



by Uwe von Seltsmann

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Non-Fiction

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Living Death *Todleben*

review

Uwe von Seltsmann's grandfather was a member of the SS who participated in the destruction of the Warsaw ghetto. His wife's grandfather died on the way to Auschwitz in 1944. Did their paths ever cross? Von Seltsmann's account of the research which he and his wife conducted into their families' pasts gives a uniquely personal take on a period of history that is of perennial interest to Englishspeaking readers.

The story begins in 2006 when von Seltsmann meets a Polish artist called Gabriela in a cafe in the old Jewish quarter of Krakow. On their first meeting, they discuss their grandparents' vastly divergent experiences during the Second World War. The couple fall in love and marry, despite initial objections from her family. Together they delve into their families' histories. They travel all over Europe in search of long-lost relatives, including survivors of the atrocities committed by the Nazi and then the Soviet state, from remote areas in Eastern Ukraine to Spain. While many are happy to share their life stories, they also meet with opposition from those who would rather that the past be forgotten.

This is a deeply moving, skilfully narrated book, which conveys the complex reality of Europe today.

press quotes

'Uwe von Seltmann's book presents an accomplished portrayal of the pain felt by the next generation. The book's voice is warm-hearted and full of extraordinary empathy, and its easy language makes it accessible to the reader.' – *Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten*

about the author

Uwe von Seltmann was born in 1964. He studied theology and first worked as a correspondent in Vienna, Berlin and Dresden, before serving as editor-in-chief for several Protestant weekly newspapers for seven years. Since 2008, he has mostly been living in Krakow, Poland, as a freelance writer and editor.

Previous works include:

Karsten Krampitz / Uwe von Seltmann (ed.): *Leben mit und ohne Gott* (2010)

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