



The Last Eyewitnesses: Children of the Holocaust Speak (Jewish Lives)

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This book provides an extraordinary new perspective on the lives of Jewish children who survived the Holocaust in Poland and remained there after the war. These testimonies, submitted by individual authors and not originally intended for publication, were assembled as a historical record by the Association of the Children of the Holocaust in Poland. The accounts are personal, unpretentious, and direct. Collectively, they tell far more than can be gotten from the story of one individual. The Last Eyewitnesses differs from other contributions to Holocaust literature in many ways. First, these accounts have a great immediacy as the subjects continue live in the country where their experiences took place; they are not looking back at the past from an entirely different world. Second, the book documents the lives of Jewish children in Poland in a wide variety of settings and circumstances, in cities and villages, east and west, north and south, living in crowded ghettos, hiding in fields and attics. Some youngsters endure the brutality of concentration camps, while others are sheltered in loving homes, unaware of the dangers that surround them. Some of the very young learned that they were Jewish only at the deathbed of an adoptive parent. One, unaware of his Jewish heritage, even became a priest. While the main focus is the writers' wartime experiences, the stories also give glimpses of family background as well as the difficulties faced by Jews during the postwar period. Finally, while the book confirms some of the painful stories told by others, it also provides an antidote to the stereotypical view of Poles during the war. Mean-spiritedness and brutal anti-Semitism are described in these accounts, but so are some of the great risks taken by truly courageous individuals in order to save Jewish children. Historical notes and a glossary provide additional information to help the reader understand the setting in which these events took place, making this book not only absorbing reading but an excellent resource. An index includes original family names of the authors and those they write about, a valuable tool for those searching for relatives.

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