Schindler's List
Teaching Guide

by Plater Robinson

Second Edition
Revised

Southern Institute
for Education and Research

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RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS

"The universe exists on the merit of the righteous among the nations of the world, and they are privileged to see the Divine Presence."

-- The Talmud

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

And who is my neighbor?

And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him.

And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

Which now of these three, thinking thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?

And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

--St. Luke 10: 30

“He [Schindler] was fortunate to have people in that short fierce era who summoned forth his deeper talents.”

--Emilie Schindler

Introduction

There have been many attempts to tell the story of the Holocaust to the general public in a comprehensible, yet historically accurate manner. Few of these efforts match the penetrating and moving contribution made by Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*. Spielberg's film demonstrates the power of cinema to convey both the barbarism and heroism of humanity.

The *Schindler's List Teaching Guide* grew out of the Southern Institute's experiences in organizing viewings of *Schindler's List* for secondary schools in Louisiana. It became evident that only with adequate preparation did students comprehend the film's moral lessons. The key to preparing students is providing teachers with appropriate instructional resources and training. We hope this study guide contributes to this end.

The *Schindler's List Teaching Guide* provides the historical background and psychological theories necessary to explore the ethical dilemmas-- and their contemporary relevance—posed in *Schindler's List*. It focuses on a simple question: "Why did Oskar Schindler do it?" Schindler was a man of complex contradictions. On the one hand, he was a dissolute profiteer and a Nazi. On the other hand, he risked his life to rescue hundreds of Jews. Oskar Schindler's wife, Emilie—who knew of his defects all too well—was once asked if Oskar was a saint or a devil. She replied tersely, "A saint of the devil."

Who is good and who is evil? Perhaps the answer is, we all are. We all have the capacity of good and evil. Every nation has the potential to commit genocide; and every human, despite their frailties, is capable of summoning the courage to defend human dignity.

The theme of rescuer behavior complements *Deathly Silence*, the Southern Institute's first teaching guide on the Holocaust. *Deathly Silence* examined how ordinary people became passive accomplices to genocide. "Teaching Schindler" illuminates the other side of the story: how ordinary people acted heroically to resist genocide.

The study guide offers several resources to assist teachers in leading discussions and designing projects related to *Schindler's List*. These include historical background on the Holocaust; an explanation of the "righteous gentiles" honor; a history of Oskar Schindler—contrasting the historical Schindler with the cinematic character; and a summary of psychological theories of altruistic behavior that may explain Schindler's motives. Though written for teachers, many of the sections are also useful for student readings and reference.

The discussion question section offers several questions to stimulate post-viewing discussion and projects. Each question is accompanied by an analysis section to assist the teachers in guiding the discussion.

We recommend that the guide be used in conjunction with the “Teaching Schindler” workshop offered by the Southern Institute. In addition to attending the workshop, we encourage teachers to use the manual readings for a series of follow-up discussions in interdisciplinary teams.

The Southern Institute’s Holocaust education project is a component of a larger anti-bias education program. The program uses the Holocaust, the Civil Rights movement, and other historical events as case studies in the politics and psychology of prejudice. Our objective is to help students in learning to apply the moral lessons of these events to the world today.

I want to acknowledge Plater Robinson’s excellent work on this study guide. His commitment to teaching about the Holocaust is both intellectual and deeply personal. Plater journeyed to Poland in 1989 where he lived for one year while studying the Holocaust and the role of righteous gentiles. This study guide bears the imprint of his careful scholarship and personal commitment to preserving the memory of those who perished.

Lance Hill
Executive Director
Southern Institute

Foreword

In 1989, I left for Poland to prepare stories for public radio on the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the Second World War. I stayed one year, which happened to be the year of the great revolutions that overthrew the communists in Central and Eastern Europe.

In that year I often traveled the Polish countryside in search of remnants of the Jewish world that the Nazis had engulfed, uprooted, and destroyed, all before the eyes of the local population. An elderly Polish woman in the small town of Oleszyce told me that it had been a "common life" among Jews and Poles before the war, although the Jews had been "better off" and indeed "rich." Do they still wear their "black hats and coats?" she asked. I interviewed an old Polish peasant in the town of Sobienie Jejoiry who had betrayed Jews to the Nazis for a meager bounty of vodka, some money, and a bag of sugar. He spent four years in prison after the war charged as a Nazi collaborator. He still claimed innocence. "I helped them," he said. "Who?" I asked. "The Jews. I helped the Jews."

I also interviewed Poles who rescued Jews from Nazi annihilation. In the memorable phrase of the survivor (and sociologist) Nechama Tec, these Poles were "the light that pierced the darkness." Few people gave a thought to rescuing Jews. "I'm not saying she was so mean," a Jewish woman told me, describing the Polish woman who gave her shelter for the night and then asked her to leave. "She was afraid that the Nazis will kill her family." Death, collectively applied, was the Nazi penalty for those helping Jews.

Terror was only one part of the equation. Culture was another. The Jews had been defined as the "chief villain" in Polish eyes long before the Germans arrived in 1939. For centuries the Jews had been the peg on which to hang all life's woe. When the Nazis removed civilization's thin veneer, the Polish attitude remained: 'What happens to the Jew, it does not concern me.'

Yet a handful of Poles defied both the Nazi terror and their own culture to rescue a relative handful of Jews. Why? One Righteous Gentile in Warsaw, Henryk Grabowski, told me that he helped the Jews because "they were my countrymen." He said this with tears in his eyes. My Polish translator, a young woman named Hanna Szmalenberg, said, "You never hear that." She also had tears in her eyes.

Three years after I returned from Poland, the film *Schindler's List* opened to wide acclaim. In 1939, Schindler, a Sudeten-German businessman and a member of the Nazi Party, came to Nazi occupied-Poland to turn a profit. He ended up rescuing 1,200 Jews.

I researched the life of Oskar Schindler for this “Teaching Schindler” study guide. Invariably, I found myself comparing Schindler with the Righteous Gentiles that I had interviewed in Poland. They appeared to be complete opposites. While the Poles were modest and had to be prodded to talk about their wartime activities, Schindler was anything but modest. he talked about his wartime exploits all the time, and, in the end, became financially dependent on the Jewish people he had saved. He was different from the Polish Righteous Gentiles in every respect - except one: He, too, had broken with conformity; he, too, had saved Jews.

What made him different?

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--Plater Robinson

Contents

RIGHTEOUS GENTILES

> He who saves one life, it is as if he saves the entire world.
>
> --Jewish Talmud

When the German armed forces surrendered on May 8, 1945, Europe was a vast Jewish cemetery in which the Nazis had uprooted even the stones.

In Poland, the setting of the Holocaust, cities where tens of thousands of Jews had lived were now wholly devoid of even a hint of Jewish life. So great was the destruction and so immense the human cruelty that few scholars gave a thought to the rescuers, a relative handful of Gentiles (non-Jews) who protected a relative handful of Jews from Nazi annihilation.

Rescue was the exception, destruction the rule. As sociologist Nechama Tec has observed, “It is only natural and expected that those who studied the tragic events focused first on the typical experience rather than the rare exception.” It was not until the 1980’s that the stories of the rescuers began to attract wide attention.

The rescuers themselves did not publicize their actions. They were, generally speaking, a most unassuming lot and did not view their actions as "heroic.” In addition, anti-Semitism persisted in Europe after World War II, and it was perhaps more intense after the war than it had been before. Jewish life had little value for six long years. Many of the rescuers feared alienation and even death at the hands of those anti-Semitic countrymen who viewed their actions dimly.

The moral outrage that today accompanies the Holocaust is very much a latter-day reaction.

YAD VASHEM

In 1953, Israel established Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem. Yad Vashem honors the Jews who perished in the Holocaust and "the high-minded Gentiles who risked their lives to save Jews." The formal Hebrew title for these saviors is *Hasidei Umot Ha-Olam*, literally “the Righteous Ones of the Nations of the World.” They are the **“**spiritual heirs**”** to the Lamed Vav, the thirty-seven Gentiles mentioned in Jewish legend whose purpose in every generation, unknown to themselves or to others, is to assist their fellow man in his hour of greatest despair.

The Righteous Gentiles cited in Hasidic teachings were mostly poor, simple people, but "the world is supported by them...the vessels into which the suffering of the whole world flows...If even one of them were not here, the world would perish with suffering."

In 1963, Yad Vashem honored its first rescuer, Ludwig Woerl, a German political prisoner who helped Jewish inmates at Auschwitz-Birkenau. During the Second World War, seven thousand Jews survived in Germany and in Austria, hiding with the aid of Gentile benefactors. Yad Vashem has honored roughly one hundred Germans and Austrians for their rescue efforts, Oskar Schindler among them.

Schindler was responsible for the rescue of 1,200 Jews, referred to as the "Schindlerjuden" (Schindler Jews). This was a very large number of Jews saved by anyone, but it is important to view Schindler's rescue efforts in perspective. Thomas Keneally, author of *Schindler's List*, quite accurately has written, "Oskar was only a minor god of rescue." Similarly, Danka Dresner, one of the Schindlerjuden, has said, "We owe our lives to him. But I wouldn't glorify a German because of what he did for us. There is no proportion." The vast majority of the Gentiles honored by Yad Vashem have been Poles and Dutchmen. In all, more than 11,000 Gentiles have received the distinction of Righteous Gentile, a small percentage of the number who were actually involved in Jewish rescue. It should be emphasized, however, that significantly less than one percent of the non-Jewish population in Nazi-occupied Europe embarked upon the path of Jewish rescue. Many people were afraid to help the Jews, knowing well the Nazi penalties. Many were indifferent to Jewish destruction. Many were delighted by it.

The term Righteous Gentile is controversial in itself. In Poland, where three million Polish Catholics perished during the war in addition to three million Polish Jews who were exterminated, a great number of people resent the implication that Poles who failed to help beleaguered Jews were somehow not Righteous. Indignantly, the Poles have turned the argument around: The Jews did not have the "right" to ask to be rescued; after all, the request implicitly endangered the Gentiles and their families. Thus does recrimination fill the void left by the destruction.

In Poland, the Nazis made it very clear that death was the punishment for any Gentile who assisted Jews; death for the rescuer, and death for "abettors and accomplices." In western Europe, the Nazi policy was different. The Gentile caught sheltering a Jew was sent to a concentration camp where there was the possibility of survival. In Poland, the Nazis had no inhibitions: The Gentile was hung in the town square, or put up against a wall and shot. The list of those executed, with red borders, was publicized on the street.

Petitions for recognition of Righteous Gentiles generally come from the Jews who were rescued, although surviving witnesses and documents are accepted. "Ordinary acts of

charity**”** are not considered. Those who profited materially from the rescue of Jews are rejected, even if they accepted payment to defray the expenses of hiding a Jew.

The exact wording of Yad Vashem's requirement to be honored as a Righteous Gentile is as follows:

> **Extending help in saving a life; endangering one’s own life; absence of reward, monetary and otherwise, and similar considerations which make the rescuer’s deeds stand out above and beyond what can be termed ordinary help.**

Yad Vashem honors the Righteous Gentiles with a medal which quotes, in Hebrew and in French, a verse from the Jewish Talmud: **“**He who saves one life, it is as if he has saved the entire world.**”**

The Righteous Gentiles are invited to plant a carob tree along the Avenue of the Righteous which leads to Yad Vashem**’**s museum (and memorial) in Jerusalem. A plaque with the rescuer**’**s name is affixed to the tree. Rescuers in dire financial straits are awarded a small stipend.

Yad Vashem honored Oskar Schindler as a Righteous Gentile on April 28, 1962, his fifty-fourth birthday. When Schindler died in October, 1974, in West Germany, his wish of being buried in Israel was honored. He was laid to rest at the Catholic cemetery on Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

On his tombstone are written these words in Hebrew: **“**The unforgettable life savior of 1,200 oppressed Jews."

BACKGROUND OF THOMAS KENEALLY'S *SCHINDLER'S LIST*

The film "Schindler's List," by Stephen Spielberg, is based on the "docu-novel" by Thomas Keneally, an Australian novelist.

In the author's note at the beginning of the book, Keneally recalled the day in 1980 when he visited a luggage store in Beverly Hills, California.

The owner of the store, Leopold Page, was a Schindlerjuden, that is, a Jew saved by Oskar Schindler in a world far removed from the blue skies of southern California. In the former world, Leopold Page answered to the name of Poldek Pfefferberg.

"It was beneath Pfefferberg's shelves of imported Italian leather goods that I first heard of Oskar Schindler," Keneally remembered. For thirty years, Pfefferberg had tried to interest every writer who entered his shop with the story of Oskar Schindler. Until Keneally, nobody was interested. Indeed, until the 1980's the Holocaust interested few people in the United States, least of all in Hollywood.

Keneally published his book, *Schindler's List*, in 1982. Twelve years later, when the film *Schindler's List* made its remarkable debut, Pfefferberg told an interviewer, "A single person, a human being, can change the world."

To research the story of Oskar Schindler, Keneally interviewed fifty Schindlerjuden in seven nations. He read the documents and the testimonies at Yad Vashem in Israel (and elsewhere), consulted Schindler's postwar friends as well as his wartime associates "who can still be reached," and visited Poland, the setting of the Nazi genocide and of Schindler's efforts.

In his "Author's Note," Keneally writes, "It has sometimes been necessary to make reasonable constructs of conversations of which Oskar and others have left only the briefest record. But most exchanges and conversations, and all events, are based on the detailed recollections of the Schindlerjuden, of Schindler himself, and of other witnesses to Oskar's acts of outrageous rescue."

Keneally also offers thanks to those who "gave interviews and generously contributed information through letters and documents." The first person Keneally lists is "Frau Emilie Schindler," Schindler's wife. In the book, however, the role of Emilie Schindler and her influence upon her husband in the rescue of Jews are touched upon only lightly. She appears to have been quoted one time, not from an interview Keneally conducted with her but from a 1973 West German documentary on her husband. The story of Emilie Schindler remains largely untold.

With unconcealed bitterness after the film opened, she said, “The Jews he saved, me he abandoned.”

Pfefferberg, who accompanied Keneally on the trip to Poland, was the author**’**s guiding spirit. The book is dedicated both to Pfefferberg and to Schindler. Keneally also acknowledges the help of two other Schindlerjuden: Moshe Bejski and Mieczyslaw Pemper. During the war, Bejski had been an expert forger of German documents, a skill of inestimable value. He later became an Israeli supreme court justice and (to turn a full circle) is today the director of the special commission of Righteous Gentiles at Yad Vashem.

A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF OSKAR SCHINDLER

April 28, 1908 - Oskar Schindler is born in present-day Czech Republic

1914-1918 - World War I; Czechoslovakia is established November 1918

1927 - Schindler marries Emilie after a six week courtship

1935 - Schindler family business goes bankrupt; father abandons mother

September 1938 - Munich Conference, Sudetenland ceded to Nazi Germany

September 1, 1939 - Nazi Germany invades Poland

September 17, 1939 - Soviet Union invades Poland; Poland partitioned between Nazi Germany and Soviet Union

October 26, 1939 - Krakow becomes capital of German-occupied Poland, the so-called General Governmnet

November 10, 1939 – Krakow Jews forced to wear blue-white armband with Star of David

December 1939 - Schindler purchases enamel factory

March 20, 1941 - Germans establish ghetto in suburb of Krakow

June 1942 - Germans begin construction of labor camp at Plaszow

June 2, 1942 - First deportations of Jews from Krakow to Belzec death camp

October 28, 1942 - Second wave of deportations to death camp

March 13, 1943 - Final liquidation of ghetto

September 1944 - Schindler's factory is closed; Schindlerjuden are taken to Plaszow

October 1944 - Schindler prepares "list" of Jews he takes to Brunnlitz, Czechloslovakia

November 1944 - Schindler rescues Jewish women from Auschwitz-Birkenau

May 8, 1945 - Second World War ends; Brunnlitz camp liberated following day

April 28, 1962 - Schindler named Righteous Gentile by Yad Vashem

October 9, 1974 - Schindler dies in Frankfurt, West Germany; buried in Israel

OSKAR SCHINDLER BEFORE THE SECOND WORLD WAR

> It is not immediately easy to find in Oskar's family history the origins of his impulse toward rescue.
>
> --Thomas Keneally, author of *Schindler's List*

Oskar Schindler was born on April 28, 1908, in Zwittau, an industrial city in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He was baptized in the Catholic church. Today the city of Schindler's birth is Zvitava in the province of Moravia of the Czech Republic.

At the beginning of the 16th century, the Schindler family emigrated to Zwittau from Vienna, the capital of the Austrian (Hapsburg) Empire. The region, heavily populated by Germans, became known as the Sudetenland, after the nearby Sudeten Mountains.

Schindler's father, Hans, was the owner of a factory which produced farm machinery, and Oskar and his sister, Elfriede, were raised in privileged circumstances, a fact of considerable importance.

The typical young man in the regimented Austro-Hungarian Empire had to follow societal rules if he expected to land a job after his schooling. But Oskar Schindler was not typical. He was guaranteed a position with the family business-- whether or not he complied with societal rules. This economic security gave Schindler patrician self-assurance and, perhaps, a willingness to flaunt the rules he believed did not apply to him. In a word, Schindler's privileged upbringing allowed him to be different.

Schindler's mother, Louisa, whom he adored, was a deeply religious woman, forever "redolent of incense" from her frequent visits to the Catholic church. His father, Hans, preferred sipping cognac in the local coffee house to attending services at the Catholic church, a preference he bequeathed to his son, who spoke little of God. The extent of the elder Schindler's political involvement seems to have been lighting a candle each year to honor the birth of the Austro-Hungarian Kaiser (or Emperor) Franz Josef, beloved by the Jews of his empire.

As Austrians living amidst a subject people (the Czechs), the Schindler family ranked high among the social and economic elite of Zwittau. Schindler's early life was pleasant, at least from the material point of view. His father gave him an extravagant birthday gift; a powerful

motorcycle. The teenage Schindler entered several racing contests. He was adventuresome, reckless, and a daredevil. A tall young man with charm and good looks, he was a womanizer of the first order, even after he married Emilie Schindler in 1927.

Emilie was educated in a Catholic convent, and, like Schindler’s mother, she was deeply religious. She and Schindler met in 1927 when he made a sales trip to her father's farm. At the time Schindler was selling electric motors for the family business.

It is not surprising that Schindler took a fancy to Emilie. Her early photographs show a beautiful woman. Her widowed father, a “gentleman farmer” and a man of wealth, disapproved of his daughter’s marriage to Oskar Schindler, knowing well his reputation. Schindler’s father also opposed the marriage, believing his son too young and the betrothal too sudden.

After a six week courtship, the two were married. At a young age, Schindler was long accustomed to getting what he wanted. Emilie’s father refused to give Schindler the traditional dowry, a bitter point with the son-in-law. The marriage became rocky after a short while, as Schindler resumed his drinking and womanizing.

Oskar Schindler and Emilie did not have children, but Schindler had two children outside of the marriage.

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If Schindler’s youth had been one of privileges, the privileges did not include a warm and loving relationship between his parents. In 1935, the Schindler factory went bankrupt due to the worldwide depression triggered by Wall Street’s collapse in 1929. Just as economic disaster struck the family business, Schindler’s father abandoned his wife. Schindler’s mother died not long after his father left home.

The family business in ruins, Schindler became a salesman for another machinery company, a job that took him to nearby Poland. Though raised in privileged circumstances, young Oskar made little of his life. He was known as a delightful personality, but not a serious person. The thought of work made him tired. He slept late, had a roving eye for beautiful women, and could not decline a drink.

WORLD WAR I

The First World War (1914-1918) dealt a crippling blow to the privileged status of the Schindler family in Zwittau. At the end of the war, the Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsed, and several newly independent nations emerged, including Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. The Schindler family, and other Germans in the new Czechoslovakia, became a minority group within the nation dominated by the Czechs.

It was a stunning reversal of fortune. Oskar Schindler was ten years old.

The German minority in Czechoslovakia was accorded limited cultural and political rights by the Prague government, but resentment towards the new Czechoslovak state was always present. It could not have been otherwise. The lord does not become a subject with grace and equanimity. The best jobs in government now went to the Czechs as formerly the best jobs had gone to the Germans. The hard feelings between the two people intensified following the world depression in 1929 and Hitler's seizure of power in neighboring Germany in 1933.

THE RISE OF HITLER

Many Sudeten Germans became ardent Nazis because of their resentment towards the Czechs, whom they viewed as an inferior people, a notch above the Poles, two notches above the Jews. Living so close to the German Reich yet not a part of it, these Sudeten Germans, in compensation, often became more nationalistic than the average German.

Out of this dissatisfaction and bitterness emerged the Sudeten German Party under Konrad Henlein, himself a Sudeten German. Henlein, later one of the most brutal Nazis, was a disciple of Hitler and took his orders directly from the Fuehrer's chancellery in Berlin. Oskar Schindler, who at the time was working as a salesman in the Sudetenland, joined the Sudeten German Party. His finely tailored suits now sported a Henlein badge in the lapel.

The author Keneally suggests that Schindler joined the Henlein party less for political reasons than for reasons of personal advancement. After all, very few Sudeten Germans did not join, or at least support, Henlein's party. "All things being equal," Keneally writes, "when you went in to see a German company manager wearing the (Henlein) badge, you got the order."

The reader of Keneally's book might be led to believe that Schindler was interested not so much in politics as he was in profit, that he was an opportunist of the first order. However close to the mark, the argument too easily dismisses the very genuine appeal Hitler exerted upon the Sudeten Germans, Schindler included.

There was a great deal about Hitler's program that resonated in the soul of the Sudeten German. Hitler promised to restore the Reich to its former glory. He pledged to end unemployment and usher in a new era of economic prosperity and security. He vowed to destroy the communists. And he offered a scapegoat for Germany's problems: The Jews. It was a rare Sudeten German who did not respond to Hitler's message.

Schindler**’**s wife, Emilie, was one of them. She despised the Nazis from the start. According to Keneally, she believed **“**simply that the man (Hitler) would be punished for making himself God.**”** Schindler’s father also despised the Nazis, but because he sensed that they would lose the war Hitler intended to launch.

His silent dissent was more practical than moral.

THE MUNICH CONFERENCE

On September 30, 1938, Hitler signed the Munich Pact with representatives of England and France, which forced Czechoslovakia to cede the German populated Sudetenland to Nazi Germany. The two western democracies, which had been allies of democratic Czechoslovakia, sought to "appease" Hitler's ambitions by abandoning the Central European nation. British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain described this as “peace in our time, peace with honor.” Ultimately, appeasement failed, and the term “Munich” has come to symbolize betrayal.

When the German army occupied the Sudetenland, the local German populace greeted it rapturously. The Czechs and the Jews of the region, however, were less enthusiastic. Almost immediately they were expelled and their property confiscated. The Nazi *Aktion* was conducted with characteristic brutality, and Schindler, according to Keneally, was repulsed by the Nazis’ behavior.

But moral indignation did not interfere with opportunity. After all, he quickly joined the Nazi Party and began wearing the Nazi swastika on his lapel. In the late autumn of 1938, Schindler joined the Abwehr (German military intelligence). Schindler was an ideal operative, a bon vivant who could strike up a conversation with anyone, preferably in a bar. He traveled frequently to Poland on business and returned with information about Poland**’**s military preparedness. It is noteworthy that Schindler’s Abwehr membership excused him from active military service.

SEPTEMBER 1, 1939

In the early morning hours of September 1, 1939, the Second World War began when the German attack on Poland. The Poles, valiant but disorganized, their army utterly antiquated, were quickly overwhelmed by the German **“**blitzkrieg” or "lightning war." This new type of warfare involved coordination between German tanks (panzers) and the air

force (Luftwaffe). The effect was devastating in Poland, as it would be a year later in France and two years later on the steppes of Russia.

On September 6, 1939, German armored forces captured the southern Polish city of Krakow, the ancient seat of Polish kings. Shortly thereafter the Nazis established in Krakow their government for Nazi-occupied Poland, known as the General-Government. Hans Frank, Hitler's longtime lawyer, became Reichsfuehrer of the General-Government and immediately issued a decree for the "voluntary departure" of all but the "economically indispensable" Jews. He could not abide the thought of Germans breathing the same air as Jews.

In the wake of the German army, Oskar Schindler arrived in Krakow. A Sudeten-German businessman, a member of the Nazi Party, and a failure in life, Schindler was determined to reverse his fortunes in Nazi-occupied Poland.

He was thirty-one years old.

SCHINDLER DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

> I knew the people who worked for me. When you know people, you have to behave towards them like human beings.
>
> --Oskar Schindler

When the Nazis seized power in Germany, unlike the Communists in Russia, they did not completely abolish private enterprise. Hitler, who viewed life in terms of a pseudo-Darwinist “struggle of survival,” believed that the “captains of industry” were at the top of their professions because they had demonstrated the greatest ability and ruthlessness. As a result, the Nazis not only preserved elements of the private sector but used those elements to the advantage of the Nazi state.

PRIVATE BUSINESSMAN

During the Second World War, private businessmen like Oskar Schindler operated factories in Nazi-occupied Poland, exploiting both Polish labor and Jewish slave labor for the benefit of both the German war machine and (not coincidentally) the factory owners.

Arriving in Krakow during the first week of the Second World War, Schindler quickly won the friendship of key officers in both the SS (Nazi elite) and the Wehrmacht (German Army). He won their friendship by his unusually personable manner and by his seemingly inexhaustible supply of desired goods: cognac, cigars, coffee, and women. Most of these items Schindler obtained from the thriving black market in Krakow.

True to his roots in the old Habsburg Empire, Schindler knew how to make a bribe seem like an act of friendship. His friends in high places would assure Schindler a steady flow of army contracts. Now Schindler had to locate a factory to produce the desired goods.

For this he turned to the Jews.

THE POLISH JEWS

When the Second World War began in 1939, three and a half million Jews lived in Poland, fully ten percent of the population. Krakow was home to 56,000 Jews, a size equal to that of the entire Jewish population of Italy. The majority of the Polish Jews were utterly impoverished, as were the Poles. But the relatively few wealthy Jews, and the omnipresent Jewish Store on the corner, gave rise to the generalization that the Jews were “rich.” At the same time, however, the Jews were identified with communism, although most of the Polish Jews were Orthodox and far removed from the atheist world of communism.

Under the fairly benevolent rule of the Austrians before the First World War, Krakow had developed a reputation as a “liberal” city. The Jews were allowed to pursue their lives with more freedom than in the Russian and Prussian (German) controlled regions of Poland. The Krakow Jews were mostly middle class and had lived in Krakow since the early 14th century. They began speaking Polish (as opposed to Yiddish or Hebrew) in the early 19th century. In 1867, Emperor Franz Josef ascended the throne in Vienna, and the Jews were permitted to live outside the ghetto for the first time. The local Polish and German middle classes bitterly protested this relative freedom given to their economic competitors.

The Jews of Krakow lived mostly in Kasmierz, a suburb of the city named for `Kasmierz the Great,’ the 14th century Polish king who had invited Jews to Poland at the time of great pogroms (or outbursts of anti-Jewish violence) in the German lands. Kasmierz built the Krakow suburb for which he was named, and, more significantly, he issued a charter which protected Jewish “liberties.” In sharp contrast to the abattoir it became, Poland was originally a haven for Jews.

In November 1939, one month into the brutal occupation that would last five years, the Nazis issued a decree demanding that all Jews over the age of nine wear a blue and white armband emblazoned with the Star of David. Thus, the first step in the destruction of the Jews had been taken.

ARYANIZATION

In Poland, the Nazis quickly expropriated Jewish businesses. Through a process termed “Aryanization,” Jewish property was sold to an “Aryans” (i.e., Germans) for a considerably reduced price. The Jews, of course, had no right to protest this virtual confiscation.

In this manner, Schindler located a formerly Jewish-owned factory on the outskirts of Krakow, which, after retooling, would produce enamel pots and pans and, later, in 1941, munitions. Through the good graces of his high ranking friends and with the usual bribes, Schindler won lucrative contracts to supply kitchenware to the German army.

The name of Schindler’s factory was Deutsche Email Fabrik, or Emalia. The building still stands and occupied by another factory. Since the film, it has become a tourist mecca, to the bewilderment of local Poles who see it as just another soot covered building in a soot covered city.

ITZHAK STERN

Having found a Jewish factory, Schindler next located the capital necessary to purchase it and to get operations underway. His key contact was a Jewish accountant, Itzhak Stern (played by Ben Kingsley in the film).

According to Stern’s recollection, he immediately recognized that Schindler was that rare item in Nazi-occupied Poland: The “good” German. When Schindler commented that it must be hard to be a priest during times like these, when life did not have “the value of a pack of cigarettes,” Stern seized the moment to recite the Talmudic verse: “He who saves one life, it is as if he has saved the entire world.” Schindler replied, “Of course, of course."

Keneally writes, “Itzhak, rightly or wrongly, always believed that it was at that moment that he had dropped the right seed in the furrow.”

The influence of Itzhak Stern is of decisive importance in understanding Schindler’s evolution from war-profiteer to rescuer of Jews. When Stern was buried in 1969, Schindler stood at the graveside, crying like a child.

Stern was the first person to inform Schindler that Jewish slave labor cost less than Polish labor. Schindler, with an eye towards a profit, recognized the advantage of Jewish labor. Thus began his relationship with the Jews. He would be Herr Direktor, they would be his employees. He would always have a kind word for them. In the end, he would save many of them from annihilation.

The first indication that Schindler was of a different breed came on December 3, 1939. He whispered less than ambiguous words into Stern's ear: "Tomorrow, it's going to start. Jozefa and Izaaka Streets are going to know all about it." Talk like this was highly dangerous. Coming from a German, it was bewildering.

Jozefa and Izaaka Streets were located in Kazimierz, the Jewish quarter. Here, the SS staged a terror-filled *Aktion* or “strike” the next day, beating, humiliating, robbing, and killing Je4ws in a seemingly haphazard manner.

Schindler had taken a first step, however tenuous, towards rescue.

WAR PROFITTER

To get the ball rolling, Stern introduced Schindler to a group of wealthy Krakow Jews. These Jews had managed to retain their wealth despite the Nazis' best efforts to seize it. With few options, these Jews invested their capital in Schindler's factory, but with the provision that they would work in the factory and, apparently, be spared the uncertain future (which, in the film, Schindler bluntly and indeed cruelly cites in order to strengthen his bargaining position).

Schindler, who arrived in Krakow with little more than his natural panache and the swastika on his lapel, had acquired a Jewish factory, Jewish capital, Jewish labor, and Jewish expertise, all with very little if any personal investment.
"You have done well here," Emilie tells her husband (in the film) when she arrives in Krakow for a short visit. "Always before there was something missing," he says, explaining his lack of financial success prior to September 1, 1939. "Luck?" she asks naively. "No," he replies. "War."

Schindler was the quintessential war-profiteer. Initially, he was able to overlook the dehumanized condition of the Jews under Nazi rule. He was interested in profit, and he was not above exploiting the Jews to this end.

Spielberg's film focuses on Schindler's evolving relationship with the Jews. A central theme emerges: In the pursuit of profit, Schindler becomes dependent on the Jews for their expertise--particularly, it seems, on Itzhak Stern--and as he becomes dependent upon the Jews, Schindler begins to know them as human beings. They appear to be quite different from the Nazi propaganda's depiction of Jews as "vermin" and as "rats." Schindler has a financial investment in his Jewish workers, but at the same time he develops an investment in them as human beings.

Twenty years after the war, with the benefit of hindsight, Schindler explained his rescue of Jews this way: "I knew the people who worked for me. When you know people, you have to behave towards them like human beings."

On another occasion, Schindler described his behavior differently: "There was no choice. If you saw a dog going to be crushed under a car, wouldn't you help him?"

THE KRAKOW GHETTO

On March 3, 1941, the Nazis established a Jewish ghetto—an area into which Jews were segregated-- in Podgorze, a suburb of Krakow across the Vistula River. A wall was constructed to enclose the ghetto, and the Jews watched ominously as the wall was

shaped in the form of a series of Jewish grave stones. The ghetto comprised three hundred and twenty apartment buildings into which a Jewish population of about seventeen thousand was crammed. The rest of the Jews in Krakow had already been expelled to the neighboring countryside. The overcrowding in the ghetto was severe, as families were forced to live together in cramped apartments. This contributed significantly to Jewish demoralization, a key German tactic.

Fearing for the safety of the Jews, Stern implored Schindler to hire more Jewish workers. Schindler agreed.

When the Jewish workers arrived at his factory, Schindler told them, much to their astonishment: “You’ll be safe working here. If you work here, then you’ll live through the war.”

One of the remarkable witnesses to the horror of the Krakow ghetto was a Polish Catholic, Tadeusz Pankiewicz (pronounced Ta-de-ush Panke-ie-vitsch). Pankiewicz managed to keep his pharmacy operating in the Krakow ghetto presumably because the Germans feared the outbreak of typhus and believed that a modicum of medicines administered to the ghetto inhabitants would keep the disease at a distance. Ironically, the German fear of disease was one of the few weapons available to the Jews.

Pankiewicz wrote of Schindler’s factory, "The Jews there were treated humanely."

THE JUDENRAT AND THE GHETTO POLICE

One of the first directives the Nazis issued was for the establishment of a *Judenrat*, or a Jewish Council. This was the device the Nazis utilized for governing the ghetto. When the Nazis issued a decree, the *Judenrat* implemented it. The Nazis established a *Judenrat* in all the Jewish localities in Poland, and its role during the German occupation is controversial in the extreme. Some view it as a traitorous extension of the Nazi machinery of death, while others believe the *Judenrat* did its best to alleviate Jewish suffering in an impossible situation.

In Krakow, the *Judenrat*, initially comprising twenty-four eminent members of the prewar Jewish leadership, was located in the main police station under the supervision of the Gestapo.

The director of the *Judenrat* in Krakow was Dr. Arthur Rosenzweig, a lawyer with an impeccable reputation. At the time of the first deportation of Krakow Jews in June 1942, Rosenzweig refused to do the Nazis’ bidding, and as a result he and his family were placed

on the transport to the Belzec death camp. The Germans subsequently found a compliant Judenrat director, David Gutter.

The Germans also created a ghetto police force, the so-called "OD" or "Ordungsdienst," meaning, "the service for keeping order." The commander of the ghetto police was Symcha Spira, a classic psychopath whom the Germans dressed up in an immaculate uniform festooned with all sorts of ridiculous insignia. Spira carried out the Nazi orders blindly and with ruthless zeal.

As portrayed in the film, the Jewish police were distinguished by their coats buttoned to the neck and by their truncheons which they swing ruthlessly, In the futile effort to save their own lives and the lives of their families, the Jewish police assisted the Nazis in rounding up Ghetto Jews for deportation. Not all of the Jewish police were scoundrels. When the Krakow ghetto was “liquidated” in March 1943, two policemen defied German orders and helped Jewish mothers smuggle their children into the Plaszow camp.

The *Judenrat* members and Jewish police were ultimately murdered by the Nazis, who wanted no witnesses. The *Judenrat* and the “OD” had earned the privilege of being the last to die.

THE CHILD IN RED

In June 1942, Schindler inadvertently witnessed an *Aktion* in the Krakow ghetto. The *Aktionen* were Nazi “strikes” on the ghetto to round up Jews for deportation to the death camps. They were meticulously planned and usually the Nazis were assisted by their foreign collaborators (Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian) and by local collaborators (Polish “blue” police and Jewish ghetto police).

At the time, Schindler and his mistress were out for a pleasant horseback ride on a hilltop when the macabre *Aktion* opened directly below them. Astonished by the Nazi ferocity, Schindler’s eye was drawn to a little girl clad in red who, alone, stood out from the mass of Jews being herded to the trains and to their death.

In Spielberg’s otherwise black and white film, this child’s coat appears in red, making her stand out all the more. The important question is: Why?

Many years later, with certitude perhaps bolstered by time, Schindler looked back on this *Aktion* and said, “Beyond this day, no thinking person could fail to see what would happen. I was now resolved to do everything in my power to defeat the system.”

"ESSENTIAL WORKERS"

The Jews who were deemed “essential workers” for the German war effort, including the Jews who worked for Schindler, were temporarily spared deportation.

In the early years of the Second World War, the Germans waged a fierce debate among themselves regarding the fate of the “essential worker”-Jews. Hitler and the hard-core Nazis wanted to destroy all of the Jews, but the less ideological Nazis, with many German businessmen as their allies, argued that it was impractical to murder a people whose labor was absolutely essential to the war effort (and to their own profits).

Ironically, there were some SS officers who also chimed in on behalf of the “essential workers.” If all of the Jews were destroyed and the camps liquidated, the SS rightly feared they would have nothing to do in occupied-Poland and would be sent to fight on the Russian Front. Much to the relief of the German industrialists, the SS, and, not least, the Jews, Hitler begrudgingly agreed to spare the Jewish “essential workers,” but only for the time being. As SS leader Heinrich Himmler noted in September 1942, “One day even these Jews must disappear, in accordance with the Fuehrer’s wish.”

On March 13, 1943, at the time of the final "liquidation" of the Krakow ghetto, the Jewish “essential workers” in Krakow were sent to the labor camp at Plaszow. It was constructed just outside of Krakow on the grounds of two uprooted Jewish cemeteries. Jewish tombstones were used as pavement slabs by the Germans.

“RESETTLEMENT”

On June 2, 1942, the first deportation, or “resettlement”, from the Krakow ghetto began. The Germans planted the rumor that the ghetto was too crowded and the Jews not fit for labor had to be removed. It seemed a plausible explanation. The ghetto *was* overcrowded.

Tadeusz Pankiewicz ,the Polish pharmacist in the Krakow ghetto, witnessed the June 1942 deportations. In his book, *The Krakow Ghetto Pharmacy*, he wrote, “The nightmare began. Like apparitions in a horror novel, they [the Jews] moved with faltering steps, carrying all their possessions on their weary backs, as heavy as the tragic burden of the fate they were facing.”

The deportation lasted three days, until the morning of June 4, 1942. The heat was unbearable. "Fire seemed to fall from the skies," Pankiewicz wrote. And the Germans were brutal beyond their usual standards. "Apparently blood exacerbated their bestial and sadistic instincts."

During the first deportation from Krakow, seven thousand Jews were sent by train to the Belzec death camp in eastern Poland. In this early stage of the destruction process, the Jews had no idea of what awaited them.

On October 28, 1942, the Nazis struck the Krakow ghetto a second time.

Pankiewicz writes, "It was a beautiful, almost spring-like day, the cloudless sky reminded one of the time of the June deportations." The Nazis informed the ghetto that only "essential workers" would be spared deportation. The Jews desperately tried to secure for themselves a "blue card" denoting status as an “essential worker.” It held the illusion of survival. Not infrequently, the Jew clasping a "blue card" was also sent to the trains. The Germans operated in a brutal fashion that was both methodical and whimsical.

Like the June deportations, the Nazis removed seven thousand Jews from the ghetto. Pankiewicz wrote,: "Everything was done to remove valuable objects, destroy and burn them, so that they would not fall into German hands." Six hundred Jews were shot on the spot. “The Spartan like silence of the victims drove them (the Germans) crazy.” The Jews rounded up in the second deportation were also sent to the Belzec death camp.

THE DEATH CAMPS

In the early stages of the destruction process, the Jews did not know that death awaited them. Shrewdly, the Nazis explained that the Jews were being "resettled” further to the east. There were rumors of work camps in Ukraine. This was a deliberate effort by the Germans to disguise their murderous intent. German and Polish railroad employees partook of the charade, explaining to apprehensive Jews that comfortable facilities awaited them at the end of the line. “Only the young will have to work,” the rumors said.

News of the death camps arrived in Krakow in November 1942, after the two waves of deportations were complete. A female relative wrote a letter to a Jewish doctor in Krakow who was "passing" as a Polish Christian outside the ghetto on the so-called Aryan side. She was living in Lvovthe present-day capital of Ukraine. Her train trip to Lvov had taken her by the Belzec death camp, which was located on a main railroad line. This letter was the first confirmation of what hitherto had only been rumored: The Jews were being physically destroyed.

In a 1994 interview, Emilie Schindler said, "At first we knew nothing about the Jews. Eventually everyone in Krakow knew that they were killing Jews. My God, how could we not know?"

Still, the general belief in the ghetto affirmed the possibility of survival: "Whoever endures will lives." Marian Peleg-Marianska, a young Jewish woman "passing" as a Christian in Krakow, has written that "hopeful rumors" were "shared by the Jews like bread by the starving."

MARCH 13, 1943

The final "liquidation" of the Krakow ghetto occurred on March 13, 1943. It was conducted with characteristic Nazi brutality. "The German proclivity for viciousness," Panankiewicz wrote, "was limitless." The last of the Krakow Jews were either deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau or, if deemed "essential workers," they were sent to the Plaszow labor camp outside of Krakow.

The Germans tried to prevent Jewish parents from smuggling their children to Palszow, but nonetheless three hundred children reached the camp.

Even in this late hour, many of the Jews still "deluded themselves," according to Panakiewicz, "that they might live, that the papers would be needed, reactions similar to the death twitches and convulsive quivering of a hanged man."

Many German industrialists using Jewish slave labor in Krakow went to great lengths to have these workers excluded from deportation. Panankiewicz writes, "Occasionally there were cases of sincere sympathy and willingness to help individual Jews, as I could judge from the stories of those directly concerned. Usually, each of the Germans acted in his own interests because the loss of workers and first class specialists could cause the liquidation of the shop, resulting in consignment of the manager to the front. Each was interested, therefore, in protecting his Jews from deportation."

At this stage of the destruction process, where did Schindler stand? Was he interested in saving "his" Jews for humanitarian reasons? Or was he interested in saving them for reasons of profit? Or both?

JEWISH RESISTANCE

In the autumn of 1942, the Jewish Fighting Organization, known by its acronym ZOB, emerged. It had secret cells in several Polish cities, including Krakow. The Jewish resistance in Krakow comprised members of the prewar Zionist youth movement Akiba. Its leaders were Adolf Liebeskind, Simon Draenger and his wife Gust Dawidsohn, Maniek Eisenstein, and Abraham Leibowicz.

Akiba purchased a handful of weapons on the black market. They also received weapons from the small Polish communist resistance movement known as the People's Guard. The major Polish resistance movement, the Home Army, or "AK," was largely unfriendly to Jews and, in any event, was weak in the Krakow region.

The first action of the Jewish fighters in Krakow occurred in August 1942 when they derailed a military train between Krakow and Bochnia. Lacking explosives, the Jews simply unscrewed the rails. In September, the Jewish fighters killed a number of lone German soldiers on the streets of Krakow and added to Akiba's fledgling stockpile of weapons. They also assassinated the German director of the Price Control and Price Administration Board in Nazi-occupied Poland. His death caused quite a stir in the Krakow region, although the Germans said he died in a car accident.

The Jewish resistance in Krakow also published two clandestine newspapers, one of which was the "Hekhalutz Halokhem" ("The Fighting Pioneer"). One issue exhorted the Jews to flee from the ghettoes because "each fight from the executioner's hands is today a fighting action. We must make it difficult for him to carry out his work of extermination. Do not lay your own head on the block."

In October 1942, Akiba members dug a tunnel into a German garage and set fire to several military vehicles. On Novermber 2, 1942, the Jewish fighters attempted to assassinate Marcel Gruner, a Jewish informer working for the Gestapo. The attempt failed, but a second attempt did not.

On December 22, 1942, in one of the first and most spectacular guerrilla actions in Poland during the war, Jewish fighters bombed the coffee house Cyganerja and two other cafes which were frequented by German officers. At the Cyganerja, eleven Germans were killed and thirteen others seriously wounded. The Jews also attacked an officers' mess, but apparently the bomb did not explode, and, according to the German account, the Jews "tried to achieve their aims by using firearms."

Hitler was enraged by the Jewish actions in the capital of the General-Gouvernment, and he ordered the high-ranking Gestapo agent, Heinrich Mueller, to Krakow. The Nazi manhunt for the resistance fighters was merciless, and virtually the entire ZOB organization in Krakow was wiped out. As a result of betrayal by two ZOB members, Leibowicz, dressed in the uniform of a German officer, was captured. The Gestapo pounced on Judah Tenenbaum, but the Jewish fighter snatched a German's pistol and killed him before being felled by machine-gun fire. The Abika leader Liebeskind was surrounded by German police. He killed two Germans and wounded two others before being shot himself. The other Jews who were captured later escaped from a truck driving them to the site of their execution at Plaszow. Eventually, they were hunted down and slaughtered.

"We are fighting for three lines in the history books," Liebeskind said a few weeks before his death. His wife, Rivka, escaped from Krakow with several other Jewish fighters, hoping, as she later said, "to set up hideouts, to work in forests, and to enable Jews to hide—because they still hoped that the war would end." The aim, she said, "was to save at least someone to relate our story."

For eight months in 1942-'43, the Jewish resistance waged urban guerrilla warfare against the Germans in the very heart of the Nazi-occupied Poland.

ZEGOTA

In December 1942, the Council for Aid to the Jews, known clandestinely as Zegota, was established in Warsaw. This small, highly unique Polish organization was dedicated to saving the remnant of Polish Jewry. With a handful of courageous and indefatigable workers, Zegota provided funds to Jews in hiding, produced false documents, smuggled food and other goods into the Nazi camps, and rescued an estimated 2,500 Jewish children by hiding them in Catholic orphanages and convents.

Zegota was founded by Zofia Kossack, a prewar novelist and a member of the wartime Catholic organization, "Front for the Rebirth of Poland." In September 1942, Kossack issued an illegal leaflet which decried both the annihilation of the Jews and the silence of the Poles, and which, at the same time, demonstrated that even those who acted to rescue Jews were not without the anti-Semitic sentiments deeply imbedded in the cultural milieu. Kossack wrote:

> Our feeling toward the Jews has not changed. We continue to deem them political, economic, and ideological enemies of Poland… But we protest from the bottom of our hearts filled with pity, indignation, and horror. This protest is demanded of us by God, who does not allow us to kill. It is demanded by our

> Christian conscience… Who does not support the protest with us, is not a Catholic.

Kossack, who employed her children in Zegota's rescue efforts, was suspected of resistance activities by the Germans and sent to Auschwitz. They did not suspect that her activities included the rescue of Jews, or she would have been executed forthwith. In the end, Kossack was ransomed out of Auschwitz by her friends, whereupon she resumed her efforts on behalf of the relatively few Jews left alive in Poland.

In April 1943, Zegota opened a secret office in Krakow. It was directed by Stanislaw Dobrowolski, a member of the Socialist Party. He helped find sanctuary for Jewish children and was also instrumental in smuggling food and clothing into the Plaszow camp. Later, he helped direct the smuggling of goods into Schindler's factory at Brunnlitz, Czechoslovakia.

Dobrowloski's opinion of Schindler was scathing. He described the businessman as "a benefactor out of fear," one of the many war-profiteers in Krakow "who had for long years employed for a token fee the slave labor supplied by the camp commandant and, toward the end of the war, when at last they took alarm, let themselves be terrorized to the point of acting as intermediaries in smuggling whole cart-loads of bread and clogs, purchased by Zegota," into the Plaszow camp.

AMON GOETH

The SS officer Amon Goeth (pronounced Gert) commanded the Plaszow labor camp. He had orchestrated the final "liquidation" of the Krakow ghetto as well as the ghettoes in several provincial towns, including nearby Tarnow. Goeth had additional experience at three death camps in eastern Poland, Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka.

Born in Vienna, Austria, in 1908, Goeth came from a family well-established in the printing industry, and he hailed from that nation which supplied an inordinately large number of Nazi criminals to the destruction process. The long list includes Adolf Eichmann, the SS officer who organized the deportation of Jews from all of Europe to the death camps in Poland (and who was executed by the Israelis in 1962 after being captured and smuggled out of Argentina).

"I knew Goeth," said Anna Duklauer Perl, a Jewish Survivor. "One day he hung a friend of mine just because he had once been rich. He was the devil."

Pankiewicz observed Goeth at work in the Krakow ghetto: "Tall, handsome, heavy set with thin legs, head in proportion, and eyes of blue, he was about forty years old. He was

dressed in a black leather coat, held a riding crop in one hand and a short automatic rifle in the other; close to him were two huge dogs.”

“When you saw Goeth, you saw death,” said Poldek Pfefferberg, one of the Schindlerjuden.

THE BUREAUCRATS

As a Nazi, Goeth was both typical yet unusual. Sadists abounded in Nazi-occupied Poland, nut they could not have done their work without the countless and faceless “des-bound murderers” who enjoyed the warmth of an office in Berlin (and elsewhere), had emotionally stable family lives, and never set foot into a concentration camp.

The bureaucrats, comprising every branch of the German civil service, arranged for the expropriation of Jewish property. They scheduled the trains taking the Jews to the death camps, as though they were a trainload of vacationing Germans bound for Italy or the Greek islands. They arranged for the delivery of the Jewish property to bombed-out German civilians, including bloodstained clothing. They took orders. They issued decrees.

Organized murder on so vast a scale as implemented by the Nazis required teamwork. The bureaucrats were team players, as integral to the murder of Jews as Goeth himself. The majority of the government bureaucrats in Nazi Germany had been at their jobs long before the Nazis seized power in 1933. Indeed, relatively few were members of the Nazi Party.
The impassive bureaucrats share responsibility for the Holocaust. For the victims, there was no difference between Goeth and his administrative accomplices.

The sadist murders with his hands- the bureaucrat with his pen.

THE GOETH-SCHINDLER RELATIONSHIP

Initially the Schindlerjuden were allowed to live in a sub-camp at Schindler’s factory. In August 1944 they were forced to move to the Plaszow labor camp. According to Keneally, Schindler befriended Goeth for the purpose of protecting his workers and thereby keeping his profits rolling in. After all, the murder of the Jews meant the end of his thriving business. The exact nature of the Schindler-Goeth relationship is unknown, but it is not implausible

that Schindler and Goeth were friends. Schindler enjoyed friendly relations with the top SS and Gestapo people in Krakow. He spent virtually all of his time in the company of murderers.

After the war, when Schindler was visiting some of the Schindlerjuden in Israel, a journalist asked, "How do you explain the fact that you knew all the senior SS men in the Krakow region and had regular dealings with them?" Schindler answered evasively with characteristic wit: "At that stage in history, it was rather difficult to discuss the fate of Jews with the chief rabbi of Jerusalem."

A great many of the Nazis were susceptible to bribery, Goeth among them. Feathering his nest, Schindler plied Goeth with money and the usual variety of black market goods. The SS arrested Goeth in September 1944, charging him with theft of Jewish property (which 'belonged to' the Reich and should have been forwarded to Berlin). After the war, on September 13, 1945, Goeth was hung by Polish authorities at the site of the former camp at Plaszow. He died unrepentant.

In a 1994 interview, Helen Rosenzweig, a Jewish woman whom Goeth chose as one of his personal servants, remembered Schindler as a frequent guest at Goeth's villa overlooking Plaszow. "He was a jolly, kind man and he liked to drink. Many times he would come into the kitchen and with a smile on his face he would pat my hair and say, `Don't worry. I will take care of you. You will be free. You will get rid of this hell.' He called me `kindchen,' which in German means `little child.' I couldn't make him out."

"JUDENFREI"

In July 1943, the Nazis declared the region of Slisia in southern Poland to be "Judenfrei" or "Free of Jews." In fact, a remnant of Polish Jewry survived in a handful of labor camps, Plaszow among them.

As the Soviet armies advanced from the east toward Poland, Hitler ordered the extermination of the hitherto protected "essential worker.". In effect, Hitler decided that it was more important for the Jews to be destroyed than it was for the essential war factories to continue operating. The war against the Jews took precedent over that against the Allies.

In the summer of 1944, trains deporting the Hungarian Jews to Aushwitz received right-of-way over war transports to the Russian front. Indeed, Aushcwitz's most lethal period was

during the last months of the war when the German army was retreating on all fronts and Allied bombs were daily falling on the Reich.

Once the tide had changed, the Nazis tried to destroy the evidence of their killing. At death camps like Belsec, Treblinka, and Sobibor, the Nazis ordered commandos of Jewish slaves to unearth the thousands upon thousands of bodies that had been buried. The bodies were burned in huge bonfires (as depicted in the film). Pine forests were planted where the gas chambers had stood, and a Ukrainian guard was stationed in the vicinity to prevent local Poles and Ukrainians from uprooting the remains in search of the fabled “Jewish gold.”

In the effort to destroy the evidence of their work, the Nazis were the first Holocaust-deniers. In an October 1943 speech, the SS leader Heinrich Himmler acknowledged that the German people themselves would not understand the murder of millions of Jews.

THE "LIST"

On September 4, 1944, as the Eastern Front crumbled and the Soviet Red Army approached Krakow, the Nazis closed the Jewish camp at Schindler’s factory. The Schindlerjuden were sent to Plaszow. On October 15, 1944, however, Plaszow itself was "liquidated." It was at this point that Schindler established his “list.” Hitherto, Schindler’s actions on behalf of the Jews had been subtle and the result of self-interest. In the autumn of 1944, that changed.

Determined to save his Jewish workers from extermination, Schindler bribed Goeth to send the Schindlerjuden to a new factory that Schindler planned to establish at Brunnlitz in Czechoslovakia, near his hometown of Zwittau. The site was directly over the Sudeten mountains from Auschwitz-Birkenau.

To strengthen his argument, Schindler insisted that his Schindlerjuden were needed to build the “secret weapons” that Hitler had promised would win the war. It was a clever argument; many Germans held out hope that the Fuehrer would produce yet another miracle.

Schindler’s “list” comprised the names of the Jewish workers who were ostensibly needed to operate Schindler’s “war essential” factory. It was, in essence, a list of those who would live and, by exclusion, those who would not. The Nazis reduced life to a brutal equation: I want to live; hence, you must die.

AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU

The Schindlerjuden were transported by train from Krakow to the new factory in Czechoslovakia, but three hundred Jewish women were mistakenly routed to the death camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. The rescue of these Jewish women has never been satisfactorily explained. After the war, in 1949, Schindler and Stern told a journalist that the women had been sent to Gross-Rosen, a concentration camp in eastern Germany. In his book, Keneally acknowledges that the entire affair is clouded with uncertainty.

To effect the rescue, Schindler had resorted to bribery. It is not unreasonable to suspect that Schindler dealt with Nazi officials who, recognizing that the war was coming to an end, were determined to fatten their wallets prior to escaping to South Anerica. The Nazi criminals who were so efficient at killing an unarmed people were also remarkably efficient in making good their post-war escape, an escape financed by the wealth of those they had murdered.

In any event, Schindler did rescue these women from a Nazi camp, a fact to which many of the women have testified. That “was something nobody else did,” said Johnathan Dresner, a Tel Aviv dentist, whose mother was among the rescued.

BRUNNLITZ

The Jews who arrived at Schindler’s new factory at Brunnlitz numbered over a thousand. Schindler also rescued an estimated 85 Jews who had been sent from Auschwitz-Birkenau to a nearby Nazi labor camp at Golleschau. The Jews were put to work at the factory producing munitions, but it is said that Schindler sabotaged the production line so that little of any value ever left the factory.

The main problem at Brunnlitz was food. The neighboring German community was not in the least bit interested in a Jewish labor camp in the vicinity and were loathe to share what little food was available with the despised Jews.

It is in Brunnlitz that the role of Emilie Schindler became paramount. "It was so little that they [the Nazis] gave the people to eat," Emilie Schindler said in a 1993 interview. “To everyone, not just the Jews. No matter who they were. For everyone it was very little.” Emilie recalled that within ten days the Jews had consumed their monthly allotment of food. For the next twenty days, they had nothing to eat but “air.”

Emilie Schindler worked indefatigably to secure food for the Brunnlitz camp. Emilie insists that there was much more to Oskar Schindler than that altruist depicted in the book and movie. She says that Oskar Schindler, who abandoned her after the war, procured no food for the camp. "I don't recognize it when he lies. You know, when he says that he brought the food ? No, nothing did he bring! All the food, I brought!...All the food that the Jews ate, that the Germans ate, that the SS ate, I brought. Not him. He brought nothing."

MAY 8, 1945

On May 8, 1945, the war in Europe ended. Schindler gathered his Jews before him. One of them, Murray Pantirer, recalled the words of Herr Direktor: "He said, `Mein Kinder (my children), you are saved. Germany has lost the war.' "

A day later, the 1,200 Schindlerjuden were liberated by a lone Russian officer on horseback, the vanguard of the Soviet Red Army. The officer, who was Jewish, said, “I don’t know where you ought to go. Don’t go east --that much I can tell you. But don’t go west either. They don’t like us anywhere.”

Two thirds of European Jewry had been exterminated, and the few words spoken by a Russian officer summarized the Jewish lesson of the Second World War. Upon those words the nation of Israel was founded.

Before he and Emilie fled west in the direction of American forces (dressed in prison garb, under the “protection” of eight Schindlerjuden, and with a letter in Hebrew testifying to his lifesaving actions), Schindler received a gift from his grateful Jews: A ring made from gold fillings extracted from one of the grateful Jews. The ring was inscribed with the Talmudic verse: “He who saves one life, it is as if he saved the entire world.”

The fate of the gold ring symbolized Schindler’s frailties and contradictions that rendered his heroism even more perplexing. Several years after the war, a Schindlerjuden asked him what he had done with the gold ring? “Schnapps,” Schindler replied, referring to the liquor which he had gotten in exchange for the gold ring.

SCHINDLER AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

> If we sent him three thousand to four thousand dollars, he spent it in two or three weeks. Then he phoned to say he didn't have a penny.
>
> --Mosche Bejski, a Schindlerjuden

Not unlike before the war, Oskar Schindler's postwar life was characterized by a notable lack of achievement. In fact, Schindler was a failure in everything he attempted. Immediately after the war, he tried to produce a film. The effort failed. In 1949, the Jewish Distribution Committee ("Joint") made Schindler an *ex gratia* payment of $15,000 in appreciation of his wartime efforts. In addition, Schindler received one hundred thousand marks from the West German government as indemnification for his property confiscated by the communists in the east.

SOUTH AMERICA

With this tidy sum (and with his wife Emilie, his mistress, and half a dozen Schindlerjuden families), Schindler emigrated to Argentina, the destination of many former Nazis. There he purchased a farm and tried his hand at raising chickens and nutria, the latter a small animal whose fur was deemed a luxury item. The effort failed. Nutria fur did not become popular, and, in any event, Schindler squandered his money.

What did he spend it on? "Idiocies," said his wife. When Emilie was asked what Schindler did for a living, she replied, "Schindler doesn't do anything. He just runs around with young women in luxury hotels and spends money."

By 1957, a bankrupt Schindler and his wife lived in a house outside of Buenos Aires provided by the Jewish organization B'nai B'rith.

RETURN TO WEST GERMANY

In 1958, Schindler left Argentina for West Germany. He never returned, abandoning both his wife and mistress. The two became close friends.

"The first thing he did was sell his return ticket," Emilie said. She was left in very difficult straits and lost the farm when she was unable to pay the mortgage. Emilie then raised dairy cows on a small plot of rented land.

With additional money given to him by “Joint” and by grateful Jews, Schindler tried to establish a cement factory. It failed. Explaining this series of financial debacles, Keneally has written that Schindler had “a low tolerance for routine."

In the late 1950's, Schindler lived in a cheap apartment overlooking the train station in Frankfurt, West Germany. It was hardly an enviable setting for the man accustomed to a beautiful woman on the arm of one of his tailored suits. Schindler’s life had turned a full circle since his glory days in Krakow when he boasted to his wife that he had 350 employees in contrast to his father who in his heyday had only 50.

Schindler’s subsistence was now based on gifts from the grateful Jews he saved, and his spirits reflected the reversal of fortune. Poldek Pfefferberg, urging the Schindlerjuden to donate at least a day’s earnings per year to their savior, described Schindler’s mental state as one of “discouragement, loneliness, disillusion.”

One of the Schindlerjuden, Mosche Bejski, the forger of Nazi documents who later became an Israeli supreme court justice, said, “If we sent him three thousand to four thousand dollars, he spent it in two or three weeks. Then he phoned to say he didn’t have a penny.””

ISRAEL

In 1961, a group of Schindlerjuden invited Schindler to Israel for a visit. This was the year that Adolf Eichmann, the SS officer who organized the deportation of Jews to the death camps, was tried in Jerusalem. One of the witnesses against Eichmann was a German civilian engineer named Herman Grabbe. He had rescued Jews in Ukraine. Grabbe had previously testified against Nazi war criminals at the International War Crimes Tribunal at Nuremberg after the war; the subsequent publicity caused Grabbe and his family to be ostracized in West Germany.

During the Eichmann trial, Grabbe's testimony highlighted the existence of the non-Jews who risked their lives to rescue Jews, a subject that hitherto had enjoyed little publicity. In turn, the contrast between Eichmann and Schindler, who was then vacationing in Israel, was noted by the Israeli press, and an effort began to honor Schindler as a Righteous Gentile.

RIGHTEOUS GENTILE

The honor came on his birthday in 1962. Yad Vashem bestowed upon Schindler the medal inscribed with the Talmudic verse (in Hebrew and French): "He who saves one life, it is as if he saves the entire word." In addition, Schindler was invited to plant a carob tree (with a plaque bearing his name) on the Avenue of the Righteous at Yad Vashem.

The surviving Schindlerjuden turned out in great number to honor their wartime savior, but, as with Herman Grabbe, reaction in West Germany was not exactly cordial.

As with many Righteous Gentiles after the war, Schindler was ostracized by many of his countrymen precisely because he had saved Jews. His postwar testimony against Nazi war criminals compounded the hatred many Germans had for him. Schindler was hissed on the streets of Frankfurt. Stones were thrown at him. "Too bad you didn't burned with the Jews!" a group of workmen shouted. In 1963, Schindler punched a factory worker who called him "a Jew kisser." Schindler was dragged into a local court, given a lecture by the judge, and ordered to pay damages. "I would kill myself," Schindler wrote to one of the Schindlerjuden, "if it wouldn't give them so much satisfaction."

THE LAST YEARS

Each spring, from 1961 to his death in 1974, the Schindlerjuden invited Schindler to Israel. His Jewish friends paid his expenses. Usually accompanied by a mistress, Schindler invariably slept late, never arising before eleven in the morning. Each day he "held court" with friends at a street-side cafe in Tel Aviv.

On April 28th of each year, the Schindlerjuden gathered to celebrate Schindler's birthday. He always waited until everybody was seated before he made a grand entrance "like a prime minister," as a Schindlerjuden recalled. "He loved children. He saw all the children and grandchildren of those he had rescued as his own family."

Today, the descendants of the 1,200 Jews Schindler saved number 6,000.

Schindler, whose raspy voice and ruddy face were the marks of a drunkard, followed his pleasures to the grave. He died of liver failure on October 9, 1974, at age sixty-six. At his side was a mistress, this time the wife of his doctor.

"One of the church's least observant sons," Keneally writes, was buried at the Catholic cemetery in Jerusalem. Five hundred Schindlerjuden stood at his grave, paying last respects to the enigmatic man to whom they owed their lives.

EMILIE SCHINDLER AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The Jews he saved, me he abandoned.
-- Emilie Schindler

In a 1994 interview, Helen Rosensweig, a Schindlerjuden, remembered Emilie Schindler as "a very quiet, subdued, refined looking lady." Emilie Schindler lives in San Vincente, a suburb of Buenos Aires, Argentina. It is a one room cottage that that the Jewish organization B'nai B'rith provides her. She spends the twilight of her life taking care of her dog, seventeen stray cats, and a rose garden. Her bones ache and she walks slowly. Now, since the film *Schindler's List*, her life has been interrupted by curious journalists. "They can make a movie if they like," she said in a December 1993 interview. "It doesn't interest me. I have been forty-three years in Argentina and nobody remembers me...I don't remember much myself."

One thing Emilie Schindler does remember is the high-handed manner in which her husband abandoned her. In 1957, he decided to return to West Germany for a visit, but he never returned. According to Emilie, "Schindler was supposed to come back, but I think the first thing he did was sell the return ticket. He had mortgaged our farm, so I had to sell it off to pay the bills."

Emilie Schindler does not refer to her late husband as “Oskar” but only as “Schindler.” It is a measure of her contempt. "Schindler never sent anything. He spent the money on women."

The world has come to admire Oskar Schindler, but Emilie despises him. Was he a saint or the devil? "A saint of the devil," she replied.

The savior of the Jews was a scoundrel: "He did have his things, eh? For the Jews he did much, no? But I don't recognize it when he lies.”

Schindler was a lazy, self-indulgent man. "With that money," Emilie said, referring to Jewish gifts and a payment from the German government for lost property, "he could have become rich. He didn't want to. Here he had a good job offer. He didn't want that either."

Is she bitter? "People who are no good don't make me mad."

Was there ever happiness in the marriage? "No. People who don't like to work, I don't like."

What explains Schindler's rescue efforts on behalf of the Jews? Emilie gives credit to the Jews who influenced him. In a 1973 interview, she said that Schindler “had done nothing astounding before the war, and had been unexceptional since. He was fortunate to have people in that short fierce era who summoned forth his deeper talents.”

Her opinion of the book? "For a novel, it's awfully clear," Emilie says, referring to the depiction of Schindler's promiscuous life-style which she believes has no part in the story. She would have preferred that the story stick to "the serious things, what happened….Leave the other apart."

Does she feel like a celebrity now that the movie is out and has been so well received? "Never. I am not for those things, you know? What I did I did for humanity. I don't need publicity. I don't need songs or whatever. I'm very simple in that sense."

"They make him a star that shines," she said. "He was. But now he is not."

Emilie traveled to Schindler's grave in Jerusalem for the filming of the cemetery scene which closes the film. "I hardly knew anyone," she recalled. "The Jews know me, they all know me. But...I can't keep them in my head...They all knew me because they came in contact for food and everything...One says this, the other says that, gives me this: I can't remember anything."

Like many who assisted Jews during the war, Emilie Schindler minimizes her courageous acts: "They say in that book (Keneally's Schindler's List) that I gave the Jews the food in their mouths. I never had time to find out who was sick and who had to be fed (by hand). I am no good as a nurse, I tell you frankly. I have no talent for nursing...I bought the food for everyone."

Emilie Schindler did not receive Yad Vashem's distinction as a Righteous Gentile. Her deeds, which came largely at the end of the war when the Schindlerjuden had been transferred from Plaszow to Brunnlitz, did not constitute, according to Yad Vashem's strict criteria, acts that went beyond "ordinary acts of charity." In December 1993, the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., awarded Emilie Schindler a medal for her wartime efforts. She had her photograph taken beside Miep Dies, one of the protectors of Anne Frank in Amsterdam. Stephen Spielberg was present. He described Emilie Schindler combing through the dead bodies in a railroad car, searching for Jews who might have survived..

In German, she replied with a modesty typical of a Good Samaritan: "We just tried to do what we could."

SCHINDLERJUDEN: WHY DID HE DO IT?

In his book *Schindler's List*, Thomas Keneally writes, "At some point in any discussion of Schindler, the surviving friends of Herr Direktor will blink and shake their heads and begin the almost mathematical business of finding the sum of his motives.

`I don't know why he did it,' they say. `Oskar was a gambler, was a sentimentalist who loved the transparency, the simplicity of to ridicule the system; that beneath the hearty sensuality lay a capacity to be outraged by human savagery, to react to it, and not to be overwhelmed.'"

Since the release of Spielberg's film, the surviving Schindlerjuden have been asked to describe Oskar Schindler and, often, the question arises: Why did he do it?

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Johnathan Dresner: "He was an adventurer. He was like an actor who always wanted to be centre stage. He got into a play, and he couldn't get out of it."

Moshe Bejski: "Schindler was a drunkard. Schindler was a womanizer. His relations with his wife were bad. He often had not one but several girlfriends. Everything he did put him in jeopardy. If Schindler had been a normal man, he would not have done what he did."

Danka Dresner: "We owe our lives to him. But I wouldn't glorify a German because of what he did for us. There is no proportion."

Ludwik Feigenbaum: "I don't know what his motives were, even though I knew him very well. I asked him and I never got a clear answer and the film doesn't make it clear, either. But I don't give a damn. What's important is that he saved our lives."

Helen Roeszweig: "I couldn't make him out...I think he felt sorry for me."
Eva Scheuer, one of Schindler's secretaries: "He was larger than life, likable and gallant."

Abraham Zuckerman: "The movie didn't show all the little things he did; he came around and greeted you. I had food, protection, and hope."

Helen Beck, one of the women rescued from Auschwitz: "I will never forget the sight of Oskar Schindler standing in the doorway (at Brinnlitz). I will never forget his voice - `Don't worry, you are now with me.' We gave up many times, but he always lifted our spirits...Schindler tried to help people however he could. That is what we remember."

Salomon Pila: "I don't know why he was so good to us, but I would say, `Thank you very much,' because he saved my life."

Ludmilla Page: "To know the man was to love him. For us, he was a God."

Abraham Zuckerman, pointing to a photograph of Schindler taken at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem: "Look at that face. Can't you fall in love with a guy like that?"

Helen Beck, referring to racial tension and conflict today: "It hurts us very much. You see the world, they have not learned so much from the past."

Mrs. Wertheim, referring to a conversation with her grandson who had just seen the film with his friends: "He said everyone of them, and they were not only Jewish boys, were all taken by that film. They didn't believe that something like that could happen. I told him he should go more often, with more friends. I want everyone should see what can happen."

ALTRUISM IN WAR

The hand of compassion was faster than the calculus of reason.

-- Otto Springer, rescuer.

Webster's Dictionary defines altruism as "an unselfish regard for or devotion to the welfare of others." In war, however, the term assumes a power that words cannot measure.

Why did they do it? Why did a small number of Gentiles risk their lives to rescue a small number of Jews during the Nazi-occupation of Europe?

The question is difficult to answer. The historian can ask sundry questions of surviving rescuers, delving into the past with expert knowledge, but it is impossible to return to the moment in 1942 when a beleaguered Jew knocked on the door and begged his Gentile neighbor for shelter from the Nazi storm. The Nazis' penalty for a non-Jew assisting a Jew was death. Death for you, death for your family.

It is impossible to enter the soul of another person, to explain the matter of conscience.

Such was the upside down moral universe created by the Nazis that reason suggested the Gentile close the door as quickly as possible. The Nazis made it abundantly clear that the penalty for a non-Jew assisting a Jew was death.

In her book, When Light Pierced the Darkness: Christian Rescue of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland, Nechama Tec tells the story of a Polish family that momentarily sheltered a Jewish girl "whose Semitic features spelled doom." The father of the Polish family insisted that the risk was too great. His daughter, Zofia, who wanted to keep the Jewish child, described her father's attitude this way: "He was a realist; he saw things more clearly and perhaps this is why he was more afraid." The Jewish girl was asked to leave. She survived elsewhere, and felt grateful for the few days Zofia's family had given her.

To many, the idea of rescuing a Jew was the furthest thing from their minds. In Poland, the Jew had been defined as the chief villain long before the Germans arrived in 1939. Miriam Peleg- Marianska, a Jewish woman who worked clandestinely for Zegota (Council for Aid to Jews) in Krakow during the occupation, has written, "The sowing of hatred would not yield a harvest of compassion."

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When studying the behavior of non-Jews during the Holocaust, we stand at the moral precipice. It is important to avoid a rush to judgment, a quick condemnation. The task here is to understand, not to condemn. As Maria Peleg-Marianska has said of the rescuers, “One is challenged to think whether in similar circumstances one would have found the inner resources to act as they did.”

What would I have done? It is a question everyone who studies this subject must ask themselves. It is, however, a question with a loud echo but no answer. Only the moment can decide. An individual, however selfless and humanitarian in previous circumstances, does not know how he or she will react until the knock on the door forces a decision. The student who knows the answer does not yet understand the question.

To explore what motivated the rare Gentile to risk his life for a Jew is a useful exercise in empathy. In December 1940, on the eve of the Nazi destruction of the Jews, the writer John Dos Passos wrote, “Our only hope will lie in the frail web of understanding f one person for the pain of another.”

Magda Trocme, who with her husband Andre saved Jews in the French (Protestant) village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, recognized the value of studying the events of fifty years ago. She said, “Remember that in your life there will be lots of circumstances that will need a kind of courage, a kind of decision of your own, not about other people but about yourself."

It is said that history repeats itself. This might be stated otherwise: Human nature remains the same. Let us turn our attention to that very subject.

OBSTACLES TO RESCUE

> "He was a realist; he saw things more clearly and perhaps this is why he was more afraid."
>
> --Zofia, a Polish girl whose father refused to hide a Jewish girl

There were many obstacles confronting the Gentiles who would offer succor to the outcast Jews of Nazi-dominated Europe.

1. TERROR:

The Germans had relatively few men to spare for the occupied-territories, fewer still for the task of annihilating the Jews. The majority of young healthy German men were required at the front. Thus, the Nazis ruled by terror first and foremost. Hanna Arndt, in her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, wrote, "There exist many things considerably worse than death, and the SS saw to it that none of them was ever very far from their victims' minds and imaginations."

In 1942, the year in which the majority of Polish Jews were slaughtered, there were only 12,000 German policemen in all of Nazi-occupied Poland. In addition, there were 12,000 Polish "blue" police and between 1,500 and 1,800 Ukrainian police. Both groups served the Nazis in the annihilation of the Jews. Also serving the Nazis during the "liquidations" of the Jewish ghettoes were foreign auxiliaries from Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. The list of Nazi collaborators constituted a host of nation.

Terror was omnipresent in each of the countries under Nazi domination. But the Nazis viewed the people of western Europe quite differently from the people of eastern Europe. The people in the East were treated as sub-humans ("untermensch"). Whereas the French intelligentsia was left relatively untouched, the Polish intelligentsia was wiped out first thing.

Destroy the leadership class, the Nazi logic followed, and it is easier to subjugate the nation.

Poland was the setting of the Holocaust. Here the Nazis built the six death camps to which they transported and murdered Jews from all the countries of Europe. In Poland, the Nazis dealt with the prospect of Gentile assistance to Jews in terms that admitted no ambiguity. On October 15, 1941, they issued the following decree:

> Jews who, without authorization, leave the residential district [i.e., the ghetto] to which they have been assigned will be punished by death. The same punishment applies to persons who knowingly provide hiding places for such Jews. Abettors and accomplices will be punished in the same way as the perpetrator, and an attempted act in the same way as an accomplished one.

Few people were inclined to brave the collective punishment administered by the Nazis. The rescuer's family, neighbors, and fellow townspeople were subject to summary execution. To render assistance to a Jew meant risking the lives of loved one- a daunting prospect for the most heroic of individuals. Paradoxically, to be selfless required a certain selfishness.

In contrast, Schindler had greater resources than ordinary rescuers. For example, the Gestapo arrested Oskar Schindler three times. The first time he was charged with kissing a Jewish girl at his birthday party, a violation of the Nazi race laws. The third time Amon Goeth, the commandant of the Plaszow labor camp, tried to save himself from imprisonment by informing the Gestapo that Schindler had bribed him with 80,000 Reichmarks to "go easy on" the Jews.

Each time he was arrested, Schindler resorted to friendly connections with high ranking SS and Wehrmacht officers, and to bribery. Thus did he manage to elude the Gestapo. At the time of his third arrest, true to his bon-vivant character, Schindler demanded the return of his 80,000 Reichsmarks bribe to Goeth, describing it as a business expense!

Three times arrested, three times released. Inherent advantages such as those Schindler enjoyed were far beyond the reach of the average Pole.

2. INFORMERS:

The Gentiles who decided on the path of rescue had to contend with native collaborators. In Poland, there was a professional class of scoundrels known as the Schmalzownicki (blackmailers). This class, the lowest dregs of Polish society, sought out Jews in hiding and betrayed them to the Germans for a meager reward of money, vodka and sugar. Outside of every ghetto in Poland the Schmalzownicki lurked in the shadows, waiting to blackmail the Jew trying to escape to the "Aryan side." "You Poles are a strange people," an SS man is

reported to have said during the occupation. “Nowhere in the world is there another nation which has so many heroes and so many denouncers.”

The rescuer of Jews also had to contend with the neighbor who simply did not like Jews, the neighbor who believed the destruction of the Jews was God’s wrath in the guise of Hitler, the neighbor who feared the presence of hidden Jews would provoke the Nazis to retaliate by punishing everyone in the building.

The rescuers also had to contend with Jewish informers. “Was I afraid of Jews?” asked Miriam Peleg-Marianska, a Jewish woman who worked for Zegota, the Council for Aid to the Jews. “I must admit I was. There were all sorts and we were often warned to be on our guard… one had to live through such infamy.”

In Krakow, particularly nefarious was a Mrs. Chilowicz. Her task was to inform the Germans where Jewish children were hidden in the Plaszow camp. Like most informers, she betrayed others to save herself, and then perished with those she had betrayed.

At not time and in no place was the Jew or the rescuer safe in Nazi dominated Europe. Informers were everywhere, waiting to turn a profite by denouncing the Jew.

3. CULTURE:

Anti-Semitism (hatred of Jews) played an important role in discouraging sympathy and aid for the Jews. Anti-Semitism was no invention of the Nazis. It is deeply rooted in Western culture.

The Holocaust historian Raul Hilberg has noted: “The Nazis did not discard the past, they built on it. They did not begin a development. They completed it… The missionaries of Christianity had said in effect, ‘You have no right to live among us as Jews.’ The secular rulers who followed had proclaimed, ‘You have no right to live among us.’ The German Nazis at last decreed, ‘You have no right to live.’”

For centuries, the Catholic church instructed the faithful that the Jews were responsible for the death of Christ. The theological basis for anti-Semitism was the account of Christ's crucifixion found in the New Testament, St. Matthew 27.

"And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.

When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the bood of this just person: see ye to it.

Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children."

It is important to note that the Second Vatican Council, in 1965, stated very clearly that the Jews were not to be held accountable for the death of Christ.

Before the war in Poland, however, Gentile children leaving the church on Easter Sunday and at Christmas often shouted “Christ killer! Christ killer!” at Jewish shops and Jewish homes, the windows of which were closed in anticipation of the Christian holiday.

The historian Hilberg has written, “The missionaries of Christianity had said in effect, `You have no right to live among us as Jews.’ The secular rulers who followed had proclaimed, `You have no right to live among us.’ The German Nazis at last decreed, `You have no right to live.’"

The Jew was “the other,” often despised and when not despised the Jew was still viewed as existing beyond the boundaries of obligation.

It is difficult to imagine the degree of anti-Semitism that existed in Europe (and in the United States) before the Second World War. The 1929 depression inflicted economic dislocation and vast insecurity, which, combined with the spread of Nazi propaganda, heightened the ancient argument that the Jews were responsible for the misfortunes of mankind.

Additionally, the Jews were linked in the popular imagination with communism. It is true that many leading communists were Jewish, but very few Jews were communists. The great majority of Jews were very religious, and communist aetheism did not appeal to them.

In Poland, Jews were very prominent in the economy. The majority of stores and taverns were Jewish owned. `They imposed their prices!' the Poles said. The people who lent money were Jews, as Catholic teaching forbid Christians to engage in usury. Who likes the man who lends money at interest?

The Jew was despised by Catholics because he was a Jew. He was despised by communists because he was a capitalist. He was despised by capitalists because he was a communist.

Paradoxically, the Righteous Gentiles were often not free of the anti-Semitic images and values that influenced European life as a whole. It is important to emphasize that the Righteous Gentiles did not rescue Jews because they were free of anti-Semitic prejudice. Rather, they rescued Jews because they were able to put the life of an individual (or individuals) before anti-Semitic prejudice.

KEY POINT: During the Nazi occupation of Poland, Zegota, a small, unique

organization, had as its task the rescue of Jews. It is of interest that the founder of Zegota, Zofia Kossack, was a novelist who work was not without anti-Semitics overtones. Indeed, when she published a pamphlet in 1942, titled "Protest," she stated frankly that the Jews were "the enemies" of the Polish people, but Poles should not let them be murdered by the Nazis. Zofia Kossack is a classic example of an individual who saw Jews as human beings despite her freely acknowledged dislike of them.

In order to save lives, Righteous Gentiles often had to sever the bonds linking them to their own culture. It is for this reason that many Righteous Gentiles, including Schindler, were ostracized by their countrymen when their deeds became public after the war. Not infrequently, it occurred that the Righteous Gentile bade his saved Jew goodbye with the firm admonition: Don't tell anybody what I did.

4. "JEWISH LOOKS"

A Jewish person who had stereotypical "Jewish looks" stood little chance of surviving the Nazis. This person was virtually impossible to hide. Few Hasidic Jews, with their long beards and earlocks, survived. In Poland, where the majority of Jews spoke Yiddish as their first language, the wrong Polish accent, or a typical Yiddish phrase translated into Polish, was enough to betray a person as Jewish. Little items, almost unnoticeable, gave the Jews away. Drinking vodka was a Polish habit, but not a Jewish one. If a "passing" Jew did not accept a drink, this might be suspicious. Jewish women had a certain advantage hiding their Jewish origins in contrast to Jewish men, whose Jewishness became obvious when ordered to drop their pants; Jewish men alone were circumcised. Many Jews suffered from so-called "Jewish eyes," that is, eyes filled with sadness, not a rarity given what those eyes had witnessed. "Jewish eyes" were enough to betray a Jew trying to "pass" as a Christian.

Essential for a "passing" Jew was a complete set of documents, including a ration car, a work card, a residence card, a birth certificate, a travel permit, etc. All of these documents had to forged by an expert in the field, but if a Jew had "Jewish features," the best documents were of little value.

ALTRUISM IN WAR: QUESTIONS

1. The rescuer of Jews, Otto Springer, has said, "The hand of compassion was faster than the calculus of reason." Explain what he meant?

2. The Nazis ruled by terror. Why?

3. The Nazi terror in western Europe was different from the terror they imposed in eastern Europe. How was it different? Why was it different?

4. `Paradoxically, to be selfless required a certain selfishness.' In the context of Jewish rescue, what is meant by this statement?

5. What were the four principal obstacles to the rescue of Jews in Nazi dominated Europe? In what ways did these obstacles dissuade Gentiles from rescue efforts? How did the Righteous Gentiles overcome these obstacles? Which of the obstacles applied to Oskar Schindler? Which did not?

6. What was Zegota? Who was its founder? What was unique about this person and the organization?

7. In your opinion, did a Jewish person have the "right" to ask a Gentile to rescue him? Explain. Are there certain people you think you would rescue, and certain people you would not?

8. What was the not infrequent way a Righteous Gentile bade his saved Jew goodbye at the war's end? Why was this done?

THE ALTRUISTICALLY INCLINED: SCHOLARLY INTERPRETATIONS

This section draws on the writings of two scholars who have studied the Righteous Gentiles for insight into the behavior of the altruistically inclined. The question “Why did the do it?” should follow the questions "Who were they?" and "What was their background?"

NECHAMA TEC

Nechama Tec, born in Lublin, Poland, in 1931, survived the Second World War “passing” as a Christian girl with the help of those she describes as “decent” Poles. Their “main motivation,” she writes, “was money; only with time did bonds of affection develop between us.”

Today, Tec is professor of sociology at Connecticut University and author of several books about the Holocaust, including her autobiographical account of surviving the Nazis in

Poland, Dry Tears: The Story of a Lost Childhood, and her study of Righteous Gentiles, When Light Pierced the Darkness: Christian Rescue of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland.

It should be emphasized that Tec's conclusions are based exclusively upon her study of Righteous Gentiles in Nazi-occupied Poland. In this land, for almost a thousand years, Poles and Jews had lived side by side one another, but at a distance; they had been neighbors, but never quite countrymen; they had in the same villages, but always in separate, insular worlds, and, generally speaking, each group preferred it that way.

Both Poles and Jews suffered grievously under the Nazis, but with an important distinction, as Holocaust survivor and Nobel Prize winner Elie Wiesel has noted: "Not all victims were Jews," he has said. "But all Jews were victims." It is understandable that a Pole who lost his family has a difficult time understanding the difference between the Nazi treatment of Jews and the Nazi treatment of Poles.

The Nazis murdered three million Polish Jews, and three million Polish Catholics also perished during the Second World War. Polish Jewry no longer exists; the "biological substance" of the Polish people does.

The Jews accuse the Poles, "You did not help us." The Poles reply, "You did not fight back." Thus does recrimination follow in the footsteps of the Nazi genocide.

There were, however, Poles who defied the Nazi terror, and their own culture, to rescue Jews. Nechama Tec describes these Righteous Gentiles as "dormant heroes, often indistinguishable from those around them." Poles represent the greatest number of people honored by Yad Vashem as Righteous Gentiles.

"We live in a shaky and uncertain world," Tec writes, "a world that offers little help in choosing life values. In such a setting, knowledge and awareness about noble and self-sacrificing behaviors may help restore some shattered illusions. Indeed, mere awareness that in the midst of ultimate human degradation some people were willing to risk their lives for others denies the inevitable supremacy of evil. With this denial comes hope."

TEC'S CONCLUSIONS:

1. "INDIVIDUALISTS"

The rescuers were all "individualists." They displayed striking self-reliance in pursuing personal values (versus cultural values) in their rescue efforts.

2. DEVOUT CATHOLICS

Among the rescuers were devout Catholics. Tec argues that Catholic teaching served paradoxical ends: On one hand, the church said that the Jews were responsible for the death of Christ and, presumably, should be punished; on the other hand, the church instructed the faithful, “Love they neighbor.” “It leads a person to a wide range of interpretation,” Tec explains. “So there is this twist.”

It should be pointed out that many individual priests and nuns assisted in rescue activities, but the Catholic hierarchy in Poland remained silent on the subject, giving no instructions one way or the other.

3. UPLANNED RESCUE

Often (but not always, to be sure) the rescuers did not previously know the Jews they saved. In this type of situation, the Gentile frequently acted “spontaneously” and even “impulsively” to help a Jew. The first assistance rendered was often “unplanned” and “gradual.”

4. "UNIVERSALISTIC PERCEPTIONS"

The rescuers had “universalistic perceptions of the needy that overshadowed all other attributes except their dependence on aid.” They viewed Jews not as Jews, with the resultant negative stereotypes, but simply as people in need. “To these Righteous Poles it mattered little who the victims were. Anyone in need qualified for help.” One Righteous Gentile (a woman) said she would have helped a Nazi, if need be

5. A MOST UNASSUMING LOT

The Righteous Gentiles were, generally speaking, a most unassuming lot. Extreme modesty was a foremost characteristic. They had to be prodded to discuss their wartime actions and were extremely reluctant to speak about themselves in a “heroic” light. “Saving the one whose life is in jeopardy is a simple human duty,” said one. Typically, they managed to push their fears in the background. “None denied it (fear) existed, but they refused to focus on punishment.”

They had “matter of fact views about rescue, which come together with the insistence that there was nothing heroic or extraordinary in their protection or of aiding Jews...to provide help for them [the Jews] was taken for granted, and they found it hard to explain.”

6. "A LONG LASTING COMMITMENT"

> The Righteous Gentiles often had “a long lasting commitment to aid the needy, a commitment that began before the war and that in the past infrequently involved Jews. They accepted and took for granted standing up for the poor and downtrodden...Protection was the result of an already established pattern of helping the needy.”

"Risking lives for Jews fit into a system of values and behaviors that included helping the weak and the dependent...Only during the war was there a convergence between historical events demanding ultimate selfishness and the already established predisposition to help.”

Zegota, the Polish organization involved in Jewish rescue, was initially comprised by a handful of women who had worked in the pre-war Social Welfare Department in Warsaw. Long before the Holocaust, these women had been devoted to the cause of poor and orphaned children.

7. ABSENT FRIENDS

> In one of her more startling conclusions, Tec writes that Gentile friends of Jews typically did not help their Jewish friends. “Helping Jews did not qualify as behavior required from friends. The rescuer of Jews had to be propelled by other forces, forces that went beyond the usual expectations of personal friendship.”

8. "ON THE PERIPHERY"

> In what she describes as “a new theory of rescue and rescuers,” Tec concludesthat the majority of Righteous Gentiles lived on the “periphery” of their pre-war communities. “The Poles on the periphery of their communities were more likely to save Jews than those who were well integrated into their social surroundings.” Why? “Being on the periphery of a community means being less affected by the existing social controls.” In other words, the Poles given to rescue were not controlled by the values of the community (i.e., by its anti-Semitism). They were not fully integrated and thus were less likely to be constrained by societal prejudices and dictates such as: The Jew is “different;” the Jew is “the other;” what happens to the Jew is of no concern to “us.”

In an interview, Tec said, "It is those who are exceptional, those that are different, that have the ability to enter into somebody, to identify with the suffering. The outsiders in a sense. If you are not so fully integrated into an environment, if you perceive yourself as different, then perhaps you are much more objective, you have an independent view of what is

happening, and if you have a much more objective view of what is happening, you are much less likely to approve of what you see. Most of us go along with what is. We don't have the strength, most humans, to object and to fight and to oppose."

9. "DORMANT HEROES"

Tec describes the Righteous Gentiles as “dormant heroes” who led unremarkable lives both before and after the war. Plainly, the characteristics that led them to rescue were not characteristics that assured them of, for example, financial success in the normal times of the post-war years.

10. CONCLUSION

In her conclusions, Tec argues that intellectuals were “more prone” to rescue than any other class. The peasantry was “less likely” to aid Jews. However, it must be noted that peasants constitute the largest number of Poles honored as Righteous Gentiles. It had been argued that the middle class, the class in the most fierce competition with the Jews during the pre-war period, was generally not inclined to rescue Jews, but Tec did not find this to be the case.

NECHAMA TEC: QUESTIONS

1. Tec concluded that many of the Righteous Gentiles were "individualists" who were not bound to societal constraints. Does this apply to Oskar Schindler? In what way was he a individualist? In what way was he a conformist?

2. Is there any evidence in the film of Oskar Schindler harboring anti-Semitic prejudices? If so, what are they?

3. What influence, if any, did religion play in Oskar Schindler's change from Nazi Party member and rescuer of Jews?

4. The rescuers, Tec writes, "had universalistic perceptions of the needy that overshadowed all other attributes except their dependence on aid." What does she mean by this? Does the observation apply to Oskar Schindler?

5. According to Tec, the Righteous Gentiles were a modest bunch who did not look at their deeds in a heroic light. Does this apply to Oskar Schindler? If so, how. If not, how. Give examples.

6. Did Oskar Schindler have a previous commitment to aiding the needy? Explain, using examples.

7. Tec concluded that Gentiles rarely helped their Jewish friends. On what basis does she make that statement? Is this the case with Oskar Schindler? Explain.

8. The majority of rescuers Tec interviewed had lived on "the periphery" of the pre-war communities. How did this influence their war-time behavior when it came to the Jews? Does Tec's theory apply to Oskar Schindler? If so, how? If not, why?

9. Tec describes the Righteous Gentiles as "dormant heroes" who led unremarkable lives both before and after the war. Why? How does Oskar Schindler's life reflect this description?

EVA FOGELMAN

Eva Fogelman, the daughter of a Holocaust survivor, is a founding director of the Jewish Foundation for Christian Rescuers, an organization whose stated purpose is "recognition of goodness." Pursuant to that, the organization locates Christian rescuers, provides them with financial support (when necessary), and, not least, acknowledges their "moral courageduring an immoral time." To date, the Foundation for Christian Rescuers has provided aid to more than one thousand two hundred rescuers, many of whom were found to be in dire straits.

In addition, Fogelman is author of Conscience and Courage: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust, (New York, 1994). The book, in Fogelman's words, "traces the psychological making of a rescuer." A great deal of emphasis is accorded the upbringing of the person who would become a rescuer. What sort of parents did the rescuer have? What values did the parents instill? And, most importantly, can moral behavior be taught?

In contrast to the rescuers Nechama Tec interviewed, exclusively Polish, Fogelman's conclusions appear to be based mainly upon interviews with rescuers in Germany and in western Europe.

FOGELMAN'S CONCLUSIONS:

1. JEWS AS HUMAN BEINGS

"It is the capacity to act lovingly toward people whom one does not even know," Fogelman argues, "that is essential for development of social conscience."

"They (the rescuers) saw people who were different from them and responded, not to these differences, but to their similarities. While most saw Jews as pariahs, rescuers saw them as human beings...Compassion for others rests on the recognition that the one asking for help differs little from the one offering it." "

"In talking with rescuers from all kinds of different homes, I found that one quality above all others was emphasized time and again: a familial acceptance of people who were different. This value was the centerpiece of the childhood of rescuers and became the core from which their rescuer self evolved. From the earliest ages, rescuers were taught by their parents that people are inextricably linked to one another. No one person or group was better than any other."

2. DIFFUSION OF RESPONSIBILITY

The act of intervention on behalf of the abused is a complicated procedure. The bystander must first recognize that a person needs help. In western Europe, the Nazis made this recognition difficult by concealing their murderous intentions behind a cloak of euphemisms. There was no talk of murder. The Jews were to be "resettled" in the east. Once recognizing that a person is in danger, the bystander had to assume the responsibility to offer help and have the necessary confidence and ingenuity to come up with a plan to effect the rescue. The bystander had to believe that he or she could make a difference. Frequently, the decision to rescue was a decision that had to made very quickly. There was little time for physical or psychological preparation. The preparation had to be in place.

Fogelman asserts that a bystander is much less likely to intervene on behalf of the abused if the bystander is in a crowd. It appears to be a human proclivity to assume that someone else, the person beside you in a crowd, will be the one to intervene. It is not my responsibility, a bystander explains. Someone else will take care of it. Thus, by way of a "diffusion of responsibility," a bystander's conscience is assuaged, permitting the bystander to carry on his or her way.

Fogelman writes: "Like a horse shielded from sights to the left or the right, most bystanders were equipped with blinders...They kept their vision narrow to protect themselves and allow themselves to focus on surviving in this new terror filled Nazi world. Mistreatment of the Jews became background noise."

Describing the rescuer Irene Gut Opdyke, Fogelman says that she "had a keen, emphathic nature that gave her a will to see what others ignored."

Of interest is Fogelman's observation that "sights, smells, and sounds of that moment of critical realization are etched forever in the rescuer's memory.

3. NARCISSIM

In what would seem a paradox, Fogelman writes that many rescuers said that the fear and terror of the Nazi-occupation was in fact one of the most satisfying periods of their lives. In essence, the rescuers not only saved a life (or lives), but derived immense fulfillment from their rescue efforts. They felt better about themselves.

The rescuers were motivated by narcissim, that is, by love of self. In other words, the self-less act is based upon a selfish instinct.

Anna Freud, the well-known psychanalyst, believed that an altruistic motivation does not exist. Those who help others, she argued, receive personal gratification from their self-less behavior.

Summarizing the argument typical of psychoanalysts, Fogelman writes that "rescuers' acts derive from self-centered unconscious motivations. For example, for certain civilians the act of rescue enabled them to express their rage against the Third Reich. Saving lives of Jews provided them with narcissistic gratification of outwitting their oppressors and the pleasure of having a person or persons totally dependent on them. Most analysts would argue that self-gratification rather than altruism underlay rescuers' deeds."

4. CHILDHOOD

Fogelman was particularly interested in the family backgrounds of the rescuers, hoping to find here the clues to the altruistic behavior that would follow. She contends that conscience or morality is the result of the "original nurturing situation" between children and their primary guardian.

"It was not a whim that led these people to risk their lives and those of their families," Fogelman writes, "but a response, almost a reflexive reaction in some cases, that came from core values developed and instilled in them in childhood."

When interviewing rescuers, Fogelman anticipated the characteristic childhood experiences and influences that she believes molded the character of the child who would later become the rescuer.

"I began after a while to wait for the recital of one or more of those well known passages: a nurturing, loving home: an altruistic parent or beloved caretaker who served as a role model for altruistic behavior; a tolerance for people who were different; a childhood illness or personal loss that tested their resilence and exposed them to special care; and an upbringing that emphasized independence, discipline, with explanations, rather than physical punishment or withdrawal of love, and caring."

Furthermore, Fogelman concluded that "the moral integrity" that led to the act of rescue was a characteristic that repeated itself throughout the life of the rescuer, both before the Nazi-occupation and afterwards.

CHILD PSYCHOLOGY AND ALTRUISTIC BEHAVIOR

In her book, Conscience and Courge, Fogelman refers to the pertinent conclusions of several leading psychologists and others regarding altruistic behavior:

1. "From four to eight years old, children have heteronomous morality. Their behavior is subject to another person's law. A child's respect for authority guides his concept of what is right and wrong."

--Jean Piaget, child development expert

2. "Parents who explained rules and used inductive reasoning instead of harsh punishment tend to have children who care for and about others. Parents who voluntarily relinquish the use of force in favor of reasoning send their children a message about how the powerful should treat the weak."

--Eva Fogelman, summarizing a conclusion by Martin Hoffman, New York University social psychologist

3. "Rescuers experienced a loving and trusting relationship with an affectionate mother, had a communicative and non-authoritarian father, and were often an only or a favored child."

-- Frances Grossman, New York psychologist

4. "Altruism best and most effectively communicated in homes where parents exerted firm control over their children. Parents tended to explain to them the consequences of hurting other children and to do so with an admonition such as `I don't like to be with you when you act like that.' They reasoned rather than threatened."

-- Carolyn Zahn-Waxler, developmental psychologist

5. "Rules laid down without discussion or justification:" Children raised in this type of environment "have trouble making independent judgments. Where there is little or no explanation, all directives seem from the child's perspective, arbitrary and irrational. So they give up and do what they are told."

-- Alice Miller, Swiss author?

6. "Example is not the only thing in influencing others. It is the only thing."

-- Albert Schweitzer

EVA FOGELMAN: QUESTIONS

1. After interviewing many Gentiles who had rescued Jews during the war, Fogelman writes, "I began after a while to wait for the recital of one or more of those well-known passages." What is she referring to? What does she mean by "well-known passages."

2. What does Fogelman mean by "diffusion of responsibility?"

3. Fogelman writes that the rescuers were people who responded "not to differences, but to similarities." What does this mean?

4. "The mistreatment of the Jews became background noise," Fogelman writes. Explain.

5. What, according to Fogelman and the psychoanalysts she quotes, are the ingredients of the perfect childhood?

THE LIFE OF OSCAR SCHINDLER: STUDY QUESTIONS

Directions: The following questions can be

PART I

Suggested discussion questions for students:

1. **WHY DID HE DO IT?**

> Schindler risked his life in order to save Jews. It was a time when terror reigned. The Jews had been dehumanized in non-Jewish eyes by Nazi propaganda and by the brutal treatment meted out to the Jews. Keneally, the author, quotes Schindler himself as having said during the Holocaust, **"**A life is not worth a pack of cigarettes.**"** Yet Schindler risked his own life. Why?

KEY POINT: Schindler did not come to Krakow to save Jews. He came to turn a profit, and Jews became a part of the bargain. It might be argued that his ideas about rescue evolved. In the book, Keneally writes that Schindler made the first step towards assisting the Jews on December 3, 1939. He whispered unambiguous words into Stern's ear: "Tomorrow, it's going to start. Jozefa and Izaaka Streets are going to know all about it." He was referring to a forthcoming SS "aktion."

Twenty years after the war, Mosche Bejski, a Schindlerjuden and later a Supreme Court justice in Israel, asked Schindler why he did it?

> Schindler replied, “I knew the people who worked for me. When you know people, you have to behave towards them like human beings."
>
> The same question was asked by Poltek Pfefferberg, another Schindlerjuden.
>
> Schindler answered, “There was no choice. If you saw a dog going to be crushed under a car, wouldn’t you help him?”

In a 1964 interview outside his apartment in Frankfurt, West Germany, Schindler said, "The persecution of Jews in occupied Poland meant that we could see horror emerging gradually in many ways. In 1939, they were forced to wear Jewish stars, and people were herded and shut up into ghettos. Then, in the years '41 and '42 there

was plenty of public evidence of pure sadism. With people behaving like pigs, I felt the Jews were being destroyed. I had to help them. There was no choice."

KEY POINT: It is possible Schindler was the sort of person who was propelled by his own words which, on occasion, seemed impulsive, slipping out with little forethought? In the book, Schindler is quoted as saying to the first batch of Jewish workers who arrived at his factory, **"**You**'**ll be safe working here. If you work here then you**'**ll live through the war.**"** The Jews did not believe he could possibly make good on that promise.

> Having spoken the words, however, Schindler might have felt compelled to fulfill them, without anticipating (or thinking through) the problems, and dangers, that lay ahead.
>
> Later, during a more perilous hour, Schindler (in the book) declared: **"**I**'**m going to get you all out.**"** Stern asked, **"**All?**" "**You anyhow,**"** said Schindler.

KEY QUOTE: Jonathan Dresner, one of the Schindlerjuden, has said, Schindler was an adventurer. He was like an actor who always wanted to be centre stage. He got into a play, and he couldn't get out of it.

KEY POINT: Luitgard Wundheiler, a psychotherapist, has written an article devoted specifically to Oskar Schindler's behavior during the Holocaust. The article, titled "Oskar Schindler's moral development during the Holocaust," appeared in the "Humboldt Journal of Social Relations, 13 (1 and 2), 333-356.

In Krakow, Schindler found himself in a position to assist those who were in a precarious state: The Jews. They had been dehumanized. They were on the verge of destruction. Any act of humanity (a job, a kind word, a place to stay) was recieved with exaggerated but understandable appreciation. Vain and insecure, Schindler was not unmoved by the attention a desperate people bestowed upon him.

Initially, Schindler was motivated by friendship to individual Jews. But gradually the Nazi industrialist won a reputation as a kind and compassionate man. He was "a savior." His factory was "a haven." The Jews working in his factory became "his Jews," the Schindlerjuden. Schindler began to glory in his reputation as a kind and compassionate man. He liked the role he was playing. It made him feel good. It filled a psychological vacumm in his life. This self-definition was a motivating factor.

Wundheiler argues that Schindler, "being defined by others as a compassionate and caring man," began to see himself in the same light. As a result, he acted in line with that idea, which in turn reinforced others' view of him as a humanitarian, and it spiraled."

He calls this "a developmental spiral."

2. WHAT WAS THE ROLE OF ITZHAK STERN?

What examples are there in the film of Itzhak Stern pushing Schindler in the direction of rescue?

It was Stern who first quoted the Talmudic verse to Schindler: "He who saves one life, it is as if he has saved the entire world."

Schindler replied, "Of course, of course."

KEY POINT: The role of Itzhak Stern (Ben Kingsley) is crucial. Stern, an accountant, informs Schindler that German industrialists have to pay the SS less for Jewish slave labor than for Polish labor. In this way, Stern first opens the door for the possibility of Jewish rescue at Schindler's factory.

In the film, Schindler sits down with Stern and proposes a toast to the factory's success. With the Nazi destruction of Jews taking place outside of Schindler's factory, and throughout Poland, Stern is not interested in a toast. **"**Pretend for Christ's sake,**"** Schindler pleads. **"**I'm trying to thank you, and acknowledge I couldn't have done it without you.**"** Stern replies, **"**You're welcome.**"** But he does not lift his glass.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTION: How does this exchange influence Schindler?

KEY POINT: Schindler is thinking about his successes, but Stern, subtly and in a dignified way, reminds him that the world in which Schindler lives and thrives is not Stern's world. In contrast, Stern's world is being destroyed by the same men--the SS and Gestapo--with whom Schindler usually raises his glass.

> "I know what you're doing," Schindler says in the film on another occasion, referring to Stern's maneuverings to bring more endangered Jews to the "haven" of Schindler's factory. It is as if Schindler is backed into the role of being a rescuer against his will.
>
> It should be noted that Schindler developed a strong relationship with the elder Stern that continued after the war. The relationship has been described as one of "a father and son." When Stern died in 1969, Schindler attended the funeral and wept uncontrollably at the grave.

KEY QUOTE: In a 1973 documentary for West German television, Emilie Schindler said, that Schindler had done nothing astounding before the war, and had been unexceptional since. he was fortunate to have in that short fierce era met people who summoned forth his deper talents."

3. WHY DID HE DO IT?

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4. WHEN DOES SCHINDLER MAKE THE DECISION TO RESCUE JEWS?

It should be emphasized that there is absolutely no correct answer to this question. It might be argued, however, that Schindler**'**s thinking on this subject underwent **"**an evolution.**"** It was a gradual process.

KEY QUESTION: Which are the key events that nudge Schindler along the path of rescue? It should be noted that Schindler**'**s initial efforts for the Jews

were modest: he warns Jews (in the book) of an impending **"**aktion"; he takes Jews as skilled workers who are not skilled; he arranges extra food for the Jews; he allows Jews to sleep at the factory during **"**aktiones**"** in the ghetto. But it should be emphasized that Schindler first fought for the Jews because he wanted to keep his factory--and his profits--going.

KEY POINT: It might be considered that Schindler**'**s dueling with the SS over the fate of the Schindlerjuden was at least in part a result of the fact that he believed the SS was treading on his **"**territory**"** and the good life he was leading.

KEY QUOTE: **"**Quite skilled," Schindler tells an SS officer (in the film), referring to a Schindlerjuden who had only one arm and who does not appear to be "an essential worker."

This was a Jewish worker whose value Schindler himself had doubted. Schindler was not interested in the one armed machinist as a human being, but as a worker. Stern arranged for the machinist to thank Schindler personally for allowing him to work at the factory. Schindler is livid. "Don't do that to me again," he tells Stern. But when this same one armed machinist is murdered by the Nazis, Schindler is furious. To repeat, he says, "Quite skilled." One armed or not, the machinist was Schindler's machinist.

5. WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE?

KEY QUOTE: In the film, the Nazi commandant Goeth describes Jewish people as "vermin" and as "rats." In this depiction of the Jews Goeth is following the tenets of Nazi propaganda which were ceaselessly emphasized in Nazi Germany and in the occupied territories.

KEY QUESTION: Why did the Nazis depict the Jews as **"**vermin**"** and **"**rats?**"** What purpose did it serve them?

KEY POINT: Reducing the Jews to these images, the Nazis sought to dehumanize the Jewish people, to push them beyond the boundaries of human and moral obligation, to reduce them to the "other." This was a necessary first step, in the minds of the Nazis, in the process of first isolating the Jews and then exterminating them.

KEY QUESTION: Ask your students about the use of language in their own community. How do they and their friends describe a different ethnic group? In the

students' environment, how does language reflect the feelings of a person towards a different group?

KEY POINT: One word, it should be emphasized, can confer dignity; one word can take it away. The process of dehumanization begins with the selective use of language. It can be argued that hatred begins with a single word. In many countries, including Poland, the very word "Jew" was a pejorative, a slur, because of the negative associations attached to Jews: dirty, dishonest, greedy, etc.

6. WHY DID THE JEWS NOT RESIST?

This is one of the most frequently asked questions about the Holocaust. It is assumed that the Jews "went to their death like sheep to the slaughter." The question, however, should be rephrased: How was it possible that the Jews resisted as much as they did.

There were revolts in three major death camps: Sobibor, Treblinka, and Auschwitz-Birkenau. In the major ghettos, the Jewish underground staged insurrections, most notably in Warsaw (April 1943). When the Nazis "liquidated" ghettos, Jews hid behind false walls (as depicted in the film). When the Jews in Poland realized that deportation meant death, many jumped from the trains and fled. Hundreds lived in the forest where they fought in partisan groups against enemies who were both Germans and local anti-semites (Polish and Ukrainain).

In the ghettos, the mere act of prayer was a violation of the law. When the Nazis forbid the Jews from wearing beards and earlocks, the traditional Jews in the Krakow ghetto pretended to have toothaches, and they wrapped their head with a scarves so only their eyes and noses were visible. In this instance, tradition proved stronger than the Germans.

The Germans began deporting the Polish Jews to the death camps in March 1942. By January 1943, most of the Jews in Poland were dead. The search for Jews across the Polish landscape, however, continued for two and a half years.

Pankiewicz.
infilm resist?

KEY POINTS:

1. The Jews had no weapons; even a damaged pistol was hard to come by. Bullets were a rarity. The Polish underground had

few weapons, which it was not inclined to relinquish to Jews. Generally speaking, the Polish underground did not look kindly on Jews. The common Polish assumption was that Jews were cowardly, and would not fight. In Krakow, the Jews received some weapons and explosives from the Polish communist underground.

2. In Poland, where the Jews from eastern and western Europe were exterminated, the Nazis ruled by terror. The terror served to intimidate.

3. The Jews were subjected to disease, starvation, and humiliation, each of which served to strip the Jews of self-worth and break their will to resist. It is important to emphasize that humiliation is an important weapon.

4. The Jewish leadership (Judenrat) in many communities counseled against resistance, hoping to avoid retaliation and decimation.

The leadership suspected the Nazis would kill individual Jews but believed the Jews would nonetheless survive as “a biological entity.” As a despised minority throughout the preceding centuries, the Jews had endured many pogroms (spontaneous outbursts of violence directed against them). Few anticipated the Nazis would be so radically different from persecutors of the past.

KEY POINT: In the film, an SS officer boasts: “We are not the Romans. We are the SS.” This is a reference to the fact that the Romans “simply” persecuted the Jews. The Nazis aimed to uproot and destroy the "biological substance” of the Jewish people in its entirety; two thirds of Europeans Jewry was destroyed.

It should be noted that the Judenrat based its opinion not only on Jewish history but on the very sound assumption that the Nazis would not be so irrational as to kill the Jews because, after all, the Jews were valuable workers necessary to run industries vital for the German war effort.

KEY QUOTE: Tadeusz Pankiewicz, the Krakow ghetto pharmachist, described this scene during one of the "aktiones" in the Krakow ghetto:

"In the space betwen the pharmacy and the ranks of SS men walked a woman with a slow majestic strie. She was pretty, nicely dressed young lady, wearing a light green cape...He

(the SS man) said something, she replied, and suddenly the German started to beat her....The woman bent her head slightly and remained motinless, rigid as a statue. She volunteered for deportation to be with her mother, and this aroused the fury of the SS men. She did not moan or cry, she did not beg. The German could not break her - he could not force her to plead for mercy...She stood next to her mother; they did not exchange a word. The SS men left, she wiped her face with a handkerchief; her mother patted her on the head. Moments passed. The German approached her again, and said something. I did not see her respond. The German grabbed her by her hair, pulled her out of the line and screamed viciously, indicating with his truncheon in which direction she was to go. She was not permitted to remain with her mother, she was spared. This was the will of the SS. The woman left, she went slowly, helpless against the overwhelming power. The mother's gaze followed her for the last time."

7. WHY DID THE JEWS NOT FLEE?

Jewish children were loathe to leave their parents by fleeing to the forests which, in any event, were frequented by anti-Semitic partisan groups, both Polish and Ukrainian. In this respect, the strong family bonds of the Jewish family served a disastrous end.

KEY QUOTE: As historian Martin Gilbert has noted, at the time of the deportations from Krakow to an unknown destination (which turned out to be the Belzec death camp), a twenty-four year old Jewish girl, Matilda Bandet, said, “My place is with my parents. They need me. They are old. They have no means of defending themselves. If I leave them, they will be alone. I will stay here with them.”

"They were free. Their last links with everyday life were broken,**”** wrote Gusta Dawidsohn in her diary, describing the Jewish youth in Krakow after the deportations of their parents in June and October 1942.

KEY QUESTION: Compare and contrast these two quotes. Put the student in the position of a young person in the Krakow ghetto who is torn between a wish to flee, and a need to take care of his or her parents. Ask the student: What would you do?

The people in the countryside were frequently hostile to the Jews; the threat came not only from the Nazis.

KEY POINT: In October 1942, Jews from the Krakow resistance movement (known as the Jewish Fighting Organization, or ZOB; see glossary) tried to set up a base in a nearby forest. The Jews were betrayed by local peasants; the Nazis were summoned and murdered the Jews.

PART II--SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

The destruction of the Jews was so widespread that in the years following the war little attention was paid to Jewish resistance or Jewish rescue. In fact, there was armed resistance in many of the Jewish ghettos in Poland (Warsaw, Bialystok, Czestochowa, and others). The revolt in the Warsaw ghetto (April 1943) lasted several weeks despite the overwhelming odds. As well, there were armed revolts in several death camps (Treblinka, Sobibor, and Auschwitz-Birkenau).

this above.

KEY POINT: It is not mentioned in the film, but in Krakow itself (the Nazi capital of occupied Poland) there was armed resistance. In 1942, a small group of Jews from the Zionist youth party obtained arms from the Polish communist party. In November and early December 1942, the Jewish resistance movement ZOB, led by Abraham Leibowicz pronounced Leibowitz, sabotaged railway lines, raided a German clothing store, and killed, in separate attacks: a German soldier, a German policeman, an SS man, an air force pilot, two Gestapo detectives and a senior clerk of German administration.

On December 22, 1942, a team of Jewish resistance fighters attacked and blew up two cafes in Krakow frequented by SS and Wehrmacht (army) officers, killing at least twenty, perhaps as many as fifty.

By February 1943, the Jewish resistance fighters had been either arrested or executed. Leibowicz, the founder of Krakow's Jewish fighting organization, was later shot while trying to escape.

KEY POINT: It should be noted that even without arms many of the Jews tried to resist. To gather for Jewish prayer was forbidden by the Nazis, yet Jews continued to pray in small groups in the ghetto. In the film, families are shown hiding behind false walls to avoid deportation; children flee to the toilets, where they submerge in filth; the little girl dressed in red (see below) slips off to hide (a temporary respite, as it turns out). These are accurate depictions of the Jewish struggle to

live. Likewise, Jews jumped from the train taking them to the death camps, particularly when they had discovered that the destination was not the vague “resettlement in the east,” as the Nazis promised.

KEY QUESTION: In the film, in what ways did the Jews resist the Nazis? What examples are there?

KEY POINT: In February 1941, two Krakow rabbis, Kornitzer and Rappaport, were sent to their death at Auschwitz-Birkenau because they had appealed to German authorities against the continuing deportations. This was the fate of any Jew who questioned German orders, let alone resisted the Germans.

8. THE GIRL IN RED

During the deportation of the Krakow Jews in June 1942, Schindler, on horseback (with his mistress) on a hill overlooking the ghetto, witnessed the brutal “aktion.” In the film, incidentally, the “aktion” was recreated in the Krakow neighborhood which, in 1942, had been the Jewish ghetto. Amidst the mass of forsaken humanity, Schindler observed a wandering Jewish girl ("a toddler,” Keneally writes) dressed in a red coat. In the book, Keneally writes that the sight of the child “compelled Schindler’s interest because it made a statement.”

KEY QUESTION: What does the girl in red symbolize? What is the **“**statement**”** to which Keneally refers?

KEY QUESTION: Why did Spielberg produce a black and white film in the first place? Why did he employ the color red in the case of the little girl? In what other instances in the film did Spielberg use color? Why?

KEY POINT: The girl dressed in red is a literary device. The child is a symbol. But of what? Innocence, yes, but who wasn't innocent? The child, distinguished by the color red, set apart from the crowd, stands out. She is presented as an individual alongside the gray masses. This serves to remind the viewer that the mass of forsaken humanity in the ghetto was a mass of individuals.

It is easy to get lost in the numbers: six million were murdered. But what is six million? It is too much for anyone to comprehend. It is important to emphasize, therefore, that each of the six million was an individual, an individual who had dreams, who had a life, who had a family.

What future might the child dressed in red have had if not for the Second World War and the Holocaust?

KEY QUOTE: According to Keneally, Schindler described the June "aktion" this way: "Beyond this day no thinking person could fail to see what would happen. I was now resolved to do everything in my power to defeat the system."

KEY QUESTION: Why was it this day, as opposed to earlier days, which made everything clear to Schindler?

KEY POINT: Keneally writes that on this day Schindler realized that the "aktion" in the Krakow ghetto was not a local atrocity perpetrated by a few SS men, but an atrocity that had been ordered by Berlin, an atrocity that had the approval of the highest authority: Hitler. He reasoned this because the SS (and their collaborators) did not worry about witnesses, like the girl dressed in red, because in the end all of the Jews would suffer the same fate and there would be no witnesses.

KEY QUESTION: Why did it take Schindler so long to realize the full implications of the Nazis' "final solution of the Jewish question?" What earlier examples were there which, in retrospect, might have alerted Schindler (and others) to the Nazi intentions?

KEY QUOTE: Twenty years after the war, Schindler said, "I knew the people who worked for me. When you know people, you have to behave towards them like human beings."

KEY QUESTION: What is the central theme of the film, Schindler's List?

KEY POINT: One interpretation of the movies theme is this: If you know someone as an individual, as opposed to knowing them simply as a member of a different ethnic group, it is more difficult to witness in silence their isolation, humiliation, and, in this case, destruction. When you know the individual, it is more difficult to push that person beyond the boundaries of moral obligation.

KEY POINT: It is important to point out to the students that the Nazis made a particularly determined effort to exterminate the Jewish children. Himmler, the Nazi SS and Gestapo chief, said the killing of the Jewish children was important lest they survive and avenge the extermination of their families. One and a half million Jewish children were murdered in the Holocaust.

KEY QUESTION: When does the child dressed in red reappear in the film? What is the connection between the two occasions?

PROJECTS

The following readings and questions can be used for discussion or writing activities

1. SMALL ACTS OF KINDNESS

KEY QUOTE: Elie Wiesel, Holocaust survivor, author of Night, and Nobel Prize laureate, has said, “It was enough to open a door, to throw a piece of bread, a shirt, a coin, it was enough to feel compassion...In those times one climbed to the summit of humanity simply by remaining human.”

ACTIVITY: Ask your students to make a list of the small acts of kindness they observed in the film, acts of kindness by Schindler, by Schindlerjuden, by anyone. In what way did these acts of kindness offer hope to the person (or persons) for whom they were intended?

KEY POINT: One example is the occasion when the Jewish boy, a member of the Jewish police, helped Mrs. Dresner to hide during one of the Nazi “aktiones” in the Krakow ghetto.

KEY QUOTE: Keneally writes, “As grateful as she (Mrs. Dresner) was to the OD (ghetto police) boy, it was clear as she went upstairs to get Danka that when murder is as scheduled, habitual, industrial as it was here in Krakow, you could scarcely, with tentative heroism, redirect the overriding energy of the system. The more Orthodox of the ghetto had a slogan: `An hour of life is still life.’ The OD boy had given her that hour. She knew there was no one who could give her more.”

ACTIVITY: What does Keneally mean by the expression, “tentative heroism?” What does it mean, “An hour of life is still life?” Do you agree? Is life under horrendous conditions better than no life?

2. MRS. DRESNER AND A FRIEND

During one of the Nazi “aktiones” in the Krakow ghetto in October 1942, Mrs. Dresner, a Jewish woman, and Danka, her child, sought refuge behind a false wall in the apartment of a friend. The friend, a woman and a neighbor, had prepared a place behind the false wall for her aged parents (who, unable to work, would be deported). The friend offered the hiding place to Danka and Mrs. Dresner.

The account in the book is taken from the reminiscences of both Mrs. Dresner and her daughter Danka after the war (both survived as Schindlerjuden).

Have your students read the account (aloud and in class) with a different student assuming each of the roles.

After reading the passage, have different students assume the role of each of the individuals involved: the friend; Mrs. Dresner; Danka; and the two aged parents. Then have the students answer the following questions:

1. When Mrs. Dresner and Danka arrived at the friend’s apartment, they received a rude surprise.

KEY QUOTE: The friend informed Mrs. Dresner, **“**It sounds bad. I have my parents in there already. I can fit the girl (Danka) in. But not you.**”**

KEY POINT: This scene, pitting life against life in the struggle to survive, was repeated many times elsewhere in the Krakow ghetto and in Nazi-occupied Poland.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Why did the friend deny Mrs. Dresner access to the hiding place? Did the friend have a “right” to deny entrance to Mrs. Dresner? According to Mrs. Dresner, the friend had offered refuge to both she and Danka, but the woman changed her mind. Why?

It might be argued that the friend was generous to offer the hiding place in the first place. She did not have to. Likewise, it appeared that four people could easily fit behind the false wall.

2. Danka finds refuge behind the false wall, but she becomes immediately concerned about her mother’s safety.

KEY QUOTE: Once inside the hidden “cavity,” Danka remembers that she “would not know why she had obeyed her mother and gone so mutely into hiding.” Danka was filled with the dual sensation of feeling

> "unexpectedly safe" behind the false wall, and "then fear for her mother, who was out there in the world of `aktiones.'"

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Ask the students if they would have obeyed their mother in the circumstances described? It should be emphasized that as far as Danka knew, this might have been the last time she would see her mother. What is worse: To survive without your mother? Or to die with your mother? Which would the student prefer? Why?

> If the mother had perished in the Nazi "aktion," Danka might well have been burdened by a sense of guilt. `Why did my mother perish while I survived"'`She gave her life for me.'
>
> The friend, likewise, might have felt guilt. Or she might have continued to feel justified.
>
> **Ask the students how each of the individuals (the friend, Mrs. Dresner, Danka, and the aged parents) might look back on this desperate encounter.**

3. After the Nazis had swept the ghetto, Mrs. Dresner returned to her friend's apartment to retrieve Danka.

KEY QUOTE: Keneally writes, "Upstairs, the woman was a little shamefaced. `The girl can come whenever she wishes,' she said. That is, according to Keneally's interpretation, "I didn't exclude you out of cowardice, but as a matter of policy." And the policy stands. `You can't be accepted, but the girl can.' Mrs. Dresner did not argue...She thanked the woman. Danka might need to accept her hospitality again."

DISCUSSION QUESTION: How did the friend react to Mrs. Dresner when she returned to the apartment? It should be noted that the friend again offers the hiding place for Danka. How does Mrs. Dresner react to her friend? Why?

KEY POINT: Shrewdly, Mrs. Dresner does not berate the woman. `You sent me to my death,' she might have said. `I narrowly escaped, but no thanks to you.' But she does not. A beleaguered Jew always had to think about the desperate future.

READING:

Mrs. Dresner and a Friend

"Mrs. Dresner took Danka with her down to Dabrowski Street, to the house of a neighbor who had a false wall. The neighbor was a woman in her late thirties...she had elderly parents who were automatic risks. So she had bricked up a sixty centimeter cavity for her parents...

She's mentioned it a number of times to Mrs. Dresner. If there was an "aktion," Mrs. Dresner could bring Danka and come herself. Therefore, on the morning Danka and Mrs. Dresner heard from around the corner of Dabrowski the startling noise, the bark of Dalmatians and Dobermans, the megaphoned roaring of Oberscharfuhrers (a Nazi officer), they hurried to their friend's place.

When the Dresners had gone up the stairs and found the right room, they could see that the clamor had had an effect on their friend. "It sounds bad," said the woman. "I have my parents in there already. I can fit the girl in. But not you."

Danka stared, captivated, at the end wall, at its stained wallpaper. In there, sandwiched in brick, rats perhaps worrying at their feet, their sense stretched by darkness, were this woman's elderly mother and father.

Mrs. Dresner could tell that the woman wasn't rational. The girl, but not you, she kept saying. It was as if she thought that should the SS penetrate the wall, they would be more forgiving on account of Danka's lesser poundage. Mrs. Dresner explained that she was scarcely obese, that the "aktion" seemed to be concentrating on this side of Lwowska Street (in other words, nearby), and that she would feel safer with her mother in there. You could see by measuring the wall with your eyes that four people could fit abreast in the cavity. But shots from two blocks distant swept away the last of the woman's reason. "I can fit the girl! she screamed. "I want you to go!"

Mrs. Dresner turned to Danka and told her to go into the wall. Later Danka would not know why she had obeyed her mother and gone so mutely into hiding. The woman took her to the attic, removed a rug from the floor, then lifted a raft of floorboards. Then Danka descended into the cavity.

It wasn't black in there: the parents were burning a stub of candle.

Danka found herself beside the woman, someone else's mother but...the woman smiled at her briefly. The husband stood on the far side of his wife, keeping his eyes closed, not to be distracted form signals from outside.

After a time the friend's mother motioned to her that she could sit if she wanted. So Danka crouched sideways and found a comfortable posture on the floor of the cavity. No rats troubled her.

She heard no sound, not a word from her mother and the friend beyond the wall.

Above everything else she felt unexpectedly safe. And with the sensation of safety came displeasure at herself for obeying her mother's order so woodenly, and then fear for her mother, who was out there in the world of "aktiones."

...Afterwards, Mrs. Dresner returned to the apartment to retrieve Danka. Upstairs, the woman was a little shamefaced. "The girl can come whenever she wishes," she said. That is, I didn't exclude you out of cowardice, but as a matter of policy. And the policy stands. "You can't be accepted, but the girl can."

"Mrs. Dresner did not argue...She thanked the woman. Danka might need to accept her hospitality again." p. 141-42

THE CONTEMPORARY RIGHTEOUS

This study guide is an analysis of the Righteous Gentiles, the individuals who risked their lives to rescue Jews from the Nazis. It is, moreover, an investigation of altruistic behavior. Why did Schindler embark on the path of rescue? Why did others risk their lives similarly? What was their background? Who were their parents? What influences formed the personality of the altruistically inclined? How did it occur that an individual viewed the life of another person as valuable as his or her own life?

The emphasis in this study guide has been on the events of fifty years ago in Nazi-occupied Europe. But examples of self-less behavior can be found everyday in contemporary society. By studying the altruistically inclined actions of others, the student explores his or her own behavior. As Magda Trocme, the rescuer of Jews in Nazi-occupied France, has said, "Remember that in your life there will be lotsof circumstances that will need a kind of courage, a kind of decisionof your own, not about other people but about yourself."

Rarely does a week go by that a newspaper account does not detail the heroics of an average person reacting to an extraordinary situation. Here are three examples:

1. During the riots in Los Angeles on April 29, 1992, Reginald Denny was pulled from his truck and beaten to within an inch of his life by a mob. Several people, watching the beating on television, hurried to the scene and rescued Denny. One of the rescuers, Bobby Green, said of the television images: "It felt like I was getting hurt. I thought he might die. I went to help."
Green arrived on the scene and drove Denny's truck to the hospital.

Lei Yuille, another rescuer, was watching television with her brother. Reacting to the images of Denny being pummeled, the brother said, "We're Christians. We need to go help." Yuille and her brother were the first on the scene. Yuille recalled, "I told him (Reginald Denny) I was there to help. He said he couldn't see, and I told him would guide him."

Reginald Denny is white; his rescuers are African-American.

2. In December 1994, a New York City subway exploded into flames. A passenger accidentally denoted a bomb in his possession. Many fled the scene, leaving the injured behind. Denfield Otto, an off-duty transit officer, did not. He snatched a fire extinguisher and doused two people whose clothing was engulfed in flames. "I got two people in flames, laying on the floor of the train," he recalled. "Some brave passengers too off their coats and tried to beat back the flames. Later, a reporter asked Officer Otto if he thought of himself as a hero? "No, I don't," he replied. "I only did my job."

A friend described Denfield Otto as a quiet, shy man who sings baritone in the choir of St. Philip's Episcopal church. One of his favorite songs is "O Holy Night." He was on his way to choir practice when the bomb exploded fifteen feet away from him.

"Black and white, it made no difference," Otto said. "One guy burning was a black guy, and white and black were beating out the flames. In crisis, people do get together. They all become human beings."

3. In 1994, outside of New Orleans on the U.S. 11 bridge, an automobile carrying a woman, her two children (ages 6 and 11), and a friend (age 12) plunged through the concrete railing into Lake Ponchartrain. The six year old was struggling to keep his head above the choppy waters.

It was then that Clint Picone arrived at the scene. He did not hesitate. "He was about to drown. I just jumped in," Picone (age 20) said. He is credited with the saving the life of the six year old. Later, Picone shrugged off any claim to heroism. "It was God's work," he said.

THE CONTEMPORARY RIGHTEOUS: STUDENT ACTIVITY

Directions: Have your students cull the newspapers, both local and national, over the course of several weeks and, if possible, months. The point is to locate stories about individuals who engage in altruistic, or self-less, behavior. The articles should be clipped and brought to class. Students should discuss the contents of the article before the class (and the articles should be pinned upon on the board). Here are some possible questions:

1. What did the individual do that qualifies as altruistic behavior? Why is that altruistic behavior?

2. How does the individual explain his or her actions? In other words, why did they do what they did? Why, in their opinion, did others not act atruistically? Of interest with this question is the fact that the altruistically inclined very frequently downplay their heroics. Look for this quality. Does the individual, for example, consider him or herself a "hero?"

What is the student's definition of a "hero?"

3. What were the influences in the individual's life that shaped his or her behavior? Was a person (a parent, a relative, a friend) the decisive influence? Was an event the decisive influence? Was religion the decisive influence?

4. If the newspaper article is taken from the local newspaper, a student might be assigned to get in touch with the individual who displayed the altruistic behavior, either by personally meeting with the individual or simply by telephoning the individual. The student can ask the individual the above questions directly, and report back to the class. It is very easy to locate an individual's telelphone number simply by looking up his or her name (taken from the newspaper) in the telephone directory, but when the individual picks up the phone he or she should be immediately informed about the purpose of the call.

5. Who or what are the decisive influences in the life, and behavior, of the student? "Example," Albert Schweitzer said, "is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing."

6. Who are the altruistically inclined people in the lives of the students? Why do the students judge these particular individuals as altruistically inclined? What have these people done to merit this distinction? What is the student's definition of a hero?

7. Otto Denfield, the rescuer of burning passengers on the New York subway, said, "In crisis, people do get together. They become human beings." Do you agree with this statement? What examples are there in the newspapers consulted of crisis in which people behave in a less than altruistic manner? Why do some people react in one way, and others in a completely different way?

AMERICA AND THE HOLOCAUST

It is a fantastic commentary on the inhumanity of our times that for thousands and thousands of people a piece of paper with a stamp on it (a visa) is the difference between life and death.

wyman -- Dorothy Thompson (journalist), 1938

The story of the Righteous Gentiles is the story of the non-Jews who defied the Nazi terror and rescued those who were the objects of destruction. It is, in turn, the story of the moral dilemma that beset non-Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. But what about the response of the U.S. government to the persecution of Jews before the Second World War and to the destruction of Jews during the war? What did the U.S. government do to rescue Jews? What was the attitude of the American people to the plight of the Jews in Europe?

The study of the Righteous Gentiles is incomplete without a study of the U.S. response to the Holocaust. It is a sad record. While the Righteous Gentiles in Europe risked their lives, the U.S. government failed to lift a finger.

The terrible question is this: Did the U.S. government represent the will of the American people?

The Depression

The 1929 world depression is a decisive event in terms of understanding the attitude of Americans towards the persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany (and, later, in Nazi-occupied Europe.).

Economic harship (and the insecurity it inspired) had a profound impact upon Americans. It instilled a fear in the hearts of the average American: a fear that he or she would not be able to provide for the family. As a result, Americans became in inward-looking people, a people concerned first and foremost with their own economic well-being and concerned very little with the plight of the Jews (or the Slavs, etc.) in Europe.

FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT

Roosevelt was inaugurated president in early 1933. The presence of several high ranking Jews in FDR's administration was seized upon by his enemies who popularized the notion that the president's "New Deal" was in fact a "Jew Deal." From the beginning of his presidency, Roosevelt had to contend with the view that he was pro-Jewish. His support among American Jewry was solid, and he did not have to worry about losing it. Paradoxically, the devotion of Jews to FDR was their political undoing. The president became much more interested in winning the support of his enemies, often times conservative congressmen who were not in the least bit interested in saving refugees (ie Jews).

In the summer of 1937, the rug was pulled from beneath the modest economic recovery engendered by the Roosevelt administration. Recession set in, and unemployment soared anew. Eight to ten million Americans were out of work, or fifteen percent of the work force. American confidence was shattered.

The issue of jobs was paramount: you were unemployed or you knew someone who was unemployed or both. No American family was unscathed.

It was precisely during this time of economic hardship in the United States that the Jews of Europe sought an avenue of escape from the Nazis. The visa became, quite literally, a ticket to survival. Dorothy Thompson, an American journalist who championed the cause of refugees, addressed the issue in terms that were stark and foreboding:

"It is a fantastic commentary on the inhumanity of our times that for thousands and thousands of people a piece of paper with a stamp on it is the difference between life and death."

On Capitol Hill, strident opponents of immigration argued for a reduction of the U.S. quota by 90%, a halt to permanent immigration for ten years, or until unemployment fell to three million.
The U.S. quota (the number of visas allocated to residents of a foreign country desiring immigration) for Germany and Austria was 27,370. Between 1933, when Hitler came to power in Germany, and 1938, when the Nazis seized neighboring and fellow German speaking Austria, a mere 10% of the U.S. quota was permitted to be filled, despite the obvious danger to German and Austrian Jews.

Until 1938, the debate in the U.S. was not about enlarging the existing quota. No, far from it. The few proponents of the refugees realized this would jeapardize the existing quota. Instead, the debate was about whether the existing quota would be filled, or would be stretched beyond the existing 10%.

In 1938, following Anschluss, or the seizure of Austria, the friends of refugees won a diplomatic victory. It was agreed that the U.S. quota would be filled. As it turned out, the quota was filled for only two years; the outbreak of war between the U.S. and Germany in 1941 effectively closed the doors to U.S. immigration entirely.

ANSCHLUSS

Hitler was born in the town of Braunau, Austria, on April 20, 1889.

When German troops entered Austria on March 13, 1938, they were greeted not by armed resistance but by flowers thrown at their feet by adoring Austrians who lined the streets of the villages and towns along the road to Vienna, the Austrian capital. The Austrian border guards were instructed not to resist the Germans. "Let us not spill our brother's blood," said the Austrian Chancellor, Kurt Schussnigg, in a radio broadcast that was particularly ominous for the Austrian Jews.

Immediately upon Anschluss, or Union between Germany and Austria, anti-Semitism was unleasched with a special fury, most notably in Vienna. SA men (Nazi storm troopers known as Brownshirts who, long before the SS, were the foot soldiers of the Nazi movement) seized Jews randomly and forced them to scrub the streets free of other than pro-Nazi slogans. Crowds of non-Jewish Viennese gathered and watched the humiliation of the Jews. The American journalist William Shirer described the mistreatment of Jews as "an orgy of sadism."

Not surprisingly, the Austrian Jews desperately sought to emigrate. It was quite obvious that there was no place for a Jew in the new Austria. Long lines appeared outside of foreign consulates. Following Anschluss, 170 Jews committed suicide each day in Vienna alone.

The events in Austria and the subsequent pressures for immigration led the Roosevelt administration to call for an international conference to deal with the refugee situation. The American invitation to the foreign governments was cautiously worded. "No country," the invitation read, "would be expected or asked to receive a greater number of immigrants than is permitted by its existing legislation."

Thirty-two nations agreed to meet at the French resort of Evian to discuss the plight of the Jews. Poland and Rumania, interested principally in the prospect of getting rid of their Jews, sent observers to Evian.

THE EVIAN CONFERENCE

The U.S. government's representative at the Evian Conference was Myron C. Taylor. At the opening of the conference, Taylor said, "The time had come when governments...must act and act promptly." Reporting on the results of the conference, a reporter for Newsweek answered Taylor's call with bitter sarcasm: "Most of the governments represented acted promptly by slamming their doors against Jewish refugees."

The conference was held in July 1938. Its ostenstible purpose was to facilitate the flow of Jewish emigration from Nazi Germany and Nazi-occupied Austria, and to put pressure on the German government to permit the Jews to take with them a reasonable amount of property and wealth. No foreign country was interested in taking on impoverished Jews.

However, the U.S. government called the Evian Conference with a different purpose in mind. A 1938 memorandum from the State Department referred to the increasing pressure on the U.S. government to assume the leadership of world efforts to deal with the refugee question. The pressure, the memorandum stated, emanated from journalist Dorothy Thompson and "certain Congressmen with metropolitan constitutencies." As a result, Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Undersecretary Sumner Welles concluded that a strategy far preferable to trying to hold off this pressure would be "to get out in front and attempt to guide" the pressure, mainly in order to forestall moves for more liberal immigration legislation.

In other words, the State Department that the best way to hand the refugee crisis would be to seize the initiative before pressure built and to spread the responsibility among the thirty-two nations instead of upon the U.S. With this rationale, the State Department recommened that President Roosevelt call the Evian Conference.

At the Evian Conference, U.S. representative Myron Taylor stated that the U.S. would make the German and Austrian quota fully available. Delegates from other countries despaired of admitting more refugees than currently allowed.

The British delegate did not even mention British controlled Palestine, the most logical place for the Jewish refugees. Instead, he asserted that the British commonwealth was largely unavailable because of it was already overcrowded and, in any event, the climate was too severe. Britain itself, the delegate continued, was completely out of the question because of the high rate of unemployment.

The French delegate said that France had already reached "the extreme point of saturation as regards admission of refugees." The Belgian and Dutch representatives spoke similarly. The Australian delegate observed that thinly settled Australia should not be considered a refuge because "as we have no real racial problem, we are not desirous of importing one." The Canadian delegate insisted that Canada's high unemployment precluded the admission of great numbers of refugees. Later, the Canadian foreign minister, drawing the line on immigrationand referring directly to the refugees, said, "One is too many."

The delegate from New Zealand described Evian as "a modern wailing wall."

The Dominican Republic was the only nation that offered any measure of hope to the refugees. The Caribbean country volunteered to contribute large (but unspecified) areas for agricultural cultivation. Jewish farmers in Europe, however, were few, except for young Zionists in whose heart Palestine was the only destination.
Jewish representatives at the Evian Conference failed to reach a unified approach to the refugee crisis. The "disintegration and rivalry" at Evian, wrote the Congress Bulletin, a weekly publication of the American Jewish Congress, was "a spectacle of Jewish discord and disruption."

KRISTALLNACHT

Three months after Anschluss, the predicament of the Jews in the Greater German Reich. On November 9, 1938, the Nazis burned synagogues, plundered Jewish stores and homes,and arrested an estimated 30,000 Jewish men. The glass littering the streets from the smashed windows of Jewish stores gave the pogrom its name: Kristallnacht (Crystalnight, or "the night of broken glass").

As a result, the refugee crisis became even more acute. In the U.S., however, the stance on the refugees remained the same. At his weekly press conference, President Roosevelt expressed his outrage at the latest Nazi atrocities against the Jews. But when he was asked if the U.S. intended to allow more European Jews into the country, the president replied, "That is not in contemplation. We have a quota system."

Even advocates of refugees did not propose raising the quota. The representative of American Friends Service Committee said, "To our knowledge, no one is trying to change the quota. It is considered highly dangerous to attempt such astep, and might jeapardize even the present quota."

In the Greater German Reich, an estimated 20,000 children had been left both homeless and fatherless by the Kristallnacht destruction. In the U.S., Senator Wagner and Representative Rogers proposed the Wagner-Rogers bill that would allow these children to immigrate into the U.S. outside of the existing quota. The bill would permit the admission of only these children. It would not permit the admission of other children at a later date. It was a one time only affair.

According to a Gallup poll conducted at the time, two thirds of the American public opposed the bill. In the end, the bill did not reach the floor of Congress. It was squelched in committee.

During the debate on the Wagner-Roger's bill, President Roosevelt remained silent. Once, when the president was on a cruise in the Caribbean, his wife Eleanor Roosevelt telegraphed him to ask if she might state publicly that both of them supported the bill. The president answered, "You may, but it's better that I don't for the time being." The "time being" did not change. The president never voiced an opinion, one way or the other, on the Wagner-Roger's bill.

In 1940, when Nazi Germany attacked western Europe and German bombs began to fall on England, great numbers of Americans offered refuge to British children who had been displaced by the bombings. This was a great contrast to the lack of refuge offered to Jewish children just two years before. The type of British child most typically requested by American families was "a six year old girl, preferably with blond hair."

So fraught with adverse consequences was the subject of refugees that when ships bringing refugees arrived in the U.S., the organizations and agencies organizing the rescue made a deliberate effort to downplay the Jewishness of the refugees and to avoid publicity altogether. Newspapers were discouraged from reporting the arrival of refugee boats.

"Behind this strategy," historian David Wyman has written, "lay anxiety that the public, exposed to story after story of ships unloading refugees, would believe the flow of immigrants really was a flood, particularly a Jewish flood."

THE ST. LOUIS

In May 1939, one month before the outbreak of World War II, the ocean liner St. Louis sailed from Hamburg, Germany, bound for the U.S. with several hundred Jewish refugees, none of whom had visas. The refugees figured they had nothing to lose and willingly took the chance. The St. Louis sailed up and down the Atlantic coast of the U.S. but was not permitted to dock at any port. It then sailed to Havanna, Cuba, but the refugees were refused entry. In the end, the St. Louis sailed back to Europe. Its passengers disembarked

at Amsterdam, Holland. Less than a year later, the German armies swept across western Europe and the former refugees of the St. Louis were swept up in the Holocaust.

In only one place in the world were Jewish refugees permitted to land without a visa: Shanghai. It became a refugee for thousands of Jews who otherwise would have perished in the Nazi death camps in Poland.

THE AMERICAN PUBLIC ON THE VERGE OF WAR

In 1938, four different polls indicated that between 71% and 85% of the American public opposed raising the quota to help refugees. An estimated 67% of the American public wanted to keep all refugees out of the country.

REIGNER'S TELEGRAM

"All those unused visas, all those unheeded appeals, all those useless screams."

-- Elie Wiesel

In late 1941, the murder of European Jews entered a new phase, a phase in which the death camps were utilized.

Hitherto, the Jews of eastern and central Europe had been subject to disease, starvation, and random violence in the ghettoes established by the Nazis. In fact, an estimated 20% of Polish Jewry died in the ghettoes. With the invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, mobile squads of Nazi murders known as Einsatzgruppen swept the Baltic nations (Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia) as well as Ukraine and Bylorussia. The Einsatzgruppen commanders included a former opera singer, a university professor, a Protestant pastor, and a large number of lawyers. In excess of one million Jews were murdered by the Einsatzgruppen. Typically, the Jews (men, women, and children) were shot in the back of the neck and dumped in ditches the Jews themselves had been forced to dig.

There was, however, a problem with German soldiers killing unarmed Jews (who were often depicted as communists, partisans, or simply "enemies of the Reich"). It had a devastating psychological toll. The Jews were dead, but the men who killed them were wasted. As well, the expenditure of millions of bullets was not a trifle to the economic-minded Germans. There had to be a change if Hitler's instructions for "a final solution of the Jewish question" was to be realized.

Thus was the decision taken to establish death camps in which Jews were destroyed by, first, carbon monixide, and, subsequently, by Zyclon B, a poisonous gas whose original purpose was the extermination of rodents.

On December 7, 1941, the Nazis opened the first death camp at the village of Chelmno, in western Poland. Here the Jews were murdered in gas vans (the size of large moving vans) by carbone monixide. The bodies were burned in pits at a nearby forest. In the spring of 1942, the Nazis established death camps in eastern Poland outside of the villages of Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka. In June 1942, the Nazis established Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest and most infamous death camp. It was was located forty miles west of the Polish city of Krakow.

In July 1942, a German industrialist living near Auschwitz-Birkenau learned of the camp's existence through friends and contacts in the Nazi high command. The industrialist, Dr. Eduard Schulte, also learned of Hitler's determination to destroy all of the Jews in Europe. In the effort to alert the leaders of the leaders of the western democracies of the Holocaust, Schulte travelled to neutral Switzerland (ostensibly on war-related business). In Geneva, he relayed infromation about the information (through an intermediary) to Gerhardt Reigner, an official of the World Jewish Congress.

Reigner transmitted Schulte's information (by way of the American consulate in Geneva) to the British Foreign Ministry and the State Department. Reigner specifically requested the State Department to forward the information to Rabbi Stephen Wise, president of the World Jewish Congress.

In August 1942, Reigner's telegram describing Schulte's information reached both London and Washington.

Before this information reached the west, it was generally believed that terrible atrocities had been perpetrated against the Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. However, no one understood that the terrible atrocities portended the total destruction of the Jews.

Hence the importance of Schulte's message: He provided the western leaders with the information that there was a Nazi plan at the highest levels to eliminate all Jews and that all the deportations and ghetoes and other indiviudal measures were only steps along the way to total extermination. It was to be a solution for all of the Jews of Europe.

When Reigner's telegram reached the State Department in Washington, officials described its contents as "fantastic allegations" and refused to pass on the information to Rabbi Wise.

In an interview, Richard Breitman, author of Breaking the Silence, has said the State Department officials felt that forwarding the information to Rabbi Wise would cause Jewish officials "to react in ways which the State Department did not think helpful. That is to say, to put pressure on the government to do things they believed not in the government's interest to do. In other words, to try to save Jewish lives."

Later, a State Department official wrote an internal memorandum explaining U.S. policy regarding refugees: "There was always the danger that the German government might agree to turn over to the United States and to Great Britain a large number of Jewish refugees."

For three months, the State Department refused to publish the information contained in the Reigner telegram. Indeed, the State Department instructed the American consulate in Switzlerland to stop transmitting information about the destruction of the Jews because "it would expose us to increased pressure to do something more specific to aid these people."

By the late autumn of 1942, sources in Europe (most notably the Polish government-in-exile) had confirmed the contents of Reigner's Telegram. On November 24, 1942, Under-secretary of State, Sumner Welles, informed Rabbi Wise, "I regret to tell you, Dr. Wise, that these (documents) confirm and justify your deepest fears."

The same evening, Rabbi Wise gave a press conference in which he detailed the destruction of the Jews in Europe based upon information the State Department had confirmed. Wise estimated that two million Jews had already been murdered. Sadly, that estimate was less than the actual number of murdered Jews.

The following day, November 25, 1942, the "New York Times" published an account of Wise's press conference. Rabbi Wise was quoted as saying: "The State Department finally made available today the documents which have confirmed the stories and rumors of Jewish extermination in all Hitler-ruled Europe." The article in the "Times" appeared on page 10.

It is of note that only five of the nineteen most widely circulated newspapers in the U.S. put the story of Jewish destruction on the front page. None of the articles in any of the nineteen papers were prominently placed. Two of the nineteen papers did not include information about Rabbi Wise's press conference at all.

During the three months between the arrival of the Reigner Telegram in Washington and the confirmation of the Holocaust by the State Department, an additional one million Jews had been murdered.

THE BERMUDA CONFERENCE

On April 19, 1943, the very same day as the outbreak of the Warsaw Ghetto revolt, British and American diplomats (of a relatively low rank) met on the island of Bermuda ostensibly to discuss what might be done to relieve the plight of European Jews. It should be noted that tens of thousands of Jews were still alive in countries beyond the reach of the Nazis: Bulgaria, Spain, Hungary, and southern France (where collaborationist Frenchmen ruled in a state known as Vichy).

The Bermuda Conference was held largely as a result of growing public pressure in England. However, as David Wyman, author of Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust 1941-1945, has said, "Rescue was not the purpose of Bermuda. The purpose was to dampen growing pressures for rescue."

In a word, Bermuda was "a facade for inaction."

The first task of the U.S. diplomats was to locate a prominent American who would be willing to represent the U.S. at the conference. Myron Taylor, the U.S. representative at the Evian Conference five years before, and the American with the most experience on the refugee issue, was rejected by President Roosevelt.

Associate Supreme Court Justice Owen J. Roberts rejected the offer, a rejection to which President Roosevelt lightheartedly replied, "I fully understand, but I am truly sorry that you cannot go to Bermuda, especially at the time of the Easter lillies! After my talk with you, the State Department, evidently decided (under British pressure) that the meeting should be held at once instead of waiting until June."

The president of Yale University at first accepted the offer to represent the U.S. at Bermuda, but then rejected it under pressure from his board of directors.

Finally, the president of Princeton University, Harold W. Dodds, accepted the appointment.

Wyman caustically observed, "It was not a good spring for finding distinguished Americans who could devote time to the tragedy of the Jews of Europe."

Bermuda was selected as the site of the conference because travel to the island was strictly limited under war-time conditions. There would be few (hand picked) reporters and no nettlesome Jewish representatives hovering over the shoulders of the diplomats at Bermuda, who stayed at the Horizons oceanside resort "set among hibiscus and oleander and lilly fields in bloom for Easter."

The State Department made it very clear to the diplomats at Bermuda that there would be no special emphasis placed upon the suffering of the Jews. This was "strictly prohibited." In addition, it was made clear that the Roosevelt administration did not have the power to relax or to rescind the immigration laws.

It was not mentioned, however, that the administration did have the power to permit the quota to be filled to its legal limit. During the Second World War, the U.S. quota was virtually untouched: 21,000 refugees, most of them Jews, were admitted into the country. This number constituted ten percent of the allowed quota. In other words, nearly 190,000 openings went unfilled while the slaughter of Jews continued unabated.

The State Department appointed two congressmen to head the U.S. delegation to Bermuda. Neither of the men had any prior experience with the refugee problem, the very subject of the conference.

Senator Scott Lucas, a Democrat from Illinois, said that he was "not acquainted with the refugee problem but intended to study it carefully."

Sol Bloom, a Yiddish speaking vaudevillian comedian who became a New York congressman and chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Relations, was widely recognized on Capitol Hill as no friend of his fellow Jews in Europe. Bloom "was a sycophant of the State Department," said Emanuel Celler, one of the seven Jews in Congress.

The diplomats at Bermuda did not reach any conclusions regarding the rescue of Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. Perhaps because of the "poverty" of their results, the diplomats did not issue a final report.

Representative Sol Bloom said, "Winning the war is our first step. We as Jews must keep this in mind."

"The job of the Bermuda conference apparently was not to rescue victims of Nazi terror," said Rabbi Israel Goldstein, "but to rescue our State Department and the British Foreign Office."

"Not even the pessimists among us expected such sterility," said Sam Dickstein of the House of Representatives.

Several months after the Bermuda Conference, the Jewish newspaper "the Frontier" wrote, "The Warsaw ghetto is liquidated. The leaders of Polish Jewry are dead by their own hand, and the world which looks on passively is, in its way, dead too."

The Allied policy towards the Jewish catastrophe in Europe had been determined by the western leaders one month before the Bermuda Conference.

A WHITE HOUSE MEETING

In March 1943, one month before the Bermuda Conference, Secretary of State Cordell Hull, President Franklin Roosevelt, British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, and British ambassador to the U.S. Lord Halifax, met at the White House. At one point in the wide ranging discussions, Secretary of State Hull raised the subject of the 70,000 Bulgarian Jews and the possibility of their rescue from the Nazis.

According to the transcript of the meeting, Eden replied, "The whole problem of the Jews in Europe is very difficult. We should move very cautiously about offering to take all the Jews out of a country like Bulgaria. If we do that then the Jews of the world will be wanting us to make similar offers in Poland and in Germany."

In an interview, historian David Wyman offered this comment: "Eden was afraid that large numbers of Jews would be saved. This was his fear and everybody in that room knew then what was thefate of the European Jews. They had known for four months. In that room were the foremost leaders of the two great western democracies with the one exception of Winston Churchill. As far as the record shows, nobody objected to that statement."

THE BRITISH

The British, for their part, were not interested in the prospect of Jewish refugees from Europe finding their way to Palestine (present day Israel), which was then a British mandate. In 1939, British authorities issued a White Paper placing a restriction on Jewish immigration to Palestine. The presence of additional Jews in Palestine would place immense pressure on the British policy of placating the Arab population of the region. It is of note that after the Second World War the British tried to thwart Jewish emigration to Palestine, leading to the incarceration of Jews in British camps of Jews who had survived Hitler's camps.

THE WAR REFUGEE BOARD

Fourteen months after the State Department confirmed the Nazi extermination of the Jews, the Roosevelt established the War Refugee Board, a government agency whose purpose was to rescue Jews still alive in Europe.

The Roosevelt administration was reluctant to establish the War Refugee Board even at this late date. Public pressure had been growing, and it had become evident that the government, particularly the State Department, was avoiding the task of Jewish rescue altogether. The U.S. Treasury Department, under Secretary Morgenthau, realized that the State Department was actually obstructing efforts to rescue Jews. Disgusted, Morgenthau had his subordinates at Treasury prepare a report detailing the State Department's actions, or lack of actions, regarding the Jewish question. The report, titled "On the Acquiescence of this Government in the Murder of Jews," was sent to the president on January 15, 1944.

David Wyman has written, "Roosevelt was finally cornered into the position that he had to do something or a scandal was going to break."

On January 22, 1944, the president established the War Refugee Board. The executive order the president signed establishing the War Refugee Board (known as the WRB) specified that it would have the support of every government agency, specifically the

support of the State Department, Treasury Department, and the War Department (today's Pentagon).
The most notable achievement of the War Refugee Board was the successful transport of 982 refugees (89% of them Jewish) from unoccupied territories in Europe to the small community of Oswego in upstate New York.

In order to assuage that part of the American public that was against the admission of refugees, President Roosevelt pledged that the 982 refugees bound for Oswego would return to Europe after the war's end. In fact, the refugees were required to sign a document promising to do just that, although the overwhelming majority of the refugees had lost their entire families to the Nazis. Despite the pledge, the refugees were met by hostility on the part of many residents of Oswego. After the war, President Trueman (who became president when FDR died in April 1945) issued an executive order permitting the Oswego refugees were permitted to remain in the U.S.

The journalist I.F. Stone remarked that Oswego was "a kind of token payment of decency, a bargain counter flourish in humanitarianism."

John Pehle, a Treasury Department official who lent his full energies to Jewish rescue, said this to say about the War Refugee Board: "What we did was little enough. It was late...late and little."

THE BOMBING OF AUSCHWITZ

In the spring of 1944, the Jewish population of Hungary, over half a million Jews, remained untouched by the Holocaust that had swept through neighboring countries. Hungary was an ally of Nazi Germany, but in March 1944 the Germans violated the alliance by occupying Hungary. Led by SS officer Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi expert on deportations, the machinery of death went to work. In less than two months, 439,000 Jews were deported from Hungary to the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp in Poland. It was an unparalled act of Nazi destruction, the high point of Eichmann's murderous career.

These Jews of Hungary went to their death completely unaware of what lay ahead. As Holocaust survivor and Nobel Prize winner Elie Wiesel has said, "The diplomats in the western capitals knew about the Holocaust, but the Jews of Hungary did not." Wiesel's village was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau in May 1944.

In the summer of 1944, while the deportations from Hungary to Auschwitz-Birkenau were underway, Jewish underground leaders in Europe forwarded information about the destruction of Hungarian Jewry to London and Washington. They requested that the U.S. air force bomb the railroad lines to the death camp, and bomb the death camp itself. The request was received by the War Refugee Board in Washington and was forwarded to the

War Department, which rejected it on the grounds that the aircraft could not be diverted to a target that was not "military related."

In fact, Auschwitz-Birkenau was not only a death camp but a vast labor camp utilizing both Jewish and non-Jewish slave labor. In the immediate vicinity of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the Germans had established numerous synthetic oil refineries upon which the German economy was based. In the effort to destroy those refineries, and cripple the German war effort, the U.S. air force (flying from Italy) repeatedly bombed the region around Auschwitz-Birkenau precisely at the time when the Hungarian Jews were being deported there. On two occasions, the camp itself was accidentally bombed and once the railroad line leading into the death camp was struck, forcing the destruction process to come to a temporary halt.

The War Department, when it received the request to bomb Auschwitz-Birkenau, did not investigate the possibility of doing so, despite the fact that President Roosevelt's executive order legally obliged the War Department to assist the War Refugee Board. The War Department simply rejected the request out of hand.

Once, while bombing the nearby synthetic oil refineries, a squadron of U.S. bombers flew directly over one of the crematoriums at the death camp and photographed it. No intelligence officer analysing the photograph, however, determined the deadly nature of the facility.

Historian David Wyman has written, "To kill the Jews, the Nazis were willing to weaken their capacity to fight the war. The U.S. and its allies, however, were willing to attempt almost nothing to save them."

FDR

In conclusion, Wyman had this to say about President Roosevelt's reaction to the Jewish catastrophe in Nazi-occupied Europe: "One of the key reasons Roosevelt didn't act, I'm convinced, and definitely the key reason the State Department wouldn't act, was the fear of the anti-Semites in Congress, and the hell they'd raise if any moves were made in that direction. The anti-Semitism in congress was reflective of the anti-Semitism in American socity."

Evidentally, FDR did not lose his political touch.

In January 1943, when Polish Jewry had been destroyed and the rest of European Jewry was on the verge of destruction, a Roper poll asked Americans a simple question: "Would it be a good idea, or a bad idea to admit more refugees (ie Jews) after the war?"

Seventy-eight percent of the respondents answered it would be "a bad idea."

In 1944, a survey of Americans identified "the most dangerous group to the USA" as 1. Jews (24%) 2. Japanese (16%) 3. Germans (8%).

GLOSSARY

Aktion - German military or police **"**action**"** or **"**operation**"** usually directed against Jews in a ghetto for the purpose of intimidating the populace or rounding up the populace for deportation to a death camp. The Jews in the Krakow ghetto suffered a wave of "aktiones," including the deportations of early June 1942. It was during this "aktion" that Oskar Schindler observed the Jewish girl dressed in red whose flight from the SS he would later describe.

Allies - The nations, including the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union, as well as the Free French, that joined in the war against Germany and the other Axis nations.
It should be pointed out that the Soviet Union, under Josef Stalin, was a temporary ally of the Nazis between August 1939 and June 1941, when Hitler finally attacked Russia. During their period of cooperation, the Soviets and Nazis divided Poland between themselves. Great Britain became an ally of the Soviet Union only after Stalin and Hitler went to war. The United States became an ally of the Soviet Union only after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and Hitler, allied to Japan, declared war on the United States. In sum, the Allies found common ground only in their opposition to the Nazis, and as soon as the war ended the Soviet Union and the western allies went their separate ways. The result was the Cold War lasting forty-five years.

Altestenrat - (Council of Elders, or Jewish Council) Another name for Judenrat. In the cities and towns of the German-occupied territories, the Nazis established a Jewish Council. The Council, often comprising pre-war leaders of the Jewish community, transmitted German orders to the Jewish population. While some members of the Jewish Councils were scoundrels looking out for their own interests, others were decent individuals caught up in a murderous system. The topic of the Jewish Council is hotly debated. On one hand, it is argued that the Jewish Councils abetted the destruction of Jews, while, on the other hand, it is argued that the Councils attempted to alleviate Jewish suffering in the period before the Jews understood that destruction was the German aim.

Anschluss - The incorporation of Austria by Nazi Germany on March 13, 1938. The majority of Austrians, disillusioned by economic hardship and inspired by the vibrant example of Nazi Germany, greeted German troops with flowers, giving the Anschluss the sobriquet "The flower war." When the Nazis arrived in Vienna, Austrian storm troopers humiliated Vienesse Jews by forcing them to scrub the streets. The historian William Shirir, who was present in Vienna, described the humiliation of the Jews in the Austrian capital as "an orgy of sadism."
According to the famed Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal, a disproportionatly large number of Austrians played important roles in the destruction of the Jews, in part because one of the leading Nazis, Adolf Eichmann, was himself an Austrian and picked his associates from among his fellows, and in part because anti-Semitism was stronger in Austria than it was in Germany (presumably because non-Jews in Vienna abhorred the so-called "eastern Jew," "or ost-Juden," who, impoverished and physically different, migrated from eastern Europe to the Austrian capital).

Anti-Semitism - Acts or negative feelings against Jews which take the form of prejudice, dislike, fear, discrimination and persecution. It should be pointed out that anti-Semitism is deeply imbedded in western culture. For centuries, (indeed, until the Second Vatican Council rejected the view in 1965) the Catholic church preached that the Jews were responsible for the death of Christ. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the Jews were blamed for being either capitalists or communists. Suffice to say, when the Nazis began the extermination process, many non-Jews had long been conditioned to view the Jews as the "other" to whom no moral obligation was due.

Aryan - A term used by the Nazis to describe Caucasians of non-Jewish descent. The Nazis believed that the ideal Aryans -- blond-hair and blue-eyed North Europe -- were a master race destined to rule the world.

It is important to note that very few of the Nazi leadership were of the racial type so glorified by the regime: Hitler was a short man (5’7’’) with false teeth, a big nose (which embarrassed him and led him to grow a moustache in order to hide his large nostrils), and dark hair. With the exception of his blue eyes, Hitler’s physical appearance was the opposite of the Nazi ideal, and closer to image of Jews illustrated by Nazi propagandists. The opposite of the Aryan was the “untermenschen” (subhuman) which included Slavs (Poles, Russians, Czechs) and Jews. Thus, in short order, the Nazis reduced all people into basic groups: superior, and inferior; Aryan, and sub-human.

Aryanization - This is the legal term given to the one-sided process by which German authorities expropriated Jewish businesses (and the businesses of other “enemies of the Reich") in Germany and in the occupied territories. The expropriated businesses were handed over to German supervisors. Oskar Schindler, upon his arrival in Krakow in 1939, obtained his enamel factory through this process of “Aryanization.”

Auschwitz-Birkenau - This was the death camp located thirty-five miles west of Krakow which was the destination of a large number of Jews deported from the Krakow ghetto. In the summer of 1944, when Oskar Schindler arranged for “his” Jews to be transferred to a new factory in German-occupied Czechoslovakia, 300 of the Schindlerfrauen (Schindler women) were routed to Auschwitz-Birkenau. The women were released when Schindler succeeded in bribing the camp’s commandant.

It is at Auschwitz-Birkenau that the Schindlerfrauen are herded into a shower where they fully expect to be gassed. Instead, water is emitted from the pipes. The Jews not “selected” for immediate extermination were forced to shower both upon arriving and departing Auschwitz-Birkenau. The Germans were terrified of typhus, which, ironically, was one of the few weapons the Jews possessed.

Authoritarianism - Believing in or characterized by unquestioning obedience to authority, as that of a dictator, rather than individual freedom of judgment and action.

Axis - Germany, Italy, and Japan, signatories to a pact signed in Berlin on September 27, 1940, to divide the world into their spheres on respective political interest. The three nations were later joined by Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia. The term "axis" was derived from the 1937 propagandistic observation that the world would revolve around the "axis" between Rome and Berlin.

Baum Gruppe (Herbert Baum Group) - Small, clandestine anti-Nazi organization founded in Berlin at the beginning of the Nazi regime by Herbert and Marianne Baum. It was composed of young people, primarily Jewish members of the Communist party, as well as a number of Zionists. Its activities centered around increasing education, political, and cultural awareness, but it also engaged in one act of sabotage: the bombing of an anti-Soviet exhibit in Berlin. Most of the members were denounced, tried, and executed between July 1942 and June 1943.

Belzec - This was the Nazi death camp located about one hundred and fifty miles east of Krakow, and it is the graveyard of Galician Jewry. The early deportations of Jews from Krakow were sent to Belzec where they were gassed immediately. An estimated 600,000 Jews were murdered at Belzec during between March 1942 and December 1942, an astonishingly short period of time.

Brinnlitz - Brinnlitz was the industrial town in German-occupied Czechoslovakia where Schindler relocates his Krakow factory in 1944, as the Soviet Red Army advanced towards Krakow from the east. The weapons factory that Schindler establishes in Brinnlitz was a sub-camp of the Gross-Rosen concentration camp. Labor camps exploiting Jewish and foreign labor like Brinnlitz were located throughout the German Reich. Brinnlitz, under Schindler, was one of the very few camps where Jews not treated brutally.

Buchenwald - Located in Weimar, Germany, this was one of the first concentration camps to begin operation (1937). German and Austrian Jews and Gypsies arrived in 1938. Prisoners too ill to work at the camp were sent to Bernburg under the euthanasia program. Before the United States Army liberated the camp in 1945, the prisoners had seized control of the camp.

Bystanders - Individuals or governments who were indifferent to the persecution of the victims of the Holocaust. Bystanders failed to come to the aid of Jews and other persecuted groups.

Chelmno - This was the first death camp established by the Nazis. It opened on December 7, 1941, the same day, coincidentally, as the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the event that led to America's entry into World War II. Chelmno was a village located western Poland. The Nazis stripped the Jews in the confines of an old castle, forced them into gas vans, murdered them by carbon monixide, and dumped the bodies into pits dug in a nearby forest, where the bodies were burned. From this initial death camp, the Nazis, by experimentation, later developed more efficient and lethal death camps, such as Auschwitz-Birkenau, where Jews were murdered by poisonous gas (Zyklon-B).

Collaborator - The Holocaust Museum in Washington defines **"**collaboration**"** as **"**The cooperation between citizens of a country and its occupiers. There were Nazi collaborators in greater or lesser numbers in most of the occupied countries."

In addition, the Germans relied heavily on the use of foreign troops (Ukrainian, Bylorussian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Estonian, etc.) in the extermination campaign against the Jews. They did this for two reasons: 1) German soldiers were needed at the military front and could not be spared for Jewish "aktiones" in the occupied territories; 2) the psychological consequences of murdering unarmed civilians were viewed as psychologically harmful to German personnel; 3) foreign auxiliaries were more than willing to murder Jews.

In the liquidation of the Jewish ghetto in Krakow, the Nazis were assisted by Ukrainian and Lithuanian auxiliary troops who had been trained by the SS. Not infrequently, Polish police, known as the Blue Police, assisted the Germans in the round-up of Jews. It should be pointed out that collaboration was not the sole province of Eastern and Central Europe. The French police, for example, assisted the Nazis in rounding up the Jews in Paris in the summer of 1942. Finally, the role of Jewish collaborators, either informers or ghetto police, was particularly devastating. In Krakow, the Jewish police were the ones who physically ousted the Jews from their apartments, hoping, in exchange, to save themselves and their families. What happened, of course, is that the Jewish police were simply the last ones to be murdered by the Nazis, who wanted no witnesses.

Concentration Camp - A prison where the Nazi regime sent people considered by them to be dangerous. Some concentration camps were “killing centers” that employed either carbon monixide or poison gas to systematically kill hundreds of thousands of people, the great majority of them Jews. Other prisoners were typically worked or starved to death. Persons held in the camps were political and religious dissidents, resistors, homosexuals, as well as racial and ethnic victims of the Nazi regime and its collaborators (see “victims"). Of the more than 100 camps that existed, the largest were Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, Belzec, Chelmno, Dachau, Maidanek, Sobibor and Treblinka.

Conformity - Acting in accordance with popular opinion, rather than following the dictates of one**’**s own conscience.

Dachau - The first concentration camp, opened in 1933 near Munich, Germany. An example of a camp that was not equipped for mass extermination program with poison gas, though many prisoners died of overwork, starvation and disease. The camp was liberated by the U. S. Army in 1945. Today the camp is a museum, just a short public transport ride from Munich. Many residents in the town of Dachau have been outspoken in their wish that the museum simply disappear, and with it, presumably, the burden of the past.

Deportation - The forced relocation of Jews, Gypsies, and some Poles from their homes to other localities, usually to ghettos or Nazi concentration camps and killing centers. The Nazis, who engaged in subterfuge at every turn, described these brutal deportations with the seemingly innocuous term "resettlement."

DEF (Deutsche Email Fabrik) - This is the name of the factory Schindler established in Krakow. The building still stands and houses yet another factory.

When Schindler arrived in Krakow in September 1939, he purchased, at a very low price, the old Jewish Rekord factory in a suburb of Krakow. With the benefit of Jewish capital, Jewish labor, and Jewish expertise, he reorganized the factory and began producing (with the benefit of lucrative military contracts) enamel bowels and other kitchenware for the German army. Schindler named his new business Deutsche Email Fabrik, or German Enamel Factory (DEF). It became the “haven” for an estimated 1,200 Krakow Jews, a place where the typical Nazi outrages did not occur.

Dissent - To differ in belief or opinion (especially from official government policy). The opposite of "dissent" is "conformity." Not infrequently the Nazi murderers explained their actions to post-war investigators by saying they did not want to appear "cowardly" in front of their comrades. Few indeed expressed "dissent"; the majority sought "conformity."

Eugenics and Population Biology Research Station (at the Reich Health Office for Racial Hygiene and Population Biology) - The department responsible for the racial and genealogical registration of Jews, gypsies and other targeted groups. The registration of

individuals by religious and ethnic category eventually permitted the Nazi regime to conduct a campaign to “racially purify” Germany by segregating, sterilizing, deporting, and murdering members of these groups.

Einsatzgruppen - Mobile killing commando units which closely followed invading armies into the Soviet Union, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Their purpose was to immediately kill the Jewish population by shooting them or packing them into vans and gassing them. These units were responsible for 2 million of the deaths. The mass murder tactics of the Einsatgruppen initiated the pattern of mass murder that distinguished the Holocaust.

Euthanasia Program (the T4 program) - A Nazi government program created to kill mentally and physically handicapped Germans deemed “incurably sick". The program murdered 90,000 people and was eventually ended due to protests by religious leaders and victims’ families. This was an example of the importance the Nazis gave to placating domestic feelings. The last thing they wanted as a revolt at home. The T-4 death technicians were later transferred to Poland where they continued to apply their techniques in the death camps. It is important to note that the first people destroyed by the Nazi regime were handicapped Germans, those deemed "unworthy of life."

The Final Solution - Euphemism used by the Nazis to describe their plan to exterminate all European Jews. The full name of the plan was “The Final Solution of the Jewish Question."

Genocide - The deliberate and total extermination of a culture. The Jews, Gypsiesish population and to some extent the Gypsies, were slated for genocide during the Nazi regime.

Gestapo - The secret political police in Nazi Germany created to eliminate political opposition. The Gestapo enforced Nazi rule through terror, arrest and torture.

Ghetto - Term used to describe the compulsory “Jewish Quarter” -- the poor sections of cities where Jews are forced to reside. During the Nazi occupation of Europe, the Jews were forced into ghettos as a centralizing point to facilitate later deportation to the death camps. Surrounded by barbed wire or walls, the ghettos were sealed. Established mostly in eastern Europe, the ghettos were characterized by overcrowding, malnutrition, and heavy labor. All were eventually dissolved (or "liquidated"), and the Jews murdered. Before the war's end, the Nazis returned to the sites of the death camps and unearthed the bodies of the victims who had not been cremated. The bodies were burned, and the camps plowed under. Forests were planted in their places. The Nazis wanted to erase all evidence of the destruction they had wrought. They were the first Holocaust deniers. All that remains at the site of the Belzec death camp, for example, are the skeletal remains of the exterminated Jews residing beneath tall pine trees. The death camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau was not destroyed, however, because the Soviets arrived (January 1945) before the camp's destruction could be implemented.

Goeth, Amon (pronounced Gert) - Like many of the Nazi criminals in Poland, Amon Goeth was Austrian. Simon Wiesenthal, the Holocaust survivor and Nazi hunter, has written, **"**Austrians accounted for only eight per cent of the population of the Third Reich, yet Nazis from Austria were responsible for half of the murders of Jews committed under Hitler."

Born in Vienna to a family long involved in book printing, Goeth joined the still clandestine Nazi party in 1930. The Austrian Nazi party was legalized in 1938, when Hitler seized Austria in the bloodless Anschluss.

Goeth joined the SS before the war and, in March 1942, he played a leading role in the liquidation of the Jewish ghetto in Lublin, a city in eastern Poland. In Krakow, Goeth lent his considerable expertise to the liquidation of the ghetto in March 1943 after which he was given command of the Plaszow labor camp outside Krakow. During the next year, Goeth ruled Plaszow and its Jewish prisoners as if it were a personal fiefdom.

It is important to note that the SS was strictly indoctrinated and pursued the slaughter of Jews for ideological reasons, but at the same time elements of the SS were thoroughly corrupt from the material point of view, and participated in the plunder of Jewish wealth for personal profit. In 1944, Goeth was arrested by SS investigators and charged (accurately) with black market activities.

Helen Rosenzweig, one of Goeth's Jewish servants, said, "Physically he was a very large man. He decided who would live and who would die. There was a slap, a kick, a push. But I guess my time wasn't up. When he had guests I had to look pleasant or the beatings were limitless."

"I knew Goeth," said Anna Duklauer Perl, a survivor with no connection to the book or move. "One day he hung a friend of mine just because he had once been rich. He was the devil."

Keneally writes, "The reflection can hardly be avoided that Amon was Oskar's dark brother, was the berserk and fanatic executioner Oskar might by some unhappy reversal of his appetite, have become."

After the war, Goeth was captured and returned to Poland for trial. He was hanged at Plaszow on September 13, 1946.

Gypsies - Collective term for the Romani and Sinti nomadic people originally from northwest India. Like the Jews, the gypsies were were targeted for destruction.

Holocaust - The systematic, bureaucratic annihilation of six million Jews by the Nazi regime and their collaborators during World War II. Although Jews were the primary

victims, up to one-half million Gypsies and at least 250,000 mentally or physically disabled persons were also victims of genocide. In addition, three million Soviet prisoners of war were killed because of their nationality. Poles, as well as other Slavs, were targeted for salve labor, and as a result ten of thousands perished. Homosexuals and others deemed **"**anti-social**"** were also persecuted and often murdered. In addition, thousands of political and religious dissidents such as communists, socialists, trade unionist, and Jehovah**'**s Witnesses were persecuted for their beliefs and behavior and died as result of maltreatment.

Jew - A person whose religion is Judaism. The Jewish faith is not comprised of any one ethnic group, but rather has followers among all nationalities, races and ethnic groups. The principal difference between Jews and Christians is that Jews believe that the Messiah has yet to come; Christians believe that Christ, who was Jewish, was the Messiah. Until the 1965 Second Vatican Council rejected the argument, Catholic theology taught that Jews were responsible for the death of Christ.

Jewish Ghetto Police (OD) - In Poland, as in other occupied territories, the Nazis established Jewish police forces by which the they controlled the Jewish population in the ghettos. In trying to save their own necks, the Jewish police played a devastating role in the liquidation of the ghettos.

In Krakow, the Jewish police, armed with truncheons, assisted the Nazis in the liquidation of the ghetto. In the film "Schindler's List, a young Jewish boy saves Mrs. Dresner. It is a touching scene, but it should be remembered that the little boy was in the service of the Nazis, and, although he saved one Jewish life, his efforts were mainly directed at rounding up Jews for their deportation to an unknown yet ominous destination.

Judenrat (Jewish Council) - In each of the Jewish ghettos of the occupied territories, the Nazis established "a council of Jewish elders" which served as a governmental apparatus and go-between the Nazi authorities and the Jews in the ghetto. In the Krakow ghetto, as elsewhere, the Nazis issued the decrees, and the Judenrat was forced to implement them. In many ghettos the Judenrat abused its enhanced position and (quite naturally) sought to save themselves and their families from deportation; but other Judenrats were often the leaders of the pre-war community who sought to mollify the increasingly brutal German decrees. Some scholars believe they ended up making the job of extermination an easier one for the Germans. The subject of the Judenrat is one of the most controversial in Jewish history.

The first leader of the Jewish ghetto in Krakow was deported to Auschwitz. The Germans then found a more compliant, or more frightened, representative.

Killing Centers - Camps maintained to systematically kill Jews. Gas chambers were built especially for that use. There were six such camps, all in Poland: Auschwitz, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor and Treblinka.

Krakow (or Cracow) - This is the architectural gem of a city in Italian Renaissance southern Poland where Schindler lived between 1939 and 1944. The ancient seat of Polish kings, Krakow was designated the capital of Nazi-occupied Poland, the so-called **"**Generalgouvernement**"** which was the administrative unit comprising those parts of Poland not incorporated into the German Reich.

When German troops attacked Poland on September 1, 1939, fifty-six thousand Jews lived in Krakow, equivalent to the entire Jewish population of Italy. This number swelled as refugees from the countryside sought safety in Krakow. The Jews of Krakow were deported to the death camps in a serious of brutal aktiones. They had lived in Krakow for seven centuries, and, although many were abjectly poor in the Jewish neighborhood of Kazmierz, many Jews in Krakow had become leaders in industry, the arts and science.

Kristallnacht (Crystal Night) - The Night of Broken Glass - November 9, 1938. The night Nazi police and collaborators subjected Jews to an onslaught of anti-Semitic violence. Nazis vandalized and burned Synagogues and Jewish business, and randomly terrorized Jews. This event signalled the beginning of the Nazi effort to exterminate the Jewish people.

Nazism - The political doctrine of the Nazi party. Nazism advocated anti-Semitism, racism, militarism, one-party rule, anti-communism and a rigid authoritarian dictatorship

Nazi Party (NSDAP, or National Socialist German Workers' Party) - After the German defeat in the First World War, the embittered ex-soldier Adolf Hitler joined the NSDAP in Munich, Germany. Hitler quickly took over the Nazi Party and, abetted by the economic dislocation and frustrations of the world depression, the Nazis won the largest number of votes of any political party in Germany in the elections of 1932. On this basis, the aged Reichspresident, Hindenburg, appointed Hitler chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933. The Nazis, whose obscure birthplace was a smoke filled beer hall in Munich, took over the reins of the potentially most powerful nation in Europe. The precepts of the Nazi party: the superiority of the German people; German domination of Europe; the extermination of inferior peoples, particularly the Jews, who were characterized as the arch-enemy of the German people.

Like many Germans, Schindler joined the Nazi party both for reasons of opportunity (one simply could not advance in Nazi Germany without being a member of the party) and for reasons of nationalism, or German patriotism.

Although he apparently was appalled by the early Nazi atrocities in the Sudetenland, in Czechoslovakia in 1938, there is no reason to believe that Schindler disagreed with the national goals of the Nazis, particularly the subjugation of Poland. As the author Keneally writes, probably quite rightly, Schindler approved **"**of the national business, though he did not like the management."

Nuremberg Trials - Trials of Nazi war criminals conducted by former military opponents of Germany after World War II. The trials resulted in several executions and prison sentences, though thousands of Nazi war criminals escaped prosecution. Testimony at the trials gave wide publicity to the Nazi policy of mass murder.

Occupied Territories - Those nations overrun and occupied by the Nazi government.

Peer pressure - social pressure to conform to the beliefs and behaviors exerted by those people of about the same age, status, etc.

Perpetrators - In the Holocaust, those persons, agencies, or governments who assist in or gain from the persecution of others.

Prejudice - A negative, inflexible attitude toward a group (ethnic or religious) impervious to evidence or contrary argument. In most cases racial prejudice is founded on suspicions, ignorance, and irrational hatred of other races, religions or nationalities.

Plaszow - On March 14, 1943, after three years of various "aktiones," the Nazis launched the final liquidation of the Krakow ghetto. Yet many Jews were "essential workers" engaged in war production, such as the Jews who worked in Schindler's enamel factory, and for these remaining Jews a labor camp was established in the Krakow suburb of Plaszow. This camp was commanded by the sadist Amon Goeth, whom Schindler befriended and in whose villa overlooking the camp Schindler often stayed following drunken and lust-filled parties.

The setting at Plaszow was macabre: Jewish gravestones had been uprooted by the Nazis and laid out as pavement stones; the stones remain at Plaszow today, and apparently for this reason Jewish representatives prohibited Stephen Spielberg from filming at the original camp. Spielberg was also prohibited from filming at Auschwitz-Birkenau, and in the film the scene at Auschwitz-Birkenau is actually outside of the original camp, with the original camp in the background.
The Jewish slaves in Plaszow worked in nearby factories run by Germans, and though they were treated brutally, Plaszow was not a death camp on the model of Auschwitz-Birkenau or Belzec where the gassing was immediate. Plaszow was typical of the hundreds of thousands of little work camps that were to be found outside of virtually every city, town, and village, or in every corner of the Third Reich.

Racism - The belief that a racial group is inferior because of biological or cultural traits.

Resettlement - Deportation of Jews to killing centers in Poland. The term "resettlement" was a typical Nazi euphemism. The Nazis never spoke of their activities with explicit terms like "murder." The selective use of language by the Nazis was means of distancing themselves psychologically from their murderous deeds.

Resistance - Acts of rebellion, sabotage, and attempts to escape committed by individuals and groups within the concentration camps and ghettos. It is important to note that Jewish resistance to the Nazis did occur, although the myth has taken root of the Jews going to their death "like sheep to the slaughter." There were revolts in both death camps and in ghettos. In Krakow itself, a Jewish underground unit committed acts of sabotage against the Nazis. More subtle forms of resistance also existed. The Jews, for example, continued religious activities, which the Nazis strictly forbade.

Rescuers - Those who helped rescue Jews without regard to the personal consequences.

Righteous Gentile -- Those Gentiles (non-Jews) honored by the state of Israel for their efforts to rescue Jews during the Nazi occupation of Europe

Scapegoat - A person, group, or thing that bears the blame for the mistakes or crimes of others. Hitler made Jews a scapegoat by blaming them for Germany**'**s unemployment and economic decline.

Schindler, Emilie -- After a courtship of six weeks, Schindler, at twenty years old, married Emilie, who was from Alt-Molstein, a village near Zwittau, Schindler**'**s hometown in the Sudetenland, the German populated border region of what was then The Republic of Czechoslovakia.

Both families disapproved of the marriage.

Her father was "a gentleman farmer," and a friend of the local pastor, who instructed young Emilie (according to Keneally) that her friendship with a young Jewess, Rita Reif, was not good. Emilie defied the pastor and retained her friendship with Rita, until Rita was murdered by the Nazis in front of her father**'**s store in 1942. The father apparently did not like his son-in-law one bit; he reneged on a dowry apparently because of Schindler**'**s public displays of infidelity.

Emilie Schindler is perhaps the most interesting story that has yet to be told. The author Keneally, for reasons unexplained, did not interview Emilie Schindler.

In 1994, Helen Rosenzweig, one of the Schindlerjuden, remembered seeing Emilie Schindler "a few times" during her infrequent trips to Krakow. She described Emilie Schindler as a "very quiet, subdued, and refined looking lady."

When the Schindlerjuden were transferred to Brinnlitz in the Nazi-occupied Czech lands, Emilie Schindler arranged for a prescription for eye glass to be picked up in Krakow and delivered to her in Brinnlitz. The glasses were for the young Jewish boy, Feigenbaum.

She is credited with many kindnesses small and large, and it is known that she worked as a nurse at Brinnlitz. Keneally writes, **"**One wonders if some of Emilie**'**s kindnesses in this matter may not have been absorbed into the Oskar legend."

After the war, Emilie emigrated with Schindler--and his mistress--to Argentina, where his entrepreneurial attempt at a nutria farm ended in failure less than ten years later. Shortly thereafter Schindler departed for Germany, leaving his wife and mistress behind. The two became close friends.

In a 1973 German documentary, Emilie Schindler spoke "without any of the abandoned wife's bitterness, or sense of grievance, about Oskar and Brinnlitz," according to Keneally.

Since the release of the film, "Schindler's List," Emilie Schindler has reacted to the admiration bestowed upon her late husband with trenchant reminders that the savior of 1,200 Jews was not a man with flaws; he was a gambler, a drunkard, and an unfaithful husband.

SS (Schutzstaffel) -- The elite force of the Nazi party, its troops were ideologically indoctrinated and viewed the Jews and other sub-humans as worthy of only extermination.

Stereotyping - Attributing to a group a quality or trait possessed by only part of the group. Stereotypes are usually negative and lead to prejudging individuals based on their ethnicity or religion.

Treblinka - A killing center near Warsaw which opened in 1942. A revolt of inmates in August of 1943 destroyed most of the camp. It was closed in November of 1943.

Victims - In the context of the Holocaust, those groups singled out for persecution and/or extermination by the Nazis: Jews, Gypsies, political dissenters, leftists, Russian prisoners of war, resistance fighters, homosexuals, and other ethnic and religious groups. It is important to note that the Jews were marked for extermination but that many other people suffered terribly under the Nazis. The Polish nation lost three million Polish Catholics through disease, malnutrition, and outright extermination. The Russian nation lost twenty million under the Nazis. However, the critical difference between Jewish suffering and the suffering of other nations is this: The Jews were marked for wholesale extermination, the others for slave labor in which death was often the result. "Not all the victims were Jews," Elie Wiesel has said. "But all the Jews were victims."

Wannsee Conference - A meeting of the Nazi bureaucracy and military held in Wannsee, a Berlin suburb. The purpose of the conference was to coordinate the role of various government agencies in the extermination of the Jews.

Zegota - A small, unique organization clandestinely established in Nazi-occupied Poland for the purpose of rescuing Jews. The director of Zegota was Zofia Kossack, and devout Catholic and a pre-war novelist whose writings were not without anti-Semitic overtones. Indeed, in a leaflet she published in September 1942 titled "Protest," Kossack wrote that the Jews were the enemies of the Polish people but that Poles could not stand by and watch the Jews murdered by the Germans. It is estimated that four thousand Jewish children were saved as a result of Zegota's efforts. The children were smuggled out of the ghettos and transferred to Catholic orphanages and convents were they pretended to be Christians. Zegota, which had a branch in Krakow (headed by Stanislaw Dobrowolski), also smuggled food into the Plaszow labor camp and, later, into Oskar Schindler's factory in Brinnlitz, Czechoslovakia.

Zyklon B - Hydrogen cyanide, the pesticide used in crystalline form in the gas chambers of the Auschwitz and Majdanek killing centers.

SCHINDLER CHRONOLOGY

April 28, 1908 - Oskar Schindler is born in Zwittau, an industrial city in Moravia, then a province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Moravia is nestled between Bohemia in the north, and Slovakia in the south. The region is also known as the Sudetenland.

August 1, 1914 - The First World War begins.

November 11, 1918 - First World War ends with collapse of three empires: Russia, Germany, and Austro-Hungary. Moravia, which included Schindler's hometown of Zwittau, is detached from Austria and is annexed by the new country of Czechoslovakia.

As a result of the war, several million Sudeten Germans found themselves a minority people. Schindler is ten years old. Schindler attends German-language school--gymnasium--in Zwittau. Among his classmates and playmates are two Jewish boys, sons of the local rabbi

1920's - Schindler works as salesman for his father's farm-machinery factory.

May, 1928 - Schindler races motorcycle, a Moto-Guzzi, in high class competition.

1928 - Schindler marries Emilie. His father disapproves of marriage, and apparently Schindler leaves his job working as a salesman. He becomes a salesman for Morovia Eklectric and travels to Poland on business.

January 30, 1933 - Hitler is appointed Reichschancellor in Germany.

1935 - Schindler family factory goes bankrupt. Oskar's parents separate. Schindler joins the pro-Nazi Henlein party in Czechoslovakia.

September 29, 1938 - Hitler meets British Prime Minister Chamberlain and French premier Daladier in Munich, Germany. The western leaders step back before Hitler's threats of war, and force the Czechoslovak government, an ally with whom treaty obligations had been extended, to cede the Sudetenland to Nazi Germany. The Jews and Czechs of the Sudetenland were summarily expelled and their property confiscated. They fled to Prague and to the regions of the rump Czechoslovak state not yet occupied by the Nazis.

Autumn 1938 - Schindler joins German military intelligence, Abwehr, under Admiral Canaris. As a salesman, Schindler travels to southern Poland and reports to Abwehr

regarding points of military importance in Poland. His affiliation with Abwehr excused Schindler from military service.

November 9, 1938 - Kristallnacht, The Night of Broken Glass. Throughout the Greater German Reich (Germany, Austria, and the Sudetenland), Nazi stormtroopers smash and burn Jewish shops and synagogues. The glass littering the street in the aftermath gave the event its name: The Night of Broken Glass. Tens of thousands of Jews were arrested, and sent to the early concentration camp, Buchenwald.

March 15, 1939 - German troops occupy the rump state of Czechoslovakia and enter Prague to the gloom of the populace.
Slovakia becomes a cooperative satellite of the Nazis. The Czech lands of Bohemia and Moravia are absorbed into the Reich and named the Reichsprotectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

September 1, 1939 - German troops attack Poland. Three and a half million Jews live in Poland. The southern Polish city of Krakow, the ancient seat of Polish kings, is occupied on September 6, 1939. Oskar Schindler arrives shortly thereafter.

September 19, 1939 - Heydrich to Army high command told General Wagner of SS plans for “housecleaning of Jews, intelligentsia, clergy, and the nobility.” The army insisted that “housecleaning” be deferred until army has withdrawn and the country has been turned over to civil administration."

October 12, 1939 - The Nazis establish Krakow as the seat of their General Gouvernment of occupied Poland. Hans Frank, Hitler’s lawyer, is designated Reichsfuhrer of Nazi-occupied Poland. He orders the “voluntary” departure of all but work-essential Jews from Krakow. “economically indispensable.” After three months, the Germans took matters into their own hands, and expelled 32,000 Jews to Warsaw, Lodz, and other Polish cities.

Schindler makes initial contact with Stern.

December 3, 1939 - Schindler informs Stern of an impending SS raid in the Jewish ghetto of Kazmierz, a suburb of Krakow. “Tomorrow, it’s going to start,” he said. **“**Jozefa and Izaaka Streets are going to know all about it!**”**

December 4, 1939 - SS Einsatzgruppen descend on Jewish ghetto at Kazimierz, a suburb of Krakow. They terrorize Jews on Jozefa and Izaaka Streets, searching for diamonds and gold and then set fire to the synagogue of Stara Boznica, the oldest in Poland.

January 1940 - Schindler opens Deutsche Emailwaren Fabrik factory at 4 Lipowa Street in Krakow neighborhood of Zablocie.

April-May 1940 - Hitler attacks and conquers western Europe.

August 1, 1940 - Hans Frank issues deadline for all but essential Jews to depart Krakow voluntarily. There is a mad scramble as Jews search for “essential” jobs. Through the urging of Stern, Schindler accepts 150 Jews as employees at his factory.

October 1940 - Hans Frank, in a speech, says, “My dear comrades, I would not eliminate all lice and Jews in one year (public amused, he notes in his diary), but in the course of time, and if you help me, this end will be attained.”

November 1, 1940 - By this date, 23,000 Jews have been expelled from Krakow.

November 10, 1940 - Nazis issue decree: **“**All Jews and Jewesses over the age of nine through the Generalgouvernment must wear a four inch arm band in white, marked with **“**the star of Zion**”** on the right sleeve of their inner and outer clothing."

February 1941 - Two Krakow rabbis, Kornitzer and Rappaport, are sent to Auschwitz and killed for having protested the deportations from Krakow.

March 20, 1941 - Jewish ghetto established in Krakow in neighborhood of Podgorze. As historian Lucy Dawidowicz has written, “The Krakow ghetto was enclosed within walls in the form of Jewish tombstones, symbols of a terrifyingly literal character."

The Jewish police in the ghetto, the OD or Ordunungsdienst, is formed.

June 22, 1941 - Hitler attacks the Soviet Union.

End of 1941 - Schindler is arrested by Gestapo for black market activities. He managed to be released.

December 1941 - Hans Frank, in a speech, **“**As far as the Jews are concerned, I want to tell you quite frankly that they must be done away with in one way or another...Gentleman, I must ask you to rid yourself of all feelings of pity. We must annihilate the Jews. Difficult to shoot or poison the three and half million Jews in the Generalgouvernment, but we shall be able to take measure which will lead, somehow, to their annihilation."

April 28, 1942 - Schindler**’**s thirty-fourth birthday. He kisses a Jewish girl at his birthday party.

April 29, 1942 - Schindler arrested a second time, having been denounced as **“**a Jew kisser.”

June 1, 1942 - Seven thousand deported from Krakow to Belzec.

June 3, 1942 - Schindler goes to Krakow train station to rescue his office manager, Abraham Banier, and other workers from deportation to Belzec.

June 4, 1942 - Seven thousand Jews are deported from Krakow ghetto. That afternoon Schindler rents two horses and he and his mistress watch the SS's liquidation of ghetto from a nearby hill. Schindler becomes fixated on little Jewish girl dressed in red who stands out from the crowd of Jews being herded to the train.

October 28, 1942 - 2000 Jewish children and 6000 Jewish adults are deported to Belzec death camp.

End of October, 1942 - Six Jews killed in forests near Krakow, having been betrayed by local peasants.

Autumn 1942 - Schindler travels to Budapest, Hungary, to inform Jewish leaders there of the extermination campaign going on in Poland. In general, Hungarian leaders do not believe him. It is, says one, "an insult to German dignity."

Forced labor camps established at Plaszow, a suburb of Krakow. Commandant is Amon Goeth.

December 22, 1942 - The Jewish Fighting Organization blows up two cafes in the heart of Krakow that were frequented by German officers. They were led by Jewish commander Adolf Liebeskind, "We are fighting for three lines in a history book," he said.
By February 1943, all members of Jewish Fighting Organization in Krakow are arrested or killed.

March 13, 1943 - Final liquidation of Krakow ghetto begins.

March 14, 1943 - Several hundred small children shot in entrance of house, and several hundred old people and sick are killed in street. Two-thousand Jews sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau.
Children and old people slaughtered at hospital. Dr. Zygmunt Fischer ordered to abandon patients, he refused and shot with wife and child. Patients are killed in wards.

Schindler establishes a sub-camp at his Emalia factory.

Spring 1944 - At Chujowa Gorka forest, Nazis unearth and burn bodies of Jews executed earlier. In the film, ashes rain on Krakow.

Jews await deportation to death camp, but Schindler goes to train station and arranges through Goeth for a fire brigade to spray the cattle cars with water.

20 July 1944 - Attempt on Hitler’s life.

Emalia factory ordered dismantled, the prisoners sent to Plaszow.
Schindler plays a game of cards with Goeth for Helen Hirsch.

Schindler prepares a list of Jews that he argues are **“**essential**”** workers and are needed at his new factory in Czechoslovakia.

September 13, 1944 - Among Goeth is arrested by the SS and charged with black market activities.

Autumn 1944 - Schindler establishes new factory at Brinnlitz, Czechoslovakia.

300 **Schindlerjuden** are sent to Auschwtiz-Birkenau instead of Brinnlitz.

November 1944 - Schindler women are transferred from Auschwitz-Birkenau to Brinnlitz. Schindler greets them, **“**You’re safe now; you’re with me."

April 28, 1945 - Schindler’s thirty-seventh birthday. He gives a speech.

May 8, 1945 - **Schindlerjuden** give Schindler gold ring. The gold is extracted from the bridge in a prisoner’s mouth and engraved with the inscription: **“**He who saves a single life saves the entire world."

Schindler and his wife, Emilie, both dressed in prison uniforms, flee the Russians in a Mercedes. They are accompanied by eight Schindlerjuden who are there to protect them. A letter, written by the Jews, testified to Schindler and Emilie’s actions.

May 11, 1945 - Brinnlitz camp is liberated by lone Russian officer on a horse.

September 13, 1946 - After a trial, Amon Goeth is hanged in Cracow by Polish authorities. He dies unrepentant.

1949 - Schindler departs Germany for Argentina to try his hand at a nutria factory.

1957 - Schindler’s nutria farm goes bankrupt.

B’nai B’rith purchases the Schindlers a house in San Vicente, a southern suburb of Buenos Aires.

1958 - Schindler returns to West Germany, leaving his wife and mistress behind. With funding from Joint Distribution Committee and **"**loans**"** from number of Schindler Jews, Schindler establishes a cement company.

1961 - Schindler**'**s cement factory goes bankrupt. Schindlerjuden invite Schindler to Israel. Eichmann trial is underway.

October 9, 1974 - Schindler dies in Frankfurt, West Germany. He is buried at the Latin cemetery on Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

THE HOLOCAUST

From the time Adolf Hitler became the dictator of Germany in January 1933, until the surrender of his Third Reich at the end of World War II in May 1945, Hitler's Nazi led government engaged in two wars. One was a declared war of military expansion against the nations of Europe, which began with the 1939 invasion of Poland and reached its peak in mid-1942, when German armies occupied much of the continent and had penetrated deep into the Soviet Union. The other was a war against the Jews of Europe, the persecution and mass murder, hidden at first from the rest of the world, that came to be known as the Holocaust.

Even when the tide of war turned against Germany in 1943, and became clearly hopeless with the mid-1944 Allied invasion of Europe, the mass killing of Jews continued with increased ferocity, eventually claiming six million lives. In addition, the Nazis also put to death an estimated five million Gypsies (or Roma), Slav peoples, homosexuals, mentally retarded people, and people with handicaps, all of whom were considered "inferior" to the pure "Aryan" race. The term "holocaust," however, which means "destruction by fire," refers specifically to the Nazis' systematic destruction of Jews. As Elie Wiesel puts it, "Not all victims were Jews, but all Jews were victims."

Hitler's horrifying scheme was foreshadowed by his denunciation of "the Jewish conspiracy" in his 1923 book Mein Kampf and fueled by German economic hardships that tapped deep currents of anti-Semitism, but to carry it out required the active, deliberate involvement of hundreds of thousands of people, both within Germany and in the occupied countries. It also required the silent acquiescence of millions of people throughout Europe, people who saw what was happening and either did nothing to stand in the way or else took part by turning in neighbors or joining the rush to take over Jewish homes and possessions.

The first Nazi concentration camps were established early in Hitler's regime, at the German towns of Dachau (1933) and Buchenwald (1937), and used primarily as prisons and a source of forced labor. But the conquest of Poland in 1939 brought a new development, as that country's Jews were herded into ghettos at such cities as Krakow, Warsaw, and Lodz in a first step toward transporting them all to concentrations camps. By 1940, mass murder and "euthanasia" in special "gas vans" was in progress, and with the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, Nazi Einsatzgruppen ("strike squads") began mass killings of Jews in captured territory, such as the machine-gunning of 33,000 Jews at the Babi Yar ravine near Kiev in September, 1941. Systematically, the ghettos in Poland and elsewhere were brutally liquidated, and the survivors sent to special extermination camps, such as Auschwitz and Treblinka. Then, in January 1942, at the infamous Wannsee Conference,

the Nazi high command sanctioned the so-called **"**final solution,**"** a plan for the total destruction of all European Jews in the extermination camps**'** gas chambers.

Nazi leaders tried to keep the mass killings secret, but word leaked out quite early in the scheme. The United States government, for example, had confirmed reports of atrocities by 1942. For the most part, however, the outside world paid little attention. American and British officials met to discuss the matter in Bermuda in 1943, but accomplished little. It was not until early in 1944 that the United States even established a special War Refugee Board (which eventually did help in the rescue of approximately 200,000 Jews).

In July 1944, the Red Army liberated the Majdanek concentration camp, and within the next sixth months all the Nazi extermination camps were liberated by Soviet or American troops, many of whom, although hardened by years of battle and death, were shocked by what they encountered there. Only then did the world begin to learn the full extent of what the Nazis had been doing over the past 12 years. The results: not counting millions of civilian deaths from **"**regular**"** military actions, some 12-14 million human beings were murdered by the Nazis, including six million Jews-more than two thirds of Europe**'**s pre-war Jewish population, and more than had been slain in anti-Semitic pogroms during the previous 18 centuries.

HOLOCAUST CHRONOLOGY

1933

Hitler is appointed chancellor of Germany (as leader of largest political party) by President von Hindenburg, the head of the Government-decreed boycott of Jewish business. Concentration camp for **"**undesirables**"** established at Dachau. Jews banned from courts and government agencies. Jewish quota established for schools and colleges. Jews banned from college teaching posts. Jews banned from cultural enterprises (music, film, theater, etc.). Jews banned from journalism. Jewish food preparation rituals prohibited.

1935

Marriage and extramarital relations between Jews and non-Jews prohibited. Jewish citizenship and civil rights revoked. Jews forbidden to display the German flag.

1938

Jews required to report all financial interests and property.
Jews forbidden to practice law or medicine. Jews required to carry identification cards at all times. Jews required to assume the names **"**Israel" if male, **"**Sarah**"** if female. Jews required to turn in passports so they can be stamped to identify them as Jews. Jewish

religious institutions placed under government control. Thousands of Jewish men arrested and sent to forced labor camps. Kristallnacht (November 9, 1938): Government-sanctioned night of anti-Jewish riots - synagogues burned, homes looted and businesses destroyed, Jews beaten, tortured, arrested or killed. Jewish newspapers and journals outlawed. Jewish children expelled from schools. Jews prohibited from public places - theatres, concerts, museums, etc. Jewish businesses closed and Jewish business activity prohibited. Jews taxed to pay for Kristallnacht property damage.

1939

Administration of Jewish affairs placed under Gestapo control.
Detailed procedures established for government re-sale and re-use of confiscated Jewish property. Conquest of Poland: Jews systematically rounded-up and relocated to urban ghettos; Jewish businesses, homes, and property confiscated; Jews required to wear the Star of David; many Jews moved from ghettos to forced labor camps.

1941

Invasion of Russia: Jews systematically executed as villages come under German control. Gas chambers for mass execution constructed near Polish ghettos - Auschwitz Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, Majdanek, and Treblinka.

1942-45

Wannsee Conference completes planning for the **“**Final solution." Jews rounded up for mass execution in Nazi gas chambers in Germany and German controlled countries: France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Italy, Austria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania.

Pre-Screening Instructional Objectives

"Schindler's List is at times a historically complex movie. Experience indicates that students find the movie more engaging and comprehensible in they understand the historical context of the film.

Vocabulary:

Students should understand and be able to use the following:

Anti-Semitism
Death Camp
Germany (identify on map and describe role in war)
Ghetto
Holocaust
Jews
Kracow
Nazi
Nazism
Nuremberg Laws
Poland (identify on map and describe role in war)
World War II

Chronology:

Students should understand the key events leading to World War II.

Nazi Seizure of Power
Invasion of Poland
Beginning of World War II
Death Camps Open
End of War

Post-Screening Instructional Objectives

C Understands the central events of the Holocaust
C Analyzes the moral and political significance of **"**Schindler's List**"**
C Recognizes the central role of prejudice in creating the Holocaust
C Understands the significance of the Holocaust to their own lives and the world today
C Understands key theories on the causes of **"**rescuer" behavior

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