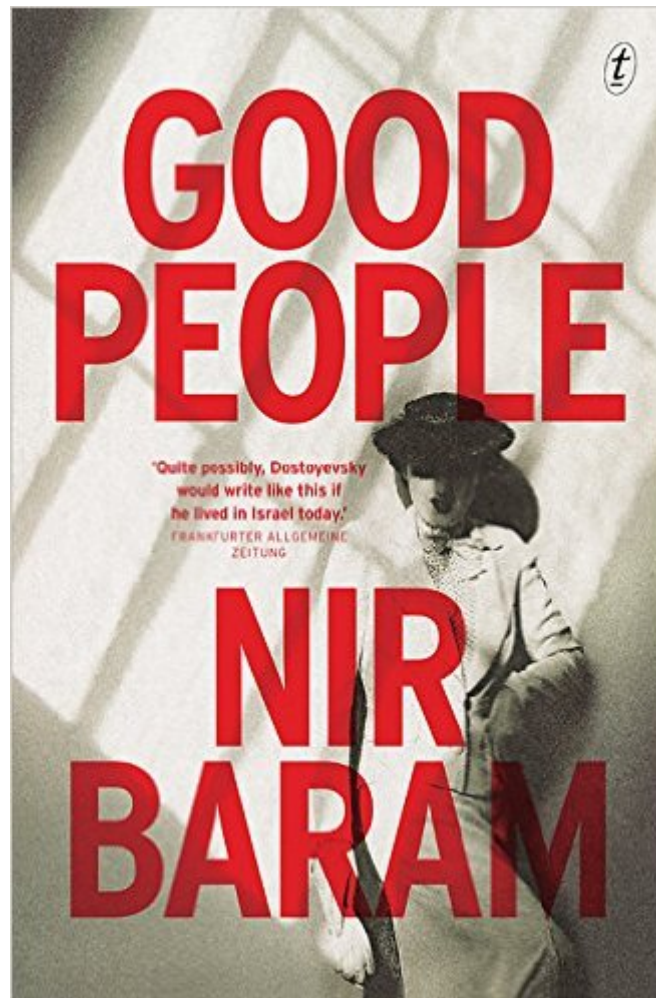


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Good People



Synopsis

'Written with great talent, momentum and ingenuity.'—Amos Oz'One of the most intriguing writers in Israeli literature today.'—Haaretz'Good People has been showered with praise for its elegance prose and scope… By putting the types of people who brought about the Second World War under a microscope, Baram creates an allegorical warning bell.'—The Culture Trip'Promising... reflects Baram's tremendous knowledge.'—Publishers Weekly'A richly textured panorama of German and Russian life…This ample novel lives most memorably through Baram's vignettes of people, dwellings, cities, landscapes and the like that seem to lie, at times, at the periphery of its central concerns.'—Sydney Morning Herald‘A groundbreaker…Riveting reading.‘—Qantas Magazine‘Astonishingly powerful…[a] compelling, important story.â™—The Listener, NZ‘Precise and evocative, Good People is a riveting glimpse into a different place and a different time.â™——Canberra Weekly‘The tale of ordinary, middle-class lives sucked into a moral maelstrom. It is compulsive and profoundly disturbing.â™—Sunday Star TimesIt's late 1938. Thomas Heiselberg has built a career in Berlin as a market researcher for an American advertising company. In Leningrad, twenty-two-year-old Sasha Weissberg has grown up eavesdropping on the intellectual conversations in her parents' literary salon. They each have grand plans for their lives. Neither of them thinks about politics too much, but after catastrophe strikes they will have no choice. Thomas puts his research skills to work elaborating Nazi propaganda. Sasha persuades herself that working as a literary editor of confessions for Stalin's secret police is the only way to save her family. When destiny brings them together, they will have to face the consequences of the decisions they have made. Good People is a tour de force that has been showered with praise in many countries. Nir Baram was born into a political family in Jerusalem in 1976. He has worked as a journalist and an editor, and as an advocate for equal rights for Palestinians. He began publishing fiction when he was twenty-two, and is the author of five novels in Hebrew. Several have been translated into more than ten languages and received critical acclaim around the world. In 2010 he received the Prime Minister's Award for Hebrew Literature.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I requested and received a free time-limited loan of an e-galley from Netgalley. I've read a lot of World War II history, and a lot of fiction set in that time period, but this is the first novel I've read that focuses on the incongruous period from 1938-1941, when Nazi Germany and the USSR briefly masqueraded as friends via their non-aggression pact. This novel focuses on two young characters, one German and one Russian. Thomas Heiselberg is a young Berliner whose sheer ambition and aggressiveness land him a highly-paid job with the first German office of an American ad agency, at a time when so many Germans were out of work and living hand to mouth. Thomas gets the job by persuading the Americans that their advertising must appeal to the German national spirit, which would require a different approach from what they'd planned. Thomas's focus on the German-ness, and all the hard work he does on a research project about Poland (in anticipation of opening a Warsaw office) make him a natural to be recruited by the Nazi government, which, unbeknownst to him, plans to invade Poland and wipe out its intelligentsia and national spirit. Thomas's self-interest and ambition mean he has no trouble glibly parroting Nazi racial nonsense. He's not anti-Semitic; he just knows which side his bread is buttered on and has no real care for anyone who can't benefit him. In Leningrad, 22-year-old Alexandra "Sasha" Weissberg lives a relatively privileged life because of her father's status as a well-known physicist. Her parents host many artists and intellectuals, which is where much dissident activity is focused. Naturally, they are spied on by the state security agency, the NKVD, and its informants.

Good People by Nir Baram is a fictional novel about taking place in German and Russia during World War II. Mr. Baram is an Israeli author, this book was translated by Jeffrey Green. Thomas Heiselberg is a market researcher working in Berlin, 1938. When the Jewish retail store he has been working for

gets destroyed Thomas puts his talents at the hands of the Nazis helping them build a model of the conquered areas to help with displacement (and murder) the population. Sasha Weissberg, a Communist Jew in Leningrad, heard her parents and their intellectual friends talk against Stalin's government. When the group gets arrested, Sasha decides that the best chance she has to save her parents and find her brothers is to work with the secret police, committing atrocious ties and helping write confessions. Good People by Nir Baram is a very ambitious and well researched novel which tries to understand how good people simply roll over and help commit atrocious ties. How good people understand that the greater good is worth more than the individual's life, soul and ethics. The novel comes off, at times, high-browed and literary at other times immensely interesting, and at times simply draining. This is one of those books that you need to read, think about, and digest not simply flip through the pages. Mr. Baram asks a lot of questions (is murdering people outright more noble than a bureaucratic sending them to their deaths? Are the Germans that assisted the Nazis the same as the Russians assisting Stalin's purges?), but does not give many, if any, answers. What I found a bit confusing was that the two main characters have the advantage of hindsight.

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