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A Brief Biography of Giovanni Palatucci (1909 – 1945)

On May 31, 1909, Giovanni Palatucci was born in Montella, Italy, located in the region of Campagna, near Naples in southern Italy (see map on page 2). By the age of 23, he graduated from the University of Turin with a degree in law. He practiced as an attorney for four years until 1936, when he qualified to be an inspector for the Italian Ministry of Public Administration.

After working at the Genoa Police Station for one year, Giovanni Palatucci was transferred to Fiume in 1937, located near Trieste, where he was put in charge of the Office of Foreigners. Only one year later, he was named Chief of Police of Fiume, one of the major port cities located on the northern Adriatic Sea (see map on page 3). At the time, Fiume was part of Italy; today, the city is officially located in Croatia, and goes by the Croatian name Rijeka.

In 1938, the same year that Giovanni Palatucci was named Fiume's Chief of Police, Italy passed a number of anti-Semitic laws under pressure by the Nazi government of Germany, including the detainment of Jewish people in internment camps established across Italy. It was at this time that Palatucci decided to begin helping the Jewish people of Fiume by "officially" deporting them to internment camps near Rome, where he had family members who could ensure the safety and well-being of the Jewish deportees. His uncle, Giuseppe Palatucci, was Bishop of Campagna, and his other uncle, Alfonso Palatucci, was the Provincial of the Franciscan Order in Puglia, located along the Adriatic Sea just north of Bari. Giovanni Palatucci called on both his uncles to protect and watch over the Jewish deportees, and said in response to the Nazi laws, *"They want to make us believe that the heart is just a muscle, to prevent us from doing what our hearts and faith tell us to do."*

In 1939, nearly 800 Jewish refugees set sail for Palestine, trying to escape the impending tyranny of the Nazis in Germany and Eastern Europe (i.e., Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland). Being a major port city along the Adriatic Sea, the ship had to pass through Fiume, Italy in order to reach Palestine. Nazi collaborators were plotting to stop the ship and send all the passengers back to Germany, but Giovanni Palatucci managed to alert the passengers in time, and as a result the ship landed safely in southern Italy before the Nazi collaborators could capture the passengers.

By 1940, Italy officially joined World War II on the side of the Germans. From 1940 to 1944, Giovanni Palatucci did everything he could to save the lives of Jewish people. He issued false identity papers and visas, delivered food and money to those who were in hiding, gave warnings when the Nazis were planning a "Jew hunt," and sent as many Jews as possible to the internment camps in Campagna and Puglia. By the end of the war, the internment camp in Campagna was one of the largest in all of Europe.

In late 1943, the Germans became dangerously suspicious of Palatucci when he was not able to provide them with a list of all Jewish residents residing in Fiume. Most of the files had been destroyed, and those remaining in Palatucci's office were of Jewish families that had been documented as having long emigrated from Italy.

Knowing the danger that faced Giovanni Palatucci, his close friend, the Swiss ambassador to Trieste, offered him an exit visa to Switzerland. Palatucci accepted the visa, but gave it to his then recent fiancée who was Jewish, rather than using it for himself. She survived the war, and lived in Israel until her death (date unknown).

Only days later, Giovanni Palatucci was arrested by the Gestapo (German security police) on September 13, 1944. He was charged with treason and conspiracy, and was sentenced to death. However, due to the plea of his friend, the Swiss consul, his sentence was commuted to exile to Dachau, a concentration camp located in Munich, Germany. He was transferred to Dachau on October 22, 1944. His prison number was 117.826.

On February 10, 1945, Giovanni Palatucci died in Dachau, just ten weeks before the camp was liberated. Some say he died of malnutrition, others have testified that he was shot.



¹ University of Texas Library, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/cia04/italy_sm04.gif

EUROPE AND ASIA MINOR IN 1924



² University of San Diego, History Department, <http://history.sandiego.edu/cdr2/WW2Pics/81522.GIF>

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Glossary of Terms

Ally: someone who speaks out on behalf of someone else, a helper.

Ambassador: an authorized representative of a foreign government.

Anti-Semitism: prejudice or discrimination against Jews based on negative group stereotypes or negative views of their religious beliefs.

Attorney: a lawyer, or legal agent.

Auschwitz: Nazi Germany's largest concentration camp and extermination camp located near the industrial town of Oswiecim in southern Poland.

Collaborators: persons who cooperate or willingly assist an enemy of one's country or an occupying force.

Commuted: converted or changed to a less severe state.

Concentration camp: a camp where persons (prisoners of war, political prisoners, or refugees) are detained or confined.

Conspiracy: to join in a secret agreement to do an unlawful or wrongful act.

Consul: an official appointed by a government to reside in a foreign country.

Dachau: the first Nazi concentration camp in Germany, established on March 10, 1933.

Deportation: the removal of a person from a country whose presence is determined to be unlawful.

Detainment: to keep back, to restrain from proceeding.

Emigrated: to leave one's country to live elsewhere.

Exile: the state of forced or voluntary absence from one's country or home.

Extermination camp: a Nazi German concentration camp that specialized in the mass murder of unwanted persons (according to the Nazis), who were primarily Jews.

Gestapo: a secret Nazi German police organization that used terrorist methods against people who were considered disloyal or unwanted.

Holocaust: the mass slaughter of European civilians, primarily Jews, by the Nazis during World War II.

Impending: about to occur in a threatening sense.

Indifference: lack of caring or showing interest one way or another.

Inspector: a person who looks over and makes official examinations.

Internment camp: a camp where persons (prisoners of war or refugees) are detained for a period of time.

Nazi: a member of the German ruling party controlling Germany from 1933 to 1945 under Adolf Hitler.

Occupy: to take possession or control.

Persecution: the act of harassing or injuring those who differ in origin, religion, or social outlook.

Port: a harbor town or city where ships may dock to take on, or take off, goods or merchandise.

Provincial of the Franciscan Order: a superior of the Franciscan order (a special Roman Catholic religious organization of priests and nuns).

Refugee: a person who runs away to a foreign country to escape danger or persecution.

Rescuer: a person who frees others from confinement, danger, or evil.

Righteous: acting with moral principles.

Stereotype: an oversimplified view or generalization about a person or group of people without regard for individual differences.

Treason: the formal offense of attempting to overthrow the government of a state or country.

Tyranny: unreasonably severe power exerted by a government, and/or a government in which power is vested in a single ruler.

Visa: a signature of approval on a passport to proceed into a foreign country.

Source: Miriam-Webster Dictionary

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Short List of Resources for Research on Holocaust Rescuers

Oskar Schindler

1. [Oskar Schindler: The Untold Account of His Life, Wartime Activities, and the True Story Behind The List](#), by [David M. Crowe](#), Publisher: Westview Press (November 1, 2004)
2. [Schindler's List](#), by [Thomas Keneally](#), Publisher: Touchstone (December 1, 1993)
3. Oskar Schindler website: <http://www.oskarschindler.com/>
4. "Oskar Schindler: The Man and the Hero" by April N. Aberly: <http://www.remember.org/imagine/schindler.html>
5. The History Place: <http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/holocaust/h-schindler.htm>

Renee Scott

1. [Conscience and Courage : Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust](#), by [Eva Fogelman](#), Publisher: Anchor (January 18, 1995)
2. [Holocaust: A History](#), by [Deborah Dwork](#), [Robert Jan Van Pelt](#), W. W. Norton & Company (September, 2003)
3. To Save A Life: Stories of Holocaust Rescue: <http://www.humboldt.edu/~rescuers/>

Chiune-Sempo Sugihara

1. [A Special Fate: Chiune Sugihara: Hero of the Holocaust](#), by [Alison Leslie Gold](#), Publisher: Scholastic (April 1, 2000)
2. [In Search of Sugihara : The Elusive Japanese Dipolomat Who Risked his Life to Rescue 10,000 Jews From the Holocaust](#), by [Hillel Levine](#), Publisher: Free Press (November 4, 1996)
3. [Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees: A World War II Dilemma](#), by [Pamela Rotner Sakamoto](#), Publisher: Praeger Publishers (November 30, 1998)
4. Jewish Virtual Library: <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Holocaust/sugihara.html>
5. U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Holocaust Encyclopedia: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/index.php?ModuleId=10005594>
6. "Visas and Virtue", <http://www.cedargroveproductions.com/onvideo.htm>

Raoul Wallenberg

1. [Conspiracy of Indifference: The Raoul Wallenberg Story](#), by [Alan Gersten](#), Publisher: Xlibris Corporation (June 1, 2001)
2. [Raoul Wallenberg: The Man Who Stopped Death](#), by [Sharon Linnea](#), Publisher: Jewish Publication Society of America (April 1, 1993)
3. The Raoul Wallenberg Committee of the United States: <http://www.raoulwallenberg.org/>
4. "The Story of Raoul Wallenberg" by Jeanine Rauch: <http://www.remember.org/imagine/wallenberg.html>
5. "Raoul Wallenberg: Buried Alive", Director: [David Harel](#), [Wayne Aaron](#), Studio: Direct Cinema Limited, Video Release Date: December 1, 1984, ASIN: B0001BP90Y

General

1. [Heroes of the Holocaust](#), by [Arnold Geier](#), Publisher: Berkley Publishing Group (February 1, 1998)
2. [Holocaust Rescuers: Ten Stories of Courage \(Collective Biographies\)](#), by [Darryl Lyman](#), Publisher: Enslow Publishers (January 1, 1999)
3. [Rescuers](#), by [Gay Block](#), [Malka Drucker](#), Publisher: Holmes & Meier Publishers (March 1, 1992)
4. [The Courage to Care: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust](#), by [Carol Rittner](#), [Sondra Myers](#) (Editor), Publisher: New York University Press; Reprint edition (February 1, 1989)
5. [The Righteous: The Unsung Heroes of the Holocaust](#), by [Martin Gilbert](#), Publisher: Henry Holt & Company (February 4, 2003)

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Short Guide to Writing an Ethnography

An ethnography seeks to describe all or part of the culture or life of a person, or a community, by identifying and describing the practices or beliefs of that person or community.

Step-by-Step Guide to Writing an Ethnography:

1. Write a short description explaining the purpose of your ethnography, and the information you would like to collect.
2. Receive informed consent from the person (or their guardian if they are under the age of 18) that you would like to interview for the ethnography. Ensure that the person knows of the nature and purpose of the study, as well as what they will be expected to discuss during the interview. Ask if they agree to the use of a tape recorder during the interview.
3. Determine what questions to ask, and the order in which you will ask the questions. Some general themes are: memories of early childhood, family stories, relationships, life events, key turning points in her/his life, experience with being a target or an ally in a situation of prejudice, discrimination or violence, reasons for decisions or actions made, hopes for the future, and so forth.
4. Determine a location to conduct the interview in privacy.
5. Check to make sure your tape recorder has new batteries before conducting the interview.
6. When conducting the interview:
 - a. Start slowly.
 - b. Keep the interviewee focused with your questions, but allow for small silences and pauses to allow time for the interviewee to think about their responses.
 - c. Don't debate or show judgment about your interviewee's responses; the ethnography is meant to be a full reflection of the person being interviewed.
 - d. Take notes as the person is speaking, and check for missing details immediately after the interview.
7. Thank the interviewee for their time and commitment to this project.

Source: [Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Applications](#), Chapter 6: Characteristics of Qualitative Research, [Lorrie R. Gay](#), [Peter W. Airasian](#), [L. R. Gay](#) (Prentice Hall, 2002)