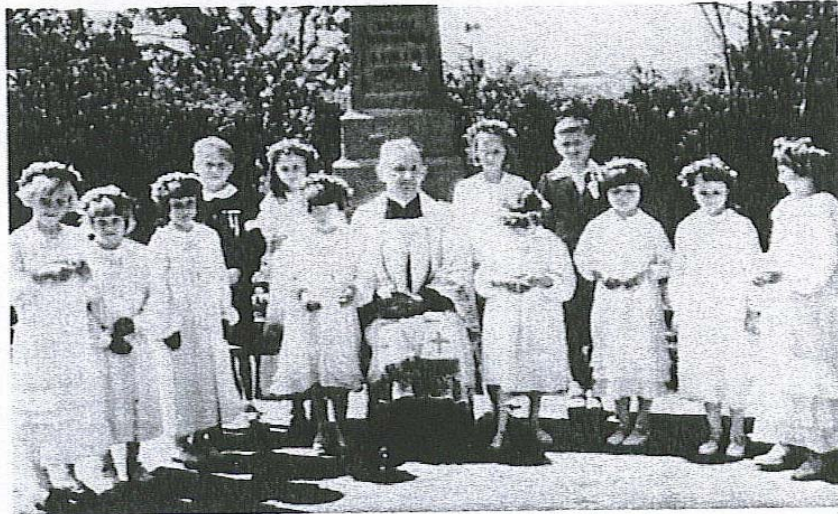


## HIDING, ESCAPE, AND RESCUE



A Jewish child in hiding stands among a group of Polish children dressed up for their First Communion (#09298)

Date: Circa 1943

Photo credit: Eve Nisencwajp Bergstein Collection, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives

Photographer: No photographer recorded

### Photo description

Pictured fifth from the left is Eve Nisencwajp (b. 1936), a Jewish child from Staszow, Poland, who was placed in the home of Stanislaw and Wiktona Szumielewica in 1941. For the duration of the war, Eve posed as their orphaned niece. In 1946 members of the Jewish brigade removed her to a Jewish orphanage in Krakow. Soon after, Eve was taken to a children's home in France, where she remained until emigrating to Canada in 1947.

Unit IV: Hiding, Escape, and Rescue

Unit Goal: Students will develop an understanding of the extensive efforts made by the Jews and other victims of the Nazis to hide and to escape from their grasp and the vital role of the rescuer in saving many lives.

<b>Performance Objectives</b> Students will be able to:	<b>Teaching/Learning Strategies and Activities</b>	<b>Instructional Materials/Resources</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrate an understanding and recognition of the influence that our values and beliefs have on the behavior of each of us.</li> <li>2. Describe and recognize positive and negative types of human behavior.</li> <li>3. Understand that behavior reflects the choices and decisions that each person makes.</li> <li>4. Demonstrate an understanding and appreciation for the complexity of the problems involved in attempting to run and/or hide from the Nazis and their collaborators.</li> <li>5. Demonstrate an understanding of the consequences of the choices we make with the impact on others and ourselves in terms of human pain vs. human happiness, and human construction vs. human destruction.</li> <li>6. Demonstrate an understanding and appreciation for the importance of moral responsibility in making choices.</li> <li>7. Review and explain the behavior associated with each of the following:</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Teacher note: Opening essay for the teacher to provide background information may be used with the students at teacher discretion.</li> <li>B. Hiding and Escape                         <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Obtain and read book with students and complete activities in the lesson for <b>Jacob's Rescue</b> by Malka Drucker and Michael Halperin.</li> <li>2. Uri Orlev's <b><u>The Island on Bird Street.</u></b> Reading and lesson included provides an opportunity to explore the loneliness and difficulties of hiding successfully and the need for human contact. If possible, obtain the novel and read entire story. Obtain copies of some of the books read by Alex and read excerpts of them in class. Discuss their fascination for an 11-year-old boy and their availability.</li> <li>3. <b><u>Twenty and Ten</u></b> by Claire Buchet Bishop is a readable story appropriate for fifth grade. View the video "Miracle at Moreaux" and compare and contrast the book and the video program. What themes and issues are consistent despite the changes in the video story?</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Essay on Hiding, Escape, and Rescue included in guide.</li> <li>1. <b><u>Jacob's Rescue</u></b> by Malka Drucker and Michael Halperin</li> <li>2. <b><u>Hide and Seek</u></b> by Ida Voss and <b><u>Daniel's Story</u></b> by Carol Matas provide opportunities to examine other experiences with fictional materials of approximately same reading level.</li> <li>3. Uri Orlev's <b><u>Island on Bird Street.</u></b> Excerpt included in guide.</li> <li>4. Excerpt from <b><u>Robinson Crusoe</u></b> for descriptions of emotions, etc.</li> <li>5. Claire Buchet Bishops's <b><u>Twenty and Ten.</u></b></li> <li>6. PBS Wonderworks video production of "Miracle at Moreaux."</li> </ol>

<b>Performance Objectives</b> Students will be able to:	<b>Teaching/Learning Strategies and Activities</b>	<b>Instruction Materials and Resources</b>
<p>collaborator, perpetrator, rescuer.</p> <p>8. Identify and discuss the difficulties of leaving almost everything behind to go to a new and strange place.</p>	<p>4. Reading and lesson from Nelly S. Toll's autobiographical story <b><u>Behind the Secret Window</u></b>. If possible, in addition to the excerpt, obtain the book so that the students may also examine some of the artwork the author produced while in hiding and since that time. The author is a New Jersey resident. Examine the timeline included in the lesson and place Nelly Toll's story within the context of the timeline.</p> <p>5. <b><u>Place to Hide: True Stories of Holocaust Rescue</u></b> by Jayne Petit. Complete readings and lesson in guide.</p> <p>6. Story of Bernard Rotmil, a reading selected from <b><u>The Hidden Children of the Holocaust</u></b> by Esther Kustanowitz. There are a number of other harrowing true life stories included and worth reading aloud in class or silently and individually. Discuss the separation and loss of family and problems of reuniting those who survived.</p> <p>7. "Escape to Shanghai" by Norbert Seiden. An autobiographical manuscript of a man who is now a New Jersey resident. Shanghai was one of the few places that kept its doors open to Jewish refugees. See the lesson for other suggested resources for the teacher and students.</p>	<p>8. <b><u>Behind the Secret Window</u></b> by Nelly S. Toll. Also, <b><u>Touch Wood</u></b> by Renee Hano Roth for further reading on hiding theme.</p> <p>9. Video: "<b>Nightmare: The Story of Joachim and Rachel</b>." Fictional story of a brother and sister who survive by running, hiding, and escaping. Well-done production includes use of flashback tactic.</p> <p>10. Reading about Miep Gies selected from <b><u>Place to Hide: True Stories of Holocaust Rescue</u></b> by Jayne Petit. Book has a number of other admirable and courageous stories in it.</p> <p>11. <b><u>The Hidden Children of the Holocaust: Teens Who Hid from the Nazis</u></b> by Esther Kustanowitz.</p> <p>12. "Escape to Shanghai" by Norbert Seiden. Story from his manuscript and lesson included. An additional suggested reading on the story of refugees in Shanghai is <b><u>Ghetto Shanghai</u></b> by Evelyn Pike Rubin.</p>

Performance Objectives Students will be able to:	Teaching/Learning Strategies and Activities	Instructional Materials and Resources
<p>9. Identify the variety of strategies and tactics employed by the rescuers to hide and to assist the targets of Nazi oppression and destruction.</p> <p>10. Identify and discuss the characteristics common to those who were willing to take the risk of being a rescuer.</p> <p>11. Demonstrate an understanding and appreciation for the many risks assumed by a rescuer</p>	<p>9. <b><u>Anne Frank: Beyond the Diary, A Photographic Remembrance.</u></b> This volume by van der Rol and Verhoeven has some excellent photographs as well as quotes from Anne's diary and commentary. Obtain book to use with lesson.</p> <p>C. Hiding and Rescue</p> <p>1. "Jews of Greece and the Holocaust." This story includes the autobiographical account of Dr. Yolanda Avram Willis as told to Alberta Lindsey. Study the map as well as completing the reading and lesson for a better understanding of the complexity of the geography as well as the population demographics.</p> <p>2. "Gandino Blooms in Israel" is the story of Marina Lowi Zinn who was born in Milano, Italy. During the Holocaust, Marina, her mother, and her brother sought shelter in Gandino where Righteous Gentiles hid them. Read the selection and complete the discussion guide and selected activities.</p> <p>3. "In Honor of My Righteous Rescuers." An autobiographical account by New Jersey resident and retired educator Cecile Seiden. Author was born in Antwerp, Belgium. A much-loved and only child whose family life is disrupted</p> <p><b>Teaching/Learning Strategies and Activities</b></p>	<p>13. <b><u>Anne Frank: Beyond the Diary, A Photographic Remembrance by</u></b> Ruud Van der Rol and Rian Verhoeven</p> <p>1. "Jews of Greece" includes story of Dr. Yolanda Avram Willis. Reading in guide.</p> <p>2. "Gandino Blooms in Israel" by Silvana Galizzi from the newspaper article in the <b>L'Eco Di Begamo.</b></p> <p>3. Video: "<b>The Assissi Underground.</b>" See videography for information.</p> <p>3. "In Honor of My Righteous Rescuers" by Cecile Seiden. Reading in guide.</p>

<b>Performance Objectives</b> Students will be able to:		<b>Instructional Materials and Resources</b>
<p>12. Demonstrate an understanding of the courage shown by a handful of diplomats who saved thousands of Jews, some in defiance of their governments' orders.</p>	<p>by the Nazi efforts to roundup and transport Jews to ghettos and camps.</p> <p>4. Gay Block and Malka Drucker have written a book with a collection of true stories called <b><u>Rescuers: Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust.</u></b> Lesson and activities included in guide. Obtain the book or an excerpt to read in class.</p> <p>5. <b><u>Darkness Over Denmark</u></b> by Ellen Levine is the dramatic story of the rescue of all but 50 of approximately 8000 Danish Jews by their fellow-countrymen. Lesson in guide. A good resource to use in conjunction with novel <b><u>Number the Stars.</u></b></p> <p>6. <b><u>Forging Freedom</u></b> by Hudson Talbott. A true story of the heroism of Jaap Penraat in Amsterdam, Holland. Mr. Penraat now lives in the United States. Reading and lesson in guide.</p> <p>7. Ken Mochizuki story of the real-life Hero and Japanese diplomat Chiune Sugihara. <b><u>Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story.</u></b> Lesson in guide.</p> <p>8. "Aristides de Sousa Mendes: Unsung Hero of the Holocaust" by Henri Zvi Deutsch. Article and lesson in guide.</p>	<p>4. <b><u>Rescuers: Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust</u></b> by Gay Block and Malka Drucker. No reading in lesson.</p> <p>5. <b><u>Darkness Over Denmark</u></b> by Ellen Levine. Lesson in guide. Book needed for reading.</p> <p>6. Hudson Talbott's story of Jaap Penraat's heroism told in <b><u>Forging Freedom.</u></b> Reading included in guide.</p> <p>8. <b><u>Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story</u></b> by Ken Mochizuki. <b><u>Visas for Life</u></b> by Yukiko Sugihara is an excellent teacher resource to use with this book.</p> <p>9. "Aristides de Sousa Mendes: Unsung Hero of the Holocaust" by Henri Zvi Deutsch. Reading included. From <b><u>Shofar</u></b> magazine</p>

<b>Performance Objectives</b> Students will be able to:	<b>Teaching/Learning Strategies and Activities</b>	<b>Instructional Materials and Resources</b>
	<p>10. <b><u>Raoul Wallenberg</u></b> by Michael Nicholson and David Winner. Reading and lesson in guide. Famous rescuer and diplomat whose disappearance into the hands of Soviet officials has never been fully explained.</p> <p>11. Varian Fry's autobiographical account of this American's efforts to save Jewish and non-Jewish targets of Nazi persecution is told in <b><u>Assignment: Rescue.</u></b> Reading and lesson in guide.</p>	<p>10. <b><u>Raoul Wallenberg</u></b> by Michael Nicholson and David Winner is one of several biographies of Wallenberg available. Reading from this book is in guide.</p> <p>11. There is a video available to accompany the autobiographical account written by the American Varian Fry in <b><u>Assignment: Rescue.</u></b></p> <p>12. Excellent video with short vignettes about a number of courageous diplomats who tried to rescue those being hunted and persecuted by the Nazis is "<b>Diplomats of the Damned.</b>" About 50 minutes in length.</p>

## Hiding, Escape, and Rescue

In the beginning, most Jews were not aware what deportation, resettlement and ghettoization meant. They had not envisioned that a civilized nation like Germany was capable of such evil.

As the Germans were victorious in Western Europe, they tightened their stronghold on the Jews under their control. From September 1939 (after the invasion of Poland) to June 1941 (start of the campaign against Russia), the Nazis overran Norway, Denmark, Belgium, France, Holland, Yugoslavia and Greece.

“The fate of Jews in Western Europe differed from country to country. Three major factors determined what happened to Jews in the lands between the Rhine and the Atlantic: the degree of control exercised by the Nazis in the conquered country, the history of the Jews in that region, and the behavior of the local populace. Despite local distinctions, anti-Jewish policy followed a familiar scenario. The pattern set by Germany toward its own Jews between 1933 and 1939, and toward Austrian Jews in 1938, became the model imposed swiftly on occupied countries.”

The World Must Know by Michael Berenbaum p. 68

In the winter of 1940-41, the war reached the second phase of destruction with the ghettos, mass shootings and then the “final solution”, the liquidation of the majority of the Jewish people in Europe. The world remained silent. Hitler was able to destroy and annihilate the Jewish people with its culture and institutions. Emigration to the United States was heavily curtailed because of its isolationist policy and not wanting to fight in another world war. Great Britain issued the White Paper of 1939 which restricted immigration to Palestine (Israel). The Jews had few routes of escape except to Shanghai, China, where no visas were needed. Twenty thousand Jews managed to escape and live there. There were eighteen Righteous Diplomats who risked their lives to provide Jews on the run with visas and permits of protection like Raoul Wallenberg and his staff in Sweden who managed to save thousands of Hungarian Jews from the gas chambers of Auschwitz.

Thousands of other “Righteous Rescuers” risked their lives and many paid for their heroic efforts with the loss of their own lives. The Gestapo offered extra bounty of groceries, cigarettes, liquor, and cash for collaboration. This became a powerful incentive to give away a hiding place. The risks were so high that, if caught, the rescuers would be killed immediately or hanged publicly as an example. The countries under Nazi occupation were almost totally cut off from the free world. Jewish communities and international Jewish organizations were anxious to retain contact with their fellow Jews in order to send supplies. After the United States entered the war, this means of supplies was cut off because the Allied powers discouraged contact in enemy territories.

As the war progressed and Jews were being rounded up in “actions”, some Jews tried to go into hiding. What did hiding entail? First, one had to have a

hiding place and someone who would be willing to help out. Hiding places were often found in convents, cellars, attics, farms, bunkers, forests or living as an Aryan. Once a hiding place was found, there was always the fear of being arrested. The Nazis in their roundups searched the many hiding places and arrested Jews and, in many cases, the rescuers that helped them. In many instances, hiding meant separation from one's parent and perhaps never seeing that parent again. There was the terrible fear of collaborators who gladly cooperated with the Nazis to reveal Jews in hiding and their rescuers. One also had to contend with the bystanders who saw but did nothing to help.

The difficulties and dangers of hiding were numerous. The difficulties were to provide shelter, subsistence and medical supplies. Food was rationed in most countries of occupation and ration cards had to be obtained, The rescuers had the extra burden of finding extra ration cards and not arousing the suspicions of the locals in order to feed Jews in hiding.

Despite the fear of reprisal from the Nazis and collaborators, Righteous Rescuers were willing to risk their lives because of their religious beliefs and humanitarian concerns. They felt that all efforts should be made to defeat the Germans and to stop the atrocities imposed upon the world and against the Jewish people.



## Jacob's Rescue

by

Malka Drucker and Michael Halperin

Yearling Book by Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1994

Recommended for Grade 5

### **Synopsis**

Based on real events, this book is the story of the Roslan family who risked their lives to hide Jacob and his brother David as well as attempting to aid other Jews. Jacob Gutgeld was only eight years old when he escaped from the Warsaw ghetto and was hidden by the Roslan family. Eventually, Jacob's younger brother David also was hidden by the Roslans. It was a risky venture for all involved and the years of hiding that followed were filled with fear, hunger, illness, and other hardships including the death of Yurek Roslan. After the war, it was discovered that Jacob's and David's father was alive and living in Palestine (Israel) and the boys had to go to him. Many years later, the now-grown boys found their rescuers living in the United States and were reunited with them.

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Locate the following on a map: Warsaw, Poland; Israel; the United States.
- Define the terms: antisemitism, prejudice, discrimination, Seder, Passover, Haggadah, *Judenrein*, heroes, Gestapo, ghetto, Righteous Among the Nations award.
- Make a list of favorite card games and other games (no technological battery-operated or electrical games) that you play inside your home. Ask your parents and grandparents or other adults in your neighborhood what games they played when they were children. If you do not know the game, ask them to describe how it was played.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What is Marissa's fifth question at the Seder?
2. What is the answer to Marissa's question?
3. Describe how Jacob's life had changed from prewar Poland of 1939 to 1941 in the Warsaw ghetto under Nazi rule. Where were the men in his family?
4. Describe life in the ghetto under Nazi rule.
5. What do *Bubbe* (grandmother) and Aunt Hannah decide must be done with Jacob?
6. What name does "Uncle Alex" give to Jacob? Why must he have a new name?
7. What are the names and ages of the Roslan children? How do Jacob and the two Roslan children react to each other at first?
8. Describe the Roslan apartment.
9. How does Jacob describe the ghetto to the Roslans? What does he say is happening to the people being taken away on trains?
10. Why is Mela (Mrs. Roslan) so worried about taking Jacob into their home?

11. Why does Alex decide that he must make a hiding place for Jacob in their home? Where is the hiding place? What is it like for Jacob in this place?
12. Why does Jacob appear to be thinner and more apt to become sick even though the Roslans fed him whatever they ate? What does Alex do to try to solve the problem?
13. Why is Jacob's Uncle Galer able to go about the streets without being arrested by the Gestapo?
14. How does Jacob feel about Marishka and Yurek going to school? How does he attempt to become involved in their schooling? How do they feel about Jacob's involvement?
15. How does a neighbor's visit bring fear to Jacob and the Roslans?
16. How does Jacob use his skill with numbers to help Alex?
17. Mela's brother Vladek is prejudiced against the Jews, yet he helps the family when the Polish police come to the apartment looking for Jews. How does he help? Why does he help?
18. Where are Jacob's brothers Sholom and David? What is life like for them in their hiding places?
19. Why did the Roslans decide to move? How was Jacob hidden during the move?
20. Why does Mela agree to permit Sholom to come to live with them also?
21. Describe Sholom's appearance. How does Mela respond when she sees Sholom? How do Jacob and Sholom react to each other? What does Marishka do?
22. What illness strikes the children in the Roslan apartment? Why does it cause so much fear?
23. While Yurek is in the hospital, how does he attempt to help little Orish (Sholom)?
24. How does Jacob react when Sholom dies? What does Alex do?
25. Explain how Yurek becomes involved with the Resistance. How do Jacob and Yurek work together to hide this information from Alex and Mela? Why do they hide what Yurek is doing?
26. What happens when Jacob develops scarlet fever? Why does Dr. Masurik agree to treat Jacob?
27. How does Alex solve the problem of the money needed for the bribe and for Jacob's treatment? How does Alex smuggle Jacob into the hospital?
28. How does Mela react when Alex takes the family to their "new home"? Describe the home. What does Marishka say about her mother to her brother Yurek?
29. How had hiding Jacob and Sholom changed life for the Roslan children?
30. What did Alex help to smuggle into the ghetto? Why did the Jews need the smuggled weapons?
31. When Alex tells Yurek that he will take him with him on the next smuggling operation, Yurek responds, "There won't be a next time, Papa. They're killing all the Jews (p.76)." What is Alex's response?
32. Why does David join Jacob with the Roslan family? Why does Jacob come to resent his little brother David?

33. What happens when Marishka and Teddy (David) disobey and go outside again to play? Why do David and Jacob fight and argue?
34. What happens when the Gestapo agent and the soldiers come to the apartment?
35. What happens to Yurek? How does Mela react? What is Jacob's reaction? What does Alex mean when he tells Jacob, "Genyek, it's the only thing that matters" in response to Jacob's comment that it doesn't matter whether or not they make it (p. 91)?
36. Why do Mela and Alex decide that they must all leave Warsaw? Where do they go to hide?
37. Describe the journey to Vladek's village.
38. When Vladek warns Alex that there is a rumor in the village that he and his family are Jewish, how does Alex handle the crisis? Does it work? How does the village respond?
39. How does Jacob respond to the Russian soldier?
40. Why do the Roslans decide that they must go to Berlin after the war ended?
41. How do Mela and Alex feel about Jacob and David by this time? Give examples that show this.
42. How do Jacob and David react when they learn that their father is alive and wants them to come to him in Palestine? What do Alex and Mela tell them?
43. Why did Mr. Gutgeld hide the letters and cards that the boys and the Roslans tried to send to each other? How did Jacob and David find the Roslans again?
44. What is the "Righteous Among the Nations" award? Why did Jacob and David want the Roslans to receive the award? Do you agree that the Roslans were true heroes?

### Activities

1. Analyze the difference between the words "famous" and "hero." Give examples of people who fit each of the categories. Explain how the word "hero" is often misused to describe people who are simply famous and popular.
2. Make a list of the games that Jacob plays with Yurek, Marishka, Sholom, and David throughout the book **Jacob's Rescue**. What are some of the common features of these games? Make a list of games that you and your family or friends like to play that could have been played by Jacob and "his family." Describe how you would feel if you could only play "quiet, indoor games."
3. On the "Righteous Among the Nations" award, Marissa read the words, "Whoever saves a single life is as one who has saved the entire world (p. 114)." Explain what this means. How does it apply to Alex, Mela, Marishka, and Yurek?
4. The decision by parents or grandparents to rescue and hide Jews had quite an impact on the lives of their children also. Make a Venn diagram illustrating how the lives of the children in a family of rescuers changed when the adults decided to help. What would you have said and felt had you been a child in such a family?

5. Find another true story about a person or family who rescued Jews and read the story. Explain some of the characteristics that the rescuers had in common with the Roslan family. How do the rescuers view themselves and what they did?

**Other Suggested Sources**

- **Daniel's Story** by Carol Matas.
- **Twenty and Ten** by Claire Huchet Bishop.
- **Hide and Seek** by Ida Voss.
- **Joseph and Me: In the Days of the Holocaust** by Judy Hoffman.

## The Island on Bird Street

A Novel by

Uri Orlev

Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1983

Recommended for Grades 6-8

### **Synopsis**

When his mother "disappeared" and his father was taken by the German army, eleven-year-old Alex is left alone in his hiding place at 78 Bird Street. The ghetto is a fearsome place to be alone. The Germans are hunting Jews and betrayal is a constant threat. Alex's only friend is Snow, a little mouse he has found. The Germans have closed No. 78, but Alex makes a rope ladder to enter and exit as he slips out to hunt for food and fuel. During his foraging, Alex meets a number of people - some friendly, some threatening - but always he is on his guard. From his hiding place, he peers out and watches what is happening in the ghetto as more and more Jews are rounded up and taken away and those who remain struggle for survival. Despite the threat to his life, Alex reaches out to others who are in trouble and tries to help. And always, always, Alex waits for the return of his father.

### *Chapter 11 "The Bunker" - pp. 79-84*

I had decided to rise very early, when the light was still gray. That way, I thought, the daytime looters would still be in bed and the nighttime ones would already have gone home. But despite the chirping of the birds on the floor above me, I didn't wake up in time. When I stepped out of the larder it was already a fine autumn day. I stretched and stifled a yawn. I tried to glimpse the front gate but couldn't see it. Which meant that anyone entering the building couldn't see me either. Now I could see the ruins beneath me too. I knelt with a red crayon that I had taken from the children's room next door and drew a line on the floor that mustn't be passed standing up. Then I drew a second line in green that mustn't be passed on my knees.

I sat in the doorway of the larder and had breakfast with Snow. All of a sudden I heard a car coming up the street, on the ghetto side of the wall. I put everything back in the larder and shut the door, even though I knew that it couldn't be seen from the ground. I remained where I was, stretched out on the floor.

They came straight to Number 78. Would they have sent a car just for me? Maybe I'd been so active the last few days that I'd been heard and mistaken for many people. And yet I had tried to be as quiet as I could. Could someone have seen me putting up the ladder and only now come to check on me? I'd throw the emergency rope out the window and make a run for it. Except that Snow was inside the larder. I should never have left him there because taking him out would make noise.

A large group of men entered the ruins. I could tell there were a lot of them by their footsteps and shouts, which were partly in German and partly in Yiddish. Someone said something in good Polish and was answered in bad. I heard

things being dragged over the ruins, and then an order given in German and bricks being struck and falling down. Plaster crumbled and showered to the ground. I realized what they were doing and relaxed. They had already spoken of it the first time they came here looking for a bunker. Now they were widening the opening in order to search the cellar.

I tried to imagine myself down there. What would it be like to be sitting there now, cringing helplessly and listening to the strokes of the hammers and picks?

The birds on the floor above me took to the air and flew off.

It didn't take them long to break through the opening. Then I heard more banging. And muffled shouts from deep within the cellar. They weren't looking for me. They were looking for bigger game. Could it be that under the floor of the cellar in which I had lived for twelve days was a bunker with people in it? And that I hadn't heard them make a sound while all along they heard me? But maybe they hadn't heard me either.

Father and Boruch had spoken of bunkers like that. Not makeshift ones like ours. Real ones, dug deep underground, with running water and concealed tunnels for air. Even with bathrooms and septic tanks. (Father explained to me what a septic tank was--a kind of sewage system without pipes.) Bunkers stockpiled with enough food to last for a long, long time. The trouble was that too many people were involved in building such a place, even if they were all supposed to hide in it afterward. Except for the man who would seal it in the end by flooring over the entrance.

There was a sharp explosion. Plaster fell on me from above. For a panicky moment I thought the whole top floor would collapse on me. Then there was silence. And then a sound of screaming and wailing that seemed to come from deep in the earth. Followed by shots, which sounded near. I prayed that they were just warning shots fired outside the bunker.

Its inhabitants began to come out. No one was screaming anymore. The children just cried and some of the grownups groaned and sighed. I didn't dare move forward on the floor to get a look at them. Someone might glance up and see me.

It took a long while for the last of them to emerge. The Germans and the policemen kept shouting, and footsteps kept crossing the ruins from the cellar to the front gate. Now and then someone stumbled. Plaster and bricks tumbled down. Somebody fell once or maybe twice. A shot rang out. Nobody screamed, though. Even the children had stopped crying. The last footsteps left the building. I heard voices in the street and an order to line up in threes. The same as had been given us. Then they were marched away. A few more shots. Finally the car started up and drove off.

The sun shone straight down on the ruins. It was noon. I crept quietly into the larder and didn't come out again until evening. It was strange to think that all those people had been hiding with me in one house without us even knowing about each other.

I took the flashlight and the pistol. They'd never take me away like that. That was for sure. I lowered the ladder and climbed down. All kinds of junk was scattered on the ground between the cellar and the gate. I entered the cellar

through the big opening that had been made. About half-way down the corridor there was a large hole in the ground. I shone the light through it and saw a low, long room that looked like a bomb shelter. Could that really have been what it was? But no, that didn't make sense: The tenants of the building had had the cellar for air raids. Wooden steps led down from the hole. How had the Germans known where they were? They had gone straight to the secret entrance.

I climbed down. The place was a shambles. Wooden benches with mattresses lined the walls. Tables stood in the middle of the room. On one of them was scattered some cards. On another lay an upside-down chessboard. On a third, large metal one stood some pots, pans, and kerosene burners. I went over to it and began to eat without thinking. Boiled potatoes. Rice. Cooked carrots. I hadn't eaten vegetables for ages. In one of the pans was an omelet. It wasn't so good, though. I knew the taste: It came from salt eggs. And there was a whole pantry full of food.

I was sure they'd come back for it, and so I set to work. I couldn't carry whole sackfuls of things, so I poured them out on the ground and took what I could. Two trips for potatoes. Two trips for crackers. One trip for rice, although I doubted it would be safe to cook it. But I decided to take a pot, pan, and kerosene burner anyway. And a jerrycan of kerosene. It was awfully heavy. I looked around and found another that was only half full. I carried it up, came down again, half emptied another can, and took that up too. My larder was bursting. There was hardly room in it for me anymore. If only I had a way of getting up to the top floor! It was a shame that I couldn't make another rope ladder. That is, I could make one all right, because I had lots of rope and wood, but there was no fifth-floor ceiling to attach a wire to in order to pull the ladder back up from below. I thought again of the metal ladder in the factory. Risking going back for it was the last thing I wanted to do. Lately there were too many people poking around the empty houses on the way. No one could guarantee that the next looter I ran into would be as nice as Bolek. I had even memorized his address. Just to be sure, I said it over to myself every night like a child reciting its prayers.

I went down again and carried up a big iron pot of salt eggs. They were better than nothing. There was a sack of carrots too. Some of them were rotten. I picked out the good ones. Carrots could be eaten raw. And they helped you to see in the dark. I knew that from mother.

And then I went to the bathroom, and even flushed. Like a king! When I was done, I took a look around me and threw some odds and ends over the potatoes that I had dumped on the ground to cover the rice and kerosene. It looked more natural that way. As though looters had been here. Then I gave in to temptation, found a towel and soap, undressed, and took a shower. Incredibly, the water was hot. I let it run on and on until it began to cool. The bunker had a tin boiler with an oil heater beneath it, just like the one we had at home. If the Germans didn't wreck the place, I could come back to wash now and then. Not too often, though. I didn't want to push my luck.

At home I really had hated to wash. Before each bath I'd have a big fight with mother. Now, though, it was delicious.

After I was dressed again, I put some jars of jam and chicken fat in a sack and carried it up tied to my waist. I worked in total darkness. By now I knew each step by heart. I found a few boxes of sugar cubes and some chocolate. And a small binoculars and some children's books. The one thing I didn't see was sardines. I'd expected to find some because I'd seen opened cans of them in the garbage. Perhaps the policemen had taken them.

That brought me back to earth with a start. They were certain to return.

Early the next morning they did, and took everything. I could hear them cursing and swearing. In the afternoon two German soldiers arrived. I couldn't see them, but I heard their voices. They spent some time in the building, exchanged a few words, and suddenly ran outside. There was a moment of silence and then a terrific boom. Everything shook and part of the top floor crashed down on my floor. Poor Snow trembled in my hand. He must have thought it was the end of the world. Long afterward loose bricks and beams still kept falling. I waited for night to come before I climbed down to see what had happened. They had dynamited the entrance to the cellar. It couldn't be gotten into anymore.

*Chapter 12 "The Girl Who Did Homework" pp. 85-95*

I didn't go get the ladder from the factory, because it occurred to me that there must be one like it nearer by in one of the lofts, which I had never bothered to inspect very carefully on my trips through them. And sure enough, I found just what I was looking for, except that it couldn't be moved. I had to bring tools and unscrew it. That was scary, because I kept hearing voices and footsteps from the next house. In the end, though, I finished before dark and brought the ladder back to my new home.

It was the autumn before the revolt in Ghetto A, and I had been living alone now for two months. I had everything worked out to perfection. Up above, on the top floor, I kept my stores. The larder on the bottom floor was my bedroom and kitchen. By kitchen I mean that I cooked in it on the burner. I'd shut the air vents and make potatoes or even rice. I wasn't sure how to cook rice, so I just put it in water and boiled it until it was soft. Then I'd eat the sticky mush with jam. It wasn't like mother's rice, in which every grain was separate, but so what?

\* \* \* \*

All during those months the Germans kept returning with Polish moving men to strip the houses all around. I could hear trucks come and go, and workers shouting. Sometimes something heavy would fly through a window and smash to pieces on the sidewalk below. There was always wild laughter when that happened. It must have been some big piece of furniture that couldn't be gotten down the stairs or wasn't worth the effort. Once I peeked out the front gate and there was a huge grand piano being lowered by ropes from the house across the street.

By day, the Germans made their rounds with their moving men and police, and by night, the looters came. Whenever I got so bored that I felt I had to go



out, I'd wait for early morning or early evening. Those were the safest times. There were police patrols then, too, but they never entered any buildings. They just kept an eye on the streets. The looters had their own ways of getting in and out of the ghetto.

\* \* \* \*

I spent most of my time in my "bedroom" with Snow, reading on my stomach or back. Sometimes I played with him. And often I carefully opened the air vent, took the binoculars, and looked through them at the Polish street across the wall. I felt as though I were living on a desert island. Instead of an ocean all around me there were people and buildings, but though they seemed close, they were really a world away. The binoculars were just a little pair of opera glasses. When I found them in the bunker I never dreamed that they would be worth as much as a good book, or even more.

It took a while, but after a couple of weeks I knew every grown-up and child in the Polish street. I knew who went to work early and who got up late. When the policeman worked the day shift, for example, he was always out of his house at the crack of dawn. Then came the mailman. The grocery and vegetable store opened early, too. The pharmacy opened much later, and the barber was last of all. But he also closed late. The doormen didn't all come out to sweep the sidewalks in front of their houses at the same time either. And they had different temperaments. There were those who liked to hit peddlers, beggars, and old clothes men who came around, and others who ignored them or even let them inside. Once I had thought that Polish doormen were mean to peddlers and old-clothes men because they were Jews. But these weren't Jews at all. At least no one thought they were, though I'll bet that some were in disguise.

\* \* \* \*

I saw other things too that once, if I had just been running down the street, I would not have paid attention to. Things such as the old man who stole from the vegetable store, or the boy who used to pee in front of the pharmacy as soon as the druggist locked up. I watched the progress of the leaves, which had still been green when I moved in but had since turned slowly yellow and begun to fall. Autumn winds blew them up and down the sidewalks, and the doormen swore in the morning at the extra work. If it were up to me I'd have let them fly about, because they decorated the street like red and yellow butterflies. It was getting colder and colder. That didn't worry me, though. I had lots of clothing and quilts, and I could always light the burner and warm my hands over the flame. In daytime, I could even light it with an open vent.

Best of all I liked rainy days and thunderstorms. Then my larder seemed the safest, coziest place in the world. If the lightning bolts were in a part of the sky I could see, I'd watch them through the vent. There were always big ones that ripped through the sky. I told Snow that if you counted the seconds between the lightning and the thunderclap, and then multiplied them by three hundred and thirty, you'd get the distance in meters that the lightning was from you. He was such a dumb mouse that I had to explain that the reason was the light reached us immediately, while sound traveled at a speed of three hundred and thirty meters per second.

I wished that there were a boy my own age in one of those houses whom I could invite to visit. Or that I could telephone the girl who did homework, so that we could get to know each other.

\* \* \* \*

Sometimes I didn't feel like reading or playing with Snow or even looking at the Polish side of the wall. All of a sudden I'd start thinking about father and mother. I never cried, but I'd lie in the larder thinking about all the terrible things that could happen, and about how lucky the Polish kids were having homes and being able to play where they wanted. Except that then I'd remember the other children who had been in the factory with me and realize that I had no right to complain. Not as long as I was here, waiting for my father.

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Define the terms: bunker, ghetto, antisemitism, salt eggs, resistance, desert island, larder.
- Locate the following on a map of Europe: Germany, Poland, Russia. Identify those cities in Poland that became large ghettos under the Nazis.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Alex draws a red line and a green line on the floor of his hiding place. What is the purpose of the lines? Why does he need them?
2. Why is Alex alarmed by the arrival of the car at 78 Bird Street? What did the men do when they arrived?
3. As Alex listens to the men, he imagines himself trapped below. What thoughts run through his head? What would you have been thinking about if you had been in Alex's place?
4. What was the "bigger game" the Germans were searching for?
5. Why was Alex so surprised that the Germans were searching the cellar so thoroughly?
6. What were underground bunkers? What were they like? What were the two weaknesses that Alex identified in building a bunker to hide?
7. Describe what Alex hears after the people in the bunker are discovered. Why do you think the people were so quiet at the end?
8. Why does Alex say that "they'd never take me away like that?"
9. When Alex finally comes out at night, what does he find in the bunker? Why were his discoveries so important to him?
10. Alex seemed especially overjoyed at the bathroom. Why do you think a working bathroom was so precious to him?
11. Alex also discovers some small binoculars and children's books. Why would these two discoveries be so important to a boy or girl in danger and alone?
12. Why did Alex create a jumbled appearance in the bunker before he left it? Why was he worried?
13. Alex's treasures taken from the bunker were important to his survival, but his own skill and ingenuity were most important. Explain some of the ways in which the eleven-year-old Alex displayed some surprising ingenuity.

14. Explain the actions of the Germans in the ghetto and surrounding streets as the months pass. Why were they taking things?
15. Why were the looters a danger to Alex?
16. Why was Snow so important to Alex? Have you ever had a pet or a favorite stuffed animal that you could talk to (even when you were very young)? Why did you share your thoughts, plans, and dreams with it?
17. Alex is surrounded by people yet says that he felt as if he were living on a desert island. What does he mean by that?
18. Alex grows to know the people in the streets as he watches from his hiding place. What are some of the things he learned from his silent watching? Why do you think the ability to watch people was so important to Alex?
19. Alex liked the autumn leaves. Why?
20. Why did Alex like rainy days and thunderstorms the best? Have you ever felt about rainy days and thunderstorms the same as Alex? Why do they have that kind of affect on people?
21. What made Alex think that he was lucky even though he had to live alone, in hiding, and in constant danger? Do you agree or disagree with him? Why?

### **Activities**

1. Make a chart of all of the things that Alex did to "entertain" himself. In a second column, make a list of things that you would have done had you been in Alex's place.
2. Alex proved himself to be a very capable eleven-year-old boy. One of the things that he did was to make a ladder of rope and wood to enter his hiding place and to hide the entry method. Research information on how to make a rope ladder and try to make one for yourself. Remember that Alex's ladder had to stretch for several stories and had to be strong enough to bear his weight and whatever he was carrying. How easy or difficult is it to make such a ladder?
3. At one point in the story, Alex thinks of himself as a kind of Robinson Crusoe. Who was Robinson Crusoe? What similarities in their situations would make Alex think of himself in those terms? Who would be Alex's "Friday?" Why?
4. The author titled this book **The Island on Bird Street**. Explain how the name is or is not an appropriate name for the story.
5. What is it like to be "lonely?" Explain why Alex had reason to be particularly lonely. Make a list of the things that Alex learns as a result of his loneliness. Write a poem or draw an illustration that describes or reflects the feeling of loneliness.
6. Alex would very much have liked a human friend that he could trust. What does the word "Friend" mean to you? Explain why friends are so important to us. Make a list of things that you do with friends.
7. Have you ever been betrayed or let down by a friend? How did it make you feel? Design a greeting card about friendship and its importance to you. Consider sending your card to someone you consider a good friend. Are you a person who makes a "good friend?" Explain your answer.

## **Twenty and Ten**

by

Claire Huchet Bishop

Puffin Books, NY, 1978

Recommended for Grades 5-6

### **Synopsis:**

In 1944 during the German occupation of France, twenty French children are sent to refuge in the mountains with the wise Sister Gabriel. When ten Jewish children are brought to the school, hiding them seems like a game – until Nazi soldiers arrive, and ten lives depend on the courage of twenty. This is the story of the ten Jewish children who are fleeing the Nazis and find refuge with Sister Gabriel and the school children who help them to reach the Spanish border.

### **Quote (p.21)**

“The Nazis are looking for those children,” said Sister Gabriel. “If we take them we must never let on that they are here. Never. Even if we are questioned. We can never betray them, no matter what they do to us. Do you understand?”

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Research Nazi occupation as it relates to all occupied countries during World War II. Create a timeline depicting Nazi occupation of countries during this time period.
- Using a world map, locate and identify those countries that were open to Jews. Make a list of countries where the Jews hid.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What were the implications for Sister Gabriel and the children if the Nazis found the Jewish children they were hiding? What does Sister Gabriel’s willingness to hide these children demonstrate?
2. How did Sister Gabriel deal with the ration card situation as it refers to the entire group?
3. What were the overall difficulties in hiding these children? What dilemmas did this present for the group?
4. How did Denise find the cave? Describe the cave.
5. Explain how the children deceived the Nazi soldiers and went to give help to the Jewish children hiding in the caves.
6. Compare and contrast the attitude and behavior of the young soldier and the old soldier.
7. What special treat did Louis find after the Nazis had gone? Why did the children call that day the Horrible-Miracle Day?

### **Activities**

1. Create a timeline that depicts the historical events that led to Jews being forced into hiding.
2. Elaborate on the timeline with various examples of hiding that the student may or may not be familiar with.

3. Imagine that you were one of the twenty children at the school. Write a series of journal entries in your "secret journal" describing your emotions when the Nazis arrived and demanded the ten Jewish children be given to them.
4. Draw a picture illustrating how you imagine the cave looked to the children hiding there. Draw an illustration of the school.

#### **Other Suggested Sources**

- Video recommended for grades 5-6 : "**Miracle at Moreaux.**" 58 minutes. PBS Wonderworks. This is an adaptation of the story **Twenty and Ten.** However, there are a number of significant differences. (Available through the Social Studies School Service company.)
- **Number the Stars** by Lois Lowry. NY: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1989.
- **A Traitor Among Us** by Elizabeth Van Steenwyk. Eerdmans, 1998.

**Behind the Secret Window**  
**A Memoir of a Hidden Childhood during World War II**

by  
Nelly S. Toll

Dial Books HC, New York, 1993  
Recommended for Grades 6th-8<sup>th</sup>

**Synopsis**

In 1943, the author Nelly Landau was an eight-year-old Jewish girl who went into hiding with her mother in Lvov\*, Poland. Among a number of hiding places, there was one that belonged to a Gentile couple. It had a small bedroom with a secret window. Nelly kept a diary about her daily fears of hiding. To keep up her spirits, she was given art materials and began to draw imaginary friends and pictures based on her life and dreams. It was the story of a loveable child who was beset with uncertainty about what life would bring and her courageous mother and father who kept her alive. She hoped that in case she did not survive her writings would. Of the 29 paintings done while she was in hiding, some are displayed today in Yad Vashem, a Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem, Israel. The diary and the drawings convey to the reader the innermost feelings of the young author, her family and the terrible world around her.

\* Lwow in Polish, also spelled Lvov, and Lemberg in German

**Quote**

“For Endless months, I was aware that each new morning might be my last. One night, I had a dream that mirrored the terrible realities of our lives. I was in Hades, the underworld. Its long, windy corridors ended in doors that were locked and guarded by Cerberus, the monstrous three-headed dog. I knew there was no help from the people of the earth; they had deliberately turned a blind eye to those of us trapped in the endless abyss below.” P. 76

*Chapter 5 pp.28-31, 70-72*

I could hear Mama crying softly at night in our small house, and not just because of all that had happened to us. My grandma Fancia’s illness was very serious. Aunt Elsa and Mama whispered a lot about her but would not tell us what was wrong with her,

Silently in bed I would pray that my beloved grandma Fancia would get better, that I would be able to see her just one more time. She was so beautiful, with her delicate face surrounded by white hair piled high in a bun, and she spoke in such a soft, refined voice. I remembered the wonderful times I had with her, sitting on a deep sofa and listening to her tell stories of the Brothers Grimm while I ate pastries and drank lemonade.

I knew that Grandpa Henryk adored her and I did not know what he would do without her. I missed him too - my tall, straight walking grandpa with his black mustache, He would talk to Janek and me about such things as love and respect

for elders. Sometimes he spoke about God and about His goodness and wisdom. But I knew I would see Grandpa again, while I was not sure about Grandma Fancia. Only a miracle could save her, I was told, so I prayed for a miracle.

But my grandmother continued to get worse, and then one day we heard the terrible news, she had died in her sleep. We kids were not allowed to go to the funeral. We cried, the mirrors in the house were covered according to custom, and a lot of people visited us. Mama told us that Grandma was better off because she did not have to suffer anymore.

Grandpa Henryk moved in with us; so did Berka, their Jewish cook, who had been with them for thirty-five years and had no other family. But my grandfather had become a different grandpa. He hardly spoke anymore. We tried to cheer him up, and sometimes he would smile. He still loved playing chess with Karol and Janek, and I think that he let them win a few games on purpose, even though he denied it.

All the adults looked sad most of the time now. Food had become hard to get, and new German restrictions and punishments were constantly being posted. But we kids were not unhappy all the time. There was one good thing about the ghetto: we were allowed outside again, though only on our street. We didn't wander away too far; it was dangerous, and we knew it. The trees in our backyard could not protect us; neither could the birds who flew past us. Only our parents could, and this was why we had to listen to them.

It was different playing in the ghetto rather than in the Christian part of town. In a strange way the ghetto was our territory. No one here called us bad names, and there were plenty of kids to play with.

We had a rule: after our evening meal, the children had to go to bed. Aunt Elsa insisted that in our crowded house, the grown-ups needed this time to talk about very important things that could be discussed at no other time.

We kids had fun in the crowded bedrooms. We shared our beds and giggled, whispered, pushed each other and laughed together, hoping the adults in the living room would not hear us. But of course we would also listen in.

We heard that sometimes, risking terrible beatings, the Jewish men and women who were working outside of the ghetto would try to exchange their jewelry or huge amounts of money for meat, butter, or cheese from the Polish people. There were rumors that the Germans were planning to stage a series of "actions," or round-ups, in our part of the ghetto, but no one knew when. They had already made such actions in nearby streets and had taken many women and children away, pulling them out of their apartments or hiding places. Nobody knew where the trucks were taking them. Papa had heard that many of the people were sent to special labor camps in Germany, but no one knew for sure where these were. Sometimes those who were seized were shot instead.

Late at night, Mama and Papa would come to their bed in our room and whisper together in troubled voices. One night, when they thought Janek and I were asleep, I overheard them talking in hushed voices about building a hiding place under our little house. Then Papa spoke about trying to find a home with Christian friends for me and Janek and our cousins.

I asked him about this the next day. At first he pretended that he didn't know what I was talking about, then he became very upset. "Nelusia, you must promise me that you will not talk with your friends about anything to do with hiding," he said sternly. "It is very dangerous, and it could get us all into a lot of trouble."

I promised that I would not tell anyone, not even Janek. Secretly, though, I didn't believe that such a hiding place could be found for us. How could we even leave for the Polish side of the city? The ghetto was very heavily guarded by the police, and if we were caught outside of it, we would be beaten or shot.

The round-ups began to grow worse; the police were snatching old people, women, and children from the streets and taking them away. Fear ruled with an iron hand inside the ghetto.

My aunt's visa still had not arrived. Sewer was talking seriously with Aunt Elsa about joining the Russian partisans who were conducting a guerilla war against the Germans from hiding places in the woods.

Only Grandpa Henryk still had faith that things would get better. "Humanity has to awake. This is too painful a nightmare," he said. "We can't exist in this darkness. That is not how God wanted men to live. It has to stop."

*pp.70-72*

We all climbed down below floor level and squeezed into a narrow, dark place. Our neighbor, Pani Goldfarbowa, clutched her baby close to her and put her hand over the child's mouth. Mama whispered to someone that she hoped the baby would not start to cry and give us all away.

It was so crowded, I could hardly move. A woman's voice was softly complaining about the disaster that the infant could bring upon our heads. "Malka sleeps a lot," Pani Goldfarbowa kept repeating. "I will cover her mouth if she wakes up. I'll make sure she is quiet, no matter what I have to do." Then I heard her sobbing softly in the darkness.

The floorboards above us were being pushed back into place, and I could hear the sounds of the hammer nailing them down. A hot, heavy blanket of blackness covered us.

A mouse or rat skittered past my feet. I stumbled up against a stepladder and climbed to the top, my head grazing the low ceiling.

It was hard to breathe; my lips felt very dry. The baby girl, Malka, whimpered, and someone cursed and hissed, "Shut that baby up!"

Mama found me. She managed to climb though all the bodies and sat down on the floor next to the ladder, touching my foot.

There was little air, and I hoped that we would not suffocate. I closed my eyes and tried as hard as I could to think of something less scary, an idea that Mama suggested when things got bad.

I pictured a park with graceful trees full of brown and orange leaves. Janek's white teeth gleamed in the sun as we ran around the bushes, trying to catch a pink and white butterfly. It flew higher and higher into the blue sky. Then, suddenly, a storm descended and thunder shook the air....

It was the boards creaking above us. I heard voices; the Germans were in the apartment.



I jumped down and opened my eyes, straining to see through the blackness. Mama's finger pressed against my lips, warning me to be quiet.

I slipped down onto a friendly lap and felt someone's arm go around me. My throat was tight as if a rubber band were wrapped around it. Had Janek been this frightened when they came for him?

Then the voices suddenly seemed to move away. We waited in total silence. A door shut with a bang, and it was quiet again. Minutes dragged by, but no one moved. I wondered if this was what eternity was like; Grandpa Henryk spoke of it often as "bottomless."

The floor above us made a whispering sound. Then someone began prying the boards open. I closed my eyes again, not wanting to see who it was.

"It is me. It's all over!" said Pan Pomeranz.

We crowded around him. His hands trembled as he spoke, and he kept wiping his forehead.

"When I told the Gestapo that I was alone in the house, they laughed and said that they didn't believe me. I watched them pull everything apart, but by some miracle they never lifted this small rug!"

"God watched over us," said Grandpa Henryk, whose hands were shaking also. No one answered him as he continued to pull and twist his dark, neatly groomed mustache. "It will pass soon, this madness...Jews have suffered before..." It seemed as if my grandpapa were talking to himself.

The following day we discovered how terrible the action had been. Whole families were pulled out of their hiding places; they took all the children. Many friends and neighbors whom Mama and Papa knew had been taken; others were shot immediately.

My parents tried their best to shield Karol and me from all the pain and fear raging around us. Like many other adults in the ghetto, they continued to provide educational and cultural experiences for their children, even under those dreadful conditions, to provide some sense of normalcy in our lives.....

p.74

Shortly after, Grandpa Henryk contracted typhus. The typhoid epidemic in the ghetto was rampant; because between the food shortages and the fact that there were hardly any Jewish doctors left—all had been taken away—many people died. The crowded living conditions bred the disease.

Food was harder and harder to get. Although it was strictly forbidden, the adults continued to risk their lives to smuggle goods from the Aryan part of town.

The round-ups in the ghetto became more and more frequent. People tried frantically to find hiding spots in the sewers of Lwow, in attics, underground bunkers, or any hole imaginable. As one "action" followed another, those of us who survived seemed to be descending into an inferno of terror.

Then my dear, wonderful Grandpa Henryk died. The adults said Kaddish, but it was too dangerous for us kids to go to the funeral. We cried and stayed home; once again the mirrors were covered.

Papa made a hiding place in the cellar of our house, and during one of the round-ups, when I was ill, Mama lifted me from my sickbed in a panic and rushed

downstairs with me. Two little girls were already there with their mothers, along with an old man and young Pan Lolek, the cousin of one of my parents' good friends....

p.106-108

We had been sitting on the floor, separating Pani Krysia's beads and buttons. Mama grabbed my hand and squeezed it hard. I dropped the rosary beads I had been holding to my lips; my heart was beating so loud that I worried they might hear it. I did not dare to move.

In the kitchen, we could hear an angry man ordering Pani Krysia to let him into the bedroom. Then someone tried to open the locked door. I watched, frozen, as the knob turned.

The Ukrainian policeman commanded Pani Wojtkowa to find the key and open the door right away. No reason was given. Did they already know about us, or did they want the apartment for their own *Volksdeutsche*?

Mama held me tight as I stared at the door. They could break it down at any minute; I could picture a strong, uniformed man with a cruel face pushing at the door. Tears started to roll down my cheeks as I heard Pani Krysia explaining that she couldn't find the key. They shouted and cursed at her in anger.

Did Pani Krysia think we could make it to our secret window? I looked up at Mama, but she shook her head and then pointed to the pants, underwear, and socks spread all over the room. It looked as if someone had been right in the middle of cleaning out the closet and had to leave it suddenly. Even if we made it to the window, they would be sure to come back with their dogs and sniff us out right away.

I heard Pani Krysia say that she had to keep the door locked because of all the robberies in the area. Her husband usually carried the key with him, she said; could they come back tomorrow, maybe?

The angry policeman told her that if she did not find the key in the next couple of minutes, they would break down the door. We could hear Pani Krysia's heavy footsteps on the kitchen floor as she continued to walk slowly to different cabinets, pretending to look for the key.

I was numb. Our lives were coming to an end. They would come and take us away...forever.

And then Mama made a decision. She got up slowly from the floor and pulled me up with her. Very quietly, on tiptoes, we slid to the other end of the room, trying not to make the wooden floor squeak. Mama moved the rug aside and opened the trapdoor. Then she pushed me up, and I climbed inside the secret window. She followed, and we pulled the little trapdoor shut again.

I was standing on the windowsill, next to my diary and my watercolors. "Please, God, make the rug stop moving before they break into the room," I prayed. If they suspected anything, they would come back with dogs...I could almost hear them barking.

If they took us, I thought, our possessions would be destroyed also. No one would ever know about my precious writing and my paintings....

Mama held me tight, her arms wrapped around me. The windowsill was narrow but large enough for us to stand sideways. Mama whispered in my ear that everything would be all right, but my tears did not want to listen. They kept pouring down my face.

Then we heard footsteps approaching our hiding place. I buried my face in Mama's arms and closed my eyes, thinking. This is the end.

Someone was lifting the rug and opening our trapdoor. It was Pani Krysia. "They are gone," she said, smiling and sighing at the same time as she reached for me....

*Chapter 15, p. 137*

And then, on a beautiful day in July 1944, the Soviet Army finally entered Lwow.

Pani Krysia came hurrying in, so excited she could hardly speak. The Germans were running away; it was really happening!

All of us stood behind the curtained window and watched the Germans dropping little bundles behind them, pushing and cursing in their haste to get away from the approaching Russians. A lost child was crying; a man with a camera grabbed the little boy and pulled him into the building, then went out again and started taking pictures of the running soldiers.

The street was in a panic, with people scurrying in different directions. A skinny young soldier was stripping off his officer's jacket and throwing it to the street. He angrily shouted, "Wir werden zuruckkommen! (We will return!)" as he ran.

"The cursed Germans are paying the highest prices for civilian clothes," Pan Wojtek said, smiling, as he joined us at the window. "They will give you anything for a pair of old pants, a caftan, or a coat- watches, gold, rings, and diamonds! The Lucifers, may they croak before I give them anything! Barbarians!"

A few young women attached themselves to the soldiers, pulling their babies behind them; some ran after the men with baby carriages.

"God curse the collaborators; let them burn in hell! Let them burn!" And Pan Wojtek spat contemptuously on the floor. "Wait till the Ruski soldiers get them! Oh, will they dance, these 'choleras' with their babies!"

I squeezed Mama's hand. The last German had disappeared. Shooting could be heard in the distance. Then someone shouted, "The Germans are gone!" I saw heavy trucks approaching and opened the window.

"Wait, wait, you must not be so careless," Mama warned me, but I didn't want to listen; I ran out into the street. It was flooded with Russian tanks full of dusty soldiers waving their caps, laughing, and hollering, "Zdravstvuite!" (Hello!) The joy of that moment is forever engraved in my memory.

I inhaled the fresh air, breathing deeply. Oh, to be free-to no longer be afraid! Where to look first?

Mama was right behind me. From one end to the other, Russian soldiers filled the street. The blend of noises was like a celebration of life itself—voices singing, trucks rumbling, somewhere a harmonica playing a Soviet song....

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In the days that followed the liberation, I tried to hold onto my belief that we would see Papa again. Maybe he had been one of the lucky ones; after all, there were still miracles-but reality slowly ground away at my dreams.

Pan Wojtek told Mama that he had heard of a place where Jewish survivors were gathering, and one afternoon we set out toward the address that Pan Michaj had given us, filled with hope.

There were hardly any civilians on the street; only masses of Russian soldiers, trucks, and tanks painted with the red hammer-and-sickle symbol. We passed bombed buildings, wrecked automobiles, loose telephone wires, broken glass, and pieces of grenade shells; some areas were cordoned off with signs in Russian and Polish warning of the dangers of an explosion.

After we had walked for some time, Mama grew tired, leaning heavily on her cane, and we slowed down. She and I had been worrying about what would happen to us if the Germans returned. We could never go back to the Wojteks; all the neighbors knew about us now. What would we do?

I asked Mama, who agreed that it would be catastrophic. "We must follow the Red Army toward the East if that should happen," she said. "We must...if they would take us."

### **Activities**

1. Discuss the various media used by the author to tell her story. How effective were they? Give examples.
2. Make a chart listing at least 5 of the principle characters from this book. Show their attributes and weaknesses
3. What were Nelly likes and dislikes?
4. What did Nelly try to tell in her artwork?
5. Write a letter of encouragement to Nelly while she is in the ghetto.
6. Keep notes of how you felt while reading this book.
7. Write a letter to a friend recommending this book.
8. Write a poem about this book or a draw a picture about your feelings

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Prepare students for studying about Poland (Ukraine).
- Read the general background of World War II as described on pages xi-xiii of the book.
- How was Poland divided in World War II?
- Study maps of the area.
- How did antisemitism rear its ugly head in the city of Lvov, Poland?

### **Timeline of Lvov**

- September 1, 1939, Germans invaded Poland
- September 17, 1939, Soviets invade Lvov
- Lvov has a total population of 340,000 with Jewish population of 110,000
- 1940, 100,000 refugees from Germany came to the occupied territories of Poland and were expelled and sent to the Soviet Union

- June 22, 1941, 10,000 Jews escaped from Lvov with the Red Army
- Nine days later, the Germans occupied Lvov
- July 3, 1941, 4,000 Jews were murdered
- July 8, 1941 Jews had to wear the Yellow star
- July 25-27-, the Ukrainians murdered 2,000 Jews
- July, a Judenrat was formed to stand up to the Germans
- August, Jews must pay an extremely high cost to ransom Jewish hostages  
The money was raised and the hostages are killed
- During the summer Jewish property is confiscated and plundered and Jews were drafted to forced labor camps
- November 8, 1941 Jews were ordered into the ghetto, 5,000 elderly and Sick were killed
- March 1942, Judenrat had to prepare lists to send Jews to camps, 15,000 Jews were sent to Belzec in one month
- June 1943, Jews were hunted, killed and sent to concentration and death camps and Lvov was declared *Judenrein*-free of Jews

### Discussion Questions

#### *Part One: Chapter 1-9. Lvov, Poland, 1941-1943: Nelly Starts Her Diary*

1. Describe Nelly's life before hiding.
2. What does she write about her family?
3. Describe the events that led up to Nelly and her family hiding?
4. What options were open to her family?
5. What were the conditions like in the city of Lvov, Poland ?
6. How did Nelly describe the arrival of the Germans in Lvov?
7. How were the Germans received by the general populace? (chapt.1)
8. Was the Russian invasion different from the German invasion? How so?
9. What changes took place in Lvov? (chapt.4)
  - ie. Ghettoization
  - Restriction
  - Laws
  - Rescuers
  - Collaborators
  - Deportations
10. What are the problems described by Nelly with her grandparents?
11. Why did Nelly go into hiding with the Krajerow family? (chapt. 6 & 7)
12. Why did Nelly return to the ghetto? (chapt, 8)
13. The Germans planned an *aktion*. What was an *aktion*?
14. Why did Nelly and her mother Mrs. Landau have to move to a new house? (chapt.9)

#### *Part Two: Spring, 1943. September, 1944. Chapters 1-16*

1. Why did Mr. Landau, Nelly's father have to find a new hiding place and make financial arrangements in the Aryan section of Lvov with a new Christian family, the Wojteks?
2. What problems awaited Nelly and her mother?

3. What daily routine did Nelly and her mother have to adopt? (chapt.11)
4. How are they treated by the Wojteks?
5. How did Nelly occupy her time?
6. What books was she able to read?
7. What feelings did Nelly express in her art work and drawings?
8. Describe Nelly's brief and painful visit from her father. (chapt. 12)
9. There is a raid by the Ukrainian police. How does Pani Wojtek handle it?
10. How are Nelly and her mother treated by Pan Wojtek?
11. There are several air raids and bombings. Why did Pani Wojtek want Nelly and her mother to leave their hiding place?
12. Liberation, July 1944, the Soviet army enters Lvov. What happens to the Germans and what did Nelly and her mother do? (chapt.15)
13. Who is Pan Hanek? Why did Nelly's mother marry him?

### Post Reading Activities

1. What does Nelly learn about her father, brother and relatives?
2. The war is over. How do Nelly and her mother and her new dad Pan Hanek rebuild their lives?
3. They plan to travel to America. Where do they live in the interim? What problems do they encounter?

### Suggested Readings

- **Along the Tracks** by Tamar Bergman. Story takes place in Russia. Yankele is eight and is separated from his family
- **Touch Wood** by Renee Hano Roth. Story of 2 sisters who survive in a convent in France.
- **Anne Frank: Beyond the Diary** by Ruud Van Der Rol and Rian Verhoeven. 100 photos never before published on the story of Anne , a Dutch girl hidden in an annex)

### Teacher Resources

- **A Teacher's Guide to the Holocaust.** Book of information on Internet sites: Documents, articles, bibliography, videography, maps, songs, plays and more) <http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/Holocaust/>
- In this site look at the Ghettos  
<http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/Holocaust/timeline/ghettos.htm>
- Look at the Lvov Ghetto.  
<http://motic.wiesenthal.org/pageso47/t04748.html>
- **Rescuers: Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust** by Gay Block and Malka Drucker. Testimony of survivors who were saved by Righteous Rescuers. Homes & Meir. 7th and up
- **Video: Courage to Care** This compelling program profiles non-Jews who followed their conscience rather than Hitler's orders- 29 min Social Studies School Service
- **Video: Nightmare: The Story of Joachim and Rachel.** Story of 13 year old Joachim and his younger sister Rachel who survived the Warsaw Ghetto,

were saved by the Polish underground, and came to America. 24 min Social Studies School Service

- **Hannele's Rescue** Hannaleh, a Jewish girl and her family. Tells of her experience in the ghetto and being smuggled to safety. 25 min. 7th grade
- **Vendor Yad Vashem** For further ideas, visit the following web site: **<http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/Holocaust/activity/activity.htm>**





## **Place to Hide: True Stories of Holocaust Rescue**

by  
Jayne Petit

Scholastic Inc., New York, 1993  
Recommended for Grades 5 and 6

### **Synopsis**

This book is a compilation of many stories of hiding and rescue that took place in a number of European countries from 1933-1945. Each story tells of brave men and women who risked their lives daily to save Jews. There was Miep (Gies) Santrouschitz who hid Anne Frank and all those who lived in the Annex in Holland. She supplied them with food, news and hope. Then, there was Oskar Schindler, a German industrialist who rescued 1,200 Jews who became his "Schindler Jews" and supplied them with work and food in his enamel factory in Poland. Another story tells of the people of Le Chambon, France who turned their small village into "a city of refuge".

Other stories tell of Padre Niccacci of Assisi, Italy who endangered his life to save Jews and become part of an underground network. There is the remarkable tale of the brave Danish people who saved almost the entire Jewish population of 8,000 by smuggling them across the sea to Sweden, a neutral country. Stories are also included that describe the brave acts of heroism shown by non-Jews who saved Jews.

### **Quote**

"Yet, in the midst of this horror, there were in each country men and women who could not ignore the cries of human beings asking for nothing more than a place to hide and something to eat." p 2

### **"Miep"**

pp.10-20

Days stretched into weeks and the weeks into months. More and more Jews were deported to forced labor camps in Germany and Poland. And in the final insult of all, Jews were required to wear a large yellow Star of David on the fronts and backs of their clothing. Most of those who protested or refused, disappeared.

Then, during the late spring of 1942, Otto Frank called Miep into his office. Entering, she heard Frank locking the door behind her. Turning her head to take note of his unusual behavior, she looked into Otto's face. Miep was suddenly frightened by the appearance of the quiet, serious man walking back to his desk.

Minutes passed, and then Frank began to speak. He feared for his wife and his two daughters. What would become of them if he were seized by the Germans? Where would they go? Then, Otto broke the terrible news. Margot had been ordered to report to a forced labor camp in Germany. Something had to be done immediately.

Step by step, Frank revealed the plans he had been making for months without his family's knowledge. Unable to flee the city, trapped and defenseless, the Franks, along with the Van Daans, were going into hiding. Would Miep help?

Without hesitation for a moment, Miep assured Otto that she would, despite the dangers she'd face. Both she and Otto were aware of the edict that ordered death by hanging to Jews and those who assisted them in any effort to escape or to hide.

Dropping his voice to a whisper, Otto Frank disclosed the whereabouts of the hiding place. It was to be the Annex, a series of rooms on several floors in the back of the building in which Travies and Company was situated. Secluded from the street and hidden by a giant chestnut tree, the Annex would offer the only hope the Franks and the Van Daans held for survival. For weeks now, Otto and Herman had carried what few belongings they could gather for the life they and their families were going to begin. Books, sheets, blankets, towels, and canned goods—all had been silently hauled, bit by bit, to the rooms tucked secretly behind the company's offices. Miep was amazed at what the two men had accomplished before the very eyes of the workers, as well as the Green Police (who collaborated with the Germans) and the Nazis, who scoured the homes, streets, and blocks of the city, searching for their next victims.

On the night before the two families were to go into hiding, Miep and Henk [also one of the rescuers] put on old raincoats, loose fitting and long, with many pockets. They rode their bikes to the Frank's apartment where they filled the pockets with as many things as they could handle, stuffing whatever else they could inside the fronts of their tightly buttoned clothing. They made several trips to the Annex and back, using darkened side streets and alleys. At curfew time, Miep and Henk returned to their own apartments,

The following morning, Miep pedaled quickly to the Frank's home, thankful that the pouring rain had driven most of the Green Police from the streets. When she arrived at her friend's home, Margo—ashen and silent—emerged from the doorway pushing her forbidden bicycle down the short steps in front of the building. Without speaking, the two quickly boarded their bikes and sped away, Miep in front with her briefcase resting in her basket, Margot in the rear with her schoolbag. The perfect picture of a mother and daughter heading for the office and school with a busy day ahead. Margot had removed the yellow Stars of David from her clothing so as not to attract attention.

Arriving at the Travies offices, Miep and Margot hurried inside, moving quickly down the corridors and up the steps that led to the hidden Annex. Opening the door to the entranceway and glancing furtively about her, Miep stepped aside while Margot slipped inside, closing the door to the world she had known for sixteen years.

Later in the day, after the office workers had left the building, Otto—accompanied by his wife and Anne—climbed the same steps, trying with all the strength they had not to think about the lives they were leaving behind.

On Wednesday, July 8, 1942, Anne Frank—now thirteen years old, opened the pages of the little checkered diary her father had given her for her birthday a month before and began her first entry since the Frank family had gone into hiding: Years seemed to have passed between Sunday and now. So much has happened, its just as if the world had turned upside down. But I am still alive. . .and that is the main thing, Daddy says.

For everyone, hiding meant no further communication with the outside world. From now on, there was just a little radio Otto had smuggled into their quarters. They would see the Travies staff- Miep and Henk and Elli Vossen from the downstairs, and Victor Kraler and Jo Koophuis, Otto Frank's business partners who had been told of the hiding place. These few would provide the only link with life as it once was.....

Miep did her best to hide her fears as she looked at the four people who stood facing her. Quietly she reassured them that she would be there always, no matter what they might need. She would come every day, she promised....

During the weeks that followed, Herman Van Daan, his wife, Petronella, and their son, Peter joined the Franks in their hiding place. Later, room was made for Dr. Albert Dussel, a dentist and German refugee. His arrival meant less room for everyone in the already cramped quarters, as well as another mouth to feed. All, nevertheless, were deeply thankful that they had a place to hide and beds in which to sleep.

As each family settled into some kind of routine, they agreed on a set of rules. Since there was to be no sign of life in their rooms, they could do nothing that would arouse suspicion in the workers downstairs, neighbors in the adjoining office buildings, people walking on the sidewalks below or Nazis patrolling the streets. They could make no sound while anyone was in the building. They couldn't wear shoes during the day, or flush a toilet, or use water for bathing or laundering. Speaking above a whisper or use of the radio was forbidden. Their cooking was limited to later evening hours so that smells from the kitchen and sounds of pots and pans wouldn't betray them. There could be no air from open windows to rustle the thick curtains and blackout sheets. They couldn't turn on lights to read by on a dark day, or sneeze, cough, or scrape chairs on the bare floors. And above all, no figure could be seen behind the window curtains.....

What Miep did not speak of were the increased raids throughout Amsterdam, as thousands were dragged from their beds in the middle of the night to be beaten, shot, or thrown into deportation trucks for camps within Holland and then Bergen-Belsen, Auschwitz, or Ravensbruck.

Miep's husband, Henk, also paid daily visits to the Annex, bringing with him supplies too heavy for Miep to carry. On Saturdays, Henk rode his bicycle to a shop on Rijn Street to borrow books for the hidden people. Each person would make a list of books wanted, and Henk's return was eagerly awaited.

Three other members of the staff of Travies and Company, Elli Vossen, Victor Kraler, and Jo Koophuis—all of whom knew about the Annex—visited as often as they could. They did their best to bring cheer to the people whose only hopes for survival lay within their hands.

As the days and nights passed with agonizing slowness, the eight Jews in hiding made every effort to keep themselves occupied. Otto spent many hours of each day teaching his daughters. Henk had brought textbooks in math, history, languages, and literature. As the voice of the BBC brought word of each day's battle results on Allied advances, pins were placed on a map that stretched along the wall of the room everyone shared as a living and eating room. Nights were filled with the sounds of boots tramping over cobbled streets and the whine of

sirens as air battles between the Allies and the Germans increased. Sleep came fitfully for the people in the Annex, and small bags to be carried if escape was necessary, often containing nothing more than a change of underclothing and a few coins, were always close at hand.

Margot grew increasingly quiet and withdrawn. Anne devoted most of her time to her writing, slipping off into a quiet corner to make entries in her diary, or to write little essays or poems marking someone's birthday or anniversary. Anne frequently fought off her fears and loneliness by adding to her collection of movie star pinups, the latest of which would be brought by Miep.

The winter of 1942 was marked by harsh winds, freezing temperatures, and increased food shortages. Miep became more concerned about the group she was helping. With fewer and fewer ration stamps to spare, she spent hours each evening and early morning riding her bicycle from shop to shop in search of food for her friends as well as for Henk and herself. When the greengrocer from whom she had bought her vegetables was arrested as a Jewish sympathizer (his wife confessed to Miep that he had sheltered two Jews), she rode many blocks and crossed several canals before discovering a tiny market run by an elderly woman in a basement apartment. Days went by before she could establish enough trust in the old woman to beg for the quantity of food she needed. Then, after a sleepless night, fearful that she might have been followed by the everwatchful Green Police, Miep returned to find the woman waiting for her with a bag of fresh produce, Miep was grateful for this newest, silent collaborator....

As the spring of 1943 burst forth in Amsterdam, some of the worst raids took place. Orphanages protecting Jewish children left behind when their parents were deported were stormed, and the children were seized and carried off to waiting trucks bound for concentration camps. Hospitals and mental institutions were raided, and the victims, often terminally ill, carried in boxcars to unknown destinations....

Summer approached and Miep found it harder and harder to locate enough food for everyone....

For those in the Annex, new problems were developing. Anne, now thirteen and bursting out of her clothing, was suffering severe headaches and difficulty with her vision. Studying was increasingly painful and her patience was wearing thin. At first, the family considered letting Miep take her to an eye doctor located a short distance away. In the end, despite Anne's discomfort, no threat to her safety could be risked. Glasses would have to wait.

On several occasions, the Franks and the others in hiding heard bumping noises and other loud disturbances coming from the direction of the warehouses downstairs. Had one of the Travies and Company shippers, one who had not been told of the Annex, become suspicious of Miep or Henk or the others? And if so, who? Uneasiness and gloom settled over everyone. Now, as Miep and Henk carried the needed supplies up to the Annex, every effort was taken to avoid further trouble. As they well knew, others in hiding had been betrayed for a few loaves of bread, a little meat, or a new pair of shoes.

The skies over Amsterdam were filled with aircraft that summer. Allied bombings of major German cities were on the increase and Germany had begun

to suffer major losses. On the Eastern Front, the Nazis had been defeated at Stalingrad, and the Russians were slowly advancing toward Poland.

The roundups of the Jews continued relentlessly throughout the summer and the fall of 1943. Miep and Henk spent many nights listening to the thunder of armored trucks rolling through the River Quarter of South Amsterdam where they lived. They watched silently the stream of captured Jewish neighbors, surrounded by the Green Police, pass under the windows of their apartment building. Who would be next?

In the winter of 1943, life for the people of the Annex was more perilous, and for Miep and her band of helpers as well. No one could ignore the black-bordered signs everywhere, threatening execution to those serving in the Dutch Resistance and to anyone caught hiding Jews.

Fears of these reprisals were brought home suddenly to Miep and Henk one evening as they discovered that their young university student, bored by long days alone in the apartment, had slipped outside and gone to the racetrack. There, a raid had taken place and Karel was questioned about his address. Foolishly, the boy gave it to his interrogators, and Henk, with great reluctance, had to tell him that he would have to find another place to hide. Henk had other worries about future investigations. He confessed to Miep that for months he had been a member of the Dutch Resistance.

As the months dragged by, several more break-ins occurred at the Travies and Company warehouses. After the worst of these, Otto Frank left the safety of his hiding place to phone his partner, Jo Koophuis. Miep and Henk, upon hearing this, rushed to warn Otto and the others, by now badly shaken, not to leave the Annex again, no matter what might be going on downstairs. More than once, Jews hiding safely for months had been caught by one little slip-up in their daily routine.

Anne continued to write in her diary each day. She noted her fears, her secret longings, private jokes, and her growing interest in Peter Van Daan. As the branches of the chestnut tree outside her window took on the first buds of spring of 1944, she wrote of the rumors of a massive invasion by the Allies.

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- As each story is covered, familiarize the students with the Nazi invasion of Holland, France, Italy and Denmark and how it affected the Jews.
- Study maps and locate each country that is mentioned in the book.
- What options did the Jews have in each country?
- How did the citizens of each country help the Jews?
- Who were the bystanders? Who were the rescuers?
- Look at picture books of the area (listed in the bibliography).
- Who was Miep and how did she meet Mr. Frank, Anne's father?
- Where did the Franks live prior to coming to Holland?
- What business was Mr. Frank in?
- What happened to the Frank family when the Nazis invaded in 1940?
- What is an "*aktion*"?
- What options did the Frank family have? Why didn't they escape?

### Discussion Questions

1. In the late spring of 1942 as the Jews of Holland were being arrested, what plans did Otto Frank prepare?
2. What incident made Otto Frank take immediate action to save Margot and his family?
3. How did Otto Frank and Herman Van Daan prepare for the Annex?
4. What was the annex?
5. What did Anne worry about when she began her diary (July 8, 1942)?
6. Who was told of the Frank's hiding place?
7. What problems did Miep have in supplying food for the people in the annex?
8. Who else joined the Frank family in the annex?
9. What rules were set by everyone in the annex?
10. How did the people in the annex occupy their time?
11. What news did Miep and the others tell about the war?
12. What happened to the Jews in the summer and the fall of 1943? What were some of Anne's comments in her diary?

### Activities

1. Make a collage of photos of Anne Frank and her world. Visit the Internet for images to print and look for magazines, etc.? What happened to Anne and the others who were hiding in the annex?
2. The war is over. Write a letter to a publisher explaining why the diary should be published.
3. Write a poem about Anne Frank.
4. Read part of the diary and write an essay.
5. Create diary entries of your own.
6. Invite a hidden child or survivor to tell their story.
7. Create a cardboard model of the annex.
8. Put on a skit telling Anne's story.
9. Write to the Anne Frank Center for materials.  
106 East 19Th Street  
New York, NY 10003
10. Get materials from the Internet.
11. Compare the story of Anne Frank with another story in the book. How is it the same, how it is different? Do the same activities with the new story.
12. Write an essay on the legacy Anne Frank left to the world.

### Suggested Readings

- **Anne Frank: Beyond the Diary** by Ruud van der Rol and Rian Verhoeven. Through photos never before published, maps, and illustrations, the reader gets an insight into the life of Anne and her family.
- **Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl** .The reader is taken to share the life of Anne, the trials and tribulations which she endured. NY: Simon and Schuster, 1982.

- **Anne Frank: Life in Hiding** by Johanna Hurwitz. Allows readers to share Anne's dreams and have an understanding of the events that affected her life.
- **Anne Frank Remembered** by Miep Gies. Story of the woman who helped Anne and her family and a biographical account of what happened.
- **Witnesses to War** by Micheal Leapman. Eight true life stories of Nazi persecution. (One of the stories in the book is about Anne Frank)

### Teacher Resources

- **The World of Anne Frank.** A Complete Resource Book by Betty Merti (When studying the historic content of WWII, this reproducible book is a supplement to the Diary and its history.) Publisher J. Weston Walch. 5th grade and up.
- **Holocaust.** Thematic Unit by Teacher Created Materials. One of the stories included is Anne Frank.
- **Teaching the Diary of Anne Frank: An in Depth Resource for Learning About the Holocaust Through the Writings of Anne Frank.** Reproducible activity book. Guided reading questions, maps, ideas for journal writing, poetry lessons, 50 photos, materials and web sites.
- **The Diary of Anne Frank.** The Critical Edition. Prepared by the Netherlands State Institute for War Documentation. NY: Doubleday, 1989. Essays on the history of Anne Frank, discussions of the diary's history and investigation of who turned in the family.
- **The End of Innocence: Anne Frank and the Holocaust.** A course study by Karen Shawn. NY: ADL, 1989.
- **Ashes in the Wind: Destruction of Dutch Jews** by Jacob Presser. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988.
- **Anne Frank's Tales from the Secret Annex.** Anne Frank. NY: Pocket Books, 1984. Examines Anne's attitudes toward people.
- **We Are Witnesses: Diary of Five Teenagers Who Died in the Holocaust** by Jacob Boas. Anne Frank is one of the teenagers.
- **Nazi Holocaust Failed in Denmark.** 14 photos that relate the success story of how the Danes protected and saved its Jewry.

### Video

- **"Rescue in Scandinavia."** Narrated by Liv Ullman. It includes the rescue of the Danish Jews by the Danes, Norwegians and Finns. It also includes the story of Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who saved thousands of Jews in Hungary. 56 min. 7th grade and up. An excerpt may be used with younger students.
- **Just a Diary.** 25 min. b/w and color. Produced by the Anne Frank Foundation. Historical footage on the rise of Nazi Germany, occupied Holland and Anne's life in hiding. Scenes from "The Diary of Anne Frank" staged in Holland.
- **The World of Anne Frank.** 28 min. color Combines dramatic readings, interviews and documentary photos and film. It includes an interview with Otto Frank and interviews with the Dutch people who risked their lives to hide the Franks and others.

- **CD- Anne Frank House.** (2000) The Complete story of Anne Frank, the families in hiding, and the persecution of Jews. Digital Treasures from Cinegram Media, Inc. Virtual journey through the house of Anne Frank, more than 1500 historical photos, 4 hours of voice narration.. 5<sup>th</sup> and up.

**Internet**

- **50 Educational Web Sites**

**<http://www.jr.co.il/hotsites/j-holoc.htm>**

- **After Seventy Years: Anne Frank (1929-1945)** by Dr. Joyce Aspel-Dir. Of Edu. Of Anne Frank Center USA

**<http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/Holocaust/activity/plans1/aspel2.htm>**

- **Anne Frank in the World 1929-1945.** Teacher Workbook- Grades 5-8.

**[http://www.uen.org/utahlink/lp\\_res/AnneFrank.html](http://www.uen.org/utahlink/lp_res/AnneFrank.html)**



**The Hidden Children of the Holocaust**  
**Teens Who Hid From the Nazis**

by

Esther Kustanowitz

From the Series: **Teen Witnesses to the Holocaust**

The Rosen Group, NY, 1999

Recommended for Grades 6-8

**Synopsis**

This book is a compilation of stories of many teenagers who lived in Europe. The hidden children who survived had very different experiences than those children in ghettos and camps. But everyone who survived the Holocaust came out of this experience scarred in one way or another. For the hidden child, nighttime usually meant persecution, running, darkness and fear. Hiding was a very lonely way to exist. Many children were all alone, they were afraid to confide in anyone for fear of discovery. This book tells the story of a number of young teenagers who faced life and death situations.

Bernard Rotmil was one of those teenagers. He was born in France in 1926. His father was an art dealer who traveled widely and his mother was a homemaker. Bernard's family was caught in Vienna when Germany annexed Austria in March of 1938. During *Kristallnacht* (Night of Broken Glass), Bernard and his brother were in Vienna and saw the terrible persecutions that were happening to the Jews. The Rotmils fled to Brussels, Belgium. They, like many other Jews, fled several times to other places of hiding such as France. France was defeated and divided into two zones, the German and the Vichy. When the Vichy (pro-Nazi) government took over the southern part of France, they asked everyone to return to their location prior to the cease-fire and the Rotmil family went back to Belgium. The family constantly lived in fear. They were afraid of being arrested by the Nazis. Bernard's father was arrested in 1943 and shipped to Auschwitz, a death camp in Poland. Bernard and his brother were helped and hidden by a Catholic Monastery in Louvain, Belgium. Bernard and his brother survived the war but their parents and sister did not. This was the tragedy of war, and how it affected young people. (Bernard Rotmil pp.20-25)

**Quote**

"We never stayed in the same place. We wanted to be a moving target. You heard about your friends getting arrested: They're gone, and they're gone. You heard slamming door, and you knew that two houses down there was a raid. You just hoped and prayed that next time it wouldn't be you." p.23

**Reading:** *Bernard Rotmil- Chapter Three pp20-25*

Bernard Rotmil was born in 1926 in Strasbourg, France. His father was an art dealer whose job brought him to many capitals in Europe. His mother was a homemaker. Bernard started kindergarten in Strasbourg, then the Rotmils moved to Metz, France. Bernard's family was in Vienna when Germany annexed Austria on March 12, 1938.

Eight months later, on November 9-10, 1938, the Nazis launched a pogrom, a violent demonstration of antisemitism. It became known as Kristallnacht, or the night of the broken glass. Throughout Germany and German –ruled Austria, people awoke in the middle of the night to the terrifying sounds of windowpanes being shattered in Jewish homes and businesses. That night, many Jews were arrested and brutalized by the Nazis.

Up to that point, Bernard's family had been mostly unaffected by Nazi rule. But during Kristallnacht, Bernard and his brother Charles were in the family apartment when a group of about six "brownshirts," or young Nazi troopers, stormed in.

"They were looking for my father. They thought he was the owner of the building, which he wasn't. We stood there terrified. The Nazi thugs- they couldn't have been older than their mid-twenties- began beating him right in front of us. They hauled my father away. He was gone for a couple of days, and we didn't know what had happened to him. Then he came back. His head was shaved, and he wouldn't talk about what had happened."

Convinced that they had to leave Vienna, the Rotmils fled to Brussels, Belgium. Bernard finished junior high school and began high school there. In 1940, Germany invaded Belgium. The Rotmil family fled, becoming part of the stream of Jewish refugees trying to outrun the Nazis.

### **Taking Flight**

"My mother, sister, brother, and I boarded a train to Paris. Our dad had been with us but we became separated. At around 2:00 AM, our train ran into another train near Rouen, France, and caused a huge crash. My brother and I were separated from our mother and sister. We were taken to a children's hospital in Rouen, which had not yet been invaded. I had a dislocated hip and my brother had superficial wounds. We didn't hear from our mother and sister.

The hospital staff evacuated all the children from that hospital because the fighting was nearing the city. They put us on a train to Brittany, France, to get us out of harm's way. We all stayed on Berdere, an island near Brittany which was run by nuns, until the shooting war was over. We stayed there about seven months."

While Bernard and his brother were in Berdere, the French signed a cease-fire with the Germans in June of 1940. Defeated France was divided into two zones: the northern occupied territory, which was under German control, and the southern region, which was ruled by the pro-Nazi Vichy government.

The Vichy government ordered everyone to return to their location prior to the hostilities. At that time, we learned that our father was in Brussels. On the way back to Brussels, we stopped at Rouen, where the railroad accident had been. We went to the children's hospital. There we were told that my mother and sister had both died of their wounds, my mother on the day of the accident, my sister the day after.

## **Home to Brussels**

"We returned to Brussels and found our father. We even went back to the school for a while. By 1941, the Germans had settled in and begun to administer the territory they had conquered. Then they began to arrest Jews. In May of 1942, Jews were required to carry an identity card that clearly stated that you were Jewish. They gave you a little star and told you to wear it. I had one but never wore it. I looked Aryan, so I was able to get away with it. My brother also did not wear the star. He looks even more Aryan than I do, like a real Hitler Youth. I never wore it, but I kept it until I came to this country."

## **Living in Fear**

"We never stayed in the same place. We wanted to be a moving target. You heard about your friends getting arrested. They're gone, and they're gone. You heard the slamming door, and you knew that two houses down there was a raid. You just hoped and prayed that next time it wouldn't be you.

The Gestapo would be early in the morning. They would jump out of their cars and slam the car doors. If you had the timing right, once you heard the door slam, you had enough time to jump up and take a secret exit.

Once, my father, my brother, and I were hiding in a house. A group of Dutch Jews moved in soon after. We befriended them. They were very professional, educated, assimilated.

We heard the slam of a car door. It was 3:00 AM. The Gestapo lined us up, and pointed at each of us, one right after the other, and asked. 'Are you Jewish?' The Dutch lady turned to me and whispered, 'Don't tell them you're Jewish.'

I didn't know what to do. If I said I wasn't Jewish and they knew I was, that would be the end of it. They finally asked me if I was Jewish, and I said 'Yes.' I don't know what happened, but they told me and my brother to go back to bed. I don't know why. Everyone in the Dutch group went to Auschwitz, and none survived.

We knew a young man who always had food and had access to things, and he had befriended us. He was not there the day of the raid, and he never showed up again. He must have been a Nazi plant who betrayed the Dutch Jews. He really liked us; maybe he wanted to let us go. To this day, I don't know.

To this day, when I hear a car door slam, something happens to me. It is something that always stays with me."

## **Going into Hiding**

In July 1943, Bernard's father was arrested and taken to Auschwitz. Bernard made his way to a Catholic monastery in Louvain, Belgium. There, he and his brother were helped by a priest, Father Bruno.

"Father Bruno took me to a camp for young boys. My brother was too young to go, and he was placed in hiding on a farm with a family. In the camp, I had friends. Some I knew were Jewish; others I found out later were Jewish. Some of our counselors were officers in hiding or part of the underground.

It is hard to describe: We played soccer, but lived in fear. After a while, like a soldier in combat situation, you become immune to it, We talked about who was

arrested, who was going to be next. I always hung out with the wild elements and never cared much for school.

My brother and I were so emotionally taken with Father Bruno and with Catholicism that we asked to be baptized. But he wouldn't baptize us without the consent of our parents.

Some time later, Father Bruno found Bernard work on farms in Belgium, where he was able to hide for the remainder of the war. Bernard's brother was hidden by a family in Brussels. They were reunited after the war. Not until then did they learn that their father had died in Auschwitz.

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Read a short synopsis of the Nazi invasion in Central Europe.
- Do a map study of all the different areas covered in this selection.
- Trace the route of the Rotmil family on a map.
- Pick another teenager in the book and compare their flight through map tracings.
- See a short film that shows how Hitler took over Germany and much of Europe such as the "**Seeds of the Holocaust.**" 16 minutes. This film covers the rise of Hitler and Nazism. (See video list.)

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Why did Bernard Rotmil's family flee from place to place?
2. What was *Kristallnacht*?
3. How did Bernard and his brother get caught in the *Kristallnacht* of Vienna?
4. What happened to the Rotmil family on their flight to France?
5. France signed a cease-fire in June of 1940. What happened to defeated France? (page 36)
6. How did the split of France affect the Rotmil family?
7. In May of 1942, Jews began to wear the yellow star. What was happening to the Jews of Belgium?
8. Give an example of the hiding and the fear that Bernard witnessed?
9. What role did Father Bruno play in the life of Bernard?
10. How was Bernard able to survive the rest of the war?
11. Would you consider Father Bruno a Righteous Rescuer? Why?
12. Read the story of Henrietta Parker (13-17). How did her story differ?
13. Compare the righteous act of Father Bruno to Julia Nicaise (Henrietta's story). Why did they risk their lives?
14. What did the righteous rescuers of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon France do for Jewish children?
15. Read other stories in the book and see if any of the teenagers had similar stories.
16. Look at the story of Hanna Eva Hirsch Liebman (pp.26-33). Compare it to Bernard's story.
17. What problems did the Nuremberg Laws create?

18. What happened to Hanna Eva after the round up of Jews in Southern France in 1942?
19. How did she get to Switzerland?
20. Upon reading the stories in the book, are there any common themes, problems and endings?
21. Why did the teenagers want to bear witness?

### Activities

1. Select a teenager to study using maps, timeline, audiovisuals and interviews  
Select the stories from the following books in the series: **Escape; the Hitler Youth; In the Camps; In the Ghettos; Liberation; Rescue; Defying the Nazis; and Resistance.**
2. Write news articles on the following subjects:  
Hitler youth, the Nuremberg Laws, *Kristallnacht*, the ghettos, the maps, resistance, the rescuers, collaborators, Final Solution, liberation, special place like village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, Jews of Denmark, and others
3. Invite a survivor to class. Contact Jewish Federations, Holocaust Teaching centers for information.
4. Visit the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC.  
<http://www.ushmm.org>
5. Visit the Museum of Jewish Heritage in NY (212-968-1800)
6. Go to the Internet sites listed and look up a variety of topics.

### Suggested Reading Materials

- **Parallel Journeys** by Eleanor Ayer , Helen Waterford and Alfons Heck. This book presents a stark contrast between two teenagers who grew up in the same vicinity but had two very different paths in life. One ended up in a concentration camp and the other became a Hitler Youth. NY: Atheneum Books HC, 1995. 7<sup>th</sup> and up
- **Your Name is Renee: Ruth Kapp Hartz's Story As a Hidden Child in Nazi-Occupied France** by Stacey Cretzmeier. Story of Renee, a German-Jewish child, who has to flee many times and is helped by a few brave families. Oxford University Press, 1999. (This book has matching Video-**A Legacy of Goodness**) 7th grade and up
- **Friedrich** by Hans Peter Richter. Tragic story of a young Jewish boy in Germany in the 1930's as seen through the eyes of his non-Jewish friend. NY: Puffin Books, 1987. 6th grade and up
- **We Are Witnesses** by Jacob Boas. The Diaries of Five Teenagers Who Died in the Holocaust. Entries of five youth from war torn Belgium, Holland, Poland, Hungary and Lithuania. NY: Scholastic Inc., 1995. Grades 7 and up

### Teacher Resources

- Provide your classroom with **Teen Witnesses** Series from Rosen Publisher. The set includes the following books: **Escape, The Hidden Children of the Holocaust, The Hitler Youth, In the Camps, In the Ghettos, Liberation, Rescuers Defying the Nazis and Resistance.**

- **The Holocaust Chronicle.** A History in Words and Pictures. The book chronicles a 3,000 item timeline that pin points deportation, atrocities, important developments in the Final Solution and individual acts of heroism as well as those who fought valiantly. Lincolnwood, Ill.: International. Ltd, 2000. Grades 7 and up.
- **Historical Atlas of the Holocaust.** Prepared by the research staff of the US Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC. NY: Macmillan. Grades 7 and up

### Video

- The Holocaust: Lives From the Past. "**Seeds of the Holocaust, 1933-1936.**" Dramatic archival footage and testimony from Elie Wiesel gives students an overview of the seminal events and causes of the Holocaust. 16 Min.
- "**Weapons of the Spirit.**" Classroom Version (38min). Moving documentary tells the story of the village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon and Pastor Andre Trocme and his villagers who gave refuge to 5,000 Jews during WWII. NY: ADL. Grades 7 and up
- "**Courage to Care.**" (29min) Reminding viewers of the power of individual action, the program profiles non-Jews who followed their consciences rather than the evils of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reich. NY: ADL. Grades 7 and up
- "**They Risked Their Lives.**" (54min) Rescuers of the Holocaust. 100 rescuers from 12 countries speak out. The film also raises the moral question why were there so few rescuers and so many collaborators. Grades 7 and up. Ergo Media, NJ.

## **Escape To Shanghai, China 1939-1949**

by  
Norbert Seiden  
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Recommended for Grades 7-8

### **Synopsis**

The Holocaust of the twentieth century was undoubtedly one of the most tragic events in Jewish history. During a short period of time, six million Jews, men, women and children were brutally murdered by Nazi Germany for no other reason than for being Jewish. Countless other Jews were maimed, physically and emotionally affected, and others were robbed of their freedom and properties. Many escaped from Hitler's Nazi German Empire suffering from the ills of persecution.

Survivors of the Holocaust are those Jews that lived in Germany or German controlled countries after 1933 and somehow managed to save themselves until after 1945, when Germany was defeated by the Allied Forces of the United States, Great Britain, Russia and their allies. All survivors had the good fortune of finding themselves in some special set of circumstances that enabled them to survive the horrors of the Holocaust. Some survived the horrors of the camps and ghettos while others remained hidden in their communities. Some joined the partisan fighters in the forests and many fled the German controlled territories to outside safe havens.

This biography is the story of Norbert Seiden, a young Jewish boy born in 1932 in Vienna, Austria to Austrian citizens, Ignaz and Pepi Seiden. They, together with his sister Trudy, escaped from Austria to Shanghai, China, a place of refuge for some 20,000 Jewish refugees from Western and Eastern Europe.

### **Quote**

"The Shanghai Jewish refugees, had the extraordinary good fortune of not only having escaped the horrors of the European Holocaust, but were also privileged to experience the essence of thousands of years of Jewish History in their own lifetime, a microcosm of the Jewish saga. Over two and a half thousand years Jews have been in exile, challenged by the task of maintaining their heritage and unique character, they had to adapt to foreign cultures and environments while warding off persecutions and isolation.

There is hardly a phase in Jewish history that the refugees did not experience or encounter during their short lived stay in Shanghai."

### **Norbert's Story**

My parents lived in Austria for many years and were citizens of that country. My father served in the Austrian Army during the First World War, and after the war established a wholesale distributorship of kitchenware in partnership with his

brother Jack. Diligence and good business acumen served to establish the Seiden firm as a major importer and distributor of merchandise in their industry.

By the 1930's, the Seiden's were a middle class family, law abiding and productive citizens of Austria.

I was born in 1932 and my sister Trudy was born in 1937. We lived in an apartment in the residential area of the city within walking distance of my father's business. During the summer months, my mother, sister and I vacationed in the country and my father usually joined us for weekends

On March 13, 1938, Hitler annexed Austria, an event that dramatically changed my life. I remember the parade with Hitler at its helm and the cheers with which the Austrians welcomed him. Little did I know then, what all this meant for the future of our lives. But as months passed, our lives were impacted by this alliance. Restrictions were placed on the Jewish population. Certain sections of parks were designated off-limits to Jews. Jewish stores were designated for Jews only. Physical attacks of Jews by hoodlums were no longer prevented by police interference and major Jewish businesses such as my father's were placed under control of Nazi commissioners. Nevertheless our private lives continued on a normal course. I had been enrolled in a private kindergarten and on September 1, 1938, I was enrolled in a private elementary school for secular and Jewish studies.

On November 9 and 10, 1938, the Nazis of Germany and Austria unleashed their infamous acts of terror on the Jewish communities. Synagogues, Jewish institutions and businesses were set on fire and Jews were taken from their homes and off the streets into custody and brutalized. Not knowing of the events of the day, my father walked me to school as on other days, and there we saw my school on fire with no fire department present to halt the destruction. My father quickly took me back home and continued to his place of business where he met the commissioner who had been installed in his business by the Nazi Party. This commissioner advised my father and my uncle that the Nazi authorities ordered him to take possession of the keys to the business and thereby assume full ownership. The same day, one of my other uncles, Uncle Joseph was taken into custody off the street. He was severely beaten and hospitalized. Several days later, he died from the injuries that he sustained on *Kristallnacht* (Night of the Broken Glass). This day of brutalization and persecution of Jews was a major turning point in our lives and gave impetus to our search for refuge.

My parents, convinced that we needed to leave Austria, sought to immigrate to some other country. It soon became apparent that all other nations of the world had closed their doors to immigration, and in no way were we able to find a place of refuge. In the meantime, I could no longer go to school, my father lost his business, and my mother mourned the loss of her brother Joseph, so brutally murdered by the Nazis.

One day in early December, my father read a notice in the Jewish Community Center that said the port city of Shanghai, China was an open port and allowed entrance of anyone appearing on its piers. Not knowing anything about Shanghai, my parents decided that in their desperation for a place of refuge, they



would leave Austria and go to Shanghai. Together with my Uncle Jack and his family, leaving all other members of the family behind, we traveled to the far off place, Shanghai, China to escape German persecution and atrocities.

On January 23, 1939, my family and I took a train from Vienna to Genoa, Italy and a few days later boarded the Italian liner *Conte Biancomano* for a one month long voyage to Shanghai.

Norbert Seiden's Special Pass for Rabbit Student in Shanghai, 1945



What was Shanghai like in 1939?

How would a community of approximately 20,000 European Jews survive in such unfamiliar surroundings? How did World War II affect their existence? And what happened to this community after the war? By relating the story of my personal experience and that of my immediate family, I hope to present an overview of how this community faced the challenges of adversity and managed to survive to provide the link of Jewish culture and history from generation to generation.

Shanghai in the 1930's was a metropolitan city with a population of approximately 6 million people, the vast majority being Chinese. During the Japanese-China War of 1937, one section of the city known as *Hongkew*, was heavily bombarded and conquered by the Japanese. Other sections were governed by American, British, and French authorities. These three along with the Japanese authorities governed Shanghai and maintained the city as an open port, meaning that any new arrivals could disembark from their ships without permit or visa and make their way into the city.

Among the small population of foreigners there were two Jewish communities of several thousand people. One was the *Sephardic* Community, that is Jews originating from Spain in the Middle Ages that made their way through Iraq, Iran and India to Shanghai in the middle 1800's, primarily for business ventures. The other was a Russian Jewish community that fled from Communist Russia through Manchuria to Shanghai in the 1920's.

When we arrived in Shanghai amongst 1,000 or so refugees on the same ship from Germany and Austria, we were welcomed by a committee of the local Jewish communities and directed to the Embankment Building, a huge warehouse at the port owned by one of the *Sephardic* families. There we were given some information about the city and advice on how to proceed with settling down. We were advised about the climate, dangers of the tropics, diseases, social services, language problems and more. Several camps were set up for people not able to cope with the situation on their own.

After a few days in this setting, my parents opted for independence and rented one room in a small house in the bombed out *Hongkew* section of the city, living quarters for my parents, sister and me. There was no heat, running water, toilet, washing facilities, but some furniture came with the room, so that we had beds to sleep on.

I was seven years old, and my parents needed to enroll me in an educational program. We did not have many options, and so my parents enrolled me in the Shanghai Jewish School, an English speaking school, located in the international settlement of the city, and operated by the Russian-*Sephardic* Communities. Going to school was quite traumatic for me. I had to take public transportation in a large city where pushing and shoving were the norm, and attend a school where I did not understand either the teachers or the students. We were given hot lunches and that took care of my food needs.

In the meantime, my parents sought to support their independence. Since *Hongkew* became the central area for the refugees, my father leased a large single family house, about 20 separate rooms, and sublet these to other refugees. This allowed my parents to live rent-free and also have some additional income for subsistence. As summer was approaching, our community feared that the tropical weather would be difficult, especially for young children, so the Russian Jewish Community of Manchuria set up an already existing summer camp for the refugee children at the seashore in *Dairen* several hundred miles north of Shanghai. At the age of 7 ½, I attended camp for three months. I remember being comfortable in this environment since we all spoke German but also remember being terribly homesick because I missed my parents and little sister, Trudy. There was no phone and I was not able to write in German or English.

When I returned from camp, a new problem confronted me. The refugee community had grown considerably and the school that I attended no longer could accommodate all the refugee children. To alleviate this problem, the world renowned philanthropist Horace Kadoorie leased a building in *Hongkew* and established the Kadoorie School for refugee children. Simultaneously, the Russian Jewish Community set up a religious afternoon school for refugee boys, a school in which my father played a very active role on the Educational Board. Now I had to maintain my German speaking skills at home, learn English in day school, and learn Yiddish and Hebrew as part of the Religious School curriculum.

By mid 1939, the refugee community had grown to a level that many feared would outgrow absorption capabilities. Consequently, the city administration imposed restrictions on further entry into the city by refugees from Europe.

Special permits were now necessary to enter the city, and another escape route from Germany was closed.

The growth of the refugee population brought with it the establishment of many civic institutions. The American Joint Distribution Committee, an arm of the United Jewish Appeal of America, and local organizations mainly supported these institutions. As mentioned earlier, the community supported four camps that housed and fed poor refugees. Although the shelter and food were meager, they provided basic sustenance. The community established recreational facilities where soccer became the main sporting event with theaters, movies, a hospital, cemeteries and houses for religious worship. Three cemeteries were created for the thousands that died from health-related problems and natural causes. In June of 1942, a severe epidemic of typhoid fever broke out amongst the refugees. My Uncle Jack was tragically inflicted by this disease and died at the young age of 52.

The central synagogue for the refugees was the *Ohel Moshe* Synagogue that was built by the Russian Community in the 1920's. Demographic changes in Shanghai caused this synagogue to be virtually unused. When the refugees came to *Hongkew* in 1939, it was rejuvenated for the community. My father served as *Gabbai*, the operating officer of the Synagogue.

After several months in Shanghai, my parents received their lift, a crate packed by our relatives in Vienna, with our personal belongings, including our furniture from our apartment in Vienna. None of the contents of the lift could fit into our small dwelling place, and my parents were able to use the money that the sale of the items brought. All the items were sold off on the second hand market. This opened up a new avenue for my father and he opened a store in the center of the refugee community, where he bought and sold second hand goods.

After a couple of years in our leased school building we were forced to move out into a different facility. Our benefactor, Mr. Kadoorie, this time decided to build a new school with beautiful classrooms and recreational facilities. The only problem with the transition was that we lost a full school year in the process.

Just prior to the entry of Japan into the war with the United States another wave of refugees numbering 1,000-1,500 people arrived in Shanghai from Eastern Europe. These refugees came from Poland and Lithuania, and made their way to Shanghai by the Trans-Siberian Railroad to *Vladivostok*, Russia and then to Kobe Japan. Their flight to the Far East was made possible by the compassionate and heroic Japanese Consul, Chiune Sugihara who was posted in Kovno, Lithuania. Aware of the plight of European Jewry, this brave diplomat issued thousands of transit visas to Japan in defiance of orders from the Diplomatic Corps of his country. Amongst the refugees was the entire Talmudic Academy of the *Mirrer Yeshiva* and smaller groups from the *Lubliner* and *Lubavitcher Yeshivot* (Religious Academies of Learning).

Three years after the arrival of the *Mirrер Yeshiva* in Shanghai, a new branch was formed for youngsters my age (*Yeshiva Ketana*), and my parents let me take off one year from my *Kadoorie* School studies to study full time in this Yeshiva.

Japan's entry into the war in December of 1941 had a major impact on our community. Japan took total charge of Shanghai and stopped all funds from outside refugee organizations. All American and British subjects were interned into camps and with it we lost some of our teachers. It took only a year before Germany influenced the Japanese to deal with the European refugees in Shanghai. In February of 1943, the Japanese authorities issued a declaration that all European refugees be relocated into a confined district, a ghetto. This ghetto was in *Hongkew* in the area where we lived but shrunk to 50% of its size. The house that my parents leased was outside of the ghetto boundaries and so my parents had to give up their source of income and move into a new location in the Ghetto. Unrelated, but around the same time, my father's store was robbed and his investments were lost.

By May 1943, we had to live in the ghetto, and could only leave the restricted area by special permission slips granted by *Goya*, a Japanese official and eccentric who called himself "King of the Jews". The story was told about his insanity and the arrogance with which he treated applicants for special passes. One day, a line of applicants formed outside his office. The first one to go in was a man who spoke only German. He walked in with an interpreter. *Goya*, admonished him and threw him out because he didn't learn the language used in Shanghai. The next applicant came in and addressed *Goya* in English. *Goya* threw him out because he spoke the language of the enemy. The next applicant came in and spoke Chinese. *Goya* was infuriated and accused the applicant of confusing him with being Chinese. Finally, the next applicant came in and addressed him in Japanese. *Goya* accused him of having learned Japanese to spy for the enemy. He too was thrown out, and no one received a special pass on that day.

Now that my father had lost both his sources of income, he resorted to other activities. Around Passover time he managed the *matzah* factory which baked *matzah* for the entire Jewish Community of Shanghai. He also took over the responsibility for *Kashruth* supervision at the hospital, and he worked in the hospital office as a bookkeeper.

As the war between America and Japan moved west in the Pacific Ocean, Shanghai became more vulnerable to air attacks. However, we felt safe being under the impression that America would not bomb our area because of our presence. Tragically on July 17, 1945, our area was hit with American bombs. Countless Chinese were killed, buildings destroyed, and thirty-seven of our refugees lost their lives. Two of my schoolmates each lost a parent. We found out later that the Japanese had oil depots close to our ghetto, and the bombs of this attack missed their target and instead landed in the ghetto.

When the war finally ended in September of 1945, we were elated to have regained our freedom, but were devastated by the news from Europe, when we learned of the annihilation of European Jewry. One half of our total family was brutally slaughtered by the Hitler regime.

Now came the time to decide where to resettle and pick up our lives. This decision was again very painful since no country in the world opened up its gates to the surviving refugees. It was clear to the refugees that no one intended to

remain in Shanghai, due to the climate, language barriers, living conditions, and cultural differences between the Chinese and the Europeans. For the most part, the refugees had no intentions to return to their country of origin, not wanting to face and interact with the perpetrators of the crimes of the Holocaust. Other countries in the world still had severe restrictions on immigration and would not easily grant visas to the survivors.

Since most of our surviving relatives found their way to the United States, my parents decided that they too would like to emigrate to America. In 1946, my parents applied to the American Consulate for visas and were told that we would have to wait our turn until the quota system would reach our application.

In the meantime, life in Shanghai became more difficult. We were forced to move from our living quarters, as the Chinese reclaimed their properties from Japanese occupation. Many self-created services by the refugees started to diminish as the refugees left Shanghai. The *Kadoorie School* that I attended lost its principal and many of its teachers to emigration. By 1948, I had to transfer back to the Shanghai Jewish School that I had attended when we first came to Shanghai. .

In late 1948, we were again confronted with a major threat while we were awaiting visas to the destination of our choice. The war between the Chinese Nationalists and Communists was ongoing and the Chinese Communist under the leadership of Mao Tse-Tung came closer to Shanghai. Fearing adverse conditions under communist rule in Shanghai, the International Refugee Organization recommended evacuation of refugees in Shanghai and offered to transport approximately 3,000 refugees to Israel, the newly born state for the Jewish people. On January 1, 1949, three ships sailed from Shanghai to Israel with the Seiden family on board.

## **Epilogue**

The Shanghai Jewish refugees had the extraordinary good fortune of not only having escaped the horrors of the European Holocaust, but were also privileged to experience the essence of thousands of years of Jewish history in their own lifetime, a microcosm of the Jewish saga. Over two and a half thousand years Jews have been in exile, challenged by the task of maintaining their heritage and unique character, they had to adapt to foreign cultures and environments, while warding off persecutions and isolation.

There is hardly a phase in Jewish history that the refugees did not experience or encounter during their short-lived stay in Shanghai. Just as Jewish history had a turning point in the twentieth century when the State of Israel was born as a nation among nations. The Shanghai Jewish Community too had its turning point in the late 1940's, when the Jews left Shanghai to settle in other lands, live and sustain themselves as people amongst people.

## **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Look at a map of Europe and Eastern Europe and see what avenues of escape the Jews had.
- Where could they hide and find safe havens?

- What was the Evian Conference?
- What happened on *Kristallnacht* in Germany and Austria?
- Why did the Japan invade Manchuria and China in 1937?
- Take out a map and study the trek of the voyage of the Jews that were saved by Sugihara.

### Discussion Questions

1. What kind of a life did the author of this story lead prior to the war?
2. How did the annexation of Austria affect his life?
3. What happened on *Kristallnacht*?
4. What courageous act did Norbert's father do to save the family?
5. What was Shanghai like in 1939?
6. How could one enter the port of Shanghai?
7. How was the family able to make a living?
8. What type of schooling did the author have?
9. When was the ghetto established and by whom?
10. Who was Horace Kadoorie?
11. How did the refugees handle daily living?
12. What institutions did they set up?
13. Who was Goya?
14. How did the entry of the United States into the war with Japan affect the lives of the refugees?
15. What happened to the Jews after the war was over? Where could they go?

### Activities

1. Study other stories of *Kristallnacht* and compare them with the author's story.
2. Read the story of Chiune Sugihara from the Internet.
3. Research why Japan was willing to let Jews enter the city of Shanghai.
4. What was the *Fugu Plan*? How did it affect the Jews of Shanghai?

### Suggested Readings

- **Nuremberg Laws** by Amy Newman. 7<sup>th</sup>
- **Ghetto Shanghai** by Evelyn Pike Rubin. 8<sup>th</sup> and up
- **Strange Haven** by Sigmund Tobias. 8<sup>th</sup> and up. A Jewish Childhood in Wartime Shanghai.
- **A Special Fate: Chiune Sugihara: Hero of the Holocaust** by Allison Leslie Gold. New York: Scholastic. 7<sup>th</sup> grade

### Teacher Resources

- **Japanese, Nazis and Jews: The Jewish Refugee Community of Shanghai, 1938-1945** by David Kranzler. NY: Yeshiva University Press, 1976. Well-researched documentation of the communities that lived in Shanghai.
- **The Fugu Plan** (Or **Desperate Voyagers**) by Marvin Tokayer. Paddington Press, 1979
- **Escape to Shanghai: A Jewish Community in China** by James R. Ross. The Free Press, 1994

- **Operation Torah Rescue.** The Escape of the Mirrer Yeshiva from war torn Poland to Shanghai, China by Yechezkel Leitner. NY:Felheim Publisher, 1987
- **Shanghai Refuge: A Memoir of World War II Ghetto** by Ernest G. Heppner. University of Nebraska Press 1993.
- **A Special Fate: Chiune Sugihara:Hero of the Holocaust** by Allison Leslie Gold. NY: Scholastic
- **Shanghai: The Rise and Fall of a Decadent City, 1842-1949** by Stella Dong. William Morrow & Co. Historical coverage of Shanghai
- Special Booklet. **Flight and Rescue** issued by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC. [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org) Tells the story of a group of Jews that escaped Poland and Lithuania with the help of Chiune Sugihara. Includes many photos.
- Article: **The “Fugu Plan: The Top Secret Japanese Plan Concerning the Jews During World War II** by Arnold Fine, Senior Editor. **The Jewish Press Magazine- 12/29/00.**

#### Internet

- On **Yahoo.com**, type in Fugu Plan. Several hundred sites will appear on the topic and guide the Educator to many more links
- 3 Articles about the Jews of Shanghai  
<http://www.dangoor.com/71page18.html-Shanghai> Jews as seen by the Chinese

#### Video

- Film. **"The Port of Last Resort."**  
<http://www.culturevulture.net/Movies/PortofLastResort.htm>
- **"Holocaust Hero: A Tree for Sugihara."** 25 min. Tells the story of Chiune Sugihara and how he saved thousands of Jews by issuing visas for them to escape to Japan. Social Studies School Service

**Anne Frank: Beyond the Diary**  
**A Photographic Remembrance**

by

Ruud van der Rol and Rian Verhoeven

Scholastic, Inc., New York, 1995  
Recommended for grades

**Synopsis**

This is the story of Anne Frank's life recalled and retold through photographs combined with the words of the authors and quotes from Anne's diary. The photographs are a visual record of Anne's life with family and friends. Anne's story is set within the context of the times with documents, photographs, and excellent maps as well as descriptions of events and people. The book concludes with the story of the publication of the diary, its worldwide appeal, and the preservation of the house where the Frank family and their friends went into hiding. Anna Quindlen has written a moving introduction to this book and to Anne Frank's story.

**Quote**

"There have been all sorts of Jewish laws. Jews must wear a yellow star; Jews must hand in their bicycles. Jews are banned from trams and are forbidden to use any car, even a private one; Jews are only allowed to do their shopping between three and five o'clock, and then only in shops which bear the placard Jewish Shop; Jews may only use Jewish barbers; Jews must be indoors from eight o'clock in the evening until six o'clock in the morning....

But life went on in spite of it all. Jacque used to say to me: 'You're scared to do anything because it may be forbidden.' "

"We don't want our belongings to be seized by the Germans but we certainly don't want to fall into their clutches ourselves. So we shall disappear on our own accord and not wait until they come and fetch us." P. 33

**Pre-Reading Activities**

- Examine the maps in the text or in a good atlas of the Holocaust to understand the proximity of Germany to the Netherlands and other countries that were conquered, the difficulty in finding a place to hide, and the location of the camps that the Germans established.
- Discuss the terms bystander, rescuer, perpetrator, and collaborator.
- Discuss the things that we can learn by studying photographs, illustrations, and artifacts from the past.
- Analyze the reasons that people keep diaries and journals and how they reveal information about people and the times in which they live.

**Discussion Questions**

1. How would you describe the young Anne that is revealed through the photographs and text of the book?



2. Why did the Frank family move from Germany to the Netherlands? What difficulties faced those people who tried to leave Germany after the Nazis came to power?
3. How would you describe Margot as she is revealed in the photographs? How do the authors of the book and Anne describe Margot?
4. Analyze the relationship that Anne has with her parents and her sister.
5. Describe the changes that occur in the lives of Anne and her family after the Nazis conquer the Netherlands. Do these changes occur slowly or very quickly?
6. What risks do Miep, Victor, and the other rescuers face in trying to aid the Franks and the others in hiding? What are some of the tasks that the rescuers must carry out to try to save those in hiding?
7. Explain some of the ways in which you believe Anne changed over the years in hiding.

### **Activities**

1. Anne's sister Margot also kept a diary but it was lost. Prepare several diary entries that you believe Margot may have written to express her feelings about her younger sister Anne and about life in hiding as well as her hopes for the future.
2. Locate some photographs of yourself during different times of your life. What do these photographs reveal about you? About the kind of life you live and the people and places that surround you? Now go back and re-examine some of the photos in the book. What things do you learn by studying these photos?
3. Make a timeline of Anne's life from birth to death. Draw a map and label the places where she was living during different periods of her life. Write a brief description of Anne for each five-year period of her life. How did she change and grow as a person?
4. Examine how the Nazis used propaganda and laws to try to isolate the Jews from their neighbors and to discourage people from caring about the fate of the Jews. Why do you think the Nazis were so successful in much of this? Why do you think the rescuers refused to accept and go along with the Nazis? Research for information about Miep Gies and other rescuers.

### **Suggested Readings**

- **Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl.**
- **We Are Witnesses: Diary of Five Teenagers Who Died in the Holocaust** by Jacob Boas
- **Anne Frank Remembered** by Miep Gies.
- **Memories of Anne Frank** by Alison Leslie Gold.
- **Anne Frank in Hiding** by Johanna Hurwitz.
- **Witnesses to War** by Michael Leapman.
- **The Last Seven Months of Anne Frank** by Willy Linder.

- **Anne Frank's Tales From the Secret Annex** translated by Michel Mok and Ralph Manheim.

### Teacher Resources

- **Latitudes: Reproducible Series- Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl.** Logan, Iowa: Perfection Learning, 1993. Resources to integrate Language Arts and Social Studies in 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades.
- **Contemporary Classics - Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl.** Outline book, questions, reproducible tests and activities, video guide. Logan, Iowa: Perfection Learning, 1990.
- **The Diary of Anne Frank.** (The Critical Edition). Prepared by the Netherlands State Institute for War Documentation. Includes essays on the history and investigation of who turned in the family. New York: Doubleday, 1989.
- **The World of Anne Frank: A Complete Resource Guide Book** by Betty Merti. J. Weston Walch Publishers.
- **Teaching the Diary of Anne Frank** by Susan Moger. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1998. In-depth resources for learning about the Holocaust through the writings of Anne Frank. Includes background information, primary sources, timeline, discussion questions, journaling ideas and literature connections.
- **Ashes in the Wind: Destruction of the Dutch Jews** by Jacob Presser. Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1988.
- **The End of Innocence: Anne Frank and the Holocaust** by Karen Shawn. New York: ADL, 1989. A course study.
- **Holocaust.** Thematic Unit by Teacher Created Materials.

### Video

- **"Just a Diary."** 25 min., b/w and color. Dutch with English subtitles. Produced by the Anne Frank Foundation. Historical footage on the rise of Nazism, occupation of Holland, Anne's life in hiding, scenes from the Diary of Anne Frank staged in Holland. Available through the Anne Frank Center USA, Tel. 212-431-7933 or e-mail: [afc@annefrank.com](mailto:afc@annefrank.com) or <http://www.annefrank.com>.

## Jews Of Greece and the Holocaust

### Background History

Greece is a small country in the Mediterranean that traces its civilization back over more than 2,000 years. A fifth of the country is made up of islands. The Jews had lived in that area since the Babylonian Exile of 586-589 BCE, and were active and influential citizens of the country.

In pre-war World War II, two of the most important Jewish Communities were in Thessaloniki and Athens. Since the 1600's, Thessaloniki had had an important Sephardic Community - the Jews that came from Spain after the Expulsion in 1492. In the 1900's, half the town was Jewish with a population of 80,000 Jews. At the time, there were 50 synagogues, 20 Jewish schools and many Jewish institutions. It became known as the Torah (Bible) learning center of Europe. By the turn of the twentieth century, the city of Thessaloniki had 90,000 Jews.

Greeks left Asia Minor en masse in the 1920's and settled on the Greek mainland. They changed the ethnic structure in the cities from the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey. Athens became the center of national and economic life. Many Jews from Thessaloniki came to Athens. Jews also left Greece for Palestine, Europe, South Africa and the United States. By 1939, the Thessaloniki community had diminished from 90,000 to 56,000 Jews.

The Jews of Athens had a different history, never being completely secure, but nonetheless were well established by the 1800's. Athens was organized legally in 1885 and granted a charter in 1889. It had a great synagogue built in 1904 that could accommodate over 3,000 people.

**“ Hitler did not really want to invade Greece. He attributed the defeat of the Central Powers in the First World War at least in part to the Balkan entanglements, and hardly wished to divert troops to a risky sideshow during the build-up to the invasion of Russia. Through trade, the Third Reich held south-eastern Europe in a powerful embrace, and there seemed little reason to add to the burdens of military occupation. Yet ironically, it was Hitler's own actions which led to the German intervention of Greece.**

**In the late summer of 1940, the Romanians had agreed to let German soldiers, unconvincingly masquerading as "advisers", into the vital Ploesti oilfields. For Mussolini this was a further sign of a dangerous expansion of German influence in south-eastern Europe, and he decided, in a fit of rage, to launch an invasion of Greece. But what had begun as an assertion of Italian independence quickly turned into a humiliating check to the Axis as Greek forces held the Italians on the Pindos mountains and even pushed them into Albania. To Hitler it was unthinkable that he could allow his partner to be defeated, and he decided to come to Mussolini's aid. In December of 1940 he issued the orders for Operation Marita, by which German troops would attack Greece from across the Bulgarian mountains. (*"The Occupation Begins"* Chapter 2, from Inside Hitler's Greece by Mark Mazower, p. 15)**

Greece became involved in World War II on October 28, 1940, when the Italians simultaneously invaded Albania and presented the Greeks with an

ultimatum. Metaxas, Greek dictator since 1936, replied "*ochi*"(No!), and moved his armies north to meet the invaders. Mussolini thought that he could win but

### ZONES OF OCCUPATION IN GREECE 1941



*Zones of Occupation in Greece, 1941*

Taken from: **Inside Hitler's Greece** by Mark Mazower p.21

terrible winter conditions bogged down his troops. The Germans, Italy's ally, came to the rescue and invaded Greece on April 6, 1941.

At the start of the war, General Metaxas tried to maintain his neutrality and tried to convince Berlin that they didn't want a conflict with Greece. However, Italy wanted Greece to give up its sovereignty.

The British realized that Hitler had to secure the southern flank in the Balkans, so they asked Metaxas if they could land their troops in Greece. He refused. He suddenly died in 1941 and was succeeded by Alexander Koryzis

who agreed to let the British land their troops. When the Germans invaded, Koryzis committed suicide.

On April 6, 1941, Palm Sunday, the Germans - with the assistance of Italy - invaded Greece and Yugoslavia. They defeated the Greek army and occupied that country until October of 1944. Greece was divided into three zones of occupation. Germany occupied Greek Macedonia, including Thessaloniki, Piraeus and Western Crete. Bulgaria annexed Thrace and Yugoslav Macedonia, and Italy occupied Dodecanese Island, Ionian Island and a large section of mainland Greece that included Athens. Italy received the largest territory.

In Yugoslavia the picture was entirely different because of the Croat Ustashi Movement. In this organization that singled out Jews and treated them brutally, Hitler had a great ally. One infamous incident involved the Rabbi of Vinkovci in Yugoslavia. When the Germans took over the town, they made Rabbi Frankfurter stand on a table while the soldiers spat on him, pulled his hair, cut his beard and hit him with the butts of their guns.

On April 14, 1941, as Hungarian troops occupied northern Yugoslavia, 500 Jews were shot. Two days later, the Germans entered Sarajevo and, with the assistance of local Muslims, demolished the entire synagogue.

Seventy thousand Jews of pre-war Greece were caught in the German sector. More than 50,000 lived in Salonika. Thirteen thousand Jews found themselves under the Italian occupation and 6,000 in the Bulgarian territory.

There was resistance by the Jews. Thirteen thousand fought against the Italians in the invasion of Greece in 1940. By 1941, there were 54 Greek underground organizations in which the Jews participated. In Salonika, Jewish resistance was led by Elie Veissi, a famous journalist who later was deported to Auschwitz in 1943.

Dr. Yolanda Avram Willis told her story of hiding as a Greek Jew and Alberta Lindsey wrote about it in the **Richmond Time-Dispatch** on September 20, 1997.

**In 1941, when Germany attacked Greece, Willis was six. She had a 2-year-old brother. Her father Salvator Avram, was an agricultural product trader. The family lived in Larisa until the war started and then moved to Crete.**

**She and her family, carrying falsified documents, pretended to be Greek Orthodox Christians. They first hid together in a flower farm outside of Athens. They went to Crete with the idea of going to Egypt. But the Germans attacked Crete before they were able to leave.**

**They were befriended by a Greek Orthodox family who helped them escape from Mount Tyliphos in the middle of the night as German paratroopers searched the area. Shortly afterward, Willis' parents decided the children would have a better chance to survive with a Greek Orthodox couple and their young daughter as the couple's godchild....Willis' "godparents" had a bakery. "They took me in. It was very hard for me. I had never been separated from my parents. But this was a lovely, generous, loving couple with not much education." Willis said.**

**One day there was a knock at the baker's door and Willis' parents were there. The shack where they had been hiding was looted by six Greek collaborators. They took everything except a diamond ring her mother wore.**

**“My mother turned her diamond ring under (so it looked like a thin band). It was later used by my parents to get me a good education. My godfather invited them to join us. At that time both Christians and Jews had to register where they resided because there were raids,” she said.**

**“ My parents were escorted every night to an abandoned house in another neighborhood in the hills...Every morning I wondered if they would come back. Sure enough one day they did not return....One day I was whisked away to a suburb in Athens where my parents were living as a childless couple.”**

**Willis learned later there had been a raid at the bakery by the SS looking for Jews.**

**“My grandmother was behind the counter selling bread to a neighbor lady. These men burst in and said,” Where are Jews?” The SS went to the loft and found some mattresses, and thought that’s where Jews are hiding. Sometimes people who needed bread and couldn’t get home before the curfew stayed there. The men decided to wait. The neighbor lady gets the bread and my grandmother writes on a piece of paper to tell her husband and George (The name being used by Willis’ father) ‘Don’t come back’ That saved them.**

**“ The 15-year-old delivery boy packed up like he was going to make a delivery. He went to my godfather’s house and was whisked away to my parents...My mother was supposed to have a sister in the hospital for (cancer) operation and I’m staying there temporarily. My godfather now is a fugitive and needed a place to hide. He had brother who was a tailor in another suburb of Athens....**

**“Now this Christian man was hiding with these Jews. He’s (supposed to be) the husband of the mythical sister with cancer.”**

**Willis recalled running up to her godfather saying: “Daddy, daddy.” There was a raid at her godparents home, during which a gun was held to Willis’ godmother’s head and she was asked to tell where her husband was.**

**She said her husband went for firewood and hadn’t come back. The man put the gun to (her daughter’s) head and asked where the father was. The child repeated what her mother had said. Really they had seen the father the day before and he had given his daughter red shoes. She was five years old.**

**“My brilliantly, genius godmother goes into a fit of coughing and says her husband didn’t want to live with his sick wife. Before dawn the SS was gone. They ate up the story.” Willis said. Willis said it wasn’t hard to remember not to give away her family’s identity.**

**“When you have air raids, uniformed occupiers in your country, the men in the city get a knock on the door in the middle of the night and disappear, you get the picture that things are not right. You know certain things are important and you just do them. Following the orders of adults was imperative. I was very compliant, “ she said.**

**(Taken from "Greek Jews Went from Hiding Place to Hiding Place."**

**<http://ripley.wo.sbc.edu/departmental/pr/sbcnews/www/9710/971Orthdhide.html>)**

**[After World War II, Dr. Willis attended American College in Athens and then attended Sweet Briar College in Virginia as a Fulbright Scholar. She has a Master’s Degree in chemistry and a doctorate in sociology. She is on the board of the Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh and teaches Holocaust courses at the Carnegie Mellon University for Lifelong Learning. She helped to make a documentary film on the rescue of Greek Jews and has written stories dealing with this episode of history.]**

## Epilogue

As soon as the German occupation began in Greece, the Jews suffered from many anti-Jewish policies. In April of 1941, the Germans aroused many anti-Semitic feelings in the Christian populace and re-instituted many old anti-semitic publications from the past. By June 1941, the Germans confiscated Jewish libraries, manuscripts, and priceless art objects and shipped them to Germany.

In July of 1942, the Greek Jews were given a taste of Nazi cruelty when 3,000 Jewish men from all walks of life were taken outside on a hot and humid day, forced to do gymnastics, hosed with water and flogged as the Greek populace watched. Since many of the Greeks were indifferent, the exercise was repeated again two days later. More Jews were arrested and sent to forced labor camps. The Jewish community tried to help but the Germans set impossible ransom demands. The Germans destroyed Jewish cemeteries and used the markers as building materials.

In February of 1943 a new commander came to Thessaloniki and commanded that all the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 be upheld. The Jews were also moved into three ghettos.

By the winter of 1941-42, refugees from Thrace (E. Macedonia) and Bulgaria came to Thessaloniki and Athens because of disease and starvation. In July of 1942, 9,000 Jews of Salonika were taken into forced labor. By March of 1943, mass deportations began and within three months, 45,649 Jews from Thessaloniki were sent to Auschwitz. Only a handful survived.

Under the Bulgarian occupation, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church saved many Jews. However, the official government supported the Nazis. By November 1942, the Bulgarian government yielded to Nazi German pressure and accepted the task of evacuating Jews from its territories. They instituted the *Nuremberg Laws*, *The Star of David* and the *Final Solution*. By 1943, after confiscating Jewish property and wealth, the Jews were imprisoned and deported to Treblinka. That summer, the extermination of Bulgarian Jewry was completed.

The Jews in the Italian Zone were subjected to less stringent rules and were ignorant of the death camp of Auschwitz. They enjoyed three years of relative security. As in other regions that were under Italian occupation, Jews sought safe haven in their areas of control. Chief Rabbi Barzilai had strong connections with the municipal government and had the full support of Archbishop Damaskenos. They were able to rescue 66 percent of Athens' Jewry. By March of 1944, the Germans managed to round up 1,690 Jews in Athens, many of whom were refugees from Thessaloniki, and deported them to Auschwitz-Birkenau. In 1945, after the war, Athens once more became the main center where Jews settled.

The story of the Jews on the island of Corfu was quite different from the rest of Greece. It was not until 1943, after the fall of Italy, that problems started for the Jews on the island. Kollas, the mayor of Corfu, was a known collaborator. In June of 1944, as the Allies bombed Corfu to divert attention away from the Normandy landing, the Jews sought safety in an Old Fort. However, the Wehrmacht and the SS police arrested 2,000 Jewish families who were hidden

with Christian families. Eighteen hundred of these families were deported to Auschwitz.

Even in Kastoria, a mountainous region between Thessaloniki and Ioannina that was an ancient trade route where 900 Jews lived, society was caught up in the Holocaust. In March of 1944, 763 Jews were arrested and deported to Auschwitz.

The fate of the Greek Jews who were shipped to the camps was as follows: 41,776 killed immediately in Auschwitz and 12,757 selected for forced labor in the orchestra, experiments, and the *sonderkommando* [workers at death camps who were made responsible for the destruction of the bodies taken to the crematorium]. Some were sent to Warsaw to recycle the ruins of the ghetto and others were sent to Dachau. Some became partisans and some were the heroes of the Auschwitz Uprising and Revolt.

Greece lost 60,000 - 70,000 Jews during the Holocaust. Today, there are about 5,000 Jews that live in Greece, mostly in the cities of Athens and Thessaloniki, a mere fraction of a once vibrant community.

### Pre-Reading Activities

- Study the presence of the Jews in Greece.
- Who were the Axis powers and who were the Allied Powers?
- Look at a map of Greece and its island and map out the different zones of occupation by the Italians, Bulgarians and the Germans
- Define the following terms: Nuremberg Laws, Star of David, Final Solution, Operation Margarita, Sonderkommando, SS , Auschwitz.
- Draw a timeline of the events from the invasion until the liberation of Greece and its islands.

### Discussion Questions

1. What happened to Jews in Greece in 1940 with the invasion of the Italians?
2. What influence did the Nazis have on Bulgaria and the Italian invasion?
3. How active was the underground in Greece and other parts?
4. What two cities were the largest Jewish centers?
5. Why did so many Greek Jews perish?
6. What was the fate of the Greek Jews in *Auschwitz*?
7. What problem did Willis encounter as a young child hiding from place to place?
8. Why were her kind and generous godparents willing to risk their lives?
9. What act of courage enabled Willis to survive?

### Suggested Readings

- Aelion, Elia. **The House by the Sea: A Portrait of the Holocaust in Greece.** San Francisco: Mercury House, 1998. Elia was the only member of his family to survive the horrors of the Holocaust.
- Kounio-Amarillo, Erika. **From Thessalonika to Auschwitz and Back 1926-1996.** London: Valentine Mitchell In Press. Story of Erika who was



deported to Auschwitz in 1943 from Salonika. In the camp she worked as scribe for the Nazi archives.

### Teacher Resources

- Angel, Rabbi Marc. **Jews of Rhodes: The History of a Sephardic Community.** A detailed history of the Jews of Rhodes, customs and religious practices and what happened during the Holocaust. Sepher-Hermon Press and Union of Sephardic Congregations, 1980.
- Bedford, Robert. **An Introduction to Literature on the Holocaust in Greece.** NY: Sephardic Historical Committee, 1994.
- Mazower, Mark. **Inside Hitler's Greece.** The Experience of Occupation, 1941-44. The author offers vivid pictures of resistance fighters, teenage German conscripts and Gestapo officers, Jews and starving villagers. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.
- Nahman, Eftyhia Yannina. **A Journey into the Past.** Personal memories of the author who went back to Ioannina, where she was born. Includes testimonies of Jews, survivors and local Greek Orthodox people who witnessed the arrest of their Jewish friends. London: Valentine Mitchell Press

### Post Reading Activity

- **Class should watch:** “It Was Nothing...It Was Everything.” Reflections on the rescue of Jewish fugitives in Greece during the Holocaust. 29 min. This film made by *Yad Vashem* and The Holocaust Heroes and Remembrance Authority, Jerusalem, Israel, combines interviews and archival footage on some of the events associated with the rescue of Greek Jews during WW II. The Nazis decimated almost 90% of the Jewish community. Available through Social Studies School Service 800-421-4246.

Information taken from:

- **The Holocaust- Greece** <http://www.ushmm.org/greece>
- **The Virtual History Tour of Greece**  
<http://www.usisrael.org/jsource/vjw/Greece.html>
- **A Short History of the Jews of Greece**  
Ancient times, The Nazi occupation, German Zone, Bulgarian and Italian Zones, Athens and Conclusion  
<http://www.grecetravel.com/jewishhistory/ancient.html>

## **Gandino Blooms In Israel**

**Written**

**by**

**Silvana Galizzi**

**From the Newspaper Article In the- L'Eco Di Bergamo June 2, 1995**

**Translated from Italian by Marina Lowi Zinn**

Recommended for Grades 7-8

### **Synopsis**

Jews have lived in Italy for more than 2,000 years and represent one of the oldest communities of Europe.

In 1922, King Victor Emmanuel III appointed Benito Mussolini, the fascist leader, as Prime Minister of Italy. Soon after, Mussolini established a fascist dictatorship and ruled Italy from 1922-43.

The 1938 census showed that Italy had approximately 50,000 Jews. That year, Italy passed antisemitic laws that forbade marriages between Jews and non-Jews. He removed teachers from schools and sent foreign refugees to internment camps.

In 1940, Italy entered the war as an ally of Germany hoping to establish a great new Italian empire. Italy occupied Yugoslavia (1941), part of Greece (1941) and part of Southern France (1942).

Marina Lowi Zinn was born in Milano, northern Italy and suffered through the Holocaust as a young child with her mother Mariem and brother Sighi. Her father Lipa left for Belgium in 1939 to try to find a safer haven for the family. Unfortunately, he was caught by the Nazis and later shipped to Auschwitz where he perished.

Marina, her mother and brother continued to live in Milano until 1943, when arrests and deportations were taking place as the Nazis implemented the "Final Solution". Marina's family went into hiding in Gandino, a small village of 6,000 people. Righteous Gentiles risked their lives to help Marina, her mother and brother and saved them. For a while Marina and her brother were hidden in a convent but when it became too dangerous, her mother Mariem took them out to stay with her.

There were sixty other Jewish people hidden in Gandino and protected by the villagers. Marina returned several times to honor her brave rescuers who were so kind to her and her family in their hour of need. Since the Italians unofficially obstructed the deportation of Jews and there was an unwillingness to enforce "The Final Solution", many Jews were able to hide and escape southward to Allied occupied areas of Italy resulting in 40,000 Italian Jews surviving the Holocaust. In Marina's case the family went northward which was under Nazi domination. She still remembers the Nazi officer on horseback outside the bus station near the school that served as Nazi headquarters, talking to another soldier and coming towards her and her Jewish friends. A fright overcame her as the officer told the soldier that he had a little girl at home who was between six and seven and was reminded of her when he looked at Marina's friend.

Although the girls understood German because they spoke it at home, they did not let on that they understood. He promised them some candy, in his broken Italian, if they would agree to return the next day. They agreed because they were afraid. They went home directly and told their parents of the incident and were forbidden to go out alone. Whenever Marina had the occasion to go with her landlady and saw this particular Nazi officer, she hid her face in fear of being recognized since she and her friend did not keep the appointment. Marina, her mother, and brother survived the war hidden and protected by their heroic rescuers.

Six years after the war, Marina and her mother emigrated to the United States where she finished her schooling. She is married to Ralph Zinn, and has a son Elliot Charles; they reside in New Jersey

### **Quote**

“One day we were home alone, my mother, brother and I. Two Germans arrived. We were all trembling. In a nearby suitcase there were Hebrew books: if they had found them it would have been the end of us.”

From the enclosed article” Gandino Blooms in Israel”

Four Trees Planted by an Italo- American Foundation remembers the families that 50 years ago accepted dozens of Jews to protect them from Nazism- including one who procured false documents and the nuns who gave hospitality to the children.

One, who was formerly persecuted returns from America to re-embrace those who kept her in hiding.

Gandino- the little fireplace is still there. It is the same as it was fifty years ago, the one that kept the owners of the house- the Ongaros of Gandino- and the small Jewish family that was on the run. Even the door of the cellar hasn't changed. But, the photos of the German movie stars that were hung by Rita and Maria Ongaro, then young ladies, are no longer there. Nor the radio on the little shelf, near the door: every night they would turn it on, very very low, so that one could barely hear it (it was illegal) via short wave, as the latest news of the war would arrive.

And the terror in Marina Lowi Zinn's eyes is also gone. She ran from Milano to Gandino when she was only six years old, together with her mother Mariem and her brother Sighi, three years older, while their father Lipa had been deported to Auschwitz. Today there is only room for smiles, embraces, gratitude and remembrance.

Marina Lowi has lived in the United States for over 30 years, in New Jersey. On their honeymoon she and Ralph Zinn went to Gandino. It was 1964. Since then, only letters and some photographs kept the contact alive between her, her brother Sighi and the families of Gandino who gave hospitality to them and 60 other Jews in the early forties, risking their lives to protect those who had to live in a clandestine manner to escape in safety from racist hate.

Now Marina has come back to say “Thank You” also in the name of the National Italian American Foundation (NIAF). With her husband Ralph and her

son Elliot Charles, who had never been in Gandino, she delivered certificates with inscriptions to Giuseppe Ongaro, Lyna Rudelli, Maurizio Servalli, all three of Gandino and Rosanna Palomba of Milano. NIAF has planted a tree in Israel for each one.

It was an alarm clock that resulted in an encounter between the families Lowi and Ongaro in 1943. "We were on our way to Mount Palandone, above Gandino, recounted Marina, there were seven or eight Jewish families and partisans. Our belongings were on top of a mule that we were taking along with us. Without realizing it, my mother lost her alarm clock, a gentleman picked it up, approached my mother with the clock in his hands and asked if it was hers. That gentleman was Bortolo Ongaro. Not much later he gave us hospitality in his house."

"First the mother, Mariem came to us, " recalled Giuseppe Ongaro, Bortolo's son. He was ten years old then as was Sighi Lowi. "In fact I didn't even know that Sighi or Marina existed. I met them much later when they came to us after they left the Convent at Gazzaniga,"

The two children, in effect, were hiding at the Sisters of Maria Bambina of the Collegio of Malta, "I remember that we walked the entire way at night from Gandino to Gazzaniga (approximately 18 miles). We couldn't take the bus because there were Germans and Fascists all over. Giovanni Servalli," continues Marina, "worked in the Town Hall and he procured false documents and ration cards for us. All night long, we were walking, mother continually asked me what my name was. I had to answer Marina Carnazzi while my brother had to answer Gilberti Carnazzi and my mother was Maria Loverinin." False



names to avoid being revealed. The Mother Superior and the priest were the only ones to know that the Carnazzis were, in reality, Jewish children – as were

others in the boarding school in Gazzaniga. It was only at the end of the war that those same children would encounter each other, again in Milano in a Jewish school, and would, with amazement, discover to have lived dramatic moments together without knowing they had the same roots.

When the word spread that the Germans were looking for Jewish children hiding in convents, Mrs. Lowi went to pick up Marina and Sighi and returned to the Ongaro's house in Gandino.

"When Battistina, the mother of Giuseppe Ongaro was making polenta (yellow corn meal porridge) she would give us a slice. We shared the kitchen, the little fireplace and the table," recalls Marina.

And moments of fright were not lacking. "One day we were home alone, my mother, brother and I. Two Germans arrived. We were all trembling. In a nearby suitcase there were Hebrew books: if they found them, it would have been the end of us. Fortunately, they didn't notice my mother's accent. They saw an accordion and asked her to play it. And then they saw pictures of German movie stars on the door to the basement and said: "Bravo, bravo."

In Gandino, there were many who knew that there were Jews in hiding. But, they all covered up, even at the cost of risking their own lives. Beside the Ongaros and Servalli, the family Lowi owes much to the Rudellis. They were the first ones to give shelter to the Jews who escaped from Milan. Mariem Lowi and her two little ones were guests on Mount Palandone together with other Jewish families and partisans.

"My father and mother," recalls Lyna Rudelli, 82 years old, "were suspended from teaching in the school system for the help they gave to them, in fact, their house was burned down several times." And also among the Fascists, there were some that knew how to help. In this case, Umberto Palomba, an attorney and father of Rosanna, welcomed the Lowi's with kindness in his house as soon as he knew of any searches and roundups.

Ongaro, Rudelli, Servalli and Palomba are the families to which Marina Lowi probably owes her life. As with her, many others of the Jewish faith were saved by the people of Gandino in the Province of Bergamo. That gratitude still ties her to these villages where they lived in refuge. A testimony to this fact is found on parchment on behalf of the Jewish refugees in Gandino. It was given to the Mayor of Gandino in 1948, and reads in part:

"Be it that such noble example be a guide to this present and all future generations." It is still exhibited on the wall in the present mayor's office.

Last week in New Jersey, they celebrated the rescue of the Jews in Italy during the Holocaust. As Governor Christine Whitman explained, "...With this day we must remember the heroism of the Italian citizens, the priests and nuns ahead of all who even at the risk of their own lives protected the persecuted from Nazism during the Second World War."

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- What were the conditions of the Jews in Italy prior to the World War II?
- What were the policies of Mussolini towards the Jews? (Information Internet)
- How did the local Italian officials execute some of the racial laws? (Internet)

- Was there a difference between Italian and German fascism?
- What role did Pope Pius XII play during the Holocaust? (Advanced students) - See Internet Listings
- Look at a timeline of **Italy and the Jews**- p.13-18  
<http://ww.us-israel.org/jsource/History/italytime.html>
- Look up the following terminology: fascist, Final Solution, anti-Jewish Laws of 1938.

### Discussion Questions

1. Why did Marina, her mother, and brother flee to Gandino?
2. How were they treated in Gandino?
3. Why did Mariem, Marina's mother, take her children out of the convent in Gazzaniga?
4. How did Marina honor her rescuers?
5. What small act of kindness did Bortolo Ongoro do for Marina's mother when they went to Mt. Palandone?
6. What acts of kindness and bravery did Giovanni Servalli do?
7. What special qualities does a rescuer possess?
8. Who were the first rescuers to give shelter to Jews who escaped from Milan?

### Activities

1. Visit the **Museum of Jewish Heritage** in New York City. Voice Mail **212-968-1800**. The museum tells the moving story of 20<sup>th</sup> century Jewish life from the perspective of those who lived it. Weaving personal experiences and world events, it paints an evocative portrait of the Jewish people beginning before the war and during the catastrophe, the Holocaust and the aftermath. Speakers are available, educators workshops, pre and post visit curriculum materials.
2. Study the Jews of Italy today.
3. Invite a hidden child or survivor to speak to the class.
4. Plant a tree for a Righteous Rescuer in Israel (\$10.00) contact **JNF** at 800-281-5375
5. See the following Videos: ( Look in Video List for Descriptions).
  - **The Assisi Underground** –117 Min.
  - **Courage to Care-29 min.**
  - **A Debt of Honor- 30 min**

### Suggested Readings

- Cowan, Lore. **Children of Resistance**. The book tells true stories of boys and girls who risked their lives and played active and dangerous roles in the underground resistance against the Nazis in World War II from Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, Holland, Italy, Norway, and Yugoslavia- NY: Avon, 1969. 8<sup>th</sup> grade and up
- David, Kati. **A Child's War: World War II through the Eyes of Children**. A collection of personal narratives of 15 European children who went through

the horrors of the Holocaust (includes Italy). NY: Avon, 1989. 7<sup>th</sup> grade and up.

- Friedman, Philip. **Their Brothers' Keepers: The Christian Heroes and Heroines Who Helped the Oppressed Escape the Nazi Terror.** This book profiles righteous rescuers from many countries including Italy who risked their lives to help the Jews survive. NY: Holocaust Library, 1978. 8<sup>th</sup> grade and up
- Napoli, Donna Jo. **Stones in Water.** Roberto and Samuele, two Italian boys living in Venice, are taken by the Nazis to a slave labor camp in Germany. Samuele, who is Jewish, perishes and Roberto manages to escape to the Russian front and tries to make his way home. NY: Dutton Co., 1997.
- Petit, Jayne. **A Place to Hide: True Stories of Holocaust Rescuers.** Brief profiles of righteous rescuers in many countries of Europe, including the Assisi underground, who tried to help save Jews in Italy. NY: Scholastic, 1997. 5<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Ramati, Alexander. **The Assisi Underground: The Priest Who Rescued Jews.** Padre Rufino Niccacci, a brave priest, endangered his life by rescuing 300 Jews in the town of Assisi during the Nazi occupation. NY: Stein and Day, 1978. 6<sup>th</sup> grade and up (Matching Film- **The Assisi Underground**)
- Rittner, Carol and Sondra Myers. **The Courage to Care: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust.** Poignant stories of rescue in many countries including Italy. NY: New York University Press, 1976. 6<sup>th</sup> grade and up – Matching film **Courage to Care.**
- Suhl, Yuri ed. **They Fought Back.** The story of Jewish Resistance in Nazi Europe. 32 dramatic true stories of revolts and escapes led by the Jewish underground in camps and ghettos and the raids of the partisans. Italy included in this reader. NY: Schocken, 1975. 7<sup>th</sup> and up

### Teacher Resources

- Bassani, Giorgio. **The Garden of Finzi-Continis.** Story about a well-off, Italian assimilated family and their fate in Ferrara after Mussolini's first anti-semitic laws were enacted. NY: Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovich, 1977.
- Bassani, Giorgio. **Five Stories of Ferrara.** Four stories deal with the deportation of the Jews in 1943 from Ferrara, Italy. NY: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, 1971.
- Gilbert, Martin. **The Holocaust: A History of the Jews of Europe During the Second World War.** Tells the history and background of the Jews of Europe including Italy. NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1985.
- Levi, Primo. **Survival in Auschwitz.** The author, an Italian chemist, writes an account of his experiences in the death camp, Auschwitz. NY: Simon and Schuster, 1995.
- Stille, Alexander. **Benevolence and Betrayal: Five Italian-Jewish Families Under Facism.** The author, who is an American journalist, shows how varied the Jewish responses were to Fascism. Some Jews joined the Fascist party and were welcome and others fought them with the partisans. The lives of 5 different families are interwoven in this book. NY: Penguin Books, 1993.

- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. **Historical Atlas of the Holocaust.** An excellent classroom resource text with maps, historical data and summaries. NY: Macmillan Publishing, 1996.
- Zuccotti, Susan. **The Italians and the Holocaust: Persecution, Rescue, and Survival.** Well documented book of interviews with Jewish Italian survivors. An estimated 85% of Italian Jewry survived, and 6,000 perished. The author credits warm Italian humaneness and the Italian historic contempt for authority as the saving grace of many Jews. University of Nebraska Press, 1996.

#### **Internet**

- **Decency in Italy Played a Role in Helping Nation's Jews**  
**<http://jewishsf.com/bk960419/sfconf.htm>**
- **Holocaust Heroes- Major Credit for the Rescue of Italy's Jews Goes to Catholic Clergy, Yad Vashem Says**
- **[http://www.holocaust-heroes.com/credit\\_clergy.html](http://www.holocaust-heroes.com/credit_clergy.html)**  
The Shoah (Site in English and Italian) 26 pages
- **<http://www.italya.net/shoa/shoa.htm>**
- **[www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com)**  
**Search –Mussolini and Jews**



## **In Honor of My Righteous Rescuers**

by

Cecile Seiden

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Recommended for Grades 6-8

### **Synopsis**

The author was born in Antwerp, Belgium and spent most of the war in Antwerp until she and her mother escaped from Belgium to a safer hiding place in Switzerland with the help of the underground. Cecile and her parents lived in the Jewish part of Antwerp. Her parents were foreign born, her mother came from Poland and her father was Rumanian. Her father was a jeweler by profession and her mother worked part time in the food industry. She and her parents had lived under German occupation since 1940 and as conditions worsened for the Jewish population they were forced into hiding in the basement of their apartment house along with other families. One day, as her father was walking on the street, he was apprehended by the Nazis and shipped to Auschwitz, Poland, a death camp. The hidden families in the basement of the apartment house feared her father's arrest might lead to the discovery of the hiding place and therefore asked the author's mother and her to leave. They were rescued by Joss, an employee of her Uncle Adolph, and Harry, her husband who took them to his family's farm in Boom to hide.

After living with the family for about a year, they realized that the constant searches by the Nazis endangered the Spiessen's, so they decided to leave the farm. With the help of the underground, they fled the countryside. Their journey was a dangerous one. They traveled from Belgium through occupied France and were smuggled across the border into Geneva, Switzerland. They owe their lives to the Righteous Rescuers, who at the risk of their own lives saved them, fed them, and graciously shared their homes and families with them.

### **Cecile's Story:**

My experience is not unique as far as experiences go but certainly, the kind people who saved the lives of my mother and I belong to a special class of people called the Righteous Rescuers.

Let me share with you the story of the Spiessens, the brave family that saved us from deportation and possible death. The Spiessens were farmers for many generations in a small town called Boom close to Antwerp in Belgium. They tilled the land, and grew crops and harvested its bounty.

Between May and June of 1940, a half-million Jews in Western Europe came under German occupation, and it changed our lives forever. My parents and I fled to France for a while seeking a safer haven but when we saw that we were homeless and couldn't survive under such terrible conditions, we returned to Antwerp.

Conditions in Antwerp were deteriorating at a fast pace. In October of 1941, a curfew was imposed upon Jews who were not permitted on the streets after a certain hour. By May 1942, the Jewish residents of Belgium had to wear a yellow

star on their clothing. In October of 1942, the Gestapo ordered all Jews to register with the police. Out of the 90,000 Jews that lived in Belgium at the time, 42,000 reported while the rest fled to other countries. There were not too many avenues of escape open to the Jews. Restrictive immigration laws and the quota system in the United States prevented many Jews from entering. Under the White Paper of 1939, Israel, [then Palestine,] a British Mandate, further restricted immigration of Jews into the country. Belgium, which is surrounded by three neighboring countries of Holland, France and Germany, all posed a threat for the Jews since they were all under German occupation. Antwerp looked like a Nazi stronghold. Mass arrests were being made and hiding places became exceedingly difficult to find. The Nazi death machine was in full swing.

Our friendship with Joss went back a number of years. She was an employee of my Uncle Adolph, a dentist who also lived in Antwerp. Joss, fearing for our safety, suggested that we hide with the Spiessens, the parents of her husband Harry.

This was the second time that my father was arrested by the Gestapo, but he didn't reveal his proper address. He listed our address as a bombed out house in the neighborhood, otherwise they could have arrested my mother and I. Joss took full responsibility. She made all the arrangements for our journey into the country. It took her several days to make the necessary plans and then she came to get us from our hiding place in the house. The other two families hiding with us asked my mother and I to leave the apartment house because they feared that my father's arrest and deportation to a working camp in the East could initiate a search for us. We didn't know until years later that my father was deported to a death camp in Auschwitz, Poland.

To me, a young child, the ride seemed endless. My mother clothed me with several layers because a valise would have attracted attention that we were moving. Along the way, we passed many patrols that examined Harry and Joss's papers. We were hidden under hay and vegetables in his little open truck. At one of the checkpoints they rifled the hay looking for contraband and anything else which they could confiscate. When the rifle entered the hay, it went past my mother's ear and she whimpered. The guard snarled: "What do you have there?" Harry answered, "A pig, he must have grunted!" Lucky for us, he believed Harry. They let us pass and didn't confiscate the pig. Joss and Harry risked their lives for us, they could have been shot.

As we approached the farm, mother and I became somewhat nervous. Would the Spiessens welcome us as Harry had said? Would we feel comfortable living with them? Our doubts and fears were quickly put at ease as we met the entire family, except for a daughter called Natalie and her husband who lived in a nearby village. They were extremely friendly and warm, and immediately served us hot drinks with home baked bread and butter. Butter was a luxury that we didn't have in Antwerp anymore.

The farm was a very busy and active place; it grew potatoes as its main crop. The farm provided vegetables for the family. The Spiessens also had livestock for their own consumption. Mother understood some Flemish, the language spoken in certain parts of Belgium, but I didn't. This caused an immediate

problem. How could I play with the local children if I couldn't communicate with them? Many things had to change for us to look like farmers. First of all, we were passed off as relatives. My mother was a sister-in-law to Mrs. Spiessen and I the niece. In fact, wherever we went, Mrs. Spiessen was told how much I resembled her.

Our clothes were exchanged and I had to wear wooden clogs. It took many weeks to get used to them. I liked them because I didn't have to tie my shoelaces. After a few months, I looked and acted just like any other farmer. It was amazing how fast my mother and I became used to farming and its chores. Mrs. Spiessen kept herself well informed and listened to the gossip in the village and to the priest to find out if the Nazis made any arrests. Natalie and her husband in the meantime had come to live with us on the farm in order to save their coal supply, since coal for heating was impossible to get during the war. Mrs. Spiessen concealed the fact that she was hiding a Jewish woman and child from her own daughter. Many times at the dinner table, the conversation turned to the subject of Jews and Natalie would chime in- "They deserve what they get!" Being a young child I was not aware of these conversations but many times the food got stuck in my mother's throat, as Natalie would speak.

For appearance sake, I attended the local Roman Catholic Church communion class. The Spiessen's were devout Catholics. The local priest and I became good friends and I tried to learn my Catechisms.

After being on the farm for many months, I developed a medical problem because of malnutrition from the war. The closest medical help was a Convent in Malines (Mechlen), which was the deportation center for all Jews from Belgium to concentration and death camps. We waited for many hours in the crowded outer office until our turn came. I was put onto a table and the Sisters proceeded to remove my scabs and treated the wounds. The pain was terrible and I was brave by not screaming too much. While this little operation was going on, Mrs. Spiessen overheard two nuns speaking to each other.

"Sister, did you see the huge lines of children waiting to be put on the trains? They looked so frightened, so scared!"

"Sister," replied the other nun, "Don't worry, they are not ours, they are only Jewish children!"

Mrs. Spiessen couldn't believe what she heard, tears came to her eyes, she bit her lip she wanted to cry out. She suddenly became silent. All the way home, she didn't say one word but just squeezed my hand very tightly. Why didn't Mrs. Spiessen speak to me, I felt that I had been so brave. That evening at the dinner table, there was not too much talk.

Life seemed normal and wonderful on the farm so far away from the horrors of war. We could see the artillery across the river, the red and black bursts of shells in the sky. We had reminders of war occasionally by bombings and the falling chaff that was dropped from enemy planes to block radar beams that were searching for their planes. The children collected the chaff to make a ball and then played medicine ball with all the children. We had very few toys except the chaff ball, an old skipping rope, and marbles. I became a great marble player.

The Spiessens were informed about the house to house searches that were being conducted by the Nazis looking for Jews. There were also other families hidden in the area. One evening, my mother awakened me with a tone of urgency and told me that we had to leave and find another hiding place.

“Why can’t we stay here, I love it here, can’t we stay?” I sobbed.

Mother reminded me of the time when she heard about a nun who was helping to hide Jewish children in her convent. When a representative came to pick me up, she couldn’t send me away. She promised herself that we would never be parted.

My mother answered with a tone of urgency “Hurry!” We kissed everyone goodbye and thanked them for their kindness and their help. The Spiessen’s packed some supplies of food for the journey and for the stay in the house and told us to hurry.

We were taken to Natalie’s house that was in a nearby village. She lived in a small cottage consisting of one bedroom, an all purpose room and a kitchen with an open fireplace. There was no electric power or running water. Water had to be pumped from the outside. It was very lonely living in the cottage. I didn’t have Albert, the Spiessen’s son, to play with or any of the other children. Albert loved to play with his pigeons and he pretended to send messages saving us from the Nazis. We missed the nightly conversation, the delicious meals, and the fresh warm bread and butter. The nights were chilly and we warmed our beds with heated bricks from the fireplace. At night, my mother and I talked about our apartment and all our friends and we wondered if they were still alive. The subject and discussions of father were completely avoided, but both of us had our own private thoughts on the matter.

One month passed and the next one came. We had very little news about the war or what was happening to the Jews. There was no newspaper available and we didn’t have a radio. I played all kinds of games with my one and only doll and knitting became the main activity, so was playing jacks that were made out of pig’s knuckles. My mother’s nerves were getting frazzled. She kept busy with knitting, and ripping and re-knitting items. I learned to knit doll’s clothing and became an expert at it.

To add to our depression, it rained for many days without stopping. The area in which we were hidden was very susceptible to heavy flooding during the rainy season. As the river swelled, the dikes broke and the sandbags were no longer able to carry the heavy load of the rising waters. We were told to evacuate. This time, we were not running from the Nazis but from the horrors of Mother Nature.

As we ran, we saw the street splitting and livestock floating by, and were wading in water up to my mother’s chest. I was holding onto her neck. We decided to return to the house and somehow managed to climb onto the roof of the cottage. People in a small rowboat passed by and helped us down and saved us. We managed to return to the farm, all were very pleased to see us.

We were forced to leave the farm again because of raids by the Nazis. We did not want to endanger the lives of our wonderful family. With the help of Joss, who had kept in touch with us, mother returned to the apartment in Antwerp. Father, who was a jeweler by trade, hid a small brick of gold in his workshop for

an emergency. When they arrived in the apartment they found it completely ransacked, everything was stolen. The furniture, clothing, bedding and what little food there was in the closets were taken; even the wallpaper and floorboards were ripped up. Joss and mother were lucky to find the little brick and quickly left the apartment. Many houses stood vacant and were bombed out. Mother and Joss wondered where the poor occupants were. Were they dead or alive?

While in Antwerp, Joss and mother went to see Mr. Flamand, a metallurgist and friend of my Father. Mr. Flamand had helped many Jews to find safer hiding places or to help them out of Belgium. He came to the farm to visit us on numerous occasions to stay in touch with us.

With this small brick of gold and the help of our friends and the underground, we crossed into Switzerland by bribing the border guard with gold and jewelry. While he was taking a smoke, the children were pushed underneath the barbed wire and the adults had to climb over the fence. My mother had difficulty climbing and panicked, so the underground leaders slapped her, to bring her back to reality and then helped her climb to the other side. I watched this from the Swiss side of the fence. I was crying so they told me to keep quiet. I listened to the command. The journey was difficult and dangerous but we managed to get to Switzerland, our new safe haven. We had to travel as a family unit, so we adopted a new father. Poor man, I gave him such a hard time because I loved my dad. We went in trains and trucks, and we walked in riverbeds so that the German patrols couldn't track us with their dogs. At one point we almost got caught by a patrol but managed to survive the ordeal. Tired, hungry and exhausted we made it to the border safely.

Good-byes are always so painful. Would we ever see the Spiessens again? Our wonderful and courageous family that shared everything with us, had protected and saved us and gave us another chance at life.



Cecile and her Mother in Switzerland, 1944

Once we were in the Refugee camp my mother and I were separated because children over the age of six stayed in the children's section. After being in the camp for a little while, my mother disappeared and I kept asking the Director of the camp where she was. He didn't tell and I became very concerned and searched for her everywhere.

In the meantime, the camps started placing refugee children with foster parents and they placed me with an elderly couple who did not have any children. The man became insanely jealous of all the attention that I was getting and behaved badly towards me, he terrified me with threats of death. One day, he took me back to the refugee camp and abandoned me. The last thing he said to me was that I would never see my mother again.

Later on, I found out that my mother became ill and had a gallbladder attack and spent two months in the hospital. No one had the decency to let me know that she was alive.

A second wonderful family, the Stettlers came to pick me up and took me home. I couldn't get those terrible words out of my mind. I became wild and unruly and cried uncontrollably and even went on a hunger strike. It was Eva, their beautiful and kind daughter, who won my confidence and I told her the whole story. The Stettlers were a kind and caring family with two children, Eva and Tommy. Mr. Stettler was a businessman and his wife volunteered in the Red Cross. I led a normal life in the Stettler house. I had a new family, a new sister and brother, a pet kitten, chickens and even started school. While I lived with the Stettler family, my mother came to visit me. I had seen her only once before then, when I lived with the first foster family. The man put me on the train to Lucerne to visit my mother in Zohnnenberg where she was staying with other refugee women knitting socks for the Allies. It was quite a tearful and happy reunion.

One day, when I was being bathed, Eva told me that I had a telephone call. I was so excited. I had never received a phone call in my life. My mother was on the phone and she informed me that my father was alive. I couldn't believe the news. Would I recognize him? I had not seen him in three years. Would he recognize me?

My father had been shipped directly to the Auschwitz death camp in Poland and was very fortunate that he got shipped to another camp after a few weeks. In fact, he spent the next three years in many other camps. When they asked him for his profession, he told them that he was a welder instead of a jeweler. This new profession apparently saved his life. He made trinkets and rings from the gold stolen from the Jews by the Kapos (lowest ranking officers) and received extra bread rations which he shared with his friends. His life in the camps was very cruel and harsh. His daily ration of stale bread and rotten soup was sparse. He was liberated by the Russians and handed over to the Belgians. He had lost a lot of weight and was swollen from malnutrition. He was very sick. He managed to get back to our house and saw that it was bombed out rubble. He collapsed and wept. Someone tapped him on the shoulder and told him that we were alive, somewhere in Switzerland. It was the kind owner, the woman of the grocery store across the street from us who had kept us alive with her leftover groceries each day when we were hiding. Joss, our friend, told her that we were safe and in Switzerland. It took several weeks before we joined my father in Antwerp. It was so hard to say goodbye to our new family and leave.

The first time that I saw my father, I hardly recognized him. There in front of me stood a man, swollen, with short hair that looked like a brush, and he had

aged terribly. I remembered him as my handsome father and not this man standing in front of me. It took a while, we didn't even understand each other. I spoke the language of Switzerland and he spoke many others but after a few months I became his little girl again.

After the war, my mother, father and I wondered why our Righteous Rescuers had saved us. We told the Spiessens that they were true heroes and they would simply answer, "No, we were not heroes but this was the correct thing to do!" We were also so grateful to the Stettler family for giving me a home and a wonderful new family and for sharing their lives and taking such good care of me.

One can never repay the kindness and courage that the Righteous Rescuers demonstrated during this period of unbelievable horror and inhumanity, when one nation tried to destroy another nation with blind hatred and ferocity unequalled in history.



May, 1945: Cecile on her first day of school, Zofingen

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Locate the following on a map of Belgium: Antwerp, and Boom.
- What happened to Belgium when the Germans invaded in 1940?
- Describe the White Paper of 1939.
- What was the British Mandate?
- Take out a map of Europe at the time of the Nazi invasion and locate places where Jews could go.
- What neighboring countries were under German occupation?
- What was the immigration policy of the United States during World War II?

- Read background materials found on the Mechelen Museum of Deportation and the Resistance Internet site.

### Discussion Questions

1. Why did Cecile and her Mother have to go into hiding?
2. What happened when they arrested Cecile's Father?
3. How did Cecile and her Mother adjust to farm life?
4. Why did they have to leave the farm for the first time?
5. Why did they have to leave the farm for the second time?
6. What type of family were the Spiessens?
7. What problems did Natalie present on the farm?
8. Why were the Spiessens willing to hide a Jewish woman and her child?
9. Why was Switzerland considered a safer place?
10. What qualities does a Righteous Rescuer possess?
11. What compelled the Righteous Rescuers to act rather than be bystanders?
12. Why was Switzerland considered a neutral country?
13. What happened to some of the Righteous Rescuers after the war? Were there any reprisals for helping the Jews?

### Suggested Readings

- **Never to Be Forgotten: A Young Girl's Holocaust Memoir** by Beatrice Muchman. First person account of young girl in Nazi occupied Belgium. When conditions worsened in 1943, Beatrice was entrusted to a Catholic woman for safe keeping where she managed to survive. Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 1997. 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades
- **Young Moshe's Diary: The Spiritual Torment of a Jewish Boy in Nazi Europe** by Moshe Flinker. Moshe writes about the terrible pain he endures during the Holocaust. His story takes place in Belgium. NY: Anti-Defamation League, 1985. 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grades.
- **Heroes of the Holocaust** by Arnold Geier. 28 extraordinary true accounts of triumph, rescue and heroism. NY: Berkley Books, 1993. 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grades
- **Children in the Holocaust and World War II: Their Secret Diaries** by Laurel Holliday. The diaries of 23 children ranging from the ages of eleven to eighteen telling their touching stories. It includes the story of Moshe Flinker who lived in Belgium. NY: Washington Square Press, place order through Simon and Schuster Press, NY, 1995. 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grades
- **We Are Witness: The Diaries of Five Teenagers Who Died in the Holocaust** by Jacob Boas. One of the teenagers is Moshe Flinker from Belgium. NY: Scholastic, Inc. 8<sup>th</sup> grade

### Teacher Resources

- **The World Must Know**: History of the Holocaust as Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum by Michael Berenbaum. This book offers an extensive documented chronicle of the events surrounding the Holocaust. 1993



- **The Holocaust: The Destruction of European Jewry 1933-1945** by Nora Levin. NY: Schocken Book, 1973. Read Chapter 20- Holland and Belgium.
- **The Holocaust- A History of the Jews of Europe During the Second World War** by Sir Martin Gilbert. From the cover "Setting the scene with a brief but cogent history of antisemitism prior to the Hitler era, the book documents the Holocaust from 1933 onward." NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1985.
- **Atlas of the Holocaust** by Sir Martin Gilbert. Maps and events of the Holocaust. Jerusalem:Steimatsky's Agency Limited,1982.

### **Videos**

- **As If It Were Yesterday** (An affirmation of the human spirit in the most trying of times...) Documents the little known heroism of the Belgian people who, during Nazi occupation, hid, placed or helped over 400 children escape deportation and extermination, often at the risk of their own lives. 85 min.b/w French with English subtitles. Axon Video, 1900 Broadway, NY, NY 10023
- **They Risked Their Lives: Rescuers of the Holocaust.** 54 min color. 100 Holocaust rescuers from 12 countries speak out and share their experiences of heroism. It also asks the question why were there so few rescuers and so many collaborators. Teaneck, NJ: Ergo Media.

### **Internet**

- **Information on Belgium before and during World War II**  
The Mechelen Museum of Deportation and Resistance  
**<http://www.cicb.be.shoah/righteous.html>**
- **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC**  
For teaching materials, photos, etc.  
**<http://www.ushm.org/Index.html>**
- **Righteous Conduct During the Holocaust**  
**[http://www.chambon.org/righteous\\_conduct.htm](http://www.chambon.org/righteous_conduct.htm)**  
**Many other sites listed**
- **Belgian Rescuer Joseph Andre**  
**<http://motic.wiesenthal.org/text/x00/xm0085.html>**

## **Rescuers: Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust**

by

Gay Block and Malka Drucker

Holmes and Meiers Publishers Inc, NY, 1992

Recommended for Grades 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>

### **Synopsis**

**Rescuers** is a compilation of true stories of the few who offered help to the Jewish people in Europe during the reign of Nazi terror. Many students will know the Anne Frank story and the role Miep Gies played as a rescuer. The story of Marion Pritchard is an excellent extension and should broaden the students' knowledge base of the "who" and "how" of the rescuer. Marian P. vanBinsbergen Pritchard says she thinks it was her parents' unusual way of childrearing that provided the motivation to act as a rescuer and a rescuer she was. One riveting story she recounts is of a night search that four Germans and a Dutch Nazi policeman carried out at the house where she was staying. A young Dutch woman, Marion was hiding three small Jewish children. A short time after the failed search, the Dutch Nazi policeman returned, this time catching the hidden ones. Marion had to make a difficult choice. With a revolver a friend had given to her, Marion killed him to protect her charges. The details involved in the act of rescue and Marion's insights on that role are valuable lessons.

### **Quote**

"I know I had no choice, but I still wish there had been some other way."

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Familiarize the students with the Nazi invasion of Holland and how it affected the Jews.
- Make a map study of the city of Amsterdam, Holland and surrounding areas.
- Review the story of Anne Frank and the role Miep Gies Santrouschitz played in hiding the Franks and others.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Describe the many possible consequences a rescuer faced during the Nazi rule.
2. Why did some people choose to become collaborators, often betraying friends and neighbors including Jews and non-Jews?
3. Why did some people choose to be rescuers despite the dangers they faced?
4. Why did so few people choose to become rescuers?
5. Why do you think there were more people (proportionately) willing to take the risk of being a rescuer in some countries than in others?
6. How did a rescuer address the problems s/he faced in caring for those s/he was attempting to rescue, i.e. food, shelter, etc.?

7. Rescuers did not always know those they rescued. Describe some of the ways that a rescuer could come into contact with Jews and others being hunted and persecuted by the Nazis.

### Activities

1. Make a chart listing those who acted as:
  - a) Perpetrators
  - b) Bystanders
  - c) Rescuers
2. Complete the following:

The dictionary definition of courage is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I think courage is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What characteristics made Marion courageous? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_
3. Write a letter to Marion Pritchard in Vermont explaining why you think she was a heroine. Include views on how heroes are not born but evolve.

### Suggested Readings

- **Anne Frank: Beyond the Diary** by Ruul Van Der Rol.
- **"A Road Not Taken"** by Robert Frost.

### Video

- **"Courage to Care."** Profiles include Marion Pritchard in her own words.

## **Darkness Over Denmark**

by  
Ellen Levine

Holiday House, NY, 2000  
Recommended for Grades 5-8

### **Synopsis**

This is the dramatic true-life story of the rescue of the Danish Jews. There is a myth that the King of Denmark wore a Jewish star to show his feelings for the antisemitic laws of the Nazis. The books make it clear that, although this is purely a myth, the king and most Danish citizens did reject and resist the antisemitic policies of the Nazi regime. The book tells the tale in a narrative fashion with the accounts of survivors and rescuers woven into the story. The book explains what the fate of the Jews would have been if they had not been saved. There is a chapter on the treatment of those deported to Theresienstadt (Terezin) concentration camp. The determined pressure of the Danish government was able to save all but 50 Jews. The book goes into the two-week long rescue by boat to Sweden of the Danish Jews and the bravery that it required. Just as telling is the account of what happened to the Danish Jews after the war. Unlike most their European counterparts, they came back to find their homes and belongings intact, protected by their fellow Danes.

### **Quotes**

"In the years before World War II, Jews in Denmark, unlike Jews in most other lands, experienced little anti-Semitism in their daily lives. The tone was set by the Danish government and the Danish Lutheran Church. For decades both accepted Jews as equal citizens." P. 22

"The need to assist Jews energized a population that viewed the Germans with increasing anger, but had not yet focused that anger in any sustained form of mass protest. Aage Bertelson, a schoolteacher...found himself increasingly sympathetic with the escalating acts of sabotage [against the Nazis]. 'So the dark night...meant a personal dawn. In the face of these open acts of atrocity...it was not a question of one's viewpoint. Action was the word.'" P. 102

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Locate Denmark and Sweden on a map of Europe.
- Discuss the fate of most Jews in Europe.
- Discuss the roles of victim, perpetrator, collaborator, rescuer, and bystander.
- Research every day life in European countries during the Nazi occupation.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Discuss why the behavior of the Danes was different than that exhibited elsewhere in Europe.
2. Analyze one or two of the accounts from the book. What situations and problems were faced? How were obstacles overcome?

3. Consider this quote from Burke: "All it takes for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing." How does this pertain to the story of the Danish rescue?
4. Bertelson mentions that the desire to help "energized" the resistance. How and why do you think this was so? Can helping others help you?
5. What risks did the people of Denmark take in order to accomplish their mission? Based on the text, why did they do this?
6. Why do you think other countries failed to mount similar rescue efforts for their Jewish citizens?

### **Activities**

1. Write a journal for one of the following: a rescuer or a Jew. Make sure it starts just prior to the occupation and ends after the war.
2. Research the history of Denmark. Write a report focusing on their treatment of minority religions.
3. The citizens of Denmark are listed as the "righteous among the nations" by Yad Vashem in Israel. Write a speech in which they receive this honor and be specific as to what the honor means and why all the citizens deserve it.
4. Create a "you are there" news report as if you were on one of the boats carrying the Jews to Sweden. Be sure to include "interviews" with people on this boat.
5. Use pictures from the book or find other pictures and make a pictorial display entitled "Rescue - The Story of the Danish Jews."

**Forging Freedom**  
***A True Story of Heroism During the Holocaust***

By  
Hudson Talbott

G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 2000  
Recommended for Grades 5-8

**Synopsis**

Jaap Penraat had many Jewish friends and neighbors growing up in Amsterdam in the 1930s. With the arrival of the Nazi conquerors in 1941, Jaap quickly came to realize that those friends and neighbors were at risk under the Nazi persecution. He decided to try to help his friends and began by making false identity cards for them. As Nazi persecution intensified, Jaap realized that more must be done if any of the Jews in his beloved city were to be saved and he became involved in the high risk effort to smuggle the Jews out of The Netherlands and to safety.

**Historical Note:**

In May of 1940, the Nazis launched their *blitzkrieg* and quickly overwhelmed the Dutch forces. By September of that year, all of Western Europe was under the control of the Nazis and their allies. As each nation fell under Nazi control, new regulations and decrees were introduced to control the local populations and to isolate and persecute the Jews. Often, local Nazi collaborators betrayed their nation and their fellow citizens by aiding the Nazis in their efforts. Many, intimidated by the power of the Nazis, did as they were ordered to do. However, there were some, like Jaap Penraat, who refused to "go along" and determined to follow their consciences. These became the rescuers, the Righteous, as they risked their lives to save the Jews and others being persecuted by the Nazis.

*Pp. 22-23*

Realizing that all of his Jewish friends' ID cards now needed "fixing," Jaap asked the non-Jewish people he trusted to "lose" their ID cards, which he then "found" and altered. A small operation sprang up in Jaap's bedroom as the "lost" ID cards came in and the "fixed" cards went out. Carel Blazer and Kreen made the new photographs.

Within a month Jaap was forging all kinds of papers. Papers were needed for everything - to own a radio or a telephone, to stay out past curfew, for travel, moving, working, not working. Compared to the ID cards, the permits and exemption papers were relatively easy to counterfeit. They were usually no more than a mimeograph sheet with a Nazi eagle stamped on them. But a false paper was frequently all that stood between life and death for many Jews.

Tension was filling the city as restrictions around the Jewish community grew harsher. On February 20 the Nazis rounded up 425 Jewish men and sent them to a concentration camp called Mauthausen. It was more than the people of Amsterdam could bear.

The following morning Jaap discovered the city at a standstill. The shops and stores he passed were closed and there wasn't a streetcar or bus in sight. A crowd was gathering in the main square.

"Isn't it great?" called Eli, running toward him. "Amsterdam is on strike! The railroad employees walked off their jobs about three a.m. protesting the Nazis' roundup yesterday, and then the dockworkers followed them. The action caught on right away, and now the whole city is shut down!"

"What is this?" a Nazi officer shouted from his car at Jaap.

"A strike," Jaap replied.

"Strike? Strike? Impossible! There is no such thing as a strike in the Third Reich!" shouted the startled German as he drove off.

Jaap and Eli laughed, but were amazed themselves. The people of Amsterdam had actually taken back their city from the Third Reich. Non-Jews were risking their lives for the sake of Jews.

The next day two battalions of Nazi stormtroopers drove into town and fired at anyone on the streets. They sent another 300 Jews to Mauthausen and threatened to shoot 500 Jews for each day the strike continued. The strike leaders had no choice but to end it.

At the café Jaap's friends debated if the strike did any good. Carel feared even more brutality and Eli regretted the many deaths.

"But look what else happened," said Jaap. "The people who are ready to fight found each other. Our network could be powerful! There's reason for hope."

### **Historical Note:**

By May 1942, the Nazis had issued the decree requiring all Jews in The Netherlands to wear yellow stars bearing the word "JEW" on them. Those caught without the yellow star were arrested immediately. The Jewish quarter of Amsterdam was surrounded by barbed wire and Jews from all over the nation were herded into the enclosure. Within a short time, the German conquerors began to demand Jewish "volunteers" to work as slave labor in Germany. Resisters and rescuers worked at great risk to themselves and their families to hide Jews and non-Jews being sought by the Germans.

Chapter: *Jail August 1942 pp. 28-30*

"False papers? What false papers? Have a shop where we make religious statues. Are you sure you have the right name?" said Jaap. He sat in the center of a room surrounded by men from the Bureau of Jewish Affairs.

"Don't bother playing dumb," said an agent. "We know you're involved in a counterfeit ring. If you give us some names, we'll let you go home."

They grilled Jaap through the night but failed to make him change his story. After three weeks of frustration the Dutch transferred him to the Germans.

For most prisoners the jail of the German Security Police was the last stop before the train ride to Mauthausen, the concentration camp for "enemies of the state." Jaap shared his closet-size cell with three others. The only light came from a hole in the door. A guard passed four slices of bread through it in the

morning and a bowl of watery soup at night. A bucket in the corner was the toilet and they slept on the floor.

Jaap discovered a friend in the next cell. Isaac the sculptor was also part of Jaap's underground ring. They communicated through a hole next to a pipe in the wall. Isaac felt his time was running out. One day he had a request for Jaap.

"It's about my son, Max," he whispered through the wall. "He just turned thirteen. I want him to live, Jaap. Would you take care of him?"

"Isaac, I doubt any of us will get out of here," said Jaap.

"You might. I won't. He's staying with my sister. Please."

The next day the guards came for Jaap and led him to the "interrogation hall." For more than three hours the Nazis beat and slapped him, trying to break his will. But they couldn't get any further information out of him. Finally they threw him into a "standing cell," a narrow box with just enough room to stand.

Hours passed until finally a door opened.

"*Komm!*" said a guard, pointing a gun. He led Jaap through a maze of halls and finally opened a huge wooden door to a blinding flood of sunlight.

"*Raus!*" the guard shouted, shoving Jaap out onto the cobblestones. The door slammed behind him. He rubbed his eyes and hoped he wasn't dreaming. After two months in the enemy's hands he was suddenly free again.

Chapter: *A New Plan Autumn 1942 pp. 32-34*  
\* \* \* \*

"I've been working on a new idea," Jaap said. "I heard about an underground group working with the Allies. They rescue downed British and American pilots and bring them to France. The French Underground takes them across the Pyrenees to Spain and then the Spanish get them to Gibraltar, where they pick up a boat to England. Maybe we could set up our own line to get Jews out of here."

"How?" inquired Kreen.

"With false papers. Like the ones we've been making, just a different kind," Jaap said. "I think I can get my hands on documents from a German construction company. I'll copy their letterhead and print it on blank paper so it looks very official, but then I'll write a letter on it saying that the company has hired us to bring workers to their job site in France. Then we use the letter to apply for an official travel permit."

"And this job site would be...?"

"The Atlantic Wall! The Germans are building a huge wall along the coast of Europe, all the way from Norway down to Spain!"

"I know about it, but is this company building it?"

"Who knows? I don't even know if they exist anymore. It's just a chance we'll have to take. But the Nazis have over five hundred thousand people working on the wall right now. They want to make Europe into a gigantic fortress. There's no way they can keep track of who's doing what and where!"

Kreen stood up. He paced back and forth, then stopped suddenly.

"Why don't you just forge a travel permit?"



"I don't have a real one to copy," said Jaap. "Fake papers only work if they're identical to real ones. If it's wrong, we're dead."

"Hmm. That's a problem," Kreen said. "The important permits are issued only in Paris."

Now Jaap was out of bed, also pacing back and forth. "So...since we don't have a travel permit yet, we'll have to *sneak* to Paris to get it, right?"

"I think so," said Kreen. "But one more thing. This all depends on having a good connection at the other end. Who do we know in Paris?"

"Jean-Paul! He moved back there at the beginning of the war," said Jaap.

"Of course," said Kreen. "He'll have contacts in the French Underground."

"I better get dressed," said Jaap. "We have work to do."

Chapter: *Final Touches pp. 42-45*

"So the first question is: Who do we take?" stated Kreen as they unlocked their bicycles outside of Amsterdam's Central Station.

"We'll start with friends," said Jaap. "People we can trust, in the gravest danger, who fit the type. That means no women, no men over thirty-five, and no kids. It's lousy, but it's the only way it'll work. They have to pass as construction workers."

"That still leaves lots of people. We only have twenty forms."

"And that's all we're taking. If this thing works, it'll be a miracle," said Jaap. "But I was still thinking I should try to copy the form. No sense writing on the originals. My dad could help me with making copies. Meanwhile, we have to start putting word out."

The next night, Jaap met his father at the printshop. They waited until the other pressmen had gone home and then set to work etching a plate made from the original Nazi form. Then they ran off several copies on a small press. Jaap took them home and added the bold red stripes by hand using a straight edge. The final touch was the eagle and swastika stamp.

\* \* \* \*

For the next two weeks Jaap and Kreen organized their group. Ben Cohen, Jaap's neighbor, was one of the first. Jaap tracked down Max, the son of his friend from prison, Isaac. He was just fourteen but a stocky athletic type. With the right photo for his new ID, he could pass for seventeen.

One evening Jaap stopped by his father's shop after receiving a message from him. Someone was waiting to see him.

"Brammy!" exclaimed Jaap, throwing his arms around his old friend.

"Hi, Jaap! It's been a long time. And it's Bram now!" he said with a smile.

"Where have you been? I haven't seen you since you left for rabbinical school."

"We were living with my uncle in a village near Utrecht since the beginning of the war. But then they brought all the Jews back here last week and stuck us in the ghetto. I had to sneak out since I don't have a permit to be on the street. Your father told me about your plan. Jaap, I want to go with you. Will you take me?"

"You don't need to ask, Bram," said Jaap. "You're partly the reason I'm doing it. You would do it for me. Who knows if it will even work, but it seems like the best chance we have for now. Can you get any workman's clothes?"

"I'll find something, but I can't be on the streets," said Bram.

"I'll make you a new ID. My friend Kreen can photograph you tonight," said Jaap. "It's important for you to come to a meeting tomorrow. We'll go over the plan and you'll meet the others."

### **Historical note:**

After a perilous journey, Jaap, Kreen, and those they were helping to escape successfully reached France. Jaap transferred those in his charge to the French Underground to continue their journey to Spain, Portugal, Gibraltar, and, finally, to England. Jaap and Kreen repeated the journey numerous times over the following months. With a combination of brazen courage, determination, careful planning, skillful counterfeiting of documents, and luck, Jaap and Kreen rescued over 406 people and sent them to safety.

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Locate the following on a map of Europe in the 1930s-1940s: Mauthausen; Amsterdam, Holland (The Netherlands); Pyrenees Mountains; Paris, France; Spain; Gibraltar; Norway; Denmark; Belgium; England.
- Define the terms: *blitzkrieg*, forger, counterfeit, general strike
- Identify the following: German Security Police, interrogation, the Atlantic Wall, swastika, concentration camp

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What was the blitzkrieg? How did it lead to the conquest of Holland?
2. How did Jaap first begin his forging and counterfeiting operation? What did Jaap, Carel, and Kreen mean when they said they were "fixing" the papers? Why were these forged identity cards so important to his Jewish friends?
3. Why did the railroad workers of Amsterdam go on strike? Who joined the strike?
4. How did the Nazis manage to put an end to the strike? Why did Jaap say that the strike was a success even though it had to be ended?
5. Why was Jaap arrested by the Dutch "Bureau of Jewish Affairs?" Why did that Bureau transfer him to the German Security Police?
6. Describe the conditions in the prison where Jaap was being held. What was a "standing cell?"
7. Why was Isaac so certain that he would not be released from the prison? What promise did he ask Jaap to make?
8. Why do you think the Security Police finally released Jaap?
9. What gave Jaap the idea for his rescue operation for his Jewish friends?
10. What was the Atlantic Wall? How does Jaap plan to make the construction project part of his escape operation?

11. Where do Jaap and Kreen go to obtain the necessary copies of the travel permits and other papers? Why was this first step of the rescue plan so risky?
12. How do Jaap and Kreen decide who to help escape by their plan?
13. Why was the work of Jaap and Kreen and those who helped them so courageous? Why do you think that they did it?

### **Activities**

1. Those who rescued Jews, Gypsies, and other victims of the Nazi terror are often referred to as the "Righteous Rescuers." What does this mean? Do you think it is an appropriate name for them? Why or why not?
2. Write a poem or an essay about the risks and courage of the rescuers and the importance of their work.
3. In the countries that the Nazis conquered, they frequently were given assistance by local residents who held some of the same views or were looking for power and rewards. In Norway, these traitors were called "Quislings" because of the most infamous of that nation's traitors. Read or do an Internet search to learn about other groups and individuals in France, Holland, and other conquered countries who worked with the Nazis. List some of the groups and the countries in which they operated. How did the local people react to these people who cooperated with the Nazis?
4. Read or do an Internet search about some of the following rescuers. Raoul Wallenberg, Oskar Schindler, Aristides de Sousa Mendes, Chiune Sugihara, Varian Fry, Miep Gies, the villagers of Le Chambon in France, the Assisi Underground in Italy, and others. Do these people have anything in common? What do you think inspired these people to take such risks? Make a poster about these rescuers with their names, their country of origin, how many people they are believed to have saved, what happened to them.

**Passage to Freedom**  
**The Sugihara Story**

by  
Ken Mochizuki

Lee and Low Books, Inc, 1997  
Recommended for Grades 5-6

**Synopsis**

This is the true story of a courageous Japanese diplomat, Chiune (Sempo) Sugihara, who lived in Kaunas (Kovno), Lithuania in 1940. As thousands of Jews of Poland were fleeing the Nazis, they found themselves stranded in Lithuania and came to diplomat Sugihara's gate in droves begging for visas. The route of escape was with the Russian Trans-Siberian Railroad to Vladivostok, a boat to Japan and then China. He issued thousands of transit visas for the fleeing Jews against the wishes of his own government. Every visa had to be issued by hand and saved lives.

The story is being told through the eyes of his five-year-old son who helped the author to make this book as historically authentic as possible. It is estimated that in this manner Sugihara saved from 6,000 - 10,000 Jews.

The Russian authorities ordered Sugihara to leave Lithuania on September 1, 1940. He even issued visas as the trains pulled out at the station. The Japanese government cited him for insubordination and took away his diplomatic post.

Check the timeline for the background facts that set the stage for this book.

**Quote**

“ I couldn't help but stare out the window and watch the crowd, while downstairs for two hours, my father listened to the frightening stories. These people were refugees-people who ran away from their homes because, if they stayed, they would be killed. They were Jews from Poland, escaping from the Nazis soldiers who had taken over their country.”

**Pre-Reading Activities**

- Look at a map of Eastern Europe and locate Poland and Lithuania.
- Who captured Poland, Lithuania and the surrounding countries?
- Define the terms: refugees, visas, diplomat, Chanukah, persecution, Holocaust, rescuer, bystander.
- Locate Japan on a map. Why was a Japanese diplomat sent to Lithuania?
- Read a short and simple description of WWII.
- Why did the Jews have to leave Poland, Lithuania and other surrounding countries?
- Where could the Jews go?
- What countries opened their borders to fleeing Jews?
- Who is a hero/heroine? What qualities does a hero/heroine display?
- What risks does a hero/heroine take?
- Can one person make a difference? Explain your answer.

### **Timeline for the Story**

- Hitler, invades Poland on September 1, 1939.  
In 1939, 3.3 million Jews live in Poland
- Two million Jews come directly under German control; the rest came under Russian influence because Germany and Russia made a pact in 1941.
- The fate of the Jews was determined by how their Christian neighbors treated them.
- The Germans carried out large anti-Jewish campaigns and went to great lengths to persecute Jews and to kill them.
- Chiune Sugihara, a Japanese diplomat, gets posted to Kaunas (Kovno), Lithuania, a neighbor country to Poland. Lithuania is occupied by the Russians in 1940.
- The Japanese government denies requests for visas for the Jews.
- Chiune Sugihara reacts.
- Jews escaped Poland and were stranded in Lithuania. They came to the gate of the Japanese embassy pleading for transit visas.
- Chiune Sugihara personally wrote thousands of visas by hand. His mission ended on September 1 after only a month because of the German and Russian invasion. He and his family then were posted to Berlin.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What is courage?
2. What courageous act did Chiune Sugihara perform?
3. What risks did he take ?
4. What were the consequences of his action?
5. Could he simply do nothing and just let the refugees leave?
6. How did Mrs. Sugihara support her husband?
7. What did Sugihara's children see?
8. Why did the Polish refugees come to the gate of the Japanese Embassy?
9. How did Chiune Sugihara handle the requests for visas?
10. What was the response of the Japanese government?
11. What happened to the Jews who had the visas?
12. How does Hiroki Sugihara look at his father's action?
13. What does he remember of his early childhood?
14. Where did the Sugihara family go after he was posted to another place?
15. What lesson in life did this heroic act teach Hiroki and his family?

### **Activities**

1. The war is over. What happened to the Sugihara family?
2. How did Israel honor the memory of Chiune (Sempo) Sugihara?
3. How did Japan honor his memory?
4. Write a poem or essay about the heroism of Chiune Sugihara.
5. Write a letter of thanks to the Sugihara family.
6. You are a Jewish survivor saved by Chiune Sugihara. Write him a "Thank you" letter.

7. Imagine you are one of the grandchildren of the survivors. Interview your grandparent.
8. Write a letter to a friend recommending this book.
9. Draw your own pictures retelling some part of the story.
10. Compare this story with another similar one.

### Other Suggested Sources

- **Number the Stars** by Lois Lowry. (Ten year old Annemarie and her family helped Jews to freedom.) 5<sup>th</sup> grade
- **Waiting for Anya** by Michael Morpugo. (Whole village worked together and saved 15 children) 6<sup>th</sup> grade
- **A Place to Hide** by Jayne Petit. (Famous righteous rescuers are profiled) 4-6<sup>th</sup> grades
- **A Traitor Among Us** by Elizabeth Van Steen Wyk.(Thirteen year old joins Dutch resistance. 5-6<sup>th</sup> grades
- **A Pocket Full of Seeds** by Marilyn Sachs. (Hiding in France) 5-6<sup>th</sup> grades

### Teacher Resources

- Levine, Hillel. **In Search of Sugihara: The Elusive Japanese Diplomat Who Risked His Life to Rescue 10,000 Jews from the Holocaust.** Free Press, 1996
- Gold, Allison, Leslie. **A Special Fate:Chiune Sugihara:Hero of the Holocaust.** NY: Scholastic Inc., 2000. 6th grade
- Sugihara, Yukiko. **Visas For Life.** (Wife of Chiune writes inspiring story of moral dilemma of her husband. Edu-Comm, 1993.
- Meltzer, Milton. **Rescue.** (The Story of How Gentiles Saved Jews in the Holocaust) New York: Harper and Rowe. 6<sup>th</sup> grade and up.
- Fogelman, Eva. **Conscience and Courage:Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust.** Interviews of more than 300 men, women and children. Anchor Press.
- **Flight and Rescue.** A pamphlet with photos issued by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1000 Raoul Wallenberg Place, SW, Washington, DC 20024- [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org) ( 5th grade and up)

### Video

- **"Holocaust Hero: A Tree for Sugihara."** Story of heroism and courage of Chiune Sugihara, Japanese diplomat who saved thousands of Jews. 30 Min. 6<sup>th</sup> grade and up
- **"The Other Side of Faith."** Important issues are discussed. For example, is it right to disobey an unjust law? What does a war hero look like? 27 min. 6<sup>th</sup> grade and up.
- **"The Visas That Saved Life."** Tells the story of the heroism that Chiune Sugihara displayed while saving Jews from death. 115 color. <http://www.jewishstore.com/cgi-bin/videosearch.exe?ISBN=156082144>

## "Aristides de Sousa Mendes: Unsung Hero of the Holocaust"

by

Henri Zvi Deutsch

Article taken from **Shofar, May 1997, Nisan/Iyar 5757**, pps. 2-5

Recommended for Grades 5-8

One of the lesser known heroes of the Holocaust is Aristides de Sousa Mendes, a lawyer who served in Portugal's foreign service for thirty-two years. In May 1939, he was assigned to Bordeaux, where he was senior Portugal Consul in France.

Exactly a year later, Germany invaded France, Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg, and hordes of refugees sought a haven in France. My family and I - natives of Antwerp, Belgium - were among this army of newly-homeless. Despite Portugal's alleged neutrality, her dictator, Salazar, sided with Hitler and ordered all Portuguese consuls not to issue visas "to Jews, communists and other undesirables." By mid-June, Paris fell and northern France was occupied by German forces, thereby closing the Italian and Swiss borders. The only ways out of France were by boat - but British warships were patrolling the coast thereby preventing ships from going to the one haven ready to accept Jewish refugees, Palestine - or through Spain and Portugal. Spain had just ended a civil war and was in no condition to accept countless refugees, so she followed Portugal's example by denying entry to refugees.

Mendes had fourteen children; one child died in infancy and a daughter had recently married a Belgian. For safety reasons, ten children were sent to Portugal and two remaining adult sons stayed with their parents in Bordeaux.

Mendes had a habit of taking a walk each afternoon wherever he was stationed, giving him an opportunity to meet the "natives." The courtyard of the Great Synagogue was packed with refugees. Mendes was moved when he saw 35 year old Rabbi Chaim Kruger, surrounded by five young children, huddled in a corner of the courtyard. The Consul invited the rabbi to his home - which already sheltered some twenty homeless - and they spent the night discussing the plight of the refugees. Mendes checked his law books where it stated in Portugal's constitution that the religion or the politics of a foreigner shall not be used to deny him refuge in Portugal. He offered visas to Rabbi Kruger and his family but the rabbi rejected the offer; he could accept when Mendes supplied visas to everyone in need.

Mendes discussed the problem with his wife Angelina. Although he knew that he would be punished, he felt that he had no choice. His son Pedro Nuno continued to wire and call the authorities in Lisbon, pleading with them to rescind the order, but to no avail. In the morning, Mendes, his wife, their two sons and an aide worked non-stop for four days issuing visas to Portugal to all who asked. Many of the refugees did not have passports, so, for the first time in diplomatic history, visas were issued on blank pieces of paper. A month later, Chiune Sugihara, Japanese Consul at Kovno, Lithuania, contrary to his government's orders, issued thousands of visas to Shanghai, many of them also on scraps of paper. In 1944, Raoul Wallenberg, known as the "Savior of Hungarian Jewry,"

served as Secretary to the Swedish Embassy in Hungary and in that position he was able to rescue tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews. Many of them were also issued "Schutzpasse" on scraps of paper, which often fooled the Hungarian authorities.

As the refugees made their way through Spain and Portugal, word quickly reached a furious Salazar, who sent two emissaries to return Mendes to Lisbon. Mendes faced a hearing where he was brought up on fourteen charges. Despite the fact that Mendes was an attorney, he was not permitted to defend himself. Found guilty, he lost his job, was deprived of his pension and was banned from practicing law. His adult sons were denied entry at the university.

Mendes was ostracized by the diplomatic community because "he broke the law." When he turned to the archbishop for help, he was advised "to pray to Our Lady of Fatima," the patron saint of Portugal. Only the small community of Jewish refugees reached out to help him.

Mendes had to sell most of his assets in order for him and his family to survive, and eventually the dignified, aristocratic Portuguese-speaking gentleman joined the refugees in the soup kitchen established by the Jewish community. Later, HIAS, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, paid the fare for three of his sons to emigrate to the States and Canada, and another Jewish agency paid him a monthly stipend of 3,000 escudos to enable him to survive.

After meeting Rabbi Kruger in Lisbon, Mendes said, "If thousands of Jews could suffer because of one Catholic - meaning Hitler - then one Catholic can suffer for thousands of Jews." This was said in 1940, long before the Holocaust was completely set in motion.

When word reached Lisbon after the war about Mendes' humanitarian gesture - issuing thirty thousand visas, contrary to his government's orders-a third of them to Jews - Salazar was quick to take the credit and continued to ignore Mendes. Mendes died in poverty and disgrace in 1954, never regretting what he had done.

Yad Vashem in Jerusalem recognized Mendes as a "Righteous Gentile" in October 1967, but his story remained unknown. In 1985, his youngest son, John Paul Abranches, spoke about his father at an Oakland synagogue on Yom Hashoah. The Oakland paper wrote an article about Mendes, which was reprinted by **The New York Times**. My brother, Simon, knowing of my interest in the Holocaust--sent me the article. That was how I first learned that my family and I owe our lives to Aristides de Sousa Mendes!

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Draw a map of Europe and mark the following on the map: Bordeaux, France; Germany; Switzerland; Antwerp, Belgium; Holland; Luxembourg; Italy; Kovno, Lithuania; Hungary; Lisbon, Portugal; Madrid, Spain; Mediterranean Sea.
- Define the terms: passport, visa, refugee, haven, diplomat, consul, rabbi, dictator, emissary, ostracize, archbishop, patron saint, soup kitchen, escudo, Yom Hashoah, Righteous Gentile.

### **Discussion Questions**



1. Why was Aristides de Sousa Mendes in Bordeaux, France in 1939 and 1940?
2. How did life in Bordeaux change after the spring of 1940? Why did so many refugees flee to southern France?
3. Who was Salazar? Why did he decide to refuse assistance to "Jews, communists, and other undesirables?"
4. Describe the two escape routes out of France. What problems existed with each of these routes?
5. Two places that fleeing Jews could be safe were Palestine and Shanghai. Where is each of the places located? (Look at a map.) Why was it so difficult for a European Jew to reach each of them?
6. Why did Mendes review the constitution of Portugal? What did he find there that was of interest to him and the situation he faced in Bordeaux?
7. Why was Salazar able to ignore the constitution of Portugal?
8. What evidence was there in Mendes' own home that he was already in favor of assisting the refugees?
9. Who assisted Mendes in distributing visas contrary to his government's orders? Ultimately, about how many visas were issued to the many different refugees, Jews and non-Jews?
10. What was unique about many of the visas issued by Mendes? Identify two other diplomats and the nations they represented who followed similar actions to save Jewish refugees.
11. What did Salazar and the Portuguese government do about Mendes? What punishment was given to Mendes and his family by the Portuguese government?
12. To whom did Mendes first turn for help? What responses did he receive? Why do you think they did not offer Mendes and his family any genuine aid?
13. What further suffering did Mendes and his family face as a result of his efforts to assist refugees from the Nazi terror?
14. Mendes told Rabbi Kruger, "If thousands of Jews could suffer because of one Catholic - meaning Hitler - then one Catholic can suffer for thousands of Jews." What did he mean by this statement?
15. Why do you think that Salazar later took credit for the actions of Mendes? Why do you think the Portuguese government ignored and refused to give any assistance to Mendes and his family after the war was over?
16. Although Mendes died in poverty, his actions were recognized and honored by some. Name several ways that his actions eventually received recognition.
17. Why did the author of this article have a "special interest" in the story of Aristides de Sousa Mendes?

### **Activities**

1. Do further research about Aristides de Sousa Mendes on the Internet or in the library. Also gather information about Raoul Wallenberg, Chiune Sugihara, Oskar Schindler, Miep Gies, and the village of Le Chambon, France. Make a chart listing each of these with columns to record the following information:

Name; Country of origin; Occupation(s); Number of Jews and other refugees assisted; Fate of the rescuer(s).

2. Do some research on the Internet or in the library to learn the names of others who saved Jews and non-Jews from the Nazi terror. Read some of the reasons that the rescuers decided to help those being persecuted. Make a list of those reasons. Do the rescuers have anything in common? Explain.
3. There is a famous quote that says to save one life is as if you have saved the world. What do you think this means? How does it apply to the actions of Mendes and other rescuers like him?
4. Visit the site of The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous on the Internet at [www.jfr.org](http://www.jfr.org). Read the brief descriptions of some of these "Righteous Rescuers." Make a poster about some of these rescuers for your classroom and/or write to the Foundation for information about their work and the rescuers.
5. Explain what you think the phrase "moral courage" means. How did those who were rescuers during the Holocaust --and other genocides since that time--"live" the meaning of that phrase? How do you think rescuers should be recognized and honored by their nation and world organizations? Write a tribute to honor rescuers everywhere and post it in your classroom.

## **Raoul Wallenberg**

by

Michael Nicholson and David Winner

Gareth Stevens Publishing, Milwaukee, 1989

Recommended for Grades 6-8

### **Synopsis**

Raoul Wallenberg was born into a prominent Swedish family on August 4, 1912. He was a much-loved child who was encouraged to broaden his cultural and educational background through travel and study. He was also a very popular young man who made friends easily and exhibited a spirit of fun and adventure. There was little indication, however, that this fun-loving, adventuresome young man would become a heroic rescuer of Hungarian Jews during the Holocaust. The War Refugee Board established by the United States needed a representative from a neutral nation to send into Hungary in 1944 to see if there was anything that could be done to help the Jews trapped there. Raoul Wallenberg was approached to accept the post and eagerly agreed. The Swedish government agreed to give him diplomatic status and Swedish neutral passports to give to Jews. By the time he arrived in Budapest in the summer of 1944, the Nazis already had deported more than 400,000 Jews from the provinces. Wallenberg was in a desperate race to save the approximately 230,000 Jews who were still alive in and around the capital. Through his heroic and determined efforts, many were saved. With the Soviet armies approaching Budapest, Wallenberg and his driver went out to meet with the commanding officer and was arrested by Soviet authorities. Although there have been many rumors about his fate, no conclusive explanation of his disappearance at the hands of the Soviet authorities has ever been provided.

*pp. 31-50*

The Germans knew they were losing the war. But the only question in [Colonel Adolf] Eichmann's mind was: could he empty the capital of Jews before the advancing Soviet armies took Budapest? [Eichmann was the man often described as the architect of the Nazi "Final Solution" and was quite boastful of the rapid efficiency with which he and his units could round up and transport the Jews to their deaths.] For Wallenberg, the question was: how many Jews could he rescue before the capital was liberated?

Raoul Wallenberg's first job was to find a practical way to help the Jewish people of Hungary - at once. He hit upon a brilliant idea. ....

### **The Schutz-pass**

He designed and printed a grand and impressive document that looked just like a passport. It carried the holder's photograph and was emblazoned with yellow and blue - like Sweden's national flag - and was full of official stamps and signatures. It looked tremendously official! But Wallenberg's new *Schutz-pass* (protection pass), as it was called, was actually a stupendous fake.

It had no legal status whatever. But that didn't matter. Because it looked so impressive, the Nazis believed it was genuine. They accepted its holders as Swedish citizens. Jews who held the Schutz-pass were now protected.

It was an inspired start, and soon Wallenberg's staff was turning out Schutz-passes as fast as possible. When he first arrived in Budapest, the Hungarian Foreign Ministry gave Wallenberg permission to issue fifteen hundred of these fake but priceless passports. Wallenberg gradually got the permitted quantity increased to five thousand, and he actually issued over three times that many. To do this, he had to bribe and blackmail Hungarian officials to overlook the document's irregularity. In the final days, when he couldn't get any more printed, he issued a simplified document. Even this, although it was run off on poor-quality paper, sometimes worked wonders.

Other embassies in Budapest took their cue from Wallenberg's clever idea and began to follow suit with their own passes.

Getting passes to threatened Jews became a priority. Wallenberg dashed out personally to distribute them at Budapest's railroad station. Within weeks thousands were saved with these fake documents. But they couldn't give them to everybody.

\* \* \* \*

### **Race against time**

From the moment he arrived in Budapest on July 9, 1944, Wallenberg started a whirlwind of activity. He set up his humanitarian relief section, Section C, at the Swedish legation. Within weeks his staff expanded to four hundred people, mostly, if not all, Jews. Section C worked around the clock.

Huge deliveries of food were sent each day to the ghetto. During the following months, Wallenberg's operation fed thousands of people each day.

All Jews were ordered to wear a conspicuous yellow Star of David. Yet Raoul, revealing his formidable qualities as a negotiator, managed to persuade the authorities to let the Jews working for him go without wearing the star.

Raoul Wallenberg did not cut a particularly charismatic or imposing figure. He was small and slight and was almost bald, but everyone who met him at that time was touched by his warmth and his great intelligence. He worked like a man inspired, sleeping only about four hours a night, generating incredible energy and optimism all around him.

He quickly established a formidable reputation, and even local Nazis began to respect him....

On one incredible occasion, a deportation train was about to leave for Auschwitz from the railroad station. Suddenly Wallenberg climbed up on the roof of the train and started to hand hundreds of Schutz-passes to the Jews inside. He ignored the orders of the SS and did not stop, even when the guards shot over his head. Calmly, he walked from one car to the other until the last passport had been issued. Then Wallenberg ordered all pass-holders to leave the train and go to a caravan of autos bearing Sweden's colors. The Nazis seemed too stunned to do anything. The Jews were taken to safety.

Meanwhile, international pressure on the Hungarian leader, Admiral Miklos Horthy, who had earlier in the war resisted Nazi demands for tougher measures

against the Jews, was mounting. The United States, Sweden, and Great Britain, in addition to the Pope and the International Red Cross, insisted on an end to the deportations. Horthy suspended the death trains.

Horthy had also withdrawn sixteen hundred brutal and much-feared Hungarian gendarmes whom Eichmann was using to round up Jews and put them on death trains.

### **Relief Work**

With the deportations suspended for the moment at least, Wallenberg concentrated on relief work to reduce suffering. He began to set up hospitals, orphanages, and soup kitchens and bought huge quantities of food, medicine, and clothing, which he hid in different parts of the city. These would prove vital.

But Jews were still being dragged from their homes or picked off the streets by armed gangs of Hungarian Nazis. To counter this, Wallenberg had another brilliant idea. He set up "safe houses" where pass-holders could live protected by the Swedish government. Soon the Swedish flag hung outside these houses alongside the Jewish Star of David. Swiss and International Red Cross officials followed Wallenberg's example and did the same thing. As a result, thousands more lives were saved, even though the buildings were not always respected.

One admiring diplomat remarked about Raoul, after the war, "He accomplished feats that no other twenty diplomats in the world would even have attempted."....

One of Wallenberg's tactics was to get to know important people who could help him in his urgent mission of rescuing Jews....

By October 1944, the combination of Wallenberg's work inside Budapest and Allied pressure from outside had forced the Hungarian dictator Horthy to establish a more moderate government. This government had been able to get the Germans to agree that Eichmann and his death squads would leave Hungary.

Wallenberg thought his work was over. He began shutting down his rescue operations and thinking of going home to Sweden in time for Christmas.

### **The Arrow Cross Terror**

By now, Horthy was desperately anxious to get out of the war, but on October 15, 1944, the day he planned to announce Hungary's surrender to the Allies, the murderous Hungarian Nazi Party, known as the Arrow Cross, seized power in a coup. This was a terrible blow to the Jews.

Now a fresh wave of violence more terrible than before hit Budapest. Many Jews committed suicide. Jewish yellow-star homes were sealed and nobody was allowed in or out for ten days. Many starved to death. Raoul would not be home for Christmas after all. In fact, he would never see his family again.

Hardly anybody showed up for work at his relief office. The terrified staff had gone into hiding. Wallenberg borrowed a woman's bicycle and rode around town to his workers' homes, trying to rally their spirits and to get them to come to work.

Later, Wallenberg discovered that his personal driver, Vilmos Langfelder, had been taken to Arrow Cross headquarters. Right away Wallenberg went to the

grim and intimidating building and demanded Langfelder's release. Wallenberg spoke with such authority that startled Arrow Cross men actually let Langfelder go!

When Wallenberg heard that thousands of Jews were being held in the synagogue on Dohany Street, he contacted the Swiss consul, Charles Lutz, and together they went to the synagogue to demand the release of the Swedish and Swiss pass-holders....

Wallenberg ordered his "Swedes" to form a line. Behind them a group of "Swiss" began to gather. Then with great assurance Wallenberg marched his people out of the synagogue, followed by Lutz at the head of his "Swiss" Jews. In response to combined international protest, the rest of the hostages were freed shortly after. It was a tremendous victory for sheer nerve and courage, and it put some heart back into the shocked and bewildered Jewish people.

### **The death marches**

Eichmann had returned to Budapest after the Arrow Cross takeover. He had immediately summoned local Jewish leaders. "I am back," he taunted them. "Our arm is still long enough to reach you."

No trains would leave Hungary for the death camps now. Eichmann had devised a demonic alternative method for transferring the Jews.

He would march Jewish men, women, and children out of the city and to the border at gunpoint. Trains waiting at the other side of the borders would take the Jews on to Auschwitz. These forced marches in the freezing sleet and snow came to be known as the "death marches."

Anyone who fell by the roadside was either shot or beaten to death.

As soon as he heard of Eichmann's plans, Wallenberg vowed to fight for the rights of protective pass-holders. His office began producing hundreds of letters of protest to government departments. He still used diplomatic language but there was often a threat behind his words. He warned Hungarian officials that if they helped with the persecution of the Jews they could be hanged after the war as war criminals. Wallenberg's staff was also continually busy trying to trace missing Jews.

### **Unimaginable suffering**

The death marches began on November 8, 1944. Children, women, and old men were forced to march through the slush for days without food or water. At night they just dropped to the ground in utter exhaustion. Some froze to death. Many committed suicide, some by throwing themselves into the icy waters of the Danube. Bodies lay along the route of the march and hung from trees. The suffering of these doomed people was unimaginable.....

Time and again, with extraordinary courage, Wallenberg and his helpers drove out into the snow to give food, help, and encouragement to the exhausted, suffering Jews on the marches and to save them wherever and however he could....

Wallenberg shouted at the German and Hungarian officers to have his pass-holders released while colleagues like Per Anger were secretly handing out more

passports to people in the crowd. Anyone showing the confused guards any kind of document, even a scrap of paper, would be accepted as a Swedish pass-holder amid the chaos.

...Despite all his efforts, his tireless energy, and his bravery, Wallenberg could save only a relatively small number of people on the death marches--thousands out of hundreds of thousands. The death marches continued until late November 1944, when international protests finally stopped them....

The death marches stopped. But the death trains began again.

### **Hell on earth**

In November of that year Budapest slipped into a state of lawlessness.

Gangs of crazed, leaderless Arrow Cross killers roamed the streets, breaking into Swiss and Swedish "safe houses" and murdering Jews. Even babies were not spared. Hospitals were broken into and patients dragged out and shot....

Throughout the city, the streets were strewn with the bodies of slain Jews...

In some ways, the Jews in the protected houses or those living in hiding with false documents were even more at risk. The Arrow Cross did not respect the Swiss, Swedish, and Red Cross homes, even though they were clearly marked with large Red Cross signs and notices....There were nightly raids....Thousands were dragged off screaming, lined up, and shot.

\* \* \* \*

### **Dead or alive**

By late December 1944, the Soviets had almost reached the city. In these last days of the siege of Budapest, Wallenberg was on the run himself. There was a price on his head. Death threats now came his way. Every night he hid in a different place. He changed his license plates constantly. Yet he saved even more lives than ever.

Wallenberg seemed inspired. Resourceful as ever, he had made valuable police contact - a member of the Arrow Cross, Pa'l Sza'lai, who was revolted by the slaughter and kept Wallenberg informed of planned murder squad raids. He even gave Wallenberg a police bodyguard....

### **The Central Ghetto miracle**

By the end of December, the Soviets had surrounded Budapest. The Arrow Cross leader had fled the city. Eichmann himself left the city the day before Christmas Eve. But before he went he was determined to commit a final act of mass murder. He ordered the massacre of more than ninety thousand Jews in the Central and International ghettos.

Incredibly, Wallenberg would foil him. Raoul Wallenberg was about to perform his final miraculous act of rescue.

Sza'lai, Wallenberg's police contact, sent news of the planned massacre. Five hundred German soldiers and twenty-two Arrow Cross men were getting ready to kill everyone in the Central Ghetto. Two hundred Hungarian gendarmes were about to join them.

By now, it was too dangerous for Wallenberg to go himself. But he immediately sent a message to SS General August Schmidhuber, the man

Eichmann had ordered to carry out the massacre, warning him: "If you do not stop this now, I can guarantee you will be hanged as a war criminal." Schmidhuber delayed a decision for several minutes, then backed down. The Jews of Budapest were spared.

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Locate the following on a map of World War II Europe: Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
- Define the terms: diplomat, *schutz-pass*, Arrow Cross, yellow star, safe house, neutral country, soup kitchen, death march, Final Solution.
- Identify the following: Charles Lutz, Per Anger, Adolf Eichmann, Admiral Miklos Horthy, International Red Cross, United States War Refugee Board

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Why would Raoul Wallenberg have seemed an unlikely hero to anyone who knew of him before he went to Hungary in 1944?
2. Why didn't the United States War Refugee Board send someone from the United States to represent them in Hungary?
3. Adolf Eichmann was known as the "architect of the 'Final Solution'." How had he earned that title? Why was he determined to continue the operation against the Hungarian Jews despite the advance of the Allied armies?
4. What was the *schutz-pass*? What role was it to play in Wallenberg's rescue operation plans? Why was it so successful?
5. How did Wallenberg influence other nation's embassies throughout his operations in Hungary?
6. What was Section C? What were some of the things that Section C did? Who did Wallenberg hire to work at Section C? Why did he choose them as his workers?
7. Who was Miklos Horthy? When he suspended the deportations, why was it only a brief reprieve? What was the Arrow Cross? Why did it terrify the Jews of Hungary that they were now in power?
8. What things did Wallenberg do in addition to distributing the fake documents? Describe the role of a "safe house."
9. How did Wallenberg and Lutz save the Jews in the synagogue on Dohany Street?
10. When Adolf Eichmann returned to Budapest to work with the Arrow Cross on the deportations, what new plan had he devised? How did it work?
11. What were some of the methods Wallenberg used to fight Eichmann's new plan?
12. What happened when the death marches stopped? While all of this was happening, what were the conditions in the city of Budapest?
13. Why did the rescue operations become increasingly risky for Wallenberg?
14. Describe Wallenberg's final "miracle."

### **Activities**



1. Make a Venn diagram of the operations against the Hungarian Jews and Wallenberg's responses to them.
2. Read about or do an Internet search about Raoul Wallenberg. Write a "newspaper" account of Wallenberg's life the last few hours before he disappeared. In the closing paragraphs of the story, write about some of the speculations and stories of his fate. What is the most recent information that has been released by the Russian government?
3. Explain the term "diplomatic immunity." Describe some of the means that Wallenberg used this idea to his advantage. Make a list of some of the tactics and techniques used by Wallenberg to save Jews. Why was his personality such an important part of his success?
4. Wallenberg has been honored at Yad Vashem in Israel as a "Righteous Gentile." What does this mean? Why did Israel establish this award?
5. Compare and contrast the tactics and strategies used by Raoul Wallenberg, Chiune Sugihara, Varian Fry, and Aristides de Sousa Mendes to save Jews from the Nazi Holocaust. Make a chart comparing and contrasting their backgrounds and efforts including such information as their nationality, their "jobs," their ages, where they set up their rescue operations, how many people they saved, what happened to them after the war, etc.

**Assignment: Rescue**  
**An Autobiography**

By  
Varian Fry

Scholastic, Inc., New York, 1968.  
Recommended for Grades 6-8

**Synopsis**

Varian Fry was 32 years-old when he was selected by the Emergency Rescue Committee to go to France. His assignment: locate and rescue 200 political and intellectual refugees (Jews and non-Jews) who were known to be in danger. These were prominent people who were at high risk because they were so easily recognized. On the surface, Fry's skills seemed to be limited to his knowledge of France and a fluency in several languages. Certainly he knew nothing about working as an agent or foreign intelligence work. He was given three weeks to complete his mission of rescuing 200 well-known people but would remain in France for over a year. He assembled a network of assistants that provided forged passports and visas, food and shelter, and escape routes. At considerable risk, he defied Nazi officials, Vichy French officials, and the wishes of the United States Department of State. He rescued not 200 but 2000 people and provided assistance for about 2000 others. Finally, in September 1941, he was expelled from France for "protecting Jews and anti-Nazis."

Chapter 5 "*Destroying Evidence*," pp. 17-19

[Fry had arrived in Marseilles, France and had begun his work when he was warned that soon he was likely to receive a visit from the police.]

I locked the door to my room and emptied the contents of my pockets onto the bed. I gathered together all the little slips of paper that gave the addresses of places where refugees in danger could hide, maps of escape routes, notes of names of underground workers and how to contact them.

Also, I had a record of all the dollars I'd exchanged for francs on the black market. I threw this on the pile. Then I grabbed my briefcase and went through it, then the desk, and then the dresser drawers.

I found papers with the names of people who could be contacted on each side of the border, deep in Spain, and even in Portugal. I had listed all the people who had so far escaped, with the addresses of where they were living in Lisbon while waiting for a ship to the United States. I checked in books and behind books, in empty suitcases, and in the boxes under the bed for any false visas or identity cards, or forged passports. Luckily, there were none.

When I had everything piled on the bed, I picked it up and went into the bathroom. Quickly, I tore all the papers into small pieces and flushed them down the toilet.

When I had finished, only two innocent documents were left. One was my own American passport - genuine; the other was my letter from the International Y.M.C.A. - also genuine. That was all.

Except, of course, for the lists of names I'd brought from the States. And these were far from innocent. They gave the names of all the refugees I was to get out of France. They also gave the code names I used in cables and letters to the Emergency Rescue Committee in New York: "Eloise" for Germany, "Heinrich" for France, "Ursula" for Great Britain, and so forth.

If I destroyed my lists, I'd be out of business even without help from the police. But I couldn't let these lists fall into their hands. Not only would they have proof of my illegal activities, but they'd arrest everyone else whose name was on the lists.

What could I do? Where could I hide them? Then I remembered where I'd hidden the map of the escape route across the frontier from France to Spain. I had no time to lose: The telephone might ring at any moment. So I quickly got out my pocket knife, and with the back of the blade started to take out the screws that held the mirror to the closet door. When I had enough of them out to pull the wood panel away from the door, I smoothed out the lists and slipped them behind the mirror. Then I put the screws back, one by one. I had to be very careful now. If the knife slipped, it would leave a telltale scratch on the wood. I felt the sweat pouring off my forehead. It seemed to take hours to turn each screw carefully into place.

I had almost finished the last one when the phone rang. Slowly, trying not to hurry, not to slip, I got the last screw tight. Then I made a dash for the ringing telephone.

"*On vous demande en bas,*" the dry voice of the hotel clerk said. "The police want you to come downstairs for questioning immediately."

"I'll be right down," I said.

I wiped the sweat off the palms of my hands and off my forehead. Then I closed the closet door, looked at the mirror, and quickly checked around the room. I pulled down my jacket sleeves, took one good deep breath, and went downstairs.

#### *Chapter 6 "Squaring It With the Police," pp. 20-25*

As I got off the elevator, the room clerk nodded toward the writing room. I walked as bravely as I could toward the door.

The "police" turned out to be one inspector. He must have finished questioning Frank Bohn (sent to France by the American Federation of Labor to get European labor leaders wanted by the Gestapo out of France), for he was alone in the writing room. Dressed in a dark business suit, he looked more like a salesman who had come to sell me a life insurance policy than a detective who was there to arrest me. He was very polite and said he was sorry for calling on me at such an early hour. Then he asked me to sit down. After we were both seated, he started to ask questions about my credentials, why I was in Marseilles, and what work I was doing there.

First I showed him my passport. Then I showed him my letter from the International Y.M.C.A. He read this through slowly several times and made some notes about it in his notebook. Then he folded the letter and gave it back to me. I explained that I had been sent to Marseilles to make a study of the

needs of the refugees. Also, I said, I was giving small sums of money to those who needed it to live on. The inspector didn't say a word about false passports or smuggling refugees into Spain - nor did I.

After about fifteen minutes, he said, "Well, I can see nothing wrong. You have a proper letter from a neutral organization. Everything you are doing seems to be legal."

"Oh, I assure you it is," I said.

"We get many reports at Police Headquarters," he said. "People who are angry because their requests for visas are turned down, people who want to collect a reward for turning in a secret agent or spy, people who will squeal on anyone just to get in good with the police. You understand, we have to check out all these reports, in case some high official of the government in Vichy starts asking questions."

He paused. His voice became very low. "If I had found anything suspicious, it would be necessary for me to arrest you here and now."

He paused again, looking me straight in the eye. "You understand?" he said.

I stared back at him. Then I nodded. "Yes, I understand."

I understood, all right. This man was on my side. He was telling me that as a police inspector he had found nothing wrong with my answers. But, as a Frenchman, he knew I was up to a lot more than I'd told him about. His quiet "You understand" was a warning. A warning to be much more careful than I had been up to now. Otherwise, I'd land in prison and be expelled from the country, or worse.

He turned to pick up his hat. "Sad days have fallen on France," he said. "It is very bad for the refugees. Especially those wanted by the Gestapo. Soon we will have to pick many of them up. Arrest them. Surrender them to the Nazis."

He turned back to me. "I am glad you are helping them," he said. Then he added quickly, "By giving them money, I mean."

He apologized once again for the early hour of his visit. Then he shook my hand and left.

I waited until he went out the main door of the hotel. Then I hurried up to Frank Bohn's room.

Bohn's talk with the police inspector had been much like mine. Bohn felt as I did, that the inspector was trying to warn us. We had made a serious mistake by not going to the police at the very beginning.

Maybe it wasn't too late to square ourselves. But there was no time to lose. We must go to the police at once and explain the relief part of our mission in Marseilles. If we got their approval for that, at least our cover operation would be legal and we would no longer be under suspicion. The police would stop watching us so closely. I called Police Headquarters and made an appointment for the next day.

When we arrived at the Police Headquarters, we were shown into the office of a high official, the Secretary General. After we were seated, he resumed his chair behind the formal desk. His manner was correct, but very frosty.

"Now gentlemen," he said, "what did you want to see me about?"

We explained that we had been sent to France to aid the refugees. We said we would very much appreciate police permission to set up a small committee to help us in this work.

"The French authorities would welcome such a committee," he said coldly, "if it does nothing illegal." He eyed us warily and added, "And I must strongly stress the word *if*."

We both acted surprised and hurt at the very idea that we would even think of doing anything illegal. He seemed convinced and gave us permission to set up our committee.

Now my underground work had a cover operation--The American Relief Center as the name we gave our committee. And the Center had the official approval of the police authorities.

I still worked from my room at the Hotel Splendide. Legally, I saw hundreds of refugees, in addition to those named on my lists. Illegally, I worked at getting the people I had been sent to rescue out of France. In many cases, this meant getting them false passports or forged visas. While we waited for their papers, I showed these people my lists and asked if they knew the whereabouts of any of the other people whose names were on them. In this way, I got many of the addresses I was looking for. I learned that some of my people had already gotten out of France, so I crossed their names off my lists.

There were other names I had to cross off, too, but for a very different reason....

One by one, I sadly crossed off the names of the men and women on my lists who had met one kind of horrible death or another. But almost every day I got at least one address or promising lead that might help me find those still alive.

When I got all their papers together, forged and legal, and the refugees were ready to go, I gave them enough money to get to Lisbon. Then I took the map of the frontier from its hiding place behind my mirror and showed them exactly how to cross the border into Spain. And they were off.

All the refugees used the same route in those first few weeks and they all got safely to Lisbon. It was as simple as that.

Obviously, this was too good to last.

#### Chapter 12 *"The All-or -Nothing Gamble"* pp. 59-63

*[Fry decided to lead a small group over the mountains himself due to troubles that have developed. Heinrich Mann and his wife, Franz Werfel and his wife, and, as it turns out, Golo Mann, Heinrich Mann's nephew and the son of the famous author Thomas Mann were in the group. Unfortunately, the frontier police would not permit them to continue without exit visas and Fry was the only person who had one. The next morning, Dick Ball (one of Fry's associates) returned to the border station to see if things had changed. Instead, he discovered more complications. However, one **commissaire** quietly advised him to take his "friends" over the mountain and out of France at once.]*

\* \* \* \*

"What do you think we ought to do?" I asked.

"Darned if I know," Dick said. "The *commissaire* says you ought to go over the hill. I told him there was an old man in the party, but he says you ought to risk it anyway. You can't tell what will happen - they might even get an order to arrest the lot of you. He said, 'Tell your friends they'd better get out while they can.' He even came out on the platform and showed me the best trail to take over the hill."

I looked up at the hill. It was pretty high and looked rugged, and the sun was already getting pretty hot.

"Dick," I said, "I don't think Werfel could make it. He's too fat, and Mann's too old. Don't you think I should go back and try to buy false exit visas for the whole lot of them?"

"I don't like the way the *commissaire* talked," Dick said. "He seemed to know something was going to happen. He wasn't kidding when he said to get them out today, while there's still time. If you ask me, I don't think we should hang around here any longer than we have to."

I decided the only thing to do was tell the others the situation. Then it would be up to them to decide what they wanted to do.

When I finished telling them, they looked at one another for a long moment. Then each one nodded. They would go over the hill. Since I had an exit visa, it was agreed that I'd go on the train with the luggage. We'd all meet on the other side of the border, in the Spanish town of Port-Bou.

We went back to the hotel to pack our overnight bags and check out. Then I made each of them go through their pockets and pocketbooks and make sure they weren't carrying anything that could get them into trouble. When I took Heinrich Mann's hat and began to scratch out his initials in the hatband, he looked at me like a condemned man about to die.

"We have to act like real criminals!" he said.

I walked with them through the village, and as far as the cemetery on the hill. On the way I stopped and bought a dozen packages of cigarettes.

"If you get into any trouble with the frontier guards," I said, "give them these. It usually works, especially in Spain."

Then I passed the packages of cigarettes out to my five mountain-climbing proteges.

I left them just beyond the cemetery. Half an hour later, I could still see them slowly climbing up across the bare limestone hillside, following the line of stone walls that ran over the hill. They would disappear from sight now and then behind an olive grove, and then I would see them a bit farther up, resting for a moment in the shade of an olive tree.

My train didn't leave until late afternoon, and when it arrived in Port-Bou, I had the bags, all seventeen of them, taken to the hotel. Then I went to the frontier police and asked them if a fat man and stout woman, an elderly man with a slight limp, a middle-aged woman with blonde hair, and a young man with jet-black hair had come through. They said they had seen no such people.

As I pace back and forth on the railroad platform wondering what to do, I got more nervous with every passing minute. Suddenly I remembered a friendly little porter I had talked to in this same station on my way to Marseilles from the

States. I found him in the customs office, and when I told him about my problem he said he'd find out right away whether or not my friends had been arrested.

He was back from the police station in about ten minutes. "No," he said. "Nobody's been arrested at Port-Bou today. It's quite unusual, but it appears to be true."

I asked him what he thought I ought to do.

"Why don't you go up to the sentry box at the border post? Maybe they will know something there," he said.

I bought a lot of cigarettes and then headed up the hill. Two tired and hot-looking sentries stood beside the sentry box at the border post. I passed out the cigarettes and then asked, "Have you seen anything of five travelers - three men and two women - coming through on foot?"

They didn't seem to understand me. So I gave them more cigarettes.

"Look," I said, "I'm worried about some people who came over the hill this morning. Are you sure you haven't seen them?"

"Wait here," one of the sentries said, pointing to a small stool. Then he went into the little house by the gate.

I sat down and nervously started smoking one cigarette after another. I didn't know if I was under arrest or not. In about ten minutes the sentry came back.

"Your friends are at the railroad station," he said. "I just telephoned down. They're waiting for you there."

I don't think I've ever been so relieved in my life as I was by those few words. I gave the sentries all the cigarettes I had left, shook hands with both of them, and started running back down the hill to Port-Bou.

There they were at the station, all five of them, when I came panting up. They were as happy to see me as I was to see them....

The first and perhaps the most dangerous part of our dash for freedom was over.

But it was still a long way to Lisbon.

## Chapter 12 *"The Rest of the Journey"* pp. 64-66

On the way to the hotel in Port-Bou, I heard all about the frontier crossing. It had been a very difficult climb, especially for Heinrich Mann, who was seventy years old. Dick and Golo had had to carry him a good part of the way. Not that Mann wasn't game - he was the gamest of the lot. But he simply couldn't make the steep grade without help.

When they had reached the top of the hill, Dick Ball stopped to get their bearings. Almost immediately, two French frontier guards appeared from out of nowhere and started toward them. It was no use trying to make a run for it. If they did, the guards might shoot at them. So they just stood there, wiping off the sweat of heat and fear and awaiting their fate.

The guards came up to them and saluted, "Are you looking for Spain?" one of them asked.

"Yes," Heinrich Mann said.

"Well," the guard said, "follow the path to the left. If you take the one to the right, you'll run right into the French border patrol. And if you haven't got exit

visas, you'll be in trouble. The left path will take you right to the Spanish border point. If you report to the sentry box, and don't try to go around it, you'll be all right."

The two guards saluted again, and watched as the group walked single file down the left path.

Ball had walked on with them until they came within sight of the Spanish sentry house. Then he stopped. "Here's where I say good-bye," he said. "You'll make it to Port-Bou okay now." He shook hands with all of them, wished them luck, and turned back toward France.

At the sentry house, there was another scare. The sentries studied each passport very closely. They showed no interest in Mr. and Mrs. Werfel, or in Mr. and Mrs. "Ludwig," the name the Heinrich Manns were traveling under. But one of the sentries showed great interest in Golo Mann. Golo's American visa said he was going to the United States to visit his father, Thomas Mann, at Princeton.

"So, you are the son of Thomas Mann?" the sentry asked.

Visions of Gestapo lists flashed through Golo's mind. He felt this was it. But he decided to play it cool.

"Yes," he said. "Does that displease you?"

"On the contrary," the sentry answered. "I am honored to meet the son of so great a man." And he shook hands warmly with Golo. Then he telephoned down to Port-Bou and had a car sent up from the station. Thus, while I was climbing up the hill, my group was already going down the same hill in comfort to meet me!

### **Historical Note:**

Varian Fry's efforts to smuggle "his" refugees out of France became increasingly hazardous. Among other things, he became a British agent assisting to smuggle out British soldiers caught by the German occupation in return for including his refugees in their number. This increased the danger to Fry himself. The pressure increased from many sources, including the American State Department, for Fry to get out of France. There was a threat to cancel his passport. His safe-conduct pass was threatened. Every day, they had to take security precautions with the office telephone lines. Spain and Portugal made it increasingly difficult for refugees to enter or pass through their countries. The Gestapo in France became more active and determined in their search for refugees, both Jews and non-Jews, who were on their "wanted list." The risks that Varian Fry and his associates took became greater all the time. New escape routes had to be found, refugees and soldiers safely hidden, money to provide for food, shelter, and false as well as legal documents gathered, and a constant cat-and-mouse game played with the officials of the various countries. Varian Fry was finally arrested and, with the concurrence of the American Embassy, ordered expelled from France. Varian Fry returned to the United States shortly before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and the United States entered World War II. In his time in France, he had succeeded in establishing a rescue operation that continued to help refugees even after his expulsion, and he had rescued not the planned 200 refugees on the list he had been given but 2000 refugees.



### Pre-Reading Activities

- Draw a map of Europe as it was in 1940 and mark the following places on the map: Marseilles and Paris, France; Port-Bou and Madrid, Spain; Pyrenees Mountains; Germany; Switzerland; Gibraltar; Mediterranean; Morocco in North Africa.
- Define the terms: passport, visa, blacklist, embassy, Gestapo, Vichy France.

### Discussion Questions

1. Why were groups like the International Y.M.C.A. and the American Federation of Labor involved in the rescue of the refugees hiding in France?
2. Why did Varian Fry and his associates have to worry about the French police as well as the German Gestapo agents?
3. In addition the Jews being sought by the police and Gestapo, what other types of refugees were they searching to find and arrest?
4. Varian Fry received warnings and assistance from several unexpected sources. Identify some of these sources.
5. Who ruled Spain at this time? Why did the Spanish give refugees trying to flee from the Germans a difficult time? Why was it a disaster for the refugees whenever the Spanish closed their borders?
6. Look at a map of Europe and German controlled lands by 1940. Why would it be difficult for boats setting to sea from southern France to escape patrol boats watching for such escape operations?
7. Why was the rescue operation so risky for Varian Fry (he was a citizen of the then neutral United States)? What are some of the methods Fry used to hide refugees and to help them escape?
8. A number of the people on Fry's list of people to be rescued were famous individuals - artists, authors, political scientists, labor leaders, etc. Why did this increase the difficulty of his task? How did it occasionally work to his benefit?
9. Why do you think the Vichy French officials, the Germans, and even the American Embassy were determined to end Varian Fry's "visit" to France if they had no actual proof of his secret operations?

### Activities

1. Among those individuals who escaped from Vichy France and Nazi Germany were both famous and "unknown" refugees. Some of the famous included the following: Hannah Arendt, Marc Chagall, Franz Werfel, Heinrich Mann, and Marcel Duchamp. Research each of these people and write a brief description of the work that each has done. Describe some of the work they accomplished **after** escaping from the Nazis.
2. Define the term "**hero**." How is a true hero different from a person who is simply famous or strong? Some people say that Varian Fry was an "unlikely hero." What does that mean? How does Varian Fry fit the description of a "true hero?"

3. Make a poster of "Heroes" for your classroom. Under the "Heroes" heading, write a definition of the term. On the poster, list the names of people who you think were/are true heroes. Next to each name, list the thing s/he has done to be considered a hero. Remember, a hero is not necessarily someone who is famous.

# Resistance





Unit V: Resistance

Unit Goal: Students will demonstrate an understanding and recognition of the many forms of resistance that occurs and the courage it takes to exercise any of these forms of resistance in situations of great repression and persecution.

Performance Objectives Students will be able to:	Teaching/Learning Strategies and Activities	Instructional Materials/Resources
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Define and describe different types of resistance that may occur at different times and in different situations, such as physical, passive, economic, moral, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, etc.</li> <li>2. Analyze the nature of resistance.</li> <li>3. Recognize and explain the difficulties that must be overcome in organizing a resistance under a totalitarian regime with great military power and many collaborators.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Teacher Note: Opening essay for the teacher to provide background information and to be used with students at teacher discretion.</li> <li>B. Organized Resistance               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>The Secret Ship</b> by Ruth Kluger and Peggy Mann. This is a true story and a shortened, student version of the adult book <b>The Last Escape</b> by the same authors. Ruth Kluger was only 25-years-old when she joined the fledgling Mossad and went to Europe to participate in rescue operations. The reading and lesson are in the guide.</li> <li>2. "Lisa Calls" by Bea Stadtler. An article taken from <b>World Over</b> magazine. The article and lesson are in guide. "Lisa" is a person - an object - and a call to resist.</li> <li>3. <b>Number the Stars</b> by Lois Lowry. A reading from this popular novel about the rescue of the Danish Jews by their countrymen. Lesson also in guide.</li> </ol> </li> <li>C. Resistance - Personal choices of children               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A different story of resistance occurs in <b>The Little Riders</b> by Margaretha Shemin. In this fictional story, a young</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reading from <b>The Secret Ship</b> by Ruth Kluger and Peggy Mann included in guide. Teacher may wish to read <b>The Last Escape</b> for more background and detail.</li> <li>2. "Lisa Calls" by Bea Stadtler in April 9, 1976 issue of <b>World Over</b> magazine.</li> <li>3. Reading from Lois Lowry's <b>Number the Stars</b> included in guide. The teacher may wish to reference the book <b>Darkness Over Denmark</b> also.</li> <li>1. Margaretha Shemin's <b>The Little Riders</b>. A reading is included (very easy reader level).</li> </ol>

<b>Performance Objectives</b> Students will be able to:	<b>Teaching/Learning Strategies and Activities</b>	<b>Instructional Materials/Resources</b>
<p>4. Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of making good moral choices.</p> <p>5. Demonstrate knowledge of the role that children and young people played in the resistance movements.</p>	<p>girl must turn to a German officer for assistance and he must decide what is the correct thing to do.</p> <p>2. <b>Rose Blanche</b>, so-named in honor of the White Rose Resistance movement, is a story that is told more through the illustrations than the text. Lesson in guide; no reading.</p> <p>3. Patricia Polacco's <b>The Butterfly</b> is Another example of a picture book whose story reaches beyond the reading level. Lesson in guide. Accompanying the book with readings from children's poetry from Terezin and other poetry of the Holocaust would be an excellent combination literature and Holocaust studies.</p> <p>D. Children with the Partisans</p> <p>1. <b>Mottele: A Partisan Odyssey</b> by Gertrude Samuels is a true story of a young boy in the Ukraine loses his family and joins "Uncle Misha's" partisans. Reading and lesson included. Investigate the story of Uncle Misha for further information On this very successful partisan unit In the Ukraine.</p> <p>2. "Children-Couriers in the Ghetto of</p> <p><b>Teaching/Learning Strategies and Activities</b></p>	<p><b>2.Rose Blanche</b> by Christophe Gallaz and Roberto Innocenti. Interested students may also want to research the real White Rose Resistance movement on the Internet.</p> <p>3.Patricia Polacco is an author of books that can be read on many levels. <b>The Butterfly</b> is an example of this. Coordinate the easy reading with poetry from <b>I Never Saw Another Butterfly</b> and <b>Fireflies in the Dark</b>.</p> <p>1. Gertrude Samuels' true story of young <b>Mottele: A Partisan Odyssey</b>. Reading in the guide.</p> <p>2. "Children-Couriers in the Ghetto of Minsk"</p>

<b>Performance Objectives</b> Students will be able to:		<b>Instructional Materials and Resources</b>
<p>6. Demonstrate an understanding of the particularly harsh fate that awaited anyone in a concentration or death camp who was caught in an act of resistance and the special courage it commanded to face that torturous pain.</p>	<p>Minsk" by Jacob Greenstein from the book <b><u>They Fought Back: The Story of the Jewish Resistance in Nazi Europe</u></b> edited by Yuri Suhl. Reading and lesson included. Use in conjunction with the story of Mottele and previous stories such as that of Rose Blanche.</p> <p>3. <b>"To Live And Fight Another Day: The Story of a Jewish Partisan Boy"</b> by Bracha Weisbarth. Reading of two chapters included in guide. The author is a New Jersey resident. The story is based upon the experiences of her family, particularly her brother who is call "Benny" in the story.</p> <p>E. Resistance in the Camps</p> <p>1. "Rosa Robota - Heroine of the Auschwitz Underground" by Yuri Suhl. Reading and lesson in guide. Make connections between this article and the stories of the three friends in the <i>Kinderlager</i> true stories in the Life in the Camps and Ghettos unit.</p> <p><b>Teaching/Learning Strategies and Activities</b></p>	<p>3. (continued) by Jacob Greenstein. Reading included in guide.</p> <p>4. <b>"To Live and Fight Another Day: The Story of a Jewish Partisan Boy" by Bracha Weisbarth.</b> Two readings included.</p> <p>1. "Rosa Robota - Heroine of the Auschwitz Underground" is in the book <b><u>They Fought Back: The Story of the Jewish Resistance in Nazi Europe.</u></b> Yuri Suhl wrote this article and the book is edited by him. The reading is in the guide.</p> <p>2. Internet: check the site list and visit the Internet for further information on Rosa and the resistance efforts.</p>

<b>Performance Objectives</b> Students will be able to:		<b>Instructional Materials and Resources</b>
	<p>F. Resistance Movements</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b><u>Sky: A True Story of Courage During World War II</u></b> by Hanneke Ippisch. A young woman witnesses the persecution of the Jews in her own neighborhood and makes a moral decision to fight back. Lesson included - no reading.</li> <li>2. <b><u>In Kindling Flame: A Biography of Hannah Senesh</u></b> by Linda Atkinson. Lesson, no reading. This is one of several stories available about Hannah Senesh, a young woman who escaped from Europe to Palestine and chose to return to fight back in the resistance. She was captured and executed.</li> <li>3. <b><u>The Resistance</u></b> by Deborah Bachrach. Reading and lesson in guide. Overview and special focus is given on the village of Le Chambon, France where an entire village became a passive resistance organization in there open efforts to offer succor and safety to Jews and other targets of Nazi persecution. This story is very much a story of rescue and moral conscience.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b><u>Sky" A True Story of Courage During World War II</u></b> by Hanneke Ippisch is one of a number of stories available about the Dutch resistance movement. Consult the lesson in the guide for other suggested readings.</li> <li>2. <b><u>In Kindling Flame: A Biography of Hannah Senesh</u></b> by Linda Atkinson. No reading in guide. Consult lesson for other suggested readings on Hannah Senesh and other related stories such as <b><u>So Young To Die: The Story of Hannah Senesh</u></b> by Candice F. Ransom.</li> <li>3. <b><u>The Resistance</u></b> by Deborah Bachrach. Reading is included in guide. This is one volume in the series <b><u>The Holocaust Library</u></b>.</li> </ol>





## Resistance

"To resist was to risk death, but to submit was to lose all that was life. The young, the religious, the righteous, and the courageous kept faith through the Holocaust, and struck out in any way possible against Nazi injustice. The faith kept them, their people, and their story, alive."  
Jewish Resistance p.4

<http://library.thinkquest.org/12307/resistance.html>

During World War II, it was estimated that approximately 20,000-30,000 Jews fought courageously as partisans in the resistance movements of Eastern Europe, Lithuania and Belorussia, all territories occupied by the Germans. Mostly young men and women in their late teens and early twenties were the backbone of the resistance fighters.

Resistance is defined in the dictionary as *the act of resisting, opposing and withstanding...the organized underground movements in a country fighting against a foreign occupying power, a dictatorship*. There were many forms of resistance including armed struggle with weapons in the camps, ghettos and forests. Examples of passive resistance were underground newspapers, forging identity cards and documents, printing anti-Nazi leaflets, running schools, keeping diaries, organizing orchestras, creating art work that depicted daily life, and the smuggling of foods, clothing and medicines. There was also spiritual resistance by the holding of prayer meetings, partaking in religious studies, making religious objects and celebrating the holidays.

The resistance fighters that fought guerilla warfare faced many obstacles. They had few weapons and little help from the outside world. Despite the horrible conditions, armed resistance did take place in five major ghettos, forty-five smaller ghettos, five major concentration and extermination camps and eighteen forced labor camps.

Every act of resistance by the Jews brought about German reprisal in order to deter further resistance. Many times the Germans ran concentration and death camps with the help of local citizens who were only too happy to rid themselves of the Jews. Often the Nazis held an entire family or community responsible for one individual act of resistance. Sometimes acts of sabotage were performed by stealing important documents, tampering with machines, reversing firing pins in guns or stealing vital weapon parts.

Another factor that hampered resistance was the secrecy of "resettlement" policy and the deception of deportation. Victims believed that they were going to a labor camp since they were told to pack and bring their belongings. They were not aware that many camps had gas chamber installations. Even as late as the summer of 1944, one and one half million Jews were deported from Hungary and most didn't know about the gas chambers at Auschwitz.

One of the largest Jewish uprisings, an example of raw courage, was the famous Warsaw Ghetto Revolt that took place from April 19-May 16, 1943. Brave young men and women staved off over 2000 German troops and Ukrainian auxiliary troops armed with heavy machine guns, hand held sub-

machine guns, howitzers, scores of rifles and flame throwers. For twenty-eight days, the valiant Jews battled the Nazis. Many Jewish lives were lost. In the end, 56,000 Jews were captured, 7,000 were shot and the rest deported and killed. Some managed to escape through the sewers to the “Aryan” side, while others joined the Polish resistance to continue fighting against the Nazis.

Despite the terrible odds, the Jews managed to carry out acts of resistance, uprisings and revolts in camps and ghettos. They fought as partisans in the woods and rescued fellow Jews who were in peril. The Jews defied their foes with their art and creativity as they did through their efforts to maintain their spiritual faith. Every day, the Jews performed small and large acts of courage in their struggle to live and to remain human in the face of Nazi determination to destroy their humanity and the Jewish people.

**The Secret Ship**

*by*

Ruth Kluger and Peggy Mann

A Doubleday Signal Book, NY, 1978

Recommended for Grades 6-8

### Synopsis

Twenty-five year old Ruth Kluger, a Palestinian Jew and a member of the fledgling Mossad, had volunteered to go Europe to participate in an effort to help the Jews escape. Hitler's Nazi Germany had already taken over Austria and Czechoslovakia. But where could the Jews go? Only the city of Shanghai in Asia was willing to permit them to enter. Palestine, under British rule was permitting only 817 "Certificates of Entry" to Palestine each month. "Secret ships" [the British called them "illegal ships"] would try to smuggle Jews into Palestine. If they were caught, the ships were seized and its "illegal" passengers were sent back to the countries from which they had fled. It was 25-year-old Ruth's responsibility to try to find the money, the ships, and the means to smuggle the fleeing Jews out of Europe and into Palestine. Now the *Hilda*, carrying 727 refugees, was trapped in the ice of Balchik harbor in Rumania. They were waiting in the already cramped ship for more refugees trapped in Kladavo. The ship's passengers were starving and freezing in the cold; they wanted to be able to take a bath and to communicate their desperate situation to the world. The sailors had deserted the ship. But Ruth knew that if the authorities learned of the ship and its illegal human cargo that all would be lost. How to convince these desperate people to remain on the ship and to remain silent, isolated from the world?

[A true story adapted from **The Last Escape: The Launching of the Largest Rescue Movement of All Time.**]

*Chapters 9-10, Pp.75-92*

At nine o'clock I walked up the ice-slick gangplank of the *Hilda*.

Alexander was waiting on deck. There was no one else around.

"They're all below," Alexander said, taking my arm. "The stage is set. But I don't like the mood of the audience."

We bent into the strong sea wind. When we came to the doorway leading down to the hold, Alexander said, "Good luck. You'll need it."

Then he disappeared.

I followed him down the ladder. The darkness stank of sweat and vomit.

Alexander lifted me onto a packing case.

Waves of bodies swelled before me. Some sat. Some squatted, or stood.

The rest lay on berths - a slab of wood with two feet between it and the wooden board above. There was not room for a person to sit up straight. But the more such berths we built in the hold of each of our secret ships, the more people we could carry to safety.

The portholes were open. Circles of daylight fell on some of the faces. Others were lit by the pale glow from kerosene lamps.

I stood in darkness.

"What's he like?" someone called out.

"It's a *woman*. A little - nobody!" The voice was sharp with scorn.

"*Shalom*," I said. The word with three meanings. *Hello. Good-by. And peace.*

The people before me were far from peaceful. Their silence was alive with hatred.

It was like waking suddenly to find men and women of your nightmare turned into real human beings. Women with matted, uncombed hair. Dark-bearded men; angry, threatening.

My mind blanked. There were no words.

Their voices rose.

"For God's sake, talk to them!" Alexander said.

"*Haverim...comrades.*"

"Louder!" Alexander said.

"*Haverim!*" My voice rang out through the stinking gloom. "I have been sent here by the Mossad. We have met with your Ship's Committee. We will try to help every way that we can. We know your problems. But you must try to understand *our* problems. And the problems of those who will - God willing - come after you. On ships like this one. Or worse than this. Because" - I took a deep breath - "because their fate is in your hands."

I paused. No one spoke. But their anger was so solid I could almost touch it, like a wall.

I told them all that I could - perhaps more than I should- about what we were trying to do. I told them about the impossibilities of our job. To find ships. Impossible, since the outbreak of the war when every nation needed ships. And *their* needs were called "legal." Ours were called "illegal."

When we *did* find a ship - even an old leaky cargo ship like the *Hilda* - there was only one way to get the owner to let us have it. We must offer more money than any of the people who wanted the ship.

And this was another impossibility. Getting the money. Every Jewish organization in the world was, at that time, against illegal immigration. With one exception. The Histadrut. The labor union in Palestine. They had given us money. But I hated to think where it came from. The workers' sick fund. The old-age fund.

The leaders of the Histadrut believed - as we did - that the Jews of Europe were on the road to doom.

And the people on this ship believed it. If they did not, they would not be here. They would not have fled from their homes, leaving everything behind them. The street they lived on. The school their children went to. The shops they knew. Leaving their friends, their relatives. Leaving their life behind them. For what? To try to reach a homeland they had never seen. Palestine. Where they would have to learn a new language. Find a new life. Palestine - where they would still be in danger. In danger of arrest by the British. In danger of being murdered during Arab riots.

Yet, Palestine also meant a chance for a normal life. And, as Jews, they knew that they could not find this in Hitler's Europe.

They knew. They all came from countries overtaken by Hitler.

But Jews in other countries still thought themselves safe. And because no one believed in what we were doing, they would not give us money. A fly-by-night group, they called us. Risking people's lives on our leaky old ships. Ships that could be blown up by a mine in the Mediterranean.

I told the people in the hold of the *Hilda* how hard it was to raise money for our secret ships. And why. "Yet," I said, my voice rising into the gloom, "we will spend the little money we have to buy the food that you need. And to buy you a bath." I told them the plans for getting the Turkish bath in working order.

They seemed at least to be listening now, without anger.

Then I said what was most on my mind. Perhaps said it too soon.

I told them there must be no talking of cabling their story to the newspapers of the free world.

"Why not?" someone shouted out. "The story would make the front pages. *That's* what we want! To open the eyes of the world! Let them know what's going on here. What's happening to the Jews of Europe."

Voices swelled. Agreeing. Yelling. Angry again.

"YES!" I shouted to be heard above them. "The front pages. That's where your story *should* appear!"

Again, quiet. They wanted to hear me agree with them.

"Yes," I repeated. "You're right. Your story would make good newspaper copy. A shipload of men, women, children. Guilty of nothing. Yet, forced to flee from their homes. Trapped here on a ship. Desperate. Starving. Yes, your story *should* appear on the front pages of newspapers. In America. In England. In France. In Switzerland. It should appear there. But *would* it? What happened to the story of the Evian Conference? How was *that* covered by the newspapers? Have you heard of the Evian Conference?"

Some murmured yes. Some said no. Most said nothing.

"There was a story more dramatic than yours," I told them. "It was one of the greatest news stories of the century. And the reporters were there. Top reporters from thirty-two countries."

"What was Evian?" A woman's voice came shrill from the darkness. "I never heard of this Evian Conference."

"It took place a year before the war broke out," I said. "In July 1938. High officials from thirty-two countries met in the French resort town of Evian. Beautiful Evian on Lake Geneva. Why did they meet? For one reason. To see what they could do to help the Jews of Germany and Austria. For one week the delegates heard eyewitness reports. From people like you. Reports about what was happening to the Jews. You remember what was happening. It was happening to you.

"The delegates were given facts, figures. By 1937 half the Jews in Germany had been fired from their jobs. Fired and unable to find work. Fired for one reason only. They were Jews. The delegates were told about the signs: hanging above hotel doorways...in shop windows...in public parks...movie houses...swimming pools. NO JEWS ALLOWED. Even above the kindergartens, signs. JEWISH SCUM. The delegates were told that in some

towns a Jew could not buy milk for his children. Or medicine. Or groceries. Because of the signs. NO JEWS.

"The delegates were told - by eyewitnesses - what had happened when German troops marched into Austria, and took it over. In a single day. You remember that day. March 12, 1938. Four months before the Evian Conference. The delegates were told that within a few weeks tens of thousands of Austrian Jews had been locked up in concentration camps. How many of your friends, relatives, were among those thousands?

"The delegates were told how Jewish men, women, even small children were beaten up on the streets by black-booted soldiers, while Austrians stood watching, cheering, jeering. A Jewish housewife told the delegates how she had been on the way to the store, when she was stopped by soldiers. Forced down on her hands and knees to scrub the gutter. She showed them her hands, burned raw. Because acid had been added to the scrub water. An old rabbi told the delegates how he had been sent to scrub out the public toilets. On and on the reports went. The horror stories.

"And the delegates were read the words Hitler had shouted. 'If the Jews of Europe again make a World War, the result will be - the wiping out of the Jewish race in Europe!'

"Then the delegates were told a surprising fact, which few of them knew. Jews - whom Hitler blamed for every evil - were only *one per cent* of the German population. Only *3 per cent* of the Austrian population. At the time of the Evian Conference there were only 350,000 Jews left in Germany. Only 190,000 Jews in Austria.

"Now among the nations who came to Evian were some of the largest countries in the world. In each of these countries there were miles upon miles upon miles of land - with no one living on it. Canada was one of the thirty-two nations at Evian. Canada: the second-largest country in the world. Brazil, the fifth-largest. Australia, the sixth-largest. And in all of Australia - an entire continent - there were only as many people as there are in the city of London. Those three countries - and many others at the Evian conference - needed people. Needed workers. Any one of them could have taken every Jewish man, woman and child in Germany and Austria.

"Well, how many did they agree to take?" This time the silence was stiff. I felt I could reach out my hand and smash it.

They were waiting. But I could not speak. Tears clogged my throat.

"Tell us."

"What happened?"

Several men in the packed crowd stood up. Shouted at me.

"*What happened at Evian?*"

"TELL US WHAT HAPPENED."

Others took up the cry. Voices swelled through the hold. The sound was so loud it seemed it would shove back the wooden walls.

I held up my hands for quiet. But since I stood in the dark, they did not see me.

Finally, Alexander shouted: "*If you want to hear, let her speak!*"

When they had quieted again, my voice returned. Words came. Low. Slow. If I did not keep them this way, the words might have sounded like a scream.

"Nations of asylum. That is what they called themselves - these thirty-two countries. It was a fine title. Asylum. Look it up in the dictionary. Asylum. The first meaning is listed: place of retreat and security. Place of refuge. And that's why they had come to Evian, these thirty-two nations. To offer a place of refuge and security. In fact, never before in history had this happened. Nations of the



world gathering for the one and only purpose of saving a doomed people. Never before in history had it happened."

I paused. I waited.

"Well," I said, "you asked the question, 'what happened?' I will tell you. On the last day of the Evian Conference each delegate stood up to tell what his country could do. To help. For a week they had listened to the facts, figures, eyewitness reports. It had been made very clear that it was a life-or-death matter. The Jews of Germany and Austria were desperate to get out. *But they had to have someplace to go!*

"The first delegate to speak on the last day was Ambassador Myron C. Taylor from the United States. Everyone listened hard to what *he* had to say! Why? Because: the United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt --was the man who had called this conference. It was his idea. His country would lead the way. Or so everyone thought.

"But Myron C. Taylor told the delegates that--unfortunately--the United States had its quota system. A certain number of people were allowed in from each country, each year. Do you know what the quota was for Rumania, for instance - -the country in which we are now sitting? Two hundred eighty-nine. Two hundred eighty-nine Rumanians allowed into the United States each year. You've heard the story about the Rumanian Jew who went into the United States embassy in Bucharest to ask for a visa? He was told to come back in the year 2003. 'In the morning,' he asked, 'or in the afternoon?' "

No one laughed. The "joke" was too hard for humor.

"Myron C. Taylor explained the United States quota system. He explained why there was nothing his country could do. Then he sat down.

"This was the help offered by the nation made up of immigrants! The nation which, through its history, had offered - asylum. This was the answer the United States gave at Evian - a closed door. Ambassador Taylor knew, however, that there were many others who would take the Jews of Germany and Austria. There were, after all, thirty-one nations to be heard from.

"Canada? The delegate explained that his country could only accept farmers. It had, of course, been clearly brought out at the Evian Conference that Jews in Germany and Austria were forbidden by law to be farmers. There was no such thing as a Jewish farmer!

"It turned out that four countries also had the same rule. Only farmers wanted.

"Brazil - huge Brazil - had a brand-new law. No one could come into Brazil without a certificate of baptism. You had to be a Christian to get into Brazil!

"Australia? The delegate announced that they had no racial problem there - and did not want to 'import' one!

"Four large South American countries listed intellectuals and merchants as - guess what? *Undesirables!* Of course, half the Jews in Germany and Austria are intellectuals: doctors, lawyers, teachers, other such - types. Most of the rest are businessmen. Merchants.

"And so it went. All through the last day of the Conference. One delegate after the other - with the same message. It was certainly a terrible time now for

Jews in Germany and Austria. They clearly need help. It was too bad, *his* country could do nothing to help. But surely there were many other countries which would welcome the half million German and Austrian Jews.

"There were three. Three of the smallest nations at the conference. Holland-- Jews could flee there and stay till they found a home somewhere else. Denmark - would take fifteen hundred. The Dominican Republic would take more - if they agreed to be Jews no longer.

"But even these three countries voted for the final resolution. *All* of the thirty-two nations of asylum voted for it. What was the resolution? No Jews would be taken in unless they brought their money with them. They had to be able to support themselves. Of course you well know that no Jew is allowed *out* of Germany or Austria with more than ten *Reichmarks*. Less than five dollars. You know it. And every delegate at Evian knew it! It had been clearly brought out at the Conference.

"So by that one resolution they made every Jew in Germany and Austria unacceptable to" - I choked on the words - "the nations of asylum!"

Through the silence in the hold I heard the soft sound of weeping.

Finally I said, "The reporters were there at Evian. Reporters from thirty-two nations. This was a story! One of the biggest stories of our century. Did it make the headlines in newspapers all over the world? I'll tell you what happened. On the opening day of that historic conference, the great New York *Times* ran a small story about it on pages thirteen. They gave twice the space that same day to the news that Adolf Hitler had visited an art show.

"Now what about the last day? The day that one nation after the other said that they could do nothing to help the Jews of Germany and Austria. They had come to Evian to offer help. But all they had done was turn their backs. Locked the doors. That was a news story, was it not?"

"Well, the New York *Times* did not think so. The story they ran was even smaller than the first. And they ran it on page twenty."

Again I paused, because I wanted to scream the sentence. But I did not. I said the words in a normal tone. But the words held their own scream.

"The New York *Times* was one of the few newspapers in the work to print any Evian stories at all."

"The story of the *Hilda* might also be used on page twenty of the New York *Times*. Will that make the people of the world run to help you? I'll tell you what would happen. Rumanian police would come here at once. They would take over our ship. You would all be sent back to the countries you came from. And the Mossad would be - finished. We could save no more people. Is that what you're after?"

This time silence was an answer; the answer I wanted.

We were partners now, the people on this ship and the Mossad. We were together, because they understood now that we were all alone.

"When will we sail?" someone asked.

"When the ice breaks."

"No more waiting for the Kladovo people?"

"The mayor told me," I said, "that if we do not get out when the ice breaks, he will tell the police in Bucharest that our ship is here."

"You must get the pregnant women off," someone shouted from the back.

"Yes!" Another voice, a shout. "If you don't, you'll be murderers. No infant could live in this hellhole."

"Yes! Get them off!"

The words became a roar. They all agreed. Get them off the ship. Now.

A woman got to her feet. A kerosene lamp hung close to her body. Her swollen body.

Silence fell around her.

"And if you put us off the ship, will my baby live? Or will it one day soon be killed by strangers?" Her voice rose. "If my baby dies I would rather have it die on this ship of Jews. Headed for the homeland." She turned to me. "Please. Don't put us off the ship. Please, God, let us stay!"

She had called upon God. Words came into my head. Words from the Bible. I said them aloud.

"The Lord said to his prophet Jeremiah, 'Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion...Behold I will bring them from the north country...the blind and the lame and the woman with child...'"

I paused. Then I knew I need say no more. Not about this.

She knew it too - the woman with child.

"Thank you," she said. And she sat down.

I repeated her words. "Thank you. Thank all of you. You are all heroes. No will give you medals. But you must know inside you - every one of you is a hero. Every Jew who struggles and suffers to keep alive...is a hero. You are - our tomorrow."

I climbed down from the wooden crate on which I stood.

Hands reached for me; led me to the ladder.

Someone started singing "Hatikvah." Our national anthem. The national anthem of a people. A people without a country, except one given to them by God. *Hatikvah*, the ancient Hebrew word meaning *hope*.

I climbed up the iron ladder into the sudden brightness of the morning.

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Examine a map of Europe. Locate the following: Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Greece, Hungary, France, Switzerland, Holland, Denmark, and the Mediterranean Sea.
- Locate Lake Geneva and Evian.
- On a world map, locate Shanghai, the Dominican Republic, Canada, the United States, Australia, Brazil, and Argentina. Locate Palestine and England.
- Investigate and discuss what was happening in the world in 1938 and 1939.
- Define and discuss the term resistance. Analyze the terms bystander, collaborator, perpetrator, and rescuer as applied to a nation.
- Find out what the Mossad is. What did it represent for the Jews of the world in the 1930s? What is its role in Israel today?

### Discussion Questions

1. Discuss what we mean when we use the word "hero" to describe a person.
2. What was the purpose of the Evian Conference? Do you think that any of the nations actually intended to offer shelter to the Jews when they first decided to send delegates to the Conference?
3. Ruth was very young - and the only woman - working as a member of the Mossad in Europe at that time. What were the risks and challenges that she faced in attempting to get the Jewish refugees out of the reach of the Nazis and other antisemitic governments? Why did such a young woman living in the relative safety of Palestine choose to take on these tremendous responsibilities?
4. Why did the Mossad warn its few members to keep their ties with the agency a closely guarded secret? Why did Ruth choose to break that rule when she met with the refugee passengers on the ship *Hilda*?
5. When the nations at Evian decided not to permit European Jews to enter their countries, what reasons did they give for their decisions? Why do you think they refused to permit the Jews to come to their countries? What was the attitude among the people of the United States at that time?
6. Why do you think the newspapers of the world chose to ignore or to give so little notice to the Evian Conference?

7. Could the newspapers have made a difference if they had given the story the coverage it deserved? Discuss the possibilities.
  8. What eventually happened to the *Hilda* and its passengers?
- **For the teacher:** Fire broke out on board the ship on December 29. Although the fire was doused, many were badly injured and one young woman died. As the ice was beginning to break up, a terrible storm blew up in the Black Sea and the ship's anchors were torn away. The ship was blown out to sea, and fearing another fire from the lamps, the people huddled in the cold and dark of the tossing ship's hold. Eventually the storm broke and the leaking ship managed to make it to shore for repairs. Fishermen found the anchors, repairs were made, and the ship sailed for Palestine with 729 passengers jammed into a space designed for about fifty cows. While fueling with coal in Istanbul, sickness swept through the passengers and drove them to the decks to stand in lines at the toilets and to vomit over the sides of the ship. Despite the darkness, the passengers were seen and searchlights flooded the ship as it tried to sail from the harbor. Two British ships surrounded the *Hilda* and sent men to take it over. Then it sailed off. Finally, in late January, the two British ships and the *Hilda* were seen sailing into Haifa. However, the *Hilda* was informed that it must sail at once for Paraguay in South America. (The false passports carried by the passengers had listed that country as their destination.) The ship and its passengers would never survive such a journey. While the captain tried to stall and make repairs, the city of Haifa was plastered with posters overnight that demanded that the people be permitted to remain in Palestine. The Jews of Palestine threatened to go on a hunger strike. The passengers painted a huge sign on the side of the ship in white letters: WE WILL NOT LEAVE. The British met with a delegation of Jews in Haifa who refused to stop the talk of hunger strikes and warned that revenge would be sought if the ship was forced to sail. The British finally removed the passengers from the ship and sent the men to a prison camp, the women to an immigrant home. They were all told that they would be sent back to Europe but within six months they were all set free. There would be other efforts by the Mossad and refugee groups to escape Europe and to sail to Palestine. Many were lost at sea, many were sent into prison camps, and some made it safely into Palestine. In January 1941 a three-day wave of horrendous murders swept through Rumania. Among the many Jews murdered was Moshe Orekhovsky, an important link in Ruth Kluger's rescue operations. He could have escaped himself but chose to remain and help others. Ruth remained for several more months until the Mossad ordered her out of Europe. Her next assignment took her to Egypt where she worked to raise money and to help organize rescue operations to take Jews from Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria across the border into Palestine.
8. Why did the British want to keep the Jews out of Palestine?

## Activities

1. Write a newspaper account of the events at Evian that you think should have been published at the time.
2. Write a series of journal entries as a passenger on board the ship *Hilda* describing the conditions and your feelings about the ship and your situation.
3. Investigate the White Paper issued by the British that set the policy to keep Jews out of Palestine. Present your findings to your class.
4. Draw an illustration of the *Hilda* or build a model of it as it may have looked in the harbor of Balchik in Rumania (or as it sat in the harbor of Haifa).
5. Write a recommendation to the Israeli government for a medal of bravery for Ruth Kluger. In your recommendation, explain why she deserves to be seen as a hero of her people and a role model for others.
6. Two babies were born on board the ship *Hilda*. Assume you are one of the parents and write an account of the experiences on the ship that is to be given to them when they are your age. What do you think the reactions of the two would be after reading the account?

### "LISA CALLS"

#### **The Battle Cry of the Fighting Partisan Organization of the Vilna Ghetto**

by

**Bea Stadtler**

**World Over Magazine**

April 9, 1976, pp. 3-4

Recommended for Grades 6-8

#### **Synopsis**

From 1939-1941, Eastern Poland, the Baltics, Belorussia, and the Ukraine - areas that once were part of the Soviet Union - were occupied by the Germans. Immediately after occupation, the Nazis started mass shootings and established ghettos to round up the Jews. Underground resistance organizations were formed to fight the Nazis and to help save Jews.

Vilna Ghetto organized a Jewish Fighting Partisan Organization (FPO). Mass shootings in Ponar, a wooded area six miles from the Vilna Ghetto, had decimated 40,000 Jews and, by 1941, only 20,000 remained.

Under the leadership of 23-year-old Abba Kovner, a Zionist, young people were organized to take up arms, to resist and fight. These brave young fighters had many obstacles to conquer, few weapons, and a high risk of being caught and killed. In late August of 1943, the Germans began the liquidation of the Vilna Ghetto. The F.P.O. sent out an urgent message to the remainder of the ghetto to resist deportation. Most of the Jews did not heed the warning. Every ghetto had its own Jewish Council called the *Judenrat*. Jacob Gens, the *Judenrat* leader of Vilna, did not want to keep weapons in the ghetto. He believed through work, not resistance that always brought reprisals, he could save the Jews. In September of 1943, the Vilna Ghetto was liquidated and 4,000 Jews were shipped to Estonia to a work camp, later to die. Nazis, assisted by collaborators, took 4,000 men, women and children and sent them to Sobibor extermination camp. Some Jews

were slaughtered at Ponar. A few hundred of the F.P.O. and Abba Kovner escaped to the forests and joined the partisans to continue fighting,

In the annals of the Holocaust and resistance there were many stories like "Lisa Calls", stories of bravery, heroism and touching examples of human courage in the face of adversity.

**World Over** Magazine, April 9, 1976, pp. 3-4

During the years 1939-1945, almost all of Europe was conquered by Adolf Hitler and the German Nazi Army, with Poland being the first victim, More than anything else, Hitler wanted to rid Europe of all its Jews. First he put the Jews in ghettos where they could be easily surrounded and controlled. Then he shipped them away-the old, ill, and very young- to be murdered. The healthy youth were put to work as slave laborers until they, in turn, would fall ill from lack of food, sleep, and overwork and they, too, would be murdered.

And so it is understandable that there could not possibly be any guns in the ghetto. Jews were searched when they left for work and when they returned. The Nazis would torture and murder anyone they thought might be bringing in a weapon. Even the Jews would stone anyone suspected of bringing in weapons, for it could mean death not only for the carrier, but for the entire community. A gun would have to be hidden, not only from the Nazis, but from the Jews themselves- so how could something as large as a machine gun possibly be smuggled into the ghetto? And yet there were - guns, bullets, hand grenades- and even some machine guns.

When young Jews realized what was happening- that those being taken from the ghetto were not really being resettled as the Nazis said, but were shot or taken to death camps- they knew there was nothing to lose by fighting. They organized themselves in the F.P.O., Fighting Partisan Organization. The group included Joseph Glasman, Itzik Wittenberg, Baruch Goldstein, Abba Kovner, Vitka Kempner, Sonia Madesker, Cessia Rosenberg, and Lisa Magon. A plea written by Abba Kovner was printed by the underground press: "We will not be led like sheep to slaughter. Better to fall as free fighters than to live by the mercy of the murderers." The group was organized, but how can a fighting group fight without weapons? On the night that the group first met, that question was asked over and over again. The next evening there was a pistol in the ghetto.

Baruch Goldstein, a member of the F.P.O., was very well liked by all the workers at a large German factory making arms and ammunition in Bordishok, outside Vilna. One day he came to work with his hand bandaged. He kept his eyes open and saw a pistol lying on the upper shelf in the German captain's office. When no one was there, he took the pistol, stuffed it in his pocket, shut himself up in the lavatory, took off his bandage, and retied it over the pistol.

The sentry at the gate of the factory carefully watched the eighty Jewish workers as they left. The stormtroopers at the ghetto gate, though, were much more thorough and searched the workers entering the ghetto from top to toe. As one of them touched the bandage, Baruch groaned and held his swollen hand as though he were in great pain. And that is how the first pistol was brought into the ghetto.

The first machine gun was brought in by Baruch Goldstein as well, but in quite a different way. On January 27, 1942, at five o'clock in the evening, Baruch was returning from work. Three of the partisans stood near the gate on the inside of the ghetto, waiting for him. The stormtroopers carefully examined everyone—pockets, pants, sleeves, collars. Baruch was ninth in line. He was limping on his right foot which meant he was carrying something illegal. The tension among those who waited grew from moment to moment. It was too much—how could he smuggle in a machine gun? The sixth person in line was being examined. Baruch stood there—tall, dark, with deep-set eyes. It was apparent his mind was made up. His comrades knew if he were caught, he would take all the responsibility. He had no ties with anyone. He would suffer any torture, but would not betray his friends. At the gate, the eighth person was being examined. Suddenly one of the three waiting men ran toward the stormtroopers as though he had gone mad. It was Yashke Raff. The stormtrooper struck him in the face and arrested him. Baruch seized the opportunity and hurried through the open gate.

“What did you bring, Baruch?”

“Half a machine gun,” he replied calmly. “Tomorrow it’s the second half,” and he continued limping on his right foot.

Arms acquired by the sweat and blood of the Jewish avengers were cherished by the fighters, as each one learned to load and aim, take a gun apart, and reassemble it. A secret radio was put together by the F.P.O. and every day a statement was issued about the war. The Germans could not find the radio, no matter how hard they tried.

Baruch Goldstein continued to smuggle in disassembled rifles and machine guns every day. He destroyed 90 machine guns and 345 mechanical units at the factory—guns and units that were sent to the front. These items somehow passed inspection, although he had taken out vital parts.

Others in the group were just as courageous, blowing up trains, stores of ammunition, and taunting the Germans when captured, although they knew death and torture awaited them.

Some of the Vilna’s fighters succeeded in escaping to the forest. Lisa was one of them. She was a fighter in the F.P.O. She was sent to the Oshmyany Ghetto to warn the Jews that they should try to escape or protect themselves in whatever way they could. She was provided with a Polish passport and managed to smuggle herself into the ghetto the same night. When she reached the ghetto it was already surrounded, but she did get inside at the risk of her life. She told the Jews: “Don’t trust the Germans. You are being led to your death.” The ghetto inhabitants did not understand her. “Where shall we go?” they asked. “Wherever you can,” answered Lisa. A few listened and that night they slipped away to the forests.

When she returned from Oshmyany, she was sent on other missions. However, for the work she was doing she needed authentic Aryan documents. She tried to get these from the German police station, but while she was taking the documents, one of the policemen recognized her as a Jewess and she was arrested. In the Gestapo, she was questioned and tortured. The F.P.O. tried to save her, even bribing the judge, but her documents had been sent off to the



Gestapo Chief. Five days later, the chief's maid, who had been bribed, said she had seen a cross on Lisa's papers which meant the death sentence. The F.P.O. attempted to bribe the firing squad. One Nazi promised, in return for a good sum of money, to shoot "without aiming." Lisa would drop to the ground and in the evening would be able to escape. But at the last moment, the chief decided to be present at the execution, and Lisa could not escape her fate.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of March 1942, she wrote from jail: "Abba (to Abba Kovner). I know exactly what to expect. It's hard to accept the idea that I'll be murdered. I am calm though. Give my regards to everyone. I press your hand. Be strong. Lisa."

The comrades commemorated her memory by collecting 18,000 rubles and giving them to the F.P.O. to buy a machine gun, and by using as their password the slogan "Lisa calls." On the thirtieth day after her death, Baruch Goldstein stole a machine gun from the Germans. In the last days of the ghetto, during the uprising, when the fighters escaped into the forest to continue the struggle, the man who marched at the head, who led the advance, carried in his arms a machine gun named for a great partisan fighter, Lisa.

## The VILNA PARTISAN MANIFESTO

**Offer armed resistance! Jews defend yourselves with arms!**

**The German and Lithuanian executioners are at the gate of the ghetto.**

**They have come to murder us!**

**Soon they will lead us forth in-groups through the ghetto door.**

**In the same way they carried away hundreds of us on the day of Yom Kippur (the holiest day in the Jewish calendar).**

**In the same way those with white, yellow and pink Schein (safe conduct passes) were deported during the night.**

**In this way our brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, sons were taken away.**

**Tens of thousands of us were dispatched. But we shall not go!**

**We will not offer our heads to the butcher like sheep.**

**Jews defend yourselves with arms!**

**Do not believe the false promises of the assassins or believe the words of the traitors.**

**Anyone who passes through the ghetto gate will go to Ponar!**

**And Ponar means death!**

**Jews, we have nothing to lose. Death will overtake us in the event.**

**And who can still believe in survival when the murderers exterminates us with so much determination?**

**The hand of the executioner will reach each man and woman. Flight and acts of cowardice will not save our lives.**

**Active resistance alone can save our lives and our honor.**

**Brothers! It is better to die in battle in the ghetto than to be carried away to Ponar like sheep. And know this: Within the walls of the ghetto there are organized Jewish forces who will resist with weapons.**

**Support the revolt!**

**Do not take refuge in the bunkers, for then you will fall into the hands of the murderers like rats.**

**Jewish people, go into the squares. Anyone who has weapons should take an ax, and he who has no ax take a crowbar or a bludgeon!**

**For our ancestors!**

**For our murdered children!**

**Avenge Ponar!**

**Attack the murderers!**

**In every street, in every courtyard, in every house within and without this ghetto, attack these dogs!**

**Jews, we have nothing to lose! We shall save our lives only if we exterminate our assassins.**

**Long live liberty! Long live armed resistance! Death to the Assassins!**

**Taken from: Resistance During the Holocaust- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum p.15**

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Locate the Vilna on a map of Poland.
- Locate the Vilna Ghetto on a map – see Internet listing for Map sites
- Read the Vilna Partisan Manifesto. What dangers did the young fighters forewarn?
- Read the background history of the partisan fighters, the F.P.O., in the booklet Resistance During the Holocaust published by United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. <http://www.ushmm.org> Educational Materials

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Why were young Jews willing to take risks and become resistance fighters?
2. What problems did the resistance fighter encounter?
3. How were they able to get weapons?
4. Why did the Vilna Partisans issue a Manifesto?
5. What did the Manifesto foresee?
- 6. What risks did Lisa and her friends take?**
7. What was Lisa's last message to her friends?
8. What did "Lisa Calls", mean?

### **Activities**

1. Read stories about other ghetto uprisings and compare stories.
2. Why did the *Judenrat* Councils object to resistance fighting?
3. Mount a bulletin board with photos of the brave young people and their histories. Pictures can be obtained from the Internet.
4. Invite a survivor to class to tell his/her story
- 5. See a video on this period of time.**

### **Suggested Readings**

- Bartoszewski, Wladyslaw. The Warsaw Ghetto: A Christian's Testimony. Story told by a Catholic-Polish historian and journalist who served as a liaison

between the Warsaw Ghetto Jewish leadership and the Polish underground. Stand out as exemplary person and one of the few that helped Polish Jews. Boston: Beacon Press, 1987. 7<sup>th</sup> and up

- Dribben, Judith. **A Girl Called Judith Strick**. Autobiography of 17-year-old Jewish girl who was a spy and active in the resistance movement in the Ukraine. She managed eventually to escape to Israel. Toronto: Cowles, 1970. 8<sup>th</sup> and up
- Suhl, Yuri. **They Fought Back: The Story of Jewish Resistance**. Tales of true revolts, escapes led by heroes of the Jewish underground and resistance, Countries represented are Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, Italy, Poland, and Russia. NY: Schocken, 1975. 7<sup>th</sup> grade and up

### **Teacher Resources**

Block, Gay and Malka Drucker. **Rescuers: Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust**

Salsitz, Norman and Amalie Petranker Salsitz. **Against All Odds**

**Number the Stars**

A Novel by

Lois Lowry

Bantam Doubleday Dell Books for Young Readers, NY, 1990

Recommended for Grade 5

**Synopsis**

Annemarie Johansen and Ellen Rosen are best friends but their happy childhood has been shattered by the Nazi conquest of Denmark. Nazi soldiers patrol the streets of Copenhagen and the Danes suffer from food shortages and restrictions on their liberty. It is 1943 and the Nazis are about to take the next terrible step in their control of Denmark - the "relocation" of all the Jews in the country. Ellen is Jewish and has been hiding as a member of Annemarie's family but now the threat to Ellen's life is greater than ever. The Johansen family determines to help Ellen and her family escape from Denmark and smuggled to safety in Sweden before the Nazis can arrest them.

*Chapter 3 "Where Is Mrs. Hirsch?" pp. 22-26*

\* \* \* \*

Annemarie was almost asleep when there was a light knock on the bedroom door. Candlelight appeared as the door opened, and her mother stepped in.

"Are you asleep, Annemarie?"

"No. Why? Is something wrong?"

"Nothing's wrong. But I'd like you to get up and come out to the living room. Peter's here. Papa and I want to talk to you."

Annemarie jumped out of bed, and Kirsti grunted in her sleep. Peter! She hadn't seen him in a long time. There was something frightening about his being here at night. Copenhagen had a curfew, and no citizens were allowed out after eight o'clock. It was very dangerous, she knew, for Peter to visit at this time. But she was delighted that he was here. Though his visits were always hurried - they almost seemed secret, somehow, in a way she couldn't quite put her finger on - still, it was a treat to see Peter. It brought back memories of happier times [when Annemarie's older sister Lise was alive and planning her wedding to Peter]. And her parents loved Peter, too. They said he was like a son.

Barefoot, she ran to the living room and into Peter's arms. He grinned, kissed her cheek, and ruffled her long hair.

"You've grown taller since I saw you last," he told her. "You're all legs!"

Annemarie laughed. "I won the girls' footrace last Friday at school," she told him proudly. "Where have you been? We've missed you!"

"My work takes me all over," Peter explained. "Look, I've brought you something. One for Kirsti, too." He reached into his pocket and handed her two seashells.

Annemarie put the smaller one on the table to save it for her sister. She held the other in her hands, turning it in the light, looking at the ridged, pearly surface. It was so like Peter, to bring just the right gift.

"For you mama and papa, I brought something more practical. Two bottles of beer!"

Mama and Papa smiled and raised their glasses. Papa took a sip and wiped the foam from his upper lip. Then his face became serious.

"Annemarie," he said, "Peter tells us that the Germans have issued orders closing many stores run by Jews."

"Jews?" Annemarie repeated. "Is Mrs. Hirsch Jewish? Is that why the button shop is closed? Why have they done that?"

Peter leaned forward. "It is their way of tormenting. For some reason, they want to torment Jewish people. It has happened in the other countries. They have taken their time here - have let us relax a little. But now it seems to be starting."

"But why the button shop? What harm is a button shop? Mrs. Hirsch is such a nice lady. Even Samuel [Mrs. Hirsch's son] - he's a dope, but he would never harm anyone. How could he - he can't even see, with his thick glasses!"

Then Annemarie thought of something else. "If they can't sell their buttons, how will they earn a living?"

"Friends will take care of them," Mama said gently. "That's what friends do."

Annemarie nodded. Mama was right, of course. Friends and neighbors would go to the home of the Hirsch family, would take the fish and potatoes and bread and herbs for making tea. Maybe Peter would even take them a beer. They would be comfortable until their shop was allowed to open again.

Then, suddenly, she sat upright, her eyes wide. "Mama!" she said, "Papa! The Rosens are Jewish, too!"

Her parents nodded, their faces serious and drawn. "I talked to Sophy Rosen this afternoon, after you told me about the button shop," Mama said. "She knows what is happening. But she doesn't think that it will affect them."

Annemarie thought, and understood. She relaxed. "Mr. Rosen doesn't have a shop. He's a teacher. They can't close the school!" She looked at Peter with the question in her eyes. "Can they?"

"I think the Rosens will be all right," he said. "But you keep an eye on your friend Ellen. And stay away from the soldiers. Your mother told me about what happened on Osterbrogade."

Annemarie shrugged. She had almost forgotten the incident. "It was nothing. They were only bored and looking for someone to talk to, I think."

She turned to her father. "Papa, do you remember what you heard the boy say to the soldier? That all of Denmark would be the king's bodyguard?"

Her father smiled. "I've never forgotten it," he said.

"Well," Annemarie said slowly, "now I think that all of Denmark must be bodyguard for the Jews, as well."

"So we shall be," Papa replied.

Peter stood. "I must go," he said. "And you, Longlegs, it is way past your bedtime now." He hugged Annemarie again.

Later, once more in her bed beside the warm cocoon of her sister [Kirsti], Annemarie remembered how her father had said, three years before, that he would die to protect the king. That her mother would, too. And Annemarie, seven years old, had announced proudly that she also would.

Now she was ten, with long legs and no more silly dreams of pink-frosted cupcakes. And now she - and all the Danes - were to be the bodyguard for Ellen, and Ellen's parents, and all of Denmark's Jews.

Would she die to protect them? *Truly?* Annemarie was honest enough to admit, there in the darkness, to herself, that she wasn't sure.

For a moment she felt frightened. But she pulled the blanket up higher around her neck and relaxed. It was all imaginary, anyway - not real. It was only in the fairy tales that people were called upon to be so brave, to die for one another. Not in real-life Denmark. Oh, there were soldiers; that was true. And the courageous Resistance leaders, who sometimes lost their lives; that was true, too.

But ordinary people like the Rosens and the Johansens? Annemarie admitted to herself, snuggling there in the quiet dark, that she was glad to be an ordinary person who would never be called upon for courage.

#### *Chapter 4: "It Will Be a Long Night" pp. 33-38*

...Leaving for school on Thursday with her sister, Annemarie saw the Rosens walking to the synagogue early in the morning, dressed in their best clothes. She waved to Ellen, who waved happily back.

"Lucky Ellen," Annemarie said to Kirsti. "She doesn't have to go to school today."

"But she probably has to sit very, very still, like we do in church," Kirsti pointed out. "*That's* no fun."

That afternoon, Mrs. Rosen knocked at their door but didn't come inside. Instead, she spoke for a long time in a hurried, tense voice to Annemarie's mother in the hall. When Mama returned, her face was worried, but her voice was cheerful.

"Girls," she said, "we have a nice surprise. Tonight Ellen will be coming to stay overnight and to be our guest for a few days! It isn't often we have a visitor."

Kirsti clapped her hands in delight.

"But, Mama," Annemarie said, in dismay, "it's their New Year. They were going to have a celebration at home! Ellen told me that her mother managed to get a chicken someplace, and she was going to roast it - their first roast chicken in a year or more!"

"Their plans have changed," Mama said briskly. "Mr. and Mrs. Rosen have been called away to visit some relatives. So Ellen will stay with us. Now, let's get busy and put clean sheets on your bed. Kirsti, you may sleep with Mama and Papa tonight, and we'll let the big girls giggle together by themselves."

Kirsti pouted, and it was clear that she was about to argue. "Mama will tell you a special story tonight," her mother said. "One just for you."

"About a king?" Kirsti asked dubiously.

"About a king, if you wish," Mama replied.

"All right, then. But there must be a queen, too," Kirsti said.

\* \* \* \*

"What's happening?" Annemarie asked when she and Ellen were alone with Papa in the living room. "Something's wrong. What is it?"

Papa's face was troubled. "I wish that I could protect you children from this knowledge," he said quietly. "Ellen, you already know. Now we must tell Annemarie."

He turned to her and stroked her hair with his gentle hand. "This morning, at the synagogue, the rabbi told his congregation that the Nazis have taken the synagogue lists of all of the Jews. Where they live, what their names are. Of course the Rosens were on that list, along with many others."

"Why? Why did they want those names?"

"They plan to arrest all the Danish Jews. They plan to take them away. And we have been told that they may come tonight."

"I don't understand. Take them where?"

Her father shook his head. "We don't know where, and we don't really know why. They call it 'relocation.' We don't even know what that means. We only know that it is wrong, and it is dangerous, and we must help."

Annemarie was stunned. She looked at Ellen and saw that her best friend was crying silently.

"Where are Ellen's parents? We must help them, too!"

"We couldn't take all three of them. If the Germans came to search our apartment, it would be clear that the Rosens were here. One person we can hide. Not three. So Peter has helped Ellen's parents to go elsewhere. We don't know where. Ellen doesn't know either. But they are safe."

Ellen sobbed aloud, and put her face in her hands. Papa put his arm around her. "They are safe, Ellen. I promise you that. You will see them again quite soon. Can you try hard to believe my promise?"

Ellen hesitated, nodded, and wiped her eyes with her hand.

"But, Papa," Annemarie said, looking around the small apartment, with its few pieces of furniture: the fat stuffed sofa, the table and chairs, the small bookcase against the wall. "You said that we would hide her. How can we do that? Where can she hide?"

Papa smiled. "That part is easy. It will be as your mama said: you two will sleep together in your bed, and you may giggle and talk and tell secrets to each other. And if anyone comes--"

Ellen interrupted him. "Who might come? Will it be soldiers? Like the ones on the corners?" Annemarie remembered how terrified Ellen had looked the day when the soldier had questioned them on the corner.

"I really don't think anyone will. But it never hurts to be prepared. If anyone should come, even soldiers, you two will be sisters. You are together so much, it will be easy for you to pretend that you are sisters."

...Annemarie and Ellen got to their feet. Papa suddenly crossed the room and put his arms around them both. He kissed the top of each head: Annemarie's blond one, which reached to his shoulder, and Ellen's dark hair, the thick curls braided as always into pigtails.

"Don't be frightened," he said to them softly. "Once I had three daughters. Tonight I am proud to have three daughters again."

*Chapter 5: "Who Is the Dark-Haired One?" pp.43-49*

Annemarie eased the bedroom door open quietly, only a crack, and peeked out. Behind her, Ellen was sitting up, her eyes wide.

She could see Mama and Papa in their nightclothes, moving about. Mama held a lighted candle, but as Annemarie watched, she went to a lamp and switched it on. It was so long a time since they had dared to use the strictly rationed electricity after dark that the light in the room seemed startling to Annemarie, watching through the slightly opened bedroom door. She saw her mother look automatically to the blackout curtains, making certain that they were tightly drawn.

Papa opened the front door to the soldiers.

"This is the Johansen apartment?" A deep voice asked the question loudly, in the terribly accented Danish.

"Our name is on the door, and I see you have a flashlight," Papa answered. "What do you want? Is something wrong?"

"I understand you are a friend of your neighbors the Rosens, Mrs. Johansen," the soldier said angrily.

"Sophy Rosen is my friend, that is true," Mama said quietly. "Please, could you speak more softly? My children are asleep."

"Then you will be so kind as to tell me where the Rosens are." He made no effort to lower his voice.

"I assume they are at home, sleeping. It is four in the morning, after all," Mama said.

Annemarie heard the soldier stalk across the living room toward the kitchen. From her hiding place in the narrow sliver of the open doorway, she could see the heavy uniformed man, a holstered pistol at his waist, in the entrance to the kitchen, peering in toward the sink.

Another German voice said, "The Rosens' apartment is empty. We are wondering if they might be visiting their good friends the Johansens."

"Well," said Papa, moving slightly so that he was standing in front of Annemarie's bedroom door, and she could see nothing except the dark blur of his back, "as you see, you are mistaken. There is no one here but my family."

"You will not object if we look around." The voice was harsh, and it was not a question.

"It seems we have no choice," Papa replied.

"Please don't wake my children," Mama requested again. "There is no need to frighten the little ones."

The heavy, booted feet moved across the floor again and into the other bedroom. A closet door opened and closed with a bang.

Annemarie eased her bedroom door closed silently. She stumbled through the darkness to the bed.

"Ellen," she whispered urgently, "take your necklace off!"



Ellen's hands flew to her neck. Desperately she began trying to unhook the tiny clasp. Outside the bedroom door, the harsh voices and heavy footsteps continued.

"I can't get it open!" Ellen said frantically. "I never take it off - I can't even remember how to open it!"

Annemarie heard a voice just outside the door. "What is here?"

"Shhh," her mother replied. "My daughters' bedroom. They are sound asleep."

"Hold still," Annemarie commanded. "This will hurt." She grabbed the little gold chain, yanked with all her strength, and broke it. As the door opened and light flooded into the bedroom, she crumpled it into her hand and closed her fingers tightly.

Terrified, both girls looked up at the three Nazi officers who entered the room.

One of the men aimed a flashlight around the bedroom. He went to the closet and looked inside. Then with a sweep of his gloved hand he pushed to the floor several coats and a bathrobe that hung from pegs on the wall.

There was nothing else in the room except a chest of drawers, the blue decorated trunk in the corner, and a heap of Kirsti's dolls piled in a small rocking chair. The flashlight beam touched each thing in turn. Angrily the officer turned toward the bed.

"Get up!" he ordered. "Come out here!"

Trembling, the two girls rose from the bed and followed him, brushing past the two remaining officers in the doorway, to the living room.

Annemarie looked around. These three uniformed men were different from the ones on the street corners. The street soldiers were often young, sometimes ill at ease, and Annemarie remembered how the Giraffe had, for a moment, let his harsh pose slip and had smiled at Kirsti.

But these men were older and their faces were set with anger.

Her parents were standing beside each other, their faces tense, but Kirsti was nowhere in sight. Thank goodness that Kirsti slept through almost everything. If they had awakened her, she would be wailing - or worse, she would be angry, and her fists would fly.

"Your names?" the officer barked.

"Annemarie Johansen. And this is my sister -"

"Quiet! Let her speak for herself. Your name?" He was glaring at Ellen.

Ellen swallowed. "Lise," she said, and cleared her throat. "Lise Johansen."

The officer stared at them grimly.

"Now," Mama said in a strong voice, "you have seen that we are not hiding anything. May my children go back to bed?"

The officer ignored her. Suddenly he grabbed a handful of Ellen's hair. Ellen winced.

He laughed scornfully. "You have a blond child sleeping in the other room. And you have this blond daughter - " He gestured toward Annemarie with his head. "Where did you get the dark-haired one?" He twisted the lock of Ellen's hair. "From a different father? From the milkman?"

Papa stepped forward. "Don't speak to my wife in such a way. Let go of my daughter or I will report you for such treatment."

"Or maybe you got her someplace else?" the officer continued with a sneer. "From the Rosens?"

For a moment no one spoke. Then Annemarie, watching in panic, saw her father move swiftly to the small bookcase and take out a book. She saw that he was holding the family photograph album. Very quickly he searched through its pages, found what he was looking for, and tore out three pictures from three separate pages.

He handed them to the German officer, who released Ellen's hair.

"You will see each of my daughters, each with her name written on the photograph," Papa said.

Annemarie knew instantly which photographs he had chosen. The album had many snapshots - all the poorly focused pictures of school events and birthday parties. But it also contained a portrait, taken by a photographer, of each girl as a tiny infant. Mama had written, in her delicate handwriting, the name of each baby daughter across the bottom of those photographs.

She realized too, with an icy feeling, why Papa had torn them from the book. At the bottom of each page, below the photograph itself, was written the date. And the real Lise Johansen had been born twenty-one years earlier.

"Kirsten Elizabeth," the officer read, looking at Kirsti's baby picture. He let the photograph fall to the floor.

"Annemarie," he read next, glanced at her, and dropped the second photograph.

"Lise Margrete," he read finally and stared at Ellen for a long, unwavering moment. In her mind, Annemarie pictured the photograph that he held: the baby, wide-eyed, propped against a pillow, her tiny hand holding a silver teething ring, her bare feet visible below the hem of an embroidered dress. The wispy curls. Dark.

The officer tore the photograph in half and dropped the pieces on the floor. He turned, the heels of his shiny boots grinding into the pictures, and left the apartment. Without a word, the other two officers followed. Papa stepped forward and closed the door behind him.

Annemarie relaxed the clenched fingers of her right hand, which still clutched Ellen's necklace. She looked down, and saw that she had imprinted the Star of David into her palm.

[The Johansens decide that Mama will take the three girls to her brother's home in a fishing village. There they mourn for a non-existent great-aunt's death as "guests" come to join the mourning in the night. Two of the guests are Ellen's parents. Soon Peter leads some of the guests away into the night and shortly Mama follows, leading the Rosen family away to Uncle Henrik's boat. Annemarie grows anxious for her mother's return and, looking from a window, sees her mother lying on the ground. As she helps her Mama into the house, Annemarie discovers a small paper-wrapped packet on the ground. It was the same packet that Peter had given to Mr. Rosen, telling him that it was extremely important that it be given to Uncle Henrik. It had fallen from his pocket.]

Chapter 13 *Run! As Fast As You Can!* Pp. 103-105

Annemarie relaxed. She stroked her mother's hand and looked down at the discolored, swollen ankle.

"Mama, what is this?" she asked suddenly, reaching into the grass at the foot of the steps.

Mama looked. She gasped. "Oh, my God," she said.

Annemarie picked it up. She recognized it now, knew what it was. It was the packet that Peter had given to Mr. Rosen.

"Mr. Rosen tripped on the step, remember? It must have fallen from his pocket. We'll have to save it and give it back to Peter." Annemarie handed it to her mother. "Do you know what it is?"

Her mother didn't answer. Her face was stricken. She looked at the path and down at her ankle.

"It's important, isn't it, Mama? It was for Uncle Henrik. I remember Peter said it was very important. I heard him tell Mr. Rosen."

Her mother tried to stand, but fell back against the steps with a groan. "My God," she murmured again. "It may all have been for nothing."

Annemarie took the packet from her mother's hand and stood. "I will take it," she said. "I know the way, and it's almost light now. I can run like the wind."

Mama spoke quickly, her voice tense. "Annemarie, go into the house and get the small basket on the table. Quickly, quickly. Put an apple into it, and some cheese. Put this packet underneath; do you understand? *Hurry.*"

Annemarie did instantly as she was told. The basket. The packet, at the bottom. She covered it with a napkin. Then some wrapped cheese. An apple. She glanced around the kitchen, saw some bread, and added that. The little basket was full. She took it to where her mother was.

"You must run to the boat. If anyone should stop you - "

"Who would stop me?"

"Annemarie, you must understand how dangerous this is. If any soldiers see you, if they stop you, you must pretend to be nothing more than a little girl. A silly, empty-headed little girl, taking lunch to a fisherman, a foolish uncle who forgot his bread and cheese."

"Mama, what *is* it in the bottom?"

But her mother still didn't answer the question. "Go," she said firmly. "Go right now and *run!* As fast as you can!"

Annemarie kissed her mother quickly, grabbed the basket from her mother's lap, turned, and ran toward the path.

Chapter 16 *"I Will Tell You Just A Little"* pp. 122-126

Despite being stopped by German soldiers, Annemarie successfully reached her Uncle Henrik with the packet and safely returned to her Uncle's home. [Uncle Henrik and his fishing vessel had returned from a day on the water.]

"Uncle Henrik," she asked, "where are the Rosens and the others? I thought you were taking them to Sweden on your boat. But they weren't there."

"They were there," he told her, leaning forward against the cow's broad side. "You shouldn't know this. You remember that I told you it was safer not to know.

"But," he went on, as his hands moved with their sure and practiced motion, "I will tell you just a little, because you were so brave."

"Brave?" Annemarie asked, surprised. "No, I wasn't. I was very frightened."

"You risked your life."

"But I didn't even think about that! I was only thinking of - "

He interrupted her, smiling. "That's all that *brave* means - not thinking about the dangers. Just thinking about what you must do. Of course you were frightened. I was too, today. But you kept your mind on what you had to do. So did I. Now let me tell you about the Rosens."

"Many of the fishermen have built hidden places in their boats. I have, too. Down underneath. I have only to lift the boards in the right place, and there is room to hide a few people. Peter, and others in the Resistance who work with him, bring them to me, and to the other fishermen as well. There are people who hide them and help them, along the way to Gilleleje."

...Annemarie frowned, remembering the empty boat that morning. "Were the Rosens and the others there, underneath, when I brought the basket?"

Uncle Henrik nodded.

"I heard nothing," Annemarie said.

"Of course not. They had to be absolutely quiet...."

"Could they hear me when I talked to you?"

"Yes. Your friend Ellen told me, later, that they heard you. And they heard the soldiers who came to search the boat."

Annemarie's eyes widened. "Soldiers came?" she asked. "I thought they went the other way after they stopped me."

"There are many soldiers in Gilleleje and all along the coast. They are searching all the boats now. They know that the Jews are escaping, but they are not sure how, and they rarely find them. The hiding places are carefully concealed, and often we pile dead fish on the deck as well. They hate getting their shiny boots dirtied!"

... "Very few people know about this, Annemarie," he said with a serious look. "But the soldiers are so angry about the escaping Jews - and the fact that they can't find them - that they have just starting using trained dogs."

"They had dogs! The ones who stopped me on the path!"

Uncle Henrik nodded. "The dogs are trained to sniff about and find where people are hidden. It happened just yesterday on two boats. Those damn dogs, they go right through the dead fish to the human scent.

"We were all very, very worried. We thought it meant the end of the escape to Sweden by boat.

"It was Peter who took the problem to scientists and doctors. Some very fine minds have worked night and day, trying to find a solution.

"And they have created a special drug. I don't know what it is. But it was in the handkerchief. It attracts the dogs, but when they sniff at it, it ruins their sense of smell. Imagine that!"

Annemarie remembered how the dogs had lunged at the handkerchief, smelled it, and then turned away.

"Now, thanks to Peter, we will each have such a handkerchief, each boat captain. When the soldiers board our boats, we will simply pull the handkerchief out of our pockets. The Germans will probably think we all have bad colds! The dogs will sniff about, sniff the handkerchiefs we are holding, and then roam the boat and find nothing. They will smell nothing."

"Did they bring the dogs to your boat this morning?"

"Yes. Not twenty minutes after you had gone. I was about to pull away from the dock when the soldiers appeared and ordered me to halt. They came aboard, searched, found nothing. By then, of course, I had the handkerchief. If I had not, well - " His voice trailed off, and he didn't finish the sentence. He didn't need to.

...."They are safe in Sweden now?" she asked. "You're sure?"

Uncle Henrik stood, and patted the cow's head. "I saw them ashore. There were people waiting to take them to shelter. They are quite safe there."

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Locate the following on a map of Europe: Copenhagen, Denmark; Sweden; Germany.
- Identify the following: resistance movement, King Christian, G.F. Duckwitz.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What is the connection between Peter and the Johansen family?
2. What happened to Mrs. Hirsch's button shop?
3. Peter says "But now it seems to be starting." Explain what he means by this.
4. Why does Peter tell Annemarie that her friend Ellen and the Rosen family will be all right?
5. After thinking about what is beginning to happen, Annemarie says, "Well, now I think that all of Denmark must be bodyguard for the Jews, as well." Explain what she means by this. What does this tell you about Annemarie's character and point of view?
6. What does Annemarie conclude about "ordinary people?" Do you think Annemarie is correct in her conclusion? Who does she think needs to have courage?
7. Why is Annemarie surprised to learn that her good friend Ellen is coming to spend a few days with the Johansen family?
8. What had occurred in the synagogue the Rosens attended that morning?
9. How does Annemarie respond to the news her father reveals to her about the Rosens?
10. How do Annemarie's parents plan to hide Ellen?
11. Papa tells Annemarie and Ellen that "Once I had three daughters. Tonight I am proud to have three daughters again." Explain what he meant by this.
12. Why do the German soldiers come to the Johansen apartment looking for the Rosens? Describe their behavior while they are in the apartment.
13. Why is Annemarie so determined to have Ellen remove the necklace?

14. How does the German officer attempt to insult Mama? How does Papa respond to this?
15. Explain how Papa "proved" to the German officer that Ellen was the Johansen's daughter Lise. How do you think the Johansens felt about the treatment of the photographs?
16. Why does Mrs. Johansen take her two daughters and Ellen to visit her brother? What is her brother's occupation?
17. How does Uncle Henrik use a village tradition to explain the arrival of so many guests at his home one evening? What happens to Mama as she returns from her night time journey?
18. Why does Mrs. Johansen tell Annemarie to act like a silly little girl if she is stopped by the Germans while on the way to her Uncle Henrik's boat? How do you think Mrs. Johansen feels knowing her daughter is taking such a dangerous risk by running this errand? Why do you think she decides to let Annemarie run the dangerous errand?
19. Why was the handkerchief so important?
20. Where were the Rosens and the other escaping Jews taken by Uncle Henrik and the other Danish fishermen? What was the penalty to a fisherman if he was caught?
21. Why do you think the Johansen family took the dangerous risk of helping the Rosens and other Danish Jews to escape from the Nazis?

### **Activities**

1. Nearly all of the approximately seven thousand Danish Jews were smuggled from Denmark to Sweden. Read more about this rescue operation and report to your class about the dangers involved and the methods used to succeed.
2. Although **Number the Stars** is a fictional story, some aspects of the tale are correct. The rabbi of the Copenhagen synagogue did warn the congregation that the lists of Jewish names and addresses had been seized by the Germans. A German official by the name of G. F. Duckwitz had secretly passed this information to friends in the Danish government who passed the information on to leaders in the Jewish community. Research in your library or on the Internet to discover more about G.F. Duckwitz. Why do you think he risked his life to pass this information on to the Danes? What happened to him after the war? If you were writing a commendation for him to receive a medal, what would you say about his actions?
3. Draw or make a model of several of the types of boats the Danes used to rescue the Jews and to take them to Sweden. Draw a map showing the route that many of these boats would have take to cross the water to Sweden.
4. Annemarie was surprised to learn that her Uncle Henrik thought she had acted with courage. What did she think it meant to be brave? What was Uncle Henrik's view of bravery? Explain how the actions of Annemarie and her family and friends were examples of courage by "ordinary people." What does this tell you about the importance of the words and actions of each person, no matter their position in society?

5. Write a poem about the courage and importance of the contributions made by "ordinary people." Who were some of the "ordinary people" in this story? Who were the "ordinary people" in the true story of the rescue of the Jews of Denmark?
6. Peter Neilsen is a fictional character in this book but many genuine young men and women did serve courageously in the Danish Resistance. Read about this resistance movement and create a large poster listing some of the things the resistance did. Hang the poster in the classroom. Also, see if you can find some names of the "everyday heroes" to place on the poster under a "banner of courage."

## The Little Riders

A Novel by  
Margaretha Shemin

Putnam Books, New York  
Recommended for Grade 5

### **Synopsis**

Eleven-year-old Johanna remained with her grandparents in their Dutch village while her parents went on an extended vacation. "Take care of the little riders," were the last words Johanna's father spoke to her before departing. Noone expected the Nazis to invade and conquer Holland before her parents could return. The twelve metal figures on horseback who rode forth from the clock in the ancient church tower had been there so long that they were part of the tradition of the town and Johanna's family had always cared for them. Joanna hated the Nazis and had promised herself that she would never look one in the face, but she had also promised her father to take care of the little riders. Now the little riders had to be hidden so that they could not be melted by the Germans for munitions. Soldiers had arrested her grandparents for questioning when the little riders disappeared from the church. Now Johanna had to find a safe hiding place for the little riders before the Germans returned to search their house. It was the only way to save the little riders - and her grandparents. Does she have the necessary courage? Who can she trust?

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Grandfather spoke so convincingly that Johanna was almost ready to believe that the riders were now in the possession of some clever thief instead of upstairs in the den under her own bed. But the big soldier didn't care what Grandfather said. He turned his back to him and gave his orders to the other soldiers.

"The old man and the old woman will come with us to Headquarters. The town commander can conduct the hearing himself. If he orders so, we will search the house later. We will not leave a thing unturned, and if those riders are hidden here," he said, shrugging his shoulder in disgust, "we will find them. And these people will learn what happens to those who dare defy an order by a German officer."

He looked at Johanna. "The child can stay," he said. But he didn't let Johanna kiss Grandfather and Grandmother good-bye. Johanna was standing near the hall closet and quickly she slipped down a coat for Grandmother, but she couldn't get Grandfather's coat off the hook. The coat was heavy and the hook too high and now they were leaving. She could give Grandfather only his hat and woolen scarf, which weren't enough for the chilly September night. Grandfather and Grandmother walked arm in arm out of the door and the soldiers followed them.



When the last soldier slammed the door behind him, Johanna found that her knees were shaking. She had to sit down on the bottom step of the staircase. The clock in the hall ticked and the minutes passed by.

"If those riders are hidden here, these people will learn what happens to those who dare defy an order given by a German officer," the soldier had said.

They must be hidden more safely, Johanna knew, and she would have to do it. The men would certainly not come now. The neighbors must have seen what happened and they would have warned the men to stay far away from the house. Johanna looked out of the peephole in the door. One soldier was left standing on guard.

"We will not leave a thing unturned, and if those riders are hidden here, we will find them," the German had also said.

The riders were big and there were twelve of them and the horses, too. What hiding place would be big enough? As she sat on the bottom step of the stairs, Johanna's mind wandered through the whole house, thinking of all the different closets, but not one was big enough to hide the riders safely. At last she thought of her attic room. Of course, her own secret hiding place was there. It was certainly big enough, but it was right in Captain Braun's room. But the more she thought about it now, the more she became convinced that it would also be the safest place to hide the riders. The Germans would certainly not think that the riders might be hidden in the room of a German officer and they would probably not search his room. Captain Braun apparently had not discovered the cubbyhole and perhaps never would discover it. Anyhow, it was the only place in the house where she could hide the riders. She would leave them in the burlap sacks and push them all the way deep in.

Tonight was Friday night and Captain Braun was not home. If she worked fast the riders would be hidden before he came back. Johanna ran upstairs and started to carry the sacks to the attic room. She didn't put on a light for fear the soldier on guard would see it and come to investigate; instead, she took Grandfather's flashlight. She decided to do the heavy work first and carry everything upstairs. Putting the riders in the cubbyhole would be easier. She decided also to take the radio from behind the books and put it in the cubbyhole, too.

It wasn't easy. By the time the last horse and rider were in the attic room Johanna was out of breath. Her hair was mussed and her skirt was torn in several places. It had also taken her much longer than she had expected, but if she worked fast there was still time enough before Captain Braun came home. In the closet she pushed Captain Braun's uniforms aside and reached to open the bolt of the little door, but it had become stiff and rusty. She got down on her knees and tried again. The bolt didn't yield. Johanna felt warm and her hands started to tremble. Surely she would be able to open the bolt, it had never given her trouble before. But no matter how hard she tried, she could not open the bolt on the little door. She forgot everything around her, even the riders and Grandfather and Grandmother and the danger they were in at this moment. She thought of only one thing. The door must open. It must.

She was so busy she didn't hear the footsteps on the stairs or the door of the attic room opening. She first saw Captain Braun when he was standing in the door of the big closet. He had to bend down a little, not to hit his head against the low ceiling.

"What are you doing in the dark in my closet?" he asked.

He switched the light on so that Johanna's eyes were blinded by it and she turned her head away. Around her on the floor were the sacks with the riders. The radio was right beside her and Johanna pushed it behind her back, but she couldn't hide the riders. Captain Braun kneeled down and opened one of the bags. There was nothing Johanna could do or say. He took out a white horse with gently black eyes and a fierce curly mane. Then he opened the other bags. The little riders and their horses were lying helpless on their backs on the floor of the closet. The legs of the horses were bent as if they wanted to get up and gallop away. The riders looked more brave and proud than ever, but Johanna knew that no matter how brave and proud they looked, they were forever lost and she could not save them anymore.

A feeling of reckless despair came over Johanna. Nothing that she would do or say now could make the situation any worse than it was already. She had tried hard but she had failed; she had failed Grandfather and Grandmother and also the little riders and even her father, whom she had promised to take care of the little riders. If it had not been for Captain Braun she could have saved them. If he hadn't come home early, the riders would have been hidden and Grandfather and Grandmother would have come back. Now she didn't know what the Germans might do to them. Everything she had ever felt against the Germans welled up suddenly in her.

"I hate you and I despise you," she burst out, "and so does every decent person, and you'll never win the war. Grandfather says that you have already lost it." She talked so fast that she had to take a deep breath before she could continue. "And in a few months there will be nothing left of Germany, Grandmother says. You only have to listen every night to the airplanes that fly over."

Then Johanna raised her eyes and looked at Captain Braun for the first time. With his boots and his uniform he looked like all the other Germans. He looked the same as the soldiers who had taken away Grandfather and Grandmother, but his face was different. Captain Braun did not have a soldier's face. He had the face of a flute player. His face was unmoved and, except for a little heightened color, he appeared not even to have heard what Johanna had said to him.

"So these are the famous little riders," he said quietly. He took one into the room and held it under the light. "They are much more beautiful than I was ever told." He looked again and hesitated for a little while. "I would like to look at them much longer, but it would be safer for them and for you to put them back in the sacks and hide them where they will not be found."

"But I can't," Johanna said. She wasn't feeling angry anymore, only very frightened. "The bolt of the door is rusty. I can't open it." She was surprised to hear that she was crying. "And they took Grandfather and Grandmother. They

said, 'If we find the riders in this house, you will see what happens to people who disobey an order given by a German officer.'

Captain Braun kneeled beside Johanna. His hands were strong and quick as he slipped aside the stiff bolt. He took the sacks and started to put the riders back in.

"What will you do to them?" Johanna asked.

"The little riders will be my guests for as long as they want to be," Captain Braun said. "I owe that to them. They are the first Dutchmen who looked at me in a friendly way and did not turn their faces away when I spoke to them."

Johanna felt her face grow hot and red as he spoke. She bent down and started to help him put the riders and the horses back into the sacks.

"There may not be much time," he said. "Crawl through the door and I will hand you the sacks."

Johanna still hesitated. Was he really going to help her?

"Come," he said. "Do as I tell you." There was a faint smile around his mouth, but the rest of his face looked grave. "This is an order given by a German officer." He gave her a gentle push.

In a few minutes the riders were hidden and the radio, too. At a moment when Captain Braun had his back turned, Johanna pushed it deep into the closet. One day when he was out she would come and get it. Grandfather couldn't be without his radio.

"Go down now," Captain Braun said. "It's better for all of us if no one sees us together."

Johanna went downstairs and alone she waited in the dark living room. Outside, the soldier was still standing guard. She pushed Grandfather's big chair near the window and sat down, her tired arms leaning on the windowsill. From there she saw them come across the marketplace.

[The soldier returned with Grandmother and Grandfather and searched their home, but they did not find the little riders. They tore the upholstery with their bayonets, broke Grandmother's Delft-blue plates, and tumbled books, papers, and furniture on the floor. At last, they came to the attic room but drew back when they found Captain Braun sitting at a table writing in his music book. Finally, they left the house and Johanna was able to explain to her grandparents where she had hidden the little riders and the radio.]

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As Johanna lay thinking about everything that had happened during the long day, she could hear the airplanes flying over the house. The night was almost gone and, with the daylight, the planes were returning from their mission. Every night it sounded as if there were more planes than the night before. This time Johanna didn't think of her father; instead she thought of Captain Braun. She put on her slippers and walked upstairs. The door of the room stood ajar. Johanna pushed it open. Captain Braun was sitting at the table with his face buried in his hands. He looked up when he heard Johanna.

"I cannot sleep," Johanna said. "If I leave my door open, would you please play the flute for me?"

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Examine a map of Europe in 1940. Locate Holland, Germany, and the sea.
- Discuss the importance of tradition and culture in the lives of people and how they help to give meaning to our lives. Give some examples of traditions in our own lives that we would consider important enough to resist to save from danger.
- Talk about resistance and some of the ways that we can resist things we believe to be wrong to do.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Discuss the role that the "little riders" have played in the town and in the lives of Johanna's family. Explain what is meant by "symbolism." What do the little riders symbolize to the people of the town?
2. Johanna and her parents have been separated by the events of war. How do you think her parents feel about this separation? How does Johanna feel about it? Why do you think Johanna focuses on the little riders when she has trouble remembering her father's face?
3. Why does Johanna promise herself that she will not look at the face of the enemy? What does this symbolize to her?
4. What does Johanna see in the face of Captain Braun, the German captain stationed in her grandparents' home, when she finally looks at him? Why do you think Captain Braun decides to assist Johanna in hiding the little riders? Why did he say that it was best that they not be seen together?
5. Explain the differences in the attitudes and behaviors of the other Nazi German soldiers and Captain Braun. What personal choice/decision does Captain Braun make in helping Johanna hide the little riders and protecting the secret for Johanna, her grandparents, and the town?
6. Johanna is somewhat confused in her feelings after Captain Braun assists her. How does she communicate her change in attitude toward him to Captain Braun? What does the flute symbolize?
7. When Captain Braun prepares to leave with the retreating Nazi German army, he leaves his flute for Johanna. Why do you think he does this? What do you think it symbolizes?

### **Activities**

1. Write a letter to Captain Braun from a grownup Johanna twenty years after the war inviting him to return to the town to see the "little riders." What should Johanna say to the Captain to express her gratitude for his help? How do you think the town will respond to the return of the Captain to the community?
2. Make a series of drawings of the "little riders," these soldiers with swords on horseback. Since they were probably several hundred years old in 1940, what would these soldiers have looked like?
3. Listen to a recording of some music played on the flute (by James Galway, a Native-American flute player, or other artist). Describe the sound of the flute. What does it make you think about? Compare it to the sounds of trumpets

and drums that are often associated with marching and war or opening events of celebrations. Why do you think that Johanna and the Captain both enjoyed the sounds of the flute so much during the time of war and danger? What other musical instruments do you think affect audiences the same as the sound of the flute?

4. Draw a picture or write a poem about the music of a flute and what it brings to your mind or how it makes you feel.

## **Rose Blanche**

text by

Christophe Gallaz and Roberto Innocenti

Illustrations by

Roberto Innocenti

Creative Education, Inc., Mankato, MN, 1985

Recommended for Grade 5

### **Synopsis**

Rose Blanche is a young girl living in a small town in Germany when the Nazis take power. Soon the town is filled with soldiers and the streets are busy with tanks and trucks. One day Rose sees a little boy escape from a truck that is being repaired but the mayor grabs him roughly and returns him to the soldiers. Rose's curiosity is aroused. She wants to know where they are going so she follows the truck through the slowly moving traffic and out into the countryside. Eventually, in a clearing in the wood, Rose sees an electrified barbed wire fence with children behind it and wooden barracks. The children look hungry and cold so she passes her small piece of bread through the wire. It is the first of many trips that Rose Blanche made that winter, taking her lunch and passing it to the children, many of whom wore a bright yellow star. The tide of war changed against Nazi Germany and the defeated soldiers were in full retreat. Rose once again ran to the forest enclosure with her school bag full of food. The day was foggy with moving shadows when a shot ran out. The Allied troops come to the small town. Rose Blanche's mother waits for her little girl while spring comes to the forest clearing and its empty barbed wire enclosure.

This is a very moving story with beautiful, touching illustrations.

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Locate Germany on a map of Europe.
- Identify and define the following: Nazi Germany, Allied Armies, concentration camp

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What affects did the new Nazi government and its armies have on the small town where Rose Blanche lived?
2. Why does Rose Blanche like to walk by the river?
3. Rose likes to watch the trucks. What happens one day when a truck must stop to make repairs?
4. Why do you think the little boy is running from the soldiers?
5. Why do you think the mayor stops the little boy and returns him to the soldiers?
6. Look at the illustration of the little boy, the mayor, the soldier, and the SS officer carefully. Describe what you see in their faces and body language.
7. Where is Rose Blanche while all of this is happening? What does she decide to do? Does anyone else notice or react to what is happening?

8. How does Rose manage to follow the truck? Where does the path eventually lead?
9. What does Rose Blanche find in the clearing?
10. Look at the two-page illustration of the barbed wire enclosure carefully. What can you tell about this concentration camp from the artist's illustration?
11. How does Rose Blanche respond to the children in the camp? What does she do throughout the winter months?
12. Why is Rose Blanche's mother worried about her? Why is Rose so thin and pale?
13. Why do you think that Rose Blanche does not tell anyone what she is doing?
14. How are things changing in the camp?
15. Finally, the Nazi armies are retreating in defeat. How does this affect the town?
16. Rose Blanche is worried and returns once again to the camp in the forest. Describe her journey that day. What does she find? What happens?
17. Who are the new armies arriving in town?
18. Why is Rose Blanche's mother waiting for her? What has changed in the forest clearing?

### **Activities**

1. The illustrations in the book **Rose Blanche** are very powerful and tell the story as much - or more - than the words. Assign a pair of students to each illustration to try to put into words what they see in the illustration.
2. The name Rose Blanche (White Rose) was the name of a group of young German citizens who opposed and resisted the Nazi regime. They were primarily of college-age with some of high school age. They attempted through their underground newspaper to bring the evils of the Nazi regime to the attention of the German people. Eventually they were all arrested and executed. Why do you think the author and illustrator took the name of this group for the little heroine of his book? Investigate and discover different methods of resistance used by those who opposed Hitler and the Nazis.
3. The authors actually do not say what happens to Rose Blanche. How would you write the end of the story?
4. Write a poem or short essay about Rose Blanche. What do her actions tell you about her character and her courage? Why do you think she did not tell anyone what she was doing?
5. At one point in the story the author notes, " Everyone was watching everyone else." Why was this happening? What did the Nazis do to those who opposed them or broke the laws?
6. Select one event or point of the story and draw your own illustration.
7. Design a medal for courage and honor that you would give to someone like Rose Blanche. Explain the meaning of the colors and symbols you use in your medal. Write the speech that you would make when you awarded the medal to such a person.

### **Other Suggested Sources**

- **The Butterfly** by Patricia Polacco.

## The Butterfly

by  
Patricia Polacco

Philomel Books, 2000.

Recommended for Grades 5-6

### **Synopsis**

This story is based on people and events taken from the author's own family history. Young Monique awakens one brightly moon lit night to see a "young ghost" at the end of her bed. The little ghost quickly disappears and the next morning, Monique's mother discourages her tale as dreaming. Later that day, Monique and her friend Denise see the friendly local shopkeeper taken away by the Nazis who have taken control of their France. Time passes but one night the little ghost returns and Monique discovers the ghost is real, little Sevrine, a Jewish girl who is being hidden with other Jews in the cellar by Monique's mother. The two girls become secret friends. When Nazi soldiers laughingly crush a beautiful butterfly in their fists, Monique comes to realize the true cruelty of the Nazis for they crush people as they do butterflies. Monique catches another butterfly to show Sevrine at night and Sevrine sets it free as she and her family wish to be free. When a neighbor looks through the window and sees the two girls playing, Monique and her mother must find a way to help Sevrine's family escape into Switzerland before the Nazis come to arrest them.

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Locate the following on a map of Europe: France, Paris, Germany, Switzerland.
- Make a timeline with the following information on it: Nazi invasion and conquest of France; Allied D-day invasion; Nazi forces driven out of France
- Define the terms: Nazi, antisemitism, French Resistance, papillon butterfly, Star of David, valise, rendezvous, checkpoint, kilometer, miracle.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Why does Monique think the figure she sees in the night is a "ghost child?"
2. Monique's village was under the control of the Nazis. Who were the Nazis?
3. Who was Monsieur Marks? Why was he a special favorite of the children in the neighborhood? What happened to Monsieur Marks that frightened Monique so badly?
4. Why does Denise warn Monique not to look too long at the Nazis?
5. How does Monique's mother Marcel explain the incident with the Nazis and their seizure of Monsieur Marks?
6. Why is Monique so surprised when she meets the "ghost girl" again and learns where she lives?
7. Why did Madame Solliliage, Monique's mother, keep her work with the French Resistance hiding the Jews of France a secret from her daughter? Do you think that your family could successfully hide people in your home without all



- of the family members knowing about it? How could it be done? Would it be difficult?
8. When the Nazi soldier crushes the papillon butterfly in his fist and laughs, Monique is shocked and frightened. How does Monique compare the crushing of the butterfly to another incident? How does this explain other things to Monique?
  9. In the dark of the night, Monique and Sevrine become good friends. What are some of the things they do together as friends in Monique's small room?
  10. Why is it decided that Sevrine and the other Jews are no longer safe hiding in the cellar of the Solliliage home? What does Madame decide must be done?
  11. Although the neighbor's discovery of the two girls together poses a great risk for her and Monique, Madame is not angry with them. Why is she so understanding?
  12. Sevrine and her parents are separated during the escape effort. Why is this done? How are they disguised? Why does Madame tell the girls to dress in layers and not to take any valises with them?
  13. What dangers are faced during the escape?
  14. What do the two friends exchange as a symbol to remember each other?
  15. The danger is not completely over for Monique and her mother. They are separated at a busy train station. How are they reunited?
  16. The next day Monique sees many butterflies. What do they symbolize to her?

### Activities

1. Draw illustrations of the papillon butterfly and use them to decorate the classroom windows and to make borders on the bulletin boards. Read some samples of the poetry from the collection **I Never Saw Another Butterfly**. These are poems that were written by children sent to the Terezin concentration camp. Write some of your own poetry about Monique, her mother Marcel, Sevrine and her family, and their resistance to the Nazis.
2. Imagine that you are Monique and that you are keeping a secret journal of what is happening in your life. Write several entries describing how you feel when you discover that your mother is a member of the French Resistance; your reaction to the arrest of Monsieur Marks; how you feel about your new friend Sevrine; how you feel about the need to keep such dangerous secrets from your other friends and neighbors.
3. Write a poem about courage and caring and choosing to do the right thing.

### Other suggested sources

- **Rose Blanche** by Roberto Innocenti and Christophe Gallaz. Mankato, MN: Creative Education Inc., 1985.
- **I Never Saw Another Butterfly: Children's Drawings and Poems from Terezin Concentration Camp, 1942-1944**. New York: Schocken Books, 1978.
- **I Wanted to Fly Like a Butterfly** by Naomi Morgenstern. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1998.
- **Hiding from the Nazis** by David A. Adler. New York: Holiday House, 1997.

## **Mottele: A Partisan Odyssey**

A True Story by  
Gertrude Samuels

An Authors Guild Backprint.Com Edition, Lincoln, NE, 2000  
New American Library, 1977  
Recommended for Grades 6-8

### **Synopsis**

At twelve years of age, "Mottele" was left alone after German soldiers murdered his family. Alone, shattered, and determined to avenge the murder of his family, Mottele sought the partisan group led by a man known as "Uncle Misha." Jewish partisan groups in the Soviet Union had much to fear. Not only were they at risk from the German armies but also non-Jewish partisan groups, anti-Semitic local people, and collaborators. Fair-haired, blue-eyed, educated, and Ukrainian, this young boy with his violin did not appear to be a likely candidate for the partisans. Against all odds, Mottele found Uncle Misha's partisans and became a trusted and valued member of the group. His desire for vengeance and his courage led Mottele to take great risks but his humanity led him to love and care for others.

### **Quote**

"But that's not what I want, someone to take care of me!" Mottele cried savagely. The mask was completely dropped now from the boy's face and voice, and he spoke as demandingly as any powerfully motivated grown-up partisan. "I want to fight, like you and Lyonka! I know the forest now! I know animals - forest animals and human animals! I must fight, Diadia Misha!"

"There are many ways to fight, Mottele," Diadia Misha said evenly. *p. 11*

### *pp.9-13*

In that momentous year of 1942, Mottele, aged twelve, knew that at last he had found the one world that could have any meaning for him. The dream of the forest, the driving need for vengeance, had become his *only* reality. What had gone before was a nightmare, and in the context of that nightmare Mottele's world had crumbled in ashes.

The Nazis had taken less than three weeks to conquer Poland in September, 1939, and begin the organized persecution of Polish Jews, but it was not until the outbreak of war with Russia, in June, 1941, that Hitler had stepped up his campaign for extermination of the whole Jewish people - in Nazi terms, "the final solution of the Jewish question." In the German-occupied Ukraine, where Mottele had lived, the Nazis coveted the rich grain lands; the herds of cattle; the horses; the immense iron ore and steel industries - resources all for their military machine.

But the Jews were to go first.

In Mottele's village of Korsnovka in the Ukraine, with its small industries and small farms, his father had been a miller. The peasants would bring their grain to his windmill for grinding. For the most part, Gentile and Jew were courteous to

one another, but distant. Mottele's father, a frail, hard-working, religious man who believed intensely in God's will, often worried about that paradox, the mixture of good and bad in the village. ("Every stick has two ends," he would quote from something in a worried way.) But he put his worries aside each week, on the Sabbath, when he celebrated that holy day's joy and peace.

Mottele had gone to *cheder* with the other Jewish boys of the village, he told Diadia Misha, for his Hebrew and academic studies; and once a week he'd gone to the next village for his violin lessons. The old violin was a family heirloom, having belonged to an uncle, long dead, and been handed down to Mottele, who was named for him. Because of Mottele's musical talent, the family Shlayan was occasionally invited to a peasant's wedding or birthday celebration; the whole family had to attend, for this was considered by the peasants a great honor; in fact, they made the Shlayans "honored guests" for the day, and Mottele would play their favorite songs.

"We were often like that, friendly in our village, until war broke out," Mottele said. "Then the police started beating and chasing the Jews. The farmers stopped coming to my father's mill. They became afraid. The Jews began to run away from the village, wherever their legs would carry them. They went to the woods and to other villages and to certain Gentiles. My mother was frightened and wanted to leave, too, but Papa said no, how could we live in the forests? My sister, Batya, was just nine."

One day when he had gone for his music lesson, the Germans came. They set fire to every Jewish house in the village and to his father's mill.

"When I got home I found everything in ruins, and my parents and Batya were dead." The boy's voice was remarkably steady, only his eyes betraying his grief. "I sat with them a long time, until a neighbor came. She brought me bread and milk, and she told me to hide myself in the forest and never to come back. She said, 'Go to the partisans. Don't use your Jewish name.' She told me to be a good boy and she crossed herself. When I ran to the forest, she called after me, 'God of mercy be with you.' God!" His voice was bitter. "I didn't even know what 'partisan' meant. I just knew she was trying to help me."

There was silence.

"As another farmer did," Mottele went on. "I took care of his sheep. I think he guessed I was Jewish. He said, 'Find this Diadia - Uncle Misha. He'll take good care of you. Find him. Don't trust the others!'"

"He told you right."

"But that's not what I want, someone to take care of me!" Mottele cried savagely. The mask was completely dropped now from the boy's face and voice, and he spoke as demandingly as any powerfully motivated grown-up partisan. "I want to fight, like you and Lyonka! I know the forest now! I know animals - forest animals and human animals! I must fight, Diadia Misha!"

"There are many ways to fight, Mottele," Diadia Misha said evenly.

"That quiet kid, like a *shaygetz* with his fair hair!" said Lyonka with a laugh. He and Sarah sat smoking cigarettes and drinking coffee in the *budke*, the night after the boy had revealed himself to Misha and Lyonka. "Before he told his

story, I could swear he had no feelings. But God, Sarah, he's really so violent inside, I thought he'd explode!"

"So all right. At last he was able to let a bit out," said Sarah dryly.

She stirred restlessly, as memories tormented her. She could have guessed at Mottele's story; it wasn't new to any of them in camp. Everyone here had lost people they had loved, or were, like the boy and herself, sole survivors of their families. Diadia Misha had told them not to hold on to the past. Nothing was to matter, he warned sternly; just the order of the day, the mission, the strength to fight and survive and destroy...and destroy. But Mottele, so young and vulnerable, was too much a reminder and symbol of the recent past!

Sarah struggled to retain her self-discipline as she listened to Lyonka.

"So Mottele's one of us," she said.

"It's time you let a bit out, too, Sarah," said Lyonka. He tried to take her hand, but she made a face and pulled away.

"I let out what I like," she said harshly.

She stood up. "The men brought back four wounded, and we're low on antiseptics and bandages."

"All right."

"It's not all right. We need a lot of things."

"Just things, is it, Sarah?"

"Just things."

"I'll see you get them tomorrow. Give me a list," said Lyonka as he got up. He was familiar with Sarah's moods by now; this one could lead to arguments, and he preferred to have some quiet time before the mission next day. "We're going to Ovruch. Sergei's there already, got himself a room inside the town. He sent word that a group of policemen want to defect and join us. They'll bring weapons out, ammunition, anything else we ask for."

"I need all the medicines they can get, and antiseptics..."

"Tomorrow's a Russian holiday, so people will be allowed to go in and out of town without permits. Misha's sending some of us to see what's going on exactly, how many soldier are camping there, which way they're heading and so on."

"Clean bandages and...and vodka. My sick ones need vodka."

"All right - vodka," said Lyonka. "Mottele's coming with us."

"No!"

"But it's perfect! A young boy, you know, innocent, a Ukrainian, in rags and begging like the other beggars at the church. Mottele can tell us a lot just by mixing with the others, one of the bunch, watching everything."

"It's too *soon* to send him out. The boy needs training."

"He can be very useful already."

"No, Lyonka, it's wrong. It's crazy!"

"Why? He'll take his fiddle, and he'll be playing all their favorite songs, and he'll sing, fiddle away..."

"It's too soon to use him!"

"Mottele's absolutely perfect for this job."

"Forget it, Lyonka! He's only a -"

"Partisan, like us," Lyonka put in roughly.

**Historical Note:** Mottele was "Nordic" in appearance and eager for revenge so he often was chosen to go on dangerous missions. He was able to infiltrate a German officers' club as a musician (he was a skilled violinist) and helped to blow it up. Although Mottele was only a boy in years, he was very brave. As a result, he often accepted missions that took him into very risky spots.

At 13, Mottele had his bar mitzvah in the partisan camp. Shortly thereafter, he was participating in an ambush when he was struck by a German bullet. Misha and Lyonka carried him to the partisan hideout.

"I will tell my parents, and my sister Batya"--the boy's voice rose --"that we took revenge."

Mottele then sank into Lyonka's arms and died.

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Examine a map of Europe in 1942. Locate the areas along the former Polish-Russian border and the area known as the Ukraine. Trace the line of penetration by Nazi German troops into the Soviet Union. Locate the area where Uncle Misha's partisan group operated.
- Read about the roles that children and teenagers played in the resistance in the ghettos, the camps, and in partisan groups. Make a list of some of the things children often did as part of the resistance.
- Discuss the meaning of "resistance." Give examples of different types of resistance.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Examine and analyze how the role of historic antisemitism in the Ukraine complicated and increased the dangers to the Jewish partisans.
2. Explain how Mottele and the partisans used the boy's appearance and skills to their advantage in resisting the Germans.
3. Despite the risky and disruptive life they lived in the forest, Uncle Misha wanted to provide some "normalcy" for the children in their group by providing school and religious instruction, time to play, etc. Why did Uncle Misha feel so strongly about this? Do you think he was correct in his view? How did he try to accomplish this?
4. Mottele was both child and adult in the strange and dangerous world of the Jewish partisans during the years of the Holocaust. Give examples of behaviors and attitudes that reflect both sides of his nature.

### **Activities**

1. Read excerpts from other stories of partisan activities. Explain how the activities of the partisans aided the Allied armies. Why was partisan activity particularly important and effective in the war in the Soviet Union?
2. Write a letter to "Uncle Misha" describing your response to the story of Mottele. Explain why you think his decision to treat Mottele as "an adult partisan" was the correct or incorrect decision for Mottele himself.

3. Imagine that you have been employed to design a monument to honor Mottele and all of the other children who played an important role in the resistance efforts. Draw or describe the nature of the monument and explain the themes that you would incorporate into that monument. (Note:A monument does not have to be a statue!)

**"Children - Couriers in the Ghetto of Minsk**  
by  
Jacob Greenstein  
from  
**They Fought Back:**  
**The Story of the Jewish Resistance in Nazi Europe**  
Edited and translated by  
Yuri Suhl

Schocken Books, New York, 1975  
Recommended for Grades 7-8 and up

[Yuri Suhl's Note: *Jacob Greenstein escaped from Warsaw in 1939 when the Germans invaded Poland. He lived with his family in a small town near Minsk until the Germans occupied that part of Byelorussia and deported him to the Minsk Ghetto. There he joined the underground and was active in concealing weapons smuggled into the ghetto, until his turn came to leave for the forest and join the partisans.*

*After his demobilization from the Red Army in 1946, Mr. Greenstein reached the DP camps in Germany where he became active in Bricha, the organization that concerned itself with the smuggling of Jewish survivors into Palestine during the time of the British blockade, and in mobilizing Jewish youth for the Hagannah in its struggle for Israel's independence. In 1948 Mr. Greenstein emigrated to Israel where he now lives.*

*Children--Couriers in the Ghetto of Minsk first appeared in the Hebrew-Yiddish anthology, Facing the Nazi, Tel Aviv: 1962, and is here presented in a somewhat abbreviated version, in translation from the Yiddish. It is included in Greenstein's memoir, Blood on Byelorussian Soil, Destruction and Resistance in Byelorussia in the Years 1941-5, published in Hebrew by the Ghetto Fighters' House and Kibbutz, Hameuchad, Tel Aviv: 1966]*

*Children - Couriers in the Ghetto of Minsk, pps. 241-245*

Among the couriers who led people out of the ghetto, three children distinguished themselves. They were Sima, Banko, and David. Three times a week they took groups of Jews to the forests of Staroje-Sielo, covering a distance of fifty kilometers both ways. Despite their age they were fully aware of the nature of their mission and of the dangers involved.

The three children were our main contact with the forest. They came to the ghetto armed, their pistols always loaded, determined not to fall into the hands of the Germans alive. They were at ease and showed no signs of fear though they were constantly exposed to death. They carried out the orders of our general staff with strict discipline.

Sima was a twelve-year-old girl with blond hair, blue eyes, and dimples that showed when she talked. Her parents perished in the first German pogrom. In the beginning Sima lived outside the ghetto and carried out important assignments for the underground party committee. Later, when we began to

lead Jews out of the ghetto, Smolar brought the little girl to the ghetto and she became our contact with the forest.

No assignment was too difficult for Sima. Before going out on a mission she listened carefully to the given instructions, then she would repeat what she was told, trying hard not to miss a single word. Her small pistol was always in the special pocket sewn into her coat. Before starting out she would always point to it and say, "Don't worry, the Fritzes will not take me alive."

On cold winter nights Sima would sneak out of the ghetto through an opening beneath the barbed wire fence. She returned to the ghetto through the cemetery. There were times when she did not succeed in getting into the ghetto at night. When this happened she would spend the night, hungry and cold, in some bombed-out building, and remain there throughout the next day. At dusk, when the Jews returned from work, she would stealthily join their column, and together with them enter the ghetto. After the liquidation of the Minsk Ghetto, Sima participated in the combat operations of the partisan detachment.

In the summer of 1944, when the Germans were driven out, Sima marched in the front lines together with other decorated partisans in the large partisans' parade in Minsk. From her youthful chest shone a silver medal, first-rank Partisan of the Fatherland war.

Banko and David were two thirteen-year-old boys who had been schoolmates and had lived on the same street. Their fathers were also friends. The boys went together to Pioneer camps. Together they hid out during the German pogroms and worked at loading coal into the freight cars at Tovarne station and together they escaped to the forest.

They wandered for weeks through the forest and villages until they came upon a group of partisans called the "Stalincy." There they found Smolar, Feldman, Zorin, and other Jews of Minsk.

When Feldman called Banko into staff headquarters and ordered him to get ready to go to the Minsk Ghetto and bring out some Jews, Banko said, "I am ready to carry out your every command on one condition - that David go with me." His request was granted.

Banko's mother was still in the ghetto. All the other members of his family had perished in the German pogroms. His mother knew of Banko's activities and the dangers he was facing. But she was proud of him. Whenever Banko came for more people he visited his mother. She would put him to bed and sit near him for hours, watching him as he slept. When he awoke he would relate to her in whispers how the partisans were fighting the enemy; how they were blowing up troop trains and killing Germans.

"And when will you take me along to the forest?" his mother asked.

"I spoke to the Commander and he said the next time I'm in the ghetto I'll be able to take you along. I'd like you to be in my detachment and not in a family camp. Ours is a combat detachment; you'll have to stand guard and hold a rifle, but we'll be together. In a detachment, in a dugout, it is good to have a mother."

Banko was a small, skinny boy, who looked ten years old. The ghetto experiences had left deep marks on his elongated, youthful face. David was



taller and also older-looking than Banko. But it was Banko who was in charge of their activities, and David was his companion.

David was an orphan, his entire family was killed. He was the sole survivor. His only friend was Banko. David carried out his work quietly and scrupulously, not overlooking a single detail. But he had one weakness--he did not like to remain long in the ghetto. He would become nervous and hurry Banko on by saying, "We've already been too long in the ghetto. So many Jews are waiting for us to take them out. Time is short."

Their mission was to bring combat-fit young men and women and weapons from the ghetto to the partisan detachment Parchomenko.

When Banko had gathered people and supplies, the underground set the departure hour and selected the lookouts to guard the exits. Then Banko gave the final instructions. He addressed the people like a commander speaking to soldiers:

*In two hours we will be leaving the ghetto. From that moment on you are partisans. Until I deliver you into the hands of the partisan Chief of Staff you must obey my every command. The order of the journey is as follows: I go first and you follow behind me in single file, according to the numbers I gave you. If we should run into a German patrol there is no way back because it would endanger the Jews in the ghetto. If the situation becomes critical we resist. Those who received grenades will throw them at the Germans; and those who have pistols will open fire on them. Retreat is possible only in the direction of Staroje-Sielo. The Germans will not pursue us very far because they are afraid of the night. Under no conditions must you abandon the knapsacks which you carry on your backs. Anyone who creates a panic or refuses to obey my command will be shot without warning! I hope that all will go well and that in a few hours from now you will be free people without yellow badges.*

At the precise moment past midnight the two boys led the Jews out of the ghetto. As always Banko was at the head of the line, his loaded pistol in his pocket. The others followed after him. David was last. All along the way to the wide fence our people were standing guard, including some members of the Jewish ghetto police who were cooperating with the underground. The people moved quietly, holding their breath, thinking of the instructions Banko had given them.

For months these children engaged in such operations, leading out hundreds of Jews - among them practically all the doctors - and covering hundreds of kilometers. Later they participated in actual combat operations together with the others.

Here, in the natural surroundings of the forest, the children caught up on their physical growth which the ghetto had stunted. Banko grew tall and manly-looking and David surpassed him by growing a head taller. They had many friends in the Parchomenko and Budiony detachments, which they regarded as their own; and hundreds in the Zorin's family detachment where Banko's mother

was. He could not persuade the commander to let his mother be with him. A combat detachment had to be combat-ready at all times, and Banko's mother had suffered too much hunger and illness in the ghetto to be able to keep up with the young partisans.

On August 15, 1943, the Germans surrounded the forest with the aim of annihilating the partisans. The Germans threw two divisions of regular military into this operation, plus some Vlassov men and Lithuanians. A few days before the blockade they burned down the farms in the forest area. Because the peasants of these farms had maintained friendly relations with the partisans the Germans had herded them all into one house and burned them alive.

The German attack lasted fifteen days; it was prepared and carried out like a full-scale front-line operation. There were bombardments from the air; heavy and light artillery were fired without letup; mine sappers cleared the way where the military had to pass, and the Germans went into attack in three waves. Every bush, every tree, was shot at.

During the first days of the attack we offered resistance. We mined the roads, dug trenches, and engaged the Germans in minor battles. The Parchomenko detachment had mined the main Ivenic-Bakszt highway, and the first truck, carrying more than thirty Germans, was blown up as soon as it entered the forest. They were all blown to pieces together with their vehicle.

After several days our resistance collapsed. We could not hold out against a regular army. From headquarters came the command that we scatter in small groups and wait out the blockade. On September 15 the Germans abandoned the forest. At the time of the German attack several hundred partisans perished, among them between fifty and sixty Jews.

The Parchomenko detachment suffered the heaviest losses. Twenty-two men, twelve of whom were Jews, were hiding out in a cave close to the base. They were discovered because of a child in their midst and all suffered martyrs' deaths. We found them burned, some only in part, their arms pulled back and tied with barbed wire. According to all evidence they had been burned alive. We found no bullet holes on their bodies. Among the burned was Banko. His body was half-burned, his eyes open as though petrified. I untied his arms but could not straighten them out.

With clenched fists and anguished hearts we swore to take revenge on their murderers. David stood at Banko's grave and cried bitterly. The entire detachment cried with him.

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- On a map of Europe in the 1930s-1940s, locate the following: Warsaw, Poland; Minsk, Byelorussia, USSR; Germany; Staroje-Sielo forest
- Define the terms: ghetto, liquidation, partisan, pogrom, martyr.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Who were Sima, Banko, and David? Why did they become partisans?
2. Describe the type of work that Sima performed as a partisan.

3. How did Sima leave and re-enter the ghetto? What would have been her fate had the Germans captured Sima entering or leaving the ghetto?
4. What was the nature of the ties that existed between Banko and David?
5. Where were the parents of Banko and David?
6. What was the relationship between Banko and his mother?
7. What were the key points of the instructions Banko gave to the people he was leading from the ghetto? Why was he so stern with them about following orders?
8. What did Banko mean when he referred to the "yellow badges?"
9. Why was it so important to the partisans that the doctors be led from the ghettos to join those in the forests and underground resistance?
10. How did life in the forest affect the children who had fled from the ghetto?
11. Why did the commander separate Banko and his mother? How did the role of the young partisans differ from those of the older units?
12. Why did the Germans place so much effort into the assault on the partisans in the forest? Describe the results of the German assault. Were the partisan units completely crushed and captured?

### **Activities**

1. Children played many important roles in the resistance to the Germans in almost all of the countries that were conquered. Read about the resistance to the Germans forces and make a chart listing some of things that children did as part of the resistance.
2. The adults in the ghettos and camps were frequently torn between their desire to protect the children and the need to use them in their struggle to resist and to save as many as possible. Read about life in the ghettos and camps and make two lists. In one list, note the things that were done to protect and help the children. In the second, list things the children did to contribute to the survival of their families and others in the ghettos and camps. How do you think the parents and grandparents felt when the children took these risks to help them and others?
3. Write a poem expressing your view of young Sima, Banko, or David.
4. Read some of the poetry and study some of the art work that can be found in the book **I Never Saw Another Butterfly** or in **Fireflies in the Dark**. The work in each was produced by children of the ghetto of Terezin in Czechoslovakia. What do these works created in the midst of such horror, hunger, and terror reveal about the character of these children? Of the approximately 15,000 children who were sent to Terezin, only about 100 survived. Why does this add to the importance of the children's work that was saved?

**"Rosa Robota - Heroine of the Auschwitz Underground"**

by  
Yuri Suhl  
from

**They Fought Back:**  
**The Story of the Jewish Resistance in Nazi Europe**

Edited and translated by  
Yuri Suhl

Schocken Books, New York, 1975.  
Recommended for Grades 7-8 and up

[Yuri Suhl's note: *"The truth about Auschwitz? There is no person who could tell the whole truth about Auschwitz."* These words were spoken by Jozef Cyrankiewicz, Premier of Poland, who was one of the top leaders of the Auschwitz underground.

*With each new memoir about that camp a little more of the truth is brought to light, as in the case of Rosa Robota who helped make possible the only revolt there. Yet it was only recently that her role in this uprising became known in many of its details.]*

Rosa Robota - Heroine of the Auschwitz Underground, pp. 219-223

On Saturday, October 7, 1944, a tremendous explosion shook the barracks of Birkenau (Auschwitz II), and its thousands of startled prisoners beheld a sight they could hardly believe. One of the four crematoriums was in flames! They were happy to see at least part of the German killing-apparatus destroyed; but none was happier than young Rosa Robota, who was directly involved in the explosion. For months she had been passing on small pieces of dynamite to certain people in the Sonderkommando. Daily she had risked her life to make this moment possible. Now the flames lighting up the Auschwitz sky proclaimed to the whole world that even the most isolated of Auschwitz prisoners, the Sonderkommando Jews, would rise up in revolt when given leadership and arms.

Rosa was eighteen when the Germans occupied her hometown, Ciechanow, in September, 1939, three days after they had invaded Poland. She was a member of Hashomer Hatzair and, together with other members, was deeply interested in the organization of an underground resistance movement in the ghetto.

In November, 1942, the Germans liquidated the ghetto of Ciechanow, deporting some Jews to Treblinka and some to Auschwitz. Rosa and her family were in the Auschwitz transport. Most of the arrivals were sent straight to the gas chambers from the railway platform. Some of the younger people, Rosa among them, were marched off in another direction and later assigned to various work details. Rosa was sent to work in the *Bekleidungstelle* (clothing supply section). Some Ciechanow girls were sent to the munitions factory, "Union," one of the Krupp slave-labor plants in Auschwitz, which operated around the clock on

a three-shift basis. Rosa, as well as all the women who worked in the munitions factory, lived in the Birkenau barracks.

One day Rosa had a visitor - a townsman named Noah Zabladowicz who was a member of the Jewish section of the Auschwitz underground. As soon as they managed to be alone he told her the purpose of his visit. The underground was planning a general uprising in camp, which included the blowing up of the gas chamber and crematorium installations. For this it was necessary to have explosives and explosive charges. Israel Gutman and Joshua Leifer, two members of the underground who worked the day shift in "Union," had been given the task of establishing contact with the Jewish girls in the *Pulver-Pavilion*, the explosives section of "Union." But all their efforts were in vain because the girls were under constant surveillance and any contact between them and other workers, especially men, was strictly forbidden. It was decided, therefore, to try to contact them through some intermediary in Birkenau. Since several of the girls who worked in the *Pulver-Pavilion* came from Ciechanow and Rose knew them and was in touch with them, she seemed to be the ideal person to act as intermediary between them and the underground.

Rosa was only too glad to accept the assignment. Ever since that day of November, 1942, when she saw her own family, together with the rest of the Ciechanow Jews, taken to the gas chambers, the strongest emotion that suffused her being was a burning hatred of the Nazis, coupled with a deep yearning to avenge the murder of her people. Now the underground gave her the opportunity to express these feelings in the form of concrete deeds.

Rosa set to work and in a short time twenty girls were smuggling dynamite and explosive charges out of the munitions factory for the underground. They carried out the little wheels of dynamite, which looked like buttons, in small matchboxes which they hid in their bosoms or in special pockets they had sewn into the hems of their dresses. These "buttons" would then pass from hand to hand through an elaborate underground transmission belt that led to the Russian prisoner Borodin, an expert at constructing bombs. For bomb casings he used empty sardine cans. The finished bombs then started moving again on the transmission belt to various strategic hiding places in the sprawling camp. The Sonderkommando had its cache close to the crematorium compound.

Israel Gutman and Joshua Leifer concealed their "buttons" in the false bottom of a canister which they had made especially for that purpose. They always made sure to have some tea or leftover soup in the canister at the time of the SS inspection after work. Since it was customary for prisoners to save a little of their food rations for later, a canister containing some liquid would usually get no more than a perfunctory glance from the inspecting SS man.

One day after work as they were standing in line during the SS inspection, Leifer whispered to Gutman, "I had no time to hide the stuff in the canister. I have it in a matchbox in my pocket." Gutman grew pale and began to shake all over. The SS had been known to look into matchboxes also. He could not stop thinking that they were at the brink of disaster, and the more he thought of it the more nervous he became. So much so that the SS man became suspicious and gave him a very close and thorough inspection. Behind him stood Leifer,

appearing very calm. Frustrated at having spent so much time on Gutman and finding nothing, the SS man gave Leifer a superficial inspection and passed on to the next man. This was one time, Gutman writes in his account of the incident, when nervousness paid off well.

Moishe Kulka, another member, recalls that "the entire work was carried on during the night-shift when control was not so strict. In the morning, when the night-shift left the plant, I waited around. A Hungarian Jew I knew handed me half a loaf of bread. Concealed in the bread was a small package of explosives. I kept it near my workbench and later passed it on to a German Jew who worked on the railway."

Rosa was the direct link with the Sonderkommando. The explosives she received were hidden in the handcarts on which the corpses of those who had died overnight in the barracks were taken to the crematorium.

The Sonderkommando, which according to plan was supposed to synchronize its revolt with the general uprising, one day learned through underground sources that it was about to be liquidated. For them it was a matter of acting now or never. Not having any other choice they acted. They blew up Crematorium III, tossed a sadistic German overseer into the oven, killed four SS men, and wounded a number of others. Then they cut the barbed wire fence and about six hundred escaped. They were hunted down by a large contingent of pursuing SS men and shot. (As it turned out the general uprising never took place and the Sonderkommando action was the only armed revolt in Auschwitz.)

The political arm of the SS immediately launched a thorough investigation of the revolt. They wanted to know where the explosives came from and how they got into the hands of the Sonderkommando. With the aid of planted agents, the SS in a matter of two weeks came upon the trail of the explosives. They arrested several girls from the munitions factory, and after two days of interrogation and torture released them. The investigation continued and soon other arrests were made. Four girls were taken to the dread Block 11 for questioning. Three were from "Union"; the fourth was Rosa Robota.

Gutman, Leifer, Noah, and others whom Rosa knew now expected to be arrested at any moment. They had full faith in her trustworthiness, but they also knew something about the torture methods the SS employed in Block 11. At one point they considered suicide. They feared that what might happen to Rosa under questioning could happen to them too.

In the meantime they watched from a distance how Rosa was being led daily to Block 11 for questioning. Her hair was matted, her face puffed up and bruised beyond recognition, her clothes torn. She could not walk and had to be dragged by two women attendants.

One day the underground decided on a daring step. Moshe Kulka was acquainted with Jacob, the Jewish kapo of Block 11. He asked him if he would be willing to let someone see Rosa Robota in her death cell. Jacob agreed and asked that the visitor bring along a bottle of whiskey and a salami. Her townsman Noah was chosen to see her. The kapo introduced him to the SS guard as a friend of his. The two plied the SS man with drinks until he fell to the

floor unconscious. Then Jacob quickly removed the keys from the guard and motioned to Noah to follow him. Noah describes the incident as follows:

*I had the privilege to see Rosa for the last time several days before her execution. At night, when all the prisoners were asleep and all movement in Camp was forbidden, I descended into a bunker of Block 11 and saw the cells and the dark corridors. I heard the moaning of the condemned and was shaken to the core of my being. Jacob led me through the stairs to Rosa's cell. He opened the door and let me in. Then he closed the door behind me and disappeared.*

*When I became accustomed to the dark I noticed a figure, wrapped in torn clothing, lying on the cold cement floor. She turned her head toward me. I hardly recognized her. After several minutes of silence she began to speak. She told me of the sadistic methods the Germans employ during interrogations. It is impossible for a human being to endure them. She told me she took all the blame upon herself and that she would be the last to go. She had betrayed no one.*

*I tried to console her but she would not listen. I know what I have done, and what I am to expect, she said. She asked that the comrades continue with their work. It is easier to die when one knows that the work is being carried on.*

*I heard the door squeak. Jacob ordered me to come out. We took leave of each other. It was the last time I saw her.*

Before Noah left Rosa's death cell, she scribbled a farewell message to her underground comrades. She assured them that the only name she mentioned during the interrogations was that of a man in the Sonderkommando who she knew was dead. He, she had told the interrogators, was her only contact with the underground. She concluded her message with the Hebrew greeting of Hashomer Hatzair, "Khazak V' Hamatz" - Be strong and brave.

Several days later all the Jewish prisoners were ordered to the Appel-Platz to witness the hanging of the four young women - Esther, Ella, Regina, and Rosa.

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Locate Auschwitz and Treblinka, Poland on a map.
- Define the terms: crematorium, liquidate, ghetto, concentration camp, death camp, munitions factory, sonderkommando, kapo
- Identify the following: "Union," Birkenau, Auschwitz, Treblinka,

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What happened to Rosa Robota's family?
2. Identify some of the production operations or factories that were operated in the camp. Why do you think various corporations and businessmen wanted to set up their factories and businesses in the camps?
3. What was the *Pulver-Pavilion*? Why was it so important for the resistance to establish contact with the women who worked there?

4. How did the women manage to smuggle the dynamite from the munitions factory?
5. Explain several other techniques the members of the resistance used to hide what they were doing from the German guards.
6. Why was Rosa Robota's role so critical in the whole operation?
7. What work did the German guards require the Sonderkommando to do? Why did the Sonderkommando act sooner than planned to blow up the Crematorium?
8. Why were the other resistance leaders so worried when Rosa was among those taken to Block 11? What was different about Block 11 from other Blocks in the camp?
9. How did the resistance leaders manage to establish contact with Rosa while she was in Block 11?
10. How did Rosa display courage throughout her time in the camps? What last message did Rosa leave for her friends?
11. How was Rosa able to bring an end to the Nazi investigation into the sabotage of the crematorium? Why was this resistance effort in Auschwitz-Birkenau so remarkable?

### **Activities**

1. Design a medal that you think reflects Rosa Robota's courage to be awarded posthumously to the resistance heroine.
2. The destruction of the Crematorium was the only such uprising in Auschwitz-Birkenau that we know about. Why was it especially difficult to plan and carry out a revolt in a camp such as this? All of those who escaped in the aftermath and destruction of the crematorium were re-captured and executed. Why was it so hard for an escaped prisoner to reach safety or to remain hidden? Investigate to discover the names of other camps where prisoners staged uprisings and revolts. Make a chart with the names of these camps and indicate which were successful and which did not succeed. What are the reasons a revolt was considered successful or unsuccessful? On what basis would you judge such efforts?
3. Write a poem of praise for Rosa and her comrades.
4. Design a monument to commemorate the efforts of Rosa Robota and other courageous prisoners like her who resisted the Nazis in many different ways.



## **Sky: A True Story of Courage During World War II**

by

Hanneke Ippisch

Troll Communications L.L.C. and Simon & Shuster Children's Publishing Division,  
1998

Recommended for Grades 6-8

### **Synopsis**

This is an autobiography. Hanneke was only fifteen when the Nazi armies conquered her country. She describes a happy life growing up in Holland and how that changed when the Nazis came. As time passes, Hanneke was drawn into resistance work that included acting as a courier, escorting Jews to hiding places, and various other activities. Hanneke was captured by the Nazis and locked away in prison. Despite the efforts the Nazis made to intimidate and terrorize her, Hanneke's resistance continued. Eventually she was released when the Allied forces defeated the Nazis.

### **Quote**

"...I could not hear the last words, but I saw in the dark street close to my home, by the light of a flashlight held by a soldier, members of a Jewish family being pushed into a truck by Germans. The flashlight held by the soldier shone on the street for a short moment, and I had to duck so that the light would not shine on me. Then for a second the light paused on a girl's face. It was Rebecca, one of my classmates.

I swallowed hard. It seemed that something snapped inside me. I went home, quietly entered my room in the old parsonage, and stared through the small window at the sky. My tears flowed silently for a very long time." P. 35

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Research and read brief descriptions of the Nazi invasion, conquest, and occupation of The Netherlands during World War II.
- Research and read about some of the laws and proclamations enforced by the Nazis on the people in the western European countries they conquered.
- Examine maps showing the lands that were conquered and controlled by Nazi Germany during World War II.
- Define the terms: conqueror, perpetrator, collaborator, resistance, rescuer, partisan, bystander.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. How did life change for the average citizen in Holland after the Nazi conquest?
2. Identify and analyze some of the values and attitudes Hanneke learned in her family home. Explain how these values influenced her decision to join the Resistance and to help others.
3. Hanneke is warned that "there is nothing adventurous or romantic about working against the enemy - it is incredibly hard work. Your life would not be

yours anymore." Was this an accurate description of what was to come for Hanneke once she joined the resistance? Describe how her life changed once she became a member of the Resistance.

4. Describe some of the problems Hanneke faced as she performed her work for the Resistance over the years of Nazi occupation.
5. The author wrote that once she was captured, a new fight began. Describe this new struggle. Explain how Hanneke managed to win this new struggle and the difficulties she had to overcome to do so.
6. Describe Hanneke's relationship with her family during the years that she was involved with the Resistance. How was the family relationship affected by Hanneke's capture and imprisonment?

### **Activities**

1. Write a letter to Hanneke Ippisch describing your reactions to her decisions and her actions during the years of Nazi Germany's control of her country.
2. Read other stories of resistance in The Netherlands and in other countries conquered by Nazi Germany. In what ways are the stories similar? How are they different? Did those who chose to resist have anything in common?
3. What were the choices of moral responsibility made by Hanneke Ippisch?
4. Explain how Hanneke accepted the responsibility for her choices and followed through on her decisions. If you were able to present a medal for valor to Hanneke, what would you say to describe the reasons for bestowing this award on her? Many of those like Hanneke who risked their lives to resist and to rescue have not received any special recognition for their efforts. How do you think the work of these many unknown and unrecognized rescuers should be honored by their nations, by society, by the world?

**In Kindling Flame**  
**A Biography of Hannah Senesh**

by  
Linda Atkinson

Beech Tree Books, 1985.  
Recommended for Grades 7 and 8

**Synopsis**

Through the use of her diary, letters, poetry, interviews with her mother and brother, and official documents, this book for young adults tells the story of Hannah Senesh. The story unfolds with Hannah's happy life before antisemitism took hold in Hungary. Hannah decides to immigrate to Palestine. The reader follows Hannah's adventures and learns of Hannah's compelling desire to contribute to Jewish society. Readers will learn of Hannah's training through the British commandos and her unsuccessful mission to return to Hungary to save those Jews who remained there.

**Quote**

"There was nothing the Jews could do to end it, because it wasn't anything they did that caused it. It was what they were in the eyes of others: strangers, outsiders, people who did not belong." P. 36

**Pre-Reading Activities**

- Discuss and explain *Kristallnacht*.
- Review knowledge of Nazi terminology and methodology.
- Identify the location of Hungary and Palestine/Israel on a world map.
- Introduce and review the movement of Zionism.
- Discuss the history that is included in Chapter 4 of the book.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Discuss the depth of self-reflection that Hannah wrote about in her diary.
2. Discuss Hannah's attitude about the events that were occurring in Germany in comparison with the attitude of Catherine.
3. Discuss the importance and value of being a Zionist at that time and in the following period of time.
4. Analyze how choices and behaviors of individuals and groups influenced events and consequences.
5. Discuss the history of the Zionist movement.
6. Why did Hannah decide to leave the relative safety of Palestine to return to Nazi-controlled Europe?
7. How did Hannah prepare for her return to Europe?
8. What was Hannah's mission? What went wrong on Hannah's mission?
9. Explain what is known about Hannah's fate after she was captured.
10. Do you think Hannah made the correct decision to become involved in the resistance and rescue efforts? Explain your answer.

11. How did Hannah's family respond to her decision to return to Europe? What was their response to her capture and fate?
12. How did Hannah's comrades view her decision and her actions after she was captured?
13. What is Hannah's legacy? Explain your answer.

### Activities

1. Create a timeline or an outline of the historical events found in Chapter 4.
2. Divide the class into groups. Assign each group one of the following activities.
  - a) Research *Kristallnacht* further and prepare an oral presentation.
  - b) Identify, by listing, the barriers and sacrifices that Hannah would have to overcome to join the Zionist movement. (Research of Zionism is needed.)
  - c) Through research, identify and explain several forms of antisemitism that have occurred throughout history.
  - d) Investigate and then draw a kibbutz setting. Write an accompanying explanation of the illustration.

### Suggested Readings

- **So Young to Die: The Story of Hannah Senesh** by Candice F. Ransom.
- **Alicia: My Story** by Alicia Jerman Applebaum.
- **The Secret Ship** by Ruth Kluger and Peggy Mann.
- **Assignment Rescue** by Varian Fry.

### Teacher Resources

- **Rescuers: Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust** by Gay Block and Malka Drucker.
- **Courage to Care**. Book and video.

The Resistance  
by  
Deborah Bachrach  
from  
The Holocaust Library

Lucent Books, 1998  
Recommended for Grades 7 and 8

Synopsis

One part of The Holocaust Library series is a book on the resistance that deals with the following topics: Hitler's Objectives; Resistance; The Ghettos; Escape to the Forest; Holland; Le Chambon-sur-Lignon; Denmark Serves its Jews; the United States and Resistance to the Holocaust; and, the Jews of Hungary.

After describing Hitler's objectives, the author turns to the issue of resistance. Resistance occurred in a number of countries and showed that in the midst of adversity there existed decency in mankind despite the horrors of war. Many Jews and Gentiles performed acts of heroism to save Jews by rescuing them, hiding them, and helping them to survive under the most difficult conditions. This was done at the risk of their own lives.

**Chapter Five** deals with the heroic episode of Le Chambon sur-Lignon, France and the neighboring villagers. They opened up their hearts as well as their homes to welcome those that were being persecuted.

In 1940, France had a total of 350,000 Jews. When the Germans invaded France in the spring of 1940, 2/3 of the Jews fled to south. The others remained mainly in Paris. Politically, France was splintered and divided between the conservatives and the right wingers. The conquered nation was split into two zones - an Occupied Zone under German control in the north and the Vichy Government or Free Zone under the leadership of Marshal Petain who collaborated with the Germans. [Until the fall of Mussolini in Italy, there existed a third zone ostensibly controlled by the Italian Fascist government.]

Le Chambon was a tourist spot before the war, located on a high volcanic plateau near Vichy and near Lyons. The villagers of Le Chambon, Huguenots (French for Protestants), were themselves a deeply religious people who had suffered from religious persecution and who had found refuge in this region.

Since 1934, Andre Pascal Trocme had been the pastor of Le Chambon. He and his friend Edouard Theis played a pivotal role in the rescue of 5,000 Jews, mostly children.

The children were given new names and placed in non-Jewish homes for safekeeping. Both men believed in a non-violent response in the spirit of internationalism and in peace.

Pastor Trocme did not conceal his distaste for the vicious antisemitic policy of the Vichy Government towards the Jews. He wrote letters of protest about the roundup of French Jews and many times openly disobeyed the Vichy regime. For his beliefs, he and his friends were arrested twice and were forced into hiding

from 1943-44 until the liberation of France. At first the rescue operations were small but then they developed into a larger network of rescuers who assisted them in saving Jewish lives.

When the war ended, 93,000 French Jews had perished. The Vichy French had a high record of cooperation with the Nazis. At the same time, one must state that it was the courageous efforts of villagers like Le Chambon, the Jewish resistance groups and a Capuchin Monk named Pere Marie Benoit who saved 4,000 Jews. Later on the Church revoked a law of newly acquired citizenship that also saved thousands of Jewish lives.

## Chapter 5 - Le Chambon-sur-Lignon

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,  
with all your strength, with all your mind; and your  
neighbor as yourself.

-Deuteronomy 6:4-9

This inspired appeal to passive resistance came none too soon. The armistice spelled the doom for one-third of the Jews of France. Almost immediately harsh anti-Semitic laws were enacted. France provided Hitler with more assistance to find and deport its Jewish population than any other country in Western Europe. A surprisingly large number of French police willingly followed the orders of their German conquerors.

Marshall Petain showed his own support for Hitler and for fascism by signing even more severe anti-Semitic legislation than his German masters expected of him. The *Milice*, those French police who acted on behalf of the Vichy government (not German soldiers), brutally carried out the capture and deportation of the Jews of France.

Historian Milton Meltzer spells out what happened in France under Petain and his fascist allies. He writes that the government of Petain had two options: To join the Germans in persecuting the Jews or to protect the Jews and resist their deportation. The choice of the Vichy government was soon clear. Within months of the surrender to the Germans in 1940, it adopted racist laws that were in some ways harsher than Germany's.

Anti-Semitic measures became more and more violent. At first Jews were forced out of public jobs. Then many people were compelled to turn over their businesses to the government. Some were openly attacked on the streets of Paris. Then men, women, and children were pulled off the streets and placed in detention camps.

The people of Chambon read about these events and heard first-person accounts from some of the refugees. While Trocme advocated nonviolence, he and his parishioners could not remain passive in the face of the persecution of their fellow Frenchmen, the Jews. And so the people of the region, singly and collectively, almost spontaneously, began taking part in acts of passive resistance.

In the words of Trocme's daughter, Nelly Trocme Hewett, Trocme, Theis, the people of Chambon and in the surrounding parishes simply "tried to implement what they said they believed in" as the violence came close to their own homes.

The protection of innocent lives was a central precept of their religious faith. They believed that "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," even if it meant risking your own life to do so. When an old woman of Chambon was asked recently why she helped during the war, she answered simply, "The Bible says to feed the hungry."

During the dark years of World War II in Chambon, the pastors' faith and that of the rural people who were their flock were put to the test. Their resistance to the Holocaust demonstrated that "The human spirit can rise to the highest challenges when those challenges come their way."

### **The Quakers**

Andre Trocme went to Marseilles to the headquarters of the American Friends Service Committee to volunteer to work in a French detention camp. He spoke with Bruns Chambers, who ran the office in the city.

Chambers told Trocme that he and his parishioners would be of far more service working outside the camps. He asked if they could offer shelter for children if they could be rescued from the camps and from hiding places throughout the country. Thousands of young French Jews, members of various underground resistance movements, worked to rescue Jewish children.

Organizations such as the Jewish Fighting Organization, the Armee Juive (Jewish Army), L'Union des Juifs pour la Resistance and in particular Jewish units of the Scouts dedicated themselves to saving Jewish children. Sometimes they convinced Jewish parents in detention camps to relinquish their children to them. Jewish resistance fighters often were able to smuggle children out of their homes, orphanages, and internment camps and place them in hiding with families. Many of the children found shelter within facilities established by the Quakers and by the Catholic Church that, on the local level, offered considerable help to refugees.

Trocme agreed to participate in these rescues and knew his parishioners would also. The people wished to help, the tourist homes made placements possible, and the pastors of the villages had agreed that this was the best way in which they could assist in the rescue efforts. The French Jewish underground, the Quakers, and other organizations knew now that they could place children in Chambon and in the surrounding villages.

Historian Milton Meltzer points out that "American organizations such as the Quakers, the Unitarians and the YWCA fought hard with the Vichy regime to win authorization to take Jewish children out of detention camps." Although their agitation did not stop the deportations, it did unveil the cloak of secrecy behind which Petain had tried to hide his collaboration with the Germans. Historian David Wyman suggests that "although the protests failed to stop the evacuations, they may have contributed to the fact that the Nazis never undertook another large-scale removal of France's native-born Jews."

The rescuers' major challenges came in the summer of 1942, when the Germans began the deportation of French Jews east to concentration camps. The Germans, numbering perhaps twenty-five hundred men, but aided by thirty-five thousand Frenchmen, undertook a huge roundup of French Jews in Paris. Between July 6 and 17 alone, twenty-eight thousand Jews were captured. Ultimately ninety thousand French Jews, nearly a third of the entire Jewish population of France, were rounded up.

At first these people were placed in detention camps. Then they were placed on trains and shipped off to concentration camps where they were murdered by the Germans with the assistance of the French authorities.

During the massive July 1942 raid, single people immediately were placed in the Drancy concentration camp, just three miles northeast of Paris. Families with children were crowded into the Veldrome D'Hiver, a sports arena in Paris where they suffered for days without food, water, or toilet facilities. Then they too, were sent to Drancy, the major concentration camp in France. From there they were shipped to Auschwitz. The group included 4,051 children. None survived the war.

The people of the Chambon region saw the dire importance of their rescue efforts. The trickle of humanity who had found their way to Chambon became a veritable flood in the second half of the war. The Vichy authorities were aware of the resistance activities. George Lamirand, the Vichy minister for youth, came to Chambon in the summer of 1942. He wanted to make sure the village would turn over any Jewish refugees if it was required to do so.

The students of the local school presented to the minister a letter that had been written by Pastors Trocme and Theis. The letter reflected the oppositions of the people of Chambon to the Vichy actions against the Jews of Paris. In part the letter stated: "We have learned of the frightening scenes which took place three weeks ago in Paris...We feel obliged to tell you that there are among us a certain number of Jews. But, we make no distinction between Jews and non-Jews. It is contrary to the Gospel teachings."

### **Foiled Round up of Jews**

Later in the year, Vichy authorities came to Le Chambon to conduct a roundup of Jews. Trocme told the Germans that he did not recognize the difference between Jews and Christians. On that occasion the Vichy officials stayed for three weeks, hoping to capture refugees. In the end the Nazis left with their buses empty. From the wooded countryside around Chambon small groups of children and adults began to reemerge to return to their places of shelter.

The Germans were aware of the rescue movement of the area since the Chambonnais' activities were relatively open. At one point the Vichy police arrested Trocme, Theis, and a third man, the schoolmaster Roger Darcissac. The entire village assembled as the three men were led away. They were taken to an internment camp where they continued to preach their religious beliefs and from which, after a short time, they were released. Their experience in custody, while alarming, did not stop the rescue efforts of the three men, their wives, or the community.



Chambon thus became a place of refuge for people, mostly children who had been removed from southern internment camps. Few other French villages were willing to expose themselves to such extreme dangers and very few had the readily available rooming facilities to do so.

### **A Community Effort**

.....In addition to its role as a place for obtaining documents and providing shelter and schooling for refugees, the area also became something of an underground railroad depot. A group of local women formed an organization called the Cimade. The Cimade took small groups of people from Chambon to the Swiss border two hours away by train. One by one the refugees, mostly children, quietly crossed into Switzerland when the German border guards could be evaded. The Cimade, with assistance from the Scouts, were particularly active in the border areas, Switzerland, and Spain, where the smuggling of Jewish children was possible.

Near the village various resistance fighters called the Maquis found shelter in the woods, undertaking acts of sabotage against the German occupying forces. They used violence in order to overthrow the Germans and they included an exceptionally large number of French Jews. In fact, it is estimated that while the Jewish population of France numbered less than 1 percent of the population, the resistance movement was approximately 20 percent Jewish.

A Jewish fighter from Marseilles led one of these groups and helped to insure that no harm came to the communes on the Plateau. Perhaps it was he who passed the word to Trocme and Theis that they were again to be arrested. Trocme went into hiding for nine months until the Allies liberated France in 1944. Theis instead spent the remainder of the war working with the Cimade, which continued its underground railroad to Switzerland.

When the State of Israel was founded in 1948, its leaders wished to pay tribute to those people who had risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. They established an organization, Yad Vashem, to examine the credentials of those people they thought worthy of being included in that small but honored group. Andre and Magda Trocme and Edouard Theis and his wife Mildred were among those individuals whose names were included for consideration. The Israeli committee concluded that they had saved Jewish lives in peril of their own and they received the Medal of Righteousness from grateful survivors of the Holocaust.

Upon further consideration, however, the Israeli committee decided that it was obligated to accord still further recognition to all those who had been involved in what happened on the Plateau Vivarais-Lignon during the war. They understood that the World War II rescue efforts were largely spontaneous acts undertaken by the people of the area as a simple human response to the needs of people who required help. In 1990 the entire village and the surrounding communes were honored for their efforts during the war.

### **Pre-Reading Activities**

- Each chapter has its own story to tell. Research the background of each country including maps on the ghettos and the forests where the partisans fought. Included each of the following in your list - Holland, France-Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, Denmark and Hungary.
- Since Chapter 5 is being read: Study the history of France and see what happened as Germany invaded in May of 1940.
- Study the demographics of the Jewish population in France in 1940.
- Learn about the French Government and the Vichy under Marshal Petain from 1940-44.
- Who were the Huguenots in the story and who persecuted them? Why?
- How did the Jewish resistance groups help in the rescue of Jews?

### **Discussion Questions on Chapter 5**

1. Why were Pastor Trocme and his congregants willing to hide Jews?
2. Who was Marshal Petain? What were some of his policies?
3. What was the central precept of the religious faith of the villagers of Le Chambon?
4. What did Andre Trocme see when he went to the Marseilles headquarters of the American Friends Service? (What is another name for the American Friends Service?)
5. What Jewish organizations helped?
6. In the July of 1942, what major challenges faced the rescuers?
7. Did the Vichy authorities know about the rescues? What did they do?
8. How did the Quakers enter the picture of rescue?
9. How did Trocme's family personally shelter Jews and children?
10. To what extent did Edouard Theis, Trocme's friend, help?
11. What did the organization Cimade do?
12. What was the Maquis?
13. Why was Pastor Trocme arrested for a second time in 1943?
14. How did the State of Israel, founded in 1949, honor the Trocme and Theis families?
15. What is a pacifist? If Pastor Trocme was considered a pacifist, why did he help the Jews?

### **Activities**

1. Write a letter of thanks to the Trocme or Theis family for the role that they played in the rescue of Jews.
2. Interview a Righteous Rescuer in your community. Contact a Jewish Federation or Holocaust Centers for names. If that is not possible, look at a tape of testimony that can be obtained from a Holocaust Center, Museum or the Internet.
3. Write an essay about what makes a hero or heroine.
4. Take a current human rights issue and write an essay or story about it.
5. Make a bulletin board with examples of heroes and heroines of today.
6. Write a journalistic account of the invasion of France by the Germans.
7. Do a video taped interview of a Righteous Rescue story

### Suggested Readings

- **Greater Than Angels** by Carol Matas. Story about the Village of Le Chambon).
- **Twenty and Ten** by Claire Huchet Bishop (Resistance in France by children and teenagers).
- **Rose Blanche** by Roberto Innocenti ( Story of courageous girl in Germany).
- **The Story of Varian Fry:Assignment Rescue** by Varian Fry. (France)
- **They Fought Back:** Stories of Resistance by Yuri Suhl(Eastern Europe)
- **The Rescuers:Portrait of Moral Courage.** (Holland)
- **Motele-**by Gertrude Samuels (Partisans-Soviet Union)
- **Heroes of the Holocaust-**Arnold Geir ( 28 True Stories)
- **Rescue:The Story of How Gentiles Saved Jews in the Holocaust** by Milton Meltzer,NY: Harper Row,1988. Grades 6 and up.

### Videos

- **"Miracle at Moreaux."** Wonderworks PBS. Jewish children are saved by the heroic deeds of the children in a Catholic boarding school in France. Based on the book **Twenty and Ten**. 58 min. Grades 5<sup>th</sup> and up.
- **"Weapons of the Spirit."** Classroom version, 30 min. French village of the Le Chambon saves the lives of 5,000 Jews and children. 6<sup>th</sup> and up ADL
- **"The Courage to Care."**30 min Reminding viewers of the power of individual action and how these brave Gentiles risked their lives to save Jews. 6<sup>th</sup> and up. ADL and SSSS
- **"They Risked their Lives: Rescuers of the Holocaust."** 54 min. 100 rescuers from 12 countries tell their story. 7<sup>th</sup> and up. Ergo, Teaneck, NJ.

### For The Teacher

- **Rescue and Resistance: Portrait of the Holocaust.** NY:MacMillan Publishers. Contains 166 authoritative articles about men and women who resisted the Nazis-7<sup>th</sup> and up
- **Rescuers: Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust** by Gay Block and Malka Drucker. First person accounts of 49 nine rescuers who hid and saved Jews. Holmes and Meir 7<sup>th</sup> and up.
- **They Fought Back** by Uri Suhl. Accounts of the partisans that fought in the forests of Eastern Europe. NY: Schocken Books, 1981.
- **The Jewish Resistance in France** (1940-1944) by Anny Latour. The author was an active member of the Jewish Resistance. She tells the saga of heroic exploits, of narrow escapes and the devotion of the fighters. Holocaust Library, 216 W.18<sup>th</sup>Street NYC, 10011. Schocken Books, NY, 1981
- **Vichy France and the Jews** by Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton. This book seeks an answer to the question: What part did Vichy France really play in the Nazi effort to murder Jews that lived in France? Basic Books, 1981
- **Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed** by Phillip Hallie. The Story of the village of Le Chambon and how goodness happened there. Harper Colophon Books, 1979

## Internet

- **Booklet on Resistance 56 pages with photos**  
<http://www.ushmm.org/education/Resistance.pdf>
- **A Teacher's Guide to the Holocaust**  
**People, Timeline, The Arts, Society, Resources and Activities**  
<http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/holocaust/people/people.html>
- **Chapter 10-Jewish Resistance from Understanding the Holocaust by J. Weston Walch, Publisher**  
[http://www.socialstudies.com/c/@cc6HgBy\\_7iaME/Pages/article.html?article@JWW255a](http://www.socialstudies.com/c/@cc6HgBy_7iaME/Pages/article.html?article@JWW255a)

**To Live and Fight Another Day**  
**The Story of a Jewish Partisan Boy**

by

Bracha Weisbarth

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**Recommended for Grades 6-8**

Synopsis

This is the story of Benny, an eleven-year-old Jewish boy, who lived in the southwestern part of the Ukraine in a small *shtetl* called Malinsk. Prior to the war, his family owned a factory for spinning wool, a flourmill, a farm and parcels of land in the forest. Told in the first person, this book is fiction based on a true story that happened during World War II to the author's family.

In 1939, the Russians invaded the village but their occupation was less harsh than the later Nazi invasion that confiscated all Jewish properties and forced the men to work for them. The family endured terrible hardships, lost many members of their immediate family, and survived against terrible odds in the marshy forests of the Ukraine for two and half years. After the Nazis invaded the area, they ordered the Jews into the confines of a ghetto in Berezno. Life in the ghetto was harsh and little food was available. Benny posed as a Ukrainian farm boy and brought food for the family.

A former employee of Benny's father came one day to warn the family that an *aktion* was planned and the Jews of the ghetto would be annihilated. Benny immediately saw the danger and grabbed his little sister and started to leave, and his mother and older sister followed. His father and 2 uncles were working at a mill at the time, a camp run by the Nazis, and didn't know what was happening to the family. His father learned about the terrible news of Berezno Ghetto and thought that his family had perished. Later, he learned that his wife, their two daughters Dina and Sheindale and only son Benny had survived.

Most of the family escaped before the *aktion* and ran deep into the forests after hiding for a couple of days with kind farmers. Benny's grandparents felt that they were too old to run and hide and stayed behind with two daughters who refused to leave them.

Benny and his family were forced to survive the harshness of the forest, the cold, the rain, the heat, searches by the Nazis, constantly foraging for food, each day fearing discovery and possible death. While hiding in the forest, the family became partisans. After they blew up a German supply train, they were forced to leave their hiding place and travel to another forest where the Russian partisans were fighting. Benny assumed the role of an adult with all its responsibilities and challenges.

This is a touching story that shows the resourcefulness of the family, the courage of Benny, his parents, uncles and his sisters and how they survived the war. After liberation they were left with nothing. The citizens of their small town had confiscated all Jewish property and refused to return them to the rightful owners. The family saw that Ukraine could never be their home again, so after great difficulty, they immigrated to Israel, their homeland.

### Quote

"At this point, the Nazis and their helpers were hunting for any Jews who survived the massacre. No Jew was safe. Hearing this terrible news was a great shock to my father who assumed that we were among the dead. To ease his pain and his sorrow, he felt a great need to recite the *Kaddish*, the prayer for the dead. *Kaddish* is usually recited in the presence of a full *minyan*, ten Jewish men. My father was alone in the farmer's house but the need was so overpowering that he walked out into the orchard, stood among the trees and talked to them. 'I need nine more men for a *minyan*. If men can turn into cruel beasts, trees can turn into merciful men.' He walked from tree to tree, touched each in turn and said, 'I name thee Abraham. I name thee Yitchak. I name thee Yaacov. I name thee Yoseph. I name thee Benyamin. I name thee Yehuda. I name thee Reuven . I name thee Levi.. I name thee Asher.' After he touched nine trees and gave them Jewish names, he declared, 'Now we have a *minyan*, let us pray, *Isgadal Ve'yiskadash Sh'mey Rabbo...*' He recited the *Kaddish* for us, his own family, and all the Jews of Berezno. When he finished he went back to Pioter's house, sank to the floor in observance of *Shiva*, seven days of mourning."

### **About the book (From the author):**

This book is a work of fiction based on the true survival story of my family, as told to me by my mother and brother. It is the story of a partisan unit fighting the Nazis in the forests of the Ukraine and of a young Jewish boy who became a partisan.

Benny, the hero of this book, is a boy who assumed a man's responsibilities and did a man's job. He saved the lives of his mother and two sisters. He stole food to feed them and he faced danger and overcame his own fears. He gathered information for the partisans and took part in the battles they fought. Despite all these hardships, he was blessed with a keen sense of humor that helped him to find something funny in each of his adventures.

Despite acting the grown man, the boy in him comes through in this story. Benny is a bright boy whose quick thinking gets him out of trouble time after time and saves his life.

This is very much Benny's story, but it is also the story of his parents and the Jewish partisans who fought the Nazis in the forests of the Ukraine. It is the story of all those who survived and lived to fight another day.

My brother, who was 11 years old when the Russian army occupied the southwestern part of Ukraine where we lived, served as the model for Benny, the hero and narrator of this story.

Two years later, when the German army occupied our shtetl and all adult men were taken to labor camps, my thirteen-year-old brother indeed became the man of the family. He foraged for food while we were in the ghetto and saved our lives by forcing us to flee the ghetto on the eve of the mass murder of all the Jews in it. Later on, while we were in the forest, he performed many dangerous assignments.

For obvious reasons, personal and literary, many names, places, and events were changed.

## Chapter 1

### **"The War Comes To My Shtetl"**

On a bright June morning in 1941, the blue skies over my home in Malinsk darkened, and blackness descended into our lives. A black cloud that seemed to last forever. The war came to our shtetl with the sound of roaring motorbikes, stamping boots and shouted orders. German soldiers, guns in their hands, became the masters of our fate. I was thirteen at that time.

Only a small number of Jewish families lived in our shtetl, Malinsk, located in the Southwest of the Ukraine in an area known as Volyn. Malinsk derived its name from the Ukrainian word "maliny" (berries). Wild berries grew in profusion in the nearby forest.

Malinsk was situated along a major and strategic railway. This railway connected the county seat Rovno all the way to Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine. The roads in this part of the Ukraine were actually dirt tracks, usable only during the summer and winter. In the spring and fall, they were mired in deep mud, totally impassable. The railway was the only means of transportation into the interior of Russia. Trains transported men and cattle, all merchandise, food, gas, and -at times of war- weapons and ammunition. Keeping the trains running was of major importance in peace and in wartime. Next to the railroad station of Malinsk were lumberyards. Train tracks connected the lumberyard with the main railway. The dense forests of this area supplied lumber, which was loaded on flatcars and sent to other locations. Many of the people living in Malinsk worked in the lumberyards or were involved in lumber trade, among them my own family.

Isolated farms and small villages, located on the edge of the very dense and marshy primeval forest, sparsely populated this region of the Ukraine. Most of the inhabitants were of Ukrainian descent. They raised crops of potatoes, sugar beets, vegetables and livestock. A small number of Poles lived in the area, mostly in the larger villages. An even larger population of Jews lived there, as well. They worked as tradesmen, storekeepers, and merchants. Malinsk was one of the larger villages in the area because it had a train station, and the weekly market was held in the center of the village.

My father, his father and his grandfather all were born in this village. The family owned a factory for spinning wool, a flourmill, a farm and parcels of land in the forest.

We lived on the farm outside the village in two large houses. My grandparents, David and Reizl, my two unmarried uncles Moshe and Shlomo, and my two young aunts, Feigale and Rivale, occupied one house. We lived in the other house - my parents, my two sisters and me.

My father Herschl was the oldest son. He was tall and strong with a merry twinkle in his blue eyes. He used to come home from work at mealtime, give my mother a big hug, and play for a while with us children. He would catch my two-year-old sister Sheindale and bounce her up and down in his arms till she

squealed with laughter and her blond curls danced around her face. He would wrestle me down to the floor and tease me constantly saying that I have to eat much more if I wished to grow up strong as he. I was the only male grandchild in the family and, according to my older sister Dina, was a spoiled brat. However, on those occasions, she would laugh with us but wouldn't join the rough games. At seventeen, she considered herself a young lady above such childishness. My mother Mania grew up in the city. She was well educated, gentle and refined. She hovered over us and watched our horse play with a smile on her face. She greatly enjoyed this special time when her whole family was together, playing happily. As it turned out these happy times would not last – the war brought them to an end.

My father and his younger brothers grew up on the farm. Three tall, strong and brave men who did not have the time to devote themselves to study because they had to manage the family's properties. They knew every farmer in the surrounding villages and every nook and glade in the forest. They had to go into the forest frequently because they were in the lumber business. It was their job to select the right trees for harvesting. As the son of the wealthiest family in the village, my father became the leader of the small Jewish community in Malinsk and supported many social activities with his donations. Mother was much involved with the welfare of the Jewish children and visited the sick and the old members of our community on a regular basis. We had many relatives in neighboring villages and in Rovno.

Now that his sons were grown-up and able to take over his work, Grandfather David was finally able to retire and take up the study of the Torah. The tutor, whom he hired to teach his grandchildren in the afternoons, studied with him in the mornings. He used to sit in the warm living room, stroking his white beard, absorbed in his studies.

Grandmother Reizl, plump and gentle, was busy running the large household for her unmarried children. My lovely aunts, Rivale and Feigale, helped her with the housework. She always prepared something sweet and tasty for us grandchildren to munch on. Dina, my sister, was a year younger than her aunt Feigale, and both attended the same high school. They were considered the most beautiful girls in our shtetl, admired by local young men and strangers who came to visit.

After school I would sneak into grandmother's kitchen and taste the wonderful dishes that she cooked. I liked best to taste the sweet fruit jams and jellies which seemed to capture the sweetness of summer in their glass jars. My favorite dish was a pastry cooked in honey called teigalach. I did have a great liking for all sweet delicacies.

Mother used to complain that I was too skinny and did not grow taller because I did not eat enough. I was always very picky about my food. Little did she know that at times Grandmother's food was to blame for my lack of appetite at mealtime. She was right as far as my growing was concerned. I was a little short for my age. I did not resemble my tall father or my strong uncles. I took after my delicate mother. I was able to get away with a lot of pranks due to this fact.



Actually I had the reputation of being a daredevil who came up with many imaginative games and led my friends into many mischievous adventures.

For me life on the farm was happy and carefree. In the morning I walked all the way to the village school where all the children of the village - Jew, Ukrainian and Poles - studied together. Some Jewish families did not want to send their children to a secular public school, but attending school was the law of the land and everyone had to comply. At school we studied the Polish language and history because our area of the Ukraine was ceded to Poland after the First World War. Later when the Russians took over, we studied the Russian language and history.

I made friends with many of my classmates, and spoke Polish, Russian and Ukrainian fluently. At home I spoke Yiddish. In the afternoons the tutor came to our house to teach us Chumash - the five books of the Torah, and some Hebrew. I worked extra hard preparing for my Bar Mitzvah during the last year before the German occupation. After the Hebrew lessons, I had chores to perform.

During spring and summer, it was very hard for me to stick to my studies, and every so often I would play hooky. I preferred to play in the forest or go with my friends for a swim in the small lake nearby. In winter I spent my time sleigh riding, skating on the frozen lake or trying to ski on my wooden, homemade skis.

The German soldiers who came to Malinsk that June were not the first to invade our peaceful village. After the First World War, Polish Border Patrol units arrived and established an army camp on the outskirts of the village, right next to our farm. My Uncle Moshe served as an officer in the Polish army. Then in 1939, when I was eleven-years-old, the Russian army occupied the area. They took over the Polish army camp. My friends and I loved to sneak up to the fence of the camp, hide in the tall grass, and watch the soldiers. Our favorite game was to play "Soldiers" marching about with wooden guns, saluting smartly, and fighting important battles. That was fun.

When the Russian communists took over, our well-to-do family was branded as "Kulaks" (rich landowners) - enemies of the people. We were in great danger because many Kulak families were summarily shot, or, at best, sent into exile to Siberia. As it was, we were lucky. We were permitted to remain in Malinsk in our own house. All our properties were confiscated and taken over by the communist state. My father was appointed manager of the factory and the flourmill. His personal freedom was severely curtailed, and every move he made was watched.

I had to grow up in a hurry and take over some of my father's duties in order to keep our family safe. At times I was sent to deliver messages to farmers, to carry packages to their houses, or to collect rent from tenants who lived in an apartment house which belonged to my grandfather. When I was told to do something, I did not ask for explanations. I did as I was told, and learned early enough to keep away from the watchful eyes of the Russian officials.

Still, despite the Russian occupation, life seemed to go on as usual. The Russian soldiers were friendly toward us. Little did I notice the concern of my parents and my uncles. I did not pay too much attention to the mysterious

comings and going of the men of the family, the cows that disappeared from the barn, the hushed conversations.

I turned thirteen in the spring. As the first grandchild to celebrate a Bar Mitzvah, a great celebration was held in my honor. Family members from far and near came to celebrate. Aunts, uncles and cousins filled our house. There were so many of them that some had to stay with Jewish neighbors in the village. The guest of honor was Uncle Boris who was an engineer, a loyal communist who lived in Russia. Despite the fact that it was a time of war, my mother, with the help of Grandma Reizl, my aunts and our cook, prepared a wonderful feast. What joy to be together, to play with my cousins, to receive gifts from our guests. Little did we know that this would be our last joyous family gathering and that most of the party would never see each other again.

War came to our region. The German army invaded our district and the bad times were upon us. Orders were sent out from the army headquarters to our farm ordering us to leave our home and move in with another Jewish family in Malinsk. By order of the German commander, all properties and goods belonging to the Jews were confiscated. Whatever properties our family still owned, our farm, a house in the middle of the shtetl that belonged to our family, were confiscated. All the Jewish men were ordered to work for the Germans. They were ordered to come each morning to the train yard and forced to work long hours loading lumber onto the flatcars. Some were sent to the lumber camp in the forest to cut the trees. In the evening the men were allowed to go home.

Our whole family now lived together in a house that once belonged to us. At this time, there was very little food available for the local population, and even less so for the Jews. It was up to the women, who stayed behind, to somehow obtain food for their children. Mostly, they were able to get some food by bartering for it in the market, exchanging a tablecloth for a few potatoes, or a cooking pot for a handful of vegetables. Bread was rationed, and we were allowed to buy a small portion at the bakery. All Jewish children were forbidden to attend the village school. My mother became our unofficial teacher, and my grandfather taught us Hebrew. Most of the time we were free to play in the back yards of our homes. There were just a few German soldiers in the shtetl. Ukrainian collaborators in German uniforms supervised the working men, and enforced the new German laws.

It was a hard time for our parents, but they hoped that eventually matters would calm down and we would be able to go back to the life we led before the Germans came. Mother said to us "The Germans are civilized people, and when the fighting will end they will leave us alone." Things went on in this manner for close to a year.

We lived under these harsh conditions until June 1942 when new orders from the Germans were posted telling us to gather in the Market Square at noon. On this beautiful summer day, all the Jewish families gathered in the Market Square and were surrounded by German soldiers. They looked so menacing and cruel. They shouted and pushed us around. One young soldier kicked my grandfather who was unable to walk fast enough. The women cried softly, their faces pale,

the young children huddled against them, while the men stood next to their families as if to protect them from harm.

A German officer dressed in black stood up in his command-car and proceeded to read long German sentences from a paper that he held in his hands. His voice was loud and harsh and the words made no sense to me, even though I understood some German. However, they seemed to be clear to the adults around me. I kept trying unsuccessfully to understand what the officer wanted us to do. I got an answer soon enough when my mother translated his words to the people standing around us. The officer announced that hereby all able-bodied men were ordered to walk to a lumber camp in the forest where they would work as lumberjacks and fell trees needed for the German war effort. All Jewish women, children, and old men were ordered to leave Malinsk where they had lived all their lives, and to walk to the nearby town called Berezno some twelve kilometers away. He said that lodging would be provided for all in a special place where all the Jews would live from now on. All properties and goods in Malinsk belonging to the Jews were to be taken over by the German army. We were ordered to go immediately to our homes, pack up some clothes and some food, and to come back to the square in two hours.

On hearing these orders, panic set in and the crying of the women grew louder, and so did the shouts of the German soldiers. Each family ran home to gather clothes and food for the journey. My mother, that frail and delicate woman, found the strength to go hastily through our closets and make bundles of clothes for each one of us. Then she wrapped bread in a clean cloth, gathered some potatoes and apples in a sack, and gave it to me to carry. I was to go with my mother and sisters. I, who celebrated my Bar Mitzvah just a few months ago and recited the words "Today I am a Man," did not accept this role willingly.

"Mother, I am not a small child anymore. I will go with father to the lumber camp. Give this sack to Dina. She can carry it."

My father, who was busy preparing his own bundle of clothes and food while talking to his parents and his sisters trying to calm their fears, turned to me. "Yes, Benny, you are not a child anymore. That is why you must go with your mother and sisters, with your grandparents and aunts. You are a strong young man; you must help them and do everything that you can to protect them. I am counting on you."

Carrying our bundles, we walked back to the Market Square. Mothers and children hugged and cried as they took leave of their fathers and brothers, not knowing when they would meet again. All the while the Ukrainian villagers watched this scene, some with tears in their eyes, and others with smug smiles on their faces. Among them were some of my classmates with whom I had played just a short while ago.

The sad march to Berezno, to the unknown fate that awaited us, had started amidst the shouts of German soldiers. I kept turning my head, looking at the group of men walking in the other direction, the German soldiers pointing their guns at them.

We walked for a long time in silence, broken by deep sighs, the quiet sobs of adults and the whimpering of the children. Every one of us was carrying a

bundle. Even my little sister, Sheindale, carried a small bundle of her own and her favorite doll. We walked and walked for endless hours. No one paid attention to the beautiful trees or the fresh smell of the flowers growing along the road. From time to time the German soldiers would shout "Halt!" and we would sink down to the ground, snatching a few moments of rest.

The German officer sat in his car, trailing our bedraggled group. He was smoking a cigarette, paying little attention to the hungry and exhausted Jews. One of the women, a mother of six young children who carried two of them in her arms, fell to her knees unable to walk any farther.

Mother dropped her own bundle and walked over to the officer in the car. She said in German, "Please, Sir, please, help this poor woman; allow her to ride in your car." He looked at her with contempt. "If you wish to help her, take her children and carry them yourself. I will not contaminate my car with dirty Jews."

Quietly, mother distributed her own bundles among us. She picked up one of the children and carried him the rest of the way while the woman carried her other child. Each time, when one of the people in our group could walk no more, those among us who could come over and helped them. As the road seemed to stretch endlessly, more and more of the women and children could not keep up with the group. They were at the end of their strength.

Darkness fell, and we were ordered to move to the side of the road to camp there for the night. This was a new experience for me, my first time of sleeping outside under a canopy of stars. At first I could not sleep. The rustle of small animals in the grass sounded very loud and frightening, and the soft cries of the exhausted women and children seemed to go on forever. Finally, my own tiredness took over and I fell asleep.

At dawn, the shouts of the German soldiers woke us up and we resumed our march. At last, after what seemed an eternity, tired and miserable, we reached Berezno. We were herded to one of the poorer sections of this small town. This was the Berezno Ghetto. A wooden wall surrounded a small-enclosed area. One gate through which people entered the enclosure led to the road leading to the center of Berezno. During the day, Ukrainian guards made sure that no one left the enclosure without a written pass. The gate was locked at sundown in order to keep us in the ghetto.

As we walked into the ghetto, many of our relatives and Jewish friends stood along the road and watched our group in silence. They had been herded into the ghetto from the neighboring villages some time before us.

In all, more than 2,200 Jewish men, women and children lived in this small and overcrowded part of the town. Friends and relatives, who had come earlier, invited their kin to share their cramped quarters. Those who had no relatives were assigned lodging in vacant rooms in decrepit buildings, two and three families to a room.

Our family of eight - my mother, my sisters and I, my grandparents and aunts - were given one room in a crowded building. We were lucky at that. Just our family of eight in one room. Others fared much worse, sharing a room with other families. This room was to be our new home.

All newcomers were given identity cards and ration cards, and acquainted with the rules that governed life in the ghetto. We were not free to come and go without permission. We had to be back in the ghetto by sundown; we had to obey these rules or be punished for breaking them.

The people in the ghetto were very dejected. They finally realized how bad things really were for us. One could feel the fear and the despair of the adults, see the sorrow in their eyes.

As for me, it was actually a very exciting time. Here in the ghetto I met a group of Jewish boys whom I had known previously as well as some new boys. There was no school to attend and nothing for us to do. We formed a gang and roamed the streets of the ghetto trying our best to escape the crowded rooms and the worried faces of the adults. In some ways, being free of any duties, playing with friends, was fun.

As time went by, food became very scarce in the ghetto. It then became the responsibility of the older children to provide for their families. All adults needed special passes to leave the ghetto, but the Ukrainian guards paid little attention to us, a rowdy group of children running freely through the gate. We were free to come and go outside the ghetto boundaries. That was very important for our survival. We were able to sneak out some goods and exchange them for much needed food. Soon enough I learned to run out of the ghetto, hiding some item of mother's clothes or a small ornament under my shirt and try to exchange it for potatoes or corn at the market. I did not look Jewish. My hair was a sun bleached blond and I had inherited my blue eyes from my father. I spoke Ukrainian and Polish perfectly, without an accent. The farmers in the market never suspected that I was a Jewish boy. They all took me for Ukrainian and, as such, I could barter freely with the farmers and get more food than some of my friends.

We lived this way for a couple of months. From time to time word would reach us from father in the lumber camp, telling us that he and all the others were well. During the time we lived in the ghetto, a former employee of father's, Mr. Kurtz, was appointed to manage our woolens factory. He would come from time to time to visit us in the ghetto and bring some food for us and some fresh milk for my little sister. We were very thankful for this help. Every time mother thanked him, he would say: "Pan Herschko was always good to me and to my family, this is the least I can do in return." Pan Herschko - Mr. Herschko - was the name by which the farmers in the area addressed my father.

One afternoon, some two months after we came to the ghetto, this good man came to our room, took my mother aside and whispered anxiously: "Panni Mania, take your family out of here this very evening. Something bad is about to happen tomorrow. Go to the forest, hide!"

Mother stood looking at him, unable to decide what to do. "Where can we go? We cannot leave all our relatives and run," she said tearfully. He shrugged, unable to help her, and left in a hurry.

Mother called the family together and told them what was said to her. My grandfather said, "Grandmother and I are too old to run and hide in the forest. You children must go without us, don't worry, nothing will happen." But my aunts

would not hear about it. They would not leave their parents and run. Mother decided that she too couldn't leave without them. Dina, my older sister told her, "If you don't go, then I will stay with you."

I realized that the next step was up to me. I was the man of the family now. I must make the decision. I must protect my mother and sisters, just as father had told me. I must act now!

Without saying anything, I took hold of little Sheindale's hand and started walking toward the gate.

"What are you doing? Where are you going?" mother cried.

"I am taking Sheindale out of here. We will go to the neighboring village and hide with a Ukrainian friend over there. If everything will turn out well, we will come back tomorrow."

I kept on walking. Mother realized that she couldn't do anything to stop me. She grabbed a head-kerchief, tied it in the fashion of a Ukrainian babushka, and followed me. Dina ran after her. We walked out through the gate without challenge and kept on walking along the road toward the village where our friend lived. Once out of town, I saw German army trucks loaded with soldiers heading toward Berezno. This was a disturbing sight. I started walking faster and faster in the opposite direction. Why were all these trucks going toward Berezno? What was the "Bad Thing" that our friend warned us about? These were the thoughts that kept running through my mind as we walked on in silence, trying not to draw attention to our little group, trying to look like a village family returning home from the market.

Finally at sundown, we reached the next village and entered our friend's house. Mother told him that we needed to stay with his family for one or two nights because we were on our way to visit our father in the lumber camp. He agreed and made us welcome, offering us something to eat. Then he led us to the barn and told us that we could sleep in the barn loft on the freshly cut hay.

When he left, mother pointed to one of the cows in the barn. "This is Bielka, the cow that used to belong to your grandmother," she said. "When the Russians came to Malinsk, we gave the cow to this man, for safekeeping."

"So this is what happened to all the cows that belonged to us," Dina said quietly, as though finally finding the answer to a question that had kept bothering her.

"Yes, when the Russians came, we gave all the cows but one, for safekeeping, to other farmers. Under Communist law, each farmer may keep only one cow on his farm, or be branded "Enemy of the People." A number of farmers have our cows, and they owe us some favors."

Now I, too, understood what had happened to our cows, and I understood why mother felt free to ask a favor from this man.

Sleeping in the sweet-smelling hayloft was another new experience for me. I slept very well that night. In the morning the farmer, Fedor, came to the barn, a frightened look in his eyes. "Panni Mania, Panni Mania, a terrible thing has happened. Early in the morning we heard many shots fired. My boy ran to find out what happened. All the Jews of the ghetto, all the women and children were

killed. The German soldiers shot them in the old graveyard of Berezno. Not one of them survived."

That is how we learned of the terrible fate of the Jews in Berezno. A fate from which but a few lucky ones who ran away were spared.

## *Chapter 6*

### **"Spring in the Forest; We Derail a Train"**

The first terrible winter in the forest was very hard, but we survived it, and now spring was here.

Our "*zemplanka*," the branch covered underground dugout, had provided us with safety and warmth. Trading for food, or "liberating" it, kept the worst pangs of hunger away. Living as part of a group provided us with friendship and support, a comfort for the wounded souls of the survivors. But the hardships of continued survival in the forest were immense. The crowding in the tight space, our eyes constantly irritated by the smoke, the dirt, the lice which infested our hair and clothes, were the price we had to pay for the comfort of our underground dwelling. It was impossible to wash either our bodies or our clothes. As a result of the lice bites, we scratched and scratched ourselves constantly and some of the scratches became infected. The only cure for such an infection was to cook-up a black ointment made of tree-bark and leaves, and apply it to the infected area. This ointment cured the infection, but turned our undershirts into a black mess. Boiling them in hot water and scrubbing them for a long time could clean the undershirts.

My mother applied the black concoction to cure our infections and, whenever possible, boiled and scrubbed our under-shirts while we sat wrapped in blankets waiting for them be washed and dried. This was exceedingly hard work under these conditions. First enough snow had to be melted and the shirts had to be scrubbed for a long time, lacking any soap, to get rid of the black stains. My mother kept doing it, never complaining about this particular hardship. The rest of the group followed her example. She did her best to keep our hair clean of lice by rubbing gasoline into our scalps.

By then we all had some warm clothes, and wore boots made of felt which kept our feet warm. But we were unable to obtain a pair of boots small enough for Sheindale. This was a real problem. Then, one of member of our group, a cobbler by trade, offered mother a deal. He would fashion a pair of boots for my little sister from a worn-out pair of leather boots he owned and, in exchange, my mother would clean and scrub his black, ointment-encrusted shirt for the length of the whole winter. Without hesitation, my mother agreed to the deal. She even sewed missing buttons to his shirt and, in exchange, Sheindale got a pair of warm boots.

During the winter we were unable to execute additional attacks against the Nazis. But the resolve to fight them was never abandoned. Long discussions ensued in which various plans were proposed. By now we had a few things going for us. We had more guns and ammunition, six hand grenades, and gasoline to make firebombs better known as "Molotov Grenades." Above all, the men had a deep commitment to keep inflicting damage upon the Nazis even at

the cost of their own lives. During all this time the war went on in the Ukraine, but at a slower pace as the harsh winter hampered the German army.

As winter was coming to an end, one plan came to the forefront of all discussions and took precedence in the men's thinking. The plan was to derail a German freight train. Because of the backwardness of the country and the harsh weather conditions, there were very few paved roads in Russia and the Ukraine. Trains delivered most of the soldiers as well as all the supplies needed by the German army. Maintaining the rail system was of major strategic importance to them. Disrupting the flow of men and materials to the front was a tactical necessity for the Russian side. As it happened, a very important rail track leading into Russia ran in the region where we were hiding. On this track heavily loaded trains brought supplies and men from Germany to the front. In the early days of the spring, when the melting snow turned all the roads into a swamp and the German war effort was renewed in full scale, their dependence on the rail system was complete. From our point of view, this dependence was the soft under-belly of the enemy. A great deal of damage could be inflicted on our enemies by very little means and a lot of daring.

During one of our discussions, one of the men said unexpectedly, "If I am right in my calculation, one week from today will be the eve of Pesach, the night of the Seder."

We were surprised by this announcement and saddened by it. Just a year ago most of the men celebrated the Seder night as best they could, reading the Haggadah, eating the special Pesach meal together with their families, feeling the joy of the holiday which celebrated the Jewish redemption from slavery. And now...bereft, lonely, hungry, in constant danger, how can we celebrate? Grief and despair settled upon us.

Without thinking I started singing the first of the four questions. "Ma Nishtana..." As I sang Sheindale joined me in her clear and sweet voice, singing the ancient tune which she had not forgotten. Others joined us and soon we sang all the four questions.

"We will have a Seder," my mother said. "It is not enough for us to survive death. Our survival, our life, must have a meaning. We shall celebrate Pesach as a sign of our eventual deliverance from pain and suffering." Her words seemed to put the spirit back into the hearts of the members of our group, to lift them from their despair.

"Yes, yes, let's have a Seder," Uncle Moshe agreed.

"I can recite the Haggadah by heart," said my father, "but we need Matzah for the Seder and wine and bitter herbs."

"Bitter herbs?" asked Yacov. "Isn't our life bitter enough?"

The rest of the men ignored his comment and started to plan the Seder. A list of things needed for the Seder was drawn up, and the men set out to obtain as much as possible of what was needed. For the moment, the plan for the Seder took precedence over the plan for the train derailment.

It was decided that some men would go to a nearby Ukrainian village and obtain flour and food for the festive night. Dina pulled out a small silver pin that



held her long braid in place and handed it over to my Uncle Moshe who was among the men going to the village.

"See if you can trade this in for some cherry wine." she said.

The men left, and my mother with the help of the two sisters Bella and Rosa set about to clean our *zemplanka*.

"This is as should be, we always cleaned our homes for Pesach," she said.

They also ordered all the men to wash themselves and to launder their shirts for the Seder night. When the men who had gone to the village returned bringing flour, wine, beets, and potatoes, the real work of preparation for the Seder started.

First we had to bake Matzah. A large stone was placed over the fire-bed, a fire was lit, and, while the stone became hot, dough made of flour and water was prepared. With the help of a round piece of wood, Dina, Rosa and Shlomo rolled the dough into round Matzoth. Sheindale was given a fork and told to prick holes in the round Matzoth. Mother placed the finished product on the hot stone, and after a short time removed the baked Matzoth from this makeshift oven unto a clean sheet. I was kept busy with gathering more and more wood for the fire. Father and the other men erected a lean-to shelter made of branches next to the entrance to our dugout.

On the day of the Seder, my mother and the other women cooked the festive meal, a hot beet soup with a meat bone adding flavor to it. Hot cooked potatoes. Somehow a few eggs were obtained and cooked for the feast, and a small bottle of cherry wine graced our makeshift Seder table, a white sheet spread on the ground. Sheindale managed to find a few early blooming spring flowers to decorate the table for this festive occasion. We all sat around the white sheet while my father recited the blessing over the wine and we all took a sip from the small bottle. Our Seder was in full progress. We softly recited as much of the Haggadah as we remembered. We asked the Four Questions, we sang in muted voices the ancient traditional songs. We invited Elijah to come to our Seder and we ate all the special delicious foods with relish. Sheindale's eyes sparkled with joy, while mother's eyes sparkled with unshed tears. For a moment all our troubles seemed to have been lifted. This Seder was a far cry from the grand Seder we used to celebrate. But it had a deep meaning for all of us. After all, we were free, we were together, and we upheld our traditional right to celebrate our holiday. Is this how our ancestors celebrated the Seder when they left Egypt? Sitting on the ground, under a flimsy lean-to, eating unleavened bread, and thanking God for their deliverance?

The Seder was special and wonderful. It lifted our spirits and strengthened our resolve to execute our plan to derail a German supply train. As always, the first step was to obtain as much information as possible about our target, get a train schedule, scout out the lay of the land and pick the best place for the derailment. We wanted to inflict the most damage on our enemy, to disrupt the running of the trains for the longest time possible, and to achieve our goal without any loss of life to our group.

Once again, disguised as a Ukrainian farm boy, I was sent into Malinsk where the train station and a train-yard were located. On this mission I was in great

danger because any one of our former neighbors or one of my schoolmates might recognize me. My father acknowledged this danger and hesitated in making the decision to send me into our shtetl.

"Look, Father," I said, "it has been almost a year since I was last in our shtetl. I have grown taller and thinner, my hair is longer, and I look really dirty. No one knows that I am still alive. I am sure that no one will recognize me. Trust me, Father, I will not be caught. I can run faster than all the adults in our shtetl and I can beat up any kid that will challenge me."

My father made me promise one thing before going, which I did. "I promise not to go anywhere near our farm, and I will not try to find my dog Rex," I said.

If any one could recognize me it would be Rex. We practically grew up together. He was my pet and playmate. I had taught Rex to perform a few tricks that he learned very quickly because he was a very intelligent dog. We were a great team. With my Rex around, I was not afraid of anyone. The bullies of our shtetl learned to give us a wide berth because Rex was very fierce when he thought that I was in danger. What fine adventures the two of us had shared! Thinking of them made me smile. As much as I wished to have my old friend with me in the forest, as much as I wanted to see how he was doing, I knew that he might disclose my identity while showing his love for me, putting my life in danger.

Disguised and full of determination, I walked to the shtetl while my father stayed behind in the forest. Neither looking right nor left, I walked past the school that I had attended more than a year ago. Fortunately, school was in session and I did not meet any of my classmates. I went to the train station, looking around me with great curiosity as befitted a farm boy who is excited by the sight of locomotives spewing smoke and steam and train cars connected to each other like a long necklace of beads. I looked with admiring eyes at the assistant engineer who perceived my admiration, and proudly showed me how he let the steam whistle blow by pulling on a certain switch.

"Oh, it must be wonderful to operate a train, to go to many distant places," I babbled. "How often do you go up and down this track?"

"Now that spring is here, we all are very busy. We work around the clock. Every day five or six trains leave this station, and many more pass this way without stopping," he answered. "The damned Germans keep sending trains day and night, filled with arms and men. I think that soon the war will be over because they are so strong. They will win, and that will be the end for us all. They are so sure of themselves that they do not even send out sentries to inspect the rails."

I detected a note of bitterness in his voice and decided to take a chance.

"What if the trains would stop going? Would the Germans still win the war?" I asked innocently.

He looked at me, winked and said, "If the trains stop, it would be very bad for them."

"If someone had information about train schedules, maybe something could be done," I said, knowing that by saying this I had put my life in his hands.

"The schedules for all trains are kept in the in the top drawer of the stationmaster's desk, in his office," he said and, turning his back to me. he walked away. He knew well enough that giving such information to a stranger might be dangerous for him, yet he had the courage to do it.

I decided that now, having obtained this important piece of information, I must lay my hands on these train schedules.

I walked into the station and hung around the door leading to the stationmaster's office, hoping that I might get an opportunity to sneak in and steal these precious papers. I waited and waited, but the office was occupied constantly and I did not get a chance to go inside, much less get the papers. I was disappointed, but as the afternoon progressed, I knew that I could not hang around any longer. I had to leave. And so I walked out of the station and out of my shtetl, greatly disappointed.

When I got back to the forest, I informed my father about the fact that German sentries did not check the tracks. I told him also not being able to steal the train schedules.

"Don't worry," my father said, "you did well not to put yourself in danger. You need to understand that when important papers go missing, the enemy is alerted to danger and changes his tactics. Don't worry, we will organize an around-the-clock watch right at the place we plan to derail the train. This way we will obtain the necessary information without alerting the Germans. At least, thanks to your report, we know that we can do all this without being disturbed by German sentries."

So our next step was to locate a good spot for the derailment and post lookouts to determine the frequency of trains. A method for derailing the train successfully had to be found. After all, we did not have any experience in derailing trains.

The men got busy walking stealthily along the tracks and trying to locate the best place for the planned derailment and observing train movement. Finally two things became clear to us. It would be best to derail a long freight train during the night to try to cause a great deal of damage to the train and to the tracks, and to make impossible the quick repair of the damage. At last, a suitable place was chosen. It was on a straight stretch of track located on a high embankment adjacent to a clump of thick trees and dense bushes. This clump of trees offered a good hiding place for our men, a place from which they could run for safety once the deed was done. It was decided that the best way to cause a derailment without using any explosives was to dislodge a length of rail in such a way that, once the locomotive traveling at a fast speed and pulling a number of cars would pass that spot, the track would come apart. The cars would jump the track and fall down the embankment, pulling the rest of the long train with them.

This seemed to be a good plan, not too hard to achieve by a determined group of people. But I was a little disappointed. I kept hoping that we would put explosives under a bridge, blow it up and then fire at the panic-stricken Nazi soldiers with our guns. This was really just a dream of a boy who had a vivid imagination. The reality was that we did not have enough explosives to blow up a bridge, or enough men to ambush a train full of Nazi soldiers. Our method had

to be different, less dramatic but probably just as effective. We had to do the job quietly, decisively, and disappear afterwards without leaving a trace.

I was very glad to be chosen to go with the party attempting the derailment. I was afraid that my father would leave me behind to guard the women. As before, my main duty was to serve as a lookout, to warn the men of any approaching danger.

A few days later on a moonless night, we walked a long distance until we reached a part of the forest close to the spot we chose for derailment. We were tired from the long march. My father advised us to eat some food and to try to sleep.

"Tomorrow night we will have to do a lot of work. Try to rest now so that you will be at your best tomorrow," he said.

Despite our excitement, we took his advice. I was so tired that I fell asleep right away. We stayed hidden all that day until darkness fell. Then we walked quickly until we reached our target. My father told me to go farther up along the track and keep my eyes open for any signs of approaching soldiers. I was to give a loud whistle if I saw anybody coming. It was a dark still night. I knew that I would not be able to see an approaching party until too late, but I would certainly hear them. The German soldiers felt so secure in their perceived strength that they did not bother to walk quietly. I knew that my services as lookout were not needed. I decided that it would be best if I helped the men in dismantling the rail. Not wishing to disobey a direct order, I talked quietly with my father bringing forth this argument and he allowed me to stay and help the men.

On this night, as quiet as our party tried to be, they made enough noise, which could be heard for some distance away, especially at this time of the night. Anyone approaching could hear the commotion. This was the main danger to our group. But it could not be helped. It was part of our dangerous mission.

From their previous observation, the men knew that they had about three hours to complete their job before the next train was due. The men, who carried crowbars that they had "liberated" previously from the freight yard, started to unbolt the rail. After a lot of hard work, which took a bit of time, they lifted the length of rail from the supporting beams. Then they dug under the beams until they were supported only in two spots, while the rest of the supporting gravel was removed. Next they put the rail back in place, and partially tightened the bolts.

At a glance this part of the track looked just the same as the rest of the rail. The men made sure that no tell-tale signs of their work was visible, and retreated into the near-by clump of trees. I joined them and we lay there anxiously waiting for the train. Some time later we heard the clickety-clack of an approaching train. We tensed up. Would our plan work? Would the train derail?

The locomotive came forward, going full speed. One car, then the next and third one passed the loosened rail. Nothing happened. I was holding my breath, praying quietly, "Let it happen, let it happen." Two more cars passed us. Nothing! Then slowly, like in a dream, the sixth car jumped the track, pulling the car behind it off the rails, then the next one and the next one followed. We heard the sound of crunching metal. Cars tumbled off the high embankment, landed one on top of the other, making an awful sound. The scream of tearing metal

sounded like the scream of a thousand dying animals. Then the locomotive, which till then was still on the track, started moving backwards, ever so slowly, until it too rolled down the embankment. The shrill scream of escaping steam masked the screams of the injured Nazi soldiers. Suddenly, an explosion sent one of the cars flying high into the air. This car must have been full of ammunition. Burning pieces of wood and metal fell all around igniting some of the other cars.

We had done it! We had derailed a German freight train!

It was time for us to leave, to disappear. As previously, arranged, we divided into smaller groups and each group walked in a different direction. We would meet later, in a safe place. Then we would celebrate our victory.

### Pre-Reading Activities

- Make a comparison between the way the Russians treated the villagers of Malinsk and the treatment the inhabitants of the village received from the Nazis.
- On a map, study the area of the Ukraine where this story takes place.
- Compare the Russian and Nazi invasions of Nelly Toll's book, **Behind the Secret Window**, with the invasions in this story.
- Discuss the differences and similarities between active and passive resistance.
- Define the following terms: Shtetl, Aktion, Chumash, Kulaks, teigalach, Bar Mitzvah, zemlanka, Molotov grenades, Pesach, Haggadah, Seder, Berezno Ghetto

### **Discussion Questions for Reading #1-Chapter 1: "The War Comes to My Shtetl"**

1. Describe the status and lifestyle of Benny's family before the Russian and Nazi invasions.
2. What happens to Benny's family in the *shtetl* (small town) of Malinsk?
3. How does the Russian invasion affect their family?
4. How does the Nazi invasion affect the family?
5. What kind of a boy was Benny?
6. Why did the family have to live in the Berezno Ghetto?
7. What was life like in the ghetto?
8. What risks did they take to get food?
9. Where were Benny's father and uncles?
10. What terrible happening was going to take place in the ghetto?
11. How had Benny's parents and grandparents attempted to provide for the livestock? How did that action help them in a time of great danger?
12. How did Benny and his family escape?
13. How did Benny's father respond to the news of the destruction of the ghetto? How were his actions a reflection of his religious faith?

### **Discussion Questions for Reading #2-Chapter 6: "Spring in the Forest: We Derail a Train"**

1. How did the family survive in the forest?

2. What is a “zemplanka” and how did they build it?
3. What was life like in the forest?
4. How did they get rations?
5. How did they get ammunition?
6. How did Benny's family exhibit the strength of their religious faith under very harsh conditions?
7. How did they celebrate the Jewish holiday of Passover (Pesach)?
8. What special precautions did Benny have to take when he went to the village?
9. How did Benny find out about Nazis train schedules?
10. Why was it so important to derail a German freight train?
11. The partisans did not have the necessary explosives to blow up a train. Describe the process they used to destroy the train despite this problem.
12. What plans had the partisans made in order to avoid capture by the German soldiers after they derailed the train? Were they successful?

#### Activities

1. Compare the stories of the resistance of **Mottele** by Gertrude Berg and Benny. How did both the boys act with their parents and partisan leaders?
2. Write a letter of protest on a humanitarian issue of injustice to your Congressperson or Senator.
3. Write a persuasive letter to a friend recommending a book of similar interest explaining why they should read it.
4. Prepare a Passover meal for the class.

#### Suggested Readings

- **Behind the Secret Window** by Nelly Toll. 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> grade
- **The Hidden Children of the Holocaust: Teens Who Hid from the Nazis** by Esther Kustanowitz. 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade
- **Island on Bird Street** by Uri Orlev. 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades
- **The Resistance** by Deborah Bachrach

#### Resources for the Teacher

- **The Resistance** by Deborah Bachrach. From **The Holocaust Library**. Lucent Books, 1998. 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades
- **They Fought Back** by Uri Suhl. Schoken Books, 1975. 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades
- **Defiance-The Bielski Partisans** by Nechama Tec. Oxford University Press, 1993 (The Story of the Largest Armed Rescue of Jews by Jews During World War II).
- **Heroine of Rescue**. The Incredible story of Recha Sternbuch who saved thousands from the Holocaust by Joseph Friedenson and David Kranzler. Artscroll History Series, Mesorah Publications, 1984

#### Internet

- **For Resistance and other Holocaust Materials**  
<http://www.usmmm.org>

- **A Teacher's Guide the Holocaust**  
**People, Timeline, The Arts, Society, Resources and Activities**  
**<http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/holocaust/people/people.html>**

**"Zog Nit Keyn Mol"**  
**"Never Say"**  
A Resistance Song  
by  
Hirsh Glick

Never say you've come to the end of the way,  
Though leaden skies blot out the light of the day.  
The hour we all long for will surely appear-  
Our steps will thunder with the words: We are here!

From lands of palm trees to far-off lands of snow,  
We come with anguish, we come with grief,  
    With pain and woe;  
And where our blood flowed right before our eyes,  
There our power'll bloom, our courage will arise.

The glow of morning sun will gild a bright today,  
Night's darkness vanish, like the enemy cast away.  
But if we perish before this dawn's begun-  
This song's a message passed to daughter and to son.

In blood this song was written, and not with pen or quill,  
Not from a songbird freely flying as he will.  
Sung by a people crushed by falling walls-  
Sung with guns in hand, by those whom freedom calls!

**Discussion Questions**

1. Why was it so important for the resistance to sound the call "We are here!"?
2. The third verse proclaims that "This song's a message passed to daughter and to son." What is the message that is being passed?
3. What does the reference to "people crushed by falling walls" mean?
4. Why do you think the author makes the comparison to a "songbird freely flying as he will?" Explain the contrast between the songbird and the resistance fighter.
5. Why are music and poetry such as this song often important to a resistance movement or a struggle for liberation? Explain the impact that music and poetry often has upon people.
6. Name the titles of some songs and/or poems that have been important in struggles for liberty, equality and justice in your own nation's history.

**Activities**

1. Design and create a bulletin board exhibiting the lyrics and words of songs and poems that have been important in the struggle for liberty, equality, and justice in countries around the world, including the United States.
2. Write a poem or a song about the importance of poetry or music to the human spirit. Illustrate your work and display it in the classroom.