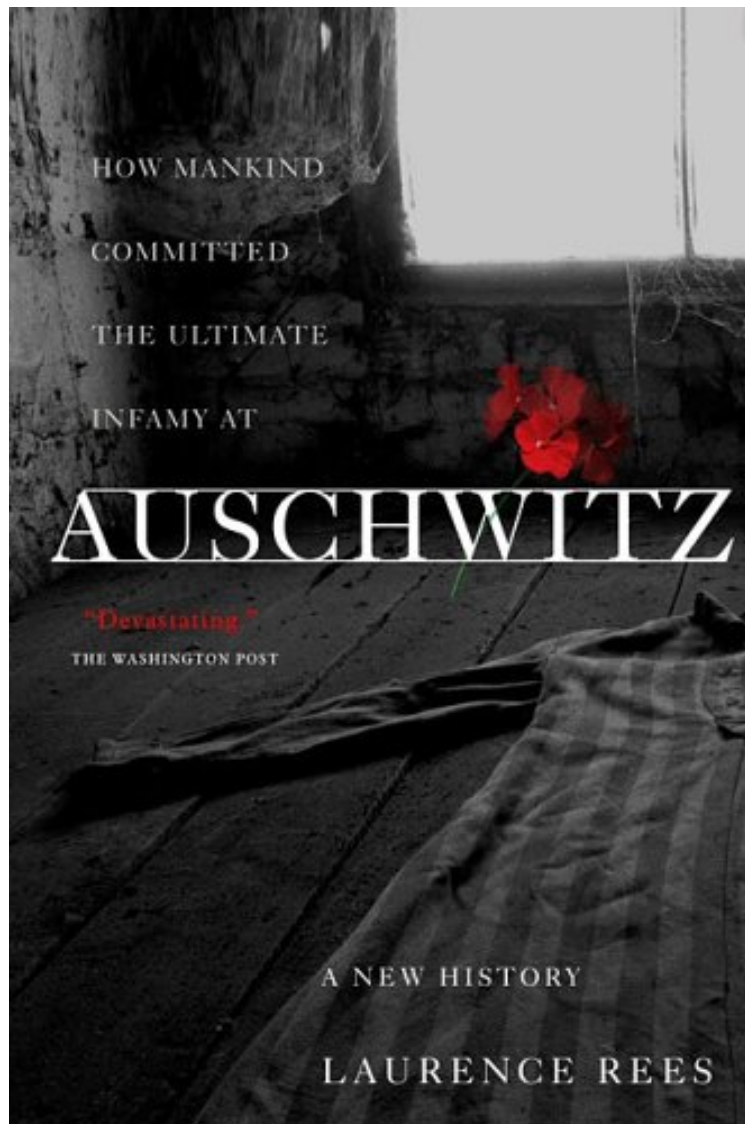


Auschwitz: A New History

Laurence Rees

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Laurence Rees : Auschwitz: A New History before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Auschwitz: A New History:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A painful but necessary readBy David O'LearyAs many can imagine, some of the things you read in this book change you in one way or another. Though I think everybody who would be looking into this topic has some idea of what occurred at the Nazi Death and Concentration Camps, nothing can really prepare you to look at the topic in such detail. It actually took me awhile to read this book, not necessarily

due to its length, but having to take a break a couple of times emotionally. The in depth examination of Germany's world renowned industrial efficiency being twisted and perverted to help bring about the destruction of an entire people is nothing short staggering. The stories of death, survival, resilience, and sometimes of outright luck have to be read a few times to really comprehend. One such story is of a woman who is guided to a room with the promise of warm clothing, only to be chased out of the room by a female guard after a long wait. She returns to her barracks feeling cheated; she showed up for new clothes and barely got her old ones back in the chaos of being chased out of the room. Later did she realize she had been standing in one of Auschwitz's gas chambers, about to be gassed. Only a prison uprising at that exact moment saved her life. Hundreds of thousands of people were murdered in the gas chambers, and somehow this woman managed to be one of a relative handful to leave the chambers alive. The author does a great job in differentiating the types of camps, something I haven't really seen done. Before reading this book, I thought the terms concentration camp and death camp were interchangeable when speaking about the Nazis, wherein reality the camps had two different functions, at least initially. The recounting of personal testimonies from former Nazis and camp survivors gives the book a guiding narrative that authentically and painfully recounts the appalling and horrifying things the victims were subjected to. A few times when reading about how the Nazis planned their Final Solution, it became painfully real how even in the planning stages, an entire people - men, women, children, families - were reduced to numbers as if they were spare machine parts or an industrial component to be collected, used if possible, then simply discarded without a thought. The scale of human destruction leaves the reader at a total loss; it is simply impossible to comprehend the level of devastation. In regards to the writing style, the book is written very well and as I said previously, is packed with personal testimonies and information. Sometimes the narrative jumps around in a way that can be difficult to follow. It seems like in one chapter the narrative will jump from 1942 to 1939 to 1933 to 1944. It just makes it hard to follow some times. Otherwise the book is well written, and should be read by anyone who wants to better understand the pure evil of the Nazis Final Solution.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Compelling and Disturbing, As One Would Expect By Dash Manchette Some things are hard to describe because they are both large in scope and extreme in condition. What can one say to truly convey them? Auschwitz is an example of this, and for all the wrong reasons. Large in scope because of the sheer numbers of people who were there for whatever period of time, and extreme in condition for the almost indescribable horror that existed there. Almost indescribable, but not quite. We should be very thankful that author Laurence Rees was up to the task of describing it. This book on Auschwitz, the most notorious of camps run by the Nazis, is a phenomenal piece of non-fiction about one of the worst places to have ever existed, and is as compellingly readable as it is informative. Rees places Auschwitz in context, describing step by step how it came to occupy such an important role in the Nazis quest to rid Europe of Jews. Although Rees makes so many good points that any review cannot even touch upon most of them, allow me to focus on two. The first, that although Nazis wanted Jews out of Europe, they did not initially intend to exterminate them. Relocation was the preferred method, which became untenable when the war with the Soviet Union went disastrously wrong. The space into which the Jews were to be relocated simply did not open up as planned, requiring more radical methods to reach the desired goal. Even then, when killing Jews became the goal, logistics got in the way. It just was not that easy killing large numbers of people, and even harder when a specific goal was to distance the Nazi killers themselves from their actions in order to lessen the psychological damage they suffered. Rees takes us through each innovation, often obtained through trial and error, which finally allowed the killings to take on such assembly-line efficiency, with Auschwitz playing an integral part of a much larger whole. Second, Rees points out the distinction, unknown to many in the general population, between a concentration camp and a death camp. The former were work camps, with very high fatality rates due to hunger, disease, cold and industrial accidents, but in which people were not summarily executed. Death camps, by contrast, were specifically constructed to exterminate large numbers of people. Auschwitz had the distinction of being the only camp that blended the two, producing one of the more horrifying aspects of the camp: the initial selection, either to work or, for most, to the chimney. How Auschwitz developed in such a way reflects much about the Nazi mindset towards Jews and other undesirables, which Rees reports in intense and captivating detail. Needless to say, the people behind the camp, from its commandant Rudolf Hoss to his superior, Heinrich Himmler, architect of the Holocaust are all given the limelight to some degree or another. To say the least, they do not look good under scrutiny. It is for that reason that scrutiny is needed, and again, Rees does the job well. In all, I strongly recommend this book.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The most accurate By Catherine Lewis This is the most accurate accounting of what happened during the Holocaust in a hellish German concentration/death camp I have ever read. The reason it is so accurate is that the author went to primary sources rather than secondary sources--he went to those who were there, not to those who merely wrote about it. Laurence Rees' book is a history book rather than a novel based on history. I would recommend this book as the definitive book on the Holocaust and Auschwitz. One word of advice: If you read historical fiction, check the history contained in the book. In my opinion, even in a work of fiction, when writing about an historical event such as the Holocaust, the history must be correct. Characters may be real or fictional; actions and interactions may be real or fictional; however, the actual history must be accurate. I am in the process of writing my own book on the Holocaust. Since it is in its infancy, I cannot predict when it will be completed and published, but I can give you

the title, "Grandfather's Legacy." Yes, the book is historical fiction and I am doing a LOT of research so my history will be accurate. The Holocaust is a very difficult story to tell. The book will not only contain my words, it will also contain my heart. This is one historical fact that MUST NEVER BE FORGOTTEN! Catherine Lewis, Writer/Editor

Auschwitz-Birkenau is the site of the largest mass murder in human history. Yet its story is not fully known. In *Auschwitz*, Laurence Rees reveals new insights from more than 100 original interviews with Auschwitz survivors and Nazi perpetrators who speak on the record for the first time. Their testimonies provide a portrait of the inner workings of the camp in unrivalled detail from the techniques of mass murder, to the politics and gossip mill that turned between guards and prisoners, to the on-camp brothel in which the lines between those guards and prisoners became surprisingly blurred. Rees examines the strategic decisions that led the Nazi leadership to prescribe Auschwitz as its primary site for the extinction of Europe's Jews their "Final Solution." He concludes that many of the horrors that were perpetrated in Auschwitz were driven not just by ideological inevitability but as a "practical" response to a war in the East that had begun to go wrong for Germany. A terrible immoral pragmatism characterizes many of the decisions that determined what happened at Auschwitz. Thus the story of the camp becomes a morality tale, too, in which evil is shown to proceed in a series of deft, almost noiseless incremental steps until it produces the overwhelming horror of the industrial scale slaughter that was inflicted in the gas chambers of Auschwitz.

From Publishers Weekly Starred . This pathbreaking work reveals the "destructive dynamism" of the Nazis' most notorious death camp. Rees, creative director of history programs for the BBC, consistently offers new insights, drawn from more than 100 interviews with survivors and Nazi perpetrators. He gives a vivid portrait of the behind-the-scenes workings of the camp: for instance, of how a sympathetic guard could mean the difference between life and death for inmates, and the opening of a brothel to satisfy the "needs" of sadistic camp guards. But this is more than an anecdotal account of Nazi brutality. Rees also examines, and takes a stand on, controversial issues: he argues, for instance, that bombing the camp's train tracks wouldn't have saved many Jews. Nor does he overlook stories of individual acts of kindness or the Danes' rescue of their Jewish community. Rees (*The Nazis: A Warning from History*) gives a complete history of the camp how it was turned over time from a concentration camp into a death factory where 10,000 people were killed in a single day. Indeed, his argument for incrementalism at Auschwitz mirrors his larger claim that the "Final Solution" came about in an ad hoc fashion, as top Nazi officials struggled for a way to implement their virulent anti-Semitism. Some scholars have made this argument, and others reject it, but the depth and wealth of detail Rees provides make this treatment highly compelling. 16 pages of bw photos not seen by PW. FYI: This book is the companion to a documentary that PBS will air in three two-hour segments, on January 19, January 26 and February 2. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist *Starred * Many books have been written about the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland, where the first prisoners arrived on June 14, 1940; the camp was liberated in January 1945. The camp was never conceived as a place to kill Jews, nor was it solely concerned with the Final Solution, although one million Jews were murdered there. Rees insists making a study of Auschwitz offers the chance to understand how human beings behaved in some of the most extreme conditions in history. He interviewed 100 former Nazi perpetrators and survivors from the camp and drew on hundreds of interviews conducted for his previous research on the Third Reich, many with former members of the Nazi Party. This book is the culmination of 15 years of writing books and producing television programs about the Nazis. Rees maintains that through their crimes, the Nazis brought into the world an awareness of what educated, technologically advanced human beings can do "as long as they possess a cold heart. Once allowed into the world, knowledge of what they did must not be unlearned. It lies there--ugly, inert, waiting to be rediscovered by each new generation." With a 16-page black-and-white photo insert, this is a significant contribution to our understanding of the intricacies of Nazi racial and ethnic policy that resulted in this ultimate abomination. George Cohen Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved "A path-breaking work...The depth and wealth of detail Rees provides make this treatment highly compelling." -- Publishers Weekly (starred review) "This admirable book deserves to be widely read." -- Ian Kershaw, author of *Hitler: 1889-1936 Hubris* and *Hitler: 1936-1945 Nemesis*