

## DOCUMENT 9A

### Partisan Groups During the Holocaust

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How do people fight? Sometimes they fight with their bare hands. Sometimes they resist by remaining human and helping others, although it may seem that the world has become one monster. Sometimes they resist by producing poetry, diaries, art work, writing, and doing this when there is no food to eat and one does not expect to live until the next day. Sometimes they resist by praying to God, even when the situation has become so terrible that one is not sure if there is a God, yet they observe His commandments and continue their existence for yet another day. But sometimes one fights back with guns. When they live in a ghetto surrounded by barbed wire and well-fed soldiers with machine guns, how do they obtain these guns?

The lie has spread that the Jews went “like sheep to the slaughter.” No such thing! As soon as the people understood what “resettlement in the East” meant, resistance groups sprang up all over. “Resettlement”, of course, was another way of saying they were to be murdered. The most famous of these resistance epics was, of course, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, which began April 19, 1943, the night of the first Passover Seder. This rebellion lasted longer than the entire Polish army’s resistance against the Germans. But the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was not the only one. There were many other uprisings and retaliations.

In ghettos, in forests and, even in the concentration camps, acts of sabotage and resistance took place. In Auschwitz, the most dreaded of all the concentration camps, one of the crematoria was blown up, with the help of a young woman, Rosa Robota. Mala Zimerbaum, another young woman in Auschwitz, helped many of the

inmates escape death. She herself escaped from Auschwitz and was gone two weeks before she was re-captured. The problem with escape was that there was no place for a Jew to hide, no one to have compassion, no one to care. Mala was to be an example to the inmates of Auschwitz, but before the Nazis could kill her, she cut her wrists. Finally, they threw her into the crematorium without gassing her first.

At Sobibor, another concentration camp, there was an uprising, and after this, the camp was dismantled. At Treblinka, another death camp, the death factory was partially destroyed and not rebuilt. Uprisings took place at seventeen different camps.

Like sheep to slaughter? Elie Wiesel says, “The question is not why all the Jews did not fight, but how many of them did. Tormented, beaten, starved, where did they find the strength—spiritual and physical—to resist?” And other nationalities, did they resist? Even two million captured Russian soldiers, used to fighting, to holding a gun, to battle—there was not one case of resistance among them. Thousands of Poles re-settled to work in Germany, and there was not one case of resistance. Italians were murdered in the Ardeatine caves near Rome, but offered no resistance. In the Katyn forest, not far from the city of Smolensk in White Russia, some 5,000 Polish soldiers were murdered, shot in the head, their hands tied; not one fought back.

Jewish children smuggled food into the ghettos, but many were caught and shot to death at the ghetto walls. Still, they had to have food, and they continued their smuggling. Study, prayer, plays, entertainment, poetry readings, orchestras—all operated under what would seem to be

## DOCUMENT 9A (Continued)

### Partisan Groups During the Holocaust

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impossible conditions. In Cracow, in September 1942, Zionist youth groups formed a resistance movement. They sabotaged railroad lines, attacked German buildings, assassinated a number of German officials. In Bialystok, an armed rebellion broke out in 1943. Many of the fighters fled to the forest, but even that was a problem. Poles and Ukrainians who had their own resistance groups were viciously anti-Semitic and fought their Jewish comrades in arms instead of concentrating on their mutual enemy, the Nazis. Partisan units were formed in Minsk, in Riga, in

Mir and Buczyn and in Vilna. The French Jews had an underground which called itself “The Jewish Partisan Unit of Paris.”

Some could escape to the forest and fight. But then another dilemma presented itself. If one escapes to the forest to fight and remain alive, what happens to his family? As soon as it was learned that a member of the family had escaped, the family was doomed. But, of course, they were doomed anyway. Would you want to be the cause of your family’s immediate destruction? This was a difficult decision to make.

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Ohio Council on Holocaust Education, *The Holocaust: Prejudice Unleashed*.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Describe the special challenges partisan fighters faced.
2. Describe some of their accomplishments as they faced these challenges.

## DOCUMENT 9B

### The Bielski Partisans

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Of the estimated 20,000 to 30,000 Jews who fought in partisan groups in the forests of Eastern Europe, the group led by Tuvia Bielski was the largest and the most renowned. Though members of his family were murdered by Einsatzgruppen in Novogradok, Tuvia escaped to the forests of western Belorussia.

Together with his brothers Zusys, Asael, and Aharon, Tuvia secured arms and created a partisan group that grew to 30 members. This band of Resistance fighters dispatched couriers to ghettos in the Novogradok region to recruit fellow Jews to join their camp. Eventually, Bielski's camp contained hundreds of families.

The primary aim of the Bielski partisans was to protect Jewish lives. But they were also aggressive, launching raids against the Germans and exacting revenge on Belorussian police and farmers who helped the Nazis massacre Jews.

Frustrated by the activities of the Bielski group, the Germans offered a large reward for Tuvia's capture.

However, the group successfully escaped by retreating deep into the forest. When the area was liberated in the summer of 1944, Bielski's band of partisans numbered 1200.

After the war, Tuvia immigrated to Palestine. He later settled in the United States with two surviving brothers.

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David J. Hogan and David Aretha, eds., *The Holocaust Chronicle: A History in Words and Pictures* (Lincolnwood, IL: Publications International, 2000), 442. Reprinted by permission.

#### QUESTION

In what ways did Jews resist during the Holocaust?

# DOCUMENT 10A

## Map: Jewish Partisans and Resistance Fighters



Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: Maps and Photographs*, 5th ed. (London: Holocaust Education Trust, 1998), 44. Reprinted by permission.

# DOCUMENT 10B

## Map: Jewish Revolts 1942–1945



Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: Maps and Photographs*, 5th ed. (London: Holocaust Education Trust, 1998), 42. Reprinted by permission.

## DOCUMENT 11

### The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

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The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, April 19, 1943—May 16, 1943. The most famous and dramatic example of armed resistance during the Holocaust was the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising by Jewish fighting forces in April and May 1943. As was true in most other locations, the uprising occurred after most of the ghetto population had already been deported and killed. In summer and fall 1942, about 300,000 Jews from Warsaw were deported to Treblinka. When reports of mass murder by gassing filtered back to the ghetto, surviving members of separate underground groups, which for months had been engaged in smuggling arms and other acts of unarmed resistance, joined together in armed resistance. Many members of the newly formed unified Jewish Fighting Organization (ZOB) were angry that no one had resisted the mass deportations in 1942.

On January 18, 1943, the ZOB, led by 23-year old Mordechai Anielewicz, leader of a Zionist youth group, fired on German troops during an attempted deportation of 8,000 Jews. After a few days, the troops retreated. The small victory inspired the ghetto fighters to prepare for future resistance. When the final liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto began on April 19, 1943, the ZOB resisted the German roundups. One of the ghetto fighters, Tovia Bozhikowski, later recalled that momentous day:

*Monday, April 19, was the day before  
Passover, the first day of spring. Sunshine  
penetrated even to the cheerless corners of the  
ghetto, but with the last trace of winter, the  
last hope of the Jews had also disappeared.*

*Those who had remained at their battle stations all night were annoyed by the beauty of the day, for it is hard to accept death in the sunshine of spring.*

*As members of Dror, we were stationed at Nalevskes 33. I stood on the balcony of a building on Nalevskes-Genshe with several friends, where we could watch the German troops who stole into the ghetto. Since early dawn long lines of Germans had been marching—infantry, cavalry, motorized units, regular soldiers, S.S. troops and Ukrainians.*

*I wondered what we could do against such might, with only pistols and rifles. But we refused to admit the approaching defeat.*

*By 6:00 A.M. the ghetto was surrounded. The first German detachment advanced toward Nalevskes. As it neared the crossroads of Nalevskes-Genshe-Franciskaner we opened fire with guns, grenades and small homemade bombs.*

*Our bombs and grenades exploded over their heads as they returned our fire. They were excellent targets in the open square, while we were concealed in the buildings. They left many dead and wounded. The alert, confident attitude of our men was impressive. The youthful Jacob shot his pistol continuously, while Abraham Dreyer and Moshe Rubin commanded from windows. Zachariash, Dror commander, moved among the men, building their courage. Liaison officers scurried between positions with messages. The battle went on for two hours.*

## DOCUMENT 11 (Continued)

### The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

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*Rivka, an observer, watched the enemy retreat. There were no more Germans on the front street. Zachariash returned beaming from his survey of the battlefield: 40 dead and wounded Germans were left behind, but we suffered no losses.*

*But even in our satisfaction we realized we would eventually be crushed. It was though a triumph to gladden the hearts of men who were about to die.*

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Resistance During the Holocaust. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. 18–19  
No publication date

#### QUESTION

1. Using the maps and text from Documents 10A and 10B, draw three conclusions about the partisans and resistance fighters and Jewish revolts.
2. Why does the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising stand as a symbol of the courage and determination of Jews to resist?

## DOCUMENT 12

### Father Maxmillian Kolbe

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Raymond Kolbe (upon entering the religious life he assumed the name Maxmillian) was born in Zdunska Wola, Poland in January 1894. After initial religious training in Poland, Kolbe traveled to Rome to complete his theological studies. During his stay in Rome, he and six other students organized a religious group which they called the Militia of Mary Immaculate or the Knights of the Immaculata. Members of this group consecrated their lives to Mary Immaculate and the teachings of the Catholic Church. Their energies were aimed at working for the salvation of all souls, especially those who were bitter enemies of the church, such as Freemasons and Communists.

In 1919, Father Kolbe returned to his native Poland where he spread the message of the new religious order. During the course of the 1920's and 1930's, the Knights of the Immaculata gained strength, numbers and influence. In 1927, a parcel of land was donated to the group in order to establish a religious community which was called Niepokalanow ("the City of the Immaculata"). By 1930 the population of the religious community totaled 772 friars and students. Relying on the power of the press, the Knights of the Immaculata published a number of newspapers and magazines in Polish and Latin with a widespread circulation among Catholic clergy and laity. Between 1930–36, Father Kolbe spent much of his time traveling in the Orient, especially in Japan, where he spread the teachings of his religious order. Through his efforts, a religious community similar to Niepokalanow was established in Nagasaki, Japan. In 1936, Father Kolbe returned to Poland.

Shortly after the outbreak of World War II in September 1939, Father Kolbe was arrested by the Nazi authorities. He was released on November 9, 1939, after spending some time in a prison in Germany and in a detention camp in Poland. On February 17, 1941, Father Kolbe was again arrested by the Germans. Although he was never formally charged with a crime, we can surmise that he was included among the members of the Polish civil, religious and cultural elite who were fated to die because of their potential power to muster opposition in German to occupation forces.

After spending three months in the Pawiak Prison in Warsaw, Father Kolbe was transferred to Auschwitz. At Auschwitz, Father Kolbe was assigned to a Polish prisoners barracks in the main camp. Never very physically healthy, Father Kolbe slowly began to succumb to the harsh conditions of the concentration camp. Polish survivors who were imprisoned with him recall how Father Kolbe served as a source of spiritual strength for his imprisoned countrymen.

Sometime in the end of July 1941, the prison guards discovered that a prisoner from Block 14, Father Kolbe's barracks, had escaped. As punishment for the escape, 10 prisoners were randomly selected for execution. Among the prisoners selected was a Polish army sergeant, Francis Gajowniczek.

When Gajowniczek learned of his fate, he screamed out, "My poor wife, my poor children, what will happen to my family!" Dr. Nicetus Francis Wlodarski, a witness to the selection, recounted, "After the selection of 10 prisoners, Father Maxmillian slipped out of line, took off his cap, and placed himself before the commandant.



## DOCUMENT 12 (Continued)

### Father Maxmillian Kolbe

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Astounded, Fritsch (Lager Fuehrer Captain Fritsch) asked him: ‘What does this Polish pig want?’ Father Maxmillian pointed with his hand to the condemned Gajowniczek and replied: ‘I am a Catholic priest from Poland; I would like to take his place, because he has a wife and children.’ From astonishment, the commandant appeared unable to speak. After a moment he gave a sign with the hand. He spoke but one word: ‘Away!’ Gajowniczek received the command to return to the row he had just left. In this manner Father Maxmillian took the place of the condemned man.”

Father Kolbe and the nine other condemned men were taken to Block 11 or as it was commonly called by the inmates of Auschwitz, “the Block of Death.” Their fate was to slowly die from starvation.

Bruno Borgowiec, a Polish inmate who served as one of the camp’s undertakers, recalled the last days of Father Kolbe.

*...From this death cell we heard daily prayers spoken with strong voices, the rosary and reli-*

*gious hymns. Prisoners in other cells also joined in. In the moments when the guard was absent, I descended to the lower bunker to converse with my suffering companions and to console them... Father Maxmillian began and the others answered. Sometimes they were so absorbed in prayer that they failed to note the entrance of the guard; they became quiet at their shouts.*

*Often at the opening of the doors the unfortunates cried and begged for a piece of bread and a sip of water. Even this was refused them... Father Maxmillian’s death was heroic. He did not whine, neither did he murmur. He encouraged and comforted the others. As all were already very much weakened by the long time, the prayers could only be whispered. At each visit Father Maxmillian was still standing or kneeling in the middle of the cell and looking calmly at those entering.*

On August 14, after almost two weeks of starvation, Father Kolbe was injected with a lethal dose of poison. Death followed immediately.

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Warren Green. “40th Anniversary of Death of Father Kolbe, Martyr of Auschwitz, to be Noted Here.” *St. Louis Jewish Light*, August 12, 1981, p. 5. Excerpted by permission, *St. Louis Jewish Light*, © 1984; all rights reserved. Reprinted as “Blessed Maxmillian Kolbe: Martyr of Auschwitz,” in *Teaching About the Holocaust and Genocide*, Human Rights Series, vol. 2 (Albany, New York: University of the State of New York, State Education Department, Bureau of Curriculum and Development, 1985), 280.

### QUESTION

1. Describe Father Kolbe’s work before he was imprisoned in Auschwitz.
2. Describe the circumstances that led to his severe punishment.
3. Why is Father Kolbe’s action so striking?

## DOCUMENT 13A

Photo: Warsaw Ghetto Milk Can

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The most comprehensive effort to document ghetto life was undertaken in the Warsaw Ghetto by a group of several dozen writers, teachers, rabbis, and historians led by Dr. Emmanuel Ringelblum in a secret operation code-named *Oneg Shabbat* (Hebrew for “Sabbath delight”). They wrote diaries, collected documents, commissioned papers, and preserved the posters and

decrees that comprised the memory of the doomed community. They had no illusions. Their only hope was that memory of the Warsaw ghetto would endure.

On the eve of destruction in the spring of 1944, when all seemed lost, the archive was placed in milk cans and some metal boxes and buried deep beneath the rubble of the streets of

## DOCUMENT 13A (Continued)

### Photo: Warsaw Ghetto Milk Can

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Warsaw. One can was found in 1946. The can shown in the photo was the second milk can buried. It was unearthed on December 1, 1950, at 68 Nowolipki Street. This can contained copies of several underground newspapers, pub-

lic notes by the Jewish Council, and a narrative of deportations from the Warsaw ghetto.

Despite repeated searches for the third can and other metal containers, they remain buried in the rubble.

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On loan to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum from the Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw. B-650/IL 91.02.01. For educational purposes only. Courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Photograph by Arnold Kramer.

### QUESTIONS

1. How was the milk can used?
2. How can a milk can be considered a form of resistance?

## DOCUMENT 13B

### Letter from Emmanuel Ringelblum

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This letter about Jewish cultural activity in the Polish ghettos was written by Dr. Emmanuel Ringelblum. Date unknown, probably early 1943.

Dear Friends:

We write at a time when 95 per cent of Polish Jewry has been wiped out, wiped out under savage torture, in the gas chambers and charnel houses of Treblinka, Sobibor, Chelmno, and Oshpitzin or in the countless liquidations in the camps and ghettos. The fate of our people now painfully rotting in the concentration camps is similarly predetermined.

Perhaps a handful of Jews will survive to live a precarious existence in the Aryan sections of the cities or in the forest, hunted like beasts. It is gravely doubtful that any of us, the communal leaders, will survive the war, working under extremely hazardous conditions as we do.

When Polish Jews fell under the cruel yoke of the Nazis, the independent Jewish communal leadership began its widespread, far-reaching work, dedicated to self-help and resistance. With the active assistance of the "Joint," a colossal network of social welfare agencies arose in Warsaw and the hinterlands under the leadership of Z.H.T.O.S. [Society for Jewish Social Welfare], Centos [Central Shelter for Children and Orphans] and T.O.Z. [Society to Guard the Health of Jewish Population]. O.R.T., too, was active. With the help of these organizations and their committees tens of thousands were able to prolong their lives. The work was kept up to the last, as long as the Jewish community showed a spark of life. Political parties and ideological groups were enabled to conduct their conspiratorial work in secrecy, and cultural activities were shielded.

The watchword of the Jewish social worker was, "Live and die with honor," a motto we endeavored to keep in the ghettos. It found its expression in the multi-faceted cultural program that grew in spite of the terror, hunger and deprivation. It grew until the very moment of the martyrdom of Polish Jewry.

As soon as the Warsaw Ghetto was sealed off, a subterranean organization, Yikor [Yiddish Cultural Organization] was established to conduct a wide program in Jewish culture. The program included scientific lectures, celebrations to honor Peretz, Sholom Aleichem, Mendele, Borochoy and others, and projects in art and literature. The prime mover of Yikor was the young economist Menachem Linder, who was killed in 1942.

Under the mantle of Centos kitchens and children's homes there sprang up a network of underground schools representing varying shades of opinion.: Cisho, Tarbuth, Schulkult, Yavneh, Chorev, Beth Yankov and others. The secular schools were taught in Yiddish. These schools were established through the work of Shachna Zagan and Sonia Novogrudski, both of whom died at Treblinka.

## Letter from Emmanuel Ringelblum

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A furtive central Jewish archive was formed under the deceptive title, "Society for Enjoyment of the Sabbath," by Dr. Emmanuel Ringelblum, who, in collaboration with others from the text gathered material and documents concerning the martyrdom of the Polish Jews. Thanks to the efforts of a large staff, about twenty trunkfuls of documents, diaries, photographs, remembrances and reports were collected. The material was buried in..., which even we could not enter. Most of the material sent abroad comes from the archive. We gave the world the most accurate information about the greatest crime in history. We are continuing our work on the archive, regardless of circumstances.

In 1941 and 1942 we were in contact with... in Vilna, who, under German control, managed to coordinate and conceal a good portion of the Y.I.V.O. documents. Today there are no Jews in Vilna. This once great center of Jewish culture and modern scientific research is in shambles.

But throughout almost the entire existence of the ghetto practically every Jewish organization participated in underground work, especially youth groups. We put out newspapers, magazines and anthologies. The most active groups in this work were the Bund, which published the "Bulletin," "Current Events," "Voice of Youth," "Nowa Młodzież," "Za Nasza i wasza Wolność"; Hashomer Hatzair, which published "Jutrznia Przewłosnie," "Upsurge," and a series of anthologies; Left Poale Zion, "Nasze Hasło," "Proletarian Thought," "Call of Youth," "Vanguard"; Right Poale Zion, "Liberation"; Dror, "Dror Yedios," "Hamadrach," "G'vura," "Pine"; the anti-Fascist bloc, "The Call"; the Communists, "Morning Freiheit," and others. Some publications reached almost all other ghettos despite extreme difficulty in communications with Warsaw.

Centos, the central child care organization, led much activity among the children. Led by... and the unforgettable Rosa Simchovich (who died of typhoid contracted from street waifs), teachers, educators and artists, Centos founded a central children's library, a theater and classes in Yiddish language and literature. Thousands of adults joined in for "Children's Month," a program of cultural and artistic projects which provided a little happiness far from the hideous realism of their existence. Today there are no more Jewish children in Poland. Some 99 per cent were murdered by the Nazis.

The ghetto even had a symphonic orchestra, under Shimon Pullman. Its concerts and chamber music afforded us moments of relaxation and forgetfulness. Pullman and most of the other musicians perished at Treblinka along with violinist Ludwig Holzman. The young conductor Marion Noitich died at the Travniki camp.

A great deal of young talent was found in the ghetto. The daughter of a director of the Warsaw Synagogue, Marisha Eisenstadt, was called the "Nightingale of the Ghetto." She was killed during the liquidations. There were many choral groups, notably the children's chorus

## DOCUMENT 13B (Continued)

### Letter from Emmanuel Ringelblum

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directed by Feivishes, who died at the Poniatow camp. Other choirmasters were Gladstein and Sax, among those who died at Treblinka. Jewish painters and sculptors, living in frightful poverty, organized occasional exhibits. Felix Freidman was one of the best; but they all died at Treblinka.

Our activities continued in the concentration camps. In Ponyatow, Treblinka and other camps we formed secret social societies and even arranged secret celebrations during holidays. Activity continued as long as there was life, in desperate struggling against the barbarism that imprisoned us.

When the deportations began our organizations turned to battle. The youths showed the way in Zionist organizations and all branches of the labor movement. Armed resistance began in Poland. We defended the Warsaw Ghetto and fought at Bialystock. We destroyed parts of Treblinka and Sobibor. We fought at Torne, Bendin and Czestochowa. We proved to the world that we could fight back, and we died with dignity.

That's what we wanted to tell you, dear friends. There are not many of us left. There are ten writers we would like you to attempt to contact through the Red Cross; we don't know if they are still alive. Enclosed is a list of the dead who have helped in our work.

We doubt if we will see you again. Give our best to the builders of our culture, and to all who fight for human redemption.

Dr. E. Ringelblum

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Emmanuel Ringelblum, "Jewish Cultural Activity in the Ghettos of Poland," translated by Moshe Spiegel, in *Anthology of Holocaust Literature*, ed. J. Glatstein, I. Knox, and S. Morgoshes. (New York: Atheneum, 1968), 336–339. Reprinted from J. Kenner, ed., *Emmanuel Ringelbaum* (New York: Jewish Labor Committee, 1945).

### QUESTIONS

1. What were some examples of cultural activity in the ghettos of Poland?
2. How was this cultural activity a form of resistance?
3. What is the irony of this situation?

## DOCUMENT 14

### Hiding to Survive

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Andy Sterling was born in Hungary shortly after the outbreak of World War II. Although Hungary was a German ally in the war, Hungarian Jews were not exempt from the Nazi roundups. Sterling's family finally sent him to safety in a Catholic orphanage in Budapest. His story is excerpted from *Hiding to Survive: Stories of Jewish Children Rescued from the Holocaust* by Maxine B. Rosenberg.

In this personal narrative, Sterling relates his experiences as a Jewish boy being hidden in a Catholic orphanage, where he could never reveal his true identity to anyone.

In 1941 Hungary, where I was born, entered the war as a German ally. A year later, when I was six and a half, my father and other Jewish men in our village were sent away to do forced labor. For the next eighteen months I didn't know where he was.

When he came back in late 1943, he told my family stories about Jews being rounded up throughout Europe and said that we were no longer safe. He thought we should leave our small village of Nagykata where everyone knew we were Jewish and go to Budapest, the capital city, where we might blend in more.

First my parents left and moved in with my aunt. For the next few months they tried to get things in order. Suddenly, in March 1944, the Germans occupied Hungary, and Jews living in and near my village were relocated to a ghetto. My grandmother, my younger sister Judith, and I went there along with my grandmother's brother and his wife.

Every day Jews from this ghetto were being sent to the camps. We knew that our time was running out. Luckily my uncle's daughter knew a Christian who had connections and helped us escape. A few weeks later we learned that all the Jews in our ghetto had been shipped to Auschwitz.

Now I was with my parents again. My father had already gotten false identity papers for himself and had become an ambulance driver. I, though, had to wear a star and abide by the curfew.

That September the Germans, with the Hungarian SS as their helpers, began deporting Jews in huge numbers and shooting Jews on the street. At the same time, the Russians were bombing the city. Things got so bad, my parents forbade me to leave the apartment and said I could play only in the garden within the building.

One day I disobeyed and went across the street with a little mirror to see how the sun's rays reflected off it. Out of nowhere, an SS man holding a leashed German shepherd appeared and grabbed me by the collar. He accused me of giving signals to American flyers and was about to take me away when the superintendent of my apartment came to my rescue. He convinced the SS man to let me go.

At this point my parents realized how much danger we were in and said that my sister and I had to be hidden. When I heard that I'd be separated from my parents, I was very upset.

My parents said I'd be going to a Catholic orphanage in Budapest with Paul, their friend's child, who was two years older than I. Paul's parents had found the place, and the priest in charge was willing to hide us. Judith, now five, was being sent to a convent, and my mother was going to live with a Catholic family in town. My father said he'd be moving around in his ambulance trying to get false papers for my aunt and grandmother.

## Hiding to Survive

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Before I left, my parents warned me not to tell anyone at the orphanage I was Jewish. Because I was circumcised, they said I had to be extra careful not to be seen when I undressed or urinated.

In October 1944, my father drove Paul and me to the orphanage. We left at night in the middle of an air raid, when only emergency vehicles were allowed on the street.

As soon as we got to the door, my father said good-bye and promised to visit whenever he could. As he drove away, I felt abandoned. It was the first time I was on my own.

The priest and his assistant took Paul and me into an office and told us never to talk about being Jewish, not even to each other. If the orphanage boys asked why we had come a month after school had started, we were to say that our fathers had been killed on the front and that our mothers were too ill to take care of us.

After the priest coached us on some of the morning prayers, he showed us to the dormitory. I lay in bed terrified. Everything was strange. I wanted my parents.

The next morning the priest introduced us to the boys. There were sixty of them, and most had been in the orphanage for years and years and knew one another. I had only met Paul twice before.

That morning I went to services and carefully watched what the others did. When they stood up, I stood up. When they knelt, I knelt. But when they crossed themselves, I got uncomfortable. I had been brought up in a Jewish home and gone to Hebrew school, and I felt awkward. In the end I crossed myself like the rest of the boys, and from then on I did what I was told. I was too afraid to do anything else.

My father visited from time to time. He could only stay for a few minutes, but at least I knew he was alive. Once in a while he came when I wasn't around, and the priest would give me the message. The priest tried to look after me and make sure I was okay, but with so many boys to take care of he didn't always have the time. Mostly I fended for myself.

In November, one month after I arrived, the bombing increased and the air raid sirens went off night and day. In a hurry we'd all rush down into the bunker, where the priest would lead us in prayer. In between the bombings the priest and his assistant tried to conduct classes, but when the air raids became too frequent, they gave up.

After that we moved into the bunker full time, running upstairs only to use the bathroom. We'd go in shifts of four or five, with just twenty-five seconds each. For emergencies we kept some buckets downstairs.

By then it was winter, and it was very cold. We had no heat or electricity, and there was a water shortage. That meant we couldn't bathe or change our clothes. For me it was easier not having to undress in front of the others. But soon we all were infested with lice.

At this time the Russians invaded Budapest, arriving in tanks. They destroyed one building after another until the Germans and the Hungarian SS were trapped and resorted to street fighting. It got so dangerous, my father was afraid to drive his ambulance and stopped coming to see me. Now I felt totally alone.

Worse, we were running out of food. Except for some corn left in the pantry, there was nothing to eat. In desperation the priest ran out on



## Hiding to Survive

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the street to scrounge up something. Once he found a dead horse that had been shot in the front of the orphanage and asked me and some other boys to help chop it up. That night he grilled the meat over some wood, and everyone had a couple of bites. The meat tasted sweet. After not eating for so long, I thought it was an incredible meal.

By late December the bombing had worsened and fires were spreading throughout the city. When a building to the right of ours was shelled, the priest got scared. He thought the Russians were probably targeting the Hungarian Gestapo's headquarters, which were next to the orphanage. To protect us, he decided to break through the wall of our cellar and tunnel into the adjacent building where it would be safer.

With only a pickaxe, he and his assistant chipped away at the bunker's stone wall, shoveling out the debris. Meanwhile bombs and shells whistled overhead. We kids watched, petrified. Eventually they dug out a large enough space for us to crawl through one at a time.

By then I hadn't seen my father in a month and a half. I didn't know where he or my mother were or if they were alive or dead. It was tough not having any word from them.

At the same time the firing outside was getting more severe. The older boys in the orphanage tried to act brave, but the younger ones, like Paul and me, couldn't stop crying. He and I clung to each other while the priest kept telling us to pray.

"The war is almost over," the priest said to everyone. With the bombing overhead, it was hard to believe, especially since the priest himself seemed scared. Only when he said I'd soon be with my parents did I have some hope.

Finally, on January 15, 1945, the Russians liberated Pest, the part of the city where I was hiding. With the priest leading us, we all went into the street to witness the events. Except for some distant shelling in the hills, it was deadly silent. I looked around and saw one building after another in rubble. Suddenly my whole body started shaking. Instead of feeling joy, I felt weak. More than ever I wanted my parents.

Six days later my father drove up in his ambulance. When I saw him, I ran into his arms and couldn't stop crying. He had brought bread for everyone, which we quickly grabbed. We were very hungry.

Now, I thought, I'll finally be with my parents. But Buda, the part of the city where my mother was hiding, hadn't been liberated. My father didn't even know if she was safe. Also, there were still pockets of Germans around who were shooting at whim, so I had to stay in the orphanage for another two months.

During that time my father visited and brought everyone food. Then in March he came for me, taking me to my aunt's apartment, where once again the family was together. The four of us and my aunt and grandmother had survived the war.

Now we had to figure out how to get food and clothing to keep us alive. Since my father had to give the ambulance back to the government, we had no transportation. Besides, there was nothing to be bought in the city. So my parents walked forty miles back to the old village to see what they could find there. A week later they returned in a donkey cart filled with enough food for us and extra to sell. Not long after, we all left Budapest and returned to our home in Nagykata.

## DOCUMENT 14 (Continued)

### Hiding to Survive

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Of the 628 Jews who had lived in and around our village, very few had survived the war. When the villagers saw us, they acted as if we had returned from the dead.

In school, my sister and I were the only Jewish children in our classes, which made us feel strange. My parents too were uncomfortable with no other Jews nearby. So in 1949 we moved back to Budapest. Until the year before, my father had been sending donations to the orphanage. But then in 1948 the Communists

banned religious schools in the country, and the orphanage ceased to exist. The building was standing, but the priest, and his assistant, and the children were gone.

I never saw the priest again, but I learned from my father that there were eight other Jewish boys in the orphanage besides Paul and me. Paul and I had suspected certain kids were Jewish, but we had been afraid to ask. It's too bad, because it would have been comforting to know we weren't the only ones.

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Andy Sterling, "Hiding to Survive," in *Images from the Holocaust: A Literature Anthology*, ed. Jean E. Brown, Elaine C. Stephens, and Janet E. Rubin (Lincolnwood, IL: NTC Publishing, 1997), 54–58. Excerpted from Rosenberg, Maxine B. *Hiding to Survive: Stories of Jewish Children Rescued from the Holocaust*. Clarion Books, New York, 1994.

#### QUESTIONS

1. How do Andy Sterling's experiences illustrate the dangers of being a Jewish child during this period?
2. What actions did Andy's parents take to protect their children during the Holocaust?
3. What might parents and children have felt during the ordeal of hiding, separation, and reunion? Use Sterling's case as an example.

## DOCUMENT 15

### The White Rose

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*We will not be silent. We are your bad conscience. The White Rose will not leave you in peace.*

—The White Rose Letters

There was scattered resistance to the Nazi regime even in Germany. Some opposition to Hitler came from members of aristocratic families who viewed Hitler as a crude upstart and were appalled by his policies and the transformation of Germany into a police state. The small group of active opponents put their lives on the line. Virtually all of them were killed. Men like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a distinguished Lutheran minister, and Hans von Dohnanyi, a jurist who served in the army, were part of a conspiracy to oust Hitler. For years, a group within the German officer corps gingerly plotted Hitler's overthrow, gaining adherents as the military tide turned against Germany. These army officers planned to assassinate Hitler, seize power, and negotiate peace with the Allies. After a series of abortive plans, a serious assassination attempt was finally made in July 1944, when it no longer took any special insight to see that Hitler's continued rule was leading to Germany's inevitable defeat. Hitler escaped the bomb blast with only minor injuries. All those who were involved in the conspiracy were killed (executed).

The White Rose movement, which culminated in a remarkable public demonstration by students against the regime, was organized and led by young people. At its head were a medical student at the University of Munich, Hans Scholl, his sister Sophie, and Christoph Probst, who were outraged by the acquiescence of educated

men and women in the Nazi treatment of Jews and Poles. Their anti-Nazi campaign was guided by a philosophy professor, Kurt Huber, a disciple of Immanuel Kant, the eighteenth-century moral philosopher who taught that human beings must never be used as a means to an end.

In 1942, the group set out to break the cycle in which "each waits for the other to begin." Their first leaflet was a call for spiritual resistance against an immoral government. "Nothing is so unworthy of a civilized people as allowing itself to be governed without opposition by an irresponsible clique that has yielded to base instinct," they wrote. "Every people deserves the government it is willing to endure."

In correspondence that became known as the "White Rose Letters," the group established a network of students in Hamburg, Freiburg, Berlin, and Vienna. "We will not be silent," they wrote to their fellow students. "We are your bad conscience. The White Rose will not leave you in peace." After mounting an anti-Nazi demonstration in Munich, in February 1943, the Scholls distributed pamphlets urging students to rebel. They were turned in by a university janitor. Hans and Sophie Scholl repeated the words of Goethe: "Hold out in defiance of all despotism."

Professor Huber was also arrested. To the end, he remained loyal to Kant's ethical teaching that one must act as though legislating for the world. Huber's defense, his "Final Statement of

## DOCUMENT 15 (Continued)

### The White Rose

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the Accused,” concluded with the words of Kant’s immediate disciple, Johann Gottlieb Fichte:

*And thou shall act as if  
On thee and on thy deed  
Depended the fate of all Germany  
And thou alone must answer for it.*

Huber and other students of the White Rose were executed a few days after the Scholls.

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Michael Berenbaum, *The World Must Know* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1993), 170. Reprinted by permission.

#### QUESTIONS

1. What was the White Rose?
2. What does the quote at the top of the page mean?
3. What was the significance of the existence and actions of the White Rose?

## DOCUMENT 16

### The *Kindertransport*

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By 1939, many Jews were trying desperately to leave Germany and Austria. One such effort was the *Kindertransport*, or “Children’s Transport”—convoys of children from Germany and German-occupied territories who were able to leave the European continent for temporary or permanent shelter.

Ellen Alexander was one of these children.

At the age of nine—maybe before then, I became very much aware of what was going on in the world, in Berlin, actually, because we were not allowed to play with the Aryan children. And people would call their children away from us because we were Jews and therefore not clean, not fit to be played with. We had to leave our school. We had to go to Jewish schools.

The school that I went to with my older sister was in Berlin. I don’t know exactly which school it was, but it was attached to a synagogue. And the day that—on November 10, 1938 [Kristallnacht], we came to the school, and it was in flames. And I do remember seeing people standing around and laughing and having a wonderful time watching these flames. And that I think was probably the end of our schooling. I didn’t understand the import of all this, but it certainly made an impression on me.

How my parents got us to go on the *Kindertransport* I don’t know, but on May 3, 1939, my sister and I were sent to England. And my parents were not overly emotional, although they may have been, especially my mother, but she didn’t show it. And we were able to leave with a lot of other children to go to an unknown place, a place where we didn’t know the language. But that didn’t bother me much. I was young and everything was an adventure.

After we left—after the children, my sister and I left—my father was not able to work for himself or for his father-in-law anymore and was eventually made to sweep the street under some young little Nazi boy who he had to help. He had to carry the bricks and he had to sweep the streets and do very menial work. My sister and I were in England and had a pretty happy life, all in all. I couldn’t complain about our foster parents. But our parents were sent to Theresienstadt [a concentration camp in Czechoslovakia] in 1943, and I never saw my father again.

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Shulman, William L., ed., *Voices and Visions: A Collection of Primary Sources* (Woodbridge, CT: Blackbirch Press, 1998), 27–28.

#### QUESTIONS

1. What was the *kindertransport*?
2. How was it a form of resistance?
3. How was this family affected?

## DOCUMENT 17

### “Resistance” Haim Gouri and Monia Avrahami

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To smuggle a loaf of bread—was to resist

To teach in secret—was to resist

To rescue a Torah Scroll—was to resist

To forge documents—was to resist

To smuggle across borders—was to resist

To chronicle events and to conceal records—was to resist

To hold out a helping hand to the needy—was to resist

To contact those under siege and smuggle weapons—was to resist

To fight with weapons in streets, mountains and forests—was to resist

To rebel in death camps—was to resist

To rise up in ghettos, among the crumbling walls, in the most desperate revolt—  
was to resist

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Gouri, Haim and Avrahami. *Faces of the Uprising*

#### QUESTIONS

1. Choose at least three different methods of resisting mentioned in the poem.
2. Describe the difference among these methods.
3. Now comment on the similarities among these methods.