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Press Release

Protection in the Glass House Resistance and Rescue Work by Hungarian Zionist Women, 1944/45

*Interviews in Israel
with surviving women from the Hungarian Zionist resistance movement*

*A Hungarian-German cooperation project
by Dr. Katalin Pécsi-Pollner (Budapest), the Holocaust Memorial Center (Budapest), the
International Auschwitz Committee (Berlin) and the German Resistance Memorial Center
Foundation (Berlin)*

Katalin Pécsi-Pollner, head of the Alternative Educational and Cultural Programs Department of the Holocaust Memorial Center Budapest, visited Israel in August and September 2010 to speak to 54 women originating from Hungary, who were involved in rescuing Jewish children and adults in occupied Budapest in 1944/45. For many of the women she interviewed, this was the first time they were prepared to break their silence. In the interviews on their life histories, they relate their own persecution under National Socialism and their involvement in a wide range of resistance and rescue work in Budapest's Glass House. They tell how they managed to survive the Nazi terror and a new life began for them in Palestine, or later in Israel. Recorded on film, these interviews with the now elderly women preserve an important chapter of European history for generations to come.

In 1944/45, numerous Zionist organizations in occupied Budapest staged resistance against the persecution of their fellow Jews and their deportation to the National Socialist extermination camps. Zionist youth movements were particularly involved in this courageous struggle against Nazi terror. These young people managed to save the lives of thousands of Jews in the Glass House (Üvegház) at 29 Vadász utca around the Swiss Vice-Consul Carl Lutz, with no leaders or outside support. They ran courier services, sought hiding places, and collected food for people at risk. Above all, however, they distributed and forged identity papers, thus helping countless people to escape. In the "children's houses," they looked after many of the Jewish children who had already lost their parents. In this way, they not only made life more bearable for these children, but also kept many of them from certain death.

Some of these young people managed to escape abroad themselves. In many cases, they only arrived at their desired destination of Palestine after a long and difficult odyssey. Others left Hungary after it was liberated from National Socialism or were forced to leave the country when Zionist organizations were banned in 1949. Many of them emigrated to Palestine or later Israel.



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These young women and men – almost children themselves – showed great courage, responsibility, and charity. However, for many years there was no public interest or recognition for their resistance and rescue work. Whereas the history of the Hungarian Zionist resistance movement against National Socialism is increasingly well researched, we still know little about these young people’s life stories and their courageous actions.

This is particularly true of the young girls and women who made up half the members of these resistance groups. These interviews are our first opportunity to find out about them, their lives, their own personal part in the resistance and rescue campaigns in the Glass House, about gender roles and equality for men and women within the groups, but also about the everyday lives of these courageous young women, about their goals, their dreams, their wishes, and their ideas about the future.

Conceived and run by Dr. Katalin Pécsi-Pollner, the project “Protection in the Glass House” has been realized since March 2010 in cooperation with the Holocaust Memorial Center (Budapest), the International Auschwitz Committee (Berlin), and the German Resistance Memorial Center Foundation (Berlin). The findings of these moving interviews will be presented in public across Europe from 2010 to 2012 under joint Hungarian and German responsibility, by means of events, publications, exhibitions, and educational projects organized by the cooperation partners.

The first joint opening event takes place at the Holocaust Memorial Center Budapest in November 2010. A joint exhibition on the subject is planned at the German Resistance Memorial Center, Berlin, for January 2012.

The interview process in Israel was funded by the Foundation “Remembrance, Responsibility and Future.”

Should you have any further questions, please feel free to contact:

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Holocaust Memorial Center (Budapest),

International Auschwitz Committee (Berlin),

German Resistance Memorial Center Foundation (Berlin)

Germany Embassy to Hungary

Funding of the interview process

Foundation “Remembrance, Responsibility and Future” (Berlin)



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