

To Rescue the Jews?

The Holocaust, American Response

And the bombing of Auschwitz

By Jerry Klinger



“Grandpa, is there a right and a wrong?”

Yes, Chandler, there is always a right and a wrong.

But, sometimes... what is right is wrong and sometimes... what is wrong is right.

I don't understand Grandpa?

Most people don't understand at the time either, Chandler.”

William Rabinowitz

“Provisional and partial translation of the minutes of the meeting of the Executive of the Jewish Agency held June 11, 1944.

Present: Ben-Gurion – Chair, Mr. (Isaac) Gruenbaum¹, Dr. Senator, Rabbi Fishman, Mr. Kaplan, Dr. Schmorek, Dr. Joseph, Mr. Schapira, Mr. Ben-Tzvi, Dr. Hantke, Dr. Granovsky, Mr. Eisenberg.

Agenda:

¹ Isaac Gruenbaum -Head of the Rescue Committee of the Jewish Agency. His proposal to bomb Auschwitz was outvoted 11-1 by the Executive of the Jewish Agency.

1. Matters of Rescue
2. Discussion of Mr. Gruenbaum with Mr. Pinkerton on matters of rescue
3. The department of immigrant absorption

Item 2, Discussion of Mr. Gruenbaum with Mr. Pinkerton on matters of rescue.

Mr. Gruenbaum: Sent to the members of the board a protocol of his discussion with U.S. Consul General on matters of rescue. Among other things he (Gruenbaum) suggested that the Allies should bomb the communication lines between Hungary and Poland. If they destroy the railway line, it would be impossible to carry out, for a definite period of time, their vicious plans. Mr. Pinkerton promised to transmit the suggestion to the War Refugee Board.

Mr. Gruenbaum also suggested that airplanes of the Allies should bomb the death camps in Poland, such as Auschwitz, Treblinka etc. Mr. Pinkerton argues that if this were done the Allies would be blamed for the murder of Jews, so he asked for the suggestion to be put in writing. Mr. Gruenbaum promised to consult with his colleagues on the matter.

According to the news available, every day thousands of Jews are being murdered in the death camps. Only the "Ordnung-Dienst" remains alive for short period of time. They do not wait long before they kill the victims. Even if we assume that they (the Allied air forces) will bomb the camps while there are Jews in them, and some of them will get killed, the others could disperse and save themselves. By destroying the buildings they will not be able to murder, by means of the techniques they use, for months. We have received news today that, in the course of ten days, 120,000 Jews were expelled from Hungary.

Ben-Gurion: We don't know what really is the situation in Poland, and it seems that we could not offer (propose) anything with regard to this matter.

Rabbi Fischman: Concurs with Ben-Gurion's opinion

Dr. Schmorek: Here we hear that in Auschwitz there is a large labor camp. We cannot take upon ourselves the responsibility of a bombing which would cause the death of a single Jew.

Dr. Joseph: He too opposes the suggestion to ask the Americans to bomb the camps, and so to murder Jews. Mr. Gruenbaum does not speak as a private individual, but as the representative of an institution. He (Joseph) thinks that the institution to which we are linked should not suggest such a thing.

Dr. Senator: Concurs with the view of Dr. Joseph. It is regrettable that Mr. Gruenbaum spoke of it with the American Consul.

Ben-Gurion: the view of the board is that we should not ask the Allies to bomb places where there are Jews.”^{2,3}

Few debates about the Holocaust are as acrimonious as the issue of Rescue. What could have been done, what was done, what was not done and why? The issue is a debate. There are historians, survivors, religious leaders, educators, politicians, moralists and demagogues on both sides. It is convenient intellectual dishonesty for manipulative reasons, frequently political, to choose facts to advance a historical argument or perspective. Facts are selected while others are left out because they do not fit a particular thesis. Historians are supposed to be intellectually honest and neutral, presenting the events they are writing about. They interpret what they write about to make it understandable to a mass market readership. If historians were only to write for their fellow historians, they will have a very small market and a very small audience. The published historians write for the broader market. The very fact that they must interpret the event(s) makes their responsibility to tell the truth all the more critical. Many try and many others simply interpret their own truth.

Anti-Semitic hate is real today especially when speaking of the Holocaust. There are those that need to claim the Holocaust and the Six Million murdered Jewish dead never happened for political or social reasons. There are those that claim the Einsatzgruppen⁴ or the Gas Chambers never existed. The problem for their truth is that the Germans kept very good records.

Could the Holocaust have been prevented – maybe yes and maybe no. Could the Nazis have been deterred -maybe yes and maybe no. Could the Allies have done more to save Jews - maybe yes and maybe no. Could Auschwitz have been bombed - maybe yes and maybe no. The arguments fly with blood red passion, even venom, 67 years after the killing ended. No matter how the Holocaust is presented, it will not bring back the Six Million.

Why do we study, remember, memorialize, and institutionalize the Holocaust even while its memory is fading? Because, the only way to make sense of something that can't be understood, without shuddering for the future of humanity, is to try and learn from it. We do not want a *next time*. We are supposed to learn from the past to shape the future. Maybe the next time will not be for the Jews but there have been next times already – Ruanda, Myanmar, Sudan... The scope and breadth of the Holocaust remains unique in human experience. Genocide, tragically, is not. The threats of a new Holocaust are being heard. Will anyone listen?

² FDR and the Holocaust, Newton, pp. 271-272. Agenda items one and three are not included here

³ The Myth of Rescue, Why the democracies could not have saved more Jews from the Nazis, William D. Rubenstein, Routledge Press, London, 1997, pg. 179-180

⁴ <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005130>

“The vast majority of Holocaust victims, prior to their deportation to concentration camps, were either unaware of the fate that awaited them or were in disbelief; they honestly believed that they were to be resettled.”⁵ When Peter Bergson joined with Col. John Henry Patterson, the Christian commander of the Jewish Legion during WWI and called for the formation of a Jewish army to fight for the Jews in WWII, there was no Jewish army. Today there is.

Professor David S. Wyman was born in Weymouth, Massachusetts, in 1929. He is the grandson of two Protestant ministers. He graduated from Boston University with an A.B. in history and from Harvard University with a Ph.D. in history. At Harvard, his studies were assisted by a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship.

From 1966 until his retirement in 1991 he taught at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, where he was the Josiah DuBois professor of history and was twice chairman of the Judaic studies program. He is the founder of The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies.

“The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies teaches the history and lessons of America’s response to the Holocaust, through scholarly research, public events, publications, and educational programs.

Based on the research of Professor David S. Wyman concerning America’s response to Nazism and the Holocaust, the Wyman Institute focuses on the abandonment of Europe’s Jews during the Nazi era, the efforts to promote rescue, and the moral and historical lessons of those experiences.

The Wyman Institute strives to bridge the gap between the scholarly community and the general public, by making the historical record accessible to a broader audience through exhibits, speakers, educational curricula, and other forms of media.”

The Institute brings together a politically, religiously, and culturally diverse group of concerned individuals and scholars, who share a commitment to the importance of studying, documenting, and publicizing the lessons of America’s response to the Holocaust.”⁶

“Deborah Lipstadt characterizes Wyman’s book, *Paper Walls; America and the Refugee Crisis*, as having stood for many years as ‘one of the most important books,’ on American immigration policy in the Nazi years. In *Paper Walls*, Wyman discusses the combination of anti-Semitism, nativistic nationalism, economic crisis and isolationism that made rescue inconceivable.

⁵ See Leni Yahil, Ina Friedman, Haya Galai, *The Holocaust: the fate of European Jewry, 1932-1945*, Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 257; Donald L. Niewyk, Francis R. Nicosia, *The Columbia Guide to the Holocaust*, Columbia University Press, 2000, p. 26; Gerald D. Feldman, Wolfgang Seibel, *Networks of Nazi Persecution: Bureaucracy, Business, and the Organization of the Holocaust*, Berghahn Books, 2006 p. 245.

⁶ <http://www.wymaninstitute.org/about/>

In his later work Wyman's position shifted, he came to believe that the attitude of American Jews during the Nazi era was to be faulted, and that the approach of the Bergson Group was the correct one. If American Jews had taken a more forceful approach, government policy could have been changed."⁷

Dr. Wyman's 1984 book, *the Abandonment of the Jews, America and the Holocaust 1941-1945*⁸, dramatically influenced American Holocaust studies. It deeply disturbed Americans and American Jews in particular, understanding of their role and responsibility for the Holocaust. The book remains dynamic. It remains controversial. It has sparked many follow on books by others and a number of books equally critical of Wyman's work.

One of the well-known critics of Professor Wyman is Professor William D. Rubinstein.

"Rubinstein was born in New York and educated at Swarthmore College and Johns Hopkins University in the United States

Rubinstein worked at Lancaster University in England from 1974-1975, the Australian National University in Canberra in 1976-1978, Deakin University in Victoria, Australia from 1978-1995, and currently works at Aberystwyth University.

Rubinstein has held chairs of history at Deakin and Aberystwyth Universities, and is an elected Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, the Australian Academy of the Social Sciences, and of the Royal Historical Society

Rubinstein was President of the Jewish Historical Society of England from 2002-2004 and was the editor of the articles on Britain and the Commonwealth (except Canada) in the second (2006) edition of the standard reference work, *The Encyclopaedia Judaica*."⁹

Routledge Press, London, 1997, published his equally controversial book, dedicated to the famed pioneer Holocaust historian Lucy Dawidowicz, *The Myth of Rescue, Why the democracies could not have saved more Jews from the Nazis*.¹⁰

Professor, attorney and famed defense advocate for Israel, Alan Dershowitz, wrote in the afterword of Robert Rosen's, *Saving the Jews, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Holocaust*.¹¹

⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Wyman

⁸ http://www.amazon.com/The-Abandonment-Jews-Holocaust-1941-1945/product-reviews/159558174X/ref=dp_top_cm_cr_acr_txt?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1

⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Rubinstein

¹⁰ http://www.amazon.com/The-Myth-Rescue-Democracies-Could/product-reviews/0415212499/ref=dp_top_cm_cr_acr_txt?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1

¹¹ http://www.amazon.com/Saving-Jews-Franklin-Roosevelt-Holocaust/product-reviews/1560259957/ref=sr_1_1_cm_cr_acr_txt?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1

“The pendulum of history swings in wide arcs, but the pendulum of historians – indeed of most concerned citizens who evaluate history – often swing in even greater arcs. For academics and writers, historical revisionism is the road to tenure, to Pulitzers and to praise. If journalism is the first draft of history, then revisionism is the second. Typically third and fourth drafts are required to set the record straight.

...From now on no serious scholar of Roosevelt’s role in the tragic events of the early 1940’s can fail to take into account Robert Rosen’s masterful and balanced analysis of the choices of evil faced by the man who remains one of the greatest presidents in our history.”¹²

The debate of Rescue has drawn Dershowitz into its midst without a right and wrong answer despite what he wrote. Dershowitz’s accolades for Rosen’s unbalanced work drew him in as an apologist for the Roosevelt administration. The debate remains what could have been done and what was done.

Wyman and Rubenstein’s counter point presentation is considered.

At the conclusion of his book, Wyman’s 12 points summarized why the Allies failed the Jews during the Holocaust.

- 1) *The War Refugee Board should have been established in 1942. And it should have received adequate government funding and much broader powers.*

The War Refugee Board (WRB) was unique in world experience. It was the first time an Allied government had formed an effort to specifically focus on saving the Jews of Europe. The Evian Conference of 1938 for European refugees and the later Bermuda Conference of 1943, both failed charades of humanitarian concern, never specifically identified that it was the Jews that Nazi policy focused on. The Allies knew by mid-1942 that the Nazis intended to and were attempting to exterminate the Jews of Europe. But, until the creation of the WRB by the United States, no Allied government had done anything about it.

The Board came about due to the Herculean efforts of a Palestinian Jew who was despised by organized Zionist and Anti-Zionist American Jewry, Peter Bergson¹³. Bergson’s real name was Hillel Kook. He came to the United States in 1940 with Vladimir Jabotinsky¹⁴. Bergson took the cover name Bergson, to protect his family in Palestine.

¹² Ibid – pg. 502

¹³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bergson_Group

¹⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ze'ev_Jabotinsky

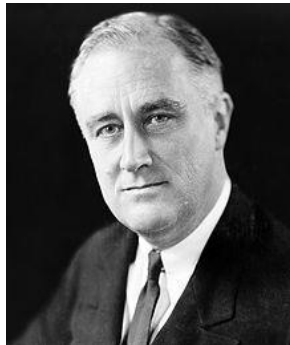


Rabbi Abraham Kook

His Uncle was Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935), the first Ashkenazi chief rabbi of British Mandatory Palestine.¹⁵

Vladimir Jabotinsky was the head of the Revisionist Zionist movement¹⁶. He was barred from Palestine by the British. The Revisionists, considered extremists by establishment American Jewry and political enemies by the mainstream American Zionist movement, sought to create a Jewish army to fight the Nazis. Even by 1940, stories were slipping through the Nazi walls in Europe of the fate of the Jews.

Jabotinsky died prematurely, the year he arrived America. Bergson took over the reins of the combined Revisionist and Irgun¹⁷ movements in America. From 1940 to 1942, he, along with a small cadre of supporters came to be known as the Bergson Group¹⁸. The group included the former British Christian commander of the Jewish Legion during World War I, Col. John Henry Patterson. Together they struggled to build popular support for a Jewish Army and the possible future Zionist State.



President Roosevelt

Irrefutable, undeniable evidence was reaching the West by 1942 of the wholesale massacre of Jews by mobile killing brigades. A tiny article, buried in the November 25, 1942 edition of the

¹⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham_Isaac_Kook

¹⁶ http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Zionism/Revisionist_Zionism.html

¹⁷ <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/293947/Irgun-Zvai-Leumi>

¹⁸ http://www1.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%205990.pdf

Washington Post, deeply disturbed Bergson when he read it. An estimated 2,000,000 Jews had been summarily executed for the crime of being Jewish in Nazi controlled Europe. The Post reported it as a cold statistical matter.

Establishment Jewry refused to believe the story. They virtually refused to act on the reports. Direct appeals by Bergson to famed Zionist leader Rabbi Stephen Wise got nowhere. American Jewish leadership feared that the war, especially if it went badly, would rebound upon them. They and American Jews would be accused of having dragged America into a foreign war only to save Jews. It would be the Jewish War and American Christian blood. The fear of anti-Semitism, though irrational from a contemporary view, was a reality for American Jewry then. Appeals by Bergson, directly to the Assistant Secretary of State, did not achieve a different result.

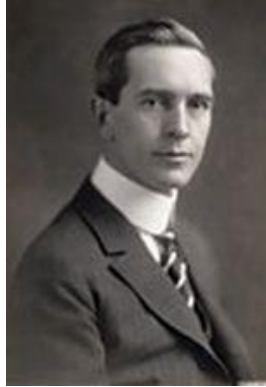
Bergson changed direction in 1942. The creation of a Jewish Army was no longer the main goal. His struggle became saving the Jews of Europe from extermination. Bergson and his tiny, almost penniless legion of supporters created the *Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe* in 1942.¹⁹ Bergson began going door to door, trudging through every Government building in Washington. He knocked on every door in the U.S. House and Senate office buildings. He spoke to anyone who would listen about the murder of the Jews in Europe. He had made a vitally important strategic decision. Bergson spoke not of the need to save the Jews but that the Jews were the first victims of Nazism. Nazism was not just killing Jews; it was intent on eugenically killing humanity and America. The message resonated. The approach worked. Doors, slowly, began opening.

One door Bergson knocked on became the key to saving the Jews. The young man behind the desk was willing to listen. He was an obscure Christian attorney in the U.S. Treasury Department, Josiah DuBois Jr. Bergson knew that monies needed to be transferred to Europe to “buy” Jewish lives, getting visas for Jewish refugees. Monies had to be transferred during War time through the Department of the Treasury with the cooperation of the Visa division of the U.S. State Department. Bergson did not understand that the American quota system for European immigration, especially if it were for Jews, was actively being blocked by the director of the State Department’s visa division, Breckenridge Long^{20, 21}.

¹⁹ http://resources.ushmm.org/film/display/detail.php?file_num=5032

²⁰ <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/holocaust/peoplevents/pandeAMEX90.html>

²¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Breckinridge_Long



Breckenridge Long

Long was a close personal friend and political appointee of President Roosevelt. They both came from the same patrician class and shared many common values. Long was a paranoid nativist and an anti-Semite. He feared for American society and culture if hordes of European Jews came to America even if they were refugees. Under his direction, immigration from Germany, with a particular focus on denial of visas to Jews, was sharply restricted. An internal memorandum written by Long explained how to keep the visa seekers (Jews) out. "We can delay and effectively stop for a temporary period of indefinite length the number of immigrants into the United States. We could do this by simply advising our consuls to put every obstacle in the way and to require additional evidence and to resort to various administrative devices which would postpone and postpone and postpone the granting of the visas."

Bergson organized his supporters for a public relations war centered on humanitarian grounds. The *Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe* attracted some of the elites of Hollywood such as Ben Hecht²², Billie Rose^{23, 24}, and Kurt Weill²⁵. March 1943, the Committee produced a major theatrical production, *We Will Never Die*²⁶. It toured America telling Americans about the Holocaust.

The Committee used the American print media. "Most controversial were the committee's full-page advertisements in major newspapers, including one that appeared in *The Times* and *The Washington Post* in February 1943. It said: "*For sale to humanity: 70,000 Rumanian Jews, Guaranteed Human beings at \$50 a Piece.*" Jewish leaders were outraged. And Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, head of the American Jewish Congress, quickly condemned the advertisement as a hoax."²⁷ Popular awareness and sympathetic concerns grew.

²² <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007040>

²³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billy_Rose

²⁴ <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007036>

²⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurt_Weill

²⁶ <http://wymaninstitute.org/special/bergsonexhibit/we-will-never-die.php>

²⁷ <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/08/20/us/peter-bergson-who-helped-european-jews-dies-at-86.html>

The issue of saving Jewish lives was so important, just two days before Yom Kippur, October, 1943, 400 Rabbis gathered for a major march on Washington²⁸. The protest and petition march was organized in coordination with the Committee and Rabbi Eliezer Silver²⁹ of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the U.S. and Canada.



Rabbi Eliezer Silver

President Roosevelt, though his calendar was free that afternoon, on the advice of American Jewish leadership, White House Jewish advisors and Zionist leader Rabbi Stephen Wise, declined to receive the Rabbis or their petition. Reluctantly, Vice-President Henry Wallace did.

Despite the obstacles, Bergson's efforts to save the Jews of Europe began paying dividends. Popular support and awareness of the Jewish-humanitarian disaster was rapidly growing. November, 1943, Congressman Will Rogers Jr. of California and Senator Guy Gillette of Iowa co-sponsored legislation to force a response by President Roosevelt. The legislation was designed to create a U.S. governmental body to try and save the Jews. Roosevelt and American Jewish leadership were being placed in a very difficult and highly embarrassing political situation.

Working on a tip from a friend in the State Department about how the State Department was keeping Jewish refugees out, Department of the Treasury attorneys, Josiah Dubois^{30, 31, 32, 33} with Randolph Paul^{34, 35} and supported by John Pehle³⁶, wrote a report to Roosevelt's Jewish Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau Jr.^{37, 38}. The report's title oozed with blood - "Report to the Secretary on the Acquiescence of This Government in the Murder of the Jews."

²⁸ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabbis'_march_\(1943\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabbis'_march_(1943))

²⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eliezer_Silver

³⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josiah_Dubois

³¹ [http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=dubois&GSfn=josiah+&GSbyrel=all&GSdyrel=all&GSob=n&GRid=65781536&df=all&)

[bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=dubois&GSfn=josiah+&GSbyrel=all&GSdyrel=all&GSob=n&GRid=65781536&df=all&](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=dubois&GSfn=josiah+&GSbyrel=all&GSdyrel=all&GSob=n&GRid=65781536&df=all&)

³² <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/treasrep.html>

³³ <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/holocaust/filmmore/reference/primary/somereport.html>

³⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Randolph_E._Paul

³⁵ [http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=paul&GSfn=randolph&GSbyrel=all&GSdyrel=all&GSob=n&GRid=83142119&df=all&)

[bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=paul&GSfn=randolph&GSbyrel=all&GSdyrel=all&GSob=n&GRid=83142119&df=all&](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=paul&GSfn=randolph&GSbyrel=all&GSdyrel=all&GSob=n&GRid=83142119&df=all&)

³⁶ <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/holocaust/filmmore/reference/interview/pehle02.html>

³⁷ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Morgenthau,_Jr.

January 16, 1944, an outraged Morgenthau, accompanied by John Pehle, presented the damning report to President Roosevelt.

The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum summarizes the story.

“On January 22, 1944, US President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9417³⁹, establishing the War Refugee Board (WRB) as an independent agency, subordinated directly to the President. Roosevelt instructed the WRB to take all measures to rescue victims of enemy oppression in imminent danger of death.

The creation of the WRB was largely the work of US Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, Jr. and his dedicated staff at the Department of the Treasury, including general counsel Randolph Paul, assistant general counsel Josiah DuBois, Jr. and Foreign Funds Control chief John Pehle. Pressure from the American Jewish community and the US Congress on the Roosevelt administration to take concrete steps on behalf of endangered European Jews increased following confirmation of the mass murder of Europe's Jews in late 1942, the failure of the Bermuda Conference on rescue in April 1943, and the growing outrage of American Jewry at how little was being done to rescue their European brethren. In the House of Representatives, the growing sense of urgency sparked a debate over a resolution urging rescue in November 1943.

Meanwhile, Morgenthau, shaken by the news of the "Final Solution" and convinced that the US State Department and the British were doing everything possible to obstruct rescue efforts, met several times during 1943 with Revisionist Zionist activist Peter Bergson (a pseudonym for Hillel Kook). Bergson advocated a high profile presidential initiative on behalf of refugees that would have the authority to circumvent the State Department. It is possible that the discussions at these meetings influenced the conception of the WRB.

Morgenthau's staff, including Dubois, Paul, and Pehle, drafted a report to the president. Dated January 13, 1944, and issued under Paul's signature, the final version assigned blame to the State Department for the failure to rescue Jews. It stated bluntly: “Unless remedial steps of a drastic nature are taken, and taken immediately, I [Paul] am certain that no effective action will be taken by the [US] Government to prevent the complete extermination of the Jews in German controlled Europe, and that this Government will have to share for all time responsibility for this extermination.” On January 16, 1944 Morgenthau, Pehle, and Paul personally delivered the report to Roosevelt. One week later, the War Refugee Board came into being.

³⁸ <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GSln=morgenthau&GSfn=henry&GSbyrel=all&GSdyrel=all&GSob=n&GRid=735&df=all&>

³⁹ <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/holocaust/filmmore/reference/primary/someexec.html>

The WRB operated under difficult political circumstances. In addition to Morgenthau as Secretary of the Treasury, Roosevelt appointed Undersecretary of State Edward Stettinius, Jr. (representing Secretary of State Cordell Hull) and Secretary of War Henry Stimson to the War Refugee Board. Each agency had equal powers on the Board, thus offering the State and War Departments, whose leaders had opposed the formation of the WRB, an opportunity to obstruct its work. While the State Department feared a flood of refugees entering the United States, the War Department opposed initiatives which might, in the perception of its leaders, hinder the war effort. Thus, bureaucratic resistance from within the US government limited the effectiveness of the WRB.

The British government opposed the establishment of the WRB as well fearing that the Jews whom it rescued would attempt to enter Palestine and spark further unrest among the Palestinian Arab population. Preoccupied with key military matters such as the preparation for the Anglo-American landings in Normandy, Roosevelt remained generally uninvolved in the rescue issue. As the President had allocated only one million dollars for its annual budget, the WRB was chronically short of funds. It financed actual rescue initiatives by raising funds from American Jews, who contributed \$17 million, mostly through the US-based Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC).

Measured against the enormity of the Holocaust, the accomplishments of the WRB seem modest. Given the enormous difficulties that the agency faced, the results were impressive, however. The War Refugee Board conducted operations through its representatives in a number of neutral countries, where they operated openly. Other representatives operated in a clandestine fashion, or used their credentials as neutral diplomats as cover. WRB officials targeted neutral and Axis nations as sites for rescue operations, hoping to achieve maximum impact.

WRB representatives persuaded the neutral nations, especially Spain, Switzerland, and Turkey, to give transit rights and temporary accommodation to refugees and to serve as bases for the clandestine activities of WRB agents. Sometimes assisted by US diplomats, WRB agents initiated negotiations with the representatives of Germany's Axis partners--Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria--on neutral sites. They reminded Axis government officials that they would likely lose the war and be called to account for their actions. In dealing with Hungarian officials during the weeks before the deportation of the Hungarian Jews began, WRB agents broadcast warnings by President Roosevelt, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and various prominent US citizens. Based in Istanbul, Turkey, WRB agent Ira Hirschman exploited Romanian dictator Ion Antonescu's change of policy towards Romanian Jews to negotiate the return of 48,000 Jews in the spring of 1944 from Romanian-occupied Ukraine (also known as Transnistria), and to facilitate the emigration of 7,000 Jews to Palestine via Turkey.

The WRB financed courier services to Budapest, Bratislava, Bucharest, Vienna, and Prague. Cooperating closely with private organizations, these agents smuggled ration cards, travel permits, and so-called Aryan certificates to endangered Jews, and bribed Axis officials and

border guards. WRB officials and their agents took steps to safeguard those who held Latin American passports, and sent thousands of life-saving food parcels to concentration camps and labor camps during the last year of the war. The WRB also sent money to occupied France, Italy, and Slovakia to support local resistance movements and to aid Jews in hiding. Such measures boosted the morale of countless thousands, who could ascertain that the United States government cared about their fate. That many of these activities were clandestine and implemented by private organizations makes it impossible to gauge their ultimate impact or to calculate the number of those impacted.

The WRB's original idea to establish "free ports" as safe havens for refugees in the United States and elsewhere yielded but one success: the establishment of a single refugee camp in Oswego, New York. In August 1944, the WRB brought 982 refugees, most of them Yugoslav citizens--both Jews and non-Jews--from liberated areas of Italy to Oswego; the US government subsequently admitted the Oswego refugees to the United States as immigrants.

The WRB achieved its best-known success in 1944 in German-occupied Hungary. Following the German occupation in March, Hungarian officials rounded up and deported approximately 440,000 Jews from Hungary. After taking custody of them at the borders of the so-called Greater German Reich, German authorities transported most of them to Auschwitz. The WRB had been active in Budapest well before the arrival of its best-known agent, Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, in July 1944. At the request of the WRB, the US government issued warnings to the Hungarian regime. WRB officials also lobbied the Red Cross, the Vatican, and officials in the neutral countries to increase their representation in Hungary and to add their voices to the protest against the persecution and deportation of Jews by Hungarian officials. Protests and official warnings from the US government and the Vatican, accompanied by the bombing of Budapest by the US air force in the first days of July 1944, influenced the Hungarian leader, Regent Miklos Horthy, to announce a halt to the deportation of the Hungarian Jews on July 6.

After Wallenberg began his service at the Swedish legation in Budapest in July, rescue efforts intensified. Wallenberg played a major role in galvanizing the representatives of his own and other neutral governments to issue thousands of "protective" documents to Jews residing in Budapest. As such papers either conferred citizenship upon or documented official diplomatic protection of the bearers, the Hungarian authorities generally recognized them and exempted their bearers from some forms of persecution, including deportation. The Swedish and other diplomatic missions also established "safe hostels" in the sections of Budapest designated as ghettos.

After the Hungarian fascist Arrow Cross movement seized power in a coup d'état with German support on October 15, 1944, the Jews of Budapest faced mortal danger both in renewed deportation operations and in unauthorized but officially tolerated rampages of robbery and murder in the ghettos by members of the Arrow Cross and other Hungarian civilians. Wallenberg and others continued to issue citizenship and diplomatic protection papers; they were even able to remove Jews from the foot marches to the Austrian border initiated in late October 1944.

Concurrent with these efforts in Budapest, WRB agents were active in opening escape routes for Hungarian Jews and offering the Germans inducements not to reinstate the deportations. Working with the JDC, WRB agents opened negotiations with the Germans to halt deportations in exchange for payment. Though these negotiations had little influence on either German or Hungarian policy until Horthy halted the deportations in July 1944, they may have helped to stall the deportation of the Budapest Jews until after Soviet troops cut the rail lines to Auschwitz.

On occasion, such negotiations led to success. Based in Switzerland, WRB agent Roswell McClelland negotiated with the Germans and obtained the release of 1,700 Hungarian Jews from the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp and the diversion of 18,000 Hungarian Jews to Vienna instead of Auschwitz in October 1944, when deportations resumed in Hungary. WRB agents also negotiated escape routes for Hungarian Jews with Marshal Josip Tito, the commander of the Communist-led Partisan resistance movement in Yugoslavia, after his cadres had succeeded in clearing northeastern Yugoslavia of German troops in October 1944. The efforts of WRB agent Raoul Wallenberg and many others played a major role in ensuring the survival of around 100,000 Jews in Budapest.

The War Refugee Board has been credited with direct and indirect participation in the rescue of approximately 200,000 European Jews. Allowing for the fact that WRB worked alongside and through many other institutions and individuals, such a figure is not an exaggeration. The WRB should be seen as a late but significant effort on the part of the United States government and American Jewry to help European Jews. Amidst the great events of 1944 (the Allied landings in France, the Soviet advance into central Europe, and the catastrophic destruction of the Hungarian Jews), it is easy to overlook an effort that saved many lives and helped to partially redeem the role of the United States government during the Holocaust."⁴⁰

Thomas Kolsky wrote a history, *Jews Against Zionism*, of the American Council for Judaism⁴¹. The Council was an anti-Zionist American Jewish organization. They believed Jews are not a people. They believed Jews were merely another of the world's religious and cultural groups. The Council, a shadow today of its size and power when it represented a large portion of American Reform Judaism in 1942, remains a part of modern American Jewish political expression⁴². In the wake of the Holocaust, American Reform Judaism has separated itself from the AJC and adopted a pro-Zionist platform.

Kolsky wrote:

"But despite the public posturing, the confrontation between the Council and the Zionists in 1943 and 1944 was marred by the tragic failure of the two groups to work for the rescue of European Jews. Instead of concentrating their efforts during the war on saving Jews, both were preoccupied with fighting each other and preparing plans for the postwar period.

⁴⁰ <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007409>

⁴¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Council_for_Judaism

⁴² <http://www.acjna.org/acjna/default.aspx>

An example of the Zionist preoccupation was the bitter campaign of the American Zionist leadership in 1943 and 1944 against the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe. Organized in 1943 by Peter Bergson (Hillel Kook), a Palestinian Revisionist, the Emergency Committee wanted to separate the issue of rescuing Jews from the statehood question for the duration of the war. Bergson's group waged an intensive advertising campaign to draw attention to the situation in Europe and to generate pressure to save Jews. Through its influence, on 9 November 1943, identical resolutions were introduced in the Senate and the House urging creation of a "commission of diplomatic, economic and military experts" to prepare a plan to save the remaining Jews in Europe. The official Zionist Leadership did not support the resolutions. Instead, apparently out of fear of competition from their Revisionist rivals, the American Jewish Conference and the AZEC attacked the Emergency Committee mercilessly throughout 1944. Moreover, the Zionists urged the State and Justice departments to have Bergson deported or drafted.

Although the rescue resolutions were not put to a vote, they contributed to Roosevelt's decision to create the War Refugee Board (WRB) in 1944. The WRB engaged in some modest rescue operations in 1944 and, 1945. The example of the WRB indicates the possibility that, if during the '41 war years American Jews had been committed to rescue rather than to Jewish statehood, much more could have been done to save Jews. The Zionists', emphatic demands for Jewish statehood during the war, their reluctance to support the rescue resolutions, and their attacks on Bergson and his Emergency Committee confirm Council claims that Zionism was less concerned with saving Jews than with achieving its political objectives in Palestine. However, despite its correct analysis of Zionist policy, the Council was equally inactive on the matter of wartime rescue."⁴³

January 11, 1944, five days before Secretary Morgenthau went to President Roosevelt with his damning report about the State Department's deliberate obstructionism and complicity in the murder of the Jews, Breckenridge Long made a long entry in his diary.

"The Jewish organizations are all divided and in controversies of their own. The world Jewish Congress is one, the American Jewish Committee is quite another and opposed, the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee is another and a fine lot of citizens engaged purely in charity and relief-not in politics, as the others are-the Emergency Committee to Rescue the Jews Under Hitler-another which is anathema to all the above named-etc. There is no adhesion nor any sympathetic collaboration-rather rivalry, jealousy and antagonism. Some are pro-Zion, some not, but no Jew can wholly oppose the idea of a Jewish Home in Palestine because it becomes almost a part of Judaism. But there is a difference between a 'Jewish Homeland in Palestine' and a 'Jewish National State of Palestine'. The World Jewish Congress contends for the latter and is

⁴³ Jews Against Zionism, The American Council for Judaism 1942-1948, Thomas A. Kolsky, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1990 pg.105

provoked because the “Emergency Committee” has stolen its thunder. The others are for a “Homeland”-or oblivious to the struggle going on amongst their confreres.”⁴⁴

Jew fought Jew with a vehemence that should have been reserved for Hitler. It confused American policy makers and disgusted even the anti-Semites.

Long left the State Department in 1944 in disgrace. During closed door testimony, November 1943, before a U.S. House committee on legislation to create a governmental department to save the Jews, he was caught lying. He deliberately and grossly misrepresented his department’s actions. He had lied about the number of visas issued to refugees escaping Hitler. The number actually issued were 90% below the restrictive legal quotas that U.S. law permitted. An estimated 190,000 people, (primarily Jews) under Nazi German and Fascist Italian control, were denied entry and the safety of the United States.

Breckenridge Long left in disgrace, but in his mind, very successful.

Chutzpah is a very defining, endearing Jewish term. American Jewish organizations tried to claim credit for the creation of the War Refugee Board. They claimed that they had paved the way for Bergson. They were the ones entitled for the Kavod – the credit and the honor. They were the first to bring the tragedy of European Jewry to the public. They had actually done little more than posture and fight with each other.

The apogee of Bergson’s success was the establishment of the WRB. False stories were planted, allegedly by American Jewish and Zionist enemies of Bergson, in the willing pages of the Washington Post and other papers. The stories charged that Bergson and his group had misappropriated funds intended for Holocaust rescue. The stories were patently false. They were retracted with an apology by the Post. The damage was done. Bergson and his reputation had been destroyed. His contributions remain marginalized by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. and at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.⁴⁵

~~~~~

Dr. David Wyman conclusions about American failure to save the Jews and how it could have been different continued.

*(2) The U.S. government, working through neutral governments or the Vatican, could have pressed Germany to release the Jews... The use of blocked funds for this purpose would not have compromised the war effort.*

*(3) The United States could have applied constant pressure on Axis satellites to release their Jews.*

---

<sup>44</sup>The War Diary of Breckenridge Long, Selections from the Years, 1939-1944, selected and edited by Fred L. Israel, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1966, pg. 336

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.wymaninstitute.org/articles/secondpetition.php>



*(4) Success in setting off an exodus of Jews would have posed the problem of where they could go. Strong pressure needed to be applied to neutral countries near the Axis (Spain, Portugal, Turkey, Switzerland, and Sweden) to take Jews in.*

*(5) Locating enough outside havens, places beyond continental Europe where refugees could safely await postwar resettlement, would have presented difficulties. A generous response by the United States would have put strong pressure on the Latin American nations, Canada, the British dominions, and Palestine.*

*(6) Shipping was needed to transfer Jews from neutral countries to outside havens. Abundant evidence proves that it could have been provided without interfering with the war effort. The preceding steps, vigorously pursued, might have saved scores or even hundreds of thousands. Early in 1943, the United States turned its back on the Rumanian proposal to release 70,000 Jews. It was a pivotal failure; seizure of that chance might have led to other overtures by Axis satellites.*

*At the same time, Switzerland was willing to accept thousands of children from France if it had assurance of their postwar removal. After refusing for more than a year, the State Department furnished the guarantee. But by then the main opportunity had passed. During the summer of 1943, the way opened for evacuating 500 children from the Balkans. But a boat had to be obtained within a month. The State Department responded with bureaucratic delays. Allied actions, instead of encouraging neutral countries to welcome fleeing Jews, influenced them to do the opposite.*

*(7) A campaign to stimulate and assist escapes would have led to a sizable outflow of Jews. Once the neutral nations had agreed to open their borders, that information could have been publicized throughout Europe by radio, airdropped leaflets, and underground communications channels.*

*(8) Much larger sums of money should have been transferred to Europe.*

*(9) Much more effort should have gone into finding ways to send in food" and medical supplies.*

*(10) Drawing on its great prestige and influence, the United States could have applied much more pressure than it did on neutral governments, the Vatican, and the International Red Cross to induce them to take earlier and more vigorous action. By expanding their diplomatic missions in Axis countries, they would have increased the numbers of outside observers on the scene and perhaps inhibited actions against Jews. More important, the measures taken by Raoul Wallenberg in Budapest should have been implemented by all neutral diplomatic missions and repeated in city after city throughout Axis Europe. And they should have begun long before the summer of 1944 ....*

*The United States could also have pressed its two great allies to help. The Soviet Union turned away all requests for cooperation, including those from the WRB. An American government that was serious about rescue might have extracted some assistance from the Russians.*

*Britain, though more responsive, still compiled an abysmal record ....*

*(11) The Air Force could have eliminated the Auschwitz killing installations. Some bombing of deportation railroads was feasible... It was, in fact, legally required to do so by the executive order that established the WRB ...*

*(12) Much more publicity about the extermination of the Jews should have been disseminated through Europe... This might have influenced three groups: the Christian populations, the Nazis, and the Jews. Western leaders and, especially, the Pope could have appealed to Christians not to cooperate in any way with the anti-Jewish programs, and to hide and to aid Jews whenever possible. . . .*

*Roosevelt, Churchill, and the Pope might have made clear to the Nazis their full awareness of the mass-murder program and their severe condemnation of it. If, in addition, Roosevelt and Churchill had threatened punishment for these crimes and offered asylum to the Jews, the Nazis at least would have ceased to believe that the West did not care what they were doing to the Jews. That might possibly have slowed the killing. And it might have hastened the decision of the SS, ultimately taken in late 1944, to end the extermination. Even if top Nazis had brushed the threats aside, their subordinates might have given pause.”<sup>46</sup>*

Wyman’s 12 points of possible American responses to save Jewish lives is legitimately criticized as conjecture *and what if* scenarios.

Jewish historian William Rubinstein responds:

*Point (1): no one advocated the establishment of the War Refugee Board in 1942, or at any time before about July 1943... Professor Wyman has, in my opinion, exaggerated the number of Jews rescued by the Board by a factor of at least 90 per cent. Even if the Board had come into existence in 1942, it is extremely difficult to see what it could have accomplished, given that Nazi-occupied Europe was entirely beyond the reach of the Allies at that time.*

*Point (2): Adolf Hitler’s aim was to exterminate European Jewry, and it is inconceivable that he would have agreed to releasing them at any time after late 1940.*

*The fact that until mid-1944 ‘it was far from clear to the Allies that Germany would not let the Jews out’ is a manifest non sequitur*

*Point (3): greater pressure might have been brought upon the Axis satellites, but it is difficult to see what this could conceivably have achieved Jews –were deported from Rumania or Bulgaria to extermination camps; no Jews were deported from Hungary to extermination camps until May 1944, when the Nazis, convinced Horthy that they were being sent to Germany to work for the Reich. When, through precisely the kind of campaign that Wyman implies was never made, Horthy became convinced that Hungary’s Jews were being sent to their deaths, he halted the deportations; for his efforts, the Nazis staged a coup d’état in large part because of his lack of cooperation over the Jewish question. If Horthy had put a stop to the deportations before, Hitler would have staged the coup earlier. Indeed, an earlier pro-Nazi coup would almost certainly have seen the deportation and extermination of*

---

<sup>46</sup> The Myth of Rescue, William Rubinstein, pgs. 206-209

*Budapest's Jews, who were spared chiefly because the Soviet armies were closing in on Auschwitz. One of Hitler's few explicit statements on the Holocaust is that he was extremely keen to deport 'Budapest's Jews to their deaths. Since no Italian Jews were deported to Auschwitz before the Nazi seizure of power there in September 1943, while Mussolini appeared to be protecting them from deportation, Italy's Jews seemed to be safe from extermination. Mussolini, by the outbreak of the war a convinced anti-Semite (if not yet genocidal) and a pro-Nazi, was certain to reject any entreaties by the Allies: he had declared war on the United States, not the other way round.*

*Points (4), (5), (6), (7) and (8) require little comment, predicated as they are on the Jews being allowed to emigrate from Nazi-occupied Europe in significant numbers during the war, something which was ipso facto impossible without a total change of heart by Adolf Hitler. It is worth reiterating that no Jews who successfully fled from Nazi-occupied Europe to the democracies were ever returned to Nazi-occupied Europe, Jews fleeing to Switzerland being the sole possible exception to this generalization. Perhaps more pressure might have been brought to bear on Switzerland to take more refugees, but - despite- its age old history of neutrality – that country, surrounded on all sides by Axis Europe, was desperately afraid of a Nazi invasion, and there is no reason to suppose that, for fleeing Jews, the borders to Switzerland were any less well guarded by the Germans than anywhere else.*

*The 70,000 Jews of Transnistria survived the war, but, ironically, any sign that Antonescu was actually in the process of allowing them to emigrate would certainly have come to Hitler's attention and led to an immediate dispatch of Eichmann and the SS. The Jews of Spain were safe from the Nazis, whether they remained in Spain or in a 'long-promised camp in North Africa'. This is a 'particularly egregious example of illogical 'pseudo-rescue'. There were repeated messages and warnings, on the BBC and by underground sources, of what the Nazis had in mind for Europe's Jews. The central difficulty with all such warnings is that Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe could do nothing to heed them.*

*Point (9) in Wyman's list, concerning food and medical aid, is yet another example of egregious illogicality. Neither food nor medical aid could have been brought to Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. As equivocal as the role of the International Red Cross during the Holocaust may well have been, it had no powers to enter any ghetto or concentration camp. Contrary to Professor Wyman's assertion, the Jews of Europe suffered not from a 'British blockade' but from a Nazi blockade; short of defeating the Nazi scourge, this particular blockade was unlikely to end.*

*Point (10) is similar to point (3) and is fallacious for the same reason: the Nazis would not have allowed it. There were no 'neutral diplomatic missions' in Poland, the German-occupied territories of the Soviet Union, or indeed virtually anywhere from where Jews were deported to extermination camps; had there been any neutral diplomats in these places, it is extremely difficult to see what they might have done, since Hitler, the absolute master of*

*continental Europe, saw the extermination of European Jewry as arguably the central goal of his life.*

*As was discussed- in saving Budapest's Jews from the Hungarian Arrow Cross (and, occasionally, from the Nazi death marches). He did not save any of Hungary's Jews from deportation to Auschwitz, for the deportation of Hungarian Jewry to Auschwitz had ceased just as he arrived in Hungary.*

*Professor Wyman's point (11), about bombing Auschwitz, has been fully discussed above. Briefly, virtually no one in the United States proposed the bombing of Auschwitz, (as opposed to one particular rail line, of little or no importance to the deportation process when it was suggested) while significant numbers of Jews were being transported there; the War Refugee Board most certainly did not.*

*There are, as well, a host of military operational reasons why the bombing of Auschwitz was a virtually impossible task in mid-late 1944.*

*Wyman's final point falls into the same category as the others, a curious mixture of criticizing the Allies for what they actually did and urging the egregious. The Allies repeatedly made clear their 'full awareness of the mass-murder program', and were bombing Germany by day and by night. Professor Wyman's suggestion that Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe somehow volunteered for transport to Auschwitz is the most curious point of all. Jews had absolutely no choice in the matter: the Germans may have depicted their fate as working for Germany in factories or as 'transportation to the east', but whatever their purported destination, the SS was, ultimately, there to enforce the deportation of Jews with their full terror, brutality and utterly relentless inhumanity.*

*It must finally be noted that few (perhaps none) of the points on this list were made by any person, Jewish or non-Jewish, or by any organization at the time, certainly not in the form suggested by Professor Wyman, whose proposals represent his thinking when he wrote *The Abandonment of the Jews* in 1984. As such, they are similar to any counterfactual historical speculation – what if Napoleon I had won the Battle of Waterloo or if Lee had been victorious at Gettysburg? Food for endless, fascinating debate, but remote from the historian's task – which is what? In this case their pointlessness is compounded by the fact that not one suggestion, even with the superior wisdom provided by forty years' hindsight, was likely to have been successful.*

*Professor Wyman may well recognize this, for immediately after presenting his list, he is careful to note that;*

*None of these proposals guaranteed success ... There was a moral imperative to attempt everything possible that would not hurt the war effort. If that had been done, even if few or no lives had been saved, the moral obligation would have been fulfilled.<sup>47</sup>*

*In my opinion, given what was either possible or actually proposed at the time, this moral obligation was being fulfilled every day the war continued and brought Europe closer to liberation."<sup>48</sup>*

Rubenstein is quite right when he says part of the issue of saving of the Jews was the futility of the effort. The issue is not if it would have been effective but was it right or wrong to try.

The dilemma is contrasted with the story of a child and a single Star Fish.

A child was seen walking along a beach that had been littered with thousands of bodies of Star Fish. They had been washed up on the sand after the previous night's heavy storm. A passing adult observed the child picking up one Star Fish at a time and tossing it back into the water.

"Little girl" he asked. "Why are you throwing the Star Fish back into the sea? Can't you see, you can't save them all?"

The child looked up at the adult and said, "I know. I can't save them all. But it matters to the one I can save."

Rubenstein's positions may have been factual. It was true that no one agitated for saving the Jews prior to 1942. And perhaps he is right that the Bergson group's effort, combined with the War Refugee Board only saved 20,000 Jews instead of the widely claimed 200,000. But does the number matter to the issue of rescue?

Hitler believed every bomb that fell on a German city was because the Jews controlled the War. But what if with every bomb a leaflet was added telling the Germans of their monstrous inhumanity to the Jews and others. What if the German people understood that the bombs that fell on them were the because of their own government's inhumanity to others?

The Germans were not unresponsive to internal resistance. The famed Rosenstrasse<sup>49</sup> Women's resistance movement was an example. Hitler and his S.S. may have been psychopathic murderers but they were not suicidal. They were not about to turn heavy machine guns upon their own without destroying Germany from within.

---

<sup>47</sup> The Abandonment of the Jews, Wyman pg. 335

<sup>48</sup> The Myth of Rescue, Why the Democracies could not have saved more Jews from the Nazis, William D. Rubenstein, Rutledge Press, London, 1997, pgs. 209-212

<sup>49</sup> [http://www.rosenstrasse-protest.de/texte/texte\\_stoltzfus.html](http://www.rosenstrasse-protest.de/texte/texte_stoltzfus.html)

“The Rosenstrasse protest was a non-violent protest in Rosenstrass (Rose Street) in Berlin in February and March 1943, carried out by the non-Jewish (“Aryan”) wives and relatives of Jewish men who had been arrested for deportation. The protests escalated until the men were released. It was a significant instance of opposition to the events of the Holocaust.”<sup>50</sup> The men survived the war. There are many inexplicable anecdotes of resistance and German pull back. There were also simple and direct examples of Germans and their supporters who were more than willing and did pull the trigger, just the same. It was a balance of terror. It was a balance of insanity.

Hitler did not implement the Holocaust in full bloom from the day of his swearing in January 30, 1933 in Berlin. It was a process of push and see if there was any resistance. The world did not object to Hitler ordering the internal affairs of Germany any way he wished. Hitler continued pushing, test case after test case.

The tragedy of the M.S. St. Louis<sup>51</sup> in 1939 was one such example. The German ocean liner was filled with over 900 German Jewish refugees carrying what they thought were legitimate visas to freedom. The visas were false. Upon arrival in Cuba they were denied entry. The Roosevelt administration sent armed United States Coast Guard cutters to be sure that the St. Louis did not land in any American port with *its illegal human cargo*. Roosevelt did not object. Eventually, the St. Louis returned to Europe and discharged its *cargo* in various non-German countries. Many of the St. Louis refugees were caught up in the German conquest of their host refuge countries and were eventually sent *East for relocation*. Many met their death.

The German’s used the St. Louis as a test case for the arena of public opinion. The German’s were demonstrating to the world that they were willing to let their Jews go. The world confirmed German opinion – the world did not want the Jews either.

Could the United States have placed its diplomatic resources to pressure neutral countries to admit Jews? Yes, it would not have cost anything. Could the Vatican and others neutrals have done more to save the Jews? Yes, but they did not. Could there have been a much greater effort to let the Jews understand their fate if they cooperated with the Nazis? Cooperation did not simply mean getting into the cattle cars. It meant administering and running the Ghettos, providing the selection lists, relieving Nazi manpower to operate the killing process and free others to fight in the War. The will to live, the will for self-deception and self –preservation is very strong. It is coded into human beings from the time of creation.

Rubenstein criticizes Wyman for calling for the bombing of Auschwitz. Rubenstein was correct. Nobody called for the bombing of Auschwitz prior to the summer of 1944, not even the Jews. Militarily it was not feasible until the summer of 1944, at the earliest, for Allied air power to reach Auschwitz. The cost in men and material for a limited military objective had to be

---

<sup>50</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosenstrasse\\_protest](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosenstrasse_protest)

<sup>51</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S.S.\\_St.\\_Louis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S.S._St._Louis)

weighted operationally. Bombing of rail lines was of nominal value as the Germans had perfected emergency rail line repair brigades that were highly effective.

But the bombing of Auschwitz would have been a moral victory for the Allies. It would have been a signal of moral indignation that demonstrated why the Allies were fighting the Nazis. It would also have tied up more German resources and more men dedicated to killing Jews without their efficient factories of death.

Assistant Secretary of War, John J. McCloy<sup>52</sup>, did not see it that way. It was a dangerous use of valuable military resources that did not warrant the risk. He did authorize bombing of nearby chemical and I.G. Farben factories. Two bombers accidentally did drop their bombs on Auschwitz.

Jewish arguments against bombing of Auschwitz were that high altitude bombing was not so accurate that they can be assured of destroying the crematoriums only. Many Jewish prisoners would be killed in the process. The Allies did not want to be accused of complicity by murdering innocent Jews. The Allies had no problem firebombing Dresden<sup>53</sup> in February, 1945 and killing 25,000 + innocent civilians. The U.S. military and President Truman did not hesitate to incinerate Hiroshima and Nagasaki vaporizing tens of thousands of civilian Japanese. It was all designed to end the war. The argument for the bombing was for the greater good and a faster method of ultimately saving more lives.

The question never asked is, why didn't the Soviets bomb Auschwitz? Their soldiers were being murdered in the Death Camps as well. Their long range bombers were operationally closer than the Americans. Soviet bombers were capable of reaching the rail lines and the Death Camps, weeks if not months, earlier than were the Americans. Had the Russians made a cynical calculation about the value of bombing the main centers of Jewish murder?

By November of 1944, when Auschwitz as a factory of death was essentially shut down because of the approaching Soviet armies, most of the 6,000,000 had been murdered. In the fall of 1944, the WRB finally forwarded the request to bomb the camp. The request had originated from a WRB Christian field representative who had learned of the plan to exterminate the Hungarian Jews. By then most of the Hungarian Jews had been murdered.

Even if Auschwitz, Treblinka and other death camps had been bombed, it may have made a difference. Millions of Jews were not gassed and murdered in the Death Camps. Many had been shot to death by *Ordinary Men*<sup>54</sup> – formed into the killing brigades called Einsatzgruppen<sup>55</sup>, (special Task Forces). The Einsatzgruppen followed behind the advancing German battle lines, especially in the early part of the war. The Jews were rounded up and taken out for mass

<sup>52</sup> <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/holocaust/filmmore/reference/primary/bombjohn.html>

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/firebombing-of-dresden>

<sup>54</sup> [http://www.amazon.com/Ordinary-Men-Reserve-Battalion-Solution/product-reviews/0060995068/ref=dp\\_top\\_cm\\_cr\\_acr\\_txt?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1](http://www.amazon.com/Ordinary-Men-Reserve-Battalion-Solution/product-reviews/0060995068/ref=dp_top_cm_cr_acr_txt?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1)

<sup>55</sup> <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005130>

executions. Few locals protested. If the killing centers had been destroyed, the efficiency rate of killing could have been slowed but not stopped. More Jews might have survived.

Rubenstein's speculation about what if the Jews had known more would that have made a difference is disingenuous. The single most celebrated event of Jewish resistance to the Nazi *Final Solution*<sup>56</sup> began on January 18, 1943 – *the Warsaw Ghetto uprising*<sup>57</sup>. It may have been futile but the Jews made the Nazis pay with their own blood for theirs. When the Jews knew and understood, they faced the German cannons, flames and bullets with little more than bricks, courage and defiance. The Ghetto did not fall passively. The Germans paid a price, although grossly unbalanced. They paid none the less. They learned that the Jews would fight back if they knew what was to be.

With the formation of the War Refugee Board, for the first time, a small administrative group of less than 30 bureaucrats were organized and authorized to save Jews. They were drastically underfunded by the U.S. Government for what they had to accomplish. Much of their funding came from American Jewish donations and support – led by the American Joint Distribution Committee. The WRB was created at the tail end of the liquidation of Hungarian Jewry – the last major Jewish population base still under control of the Nazis. Rubenstein was correct. Raoul Wallenberg arrived too late to do much to save Hungarian Jewry – but he did what he could. How many other Raoul Wallenberg's might there have been if the WRB was created a year earlier?

Axis countries were wavering in their support of the Nazi war machine as the Soviet armies neared in 1944. The writing was on the wall and some even switched sides for their own self interests. The WRB's records do not claim that they saved hundreds of thousands of Jews. What the WRB records do demonstrate was that if there was a will to try and save, someone could be saved.

The first American representative of the WRB was an American – a Jew – a New York Department Store executive on over-extended leave. His name was Ira Hirschmann. Perhaps Rubenstein was correct in that the Rumanian and Hungarian support for the Nazi killing machine was tottering on its own. Hirschmann's auto-biography centered on the time he was in Istanbul as the WRB representative tells another story. He tells of direct intervention and success in saving Jewish lives.

Hirschmann faced down the British who refused to permit a ship with escaping refugees into Palestine. The Turks would not permit the escaping Jews into Turkey unless they could be assured they would be admitted into Palestine. The British White Paper<sup>58</sup>, though the official quotas for Jewish immigration had not been filled, the British Consul would not permit the Jews entry and safety in Palestine. Hirschmann used his ace in the hole, as the official representative

---

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005151>

<sup>57</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warsaw\\_Ghetto\\_Uprising](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warsaw_Ghetto_Uprising)

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/paper39.html>



of the WRB, a letter from the President and a direct emergency contact to the White House. When faced with the blatant British obstructionism, Hirschmann called his contact in the White House. President Roosevelt called Churchill. The next day – the Jews were given their visas. Saving the Jews could be done.

Hirschmann used his position as the American representative of the WRB to save Jews. He, knowingly, let himself and his position with the WRB be used by Jewish Palestinian rescuers, to scare, to pressure and encourage negotiations, including ransom negotiations with the Axis Rumanians to save Jews.

He appealed directly to the Vatican's representative in Istanbul, Cardinal Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, to help save Jews – which he did. Cardinal Roncalli<sup>59</sup> was elected Pope John XXIII in 1958.

If the WRB had been created in 1942 could more Jews have been saved? Maybe yes and maybe no.



Joel Brand

Ransoming the Jews was not an open and shut case with the fanatic Germans. The clandestine meetings of Adolf Eichmann<sup>60</sup> and Joel Brand<sup>61</sup>, trading of gold and 10,000 trucks for the lives of Hungarian Jews, had to be considered. That individual corruption existed and Nazis or their henchman could be bribed to save Jews is well documented. Could Eichmann have been bribed – maybe yes, maybe not. The negotiations that delayed Eichmann's operational implementation of his death orders brought the Allied armies that much closer to save Jewish lives. No one can prove, *what if*, only reflect on what happened.

Rubenstein's criticism of Wyman was in some instances technically correct. Rubenstein was morally wrong. It is not the how many that can be saved but the effort to save that was the moral imperative from World War II. The failure to actively save the Jews of Europe has enough criticism to share with the Western Democracies, the Jews, the Soviets, the Vatican, the world.

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.raoulwallenberg.net/roncalli/articles-11/pope-john-xxiii-jews/>

<sup>60</sup> <http://www.nizkor.org/hweb/people/e/eichmann-adolf/>

<sup>61</sup> <http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/nazioccupation/brand.html>

From the distance of time it is easy to Monday morning quarterback. There is one thing that can never be second guessed.

When is it ever wrong to try and save a life?

Jerry Klinger is President of the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation,

[www.JASHP.org](http://www.JASHP.org)

### **Partial Bibliography**

Voyage of the Damned, A Shocking True Story of Hope, Betrayal, and Nazi Terror, by Gordon Thomas and Max Morgan-Witts, Skyhorse Publishing, New York, 2010

The Myth of Rescue, Why the democracies could not have saved more Jews from the Nazis, William D. Rubinstein, Rutledge Press, London, 1997.

A Race Against Death, Peter Bergson, America and the Holocaust, David S. Wyman and Rafael Medoff, The New Press, N.Y., 2002

Jews Against Zionism, The American Council for Judaism 1942-1948, Thomas A.Kolsky, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1990

While Six Million Died, Arthur D. Morse, Random House, New York 1968

Militant Zionism in America, The Rise and Impact of the Jabotinsky Movement in the United States, 1926-1948, Rafael Medoff, University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa, 2002

Caution to the Winds, IraHirschmann, David Mckay Co, New York, 1962

The Saving Remnant, An Account of Jewish Survival, Herbert Agar, Viking Press, New York, 1960

Saving the Jews, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Holocaust, Robert Rosen, Thundermouth Press, New York, 2006

Earnest Endeavors, The Life and Public Work of George Rublee, by Marc Eric McClure, Praeger Press, Westport, Conn., 2003

Shake Heaven and Earth, Peter Bergson and the Struggle to Rescue the Jews of Europe, by Louis Rapoport, Geffen Press, Jerusalem, 1999

FDR and the Holocaust, by Verne W. Newton, St. Martin Press, New York, 1996

Haven, The Unknown Story of 1,000 World War II Refugees, by Ruth Gruber, Coward-McCann Inc., New York, 1983

The Final Solution, The Attempt to Exterminate the Jews of Europe 1939-1945, by Gerald Reitlinger, Perpetua Books, New York, 1961

The Holocaust, A History of the Jews of Europe During the Second World War, by Martin Gilbert, Henry Hold & Co., New York, 1985

The Abandonment of the Jews, America and the Holocaust 1941-1945, David S. Wyman, 1984

The War Diary of Breckinridge Long, Selection from the Years 1939-1944, Selected by Fred L. Israel, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1963

Advocate for the Dead, The Story of Joel Brand, Constantine Fitgibbon & andrw Foster-Melliari, Andre Deutsch Co., London, 1958

The Unheeded Cry, The Gripping story of Rabbi Weismandl, the valiant holocaust leader who battled both Allied indifference and Nazi hatred,. By Abraham Fuchs, Mesorah Publications Ltd., Brooklyn, 1984

