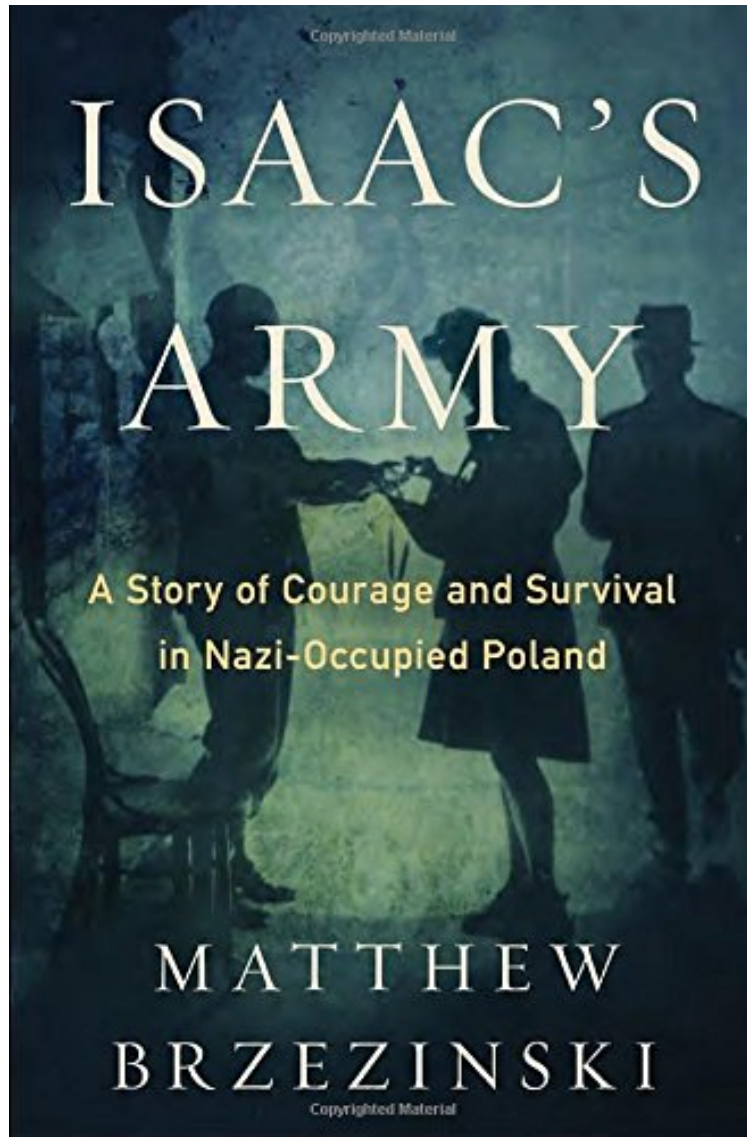


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Isaac's Army: A Story of Courage and Survival in Nazi-Occupied Poland

Matthew Brzezinski

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Matthew Brzezinski : Isaac's Army: A Story of Courage and Survival in Nazi-Occupied Poland before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Isaac's Army: A Story of Courage and Survival in Nazi-Occupied Poland:

18 of 18 people found the following review helpful. A pageturner: an oft told story told in a new and meaningful

wayBy Stuart M. WilderThere are many books on the atrocities that occurred in Warsaw during World War II. This book, by a non-Jew, nicely ties together accounts and stories about not only the sufferings and courage of Jews in the Ghetto, but also the heroism, sacrifice, and perfidy of their Polish neighbors. The stories of the Jewish resistance fighters are riveting, but I have read very little about the righteous gentiles who helped hide them and arm them-- that to me was the new view offered by this book. Matthew Brzezinski also tells the story in a way that left me wondering from nearly the beginning whether I would have had the courage to leave my family and fight, or if I was Polish, to help Jews knowing discovery of such aid would mean death for me and maybe my family. The book ends with an interesting comment on that which I will leave for anyone fortunate enough to read it. It is an engaging read, and I can't recommend it enough.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Well-Told History of Unsurpassed Tragedy and HeroismBy Inside the Beltway ReaderIn cinematic detail, Isaac's Army brings to life the period of death, destruction, survival and resistance that was wartime Warsaw under the Nazi occupation. In telling this history, Matthew Brzezinski masterfully weaves together the stories of half a dozen Jews, four of whom played key roles in the organized resistance. These stories might well have been lost had the author not been able to track down and interview those still living a decade ago with first-hand knowledge and intact memory of these events. The oral histories the book is based on alone make a major contribution to Holocaust studies. But the narrative goes well beyond transcriptions of witness testimonies recollected decades after the events. Equal parts tragedy and heroism to an unfathomable extent, it is as thrilling to read as was (in my faded recollection) Hersey's fictional account of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in *The Wall* or any of the WWII spy/resistance novels by Allen Furst, who provided his own laudatory review of this book ("told with care and compassion ... riveting account ... an intense story that transcends the horror of the time and finds real inspiration in the history of those who fought back ...").4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. gripping and well-writtenBy K. HuggsI agree with all the earlier reviewers of this powerful book. I have always been interested in Jewish resistance to the Nazis and this adds immeasurably to my understanding. A fair amount has been written about the rebellions at the Treblinka and Sobibor death camps but there hasn't been much about the Jewish rebellion in Warsaw, besides Leon Uris' highly romanticized novel.I also agree with the criticisms about the lack of maps. I am not on the Vine and the only map is inside the covers, where it's split by the binding and very hard to read. Due to the destruction, it may be hard to determine just where certain streets were but there must be some pre-war maps out there somewhere. The author went to so much trouble to find and interview survivors and I wish he had continued on and found some maps, and maybe pre-war photos.In any case, if you are at all interested, get this book, preferably at a time when you don't have too many demands on your time.

Starting as early as 1939, disparate Jewish underground movements coalesced around the shared goal of liberating Poland from Nazi occupation. For the next six years, separately and in concert, they waged a heroic war of resistance against Hitler's war machine that culminated in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. In *Isaac's Army*, Matthew Brzezinski delivers the first-ever comprehensive narrative account of that struggle, following a group of dedicated young Jews some barely out of their teens whose individual acts of defiance helped rewrite the ending of World War II. Based on first-person accounts from diaries, interviews, and surviving relatives, *Isaac's Army* chronicles the extraordinary triumphs and devastating setbacks that befell the Jewish underground from its earliest acts of defiance in 1939 to the exodus to Palestine in 1946. This is the remarkable true story of the Jewish resistance from the perspective of those who led it: Isaac Zuckerman, the confident and charismatic twenty-four-year-old founder of the Jewish Fighting Organization; Simha Ratheiser, Isaac's fifteen-year-old bodyguard, whose boyish good looks and seeming immunity to danger made him an ideal courier; and Zivia Lubetkin, the warrior queen of the underground who, upon hearing the first intimations of the Holocaust, declared: We are going to defend ourselves. Joined by allies on the left and right, they survived Gestapo torture chambers, smuggled arms, ran covert printing presses, opened illegal schools, robbed banks, executed collaborators, and fought in the two largest rebellions of the war. Hunted by the Germans and bedeviled by the Greasers roving bands of blackmailers who routinely turned in resistance fighters for profit the movement was chronically short on firepower but long on ingenuity. Its members hatched plots in dank basements, never more than a door knock away from summary execution, and slogged through fetid sewers to escape the burning Ghetto to the forests surrounding the city. And after the initial uprising was ruthlessly put down by the SS, they gambled everything on a bold plan for a citywide revolt of both Jews and Gentiles that could end only in victory or total destruction. The money they raised helped thousands hide when the Ghetto was liquidated. The documents they forged offered lifelines to families desperate to escape the horror of the Holocaust. And when the war was over, they helped found the state of Israel. A story of secret alliances, internal rivalries, and undying commitment to a cause, *Isaac's Army* is history at its most heart-wrenching. Driven by an unforgettable cast of characters, it's a true-life tale with the pulse of a great novel, and a celebration of the indomitable spirit of resistance. Advance praise for *Isaac's Army* Told with care and compassion, Matthew Brzezinski's *Isaac's Army* is a riveting account of the Jewish resistance in wartime Poland. This is an intense story that transcends the horror of the time and finds real inspiration in the bravery of those who fought back some of whom lived to tell their stories. Highly recommended. Alan Furst, author of *Mission to Paris*

From Booklist Much has been made of supposed Jewish passivity in the face of escalating Nazi terror. This ignores the thousands of Jews who fought the Nazis as members of various broader resistance groups across occupied Europe. But in Poland, the locus of genocide, Jews created their own resistance group. Brzezinski, a gentile of Polish ancestry with a Jewish wife and children, tells the story of these heroic men and women in an unvarnished, often grim, but inspiring chronicle. At the center of the narrative is Isaac Zuckerman, who with his blond hair and powerful physique could have been mistaken for an Aryan poster boy. Only 24 when Hitler invaded Poland, Zuckerman was both a Polish patriot and a dedicated Zionist. As head of the Jewish Fighting Organization, he led a mostly young group of Jews as they smuggled others to safety, gathered arms, plotted attacks, and eventually helped create the nation of Israel. This is not a tale of romantic glory. To survive, these fighters had to be ruthless and sometimes brutal, since torture and execution were guaranteed if they were caught. Still, this is an outstanding tribute to these men and women who chose to resist a monstrous tyranny. --Jay Freeman

Isaacs Army unfolds like a novel, with a thrillers feel for pacing and intrigue, and generous supplies of gasping suspense. The characters are vividly rendered within a surreal environment that makes *The Hunger Games* look like survivor Little League. *The Washington Post* Their stories of resistance gathered in meticulous detail give *Isaacs Army* texture and context that is especially compelling as the last of the Holocaust generation passes away. . . . As a prodigious reporter and skilled writer, Brzezinski's account gives greater depth and insight to their saga of ingenuity and luck, as he does throughout for the stories of those whose courageous choice was to resist. *The Atlantic* [An] admirable study of the Jewish resistance movement in Warsaw . . . compellingly [conveys] Poland's wartime agony and the ordeals of those caught between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. *The Wall Street Journal* Told with care and compassion, Matthew Brzezinski's *Isaacs Army* is a riveting account of the Jewish resistance in wartime Poland. This is an intense story that transcends the horror of the time and finds real inspiration in the bravery of those who fought back some of whom lived to tell their stories. Highly recommended. Alan Furst, author of *Mission to Paris* In every chapter and on every page, *Isaacs Army* vindicates the adage that truth is stranger and more harrowing than fiction. Matthew Brzezinski's often painful, always riveting account of Jewish resistance in German-occupied Poland is unsparing in its details and epic in scope, offering the kind of sweeping narrative that this subject has long deserved. Andrew Nagorski, author of *Hitlerland: American Eyewitnesses to the Nazi Rise to Power* In *Isaacs Army*, Brzezinski brings us a sweeping, finely researched history of a band of Jewish heroes battling to drive the Nazis from their city and save their people. The stir to rebellion, the labyrinth of intrigue, the courageous long struggle, and the freedom found in the fight itself these are but parts of this tremendous tale. Neal Bascomb, author of *Hunting Eichmann and The Perfect Mile* About the Author After working for *The New York Times* in Warsaw in the early 1990s, Matthew Brzezinski served as Moscow correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal*. Following the September 11th attacks, he covered homeland security as a contributing writer for *The New York Times Magazine*. He is also the author of *Casino Moscow*, *Fortress America*, and *Red Moon Rising*. He lives in Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts.