



The Last Selection: A Child's Journey Through the Holocaust

Goldie Szachter Kalib, Sylvan Kalib, Ken Wachsberger

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This haunting memoir records the experiences of a young Jewish girl forced to confront the horrors of the Holocaust. Born on 1931 into a well-to-do family, Goldie Szachter Kalib begins her account with a rare portrait of Jewish life in a small Polish town in the 1930s. Although her memories reflect the perceptions of a child, her descriptions offer a wealth of information about Jewish education, politics, and religious practices outside the major urban centres of pre-World War II Poland. Her observations also shed new light on relations between Jews and Christians, making it clear that the expression of antisemitism in Poland was neither simple nor uniform. As her story unfolds, Szachter Kalib recounts in vivid detail the events that shattered the world of her youth, beginning with the Nazi invasion and occupation of her hometown, Bodzentyn. While other family members were sent to the labour camp at Starachowice, she was placed in hiding with a family of Polish Christians. Adopting the identity of a "niece from Krakow", Szachter stayed with Mme Zofia Surowjecka and her nephew Ben, a member of the Polish resistance, until the growing suspicions of neighbours forced her to leave. She lived briefly with two other Polish Christian families, but eventually rejoined her parents and siblings at Starachowice. Nine months later, in July 1944, she and her entire family were transported to Auschwitz. At Auschwitz, 13-year old Szachter and her mother were among some one hundred prisoners selected for extermination during the last days of the war. Those chosen were herded into a gas chamber, only to be ordered out again when the rapid advance of the Soviet army forced the Nazis to abandon the death camp. Szachter then endured the notorious "death march" to Bergen-Belsen, where she was later liberated by British forces. Goldie Szachter, her sisters Irka and Rachela, her Uncle Leib'l, and her cousin Rivtche Ehrlich survived. Her parents, two brothers, and twenty-four other members of her extended family perished in the Holocaust.

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