

An International Humanitarian Diplomacy: The Protection Operation of the Jews of Budapest in 1944 – 1945

The Holocaust being the worst crime in the history of mankind, the 80th Commemoration of the Holocaust in Hungary is a special occasion to remember the victims and honour the rescuers. Among the efforts to oppose the perpetrators, the operation to protect the Jewish population of Budapest in 1944–1945 remains unique until the present days and its actors deserve a special recognition. Several neutral diplomats played a major role in this operation. Notably, the Papal Nuncio Angelo Rotta, Raoul Wallenberg of Sweden, Carl Lutz of Switzerland and Friedrich Born of the International Committee of the Red Cross are recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations and have gained international recognition as rescuers during the Holocaust in Hungary. As such, they are honoured for their individual actions to save lives during the Shoah and because they were, to some extent, successful against evil.

As Swiss Ambassador to Hungary from 2012 to 2016, and then again from 2020 to present, I had many occasions to get involved with the legacy of the neutral diplomats and Righteous Among the Nations. It was a very moving experience to meet Hungarian personalities such as philosopher Ágnes Heller, journalist Paul Lendvai or Rabbi József Schweitzer, who had been saved by Carl Lutz and later became in their own sectors important figures of public life in Hungary. It was no less moving to be approached by people I met as part of my diplomatic activities, who wanted to show me the Swiss letter of protection of a parent or grand-parent whose live had been saved thanks to this document.

In the historiography of the Holocaust in Hungary, the Righteous diplomats appear as rescuers whose engagement and courage contrast with the indifference of other actors, labelled as onlookers or bystanders. Randolph Braham describes the onlookers as follows:

„Who must bear the historical responsibility for this catastrophe? In retrospect, it appears that considerable blame falls on those who might be called onlookers – the Allied and the neutral powers for their basic indifference to the plight of the Jews, the International Red Cross and the Vatican for their lack of urgency and insensitivity, and the local Christian population and church authorities for their apathy and passivity. To a much lesser extent blame must also be shared by the Hungarians and world Jewish leaders for their short-sightedness and bureaucratic-diplomatic tendencies, though their ineffectiveness reflected primarily the impotence of the Jewish people. Ultimate responsibility, however, must be borne almost exclusively by the Germans and their Hungarian accomplices. It was the concerted and single-minded drive of these two groups that made the effectuation of the Final Solution in Hungary possible: one could not have succeeded without the other.”¹

* Ambassador of Switzerland to Hungary from 2012 to 2016 and from 2020 to present. He holds a degree in history of the University of Lausanne and a postgraduate degree in international history and politics of the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva. The author is expressing a personal point of view here and does not engage the responsibility and views of Switzerland or of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). The opinions stated in this text should not be regarded as the official position of FDFA. It is not a publication of the FDFA.

1 Braham 2016: xxxix-xl.

However, looking closer at the protection operation of the neutral diplomats in Budapest, I realized that had they really acted alone and against the objectives or instructions of their governments, as is sometimes believed until today, they would not have been as successful as they managed to be. The question „*how could they be at least partially successful?*” has thus intrigued me for several years. I started looking into the diplomatic archives to examine the status of conformity of their actions with the goals and instructions of their governments and to try to understand better the reasons for their success. I also became aware that there are some myths about the rescuer diplomats and that historians are pointing out the necessity to question them.

Susanne Berger, for instance, writes:

„Swedish historians like Paul Levine and Attila Lajos have argued that Wallenberg’s fame today is due mainly to the uncertainty about his later fate. They claim that the post-war ‘myth making’ around Raoul Wallenberg has prevented a realistic evaluation not only of his achievements but of the events in Budapest in general. Levine and Lajos make an important point: In the end ‘myth making’ is always a form of simplification. When it goes too far, when things are over-simplified, the essence of any problem is lost.”²

Paul A. Levine notes that

„a full, comparative analysis of the accomplishments and failures of international diplomacy in Budapest (...) remains to be written, and would most likely require the efforts of a group of historians from different countries”.³

About Carl Lutz, he states that „*Lutz’s achievements remain in need of scholarly analysis*”.⁴

Braham, for his part, observes that

„there is a potential danger that rescue myths, if left where they are, will one day acquire a life of their own, threatening the integrity of the Holocaust historical narrative.”⁵

Inspired by these historians, I became convinced that an important responsibility lies in the patient, humble and relentless search for the facts in their complexity, in order to ensure that the historical narrative of the Holocaust, enriched by the successive researches, becomes more and more precise and relies on convincing documentary evidence. My research is focused on the international context and is mainly based on the diplomatic documents from several countries, in particular the United States and Switzerland. They have enabled me to develop the vision of the protection operation as being part of a humanitarian diplomacy of international dimension, and to highlight the complex and rich interactions between its various actors, as well as their cooperation in the implementation of a wide range of protection instruments.

2 Berger 2005: 7

3 Levine 2010: 319 and 356.

4 Ibid., 209.

5 Braham 2006: 425–426.

THE ACTORS AND THEIR INTERACTION

The protection operation is a collective action. Sixteen neutral diplomats, including five heads of mission and delegation, plus two spouses, have so far been recognized as Righteous Among the Nations. Of course, these diplomats did not become dissidents to their governments altogether. The protection operation involves not just some neutral diplomats as individuals but the teams of six embassies and diplomatic representations. These teams are composed by remarkable people, with a mix of experienced diplomats like Angelo Rotta, 72, Carl Danielsson, Maximilian Jaeger⁶ or Carlos Sampaio Garrido, all three in their sixties, and young diplomats like Angel Sanz-Briz, who is 34, Raoul Wallenberg and Harald Feller, who are both 32. And there are also persons who are not diplomats at all, like Giorgio Perlasca. Prior to his recruitment, Raoul Wallenberg had been a businessman, as had also been Friedrich Born, Peter Zürcher, Ernst Vonrufs and Eduard Brunschweiler. Faced with a lack of available diplomatic personnel, which is bitterly deplored by Carl Lutz,⁷ the diplomatic services of the neutral countries and the ICRC hire businessmen already stationed in Hungary who are available as the war severely affects their economic activities. Together, the experienced and the improvised diplomats play a central role in the implementation of main components of the protection operation: issuance and distribution of protection documents, diplomatic demarches to ensure that the documents are respected, as well as establishment, maintenance and care for the „protected houses” in the International Ghetto, hiding of persecuted persons in private properties, individual acts of courage and heroism.

In Budapest, they work closely with scores of local staff and with partners such as the leaders of the Jewish Council of Budapest under Samu Stern and the representatives of the Zionist organizations who are members of the Jewish Aid and Rescue Committee of Budapest. Their cooperation with the members of this Committee is not only operational but also institutional. After the German occupation, the Head of the Palestine Office, Moshe Krausz, becomes Head of the Emigration Office in the Division for the protection of foreign interest of the Swiss Legation in Budapest. Rezső Kasztner and Ottó Komoly cooperate with Friedrich Born. Ottó Komoly becomes the Head of the Section A of the ICRC Delegation in Budapest, in charge of the assistance to persecuted Jews.⁸ The members of the Committee, helped by numerous volunteers, play a decisive role in several efforts to protect the Jewish population and in negotiations to this end. Joel Brand and then Rezső Kasztner get involved in negotiations with German perpetrators of the Holocaust in an effort to save Jewish lives. Moshe Krausz is the responsible for bureaucratic efforts to prepare the emigration of Palestinian certificate holders from Hungary as part of the „Horthy Offer”, in partnership with Carl Lutz⁹.

The operational centre of the protection operation is in Budapest, but the actions are accompanied remotely from a main political decision centre in Washington, within the State Department and the War Refugee Board (WRB) headquarters. There is also a main coordination centre in Switzerland, with the American Legation in Bern in the lead role. The protection operation is indeed part of an international humanitarian diplomacy aiming at saving Jewish lives. It consists in a collective effort initiated in January 1944 after the creation of the WRB by

6 Maximilian Jaeger is not recognized as a Righteous Among the Nations.

7 Letter of 10 December 1944 to the Head of the Legal Office in the Federal Political Department, Swiss Diplomatic Documents, <https://dodis.ch/14326> (accessed 22 October 2024). For ease of reading, the original texts quoted in the article have been translated into English by the author.

8 Born, Bericht: 27 and 34, <https://dodis.ch.18861> (accessed 22 October 2024).

9 Carl Lutz gave many testimonies about his cooperation with Moshe Krausz, for instance in his report of 1st July 1945 of the Division for the protection of foreign interests about its action for the rescue of the Jewish population in the Winter of 1944–1945 (<https://dodis.ch/14327>) and in a report of 1949 (<https://dodis.ch/14325>) (both accessed 22 October 2024).

the Roosevelt administration.¹⁰ With the establishment of this new governmental agency, the United States Government sets a new goal as part of its foreign policy objectives, namely to save as many Jews as possible from the remaining Jewish population of Europe:

„It is the policy of this government to take all measures within its power to rescue the victims of enemy oppression who are in imminent danger of death and otherwise to afford such victims all possible relief and assistance consistent with the successful prosecution of the war”.¹¹

To achieve this goal, the new and *sui generis* governmental institution must base its actions on a broad cooperation with various actors:

„The Board and the State, Treasury and War Departments are authorized to accept the services or contributions of any private persons, private organizations, State agencies, or agencies of foreign governments in carrying out the purposes of this Order”.¹²

Having to perform a lead function in the protection efforts, the WRB has the mandate to create an international coalition, as appropriate:

„To this end the Board, through appropriate channels, shall take the necessary steps to enlist the cooperation of foreign governments and obtain their participation in the execution of such plans and programs.”¹³

The creation of the WRB is a game changer for the international efforts to save and protect the victims of the Nazi persecutions and of their monstrous extermination undertaking. In international relations, efforts of the countries involved had dealt as a matter of priority with the search of solutions to the „refugees’ problem”, in particular by avoiding having to welcome them in large numbers on their own territory. The main problem is now identified as being the way the Nazi regime is treating the Jews and the priority becomes to save Jewish survivors in Reich-controlled territories by any effective means possible. A gradual shift occurs as the apprehension of having to welcome an uncontrolled stream of refugees is reduced, then resorbed by the prospect of the war ending soon and the refugees being able to return to their country of origin or find another destination. The new element is therefore above all the political will now demonstrated by the government of the first Western allied power to help the victims of Nazism. Thus, upon the initiative of the American Government, starting in January 1944, an informal international coalition is established to implement this humanitarian diplomacy in favour of the victims of the Nazis persecutions. These efforts receive a special level of dramatic urgency after March and in particular April and May with the beginning of the ghettoization and deportation of the Hungarian Jews.

To implement this diplomacy, the State Department appoints WRB representatives in several countries, such as Roswell McClelland in Bern, Iver Olsen in Stockholm and Ira Hirschmann in Ankara. With them, it actively seeks the cooperation of Allied and neutral governments which are persuaded to take part in the efforts of saving lives. After some elements of perplexity in face of what appears as a sudden new focus,¹⁴ the neutral governments join the

¹⁰ Wyman 1984; Erbelding 2018.

¹¹ Executive Order No 9417: *Establishing a War Refugee Board*, paragraph 1. The White House, 22 January 1944. https://archives.federalregister.gov/issue_slice/1944/1/26/935-936.pdf (accessed 22 October 2024).

¹² *Ibid.*, paragraph 2, subparagraph 4.

¹³ *Ibid.*, paragraph 2, subparagraph 2.

¹⁴ See for instance the letter of 21 April 1944 of the Head of the Federal Political Department, Marcel Pilet-Golaz, to the Swiss Minister in Washington, Karl Bruggmann, <https://dodis.ch/47728> (accessed 22 October 2024).

efforts rather willingly. In Bern, regular and direct contacts are established almost on a weekly basis between the Head of the American Legation, Leland Harrison, and the Head of the Swiss Federal Political Department (in fact the foreign minister) Federal Councillor Marcel Pilet-Golaz. At working level, the exchanges between the personnel of the Legation, in particular Roswell McClelland, and the officials of the Political Department are intense. Rebecca Erbelding notes in this regard that „*the Board was in almost daily contact with the Swiss Foreign Office*“.¹⁵ The WRB encourages neutral governments to increase their diplomatic presence in Budapest. The Swedish Government is the only government of a neutral state to comply with this request and it marks the origin of Raoul Wallenberg’s mission to Hungary. Simultaneously, the WRB builds a close partnership with the Jewish organizations, such as the World Jewish Congress, the Joint Distribution Committee, the Jewish Agency for Palestine, the World Center of the Hechalutz Movement, all having offices or representatives in Switzerland, mostly in Geneva. The WRB also cooperates with humanitarian organizations such as the ICRC and National Red Cross Societies.

The different actors of this humanitarian diplomacy build together a new architecture of rescue and protection in which they can exercise various functions, based on their assets and limitations. The table attached as Annex 1 presents the main actors and the principal lines of communication between them. The American officials represent the political power and they coordinate the diplomatic efforts. They can pilot actions in the background but they have no direct access to the Nazi-controlled territories. They can emit messages, but in order to transmit them officially and not only by radio broadcasts, they need third parties, mainly the neutral diplomats who represent and protect their interests. They do not have much direct access to information and therefore must rely on the neutral diplomats and mainly on the Jewish organizations present on the ground in Budapest to inform them on the main developments. In terms of delivery of support and implementation of rescue and protection measures, as they have no physical presence in the enemy or enemy-occupied countries, they also rely on the neutral diplomats, the humanitarian actors like the ICRC or the Swedish Red Cross, and on the Jewish civil society organizations. The latter, and in particular the Joint Distribution Committee, finance to a large extent the humanitarian support operations.

As early as in May 1944, Switzerland is considered as the main operational coordination center for the efforts of the WRB in favor of the persecuted Jewish population in various European countries, including Hungary. On 22 May 1944, in a telegram addressed to the Legation of the United States in Stockholm, the WRB suggests that rescue and support operations in eastern European countries still under Nazi rule can be coordinated more effectively from Switzerland than from Sweden:

*„Relief and rescue with respect to refugees in Romania, Slovakia, Hungary and southern France {could} be handled more effectively from Switzerland. Large sums are being remitted regularly to Switzerland from the United States for such purposes.“*¹⁶

This identification of Switzerland as a central location for rescue efforts is confirmed several times later. In a letter dated 23 October 1944 to McClelland concerning the mission of Joseph Schwartz, representative in Europe of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, the Director of the WRB John Pehle mentions the *„possibility of further rescues from Switzerland, which at this stage seems to us to be the main country in Europe from which such activities can*

¹⁵ Erbelding 2018: 193.

¹⁶ Telegram of 22 May 1944, NARA, 840.48 Refugees/5922,984, quoted in Matz 2012: 143.

take place.”¹⁷ Interestingly, both Carl Lutz and Raoul Wallenberg, the two neutral diplomats in Budapest whose actions have taken the greatest scale in the operation to protect the Jews in the Hungarian capital, are, for diverse reasons, somewhat marginalized within the diplomatic service of their respective countries and they also occupy a decentralized position within the framework of the diplomatic representation of their countries in Hungary. Neither of the two has a direct line with the main actors of the international protection efforts outside Hungary.

In terms of information gathering, the cooperation between the partners of the protection efforts produces positive results. The Legation of the United States in Bern becomes a hub for gathering information about the situation in Hungary, for the transmission of this information to the competent authorities and for their use in the form of diplomatic or humanitarian measures to be implemented. The archives of the WRB highlight the frequency and abundance of information and reports received by the Jewish organizations on the situation of Hungarian Jews, starting already in March 1944.¹⁸ On 14 April, the United States Legation in Bern transmits to the State Department in Washington a report on ongoing developments in Hungary in which the main Hungarian Government officials responsible for the persecutions of Jews are explicitly named. Brief reports on developments in Hungary, in the form of telegrams, are sent by the Legation to the State Department on 20, 21 and 24 April. The United States Legation in Bern manages to send to the State Department in Washington detailed information on the deportations of the Hungarian Jews already on 25 May 1944, several weeks before Moshe Krausz’s report was brought to Switzerland by Florian Manoliu, together with copies of the „Auschwitz protocols”.¹⁹ The telegram details the ghettoization measures taken in the regions concerned by providing precise information on the number of people affected, the places of concentration, the dramatic living conditions and the reactions of the local population. In its second part, it contains proposals of actions to try to stop the fatal enterprise in progress, or to help the victims. In the light of the documents preserved in the archives of the WRB, it is necessary to re-evaluate the importance of the reception in Switzerland, via Budapest, of copies of the „Auschwitz Protocols” and of the report sent by Moshe Krausz on the deportation of the Jews from Hungary, and the follow-up to the information thus obtained. Many efforts to protect the Jews in Hungary are initiated before the reception of Krausz’s correspondence and prior to the press campaign initiated afterwards. This campaign is not conducted in violation of censorship provisions in Switzerland (where there is no prior censorship), but it ultimately constitutes a huge boost to the efforts already undertaken by the American Legation in Bern as part of the „psychological weapon” implemented by the WRB with various partners.²⁰

THE INSTRUMENTS OF PROTECTION

The actors of the humanitarian diplomacy, American diplomats and representatives of the WRB, British diplomats, neutral diplomats, members of the Jewish Aid and Rescue Committee in Budapest, ICRC delegates, representatives of the Jewish organizations in the United States, Switzerland, Turkey or Slovakia, for instance, share a common objective and they join forc-

17 WRB Records, Box 71, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee: Activities in and from Switzerland (2), February 1944–May 1945.

18 WRB Records, Box 66, Jews in Hungary (2), February–May 1944.

19 Telegram of the United States Legation in Bern to the State Department in Washington, 25 May 1944, a draft of which is preserved in the archives of Roswell McClelland’s correspondence: WRB Records, Box 66. Jews in Hungary (2), February–May 1944.

20 See the „Report on the Activities of the War Refugee Board through its Representation at the American Legation in Bern, Switzerland, March 1944–July 1945”, 15–16 and 25. WRB Records, Box 50. Programs with Respect to Relief and Rescue of Refugees – Evacuations to and through Switzerland – Evacuation to Switzerland (1).

es to implement a set of instruments identified as possible means to save or protect lives. Those instruments are not invented by the WRB or by the neutral diplomats. Most of them have been identified and proposed by the Jewish organizations many months before, for instance to the attention of the Bermuda Conference of April 1943. On the occasion of this conference, a „*Joint Emergency Committee for European Jewish Affairs*“, in the name of 8 Jewish organizations, presents on 14 April 1943 a „*Program for the Rescue of Jews from Nazi Occupied Europe*“.²¹ In response to the consultation that the new Executive Director of the WRB, John Pehle, addressed to 94 relief organizations on activities that could be implemented in favor of the Jewish populations of Europe,²² the Chairman of the Joint Distribution Committee, Paul Baerwald, drew up in a communication of 28 February a detailed list of possible measures and actors for their implementation.²³

The instruments and potential actors are also mentioned in a document of the American Legation in Bern of 30 April 1944, listing the measures to protect the Hungarian Jews.²⁴ In this document, which is attached as Annex 2 to this article, the instruments identified include different categories of actions, with a first category aiming at providing support „surplace“ (on the spot), such as financial assistance or material assistance. Legal or psychological measures are also listed within this first category. The legal measures consist of the issuance of false passports (sic) and certificates of nationality, of interventions on the basis of international law, and the control of the camps. Psychological measures refer to the issuing of warnings by means of radio broadcasts or by parachuting leaflets. The promise of punishment aims to intimidate the perpetrators of persecution and is accompanied by encouragement to help the victims. As possible actors for the implementation of these various measures, the document lists, in particular, for financial assistance, the World Council of Churches, private entrepreneurs, Jewish organizations and the WRB; for the distribution of material assistance, the Mixed Commission of the International Red Cross; for passports and certificates of nationality the consulates of Latin America, the International Red Cross, Switzerland and the Nuncio. The measures of the second category, those of rescuing victims of enemy oppression, can be legally ensured through Palestinian certificates, for which the authors of the document rely on the good offices of the heads of mission of Romania and Bulgaria in Bern, or through emigration to Switzerland, with the support of non-Jewish personalities and possibly by paying the Germans. They can also be provided illegally for emigration from Hungary to Tito's Yugoslavia or Switzerland, with the support of resistance movements.

Thus, the toolbox to save and protect includes several categories of actions and for their implementation a broad gathering of diverse actors is envisaged. The international humanitarian diplomacy in favour of the persecuted Jews in Hungary indeed consists in systematic efforts to implement these instruments, as part of a collective endeavour. The protagonists of the protection efforts often debate about the opportunity to implement some of the instruments, but only with regard to their effectivity, advisability or timing; they never question their main and common objective, which is to save lives.

The political and diplomatic measures implemented include threats, political demarch-

21 *Program for the Rescue of the Jews from Nazi Occupied Europe submitted to the Bermuda Refugee Conference by the Joint Emergency Committee for European Jewish Affairs*, Jewish Virtual Library, a project of AICE, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jewish-organizations-plan-for-rescue-of-european-jewry-april-1943> (accessed 22 October 2024).

22 Erbelding 2018: 69.

23 Letter from Paul Baerwald to John W. Pehle, 28 February 1944. https://search.archives.jdc.org/multimedia/Documents/NY_AR_45-54/NY_AR45-54_Orgs/NY_AR45-54_00193/NY_AR45-54_00193_1233.pdf (accessed 22 October 2024).

24 Document „draft outline“, with a manuscript inscription partially unreadable indicating probably „WRB's plan of activity in favour of persecuted Jews in Hungary“, dated 30 April 1944, with the initials LH. WRB Records, Box 66, Jews in Hungary (1), February–May 1944.

es and appeals aiming at avoiding persecution or stopping it. Attempts to influence the policy of enemy governments, especially those of Germany's satellite countries, by a communication campaign and warnings are seen as a way to possibly save more lives than the actions to rescue victims implemented on the ground.²⁵ The Roosevelt Declaration of 24 March 1944, which states:

„we should again proclaim our determination that none who participate in these acts of savagery shall go unpunished. The United Nations have made it clear that they will pursue the guilty and deliver them up in order that justice be done. That warning applies not only to the leaders but also to their functionaries and subordinates in Germany and in the satellite countries”²⁶

and the statement by the British Secretary of State Anthony Eden at the House of Commons on 30 March 1944, are important milestones in this regard.²⁷ The determination to punish those responsible for crimes against humanity gives rise to concrete preparations. In its Document No. C.31, of 16 June 1944 (Surrender by the Axis Powers of Persons Wanted for Trial as War Criminals), the United Nations War Crimes Commission, established in October 1943, proposes that the texts of the armistices to be concluded with Nazi Germany and its satellite states contain a paragraph imposing the surrender to the United Nations authorities of persons wanted for war crimes.²⁸ Concrete measures to enable the prosecution of war criminals after the war are also taken by the authorities of neutral Switzerland, based on lists issued by the „Soviet War News” in London, which are registered by the Federal Public Prosecutor.²⁹ After the Confederation's asylum policy towards Jewish refugees had undergone a major adjustment the previous month, the Federal Council, at its meeting on 30 August 1944, decides that the members of the Gestapo who would ask to enter Switzerland would be turned away.³⁰

It is in the context of these measures to influence the behaviour of the leaders of the perpetrators' states that on 26 May 1944 the Department of State suggests that the Pope should speak out on the persecutions in Hungary.³¹ On 5 June, the Apostolic Nuncio in Budapest, Angelo Rotta, addresses a substantial diplomatic Note to the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, protesting against the deportation and other forms of inhumane treatment of Jews.³² Following a new message on 24 June from the WRB asking for the Pope's intervention,³³ Pope Pius XII addresses on 25 June to the Hungarian Regent Miklos Horthy a telegram with a personal message asking him to undertake everything in his power to avoid further mourning and suffering.³⁴ On 12 June, Leland Harrison meets with Federal Councillor Pilet-Golaz and

25 See WRB Records, Box 40, Measures Directed Toward Halting Persecutions - Measures Directed Toward Halting Persecutions (1).

26 Statement by President Roosevelt on 24 March 1944, Department of States of the United States of America, Office of the Historian, FRUS, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1944v01/d771> (accessed 22 October 2024).

27 See: <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1944/mar/30/persecution-of-jews-germany-and> (accessed 22 October 2024).

28 Department of States of the United States of America, Office of the Historian, FRUS, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1944v01/d850> (accessed 22 October 2024).

29 SFA, E4320B#1990/266#874* Kriegsverbrecher. List of 17 November 1943, filed at the Federal Prosecutor's Office on 6 January 1944.

30 Federal Council. Minutes of 30 August 1944. „1451 Members of the Gestapo seeking refuge in Switzerland”, <https://dodis.ch/47819> (accessed 22 October 2024).

31 Telegram 1819 of 26 May 1944 from the State Department (Hull) to Harold H. Tittman, Chargé d'affaires of the United States to the Vatican, WRB Records, Box 66, Jews in Hungary (2), February–May 1944.

32 Note Nr. 1207/44 of 5 June 1944 of the Apostolic Nunciature to the Hungarial Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Actes et Documents du Saint-Siège relatifs à la Seconde Guerre Mondiale*. Vol. 10. 308–313, <https://www.vatican.va/archive/actes/documents/Volume-10.pdf> (accessed 22 October 2024).

33 Ibid., 326–327.

34 Ibid., 328.

informs him of the American request to transmit to the Hungarian authorities a warning note on the persecution of Jews.³⁵ The formal note from the American Legation is dated 13 June. An instruction to transmit the American warning is sent by mail to the Swiss Legation in Budapest on 14 June³⁶ and the demarche is carried out by Minister Jaeger on 26 June, the same day as Regent Horthy convenes a Crown Council meeting to review the domestic and international situations and to initiate measures towards the end of the deportations.³⁷ Pressured to appeal to the Hungarian Head of State, King Gustav V of Sweden also decides to send a personal message to Regent Horthy, which is sent by telegram on 30 June and delivered on 3 July by Minister Danielsson.³⁸ These joint efforts contribute to the Regent's decision to halt deportations and to his offer to allow several thousand Hungarian Jews to emigrate from Hungary to neutral states or to Palestine. During the summer, upon instructions from their capitals, the neutral diplomats in Budapest undertake several diplomatic demarches in favour of the persecuted Jews, in order to facilitate humanitarian support, to ensure emigration to Palestine, to secure respect for the protection documents and to prevent the resumption of the deportations.³⁹

Consular protection. Among the rescue instruments identified, the measures implemented as part of the consular protection by the neutral diplomats in Budapest have become a main symbol of the protection operation in Budapest. They consist in the emission of emigration documents, of identity documents and of protection documents. These documents are not an invention of the Righteous Among the Nations diplomats in Budapest. They are part of an international effort led by the capitals, but the neutral diplomats in Budapest are the only actors who can, at the operational level, deliver national documents to persecuted persons having a relationship with their country and issue protection documents for persons and locations which are associated with their activities. Furthermore, as representatives of countries ensuring the protection of foreign interests, they have an additional competence to issue protective documents to persons having a relationship with the states they represent. At the beginning of 1944, Switzerland represents the interests of Belgium, Chile, Egypt, the British Empire, the United States of America, Greece, Uruguay, Venezuela and Yugoslavia. In the course of 1944, Haiti, Honduras, Paraguay, Romania and El Salvador join the list.⁴⁰ Sweden, for its part, represents the interests of the Soviet Union, the Netherlands and Iran in Hungary and the interests of Hungary in several countries, including the United States and the British Empire. Spain and Portugal also exercise mandates as protecting powers. Spain represents Germany in several Latin American countries, and Paraguay's interests in Hungary.

The WRB archives⁴¹ show that numerous protagonists of the protection operation are involved in the successive steps between April and September 1944 leading to the request by several Latin American countries to Switzerland to represent their interest in Hungary and to the acceptance of the Swiss Confederation's authorities to perform this task, thus being able to distribute widely South American passports to Hungarian citizens who had in principle no relation with the Latin American countries. This operation takes a significant dimension in the

35 Memorandum dated 13 June 1944 from Mr. Tait to the Minister, copy dmh with a mention in the margin: „(Note of the Minister: I saw Mr. P.G yesterday and had an opportunity to mention this; Mr. P.G. seemed favorably disposed and I believe will authorize presentation to his government. L. H.)”. WRB Records, Box 66, Jews in Hungary (1), June 1944.

36 DDS, Vol. 15. 444, note 1.

37 Braham 2016: Vol. 2, 1021.

38 See Levine 2010: 114–116 and Levine 1998: 273–275.

39 Concerning the demarches undertaken by the neutral diplomats on 13, 18, 21, 31 July and 21 August, see for instance Braham 2016: 1420, 1427–1428 and DDS, Vol. 15. 506, note 2.

40 See the document „Liste des pays représentés par la Suisse pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale 1939–1945”, <https://dodis.ch/18539> (accessed 22 October 2024).

41 Among numerous other files, see WRB Records, Box 79, Recognition of Latin American Passports.

case of the passports of El Salvador. The American and the Swiss authorities are partners for the dissemination of passports of convenience, and in 1945 Carl Lutz summarized this operation as follows:

„In this chapter of the protection of the Jews belongs the assumption of the interests of San Salvador (sic). In reality, these were purely Jewish interests, since no citizen of San Salvador (sic) had previously been in Hungary. The plight of the Hungarian Jews was brought to the attention of the American State Department through various channels, so that the latter one day asked the Swiss government to take over the interests of San Salvador in Hungary. Since Bern knew and Washington also openly admitted that it was the dissemination and recognition of fictitious citizenship documents, Bern first took a negative attitude but then gave in to the desire of the American government, who said it was an action to save people.“⁴²

The protection value of the South American passports relates to the fact that their holders are considered by the Germans as possible candidates for exchanges with German citizens in allied countries.

In terms of instructions, the Swiss authorities consider that within the framework of the protective power mandate, its officials must endeavour to provide nationals of the countries represented with the same services as Swiss nationals, in accordance with the provisions of the Swiss Consular Regulation.⁴³ As a result, the Swiss diplomats and their local staff and partners in Budapest strive to ensuring that protected persons enjoy the same protection as if they were Swiss citizens. And in fact, Vatican, Swedish, Portuguese or Spanish documents have the same effect: the holders of these documents must be considered as citizens of these neutral countries. Carl Lutz and Raoul Wallenberg build a significant protection bureaucracy tasked with the treatment of lists of potential beneficiaries of consular protection or of emigration facilities, the contacts with these beneficiaries, the issuance of appropriate identity or travel documents, and the preparation of their emigration from Hungary. The instructions of the Federal Political Department are of a general nature. They grant a wide delegation of powers and provide for a margin of initiative, particularly with regard to the issuance of passports of States whose interests are represented. The detailed instructions are initiated by these states themselves, and not by the Swiss authorities. If they cannot be received in a timely manner, the consular agents are authorized to extend the validity of existing passports or to deliver passports of protection.⁴⁴

Within the representation of the British interests falls for the Swiss diplomacy the exercise of several functions related to the British mandate over Palestine. As part of this mandate, the British authorities, in cooperation with the Jewish Agency for Palestine, establish lists of Jewish persons or families from various countries in Europe who are entitled to emigrate to Palestine and receive there a new Palestine citizenship and they use this possibility of emigration as a possible protection against deportation. It is within the framework of the mandate of protective power that the Swiss authorities lend their assistance to the realization of demarches in favour of the Jews allowed to emigrate to Palestine and in the organization of German-Palestinian exchanges of civilians. The activity report of the Foreign Interests Division

42 Report on the events at the Swiss Embassy in Budapest, the Foreign Interests Division and the offices and buildings under its protection (October 1944–April 1945). Written by C. Lutz, at that time Head of the Protection Division in Budapest. The document consulted is a copy of a document kept at the Yad Vashem Archives in Jerusalem, Carl Lutz Collection: Notes regarding the rescue activities in Budapest.

43 „Rechenschaftsbericht der Abteilung für fremde Interessen des Eidgenössischen Politischen Departementes für die Zeit von September 1939 bis Anfang 1946“, <https://dodis.ch/2340> (accessed 22 October 2024).

44 Article 12 of the „Instructions for legations that will have to take charge of safeguarding foreign interests“, Attachment IX to the Rechenschaftsbericht, op. cit. A model of a passport of protection is joined as attachment X to the Rechenschaftsbericht.

mentions such exchanges conducted between 1942 and 1944 between the authorities of the British Empire and Germany, with the operational support of Swiss diplomacy and Swiss representations in both countries, within the mandate of protective power.⁴⁵ These operations are carried out based in particular on certificates of Palestinian nationality, and with the establishment of lists of up to several hundred people, thus foreshadowing what will be implemented in Budapest by the Emigration Division of the Swiss Legation during the summer and autumn of 1944 in the form of collective passports.⁴⁶

Between March 1943 and June 1944, on the basis of proposals by the Jewish Agency for Palestine, the British authorities have established 25 lists of persons or families authorized to emigrate to Palestine.⁴⁷ Those lists bear the stamp of the „British Passport Control Istanbul Turkey“. The role of the Swiss Legation in Budapest is to transmit these lists to the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and to request on behalf of the British authorities that the Hungarian authorities allow the emigration to Palestine of the persons on the lists, who are designated as „Veteran Zionists“. The practical organization of emigration is ensured by the Palestinian Office in Budapest, led by Moshe Krausz. The lists of „Veteran Zionists“ include 8343 names, for many of which it is mentioned that the authorization to emigrate also covers their families. Interestingly, the lists include the names of several of the main Jewish officials who are partners of the neutral diplomats in Budapest. Yeel Brand in Budapest (number 8), Dr. Rudolf Kasztzner (sic) in Kolozsvár (number 45) and Ottó Komoly in Budapest (number 58) are on list 1. Samu Stern, in Budapest (number 210) is on list 2. Philipp von Freudiger in Budapest, „% Orthodox Jew. Com.“ (number 41) is on list 6.⁴⁸

After the German occupation, the Palestine Office cannot continue its activities and Moshe Krausz seeks the protection of the Swiss Legation. On 30 March, the Legation informs the Federal Political Department of the importance of Krausz' activities and enquires about the possibilities to grant him an appropriate protection. After various exchanges to gather more information, the British Legation in Bern, on 6 May, informs that Moshe Krausz, „an official of the Emigration Division of the Jews Agency in Jerusalem in charge of the Agency's office in Budapest, may be included in the list of the Veteran Zionists“. The objective to protect Krausz from deportation is clear, but the modalities are not very conclusive. Thus, the Swiss Legation in Budapest uses the flexibility included in the general instructions for the exercise of the protection of foreign interests and engages Krausz and his team as local employees of the Legation, according to Article 10 of these instructions.⁴⁹

On 27 May 1944, the Head of the Swiss Legation in Ankara addresses a telegram to the Division of Foreign Interests in Bern which states:

„For your information, the British Government will shortly ask you to have certificates issued by the Swiss Legation in Budapest to Hungarian Jews who have already received authorization to enter Palestine attesting to this admission and likely to reduce the risk of deportation. Stop. The Embassy of Great Britain in Ankara will send them by regular mail to the Legation of Great Britain in Bern and as

45 Rechenschaftsbericht, 49.

46 See SFA E2200.56-06#1000/646#1540*, E2200.56-06#1000/646#1541* and E2200.56-06#1000/646#1642*, Deutsch-Palästinensischer Austausch – Grossbritannien.

47 See the Notice on the number of persons or families on the lists of Veteran Zionists in Hungary and the lists in the SFA E2001-02#1000/114#528* Questions juives.

48 Ibid.

49 Article 10 of the „Instructions for legations that will have to take charge of safeguarding foreign interests“, Attachment IX to the Rechenschaftsbericht, op. cit.

a precaution will give me a copy that will be sent to you by the next mail. Lardy".⁵⁰

On 13 June, Minister Lardy sends the 25 lists to Bern, noting that

*„the purpose of sending them is, as you know, the possible establishment by the Swiss Legation in Hungary of certificates attesting to the admission of the persons concerned in Palestine and likely to reduce, for their holders, the risk of deportation. This question is to be dealt with shortly, or has perhaps already been the subject of an approach to you by the British Government.”*⁵¹

In a diplomatic note dated 16 June (cf. Annex 3), the British Legation in Bern explains its requests related to the protection certificates, with the objective to provide the Jews whose admission into Palestine has been approved with a protection against deportation:

*„His Majesty's Government enquire whether the Swiss authorities would be good enough to issue certificates to such persons to the effect that their admission into Palestine has been approved. The certificate should be of such a kind that the Jews can carry them about with them.”*⁵²

A request is also made for the Swiss Legation to assist in the handing over of travel documents to Jews authorized to emigrate to Palestine, in order to allow them to escape the Gestapo agents who monitor and arrest them when they visit the Legation of Turkey in Budapest. The Foreign Interests Division cables the content of this note to the Swiss Legation in Budapest and announces that:

*„As soon as we receive the text of these certificates we will wire them to you and you can have them drawn up and given to all the Jews whose names are carried in the 25 lists that Ankara transmitted to you on 13 June”.*⁵³

On 3 July, the Foreign Interests Division of the Federal Political Department asks the Swiss Legation in Budapest to confirm if they have received the 25 lists and informs it that appropriate instructions will soon be sent.⁵⁴

In the next weeks, the follow-up to this British initiative continues in parallel with efforts to implement the „Horthy Offer”, under which Jewish children, the holders of Palestine certificates and of Swedish letters of protection were allowed to emigrate from Hungary to Palestine. Negotiations between the Swiss Legation in Budapest and the Hungarian authorities about the departure of a first contingent from Hungary to Palestine, via Romania and Turkey, and the communications between the British authorities and the Swiss authorities about the content of the certificates which should be issued to the Jews inscribed on the 25 lists are conducted in parallel and it causes some degree of confusion. After the British authorities have proposed a text for the certificates which, given the reality on the ground, cannot provide an appropriate protection from the German services or the Hungarian police, the Swiss Legation in Budapest is faced with the challenge of finalizing a document that works. Since the reception of the 25 lists transmitted by the British authorities, Carl Lutz and Moshe Krausz

50 Telegram 17 of the Swiss Legation in Ankara to the Division for the Protection of Foreign Interests in Bern. SFA E2001-02#1000/114#528* Questions juives.

51 Communication 682/31 of 13 June 1944 of the Swiss Legation in Turkey to the Division of Foreign Interests of the Federal Political Department, Ibid.

52 Note 11/150/44 of the British Legation in Bern to the Foreign Interests Division of the Federal Political Department, 16 June 1944, Ibid.

53 Cable 69 of the Foreign Interests Division to the Swiss Legation in Budapest, Ibid.

54 Telegram (C) of 3 July of the Division of Foreign Interests of the Federal Political Department to the Swiss Legation in Budapest, Ibid.

were convinced that the best and maybe only way to offer a certain protection to the Jewish people on the lists would be to issue some kind of Swiss protection documents. In his letters dated 19 June to George Mantello and to Dr. Pozner in Geneva, Moshe Krausz observes that:

„I see no possibility of rescue, we only have a few days left, but if the Christian world wants to do something in our interest, one could save a few thousand or a few hundred people, if we could ensure that all certificate holders would receive Palestinian passports or citizenship. In this case, the Swiss legation should be allowed to issue such passports, and passport forms should be provided at the same time, but immediately, because otherwise it is too late. Passports of other neutral states could be considered.”⁵⁵

Probably worried that the Foreign Interests Division of the Federal Political Department would limit itself to its role of postman or messenger, Carl Lutz also seeks the possibility to issue Swiss documents which would enable to combine the British mandate over Palestine with Swiss diplomatic protection. He's making a sort of appeal for help to the WRB, using an intermediary. In an internal memorandum to his colleague Tait dated 27 June, McClelland reports:

„I had a talk over the week-end with a woman who has recently arrived in Switzerland from Sofia, via Budapest, whose husband is in the Swiss diplomatic services. I also had occasion to see a letter written on June, 18th. by a man of responsibility in Jewish circles in Budapest. Both of these sources raised the following point in connection with possible aid for those threatened with deportation from Hungary.

They stated that the Swiss Legation in Budapest, (specifically a Mr. Lutz, apparently in charge of the Div. des Int. Etrangers there) was quite prepared to deliver 'protection documents or letters' to holders of Palestine certificates in Hungary, if the Political Dept, here in Bern would sanction this. Such 'protection documents' would be issued on the basis of lists already communicated to the Swiss by the British. It was felt that these letters from the Swiss would be of great help in at least forestalling deportation of their holders. A similar statement was made to me a few weeks ago in relation to Holland by a reliable person who claimed that the mere possession of a certificate or the being on an official list were not sufficient. If, however, the person in question possessed an individual letter or documents attesting to the fact that he was admitted to Palestine issued by the Protecting Power that person was generally not deported.”⁵⁶

On 5 July, Tait reports to McClelland on his exchanges with the Foreign Interests Division of the Federal Political Department regarding the proposed issuance of protection documents. The American diplomats agree *„that the British Authorities and the Palestinian Committee in Geneva would be the appropriate agency to press the matter with the Swiss rather than ourselves”*.⁵⁷ On 24 July 1944 the Secretary General of the Jewish Agency for Palestine in Geneva informs the Director of the ICRC's Special Assistance Division as follows:

„In view of this new situation and at the insistence of the Jewish Agency, the British Government has approached the Swiss Government for assistance as a Protecting Power. The aim was to find a way for the persons in question to receive official confirmation from the Protecting Power, attesting to their status as holders of Palestinian immigration certificates (thus virtually 'Pales-

55 Copy of the letter from Moshe Krausz to George Mandel Mantello, dated 19 June 1944. SFA, E4001C#1000/783#2598*, Ungarische Flüchtlinge in der Schweiz: Deportation ungarischer Juden (Dossier). Poszner's and Scheeps transmission letter to McClelland, dated 24 June, is in WRB Records, Box 66, Jews in Hungary (1). June 1944.

56 Memorandum of 27 June of McClelland to Tait, WRB Records, Box 66, Jews in Hungary (2), June 1944.

57 Memorandum of G. Tait to McClelland, on 5 June 1944. American Legation in Bern. WRB Records, Box 66, Jews in Hungary (1) July 1944.

tinians') and being able, vis-à-vis the Hungarian authorities, to save them from deportation first and then make their departure to Palestine possible.

The negotiations on this subject, conducted between the British and Swiss Governments on the one hand and between the Swiss and Hungarian Governments on the other, lasted nearly six weeks and they just ended two weeks ago. However the formula finally decided as the text of the attestation still had to be submitted to the approval of the Government of Palestine which gave its answer (affirmative) only three days ago.

*The Swiss Legation in Budapest (Foreign Interests Section) will now receive the necessary instructions to act.*⁵⁸

While Carl Lutz and Moshe Krausz leave no stone unturned to facilitate the departure of the holders of Palestine certificates to Palestine, they try to find appropriate support for the emission of documents which offer effective protection in Hungary. If they are not the inventors of the collective passports and of the protection letters, they nonetheless play a significant role in their development. These documents are the product of a multi-stakeholder process of brainstorming and of negotiations of international dimension involving the British authorities, the Swiss authorities, the Hungarian authorities, the War Refugee Board, the Jewish Agency for Palestine and the mandate Government of Palestine. On 23 August, 1944, Carl Lutz sends a detailed report about his efforts to Bern, mentioning the collective passports and the protection letters:

„Since every Hungarian Jew loses his citizenship when emigrating, the question of the travel document arose. The Hungarian authorities were not prepared to issue passports of any kind, but asked for a collective passport. The latter contains in two parts the names, dates of birth and photos of 2195 people. The nationality and destination of the emigrants were not mentioned as a precaution. We have attached a note to the passport stating that it should be handed over in the destination country (in this case Palestine) to the Swiss official representation there, for return to here. (...)

*In order to protect the certificate holders from internment, arrest or assault, we issue each traveller a confirmation in the sense of your letter of 31 July.*⁵⁹

Ultimately, as good diplomats do, Carl Lutz thus refers to the instructions received from the headquarters and adapts them to local circumstances. While the text sent with the instructions of 31 July, and later slightly amended through new instructions on 5 August reads:

„The bearer of this certificate (insert name) will be admitted as an immigrant into Palestine at any time at which he (she) may reach that countryland thereafter on the completion of two years residence will obtain Palestinian citizenship in accordance with the Palestinian citizenship order of 1925-1941 consolidated”,⁶⁰

the text of the letters of protection established by the Swiss Legation in Budapest reads:

58 Letter of 24 July 1944 of Dr. M. Kahany, Secretary General of the Geneva Office of the Jewish Agency for Palestine to Dr. J. Schwarzenberg, Director of the Special Assistance Division of ICRC. Dr. Kahany sends a copy of this letter to McClelland. On the copy he received, Roswell McClelland puts the following handwritten comment: „Palestine certificates in Hungary & role of Switzerland as 'Protecting Power". WRB Records, Box 66, Jews in Hungary (2), July 1944.

59 <https://dodis.ch/47812> (accessed 22 October 2024).

60 Telegram (C) of the Division for the Protection of Foreign Interests (M. van Muyden) of 5 August 1944 to the Swiss Legation in Budapest, SFA E2001-02#1000/114#528* Questions juives.

„The Swiss Legation, Foreign Interests Division, confirms herewith that (name) is registered on the Swiss Collective Passport for Emigration, and therefore must be considered as the owner of valid travel passport.“

Besides the efforts to ensure protection thanks to the protection letters, the efforts to ensure the effective emigration and transit from Budapest to Palestine or to neutral countries also involve many actors of the international humanitarian diplomacy at different levels, as is demonstrated, among hundreds of other documents, by a cable dated 3 November 1944, from the State Department in Washington to the American Embassy in London,⁶¹ joined as Annex 4. It mentions many protagonists of the international protection efforts in Budapest, Washington, London, Bern, Istanbul and the channels of communication shown on the table in Annex 1. Numerous documents available online on the Office of the Historian of the Department of State’s website also illustrate the „behind the scene” efforts to facilitate the emigration from Hungary under the „Horthy Offer”.⁶² In this context, contrary to what is still often believed, a fundamental divide does not exist between the Swiss diplomats in Budapest and their headquarter on the question of this emigration from Hungary. The Head of the Political Department in Bern, Marcel Pilet-Golaz communicates to the American Minister in Bern on 11 August that

„he was advising the Swiss Minister in Budapest that, in the event that it would not be possible for them to proceed eastward, Switzerland would be prepared to give temporary refuge to 8,000 individuals holding Palestinian Certificates. (...) The willingness thus expressed by Mr. Pilet-Golaz to receive holders of Palestinian Certificates was in addition to the proposed asylum for expectant mothers and children”.⁶³

A document dated 14 August shows that the Political Department is even considering the possibility to receive not just 8000 individuals, but 8000 families, that is between 30 and 40 thousand persons, in addition to the 1000 or 2000 children already envisaged.⁶⁴ On the occasion of a meeting with ICRC representatives and representatives of the Federal Justice and Police Department, including Heinrich Rothmund, the representatives of the Federal Political Department note on 17 August that:

„In fact, it seems that more than 40,000 certificates have been issued, but the Foreign Affairs Division has currently received permission from the British Government to intervene only for the emigration of 2,000 individuals to Palestine. It is from the list of 8,000 that these 2,000 people were chosen, according to mostly practical criteria.”⁶⁵

A manuscript annotation on the meeting’s report states that *„the choice appears to be made by the Palestinian Office in Budapest”.*

61 WRB Records, Box 20, Palestine Certificates (1).

62 See for instance: Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1944, General, Volume I840.48 Refugees/9–1144: Telegram, The Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Winant) to the Secretary of State, London, September 11, 1944, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1944v01/d690> (accessed 22 October 2024).

63 „Extract from Memorandum concerning the Minister’s call on Mr. Pilet-Golaz at 10:30 August 11, 1944”. WRB Records, Box 66, Jews in Hungary (1), August 1944.

64 Heinrich Rothmund to the Head of the Division for Foreign Affairs of the Political Department, SFA E4800.1#1967-111#330*. In a telegram sent to the State Department on 11 August 1944, Harrison also refers to *„the 40’000 Jews whose emigration to Palestine is being planned at present”.* WRB Records, Box 66, Jews in Hungary (1), August 1944.

65 Jews of Hungary. Conference of ICRC with the FPD and the Department of Justice and Police, 17.8.44, <https://www.dodis.ch/47804> (accessed 22 October 2024).

Humanitarian assistance measures build another significant sector of the relief efforts. They include the provision by the ICRC, the Swedish Red Cross, Raoul Wallenberg and the Foreign Interests Division of the Swiss Legation of material support, such as food, clothes and medical assistance to the persecuted Jewish population. As part of this component of the protection operation, the ICRC ultimately places under its protection all Jewish health facilities and dozens of other institutions in Budapest.⁶⁶ Interestingly enough, the provision of this humanitarian assistance is accompanied by an intense diplomatic activity. It is executed as part of a cooperation which remains in many ways unique until the present day. The importance of financial assistance is underlined by Roswell McClelland in his final report. The WRB, the Jewish organizations, the Red Cross movement and the neutral diplomats all play their role in this endeavour. While the WRB representatives can grant some financial support through the use of a rather small discretionary fund, the main source of financial support emanates from the private funds collected by Jewish organizations. McClelland notes that

*„In the cases of Hungary, Slovakia, Rumania and Austria the principal private relief agency financing rescue operations was the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee which, through their representative in Switzerland, Mr. Saly Mayer, regularly transferred money into the above-mentioned countries“.*⁶⁷

To enable the transfer of money in the occupied countries, the WRB grants to several Jewish organizations special US Treasury Licences allowing exemptions from the economic wartime blocus. The Jewish organizations also manage to implement creative private clearing schemes by which local currencies are made available in Hungary by private persons against a corresponding amount of money deposited in Swiss francs in Switzerland. For the foreign exchange and clearing operations, the cooperation of the Swiss authorities and of the Swiss National Bank is sought and obtained.⁶⁸ The available funds are dedicated to a wide range of support measures. In spite of the creativity achieved and of the various efforts, Carl Lutz and Raoul Wallenberg are always confronted with lack of funds and complain bitterly about it.⁶⁹ In his report of July 1945, Lutz notes that:

*„What we lacked most apart from a larger staff to deal with the emergency, to intervene in numerous individual cases, to secure the urgent protection, to protect houses and districts against attacks, to keep the extremely hostile elements (for they, too, were already suffering from hunger and deprivation) were foreign currencies, in the form of notes and gold. Even larger actions could have been carried out to save more people. The catering of many thousands in the sheltered houses devoured large sums, also the hospitalization of the sick and infirm as well as the care of the children. Most of the money needed for this was raised by the Jewish communities themselves, some of which provided funds in Hungarian Pengös. It was also a great misfortune that we were never told of the existence of a 'fund for human rescue“.*⁷⁰

Such a fund indeed did not exist and, no matter how intense the collective efforts were, in view of the prevailing needs and of the practical difficulties, the humanitarian actors on the ground were unlikely to receive adequate funding for their activities. But what was achieved

66 Born, Bericht. 31.

67 McClelland, Report on the activities of the War Refugee Board through its representation at the American Legation in Bern, Switzerland, March 1944–July 1945, 21–22. WRB, Box 50, Programs with Respect to Relief and Rescue of Refugees – Evacuations to and through Switzerland – Evacuation to Switzerland (1).

68 See for instance the Memorandum of McClelland to Saly Mayer of 20 July 1944. WRB Records, Box 71, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Activities in and from Switzerland (1), February 1944–May 1945.

69 See: Levine 2010: Wallenberg and Money – again. 252–262.

70 Report of 1st July 1945, of the Division for the protection of foreign interests, Budapest, about its action for the rescue of the Jewish population in the Winter of 1944–1945, 4 (<https://dodis.ch/14327>; accessed 22 October 2024).

would not have been possible without these joint efforts between government officials and private Jewish organizations.

Negotiations with the SS led by representatives of the Aid and Rescue Committee of Budapest and Saly Mayer of the Joint Distribution Committee also received a substantial amount of international support. While „to pay Germans“ is mentioned as a possible instrument of rescue in the April draft outline document of the American Legation in Bern, negotiations about ransom payment schemes were not included in the measures envisaged. Thus, the negotiations which are engaged as early as April 1944 by members of the Jewish Aid and Rescue Committee of Budapest, namely Joel Brand and Rezső Kasztner with German Nazis Adolf Eichmann and Kurt Becher and their aides constitute a case in which the American authorities, including WRB officials and representatives are not in the initiative or at the origin of the action. They are rather running after the information and trying to figure out what is at stake. While the details of the negotiations in Budapest, Istanbul and then Switzerland are well documented, the coordination efforts at the international level and the intensity of contacts between the various players of the protection operation have not been fully highlighted so far.

The negotiations with the perpetrators last over one year, with the initial objective of avoiding the deportation of the Hungarian Jews, then with the subsequent objective of saving as many Jews as possible from the deportation and the final objective of gaining time until the Nazis' defeat. They involve several categories of actors of the international humanitarian diplomacy and in their efforts to save lives, many of them are led to cross red lines. The leaders of the Jewish organizations in Budapest are faced with the inhumane task of establishing the list of those who will be able to obtain a place in the „Kasztner train“, while the others are condemned to deportation. In November 1944, in derogation of the principles applied until then, under which the representative of the Joint Distribution Committee in Switzerland, Saly Mayer, negotiated as a private person, Roswell McClelland, the representative of the WRB in the American Legation in Bern, joins Saly Mayer and Rezső Kasztner on the occasion of their negotiation with Kurt Becher in Zurich. Similarly, as a rare exception to the principle that Swiss authorities, in their capacity as protecting power, do not transmit or formulate threats towards one of the parties, Heinrich Rothmund invites the Swiss Minister in Berlin to threaten a Secretary of State of the German Foreign Office, whose wife and son he has authorized to discretely reside in Switzerland.⁷¹ Far from being unaware of relief efforts, or hostile and indifferent to protective actions, the Swiss authorities support them politically, diplomatically and logistically, in close cooperation with the American diplomats and the representative of the JDC, Saly Mayer. The Swiss Legation in Berlin receives instructions to intervene in favour of the emigration of the Jews concerned by the „Horthy Offer“ and of those who were part of the Kasztner train. In a situation similar to that prevailing in Budapest, neutral diplomats and ICRC representatives in Berlin intervene in a concerted manner in favour of the Hungarian Jews.⁷²

FACING THE ARROW CROSS REGIME AND THE NYILAS TERROR

The archive documents show that a diplomatic and humanitarian action piloted from the capitals was at work on an international scale since the early months of 1944, involving many states and private actors. The neutral diplomats in Budapest did not act alone, did not act against the instructions of their respective capitals and did not invent original instruments

71 Communication of Heinrich Rothmund to Hans Frölicher, of 3 November 1944, <https://dodis.ch/47885> (accessed 22 October 2024).

72 See SFA 236#1993-368#8*, Tagebücher Hans Frölicher, 7, 10, 23, 27 November 1944.

to save and protect, but they nonetheless did take a central role, at the operational level, in the international efforts at stake. This role takes an even greater dimension after the overthrow of Regent Horthy and the establishment of the Arrow Cross Government in Budapest. The removal of Regent Horthy opens a new chapter in the international efforts to save and protect the Hungarian Jews. Prior to the fall of his regime, these efforts aim at influencing the Hungarian policies and at supporting the pro-Allies political forces and inclinations in Hungary. Once the Szálasi regime is established, there is no legitimate leader anymore who, like Regent Horthy, can be recipient of political high-level messages aiming at convincing him to switch side in the war or to fundamentally change his policy towards the Jewish population. At first, the situation of the Jews and the perspectives of success in the international efforts to rescue or protect them thus appear extremely bleak. It is all the more the case when on 17 October, the Minister of Interior of the Arrow Cross Government Gábor Vajna declares that a merciless policy will be conducted towards the Jews, that no foreign passport or protective document of any sort will be honoured and that no interference either internal or external will be tolerated. This development is a hard blow for the rescue efforts and creates at first a certain sense of helplessness, since none of the available protection instruments seems likely to be successfully implemented. On 20 October, Roswell McClelland writes to the attention of Minister Harrison:

„It is reliably known that the Germans tried to force the last Hungarian Government to remove the Jews from Budapest. The Hungarians, however, stalled and succeeded in keeping them there. Now, with a 100% Nazi Government in the saddle and the Gestapo & SS given a free hand, the logical step, in order to prepare the way for further deportation or extermination is to get the Jews out of the capital and to some location where they can be ‘worked’ on without observers or danger of interference.

In the light of the above information, the situation looks very serious to me. I do not, however, see just what steps could be undertaken either by ourselves (other than continued propaganda pressure via the radio & leaflets) or by the Swiss to avert or mitigate the final and radical ‘solving’ of the so-called Jewish problem. From conversations I had this morning I have the feeling that the Swiss would be willing to do all they could through their Legation in Budapest if they knew exactly how to proceed. Perhaps, in the interest of leaving no stone unturned, it might be worthwhile to voice our concern to Monsieur Pilet asking him to undertake any steps possible through the Swiss Legation in Budapest. Perhaps if the latter had instructions to take whatever steps possible in the light of the local situation some helpful demarches might be made in behalf, at least, of individuals in whom the Swiss can legitimately (sic) occupy themselves in their role of Protecting Power.”⁷³

After reception of this Memorandum, a note is prepared to the attention of the Division of Foreign Interests of the Swiss Political Department asking for confirmation of Minister Vajna’s statement and *„if confirmed asking the Division to instruct Minister Jaeger to protest and, second, to take such steps as may be possible on behalf of all Swiss protected persons”*.⁷⁴ A handwritten annotation by McClelland on the Memorandum states: *„Minister saw P(ilet) on Sat(urday) October 21st. Pilet wired requesting that Swiss Legation in Budapest makes every effort to protect all those it conceivably could”*.⁷⁵ It turns out that the Federal Political Department had already transmitted on 13 October an instruction to undertake a demarche in favour of the Jewish population. However, the headquarters in Bern are aware that since the new Hungarian Gov-

⁷³ Memorandum of October 20, 1944 of McClelland to the Minister, WRB Records, Box 65, Jews in Hungary, October 1944. On the online records of the WRB, the file is improperly registered under Jews in Hungary (1), November–December 1944.

⁷⁴ Memorandum from the Minister to McClelland, on 20 October, Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

ernment is not recognized as the legitimate Government of Hungary, the scope for diplomatic action is reduced. It is observed that

„We have already instructed our Legation in Budapest to do everything in its power to prevent the resurgence of persecutions of Jews and to assist those persecuted. Since the current rulers of Budapest can only be seen as a de facto government, even narrower limits are drawn nowadays for our Legation in its possibility to intervene.”⁷⁶

In fact, an instruction sent by the Political Department to the Legation in Budapest on 21 October indicates that diplomats on the spot are allowed to join in, but must do so in their capacity as local diplomatic agents, and not in the name of the Swiss Government:

„If the local diplomatic corps identifies actions that are incompatible with basic principles of law and humanity, you can follow the steps of your colleagues as required by the circumstances. But keep the Swiss Federal Council out of the game, especially since the relations with the new Hungarian rulers must be regarded as only de facto.”⁷⁷

The possibility of using the function of representatives of foreign interests as a factor of influence towards a government which is not recognized by the mandatory state and the protecting power is very limited. Indeed, in such a situation, the neutral diplomats cannot officially transmit messages of the Governments of the allied countries whose interests they represent. Notwithstanding these limitations, the neutral diplomats in Budapest manage to assert themselves as the representatives of states and organizations which must be taken seriously even after their governments did not recognize the Szálasi Government. They are already organized as a group with an established practice of common diplomatic action and they know that there is a common objective of the American authorities, the British authorities, the neutral governments and all the partners of the informal coalition to protect the victims of persecutions. Their interlocutors in the Hungarian ministries also know that they are backed by this coalition including the main Allied powers. In this context, as the Dean of the local diplomatic community, Apostolic Nuncio Angelo Rotta builds skilfully on his professional experience and on his moral authority to gather the collective diplomatic efforts. His position is also strengthened by the fact that he claims that the Vatican recognizes the new Hungarian Government. The collective notes of 17 November and 23 December are written on behalf of *„the representatives of the neutral powers accredited in Budapest”*, but besides the evocation of their humanitarian motives, the authors gathered by their dean make it clear that they have governments behind them who have the capacity to influence the behaviour of the future winners of the war towards Hungary and the Hungarian people:

„For their part, the Representatives of the Neutral Powers, as well as their Governments, have no other purpose than to alleviate human suffering and intensify the works of assistance to the victims of war. However, the reception which the Hungarian Government will give to this approach will not fail to have a great influence on their line of conduct towards the Hungarian people; and if it is favourable, it will be a stimulus that will push them to work with more interest and goodwill on behalf of the Hungarian people, especially in the painful case of an extension of foreign occupation.”⁷⁸

76 Telegram of 21 October 1944 of the Federal Political Department to the Swiss Legation in Washington, DDS, Vol. 15.731–732, note 4.

77 Telegram of 21 October 1944 of the Political Department to the Swiss Legation in Budapest. DDS, Vol. 15. 732, note 4.

78 Note of 17 November 1944 of the Representatives of the Neutral Powers accredited in Budapest to the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Actes et Documents du Saint-Siège relatifs à la Seconde Guerre Mondiale, Vol. 10. 500.

Providing significant humanitarian assistance to the Jewish population as part of a program approved by the Hungarian and German authorities in July, the representative of the ICRC in Budapest, Friedrich Born, together with Robert Schirmer of the Delegation of the ICRC in Berlin, make numerous demarches to several Hungarian ministers and ministries in the crucial and chaotic days following the Arrow Cross coup.⁷⁹

The importance of diplomatic action is well underlined by Paul Levine in his book on Raoul Wallenberg when he notes:

„(...) after the 15 October and for much of the remainder of the year, Wallenberg functioned, for the most part, more as a bureaucrat and a diplomat than as a dashing 'Scarlet Pimpernel'. This was wise of him, because there is no doubt whatsoever that he and the other neutral diplomats remaining in Budapest were more effective by continuing their negotiations with those officials, including the Budapest police, with the power to influence events. More lives were saved in Budapest through these contacts than by rushing about the city confronting episodic outbreak of murderous violence. This more subdued image of Wallenberg goes against the grain of much of the witness testimony, popular literature and cinematic representations, but it is borne out by the contemporary documentation.”⁸⁰

Faced with new high-level contacts in the Szálasi Government, the neutral diplomats adapt their narrative and try to exploit the weaknesses of their interlocutors. The Swiss and Swedish diplomats use the perspective of a possible recognition of the Szálasi Government by their authorities as a lever to ensure respect for their protection documents and the implementation of the emigration arrangements. The Red Cross representatives think that they can take advantage of the ignorance of Foreign Minister Gábor Kemény to convince him that the provisions of the then existing Geneva Conventions protect the Hungarian Jews, which is not the case.⁸¹ A collective achievement of the neutral diplomats in Budapest is that they manage to keep alive earlier commitments towards the Jewish population.⁸² They probably contribute to the decision of Szálasi to implement a „Jewish policy” which continues to entail a regime of exemption from deportation or labour service for the holders of foreign identity, emigration or protection documents.

The efforts to ensure emigration continue unabated after the Szálasi coup. However, the multi-stakeholder efforts are now directed towards an emigration which does not aim at Palestine but Switzerland, as a temporary destination before emigration to other places of asylum or settlement. Concrete preparations are taken in Switzerland at the highest political level. The minutes of the meeting of the Federal Council of 31 October 1944 inform about the decision to grant passage or to accept a temporary stay for 8000 Hungarian Jews. The text mentions various actors involved in this emigration project, which results from an agreement between the Hungarian Government and the German Government. The measures to be implemented for the reception of these emigrants, their stay in Switzerland and the continuation of their trip to Lisbon or Marseilles are presented as being taken in support of the United States and the representative of the WRB in Bern.⁸³ Towards the German authorities, diplomatic action, also in Berlin, integrates in the same steps the efforts for the emigration of

79 See Ben-Tov 1988: 282–293.

80 Levine 2010: 306–307.

81 Notice for the file written by Gerhart Riegner on 9 November 1944 about a meeting with ICRC Representative Robert Schirmer, WRB Records, Box 65, Jews in Hungary, November and December 1944. On the online records of the WRB, the file is improperly registered under Jews in Hungary (1), September–October 1944.

82 See Braham 2016: 1422–1423.

83 Minutes of the Federal Council meeting of 31 October 1944. DDS, Vol. 15, document 276, 704.

the Jews from Budapest in the continuation of „the Horthy offer” and for the transfer to Switzerland of Jews still interned in Bergen-Belsen who were part of the „Kasztner train”. Meanwhile, support for Saly Mayer’s negotiations with Kurt Becher and his acolytes intensifies. However, the emigration to Switzerland of the Hungarian Jews holding Palestine Certificates never materializes, no matter how intensive the efforts of the neutral diplomats in Budapest. As Friedrich Born notices in his report:

„This result of lengthy negotiations was overtaken by the coming events. Due to various indications, however, it was clear to me for months that the Reich government and the German legation never seriously thought of granting the transit for Hungarian, Jewish emigrants. The departures that have taken place since the Hungarian turnaround (since 20 March 1944) took place under conditions which could not be the subject of negotiations by ordinary foreign representations.”⁸⁴

If the elements of continuity must not be lost from sight, it is also necessary to emphasize adequately what is radically changing for the neutral diplomats posted in Budapest. Besides the new governmental officials, they also face the Nyilas terror, perpetrated by uncontrolled fanatical Arrow Cross and other Hungarian Nazi militants who randomly assault and kill Jews. Alongside their diplomatic efforts and operational preparations to facilitate emigration, the neutral diplomats reinforce their efforts to protect against persecution, with new interventions and with an adaptation of the available instruments to the new circumstances. As far as the instruments are concerned, they face the dilemma of the multiplication of the protection documents which was present since long ago but takes a new sense of urgency under the Arrow Cross regime. In view of the new level of persecution, they extend the number of protected documents to such a high level that the very base of the „exemption system” is compromised. With the establishment and maintenance of the „protected houses” in the International Ghetto, they gradually adapt a scheme that was set as a short-term provisional settlement prior to emigration into a district of the city in which residents should be kept in place and exempted from persecution, with the objective of gaining time until the liberation by the Soviet army. As they face new foes, they must set new priorities in the cooperation with their partners. Within the Section of Emigration of the Division for the Protection of Foreign Interests, installed in the „Glass House” on Vadász utca 29, the rivalry between Moshe Krausz and the members of the Hechalutz, the Zionist youth resistance movement, turns in favour of the latter. The production of large amounts of forged protected papers and the occupation of the protected houses with residents who do not have genuine protection papers produce a situation where the neutral diplomats are faced with the inhumane task of protecting the holders of their genuine protective documents at the cost of participating in the filtering of the „legitimate” beneficiaries of exemptions from the others. The sorting out of the authentic letters from the fake documents and the eviction from the protected houses of the unauthorized residents are not a simple bump in the road, as they are often described in the romantic or hagiographic literature but form an integral part of the efforts of the neutral diplomats to save a portion of the Hungarian Jews in Budapest.⁸⁵ The neutral diplomats are not and cannot afford to be idealistic rescuers but are efficient professionals who accept to get their hands dirty in order to save lives with the available, although questionable means.

At the same time, they use every occasion, depending on the local situation, to extend their protection by the distribution of additional authentic papers and by rescue efforts of protect-

⁸⁴ Born, Report.32.

⁸⁵ See Protocol of the recorded interview of Eduard Hürlimann, SFA, E2001D#1000/1557#492*. See also „Situationsbericht der Abteilung für fremde Interessen Budapest”, 8 December 1944, <https://dodis.ch/14326> (accessed 22 October 2024).

ed persons who have been driven away from the protected houses or/and enlisted in death marches. In their protection endeavours, they manage to find interlocutors even after the Arrow Cross Government has left Budapest for Sopron. They establish a cooperation with those agents of the Hungarian State or of the German army who can provide assistance against the uncontrolled Nyilas. They use their prestige and moral authority to dissuade the violent extremists and assert themselves as protectors of the victims and as allies of the local opponents to the cold blood killings. Unexpected coalitions form to face barbarism, as J. Szatmari, correspondent of the „Basler Nachrichten” in Budapest reports:

„On October 28, a group of Nyilas attacks the building of the 'grey sisters', Thököly-ut 69, where about 150 Jews are hidden. The sisters do not let them in, two nuns stand with revolvers at the gate. The Superior Margit Schlachta sent a nun to the police through the back gate, telephoned the papal nuncio himself, who arrived ten minutes later with his car and drove the Nyilas away.”⁸⁶

While they are, to a large extent, the „tip of the iceberg” of a large international rescue effort, contrary to their partners in the capitals, they do not have the privilege of being „desktop rescuers” facing „desktop murderers”. They implement ad hoc measures and individual acts of courage and heroism, which have little to do with diplomatic or humanitarian action *stricto sensu*, but have much to do with heroism and survival strategies, such as the hiding of persecuted persons in private properties. Ultimately, they provide their support in a context in which they themselves are not beneficiaries of diplomatic immunity any more. In fact, since the Szálasi Government is not recognized by the Allied powers and by the neutral states, the neutral diplomats should not have been kept at their post in the Hungarian capital. This is all the more true as anarchy quickly settled in Budapest, followed by the siege and the fighting in the city. And it is even more the case after the Hungarian Government is moved to Sopron. Once their governments had recognized the newly established Hungarian Government in Debrecen in December 1944, the legal basis for their role as representatives of the protecting power did not even constitute a valuable basis for their diplomatic work. In such conditions, in principle, no diplomatic or humanitarian action is possible. Thus, the diplomats should not have been there. Some countries, like Spain and Portugal, withdraw their Head of Mission. Others, like Sweden or the Holy See, keep their Head of Mission in the Hungarian capital city. Switzerland recalls its Head of Mission for consultation, and Maximilian Jaeger would never go back to Budapest, but most of the diplomatic and consular personnel is asked to continue its mission, a decision which is rightly criticized by Carl Lutz.⁸⁷

The decision to keep the diplomats in Budapest is the result of several miscalculations but, in fact, they managed to continue and carry out under the most unfavourable circumstances a protection operation that had been devised many months before and had so far achieved some tangible success, but also no real breakthrough. In particular, the Hungarian Jews in the province had been deported without any effective protection measure from any of the actors of the international humanitarian diplomacy. But in Budapest, the neutral diplomats and their partners in rescue and protection achieve significant results in conditions that made their efforts close to a mission impossible. At first, their action is not immediately acknowledged by their authorities or by their compatriots. The countries liberated from war have other priorities and the singularity of the Holocaust is not seen in all its horror. In Switzerland, Marcel Pilet-Golaz announces his resignation in November 1944 and high-level officials at the Federal Political Department are transferred. In the United States, the WRB is dissolved after

86 J. Szatmari, correspondent of the „Basler Nachrichten” in Budapest: Records from Hungary’s Dark Days. Archives of Contemporary History / ETH Zurich.

87 See for instance <https://dodis.ch/14326> and <https://www.dodis.ch/14295> (both accessed 22 October 2024).

20 months. The institutional memory gets lost and diplomatic archives, when they are not destroyed, disappear for decades in the basement of national archives. But soon comes for the rescuers the late and all too often posthumous recognition of their hard-earned successes. Using all the elements of authority they had left, they endowed themselves by their own determination and courage with a „license to meddle“. In the streets of Budapest where the devil was unleashed, they have confronted the killers face to face and they have been seen as the symbol of goodness and humanity. The persons they rescued obtain the occasion to honour them. The myth-making is then a logical consequence of this recognition based on individual memories. It is most probably a necessary step in the process towards remembrance. The Righteous all deserve our respect and admiration but none of them ought to be remembered on the basis of a usurped fame or a hagiographical outbidding. Thus, thanks to the archives available – many of them now online – and thanks to the cumulation of generations of dedicated researchers, let us progress together in the acquisition of an ever-broader and deeper picture. Much remains to be done.

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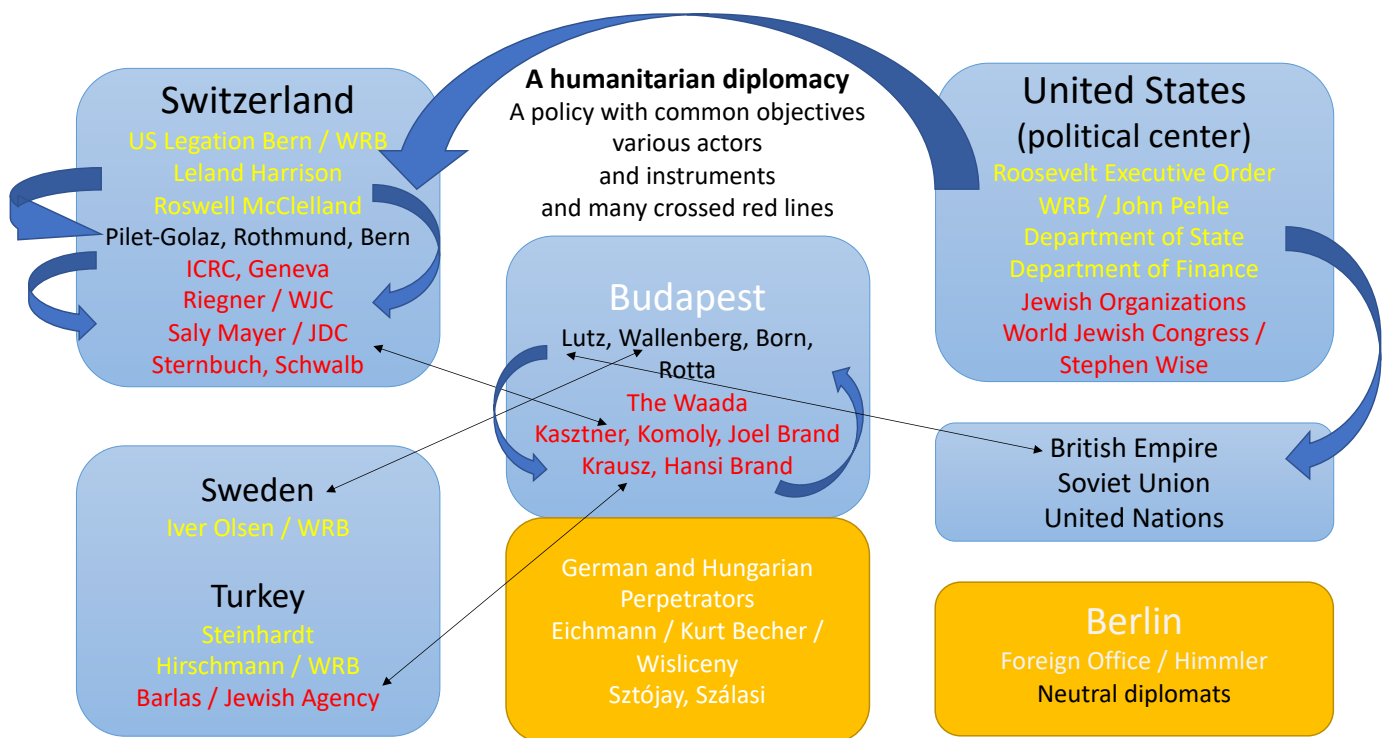
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Draft outline

April 30, 1944.

A. Information on the persecuted people in Hungary

of Jews, Poles and other persecuted people in Hungary

- I. Before March 20th, 1944.
- II. After March 20th, 1944.

Schedules:

To make available documentation contained by Hungarian and foreign newspapers and other publications.

To get inside informations through other channels: pouch, travellers, underground channels.

B. Measures susceptible to carry out the policy of the WRB in HungaryI. To help people "survive"

("to afford such victims all possible relief and assistance consistent with the successful prosecution of the war")

- a. Financial help (private clearing; to convert debts etc.)
- b. Material assistance (food parcels; cloths; medicaments)
- c. Legal means (forged passports; certificates of nationality etc. intervention on the basis of international law as far as there is any such basis) (Control of camps etc.)
- d. Psychologic means

(warnings through wireless; dropping leaflets from airplanes etc.)

Roosevelt Statements of Richard Law (1-3-44)
Eisen (30-3-44); Roosevelt (24-3-44)

"Not to persecute, but help, possibly hide"

Schedules:

- a. Council ceugum.; private business men; Jewish organisations; WRB
- b. Mixed Commission of the International Red Cross (E. de Schwarzenberg)
- c. Latin American Consulates (Brazil; Paraguay etc.) Mr. London -- International Red Cross -- Switzerland - Wancio -
- d. Mr. Dulles - Mr. Nayer - BBC - Moscow - RAY and KEE UNAP in Paris

II. "To take all measures in within its power to rescue the victims of enemy oppression who are in imminent danger of death"

- a. Legal Fulantine Certificates (good offices of M.E. with the Roumanian and Polish Ministers)

a. (cont.) Precedents: Roumanian Jews - Turkey (Iren H. Amern)

Switzerland - Prominent non-Jewish elements - to pay
Germans (?)

Illegally
b. Tito - Switzerland - other countries

Chancellat - Partisans - Mr. Dulles -

MSPP - Communist Party - Austrian Resistance
movement - etc.

LH.

11/159/44

*à propos de l'immigration
à M. Mayall pour
se faire pour les certificats*

16 JUN 1944
N ^o 132
FOLIO 132

*avant donner à Bud
de demander à Londres
96(9)18-1*

His Majesty's Legation present their compliments to the Foreign Interests Division and have the honour to inform them that reports continue to reach His Majesty's Government that Jews are being deported in large numbers from Hungary to Poland. According to the Jewish Agency's representative in Turkey, it is believed that there are in Hungary 225 children and about 400 veteran Zionists whose Turkish transit visas have been approved though not actually granted. It is said that there are in addition 2,000 Jews for whom visas have not yet been requested, but whose Palestinian immigration certificates have been issued.

*Juifs en
ce de parler
les armes?*

2. His Majesty's Government enquire whether the Swiss authorities would be good enough to issue certificates to such persons to the effect that their admission into Palestine has been approved. The certificates should be of such a kind that the Jews can carry them about with them.

3. His Majesty's Ambassador at Angora has given complete lists of Hungarian Jews whose admission into Palestine has been approved to the Swiss Minister at Angora, who is despatching by courier on the 13th June one copy to Berne and one to the Swiss Legation, Budapest.

4. The children would not appear to be protected by the form of endorsement on their passports or travel documents already agreed upon, since passports issued in Hungary to Jewish emigrants are only valid for short periods, and a special certificate would in any case be required after the expiry of the passport.

5. His Majesty's Government therefore request the Swiss authorities to indicate on the certificates to be issued not merely an assurance of entry into Palestine, but also that in accordance with the Palestinian Citizenship Order, the holder would qualify for Palestinian citizenship after two years residence in that country.

*voir
note
(46(9)
Londres
(9)18-1*

6. His Majesty's Ambassador at Angora reports, on the authority of the Turkish Minister, Budapest, that Jewish applicants for travel facilities at the Turkish Legation there are watched by the Gestapo and subsequently disappear. The Jewish Agency suggest that the Swiss Legation at Budapest might collect the necessary documents from the Turkish Legation on behalf of the Jews thus shielding them from the danger of the Gestapo. Apparently a call at the Swiss Legation is not fraught with the same danger.

His Majesty's Legation would be most grateful to have the views of the Foreign Interests Division on the above suggestion.

BRITISH LEGATION,

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

OUTGOING TELEGRAM

DIVISION OF COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS

November 3, 1944
Midnight

This telegram must be paraphrased before being communicated to anyone other than a Government agency.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
NOV 5 1944
DIVISION OF COMMUNICATIONS & RECORDS

*2 - War Refl
Mr. Pelt*

AMEMBASSY

LONDON

9220

The cable below for Mann is WRB 19

CONTROL COPY

The following message under date of October 30 has been received from Katzki:

QUOTE The Jewish Agency Istanbul is in receipt of a telegram via Geneva dated October 25 from the Jewish Agency representative Krausz in Budapest stating that exit permits for the first group of 2,000 Palestine certificate holders in Hungary will be secured. Krausz states that the projected route of travel is through Switzerland and Portugal. He requests the aid of the WRB in obtaining the necessary transit visas. We suggest that you verify Krausz's report with McClelland in Switzerland. Information received in Istanbul concerning the Jews in Hungary is meager and general, but unconfirmed Turkish newspaper reports that evacuation of Hungary may be in contemplation. Future developments may make advisable renewed inquiry at this time regarding possibilities for emigration from Hungary.

According to Jewish Agency the 2,000 certificate holders are still in Budapest and they are in possession of passports. UNQUOTE

The substance of the message has been cabled to Harrison and McClelland with the following instruction:

QUOTE Please verify above information and, if correct, please take

-2- #9220 November 3, Midnight, to London

take all necessary steps to ensure speedy Swiss action to enable the certificate holders from Hungary to reach Switzerland without delay. You may assure Swiss authorities that this Government will use its best efforts to secure the unimpeded progress of the certificate holders to Palestine. UNQUOTE

Please represent to British authorities the Board's view that this unexpected chance to rescue some of the doomed Jews in Budapest, if verified, confronts Great Britain and United States with an opportunity that may not be allowed to end in failure by reason of any hesitation or delay on the part of either of our two governments. This Government is determined to spare no effort in interceding with Swiss, French, Spanish, and Portuguese officials in the interest of securing speedy transportation of the certificate holders in accordance with the suggested routing and is prepared to recommend to the Allied military and shipping authorities to make possible their speedy transportation by rail and by boat.

It is earnestly hoped that British authorities will view the situation in an identical light and will take similar steps to make possible the early departure of the certificate holders for Palestine.

Please advise Department and Board of British reaction.

WRB:MMV:KG
11/2/44

BC

WE

NE

SE

SECRET
(AGENCY)
(CIA)