



Ingenuity

Olga Kukovic

Sarajevo, Croatia... October 1941 – In April 1941, Germany invaded Yugoslavia with the help of its Axis allies Italy, Hungary, and Bulgaria. The victors split up the country, which was home to nearly 80,000 Jews. Germany and Italy established the state of Croatia in the northern part of Yugoslavia and installed a fascist, pro-Nazi regime, the *Ustashe*. The *Ustashe* immediately began to persecute and terrorize the Serbs, Jews, and Roma (Gypsies) living within Croatia's borders. These groups, all designated by the *Ustashe* as "foreign elements," fell victim to racial laws, systematic murder, torture, and expulsion. The regime also established concentration camps throughout Croatia and, by the end of 1941, had imprisoned two-thirds of the some 40,000 Jews living there.

One of the cities that fell within the borders of Croatia was Sarajevo (now part of Bosnia and Herzegovina). Olga Kukovic, a Serb, lived with her young daughter in an apartment in the city center. Olga's husband, Janko, had fled to Serbia after learning that he was on a *Ustashe* execution list. In October 1941, *Ustashe* officials were rounding up the remaining Jews of Sarajevo. Isidor Baruh, who was among them, was walking near the home of Olga Kukovic when someone told him to go into hiding immediately. Because Isidor's sister, Berta, was a friend and former classmate of Olga's, Isidor ran to Olga's home and asked her for help.

Olga sent her daughter, Liliana, to find Isidor's other sister, Hanna, and to bring her to their apartment. Hanna came right away, carrying only her handbag. Hanna's husband had already been taken away. It was

clear that she and Isidor were also in grave danger. Olga decided that the only way to save Isidor and Hanna was to get them to Mostar, a nearby town in the Italian-occupied zone of Yugoslavia. Berta, along with Isidor's wife and child, had already gone there. The Italian commander in Mostar refused to enforce the anti-Jewish measures called for by the Germans, so Jews were relatively safe there.

Olga knew that smuggling her Jewish friends out of Sarajevo would be risky. She had heard that some Jews had escaped from Croatia by posing as Muslims, who were not targeted by the *Ustashe* or the Germans. She decided to disguise the Jewish siblings in this way. Olga bought Hanna a long Muslim dress with a hood and a veil, and Hanna was able to travel to Mostar by train with her appearance concealed.

Because Isidor had red hair and facial features that the Nazis and their collaborators saw as typically Jewish, his task was more difficult than his sister's. Olga used her imagination to help Isidor overcome these obstacles. First she had a hairdresser color Isidor's hair black. She then bought him a fez, a felt cap that many Muslims wore, dressed him in Muslim garb, and took a photo of him. Olga bribed a policeman to make Isidor a fake identity card. She also made contact with a Muslim friend of Isidor's who offered to help him get to Mostar. The Muslim man brought his Jewish friend to the train station, and Isidor boarded a train that brought him to Mostar. Thanks to Olga Kukovic, Isidor and Hanna – along with their sister, Berta – survived the war.

THE JEWISH FOUNDATION *for the righteous*

The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous provides financial support to Christians and Muslims who rescued Jews during the Holocaust and preserves their legacy through its national Holocaust education program.

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Oskar Schindler

Krakow, Poland... 1940 – Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. Within a week, enemy troops occupied the city of Krakow. The Germans declared Krakow the capital of German-occupied Poland. At that time, 60,000 Jews lived in Krakow, nearly one-quarter of the city's population. The Germans persecuted the Jews from the moment they reached the city, and soon began to expel them to the Polish countryside. In March 1941, the Germans established a ghetto in Krakow, a section of the city to which the Jews were restricted to live. 20,000 Jews from the city and from surrounding towns were forced to move there, and many of the inhabitants were forced to work in factories both inside and outside the ghetto.

Oskar Schindler, a German businessman, went to Krakow in October 1939 to take advantage of this slave labor and confiscated property that would become available. He wanted to make money. In January 1940, he acquired a Jewish-owned business that made enamel kitchenware and renamed it the German Enamelware Factory Oskar Schindler. It came to be known as Emalia. The factory was located at the edge of what would become the Jewish ghetto. Oskar employed Jews at the factory initially because they were much cheaper than Polish laborers. His reasons for taking in more such workers evolved, however, as the plight of Krakow's Jews worsened.

In the spring of 1942, the SS began to round up Jews in the Krakow ghetto and deport them to recently opened killing centers. Oskar witnessed the brutality and bloodshed of the deportations and decided that he would do what he could to save his Jewish workers. That summer, the Germans established the Plaszow slave labor camp near the ghetto. Jews as well as Polish prisoners were sent there to work in factories.

In March 1943, the Germans emptied the ghetto, sending more than 2,000 inhabitants to the Auschwitz-Birkenau killing center. The remaining Jews were sent to Plaszow. Having learned of the Germans' plans for the liquidation of the ghetto, Oskar told his employees to stay at Emalia until it was over.

The violence of the liquidation and the worsening conditions at Plaszow, where the Jews were now forced to live, led Oskar to take additional steps to protect them. He told Amon Göth, the commandant of Plaszow, that he wanted to transform Emalia into a sub-camp of Plaszow, complete with barracks for his Jewish workers. Göth agreed to the idea, in part because Oskar bribed him, and the first transfer of Jews to the sub-camp took place in May 1943. By the summer of 1944, more than 1,000 Jews lived there. Oskar treated the workers relatively well and provided extra food rations that he bought on the black market.

As Soviet troops approached Krakow, Oskar was ordered to break up the Jewish sub-camp at Emalia. The workers were to be sent back to Plaszow and then to other camps or killing centers. Knowing that Germany sought to increase its production of arms for the war effort, Oskar asked permission to set up a new armaments factory in Brünnlitz, located in German-occupied Czechoslovakia. He then arranged for nearly 1,100 Jews from Plaszow, some of whom had worked at Emalia, to be transferred to the new factory. On this list, he claimed, were "indispensable" workers. His ploy was successful. In the fall of 1944, the Jews were brought to the factory in Brünnlitz. The men were transferred from the Gross-Rosen concentration camp, and the women from Auschwitz. The Jews remained in Brünnlitz until the area was liberated by the Soviet army in May 1945.

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