

Jerusalem Working Group

for Recognition of Leading Jewish Rescuers during the Shoah

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The Rescuers

A White Paper

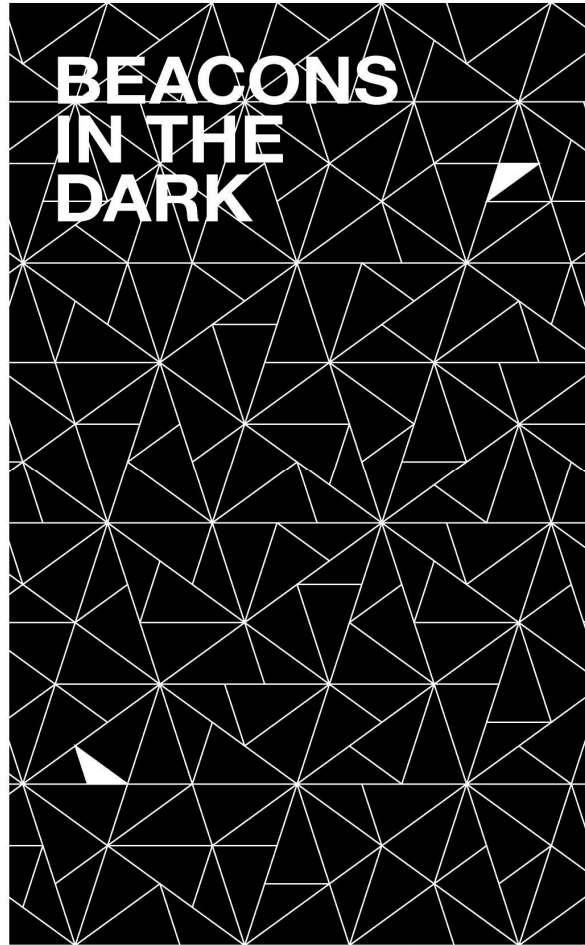
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... בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך ובכל מאודך ...

... with your whole heart, your whole soul and your whole being ...

(From Shema Israel, one of Judaism's central prayers)



By Alexandr Simon – son of Raoul Wallenberg’s niece

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Our Mission

During Europe's twentieth century dark ages, the dark and murderous years of the Holocaust, there were highly motivated, innovative men and women – Jews and non-Jews – whose activism led to rescue of hundreds of thousands of Jews from the Nazi, Fascist and antisemitic murderers¹.

Regretfully few are familiar with these special people, the “rescuers”, and their amazing deeds. Two generations have been deprived of essential knowledge about this aspect of Holocaust history, especially about those who were Jews. We are all the poorer for it, particularly our youth, which is in desperate need of authentic role models.



Our Holocaust centers and Israel made a long-term policy decision not to accord meaningful recognition to Jewish rescuers. This must change without further delay. *Our first primary objective is to help assure this happens. Our second major objective is to assure that the phenomenon of “Rescue” and “Obstruction” by Jews becomes an important part of education. Our third objective is to assure Jews around the world do collective soul searching to learn from grave and tragic mistakes by our Holocaust era leaders.*

Unfortunately the dark times did not end with the Holocaust. Our initial hopes that this great tragedy would stand as an enduring lesson for mankind have long been proven wrong by the democide of the Communist empire², and genocides such as Rwanda, Somalia, other parts of Africa and in what was once Yugoslavia. We also believe that lessons learned from Holocaust era rescuers are critical, that we are obliged to ask what **we** can do for today's burning problems and **do it**. *Assuring that there is awareness for this is our fourth major objective.*

The Jerusalem Working Group (JWG) was named in honor of the Holocaust era “*Bratislava Working Group*”, which succeeded in rescuing tens of thousands of Slovak and Hungarian Jews (*see Profiles*) and made other important contributions to rescue at an international scale. The JWG was formed to insure that the largely unheralded deeds of major Holocaust rescuers, particularly Jewish rescuers who have never been suitably acknowledged, receive the recognition they have been denied since the Holocaust. This is to rectify a historic injustice and to clearly state important lessons which until now we were prevented from learning.

The Jerusalem Working Group has no political or other affiliations beyond its stated mission. Its members are volunteers and it collaborates with other groups and individuals seeking recognition for leading Jewish and to some extent also non-Jewish rescuers who have not been suitably recognized.

At a time when humanity, especially in Europe, was at its low moral ebb, when intense hate, barbarism and apathy were the rule rather than the exception, when some people became the worst they could be some others became their best. They stood apart from the madness of crowds that infected Europe during its twentieth century dark age. They retained their humanity, and were so motivated by the need to save lives that they surpassed all normal expectations. They became towering figures, beacons of light in that dark period of modern history, one of humanity's greatest tragedies.

Some of these people saved large numbers of Jews and others rescued one or a few Jews, often at enormous risk to themselves and their family. Even among these brave and highly principled

¹ Many more could have been rescued if some leaders of free world Jewish-Zionist communities had different priorities and joined leading Jewish rescuers instead of frequently obstructing their work.

² International Communism alone resulted in non-war related death of multitudes. A probably conservative estimate is 94 million dead (mostly in China and the Soviet Union). The actual figure could be much higher. (Ref. Harvard Press “*The Black Book of Communism*”)

people a few stand out, since their activism contributed to rescuing thousands, tens of thousand and in some cases hundreds of thousands of people. They were multi-talented mavericks, working in small groups or even alone. Their single-minded dedication, imagination, reliable inner moral compass, self reliance, constant improvisation and daring enabled them to significantly outperform large Jewish-Zionist organizations, many of which did more to hinder the rescuers' efforts than to aid them. In contrast to often bureaucratic, petty, ineffective and unimaginative organization men, the leading rescuers were self-motivated, self-empowered, energetic and often ingeniously innovative as changing circumstances demanded. Their lives and deeds are a testament not only to their character, but to the immense potential of rugged, egoless self-empowerment, collaboration skills and the power of daring imagination and innovation. During the Holocaust and subsequently the attenuation of some of these character traits and over-reliance on large and at times stale organizations and their leaders proved to be a severe handicap.

Judaism teaches that he who saves one life saves an entire world¹. This is exemplified by the children and grandchildren that have issued from those who survived the Holocaust as a result of the efforts of the major rescuers. For this legacy alone, we owe them a permanent debt.

Our goal is also insistence on truthfulness about the history of "*Rescue and Obstruction*" by Jews during the Holocaust, without significant omissions, changes in emphasis and coloring. We feel that there isn't only one way of looking at this important phenomenon, but that there is a need for healthy and creative competition of views within a new "*marketplace of ideas*" and approaches. Only this can assure that the complex issue of "Rescue and Obstruction" is suitably understood and important lessons are learned from our great collective tragedy. Unfortunately today this subject is tightly controlled by an intellectual monopoly and possibly an intellectual cartel.

The crematoria stopped smoking over 60 years ago. It is time that those who gave so much of themselves to beat back the flames and rescue their brethren receive the honor and recognition so long withheld and we need them as authentic role models. It is time to set the record straight.

¹ and someone who saves thousands of lives saves thousands of worlds

Basic Concepts and Terminology

Clarity of discussions depends on crispness of terminology and definitions as well on the way a problem/subject is posed. It was written that “*A problem well stated is a problem half solved.*” (Charles Kette) This is probably an understatement. Albert N. Whitehead wrote that “*By relieving the brain of all unnecessary work, a good notation sets it free to concentrate on more advanced problems, and in effect increases the mental problem of the race.*”

Current discussions about “rescue” tend to be based on at best very fuzzy terminology and underlying conceptual structure and are often colored by political and religious views and group identity of discussants. In contrast, realms of discourse which have clarity and where ideas can build on ideas are generally based on a neutral underlying definitional and conceptual framework which considerably enhances understanding, discourse and problem analysis. In effect this simplifies discourse and also divides complex matters into manageable, inter-related sub-parts. This section is a brief and incomplete example of the type of terminology the subject of “*Rescue and Obstruction*” by Jews needs.

Rescuer

For purposes of this document the term “*rescuer*” refers to those who saved people by any unselfish means, not necessarily through armed or other forms of resistance. Often rescuers saved large numbers of Jews through legal means, such as “protection papers”, or by negotiation with or without payment of ransom and/or bribes to the Nazis and Fascists (e.g. activism by Raoul Wallenberg, Carl Lutz, Rabbi Weissmandl, Gisi Fleischmann and Recha Sternbuch), information and lobbying campaigns (e.g. Hillel Kook, George Mantello, Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld), smuggling Jews to safe areas (e.g. Recha Sternbuch and the Zionist youth rescue underground in Hungary), maintaining orphanages and assuring food and other supplies in Nazi and Fascist regions (e.g. Zionist youth rescue underground in Hungary).

In contrast, the Yad Vashem “*Righteous Among the Nations*” program emphasizes the need to take extreme personal risk, even to risk death, in the course of rescue. We feel that in the context of “rescue” priority needs to be given to “rescue” of Jews by any means rather than to glorification of willingness to in effect commit suicide.

Resistance

There were many (e.g. partisans, Warsaw Ghetto) whose primary purpose was resisting the Nazis and their allies. In some such actions Jews may have been saved. Were that important activity addressed in this document it would be called “*resistance*”.

Leading Rescuer

“*Leading rescuer*” denotes those who worked on rescue at the strategic and international level, had significant positive impact on rescuing Jews affecting a wide geographic region, and whose rescue efforts saved or had the potential to rescue or contribute to rescue of ten thousand or more Jews. In numerous cases leading rescuers did their work outside Nazi-Fascist occupied regions and their weapon was their intense dedication and phenomenal talent. Some operated literally in the shadow of the Nazis and Fascists in Europe, while others were in the free West.

Other categories of rescuers need to be defined to assist clear and productive discourse.

Individualism

Example of the major Jewish and non-Jewish rescuers clearly shows the tremendous potential inherent in the unselfish, dedicated, inspired and creative individual. The history of rescue exemplifies victory of the individual and failure of large well funded organizations and so called “professionals” during times of rapid transition and crisis.

Professionals vs. “Amateurs”

History of rescue, in general, shows that those who had the greatest success were, in effect, “amateurs” who invented bold and innovative techniques in the course of their dedicated work. Raoul Wallenberg and the leading Jewish rescuers were not “trained”, educated or “licensed” in the “profession” of rescue. In contrast, the free world Jewish-Zionist leaders of the time had considerable organizational, administrative and political skills and resources but, in general, they failed in the task of rescue. There are powerful lessons in this. One conclusion is that during major crisis and paradigm shifts so called “professional skills” from a past paradigm become at least temporarily irrelevant. Often the prior paradigm’s skill set and accompanying world view becomes an obstacle rather than help. Dedicated and talented “amateurs” not imprinted and limited this way have a much greater opportunity to invent new approaches and techniques relevant to changing circumstances¹.

Heroes

Whereas the leading Jewish rescuers were great “heroes” in many senses of the word the Jerusalem Working Group is concerned with “rescuers” and not “heroes”. Study and commemoration of heroism is also important.

Chesbon Nefesh

Despite the immense tragedy of the Holocaust to date there was no meaningful collective soul searching, or *Chesbon Nefesh*, within the Jewish community. Chesbon Nefesh is the only way to try to understand the reasons for the magnitude of the catastrophe. It is a necessary process in order to at least learn from the important and amazing deeds of leading rescuers and also from numerous cases of high level obstruction of rescue by Jewish-Zionist leaders which is likely to have cost large number of lives. If Jewish-Zionist leaders acted differently possibly hundreds of thousands or even millions may have been rescued, and enormous suffering may have been prevented².

“Remembering the Past, Shaping the Future”

This is a slogan used by Yad Vashem in its Visitors’ Hall. Unfortunately Yad Vashem and other Holocaust centers misshape an important part of collective Holocaust memory, which implies misshaping the future.

Networks

The efforts of different rescuers intersected and/or complemented each other. For example the work of Rabbi Weissmandl and the Bratislava Working Group, Carl Lutz and George Mantello in Europe and Hillel Kook and his rescue group, Henry Morgenthau, Rabbi Aharon Kalmanowitz³ and a few other Orthodox rabbis in the USA converged and culminated in the Wallenberg mission, as shown in later section “*Networks*”. It is well known that some dynamic processes in nature can only take place if there is “*critical mass*”. It is similar with social phenomena.

¹ This is one of reasons why hi-tech start-ups launched by young entrepreneurs can often innovate more successfully than well funded large organizations

² One of the leading Jewish rescuers, Hillel Kook, stated this very clearly in a late-1970 filmed interview (see References)

³ It is claimed that Joseph J. Schwartz of the JOINT said that "there was a rabbi with a long white beard, who, when he cried, even the State Department listened." (Ref: Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff, *The Silver Era*, p. 210) - in www.jpi.org/holocaust/hlchp5a.htm. Rabbi Kalmanowitz once fainted in Morgenthau’s office while discussing the plight of Jews in Europe. This probably had a great impact on Morgenthau, who was an assimilated Jew, but in whom Rabbi Kalmanowitz awakened the Jew

“Save Credit”

For clarity it is noted that frequently the same Jews had to be saved several times from a succession of life threatening situations and someone once saved may have been murdered subsequently. Thus, from the perspective of this document a rescuer’s “*save credit*” is based on aggregation of number of lives rescued per incident. Similarly, one individual may have been rescued due to the cumulative results of multiple rescuers’ work. In Budapest, for example, multiple individuals may have saved a person from multiple threatening incidents.

Multiple Attribution

Often “save credit” of a rescuer or rescue group is in some sense shared by those whose prior or parallel work enabled another rescuer. Thus some people and groups, such as Hillel Kook’s rescue group in the USA (see later section) rescued large numbers of Jews “indirectly” (See “Networks” above.)

Obstruction

Regretfully there were many incidents when modern Jewish-Zionist leaders in the free world made the Jewish rescuers’ work extremely difficult for a variety of misdirected reasons. Whereas this document does not elaborate on this tragic phenomenon which is likely to have cost hundreds of thousands and perhaps millions of lives¹, verity requires stating that there was much apathy and also considerable “*obstruction*” and even sabotage of rescue by Jewish and Zionist leaders in the free world. This too requires study to be able to at least learn from the Holocaust’s monumental tragedy.

The subject of “obstruction” is politically sensitive within the Jewish-Zionist community. There is great resistance to discussing the phenomenon and especially to mention the major obstructors by name. Yet, important lessons can’t be learned from the monumental tragic events of the Holocaust if both rescue and obstruction by Jews is not discussed in an apolitical and truth seeking manner. Perhaps the Torah is a guide. It doesn’t white wash and few if any of its towering figures are flawless. The same approach is required for the leading Jewish rescuers as well as those who chose to be apathetic and especially those who obstructed rescue.

The leading Jewish obstructors of rescue were not basically “evil”. Some were idealists and in many cases were concerned with Jewish and also general humanitarian interests. Still, their actions during the Holocaust caused immense suffering and unnecessary death to large number of Jews in Nazi and Fascist infested Europe. The consequences of these leaders’ action shows that indeed, as Hannah Arendt wrote after observing Eichmann during his Jerusalem trial, evil things happen because of the utter “*banality of evil*”.

“Jewish Pride”

Some groups and organizations see a need to encourage “*Jewish Pride*” by relating the story of Jewish rescuers. This is not the Jerusalem Working Group’s goal. We Jews have much to be extremely proud of: enormous past and present achievements in spite of our small number and formidable obstacles placed in our way by the world in the past and currently. The actions of Jewish rescuers is certainly something to be proud of. In the Holocaust context discussion of “*Jewish Pride*” demands coming to grips also with “*Jewish Shame*” – not because of the helpless victims whom many subsequently held in contempt, but due to the often apathetic, bureaucratic, unimaginative and petty free world Jewish-Zionist “leaders” of that time.

¹ Hillel Kook said this very clearly in a mid-1970 video interview with Larry Jarvik

Never Again

In general “*Never Again*” means that Jews will never again put their fate in the hands of other nations and will never again allow another Holocaust. There should be other meanings to this phrase. It must be resolved that in cases of great danger Jews will never again be as divided as they were during the Holocaust and especially that Jews will never again obstruct efforts to save Jews. It needs to be also resolved that Jews will never again forget the deeds of those who have helped them.

History of the Past

“*History of the Past*” must be truthful representation of the facts of the past and free of ideological or other cosmetics, filters, additives, emphasis changers and other enhancement, distortion and marketing techniques. This is in contrast to “fiction” and “propaganda” which don’t demand verity and where imagination and skillful distortion of facts is highly valued. Another genre, “*docu-fiction*” is problematic, since it purposefully distorts history, often because of ideological or other motivations. If “propaganda” is “*black propaganda*” then docu-fiction is “*gray propaganda*”, which can be more insidious than black propaganda since the viewer or reader assumes it is truthful and does not activate her/his critical thinking.

History of the Future

One of the most important lessons from the Holocaust is that we as individuals and society at large have great difficulty comprehending and imagining situations even slightly removed from daily concerns and established thinking and discussion patterns, and most of us are unable to perceive anything radically different from what we have previously experienced. “*Failure of Imagination*” is a considerable debilitating handicap for humanity and is one of the fundamental constants of the history of the past. One reason for this psychological limitation is that from early school education we are taught only about the past but not about the future. Unfortunately this is compounded by insistence on rote memorization of dates, dynasties, and raw facts, as opposed to encouraging perception of “*patterns in time*”.

It is imperative to strike a different balance between teaching of the past, present and the future. We must restructure the teaching of time based phenomena in schools and expand the study of history by integration of the *History of the Past* with study of the *History the Future*. The latter would help us develop speculative, pattern based thinking and inculcate a deep appreciation for pragmatic imagination, open mindedness, extrapolation and creativity skills in social and other realms. This is especially important in our era characterized by multiple, intertwined exponential growth patterns in fundamental processes shaping and potentially threatening our lives and society as we know it. In contrast, *History of the Past* needs to provide racial memory, continuity, a conceptual “home base” and “anchor” as well as shared identity. This can only be meaningful if teaching about the past is completely reality based and is not altered or colored for any ideological reason. In such an ideal context study of Holocaust era rescuers naturally leads to students internalizing and when necessary implementing in their context what is learned.

Recognition

The term “*recognition*” often comes up in discussions about leading rescuers. We consider the following as “*minimal norms of recognition*” for leading Holocaust era rescuers:

- issuance of stamps and minting of coins for each rescuer (ideally with a stub or other technique summarizing each rescuer’s contribution)
- meaningful educational content for wide-scale use in formal and informal learning – primarily in “character development” context
- appropriate, high-level state ceremonies
- high visibility standing exhibits
- naming of public places
- steps assuring that the names and stories of individual rescuers and their groups is part of the general culture
- collective soul searching about “Rescue and Obstruction”

It is expected that minimally Israel, international Jewish organizations and communities, Holocaust centers and Hungary provide at least the above level recognition. Reason for the need for recognition by Hungary is that the rescue work of most of the major Jewish rescuers culminated in saving some of the remnants of Hungary’s Jewish citizens while many other citizens of Hungary were betraying, humiliating, robbing, torturing and murdering their Jewish countrymen in the army, organized militia, in streets and other public places and in general.

To date Israel, the Jewish community world-wide and Hungary failed to provide even the barest of the above minimal steps of “recognition”.

What is the minimum that needs to be done to achieve our goal?

Internationally

- January 17 named an annual “*International Rescuer Day*”, when the deeds of major rescuers are honored¹
- Profiles of major rescuers should be part of the theme of International Rescuer Day events, especially in Israel on State Television and Radio, in schools and other places
- School networks should include in the curriculum classes on major non-Jewish and Jewish Rescuers – as part of classes on “character development”
- Annual fellowships related to the topic should be sponsored for Masters and Ph.D. theses
- There should be an annual International Student Competition for the most creative, daring, pragmatic and breakthrough seeking potential proposed project oriented solutions to dire situations requiring rescue efforts and for problems of major social and humanitarian impact. Adequate venture philanthropy funds ought to be found. Winners would get significant financial and other resources to implement the initial phase of the proposed winning project² with adult supervision and access to volunteer experts in required fields
- The fact that none of the major Holocaust centers around the world provide even minimal acceptable coverage of rescue and obstruction by Jews shows lack of intellectual integrity, over-synchronization by the centers (undesirable conformity) and a de-facto intellectual cartel. This must change as soon as possible and the centers need to be restructured, perhaps through changes in funding policy and public pressure. If needed then change needs to occur through legal process to assure there is a marketplace of ideas vs. coordinated and perhaps peer and/or funding pressure enforced politically correct “consensus view”.

In Israel

- The Israel Post Office Philatelic Service must issue commemorative stamp(s) featuring the leading rescuers (both Jewish and non-Jewish³). Similarly, the Israel Medals and Coins Company should issue commemorative medals
- Suitable public places named after the leading rescuers – especially in Jerusalem
- There should be a well publicized annual state ceremony at the Knesset and/or the President’s House - announcing recognition of each major rescuer and, on International Rescuer Day, awarding prizes to student competition winners
- Three members of one of the most important rescue groups, the *Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe* (the “Bergson Group”) were members of the first Knesset⁴. On January 17 and Holocaust Memorial Day the Knesset should appropriately remember them and other leading Jewish and non-Jewish rescuers, as well as all those who rescued Jews – perhaps as an extension of the “*Unto Every Person There Is A Name*” program

¹ Raoul Wallenberg was abducted by the Soviet Union on January 17, 1945 and disappeared in the Gulag. International Rescuer Day events were held on three continents since 2005

² youth ought to be trusted to act responsibly, keeping in mind that often after graduation from high school young people have serious responsibilities such as getting married and having children, being entrusted with their nation’s defense where they have to make difficult moral judgements in military situations and some young people are responsible for military and other gear worth tens of millions of dollars or more

³ a stamp was issued about Raul Wallenberg and another about a few Gentile rescuers. Israel’s Philatelic Service declines to issue a stamp honoring leading Jewish rescuers. Also, as a matter of policy Yad Vashem and other major Holocaust centers have not done anything in honor of leading Jewish rescuers in a way that is appropriate to their stature and deeds

⁴ Eli Jabotinsky, Hillel Kook and Samuel Merlin

An apolitical museum/center needs to be set up adequately cover rescue and its obstruction – especially by Jews. The center should be set up by a new, independent group to assure freshness and creativity of ideas and approaches and to be free to present content truthfully including major difficulties faced by major Jewish rescuers because of Jewish-Zionist leaders. Care needs to be taken that the center doesn't become politicized and that a marketplace of ideas and perspectives is encouraged.

In Hungary

Hungary was the greatest beneficiary of rescue. Hundreds of thousands of Jews were rescued there thanks to the cumulative effort of many rescuers. Also, large number of Jews in Hungary were murdered because of fellow Hungarians even before Germany entered Hungary. Germany did considerable soul searching in the post-war era. This has yet to happen in Hungary and many other European nations responsible for the murder of their Jewish citizens. The government of Hungary and Hungary's Jewish community need to find appropriate ways to express their gratitude to the rescuers.

One positive step would be to dedicate the legendary “*Glass House*” (Üvegház¹) in Budapest to the subject of rescue. It ought to become a living museum. This building was under protection of the Swiss consul Carl Lutz and thousands of Jews found refuge there. It was also headquarters of the Zionist youth rescue underground. Since the subject of rescue is often tainted by politics it is advised to structure the center in a modular fashion – with independent groups setting up different exhibits and activities relating to rescue in context of the dark forces in Hungary during its Fascist era. The center ought to find a balance between Holocaust history and current and future rescue missions and should be managed by youth, inasmuch as possible. Since so many Holocaust centers aim to provide answers this center ought to stimulate deep questions, some remaining unresolved through the questioners' life and the center ought to be called “*The House of Questions*”.

¹ Vadász utca 29, Budapest

Reasons Why Jewish Rescuers Were/Are Not “Recognized”

Totalitarian countries manipulate history. Israel is a democracy, yet the Rescue and Obstruction aspect of the Holocaust is at best distorted and worst falsified.

The facts are simple. In general there are no streets and public places named after leading Jewish rescuers, no stamps and coins were issued in their memory, Holocaust Memorial Day ceremonies don't include their mention, their deeds are not taught in schools and although three leaders of one of the major rescue groups, the Bergson Group, were members of the first Knesset the Knesset doesn't memorialize them even on Holocaust Memorial Day. Non-Jewish rescuers are only slightly better remembered. For example there is a one block street in downtown Jerusalem named after Raoul Wallenberg and a stamp was once issued for a few leading non-Jewish rescuers. Considering how many Jews the leading non-Jewish rescuers saved it is surprising that as a matter of policy Israel and the Jerusalem municipality decided not to name streets and other public places after them.

Yad Vashem has an explicit and frequently voiced policy of not recognizing Jewish rescuers.

The situation is not different in Holocaust centers around the world. In general they excise the deeds of leading Jewish rescuers from their exhibits and events.

This is in sharp contrast with the way other democratic countries handle their heroes and most people are very surprised or shocked when they first hear the above facts. The following is a brief explanation for the reasons of this distortion of Holocaust history.

After the Holocaust the Jewish world was in shock. Israel was facing enormous security and other challenges and was worried primarily about its survival. At the same time Israel was still advocating contempt for the Diaspora Jew. Those who were murdered in Europe were held in contempt for not fighting (which was in general impossible and fruitless as the Warsaw Ghetto uprising shows) and were called “*Afar Adam*” (“*The dust of mankind*”). The heroes who were elevated into public consciousness were partisans and the Yishuv parachutists, primarily Hannah Szenes. The message was clear: we need Jews who are willing to die when necessary. This view was codified into a slogan taught to Israeli children: “*Tov Lamut Ba'ad Artzenu*” (“*It is good to die for our country*”) supposedly exclaimed by Joseph Trumpeldor in 1920 after he was fatally shot in Israel's north. Youth and soldiers were routinely taken to Massada, the scene of mass suicide in the Roman times, to imprint the message that it is better to commit collective suicide than to be conquered and humiliated.

Many of the leading Jewish rescuers didn't fit this mold of a “hero”, especially since some of them lived in the free world and not under Nazi-Fascist ruled countries. A Jew who rescued thousands or tens of thousands of Jews, but did so from an office using negotiation, publicity and lobbying was simply not perceived as a hero. In fact such a person may have been viewed as anything but a hero since according to post-war perception in the Yishuv and Israel he/she should have gotten hold of a weapon and fought to the death against the Nazis and Fascists, even though that may not have saved anyone's life. It was honorable to die and to some extent dishonorable to rescue through actions which didn't involve armed uprising.

Yad Vashem and the Israeli government, which it represents, have a fundamental guiding principle which Yad Vashem and other government agencies (e.g. Philatelic Service) clearly voiced. It can be paraphrased as “*A Jew doesn't deserve any 'recognition' since it was a Jew's obligation to save other Jews*”. This has become a dogma. As all dogmas it is to some extent meaningless, somewhat hypocritical and problematic.

Yad Vashem and Israel give prominence in Holocaust history to a true hero, Hannah Szenes, who became a legendary figure in Israel. Chaviva Reich, who was in some ways similar to Hannah Szenes, parachuted into Slovakia, fought there and was later killed. She is presented as a relatively obscure minor figure. More striking is the way recognition works for Mordechai

Anielewicz, leader of the Socialist fighting group in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. The group and its leader were turned into great Holocaust era icons while another group and its leader were in effect erased from history in large part because they were not Socialists. Only lately is this gradually corrected because of the dedication of Professor Moshe Arens¹ who researched the true history of the Warsaw Ghetto and publicized the deeds of the other group.

The dogma of not recognizing Jews who rescued Jews because all they did is what was expected of them is meaningless and even hypocritical. Israel issued numerous stamps and coins for those it considers to be Zionist heroes. Herzlia is named after Theodore Herzl, Israel's international airport and a university are named after Ben-Gurion, another university is named after Chaim Weizmann, major buildings and centers are named after Yitzchak Rabin, and every major city has sections of highways, boulevards, streets named after the above and after Jabotinsky, Begin, Gold Meir, Arlozoroff, Eshkol, Dayan and others as a form of "recognition" for their important contributions.

The above gross distortions are to be expected when history is crafted by the state and is used to serve ideology.

It is not clear what forms of recognition are to be accorded to non-Jewish rescuers but not to Jews who rescued Jews. It is acceptable that Jewish rescuers receive no monetary compensation. But denying them other forms of recognition is paraphrase for excising them from history, exhibitions, ceremonies, education, and public consciousness and censoring history. Such lack of recognition for a people's heroes is unique to Israel, Holocaust institutions and to the Jewish people as a whole. After all America, countries in Europe, etc. remember their citizens who performed great deeds and also citizens who are considered to have been traitors. In the Holocaust context there are no officially recognized leading Jewish-Zionist heroes or traitors.

There are other reasons which led to refusal to recognize leading Jewish rescuers.

Many were Orthodox Jews and that didn't fit the image of the modern age Jewish hero. Rabbi Weissmandl was perhaps the greatest Jewish rescuer. He was ultra-Orthodox, not pro-Zionist and after the war condemned the war time Zionist leaders for their actions during the Holocaust. Another leading rescuer, Hillel Kook, was a Revisionist and a founder of ETZEL ("*Irgun*"). In the early phase of the state the essentially Socialist leadership and milieu in Israel considered people with such background enemies and Fascists. Regretfully the echoes of some of these stereotypes and antipathies echo even in the 21st century.

A more fundamental problem is that the work of leading Jewish rescuers was frequently obstructed by free world Jewish-Zionist leaders. "Recognition" for the rescuers would inevitably open up bitter controversies and may require "recognizing" some Jewish-Zionist leaders and their organizations as obstructors of rescue - the way President Roosevelt, Churchill, the USA State Department and Britain in general are accused.

Finally the reason for unwillingness and inability to accord suitable recognition is because of a fundamental limitation of the human spirit: lack of imagination, imprinting and being unable to reassess fossilized perceptions.

¹ Who was Israel's Minister of Defense, Foreign Minister and Ambassador to the USA

Profile of some major Jewish Rescuers¹

George Mantello



George Mantello (Mandl György), a Hungarian-Rumanian Orthodox Jew, was one of the most important Jewish rescuers. He worked for the El Salvador mission in Switzerland and pioneered issuing large numbers of El Salvador protection papers, which later inspired diplomats of different countries, including Raoul Wallenberg, to do likewise. These papers afforded the greatest protection and had considerable impact on rescue. They could be used to protect an entire family and often strangers formed “families” which were thus protected.

Mantello’s major contribution toward saving Jews was broadly publicizing the *Auschwitz Report* (also known as the *Auschwitz Protocol*) written in Slovakia by the Bratislava Working Group, after two Jews, Alfred Wetzler and Walter Rosenberg (later called Lanik and Vrba), escaped from Auschwitz on April 7, 1944². The report was first distributed to Hungarian and world Jewish-Zionist leadership in late April and was meant to alert the world to the imminent murder of Hungary’s Jews. Well before Mantello obtained the report on June 20 it was sent from Bratislava, and later from other places, to leaders of major Jewish-Zionist organizations, but unfortunately the recipients didn’t act upon it forcefully enough. With much delay, during a very critical time, Rabbi Weissmandl’s version of the Report ultimately reached George Mantello in Switzerland after it was obtained from Miklós (Moshe) Krausz in Budapest. Unlike others Mantello acted decisively and immediately publicized the report over major news networks in the free world. As a result a major grass root protest movement was launched in Switzerland. Sermons in Swiss Protestant churches focused on the monumental tragedy and a leading Protestant theologian, Pastor/Dr. Paul Vogt, quickly wrote and published a book “*Am I my Brother’s Keeper?*” which rapidly sold out. There were over 400 glaring headlines in over a hundred Swiss papers in German, French and Italian deploring the depth of depravity and barbarism to which Europe sank in its new Dark Age. This reaction was unprecedented in intensity in the free world. It aroused a level of the people’s spontaneous participation which was not matched in any way in the USA or the Jewish part of Palestine (*Yishuv*), where for various reasons apparently the tragedy in Europe was not considered to be a dominant issue.

Activism in Switzerland was carried out by the Swiss people and the Protestant church and not by the Swiss government or the banks, which have an entirely different and shameful track record to account for. The highly vocal Swiss grass root movement forced action by leaders of various countries, including President Roosevelt, Churchill, the King of Sweden and others who finally issued a grave warning to Admiral Miklós Horthy, the Fascist leader of Hungary. George Mantello’s action was the major contributor to stopping the transports from Hungary to Auschwitz, which until then took the life of twelve thousand Jews a day.

It is noteworthy that Mantello worked as a diplomat for El Salvador, since during a critical time he was, indeed, one of the main “*Salvadors*” (Saviors) for Jews, especially in Hungary.

¹ alphabetic, by first name (to avoid prioritizing)

² Later, in May, two other Jews, Arnost Rosin and Czeslaw Mordowitz, also managed to escape and were also debriefed by the Bratislava Working Group

Hillel Kook and the *Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe*



Hillel Kook, nephew of Israel's first Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Kook, was one of the most important Jewish activists during the Holocaust. He was an ETZEL (*"Irgun"*) commander, sent to the United States in his mid 20-s to help build a Jewish Army. When he learned about the true meaning of the Holocaust he and fellow ETZEL emissaries to the USA postponed their assigned mission and put Zionism on the back burner for a while. Hillel Kook got up in the morning and went to sleep at night with one thought and mission: saving the abandoned Jews.

He used the name "Peter Bergson" and formed a very talented, motivated and successful activist group in the United States: the *Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe*. The group placed one-page ads in major newspapers declaring the tragic plight of European Jews and calling for immediate rescue action. The group authored and put on a very well received pageant¹, *"We Shall Never Die"*, in major American cities. They had much support in the Congress, Senate, Treasury Department and from Eleanor Roosevelt. Hillel Kook organized the well-known *"Rabbis' March"* of 400 Orthodox rabbis to Washington to plead for rescue action. Representatives of more "modern" streams of Judaism were disinclined to participate and support in Washington came mainly from non-Jewish Senators and Congressmen.

Despite many hardships and considerable obstruction by the large, establishment Jewish-Zionist organizations and their leaders, including Dr. Stephen Wise, Dr. Nachum Goldman, Congressman Sol Blum and Sol Rosenman the Emergency Committee's persistent efforts led to President Roosevelt setting up in January 1944 the *"War Refugee Board"*, sponsor of the Raoul Wallenberg mission to Budapest. Pressure by Secretary of Treasury Henry Morgenthau was a major contributing factor to setting up the WRB. Over two hundred thousand lives, mostly Jews, were rescued in large part due to the Bergson Group's efforts.

After the War, Hillel Kook and some of his colleagues worked with equal fervor toward the establishment of the State of Israel and Hillel Kook, Sam Merlin and Eri Jabotinsky were members of the first Knesset. Hillel Kook vigorously argued for establishment of a constitutional state.

Some members of the *Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe* were: Hillel Kook (*Peter Bergson*) and Alex Hadani Rafaeli, Alex Wilf, Arie Ben-Eliezer, Arthur Szyk, Ben Hecht, Rabbi Ben Rabinowitz (Robbins), Eri Jabotinsky, Esther Untermeyer, Gabe Wechsler, Senator Guy Gillette, Harry Selden, Johan Smertenko, Konrad Bercovici, M. Berchin, Samuel Merlin, Sigrid Unset, Stella Adler, Congressman Will Rogers Jr., Yitzchak Ben-Ami. There were many other active supporters of the "Bergson Group", for example a number of the best known people on Broadway and Hollywood, due to Ben Hecht's contacts (such as Kurt Weil).

¹ Written by Ben Hecht, who wrote the script for *"Gone With the Wind"*. He wrote about meeting Hillel Kook: *"I was a script writer until one day I bumped into history."* (paraphrase). He brought into the Bergson Group many talented people from the movie and theater industry and after the war wrote *"Perfidy"*.



Rabbi Michael Ber Weissmandl, Gisi Fleischmann and the Bratislava “Working Group”

One of the towering Jewish figures during the Holocaust and a “genius of rescue” was Rabbi Michael Ber Weissmandl, who, together with Gisi Fleischmann and other colleagues in the Bratislava “*Working Group*” mounted an extraordinary level of effort to save the Jews of Slovakia, Hungary and everywhere where Jews were endangered by the Nazis, Fascists and anti-Semites. Rabbi Weissmandl’s brilliance and unconventional thinking led him to various rescue concepts, including negotiation with the Nazis in 1942 to stop the transports from Slovakia, which the Nazis agreed to for a \$50,000 ransom. The money was raised with great difficulty, bribes were also paid to various Slovak officials and the transports were stopped. Rabbi Weissmandl also initiated what became known as the “*Europa Plan*”: the Nazis’ agreement in late 1942 to stop transports from most of Europe (except Germany and Poland) in return for two million dollars and requiring only a 10% down payment, with the rest to be paid based on the Germans keeping their word. Regrettably the Working Group was unable to raise the down payment despite many desperate pleas to Jewish-Zionist leaders.

Rabbi Weissmandl was a major participant in drafting, translation and wide-scale dissemination of the “*Auschwitz Report*”, based on de-briefing two Jews, Wetzler and Rosenberg (later called Lanik and Vrba) who escaped from Auschwitz in Spring 1944. Although the report was widely disseminated to major Jewish-Zionist organizations only George Mantello chose to act on it. His efforts had considerable impact on stopping the transports from Hungary. Rabbi Weissmandl also advocated bombing the rail lines to Auschwitz, and set up an extensive intelligence network in the Slovak railroad network and elsewhere in Slovakia.

Rabbi Weissmandl was born in Debrecen, Hungary and was a brilliant Talmudic scholar. In his spare time he founded the field of research now known as “*Torah Codes*”. He was mostly in the Nitra Yeshiva and Bratislava during the Shoah. His family was murdered in Auschwitz and after the war he was a broken man. He re-established the Nitra Yeshiva in Mount Kisco, NY before he died of a broken heart.

Gisi Fleischmann was a highly respected and brave leader of Slovak Jewry and was Rabbi Weissmandl’s partner leading the Working Group. Although she had an opportunity to escape to safety she decided to stay with her “children”: Slovakia’s Jews. To save Jews she made the best possible use of her excellent connections with Jewish-Zionist organizations and her personality assured that the Working Group operated in harmony despite the diversity of its members.

Working Group members were *Rabbi Michael Ber Weissmandl* and *Gisi Fleischmann*, Andre Steiner, Rabbi Ármin Frieder, Oscar Neumann, Tibor Kovács and Willy Furst. Main collaborators were Emanuel Frieder, Julius Natali (Gentile), Juraj Révész and Shlomo Stern.

Recha Sternbuch (on the right)



Recha Sternbuch was the wife of Yitzchak Sternbuch, a businessman in Montreux, Switzerland (at left of photo). Although she was an Orthodox woman, had children and was pregnant she spent nights in the forest by the Austrian border to smuggle refugees while trying to evade Swiss border guards who had orders to turn back anyone over sixteen and under sixty. She worked with a Swiss police captain, Paul Grueninger, who in 1938 helped her smuggle over 800 refugees into Switzerland. A leader who had all the reasons to help instead informed on them. Recha Sternbuch was arrested, was jailed for two weeks and lost her child. Mr. Grueninger lost his job and pension for his help to Jews and was later helped by the Sternbuchs.

After her release from prison Recha Sternbuch continued her activism largely alone and arranged rescue of over 2,000 Jews. At great risk she smuggled forged Swiss visas to many Jews across the German and Austrian borders. Later she obtained Chinese entry visas which enabled their holders to traverse Switzerland and Italy to ports from where they could be smuggled into Palestine. She had access to the Polish diplomatic pouch and was able to send coded cables to her contacts in *Va'ad Hatzalah* (Rescue Committee) in the USA and Turkey. One important use of this channel was the Sternbuchs alerting the New York *Va'ad Hatzalah* on September 2, 1942 to the horrors of the Holocaust. This cable was the first to alert American Jewry to the reality of the Holocaust and led to a meeting of 34 Jewish organizations. The Polish diplomatic pouch was also used to send secret messages, money to Jews in Nazi occupied Europe and as bribes for rescue. Recha Sternbuch also developed good connections with the Papal Nuncio to Switzerland, Monsignor Phillippe Bernadini, dean of the Swiss diplomatic community. He gave her access to Vatican couriers for sending money and messages to Jewish and resistance organizations in Nazi occupied Europe. Recha Sternbuch was among the first to obtain South American identity papers and distribute them to Jews whose life was endangered by the Nazis.

In September 1944 she made contact with Dr. Jean Marie Musy, a Fascist anti-Semite, former Swiss president and a friend of Himmler. At Recha Sternbuch's request Musy negotiated with Himmler, who was willing to release all Jews then in concentration camps for ransom of one million dollars. On February 7, 1945 Musy delivered the first 1,210 inmates from Theresienstadt and more were promised at two week intervals. According to historians, the rescue was obstructed by those in Switzerland who should have helped most.

The Sternbuchs kept negotiating through Musy to the end of the war. There was an agreement to turn over four concentration camps essentially intact to the Allies in return for a USA guarantee to try the camp guards in court as opposed to shooting them on the spot. This saved the lives of large numbers of camp inmates. The Sternbuchs also negotiated release of thousands of women from the Ravensbrück camp and release of 15,000 Jews held in Austria.

(Section is based on Dr. David Kranzler's article "*Three who tried to stop the Holocaust*")

Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld



One of the most remarkable Jewish rescuers was Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld who personally rescued thousands of Jews. He was the rabbi of a small Orthodox congregation in London and was pioneer of the Orthodox day school movement in London. He was a very charismatic, dedicated, innovative and dynamic young man, who studied before the war with Rabbi Weissmandl at the Nitra Yeshiva in Slovakia. Rabbi Schonfeld was inspired by his teacher which explains, in part, some of his daring and innovative rescue initiatives in England. His rescue activities were under auspices of the *Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council*, which he created with approval of Chief Rabbi Joseph P. Hertz, his future father-in-law. He saved large numbers of Jews with South American protection papers. He single-handedly brought over to England several thousand youngsters, rabbis, teachers, ritual slaughterers and other religious functionaries. Rabbi Schonfeld provided his "charges" not only with safety, but also with kosher homes, Jewish education and jobs. He also initiated two very important rescue initiatives. In late summer 1942 he convinced the Colonial Office to allow Jews to find safe heaven in Mauritius. In December 1942 he discussed his ideas about rescue with a number of highly positioned church men and members of Parliament, and organized Parliament-wide support for a motion which asked the government to make a declaration along the following lines:

"That in view of the massacres and starvation of Jews and others in enemy and enemy-occupied countries, this House asks H. M. Government, following the United Nations Declaration read to both Houses of Parliament on 17th, December, 1942, and in consultation with the Dominion Governments and the Government of India, to declare its readiness to find temporary refuge in its own territories or in territories under its control for endangered persons who are able to leave those countries; to appeal to the Governments of countries bordering on enemy and enemy-occupied countries to allow temporary asylum and transit facilities for such persons; to offer to those Governments, so far as practicable, such help as may be needed to facilitate their co-operation; and to invite the other Allied Governments to consider similar action."

Within ten days, two Archbishops, eight Peers, four Bishops, the Episcopate of England and Wales and 48 members of all parties signed the notice of meeting to consider the Motion. Eventually the number of members of Parliament in support of the motion rose to 177.

The above two 1942 initiatives could possibly have saved large numbers of Jews, but regrettably obstruction destroyed these important opportunities. The main reason for obstruction was tragic inability to appropriately prioritize the immediate cause of rescue and important but longer-term initiatives. (The Parliamentary motion omitted Palestine as a possible temporary haven and was therefore opposed by a vocal Zionist faction in London.)

Rabbi Schonfeld considered as one his failures his unsuccessful request to the British government to heed Rabbi Weissmandl's plea to bomb Auschwitz.

After the war he rushed to the liberated continent to serve the spiritual and physical needs of survivors.

(The above is based on Prof. David Kranzler's "*Holocaust Hero: Solomon Schonfeld*")

Zionist Youth Underground in Budapest

The above individuals and groups had strategic impact on saving Jews.

In addition there were important rescue groups with focus on rescue at a regional scope. Perhaps the Budapest Zionist youth rescue underground is the best example of this.

Until early 1944 the majority of Hungary's Jews were confident that "it couldn't happen here". Despite imminent collapse of Nazi Germany the Germans and Hungarian Fascists and anti-Semites started the transport and mass murder of Hungary's Jews. Almost half a million Jews were transported from Hungary in May and June 1944. This was made possible by the enthusiastic collaboration of Hungarian Fascists and anti-Semites. It is misleading to call only the Germans "Hitler's willing executioners"¹.

Hungary's organized Jewry was divided and at best paralyzed. There was an exceptional and effective Zionist youth rescue underground in Budapest during 1944/45. Their illegal activities included forging protection papers, setting up hiding places, taking care of children in protected houses, obtaining food for children and for many other Jews in the ghetto on a regular basis, organizing escape from Hungary, procuring weapons, and maintaining working relations with the underground, resistance and other anti-Nazi and anti-Fascist groups.

There were hundreds of young activists in various collaborating groups closely paralleling political movements in Palestine. Many of the activists were refugees from Poland and Slovakia.

Rescue in the Camps

Earlier it was mentioned that twice Jews escaped from Auschwitz to warn of imminent danger to the Jews of Hungary. The resulting *Auschwitz Report* was an important tool for rescue.

Some Jews were determined to rescue others even under seemingly impossible circumstances: in the camps. One example is Dr. Gisella Perl from Romania who in Auschwitz saved about 1,000 pregnant women by secretly performing abortions, knowing that the Nazis routinely murdered pregnant woman and infants. A movie called "*Out of the Ashes*" was made about her based on her autobiography "*I was a Doctor in Auschwitz*".

Joseph Bau and Rifka (Rebecca) Tannenbaum, from Cracow, secretly married in the Plaszow concentration camp². They managed to save Jews in Cracow and even in Plaszow run by the vicious Nazi commander Amon Göth. Rifka also managed to rescue Jews in Auschwitz. She also saved Joseph's life by exchanging his name for hers on Schindler's list and to save him she went to Auschwitz. Joseph saved lives by forging papers. He also saved lives by a subtler technique: making people laugh even in the camps. Sometimes laughter, meaning and hope can provide energy to continue living under impossible circumstances. In the camp Joseph created art depicting life there. Much later he was able to recover the drawings, some shown on

www.josephbau.com

After immigrating to Israel, Joseph Bau became the pioneer of Israel's early cinema and graphic art industry and was the Israeli secret service's leading graphic artist.

Other Jewish Rescuers

There were many other Jewish rescuers – with different types of impact and rescuing Jews under differing circumstances. Despite monumental human and fiscal resources poured into Holocaust research and Holocaust studies these people didn't receive appropriate level recognition and their acts are not a key part of the formal Holocaust legacy. This is an intolerable situation and must change.

¹ or regard only the Communists is Russia as "Stalin's willing executioners" ...

² shown in "*Schindler's List*"

Raoul Wallenberg and some other major non-Jewish Rescuers



Raoul Wallenberg is the best known leading non-Jewish rescuer during the Shoah. He is a legend because of his bravado and super-human deeds and having been abducted by the Russians, the Nazi Germany's one time ally, from Hungary on January 17, 1945 – a day before the Pest side of Budapest was “liberated” by the allies¹. Wallenberg saved tens of thousands to a hundred thousand Jews in Hungary. Actions by him and diplomatic colleagues like Carl Lutz put “rescue in the air” in Nazi and Fascist infested Budapest. Because of him and his colleagues others too were inspired to innovate, conspire and take major risks to save Jews. The magnitude of rescue in Budapest, achieved without weapons, was unique. In addition, the impact of rescue efforts of the leading Jewish rescuers (e.g. Bratislava Working Group, Bergson Group and George Mantello) was the greatest in Budapest. Wallenberg became the symbol of Holocaust era rescuers and tragically also the symbol of victims of the International Communist Gulag: the “*Red Auschwitz*”.

Many Jews were rescued from the Nazis, Fascists and anti-Semites all over Europe and probably many more could and should have been saved – hundreds of thousands and perhaps millions more. It is noteworthy that there was probably no such activism and success in the massive auto-genocide, or “democide”, perpetrated world-wide by Communist regimes – estimated to have killed about 94 million people² aside from monumental war related casualties³.

Some of the leading non-Jewish rescuers were as follows (alphabetic by first name):

Angelo Rotta (Monsignor) - Papal Nuncio in Budapest

Aristides de Sousa Mendes - Portuguese diplomat who saved tens of thousands

Carl Lutz - Swiss diplomat in Budapest

Feng-Shan Ho - Chinese consul in Vienna

Giorgio “Jorje” Perlasca - “Acting Charge d’Affaires” of the Spanish Legation in Budapest

Per Anger - Swedish diplomat in Budapest

Raoul Wallenberg – Swedish diplomat in Budapest

Sempo “Chiune” Sugihara - Japanese consul in Lithuania

¹ Hungary and other “liberated” countries were brutally colonized by the Russians, whose “Red Army” robbed and mass raped its way to Berlin

² Per “*The Black Book of Communism*” by Harvard Press. These grim estimates are considered too low by some and too high by others. In “*Gulag Archipelago*” Solzhenitsyn refers to over 60 million victims in the USSR. R.T. Rommel gives minimal and maximal estimates in the USSR of 28 million and 127 million, and 62 million as most probable. China is estimated to have murdered even more people than the Soviet Union – thus the “ranking order” of the 20th century’s major murders is probably Mao Tze Tung first, then Stalin and then Hitler.

³ A “low-estimate” of Soviet military and civilian casualties is 20-30 million, which is over 40% of the estimated 50 million casualties of World War II. Some estimates of Soviet loss of life are much higher. Such high loss of life is indicative of major systemic flaws of the Soviet Union.

Eric Saul's "Visas for Life" traveling exhibit presents the profile of many of the leading diplomatic rescuers.

Some diplomats were severely punished by their country after the war for their dedication to saving Jews – as opposed to being mere cold hearted, clerical "diplomats". Switzerland was one such country.

The fascinating story of Giorgio Perlasca is an indicator of the unusual nature of rescue during the Holocaust – especially in Budapest. Perlasca was an Italian sympathizer of Franco and volunteered to fight for Fascist Spain. By the time Giorgio became disillusioned and returned to Italy he was also "Spanish" and called "Jorje". He ended up in Budapest on business. When he realized the nature of the Holocaust he became a rescuer of Jews. Perlasca "appointed himself" Spain's official representative when the Spanish ambassador hastily left Budapest and thus adventurer Giorgio Perlasca, "Spanish ambassador", became a rescuer of the Jews of Budapest¹.

The Swiss People's Role in Rescue

Despite the Swiss government's and banks'² contemptible war time record, many among the Swiss people had a significant impact on rescue starting in mid-1944. The extraordinary Swiss Press and Church campaigns and grass root demonstrations were important primary factors in the halting of the trains from Hungary to Auschwitz. These campaigns involved large numbers of Swiss newspapers (about 400 articles and glaring headlines in over 100 papers) and churches throughout Switzerland protested against the Holocaust. This sustained protest evoked worldwide condemnation by the Allied and neutral leaders (Roosevelt, Churchill, Pope, the King of Sweden, etc.) The public outcry and pressure on Admiral Horthy, Regent of Hungary, forced him to stop the trains to Auschwitz, send Eichmann back to Germany and reassert his power.

Most amazing was the fact the Swiss people's protest against their government and the International Red Cross (IRC) for their indifference to the Jews' tragedy. Protests were in newspapers and churches, but above all in unprecedented street demonstrations in the big cities by thousands of Swiss university students, women's leagues and labor unions. The Swiss people forced their government and the IRC to provide protection of the Jews in Budapest holding foreign papers (Certificates, Latin American and other protective papers). The Swiss grass roots movement was also a critical factor in creating conditions in Budapest making the Raoul Wallenberg mission feasible and neutral diplomats protecting remnants of Budapest Jewry.

It is to be noted that the Swiss people's awakening was ignited by Hungarian-Romanian born Orthodox Jew George Mantello (Mandl György) who worked at the El Salvador mission in Switzerland and whose El Salvadorian protection papers saved many lives.

The Swiss people's grass roots movement deserves serious attention especially because of the well deserved very negative press the Swiss government and banks has been getting in recent years for their war time and post-war conduct³. That is likely to create a strong and unjustified bias against any form of recognition for many among the Swiss people, newspapers and church whose aggregate behavior in mid-1944 was distinct from that of their government.



¹ There is a beautiful ballad about Perlasca, written and sung by Sandy Cash living in Beit Shemesh, Israel. Links to the song and lyrics can be found on www.geocities.com/eProceeding/liberation

² Regretfully Israel's banks and land administration authorities seem to be as guilty as the Swiss, but are far less willing to atone for misappropriations

³ according to a Knesset committee some of the Israeli banks seem to have a worse track record than the Swiss banks, apparently there is refusal by Israeli public organizations to compensate Holocaust victims' descendents for real estate holdings and the government of Israel apparently cheated Holocaust survivors by keeping some restitution funds

The above is clarified and detailed by Dr. David Kranzler's scholarly work "*The man who stopped the trains to Auschwitz*" (especially chapters 7-9). The book was awarded the Histadrut Prize for the best manuscript on the Holocaust. Dr. Kranzler, who wrote 10 books on rescue, primarily rescue by Jews, has researched the subject for 30 years and has interviewed over 1,000 people - including leading Jewish rescuers. The Swiss people's activism is substantiated by an earlier pioneering work: Jenő Lévai, "*Zsidósors Európában*" ("*Jewish Fate in Europe*") published in Hungarian in 1948.

Networks

There were numerous relationships between various major rescue related events. The network diagram on a subsequent page indicates major known "events" which seem to be pre-requisites or building blocks for the Wallenberg mission to Budapest¹. It is meant to be a high-level map showing important linkages between various individuals, groups and events and culminating in the Wallenberg mission to Budapest. Were the objective the creation of a scholarly work, many details could and should be added.

Others may well be interested to develop other network diagrams and visual aids to illuminate often varied relationships between rescuers and rescue groups. Network and similar diagrams would be useful to succinctly explain major events related to specific rescue groups - e.g. the "*Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe*" (the "Bergson Group"), the Bratislava "*Working Group*", Recha Sternbuch's and Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld's rescue activities, distribution dynamics of the Bratislava Working Group's *Auschwitz Report*, etc.

One important element of such diagrams would be appropriate visual notation for "obstruction" of rescue by individuals and groups and, of course, also various form of assistance or "catalytic activity" assisting and intensifying rescue.

Another concern is somehow assigning metrics to the relative significance of various "nodes" on the network diagram. This is very subjective and there was no attempt to "prioritize" in the diagram.

¹ Initial public discussion of the information in the diagram took place in Budapest on January 17, 2005 with Raoul Wallenberg's niece, Louise von Dardel, explaining the various relationships. She repeated the explanation on February 1, 2005 in Israel's Knesset and broke a 60 year old taboo – preventing mention of Jewish rescuers in such forums. Dr. Robert Rozett of Yad Vashem also verbally sketched the above network relationship in the Knesset – hopefully a sign that major Holocaust centers will start "recognizing" Jewish rescuers and related circumstances

Some References

Abraham Fuchs, *The Unheeded Cry* (also in Hebrew as *Karati ve ein oneh*)

Ben Hecht, *Perfidy* (also in Hebrew - as *Kachas*)

Benedek István Gábor and Vámos György, *Tépd le a sárga csillagot* (*Tear off the yellow star*), in Hungarian, about the young Jewish rescue underground in Budapest

David Kranzler, *Thy Brother's Blood*

David Kranzler, *The Man who Stopped the Trains to Auschwitz: George Mantello, El Salvador's and Switzerland's finest hour*

David Kranzler, *Holocaust Hero: Solomon Shonfeld - The Untold Story of an Extraordinary British Rabbi who Rescued 4000 during the Holocaust*

Jenő Lévai, *Zsidósors Európában* (*Jewish Fate in Europe*) published in 1948 in Hungary about George Mantello and the major Swiss grass roots protests against the Holocaust

Larry Jarvik, *Who Shall Live and Who Shall Die*, video and extensive film interview with Hillel Kook in New York (1978)

Louis Rapoport, *Shake Heaven and Earth: Peter Bergson and the Struggle to Rescue the Jews of Europe*

Moriah Films, *Unlikely Heroes*, documentary, included chapter on Recha Sternbuch

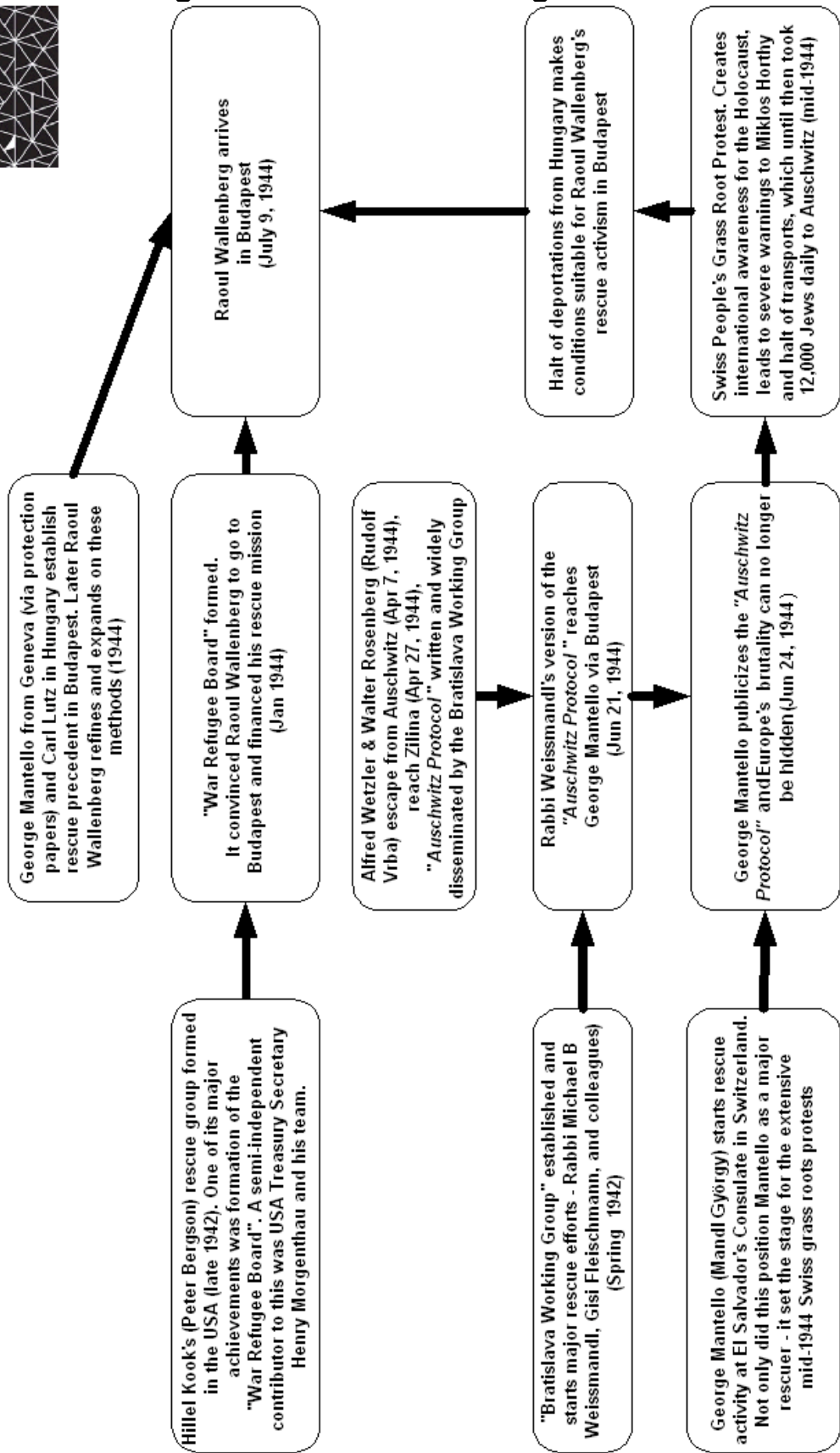
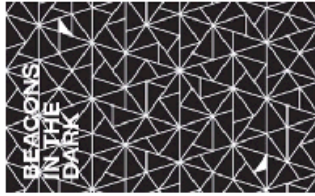
Petr Bok and Martin Smok, *Among Blind Fools*, three hour video documentary about Rabbi Michael Ber Weissmandl and the Bratislava Working Group

Rabbi Michael Ber Weissmandl, *Min HaMetzar* (*From the Straights*), in Hebrew

David Wyman and Rafael Medoff, *A Race Against Death - Peter Bergson, America and the Holocaust*

Approximate sequence of major events leading to the Raoul Wallenberg Mission to Budapest

Based on János Lévai "Zsidósors Európában" ("Jewish Fate in Europe", in Hungarian, 1948), subsequent extensive historical research in Dr. David Kranzler's books, primarily "The Man Who Stopped the Trains to Auschwitz", and Prof. David Wymann and Dr. Rafael Medoff "A Race Against Death - Peter Bergson, America and the Holocaust"



Significant Dates Related to Rescue by Jews

This is a very early list and needs to be considerably expanded.

Spring 1942 - Bratislava Working Group established with Rabbi Michael Ber Weissmandl and Gisi Fleischmann as leaders

Spring 1942 – Rabbi Weissmandl initiates negotiations with the Germans and after payment of \$50,000 ransom and bribes the transports from Slovakia stop for two years

May 21, 1942 – Bund¹ Report about murder of 700,000 Jews transmitted to London and broadcast on BBC on June 2, 1942

July 27, 1942 – Ignacy Schwartzbart, Jewish member of Polish government in exile in London, sent cable to the World Jewish Congress in New York describing the mass murder of Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto by the Germans

Late Summer 1942 – Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld convinced the Colonial Office to allow Jews to find safe haven in Mauritius

August 1942 – Gerhart Riegner cable to Rabi Stephen Wise in the USA and Sidney Silverman in London (both with the World Jewish Congress) describing the Germans' plan for the "*Final Solution*" (Silverman was also a Member of the Parliament)

September 2, 1942 – Recha and Yitzchak Sternbuch send cable describing the "*Final Solution*" to the Va'ad Hatzalah in New York

Fall 1942 – Rabbi Weissmandl initiates negotiations with the Germans who agree to stop transports from most countries for \$2 million and required a 10% down payment. Unfortunately the offer was not taken seriously by those who were in a position to help

Late 1942 – After learning about the atrocities in Europe ETZEL leader Hillel Kook and his team of emissaries (*shlichim*) to the USA place Zionist aims on the back burner, dedicate themselves to rescue of their brethren and form the *Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe* ("*Bergson Group*")

Late 1942 - Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld convinces many British Church leaders and Parliamentarians to pass a motion in Parliament allowing Jews who can escape from the Nazis and Fascists to find temporary haven in parts of the British Empire except Palestine

March 9, 1943 – first performance of Ben Hecht's "*We Shall Never Die*" pageant in New York's Madison Square Garden – organized by the Bergson Group and seen by 40,000. After another New York performance it played in Washington (DC), Philadelphia, Boston and Los Angeles. Performances planned for other cities were unfortunately obstructed

October 6, 1943 – Rabbis' March to Washington

January 1944 - President Roosevelt is forced by the Bergson Group, Secretary of Treasury Henry Morgenthau and his team and Orthodox rabbis to establish the War Refugee Board, which is said to have contributed significantly to rescue of over 200,000 Jews and many others

April 7, 1944 - Wetzler (Lanik) and Rosenberg (Vrba) escape from Auschwitz

Late April 1944 - "*Auschwitz Report*" initial distribution. Dr. Rezső Kasztner visits Bratislava, requests and obtains copy also in Hungarian

May 1944 - Arnost Rosin and Czeslaw Mordowitz also escape from Auschwitz and are debriefed by the Bratislava Working Group

May 15, 1944 - Daily deportations of 12,000 Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz began

¹ Jewish Socialist group in Poland

June 20, 1944 - George Mantello obtains copy of Auschwitz Report from Rumanian diplomat Florian Manoliu, who obtained it from Miklós (Moshe) Krausz in Budapest. Mantello immediately summarized and publicized the report (June 24)

June 1944 - Start of Swiss press campaign, church sermons and grass roots protests against Europe's barbarism

July 7, 1944 - Hungary's Regent Miklós Horthy stops the transports from Hungary after receiving severe threats from free world leaders of retribution after allied victory

July 9, 1944 - Raoul Wallenberg arrives in Budapest and is said to have rescued tens of thousands to a hundred thousand Jews

September 1944 – Recha Sternbuch negotiates with Himmler via Swiss Fascist leader Dr. Jean Marie Musy to prevent immediate murder of Jews in concentration camps by the retreating Germans

January 17, 1945 - Raoul Wallenberg is abducted by the Russians and disappears in the Gulag

Much of the above is based on works and discussions with historian Professor David Kranzler

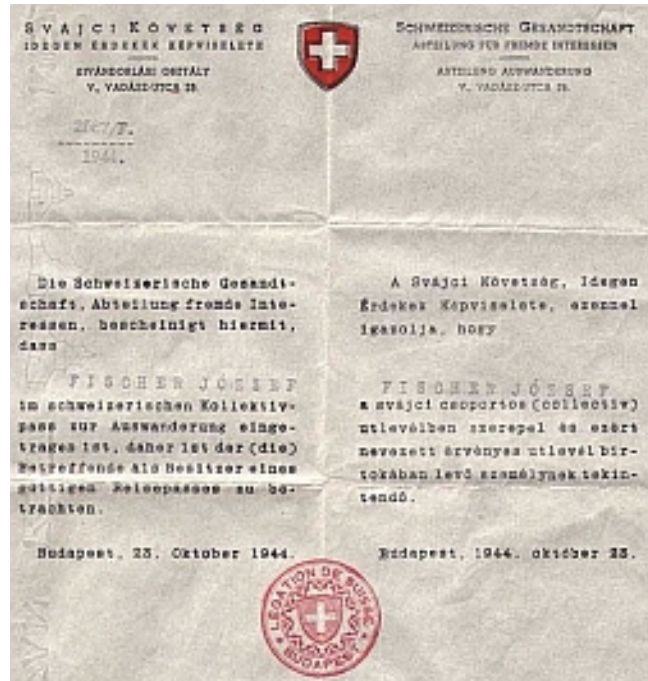
Protection Papers

Large number of lives was saved by diplomats who issued various forms of protection papers, some of which were known as a “*Shutzpass*”. Such papers often placed an individual or a family under protection of nations like El Salvador and other Central and South American countries, Sweden, Switzerland, Portugal and China. After the war diplomats were often severely punished by their government for issuing such papers. A traveling exhibit, “*Visas for Life*”, documents this important aspect of history.

In Budapest the Zionist Youth Rescue Underground forged important papers and thereby saved many lives.



Issued by El Salvador



Issued by Switzerland

Jewish Sources on Activism, Individualism and Time

Jewish law and tradition has considerable material requiring both activism and individualism and the notion of time. This brief section can probably be expanded into multiple books by scholars. The following quotes are based on secondary sources.

Activism

Jewish laws and traditions don't allow standing idly by when there are grave circumstances. Perhaps it is because of this that Jews are so often the world's conscience and stand at the forefront of social protest.

“Love that does not include an element of criticism is not really love.” (Midrash Beresit Rabbah)

Jews are responsible for one another – *“arevim ze le ze”*.

For the sake of justice and to save lives Jews are required to struggle even with God as did Abraham, who is recorded as one of the early rescuers followed by Moses and later Queen Esther and Mordechai. In contrast to Abraham, Noah was reprimanded by God for not being an activist and failing to intercede to save the world from the flood almost extinguishing all life..

“If a man of learning participates in public affairs and serves as judge or arbiter, he gives stability to the land. But if he sits in his home and says to himself, ‘What have the affairs of society to do with me?... Why should I trouble myself with the people’s voice of protest? Let my soul dwell in peace!’ If he does this, he overthrows the world.” (Tanchuma to Mishpachim)

“Whoever is able to protest against the transgressions of his own family and does not do so is liable for the transgressions of his family. Whoever is able to protest against the transgressions of the people of his community and does not do so is liable for the transgressions of his community. Whoever is able to protest against the transgressions of the entire world and does not do so is liable for the transgressions of the entire world.” (Talmud Bavli)

It is said that *“A man stood at the gates of Sodom crying out against the injustice and evil in that city. Someone passed by and said to him, ‘For years you have been urging the people to repent, and yet no one has changed. Why do you continue?’ He responded: ‘When I first came I protested because I hoped to change the people of Sodom. Now I continue to cry out, because if I don’t they will have changed me.”*

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik writes: *“Man is obliged to engage in creation and renewal of the cosmos.”* and *“This wondrous spectacle of the creation of worlds is the Jewish people’s eschatological vision, the realization of all its hopes.”*

A well known dictum is that *“It is not your obligation to complete the task but neither are you free to desist from it.”*

The Talmud relates a story of how righteous individuals were punished along with the wicked because *“they had the power to protest but they did not.”*

The Kozker Rebbe said: *“Do not be satisfied with the speech of your lips and the thought in your heart, all the promises and good sayings in your mouth, and all the good thoughts in your heart; rather you must arise and do!”*

“If I am not for myself, Who will be? If I am only for myself, What am I? And if not now, When?” (Hillel)

“Ba makom she ein ish tihje ish” – where there is no man be a man

Individualism

The leading Jewish and non-Jewish rescuers were distinguished not only by their achievements but by their individualism and the extraordinary scope of their aspirations and activism. Judaism has much to say on this as well.

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik:

“The peak of religious ethical perfection to which Judaism aspires is man as creator.”

“Halakhic man is the man who longs to create, to bring into being something new, something original.”

The Kotzker Rebbe:

Man must “guard himself and his uniqueness, and not imitate his fellow ... for initially man was created in his own image, and only afterwards in the image of God.”

“Just as it is the way of an ape to imitate humans, so too, a person, when he has become old, imitates himself and does as was his manner previously.”

“A person must renew himself, and his world with him, each and every day. But one who does not do so, and rather performs his deeds as a mechanical function, does nothing other than the actions of a monkey. Just as this monkey has no personality of his own, but rather copies his own actions and his fellow, so too this person.”

“Just as it is the way of an ape to imitate humans, so too, a person, when he has become old, imitates himself and does as was his manner previously.”

Rabbi/Dr. Norman Lamm:

“Group action--yes; group thinking no.”

“Mutual commitment to ideals--yes; the stifling of all dissenting notions--no.”

Past and Future

In “*The Unique Experience of Judaism*” Rabbi Soloveitchik writes about Judaism’s linkage between the past and the future:

“The time awareness of youth is future oriented while the time awareness of the old centers on the past. Existentially, to be young means to be committed to the future, while to be old means to contemplate what once was but is no longer. The young man is essentially a searcher, a questioner, and a believer, while the old man is primarily a reviewer, a mediator, and a skeptic. Judaism attempts to combine the experience of youth and age and requires of the Jew that he be simultaneously, and perhaps paradoxically, both young and old. Like a tree whose roots absorb their nourishment from the soil and whose foliage is caressed by sunlight flowing from a distant and unknown future, the Jew must be deeply rooted in the past and inspired by a vision of the future.

Just as the past can be experienced in the present, so can the future. Experiential anticipation means that the Jew anticipates an event not just because it is bound to occur -- that would only be intellectual anticipation; it means that the Jew becomes excited and rejoices and sings and dances as if an event which will first transpire on some unknown date in the future had already taken place. The future is experienced as reality and is integrated into the frame of reference of reality even before it occurs.”

One reason why it is important to remember the past in the context of rescue and obstruction by Jews is to learn important lessons to be able to apply what was learned from the past to the future. The leading Jewish rescuers were hoping that after the Holocaust there would be collective soul searching (*chesbon nefesh*) in order to at least learn from that great tragedy.

About Us

During the darkest days of the Holocaust there were Jews and Gentiles from various countries who refused to put aside the torch of humanity and liberty, even as its light seemed all but extinguished. They were a remarkable group of rugged individuals, people of enormous talent, moral sense, dedication, courage and ability to innovate. They succeeded in snatching hundreds of thousand Jews from the Nazis', Fascists' and anti-Semites' killing grounds in the face of intensive bureaucratic obstruction and indifference. History has largely failed to mark their deeds, thus; regrettably, important lessons from the tragedy of the Holocaust were not learned. Holocaust centers world wide have yet to provide appropriate recognition to major Jewish rescuers. Israel does not name public places after them, issues no stamps and coins in their honor and most schools don't teach about them.

The Jerusalem Working Group is determined to rectify this and is dedicated to realizing the honor and recognition that has so long been denied.

The JWG is an organization of academics, historians, Holocaust survivors, concerned people in Israel and internationally, and families of Jews who, defying all risks, played a seminal role in the rescue of large numbers of Jews from the murderers. JWG has no political affiliation and its members are volunteers from various walks of life, dedicated to the principle that justice delayed will no longer remain justice undone and that the brilliant beacons in the dark period of the Holocaust will be suitably recognized.

Contact

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Be done at all cost. We shall be the first to witness with pity alone...
John G. Sweeney
John G. Sweeney

"We shall no longer witness with pity alone..."

A Proclamation

ON THE MORAL RIGHTS OF THE STATELESS AND PALESTINIAN JEWS

WE, the people of America, a nation proudly fighting to save the world from the scourge of Nazism, and to restore to the globe the rights of freedom and justice to all its peoples, do hereby proclaim our solidarity with the Jewish people of Palestine, who are being persecuted and oppressed by the Nazis and their henchmen. We are convinced that the Jewish people of Palestine have a right to a national home of their own, and that the United States should support their struggle for freedom and justice. We are convinced that the Jewish people of Palestine have a right to a national home of their own, and that the United States should support their struggle for freedom and justice. We are convinced that the Jewish people of Palestine have a right to a national home of their own, and that the United States should support their struggle for freedom and justice.

Thousands of thousands of Jews have perished in Europe since the war which broke in 1939. The Jews were not only the first victims of Hitler's aggression, but also the most numerous. The Jews have been reduced to a state of complete helplessness, and are being persecuted and oppressed by the Nazis and their henchmen. The Jews have been reduced to a state of complete helplessness, and are being persecuted and oppressed by the Nazis and their henchmen. The Jews have been reduced to a state of complete helplessness, and are being persecuted and oppressed by the Nazis and their henchmen.

FOR SALE to Humanity
70,000 Jews
Guaranteed Human Beings at \$50 a Piece

Roumania is tired of killing Jews. It has killed one hundred thousand of them in two years. Roumania will now give Jews away practically for nothing.

SEVENTY THOUSAND JEWS ARE WAITING DEATH IN ROUMANIAN CONCENTRATION CAMPS;

Roumania Will Give These 70,000 Jews to the Four Freedoms for 20,000 Leds (\$50) a Piece. This Sale Covers All Transportation Expenses.



ROUMANIA OFFERS TO BELIEVE THESE 70,000 ALIVE TO PALESTINE

Attention Four Freedoms!!!
 NO JEWS WERE FOUND AMONG THE 3000 JEWS WHO CAME TO PALESTINE SINCE HITLER'S ORDER TO STOP ALL JEWISH IMMIGRATION INTO PALESTINE. THESE JEWS ARE THE ONLY JEWS YOU CAN BUY NOW!

Attention Humanity!!!
 PALESTINE'S ARABIS WILL NOT BE ASSURED BY THE ARRIVAL OF 3000 JEWS AND ARABIS WHO WOULD LIVE IN PALESTINE WITH THE ARAB LEADERS WHO ARE IN BLOOD AND THEIR LIES IN PALESTINE.

Attention America!!!
 THE GREAT ROUMANIAN BARGAIN IS FOR THIS MONTH ONLY!
 IT IS AN UNPRECEDENTED OFFER!
 SEVENTY THOUSAND SOULS AT \$50 A PIECE!

The Doors of Roumania Are Open! Act Now!

The two million Jews of Roumania have been the principal source of the immigration to the United States since the war. The Jews have been the principal source of the immigration to the United States since the war. The Jews have been the principal source of the immigration to the United States since the war. The Jews have been the principal source of the immigration to the United States since the war.

Committee for a Jewish Army of Resistance and Political Jews
 1000 Broadway, New York, N.Y.
 1000 Broadway, New York, N.Y.

Help from the New World

Image Foreground: Washington, DC

Hillel Kook was a young emissary sent to America from the Yishuv. After learning about the tragedy in Europe he set up an important rescue group: “*The Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe*”. He made America aware of the Holocaust through creative, high impact Public Relations campaigns. He led a spectacular march of 400 Orthodox rabbis to the White House on October 6, 1943 calling for immediate rescue action. His continuous and inspired lobbying broke through apathy and forced America to finally face the tragedy of European Jewry. Hillel Kook’s group had dedicated supporters in Congress and the Senate. Persistent pressure resulted in President Roosevelt’s creation of the War Refugee Board in January 1944, which is estimated to have helped rescue over 200,000 Jews, in part through the Wallenberg mission.

Image Background: Budapest during Winter 1944

Under the pro-Nazi Szálasi regime the remnants of Hungarian Jewry struggled to survive Eichmann’s efforts to complete the Final Solution in Hungary. Despite great personal danger Raoul Wallenberg (Swedish diplomat, right) and Carl Lutz (Swiss Consul, left), other diplomats, the Zionist youth rescue underground and some brave Hungarians valiantly fought to protect the remnants of Hungary’s Jewry. Recha Sternbuch (middle), Swiss representative of the New York-based Orthodox Rabbis’ Rescue Committee, distributed protective papers, smuggled Jews to safety across the Austrian-Swiss border and conducted late-1944 ransom negotiations with Himmler to save the lives of concentration camp inmates as Germany retreated.

Switzerland Awakens

Image Background: Bratislava (in Slovakia)

Daily deportations of 12,000 Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz began on May 15, 1944. In late April 1944 a desperate Rabbi Michael Ber Weissmandl of the Slovak Jewish underground “Working Group” co-headed by Gisi Fleischmann sent copies of the “*Auschwitz Report*” to the major Jewish organizations in the free world. It was based on testimony of two escapees from Auschwitz and included Rabbi Weissmandl’s plea for the Allies to bomb the rail lines to Auschwitz and the crematoria.

Image Foreground- George Mantello and Pastor Paul Vogt

Little was done with the Auchwitz Report until George Mantello (Mandl György, right), Secretary of El Salvador’s Consulate in Switzerland, obtained a copy via Budapest, long after others have already received it. He immediately publicized it. This led to major grass roots protests in Switzerland, including an extraordinary Swiss press and church activism. Swiss newspapers ignored strict Swiss censorship rules. There were 440 articles in 120 papers. Under leadership of Swiss theologians, including Pastor Paul Vogt (left), church sermons called for the end of the atrocities. An aroused Swiss people, university students, members of labor unions and women’s leagues staged unprecedented street demonstrations in Swiss cities. Within a few days this critical Swiss public outcry about the atrocities evoked the first major public response by political and religious leaders of the free world. A severe warning was issued by world leaders to Hungary’s leader Horthy. This was a major reason for stopping the transports to Auschwitz. Finally, the Swiss government and the International Red Cross went into action in Budapest. Despite Eichmann’s renewed attempts to deport the Jews Wallenberg, Lutz and the other neutral diplomats were able to rescue an estimated 140,000 Jews in Budapest.

Help from the New World – Painting by Hanalisa Omer (2006)



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Switzerland Awakens – Painting by Hanalisa Omer (2006)



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A Light to the Rescuers – by Elyakim Bruck (2006)



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