

RESCUE AND RESISTANCE

Rescue and Resistance Some Jews survived the "Final Solution," the Nazi plan to kill the Jews of Europe, by hiding or escaping from German-controlled Europe. Most non-Jews neither aided nor hindered the "Final Solution." Relatively few people helped Jews escape. Those who did aid Jews were motivated by opposition to Nazi racism, by compassion, or by religious or moral principle. In a few rare instances, entire communities as well as individuals helped save Jews. They did so at tremendous risk. In many places, providing shelter to Jews was punishable by death.

The residents of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, a Protestant village in southern France, helped thousands of refugees, most of them Jews, escape Nazi persecution between 1940 and 1944. Though they knew the danger, they were resolute, inspired by religious conviction and a sense of moral duty. Refugees, including many children, were hidden in private homes and also in nearby Catholic convents and monasteries. Resident of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon also helped smuggle refugees to neutral Switzerland.

Many Jews throughout occupied Europe attempted armed resistance. Individually and in groups, Jews engaged in both planned and spontaneous opposition to the Germans. Jewish partisan units operated in France and Belgium. They were especially active in the east, where they fought the Germans from bases in dense forests and in ghettos. Because antisemitism was widespread, they found little support among the surrounding population. Even so, as many between 20,000 and 30,000 Jews fought the Germans in the forests of eastern Europe.

Organized armed resistance was the most direct form of Jewish opposition. In many areas of Europe, Jewish resistance instead focused on aid, rescue, and spiritual resistance. The preservation of Jewish cultural

institutions and the continuance of religious observance were acts of spiritual resistance to the Nazi policy of genocide.

Key Dates

February 13, 1943

Protestant pastor arrested for aiding Jews in France

Pastor André Trocmé is arrested in Le Chambon-sur-Lignon. Edouard Theis, the administrator of the Cévenol School and half-time minister, and Roger Darcissac, the director of the public boys' school, are also arrested. The three men are interned at the Saint-Paul d'Eyjeaux camp near Limoges. Between 1940 and 1944, these men led the Protestant community of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon in the rescue of about 5,000 more than half of them Jews. They hid refugees in private homes, schools, local monasteries, and convents; they provided false identity cards; and they assisted in transporting refugees across the border into neutral Switzerland. During their internment, Trocmé, Theis, and Darcissac lead Protestant services and discussions for the other prisoners. After more than a month of incarceration, the three men are offered their freedom. However, they must both sign a paper pledging allegiance to Marshal Philippe Pétain and obey the orders of the Vichy French government. Darcissac signs and is released immediately. Trocmé and Theis refuse to sign because the pledge is contrary to their beliefs. They are, however, released the next day. All three return to Le Chambon-sur-Lignon and continue to save Jews.

August 4, 1944

Jewish family hiding in Amsterdam arrested

When deportations from the Netherlands to extermination camps in Poland began in 1942, Anne Frank, her family, and four other people went into hiding in a secret attic apartment in Amsterdam. With the aid of friends who took great risks, the Franks survived in hiding for two years. During this time, Anne kept a diary in which she recorded her fears, hopes, and experiences. The family and the four others are discovered in hiding

and arrested on August 4, 1944. The Frank family is sent to the Westerbork transit camp ⓘ and later deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. As the war nears an end, Anne and her sister are evacuated and sent to Bergen-Belsen. There, they both die of typhus in the spring of 1945. Only their father survives. Anne Frank is one of hundreds of thousands of Jewish children who died during the Holocaust. Anne Frank's diary was recovered after the arrest and published after the war in many languages.

October 21, 1944

German industrialist rescues Jewish work force

German industrialist Oskar Schindler moves his Jewish work force from the Plaszow concentration camp to a factory in Bruennlitz (in the Sudetenland). Schindler saves over 1,000 Jews through employment in his factory by claiming they are essential to wartime production. In the winter of 1939-1940 Schindler opened an enamelware factory on the outskirts of Krakow, Poland. Over the next two years, the number of Jewish employees increased. By 1942, these Jews were living in the Krakow ghetto and were continually threatened by selections carried out by Germans to determine who was unfit to work. Schindler protected his Jewish work force by falsifying factory records—ages of employees were changed and professions altered to list trades essential to the war effort. In March 1943, the Krakow ghetto was liquidated and the work force was moved into the Plaszow camp. Schindler's Jews continue to work in his factory until October 1944 when the approach of Soviet troops force the evacuation of Plaszow. Most prisoners are sent directly to extermination camps. Schindler, taking advantage of his good relations with the SS, gains permission to move a work force of over 1,000 Jews to the factory in Bruennlitz. The Jews remain under the care of Schindler until liberation in May 1945. Schindler escapes into western Europe and returns to Germany after the war.