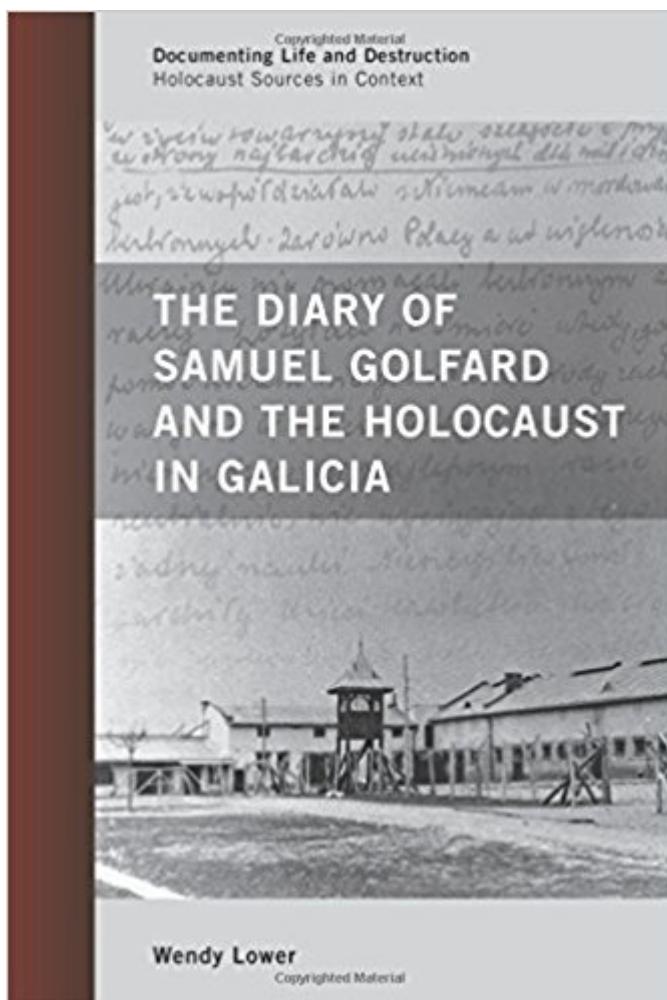


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The Diary Of Samuel Gelfand And The Holocaust In Galicia (Documenting Life And Destruction: Holocaust Sources In Context)



Synopsis

This in-depth study of a Jewish man's diary from Nazi-occupied Poland provides an unfiltered view of the struggles of Samuel Gofeld, who tried to make sense of and resist the Holocaust that ultimately destroyed him. The diary is complemented by an array of wartime and postwar photographs, newspaper articles, documents, and testimonies that create a fuller picture of Jewish resistance and the perpetration of mass murder in eastern Galicia.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This volume combines a powerfully emotional personal narrative with concise and cohesive historical analysis in a way that other source-based books do not. Moreover, it is of great use to both scholars and students. While specialists and historians will surely find Gofeld's testimony textually rich, multi-dimensional, and challenging, the educational value of this volume is substantial. The book is short enough for students to digest easily, and perhaps more important, the historical background and editorial comments make the text a stand-alone work containing all one needs to truly engage with Samuel Gofeld's diary. Lower has produced an accessible yet historically complex commentary on a very special testimony—one that scholars and educators alike will certainly want on their shelves. (Holocaust and Genocide Studies) Gofeld's diary is remarkable. It is searing, moving, emotional, yet also analytically sophisticated. The published diary will make a substantial contribution to several fields of study, including the history of Jewish responses during the Shoah, the perpetration of genocide, and Holocaust literature. Lower

has done a beautiful job of framing the diary entries so that the reader gains a broader perspective of the unfolding history. This book is a most welcome contribution to the existing body of published source materials, illuminating a lesser-known dimension of the Holocaust that is at the forefront of recent research being conducted in the field. (Alexandra Garbarini, Williams College)It is a miracle that this diary survived and has now become an invaluable source on the Holocaust in a small town in western Ukraine. It provides a glimpse into the state of mind of those destined for annihilation on the very eve of their destruction. The diarist is insightful and thoughtful. The introduction and commentary provided by Wendy Lower are nuanced and intelligent. One will learn a lot about the Holocaust from reading this book. (John Paul Himka, University of Alberta)

Wendy Lower is professor of history at Claremont McKenna College. She is the author of Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields, a National Book Award finalist.

This is the first and so far only diary that I have read by someone who lived in Przemyslany, Poland.

Editor Wendy Lower provides the background for the situation facing the Jews, Poles, and Ukrainians of Peremyshliany (Przemyslany) in eastern Galicia under the German occupation. She annotates the diary with helpful comments, and then describes the 1960's trials of some of the Nazi war criminals involved. While helpful, Wendy Lower's comments often distort Polish-Ukrainian and Polish-Jewish relations. As an example of the latter, she quotes Jan T. Gross on Jedwabne as gospel truth. In actuality, and contrary to media reports, the investigative IPN Commission did not "prove Gross right" on Jedwabne. Please click on the IPN Proceedings volume, *A Wok Af I Jedwabnego*, and read the detailed English-language Peczkis review. GOLFARD'S DIARY Unlike some Jewish diarists, Samuel Golfard did not survive the Holocaust. He was, for a time, protected by a Pole, who later also helped bring Golfard's diary to light. The Germans killed Golfard in a labor camp, in June or July 1943, after he allegedly obtained a firearm and shot at a German. Golfard's diary itself runs from January through April 1943. Here are some points: JEWS AND POLES: UNEQUAL VICTIMS, YET... In contrast to the modern practice of treating the victimhood of Jews and Poles as qualitatively different, Golfard does not. Of course, he internalizes the obvious differences between Nazi policies against Poles and Jews. Even so, he writes that, (quote) I am constantly writing about the martyrdom of the Jews. But I know that not only we are suffering. In the camps, the flower of the Polish nation is perishing. Millions of Poles in Germany do the work of hard labor convicts. Tens of thousands have perished in camps. Suffering hunger and disease, the whole

nation gives itself with blood for the "contribution"...Moreover, they [the Jews] bear a grudge against the Poles for not being fellow sufferers in misery and brothers in misfortune. They forget that the Polish nation is defenseless. Reports arrived from the province of Lublin about the murder of [Polish] peasants who refused to be resettled. There are more gloomy and bloody reports from the Zamosc area. (unquote). (pp. 63-64).

GERMAN-IMPOSED DEATH PENALTY WAS DECISIVEUnlike neo-Stalinists today, such as Jan T. Gross, who belittle the German-imposed death penalty for the slightest aid to Jews, Gofard does not. He comments, (quote) The thing of greatest consequence is that there is general passivity dictated by weakness. No one can save his neighbor. Everyone's life is threatened. And if in a moment of great danger someone is in a position to save the life of someone else, he cannot do so while being in ghastly fear for his own life. (unquote). (p. 64).

As for allegation that some Poles were grateful to the Germans for making Poland JUDENREIN, Gofard quips, "I believe there are few such people". (p. 64). In addition, he compares accounts of Poles, who were utterly indifferent to the sufferings of Jews, with Jews who were utterly indifferent to the sufferings of other Jews, giving several examples of the latter. (pp. 64-65).

NO DIALECTICGofard rejects the dialectic of Jews as victims and Ukrainians [and Poles] as victimizers, and alludes to the de-moralization caused by Nazi policies. He comments, (quote) They can be found in each nation, even among the Jews, who in the past were famous for being repulsed by bloodshed. While in camp, I saw human beasts among Jewish group leaders

[GRUPENFUHRERZY], the Ukrainian militia, and the German Gestapomen. It is they who are guilty of letting loose man's most primitive animal instincts as the war made human life worthless and all morality a museum relic. (unquote). (pp. 82-83).

ACQUISITIVENESS OF JEWISH PROPERTYRecently, Jan T. Gross has portrayed Poles as "greedy and anti-Semitic" for wanting to acquire Jewish property. In contrast, Gofard realizes that the Germans were the primary Jewish-property-seekers, and he even juxtaposes the conduct of certain Jews and Germans in this regard. He comments, (quote) With this "action" the Jewish militia participated actively for the first time, breaking into hiding places, seizing children, young people, women, and old men in the streets. For thousands of zloty and for dollars they saved certain people. In this respect, they were not better or worse than many Germans, who for a bottle of vodka or a can of sardines spared one's life. They [Jewish militia] were just somewhat cheaper. (unquote). (p. 55).

BITTERNESS OF SOUL? POLES VINDICATEDTowards the end of his diary, Gofard appears to lash out at everybody for their conduct during the Holocaust: the Germans, the Ukrainians (and, to a lesser extent, Poles), his fellow Jews, the Catholic Church, Britain and the USA, etc. In the end, however, he praises his Polish benefactor, Jankiewicz, and ends with a positive note about Poles, (quote) Among the Polish

people there has always existed an immeasurable wealth of kindheartedness, which has been purposely stifled. These Poles [who have helped me] have restored my faith in the Polish people, and let it be to their credit. (unquote). (p. 95).

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