



This Has Happened: An Italian Family in Auschwitz

Piera Sonnino , Ann Goldstein (Translation)

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Five years after her return home from Auschwitz, Piera Sonnino found the courage to tell the story of the extermination of her parents, three brothers, and two sisters by the Nazis. Discovered one year ago in Italy and never before published in English, this poignant and extraordinarily well-written account is strikingly accurate in bringing to life the methodical and relentless erosion of the freedoms and human dignity of the Italian Jews, from Mussolini's racial laws of 1938 to the institutionalized horror of Auschwitz. Through Sonnino's words, memory has the power to disarm these unspeakable evils.

This Has Happened: An Italian Family in Auschwitz Details

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Brandi Carrier says

The authors purpose for this book was to give her history and what she experienced throughout the holocaust growing up. The theme of this book is about an Italian family in Auschwitz concentration camp. Piera Sonnino and her family attempted to hide from the Germans for as long as possible, staying in many different huts and apartments, but unfortunately something happened where the Nazis found Piera and her family and transferred them to Auschwitz. The style of this novel was non-fiction. The writers opinion of the book was clearly displaying how hard of a time it was not just for her, but for all of her loved ones.

Everything they went through, was just absolutely devastating.

This book really opens the readers eyes not just to all of the history throughout the holocaust, but also through the perspective of Piera, who was a victim. Being able to visualize what it was like for her to get transferred to Auschwitz, lose all her family, and become ill herself, really puts things into perspective. Everyone complains of things they do not have now a days, when back then, the victims of the holocaust just wanted some water after four days of nothing to eat or drink.

In my opinion, this book was pretty good, although the first couple chapters were a bit hard to get through because of all of the dates and history of her life she is displaying. Besides that, I would recommend it to anyone who is wanting to learn more about the holocaust and be able to visualize things through a victims perspective.

Violet wells says

Italy is my adopted country and it sometimes pains me that it was allied to the Nazis - usually this happens when the subject of the war is raised and the discomfort of my Italian friends becomes palpable. It's a legacy they still live with. On the other hand all of us from countries that weren't allied to the Nazis can discuss the subject without any troubling ancestral guilt. We can count ourselves lucky in England that we were never occupied by the Nazis and so never found out how much latent hatred existed in our country for the Jews. But we did gratuitously bomb to dust the beautiful city of Dresden; the Americans dropped two atomic bombs on Japan; it was the Vichy government and not the Nazis that introduced the race laws in France and the right wing French press who first stirred up anti-Semitic hatred; there are horrible stories about how Poles treated Jews and we all now know what a monster Stalin was. Arguably the worst thing the Italians did in the war was drop mustard gas on Eritrea. Yet no one's ashamed of that. It's barely mentioned. Italians are ashamed of adopting Hitler's race laws and therefore assisting in the Holocaust. I'm not sure if anyone has ever done a comparative study of how these race laws were greeted by the populaces of various occupied countries. There's a lot of evidence that in Italy they were met without any enthusiasm, without the bullying war whooping they received in other European countries. No evidence Jewish shops were attacked or Jewish individuals in any way abused. I know 85% of the Jews in Italy survived the war. And this was largely because of the help they received from the Italian populace, strangers who often barely had the means to support themselves and risked death by assisting Jews. A greater percentage survived in Italy than in France and a much larger percentage than in most of the other occupied countries. I can't help feeling this should be a source of pride to Italians; that they should no longer have to squirm when the war is mentioned.

Sometimes government policy is completely out of touch with public feeling.

Piera Sonnino was arrested with her entire family – mother, father, three brothers and two sisters. They were all taken to Auschwitz. Her mother, father and eldest brother were all gassed immediately. Piera and her two sisters were transported to various work camps. Only Piera survived. Piera narrates her story with heartbreaking eloquence.

Francesca Pasini Danzin says

I gave 5 stars because I find incredible that Piera could write this book in such an impeccable style and with no grammar mistakes. I cried while she described her sister death. These events really happened. How could she survive that? How could she survive the rest of her life with these atrocities in her past? I think about her and I truly believe she lived hell on earth. She is my hero because she had the courage to continue her life, create a family and her on with her existence

Danielle Delahunty says

As I understand it, the woman who wrote this did so not long after the events happened, but she wrote it for her family's use and knowledge. According to the afterward, they found this manuscript and published it AS IS because it had no grammatical or spelling errors, which is amazing.

So this story was not written for selling to a larger public, or persuading a larger audience, and that makes it completely intriguing even though the story, though horrific, may not be as unique or noteworthy as similar stories.

The issue here for the reader is that this story was not sold to move anyone in any particular way, and the fact that it is flawless, well told and STILL completely compelling is possibly more of a testament to how important oral history is for the purposes of learning. Please do not misunderstand me, I am NOT saying that any stories of survivors are for profit, I am saying they fall prey to a book editor and a publicist like any other writer.

I could be wrong, but this family was more affluent, more resourceful and had more time to plan out the emergency. They suffered no less, of course, in the end, but one amazing thing to me is that the father crumbled, the women were stronger, and there was less interest in describing how they handled Judaism in the midst of despair, which is the usual fare in these stories.

This author uses the story of a human being treated like garbage to get the theme across of how the Germans made the Jews feel. I mean literally, a human in this book is tossed onto a garbage pile and left there for her sister to see rot every day. So for the interesting slant of it being a raw story with not much forethought, this book is a good one to add to a repertoire of Jewish stories of Woe from WWII.

Cloie Kim says

This has happened: an Italian family in Auschwitz-Piera Sonnino

5/5 read from October-November by cloie kim

this has happened is a book about a family in Nazi period Italy. it is a really nice book, i liked it a lot. what i like about it is that it's from the account of a survivor. it also is quite ironic. how that Hitler made most people believe that he was doing the right thing. now most people associate Hitler with the devil. the irony of it is amusing in a morbid sense. i think that this is a book for people who love the morbid and triumph tales all mixed in one, i know i do. it also has the historic element in it, while holding the pretense of fantasy. it's also sorta funny. how that Hitler tried to get everyone around to his way of thinking and yet today they still hate him. in all, if you like history, morbid literature, with a ironic sense to it, with an ending of triumph, all with a feel of another world. then books like these are the one for you. it is also sad, though as all the holocaust writings are. but it just is incredible, how they survived. it questions all sense and reason and logic in a simple phrase. this has happened, this is what happens when you discriminate. this has happened and we need to be aware of the consequences our actions bring. this has happened, it would not have had we just thought. all in all, it's a good book and you should read it.

Erin Woodall says

This woman wrote her story so matter of fact. All of the things her family went through, the possibility of survival, and she can see as an adult how things could have been.

Autumn Paul says

In the book "This Has Happened", the author clearly states her purpose. Piera Sonnino, talks about her extravagant history of what happened to her and her family during the holocaust. Sonnino's purpose of this book was to tell her true story about how her family got taken away by the Nazis. Sonnino is trying to share this sad story and touch many hearts around her when they read this non fiction story of her life during the years of 1941 to 1945. Sonnino wants to tell the horrors of what happened by the Nazis during the holocaust and share true facts of the terrible and excessive pain they caused to many Jewish family's.

The theme of the story "This Has Happened", is the unspeakable and frightful measures the Nazis took to extinguish the Jewish family's. Like the quote " Sonnino and her family leave Genoa and begin the year of hiding and fight that will end after they are denounced and captured." This quote shares the relationship that is connected to the holocaust. Sonnino and her family have to "hide" to hope that they might not get captured and put into concentration camps, and maybe even murdered. Her and her families profligate attempts to escape the Nazis and be free of all of it all ends in a bad excessive triumph.

The style of Sonnino's writing is written in narrative form. Sonnino's story tells of her past history and events. Sonnino's story tells of the true events that include the history of the holocaust. During her life she tells of the story about her family and how they got taken away and put into concentration camps. Sonnino tells of how her family eventually all get murdered by the terror of the Nazis. The story This has happened, goes along with how the history of her life happens through a change of radicle events.

My opinion is that the book went well with the holocaust and the distressful things that happened to a large quantity the Jewish people. When Sonnino shares the story of her life and her families that must have taken

lots of courage to write the stressful and upsetting events that accrued. All in all I liked the book but there was a few things I didn't like. I didn't like how the first part of the book was kind of boring and talked a lot about historic events. The first part of the book I kind of lost interest a little. As the book went on it got more interesting and fascinating to learn about her life during the holocaust.

Hannah says

What if? What if? As the sole survivor of the Holocaust of her family of eight, Piera Sonnino wrestles with this question. Written as a personal family record a few years after the events, Sonnino tells a straightforward account of her family hiding from the Nazis and ultimately being betrayed and deported to their deaths.

She recalls the opportunities to escape destruction that her family missed. She must reconcile what has happened and know it was not her fault.

Sonnino records with honesty the details she recalls until what happens "has no reference in the human language." It is a nightmare without hope of waking. She allows her readers to see into her mind: hopes, fears, confusion, resignation, and regret.

At last, the final night her family is alive and together, she writes, "whatever I could say of that time, it wouldn't make sense translated into words; it would be a thin shadow of that reality. I would be stealing it from myself, from what is mine, desperately mine alone."

In the midst of the horror, Sonnino writes of the many Italians who risked their own lives to help the Sonnino family or refused to expose them, even for a reward. When a German woman gives the imprisoned sisters tea and bread to help one sister recover from sickness, Sonnino writes, "But we experienced also the other side of Germany, the real one, the one not corrupted by Hitlerism." I am greatly encouraged by Sonnino's ability to differentiate between Nazis and Germans.

Reading about the Holocaust is hard. I am sickened by the unspeakable horrors people like Piera Sonnino have endured. Yet I am compelled to read, to remember, and to honor the memory of those who suffered.

Suzanne says

I quite liked this book. Of course it tells the story of a family who was taken from their home to the concentration camps and of the survival of one member of the family. What I especially enjoyed was the epilogues explaining the significance of the Italian people in hiding Jews and that this country had the lowest amount of Jews taken to the camps. This was beautifully written from Piera's point of view.

Maurizio Manco says

"Soltanto due generazioni libere tra il ghetto di Roma e la notte di Auschwitz. Una breve parentesi. L'ondata è tornata a rinchiudersi su di noi." (p. 73)

Videoclimber(AKA)MTsLilSis says

I loved the writing! Knowing that this woman wrote this to be passed onto her family made it even more interesting. She says over and over how she cannot find the words to describe what happened, or that she cannot bring herself to see what happened. It is amazing that she was able to escape with her life! It is also amazing that she was able to recover the pictures of her family. I found her story especially heart wrenching. To have lost her whole family in such horrific circumstances, and to still realize that her ancestors Must know what had happened to them all, she was not afraid to share this with her family. I believe the story benefits from not being proof read. Her story is here to read just as it was written. The writing for me, made it one of my favorite accounts of the Holocaust. A lovely, touching, tribute to her family, and the ongoing will to survive. Highly Recommended!!

Elizabeth says

The book I read was called this has happened by: Piera Sonnino. The author's purpose for writing this book was to tell her and her families journey of hiding from the Nazis because her family was Jewish and the holocaust was going on. She also informed readers what she and her family had to go through in concentration camps and how she survived them.

The theme of this book is even when you want to give up on tough things just keep pushing and something positive will happen.

The style of this book is narration. The book is narration because this book tells a story written in first person about how the Sonnino family went into hiding and got sent to concentration camps and all the struggles they faced.

My opinion of this book is this book is a very good and informing book of what a young girl and her family had to do in order to avoid the Nazis and what they had to do in the concentration camps. I liked how the author just wrote what she had remembered and but the story through her eyes and gave the reader a piece of mind what they went through during World War 2 and what she did when she got out of the concentration camps. There was nothing that I disliked about this book. This book is not similar to any other books that I have read in the past.

Meaghan says

This is a slim memoir, enhanced by a forward and epilogue written by scholars which explain the historical context. The author, Piera Sonnino, wrote it for the benefit of her daughters and never intended it for publication. One of her children had it translated and published years after her death.

It is a fairly typical Holocaust memoir, distinguished mainly by three things: the Italian family that is the subject (not many stories about Italian Holocaust victims out there), the author's dignified, refined genteel tone, and the fact that, unlike in many such books, a lot of information is provided as to what happened to Piera after liberation. I would recommend as a solid addition to Holocaust collections.

Petra says

Absolutely heartbreaking on many levels.

The story of the Sonnoni family is tragic and not only because of their treatment in Auschwitz and other camps. This family was unprepared in so many ways, so disconnected from what was happening in the world around them, that they missed many opportunities to maybe, just maybe, suffer less heartbreak and death.

Ultimately, the Sonnoni's were betrayed for money. This led to their demise. Yet, as said by Giacomo Papi, a journalist who wrote the epilogue in the book, "...those characteristics of modesty, dignity and shame that kept her family from putting up even the most tenuous resistance....can be transformed into resignation, into silence and immobility". This is the saddest and biggest heartbreak of this story: that things could, just maybe, even possibly, have turned out differently.

So many things were left out: how did Anna survive? Why did the sisters enter their home, knowing the family was arrested? Why did the family not run to Switzerland? Why....oh, so many things throughout this book.

The Sonnini's suffered as no family should suffer and their story needed to be told.

Camille McCarthy says

A very short but moving account a woman wrote of her experience of the Holocaust for her daughters. It was published after her death because her daughters felt that her story had a lot to add to the understanding of that experience. The prologue, epilogue and afterword of this book were all very good and were great companions to the actual story. After reading this book I admire the Italians even more for being able to go around the anti-Semitic laws as much as they did and for their bravery in hiding Jews to the best of their ability. Obviously not everyone did this but from the percentage of Jews that were never captured it seems like almost everyone was protecting them.

I thought it was very well-written and moving. Piera is honest and straightforward in writing what happened to her and her family, but she makes her emotions clear. It seemed like the family was caught in a whirlwind of danger and when they were swept up in it finally it was not long before most of them were eliminated, which also shows the desperation of the Nazis to demolish the Jews towards the end of the war; they were captured only a few months before the end of the war and yet of a family of eight only one remained, and she was only barely alive when she was liberated.
