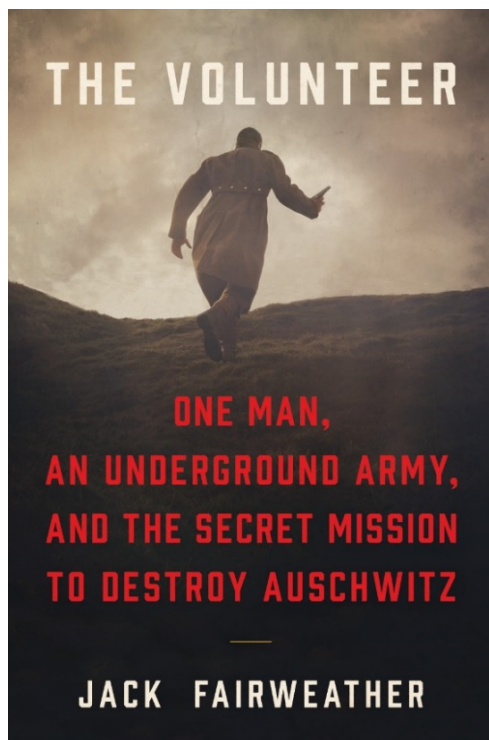




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**“Fairweather shines a powerful spotlight on a courageous man and his impressive accomplishments in the face of unspeakable evil. An inspiring story beautifully told.” –Kirkus, Starred Review**



## **THE VOLUNTEER**

**One Man, An Underground  
Army, and the Secret Mission to  
Destroy Auschwitz  
by Jack Fairweather  
To be published June 25, 2019**

**Featuring maps, drawings, and more  
than 200 original photographs from the  
1930s and 40s that detail the  
breathtaking journey of Witold Pilecki.**

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“Superbly written and breathtakingly researched, *The Volunteer* smuggles us into Auschwitz and shows us—as if watching a movie—the story of a Polish agent who infiltrated the infamous camp, organized a rebellion, and then snuck back out. Fairweather has dug up a story of incalculable value and delivered it to us in the most compelling prose I have read in a long time.” — **Sebastian Junger**, bestselling author of *The Perfect Storm* and *Tribe*

“Such an amazing story it would be impossible to believe if it were not so meticulously researched and clearly told. The book succeeds as a page-turner, a remarkable inside-view of the Holocaust, and also as a testament to all that is best in the human spirit.”  
— **Mark Bowden**, author of *Black Hawk Down* and *The Last Stone*

— MORE —

**T**he Auschwitz concentration camp, the epicenter of Hitler's Final Solution, was a living horror. Yet unimaginably, one unsung Polish patriot orchestrated his own arrest and incarceration in the death camp in order to establish a resistance network against the Nazis. In **THE VOLUNTEER (Custom House; June 25, 2019)**, award-winning journalist Jack Fairweather reconstructs the remarkable, little-known story of Witold Pilecki, who spent nearly three years in the camp clandestinely working to undermine the Germans and inform the Allies of Nazi crimes—while all the time struggling to survive.

Pilecki's exploits were suppressed for decades after the war by Poland's Communist government, but with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 and the opening of the archives in Warsaw, the story of his heroic mission slowly emerged. Fairweather has drawn on Pilecki's own accounts, including previously uncovered writings, hundreds of prisoners testimonies and exclusive interviews with those who knew him and fought beside him, to paint a compelling, nuanced portrait of a hero who risked everything to bring the horrors of Auschwitz to light. At its core, **THE VOLUNTEER** explores the question of how an average man was able to expand his moral capacity and act against the Nazi's greatest crime while so many others looked away.

When the Germans overran Poland in September 1939, Witold Pilecki, a second lieutenant in the Polish cavalry reserves and member of the local gentry, led his men against the invaders. With his country's swift defeat, Pilecki, separated from his family, joined the burgeoning resistance movement in Warsaw, where he was tasked with infiltrating the new Auschwitz concentration camp by becoming one of its prisoners. Once incarcerated, Pilecki witnessed—and himself suffered—the inconceivably sadistic mistreatment of inmates by the Nazis. He set to work gathering a secret network of likeminded Polish prisoners who were determined to fightback through subterfuge. But their first missives about the atrocities, dangerously smuggled to the exiled Polish government in London, seemed to fall on deaf ears, and their plea that the British bomb Auschwitz went unheeded.

As Auschwitz morphed from a horrendous labor camp to the site of the mass murder of Europe's Jews, Pilecki realized he needed to escape to make the case for action in person. In a feat as daring and unbelievable as his initial voluntary imprisonment, he broke out of the camp

and delivered to Warsaw some of the first verification of the Jewish extermination. In doing so, he presented Allied commanders with the opportunity to save hundreds of thousands of Jewish lives. Free from the concentration camp, Pilecki continued to work underground against the Nazis. But, transferring the spirit of resistance to the country's Soviet "liberators" after the war, this unabashed Polish freedom fighter would be betrayed, ultimately meeting the tragic fate he managed to avoid at the German's hands.

As its enthralling narrative unfolds, **THE VOLUNTEER** resurrects a story of resistance and heroism in the face of unbridled evil and seemingly unconquerable despair. "Jack Fairweather has meticulously chronicled Pilecki's remarkable journey, one that was lost from history," says Elliot Ackerman, author of *Dark at the Crossing*, "crafting a book that is as riveting as any page-turner and as profound as any great work of literature as it reveals humanity's capacity for both courage and savagery."

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**Jack Fairweather** is a graduate of Oxford University and has been a correspondent for the *Washington Post* and the *Daily Telegraph*, where he was the paper's Baghdad and Persian Gulf bureau chief.



While living in Baghdad as the *Daily Telegraph's* bureau chief, Jack met his wife-to-be and lived in the house of Saddam's former perfume supplier alongside other reporters. As the violence escalated in Iraq Jack was fortunate to survive a suicide bomb attack, a kidnapping attempt, and almost daily mortar attacks around their house.

His reporting while an embedded reporter during the Iraq invasion won him the British Press Award (the British equivalent to the Pulitzer Prize.) He now lives a quieter life, writing history books while raising his three daughters in Vermont. He is the author of *A War of Choice*, and *The Good War*.

**THE VOLUNTEER, by Jack Fairweather**

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