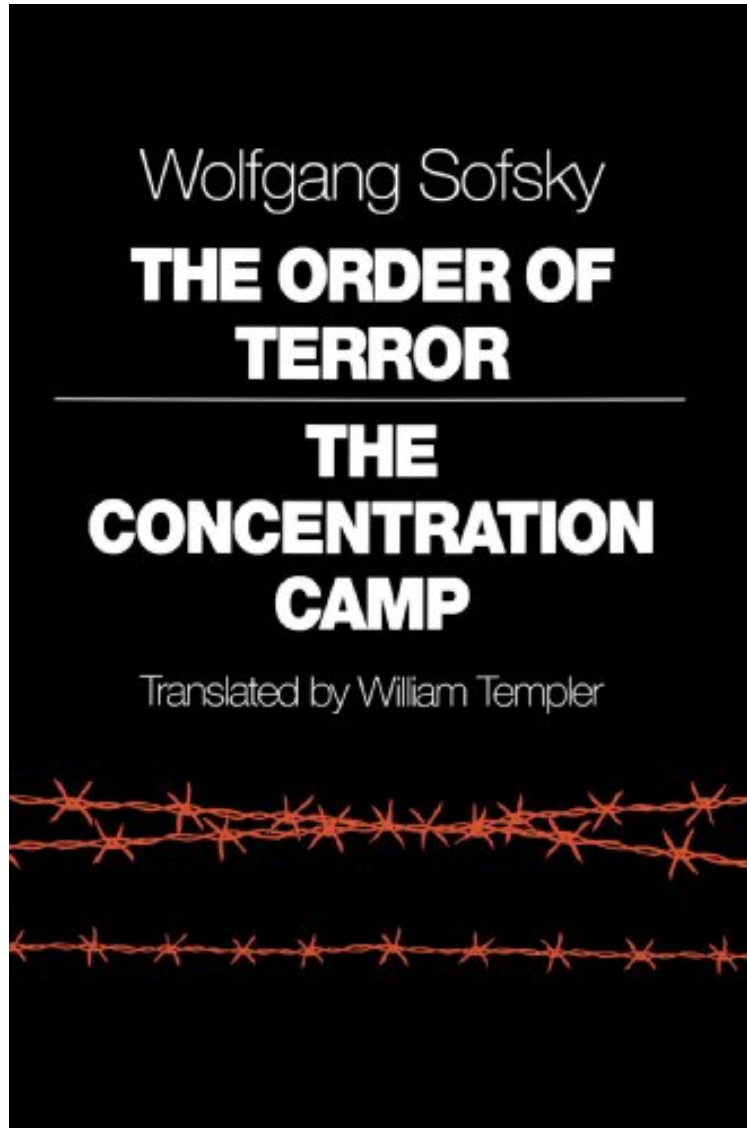


[Free] The Order of Terror

The Order of Terror

Wolfgang Sofsky

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Wolfgang Sofsky : The Order of Terror before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Order of Terror:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A Sociological Look at the Nazi Concentration Camps By Al Wolfgang Sofsky's book is not a work of history, but of sociology. The author is an Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Gottingen, and it shows. He has written a fascinating, very worthwhile look at how human existence in a concentration camp affects how we interact with one another socially. He has entire chapters devoted to space, time, social structures and work. He examines how each affects and is affected by the concentration

camp. He looks at how space and time were used in Dachau, Sachsenhausen, etc. For example, the higher your place in the camp hierarchy, the more space you had, such as in your living quarters. Also, the higher your social status in the camp, the more free time you had. Those at the bottom, the Jews, had no free time. He examines the existence of social structures within the camp, ie there was the SS at the top; then the kapos, the prisoners who were put in charge of other prisoners; the block leaders, and the average prisoners beneath them. At the bottom, treated the most inhumanely, were the Jews and the so-called Musselmen, prisoners who were so weak and sick that they were apathetic, unaware and physically almost dead. He shows that work was used in the German concentration camps, not for much productive purpose, but to hasten the death of the prisoners. One of the most important things in this book is Sofsky's look at selections. When people were brought to Auschwitz and other death camps, they were selected for either death or residence in the camp. Those most fit for work were registered and brought to live in the camp, everyone else was killed. He claims 25.9% of those transported to Auschwitz were admitted to the camp and the rest were killed. My only problem with Sofsky is that his source for that figure is other books and articles by the likes of D. Czech and Raul Hilberg. Sofsky fails to reference exact documents in that regard. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. If you do not understand why this was such a big deal, read this book. By Red Wolf Of everything I have read about the Concentration Camps, this is the first thing that really gave me a feel of total horror at how they operated and what it did to the people that experienced the camps in any role. I have never appreciated the concentration of evil nearly as well as I did reading this book. War has many horrors, but even the horrors of other wars pale before this measure of evil. If you have any thoughts that the internment of Americans in American internment camps was in any way comparable, read this and realize that there is no comparison. What we did was a national disgrace, but it was nowhere near this concentrated, distilled, carefully crafted evil. Well researched, and written by a German as a warning against complacency, lest time make memories of the horror fade. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Dense but Riveting By Tracy Cramer Austin, Texas This is a powerful book. It analyzes and explains the sociology of the Nazi concentration camp. I would, however, recommend reading it After reading other books about the camps in general, and survivor testimony in particular. It is not light reading, but, I found it gripping nonetheless.

During the twelve years from 1933 until 1945, the concentration camp operated as a terror society. In this pioneering book, the renowned German sociologist Wolfgang Sofsky looks at the concentration camp from the inside as a laboratory of cruelty and a system of absolute power built on extreme violence, starvation, "terror labor," and the business-like extermination of human beings. Based on historical documents and the reports of survivors, the book details how the resistance of prisoners was broken down. Arbitrary terror and routine violence destroyed personal identity and social solidarity, disrupted the very ideas of time and space, perverted human work into torture, and unleashed innumerable atrocities. As a result, daily life was reduced to a permanent struggle for survival, even as the meaning of self-preservation was extinguished. Sofsky takes us from the searing, unforgettable image of the Muselmann--Auschwitz jargon for the "walking dead"--to chronicles of epidemics, terror punishments, selections, and torture. The society of the camp was dominated by the S.S. and a system of graduated and forced collaboration which turned selected victims into accomplices of terror. Sofsky shows that the S.S. was not a rigid bureaucracy, but a system with ample room for autonomy. The S.S. demanded individual initiative of its members. Consequently, although they were not required to torment or murder prisoners, officers and guards often exploited their freedom to do so--in passing or on a whim, with cause, or without. The order of terror described by Sofsky culminated in the organized murder of millions of European Jews and Gypsies in the death-factories of Auschwitz and Treblinka. By the end of this book, Sofsky shows that the German concentration camp system cannot be seen as a temporary lapse into barbarism. Instead, it must be conceived as a product of modern civilization, where institutionalized, state-run human cruelty became possible with or without the mobilizing feelings of hatred.

From Publishers Weekly The Nazi concentration camps illustrate the Dostoevskian doctrine that where there is no God, everything is permitted. While the camps had many rules, there were no laws, and certainly no justice. In this lucidly translated volume, award-winning German sociologist Sofsky sets out to analyze the organization of dominance in the camps and concludes that they were places of "absolute power; not a means to an end, but an end in itself." Indifferently ruled by the SS, which delegated responsibility for the day-to-day running to prisoner-functionaries, the lagers were divided into classes, with German political prisoners at the top, and Jews, Poles, and Russians at the bottom. Whether beaten, worked to death or left to die of disease, their lives were worthless, and their pain meaningful only in the pleasure it provided to the torturers. They were nothing, so nothing done to them mattered. Sofsky emphasizes that the murderers, ordinary people who were suffused with a spirit of "camaraderie" and a faith that they wouldn't be punished, did more than was required. "They did what they were permitted to?and they were permitted to do everything." Despite Sofsky's vast and painstaking research, his admirable and horrifying book leaves the reader convinced that the Holocaust is not a subject for sociologists but for theologians. Illustrations not seen by PW. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal This work, a prize winner when published in

Germany in 1993, is derived from the author's postdoctoral thesis. In it Sofsky (sociology, Univ. of Gottingen) utilizes a wide range of both primary and secondary sources to analyze how concentration camps were used by Germany to maintain absolute power over its victims based on terror, organization, and excessive violence. He does not attempt to explain how or why the Holocaust happened and for the most part focuses on the concentration camps rather than the extermination centers. Rather, Sofsky patiently shows how virtually everything in the camps, from their physical layout to the use of time to the categorization of prisoners, was a way of exercising and consolidating absolute power over an increasingly dehumanized prisoner population. An important study; recommended for academic and large public libraries. ?John A. Drobnicki, York Coll. Lib., CUNY, Jamaica Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Sofsky, a German sociologist and professor, examines the structure and history of the Nazi concentration camps from 1933 to 1945, with much of his study devoted to the SS personnel that ran the camps. Based on historical documents and survivors' testimony, this account was first published in Germany in 1993, and subsequently published in France and Italy. Sofsky analyzes the camps as a distinctive system of absolute power, based on terror, organization, and excessive violence. "The concentration camp demolished the central concepts of civilization, the ideals of reason, progress, freedom, and understanding," Sofsky posits. "The ideal of an abiding society, which is covertly intrinsic to both everyday thought and sociological reasoning, has been shattered." This is a work of impeccable scholarship, a definitive history of what has come to epitomize the ultimate evil. George Cohen