

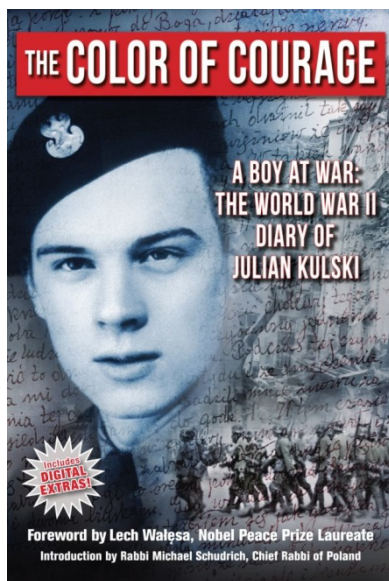
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Books in Brief: Fall 2014

Posted by CR on November 16, 2014 at 9:30 am



The Color of Courage: A Boy at War: The World War II Diary of Julian Kulski

Aquila Polonica; Los Angeles, 2014

There is an entire world that separates war while it is raging around you, and war that is analyzed years or decades later while looking through orderly archives and sitting at one's computer.

Why would a boy of 10 want to be a soldier? Why would adults let him?

Ask the boys – and girls – who joined the resistance in German-occupied Poland and they will tell you: We didn't ask anyone for permission. Julian Kulski, a charming and successful Washington-based architect was one such boy.

Kulski grew up in Żoliborz, a leafy district in Warsaw that was home to professionals and intellectuals, idealistic people who had fought for Poland's independence and inculcated the virtues of patriotism and honor in their children. When the war broke out, Julian's father was second in command to the President of Warsaw, i.e., the mayor of the city, Stefan Starzynski. When the Germans occupied the country, after Poland's defeat in October 1939, Starzynski was executed, and Julian's father put in place as the figurehead president, with no power. However, he used that position for the benefit of the Polish resistance, and was arrested by the Gestapo many times.

As a boy, Julian witnessed the German takeover and saw everything he ever knew as liberty taken away. It was not just the material destruction of the city, but the calculated destruction of society, the debasement of the people, that made a huge impression on him. That he, his friends, and all Poles, were condemned to live without an education, were dispossessed, their educational, cultural, and historical institutions destroyed, his family and friends arrested or killed, these are the experiences that put an end to childhood. It was a very young human being who joined the resistance, but he was no longer a boy. War is not just a killer but also a thief; it steals all your possessions, including your childhood.

What follows is Julian's meticulous record of events as he lived them, the constant danger, the loss of friends, the daily terror. Ultimately, it led to the uprising of 1944, a tragedy on a colossal scale that took the lives of 20,000 insurgents and 200,000 civilians, and ended in the almost total destruction of Poland's beloved and lovely capital city.

In the aftermath, young Julian ended up the youngest prisoner in a POW camp and finally in a hospital in England where he was treated for PTSD. His doctors suggested he write about his experiences, as therapy; For Julian it was like reliving the nightmare, but it had to be done. This book is the dramatic, heartrending result.

Published by Aquila Polonica with their usual high production values, The Color of Courage includes dozens of wartime maps and photographs, plus a list of digital extras, archival wartime films, that you can access either on your smartphone or by entering the URL as indicated with each entry. Some of footage provided with these links has rarely, if ever, been available to the public. Highly recommended for history buffs.

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