



No Time to Mourn

Leon Kahn

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Growing up Jewish in the little town, or shtetl, of Eisiskes near the Polish-Lithuanian border, Leon Kahn experienced a peaceful childhood until September 1, 1939 when Hitler's forces attacked Poland. Only sixteen years of age, Kahn watched as the women and children of his community were herded into a gravel pit and murdered.

Realizing that to stay meant certain death, Kahn tore off his yellow star of David identifying him as a Jew, and fled with his father, brother and sister to the Polish forests and the uncertain welcome of a few farmers who, at risk to their own lives, would offer temporary food and shelter. Here Kahn tells the little known story of the family groups of Jews and partisan fighters, composed of Russians from Siberia and Poles, who roamed the forests outside the towns in search of food and weapons.

As a partisan fighter, Kahn was given professional guerrilla training and soon became an expert in blowing up German trains. The story of the partisan struggle is as engrossing as it is terrible, for Kahn describes in detail those uncertain times when one never knew who was friend, who was enemy. The final irony may well have come at the end of the war when both the Russian and the American forces, one after the other, detained Kahn for a time as an enemy alien. Eventually, however, his search for freedom was successful: the memoir ends with his immigration to Canada in 1948 and his discovery in Vancouver that "this is my home now."

This volume was co-published with the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre.

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