



Forgotten Survivors: Polish Christians Remember the Nazi Occupation (Modern War Studies (Hardcover))

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Wanda Lorenc watched horrified as the first Wehrmacht soldiers stormed into Warsaw. Jan Porembski witnessed the mass executions of Polish civilians. Barbara Makuch became a courier for the Polish underground until she was caught and tortured. Jan Kowski was thrown into the very first transport to Auschwitz and observed its rapid expansion firsthand. But, unlike the nearly three million other Polish Christians (and three million Polish Jews) who died during World War II, they survived.

Richard Lukas presents the compelling eyewitness accounts of these and other Polish Christians who suffered at the hands of the Germans. They bear witness to unspeakable horrors endured by those who were tortured, forced into slavery, shipped off to concentration camps, and even subjected to medical experiments. Their stories provide a somber reminder that non-Jewish Poles were just as likely as Jews to suffer at the hands of the Nazis, who viewed them with nearly equal contempt.

Zbigniew Hasztrakiewicz remembers being brutally whipped and tortured-hung by his arms and legs, hands tied behind, and repeatedly stabbed: "I prayed to lose consciousness, but it was impossible. The Gestapo soon tired and started to drink beer and smoke cigarettes as they sat at that big desk. And I hung like a hammock."

Lorenc tells of encountering starving Jews: "I broke an end off one loaf [of bread] and threw it to a woman in the group. An SS guard saw what I had done, rushed over to me and began to beat me with her stick. When I fell, she beat me with her boots. Two of my teeth dislodged and my mouth filled with blood. When I returned to the barracks, no one recognized me."

But Dr. Jan Moor-Jankowski also recalls: "One night they took a prisoner and hanged him. He died in front of our eyes. I remember seeing a tiny twig of a tree from the window. As time passed, I saw a bud on the twig and soon leaves came out. It was something that gave me hope."

Through the survivors' voices we also learn about the Polish underground, the Council for Aid to Jews (Zegota), the Jewish Uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Home Army's heroic battle during the Warsaw Uprising in late 1944. Lukas places the narratives in their historical context and Jan Kowski's drawings capture the horror of concentration camp life.

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