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Miklós Nyiszli , Tibère Kremer (Translator) , Bruno Bettelheim (Foreword) , Richard Seaver (Introduction)

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When the Nazis invaded Hungary in 1944, they sent virtually the entire Jewish population to Auschwitz. A Jew and a medical doctor, the prisoner *Dr. Miklos Nyiszli* was spared death for a grimmer fate: to perform "scientific research" on his fellow inmates under the supervision of the man who became known as the infamous "Angel of Death" - Dr. Josef Mengele. Nyiszli was named Mengele's personal research pathologist. In that capacity he also served as physician to the Sonderkommando, the Jewish prisoners who worked exclusively in the crematoriums and were routinely executed after four months. Miraculously, Nyiszli survived to give this horrifying and sobering account.

Auschwitz: A Doctor's Eyewitness Account Details

Date : Published September 1st 2007 by Arcade Publishing (first published 1946)

ISBN : 9781559702027

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Format : Paperback 222 pages

Genre : History, Nonfiction, World War II, Holocaust, War, Autobiography, Memoir, Biography, Historical, Biography Memoir



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From Reader Review Auschwitz: A Doctor's Eyewitness Account for online ebook

Kimberly says

I find it hard to write an accurate review of this book. The topic of the book does not lend itself to be titled a "good book", but the story was gripping and detailed and it was hard to walk away from the book, regardless of the topic.

While the book was written clearly in the style of someone who is used to detaching themselves emotionally and sticking with facts, I think it helps in getting across the points he wished to accomplish. The facts and numbers are so staggering that it sometimes feel like you are reading a story of fiction instead of fact. But most stories from survivors and anything read about the camps leave this feeling.

The book was an amazingly smooth and fast read especially considering the topic and I found his style of emotional detachment in his writing easier for me to take those facts in as a whole. Where normally a book with this sensitive topic I would need to take breaks from my readings to process and to deal with the feelings of depression and heaviness, this book portrayed the facts in a way that made it easier to move through the book at a faster rate. I finished the book feeling more informed, mourning the loss of the sheer numbers of people killed without thought but still detached enough to slowly process what I read without the heavy, somber feeling one would get with reading such a heavy and heart breaking topic. I don't actually know whether this is good or bad though...

Natalie says

I've found that my mind muddles reading non-fiction accounts of the Holocaust with fictitious stories of it because sometimes it (my mind) cannot wrap itself around the fact that this horrifying event *actually took place*.

I am FAR (imagine sixty billion miles away and then triple it and then double it and then quadruple that) from being knowledgeable on this time period and have only read a handful of books (fiction and non-fiction combined) about it. This book introduced me to the Sonderkommando. In case anyone else is a novice like me, Wiki says: *Sonderkommandos were work units made up of German Nazi death camp prisoners. They were composed of prisoners, usually Jews, who were forced, on threat of their own deaths, to aid with the disposal of gas chamber victims during the Holocaust.*

I imagine there would be criticism for these prisoners for "aiding" the Nazis, but I was far from criticizing the author. Reminder: this is non-fiction - not a work of fiction in which a superhero emerges and frees all the victims and where good prevails over evil. Don't even try to put yourself in their shoes with what you may have done because it's not even really *imaginable*, is it?

I *always* cry while reading about the Holocaust, whether the book is sentimental or not. Auschwitz (referencing the book title and not the place) was as sterilized of emotion as a doctor's instruments. But how could I not have to set down the book and cry until I could collect myself when I read something like this?: *They advanced with slow, weary steps. The children's eyes were heavy with sleep and they clung to their mothers' clothes. For the most part the babies were carried in their fathers' arms, or else wheeled in their*

carriages.

Devastating.

And then the degradation of human beings is enough to make my skin crawl. Through forced nakedness and starvation and disease.

In contrast to the prisoners in the camp proper, who writhed in lice-filled boxes, who, mad with hunger, battled furiously for a scrap of bread or a piece of potato.

But let's talk about the author. A doctor who became indispensable to the Nazis (that is - for an allotted amount of time until they would find a replacement). A man who not only wanted to survive for the chance to *just be alive* and to see his family again but to RECORD AND REVEAL WHAT HORRORS HAD OCCURRED WITHIN THE CONFINES OF AUSCHWITZ. It's a pretty damn noble reason to fight for survival.

If by chance I ever get out of this place alive, I thought, and have a chance to relate all I've seen and lived through, who will believe me? Words, descriptions are quite incapable of furnishing anyone with an accurate picture of what goes on here. So my efforts to photograph in my mind all I see and engrave it in my memory are, after all, completely useless.

Paul Bryant says

Unfortunately, it seems to me that Holocaust memoirs can at this distance in space and time become something they were not meant to be, something disreputable, something akin to the torture porn of modern horror movies like Saw or Hostel. If you read a number of these memoirs you get to be a connoisseur of atrocities. When you find yourself being able to explain why Mauthausen was worse than Dachau, and how Treblinka and Chelmno differed from Stutthof and who Irma Grese was, and you are not yourself a professional historian, it may be that you should stop reading them.

Rae says

No words could do this first hand account near justice. 'Auschwitz' was an amazing, true tale of a WWII camp hellbent on liquidation then using their victims for scientific exploration purposes. Written by Dr. Mengele's right-hand-man of a coroner, Dr. Miklós writes from the heart what he witnessed in this man-made hell.

Rich Weiss says

I have read a number of books about the holocaust, mainly from those who were imprisoned in Auschwitz or several of the other concentration/death camps. This was the only book from the perspective of a "prisoner" who received special treatment because he was selected to assist Dr. Joseph Mengele.

The emotion didn't hit home with me. Although Nyiszli explained what happened in the camp, he didn't impart a personal feeling of terror. What's more, he sanitized his role in medical experiments, indicating that,

although his "subjects" were just killed before he examined the bodies, he never took part in their execution. When you know the facts, that people were tortured to death by Mengele by cutting out body parts without anesthesia, or slowly killing victims with electrical shocks, or freezing them in ice water, it's odd that none of this came out in this book, as if Nyiszli downplayed many of the horrors that he must have not only encountered but for which had been involved.

Although this was a good read, the story is told by someone with special privilege, even though he was a Jew in a place where every other Jew was starved, beaten, tortured or gassed to death.

Megan says

Generally, I dislike non-fiction. Which sounds insane when you think that my major in college is history, but there it is all the same. I tend to avoid reading non-fiction unless I have to for school, which is how the reading of this book around. I am currently enrolled in a World War II class and for our mid-term exam we are to write a paper over a book on some aspect of the war and how it has changed our understanding of the subject.

Now I have read quite a lot about the Holocaust and have even attended various speeches and lectures given by survivors or experts in the field. I fully believe that we children of the future have to preserve the past for future generations so that nothing is forgotten. I thought I had heard all of the worst things about this period in history, but I was sadly mistaken. This book is told by, Dr. Miklos Nyiszli, a Jewish prisoner of the extermination camp Auschwitz. He is given the position of Dr. Mengele's personal pathologist. He has to do all the autopsy that he is asked to do and also take care of the ill in all of the barracks.

He explains all the horrifying things that he is required to do in this place and the toll that it takes on him as well as the three assistants he is given. He really opens your eyes as to how much fear everyone in this camp had and how most if not all of the people that were sent Auschwitz ended up "liquidated".

At some points in the story I felt like I had to be reading fiction because there is no way that one group of people could do this to another without the oppressed group fighting back. Nyiszli even mentions how he can't figure out why none of them fight back. They just resign themselves to their fate and stand in line waiting their turn to be shot, gassed, or beat to death. There were so many of them that had they all gotten together and staged a revolt at some point I don't think the SS guards could have put down the revolt.

I don't believe I've ever felt such pure unabashed hatred for someone than I felt about Mengele and Hitler while reading this book. I mean I've always had an intense dislike for them, who hasn't, but this book really clinched it for me. I feel like everyone everywhere should have to read this book. How can people believe that the Holocaust was made up when they read something like this. I don't think anyone could really make something like this up.

I think that if there is a God that he gave Dr. Nyiszli divine assistance because there were so many times that he should have been killed but he kept slipping by. I think he was meant to live so that he could tell his story about what really occurred in Auschwitz when everyone else from his camp had either died or been killed. I seriously recommend going out and getting a copy of this book. It is a first hand account of what happened in one of the most reviled places man ever created. I hope you all find it as important and as moving as I have.

david says

Yet another insight into Auschwitz.

This time by a Jewish doctor who worked directly under Mengele.

Survival is a human instinct.

Immoral, amoral, who is to judge?

Mélanie says

There are some books that you just can't comment on. Not because you have nothing to say, but because there simply are no words to express how you feel about what you've read. If I could propose a review in images only, they would be the following:

- shocked gaze of a brown eye
- faces, bleak with despair
- clouds of black smoke
- a flash of stainless steel
- shimmer of gold on bone
- orange flames streaming from chimneys

I read this account because I had studied bits of the holocaust in University, and having recently read Those who save Us, I found that my memories of what we had learned and discussed 10 years ago had faded.

It was one thing to shock those memories back to life; but quite another thing to read a first hand account. The only reason I couldn't give it a full five stars is because of how it ended... But I suppose, having been written in a logical, no nonsense fashion by a doctor, the abrupt ending made sense. Rebuilding after a horror like that is likely a whole other story.

Monty desai says

This is one hell of a book...its a true eyewitness account of "DR MIKLOS NYISZLI" who was himself a prisoner , but a prisoner physician of "AUSCHWITZ CONCENTRATION CAMPS " during HITLER NAZI REGIME...This is a beautiful book describing the HOLOCAUST HORRORS faced and experienced by JEWS in Germany and other parts of EUROPE from the eyes of this doctor himself...This book gave me chills and creeps throughout the book. It's beyond my imagination just to think what horrible things this doctor was made to do.

Rebecca says

Really, I probably need a few days to digest this book before I review it, but here are some of my thoughts:

1. I've read many books about the holocaust, but this is the first personal account of life directly within a death camp that I've read. Though I knew some of the horrors that went inside, I had no idea how atrocious they were, or that they were committed in the name of science. I'm sure there was much omitted from Dr.

Nyiszli's account, but this book gives the reader a fairly good idea of just how demented members of the Third Reich were.

2. Some have criticized the lack of emotion in the book. First off, Nyiszli states right off that he is writing as a doctor and not for literary acclaim. That in and of itself warrants a more detached narrative. Secondly, to have done what he did and survived with even a shred of sanity he would have had to almost completely detach himself from the situation he found himself in. Finally, I was grateful for the clinical way Nyiszli wrote of his experiences. Perhaps I am just extremely sensitive, but the book had a profound effect on me as is. I do not think I would have been able read the book in its entirety had it contained more emotion.

3. I thought that it was a book worth reading - one that made you think and ask questions. How could this have happened? At what point does what would normally be considered unethical become Okay or even an act of mercy? Is survival a good enough reason to assist in such heinous experimentation, even with the rationalization that the Nazis had already killed the victims and he was just following orders where disobedience meant death? What would I have done had I been in Nyiszli's shoes? Would my decisions have been any better if placed under the same strain. I would like to think that I could and would have died with honor instead of living with regret, but who knows what my mental state would have been in the same circumstances.

Linda says

Miklós Nyiszli was one of the prisoners of Auschwitz, but in the selection process, when he revealed he was a doctor, he was chosen as doctor Mengele's assistant.

The book, as all holocaust biographies, is an important account of a horrible time. It is full of tragic, devastating situations, some of them containing a hint of hope. I think of the girl that survived the gas chambers, the woman and child hiding several days in the camp and the rebellion of the Sonderkommando, working in the crematorium. Unfortunately, there are not so many happy endings. Nyiszli was near death constantly, and very close to be killed two times. He was extremely lucky to survive both a roll call when every one else were killed, and the very gas chamber, when he was saved in the last moment.

The book is uneven. It is not well written at all, but it doesn't matter. It has other values. However, there are some thoughts worth discussing. The things the author had to do as doctor Mengele's assistant were horrible, of course, but sometimes, I wonder if he tells the whole truth. I feel Nyiszli tries to justify himself too much, as if he has a reason.

The parts about his family must have been very emotional for him, of course. I would have liked more thoughts and feelings about his family, but the book is somewhat matter-of-factly written. He wrote the book shortly after the war, and perhaps it was a defense mechanism he needed for even managing to write a book about his experiences. Perhaps, some memories were too personal and he didn't want to share them. Anyway, I'm very grateful for having the opportunity to read the book, and get an insight into the author's experiences.

In fact, the not very emotional style has an advantage. It is interesting to read about the holocaust and Auschwitz from that perspective because it gives a kind of overview. I think he mentions many details that other books don't. Most prisoners probably never knew this much, and therefore, this book is very important.

Jodi says

My uncle recommended this book to me because my grandfather liberated this camp when he was in the war. At the end of this book it tells about how a US light tank comes in to set them all free and my grandpa was in that tank. For years I have heard through the family about that day so for me this was a great book with lots of insight so I was able to make the connection between what was happening in the camps up to the point of where my grandfather's stories start.

Steven Godin says

To the Holocaust denier, Dr. Miklós Nyiszli's eyewitness account to the hell that played out at Auschwitz would read like a remarkable work of fiction. To those of us living on planet earth the truth is relentless, unbearable, and should never be forgotten. All the youngsters who neglect history, and keep whining on about life need to read this.

I had a pretty good idea how this was going to read, but that didn't make it any less painful. It hurt. There was just no let-up, the Nazi conveyor belt of death moving continually twenty-four-seven. Even though I knew beforehand, the amount of Jews mass murdered I still simply cannot and will not ever fully grasp, how could man do this? It's just beyond my realms of thinking. My blood runs cold just thinking about it. I am numb. For Romanian born Sonderkommando Physician Miklós Nyiszli, every second spent working under the watchful eye of S.S. Dr. Josef Mengele was sacred, death could have been waiting for him at any given time. One mistake, and it's certain. So many moments arose when he thought, that's it, only to be spared. Had he not been able to perform autopsies at the hands of the Reich, this book wouldn't exist.

Hope had no place here, every Sonderkommando work unit had a life span, the new would cremate the old. Nyiszli witnessed this twelve times during his stay, before catching sight of the last S.S. coward leaving the camp for good, closing the Iron gates, cutting off the lights, Nyiszli seeing this enormous cemetery of European Judaism sink into darkness. His eyes lingered for what seemed like an eternity, through the barbed wire fence of the camp, the rows of barracks stood out against the night sky. This cemetery of millions, without a single grave.

With a racing heart, he was on the path to freedom...

It all began for Nyiszli, specializing in forensic pathology and carrying out medical duties for both the police and the courts, gaining valuable experience in identifying unusual or disputed deaths in the corpses he examined. Of course this being before war broke out. Little did he realize this would not only help to save his life, but also pass on valuable knowledge in the Reich's evil machine during the final solution. He was left with little choice. After being rounded up, shipped off, to then an unknown destination, who can guess what went through his mind. Surely not this? Nyiszli lived and breathed the stale air, surrounded by the ghosts of the dead and the men of the Sonderkommando throughout his time in Auschwitz. And for a long time his account of the day to running of Auschwitz was virtually the only record of what really happened behind the gates of hell. He had many duties, from patching up prisoners and S.S. men, to later working for Josef Mengele as a pathologist. Mengele had a specific interest in anthropology, and had Nyiszli look closely at the bodies of many sets of twins, ranging from infants to those older, in the hope of learning more genetically. It also becomes apparent Mengele engaged in sadistic often fatal experiments on the living,

which grossly violated commonly accepted ethical standards of medicine and clinical research. I thought this man would be as bad as it gets, who could be lower ? I was wrong. As another truly evil monster was waiting, Oberscharführer Mussfeld.

At least Mengele showed the smallest amount of emotion, whilst Mussfeld was void of any. A human killing machine, the worse of his kind, who liked to put a bullet in the back of the neck of his victims, some not killed outright, left to suffer. It's off the scale thinking numbers wise, but it didn't in the least bit bother him to exterminate hundreds of screaming prisoners of all ages at a time. So along with the gas, there was the bullet, and later on not to my surprise, the flamethrower,

typical Nazi mentality, no one gets an easy death, even those attempting suicide were bought back, only to end up like the rest. In fact Nyiszli helped save a member of the Sonderkommando, who tried to put himself to sleep. Others begged him to let the man go peacefully, away from this hell on earth, he didn't listen, and deeply regretted his decision.

On gaining more trust with Mengele, and not talking on subjects other than work, Nyiszli, with an air of confidence simply asked one day 'when is this all going to stop?', Mengele replied 'never, it goes on and on and on'. Nyiszli knew, that if he dared to raise his voice or act with criticism and doubts, his life might well be forfeit, and the descriptions in his accounts here show how careful he had to be in regards his relations with Mengele. He walked on a fine tightrope. Never to over step the boundary of his status. He needed to remind himself from time to time that despite having extra privileges, he was still a dead man walking, it was only a matter of time.

He writes as a doctor, or in other words, as a dispassionate clinical observer, perhaps this was the only way of escaping his torment, and the numbing horrors that were carried out not far from his room. The clinical, factual nature of events gives this account added value. It's written in a way that shows self-control rather than an out pouring of grief and pain. But this is clearly hard to contain, as many times you feel he just wants to break down, who can blame him? It's all about what his eyes witness, not the mind, his own thoughts are second nature, although his wife and daughter remain close in his heart, he had little time to dwell on the chimneys of doom, or the screams of the many, having become so use to them. What good would it have done anyway? All he could do was please the S.S with his work, carry on living, until he didn't.

But a breakthrough came when an attack by kommando rebels claimed one of the four crematorium as well as many S.S. This was the beginning of the end, and the Reich knew it. With the Red Army approaching, the S.S. destroyed as much of the camp as they could before fleeing, and for the first time since his arrival, Miklós Nyiszli was filled with hope of getting out alive. And thus telling the world about the worst atrocity to hit the 20th century.

Miklós Nyiszli died in may 1956, I hope his final thoughts were filled with love and his family, not the barbaric bastards who held him captive.

Anne says

This is not an easy book to read. it concerns the eyewitness account of a Hungarian Jewish doctor who was able to survive in Auschwitz by using his skills to assist the German doctors there, led by Josef Mengele, the notorious "Angel of death." he tells how the doctors would wait for the arrivals, and choose whether they would live or die-right-life by labour, left-immediate death in the gas chambers. because he Uses his medical skills are used to care for the Sonderkommando, the Jewish prisoners forced to work in the crematoriums and

who were always killed after 4 months of work. He also worked as a pathologist for Mengele. Before I continue, Dr. Nyiszli must be considered with eyes that see "you have to walk a mile in a man's shoes before you judge him." Should he have refused or continued to save his life? It is a question that is difficult to answer unless you have experienced this yourself, and very few have. would his death had made any difference either way? Of course not. If he had said no he would just have become another body fed to the ovens. The only fact that might have saved him mentally was that he was used to dealing with dead bodies. In order to justify to himself what he is doing, he decides to do everything he can to survive and tell the world what happened.

Most methods of extermination have been discussed many times, but I found one used on the Sommerkommando group near the end of the war to be one of the most horrific I have ever read, and new to me. This group was taken out into the woods and killed by flame throwers. However, even horribly burned, some lived to suffer horribly before a mercy shot was given. This has to be one of the most inhumane ways of killing that I have ever seen. I believe this book should be required reading for every college student today. We must never forget this horror perpetuated by the Nazi's, yet today, many deny these things happened. Highly recommended for those who can take it.

Anushree says

Auschwitz: A Doctor's Eyewitness Account by Miklós Nyiszli

My Rating: I find myself incapable of rating this testimony of the excruciating horrors inflicted by human beings on fellow human beings and I decided to only write my thoughts rather than a review

Dr. Miklós Nyiszli has categorically specified that this is not meant to be a literary piece (although the account must be the bravest non-fiction so far – if it is to be seen only through a reader's point of view - coming from an eye-witness who was present on the camp for 12 laborious months) but it is only meant to be a first-hand testimony for the world to know what happened to their fellow human beings behind those hard-wearing camps in Auschwitz.

He was appointed as one of the infamous Sonderkommando, prisoners who worked for the German forces to aid with the disposal of gas chamber victims or to aid with other work related to extermination of the millions of innocents who came to the Auschwitz whose life span is not more than a meager 4 months themselves. Here he was made to perform experiments on the corpses of the various fatalities for a pathetic research (racial and pathological) that was being conducted by a demented monstrous doctor called Dr. Menegle.

Dr. Nyiszli, describes in detail, the horrors that went on inside the camp. The gas chambers, the bullet in the neck, the pyres, the experiments, the dissections. He tells us the journey from his arrival till his freedom – about how he narrowly stole himself from the jaws of death, about how he had to turn his heart into stone in order to keep his sanity intact, about how in some way he strived to make sure that the savagery happening inside the barbed fence wires of Auschwitz goes out in the open and be known to the world outside, about how out of desperation a fellow group of human beings started feasting on the flesh of fellow human beings. He tells us how in the events such as these it becomes extremely important to save one's own life than take pity on others. He wasn't strong willed. He was not hopeful of his own survival either. He was just one of those lucky ones who had a good degree and a better advantage above others. Had that not been he would have been one of the "Thirteenth Sonderkommando's who had to give up on life in the most disastrous ways after their 4 months of service. He was the one who lived to tell his tale.

P.S.: I browsed through some more literature about this book and I found a quite detailed introspection about the authenticity of Dr. Nyiszli's claims. (http://www.ihr.org/jhr/v20/v20n1p20_p...). A careful analysis of the book reveals certain discrepancies in what has been written by Dr. Nyiszli, as compared to what really happened, as is expected for a gargantuan phenomenon such as Holocaust and The Final Solution. Facts starting from Dr. Nyiszli's existence till the factual descriptions of Auschwitz's crematoriums and chambers were investigated several times and in this particular study conducted by Charles Provan, it is seen that Dr. Nyiszli did exist at Auschwitz during the mentioned period, however suspicions of his having collaborated with Germans (especially his SS superiors for certain favors) have been expressed and none have been able to completely demolish them. So whether Dr. Nyiszli wrote the book out of guilt and shame or whether he really has undergone the torture and later set free is yet to be established.

I do not know the truth either and I do not know whether after decades of the horrendous past it would be feasible for the ENTIRE truth to be uncovered. I only know that the atrocities were real. The horrifying details of the millions of innocents exhumed under pretentious lies were real. Some escaped, some could not. Accounts of human beings turning into vicious monsters still are a reality none can escape. So even if Dr. Nyiszli did turn into a monster himself, we know that at least some parts of this book are true. And those parts are enough to shatter all my positive perceptions of human behavior in extreme calamities. We do not know and would never know what a man is capable of doing to other man.

Arnab Das says

To say that Auschwitz is an interesting read would be a gross understatement. Auschwitz is a historical document. A memoir. A brilliant commentary. And most importantly an insider's tale of the horrors that the captives of one of the most dreadful concentration camps in history underwent. As a result, an attempt to rate the book on its literary value is not only a useless exercise but also a disrespectful one.

Dr. Nyiszli's account portrays the terrible crimes and the injustice meted out to the Jews in the name of racial purification. The demented doctors, who he unequivocally calls criminals, the cruel and heartless SS soldiers, the helpless sonderkommandos, the crematoriums, the deaths, the cries for help, the sound of bullets ending lives all flash vividly in front of the reader. Reading this book does give the reader a glimpse, even though a small one, of a time when torture and killing en masse was commonplace. The accounts are so horrific, that for a person in the 21st century cribbing about internet freedom, it seems quite Orwellian. There is no doubt that the Holocaust was one of the darkest periods in history and Dr. Nyiszli reveals from his unique perspective the tale of a populace who had to suffer tragedies of unimaginable proportions to suit the whims and fancies of a delusional and troubled animal they once called the Fuhrer.

Maureen Casey says

This was a short and gripping read, and tells a story that must never be forgotten.

I am writing this review not to comment on the story itself, but in response to some of the criticisms I have read about the book.

Criticism #1: Dr Miklos Nyiszli was at Birkenau rather than Auschwitz, and there are several inconsistencies in the book between Auschwitz and Birkenau.

Response: Auschwitz and Birkenau were part of one larger complex collectively called Auschwitz. I believe that perhaps the colloquial references to the name of the camp heard while living there are just simply unclear to those of us who weren't there. I sometimes found the descriptions of the layout of the camp in the book confusing, but I believe they made sense with Dr. Nyiszli's recollection of Auschwitz-Birkenau when he was there.

Criticizm #2: The doctor's descriptions seem detached, therefore the book may have been written by someone else.

Response: Technically, the TRANSLATION was written by someone else. I think the phrase "lost in translation" may describe the feeling some readers have expressed.

My Criticism: I felt throughout the book that Dr Nyiszli probably was responsible for more of the medical "experiments" (atrocities) than he claimed responsibility for in the book, and pointedly left out details for what he was not proud of. Dr. Mengele was a really bad dude, and I don't think the author would have established the level of trust with Mengele that he did without being more menacing himself. That being said, whatever the doctor did certainly saved his life, and shocking readers with more details of gruesome medical experiments would have people shun the rest of the story. I don't think this book was published until several years after the doctor's death, and I would not be surprised if I found out that someone close to the author edited out gruesome parts of the manuscript before publication. If that happened, it may also explain some of the disconnectedness some readers felt about this book.

Overall, I think this was a VERY worthwhile read.

Amanda says

Despite the incredibly difficult subject matter, this book was a surprisingly fast read. Equally horrifying and compelling, both my roommate and I read it cover to cover within 24 hours. Nyiszli's story is remarkable, as a man who survived certain death by systematically aiding in the killing of his own people, bringing into question the true cost of survival. His narrative is invaluable, as it preserves a virtually clinical dictation of what truly transpired from within the ranks. This preservation undermines the Nazi aim of concealment, exposing every last inhumane and evil act committed by the regime and the author himself.

Marialyce says

I really felt that this was an important book to read. However, I just could not get over the lack of emotion I felt running through the story. I don't know if it was a defense mechanism against the horrors that this doctor saw, or if it was a somewhat hardened outlook on what transpired in the camp. I realize that one probably needed to develop a shell or cocoon around oneself in order to not go insane, but I wanted some emotion to bubble to the surface which unfortunately I did not find. I really hated rating a book such as this. Do you rate the writing style or do you rate the event was my dilemma? I guess I wanted the author to make me feel

something, but too often felt this was a clinical study and for that I was ever so sad.

The atrocities that were done somehow seem a work of fiction. One still can't wrap their arms around what man's inhumanity could and did do. I wanted to feel that emotion, feel that the author had tried to bring emotion to his writing, but no, I felt so deprived of feelings reading it. Sad, but true, I am ashamed to admit that although this book is surely relevant, I don't really think it has much effect on the readers' way of thinking and judging of an event that changed the face of this planet.

I think that even though this was a non fiction book, it read more like a work of fiction and for that I am particularly sad.

Petra says

How does one rate a book like this? It doesn't tell a story, it's a memoir and an account of witness. It's a telling that needs to be told but it's not a comfortable read. The people in this book, those who can't tell their stories, need to have their story told. But it's not easy (and it shouldn't be).

Five stars for the courage to tell the story. Five stars for remembering those who can't tell their story. The author tells his story in an unemotional way. As I read his account I began to understand that when one is surrounded by these atrocities and witnesses them, when one's own life hangs on a whim of another, that one would/could distance oneself from that immediate horror and emotion would slip into one's interior space. One would witness but perhaps not feel on the surface of one's being but somewhere deep inside instead, where it's hidden from view. It's a survival mechanism; a way to stay sane. Even after liberation, allowing one's emotions to the surface would be devastating to the battle of trying to live again in some "normal" way. The unemotional aspect of survival & guilt hits home about half way through this book. It's horrifying, really.

At times, there seem to be jumps in time and/or thought from one paragraph to another. It sometimes reads a bit disjointedly. Some things may be missing from the telling or perhaps the translation isn't the best. However, the details provided are enough to demonstrate the horrors and terror of living inside the crematorium, knowing that you can't be allowed to live because of what you've been forced to see and do. This story is horrific. I'm glad I read it. I'm glad that people such as Miklos Nyiszli had the courage to tell the story of those who can't do so.
