

= Oskar Schindler =

Oskar Schindler (28 April 1908 ? 9 October 1974) was a German industrialist , spy , and member of the Nazi Party who is credited with saving the lives of 1 @, @ 200 Jews during the Holocaust by employing them in his enamelware and ammunitions factories , which were located in occupied Poland and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia . He is the subject of the 1982 novel Schindler 's Ark , and the subsequent 1993 film Schindler 's List , which reflected his life as an opportunist initially motivated by profit who came to show extraordinary initiative , tenacity and dedication to save the lives of his Jewish employees .

Schindler grew up in Zwittau , Moravia , and worked in several trades until he joined the Abwehr , the intelligence service of Nazi Germany , in 1936 . He joined the Nazi Party in 1939 . Prior to the German occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1938 , he collected information on railways and troop movements for the German government . He was arrested for espionage by the Czech government but was released under the terms of the Munich Agreement in 1938 . Schindler continued to collect information for the Nazis , working in Poland in 1939 before the invasion of Poland at the start of World War II .

In 1939 , Schindler acquired an enamelware factory in Kraków , Poland , which employed about 1 @, @ 750 workers , of whom 1 @, @ 000 were Jews at the factory 's peak in 1944 . His Abwehr connections helped Schindler to protect his Jewish workers from deportation and death in the Nazi concentration camps . As time went on , Schindler had to give Nazi officials ever larger bribes and gifts of luxury items obtainable only on the black market to keep his workers safe .

By July 1944 , Germany was losing the war , the SS began closing down the easternmost concentration camps and deporting the remaining prisoners westward . Many were killed in Auschwitz and Gross @-@ Rosen concentration camp . Schindler convinced SS @-@ Hauptsturmführer Amon Göth , commandant of the nearby Kraków @-@ P?aszów concentration camp , to allow him to move his factory to Brännlitz in the Sudetenland , thus sparing his workers from certain death in the gas chambers . Using names provided by Jewish Ghetto Police officer Marcel Goldberg , Göth 's secretary Mietek Pemper compiled and typed the list of 1 @, @ 200 Jews who travelled to Brännlitz in October 1944 . Schindler continued to bribe SS officials to prevent the execution of his workers until the end of World War II in Europe in May 1945 , by which time he had spent his entire fortune on bribes and black @-@ market purchases of supplies for his workers .

Schindler moved to West Germany after the war , where he was supported by assistance payments from Jewish relief organisations . After receiving a partial reimbursement for his wartime expenses , he moved with his wife , Emilie , to Argentina , where they took up farming . When he went bankrupt in 1958 , Schindler left his wife and returned to Germany , where he failed at several business ventures and relied on financial support from Schindlerjuden (" Schindler Jews ") ? the people whose lives he had saved during the war . He was named Righteous Among the Nations by the Israeli government in 1963 . He died on 9 October 1974 in Hildesheim , Germany , and was buried in Jerusalem on Mount Zion , the only member of the Nazi Party to be honoured in this way .

= = Early life = =

Schindler was born on 28 April 1908 , into a Sudeten German family in Zwittau , Moravia , Austria @-@ Hungary . His father was Johann " Hans " Schindler , the owner of a farm machinery business , and his mother was Franziska " Fanny " Schindler (née Luser) . His sister , Elfriede , was born in 1915 . After attending primary and secondary school , Schindler enrolled in a technical school , from which he was expelled in 1924 for forging his report card . He later graduated , but did not take the Abitur exams that would have enabled him to go to college or university . Instead he took courses in Brno in several trades , including chauffeuring and machinery , and worked for his father for three years . A fan of motorcycles since his youth , Schindler bought a 250 @-@ cc Moto Guzzi racing motorcycle and competed recreationally in mountain races for the next few years .

On 6 March 1928 , Schindler married Emilie Pelzl (1907 ? 2001) , daughter of a prosperous Sudeten German farmer from Maletín . The young couple moved in with Oskar 's parents and

occupied the upstairs rooms , where they lived for the next seven years . Soon after his marriage , Schindler quit working for his father and took a series of jobs , including a position at Moravian Electrotechnic and the management of a driving school . After an 18 @-@ month stint in the Czech army , where he rose to the rank of Lance @-@ Corporal in the Tenth Infantry Regiment of the 31st Army , Schindler returned to Moravian Electrotechnic , which went bankrupt shortly afterwards . His father 's farm machinery business closed around the same time , leaving Schindler unemployed for a year . He took a job with Jaroslav Simek Bank of Prague in 1931 , where he worked until 1938 .

Schindler was arrested several times in 1931 and 1932 for public drunkenness . Also around this time he had an affair with Aurelie Schlegel , a school friend . She bore him a daughter , Emily , in 1933 , and a son , Oskar Jr , in 1935 . Schindler later claimed the boy was not his son . Schindler 's father , an alcoholic , abandoned his wife in 1935 . She died a few months later after a lengthy illness .

= = Spy = =

Schindler joined the separatist Sudeten German Party in 1935 . Although he was a citizen of Czechoslovakia , Schindler became a spy for the Abwehr , the intelligence service of Nazi Germany , in 1936 . He was assigned to Abwehrstelle II Commando VIII , based in Breslau . He later told Czech police that he did it because he needed the money ; by this time Schindler had a drinking problem and was chronically in debt . His tasks for the Abwehr included collecting information on railways , military installations , and troop movements , as well as recruiting other spies within Czechoslovakia , in advance of a planned invasion of the country by Nazi Germany . He was arrested by the Czech government for espionage on 18 July 1938 and immediately imprisoned , but was released as a political prisoner under the terms of the Munich Agreement , the instrument under which the Czech Sudetenland was annexed into Germany on 1 October . Schindler applied for membership in the Nazi Party on 1 November and was accepted the following year .

After some time off to recover in Zwittau , Schindler was promoted to second in command of his Abwehr unit and relocated with his wife to Ostrava , on the Czech @-@ Polish border , in January 1939 . He was involved in espionage in the months leading up to Hitler 's seizure of the remainder of Czechoslovakia in March . Emilie helped him with paperwork , processing and hiding secret documents in their apartment for the Abwehr office . As he frequently travelled to Poland on business , he and his 25 agents were in a position to collect information about Polish military activities and railways for the planned invasion of Poland . One assignment called for his unit to monitor and provide information about the railway line and tunnel in the Jablunkov Pass , deemed critical for the movement of German troops . Schindler continued to work for Abwehr until as late as fall 1940 , when he was sent to Turkey to investigate corruption among the Abwehr officers assigned to the German embassy there .

= = World War II = =

= = = Emalia = = =

Schindler first arrived in Kraków in October 1939 on Abwehr business and took an apartment the following month . Emilie maintained the apartment in Ostrava and visited Oskar in Kraków at least once a week . In November 1939 , he contacted interior decorator Mila Pfefferberg to decorate his new apartment . Her son , Leopold " Poldek " Pfefferberg , soon became one of his contacts for black market trading . They eventually became lifelong friends . Also that November , Schindler was introduced to Itzhak Stern , an accountant for Schindler 's fellow Abwehr agent Josef " Sepp " Aue , who had taken over Stern 's formerly Jewish @-@ owned place of employment as a Treuhander (trustee) . Property belonging to Polish Jews , including their possessions , places of business , and homes were seized by the Germans beginning immediately after the invasion , and Jewish citizens were stripped of their civil rights . Schindler showed Stern the balance sheet of a company he was

thinking of acquiring , an enamelware factory called Rekord Ltd owned by a consortium of Jewish businessmen that had filed for bankruptcy earlier that year . Stern advised him that rather than running the company as a trusteeship under the auspices of the Haupttreuhandstelle Ost (Main Trustee Office for the East) , he should buy or lease the business , as that would give him more freedom from the dictates of the Nazis , including the freedom to hire more Jews . With the financial backing of several Jewish investors , Schindler signed an informal lease agreement on the factory on 13 November 1939 and formalised the arrangement on 15 January 1940 . He renamed it Deutsche Emaillewaren @-@ Fabrik (German Enamelware Factory) or DEF , and it soon became known by the nickname " Emalia " . He initially acquired a staff of seven Jewish workers (including Abraham Bankier , who helped him manage the company) and 250 non @-@ Jewish Poles . At its peak in 1944 , the business employed around 1 @, @ 750 workers , a thousand of whom were Jews . Schindler also helped run Schlomo Wiener Ltd , a wholesale outfit that sold his enamelware , and was leaseholder of Prokosziner Glashütte , a glass factory .

Schindler 's ties with the Abwehr and his connections in the Wehrmacht and its Armaments Inspectorate enabled him to obtain contracts to produce enamel cookware for the military . These connections also later helped him protect his Jewish workers from deportation and death . As time went on , Schindler had to give Nazi officials ever larger bribes and gifts of luxury items obtainable only on the black market to keep his workers safe . Bankier , a key black market connection , obtained goods for bribes as well as extra materials for use in the factory . Schindler himself enjoyed a lavish lifestyle and pursued extramarital relationships with his secretary , Viktoria Klonowska , and Eva Kisch Scheuer , a merchant specialising in enamelware from DEF . Emilie Schindler visited for a few months in 1940 and moved to Kraków to live with Oskar in 1941 .

Initially , Schindler was mostly interested in the money @-@ making potential of the business and hired Jews because they were cheaper than Poles ? the wages were set by the occupying Nazi regime . Later he began shielding his workers without regard for cost . The status of his factory as a business essential to the war effort became a decisive factor enabling him to help his Jewish workers . Whenever Schindlerjuden (Schindler Jews) were threatened with deportation , he claimed exemptions for them . Wives , children , and even persons with disabilities were claimed to be necessary mechanics and metalworkers . On one occasion , the Gestapo came to Schindler demanding that he hand over a family with forged identity papers . " Three hours after they walked in , " Schindler said , " two drunk Gestapo men reeled out of my office without their prisoners and without the incriminating documents they had demanded . "

On 1 August 1940 , Governor @-@ General Hans Frank issued a decree requiring all Kraków Jews to leave the city within the next two weeks . Only those who had jobs directly related to the German war effort would be allowed to stay . Of the 60 @, @ 000 to 80 @, @ 000 Jews then living in the city , only 15 @, @ 000 remained by March 1941 . These Jews were then forced to leave their traditional neighbourhood of Kazimierz and relocate to the walled Kraków Ghetto , established in the industrial Podgórze district . Schindler 's workers travelled on foot to and from the ghetto each day to their jobs at the factory . Enlargements to the facility in the four years Schindler was in charge included the addition of an outpatient clinic , co @-@ op , kitchen , and dining room for the workers , in addition to expansion of the factory and its related office space .

= = = P?aszów = = =

In fall 1941 the Nazis began transporting Jews out of the ghetto . Most of these were sent to Belzec extermination camp and killed . On 13 March 1943 the ghetto was liquidated and those still fit for work were sent to the new concentration camp at P?aszów . Several thousand not deemed fit for work were sent to extermination camps and killed . Hundreds more were killed on the streets by the Nazis as they cleared out the ghetto . Schindler , aware of the planned action because of his Wehrmacht contacts , had his workers stay at the factory overnight to prevent them coming to any harm . Schindler witnessed the liquidation of the ghetto and was appalled . From that point forward , says Schindlerjude Sol Urbach , Schindler " changed his mind about the Nazis . He decided to get out and to save as many Jews as he could . "

Płaszów concentration camp opened in March 1943 on the former site of two Jewish cemeteries on Jerozolimska Street, about 2 @.@ 5 kilometres (1 @.@ 6 mi) from the DEF factory . In charge of the camp was SS @-@ Hauptsturmführer Amon Göth , a brutal sadist who would shoot inmates of the camp at random . Inmates at Płaszów lived in constant daily fear for their lives . Emilie Schindler called Göth " the most despicable man I have ever met . "

Initially Göth 's plan was that all the factories , including Schindler 's , should be moved inside the camp gates . However , Schindler , with a combination of diplomacy , flattery , and bribery , not only prevented his factory from being moved , but convinced Göth to allow him to build (at his own expense) a subcamp at Emalia to house his workers plus 450 Jews from other nearby factories . There they were safe from the threat of random execution , were well fed and housed , and were even permitted to undertake religious observances .

Schindler was arrested twice on suspicion of black market activities and once for breaking the Nuremberg Laws by kissing a Jewish girl , an action forbidden by the Race and Resettlement Act . The first arrest , in late 1941 , led to him being kept overnight . His secretary arranged for his release through Schindler 's influential contacts in the Nazi Party . His second arrest , on 29 April 1942 , was the result of his kissing a Jewish girl on the cheek at his birthday party at the factory the previous day . He remained in jail five days before his influential Nazi contacts were able to obtain his release . The third arrest , where he was accused of black marketeering and bribing Göth and others to improve the conditions of the Jewish workers , took place in October 1944 . He was held for most of a week and released . Göth had been arrested on 13 September 1944 for corruption and other abuses of power , and Schindler 's arrest was part of the ongoing investigation into Göth 's activities . Göth was never convicted on those charges , but was hanged by the Supreme National Tribunal of Poland for war crimes on 13 September 1946 .

In 1943 , Schindler was contacted via members of the Jewish resistance movement by Zionist leaders in Budapest . Schindler travelled there several times to report in person on Nazi mistreatment of the Jews . He brought back funding provided by the Jewish Agency for Israel and turned it over to the Jewish underground .

= = = Brännlitz = = =

As the Red Army drew nearer in July 1944 , the SS began closing down the easternmost concentration camps and evacuating the remaining prisoners westward to Auschwitz and Gross @-@ Rosen concentration camp . Göth 's personal secretary , Mietek Pemper , alerted Schindler to the Nazis ' plans to close all factories not directly involved in the war effort , including Schindler 's enamelware facility . Pemper suggested to Schindler that production should be switched from cookware to anti @-@ tank grenades in an effort to save the lives of the Jewish workers . Using bribery and his powers of persuasion , Schindler convinced Göth and the officials in Berlin to allow him to move his factory and his workers to Brännlitz (Czech : Brněnec) , in the Sudetenland , thus sparing them from certain death in the gas chambers . Using names provided by Jewish Ghetto Police officer Marcel Goldberg , Pemper compiled and typed the list of 1 @,@ 200 Jews ? 1 @,@ 000 of Schindler 's workers and 200 inmates from Julius Madritsch 's textiles factory ? who were sent to Brännlitz in October 1944 .

On 15 October 1944 a train carrying 700 men on Schindler 's list was initially sent to the concentration camp at Gross @-@ Rosen , where the men spent about a week before being re @-@ routed to the factory in Brännlitz . Three hundred female Schindlerjuden were similarly sent to Auschwitz , where they were in imminent danger of being sent to the gas chambers . Schindler 's usual connections and bribes failed to obtain their release . Finally after he sent his secretary , Hilde Albrecht , with bribes of black market goods , food and diamonds , the women were sent to Brännlitz after several harrowing weeks in Auschwitz .

In addition to workers , Schindler moved 250 wagon loads of machinery and raw materials to the new factory . Few if any useful artillery shells were produced at the plant . When officials from the Armaments Ministry questioned the factory 's low output , Schindler bought finished goods on the black market and resold them as his own . The rations provided by the SS were insufficient to meet

the needs of the workers , so Schindler spent most of his time in Kraków , obtaining food , armaments , and other materials . His wife Emilie remained in Brännlitz , surreptitiously obtaining additional rations and caring for the workers ' health and other basic needs . Schindler also arranged for the transfer of as many as 3 @, @ 000 Jewish women out of Auschwitz to small textiles plants in the Sudetenland in an effort to increase their chances of surviving the war .

In January 1945 a trainload of 250 Jews who had been rejected as workers at a mine in Góleschau in Poland arrived at Brännlitz . The boxcars were frozen shut when they arrived , and Emilie Schindler waited while an engineer from the factory opened the cars using a soldering iron . Twelve people were dead in the cars , and the remainder were too ill and feeble to work . Emilie took the survivors into the factory and cared for them in a makeshift hospital until the end of the war . Schindler continued to bribe SS officials to prevent the slaughter of his workers as the Red Army approached . On 7 May 1945 he and his workers gathered on the factory floor to listen to British Prime Minister Winston Churchill announce over the radio that Germany had surrendered , and the war in Europe was over .

= = After the war = =

As a member of the Nazi Party and the Abwehr intelligence service , Schindler was in danger of being arrested as a war criminal . Bankier , Stern , and several others prepared a statement he could present to the Americans attesting to his role in saving Jewish lives . He was also given a ring , made using gold from dental work taken out of the mouth of Schindlerjude Simon Jeret . The ring was inscribed " Whoever saves one life saves the world entire . " To escape being captured by the Russians , Schindler and his wife departed westward in their vehicle , a two @-@ seater Horch , initially with several fleeing German soldiers riding on the running boards . A truck containing Schindler 's mistress Marta , several Jewish workers , and a load of black market trade goods followed behind . The Horch was confiscated by Russian troops at the town of Budweis , which had already been captured by Russian troops . The Schindlers were unable to recover a diamond that Oskar had hidden under the seat . They continued by train and on foot until they reached the American lines at the town of Lenora , and then travelled to Passau , where an American Jewish officer arranged for them to travel to Switzerland by train . They moved to Bavaria in Germany in the fall of 1945 .

By the end of the war , Schindler had spent his entire fortune on bribes and black @-@ market purchases of supplies for his workers . Virtually destitute , he moved briefly to Regensburg and later Munich , but did not prosper in postwar Germany . In fact , he was reduced to receiving assistance from Jewish organisations . In 1948 he presented a claim for reimbursement of his wartime expenses to the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee , and received \$ 15 @, @ 000 . He estimated his expenditures at over \$ 1 @, @ 056 @, @ 000 , including the costs of camp construction , bribes , and expenditures for black market goods , including food . Schindler emigrated to Argentina in 1949 , where he tried raising chickens and then nutria , a small animal raised for its fur . When the business went bankrupt in 1958 , he left his wife and returned to Germany , where he had a series of unsuccessful business ventures , including a cement factory . He declared bankruptcy in 1963 and suffered a heart attack the next year , which led to a month @-@ long stay in hospital . Remaining in contact with many of the Jews he had met during the war , including Stern and Pfefferberg , Schindler survived on donations sent by Schindlerjuden from all over the world . He died on 9 October 1974 and is buried in Jerusalem on Mount Zion , the only member of the Nazi Party to be honoured in this way . For his work during the war , in 1963 Schindler was named Righteous Among the Nations , an award bestowed by the State of Israel on non @-@ Jews who took an active role to rescue Jews during the Holocaust . Other awards include the German Order of Merit (1966) .

Writer Herbert Steinhouse , who interviewed him in 1948 , wrote that " Schindler 's exceptional deeds stemmed from just that elementary sense of decency and humanity that our sophisticated age seldom sincerely believes in . A repentant opportunist saw the light and rebelled against the sadism and vile criminality all around him . " In a 1983 television documentary , Schindler was

quoted as saying , " I felt that the Jews were being destroyed . I had to help them ; there was no choice . "

= = Legacy = =

= = = Films and book = = =

In 1951 , Poldek Pfefferberg approached director Fritz Lang and asked him to consider making a film about Schindler . Also on Pfefferberg 's initiative , in 1964 Schindler received a \$ 20 @, @ 000 advance from MGM for a proposed film treatment titled To the Last Hour . Neither film was ever made , and Schindler quickly spent the money he received from MGM . He was also approached in the 1960s by MCA of Germany and Walt Disney Productions in Vienna , but again nothing came of these projects .

In 1980 , Australian author Thomas Keneally by chance visited Pfefferberg 's luggage store in Beverly Hills while en route home from a film festival in Europe . Pfefferberg took the opportunity to tell Keneally the story of Oskar Schindler . He gave him copies of some materials he had on file , and Keneally soon decided to make a fictionalised treatment of the story . After extensive research and interviews with surviving Schindlerjuden , his 1982 historical novel Schindler 's Ark (published in the United States as Schindler 's List) was the result .

The novel was adapted into the 1993 movie Schindler 's List by Steven Spielberg . After acquiring the rights in 1983 , Spielberg felt he was not ready emotionally or professionally to tackle the project , and he offered the rights to several other directors . After he read a script for the project prepared by Steven Zaillian for Martin Scorsese , he decided to trade him Cape Fear for the opportunity to do the Schindler biography . In the film , the character of Itzhak Stern (played by Ben Kingsley) is a composite of Stern , Bankier , and Pemper . Liam Neeson was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Actor for his portrayal of Schindler in the film , which won seven Oscars , including Best Picture .

Other film treatments include a 1983 British television documentary produced by Jon Blair for Thames Television entitled Schindler : His Story as Told by the Actual People He Saved (released in the US in 1994 as Schindler : The Real Story) , and a 1998 A & E Biography special , Oskar Schindler : The Man Behind the List .

= = = Schindler 's suitcase = = =

In 1997 a suitcase belonging to Schindler containing historic photographs and documents was discovered in the attic of the apartment of Ami and Heinrich Staehr in Hildesheim . Schindler had stayed with the couple for a few days shortly before his death . Staehr 's son Chris took the suitcase to Stuttgart , where the documents were examined in detail in 1999 by Dr. Wolfgang Borgmann , science editor of the Stuttgarter Zeitung . Borgmann wrote a series of seven articles , which appeared in the paper from 16 to 26 October 1999 and were eventually published in book form as Schindlers Koffer : Berichte aus dem Leben eines Lebensretters ; eine Dokumentation der Stuttgarter Zeitung (Schindler 's Suitcase : Report on the Life of a Rescuer) . The documents and suitcase were sent to the Holocaust museum at Yad Vashem in Israel for safekeeping in December 1999 .

= = = Copies of the list = = =

In early April 2009 , a carbon copy of one version of the list was discovered at the State Library of New South Wales by workers combing through boxes of materials collected by author Thomas Keneally . The 13 @-@ page document , yellow and fragile , was filed among research notes and original newspaper clippings . The document was given to Keneally in 1980 by Pfefferberg when he was persuading him to write Schindler 's story . This version of the list contains 801 names and is

dated 18 April 1945 ; Pfefferberg is listed as worker number 173 . Several authentic versions of the list exist , because the names were re @-@ typed several times as conditions changed in the hectic days at the end of the war .

One of four existing copies of the list was offered at a ten @-@ day auction starting on 19 July 2013 on EBay at a reserve price of \$ 3 million . It received no bids .

= = = Other memorabilia = = =

In August 2013 , a one @-@ page letter signed by Schindler on 22 August 1944 sold in an online auction for \$ 59 @,@ 135 . The letter noted Schindler 's permission for a factory supervisor to move machinery to Czechoslovakia . The same unknown auction buyer had previously purchased 1943 construction documents for Schindler 's Kraków factory for \$ 63 @,@ 426 .