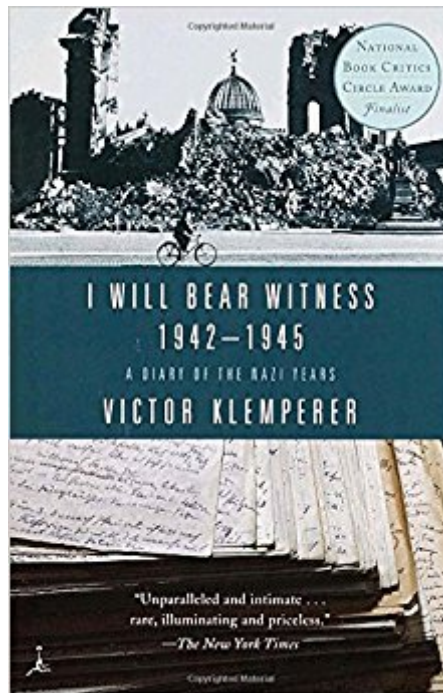


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# I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary Of The Nazi Years



## Synopsis

Destined to take its place alongside *The Diary of Anne Frank* and Elie Wiesel's *Night* as one of the great classics of the Holocaust, *I Will Bear Witness* is a timeless work of literature, the most eloquent and acute testament to have emerged from Hitler's Germany. Volume Two begins in 1942, the year the Final Solution was formally proposed, and carries us through to the Allied bombing of Dresden and Germany's defeat.

## Book Information

Series: Modern Library Paperbacks (Book 2)

Paperback: 576 pages

Publisher: Modern Library (April 3, 2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0375756973

ISBN-13: 978-0375756979

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 1.2 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.9 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 46 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #130,298 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #70 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Europe > France](#) #83 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Professionals & Academics > Educators](#) #105 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Europe > Germany](#)

## Customer Reviews

"Unparalleled... rare, illuminating, and priceless."- The New York Times

Destined to take its place alongside *The Diary of Anne Frank* and Elie Wiesel's *Night* as one of the great classics of the Holocaust, *I Will Bear Witness* is a timeless work of literature, the most eloquent and acute testament to have emerged from Hitler's Germany. Volume Two begins in 1942, the year the Final Solution was formally proposed, and carries us through to the Allied bombing of Dresden and Germany's defeat.

This is the most invaluable resource, and to think that all of the entries could have resulted in his death once discovered, and the death of Annemarie his Aryan abettor, could have been misplaced in all the moves, could have been destroyed by war, and could have been destroyed after the war. If

there are other works similar, they don't have the depth of "The Professor and the Nazis" and his incredible attention to detail and feel for the comprehensive cost of war, being a Jew, and being German. Although I was not able to read this work quickly and did not finish with anticipation, Klemperer accomplished everything the Nazis took from him beginning with the 1933-1941 diary. Unlike the first diary, Klemperer has no need to discuss the house's construction, the anxiety of driving, the trivial budgeting, and the loss of his work. This *I Will Bear Witness* still details his angina trouble, as well as Eva's struggles, to include toward the end anemia, but the other details are from inside the cave. The Jews' house goes from one spot into another. He counts the deaths as they are rumored to occur, and usually confirmed. The Jews' house, technically, was counterintuitive for the Nazis. Klemperer obviously took strength from the close quarters and the overall circumstances of seeing others suffer the same. This includes diet after diet of potatoes. The rationing coupons keep the story going. Dresden is a character more and more, but I was enlightened about the rate of bombing, finding that the bombs came late and in spurts. His house's survival, and that of an old friend, suggests the bombing was not that of the final scenes of *The Pianist*. The shelters were used thirty minutes at a time, sometimes less. The concentration camp of choice is Theresienstadt, never Auschwitz or Dachau. There is little to no hint that Theresienstadt is a haven. As Klemperer says, the camp surely means death. Klemperer's reading is slowed but not eliminated. I marked a page for Joseph Kessel and *The Prisoners*. As the good of the war seems possible, the time can be a neutralizer. On May 6, 1944, Klemperer writes, "Yesterday a death sentence that is more cruel and brooks less delay than the angina diagnosis. An eye muscle, the obliquus inferior of the left eye, is paralyzed." Klemperer believes whatever the progress of the Russians and the Americans, and despite the fall of the Italians, his health will kill him at any time because of diet, poor healthcare, and of course the stress. On some pages he is bravely resigned, and then a radio report or a conversation with a nice policeman will actually bring him all back into dogged focus. All in all the timeline is as can be expected. When Operation Valkyrie failed and officers were shot, Klemperer knew. When D-Day hit, Klemperer knew, and had enough information, or perhaps firsthand evidence in Dresden, to disbelieve reports that the Americans and British were failing their mission. Although he was way off the mark suggesting the war would end in 1943, he is on the pulse of the war believing 1944 might not be premature. But then the Battle of the Bulge, and the writing was definitely on the wall as the Russians, feared as rapists but viewed as heroes, and the Americans, viewed as casual and particularly un-militaristic, un-German, collapsed in what some

near Klemperer thought would immediately lead to a new clash. Klemperer never states he believes strongly in this. He dwells on being a refugee. He does not fear the future. He does not wonder anymore about money. The references he makes to his profession and his livelihood come from others who believe the Klemperer name will automatically place the author back on a pre-1933 perch.

This is the second volume of a very detailed diary kept by illiterate and meticulous scholar who although a Christian was half Jewish by blood and was therefore treated as a Jew by the Nazis. The story starts in 1933 and ends when he finally returns home to his little house in the suburbs of Dresden in 1945. This documents the slow and calculated process which by the clever use of propaganda transformed a cultured and relatively peaceful people into one of the most frightening military machines the world has ever seen. I think the message still has validity today.

Please see my review of the first volume, 1933-1941. A remarkable account and compelling read

Klemperer's diary details what it was like for a Jew to live in what had to be one of the worst tyrannies imaginable. His fear, fatigue, hunger and hopelessness (and at times, horror) are palpable throughout this book and he knew he was risking his life by putting his thoughts down on paper, an incredible act of bravery at that time. He watches friends and acquaintances be arrested by the Gestapo (or deported to Poland), with only their corpses (or ashes) occasionally delivered back to the remaining family members after being tortured to death. Many of us associate the guillotine with the French Revolution; the Nazis used it liberally on political prisoners, both Aryan and Jews, throughout their time in power, yet another horror of the Reich. What struck me the most was the litany of the "little" insane and irrational tortures the Nazis inflicted on the few remaining Jews: not being allowed to own any pets (and not being allowed to have the animal put to sleep, they had to be turned over to the Reich), no library privileges, food rations reduced to virtually nothing, forced to ride on the front-outside of the tram, yet being forced to exit the back (meaning one would violate the law simply by trying to exit), not allowed to have or ride a bicycle, and the endless fear of surprise Gestapo visits. Even if the Gestapo didn't find anything illicit, they'd trash the house and loot anything they wanted while severely beating and insulting the occupants. Klemperer details this evil lawlessness and brutality in a way that I haven't really seen before. He also documents the "vox populi" - what Aryans would say to him at the factory, on the street, in the neighborhood. It's a fascinating look at the German people generally. It's like going behind the drier WWII history books

and really getting a taste of what it would be like to live (as a Jew) in Nazi Germany on a day-to-day basis. It's simply amazing he survived.

As a Jew married to an Aryan, the author barely survived, while many others in the same situation died ("Shot trying to escape a concentration camp".) I have read extensively about WW II and the politics of the 30's and 40's. Always wondered about what people knew, their attitudes, etc. His diaries (Three volumes, 1933 to 1958) provide great insight into how people lived, how rights were slowly taken away from Jews, first, Drivers licences, then telephones, then typewriters, access to newspapers, finally their lives. After Hitler came to power, he was able to acquire a car and a house, but had to give these up as restrictions were imposed. The diaries contain lots of information about ordinary Germans, their attitude toward Hitler and the war including jokes. Trying to get food during and immediately after the war was a constant struggle. His interactions/contacts with various Germans are extremely interesting; police, supervisor of snow shoveling, lawyer overseeing his house, stories about trams, etc. The bombing of Dresden, a tragedy for most, saved his life. The last volume covering the post war years in East Germany are also interesting.

Klemperer' 2 volumes follow the rise of the Nazis and their increasing brutality towards non Aryans. His style of writing is so present that one feels like a witness as well.

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