

Writing: 6-8th Grade. Honorable Mention.

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"I want people know that there was resistance. Jews did not go like sheep to the slaughter. Many fought back – if there was the slightest opportunity – and thousands lost their lives fighting the enemy and working to save lives. I was a photographer. I have pictures. I have proof." Faye Schulman was the only known Jewish partisan photographer during WWII; her courageous efforts, after witnessing the brutal slaughter of her family, showed that she had the power to protest the Nazis and their focus on extermination of the Jewish people.

Fay Lazebnik Schulman was born in Lenin, Poland, near the Russian border on November 28, 1919. Lenin was a town of approximately 10,000 inhabitants equally divided between Jewish and non-Jewish families. Faye had a larger Orthodox Jewish family with four brothers and two sisters. Her father spent his days at the local synagogue, while her mother worked. Her brother Moishe was a professional photographer and from him she learned this skill that enabled her to survive, help others and contribute to defeating the Nazis.

In order to understand the importance of Mrs. Schulman's contribution to Nazi defeat, it is important to note the events that led to the rise of Adolph Hitler, the Nazi Party and the partisan resistance.

World War I, was a military conflict lasting from 1914 to 1918 involving nearly all the biggest powers in the world. The treaty of Versailles in 1919, was the official end to World War I. Its terms were harsh, requiring Germany to claim full responsibility for causing the war, pay war reparations, lose territory and military power while creating humiliation for the German people. At the same time, Germany was in an economic depression as it had financed the cost of the War based on the premise that Germany would be victorious. The Treat and economic depression eventually led to the collapse of Germany's Weimar Republic and Adolph Hitler's rise to power. A gifted orator, Hitler promised Germany that if he became leader he would restore Germany to greatness. In 1933, he was elected

Chancellor of Germany. Hitler hated the Jewish people and had devised a policy called the Final Solution to murder all European Jewish people which resulted in the Holocaust – the systematic murder of six million Jewish people.

On September 1, 1939, the Nazis attacked Poland. As a result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact signed on August 23, 1939, between the Soviets and the Nazis, the Soviets stood by as the Nazis took over Western Poland and then on September 17, 1939, the Soviets entered Eastern Poland. Later that month, Poland surrendered. In the end, the western territories were annexed into Germany, eastern areas into the Soviet Union and the central portion became a German protectorate.

This was the beginning of the extermination of 3.3 million Jewish people of Polish descent by the end of World War II. The German program for these people was one of concentration, isolation and eventually, annihilation. In 1941, Germany broke the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and stormed into Eastern Poland before attacking Russia. In 1942, the situation became desperate for the Jewish people in Western Poland. They were imprisoned in ghettos, shipped to concentration camps and slaughtered in the streets. IN August 1942, Faye witnessed the Nazis murder more than 1,850 people in the Lenin ghetto, including her family. She was sent to a nearby synagogue and was spared because the Nazis valued her photographic skills. The Nazis took pictures of the mass slaughter, including her family, and gave the film to Faye for development. She kept extra copies. She knew she needed to do something. She fled to the forest and joined the Molotava Brigade, a partisan resistance group made mostly of escaped Soviet Red Army POWs.

What was the partisan resistance? There were two armed resistance movements in which Jewish women participated. Most partisans were Russian soldiers, hundreds of thousands of mostly men, who had escaped from German prison camps and were trained in combat. There were approximately 30,000 Jewish partisans that formed resistance groups during the war after escaping from Nazi ghettos conducting thousands of acts of sabotage. These were organized bodies of guerilla fighters, who attacked and harassed the

enemy, especially behind party lines. Their objective was to fight a guerilla war to interrupt and disrupt Nazi communication and transportation to the front.

Faye served with the partisans as a nurse from September 1942—July 1944 and was the only partisan Jewish photographer. She always posed as a non-Jew when she took photographs for her Soviet partisan group. During a raid on Lenin, Faye rescued her camera and many family photos. Faye developed her film at night and painted pictures by campfire light. By the summer of 1944, Faye's brigade made their way to the Russian town of Pinsk, which they liberated from Nazi control.

The war ended for Faye in January 1945. She was a recognized war hero, with a well-paying job as a photographer for the government of Pinsk. She was isolated. Soon after, she reconnected with her brother Moishe, who escaped the Nazis and became a Partisan. Moishe introduced her to Morris Schulman, also a Jewish Partisan. They married and enjoyed life as decorated Soviet Partisans. They wanted to immigrate to Palestine (now Israel) and help build a Jewish homeland. They left Russia and entered a displaced persons camp in Germany called the Landsberg Displaced Persons Camp smuggling arms into Palestine and supporting the struggle for a homeland while they waited to immigrate. Instead in 1948, they immigrated to Canada in 1948, where they started a business and raised two children. Faye still lives in Toronto today.

Faye Schulman, a fearless woman, was not powerless to prevent injustice. After witnessing the brutal slaughter of her family, she chose to protest, by joining the resistance and fighting a guerilla war in harsh conditions so that the Jewish people would survive and eventually take their rightful place in Israel.

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