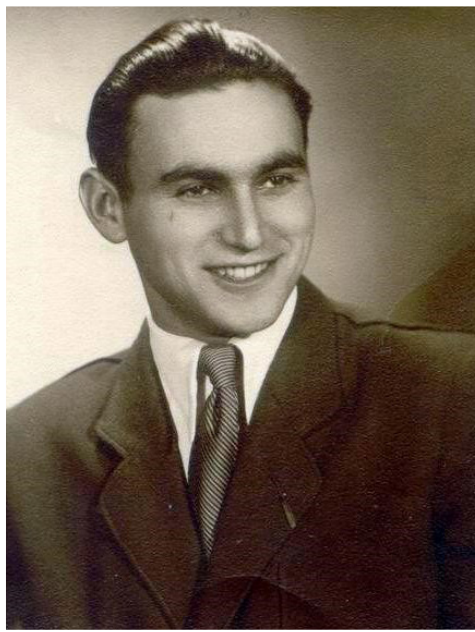


Rudolf Vrba

Easy to read life story



HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
DAY TRUST



Key words

Auschwitz – ‘Auschwitz’ was a camp where the Nazis kept people as prisoners and killed many of them. If you are a prisoner you are not allowed to leave a place. The Nazis had many camps and they killed millions of people in them.

Czechoslovakia – ‘Czechoslovakia’ was a small country in the middle of Europe. Today the area of land that was ‘Czechoslovakia’ is two countries: Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

Escape – When you ‘escape’ something you get away from it. When we use the word ‘escape’ we are usually talking about getting away from a bad thing.

Nazis – The ‘Nazis’ were a group of people in Germany who believed that they were better than everyone else. The ‘Nazis’ were racist, they wanted to kill people who were Jewish for being ‘different’ to them.

Stand by – ‘Stand by’ is a phrase people use to talk about letting things happen. Often people use it to talk about allowing bad things to happen. A person who stands by does nothing and says nothing to stop bad things from happening. Someone who tries to stop bad things from happening, or who speaks out against them happening, is someone who does not stand by (even if the things they do do not stop the bad things from happening).

Rudolf was born in 1924, in Czechoslovakia. The Nazis tried to kill him because he was Jewish. When Rudolf was 17 years old he tried to escape from the Nazis. The Nazis caught him and took him to a prison camp called Auschwitz.

When the Nazis wanted to kill people they sent them to prison camps. The Nazis killed most of the people sent to the prison camps. The Nazis kept a few people alive at the prison camps and made them work.

Rudolf was kept alive to work for the Nazis. Rudolf’s job was to clean the trains that brought the other people to the prison camps.

Rudolf saw how many people came to the prison camp. He knew how many people the Nazis were killing.

Rudolf knew the Nazis wanted to kill even more people. He wanted to warn those people so that they could escape.

Rudolf and a friend escaped from Auschwitz. This was very difficult. Out of hundreds of thousands of prisoners they were the only ones who managed to escape. They walked for 11 days to get to the people the Nazis wanted to kill next.

Rudolf and his friend wrote down everything that they knew about the killing the Nazis were doing. Rudolf knew that if people read about the bad things they would try to escape.

Some people thought that talking to the Nazis would stop them from killing people. They thought that if people read what Rudolf had written they would not be able to talk to the Nazis. So they hid Rudolf's writing.

But people in Switzerland, Britain and America read what Rudolf and his friend had written. Because of what they had read they knew how important it was to stop the Nazis from killing more people.

Lots of people worked together to stand up to the Nazis and stop them from killing more people.

For his whole life when Rudolf saw something bad he did not stand by. Rudolf always tried to fix the bad things and do good things.

Find out more...

The Holocaust: hmd.org.uk/holocaust

Life stories of those affected by genocide: hmd.org.uk/lifestories

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Learning from genocide - for a better future