

Youth at War: Feldpost Letters of a German Boy to His Parents, 1943-1945 is a bilingual (German and English), annotated edition of a large collection of Feldpost letters and postcards written by a German boy between September 1943 and February 1945. Born in 1927, Gerhard G. was one of Germany's youngest soldiers during the Second World War. He was only fifteen years old when in September 1943 he became a student (Luftwaffenhelfer) in the German Flak, an anti-aircraft gun unit that defended Germany against frequent aerial attacks by the Allied Forces. In July 1944, he was drafted into the R.A.D., a compulsory national labor service for young men and women. Finally, in October 1944, Gerhard joined the German navy (Kriegsmarine), where he served on the pocket battleship Admiral Scheer from January to March 1945. In May 1945, at the age of seventeen, he became an American prisoner of war. Due to his young age, he was released and permitted to return home in August 1945. This collection of one hundred and forty letters and postcards he had mailed to his parents was found in his house, shortly before his death in May 2008, neatly tied together by a string and in chronological order. It represents the large majority, if not all of the correspondence to his family that reached them while he was away from home. Gerhard's letters give deep insight into many aspects of military and social life during the Second World War, while offering the reader a rare and close look at the war experiences, thoughts, and feelings of an intelligent German boy who, from one day to the next, was made a part of Hitler's war machine. In combination with photographs and other documents from his childhood, youth, and young adulthood, these letters help reconstruct an interesting piece of German Alltagsgeschichte and can perhaps shed new light on a much-discussed time in German history. The edition, which includes a historical and biographical introduction, is not only a valuable source for scholars and students in various disciplines, but also addresses general readers with an interest in the social history of the Second World War.

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