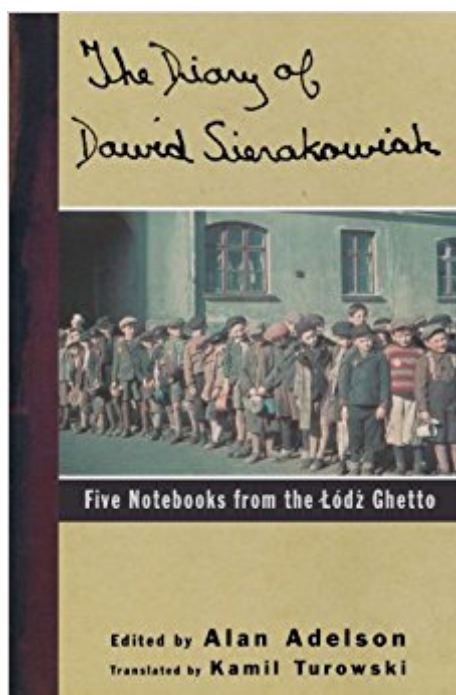


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The Diary Of Dawid Sierakowiak: Five Notebooks From The Lodz Ghetto



Synopsis

"In the evening I had to prepare food and cook supper, which exhausted me totally. In politics there's absolutely nothing new. Again, out of impatience I feel myself beginning to fall into melancholy. There is really no way out of this for us." This is Dawid Sierakowiak's final diary entry. Soon after writing it, the young author died of tuberculosis, exhaustion, and starvation--the Holocaust syndrome known as "ghetto disease." After the liberation of the Łódź Ghetto, his notebooks were found stacked on a cookstove, ready to be burned for heat. Young Sierakowiak was one of more than 60,000 Jews who perished in that notorious urban slave camp, a man-made hell which was the longest surviving concentration of Jews in Nazi Europe. The diary comprises a remarkable legacy left to humanity by its teenage author. It is one of the most fastidiously detailed accounts ever rendered of modern life in human bondage. Off mountain climbing and studying in southern Poland during the summer of 1939, Dawid begins his diary with a heady enthusiasm to experience life, learn languages, and read great literature. He returns home under the quickly gathering clouds of war. Abruptly Łódź is occupied by the Nazis, and the Sierakowiak family is among the city's 200,000 Jews who are soon forced into a sealed ghetto, completely cut off from the outside world. With intimate, undefended prose, the diary's young author begins to describe the relentless horror of their predicament: his daily struggle to obtain food to survive; trying to make reason out of a world gone mad; coping with the plagues of death and deportation. Repeatedly he rallies himself against fear and pessimism, fighting the cold, disease, and exhaustion which finally consume him. Physical pain and emotional woe hold him constantly at the edge of endurance. Hunger tears Dawid's family apart, turning his father into a thief who steals bread from his wife and children. The wonder of the diary is that every bit of hardship yields wisdom from Dawid's remarkable intellect. Reading it, you become a prisoner with him in the ghetto, and with discomfiting intimacy you begin to experience the incredible process by which the vast majority of the Jews of Europe were annihilated in World War II. Significantly, the youth has no doubt about the consequence of deportation out of the ghetto: "Deportation into lard," he calls it. A committed communist and the unit leader of an underground organization, he crusades for more food for the ghetto's school children. But when invited to pledge his life to a suicide resistance squad, he writes that he cannot become a "professional revolutionary." He owes his strength and life to the care of his family.

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Customer Reviews

When the Nazis captured Lodz, the great textile center of Poland, they squeezed the Jewish population of 200,000 into a sealed neighborhood and began systematically to work and starve them to death. Sierakowiak began his journals when he was 15, just before the war, and continued with almost daily entries until it abruptly breaks off in 1943. Edited by Adelson, producer of the documentary film, Lodz Ghetto, the diary meticulously records Sierakowiak's own deterioration as well as that of the ghetto. Sierakowiak chronicles the growing hunger and desperation of those residents not connected to Chaim Rumkowski, the ghetto's corrupt and dictatorial leader, and the loss of both parents—his mother to the Nazis and his father to tuberculosis, the disease that would claim Sierakowiak at the end. Although Sierakowiak was a Marxist, his political beliefs didn't lead to action of any sort, unlike many of the young leftists in the European ghettos. Instead, he focused almost entirely on food coupons and where he could find work. His obsession with exams, grades and abstract communist theory make the knowledgeable reader, aware of what is to come, scream with exasperation. Sierakowiak didn't have an artist's observant eye, although he was a dedicated reader of literature, so there are no distinctive individuals here aside from the writer himself, nor are there inspirational statements about the innate goodness of people. What is here is a repetitive and detailed account of a population being methodically ground into dust. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

YA. Dawid Sierakowiak was a bright, athletic, 15 year old in 1939; he died of tuberculosis just a few months after his last journal entry in April of 1943. The ordeal that he, his family, his friends, and the Jews of Lodz endured are highlighted as the day-to-day struggle to survive emerges in these

writings. The young man's desire for learning is constant in spite of the inhuman living conditions. Five of the seven notebook diaries kept by Dawid have been translated from the original Polish into English. Efforts at publishing them have been ongoing for over 30 years; the journals were first discovered following Lodz Ghetto's liberation. For libraries striving to develop an extensive collection of Holocaust materials, this book is highly recommended. Dottie Kraft, formerly at Fairfax County Public Schools, VA Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Outstanding. Haunting. Memorable. I discovered Dawid's diary after visiting a special exhibit on the Lodz Ghetto at the U.S. Holocaust Museum several years ago. Dawid's "voice" was one of five that led us through the Ghetto's history. One volume from his diary was on display and, of course, the giftshop had this printed edition for sale. I eagerly dove into the volume and soon found myself absorbed into this horrific yet curiously hopeful and often even upbeat world, a prison of a "town" where those imprisoned sought to create a sense of organization and normalcy for themselves. Dawid's diary entries begin just before the war, at summer camp, a brilliant young boy having the time of his life. Within days of returning home the Nazi threat becomes grim reality as the Germans invade Poland, take control of Lodz, and begin the process of snuffing out the Jewish community there. The entries span nearly four years and document Dawid's physical decline, his rapidly-expanding young mind and most generous soul. His entries range from the mundane (number of discernible vegetables found in that day's soup) to the sublime (his on-going political awakening and self-realization) to the downright heartbreaking (the day the Nazis came to take his mother away). Yes, this is not a story with a happy ending and it is not a bright, uplifting book necessarily, but I strongly (underline that a few times, please) urge you to buy and to read this precious volume! The reason for this recommendation is Dawid himself. This is an outstanding kid, and through this volume we gain the privilege of knowing him. Budding young leader, an enormous and wide-ranging intellect, the drive to succeed, to achieve, to expand -- and ultimately to survive, you will find yourself thinking of and remembering Dawid quite fondly long after you finish this book. It frustrates the hell out of me that this brilliant young life was ended so very early, I'm left wanting more life for him, more words from him. I can only imagine what "might have been" and THAT is the really the true tragedy of the Holocaust, isn't it? Rumor has it that the complete diaries are being prepared for publication in Polish very soon (this is an abridged, though still quite substantial version) and I can only hope that volume will find its way to an English edition soon. Until then, BUY this book and lose yourself in it! I think you will be quite happy you did.

One of the better Holocaust memoirs, because Dawid Sierakowiak wrote seemingly every day. The entries are generally brief, personal comments about the situation in the Lodz ghetto, yet the desperate hunger and the injustice of the ghetto administration is hauntingly clear. It's a shame that some of the notebooks were burned in efforts to supply the desperate need for fuel, and more of a shame that the Communist government suppressed publication of the diaries -- ironically, as Dawid considered himself a communist and wrote at length about the appalling discrepancy between the "haves" and "have-nots" within the Jewish ghetto. His journals will undoubtedly be compared to "The Diary of Anne Frank," yet Sierakowiak wrote from a more mature perspective and from that of someone who lived directly under Nazi control rather than in hiding so the two had very different experiences during the time they were able to record their thoughts and insights.

This book is a diary of the author's daily Jewish life in the Lodz ghetto for the first 4 years of WWII. The narrative is broken in places (diary books missing), and is told from the point of view of a young man (age 15 when he started, age 19 when he died from starvation and tuberculosis). I found myself drawn into the life of pestilence, especially during the last year of his life. Constant suffering from starvation, lice, scabies itching, freezing temperatures, a father who stole food from his children, the loss of his mother, tens of thousands of people being deported to their deaths -- what a hard life. Let me never complain about being hungry ever again -- I will think of this story, and be grateful for my current life. I would recommend this book to anyone who wants to learn more about the ghetto hardships and the Holocaust.

A teenager's almost day-to-day account of life in the Łódź ghetto. Not to talk down Anne Frank, but her diary doesn't touch what it was like physically under Nazi oppression, just mentally and emotionally, and focuses more on family strife and pain. This book, a collection of several of young Dawid's diaries begun shortly before his town was occupied, deals with survival in the ghetto (spoiler, but not really: Dawid himself died in Łódź), fighting for food, the Jewish Council under the ruthless and tyrannical Chaim Rumkowski. It offers an almost unparalleled insight into ghetto life (not the Tupac kind) and though it may be tough to get through sometimes, the knowledge of Dawid's experience is worth every cringing turn of the page.

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