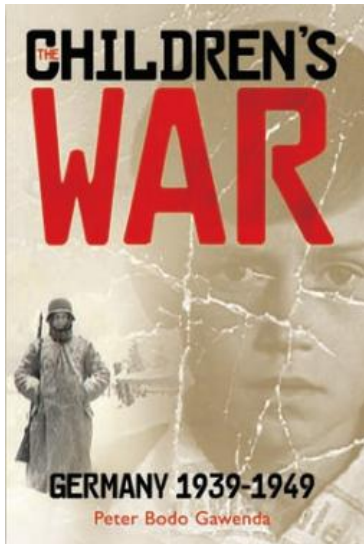


World War II History Book Review

“The Children’s War: Germany 1939-1949” by Peter Gawenda

The Children’s War Review by Trent Overbey (February 28, 2011)

Book Title: *The Children’s War: Germany 1939-1949*
Author: Peter Bodo Gawenda
Publisher: Brown Books Publishing Group
Length: 352 pages (hardcover)
Release Date: November 18, 2010



“War Life as a Child”

‘The Children’s War: Germany 1939-1949’ is a memoir penned by author Peter Bodo Gawenda. He writes the stories of his youth so that all who read them can understand what war was like for children in Germany during World War II and what sacrifices the families on the home front made to give those children a future.

Gawenda’s *‘The Children’s War’* tells the reader about his family and home, the environment that shaped the majority of his wartime experience and the rest of his life. He describes his world through the eyes of a child, from his earliest recollections in 1939 and up to the age of 12 in post war Germany 1949. Through this point of view the reader can see that war for these kids was not

one of military accomplishments and grandeur but one of great adventure and discovery. Over time they learned how to repair their own clothing and find and ransack shot-down planes for parts they could barter with on the black market for food.

Opa Mueller, his maternal grandfather in his hometown of Oberglogau, was a World War I veteran who taught them to make the best of what they had in any possible situation. They would secretly listen to the BBC broadcasts together and keep up with the German front. The children watched the dogfighting in the skies above them and were taught to identify whether incoming planes were friendly fighters or enemy bombers, therefore helping to protect their neighbors.

Gawenda shares what the home front was like for a German family. Though they came from a financially stable background, the rationing for the war still made them become self sufficient. These skills came to great use when, in early-1945, they chose to take the path of refugees and flee west towards Bavaria to escape being over run by the Red Army.

‘The Children’s War’ is a good look in the effect World War II had on the lives of the German youth. Every day had new trials. Every trip they took was a grand adventure that offered an exciting experience. This book brings a unique perspective to the war, showcasing an innocence that is not typically associated with stories of such great conflict.



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About the Reviewer: Trent Overbey is a member of the [World War II History](http://wwarii.com) Review Team. He is a graduate of the University of Kansas with a degree in History.