



Oskar Schindler was born in 1908, in Zwittau (today Svitavy), in what is now Moravia in the Czech Republic. He grew up in a Catholic well-to-do family that was German-speaking. Before the Germans occupied a section 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. In 1939, Schindler became a member of the Nazi Party, relocated to Krakow, and acquired a run-down enamelware factory that had been owned by a Jew. He transformed it into an extremely successful enterprise with the help of a Jewish financial advisor, Abraham Bankier, and Schindler amassed a fortune. At the factory's peak in 1944, he employed about 1,750 workers, of whom 1,000 were Jews. The classification of the factory as a "business essential to the war effort" and his connections helped Schindler protect his Jewish workers from deportation and death in the Nazi camps, but as time went on, Schindler had to give Nazi officials large bribes and gifts of luxury items obtainable only on the black market to keep his workers safe.

By July 1944, when 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 the Gross-Rosen concentration camp. Schindler convinced *SS-Hauptsturmführer* Amon Goeth, commandant of the nearby Kraków-Plaszów concentration camp, to allow him to move his factory to Brännlitz (today Brno) in the Sudetenland, thus sparing his workers from almost certain death in the gas chambers.

Using names provided by Jewish Ghetto Police officer Marcel Goldberg, Goeth's secretary Mietek Pemper compiled and typed the list of 1,200 Jews who traveled 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 organizations. 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 returned to Germany alone, 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.

Oskar Schindler and his wife, Emilie, were named Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem in 1993. He died in October 1974 in Hildesheim, Germany, and was buried in Jerusalem.



Itzhak Stern was born in 1901 in Krakow, a city in southern Poland. He was an important leader in the Jewish community, vice president of the Jewish Agency for Western Poland, and a member of the Zionist Central Committee. During the war, Stern was imprisoned in the Krakow ghetto and later the Plaszow labor and concentration camp, where he was forced to work in the office and had contact with the camp's commandant, Amon Goeth. While still in Plaszow, Stern supplied information to Schindler about conditions in the camp and Schindler in turn provided money to improve them.

Stern and the surviving members of his family were placed on the famous list to be transferred to Brunnlitz, in then Czechoslovakia; however, his mother died of illness when the female prisoners were transferred to Auschwitz before Schindler could intervene. In Brunnlitz, Stern worked directly with Schindler and became one of the leaders of the workers. After the liberation of Brunnlitz by the Russian Army, Stern moved to France and eventually immigrated to Israel where he lived with his wife, Sophia, until his death in 1969.

Stern's role in the film is expanded. While he was an accountant for Oskar Schindler, he serves as a composite of several Jewish men Schindler had working for him, notably Mietek Pemper, who had been forced to work as Amon Goeth's assistant in Plaszow and Abraham Bankier, who actually worked more closely with Schindler.

Amon Leopold Goeth was born in 1908 in Vienna, Austria and was raised in a well-to-do middle class and Catholic family. In 1925, he joined the Austrian Nazi Party, was awarded full party membership in 1931, and a year later joined the SS, where he rose steadily through the ranks. In 1942, he was transferred to the staff of SS General Odilio Globocnik who was in charge of Operation Reinhard, the Nazi campaign to kill the Jews of occupied Poland. In February 1943, he was made commandant of the Plaszow concentration camp and also supervised the violent liquidation of the Krakow and Tarnow ghettos and the Szebnie concentration camp.

Goeth was known as "The Butcher of Plaszow" for his cruelty and violent treatment of prisoners. A prisoner in Plaszow was lucky to survive more than four weeks—collective punishment became frequent, torture and death were daily events. Goeth was arrested in the autumn of 1944 in connection with an investigation of corruption and black market activities in the camps. He was also suspected of embezzlement, but before he could be put on trial the war ended. He was recuperating in an SS-sanitarium in Bavaria, when he was arrested by Patton's troops in February 1945. The Americans turned him over to the Poles.

In 1946, at the trial at the Supreme National Tribunal of Poland, in Krakow, Goeth was found guilty and convicted of the murders of tens of thousands of people. He was hanged for his crimes on September 13, 1946, not far from the site of the former Plaszow camp.