



From Day to Day: One Man's Diary of Survival in Nazi Concentration Camps

By Odd Nansen

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In 1942 Norwegian Odd Nansen was arrested by the Nazis, and he spent the remainder of World War II in concentration camps?Grini in Oslo, Veidal above the Arctic Circle, and Sachsenhausen in Germany. For three and a half years, Nansen kept a secret diary on tissue-paper-thin pages later smuggled out by various means, including inside the prisoners' hollowed-out breadboards.

Unlike writers of retrospective Holocaust memoirs, Nansen recorded the mundane and horrific details of camp life as they happened, "from day to day." With an unsparing eye, Nansen described the casual brutality and random terror that was the fate of a camp prisoner. His entries reveal his constantly frustrated hopes for an early end to the war, his longing for his wife and children, his horror at the especially barbaric treatment reserved for Jews, and his disgust at the anti-Semitism of some of his fellow Norwegians. Nansen often confronted his German jailors with unusual outspokenness and sometimes with a sense of humor and absurdity that was not appreciated by his captors.

After the Putnam's edition received rave reviews in 1949, the book fell into obscurity. In 1956, in response to a poll about the "most undeservedly neglected" book of the preceding quarter-century, Carl Sandburg singled out *From Day to Day*, calling it "an epic narrative," which took "its place among the great affirmations of the power of the human spirit to rise above terror, torture, and death." Indeed, Nansen witnessed all the horrors of the camps, yet still saw hope for the future. He sought reconciliation with the German people, even donating the proceeds of the German edition of his book to German refugee relief work. Nansen was following in the footsteps of his father, Fridtjof, an Arctic explorer and humanitarian who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1922 for his work on behalf of World War I refugees. (Fridtjof also created the "Nansen passport" for stateless persons.)

This new edition, the first in over sixty-five years, contains extensive annotations and new diary selections never before translated into English. Forty sketches of camp life and death by Nansen, an architect and talented draftsman, provide a sense of immediacy and acute observation matched by the diary entries. The preface is written by Thomas Buergenthal, who was "Tommy," the ten-year-old survivor of the Auschwitz Death March, whom Nansen met at Sachsenhausen

and saved using his extra food rations. Buergenthal, who later served as a judge on the International Court of Justice at The Hague, is a recipient of the 2015 Elie Wiesel Award from the US Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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Editorial Review

Review

"A long-forgotten masterpiece. In his secret diary, written inside the Nazi camps, the Norwegian prisoner Odd Nansen paints a deeply affecting picture of everyday terror, sketching the inmates' lives and deaths with exceptional clarity and compassion. Rarely has the inhumanity of the camps been captured with such humanity. An invaluable document for anyone interested in the Nazi camps."

Nikolaus Wachsmann, author of *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps*

"This extraordinary diary by a non-Jewish victim of the Nazi regime and its collaborators is a rich historical document. Nansen's stunning illustrations provide a pictorial narrative into the concentration camp world he endured. Superbly translated by Katherine John, his text renders his experience in clear, muscular prose. We see through his eyes and imagine what he describes. We follow him, day by day, as his diary traverses three and a half years—an eternity at that time—and moves with him from the Norwegian camp system, the Norwegian regime, and occupied Norway to his perspective on the German camp of Sachsenhausen, the Nazi regime in Germany, and the final disintegration of the Third Reich.

Timothy Boyce's introduction frames the diary beautifully, setting the diary years into the larger picture of Nansen's life with just the right balance between the private and the public. And his extensive editorial notes provide guideposts along the way."

Deborah Dwork, Rose Professor of Holocaust History, Director, Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, and author of *Flight from the Reich: Refugee Jews, 1933–1946*

"This is one of the most searing contemporaneous accounts of the Holocaust, but also one of the best written of the great documents of World War II. It is a profound indictment of evil, a daily diary of torment and torture, yet also somehow a deeply moving love letter. It should find a place on the bookshelf of every home, be taught in every school, made into a movie, and feted for what it says about man's capacity for humanity in the face of satanic loathsomeness. Mr. Nansen's decency and courage in the most vicious of circumstances shines through on every page; he personifies the civilization for which the Allies fought."

Andrew Roberts, author of *The Storm of War: A New History of the Second World War; Masters and Commanders: How Four Titans Won the War in the West, 1941–1945; and Napoleon: A Life*

From reviews of the 1949 edition: "From Day to Day is unlike any other record of personal war experience which has yet appeared. There have been plenty of other accounts of imprisonment and concentration camps but none by a man like Mr. Nansen. Writing with no thought of publication, merely to keep a record for his wife and to express his own boiling emotions, Mr. Nansen somehow created a remarkable book. Using stolen paper and stolen time, always in fear of being caught, he described each day's adventures with stark simplicity and intimate authority. His book, although immensely long, is a continuously engrossing narrative. It is filled with vivid, concrete details, sharp character sketches, unspeakable horrors."

Orville Prescott, *New York Times*

From reviews of the 1949 edition: "Most citizens, one hears, are fed up with books about the atrocities of the Nazi concentration camps. But this book is different from all the others this reviewer has read. True, it does not slur over the unspeakable barbarities. But it rises above them and reminds us in never-to-be-forgotten pages how noble and generous the human spirit can be in the face of terrible adversity."

William L. Shirer, *New York Herald-Tribune*

*From reviews of the 1949 edition: "The first two-thirds of *Day after Day* can only be compared with Dostoevsky's *House of the Dead*; but compared with the last third of Hr. Nansen's book, *The House of the Dead* reads like Jane Austen. . . . It is a masterpiece. . . . The number of men who have successfully exploited the unique character of the diary as an art-form can still be counted on the fingers of one hand."*

?Times Literary Supplement

About the Author

Odd Nansen, a Norwegian architect, organized relief efforts for Jews and other refugees beginning in 1936, and was imprisoned by the Nazis in a series of concentration camps. After the war, he remained active in humanitarian work until his death in 1973.

Timothy J. Boyce practiced law for thirty-five years, most recently as the managing partner of the Charlotte office of Dechert LLP, an international law firm.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Loretta Yoder:

Why don't make it to become your habit? Right now, try to prepare your time to do the important action, like looking for your favorite publication and reading a book. Beside you can solve your condition; you can add your knowledge by the book entitled *From Day to Day: One Man's Diary of Survival in Nazi Concentration Camps*. Try to face the book *From Day to Day: One Man's Diary of Survival in Nazi Concentration Camps* as your buddy. It means that it can to become your friend when you experience alone and beside regarding course make you smarter than ever before. Yeah, it is very fortunate for yourself. The book makes you more confidence because you can know anything by the book. So , let's make new experience and also knowledge with this book.

Rhonda Rudder:

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Lillian Trimmer:

People live in this new day time of lifestyle always try and and must have the spare time or they will get lots of stress from both daily life and work. So , if we ask do people have free time, we will say absolutely indeed. People is human not only a robot. Then we inquire again, what kind of activity are there when the

spare time coming to anyone of course your answer will probably unlimited right. Then do you ever try this one, reading books. It can be your alternative within spending your spare time, the particular book you have read is From Day to Day: One Man's Diary of Survival in Nazi Concentration Camps.

Curtis Waters:

Playing with family within a park, coming to see the coastal world or hanging out with close friends is thing that usually you have done when you have spare time, in that case why you don't try factor that really opposite from that. One particular activity that make you not sensation tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you are ride on and with addition associated with. Even you love From Day to Day: One Man's Diary of Survival in Nazi Concentration Camps, it is possible to enjoy both. It is very good combination right, you still want to miss it? What kind of hang-out type is it? Oh can happen its mind hangout people. What? Still don't get it, oh come on its known as reading friends.

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