

STORIES OF POLISH RESISTANCE



Irena
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Emanuel
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Mordechai
Anielewicz



Witold
Pilecki



Janusz
Korczak



Jan
Karski



Zofia
Kossak-
Szczucka



Father
Marceli
Godlewski



Jan &
Antonina
Zabinski



Józef &
Wiktoria
Ulma

About half of the six million European Jews killed in the Holocaust were Polish. In 1939 a third of the capital city Warsaw, and 10% of the entire country was Jewish. By 1945 97% of Poland's Jews were dead.

These eleven examples of Polish resistance *do not* proprt to give an overview of what happened in Poland during The Holocaust. They have been chosen to reflect the unimaginably difficult choices made by both Jews and non-Jews under German occupation – where every Jew was marked for death and all non-Jews who assisted their Jewish neighbours were subject to the same fate.

These individuals *were not* typical; they were exceptional, reflecting the relatively small proportion of the population who refused to be bystanders. But neither were they super-human. They would recoil from being labelled as heroes. They symbolise the power of the human spirit – their actions show that in even the darkest of times, good can shine through...

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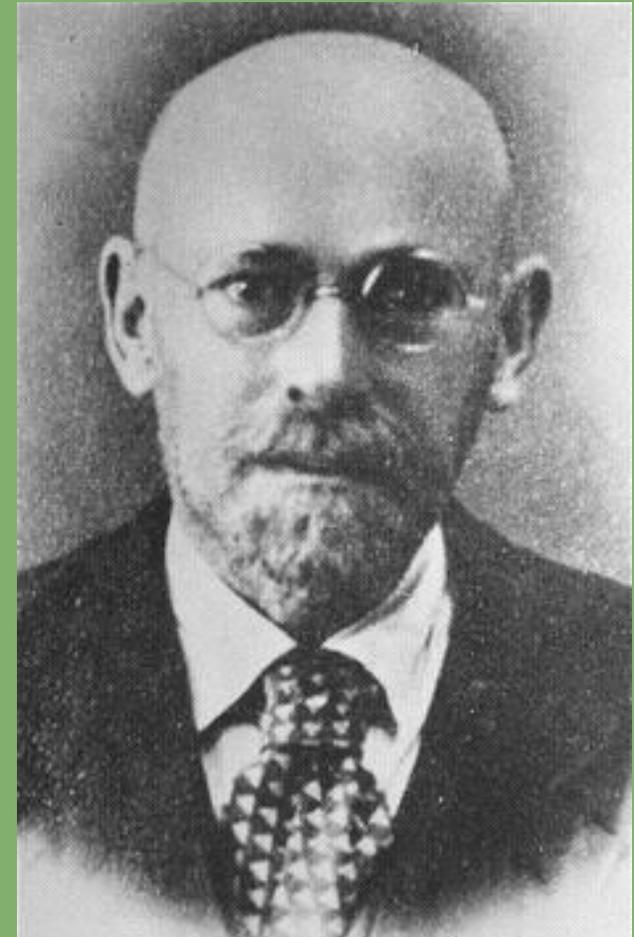
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JANUSZ KORCZAK 1878 - 1942



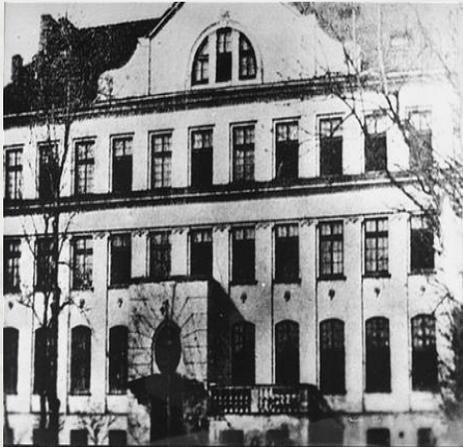
Janusz Korczak was the pen name of Henryk Goldszmit. He was born in Warsaw, to an assimilated Jewish family. After school he became a medical doctor, doing his best to help the poorest in society. He also began to write prolifically, and his first books aroused great interest. Both as a doctor and a writer, Korczak was drawn to the world of the child. He worked in a Jewish children's hospital and took groups of children to summer camps, and in 1908 he began to work with orphans.



JANUSZ KORCZAK

1878 - 1942

In 1912 he was appointed director of a new and spacious Jewish orphanage in Warsaw. Throughout his life, his partner in his work was Stefania Wilczynska, who dedicated her life to the care of orphans and greatly influenced Korczak and his career as an educator.

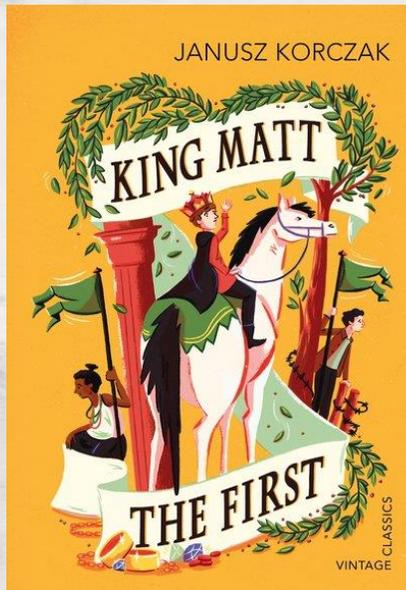
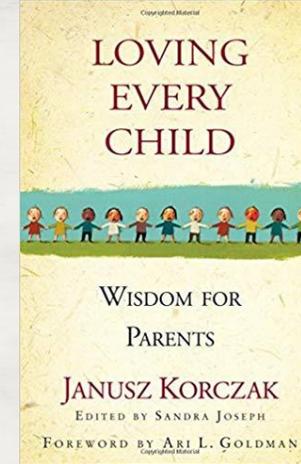


In the orphanage, Korczak developed an approach to child care that called for an understanding of the emotional life of children and urged that children be respected. A child was not to be regarded as something to be shaped and trained to suit adults, but rather as someone whose soul was rich in perception and ideas, who should be observed and listened to within his or her own autonomous sphere. Korczak maintained that every child should be seen as an individual.

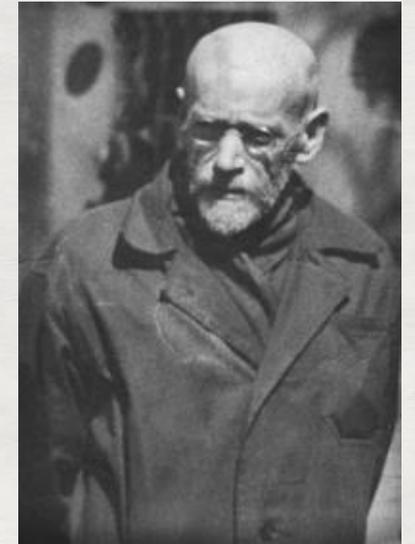


JANUSZ KORCZAK 1878 - 1942

In 1914 Korczak was called up for military service in the Russian army, and it was in military hospitals and bases that he wrote his important work *Loving Every Child*.



After the war he returned to the newly independent Poland. He resumed his role in the Jewish orphanage but was also asked to take charge of an orphanage for Polish children. Thus the 1920's were a period of intensive and fruitful work in Korczak's life – he was in charge of two orphanages and served as an instructor at other boarding schools and summer camps, as well as being a lecturer at universities and seminaries. In the late 1920's, he established a weekly newspaper for children that was also written by children, who related their experiences and their deepest thoughts.



JANUSZ KORCZAK 1878 - 1942



But in the mid-1930's, Korczak's public career underwent a change. Following the death of the Polish leader, Jozef Pilsudski, political power in the country fell into radical nationalistic and openly anti-Semitic hands. Korczak was removed from many of the positions in which he had been active, including an extremely popular radio broadcast that had made him famous across the country.

He visited Palestine twice, in 1934 and 1936, showing particular interest in the state of education, especially the educational achievements of the kibbutz movement. On the eve of World War Two Korczak was considering emigration, but his idea failed to reach fruition.

JANUSZ KORCZAK 1878 - 1942

From the very beginning of the war, Korczak dedicated himself to the welfare of children. At first, he refused to acknowledge the German occupation and heed its rules, even refusing to wear the Jewish star, which earned him a prison sentence.

As the situation got worse and the Jews of Warsaw were imprisoned in the ghetto, Korczak concentrated all his efforts on the orphanage. The only thing that gave him the strength to carry on was the duty he felt to preserve and protect his children. Polish friends of Dr Korczak tried to persuade him to escape from the ghetto but he refused to abandon the children.

On Thursday 6 August 1942 the Germans deported Korczak, his assistants and the two hundred children. A witness described the scene as follows: “This was not a march to the railway cars - this was an organised, wordless protest against the murder. The children marched in rows of four, with Korczak leading them, looking straight ahead, and holding a child’s hand on each side. Another column was led by Stefania Wilczynska, her children carrying blue knapsacks on their backs.”



JANUSZ KORCZAK 1878 - 1942

Korczak, his assistants and all of the children, were killed in Treblinka.



After the war, associations bearing Korczak's name were formed in Poland, Israel, Germany and other countries, to keep his memory alive and to promote his message and his work. Books, plays and films have all been produced about Korczak, and his own writings have been translated into many languages.