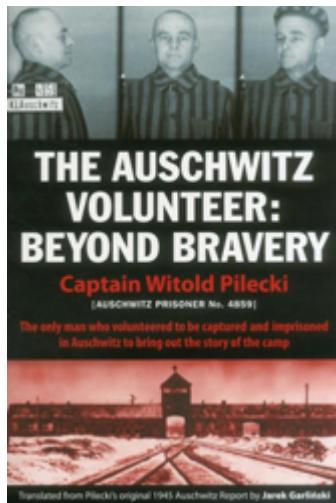


The Auschwitz Volunteer: Beyond Bravery

Captain Witold Pilecki; Jarek Garlinski, trans.



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Review by Marcia Weiss Posner

Having attended Wagner's Ring Cycle this previous winter helps me realize that in every generation heroes and heroines walk among us. These are the rescuers who endanger themselves and family, and most assuredly, ruin their careers, in doing the noble thing. Among them walked a man named Captain Witold Pilecki. *The Auschwitz Volunteer* is a translation of Pilacki's account of his almost three years in Auschwitz, suppressed by the postwar Polish communist regime for nearly fifty years, published in English for the first time.

A Polish army officer in the Resistance, Pilecki walked into a Nazi German street round-up and, using an assumed name, became Auschwitz prisoner number 4859. He was on a secret mission for the Polish government to send out intelligence about this new German concentration camp and to build a Resistance Organization among the prisoners.

In the beginning, the camp was used for the Polish intelligentsia and high-ranking Poles; and at first, he reported that prisoners were being released for various reasons. Soon after, prisoners were goaded to run and then shot randomly like animals pursued in the hunt. The type of prisoners changed from ethnic Poles to Jews and the camp became the ghetto. He witnessed the crematoria being built and the last step was its destination as a killing camp and a camp for Russian soldiers. He was lucky not to be killed but claimed that although he could have died from illness, *death* was just a matter of chance. As he organized the Poles, and remained in the camp a longer time, his longevity permitted him to be part of a work group that was allowed to work outside the camp and that is how he finally planned his escape. In the meantime, he had accomplished what he set out to do: organized a Resistance and reported on daily life inside the camp. Ultimately, he met his death as a spy on behalf of Poland. Appendices; black and white photos, illustrations, and maps; glossary; selected highlights of the report.

Book Trailer: <http://bit.ly/AuschwitzVolunteerBookTrailer>