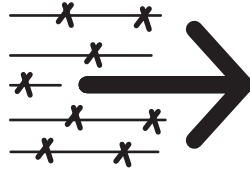


RESCUE / ESCAPE



the holocaust

Jews fleeing from the Third Reich. The German annexation of Austria in March 1938, the increase in personal assaults on Jews during the spring and summer, the nationwide Kristallnacht ("Night of Broken Glass") pogrom in November, and the subsequent seizure of Jewish-owned property had caused a flood of visa applications. The plight of German-Jewish refugees, persecuted at home and unwanted abroad.

ST LOUIS

Nazi violence and the destruction of Jewish-owned property spread throughout many cities during the Kristallnacht pogrom of November 1938.

Many Jews decided to leave Germany in the face of this growing threat.

Their preferred destinations were the British Mandate of Palestine, and the United States.

However, both imposed quotas strictly limiting the number of emigrants.

Desperate to escape Nazi Germany, 937 passengers, almost all of them Jewish refugees, boarded the ship St. Louis and departed Hamburg for Havana, Cuba, on May 13, 1939.

About two weeks later, they arrived in Havana.

Cuban officials refused to allow the refugees to land, claiming that the passengers' landing certificates, purchased from a corrupt consular official in Germany, were invalid.

Only 28 passengers – among them 22 Jews who had secured valid Cuban visas – were allowed to disembark in Havana.

The rest lingered on the ship for five days as a representative of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee negotiated with the Cuban government.

Negotiations failed. The ship was ordered out of Cuban waters, and sailed slowly toward Miami.

Telegrams requesting refuge were sent to the White House and U.S. State Department, but entry was denied. The St. Louis turned back toward Europe.

During the return voyage, four western European countries agreed to take the refugees. The passengers disembarked in Antwerp on June 17, 1939, after more than a month at sea.

With the German invasion of western Europe in 1940, many of the St. Louis passengers were again trapped under Nazi rule and subsequently perished in the Holocaust.

DESIGN DIRECTION:
mapping of refugees leaving germany
st louis

JEWISH RESISTANCE

Even at the height of the German domination of Europe, many Jews risked their lives to resist Nazi oppression.

IN GHETTOS

throughout Nazi-occupied Europe, Jews defied the indignity and dehumanization of Nazi terror through spiritual resistance and attempts to preserve their communal and cultural life.

They held clandestine religious services, established schools and libraries, and maintained cultural traditions through secret publications, lectures, and performances.

Secret archives of art and written documentation recorded conditions in some of the ghettos.

Underground networks of forgers and smugglers supplied life-saving official documents and food to people in ghettos and in hiding throughout Europe.

Prisoner revolts even took place in Nazi camps, including 1943-1944 uprisings in the Treblinka, Sobibor, and Auschwitz-Birkenau killing centers. The spirit of these and other efforts transcends their inability to halt the genocidal policies of the Nazis.

DESIGN DIRECTION:

ghettos
smuggling

PARTISAN

Organized armed resistance, though, was the most direct form of Jewish opposition to the Nazis.

In western Europe, Jewish partisans smuggled endangered people to safety and aided those in hiding.

They also joined non-Jewish resistance units and sabotaged German military operations.

Despite minimal support and even hostility from local populations, armed resistance units also formed in more than 100 ghettos.

Jewish partisan units operated in France, Belgium, the Ukraine, Belorussia, Lithuania, and Poland. Jews also fought in general French, Italian, Yugoslav, Greek, and Soviet resistance organizations. While organized armed resistance was the most direct form of opposition to the Nazis, resistance also included escape, hiding, cultural activity, and other acts of spiritual preservation.

In April 1943, the Jews of Warsaw, outgunned and outnumbered, launched the largest ghetto uprising. After almost a month, the Germans suppressed the uprising.

Jews fought the Germans both in the ghettos and behind the front lines in nearby forests.

In many cases, resistance members also joined partisan units outside the ghettos of eastern Europe.

DESIGN DIRECTION:
partisans

Despite the indifference of most Europeans and the collaboration of others in the murder of Jews during the Holocaust, individuals in every European country and from all religious backgrounds risked their lives to help Jews. Rescue efforts ranged from the isolated actions of individuals to organized networks both small and large.

Rescue of Jews during the Holocaust presented a host of difficulties. The Allied prioritization of “winning the war” and the lack of access to those who needed rescue hampered major rescue operations. Individuals willing to help Jews in danger faced severe consequences if they were caught, and formidable logistics of supporting people in hiding. Finally, hostility towards Jews among non-Jewish populations, especially in eastern Europe, was a daunting obstacle to rescue. Rescue took many forms.

DENMARK

In August 1943, the Danish government resigned rather than yield to German demands. German police began arresting Jews on the night of October 1, 1943. Popular protests came from quarters such as churches, the Danish royal family, and social and economic organizations.

Throughout October, the Danish resistance, assisted by many civilians, hid Jews and covertly transported them to coastal towns.

Using small boats, fishermen then ferried 7,200 Jews, almost all of Denmark’s Jewish population, to safety in neutral Sweden.

FRANCE

In southern France, the village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon and nearby towns provided refuge to several thousand Jews, including many children.

Residents opened their homes to shelter Jews and smuggled many to safety in neutral countries.

The overwhelmingly Protestant Huguenot population was motivated by religious conviction and empathy for the persecuted.

The scope of this extraordinary rescue effort reflects the solidarity of neighbors, despite the threat of informants in their midst.

DESIGN DIRECTION:

mapping countries: denmark, france, poland, us

US

Some U.S.-based groups engaged in rescue efforts. The Quakers' American Friends Service Committee, the Unitarians, and other groups coordinated relief activities for Jewish refugees in France, Portugal, and Spain throughout the war. A variety of U.S.-based organizations (both religious and secular, Jewish and non-Jewish) cooperated in securing entry visas into the United States and arranging placement and, in some cases, eventual repatriation for around 1,000 unaccompanied Jewish refugee children between 1934 and 1942.

POLAND

In the so-called Generalgouvernement (German-occupied Poland), some Poles provided assistance to Jews. For instance, Żegota (code name for Rada Pomocy Żydom, the Council for Aid to Jews), a Polish underground organization that provided for the social welfare needs of Jews, began operations in September 1942. Although members of the nationalist Polish Home Army (Armia Krajowa-AK) and the communist Polish People's Army (Armia Ludowa-AL) assisted Jewish fighters by attacking German positions during the Warsaw ghetto uprising in April 1943, the Polish underground provided few weapons and only a small amount of ammunition to Jewish fighters. From the beginning of the deportation of Jews from the Warsaw ghetto to the Treblinka killing center in late July 1942 until the German occupiers leveled Warsaw in the autumn of 1944 after suppressing the Home Army uprising, as many as 20,000 Jews were living in hiding in Warsaw and its environs with the help of Polish civilians.

DESIGN DIRECTION:
religious

HIDING (UNDERGROUND NETWORKS)

Rescuers came from every religious background: Protestant and Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Muslim. Some European churches, orphanages, and families provided hiding places for Jews, and in some cases, individuals aided Jews already in hiding (such as Anne Frank and her family in the Netherlands).

In France, the Protestant population of the small village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon sheltered between 3,000 and 5,000 refugees, most of them Jews. In France, Belgium, and Italy, underground networks run by Catholic clergy and lay Catholics saved thousands of Jews. Such networks were especially active both in southern France, where Jews were hidden and smuggled to safety to Switzerland and Spain, and in northern Italy, where many Jews went into hiding after Germans occupied Italy in September 1943.

Jan Karski

Other non-Jews sought to draw attention to Nazi plans for genocide in order to spur the Allies to action. Roman Catholic Jan Karski was a member of the Polish underground.

As a courier with a near photographic memory, he conveyed secret information between the underground movement and the Polish government-in-exile. Smuggled in and out of the Warsaw ghetto and the transit camp at Izbica, he witnessed the horrors suffered by Jews.

In 1942, he warned the Polish government-in-exile in London and senior British authorities of Nazi Germany's plans to murder European Jews.

In 1943, he delivered the same message to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. His warnings were uniformly greeted with disbelief, apathy, and indifference.

DESIGN DIRECTION:
hiding religious backgrounds
jan karski
varian fry
raoul

FRANCE - VARIAN FRY

Other rescuers facilitated escape routes out of occupied Europe.

From his base in Marseille, American journalist Varian Fry rescued Jewish refugees trapped in France following the German invasion.

Fry's network of accomplices forged documents and devised clandestine escape routes. He aided antifascist refugees, both Jews and non-Jews, including artists and intellectuals such as painter Marc Chagall, Catholic philosopher Alfredo Mendizabel, and writer Hannah Arendt.

Under constant surveillance, Fry was repeatedly questioned and detained.

His covert activities angered officials of both the U.S. State Department and Vichy France and in September 1941 he was expelled from France.

Although in France only 13 months, Fry assisted in the escape of some 2,000 people.

Raoul Wallenberg

A number of individuals also used their personal influence to rescue Jews. In Budapest, the capital of German-occupied Hungary, Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg led an extensive rescue effort.

Wallenberg began distributing Swedish protective passports in July 1944 and set up more than 30 safe houses.

In November 1944, during the death march of Jews from Budapest to labor camps in Austria, Wallenberg secured the release of those with protective passports or forged papers.

He and his associates rescued tens of thousands of Jews.

In January 1945, Wallenberg disappeared while on his way to meet Soviet officials. He is presumed to have died, or been murdered, in a Soviet prison.

Oskar Schindler

The Sudeten German industrialist Oskar Schindler took over an enamelware factory located outside the Krakow ghetto in German-occupied Poland. He later protected over a thousand Jewish workers employed there from deportation to the Auschwitz concentration camp.

Asked why he had intervened on behalf of the Jews, Schindler replied:

“The persecution of Jews in the General Government in Polish territory gradually worsened in its cruelty. In 1939 and 1940 they were forced to wear the Star of David and were herded together and confined in ghettos. In 1941 and 1942 this unadulterated sadism was fully revealed. And then a thinking man, who had overcome his inner cowardice, simply had to help. There was no other choice.”

—Oskar Schindler, 1964 interview.

Schindler was an unlikely hero. An ethnic German living in Moravia, Czechoslovakia, he joined the Nazi party in 1939. In the wake of the German invasion of Poland, Schindler went to Krakow. He assumed responsibility for the operation of two formerly Jewish-owned manufacturers of enamel kitchenware and then established his own enamel works in Zablocie, outside Krakow. Through army contracts and the exploitation of cheap labor from the Krakow ghetto, he amassed a fortune. Dealing on the black market, he lived in high style.

In 1942 and early 1943, the Germans decimated the ghetto's population of some 20,000 Jews through shootings and deportations. Several thousand Jews who survived the ghetto's liquidation were taken to Plaszow, a forced labor camp run by the sadistic SS commandant Amon Leopold Goeth. Moved by the cruelties he witnessed, Schindler contrived to transfer his Jewish workers to barracks at his factory.

In late summer 1944, through negotiations and bribes from his war profits, Schindler secured permission from German army and SS officers to move his workers and other endangered Jews to Bruennlitz, near his hometown of Zwittau. Each of these Jews was placed on “Schindler's List.” Schindler and his workforce set up a bogus munitions factory, which sustained them in relative safety until the war ended. Oskar Schindler's transformation from Nazi war profiteer to protector of Jews is the subject of several documentaries, the best-selling novel *Schindler's List* (1982) by Thomas Keneally, and an Academy award-winning film directed by Steven Spielberg.

CONCLUSION

Whether they saved a thousand people or a single life, those who rescued Jews during the Holocaust demonstrated the possibility of individual choice even in extreme circumstances. These and other acts of conscience and courage, however, saved only a tiny percentage of those targeted for destruction. These and other acts of rescue, despite the profound courage, conviction, and charity that they represent, did little to stop the Nazi implementation of mass murder.

Only a tiny percentage of the targeted populations was rescued. Most Europeans neither aided nor hindered the "Final Solution."

They remained bystanders to the deaths of millions.

DESIGN DIRECTION:
schindlers list