

Courage to Care remembers and salutes those courageous people who took enormous personal risks to rescue Jews and others from the program of extermination known as the Holocaust.

These groups and individuals have been honoured as The Righteous amongst the Nations.

Courage to Care encourages all Australians to reject intolerance and discrimination. The Righteous amongst the Nations are an example to all of us of the power of an individual to make a difference.

Courage to Care

Index

The Righteous amongst the Nations

Four true stories

Chiune Sugihara

Denmark

Eugenia Renot

Dervis Korkut

Some Questions for further Discussion

The Holocaust – An historical overview

Glossary

Want to find out more?

Page

3

5

5

5

6

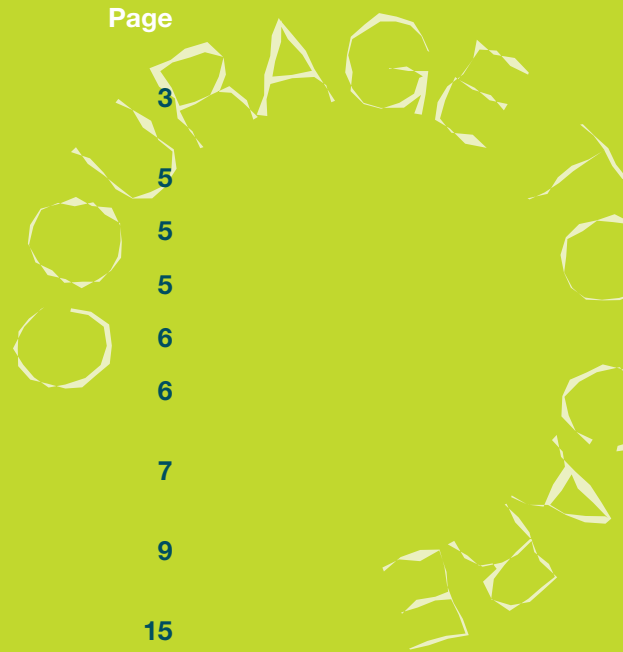
6

7

9

15

16



Courage is never alone, for it has fear as its ever-present companion. An act deserves to be called courageous if, and only if it is performed in spite of fear.

The greater the fear, the more courageous the action that defies it. Thus, it is only when fear and anxiety rule supreme that courage can truly assert itself.

Shlomo Breznitz

'The Righteous Among The Nations'

Introduction

'All the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light from a solitary candle'.

'During the long night of the Holocaust, among the few points of light were the actions of the Righteous Among the Nations. These men and women risked their lives to save the lives of Jews. Their actions show us that compassion, courage and morality were not totally extinguished in those dark years'.

Yad Vashem

COURAGE TO CARE



A Jewish child in hiding poses with members of the Dutch family that adopted her. Henny Kalkstein (right) with Dieuwke Hofstede and her two sons, Maaïke and Andries.

Who are 'The Righteous Among the Nations'?

The 'Righteous' are those **non-Jews who risked their own lives to save Jews from the threat of death or deportation to death camps.**

This recognition is awarded by Yad Vashem (The Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority in Israel), the major Israeli repository for knowledge about the Holocaust, to those who meet three criteria:

- That the nominee **extended help** to save the life of a Jewish man, woman or child during the Nazi persecution;
- That they **endangered their own life, freedom or safety** in the process;
- And that they did so **without exacting a reward**, monetary or otherwise.

A total of 20,205 persons have so far been recognised and honoured by Yad Vashem as 'Righteous Among the Nations.' They come from every country of occupied Europe.

Communities, individuals – from all walks of life

Most of the Jews who survived did so as a result of their own actions. Some were assisted by courageous acts of individuals who risked their lives in order to save them. In many countries any person caught hiding a Jew was shot or publicly hanged by the Nazi police – many such righteous non-Jews were executed.

Many who saved lives have not been identified, because of lack of evidence or loss of contact after the war.

In some other cases, communities rather than individuals were recognized. They include the whole Danish people and members of the Norwegian underground.

How did they help?

Those non-Jews recognized as Righteous helped Jews escape by offering

- shelter
- places to hide
- food
- means of escape

All these actions were taken at great risk to their own lives and those of their families.

Usually they acted alone, in some cases with others. On rare occasions this involved the whole community, as it did in Denmark and in the French village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon where the people hid Jews in their homes, in some cases for as long as four years.

Reasons for helping

They acted for one or more reason:

- they were horrified by the ill treatment meted out to Jews
- angered by the repressive occupation of the Nazis
- guided by their Christian and/or humanitarian principles
- moved by the plight of a child, or just eager to help a Jewish friend or acquaintance.

Ordinary people – extraordinary courage

On the whole, those who were prepared to act righteously and even heroically were ordinary women and men who responded – often without thought, on the spur of the moment – to the needs of others. They were singular and extraordinary in that they had the 'Courage to Care', unlike the great majority who remained indifferent or were hostile.

They came from all walks of life, from the city and the country, and with varying resources at their disposal – they were manual workers, farmers and teachers, doctors and professors, soldiers, diplomats and bureaucrats, priests, nuns and monks. Convents and monasteries gave sanctuary to hundreds of Jews, especially to women and children.

We can best appreciate what all the righteous persons did to save Jewish lives, the risks they took and why they were prepared to act, by reading their testimonies and the testimonies of those Jews they helped to save. We can gain some understanding through these stories of the particular qualities or characteristics that set them and their deeds apart from the vast number of bystanders.

A number of the rescuers and rescued made their homes in Australia after the war. They are featured in the exhibition.

Sugihara

On the morning of 27 July 1940, Chiune Sugihara, a young career diplomat in the Japanese Foreign Service, looked out of the consulate windows in Kaunas (Kovno) in Lithuania, to see some 200 Jewish refugees from Poland outside the gate. Each day the numbers grew.

They came to beg Sugihara for transit visas to escape Poland and travel across the Soviet Union to Japan. Sugihara sought permission from Tokyo to issue the visas and was refused. Nevertheless, he decided to assist the desperate Jews, saying: "I may have to disobey my government, but if I don't I will be disobeying God."

Working feverishly day and night, Sugihara wrote out visas by hand. When ink supplies became low and replacement impossible in war-time Lithuania, he watered down the remaining ink and kept writing. On 28 August the consulate closed and Sugihara was relocated to Berlin. In one short month he had issued approximately 6,000 visas. Because of his bravery, there are more than 40,000 descendants of the refugees he saved.

On his return to Tokyo after the war, he was dismissed from the diplomatic service for disobeying orders. However, a group of Sugihara survivors located him and saw him honoured as one of the Righteous Among the Nations. Posthumously, Japan apologised for his dismissal and paid tribute to his humanitarian deeds.

I may have to disobey my government, but if I don't I will be disobeying God.

The Danish Rescue

Ordinary Danish people actively conspired against their Nazi invaders. In 1943, large numbers, acting as a unified group, did what they could to save the lives of their Jewish citizens.

Georg Duckwitz, a German businessman with close ties to the German Embassy, secretly informed the Danish Resistance of the Nazi plans to deport Denmark's 8,000 Jews. The Danes reacted immediately, organising a nationwide effort to ferry the Jews across the North Sea to safe havens in Sweden, which was a neutral country. Risking Nazi retaliation, people from all walks of life warned the Jews that they would be deported, and organised hiding places in hospitals, homes, factories and churches. Within a two-week period, working at night, fishermen helped ferry 7,220 Danish Jews and 680 non-Jewish family members to safety in Sweden.

Hiding, feeding, and transporting a large group of people, under the noses of the Nazis, required the full cooperation of the population.

The Danes reacted with self discipline and responsibility. The maturity of their religious and political values helped them to recognise that freedom and equality belong to all. By defending their Jewish citizens, they were defending their most precious traditions. The Danish people certainly had the Courage to Care!

Eugenia Renot

Eugenia was born into a farming family in Wengrow, Poland. In 1939 she became a Catholic nun. She was sent to work at the Catholic orphanage in Przemyśl which cared for 40 Polish children. Fearing the Nazis, desperate Jewish parents who were about to be deported also brought their children to the orphanage. Eugenia's courage and intelligence helped save 13 Jewish children. She learned to scavenge for food, repair shoes and make medicines, all to avoid bringing outsiders into the home. 'I knew I was risking all our lives to protect them,' she said, 'but what kind of a Christian would I have been if I had put my own safety first.'

After the war she returned the Jewish children to a Jewish orphanage. Some were reunited with their parents; others went to Israel. Eugenia now lives in Melbourne.

In 1980 she fulfilled her dream of meeting the 6 children who now live in Israel. She was honoured by Yad Vashem as a Righteous Amongst the Nations.

She learned to scavenge for food, repair shoes and make medicines, all to avoid bringing outsiders into the home.

Dervis Korkut

Dervis was the Muslim Director of the Sarajevo Museum in Bosnia. When the German army occupied Sarajevo in 1941, the Commandant asked Korkut to head a collaborationist Muslim community. He refused. A few months later, a caretaker at the Museum brought a young woman, Mira Papo, to see him. Barely out of High School, she had no home, no papers and no family. She was a Jewish girl who had been fighting with the partisans, but now with the onset of winter she desperately needed sanctuary. Korkut took her home. 'She will be staying with us for a while,' he told his wife, Servet. 'We can say she is household help. She will pose as a Muslim and her name will be Amira.'

Servet knew that families harbouring Jews suffered the same penalty as the Jews - death. Nevertheless she agreed. So Mira the Jewish girl began living the routine of her Muslim rescuers. She had lost her own faith by then, but she respected the Korkuts' faith. Finally, as the war turned against the Nazis, the Resistance re-organised and Mira bade her protectors farewell and rejoined the partisans.

In an ironic turn of fate, more than fifty years later, Mira's son was able to welcome the Korkuts' daughter and her family after they were expelled from their Kosovo home and provided with refuge in Israel.

Korkut as a Muslim Director had deep respect for the religious and cultural treasures of non-Muslims. When a high-ranking German officer asked to see the Sarajevo Haggadah, a priceless 14th century illuminated manuscript which described the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt, Korkut told the officer, 'Alas I regret to tell you that the book vanished two years ago.' Because of his integrity and courage a treasured artefact was preserved from the Nazi pillagers for future generations.

Some questions for further discussion



- 1** What is unique about you? your friend? your neighbour?
- 2** How do you feel about people of a different faith, race or culture?
- 3** Does it make a difference if you get to know them personally?
- 4** A dictionary definition of “to tolerate” is “to put up with something”.
What is the difference between
 - a) Tolerating
 - b) Understanding
 - c) Having the Courage to Care?
- 5** Can you think of some situations where it may be best not to get involved? What do you think is the difference between these situations and the ones described in this Exhibition?
- 6** From your reading of the stories in this Exhibition, do you think the rescuers shared any other characteristics over and beyond courage?
- 7** What is courage? Are there different sorts of courage?
- 8** Can you see anything in this exhibition which is relevant to you as an Australian teenager?

The Holocaust

An Historical Overview

What was the Holocaust?

The Holocaust was the attempt to systematically exterminate the Jewish population of Europe by the government of Nazi Germany. It led to the killing of almost two out of three European Jews, a total of almost six million people.

How were so many people killed?

The largest number were gassed to death in extermination camps. More than a million were systematically shot, others were forced to live in sections of cities where they were denied sufficient food and medicine and left to die of malnutrition and disease.

Estimated number of Jews killed in the Holocaust (minimum)

Poland	2,900,000
Russia	1,000,000
Hungary	555,000
Romania	271,000
Lithuania	140,000
Germany	134,500
Netherlands	100,000
Other countries	496,000

COURAGE TO CARE

How and when did the Nazi Party come to power?

The Nazi Party never succeeded in winning a majority of the vote in a free election. At the last free election it contested (in November 1932) it won 33.1% of the vote, down from a peak of 37.3%. But it was the *largest party* in the Reichstag (parliament) and in January 1933 the German president appointed Hitler head of a governing coalition. Once in power the Nazi leadership moved quickly to end democracy and *establish a dictatorship*.



Hitler reviews SS troops, Nuremberg 1938.

How did the Nazi Party treat Jewish people before the outbreak of war in 1939?

The Nazi Party was in power for six years before the war. During this period German Jews faced mounting persecution. At first Jews were dismissed from government employment and businesses were boycotted. In 1935 Jews were formally deprived of citizenship under the Nuremberg laws. By 1938 they had become segregated outcasts and in November of that year, during the Kristallnacht pogrom, there were violent attacks in many parts of the country. Before the eyes of the free world men were beaten to death in the streets, tens of thousands were arrested, synagogues were burned and businesses vandalised. Those fortunate enough to obtain a visa to a foreign country left at the first opportunity.



Badge required to be worn by Jews in Nazi occupied France.

Why were Jewish people persecuted?

To understand Nazi attitudes it is necessary to enter the world of *irrational thought*.

Jewish people comprised less than 1% of the German population, yet Hitler and most of his followers believed that they controlled the country. *Everything that went wrong*, everything that was evil, was traced to the influence of 'Jews'. Hitler told his followers that once the power of Jews was removed all would be well and Germany would assume its rightful position as the leading nation of the world.

For the extremists in the Nazi movement it was not enough to remove Jewish people from Germany, for they believed that 'international Jewry' would continue to plot the destruction of the German people. In Hitler's view there was a *struggle for survival* in which only one 'race', one life force, could survive.

Ultimately it would be *necessary to eliminate* 'the Jew' from the face of the earth.



Destitute Jewish woman, Warsaw ghetto.

What happened to Jewish people once war began?

In countries which fell under German control Jewish people were rounded up *and forced to live in ghettos* – specially designated parts of cities and towns. The largest ghetto was in Warsaw, the capital of Poland, where some 480,000 Jewish lived (and many died) in grossly over-crowded conditions, without adequate supply of food and the necessities of life. Beginning in the second half of 1941 German troops (notably the special detachments known as ‘Einsatzgruppen’) *began to systematically shoot* Jewish people in territory captured from the Soviet Union. In the course of 1942 *six extermination camps* were built in German occupied Poland. In the largest of these camps, Auschwitz, over 1.1 million Jewish people were gassed.

Thus from 1941 to 1944 the Nazi regime developed the *psychology and technology* for the increasingly efficient killing of whole populations – over time they developed industrialised ‘factories of death’.



Einsatzgruppe murder squad.



Above: One of the most famous images of the Holocaust, representing the essence of the Nazi war on the Jewish people: the arrest at gunpoint of a Jewish child outside a Warsaw hotel.

How did Jewish people respond during the Holocaust?

It is often asked why Jewish people did not do more to resist the Nazi murderers. They went like lambs to the slaughter, it is often said. Such arguments show little understanding of the conditions facing Jewish communities.



Above: The capture of freedom fighters during the Warsaw uprising, April 1943.

Those attempting to resist faced almost impossible odds. First, caught in a storm of violent oppression, all but a *few lacked a clear idea of what was happening* to them. Second, Jewish people were almost totally *isolated*, without anyone to offer them help, subject to terrible reprisal if they dared to resist. Third, *without weapons*, men, women and children faced the most powerful armed force in Europe, one which had defeated the mighty French army in a matter of weeks.

Forms of resistance

In the face of such massive power, the most difficult circumstances faced by any people in the course of human history, communities *maintained their cohesiveness*. Where opportunity provided, educational institutions and orphanages were established and culture and religion was maintained. *The mere effort to survive*, fuelled by the desire to pass knowledge of their fate to subsequent generations, led to the most heroic of acts. And in the last of days, when hope of survival had disappeared, *many instances of armed struggle* occurred, the most famous the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto and in the death camps Treblinka, Sobibor and Auschwitz.



Heroes of armed resistance, Haika Grosman, Bialystok, Rosa Robota, Auschwitz, Mordecai Anielewicz, Warsaw

The last days

During the final months of the war, when it was clear that defeat for Germany was inevitable, the Nazi regime *did not halt its war on the Jewish people*. As concentration camps were evacuated before the advancing Allied armies, inmates still surviving were often shot. An estimated 250,000 were killed on 'death marches'.



Murdered concentration camp inmates stacked for burning, as found by Soviet troops in Sept. 1944.

Following liberation

It is estimated that there were some 200,000 Jewish survivors of forced-labour, concentration and extermination camps – some 50,000-75,000 in the western part of occupied Germany. *Many did not long survive liberation*. Some were fed food with which their starved bodies could not cope, others were too ill to recover. Three weeks after liberation the daily death toll at Bergen-Belsen was still 200. Some attempting to return to their homes in search of relatives were murdered. The great majority decided to make a *new life outside Europe*, the largest number going to Israel and the United States. Australia admitted 25,000 Holocaust survivors, mainly from Poland and Hungary, between 1945 and 1957.



1947, Bergen-Belsen. Demonstration of displaced persons against the denial of entry into Palestine of the refugee ship Exodus.

Remembrance

It was common for survivors attempting to establish new lives to attempt to blot out memories of past horrors. A greater willingness to speak out slowly became evident in the 1960s and over the last two decades there has developed a determination by survivors to record their individual experiences in the hope that future generations will know and learn. While the major museum of Holocaust remembrance, Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, was established by the Israeli parliament in 1953, many institutions date from the 1980s and early 1990s. In Melbourne a memorial to the six million was erected in the General Cemetery in 1962 and the Jewish Holocaust Museum and Research Centre was opened in 1984.

Three Holocaust survivors, Bono Wiener (l.) and Aron Sokolowicz (r.), first co-Presidents of the Melbourne Holocaust Museum, with Nobel Peace Prize Winner Eli Wiesel (centre).



Non-Jewish victims of Nazism

The Nazi government waged war not only on Jewish people – although they were the only group whose total extermination was planned.

Other groups were targeted on the grounds of race, politics, religion and lifestyle. It was a regime founded on violence, opposed to free speech and democracy. The sanctity of life did not matter. Hitler was little concerned even at the death of millions of his own 'Aryan' people, killed in the struggle for domination of Europe.

In Germany after 1933 **political opponents** were imprisoned in concentration camps, where many were killed. Others gaoled included members of the Jehovah's Witness religious faith and homosexuals.



Above, execution of a Polish priest, Piotr Sosnowski.

After the outbreak of war the **Slavic peoples** of eastern Europe, regarded by the Nazis as sub-human, were to be reduced to the status of slaves. Thousands of communal leaders – officials, teachers, lawyers, doctors, writers, army officers, priests – were killed and any resistance to the Nazi regime was ruthlessly suppressed. **Russian prisoners-of-war** were brutally mistreated and left to starve.



Above, Himmler, the architect of genocide, disdainfully inspects a Russian prisoner-of-war. More than 3 million Russian soldiers died in German hands.

The Nazi regime made it a priority to improve German 'racial stock'. A 1933 law provided for forced sterilization of all those with diseases considered hereditary. Under the 'T4' program, begun in 1939, between 200,000 and 250,000 **people living in asylums** for the mentally ill were killed. They were seen as **'life unworthy of life'**.

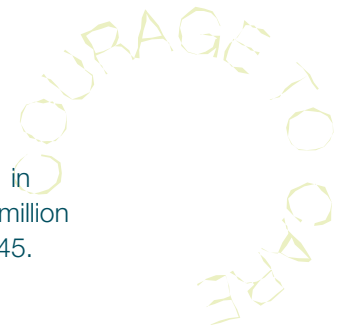
The **Roma and Sinti peoples**, commonly known as **Gypsies**, were, like the Jews, killed on racial grounds, although with less consistency. The precise number murdered is not known; most estimates are in the range 250,000 – 500,000. Many were shot in rural districts, others were taken by train to extermination camps. At least 23,000 were deported to Auschwitz, where there was a section known as the Gypsy family camp – it was closed in August 1944 and the last surviving inmates were killed.

Below, Roma & Sinti (Gypsy) prisoners in the Belzec concentration camp, Poland.



Remember that it is easy to save human lives. One did not need to be heroic or crazy to feel pity for an abandoned child. It was enough to open a door, to throw a piece of bread, a shirt, a coin; it was enough to feel compassion... In those times, one climbed to the summit of humanity by simply remaining human.

Elie Wiesel



Auschwitz	Largest of the concentration and extermination camps, located in upper Silesia, Poland. It is estimated that between 1.1 and 1.3 million Jews were killed at this location between 1942 and January 1945.
By-stander	A person who does not want to get involved.
Communist	A political party which believed that Germany should follow the path of Russia under Stalin. A key policy was the abolition of private property
Extermination camps	Nazi camps for the mass killing of Jews and others (e.g. Gypsies, Russian prisoners-of-war, ill prisoners).
Ghetto	A section of a city where all Jews from the surrounding areas were forced to live. The largest ghettos were usually surrounded by barbed wire or walls and people were prevented from leaving or entering.
Holocaust	The attempt by the government of Nazi Germany to kill the entire Jewish population of occupied Europe.
Kristallnacht (German word)	Night of the Broken Glass, November 9-10, 1938. Violent attacks on the Jews of Germany were organised by the Nazis on this night. People were beaten to death in the streets, 35,000 Jewish men were imprisoned in camps and Jewish property and places of worship were destroyed. The "excuse" for this action was the assassination of a German consular official by a Jewish teenager.
Partisans	Resistance fighters in Nazi-occupied countries who engaged in attacks on Nazi troops and property.
Perpetrator	Someone who commits a crime.
Righteous among the Nations	Term applied to those non-Jews who, at the risk of their own lives, saved Jews from their Nazi persecutors.
Trade Unions	Organisations formed to protect the interests of workers. Hitler abolished trade unions and outlawed the Communist Party as soon as he came to power.

This glossary is based on the text of the Museum of Tolerance, Los Angeles. For further detail and additional terms see: <http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/resources/glossary/glosdef.html#6>

Want to find out more?

Contact information

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Web sites

Yad Vashem, section on the Righteous among the Nations at:
http://www1.yadvashem.org/righteous/index_righteous.html

Yad Vashem, section on the Holocaust at:
http://www1.yadvashem.org/about_holocaust/index_about_holocaust.html

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum site, section on “rescue”:
<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/>

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum site, includes introduction to the Holocaust:
<http://www.ushmm.org/>

Wikipedia, entry on the Righteous among the Nations at:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Righteous_Among_the_Nations

Wikipedia, detailed entry on the Holocaust at:
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holocaust>

Print sources

GILBERT, Martin. Never Again—A History of the Holocaust (Universe Publishing, 2001)

The State Library of Victoria’s Raoul Wallenberg Collection, established by the library in conjunction with the Raoul Wallenberg Unit of B’nai B’rith, provides the basis for detailed study of issues presented in this exhibition. The collection includes memoirs and works by survivors and their children, historical, political, philosophical and religious analyses, and works on art, literature and music influenced by events of the Holocaust. For a guide to this collection, see: <http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/slv/collections/wallenberg/>

A number of survivor memoirs have been published by the Jewish Holocaust Museum and Research Centre, 13 Selwyn St., Elsternwick 3185. (Tel.: 03 9528 1985)

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