

Trudy Gold - The Jews and the War Beginnings

- Judy, will you signal me when you're ready for me to start? Shall I give you one more minute?

- [Speaker] Just let's give it a few more minutes. One more minute, yeah.

- Okay, fine.

- [Speaker] Trudy, Joan is saying it's weird not to be able to check before the class.

- Who's saying that?

- Joan, Joan.

- [Speaker] Sorry, Joan.

- I know, oh Joan. Joan listen, oh, lovely to speak to you. Oh, no, I know. It was just that we could only stick to Zoom with a thousand and unbelievably more and more people joined, so we have no choices, but we will all meet up and there'll be loads and loads of chats, promise.

- [Speaker] Trudy, I'm handing over to you now.

*Visuals are displayed throughout the presentation.*

- Lovely, well, good evening. Good morning, everyone. And today we come on to one of the darkest chapters in Jewish history, and that is, of course the Shoah, which has had such profound effects on all of our lives and has really marked the Jewish people. And I think in many ways the world. Now, I've had a lot of discussions with my colleagues on this because those of you who've come on late, remember that we've been going for about a year. So we've been looking at Jewish history from 1750 and running alongside that, we've been looking at the culture, the literature, et cetera. So we now have come to that time where we're all coming in to talk about the Shoah from our different perspectives. And I think it's very important to not just to honour the dead, but also to see if there's any sense we can make of it, because we live in such a fractured world. And I do believe that all the answers to human behaviour are actually in that terrible time of history.

And what I'm going to be looking at today, I'm going to be concentrating on Warsaw. I'm going to be concentrating on Poland, and I'm going to begin to look at what actually happened. But I'm also going to be concentrating on some of the personalities, not just the positive ones, but I'm also going to be looking at the personification of evil, which of course was, which was of course Heinrich Himmler and Heydrich. Now, as I'm sure you all know, the German invasion began on the 1st of September, 1939. This is one week after the signing of a non-aggression pact between Molotov and Ribbentrop. It was fascinating because any of you who know anything

about Nazism will know the sworn enemy of Nazism was Jewish communism. However, this was a totally pragmatic pact, and Stalin well prepared for it. He got rid of all the Jews out of the foreign ministry. He replaced Jewish commissars to make way for this pact, and it wasn't just a non-aggression pact, it was actually a carve up because as the Nazis are going to move in from the west, the Soviets are going to move in from the east.

Now, on the 22nd of August, this is the week before the invasion. This is what Hitler said to a group of SS officers, "The object of war is to physically destroy the enemy. That is why only in East I have prepared my death formations with orders to kill, without pity, all men, women and children of Polish descent and language. Only in this way can we obtain the living space we need." In a previous presentation, I already referred to the complication of dealing with Poland. One of the problems is that the Poles see themselves as victims of Nazism. And they were, the occupation of Poland is far harsher than any other occupation. As I mentioned before, all a Pole had to do was to count up to 500 and to be able to read and write. Now, when the Germans invaded Poland, it was a put up job. It was actually, planned by Heydrich. What happened was some Polish prisoners were put in Nazi uniform, oh, beg your pardon.

Some Polish prisoners were put in Polish uniforms, Polish prisoners in German jails to prove that the Poles were trying to attack Germany. And that was the excuse, the Germans rolled in, and it took them three weeks to take over the whole of Poland. It was a total slaughter up to the line that they'd made a deal with the Soviets. And it was the most brutal bombing and occupation. I mean, in the bombing of Warsaw, over 7,000 were killed and a thousands were injured. The civilian losses in the hold of the invasion has been estimated about 150,000. It was called Operation Tannenberg. Tannenberg, the great battle between the forces of German, the Germans, and the forces of the Rus. And it also gives you a notion of the pagan roots of Nazism, 750 execution sites. Who did the Germans wipe out as far as the Polish population is concerned? they killed over 60,000 members of the intellectual class, liberals, priests.

I want to say here though a word about the Catholic church. Poland, of course, was a deeply Catholic country. And one of the problems that we'll be dealing with in different sessions, Rabbi David Rosen, is actually coming in in a couple of weeks to give a special session on the role of the Vatican. When you deal with the papacy during these terrible years, you had on the Papal Throne Pius the 12th, as papal nuncio in 1933, or he'd actually been involved in a non-aggression pact. He was papal nuncio for foreign affairs. The Vatican signs a non-aggression pact with the Nazis. Basically, we'll leave you alone, you leave us alone. And one of the indictments that comes from the Poles as well is why didn't the Pope intervene to save Polish Catholics? There were also many indictments from the Jewish point of view, because the Poles, the Polish priests had incredibly, you've got to remember every village had a priest, every town had a bishop, they had incredible intelligence service.

And the Pope was probably the most well-informed man in Europe, better informed probably than the allies. So it's important to remember this against the background. So you've got to see this terrible, terrible catastrophe. And from a Polish point of view, concentration camps were

established. The Polish intelligentsia was completely eradicated, so they were leaderless. Now, and even as the Germans were bombarding Warsaw, the chief of the German security police, Heinrich Heydrich dispatches mobile units. They're called the Einsatzgruppen and the Einsatz commando. Now, these are going to be the killing squads that later on, of course, are responsible for the shootings after the invasion of Russia. But more about that later, they were composed of whom? Of Gestapo, criminal police and SS. And on September the 19th, it's not over yet. They haven't even conquered Poland yet. He obtained agreement with the army's quartermaster, General Wagner for wide ranging power over Jewish affairs. So Heydrich, with his Einsatzgruppen are the ones that are really going to be behind the setting up of the, the establishment of the ghettos. But it's now going to be handed over to the civilian authorities. Before we talk about Heydrich, I've got a very, very important question to ask you. Who writes history? I'm going to read you two separate reports, and I want you to think about it very, very seriously.

This goes back to New Year's Day 1915. I'm going back now to the first World War with three very important Jewish writers. You will know of them, Peretz, Ansky and Dinezon. They send a warning to the Jews. Now remember what's happening in 1915, in the horror of the First World War, as the German army invaded czarist Russia, the czarist forces didn't believe that they could trust the Jewish population. And about 500,000 old men, women and children were frog marched into the Russian interior. Over 100,000 of them died later on, of course, after the revolution. And the Ukraine attempting to break away, there are terrible pogroms. We've covered this in previous presentations. So it becomes really, up until about 1922, that whole area was aflame. And this is a warning from three important Jewish writers. "Woe to the people whose history is written by strange hands and whose own writers have nothing left, but to compose songs of lament, prayers and dirges after the fact. Therefore, we turn to our people that is now and evermore being dragged into the global, to all members of our people, men and women, young and old, who live and suffer and see and hear with the following appeal, become historians yourself. Don't depend on the hands of strangers.

Record, record, record, take it down and collect." And if you think of the words of the great Simon Dubnow, the great Jewish historian who was born in 1860, and he was murdered by the Einsatzgruppen in Riga in 1941, his last words were, remember, remember, remember. And what we're going to see happening in the Warsaw Ghetto is the story is not, the story as we know it today, is not going to be told by the victors of the Warsaw Ghetto. But the story as we know it is actually told by the Jews themselves. Now, I'm going to quickly read to you the German response to the end of the Warsaw ghetto. And I'll be talking about this on Thursday. Don't forget that in the end, there's going to be a physical revolt where the Warsaw ghetto holds out longer than the whole of Poland. It's very interesting this notion of Jewish resistance and Jewish defence. When I talk about the heroes of the ghettos on Thursday, I'm going to give you lots of different kinds of heroes. The rabbis who kept services going even though there was no hope, even though they didn't, sometimes they didn't even have the prayers or was it the writers who recorded everything? Or was it the extraordinary Annas Kojak who went back into the ghetto to look after the children?

Or was it the freedom fighters of the Warsaw ghetto who when they knew there was no hope, they rose up and when did they rise up? Passover, 1943, one of the most solemn dates in Jewish history, the Nazis often went for attacks on the Jews at times of Jewish festivals. For example, in some of the camps, they would actually double the food rations on Yom Kippur. And don't forget, also Julius Streicher, the appalling Julius Streicher, the editor of Der Sturmer, his last words on the gallows at Nuremberg were poor infest. They studied the Jewish world. But this is General Stroop. General Stroop was the general who was finally sent in to quash the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. And we know quite a lot about him, why? Because he was later imprisoned and executed by the Poles. And whilst he was imprisoned, he gave a lot of his accounts to a fellow prisoner who actually wrote it down.

And this is Stroop's description of the end of the Warsaw ghetto. What he did was he sent a 125 page report to his superiors. The Jewish quarter in Warsaw is no more. And if it hadn't been for the fact that the Jews of the ghetto had been recording, recording, recording, this could have been the last word. And this is what he wrote when he blew up the Great Synagogue. What a marvellous sight it was, what a piece of theatre. My staff and I stood at a distance. I held the electrical device that would detonate all the charges. I glanced at my brave officers and men, tired and dirty, silhouetted against the burning buildings. I shouted Heil Hitler and pressed the button, with a thunderous deafening bang and a rainbow burst of colours, the fiery explosion soared towards the clouds. An unforgettable tribute to our triumph over the Jews. The Warsaw ghetto is no more. The Willow for Hitler and Heinrich Himmler has been done. That's an absolutely extraordinary, that is completely upside down morality. And I suppose before we even get on to looking at the great heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto, I do want to spend a little bit of time looking at the perpetrators because just maybe if we study them, we can find out what went wrong. Is there such a thing? Sort of questions it makes me ask. And Wendy's often saying, we have to turn to the role of psychologists. And it's so important.

Are we born with a moral conscience? Is morality innate within us? Never forget one of Hitler's most famous comments. I can never forgive the Jews for inventing moral conscience. Is moral conscience and invention? Remember the words of Hugo Gryn, the rabbi who survived two camps? He said "To him, Nazi-ism was the inversion of the 10 Commandments. A world where you can steal, you can kill, you can dishonour. And that's the upside down world that the Nazis created. Now, the reason I want to look at Heydrich's biography with you is that he's not one of the creatures of the gutter. This is Heydrich, one of the best looking of the Nazis. Hitler called him the man with the iron heart. Now this is the man who's going to be in charge of the Einsatzgruppen in Poland. That is going to set up, first of all, the Judenrat. And that's something else I'm going to talk about. Because what the Nazis did, they set up Jewish councils to run Jewish affairs. There's going to be 800 ghettos throughout, just over 800 ghettos throughout the Nazi regime. And I focused on Warsaw because it was the biggest. At its height, there were over 400,000 people crammed into about 1,600 tenements.

Can you imagine the overcrowding, we'll talk about this. So this is Heinrich Heydrich. Is there

anything in his background that gives us any kind of clue? Are we in the end going to say that all these characters were psychopaths? It's not enough. He was born in March, 1904. His father was an opera singer and a writer, a writer of music. His mother was Protestant, his father was Roman Catholic. And Reinhard was very proud of his father. He was named, he was actually named Reinhard Tristan. And of course Reinhard, is the hero of his father's opera and Tristan, of course, Wagner the third name Eugen, was named for his great-grandfather who was the director of the Dresden Royal Conservatory. So you are looking at the man who's got if you like, a very cultural, artistic background. He came from an upper middle class family. Music was a totally integral part of his life. His father founded the Halle Conservator of Music, of theatre and of teaching. His mother taught piano there. And he was passionate about the violin. He was a very, very talented musician. His father was a strong German nationalist. He was very patriotic. We know that it was a strict household, there with three sons. We know that he was an expert fencer. He fenced with his younger brother Heinz. He went to a gymnasium. He was an excellent student, particularly in the sciences. He was very talented, he was a talented athlete. He wasn't just an expert fencer, he was a very good swimmer.

Evidently, he was a bit bullied at school because he had a high pitch voice and there was perhaps a shade of a suspicion of Jewish ancestry. Is that what turned him? In 1918, he is only four years old, beg your pardon, in 1918, he's born in 1904. So he is 16 years, have I got it right? No, he is 14 years old. So he can't do anything, he can't be part of the war. But remember what happens at the end of the war? There's revolution in Germany and he is in his hometown of Hale. And the defence minister ordered a para military group to recapture the town, and he's a nationalist. So he joins this paramilitary group and he then joins the. He's then assigned to protect private property. And this is what he said was his political awakening. He joined the German protection. And the German protection and shelter league, which was one of hundreds of little leagues set up all over Germany.

We've spent a lot of time discussing this. He obviously, he's a young man. He's smarting under Germany's terrible defeat. And were the Germans responsible? We talked about the stab in the back theory. Consequently, if you think about who were leading the revolutions in Germany, even though communism was never a majority Jewish response, what is certainly true is that many of the leaders of the revolutionary parties were of Jewish birth. And that in all sorts of surveys, a lot of characters who joined the Nazi party or became involved in this ultra national groups said that the fear of communism and hatred of Jews as communists was a terribly important point. Anyway, of course, during the crisis of hyperinflation, it affected the conservatoire. So that led to a financial crisis for the family. So the man from the upper middle class background, the good student, the man who loves culture, high culture, he now feels threatened. And in 1922, he joins the Navy and he becomes, he passes up very, very quickly. He becomes a senior midshipman, further promotions.

And he is a signal officer on Schleswig-Holstein, which was the flagship of Germany's North Sea Fleet. So he is doing terribly well. He gets a very good evaluation from his superiors. But then he gets into trouble. He's a womaniser. And he gets a woman, a woman he promises to marry

and has sexual relations with, he then goes off and marries someone else. So I'm going to talk about in a minute, 'cause she's also fascinating. And what happens is this woman that he has dishonoured, her father is very close to German generals. So there's nothing that his superior offices can do to save him, and he's rusticated from the army. He then marries this woman, Lina von Osten, who is already a member of the Nazi party. She came from a minor aristocratic family. She'd attended an Nazi rally back in 1929, and she was already obsessed with Adolf Hitler. So he goes ahead and he marries Lina and he joins the Nazi party. Lina's family have contacts to Heinrich Himmler. Now Heinrich Himmler, by this time, he was involved in the push. He was becoming more and more important in the Nazi party. He was already setting up a counterintelligence division.

And through Lena's family, he has meetings with Heydrich. Heydrich impresses him. Heydrich is incredibly clever. He's very well organised. And what he does is he basically, he says to Himmler, I will organise things for you. And he becomes a major in the SS. And later on he's going to become Colonel in chief of the Gestapo. He helps in the put, he's totally ruthless. Remember Hitler says, he is the man with the iron heart. He's totally ruthless. He becomes the right hand man to Heinrich Himmler. He really intrigues his way into the Berlin Gestapo. And by 1936, he's totally loyal to Himmler and he's in command of the security police throughout the Reich. Herman Göring had actually founded the Gestapo back in 1933 as a Prussian police force. Göring then transferred all the authority to Himmler. Later on, I'm going to be looking at the infighting between all these kind of characters. But the reason I'm bringing out Heydrich now, to start with, he's going to set up the Einsatzgruppen in Poland, and, but it's more than that. When you look at Himmler and Hitler and Goring and Goebbels, they were all kind of disease creatures. But this man, he had the brain, he had the looks, he was successful with women.

Yes, he had a few battering along the way in terms of being kicked out of the Navy and the German depression. But this is the man who is going to be responsible under his chief Heinrich Himmler. It is he who is really responsible in the end for what they euphemistically called the Final Solution. So what he does, he builds up the Gestapo. He had the authority to arrest on suspicion that there might be a crime committed. We really are into an Orwellian at nightwear. And what was a crime was completely at the discretion of the Gestapo. In 1936, the Gestapo law actually gave the police the right to act outside the law. I hope Dennis, our judge is listening because this is a totally, just think what what that does to a society. The police can act outside the law. They can take people into custody under the order of the Fuhrer, it's a bit like the notion of lets to Cache at the time in the French Revolution, where the king could put people in prison for life just under his word. So also remember he comes from a Roman Catholic background, but Hitler is very much developing the him. Himmler is very much developing the notion of the Germanic religion. He wants to leave the church. His wife had already done so, and he gradually begins to see that the church is a danger to the state.

This is interesting because I've already talked about the Catholic church, but at the inner core of the Nazis, there is a clash amongst those who want to go along with religion to keep the masses

happy and those like Heydrich and Himmler, who really believe in the old pagan Gods, by 1936, he's chief of the German police and he unites all the police forces throughout Germany. He takes on his man Müller, who's going to become the Gestapo's educational chief. And also the operational chief. Educational, interesting, what does an SS education mean? I'll talk about that later on. He was very, very efficient. He helped organise the Berlin Olympics of 1936, was awarded the Olympic Games decoration for that. And in 1938, when the Austrian Chancellor Schuschnigg resisted Hitler's proposed merger, this is before the, it was Heydrich who went in to organise Nazi demonstrations in Austria and also to distribute propaganda throughout Vienna. And by mid 1939, he created a foundation to obtain property for the SS and the SD to use his guest houses and vacation homes, including a house on the shore of Lake Wannsee.

Of course, we know it as the Wannsee House. He bought that in 1940 as a home, a residential rest home for the SS. So we could go there with their girlfriends and wives and have a holiday on the state. So basically, and it's also he that he becomes president of the International Criminal Police Commission, later on that's known as Interpol. There's another story for you. Now going on on this. He now is involved in Operation Tannenberg against the Poles. And what is his role in the Shoah, he was organ already under Himmler, one of the most important organisers of Kristallnacht. He had been behind Operation False Flag, the invasion of which I've already mentioned. And he formed the Einsatzgruppen. This is 21st of September, a memorandum, the Jewish question in the occupied territories. And what they discuss is what will be the final solution of the Jewish problem and what will be the interim solution. We now come to a terrible debate.

Did Hitler always intend to murder the Jews or was it the twisted path to fate? Up until up until 1941, let's go up till 1939, up until 1939, it is the political, legal and economic exclusion of the Jews from German society and Austrian society to get them to emigrate. And of course, it was under Heydrich, his functionary is Eichman that he sets up immigration bureaus in Berlin and in Vienna because it's also about greed. It's also about the appropriation of Jewish property. Between 1939 and the summer of 1941, it's the holding operation. In fact, Jews got out of Germany and Austria as late as October, 1941. They're now invading Poland. And of course, Poland as we discussed, has three and a half million Jews. It's the largest Jewish community in Europe. Warsaw alone at the time of the occupation had 378,000 Jews. And it's going to be swelled by Jews fleeing from the small towns and villages into Warsaw. So Poland, from the point of view of the Nazis, was actually divided up into various sections. The general government, which was run by Hans Frank, and also the areas where Poles were pushed out to be replaced by Baltic Germans.

The Poles are completely expendable in this story. So Heydrich sets up the Einsatzgruppen, much more about that later because they are also going to be the force that leaves the killing squads after the invasion of Russia. And suffice to say, the majority of the Einsatzgruppen, and there were 3000 of them, the majority of them had doctorates from top German universities. Many of them were figures of high culture. It's not a bottom up organisation. And it's important to remember that. And we also know that an incredible number of locals, the German police and

the worked with them on the killing process. And this is where psychology comes in. The reason I spent time talking about that monstrous person, is there anything in him that gives us clues? Is he a psychopath, what does it mean to be a psychopath? Someone who doesn't know the difference between right and wrong. But then the whole effort of the Nazis was to take away conventional morality. It's weakening, according to Nazis, conventional morality is weakening. I just quickly want to mention his wife Lina, because to me she's also interesting.

As I said before, she was the daughter of a minor aristocrat. It was she who joined the Nazi party first, not him. And she had been, and her link in was a man called Friedrich, who was a member of the SS. His mother was Heydrich's godmother and he was the police president of Munich during Kristallnacht. And Dachau was under his purvey. He was actually a witness at Nuremberg. He wasn't brought to justice. He was denazified, there were five categories of denazification. And what he had to do was to forfeit 1/3 of his wealth. And he was categorised as a follower and sympathiser. Now he married Lina. And what happens with Heydrich, the man, and we're going to spend a lot more time when we look at the Wannsee House because it is he who actually convenes that terrible meeting at Wannsee on the 20th of January, 1942, where they actually write down the final solution. Now the point is, they already started with the invasion of Russia, but they write it down. And it's also about Heydrich making sure it's all under his control and under the control of his master Himmler. But in recognition of all his services, he's actually made the protector of Bohemia and Moravia. He's given a country estate. He has a huge amount of wealth. And what happens is he is assassinated by a group of Czechs.

From then on, the murders of the Jews are going to be under the banner of operation Heydrich. So he dies in 1942. His place is going to be taken by Carlton Brunner. More about that later. Now, what happens to his wife and the mother of his four children, one of the children actually died in a traffic accident. So she was actually cleared during the denazification process. And through a series of court cases, she won the right to a West German government pension because she was the wife of a German police general who was killed in action. Now she died in 1985. She remarried, so it's interesting, when we think about justice, did anything ever trouble, did anything ever trouble that woman? So basically that's the kind of character that we are dealing with. Can we go on to the next stage? Yes, now what happens now is Heydrich gives the order to actually set up the Judenrat. This is what's going to happen all over the occupied territories. Jewish organisations, Jewish elders are going to determine what is happening to the Jewish people. Now remember, they had no choices. Later on, the issue of the Judenrat is going to come up quite a lot. And I know that it's something that Dennis and David will be discussing when they look at the issue of the German Jewish philosopher, Hannah Arendt. Now remember, they had no choice. This is an unbelievably brutal occupation.

And no choices are given. The Germans march in into Warsaw, And just think Warsaw look, on the eve of war, there are 378,000 Jews in Warsaw. They make up 30% of the population. They live mainly to the north in an area that was 90% Jewish. Nearly half of them earned their living from industry and artisanship, many of them worked in small factories or owned small factories, 30% of them were in commerce. When I showed you the film, I wanted you to see a whole



range of life. And between 36 and 39, there'd been horrific anti-Semitism in Poland. Now, Warsaw had become the capital since 1596 when it was removed from Krakow. And now the Polish government, which had been previously an anti-Semitic. And if you think about it, characters like Weitzman, Jabotinsky begging Polish Jews to get out. Where can one get to, that's another issue. And now they are living under Nazi rule. And not only are they unbelievably cruel to the Polish population, it's almost as the Poles have been dehumanised and they are even crueller to the Jewish population, as far as characters like Heydrich are concerned and Himmler and the SS, the Jew is the enemy. And this is one of the most extraordinary aspects of Nazi policy because you now have a completely captive population, a pitiful population, a tragic population who are going to be starved, who are going to be humiliated. And yet the Nazis still believed in Jewish power. And it's absolutely extraordinary.

Eventually they're going to be pushed into a ghetto, which is going to be set up by the Judenrat under Nazi orders. And I'm just going to give you some so that you get the picture, this terrible, terrible picture. It was appalling preparing this lecture. And I know it's appalling for you to hear it. And we listen because we must honour, we must honour those of us, of our families who died. And we also have to study in case we can perhaps come up with a formula. But I want you to imagine a situation where with all the people fleeing in from the countryside, at its height, there were nearly 500,000 people. And according to the majority of figures, and remember, it's all going to be recorded in these extraordinary documents that survived the war. There were 13 people per room, many thousand are homeless. The horrific rations were 184 a day. There was typhus. Over 100,000 people are going to die of starvation and disease, properties were plundered, goods confiscated. It's just an upside down world of evil that was created by the Nazis. And he looked over by the Judenrat. Now I realised that I'm running out of time, so I'm going to stop there. The reason I'm going to stop there is I want you to have a look at some photographs of the Warsaw Ghetto, and then I'm going to show you a film of "Vilma" that you'll remember last time I showed.

Now, can we go slowly beyond these pictures? Now, where do these pictures come from? Well, the pictures I'm showing first my great friend, who survived because there was a numerous classes at the, and he came to England to do his PhD. He really became very involved in Polish Jewish relations. And he was given a role of film in the eighties by a German photographer, Billy George, whose father had been testing his Likeman in the Warsaw Ghetto. This is a German soldier going into the ghetto. And here you see, these pictures are extraordinary. And here you see pictures of everyday life in the Warsaw Ghetto. Don't forget that of those children, nine out of 10 of them passed away. So these are pictures from the collection of Willie George. Can you go on Judy? Here's some more. It's the summer of 1941. See the vendor, see that old man? Those pretty women, they're all wearing armbands. I'll talk about that on Thursday. Can we see some more Jude? Yeah, yeah. See the bewilderment. And of course you see a member of the Jewish police, I'll talk about that as well.

Can we go on Judy? Yeah. The white Armand. Yes, now these are photographs that come from Frida. Frida sent them this morning, as ever Frida, thank you so much. And there you see a

Jewish policeman. See all those children? There are many photos of Poland. I mean, we are the people of the book. We are the recorders. You see Stroop got it so terribly, terribly wrong. And of course you have Roman, if you go onto Prime, there is in Polish a documentary that I found last night on pre-war war Warsaw. So yes, thank you. What I suggest now, because I do, I will be coming back to Warsaw, but I want to, before we do that, can I quickly explain Judy? Now, when the Warsaw ghetto, when Warsaw was invaded, quite a few of the leadership escaped to Vilnius. Vilnius was part of Poland. Vilnius was now at this stage part of Poland. And on the 19th of September, the Soviets seized the city. And after talks, the Soviets transferred the city to the Lithuanians in exchange for Soviet bases. Now, for a while it was under Lithuania. And then in June, 1940, the Soviets took it. And between June, 1940 and July 41, it's under Soviet rule.

And then in 41 it's under Nazi rule. And one of the things we're going to see is just how cruel the Lithuanians were. And I should mention to you that on the Wednesday the 24th, who is a Nazi hunter, who's done a lot of work in Lithuania. He's going to be interviewed by Phil Rubenstein on this particular issue, and he will concentrate on Lithuania. But this comes from that extraordinary footage. Remember the five Polish cities? And so many of you asked if I could show more. This is Jewish life in Vilnius and I think it will be particularly interesting for South Africans. Remember this is the summer of 1939 where Israel Gutman, who was living in America, went back to Poland to show the film, to make a film for the folks back in America. It was found in a left luggage in the seventies, cleaned up, and it's in Yiddish. So let's have a look at Jewish life in Vilnius. Thank you Judy. Can you just run it on a minute, Judy, to show what happened.

*Video clip is played.*

That was about a third of the population of Vilnius were Jewish. Two ghettos in Vilnius, and I'll be talking to you about particularly a man who came from the Vilnius Ghetto. Is now in New York. I put these films are more evocative and I hope you realise how modern some of the, how modern so many of the Jews were in the way they dressed. It gives you a whole slice of Jewish life. Bearing in mind that in 39 was in Polish hands, then Lithuanian, then Russian, we stop there. Maybe we could look at Jewish, if you want me to, at the beginning of every presentation, I can show a little bit of all of this. Anyway, I think we should go to questions now Judy, let me have a look at the question. I'm sorry I put my finger over the, I'm trying not to, I have an iPlayer, et's have a look at the questions.

Q&A and Comments:

This is from Frida and thank you Frida again for your films. My father was in Rami defending Poland. Sadly, the Polish government were not prepared for Hitler's army, no.

And this is from. I have a letter from my uncle in, written to my father in South Africa, suggesting my father send me to Poland. Be safer for me than staying in South Africa. Yeah, yes.

Nancy Spielberg produced a movie titled, "Who Will Tell Our Story" about Emanuel Ringelblum in the Warsaw Ghetto story. Yes, it's very impressive and you can get it on Prime. And I will be talking about Emanuel Ringelblum because of course he's one of the great heroes.

Shabbat, the pleasure of Shabbat. He collected thousands and thousands of stories. He was a brilliant historian. I'll be talking about him next week, I mean on Thursday.

And who was, yes, Jack, stored historical documents. Yes, what they did is luckily they were hidden in milk churns. And most of the archives have been discovered. And this is, has the cold eyes of the state.

Please talk more about Heydrich and Interpol. I'll be talking about Heydrich more when I talk about the Wannsee Conference.

Evil is, this is from Joan, and evil is in the eye beholder. If one is surrounded by people who think something is not wrong, and your leaders also think that way, it isn't wrong. We see it in that many places even today. Yeah, you see, this is why it's so important to think about these issues. The thing that I really grapple with is whether moral conscience is innate or it's something that we have to foster in people and who's going to be able to answer those questions. Not if you believe in the 10 Commandments, equal equals evil no matter what your leaders say.

Q: But Audrey, what if you live in a totalitarian society?

A: I've looked at codes of education for Nazi Germany, but from kindergarten through to university. I'm not making excuses, I'm just giving explanations. They are taught in one way. Think of the burning of the books. Just think what happens when the libraries are weeded out. When you can only watch certain films. You can only read certain books, when if your parents dare to speak against it, they will be sent to concentration camps. In the end, this is the question, do you believe that yellow is black and green is white? It's indoctrination, does it work? Does it work for everyone?

And this is from Suzanne. She's staying the Wannsee House is well worth the visit. Yes, and I'm hoping that the director of the Wannsee House will be our guest later on.

Father, this is Anna. Father Patrick has written several of books about the Holocaust by bullet, his foundation. Yes, I've interviewed Father Desbois. He's a very, very interesting man. He's actually saying because after the Russian, after the Nazis broke the Soviet Molotov Pact and invaded Russia, the Einsatzgruppen followed them. And this is when the killings begin, the shootings. And Father Desbois's theory is that it's sort of become a blueprint for many of the genocides that have happened post Shoah.

And also Anna talks about the participation of the local Ukrainians. Yes, one of the horror stories

is that in Lithuania, Latvia, the Ukraine, there was a huge amount of participation. And also what the Nazis unleashed was venality. You see, they wanted, look, they robbed the serious artefacts. Don't forget, we've got a programme at six o'clock about looted art.

Q: But what about the ordinary homes?

A: If you lived next door to a Jew in a small village, and I've travelled in all these places, wooden houses, I used to go there before communism collapsed. I saw, you could see where the had been pulled out. You would go in, you could take the pots, the pans, the clothes. This is the unleashing of the 10 Commandments. Yes, a lot of the actual killings were done under the supervision of the Nazis. This is the unleashing of evil.

Q: How much detail of the final solution was recorded at Wannsee?

A: Melvin, I'll go through the documents with you. When we look at Wannsee. How did Heydrich family and parents, were they all very, very good Nazis. The children didn't pass away, they were murdered. Yes, they were murdered. When I said passed I meant passed, for me, something really strange happened about six weeks before my partner died, this is four years ago. We were going through some of his old papers, his father's old papers. His father managed to get out of Warsaw in 1940. He went to America and you know, this is the evil of Nazism. They kept a post office in the Warsaw ghetto right up until the summer of 1942. And we found a postcard of a very beautiful woman with a young little boy in her arms. And it said to Uncle Yaakov from Motti, this was his father's sister. We don't even know her married name because she'd married since her brother had left. And a little boy of one and a half years old. That's all we know, a little picture of Motti, one of the one and a half million children who were murdered, and this is Joan saying, Roman was a close friend. His book is wonderful, Marilyn, to me, one of the saddest pictures is the picture of a child smiling. Yes, what those kids went through. And yet some of them emerged. Those who survived, some of them became incredible human beings. Yes, Aviva Kempner made a documentary about Vilnius in the 1980s in honour of her mother who came from Vilnius, wonderful documentary. Yes. Please don't forget, look at Prime. I dunno about that one. You find, I actually put in Jewish movies. You find so many interesting documentaries.

Please repeat details of the interview. It's six o'clock English time. We have the Jewish Museum and there's going to be a session on looted art.

Q: Now this is from Martin. Can the plight of in China be compared with the Jews under the Nazis? What will historians 15 years from now say about in the world's response, assuming that history is not under Chinese control?

A: You see, Martin, here, you come to the nub of it. Have we learned any of the lessons of history? What is happening to the isn't what's happening to the Jews, but it doesn't make it any less horrifying and it's a long way away, and we're not protesting. And if we do protest, what

action can we really take? One of the tragedies is that we haven't yet, if you want to go to philosophy, the Greek said the only hope was philosopher kings. But we have never created them, in William's wonderful presentation yesterday, he did talk about Churchill and for all the flaws of Churchill and of which there were an incredible amount of course, and yet, he saved a nation. And where are those kind of characters? And let me go back to a lot of you like the footage.

Yes. The change of music is interesting as he gets to the Jewish quarter.

Q: Yes, this is from Marilyn, in the Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocides Centre, There's a short film on Jewish life. Can you give details on how to access it?

A: I don't know, but I'm sure if you contact the Johannesburg Museum, they would be able to, this is from Bonnie.

This is not a question I want to honour a former client, Beau, whose polish father, uncles and cousins were all shot for helping Jews. He never allowed me to nominate him as a righteous gentile. He said what his family did was a Christian duty. Well, that's beautiful Bonnie. Not beautiful, this is the other thing, we will be talking about rescuers. We're going to do a couple of sessions on them. What made rescuers, rescuers, what's in their DNA? Yes, Bonnie, I know the captions of black are white often on a light background. I said to you, when I first showed these films, they're not perfect. They were found in a left luggage. But I personally think because they are authentic footage of 1939, I'm prepared to swallow it.

Carol, my father was from Lithuania, immigrated to America with his father and two brothers. All of them were damaged by their lives. This movie is breaking my heart, but I'm thankful to see it. Yeah, I mean, how many people did escape? How can you escape from that? I still think the Jewish world is in shock. And you could make the case. And some writers, like Adorno, he said it's actually the of Western civilization.

I love the song, which is one of the wonderful Yiddish songs composed by Mordechaj Gebirtig, who was killed in the Krakow ghetto, yes. I mean, it was a civilization that was destroyed, every kind of, okay.

Q: This is a Alan, realising there was enormous Jewish population in Poland, but what was happening to other Jewish communities in Nazi occupied Europe?

A: We will be looking at it. I don't know, you see, one of the issues that I've discussed with Wendy and my colleagues, we are looking, we're dealing in the main with a Jewish audience, and we are dealing with one of the most extraordinary ghastly episodes in history. So what are we do, how are we going to do it? How are we going to present it to you? I decided to look at Slovakia and Bulgaria as case studies. We won't be spending months and months on the Shoah, and we're not doing a facts and figures kind of lecture because you all know too much.

So what I'm trying to do is to bring up the issues. This is what Wendy and my colleagues felt, and Wendy felt very strongly that we should look at biography. And I think she's right. I really believe that what, look at the biographies of the perpetrators. Some of course of the victims and some of the wonderful stories from Shabbat, it's terrifying. But on the other hand, it's a real triumph of the human spirit.

Yes, this is from Jonathan. The Soviets were killing the Polish officers in the forest of. Yes. I'm actually dealing with Jewish history and William gives general history. What happened, what the Soviets were up to under Stalin was also, you're living through one of the darkest times in history. If you actually look at the interwar period from the First World War to the Second World War, including the Second World War, it's the darkness. This is a brilliant book being recommended by Professor Daniel Kasal on Shabbat archives and Emanuel Ringelblum.

Yes, could you please repeat where I can see this film again? No, I was talking about the one, the film I was talking about, the one at the Holocaust Museum in, I suggested you get in touch with them. I don't know how we can show this again. I'm going to be discussing it with Wendy and Judy.

Where can I access the film of Vilnius? What I do know is that when our website is up and running, you will be able to go back and get the presentations.

This is from Judith. My uncle lost his job as a lawyer in Vienna after the. He was offered a good job as a leader in the East. He had his back packed to go, but his train was cancelled. His new wife was to join him later, he would've gone and his new wife would've joined him. They had no idea what the east meant. No, it was the great secret, wasn't it? Except by 1943, it was no longer a great secret. In fact, by 1942, there's actually the first press reports, or before that in 1941, after the invasion of the Soviet Union. And that's an area I'm going to look at because I mean, somebody brought up the issue of what's going on in China. It's in the press. There's going to be an allied declaration on December the 17th, 1942. So the world knew, so what, that's my question.

The ambush of Heydrich was very clever, says Stewart. Yes, but those people who ambushed him, the Nazis took a terrible revenge. They wiped out the village they came from. They murdered all the men and sent the women and children to concentration camps.

Yes, Amanda. The film is a haunting window onto a lost world.

This is from Bonnie, Boston's old is Shore is named after Vilnius. Vilnius is now a museum as well as a functional synagogue. Our grandson celebrated his bar mitzvah in the sanctuary. Yes, yes, Vilnius is an extraordinary city to visit. I'm not clear about the South African connection. The reason I mentioned Vilnius and the South Africans is 80% of South African Jews are Lithuanian. That's why I mentioned it. Most of South African Jewery came from Lithuania, my father's family.

Yeah, Debbie's answered it. That's why it's just, it's fascinating how the majority of Jews who went to South Africa between 1818 and 1914 came from Lithuania. And in the interwar period, a lot of South Africans went to, a lot of Lithuanians went to South Africa.

Yes, Brandeis definitely has these films, yes.

And this is from Jeffrey, my father-in-law from, I hope I pronounced it correctly, which is now a suburb of Vilnius, went back 15 years ago and found out what happened to the family. Vilnius looks the same except more, I can't read that now. Yeah, Vilnius is a beautiful city. Emanuel Ringelblum is under the Chinese embassy in Warsaw, most of them are being recovered.

Yes, they were smuggled into milk cans. I've heard the story of the Chinese embassy. I didn't know if it was true or not.

My family was from, when you talk about where many Jews, yeah. You see the point is it's a terrible story and I have the film of. The Poles called it. And I think maybe what I will do is show these. I've got another three, at the beginning of each presentation I will show the short films.

This is from, my mother lived in lodge and had an accessory store with her husband. A cleaning lady told her, when the Germans come, don't worry. We'll help you escape pre-invasion. Yeah, there was incredibly good people too. And there's no, you see the point is, there's no common denominator.

Yes, this is John, Judaism does not say people are basically good. We are born with an inclination to good and an inclination to evil. Yes, the evil instinct and the goods instinct. But this is beyond that. What I'm talking about I think is beyond it.

Yes, yes, What I've just said, Peter. Yes, of course. The whole of was wiped out. This is from Eli, the Wannsee House is terrifying. It's basically a corporate conference to decide to eliminate the Jews. Yeah, it becomes a business meeting and when we look at it, it's extraordinary.

Anna is pointing to The Book Smugglers by David Fishman, the Palestinians.

This is from Jill. The Palestinians are indoctrinated today in the same way the Germans were. Look, antisemitism didn't die with the Shoah. And that is extraordinary because antisemitism is really, one of the great tropes is that Jews have such power and unfortunately it hasn't died.

Eli, Hitler hated the world for giving the Jews a sense of morality.

I hope you're familiar with the lodge Ghetto photographs of Henry Ross, no, I'm not Miriam. I will certainly look them up, thank you for that.

Think of prophecy of unleashing the devil. Yeah, that's brilliant, Eli. Those of you who don't know

it, if the talisman the cross will ever fall in Germany, then the hammer of Thor will rise up. It's an extraordinary, I will try and get it for on the screen in the next few weeks.

Okay. Oh, this is from Barbara, just read book, very interesting, yes. And he's going to be on air on the 24th and she says, this is from Barbara. Thank God my Polish grandfather took my grandmother and mother to South Africa, but my Lithuanian grandmother and family were not able to escape and they all perished.

Yeah, this is from Diane. I've been to Lithuania. We were told the German soldiers couldn't believe that non-Jews were so helpful.

I feel that Lithuania is one big killing field and this is from Edna. My entire family in were wiped out in the Holocaust. The Lithuanians were worse than the Nazis, yeah. This is one of the problems that we have to grapple with.

This is from Linda. My grandfather was one of 13 from. Five brothers left for South Africa and one to America. The rest all perished, yes.

Katherine Irvine, perhaps Heydrich anxious that even a suspicion he had Jewish ancestry was a potential death sentence thought his best chance of survival, yeah. Was to promote extreme anti-Jewish practise. You know, it's possible that Hitler thought he had Jewish ancestry as well. It's one way of explaining a pathology.

Was involved in, Ron Hoffman.

Q: Why would we think that morality is innate?

A: Self-interest is innate. The rules by which we live have been created to prevent rampant self-interest. You've got me thinking of a, aha. Okay, I'm going to answer that with a quote of, the great direst of the Warsaw ghetto. What he said, he said, he's talking about the Second World War and he says, "This war will bring destruction upon human civilization, but this is a civilization which merits annihilation and destruction." Basically what he said is, we've got to understand that it's in our own interests to work together to save the world. You see, that is an interesting comment, isn't it? That self, in a way, if we all work together, maybe we could save the world. That's real self-interest, isn't it?

Michael Block is, I'm not going to repeat this, Michael, I'm not having arguments online, but Michael says, Netanyahu is a Churchillian character, discuss.

And Myrna and Susan says, the films are precious.

All who were left in Poland, my maternal grandfather's family were killed.



Have people seen the moving Hungarian Film 1945? W

hy did so many Lithuanian Jews go to South Africa? I think it was because the Union Castle line was actually advertising for immigrants. I'm pretty sure a friend of mine did her PhD on it, I think.

Isn't that about enough, Judy? Is Wendy there or is it Judy?

- [Speaker] No, she's not unfortunately she lost her signal.

- Yes, I saw her come on, Judy. Thank you so much for sorting the films out. I hope you all realise what a debt we owe to Judy for keeping, I'm completely techno phobic. I've actually had to come to my daughter's house because my internet went off. But thank you all for listening. I know this is very dark. I just hope that out of it we can come up with some sort of resolution because I think we need to. Anyway, I wish you all good night and it's at six o'clock our time. The next 6:00 PM.

- [Speaker] 6:00 PM UK and that makes it 8:00 PM in South Africa. So we'll see everybody a bit later.

- God bless, thank you very much.

- [Speaker] Thank you so much, bye-bye everybody.

- Bye.