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Nikolaus Wachsmann

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#90996 in Books Nikolaus Wachsmann 2016-08-02 2016-08-02 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.27 x 1.58 x 5.551, .0 #File Name: 0374535922880 pages KL A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps | File size: 60.Mb

Nikolaus Wachsmann : KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps:

128 of 130 people found the following review helpful. A scholarly and groundbreaking work By Ashutosh S. Jogalekar This book is unlikely to be surpassed. It documents for the first time the complete and comprehensive history of the Nazi concentration and extermination camp system from 1933-1945. In the process it clears up some

misunderstood beliefs and showcases how the Nazi march toward the Holocaust was based on a continuum rather than an overnight momentous decision. Wachsmann demonstrates how the first concentration camps - ramshackle holding cells really - were set up in 1933 after Hitler came to power. The purpose of these camps was to intimidate and silence all kinds of opponents, from vagabonds and Communists to drunks and Jews. Targeting only Jews was not the purpose of these camps. The camps subsided for a few years after 1933 but were rekindled in the late 30s after Hitler, Himmler and others set their plan for a 'Master Order' based on race in effect. Jews, gypsies and homosexuals started to be specifically targeted after 1938, although even then until 1941 or so the main plan was intimidation, financial extortion and forced migration. It was only in 1942 that the plan turned toward extermination; the Wannsee conference was an important touchstone (although again not the most important or the only one). But even here, the methods for extermination were based on older ones. Killing by gas was a legacy of the horrific T-4 euthanasia program of the 30s. Wachsmann also reminds us that the Holocaust did not suddenly start with the gas chambers but was initiated by the SS Einsatzgruppen killing squads in the Ukraine and the Soviet Union. Also, the first casualties of many of the camps were not Jews but Soviet POWs. Another book that details this background very well is Richard Rhodes's "Masters of Death". The book also demolishes some myths. One myth of course is the belief that the Holocaust somehow sprang fully from someone's head or signature or from a single conference in 1942. As the book demonstrates, this is not true and the whole program grew out of an escalation of historical acts from the 1930s onwards, sometimes through accidents and fits and starts. The other myth the book addresses is of Auschwitz somehow being the most gruesome emblematic symbol of the Holocaust. As terrible as Auschwitz was, the book makes it clear that unlike Auschwitz, four other camps (Treblinka, Sobibor, Belzec and Chelmno) were dedicated exclusively to extermination. Auschwitz was also a labor camp; this fact was valuable because it allowed many survivors to escape and tell their stories. However an unintended side effect of their unforgettable testimony is the belief that Auschwitz stood for everything the Holocaust stood for. As the book documents in great detail, reality was more complicated. Wachsmann talks about all of this as well as the mind numbing bureaucracy that permeates even an unimaginable atrocity like the Holocaust at great length. Yet the prose in this 800 page volume is remarkably readable, partly because somehow Wachsmann still finds space to focus on individual personalities, from the infamous to the mundane. He never lets us forget that the Holocaust was perpetrated by many ordinary people, from high Nazi officials to lowly camp personnel and random citizens of occupied territories, and this remains perhaps the most disturbing fact of all. This is quite definitely the most panoramic, nuanced and authoritative view published until now, not just of the camps per se but of their historical evolution. Painful and gut-wrenching to read in many places, but a necessary and very valuable contribution even to the mountain of literature that exists about the Third Reich.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.
Exhaustively researched
By Susan B. It is an very in-depth treatment of German concentrations camps in Europe during WWII. The research is exhaustive. The organization of the book is clear, but since it is not chronological it is difficult at times to keep track of developments. You need to be interested in the topic. It is a fairly large book and requires a lot of concentration. However, at the end you will know all there is to know about the topic.

65 of 68 people found the following review helpful.
Excellent history of the Nazi concentration camps
By JEDCJTAs its title suggests, the book chronicles the formation, expansion, and entrenchment of the Nazi concentration camps (known as the Konzentrationslager, KL), from its haphazard beginnings in 1933 to its ignominious end in 1945. As Wachsmann reveals, the KL played a central, if not pivotal, role in the consolidation of the 'Thousand-Year Reich' following the Nazi seizure of power in 1933. From the beginning, a growing number of citizens found themselves incarcerated in the newly formed camps on virtue of their political orientation (mainly Communists) and their race, ethnicity, and religion (Jews, among others the Nazis deemed 'inferior') -- and these numbers would continue to expand from hundreds to tens of thousands, and more so during the Second World War. Interestingly, at least in the beginning, the KL was by no means guaranteed to become a permanent fixture of the Nazi regime; the legal judicial authorities increasingly lambasted the KL not least because they had the potential to tarnish Germany's international image. Were it not for Hitler's decisive intervention, the KL would have faded away sometimes in the mid- to late 1930s. This was not to happen, of course, and under the supervision of the ever-ambitious Himmler and other officials such as Theodor Eicke (who headed Dachau, the first concentration camp set up under the Nazis, and who would reorganize the KL system on a large scale), the KL would play an increasingly lethal role in the Nazi machine of repression. (According to the author, the lethality of the KL was such to an extent that its prisoners were more likely to perish there -- especially during the war -- than their Soviet counterparts in the Gulag). I found this to be a very fascinating, if distressing, subject, and I believe that readers will come away from this book with an increased understanding, if not appreciation, of a relatively little-explored topic in the history of Nazi Germany.

A Wall Street Journal Best Book of 2015
A Kirkus Reviews Best History Book of 2015
Finalist for the National Jewish Book Award in the Holocaust category
The first comprehensive history of the Nazi concentration camps
In a landmark work of history, Nikolaus Wachsmann offers an unprecedented, integrated account of the Nazi concentration camps from their inception in 1933 through their demise, seventy years ago, in the spring of 1945. The Third Reich has been studied in more depth than virtually any other period in history, and yet until now there has been no history of the

camp system that tells the full story of its broad development and the everyday experiences of its inhabitants, both perpetrators and victims, and all those living in what Primo Levi called "the gray zone." In *KL*, Wachsmann fills this glaring gap in our understanding. He not only synthesizes a new generation of scholarly work, much of it untranslated and unknown outside of Germany, but also presents startling revelations, based on many years of archival research, about the functioning and scope of the camp system. Examining, close-up, life and death inside the camps, and adopting a wider lens to show how the camp system was shaped by changing political, legal, social, economic, and military forces, Wachsmann produces a unified picture of the Nazi regime and its camps that we have never seen before. A boldly ambitious work of deep importance, *KL* is destined to be a classic in the history of the twentieth century.

[A] monumental study . . . a work of prodigious scholarship . . . with agonizing human texture and extraordinary detail . . . Wachsmann makes the unimaginable palpable. That is his great achievement. Roger Cohen, *The New York Times Book* [An] impressive and authoritative new study . . . [a] gripping, humane, and beautifully written narrative. Richard Evans, *The New York of Books* *KL* is a definitive history . . . Mr. Wachsmann's most impressive achievement in this synthetic work is his portraits of individual human beings. It takes hard effort to assemble enough sources on inmates or SS men to sustain them as characters in a book of this length. The prisoners had a range of references to describe their ordeals, from the Book of Exodus through Dante's *Inferno*. In the generations since, their experience has become one of our points of reference in moral discussions, and it is all the more gratifying to see the camp inmates portrayed here with unvarnished humanity. Mr. Wachsmann has in effect united the best of the German and the British schools of grand World War II history: hugely but humbly exhaustive research with attention to character and to detailed narrative. Timothy Snyder, *The Wall Street Journal* This is history writing of the highest order, and *KL* is surely one of the outstanding books written on the Third Reich in the past decade. Its author, Nikolaus Wachsmann, a professor of history at Birkbeck College, London, succeeds brilliantly in telling us much we did not know about what might seem like one of the most familiar phenomena of the Third Reich . . . What we have lacked all this time is a synoptic analysis of the development and character of the entire Nazi camp system. Now we have it and it will not need to be done again. In fact, anyone seriously interested in the Third Reich should read this book. Mark Mazower, *Financial Times* Magisterial Thomas Laqueur, London of Books [A] superb book . . . essential, profoundly sobering . . . It is difficult to imagine a more powerfully instructive telling of this painful story, and it will certainly be a long time before this masterly account is superseded. Janet Caplan, *The Times Literary Supplement* Deeply researched, groundbreaking history. Adam Kirsch, *The New Yorker* While Wachsmann holds himself to highest standards of scholarship, he is also a gifted author whose eye frequently falls on the telling or surprising detail, which makes *KL* not only an important work of history, but also, even at 865 pages in length, a rich and highly readable book, full of incident and irony. Jonathan Kirsch, *Jewish Journal* This book is a remarkable achievement. Nikolaus Wachsmann has written the first integrated history of Nazi concentration camps, unifying in a single narrative the policies and measures governing the inception and growth of the system, the context in which the monstrous *KL* developed and how each of its stages and facets was recorded and remembered by its victims. The study is essential for a further understanding of the Third Reich. Saul Friedlander, author of *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939-1945* (winner of the Pulitzer Prize) Nikolaus Wachsmann has written an admirable historical overview of the Nazi concentration camps, effectively combining decades of recent scholarship with his own original research. He captures both the trajectory of dynamic change through which the camp system evolved as well as the experiences and agency--however limited--of the prisoner community. This is an impressive and valuable book. Christopher R. Browning, author of *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* It is hard to imagine that Nikolaus Wachsmann's superb book, surely to become the standard work on Nazi concentration camps, will ever be surpassed. Based on a huge array of widely scattered sources, it is a gripping as well as comprehensive and authoritative study of this grim but highly important topic. Sir Ian Kershaw, author of *The End: The Defiance and Destruction of Hitler's Germany, 1944-1945* This is the fullest and most comprehensive history of the Nazi concentration camps in any language: a magnificent feat of research, full of arresting detail and cogent analysis, readable as well as authoritative: an extraordinary achievement that will immediately take its place as the standard work on the subject. Sir Richard J. Evans, author of *The Third Reich at War* [I]f a bookshelf has room for only one history of the Holocaust, this is a strong contender for that space. Stephanie Shapiro, *The Buffalo News* [A] comprehensive and ground-clearing work of research and a wrenching work of narrative. It's gruesome reading, but you're in masterful hands the entire time. Steve Donoghue, *Open Letters Monthly* Nikolaus Wachsmann... delivers a comprehensive history of an unendurable subject. ... [He] has absorbed an enormous amount of recent research on the *KL*. From this mountain of material he has crafted a fluent and gripping history. David Mikics, *Tablet Magazine* Wachsmann's meticulously detailed history is essential for many reasons, not the least of which is his careful documentation of Nazi Germany's descent from greater to even greater madness. To the persistent question, "How did it happen?," Wachsmann supplies voluminous answers. Earl Pike, *Cleveland Plain Dealer* Monumentally impressive . . . seems certain to become the definitive history of the Nazi concentration camps . . . his scholarship brings new life to

a familiar subject. Dominic Sandbrook, *Sunday Times* (UK) Profoundly important . . . exceptional . . . will surely become the standard work on the subject. Laurence Rees, *The Irish Mail on Sunday* A remarkable feat . . . readable, accessible . . . KL represents the acme of what the historical discipline can achieve. Dan Stone, *BBC History Magazine* [A] magnificent work of scholarship . . . every page of Nikolaus Wachsmann's magisterial account is suffused with humanity. David Cesarani, *Literary* (UK) Wachsmann's exhaustive study will be seen as the authoritative work on the subject. *Publishers Weekly*, starred review A harrowing, thorough study of the Nazi camps . . . A comprehensive, encyclopedic work that should be included in the collections of libraries, schools and other institutions. *Kirkus* s (starred review) About the Author Nikolaus Wachsmann is a professor of modern European history at Birkbeck College, University of London. He is the author of the prizewinning *Hitler's Prisons* and a coeditor of *Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany: The New Histories*.