



The Hitler Salute: On the Meaning of a Gesture

Tilman Allert

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Sometimes the smallest detail reveals the most about a culture. In *The Hitler Salute*, sociologist Tilman Allert uses the Nazi transformation of a simple human interaction--the greeting--to show how a shared gesture can usher in the conformity of an entire society. Made compulsory in 1933, the Hitler slaute developed into a daily reflex in a matter of months, and became the norm in schools, at work, among friends, and even at home. Adults denounced neighbors who refused to raise their arms, and children were given tiny Hitler dolls with movable right arms so they could practice the salute. And, of course, each use the greeting invested Hitler and his regime with a divine aura.

The first examination of a phenomenon whose significance has long been underestimated, The Hitler Salute offers new insight into how the Third Reich's rituals of consent paved the way for the wholesale erosion of social morality.



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