



# Jungvolk: The Story of a Boy Defending Hitler's Reich

*Wilhelm R. Gehlen*

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## **Jungvolk: The Story of a Boy Defending Hitler's Reich** Wilhelm R. Gehlen

This is the wartime memoir of a boy named Will, who happened to be the nephew of the head of Nazi Germany's intelligence agency, Foreign Armies East. After reading this book, the reader will wonder who had the most exciting time during World War II.

Will Gehlen's father, a trolley driver, was drafted into the Wehrmacht to man a Sturmgeschutz assault gun in Russia. His older brother, Len, was enlisted in the Hitlerjugend. The author, only 10 years old when the war began, became a helper at the local Luftwaffe flak battery, fetching ammunition. It was exciting work for Will (a member of the "Jungvolk") and by the end of the war he had become expert at judging attacks. As fighter raids increased in frequency he noted that the pilots became less skilled.

Aside from aircraft kills, Gehlen had other adventures during the war, as when his mother dragged him to visit his aunt in Luxembourg in 1944. Crossing the lines they found no aunt but met American troops, and were surprised when the German Army launched an offensive, overrunning the village and forcing US soldiers to retreat with casualties. Making their way back to Germany was even more perilous, until they discovered the most secure vehicles were mail trucks. No one, not even the SS, tried to interfere with their progress.

Gehlen's town was repeatedly bombed and he often had to help with the wreckage or to pull survivors from basements. He witnessed more death than a child ever should; nevertheless, his flak battery continued firing until US tanks were almost on top of the position. In this book Gehlen, provides an intimate glimpse of the chaos, horror and black humor of life just behind the front lines. As seen through the eyes of a child, who was expert in aircraft identification and bomb weights, food-rationing and tank types, one encounters a view of life inside Hitler's wartime Reich that is both fascinating and rare.

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