

Witnesses Of War: Children's Lives Under The Nazis - Nicholas Stargardt

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Witnesses of War is the first work to show how children experienced the Second World War under the Nazis. Children were often the victims in this most terrible of European conflicts, falling prey to bombing, mechanised warfare, starvation policies, mass flight and genocide. But children also became active participants, going out to smuggle food, ply the black market, and care for sick parents and siblings. As they absorbed the brutal new realities of German occupation, Polish boys played at being Gestapo interrogators, and Jewish children at being ghetto guards or the SS. Within days of Germany's own surrender, German children were playing at being Russian soldiers. As they imagined themselves in the roles of their all-powerful enemies, children expressed their hopes and fears, as well as their humiliation and envy. This is the first account of the Second World War which brings together the opposing perspectives and contrasting experiences of those drawn into the new colonial empire of the Third Reich. German and Jewish, Polish and Czech, Sinti and disabled children were all to be separated along racial lines, between those fit to rule and those destined to serve; ultimately between those who were to live and those who were to die. Because the Nazis measured their success in terms of Germany's racial future, children lay at the heart of their war. Drawing on a wide range of new sources, from welfare and medical files to private diaries, letters and pictures, Nicholas Stargardt evokes the individual voices of children under Nazi rule. By bringing their experiences of the war together for the first time, he offers a fresh and challenging interpretation of the Nazi social order as a whole.

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