

Reading 13A

VOICES OF CONSCIENCE

SALONIKA, GREECE: After Greece was occupied by the Germans in 1941, the Nazis requested the head Greek Orthodox priest to hand over a list of Jews in that city. The priest told the SS he could identify only Greeks, without any religious distinction.

What do you think happened?

MINSK, RUSSIA: Wilhelm Kube {kew-beh}, Nazi *Generalkommissar* of White Russia (central, western district of Russia), repeatedly refused to allow mass murders of Jews who had been deported from Germany to Minsk. Although Kube protected German Jews, he had fewer qualms about killing Russian Jews. While he did not vigorously object to the murder of Russian Jews, he objected to any brutal and inhumane treatment of the Jews while they were alive.

What do you think happened?

AUSCHWITZ, POLAND: Several SS physicians refused to participate in medical experiments on Auschwitz prisoners.

What do you think happened?

EUROPE: There are many examples of Nazis who refused to participate in the killing process; some members of the SS would not be a party to mass shootings; some Nazi Party members would not engage in anti-Jewish activities.

What do you think happened?

A LABOR CAMP NEAR AUSCHWITZ, POLAND: Seeing that a 15-year-old boy had been badly beaten while working on a cement detail, a German civilian engineer, who was an I.G. Farben supervisor, detoured him from his way to the infirmary where he would have died. The engineer hid the boy each day for the next three days so that the boy could rest.

What do you think happened?

WARSAW, POLAND: A Polish girl was visited one night by a Jewish friend who pleaded to be hidden from the Nazis. Although the Polish girl knew that hiding Jews might mean death for her and her family, she took her in.

What do you think happened?

UKRAINE: In 1941, an old farmer discovered a family of four Jews hiding in his barn. His young wife was extremely superstitious and anti-Semitic, but he was a devout

Christian and believed it was a sin to murder Jews. He offered the family refuge in the loft of his barn. He told his wife to say nothing to anyone—not even his young children.

What do you think happened?

DENMARK: Although the German Army occupied Denmark from 1940 on, Danish officials from King Christian X to railroad employees to police officers all refused to cooperate with the Gestapo. They would not identify Jews and refused to introduce anti-Jewish measures of any kind.

What do you think happened?

RAOUL WALLENBERG: Raoul Wallenberg (1912-?) was a Swedish diplomat who saved thousands of Jews in Hungary during the Holocaust. He prevented their deportation to concentration and death camps during the German occupation of Hungary in the spring and summer of 1944.

Wallenberg was born in Stockholm, Sweden. His family was wealthy and included bankers, diplomats and industrialists. He traveled widely as a youth and could speak several languages. He studied architecture and city planning at the University of Michigan and graduated from there in 1935. He then worked for a business firm in South Africa and for a Dutch bank in Haifa, Palestine, where he met Jewish refugees from Germany in the late 1930s.

In 1944, he was working with the Swedish consulate in Budapest, Hungary. As a neutral country, Sweden could offer refuge for those who claimed Swedish citizenship. Wallenberg placed thousands of Jews in buildings under Swedish government authority where they were protected from the Nazis. He also distributed counterfeit passports and identification papers to thousands more who were scheduled for deportation to Auschwitz. With the forged papers secured by Wallenberg, these Hungarian Jews were given legal status as Swedish citizens, and thereby saved.

What do you think happened to him?

OSKAR SCHINDLER: Oskar Schindler was a member of the Nazi Party and a German businessman. Prior to the war, he had a reputation as a womanizer and heavy drinker. During the war, he was put in charge of a German factory near Krakow, Poland, to produce utensils for the German Army. In 1940, he employed 150 Jewish workers; by 1942, he employed 500. As the SS began to deport Jews to death camps, Schindler worked to protect them. He brought and kept whole families together, including old and “unproductive” people. He would often socialize with SS Commandant Goeth {get}, one of the most sadistic and murderous of the camp commanders. Through this socializing, however, he was able to save Jews, once even playing cards with Goeth for the life of a Jewish woman who worked in Goeth’s house. Through his connections with high-ranking SS officials and businessmen, Schindler was able to secure extra food and medical supplies for his workers.

By 1944, Schindler was able to provide over 1,000 Jews with work cards that saved them from deportation to Auschwitz. He called them “his” Jews, and they all recognized that it was his personal courage that was keeping them alive. He continued to bribe SS guards and buy extra rations through illegal channels. When the Germans retreated from Eastern Poland in 1944, they took apart their factories and killed Jewish workers. Schindler managed to save his workers by transferring them as a group to another factory in Western Czechoslovakia.

What do you think happened to him?

WARSAW, POLAND: In October 1942, a group of non-Jewish fighters in the Polish underground led by Colonel Henryk Wolinski and a Jew, Adolf Berman, formed the organization known as *Zegota*. It was devoted to rescuing Jews in Warsaw and Kracow.

What do you think happened?