



READING GROUP GUIDE

1. In her youth Maria Mandl was described as “a nice girl from a good family.” After reading the opening chapters did you discover any unexpected factors which may have led to her later life decisions?
2. How do you think being female affected the course of Maria’s life? Had she been male, what do you think her life would have been like?
3. Many of the young women in the orchestra at Birkenau struggled with the creation of music and beauty in a place like Auschwitz. Several felt both guilt, and shame, that they played in this group to save their lives. Do you think the presence of music, and the Arts, in a place like Auschwitz was a good or bad thing? Why?
4. Describe your impressions of Maria’s friend, Margit. She was one of many young German women who served in different capacities for the Third Reich in eastern Europe during the war. Although Margit was exonerated of any crimes, and worked as a secretary, do you think she and the other

women who served in these capacities bear any culpability for the actions of the Nazi regime?

5. Do you believe that crimes the magnitude of Maria Mandl's are forgivable? Do you believe the death penalty was warranted in her case?
6. Do you believe that Stanisława Rachwałowa was right in forgiving Mandl "in the name of all the prisoners?"
7. When studying extreme perpetrators of evil, such as Mandl, do you believe we should even consider and acknowledge the 'good sides' of their personalities? Why or why not?
8. Barring any psychological disorders (psychopathy, sociopathy) do you believe that some people can be intrinsically evil? Do you believe Maria Mandl was intrinsically evil?
9. What do you think the author would like you to take away from the reading of Maria's story?