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The Mermaid and the Messerschmitt

By [Mary Lignor](#) | Published September 10, 2010 | [History](#) |

Author: Rulka Langer
ISBN: 978-1607720003

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This book is an account of the beginning of World War II when Hitler invaded Poland by a citizen of Warsaw. The first edition was published in 1942 and the second in 2009.

The book begins at the end of the summer of 1939. The author, Rulka Langer, was at a family reunion with her two children and hearing about Hitler's plans to invade Poland and hoping that she would be able to "beat" Hitler and complete her vacation before the war started. The invasion began on September 1, 1939 and this is a picture of what some of the Polish people had to endure in the first few months of the Nazi occupation. The author (now deceased) was a first class writer and when it was published in '42 certainly was an eye-opener for the historians who would later write about the occupation of Poland. This edition (published in 2009) is a very informative history book that contains many photographs of the city in turmoil and the author had a wonderful eye for detail and was also an excellent story teller. You have to feel a very deep admiration for the bravery and cleverness of the Polish people during this awful time and I am very happy that the author was able to get out of Poland and write her story. As I said, this book would be a wonderful History book for the children of the 21st century who know nothing about the trials and tribulations of the Second World War.

Mary Lignor



Reviewer Mary Lignor: Mary is a retired librarian, originally from Connecticut but now

living in New Mexico. All her life Mary has loved books and has passed this love on to her daughters. Mary started working in a library when her children were young as an Assistant Librarian and ended up as its Director. Her favorite books are suspense, political intrigue and anything involving the World War II era.

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I am a big fan of 1930's and 40's fiction and non-fiction and have read a lot about WWII and it's heroes and villains. I noticed this book was advertised as "War is Hell, A rare first-person account of WWII's beginnings, told by an ordinary citizen with an eye for detail." I'm sorry that I just can't agree with that statement. Mrs. Langer was NOT an ordinary citizen. She was a very talented writer and a very privileged lady who was a graduate of Vassar College in the United States. The author was living in Warsaw when the war began but, to me, her life didn't change all that much. I'm sure that in 1939-40 that this narrative was very believable but, after things were all said and done, so many people perished in Poland and other countries at the hands of the Nazis and the privileged were able to escape. (An example: the author and her children had a bit of a dicy time on the way out of Poland and into Italy she became friendly with a Gestapo Officer on the train. The officer, of course, said that "Poland will be free of Jews" and she said she liked Jews. She also said that she loved the Ghettos and asked the soldier if he had ever been to New York. "Well, to me, the ghetto is to Warsaw what Harlem and Chinatown are to New York. Exotic and picturesque spots.") This gives a lop-sided view to what was actually going on.

To be fair however, the writing was first class and the decades between 1939 and 2009 have changed many peoples opinions about the War and what went on. And, by the way, the Mermaid in the title refers to a statue in Warsaw. She watches over the city and is depicted on the city's coat of arms.

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