

Appendix D

VIDEO TEXT:

LESSON 1

In 1920, approximately nine million Jews lived in Europe. In 1945, less than two million remained there. Six million had been murdered. Of those six million, one and half million had been children under 15. The voices on this tape are of victims of the Holocaust who survived. Some lived through labor camps where they were forced to do slave labor; some survived death camps like Auschwitz {*Ovshvitz*}. Others survived in hiding, constantly alert to the possibilities of betrayal or detection.

To each of them, the Holocaust means one fundamental fact: their families were annihilated. Jewish culture, whether in large cities or small towns, in France or Poland, revolved around close, tradition-oriented large families. Rich or poor, educated or not, their lives were directed by their religion, learning, work and community. In 1945, all of that was gone. Each of these people had lost from 40 to 80 family members.

Such terrible losses, made even worse by the way mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers were killed, have left their mark on the survivors.

This unit is, in part, about those victims and what the Holocaust means in very personal terms. It is also about the people who were responsible for that event. We might ask about the results it has had on these people. Has it changed their lives? Are they remorseful? Who are they and what were their tasks before and during the Holocaust?

Finally, because the Holocaust occurred so recently in the Western, civilized world, it has changed the ways in which many people think about that world. The lessons of this history might teach us how to avoid becoming victims, and, perhaps more importantly, how to avoid becoming perpetrators.

Let us first hear the voices of victims to better understand why this unit is so important. All the speakers are from the Detroit metropolitan area. All of them were between the ages of 14 and 16 when they experienced the Holocaust.

Their testimonies show us what the Holocaust was: the violent separation of children from their parents and families, the loss of home and protection, of security and warmth.

LESSON 8

The destruction of the European Jews has been called a “process.” That means it proceeded in stages or steps. Each step seemed to make the next one possible. A governmental process needed the integration of civil service departments, the cooperation and work of offices that thought up, wrote and rewrote anti-Jewish directives and laws.

The members of different departments were given the tasks of devising the most efficient ways to put their orders into action. They received instructions, acted upon them and then passed the tasks on to the next department. The paperwork left their desks and was forgotten. But the results of their labor were devastating. This paperwork, these directives, uprooted communities, tore families apart, and brought death to innocent victims of all ages.

From April 1933, a torrent of anti-Jewish laws was passed in Germany. Jews were expelled from government civil service jobs; Jews were prohibited from becoming lawyers; Jewish children were prohibited from attending schools; Jewish university students were expelled; Jews could not hire non-Jews; Jews were dismissed from jobs in department stores and other types of businesses; Jews could not fly the German flag; Jews could not marry non-Jews; Jewish doctors could only treat Jewish patients.

In 1938 Jewish business were confiscated; eventually, food was rationed, curfews were imposed, and Jews were forced to live in specific areas and wear the Star of David whenever they were on the street. All this proved to be only the beginning of persecution that would assume unimaginable proportions.

The nationwide pogrom known as the *Kristallnacht* {*Kristall-nacht*} broke this systematic process. Jewish homes and businesses were smashed and looted. Jews were beaten in the streets. Twenty-six thousand Jews were arrested and placed in so-called “Protective Custody” in concentration camps.

Such violence however, had the effect of angering many Germans who were willing to turn their backs on anti-Jewish laws and state-ordained discrimination but were offended by the open violence of the *Kristallnacht*.

After 1938, under the administrative guidance of Hermann Goering {*Hair-man Ger-ring*}, Heinrich Himmler {*Hynerrick Himmler*}, and Reinhard Heydrich {*Rinehard Hy-dritch*}, the “Solution to the Jewish Question” would return to the process of legal, orderly and systematic persecution. The police were under the direction of Himmler and his SS.

The courts were committed to enforcing the laws passed by the government. And the goal was to separate Jews from the rest of German society, then to isolate them and remove them from the country. This meant concentrating Jews in specific areas. The same policy would be pursued in Poland after September 1939, when Germany invaded that country.

In 1939, before the “Final Solution” of killing was planned, Heydrich and Himmler had decided to concentrate Jews in urban areas known as ghettos. For the German administrators, this plan presented a host of problems to be solved with expertise and efficiency. Jews who lived in large cities like Warsaw or Lodz {*Luhdge*} had to leave their homes and move into run-down neighborhoods.

Jews in small towns and villages were rounded up and brought to the newly formed ghettos. The property of Jews was to be confiscated. Areas had to be selected and cordoned off.

A system of governing the ghettos had to be devised. Guards had to be chosen. Rationing, curfews, labor details, all had to be worked out. Even the specific measurements of armbands with Stars of David on them had to be decreed. All this was done according to concise directions sent through the German bureaucracy in memoranda and orders. All this was set in motion because of a few written paragraphs.

Some 500,000 people died in the ghettos of eastern Europe from 1939 to mid-1944. Some of the victims who survived remember frightening details of the violence of the *Kristallnacht*. Others recall in very specific human terms the consequences of indifferently written orders for ghettos.

LESSON 10

His father was a private tutor for the son of the Duke of Bavaria. His uncle was a Catholic bishop. He was raised in the Catholic faith. He was an obedient and cautious child brought up in a strict but educated German home. After World War I, in which he was too young to serve, he went to school and hoped to study farming. Perhaps he would own a chicken farm some day, or be a teacher like his father.

He also dreamed about adventures in secret service agencies – fantasizing a leadership role in organizing an efficient police system. His quiet manner, studious ways and meticulous concern for details would lead him to some “suitable profession.” Those who knew him admired his business-like precision, “disciplined obedience,” his piety and devotion to his family and, later, to his men. One American who met him in the 1930’s said to him: “I am convinced that nobody I met in Germany is more normal.”

His name was Heinrich Himmler.

Heinrich Himmler became the *Reichsfuehrer* {Reichs-Furor} des SS, Leader of the SS, and Chief of German Police. He was accountable only to Hitler and was in charge of the destruction of the European Jews and responsible for almost every aspect of their annihilation. Himmler authorized the *Einsatzgruppen* {Ein-zotz-grew-pen} and the death camps. The six million murdered Jews were killed under his jurisdiction.

An obedient young child brought up in a strict Catholic home, this young man both feared and respected his father. As a teenager, he considered the priesthood but decided it would not be for him. In high school, his teacher thought he was not exceptionally bright but better than average. He had a talent for careful observation and organizing his work.

As a soldier in World War I, he became extremely patriotic and later was deeply depressed because of Germany’s loss in that war. Times were hard, but his education provided him with skills, and his beloved wife and family gave him incentive to try different professions.

He seemed to feel a need for order and stability, a need he shared with most people of his generation. He had a simple, uncritical mind and struck people as uninvolved and cold. He said of himself that he was able to follow orders without thinking about them – a good employee. An excellent organizer, he became famous for his attention to the smallest details and his ability to focus on technical questions and to solve technical problems. He remained devout and rigid. All in all, an average citizen.

His name was Rudolf Hoess. {Hess}.

Rudolph Hoess became the Commandant of Auschwitz. Commissioned by Himmler in 1941, he organized the procedures that resulted in the death of more than two million Jews by gassing, shooting, starvation, medical experiments, beatings or disease.

Born in Germany, he was raised in Linz, Austria. His father was a bookkeeper for an electric company. After he did poorly in a technical high school, his father found him a job with the electric company. Having failed in school and then at his new job, he was given another, at the urging of his father. After his brief work, he began selling vacuum cleaners but was soon released from this position.

He moved to Germany, as a German citizen, in search of work and a better life—perhaps with a family. It was 1933. He admired and even envied those few friends he had made who were aristocrats with titles, and followed them wherever he could. He was helpful, attentive, a follower who obeyed authority figures—from his father to older friends. To this point in his life, he was a rather mediocre person.

His name was Adolf Eichmann.

Adolf Eichmann became Chief of the Office of Evacuation and Jews in the Security Service section of the SS. His first task was to deport the Jews of Austria, and he devised assembly-line methods for efficient deportation. His last task was the deportation of almost one-half million Jews from Hungary to Auschwitz in 1944. He achieved great success in both tasks. He was responsible for the deportation and murder of more than one million Jews.

He was the son of a famous director of a music conservatory. By the time this man was 18, he had distinguished himself as a student and a musician. He could have chosen a career as an academic or a violinist. Brilliant in school, he excelled in fencing and other athletics. His mother was a devout Catholic and raised him in the Catholic faith, and his musical abilities did not keep his parents from sending him to a strict boys school.

He was alert, energetic, hard-working and rigid. He was coldly handsome, the model “Aryan” {*Air-ee-an*}. Ambitious and determined, his clear and calculating mind brought him the reputation of being able to solve any technical or organizational problem.

Some called him an opportunist. Others saw him as a perfectionist. He was objective and unemotional. He continued to play Bach violin sonatas. He was unique among his peers.

His name was Reinhard Heydrich.

Reinhard Heydrich became the Chief of the Main Office of the SS. He coordinated all the many operations of the SS. In 1939, Heydrich was put in charge of organizing the “Final Solution.” He was directly responsible, before his assassination in 1942, for establishing all the procedures that led to the murder of two million Jews up until 1942. His methods and procedures were also used in the murder of four million more Jews between 1943 and 1945.

LESSON 13

On October 15, 1941, Hans Frank {*Hahns Frahnk*}, the Nazi Governor General of occupied Poland, issued a public order imposing the death penalty on persons hiding Jews outside the ghettos. The threat of death was not empty rhetoric, as Poles and Germans in that area knew. Punishments for even the slightest aid to Jews were quick and brutal, often public, and took the form of shooting or hanging or imprisonment in a concentration camp. There were non-Jews, however, who acted humanely, breaking the law to hide, rescue or somehow help Jews.

In the midst of indifference, apathy and collaboration, there were examples of courageous and righteous behavior. In Amsterdam, although most were eventually caught and killed, approximately 25,000 Jews were hidden at one time or another.

Among them were the young Anne Frank and her family. The four people who chose to hide the Franks did so knowing they were endangering the lives of their friends and families. Yet, they took the risk. To offer assistance was not a simple act of moral conviction—it involved painful decisions about jeopardizing family members.

The Nazi system of collective responsibility—making a group responsible for the actions of one person—made offering assistance doubly difficult. Those who offered aid and rescued Jews were heroes; yet, they often saw themselves as potentially responsible for the death of innocent members of their families. Moral action was not a simple choice—it might simultaneously produce deadly consequences.

Perhaps the most instructive story of rescue is the Danish one. Denmark was occupied by the Germans in 1940. In 1943, SS headquarters in Berlin sent orders to the SS in Denmark demanding that all Jews in Denmark be rounded up for deportation to Auschwitz. The Danish police and the Danish civil service refused to cooperate with the SS. When the Germans moved to round up the Jews of Denmark, the Danish population worked together to rescue over 7,000 Jews by sending them in boats to Sweden where they were offered refuge. The Danes, as a nation, acted heroically.

In the small town of LeChambon {*Le-Shombon*} in Southern France, the citizens hid Jews who managed to get there. The people of LeChambon then escorted the Jews under cover of night to Switzerland where they were smuggled across the border to safety. The people of LeChambon, as a group, acted heroically.

There were many individuals who offered to hide Jews. Jews were hidden in every European city—Warsaw, Budapest, Paris, Berlin, Amsterdam and others. In the rural areas of every country, farmers hid Jews in their barns or cellars. Some clergymen hid Jews in churches and monasteries. Members of the underground prepared false identity papers for Jews. The people on this tape survived by hiding or running from one place to another. Like them, almost all who survived needed some help from someone at some time.

Perhaps one should devote time to studying the Danes, examining the motives of the people of LeChambon and the would-be rescuers of the Frank family. For all of them, life was sacred. Hope lies with the rescuers—there were pitifully too few of them.