

[Download free pdf] The Final Station: Umschlagplatz

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Jaroslav M. Rymkiewicz

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Jaroslav M. Rymkiewicz : The Final Station: Umschlagplatz before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Final Station: Umschlagplatz:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. the Final Station: UmschlagplatzBy George EppThis book came to me as a surprize. My wife is a librarian and she brought it to me "on spec". I've renewed it twice since. Rymkiewicz weaves here an extraordinary collage of thought and emotion, reason and passion as he leads us through the spectre that was the holocaust in Poland. The narrator is elusive, as if he were the collective mind of all those who lived through the terrible days of the Warsaw Ghetto, its precursors and its aftermath. There is guilt here for the massive consent -- if not cooperation -- with the NAZIs. There is sorrow over the helplessness of ordinary people run over, figuratively, by the tanks and uniforms of the totalitarian state. All is told in a style that defies description in conventional terms; time and substance swim back and forth, making this more a collage of humanity at its weakest and worst rather than a narrative of a single event. A good read, with amazing quotes.4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. a brilliant tour de force of both literary and moral merit.By LeucippeRymkiewicz's engagement with the past events of the Holocaust, as focused through his own forgotten childhood encounter with the liquidation of Jews in Poland, is a brilliant literary accomplishment and a work of high moral value. It is the first sustained treatment by a Pole of the tragedy that befell the Jews of Poland, whose absent presence haunts every page, and it does so through a complex and imaginative structure that draws on documentary sources and fictional recreation of a world the author could not know. The grudging Kirkus review, cited above, does not do justice to this bold and daring work. Read it for yourselves.2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating novel of Polish

perspective on Jewish Holocaust
By A Customer
The author was a child during the extermination of the Warsaw Ghetto, and describes the Polish wartime experience in relation to that of the Jews he saw being deported to extermination. Occasionally apologetic, sometimes confrontative about responsibility, I found the book to be very readable. Flashbacks/forwards are potentially confusing. Certainly a different slant from the typical Holocaust memoir.

A uniquely personal Polish account of the Holocaust. At once a meditation, journal, and a novel, this work includes a reconstruction of the minutest details of genocide and a fictional account of a group of Jewish and Christian friends meeting shortly before the war for a summer of frivolity.

From Publishers Weekly
In a moving if sometimes awkward blend of fiction, history, meditation and autobiography, a Polish Christian, poet, essayist and playwright ponders a central question: How did the collapse of moral responsibility permit so many gentile Poles to denounce, betray and murder Polish Jews? As a crucial corollary theme, he considers the issue of why God allowed the Holocaust to occur. Umschlagplatz, the square in the Warsaw ghetto that served as the debarkation point for Jews packed into trains destined for the Nazi death camps, haunts Rymkiewicz's searching, expertly translated narrative. He painstakingly reconstructs the square's topography, mining histories, diaries and survivors' accounts. The book's chief fictive element involves a group of Jewish and Christian friends who meet at the dilapidated summer resort of Otwock in 1937 to romance and to discuss the looming, though not fully recognized menace of Hitler. The author's account of the Germans' 1942 extermination of the Otwock Jewish community (in conjunction with their annihilation of the Warsaw ghetto) makes this a valuable addition to Holocaust literature. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.
From Library Journal
The author, a Christian Polish poet, essayist, playwright, and translator, is obsessed by his fellow Poles' treatment of Jews during World War II. At once a meditation, a journal, and a novel, this work agonizes over why the Poles blackmailed and denounced Jews, displaying a sense of collective guilt for the Polish people. The Umschlagplatz, the area of the Warsaw ghetto in which Jews were gathered for deportation to the death camps, is selected as the focus of Rymkiewicz's chronicle because events there happened right under the noses of Warsaw's Polish Christian community. The author cites many Jewish memoirs and accounts of the time, including those by Emanuel Ringelblum, Aron Kaplan, Adam Caerniakow, and Marek Edelman. A fictional passage depicting Jews and Christians at a summer resort before the war is particularly poignant. This well-researched account of the Poles' relationship to the Holocaust is recommended for most libraries. - Molly Abramowitz, Silver Spring, Md. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc.
From Kirkus
In the summer of 1942, the Nazis rounded up 300,000 Jews at the Umschlagplatz (Transfer Square) in Warsaw for deportation to death camps. Polish playwright, poet, and essayist Rymkiewicz reflects on the meaning, for "Polish spirituality," of the place where daily life and unimaginable horror collided in the heart of the city. Rymkiewicz writes with a gadfly brio that's thought-provoking and often original. The Umschlagplatz itself has disappeared, buried beneath the postwar city, but Rymkiewicz is an urban archaeologist, and he searches, 50 years after the fact, for traces of the old neighborhood, cataloguing the rare ghetto houses that still stand, scouring available memoirs for scanty, elusive detail. He ponders also the existence of God; the mystery of evil; the question of Jewish passivity (no worse, he points out, than German passivity when Soviet troops occupied their country in 1945 and shipped them to Siberia); the totalitarian state; the losing battle of memory against time. Family and friends contribute telling anecdotes of Poles who saved, others who betrayed Jews. The author himself meditates about Poles looting a small-town ghetto the day after mass deportations; and he meditates even more about happy, oblivious crowds at a nearby beach, himself--still a child-- included. Is there such a thing as an innocent bystander? Unfortunately, Rymkiewicz mixes vivid history with pallid fiction (scenes in an imaginary Jewish boardinghouse are exercises in borrowed pathos, derivative of Singer, Appelfeld and Kis). The author's coy humor, too, can make you squirm, and Jewish readers may dislike his description of the hellish Umschlagplatz as "an enormous outdoor synagogue," and his implied equation of Judaism and Holocaust. Yet in spite of all, Rymkiewicz's conscientious worrying of history is impressive. And his subject, genocide in Eastern Europe, is right up to date. -- Copyright 1993, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.