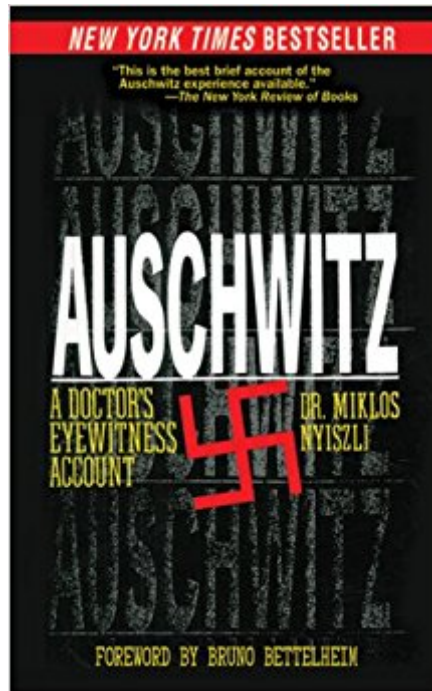




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Auschwitz: A Doctor's Eyewitness Account



Synopsis

When the Nazis invaded Hungary in 1944, they sent virtually the entire Jewish population to Auschwitz. A Jew and a medical doctor, Dr. Miklos Nyiszli was spared from death for a grimmer fate: to perform "scientific research" on his fellow inmates under the supervision of the infamous "Angel of Death": Dr. Josef Mengele. Nyiszli was named Mengele's personal research pathologist. Miraculously, he survived to give this terrifying and sobering account.

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"Auschwitz" is the account of a Jewish medical doctor who performed autopsies at the crematoria of Auschwitz at the behest of the infamous Dr. Mengele. It's a gut-wrenching reading. One is constantly reminded of the words of another famous Holocaust chronicler, Viktor Frankl, who said, "We who have come back, by the aid of many lucky chances or miracles - whatever one may choose to call them - we know: the best of us did not return." That's a sad fact with which Dr. Nyiszli had to live. Nyiszli lent his expertise to many despicable acts in the process of surviving, and

it's to his credit that he had the courage to write this work. He was the only one who could have told much of this story, and it's a story that he felt the world must know--even if it meant rehashing the nightmare scenario of his life during the holocaust years, even if he was not always to be seen at his most virtuous. While Nyiszli was a man of science who tried to stick to the objective task of conducting autopsies, his results were routinely perverted to support Nazi pseudo-science--the pseudo-science used by Nazis to justify elimination of the Jews and other despised classes of humanity. Nyiszli stayed alive first-and-foremost because Dr. Mengele valued Nyiszli's expertise, and perhaps the credibility that expertise offered to the Nazi's insane attempts to emulate science. Sometimes by just answering basic scientific questions, Nyiszli was contributing to the advancement of dire atrocities. There's no better example than when Mengele asked Nyiszli how one could obtain a skeleton from a corpse. These skeletons displayed deformities, and were thus to be sent to the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity, and Eugenics to support the absurd assertion that Jews were genetically degrading. Of course, as Nyiszli points out the disease these two people were afflicted with was no less common among blond-haired, blue-eyed Aryans than it was among the Jewish people. At any rate this resulted in two corpses (made corpses by force, not nature) being boiled to remove the skeletons so they could be sent to an institute as pseudo-evidence. Nyiszli's forthcomingness is astounding. Nyiszli performed many objectionable actions at the behest of Mengele, but it's clear he couldn't have survived disobeying the Nazi doctor. However, there were also times when Nyiszli acted on his own in a way that was, arguably, detestable. After Auschwitz was abandoned, Nyiszli used his former position--and Mengele name-dropping)--to cut in line to get into an encampment (essentially a refugee camp) so he could get a shower and food for the night when others were left out in the cold. I don't mean to make Nyiszli look evil. He did many virtuous things in the process of surviving as well. This included sneaking medical supplies from the crematoria infirmary (where there was abundance) to barracks infirmaries (where there was a dire shortage.) He did his best to save those he could. It's to Nyiszli's credit that he shows us a complete picture. One expects such a book to be distorted when it comes to the author, but Nyiszli's book seems honest. This is an important book as it lets us peer into one of the darkest hours of humanity, and gaze upon a terribleness that would have been lost to posterity. The book gives a chilling account of what it must have been like to be in the gas chambers, told by someone who saw the aftermath in person. Nyiszli saw the piles of bodies reaching to the ceiling--dog piles in which the weakest were trapped on the bottom

as the strongest tried to climb over women and children to get a gulp of good air. (Another proof of Frankl's thesis.) Nyiszli also describes how one little girl, in a freak occurrence, managed to survive the chambers owing to an air pocket, only to have the SS finish the execution by cruder means. I think everybody should read this book, but I'll offer a warning that it's not for the faint of heart. One has to keep righteous rage in check to just get through the book. However, to ignore this wicked moment in history is to fail to see the traps humanity is capable of falling into through simple refusal to do the right thing or a willingness to try to feel better about oneself by casting aspersions on those with slightly different physical features.

I was aware of much of what he wrote about from other books. It has to have been awful trying to save yourself and your family, but having no control over anything, never knowing when the whim of an SS would cause your death or more suffering. To me this wasn't an in depth book, but after all he witnessed and had to participate in it may be all he was capable of at the time of writing and still remain whole. I always learn something from what I read never the less.

Dr. Miklos Nyiszli has written (1960) a graphic, gruesome, first-hand account of his time working as a doctor in the gas chambers of Auschwitz. Due to his previous medical training in medicine and pathology, Dr. Nyiszli was spared by the hideously inhuman Dr. Josef Mengele, to be the medical doctor to the Sonderkommando, the 600-plus Jewish prisoners who actually operated the crematorium ovens which incinerated over 3,000 inmates a day. Dr. Nyiszli also became the chief pathologist for Dr. Mengele's infamous experiments on Jewish prisoners, performing dissections and autopsies, all explained in great detail. Dr. Nyiszli had permission from Dr. Mengele to travel through the camp, and therefore witnessed atrocities that are shock all sensibilities, and are sickening in the cruelty in which they were carried out. One wonders how the guards can kill in such a matter of fact manner, so many men, women, children, grandmothers, and grandfathers, without being emotionally devastated. He described the entire process of how the Jewish populations were induced to walk into the gas chambers without resistance. How they died a horrible death in the gas chambers, how their bodies were stripped of hair and gold teeth, and then incinerated in non-stop 24 hour a day operation in the four ovens. When the gas chambers were overflowing with Jewish bodies, he writes of hundreds of others standing in line to be shot to death with a single bullet in the back of the head, then dumped into a long burning death pit, created for just such a purpose. He describes how a 16 year old girl miraculously survived being gassed in the chamber, only to be shot the next day. He describes how whole camps of upwards of 4,500 people were "liquidated" in one

day. Dr. Nyiszli is continually stunned by the utter brutality of the German Nazis and the ultimate purpose of Auschwitz - to destroy the Jewish race and other "undesirables". Since the Sonderkommando group of prisoners were themselves shot to death every 4 months to prevent anyone from telling the world what the Germans were doing in the camps, it is a miracle that Dr. Nyiszli survived to tell the atrocities of the death camp. Fortunately for history, and for the lesson of man's inhumanity to man, we have Dr. Nyiszli's account to tell the world the truth about what happened in Hitler's concentration camps. Although very disturbing to read, this is an important account that absolutely refutes modern-day revisionists who claim there was no holocaust, or that it was greatly exaggerated. This book is not for young eyes. The descriptions of the deaths are too vivid. However, it is an important book for students of history and for any who need to be reminded of the incredible cruelty man is capable of. While sobering and horrific to read, I do recommend this book to those interested in the holocaust. It is one of the better books in the genre. James Konedog Koenig

Having just finished this book, I will say that it is a must read. This is a very disturbing look into Auschwitz and the atrocities that took place, under the direction of Mengele. This account, from a Dr. details that number of people massacred and how they were relieved of their lives. This man, for one reason or another, managed to stay alive and recount the life in Auschwitz as no other could. He is detailed in his memories of the place and gives a clear image for the reader to understand. It is one of those books that you don't often find, in which once you start, you simply cannot put it down. Truly one of the best accounts to date, as it has held up under the years.

When I got this book I couldn't put it down! I wanted to know what happened next. The author gives details as if you are there witnessing this time with him. He gives an account you will not find anywhere else. How Nazi personnel planned numerous ways to end peoples lives was new to me.

This was a hard book to read. The author somehow was able to separate himself from what his role was. I know it was about survival for him. I just don't know how he kept doing his work. I felt very conflicted about this man.

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