



Nine Suitcases: A Memoir

By Béla Zsolt

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Suppressed by the Communists for nearly forty years and never before published in English, *Nine Suitcases* is one of the first—and greatest—memoirs of the Holocaust ever written. Originally published in Hungary in weekly installments starting in 1946, it tells the harrowing story of Béla Zsolt's experiences in the ghetto and as a forced laborer in the Ukraine. It gives not only a rare insight into Hungarian fascism, but also a shocking exposure to the cruelty, indifference, selfishness, cowardice and betrayal of which human beings—the victims no less than the perpetrators—are capable in extreme circumstances.

Apart from being one of the earliest writers on the Holocaust, Zsolt is also one of the most powerful. He bears comparison with Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel, or Imre Kertész. Both an accomplished novelist and a highly skilled journalist, he was reporting and analyzing these appalling events soon after they occurred with exceptional clarity and a devastating blend of angry despair and cool detachment.

Zsolt was spared Auschwitz, but he witnessed and suffered some of the worst atrocities of the Holocaust elsewhere; his nightmarish but meticulously realistic chronicle of smaller and larger crimes against humanity is as riveting as it is horrifying. The rediscovery and publication of *Nine Suitcases* is an event of great historical importance.

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