



The Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust

Mordecai Paldiel

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In the darkest days of World War II, the Nazi German regime reigned supreme over virtually all of Europe. Within these occupied lands, Jews were being rounded up and sent off to extermination camps for execution. Helping them escape was punishable by death.

In this dark and seemingly hopeless situation, hundreds of ordinary people risked all to shelter and smuggle Jews to safety. These were generally not organized efforts, simply moral people who reacted in horror to the fate of innocent neighbors and took action. Thousands of Jews were rescued in this way.

In 1953, the state of Israel established Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem to commemorate and perpetuate the memory of the heroes and martyrs of the Holocaust. An independent committee reviews and awards the honor of The Righteous Among the Nations to those documented cases of rescue. Over 20,000 people, from all nationalities and religious groups, have received this prestigious awards.

This work selects approximately 200 biographies from among the Righteous, and describes the circumstances of the rescue. Each entry includes description of the contact; the aid extended; dangers and risk faced by the rescuer; motivation (eg, friendship, altruism, religious belief); and evidence from the rescued. These little-known stories offer a picture of the best of humanity in the worst of times.

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