ForeWord Reviews

GENERAL

Tell Me Another Morning: An Autobiographical Novel
Zdena Berger
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There was nothing extraordinary about that day in 1939, until Tania saw the waves of green uniforms and columns of tanks that rolled into Prague. It was before the yellow stars that had to be sewn onto clothing or the green tickets that signaled deportation to a labor camp, before her family was liquidated.

When the Nazi German army occupied Czechoslovakia and took over its capital city, there were about 50,000 Jews living in Prague. While most were killed or went into exile, *Tell Me Another Morning* follows Tania Andresova, a fourteen-year-old girl, who survives concentration camps, forced marches, labor camps, and Typhus to return to the city of her birth.

Tania's story emerges from a mosaic of small details. This girl/woman, forced to grow up quickly under extraordinary circumstances, scratches and feels her way through the nightmare of long captivity. By concentrating on pieces of the scene, the sketchy details of human experience, Zdena Berger builds a novel that allows readers into hell without scorching them with the horror that we know from the history books.

Berger knows the reality all too well. She is a survivor of the concentration camps at Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, as well as a labor camp in Hamburg. Born in Prague, she now lives in the United States with her husband. This book was originally published in 1961 and is being re-released.

The novel is an immediate and moving history of women's lives under Nazi control. Three friends from the same neighborhood stick together, pushing and pulling each other through the camps, despite the omnipresent threat of instant death. The minutiae of life, like the taste of a sugar cube, the feel of cool water on swollen feet, the heat of a fire, and the taste of an apple, help to describe the struggle to stay alive through systematic dehumanization:

> *Eva makes three lines on the apple with her nail; with her finger and thumb measures the distance between the lines. The apple*

> *divided, she hands the knife back to Ilse. They bite into the apple at the same time. Eva eats slowly, rolling it in her mouth. Ilse makes sounds deep down in her throat. I still hold my piece of apple, the skin red, shining. No flaw, no mark on it. I carry it to my mouth, the smell of forgotten times near my face. I bite into it: the sound like no other sound.*

Now, in an era where there are fewer and fewer survivors to tell their story, Berger's autobiographical novel is an important testament to both the brutality of Nazi fascism and the tenacity of the human spirit to overcome.

Deirdre Sinnott