

Planet Dora: A Memoir Of The Holocaust And The Birth Of The Space Age

Yves Beon, Michael J. Neufeld



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An extraordinary memoir by a survivor of the Nazi camps, Yves Béon, *Planet Dora* is a recollection of life and death in a concentration camp like no other. Dora was a cavernous underground factory cut out of solid rock, where life was like a nightmarish scene from Dante: thousands of prisoners beaten, starved, killed, and living underground for weeks at a time. The purpose of all this brutality was to build the world's first operational rockets: the V-1 and V-2 missiles, Hitler's vengeance weapons. Some of Germany's most brilliant engineers were involved with production at Dora, including Werner von Braun, who after the war went on to become the father of the American space program. It was his Saturn V rocket, designed with the help of his wartime comrades, that put the first man on the moon; while the Saturn V project was headed by the same man who had been the director of slave labor in Dora. In fact, some of the very rockets built in Dora were packed up after the war and shipped to New Mexico to serve as the seeds of the U.S. space program. In a very real sense, the greatest technological achievement of the twentieth century had its origins in the enslavement and murder of thousands of innocent people, the down payment of a Faustian bargain that still tarnishes the foundation of our reach for the stars.

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