

A black year of silence

1942

HERMAN VAN GOETHEM

1942 is a turning point in World War II. From November, the Nazis are suffering heavy losses. All over the West, from London to Washington, governments and their civil servants are beginning to change course.

Herman Van Goethem has brought this crucial year back to life. He has written a compelling chronicle of everyday life in Antwerp, Belgium. The Jews are waiting to see what happens while suffering abject poverty. The city council wholeheartedly collaborates with the occupying forces. The police are increasingly aiding and abetting the harsh New Order, and from August large numbers of Jews are being deported. The decisive factors at this point are the deafening silence and agonizing suspense on an international level.

This book will resonate for a long time and I do hope it will have a healing effect on society.

DEWERELDMORGEN

'1942. The year of silence' is more than a reconstruction of a forgotten war year. It offers a new way of understanding World War II, which raises questions that reach far beyond the pitch-black year of 1942. Set against this startling background, the author examines the past, as well as the acceptance and denial of what came to pass.

This book is not only remarkable for its hypothesis, but also the way it has been written is unique. The author mirrors the style of a diary to tell the little stories on particular situations in a strict chronological order, and intervenes with considerations and opinions, topical subjects, proper memories and family history. The diary fragments are combined with photographs of the people the author is writing about. This makes this committed book a confronting read.



AUTHOR



Herman Van Goethem (1958) is a historian, lawyer and the rector of the University of Antwerp. He was curator and co-initiator of the project Kazerne Dossin, at the Museum and Centre for Documentation on the Holocaust and Human Rights. Van Goethem is also the author of some notable high-profile books including 'Leopold III. De Koning, het Land, de Oorlog', which he co-wrote with Jan Velaers. Photo © Koen Broos

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