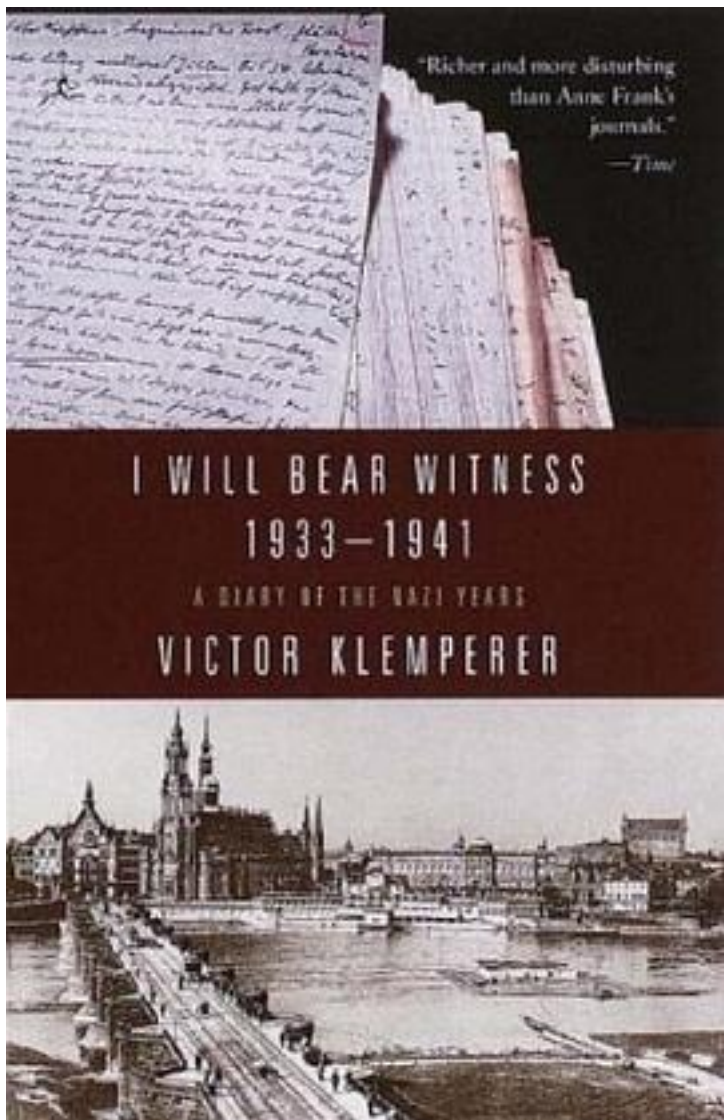


# I Will Bear Witness



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"The best written, most evocative, most observant record of daily life in the Third Reich." -Amos Elon, The New York Times Victor Klemperer risked his life to preserve these diaries so that he could, as he wrote, "bear witness" to the gathering hor-ror of the Nazi regime. The son of a Berlin rabbi, Klemperer was a German patriot who served with honor during the First World War, married a gentile, and converted to Protestantism. He was a professor of Romance languages at the Dresden Technical Institute, a fine scholar and writer, and an intellectual of a somewhat conservative disposition. Unlike many of his Jewish friends and academic colleagues, he feared Hitler from the start, and though he felt little allegiance to any religion, under Nazi law he was a Jew. In the years 1933 to 1941, covered in the first volume of these diaries, Klemperer's life is not yet in danger, but he loses his professorship, his house, even his typewriter; he is not allowed to drive, and since Jews are forbidden to own pets, he must put his cat to death. Because of his military record and marriage to a "full-blooded Aryan," he is spared deportation, but nevertheless, Klemperer has to wear the yellow Jewish star, and he and his wife, Eva, are subjected to the ever-increasing escalation of Nazi tyranny. The distinguished historian Peter Gay, in The New York Times Book Review, wrote that Klemperer's "personal history of how the Third Reich month by month, sometimes week by week, accelerated its crusade against the Jews gives as accurate a picture of Nazi trickery and brutality as we are likely to have...a report from the interior that tells the horrifying story of the evolving Nazi persecution...with a concrete, vivid power that is, and I think will remain, unsurpassed." This volume begins in 1942, the year of the Final Solution, and ends in 1945, with the devastation of Hitler's Germany. Rumors of the death camps soon reach the Jews of Dresden, now jammed into their so-called Jews' houses, starved, humiliated, subject day and night to Gestapo raids, and terrified as, one by one, their neighbors are taken away. Klemperer is made to shovel snow, is assigned to do forced labor in a factory, is taunted on the streets by gangs of boys, but his life is spared, thanks to the privileged status of Jews married to Aryans. In the final days of the war, however, even Jews in mixed marriages are summoned to report for transport to "labor camps," which Klemperer now knows means death, and that his turn will soon come. He is saved by the great Dresden air raid of February 13, 1945; he and his wife survive the fiery destruction of their city and make their way to the Allied lines. "In the enthralling and appalling final pages of this miraculous work," wrote Niall Ferguson in the London Sunday Telegraph, "Klemperer all too soon encounters the deliberate amnesia of the defeated Germany: 'What is "Gestapo"?' declares a Breslau woman he encounters in May 1945. 'I've never heard the word. I've never been interested in politics, I don't know anything about the persecution of the Jews.'" Says Ferguson, "Of all the books I have read on this subject, I find it hard to think of one which has taught me more."

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