The Second World War: a people's history


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Abstract

Book synopsis: The Second World War surpassed all previous wars in the sheer cost of many millions of lives, most of them civilian. It left a world reeling from physical destruction on a scale never experienced till then, and from the psychological traumas of loss, of imprisonment and genocide, and permanent exile from home. In this short, uncompromising book, Joanna Bourke turns an unblinking eye on the events and outcomes in the vast number of places in which the War was fought: throughout Western and Central Europe, on the Eastern Front in the Soviet Union, in the Pacific, in Africa, in Asia. She shows where the strategic decisions came from and how they were implemented, but she also shows, through diary entries and recorded oral history, how ordinary people felt when they witnessed or heard of events, from the declaration of war on the radio to the mass murders carried out by Nazi soldiers in Russian villages.

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behind the war effort War involves killing people: the multiple ways in which this could be achieved were never so clearly demonstrated as during the Second World War. Total War The Second World War was the greatest cataclysm in modern history. This was truly a ‘world war’. Just compare this conflict with its major predecessor. For this reason, every history of the Second World War is necessarily fractured and incomplete. This is even more the case in a book of this brevity. Each participating nation tells a separate story of ‘the war’ and very few points of agreement can be found. Even such basic questions such as ‘what’, ‘when’, and ‘who’ are disputed. What is this military conflict called? The Second World War surpassed all previous wars in the sheer cost of many millions of lives, the majority of them civilian. It left a world reeling from physical destruction on a scale never experienced before or since, and from the psychological traumas of loss, of imprisonment and genocide, and permanent exile from home. Through diary entries and recorded oral history, we experience how ordinary people felt when they witnessed or heard of events, from the declaration of war on the radio to the mass murders carried out by Nazi soldiers in Russian villages. It has been translated into Italian, Spanish, and Catalan. Table of Contents. 1. Introduction. 2. The declaration of war in Europe. 3. Occupied Europe. 4. Battle of the Atlantic. 5. War in China, Burma, and India.