

# CRIMINAL DEMOCRACY BY AL BIRCH

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Al Birch *aka* Arie Livne

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# CRIMINAL DEMOCRACY BY AL BIRCH PDF

Dear Reader,

As Williams Faulkner famously wrote, “The past isn’t gone – it isn’t even past.” Though the tumultuous events of the twenty-first century have been relegated to the history books, their legacy endures, most tellingly in the lives of the ordinary individuals whose lives those events have shaped. This fact is made poignantly evident in *Criminal Democracy*, a multi-generational family history and personal memoir by first-time published Israeli-American author Al Birch (aka Arie Livne).

This 61,000-word work begins by chronicling the tenuous calm that characterized Jewish life in 1930s Krakow, where Birch’s father grew up, before the savagery of WWII forever altered Europe and the world. With a careful eye for detail and a narrative style that borrows from the best historical fiction, Birch tells the true account of the lives and loves of his grandparents, Joel (his father), and other relatives, until the moment when the horrors of the Holocaust engulf his family and everything they know.

Drawing on historical documents and family oral history, Birch narrates the misery his forebears endured when they found themselves transported to Auschwitz. They cross paths with a historical chapter known to many: that of Oscar Schindler, in whose factory Joel was selected to work, a fortuitous turn of events that would spare him from the tragic fate so many others (including his wife Zocha) encountered in the concentration camps and cities-turned-battlefields.

From the ruins of war-torn Europe, the story moves to Israel, where Joel with his new wife Frida settle, despite the difficulties of living in the nascent nation in the aftermath of tragedy. Birch candidly describes his childhood, family life, and the ordinary trials and triumphs of growing up and getting older. As with his relatives, his own story often intersects with the national story of Israel and broader world events, and he offers his honest critique of Israel, a land he loves despite its deep-rooted political flaws. Eventually, Birch is uprooted again, when he and his family relocate to California, in a new country and culture he eventually adopts as his own. Later, he achieves some measure of closure with his family history in Poland when in the aftermath of the fall of communism, he returns to his ancestral homeland to try to reclaim long-lost family properties.

Birch is a certified accountant and experienced financial officer in the corporate worlds of both the U.S. and Israel. He has a talent for merging personal and family details with broader, overarching historical themes, while narrating objectively and truthfully to open up his own world to the reader.

- Sales Rank: #2910911 in eBooks
- Published on: 2013-05-01
- Released on: 2013-05-01
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Call me Israel

By Bernard Dan

Is this a biography? Is this fiction? Is this an exemplification essay? A manifesto? A homage to a lineage of survivors and a testimony for generations to come? All of these, to be sure, elegantly interwoven into a trepidatious narrative that takes the reader through flashbacks, flash-forwards and transitions from pre-war

Poland bourgeoisie to the unfolding of the Nazi rule against the Jews, the hazardous building of a society in Israel and the unusual destiny of a family in the US. The reader is invited to share highlights of various aspects of the author's life, including intimate details of experience, richly illustrated by photographs, postcards and other personal documents. The plot surfaces here and there like the ferocious, enigmatic Moby Dick. In response to Melville's famous opening line "Call me Ishmael", this book's title can unmistakably be guessed to reply, in an anguished whisper, "Call me Israel".

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

An Eye Opener

By Bill McRae

Telling the truth is a powerful, and dangerous thing. Not telling is more dangerous. Arie Livne (aka Al Birch) chose to take the risk of revealing an accurate look at his world. His first book, *Criminal Democracy* is largely a very personal telling of a family, a time, and a culture worth knowing.

Children of the Holocaust, this Jewish family has lived through a perilous world, has survived and has succeeded. Livne provides an insider view of his Israel and how its powerful elite have misused their power. In the United States we don't think of Israel - the State of God's Chosen ones - as corrupt, but here it is. After several probable Israeli government attempts to destroy his family, Livne uses the best weapon he has to protect his family - his truth - this story.

The English edition reveals Livne's Hebrew way of speaking and thinking. This is simply written, and compelling. The book's main audience is probably Israeli nationals, who thought they knew their world, that is, until Livne unveils its unhealthy underside. He had to make the choice - to quietly not provoke these dangerous officials, or to reveal it all. He chose the latter, and I hope his family is safer for it. They now have a published legacy in *Criminal Democracy*.

If you like true stories, of present day and recent intrigue, and of a captivating time and place which is rapidly disappearing in the minds of its living witnesses, this should be your next read. I recommend it highly.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

An interesting story

By Leah Kabaker

Don't expect a highly polished, well edited story here. On the other hand, the historical facts of the time period make for a most compelling story. The story is shared in a most heartfelt manner about the travails of life and overcoming adversity.

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