Social Responsibility

Varian Fry

Marseilles, France... August 1940 – On June 22, 1940, France surrendered to Germany and the two countries signed an armistice. France was divided into a Northern Zone, which was occupied by the Germans, and a Southern Zone, which was controlled by a French government, based in the town of Vichy, that was eager to assist the Nazis. Thousands of refugees living in the Southern Zone, both Jews and anti-Nazi non-Jews, were suddenly in danger of being turned over to the *Gestapo* (German secret state police) and sent to Germany. Troubled by this situation, a group of American citizens formed a relief organization to help the refugees. They called it the Emergency Rescue Committee (ERC).

Varian Fry, an American journalist, volunteered to travel from New York to Marseilles, a port city in southern France, as a representative of the ERC. Although U.S. policy toward refugees was unaccommodating, the government agreed to provide entry visas to two hundred refugees in France – prominent political leaders, scientists, artists, and writers. Varian's task was to help them get out. He arrived in Marseilles in August 1940 with a list of names and $3,000.

Refugees from all walks of life heard about Varian's mission and approached him for help. Varian was shocked to learn that thousands were unable to leave due to bureaucratic hurdles that stood in the way. He felt a responsibility to help as many people as possible. Varian rented an office and assembled a staff of American expatriates, French relief workers, and refugees. In direct opposition to the Vichy regime and the American consulate, he and his accomplices used black-market funds to forge passports and to smuggle refugees out of France; some by sea, and some by land, across the border into Spain. Varian established a legal organization, the American Relief Center, to serve as a cover for his illegal rescue work.

Varian turned his three-week mission into a thirteen-month stay. As the rescue work expanded, however, it became harder to keep it secret. Both the French authorities and the American consulate in Vichy condemned Varian's efforts. He was detained and questioned on more than one occasion. When his passport expired, the American consulate refused to renew it. Varian stayed in France nevertheless, and continued his rescue work. In June 1941, both the American consulate and the Vichy regime ordered Varian to return to the U.S. Ultimately, on September 6, 1941, he was deported by French authorities.

Upon his return to America, Varian continued to speak out about the plight of the refugees. The Emergency Rescue Committee, however, did not permit Varian to represent the organization or to speak on its behalf. He left the ERC and began writing for *The New Republic*, a political magazine. Varian wrote regularly about the United States' restrictive immigration policies. After he gathered information about the Nazis' efforts to wipe out the Jews of Europe, he wrote an article called "The Massacre of the Jews: The Story of the Most Appalling Mass Murder in Human History." In the piece, which appeared in *The New Republic* in December, 1942, Varian called on the United States to allow the unrestricted entry of all who were suffering at the hands of the Germans. His article went largely unnoticed.

Through his actions in France, Varian helped more than 1,000 refugees escape to safety, including some of Europe's leading cultural, intellectual, and political figures. Varian Fry is the only American recognized by Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust authority, as a Righteous Among the Nations.

Self-Sacrifice

Jadviga Konochowicz

Jody, Poland… January 1943 – When Germany attacked the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, the Soviet Army retreated and the Wermacht (German army) rapidly advanced eastward. One of the towns they occupied was Jody, then in Poland and now in Belarus. Jody was a small shtetl with 1,000 inhabitants, about 700 of whom were Jewish. The Germans immediately herded the Jews of Jody as well as Jews from surrounding villages into a ghetto, a section of the town where they were forced to live, isolating them from the non-Jewish population. On December 17, 1941 – the fifth night of the Jewish holiday, Hanukkah – the Germans and their Polish collaborators massacred roughly 500 of the Jews. By the end of the month, they had captured and murdered another 100. Of the roughly 100 Jews who were still alive, some fled to ghettos in nearby towns, some wandered from place to place, and a few were hidden by Christians. The Silverman and Smuszkowicz families were among those who found shelter.

Alter Silverman and his three teenaged children, and his sister Chaiye Rivke Smuszkowicz and her three teenaged children escaped the liquidation of the ghetto by hiding with their non-Jewish neighbors. The eight relatives spent most of 1942 hidden by two Christian families – five hid with one, three with the other. Toward the end of that year, the Germans raided the farm where one group was hiding. Although the Jews were not discovered, they had to find a new place to stay.

The Silvermans and Smuszkowiczes found shelter with the Konochowicz family, who were complete strangers. The family consisted of the parents and eight children, including seventeen-year-old Jadviga, the third oldest. The two Jewish families asked if they could stay for one night. They ended up staying for more than a year. Although the Konochowiczes were poor and barely able to care for their own family of ten, they provided food and shelter for the eight Jews. In doing so, they sacrificed their own welfare and risked their lives. The punishment for hiding a Jew in German-occupied Poland was death. Often the rescuer's entire family was murdered as well. Jadviga's father, however, was a devout Catholic and felt that it was his duty to help. People were suffering and his family had the ability to do something about it, despite the danger and hardship involved.

To avoid detection, the eight Jews lived in the attic of the Konochowiczes' barn. Jadviga regularly brought them food, which they pulled up to the attic in pails attached to a rope. Jadviga hummed to let them know when she was coming, as she knew that it was too dangerous to speak to them. In June 1943, four of the Silverman and Smuszkowicz children left the farm and went into the forest to join a partisan brigade – a group of resistance fighters. A few months later, the other two teenagers joined another partisan brigade that was fighting the Germans. They continued to use the Konochowicz farm as a safe house. Jadviga continued to help by smuggling weapons and ammunition to the partisans. All eight members of the Silverman and Smuszkowicz families survived the war.

Ingenuity

Olga Kukovic

Sarajevo, Croatia... October 1941 – In April 1941, Germany invaded Yugoslavia with the help of its Axis allies Italy, Hungary, and Bulgaria. The victors split up the country, which was home to nearly 80,000 Jews. Germany and Italy established the state of Croatia in the northern part of Yugoslavia and installed a fascist, pro-Nazi regime, the *Ustashe*. The *Ustashe* immediately began to persecute and terrorize the Serbs, Jews, and Roma (Gypsies) living within Croatia's borders. These groups, all designated by the *Ustashe* as "foreign elements," fell victim to racial laws, systematic murder, torture, and expulsion. The regime also established concentration camps throughout Croatia and, by the end of 1941, had imprisoned two-thirds of the some 40,000 Jews living there.

One of the cities that fell within the borders of Croatia was Sarajevo (now part of Bosnia and Herzegovina). Olga Kukovic, a Serb, lived with her young daughter in an apartment in the city center. Olga's husband, Janko, had fled to Serbia after learning that he was on a *Ustashe* execution list. In October 1941, *Ustashe* officials were rounding up the remaining Jews of Sarajevo. Isidor Baruh, who was among them, was walking near the home of Olga Kukovic when someone told him to go into hiding immediately. Because Isidor's sister, Berta, was a friend and former classmate of Olga's, Isidor ran to Olga's home and asked her for help.

Olga sent her daughter, Liliana, to find Isidor's other sister, Hanna, and to bring her to their apartment. Hanna came right away, carrying only her handbag. Hanna's husband had already been taken away. It was clear that she and Isidor were also in grave danger. Olga decided that the only way to save Isidor and Hanna was to get them to Mostar, a nearby town in the Italian-occupied zone of Yugoslavia. Berta, along with Isidor's wife and child, had already gone there. The Italian commander in Mostar refused to enforce the anti-Jewish measures called for by the Germans, so Jews were relatively safe there.

Olga knew that smuggling her Jewish friends out of Sarajevo would be risky. She had heard that some Jews had escaped from Croatia by posing as Muslims, who were not targeted by the *Ustashe* or the Germans. She decided to disguise the Jewish siblings in this way. Olga bought Hanna a long Muslim dress with a hood and a veil, and Hanna was able to travel to Mostar by train with her appearance concealed.

Because Isidor had red hair and facial features that the Nazis and their collaborators saw as typically Jewish, his task was more difficult than his sister's. Olga used her imagination to help Isidor overcome these obstacles. First she had a hairdresser color Isidor's hair black. She then bought him a fez, a felt cap that many Muslims wore, dressed him in Muslim garb, and took a photo of him. Olga bribed a policeman to make Isidor a fake identity card. She also made contact with a Muslim friend of Isidor's who offered to help him get to Mostar. The Muslim man brought his Jewish friend to the train station, and Isidor boarded a train that brought him to Mostar. Thanks to Olga Kukovic, Isidor and Hanna – along with their sister, Berta – survived the war.

Cooperation

Preben Munch Nielsen

Copenhagen, Denmark... October 1943 – On April 9, 1940, Germany invaded Denmark. The Germans believed that the Danes shared their "Aryan" racial qualities, so they imposed a less rigid occupation in Denmark than they did in countries such as Poland. The Danish government was allowed to remain in power, and although it chose to cooperate with the Nazis, it continued to protect the more than 7,500 Jews living within its borders. Jewish citizens, who were located mainly in the capital city, Copenhagen, were not stripped of their rights, property, jobs, or security. Because the Jewish population was small and had the support of the Danish government, the Germans decided to postpone the persecution of the Danish Jews until after they had won the war.

In the spring of 1943, however, the situation changed. Inspired by the Allies' progress in the war, the Danish people stepped up their resistance to the German occupation. Labor strikes and acts of sabotage intensified. On August 28, 1943, the German military commander in Denmark declared a state of emergency and commanded the Danish government to institute martial law. Acts of sabotage were to be punishable by death, the press was to be censored, and demonstrations were to be banned. The Danish government refused to accept these measures and resigned. The presiding Nazi official, Werner Best, saw this as an opportunity to begin the deportation of the Danish Jews.

Georg Ferdinand Duckwitz, a German official stationed in Denmark, leaked the news of the pending deportation to Danish leaders, who informed the Jewish community. On September 29, 1943 – the eve of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year – the chief rabbi of Denmark entered the Great Synagogue in Copenhagen, announced the plans for the deportation, and told the congregants to leave immediately, alert others, and go into hiding. The arrests were set to begin on October 2, but they would not be successful. The people of Denmark – members of the resistance, church leaders, students, policemen, physicians, ordinary citizens – spontaneously came together to thwart the operation. Preben Munch Nielsen, a high school student from Snekkersten, a fishing village north of Copenhagen, was among those who participated.

Preben had joined the resistance as a courier in 1940, and he quickly became involved in the rescue operation. A policeman came to his door and asked him to pick up several Jews at a nearby train station and escort them through the woods to the shore. They would be smuggled by boat across the sound to Sweden (the sound is the body of water they crossed). Preben completed this mission and joined the Friends of the Sound, a group of Danes based in Snekkersten that coordinated the secret crossings to Sweden. A neutral country, Sweden had agreed to accept the fleeing Jews and encouraged its citizens to welcome them.

The Friends of the Sound used the Snekkersten Inn as their headquarters. Many Jews hid at the Inn or in nearby homes before being brought to waiting boats. Preben and his friends worked with local fishermen to take up to twelve Jews at a time across the four-mile stretch of water. In less than a month, they ferried some 1,400 Jews to Sweden. Wanted by the *Gestapo* (German secret state police), Preben fled to Sweden in November 1943. He returned to Denmark when the war ended in May 1945. In the span of one month, October 1943, the people of Denmark helped more than 7,200 Jews escape to Sweden. Ultimately, about 100 Danish Jews died during the Holocaust.

Cooperation

Dimitar Peshev

Sophia, Bulgaria… March 1943 – In January 1941, Bulgaria passed anti-Jewish legislation modeled after the Nuremberg laws that Germany had instituted in 1935. The Bulgarian government felt that an alliance with the Germans would enable the country to regain land it had lost decades earlier. Persecuting the nearly 50,000 Jews was a way to show common cause. Some Bulgarian politicians, writers, intellectuals, and church leaders protested the measures, but the government stood firm. Germany saw that it had a loyal partner in Bulgaria and welcomed the country into the Axis alliance in March 1941.

Dimitar Peshev, the deputy speaker of the Bulgarian parliament, supported the anti-Jewish legislation. He felt that Bulgaria's alliance with Germany was in his country's best interests and that the anti-Jewish measures were a shrewd move. The strategy proved a success. In April 1941, Bulgaria participated in the invasions of Greece and Yugoslavia and received portions of each country in return. Another 11,000 Jews came under Bulgarian rule, more than 7,000 in Thrace (annexed from Greece), and some 4,000 in Macedonia (annexed from Yugoslavia). Over the next two years, the Bulgarian government confiscated Jewish property, forced Jews to wear yellow stars, and further limited their rights. The government, however, took no immediate steps to deport the Jews to killing centers.

The situation changed dramatically in February 1943. Bulgaria agreed to Germany's request to hand over 20,000 Jews from its territories. In March, Bulgarian authorities arrested more than 11,000 Jews living in the newly annexed territories, and German army units deported them to the Treblinka killing center in Poland. Because the Bulgarian government had not met the quota of 20,000, it decided to deport Jews of Bulgarian citizenship, namely the 8,000 living in the town of Kyustendil near the Macedonian border. Word of the plan spread and angered many of the non-Jewish residents. A delegation of Bulgarians boarded a train for Sophia, the capital, to protest the deportation. They were hoping to enlist the support of Dimitar Peshev.

Although he had supported the anti-Jewish laws, Dimitar had done so for practical reasons and he never supported the deportation of Bulgaria's Jews. He, too, wanted to stop it. On March 9, 1943, he brought the Kyustendil delegation, along with several parliament members, to meet with the Minister of the Interior, Petur Gabrovski. Gabrovski denied knowing about the plan, but they knew he was lying and demanded that he cancel the deportation. After a lengthy argument, Gabrovski agreed to do so. Dimitar knew, however, that the Jews were not out of danger.

On March 17, 1943, Dimitar wrote a letter to Prime Minister Bogdan Filov in which he opposed any future deportations of Bulgarian Jews. He convinced 42 of his colleagues in parliament to sign the petition and presented it to the prime minister. Filov was furious that Dimitar organized such a public protest. The parliament voted to remove Dimitar from his position as deputy speaker. Soon thereafter, the government launched a plan to deport all of the nearly 50,000 Bulgarian Jews to Poland. Although Dimitar felt defeated, his actions caused others to intensify their protests. Leaders of the Bulgarian church sent letters to the prime minister and to King Boris III. Prominent writers and intellectuals spoke out, as did groups of lawyers, physicians, and communists. This collective pressure led King Boris III to alter his policy. Despite competing pressure from the Germans, he prevented the deportations by having many Bulgarian Jews assigned to forced labor units in Bulgaria. As a result, no Jews of Bulgarian citizenship were sent to their deaths in Poland.

Courage

Marion Pritchard

Amsterdam, the Netherlands... 1942 – Marion Pritchard was studying to become a social worker when Germany invaded the Netherlands in May 1940. Amsterdam, the city in which she lived, was home to more than 75,000 Jews. The Germans began deporting Jews from Amsterdam to the Buchenwald and Mauthausen concentration camps in February 1941. Most Dutch citizens opposed Germany's assault on their country and the persecution of their Jewish neighbors, but they felt powerless in the face of German brutality and military might. Many reluctantly accepted the Nazi presence, and some, including Dutch officials, collaborated with the Germans. Others, like Marion Pritchard, chose to resist and to help Jews.

At the beginning of 1942, the Germans started concentrating Jews in Amsterdam; many were forced to relocate from the countryside. The growing Jewish population was then confined to certain areas of the city. July of that year marked the beginning of mass deportations to the killing centers in occupied Poland, mainly to Auschwitz. One day, Marion Pritchard witnessed Germans throwing young Jewish children onto a truck for deportation. It was a shocking sight, and Marion was overwhelmed with rage. The twenty-two-year-old student decided then that she would do whatever she could to rescue Jewish children.

Working with friends in the Dutch resistance, Marion began to bring food, clothing, and papers to Jews in hiding. She also performed more complicated missions when called upon, often putting herself in danger. Once, a friend asked her to deliver a "package" to a home in the north. Marion went to the handoff site, and a stranger gave her a baby girl. Marion traveled all day by train only to find that the people she was supposed to meet had been arrested. Another man took Marion and the baby into his home. He and his wife decided to care for the child even though they were not involved in the operation.

In addition to carrying out short-term assignments, Marion hid a Jewish man and his three children from the fall of 1942 until liberation in 1945. Marion's friend, Miek, asked her to find a hiding place for his friend, Freddie Polak, and his children, ages four, two, and newborn. When Marion could not find a place, Miek persuaded his mother-in-law to let Freddie and the children, Lex, Tom, and Erica, stay in the servants' quarters of her country house. For the first year in hiding, Marion visited the family every weekend. When she finished school in November 1943, she moved into the home and took over the fulltime care of the children.

Miek had built a hiding place under the floor in case the Germans came looking for Jews. All four of them could fit in the space. One night, three Germans and a Dutch Nazi came to search the house. Marion had put the Polaks under the floor, but had not had time to give Erica, the baby, her sleeping powder. The search party left after failing to find any Jews. The baby started to cry, so Marion let the children climb out. The Dutch Nazi returned half an hour later; he saw the children sleeping and the hiding place uncovered. Marion knew she needed to act quickly. She reached for a gun that Miek had given her and killed the Dutchman.

The Polaks stayed with Marion until the end of the war. During the German occupation of the Netherlands, which ended in the spring of 1945, Marion Pritchard helped save approximately 150 Jewish children.

Social Responsibility

Jerzy Radwanek

Oswiecim, Poland... 1940 – Shortly after World War II began in September 1939, Jerzy Radwanek, a pilot in the Polish air force, was assigned to a secret intelligence mission. The *Gestapo* (German secret state police) learned of the operation and arrested Jerzy before it was launched. In the fall of 1940, he was deported to Auschwitz.

Although it would become the deadliest killing center during the Holocaust, Auschwitz began as a prison for Poles who opposed the German occupation of their country. Construction on the first part of the camp began in May 1940, when the Germans converted Polish army barracks near the town of Oswiecim, 37 miles west of Krakow, into a concentration camp. It would become known as Auschwitz I.

Rudolf Höss, the SS captain in charge of the new project, was instructed to build a camp that could accommodate 10,000 prisoners. The idea was that Auschwitz would be a transit camp from which inmates could be sent to camps in the west for slave labor. However, because the region around Auschwitz was discovered to be rich in natural resources, the Nazis decided to house a permanent population of slave laborers at Auschwitz I.

In October 1941, the Germans began construction on Auschwitz II, or Auschwitz-Birkenau, which became the primary site of the genocide of Europe's Jews. Birkenau was originally conceived as a prisoner of war camp that would hold 100,000 inmates, but it evolved into a site of mass murder once the Final Solution – the Nazis' policy to annihilate all the Jews of Europe – took shape.

In November 1942, the Buna camp at Monowitz, also known as Auschwitz III, was established as the first of several satellite camps located on industrial sites around Oswiecim.

When Jerzy Radwanek arrived at Auschwitz I in the fall of 1940, he worked with other Polish inmates to establish a secret military organization inside the camp. They planned escape routes and documented atrocities committed by the Germans. Jerzy was given the job of a camp electrician and was able to move about the grounds more freely than most other inmates. On several occasions, he was sent to the Jewish barracks to repair wiring and install lights. He was deeply disturbed by the plight of the Jewish inmates and decided to do whatever he could to help them. Despite the dire circumstances he himself faced, Jerzy felt a responsibility to ease the suffering – or at least to try – of the Jews imprisoned with him.

Often, Jerzy would purposely cause a short circuit in a Jewish compound so that he would be called in to fix it. On such occasions, he smuggled food and medicine in his toolbox that he had stolen from the Germans. When the guards' attention wandered, Jerzy distributed the items to the Jewish women and young people. He was caught more than once and severely beaten for offering this aid. Jerzy befriended several of the women whom he visited, and he promised, if he survived, to tell the world of the brutality and suffering he witnessed. The Jews who came to know Jerzy called him the "Jewish Uncle" of Auschwitz. Jerzy was a prisoner in Auschwitz from May 1940 until the camp was liberated in January 1945.

Compassion

Olga Rajsek

Zagreb, Croatia… 1942 – After Germany and its allies invaded Yugoslavia in April 1941, they carved the country into zones of occupation, with Germany, Italy, Hungary, and Bulgaria each taking a portion. In the northern part of the country, the Germans and Italians created the fascist puppet state of Croatia. The pro-Nazi *Ustashe* regime immediately launched a reign of terror against "foreign elements" within the country, some 2 million Serbs, 40,000 Jews, and 30,000 Roma (Gypsies). In their assault on the Jews, the regime first enacted laws that isolated them from society, both economically and socially. In June 1941, mass arrests began. By the end of that year, the *Ustashe* had imprisoned nearly two-thirds of the Jews of Croatia in concentration camps that they had built throughout the country. The largest such camp complex was Jasenovac, located about 60 miles west of the city of Zagreb.

Zagreb was home to about 11,000 Jews, including the Stockhamer family. Shortly after the Axis invasion in 1941, eight-year-old Dan Stockhamer learned that his father and uncle had been captured as war prisoners. A year later, Dan and his mother were sent to a concentration camp. Dan's grandfather was able to secure the boy's release and brought him to the home of Olga Rajsek in Zagreb. Olga, a Christian, was the fiancée of Dan's imprisoned uncle, Zlatko Neumann. Unaware of Zlatko's fate and distraught about Dan's safety, Olga sought to do what she could to help. She took Dan into her home and hid him for months.

Around neighbors, Olga passed Dan off as her cousin. One family that supported the *Ustashe* became suspicious and questioned the boy about his identity when they invited him into their home. They realized that Dan was a Jew. They reported him to the authorities and he was taken to a local prison. Olga pleaded for Dan's release. After little success, she approached Bishop Alojzije Stepinac, the head of the Catholic Church in Croatia, who had begun to publicly criticize the regime's policies against the Jews and the Serbs. Stepinac intervened and was able to get Dan released from prison.

However, Dan was arrested and taken away again. This time with the help of a friend, Olga was able to get him out and had him placed in an orphanage that was caring for the children of partisans (resistance fighters). Olga continued to care for Dan, bringing him food every day and taking him to her home on weekends. The suspicious neighbors had moved away, but Olga pretended that Dan was the child of a partisan just to be safe. The boy often asked for his mother, who had been killed months earlier in a concentration camp.

When the war ended in the spring of 1945, Olga took Dan from the orphanage and brought him back to her house. Dan's father and uncle were released from prison. Dan was reunited with his father. Olga Rajsek and Zlatko Neumann, Dan's uncle, were married.

Ingenuity

Oskar Schindler

Krakow, Poland... 1940 – Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. Within a week, enemy troops occupied the city of Krakow. The Germans declared Krakow the capital of German-occupied Poland. At that time, 60,000 Jews lived in Krakow, nearly one-quarter of the city's population. The Germans persecuted the Jews from the moment they reached the city, and soon began to expel them to the Polish countryside. In March 1941, the Germans established a ghetto in Krakow, a section of the city to which the Jews were restricted to live. 20,000 Jews from the city and from surrounding towns were forced to move there, and many of the inhabitants were forced to work in factories both inside and outside the ghetto.

Oskar Schindler, a German businessman, went to Krakow in October 1939 to take advantage of this slave labor and confiscated property that would become available. He wanted to make money. In January 1940, he acquired a Jewish-owned business that made enamel kitchenware and renamed it the German Enamelware Factory Oskar Schindler. It came to be known as Emalia. The factory was located at the edge of what would become the Jewish ghetto. Oskar employed Jews at the factory initially because they were much cheaper than Polish laborers. His reasons for taking in more such workers evolved, however, as the plight of Krakow's Jews worsened.

In the spring of 1942, the SS began to round up Jews in the Krakow ghetto and deport them to recently opened killing centers. Oskar witnessed the brutality and bloodshed of the deportations and decided that he would do what he could to save his Jewish workers. That summer, the Germans established the Plaszow slave labor camp near the ghetto. Jews as well as Polish prisoners were sent there to work in factories.

In March 1943, the Germans emptied the ghetto, sending more than 2,000 inhabitants to the Auschwitz-Birkenau killing center. The remaining Jews were sent to Plaszow. Having learned of the Germans' plans for the liquidation of the ghetto, Oskar told his employees to stay at Emalia until it was over.

The violence of the liquidation and the worsening conditions at Plaszow, where the Jews were now forced to live, led Oskar to take additional steps to protect them. He told Amon Göth, the commandant of Plaszow, that he wanted to transform Emalia into a sub-camp of Plaszow, complete with barracks for his Jewish workers. Göth agreed to the idea, in part because Oskar bribed him, and the first transfer of Jews to the sub-camp took place in May 1943. By the summer of 1944, more than 1,000 Jews lived there. Oskar treated the workers relatively well and provided extra food rations that he bought on the black market.

As Soviet troops approached Krakow, Oskar was ordered to break up the Jewish sub-camp at Emalia. The workers were to be sent back to Plaszow and then to other camps or killing centers. Knowing that Germany sought to increase its production of arms for the war effort, Oskar asked permission to set up a new armaments factory in Brünnlitz, located in German-occupied Czechoslovakia. He then arranged for nearly 1,100 Jews from Plaszow, some of whom had worked at Emalia, to be transferred to the new factory. On this list, he claimed, were "indispensable" workers. His ploy was successful. In the fall of 1944, the Jews were brought to the factory in Brünnlitz. The men were transferred from the Gross-Rosen concentration camp, and the women from Auschwitz. The Jews remained in Brünnlitz until the area was liberated by the Soviet army in May 1945.

Courage

Irena Sendler

Warsaw, Poland... 1942 – When the Germans invaded Poland in September 1939, Irena Sendler was working in the Social Welfare Department of Warsaw's Municipal Administration. Warsaw was home to 375,000 Jews, the largest Jewish community in Europe and nearly thirty percent of the city's population. The Germans began to persecute the Jews of Warsaw from the beginning of the occupation. From the outset, Irena Sendler used her position to provide financial and material assistance to Jewish families who were affected.

On October 12, 1940 – the Jewish holiday, Yom Kippur – the Germans issued a decree calling for the establishment of a ghetto, a section of the city where the Jews would be forced to live, isolating them from the non-Jewish population. About 400,000 Jews from Warsaw and the surrounding region were forced to move into an area of 1.3 square miles. In mid-November, the ghetto was sealed, surrounded by a brick wall over ten feet high and topped with barbed wire. A few heavily guarded gates permitted access to the ghetto, but the Jews inside were forbidden to leave. On account of the cramped conditions, poor sanitation, and very limited food and medicine, disease and starvation claimed thousands of lives each month. Ghetto inhabitants also fell victim to random acts of violence by both German and Polish authorities.

In July 1942, mass deportations of Jews from the Warsaw ghetto began. Most were sent to the Treblinka killing center northeast of the city, where they were murdered in gas chambers. Horrified by the Germans' persecution of the Jews, a group of Polish citizens formed an underground organization called the Council for the Aid to Jews, or *Zegota*, in September 1942. Irena Sendler became the head of *Zegota's* Children's Bureau. She and a colleague, Irena Schultz, obtained documents that allowed them to enter the ghetto, and the two young women began to smuggle children out.

Irena Sendler, who used the codename "Jolanta," and the members of *Zegota* used creative methods to get children out of the ghetto. They led some out through the underground corridors of a courthouse and through a tram depot. They sedated some infants and carried them out in potato sacks or coffins. A church located on the edge of the ghetto also became useful. It had two entrances, one inside the ghetto and one on the Christian side of Warsaw. With *Zegota's* help, some children entered the church as Jews and exited as "Christians."

In addition to smuggling children out of the ghetto, Irena Sendler found safe places for them to hide – often with non-Jewish families in the Warsaw area. Children were also sheltered in convents, hospitals, and orphanages. To Poles who struggled under the added financial burden that came with hiding a Jew, *Zegota* gave money to help pay for food, clothing, and medicine.

The Germans learned of Irena's activities. On October 20, 1943, she was arrested by the *Gestapo* (German secret state police) and taken to the Pawiak prison. Irena was tortured brutally, but she refused to give any information about *Zegota* or about the children she had placed in hiding. She was sentenced to death. Members of *Zegota* bribed one of the *Gestapo* agents, and on the day Irena was to be executed, she was permitted to escape. She had to go into hiding for the remainder of the war but continued to coordinate her rescue work. By January 1945, when Warsaw was liberated by Soviet troops, the Children's Bureau of *Zegota* had saved more than 2,500 Jewish children.

Self-Sacrifice

Aristides de Sousa Mendes

Bordeaux, France... May 1940 – On May 10, 1940, Germany invaded the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France. The Germans attacked France through the Ardennes Forest in southeastern Belgium and swiftly advanced south through the country. Many of the Jews living in France – some of whom had emigrated from Germany in the 1930's – fled south. Most sought to enter Spain, proceed to Portugal, and then escape by ship to Great Britain, the United States, or South America. In order to cross the French border into Spain, the refugees needed Portuguese entry or transit visas. On the day the Germans launched their invasion of Western Europe, however, the Portuguese government instructed its consular representatives in France not to issue such visas, especially not to Jews. This left thousands of refugees stranded in Bordeaux, a French city near the Spanish border.

One night Rabbi Haim Kruger from Belgium, one of thousands of refugees trying to escape, approached Aristides de Sousa Mendes, the Portuguese consul general in Bordeaux, and begged him to issue visas to the more than ten thousand Jews who had fled to the area. Aristides agreed to give visas to the rabbi and his family, but said that he could not give out any more without his government's approval. Rabbi Kruger refused to accept the offer. After much soul-searching, Aristides decided that he would issue visas to all those who needed them, even though he would be risking his career and his life. As the Germans continued their push into southern France, Aristides began to issue transit visas to Jews, defying the orders of his government. With a Portuguese transit visa in hand, a refugee was allowed to cross into Spain in order to enter Portugal. Aristides issued thousands of visas before the Germans reached Bordeaux. His wife, Angelina, took care of those who were ill, elderly, or pregnant, and his two oldest sons assisted him in preparing the visas. When German planes bombed Bordeaux on the night of June 19, 1940, many of the refugees fled to Bayonne and Hendaye, French towns closer to the Spanish border. Aristides followed and instructed the Portuguese consul in Bayonne to issue special visas to the Jews, whose situation grew more perilous as the German assault on France intensified. When Aristides arrived at Hendaye along with some of the Jews to whom he had issued visas, the Spanish officials refused to let them cross the border. They had received orders not to honor any transit visas Aristides had issued. Aristides led the refugees to an obscure border crossing that did not have a telephone. The lone guard had not received the orders, and Aristides persuaded him to let everyone through.

France surrendered and signed an armistice with Germany on June 22, 1940. Germany occupied the northern part of France and a stretch along the western coast – where Bordeaux was located – that extended down to Spain. Even after the German army entered Bordeaux on June 27, 1940, Aristides continued to issue Portuguese passports to Jews who were still stranded there, knowing that such documents might prevent these Jews from being deported to concentration camps. Once again, his disobedience angered the Portuguese government. Aristides left Bordeaux on July 8, 1940 and returned to Portugal. Upon his return to Lisbon, the capital, he was dismissed from the diplomatic service and was denied retirement and severance benefits. Aristides de Sousa Mendes died in poverty in 1954 and was survived by twelve children.

Integrity

Chiune Sugihara

Kovno, Lithuania... August 1940 – In November 1939, Chiune Sugihara, a Japanese diplomat, opened a consulate in Kovno, Lithuania. While his official assignment was to perform diplomatic functions, Chiune's main responsibility was to gather intelligence on German and Soviet troop movements near Lithuania's borders. In June 1940, the Soviet Union invaded Lithuania and ordered all consulates to close by the end of August. On July 27, Chiune saw hundreds of people waiting outside the consulate. He learned that they were Polish Jews trying to escape from the advancing German army.

Chiune agreed to meet with a group of the refugees. The delegation asked him to issue Japanese transit visas to the Jews so that they could travel east across Soviet territory and exit through Japan on their way to other countries. Many of the refugees hoped to reach the Dutch West Indian island of Curaçao, which did not require visas for entry. Even though they had a final destination, they would not be given exit visas by the Soviet Union unless they also had visas permitting them to continue their trip. Chiune was moved by their plea for help.

After the meeting, Chiune wired the Foreign Ministry in Tokyo, explained the situation, and requested permission to issue the visas. His request was denied. The Ministry insisted that a Japanese visa be issued only if the refugee had a valid end visa and enough money to cover the cost of the entire trip. Chiune knew that most of the refugees could not meet either requirement. Over the next few days, he sent further requests to the Foreign Ministry for permission to issue the visas. Each request was met with silence. Realizing the urgency of the situation and unwilling to ignore his conscience, Chiune began to issue Japanese transit visas.

Chiune worked more than sixteen hours a day to issue 2,139 handwritten visas. He distributed them regardless of whether or not the refugees had the necessary supporting documents. In early September 1940, the Soviet authorities forced Chiune to close the consulate in Kovno. As he and his family prepared to leave Kovno for Berlin, he continued to issue visas on the train platform. He handed out more once he was on board.

The Germans invaded Lithuania in June 1941. There were more than 30,000 Jews still living in Kovno when the Soviet forces fled. In July, the *Einsatzgruppen* (mobile killing squads) and their Lithuanian auxiliaries began to massacre Jews in several forts around the city. The remaining Jews were herded into a ghetto, a section of the city where they were forced to live, and mass killings continued through the summer of 1944.

At the end of the war, the Soviets arrested Chiune Sugihara in Bucharest, Romania. They detained him and his family for more than a year in an internment camp in Romania, which had been part of the Axis alliance, and then for several months in Vladivostok, a seaport in far eastern Soviet territory. Upon his return to Japan, Chiune was forced to resign from the Foreign Service. The official reason for his dismissal was the downsizing of the diplomatic corps, but the real reason was likely the disobedience Chiune exhibited in helping the Jews of Kovno.

None of the refugees ever made it to Curaçao. From Japan, most went to Shanghai, China and others to the United States, Canada, and Palestine (now Israel). Since entire families were often included in a single visa, thousands of Jews survived due to the efforts of Chiune Sugihara.

Compassion

Hasmik and Tigran Tashtshiyan

Simferopol, Ukraine… 1941 – In August 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union signed a nonaggression pact, each agreeing that it would not attack the other. On June 22, 1941, Germany broke the agreement and launched Operation Barbarossa, the largest German military operation of World War II. More than three million soldiers from Germany and more than half a million from its allies participated in the invasion. The Soviet army was caught off guard, and German forces rapidly advanced eastward. Following the German army into Soviet territory were the *Einsatzgruppen*, mobile killing squads charged with the task of shooting Communist officials, partisans (resistance fighters), and racial enemies, including Jewish men – and ultimately Jewish women and children as well.

On September 19, 1941, the Germans entered Kiev, the capital of the Soviet republic of Ukraine. On November 1, they occupied Simferopol, a Ukrainian city on the Crimean peninsula, near the Black Sea. By the time they reached Simferopol, most of the 20,000 Jews living there had fled. Jewish refugees from other regions of Ukraine, however, had come to the city as German forces moved farther into Soviet territory. When the Germans arrived in Simferopol, they ordered the more than 14,000 Jews in the city to register with Nazi authorities and to wear arm bands displaying the star of David. *Einsatzgruppe* D established its regional headquarters there.

In November and December of 1941, thousands of Jews were rounded up, loaded onto trucks, taken to the outskirts of the city, and shot. Among those killed were the grandparents of Rita and Anatoly Golberg. The children's mother, Eugenia, knew that Rita and Anatoly would likely be killed as well and sought to find a place to hide them. She had to look no further than the house next door, where the Tashtshiyan family lived.

Eugenia pleaded with her neighbors to shelter Rita and Anatoly. Survivors of the Armenian genocide during World War I, the Tashtshiyans sympathized with the Golbergs and understood the dire circumstances they faced. They immediately offered to take in the two Jewish children, even though it meant endangering the lives of their own children, Hasmik and Tigran. Their assistance could not have come at a more crucial time.

From December 11 to 13, *Einsatzgruppe* D rounded up and murdered the remaining 12,500 Jews of Simferopol. They did not find Rita and Anatoly Golberg. Hasmik and Tigran had built several hiding places for them – one in the attic, one in the basement, and one in the shed outside their house – and the two Jewish children went undetected. Hasmik and Tigran shared their food and clothing with Rita and Anatoly and cared for them until April 1944, when Simferopol was liberated by the Soviet Army. Eugenia Golberg survived the war and reunited with her children after liberation.

Moral Leadership

André Trocmé

Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, France... Winter 1940 – After Germany defeated France in June 1940, the two countries signed an armistice. Under the terms of the agreement, the Germans occupied northern France and annexed the eastern provinces of Alsace and Lorraine. A newly formed French government, based in the town of Vichy, was given authority in southern France. The Vichy regime, led by Marshal Henri Philippe Pétain, immediately began to persecute the Jews. In October 1940 and again in June 1941, Pétain's government enacted anti-Jewish legislation that banned Jews from most professions and excluded them from public life. Beginning in the summer of 1942, they deported thousands of Jews from France to killing centers in Eastern Europe.

The village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, located in a mountainous region of the Southern Zone, was an enclave for French Protestants whose ancestors had moved there centuries earlier in order to practice their religion freely without fear of persecution. From the beginning of the German occupation, the inhabitants of the village adopted a spirit of resistance, encouraged by their pastor, André Trocmé. A minority themselves in Catholic France, the villagers of Le Chambon empathized with the Jews and felt an obligation to help them.

Late one night in the winter of 1940 someone knocked on the door of André Trocmé's home. A Jewish woman who had fled from Germany sought shelter; she thought perhaps the local pastor would understand her plight. Magda Trocmé, André's wife, knew that the woman would need false identity documents in order to avoid arrest. Magda went to the mayor's office to see if he would help. The mayor refused and demanded that the Jewish refugee leave Le Chambon the following day.

Realizing the danger this woman now faced, Magda asked a family if they would hide her. They agreed to do so and took the woman into their home.

Magda and André began to identify more families in and around Le Chambon who were willing to shelter Jewish refugees. People of all ages were hidden in homes, residential schools, and public institutions. The Vichy regime learned of the operation. In the summer of 1942, French police descended on Le Chambon to stop the community's rescue work. André delivered a forceful sermon to his congregation in which he urged them to uphold their religious values and to resist all actions that betrayed the teachings of the Gospel. Because of the increased police presence, many of the Jews were spirited out of Le Chambon and hidden in surrounding farms. Villagers helped Jews who were most at-risk to make the dangerous trek to the Swiss border. These refugees were smuggled across the border into the waiting hands of Protestant supporters on the Swiss side.

Throughout the rescue effort, André Trocmé urged his congregants to stand by their convictions and to continue to shelter the persecuted, both Jews and non-Jews. André and his accomplices had several confrontations with the Vichy police. In February 1943 he was arrested and sent to a detention camp in France. The camp commander demanded that André sign an oath of loyalty to the Vichy government. He refused but was released after five weeks. He went underground at that point but continued to oversee the community's rescue work. By the time France was liberated in September 1944, the villagers of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon and the eleven surrounding villages had saved approximately 5,000 people, including about 3,500 Jews.

Moral Leadership

Raoul Wallenberg

Budapest, Hungary... July 1944 – Following Germany's defeat at Stalingrad in February 1943, which put the Wermacht (German army) on the defensive, Hungary reconsidered its loyalty to the Axis alliance and tried to negotiate an armistice with the Allies. Germany wanted to prevent this from happening and also wanted to annihilate the Jews of Hungary, the last large Jewish community left in Europe. German forces occupied the country on March 19, 1944. With the help of Hungarian officials, they forced the Jews to move into ghettos – sections of towns and cities to which they were restricted to live – and then deported the majority to Auschwitz. Most were murdered upon arrival. By the end of July 1944, nearly 440,000 Jews had been deported from the Hungarian countryside; only the Jews of Budapest remained. Although Miklós Horthy, the Regent of Hungary, attempted to prevent the forced removal of the 260,000 Jews living in Budapest, Hitler insisted that the deportations continue.

Swedish diplomats stationed in Budapest had begun to issue provisional passports to Jews in March 1944. With these documents, Jews were treated like citizens of Sweden, a neutral country. At the urging of a newly formed American organization, the War Refugee Board, and Swedish officials in Budapest, the Swedish government agreed to redouble its efforts. It sent Raoul Wallenberg, a thirty-two-year-old businessman, to the Swedish embassy in Budapest to see what might be done. Raoul arrived in the city on July 9, 1944, and he soon inspired hundreds of people to intensify the rescue work. He created a new document called a *Schutzpass* (protective passport), which protected the holder from deportation by declaring that he or she was under protection of the Swedish government. It also exempted the holder from wearing the yellow star of David. Raoul and his colleagues handed out thousands of these protective passports, and employed hundreds of Jews to help with the operation.

In October 1944, the Germans orchestrated the overthrow of the Hungarian government, and the fascist, antisemitic Arrow Cross party took power. The Arrow Cross launched a reign of terror on the streets of Budapest and supported the Germans' deportation efforts. Raoul continued to issue thousands of protective passports and set up safe houses to which the Jews could move. He worked with diplomats from other neutral embassies, including Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, and the Vatican, to establish an "international ghetto" that came to house 30,000 Jews.

In November 1944, more than 70,000 Jews were forced to march on foot to the Austrian border. Many were shot along the way. Raoul followed the columns of Jews in his car and managed to secure the release of hundreds, providing trucks to bring them back to Budapest. He also organized checkpoints along the roads out of Budapest and at the border crossing. He enlisted members of his staff to demand the release of those carrying protective passports. Some colleagues even handed out passports secretly on the spot. Hungarian and German officials warned Raoul to stop his rescue activities, but he continued relentlessly until January 1945, when Soviet forces liberated the area of Budapest where the Jews were living.

On January 17, 1945, Raoul set out to meet with Soviet officials at Debrecen, a Hungarian city about 125 miles east of Budapest. He hoped to return in a week with food and medicine for the more than 100,000 surviving Jews. He was never seen again and likely died or was killed in a Soviet prison. During the six months he spent in Budapest, Raoul Wallenberg and his colleagues rescued tens of thousands of Jews.

Integrity

Eugenia Wasowska

Przemysl, Poland... Summer, 1941 – A year before Germany launched World War II, Sister Alfonsja became the director of an orphanage in Przemysl, Poland. She was nineteen years old. Born Eugenia Wasowska, she became a nun as a result of a vow her father had made when she was thirteen. The young girl was struck by a horse and buggy and seriously injured. Her father promised God that if his daughter lived, she would enter a convent. Eugenia recovered, and after finishing high school, she became a nun. She took the name Sister Alfonsja. Because of her love for children, she was assigned to a Catholic orphanage in Przemysl.

On the eve of the war, Przemysl, located in southeastern Poland, had a Jewish population of about 24,000. The Germans reached the town on September 14, 1939. Germany had agreed to divide conquered Polish territories with the Soviet Union, whose armies had advanced from the east. Przemysl straddled the dividing line, and came under full Soviet control on September 28, 1939, only to be reoccupied by the Germans on June 28, 1941. Under both Soviet and German rule, Jewish life in Przemysl deteriorated drastically. It was the Germans, however, who enacted anti-Jewish laws and who concentrated the Jews in a sealed ghetto, a section of the city where they were forced to live, isolating them from the non-Jewish population. Eventually, the Germans deported thousands of Jews from the ghetto to killing centers in Poland.

Sister Alfonsja became the director of the Catholic orphanage in Przemysl before the Germans and the Soviets invaded. Soon after the Germans reoccupied the area, she began to take in Jewish children. “Maria” was one of the first. One day Maria showed up at the front door of the orphanage. When Sister Alfonsja opened the gate, Maria whispered through her tears, “My name is Maria. I am a Catholic. Please take care of me.” Sister Alfonsja noticed a young couple watching the girl from the edge of the woods near the orphanage. She immediately let her in. “Maria” was in fact Hedy Rosen, and the couple at the edge of the woods was her parents. Pretending to be Polish, Hedy’s mother found work as a washwoman in a nearby village. She would come to the orphanage in the middle of the night and leave food for the children by the gate.

Despite the danger and the daily struggle to manage, Sister Alfonsja took in thirteen Jewish children. There was never enough food or medicine, and she often had to beg for rations. The orphanage was unheated, and water had to be brought up from a well. Human waste was collected daily in buckets, which then had to be emptied.

In addition to providing shelter for the children, the orphanage saw to their schooling. Since Sister Alfonsja had pledged to take in only Catholic children, she had to keep the true identities of the Jewish children unknown to the priests who oversaw the local church. She treated the Jewish children as if they were Catholics. They attended mass along with the others and were taught that if a German asked them what they wanted to be when they grew up, they should say a nun or a priest.

In the spring of 1944, as the retreating Germans moved out of eastern Poland, Sister Alfonsja brought the thirteen Jewish children to the Jewish community in Przemysl, of which there were only 300 survivors. In 1950, she left the convent and returned to her original name, Eugenia Wasowska.