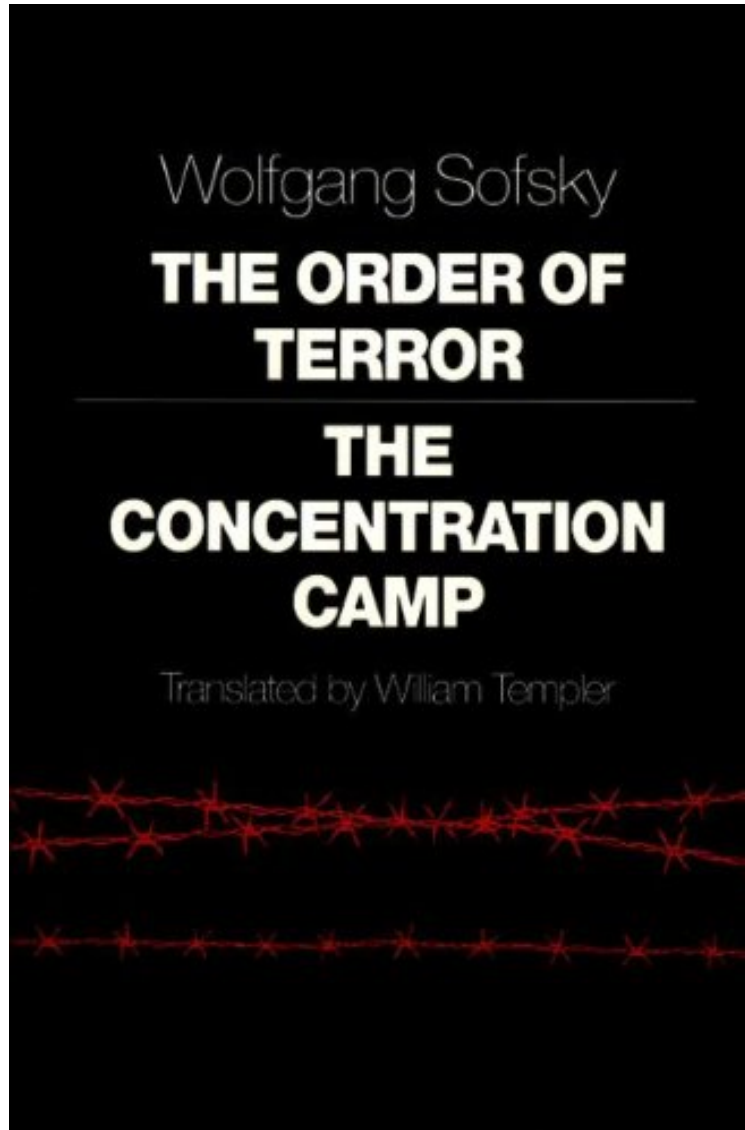


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The Order of Terror: The Concentration Camp

Von Wolfgang Sofsky

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Kurzbeschreibung During the twelve years from 1933 until 1945, the concentration camp operated as a terror society. In this pioneering book, the renowned German sociologist Wolfgang Sofsky looks at the concentration camp from the inside as a laboratory of cruelty and a system of absolute power built on extreme violence, starvation, "terror labor," and the business-like extermination of human beings. Based on historical documents and the reports of survivors, the book details how the resistance of prisoners was broken down. Arbitrary terror and routine violence destroyed personal identity and social solidarity, disrupted the very ideas of time and space, perverted human work into torture, and unleashed innumerable atrocities. As a result, daily life was reduced to a permanent struggle for survival, even as the meaning of self-preservation was extinguished. Sofsky takes us from the searing, unforgettable image of the Muselmann--Auschwitz jargon for the "walking dead"--to chronicles of epidemics, terror punishments, selections, and torture. The society of the camp was dominated by the S.S. and a system of graduated and forced collaboration which turned selected victims into accomplices of terror. Sofsky shows that the S.S. was not a rigid bureaucracy, but a system with ample room for autonomy. The S.S. demanded individual initiative of its members. Consequently, although they were not required to torment or murder prisoners, officers and guards often exploited their freedom to do so--in passing or on a whim, with cause, or without. The order of terror described by Sofsky culminated in the organized murder of millions of European Jews and Gypsies in the death-factories of Auschwitz and Treblinka. By the end of this book, Sofsky shows that the German concentration camp system cannot be seen as a temporary lapse into barbarism. Instead, it must be conceived as a product of modern civilization, where institutionalized, state-run human cruelty became possible with or without the mobilizing feelings of hatred.

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