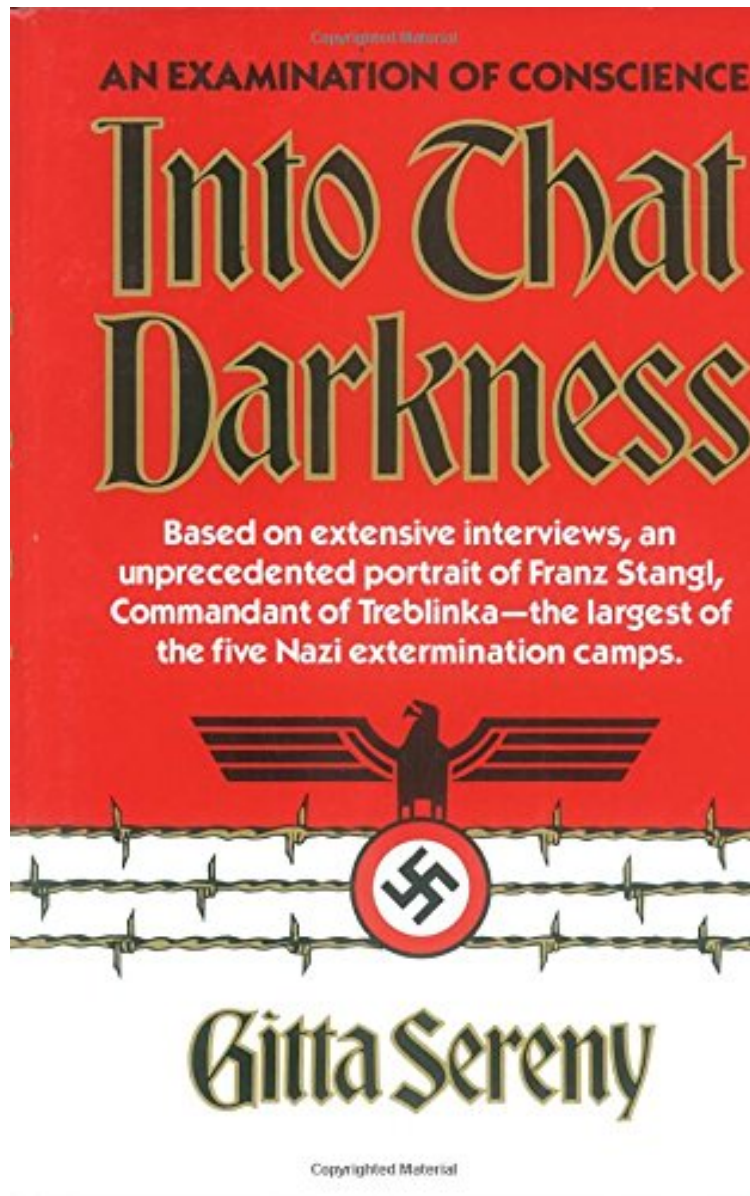


Into That Darkness: An Examination of Conscience

Gitta Sereny

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Gitta Sereny : Into That Darkness: An Examination of Conscience before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Into That Darkness: An Examination of Conscience:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Interview with Franz Stangl, Treblinka and Sobibór Commandant. By Husker005 Sereny's journey into the madness that was the Nazi murder machine centers on her

interviews with Franz Stangl, a commandant of Sobibór and Treblinka extermination camps. Sereny interviewed Stangl in the Düsseldorf prison where he lived in relative comfort and ease after his capture in Brazil, repatriation to Germany and sentencing as a war criminal. Stangl's tale takes the reader on a journey of this mass murderer who participated in the Nazi euthanasia horrors and was rewarded for his work by appointment as the first commandant to the Sobibór and subsequently to the Treblinka extermination camps. Stangl is portrayed as a man comfortable with his actions. A man who denied having any personal feelings about those whose slaughter he oversaw. A man without remorse. Sereny doesn't take the reader into the details of the camps. Sobibór is almost a footnote and paints a rather incomplete picture of Treblinka's horrors. Though detailing the operations of the camps isn't her purpose, its absence of detail somewhat undermines the reader's ability to process Stangl's role in mass murder, unless the reader is versed in how these murder machines operated. A strength of her work is that she doesn't lead the reader to judge Stangl through her eyes as she studiously avoids interjecting herself between Stangl's words and the reader. However, she takes to task the Pope and leaders in the Roman Catholic church for their role in aiding and abetting the Nazi killing rampages beginning with the euthanasia program through the church's support assisting the butchers' efforts to flee justice. This is an important work.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. well researched, well written

By Al

This book is great. Gitta Sereny interviewed many, many people in researching it, including, of course, Franz Stangl, his wife, her sister, one of his daughters, and several former SS-men involved in the Treblinka extermination camp, one of the most important being Franz Suchomel, who was interviewed by Claude Lanzmann in Shoah. Other former SS-men she interviews were Otto Horn and Gustav Munzberger. She really did her homework. She also interviewed former inmates of Treblinka, such as Samuel Rajzman, Berek Rojzman, and Richard Glazar, who's written a book about his experiences. The result is a very well-rounded, very credible and extremely accessible, well-written account of Franz Stangl's life, career, and activities at Hartheim, where he took part in the Third Reich's euthanasia program, T4, Sobibor, and Treblinka. The euthanasia link is important because most of the people involved in it were transferred to Sobibor and Treblinka when T4 was wound down. The skills they acquired were put to new and bigger uses. Sereny gives a gripping and interesting account of Stangl's escape to Brazil and interviews Vatican officials who were involved in helping Nazis escape to South America. She also investigates how much Pope Pius XII knew about the Holocaust and when. An interesting note is that Stangl lived openly in Brazil under his real name and his wife was registered at the Austrian consulate there under her real name.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Not a psychopath

By gbmillion

This book succeeds in making a good point: the perpetrator of one of the worst mass murders in history, Franz Stangl, commandant of Treblinka, was not the psychopathic monster that stereotype would have him be. On the contrary, he was a diligent, loving father of three sucked into an evil system and lacking the heroic courage required to resist. The author describes the development of the Holocaust from euthanasia to ethnic cleansing. We learn that the same people who started up and operated the euthanasia program were sent to Poland to apply their skills on a larger scale. A substantial amount of the book concerns the role of the Vatican in condoning euthanasia and turning a blind eye to mass murder. This is a bit of a tangent to the main theme and became tedious. It would have been sufficient to describe how the church assisted Stangl's escape without dwelling on the wider issue. Overall the book is engaging and the personalities of Stangl and his wife are well developed.

Based on 70 hours of interviews with Franz Stangl, commandant of Treblinka (the largest of the five Nazi extermination camps), this book bares the soul of a man who continually found ways to rationalize his role in Hitler's final solution.

From the Inside Flap

Based on 70 hours of interviews with Franz Stangl, commandant of Treblinka (the largest of the extermination camps), this book bares the soul of a man who continually found ways to rationalize his role in Hitler's final solution.

From the Back Cover

The scene is Treblinka; the character is Franz Stangl. The theme is the mass extermination of men, women and children. As Commandant of Treblinka, Stangl was imprisoned for life. Gitta Sereny covered the trial on behalf of a London newspaper. Fascinated by the prisoner, she decided to make an effort to get to know him better, to delineate him more deeply.

About the Author

Gitta Sereny was one of Europe's foremost journalists with a special interest and expertise in the Third Reich. She has written extensively for London's Daily Telegraph magazine, Sunday Times, and The Independent, as well as for Die Zeit and Le Nouvel Observateur. In America, she has written for The New York Times Magazine, The New York Review of Books, and Vanity Fair. Her books include Into Darkness: An Examination of Conscience, The Invisible Children, and Albert Speer: His Battle with Truth. She had two children and two grandchildren and lived with her husband, the photographer Don Honeyman, in London. She died June 14, 2012.