

The Shame of Survival: Working Through a Nazi Childhood

By Ursula Mahlendorf

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While we now have a great number of testimonials to the horrors of the Holocaust from survivors of that dark episode of twentieth-century history, rare are the accounts of what growing up in Nazi Germany was like for people who were reared to think of Adolf Hitler as the savior of his country, and rarer still are accounts written from a female perspective. Ursula Mahlendorf, born at the height of the Great Depression in 1929 to a middle-class family, was for a long while during her childhood a true believer in Nazism, the daughter of a man who was a member of the SS at the time of his early death in 1935--and a leader in the Hitler Youth herself. This is her vivid and unflinchingly honest account of her indoctrination into Nazism and of her gradual awakening to all the damage that Nazism had done to her country. It reveals why Nazism initially appealed to people from her station in life and how Nazi ideology was inculcated into young people. The book recounts the increasing hardships of life under Nazism as the war progressed and the chaos and turmoil that followed Germany's defeat. In the first part of this absorbing narrative, we see the young Ursula as she becomes an enthusiastic member of the Hitler Youth and then goes on to a Nazi teacher training school at age 15. In the second part, which traces her growing disillusionment with and anger at the Nazi leadership, we follow her story as she flees from the Russian army's advance in the spring of 1945, works for a time in a hospital caring for the wounded, returns to Silesia when it is under Polish administration, and finally is evacuated to the West, where she begins a new life and pursues her dream of becoming a teacher. In a moving Epilogue, Mahlendorf discloses how she learned to accept and cope emotionally with the shame that haunted her from her childhood allegiance to Nazism and the self-doubts it generated.

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The Shame of Survival: Working Through a Nazi Childhood By Ursula Mahlendorf Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
A former German and women's studies professor at UC–Santa Barbara, Mahlendorf grew up in a small town in Silesia and was a squad leader in the Hitler Youth who embraced Hitler as a father substitute after the death of her own father, a former SS member, in 1935 and also in rebellion against her mother who disapproved of the Nazis. Her escape from a group suicide pact in the wake of Hitler's suicide was a first step in her denazification and eventual acceptance of her culpability in the Holocaust, an open-ended process that gained a feminist twist as she realized how politics were personal under Nazism. An eye-opening, honest and absorbing account of how evil takes root and flourishes among ordinary people. Illus. *(Mar. 28)*
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From Booklist
Inducted into the Hitler Youth at age 10, Ursula Mahlendorf witnesses the pogrom of Krystallnacht in her small German town and becomes an ardent follower, exhilarated by news of German victories. Now a retired professor of German literature and women’s studies at the University of California, she is still torn with guilt, “mortified that I felt edified by such trash.” As a young teen, she was a bystander; if she had been old enough, would she have been a perpetrator? It is that dual perspective that gives this memoir its power: the immediacy of her memories; the shame, remorse, and uncertainty of remembering. There is sometimes too much personal detail, especially about her academic career that led to a Fulbright scholarship to the U.S. But the personal experience is haunting about then and now: how you can develop a shell of toughness and numbness and not know what is happening at Bergen-Belsen, only 50 miles away from where you live. --Hazel Rochman

Review
The Shame of Survival is a compelling memoir of a girl's experiences growing up in Nazi Germany that analyzes the life-long implications of Nazi indoctrination on a sensitive, thoughtful young woman. It shows how a reluctant, shy, frightened, and naive BDM member becomes swept up in Nazi ideology and documents the life-long psychic ramifications of living with that legacy: feelings of guilt and shame, a need to work through these experiences and to take responsibility for and mourn the past. Focusing on both class and gender, Mahlendorf's memoir offers a unique and valuable perspective on a growing body of emergent belated narratives on Nazi Germany by German emigre academics. --Anna Kuhn

As a young teen, she was a bystander; if she had been old enough, would she have been a perpetrator? It is that dual perspective that gives this memoir its power: the immediacy of her memories; the shame, remorse, and uncertainty of remembering....The personal experience is haunting about then and now: how you can develop a shell of toughness and numbness and not know what is happening at Bergen-Belsen, only 50 miles away from where you live. --Booklist, February 15, 2009

An eye-opening, honest and absorbing account of how evil takes root and flourishes among ordinary people. --Publishers Weekly

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Kenneth Hand:

This The Shame of Survival: Working Through a Nazi Childhood book is not ordinary book, you have it then the world is in your hands. The benefit you receive by reading this book is usually information inside this book incredible fresh, you will get facts which is getting deeper a person read a lot of information you will get. This The Shame of Survival: Working Through a Nazi Childhood without we know teach the one who examining it become critical in imagining and analyzing. Don't be worry The Shame of Survival: Working Through a Nazi Childhood can bring if you are and not make your carrier space or bookshelves' become full because you can have it with your lovely laptop even telephone. This The Shame of Survival: Working Through a Nazi Childhood having fine arrangement in word as well as layout, so you will not experience uninterested in reading.

Carl Strum:

Do you among people who can't read enjoyable if the sentence chained in the straightway, hold on guys this specific aren't like that. This The Shame of Survival: Working Through a Nazi Childhood book is readable by you who hate the straight word style. You will find the data here are arrange for enjoyable reading experience without leaving even decrease the knowledge that want to provide to you. The writer associated with The Shame of Survival: Working Through a Nazi Childhood content conveys prospect easily to understand by a lot of people. The printed and e-book are not different in the articles but it just different as it. So , do you even now thinking The Shame of Survival: Working Through a Nazi Childhood is not loveable to be your top record reading book?

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Joseph Lewis:

In this era globalization it is important to someone to receive information. The information will make a professional understand the condition of the world. The healthiness of the world makes the information quicker to share. You can find a lot of sources to get information example: internet, magazine, book, and soon. You can view that now, a lot of publisher which print many kinds of book. The particular book that recommended for you is The Shame of Survival: Working Through a Nazi Childhood this book consist a lot of the information of the condition of this world now. That book was represented just how can the world has grown up. The dialect styles that writer use for explain it is easy to understand. The actual writer made some study when he makes this book. That is why this book suitable all of you.

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