

## Our Maverick El Salvadors

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THIS NOTE IS PLANNED TO BE PART OF BOOKLET ABOUT  
MY FAMILY AND THE SHOAH

*Much of the following is based on references at the end of this section and in-depth conversations with Professor David Kranzler<sup>1</sup>, a noted and dedicated historian of Holocaust era Jewish rescuers and an honest broker of history.*

### *Beacons in the Dark*

Dark, painful and fearful periods occasionally plague humanity. The Second World War was one such time. It led to horrible suffering and resulted in a major post-war restructuring of Europe. It also set the stage for the Cold War era, which could have triggered devastation on a much greater scale than World War II.

The war also had an inner darkness, pain within pain, terror within terror. This inner horror, the Shoah, was the genocide against us Jews and to a lesser degree against other groups. In retrospect, emergence of this Extreme Inner Darkness is not surprising; there were many large-scale genocides in the twentieth century even before the Shoah<sup>2</sup>. The Jews' suffering during the Shoah is also not surprising. Thru almost two millennia incessant antisemitic campaigns by the church fertilized the ground of Europe with intense hatred for Jews and Judaism. The Nazis

and Fascists found a fertile soil for antisemitism and were able to use that as a catalyst to amplify antisemitism to an unprecedented scale and violence.

The puzzle is not the *Descent of Darkness* but *Illumination by Light*: lone individuals, generally brilliant and daring mavericks, who broke all rules when necessary and wrote new rules as they relentlessly improvised to save us. Some took phenomenal personal risks. Most had to struggle against their own establishment, including modern Jewish leadership in the free world and leaders of the then dominant Socialist-Zionist establishment. The mavericks often faced the forces of Darkness alone or with a small but fully trustworthy group dedicated to saving Jewish lives. Among Jews Rabbi Michael Ber Weissmandl and Mrs. Gizi Fleischmann of the exemplary Bratislava “Working Group”, “Peter Bergson”<sup>3</sup>, George Mantello (Mandel)<sup>4</sup>, Yitzchak and Recha Sternbruch<sup>5</sup>, and Rabbi Solomon Schoenfeld<sup>6</sup> exemplify *Brilliant Light in Extreme Darkness*. There were many others.

*Raoul Wallenberg*, the Swedish diplomat in Budapest who later tragically disappeared in the Soviet Gulag was perhaps an even more significant Beacon. He was in the same category as the above mavericks, was fearless and amazingly resourceful. His hero was Charlie Chaplin and in many ways he mixed humor with agile and non-conventional ways of thinking to outsmart the Nazis and save many of us, Jews, from their claws. Wallenberg was extremely daring and often risked his life for us under very difficult circumstances. He was not a Jew, yet he did all he could to save the Jews of Hungary. He was an exceptional man and a “mentch” of unusually high caliber.

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<sup>1</sup> retired, City University of New York

<sup>2</sup> for example the Turkish genocide against Armenians

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<sup>3</sup> Irgun representative sent to the USA from Palestine. His real name was *Hillel Kook*. In this note he is referred to under his alias or *nom de guerre*

<sup>4</sup> Orthodox Jew born in Romania and represented El Salvador in Switzerland

<sup>5</sup> Switzerland

<sup>6</sup> England

It is said that no good deed goes unpunished. Immediately after Hungary's liberation Raoul Wallenberg was "repaid" for being an exemplary rescuer by being swallowed up in the Leftist Paradise on Earth<sup>1</sup> Inquisition's concentration camps. He became its victim along with his Jewish driver from Hungary, Vilmos Langerfelder, and tens of millions in another large-scale genocide perpetrated during the blood and tear filled twentieth century<sup>2</sup>. His tragic fate in the claws of the Soviet regime, in the hands of Hitler's one-time partner and co-war criminal, Stalin, is still unknown.

Many of the Jews of Hungary who survived and their descendents owe their lives to a number of mavericks, including Raoul Wallenberg, Rabbi Weissmandl and his "Working Group" colleagues, including Mrs. Gizi Fleischmann, as well as Peter Bergson and George Mantello. The Jewish maverick rescuers are still shunned by the modern Jewish and Zionist establishment in the free world, including the Holocaust Museums.

For various reasons the amazing, often daring and brilliant deeds of some Holocaust era Jewish mavericks who had great impact on saving Jews was not publicized by the Jewish and Zionist establishment. Every thinking person must ask how that happened – especially after the huge sums, energy and publicity poured into Holocaust museums, Holocaust education in Israel and world-wide. The answers to such a question are painful, but it is more painful and extremely damaging not to finally face the truth.

An earlier draft of this booklet included a section titled "*Darkness Among Us*" and was removed after much deliberation. This booklet is not the place to go into details about our own significant failings, for which large numbers of our brothers and sisters paid with their lives. It must be noted that whereas we are quick to call other nations and their

leaders to task for not doing enough for us Jews during the Shoah, so far we deliberately failed to honestly examine our less than exemplary record and produced a distorted history. We must face history as it was, without whitewashing anything or anyone. We owe this to our murdered six million sisters and brothers, tens of millions of us who were unborn because the potential parents were murdered, and to ourselves. Without honest introspection we will not be able to learn from our tragic mistakes and wrong motives during a very tragic time. Perhaps we ought to take a lesson from our foundation document, the Torah, which presents our greatest people as having had weaknesses and downfalls which due to their stature they were able to overcome. We, the Jewish people, the State of Israel and leading Jewish and Zionist organizations<sup>3</sup>, should not settle for less regarding our failings during the Shoah. The magnitude of our magnificent accomplishments should give up the inner strength to face ourselves with integrity and without makeup.

Much can be written about the unselfish, heroic, humane, brilliant, creative and entrepreneurial character of the great maverick rescuers. Concern here is not for specific deeds, but the universal lesson, and the abstract character of *Beacons in the Dark*. It is puzzling that the periods of darkness<sup>4</sup> during the twentieth century in Armenia, the Soviet Union<sup>5</sup>, Cambodia, Argentina<sup>6</sup>, Rwanda and ex-Yugoslavia may have been so unlit by Beacons. There was a momentary glimmer of Light breaking thru the Darkness in latter day Communist China, when an anonymous, unarmed, lone young man stood in front of a long line of tanks next to Tiananmen Square on June 5, 1989 and stopped the tanks.

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<sup>3</sup> like the World Jewish Congress and the Jewish Agency

<sup>4</sup> large-scale genocides

<sup>5</sup> during time of the Gulags and general Stalinist terror and genocide in the CCCP and its colonies, whose toll was apparently much higher than the number of people killed by Hitler's genocide

<sup>6</sup> during time of the *desaparecidos*, when many young men and women "disappeared" after being tortured and murdered by the dictatorial regime

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<sup>1</sup> the CCCP and its Gulags

<sup>2</sup> seems that the Soviet system, including its colonies, murdered even more people than the Nazis and Fascists

There is a need to teach young people the *Principles of Light in the Dark* to assure that periods of future extreme Darkness will be pierced, lit and dissipated by powerful Beacons. History shows that even if powerful forces of evil create widespread darkness sometimes even one person can light up the entire planet. Often it is the lone maverick who acts as a Beacon.

### ***Some of the Most Important Rescuers***

#### ***Rabbi Michael Ber Weissmandl and Mrs. Gizi Fleischmann***

One of the most remarkable geniuses of rescue during the Shoah was Rabbi Michael Ber Weissmandl. He was born in Debrecen, Hungary and later was at the Slovak Nitra Yeshiva, where he married Rabbi Ungar's daughter. He was a multi-faceted genius. His grandfather asked him not to present his Bar-Mitvah speech because it was of such high quality that he was afraid that success too early in life may have a bad effect. He was a renowned scholar in Judaism and in his spare time he developed the concept now well known as "Torah Codes".

He helped found the war time Bratislava "Working Group", where he was the strategic planner and key activist aiming to save as many Jews as possible, without regard for affiliation and geographic location<sup>1</sup>. One of his colleagues in the Working Group was an exemplary and brave woman, Mrs. Gizi Fleischmann, who was unfortunately murdered by the Nazis in Auschwitz.

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<sup>1</sup> he also had unsatiable curiosity in many fields, was fascinated by all sorts of machines, and traveled widely to distant Jewish communities which was unusual at the time. He also traveled to Oxford a number of times to do research, which was very unusual for a "haredi" Jew in those times. In his "spare time" before or during World War II he founded the field now well known as "Torah Codes"

In 1942 Rabbi Weissmandl realized that the Germans were willing to make a deal with what they perceived as a "world-wide Jewish power structure" controlling the world<sup>2</sup>. Rabbi Weissmandl invented a Swiss Jew, "Felix Roth", part of the German's imagined Jewish power structure. Fortunately Rabbi Weissmandl had stationery from an expensive Swiss hotel, from pre-war days, and on a suitable typewriter wrote a letter from a fictitious "Felix Roth" to himself, authorizing negotiation with the Nazis to save the lives of Slovak Jews. Rabbi Weissmandl conducted negotiations with the leading German Nazi in Slovakia, Wisliceny, first thru a Jewish traitor<sup>3</sup> and then thru one of the trusted members of the Working Group, Andre Steiner<sup>4</sup>.

Rabbi Weissmandl was able to bribe the Nazis in Bratislava in 1942. They were willing to stop the transports from Slovakia for US \$50,000<sup>5</sup>. The Nazis showed good will by suspending the transports for a while, to give the Working Group credibility and time to raise the money. Repeated pleas for money by the Working Group to various parts of the Jewish establishment, particularly the JOINT and HEHALUTZ, were futile. Since the money was not forthcoming eventually the Nazis resumed the transports.

Later in 1942 Rabbi Weissmandl was again able to negotiate with the Nazis, who agreed to stop almost all transports in Europe for two million dollars<sup>6</sup>. This was called the *Europa Plan*. Only a small down payment of about 10% was required to show the Nazis good faith. Once again

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<sup>2</sup> shows how propaganda can backfire. Often the chefs of non-kosher mind food end up eating their own slop as if it were gourmet food ...

<sup>3</sup> who stole much of the ransom amount to be given to Wisliceny

<sup>4</sup> Rabbi Weissmandl refused to cut his beard, despite being beaten up a number of times for being a Jew. He thought that it would be more effective if a "modern looking" Jew negotiated with the Nazis. I heard that later he regretted not negotiating directly

<sup>5</sup> worth about \$500,000 today

<sup>6</sup> in today's terms about twenty-million dollars

the modern Jewish establishment refused to help. The results we know: six million of our brothers and sisters murdered, six million worlds destroyed and untold suffering by eventual survivors.

Rabbi Weissmandl was also instrumental in the drafting of what became known as the “*Auschwitz Report*”, based on testimony of two Jews who escaped from Auschwitz<sup>1</sup>, Walter Rosenberg<sup>2</sup> and Alfred Wetzler, to warn of the imminent murder of Hungarian Jews<sup>3</sup>. This was around April 7, 1944 soon after the Germans entered Hungary and deported about 12,000 Jews a day to Auschwitz. The escapees were extensively questioned by members of the Bratislava Working Group and their testimony and maps of Auschwitz they had memorized formed the basis of the *Auschwitz Report*<sup>4</sup>. Rabbi Weissmandl’s Yiddish summary of the report was widely distributed to major Jewish/Zionist organizations in the free world. Eventually a copy reached George Mantello (Mandel) in Switzerland, who obtained it via the Orthodox community in Budapest. Mantello used the report to widely publicize the Nazi atrocities and that stopped the trains from Hungary. See later section on George Mantello.

Mrs. Gizi Fleischmann was able to send her children to Palestine, but declined to leave Bratislava, saying that her place and fate was with her other children: the abandoned Jews of Slovakia. She was Rabbi Weissmandl’s relative, wasn’t religious, was a Socialist-Zionist leader in Slovakia, and was by profession a social worker. Because of her dedication, the Nazis requested “special treatment” for Mrs. Gizi

Fleischmann when she was sent to Auschwitz. This meant that she was probably murdered immediately upon arrival. It is gratifying that at least a small Jerusalem alley is named after Mrs. Gizi Fleischmann<sup>5</sup>. There is also a small Jerusalem street named after Raoul Wallenberg. The other Jewish rescuers received no recognition in Israel or by Yad Vashem.

During the Shoah she, Rabbi Weissmandl and others in the Working Group worked tirelessly and selflessly to save Jews without concern for their religious or political preferences. In Bratislava religious and irreligious, Zionist and non-Zionist, assimilated and non-assimilated Jews worked together in harmony. Unfortunately that seemed to be not the case in Budapest and elsewhere<sup>6</sup> during an extremely critical time for us.

Rabbi Weissmandl was also to be accorded by the Nazis “special treatment”, but he was able to saw thru a lock on the train taking him and his family to Auschwitz, jumped off the train and survived. His family, unfortunately, was murdered. Rabbi Weissmandl was a broken man after this and often cried every night because of his personal tragedy and due to his knowledge that more could have been done to save the Jews of Europe. After the war he lived in the USA where he rebuilt the Nitra yeshivah which he set up in the then secluded Westchester town of Mount Kisco in New York state. After much deliberation he wrote a book called *Min Ha Metzhar*<sup>7</sup> about what happened during the Shoah and the book was apparently banned in Israel. He died shortly after writing the book, some say from a broken heart.

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<sup>1</sup> the escape was organized by the underground in Auschwitz to warn of the Nazis’ plan to murder the Jews of Hungary

<sup>2</sup> changed his name to Rudolph Vrba

<sup>3</sup> later, on May 27, 1944, two more Jews escaped: Ernest Rosin (Slovak) and Ceslov Mordowitz (Polish) and were also debriefed by a member(s) of the Working Group

<sup>4</sup> a noted and reliable historian said that as recently as the 1970-s over 10 copies, some variants, of the Auschwitz Report were in the Sochnut archives, but recently he couldn’t find any copies.

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<sup>5</sup> in the Ramot Beth neighborhood, called Rechov Giza, off Rechov Even Shmuel

<sup>6</sup> including the Yishuv in pre-state Israel, the USA and the Warsaw Ghetto during the revolt

<sup>7</sup> “*From the Straights*”, written in the late 1950-s or early 1960-s after much deliberation. Rabbi Weissmandl felt that in order to learn important lessons it is important to understand certain aspects of the Shoah we may prefer to ignore. He decided to publish it only in Hebrew, intending the book for a Jewish audience

### *Peter Bergson (Hillel Kook)*

One ardent Zionist<sup>1</sup>, Peter Bergson, a high ranking member of the Irgun, worked tirelessly and very effectively in the United States to try to save the Jews of Europe. His real name was Hillel Kook, which he changed to Peter Bergson out of concern for his well known uncle, Rabbi Kook, the Chief Rabbi of Palestine, whom he didn't want to embarrass with his political activities<sup>2</sup>.

Bergson was sent from Palestine to Europe and after the war broke out to America to help establish a Jewish Army. He was young, maybe 25. Although he was an ardent Zionist he realized that during the Shoah there is an even more important mission than Zionism<sup>3</sup>: saving the lives of his brothers and sisters in Europe from what appeared to be certain death. He dedicated himself to organizing various efforts to make Americans aware of what was happening in Europe, and putting pressure on American politicians. Starting in Spring 1943 the small, but very dedicated and talented group he led placed full page ads in major newspapers, including the New York Times. He organized a major public demonstration, the "*Rabbis' March*"<sup>4</sup> in Washington, DC, to call attention to our plight.

Bergson prevailed on the noted playwright, Ben Hecht<sup>5</sup>, to write a script for what turned out to be a widely performed traveling pageant "*We Will*

*Never Die*", depicting the crisis<sup>6</sup> and to write newspaper ads and articles on the subject. Despite attempts by the Jewish establishment's "company men"<sup>7</sup> to sabotage this effort the pageant was performed twice to large audiences in New York's Madison Square Garden, and was also performed in Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles and Washington DC, where it was well attended by America's political leaders and Eleanor Roosevelt. The pageant was directed by Moss Hart. Starring in it were Edward G Robinson and Paul Muni and its score was written by Kurt Weil<sup>8</sup>.

Prior to meeting Peter Bergson, among his other works Ben Hecht rewrote the script of *Gone With the Wind* in about one week of intense work at the request of one of the Hollywood moguls. It is a testimony to his character that after meeting Bergson in New York he gave up his lucrative writing activities and dedicated himself to work for saving the Jews of Europe. As a side note, it is not to our credit as Jews that only two anti-Nazi/anti-Fascist movies were produced during the war, both by non-Jews (one by Charlie Chaplin: *The Great Dictator*), in spite of strong Jewish presence in Hollywood.

Ben Hecht was an Academy Award winning screen writer. He was not a political activist before meeting Bergson, but after their meeting dedicated himself to saving Jews. He was disheartened by the Jewish

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<sup>1</sup> a "Revisionist" - follower of Jabotinsky - in the Etzel group

<sup>2</sup> Hillel Kook was not an observant Jew

<sup>3</sup> in contrast, a leading Socialist-Zionist, signer of Israel's Declaration of Independence, and Mapai party nominee for President, Yitzchak Greenbaum, a leader of HEHALUTZ (represented in Hungary by Dr Rezső Kasztner), said "*Zionism is above everything!*" - i.e. above rescue and diverting funds for rescue is an anti-Zionist act

<sup>4</sup> unfortunately only Orthodox rabbis agreed to participate

<sup>5</sup> Hecht was not a political man until he met Bergson in New York. He wrote (paraphrase): "*I was an honest writer minding his own business until walking down the street bumped into history.*"

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<sup>6</sup> after some initial resistance rabbis were convinced to say Kaddish on stage for European Jews. Initially they felt it was not appropriate to say that prayer on stage

<sup>7</sup> primarily leaders of American Jews: Rabbi/Dr. Steven Wise - a man with a phenomenally bloated ego, an ardent follower of Roosevelt and a Socialist-Zionist, and Dr. Nachum Goldman - later head of the World Jewish Congress and considered to be candidate for Israel's President. It was observed that the few meetings which the establishment Jewish leaders held about the Holocaust were often broken off for lunch. The "leaders" seemed to have truly been "Out to Lunch ..."

<sup>8</sup> Ben Hecht wrote in *Perfidy* that most American Jewish creative people whom he approached refused to participate

and Zionist establishment's negative attitude toward the rescue efforts and after the Kasztner trial in Israel he wrote a damning book, "*Perfidy*"<sup>1</sup>, which was apparently banned in Israel, along with Rabbi Weissmandl's *Min HaMetzar*.

*Perfidy* exposes some of the Holocaust era record of top Socialist-Zionist leaders and Jewish leaders in the free West. It is a testimony to Hecht's character that after he wrote his book he read it to seven high-level Zionist leaders in America, who burst into tears. Hecht withheld publishing his book for quite a while after he asked these leaders whether to publish or not, and they unanimously asked him not to publish his work.

Ben Hecht wrote about the Bergson Group's rescue efforts: "*And who blocked our way? Jewish leaders. Jews of name and position, who feared that they would be recognized as Jews and not as Americans. One who fought with all his might against our rescue and publicity campaigns was Rabbi Stephen Wise, president of the various Jewish congresses.*" He calls to task also the Yishuv war time leaders, primarily Weizman, Ben Gurion and Sharett and especially the Sochnut's representative in Hungary and subsequent Mapai party functionary in Israel: Dr. Rezső Kasztner.

It is sad that the ones who tried to diminish Bergson's efforts, and engaged in significant obstructionism, which was in fact sabotage, were apparently the leaders of the modern Jewish establishment, foremost their leader, Rabbi Steven Wise, who tried to portray Bergson and his collaborators as mere troublemakers, adventurers and con men. Another noted Zionist leader, Dr. Nachum Goldman, tried to use his influence in Washington with the apparently antisemitic State Department to destroy Bergson's credibility and eliminate Bergson's group's activities by having Bergson deported from the USA or drafted. When about four hundred

rabbis demonstrated in Washington to call attention to our severe plight in Europe Roosevelt apparently asked who was the demonstrating group. Apparently one of his Jewish advisors told him that it was just a group of old men from a nursing home ...

Bergson was very effective in gaining political support in Washington. Characteristically, the main Jewish organizations pressured senators and congressmen to drop support for Bergson and his rescue efforts. It is perhaps telling that those who responded to such calls for boycott and sabotage of rescue were Jews. Because of this Bergson later focused his efforts on politicians from states without significant Jewish voters, and drew his support from Christian politicians whom Steven Wise and other American Jewish leaders could not easily pressure. It is notable that Bergson was able to organize prayers for us in about 6,000 Churches in America.

One of the Bergson group's "small" achievements was effective political pressure in Washington which resulted in President Roosevelt reluctantly setting up what became known as the War Refugee Board (WRB), which is estimated as saving over 200,000 lives in Europe, mostly Jews. Raoul Wallenberg's heroic mission to Budapest was a result of the Bergson group's activities<sup>2</sup>.

### *George Mantello (Mandel)*

An important rescuer was George Mantello (Mandel), an Orthodox Jew originally from Romania and representing El Salvador in Switzerland. He was instrumental in issuing large numbers of El Salvadorean papers to Jews. These turned out to be the best protection papers and afforded the greatest protection to Jews in Nazi occupied Europe. One of the advantages of these papers was that they could be used to protect an entire family - including a "virtual family" of unrelated individuals.

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<sup>1</sup> "Kachas" in Hebrew

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<sup>2</sup> the estimated 200,000 or more who were saved by the Bergson Group include those rescued by Raoul Wallenberg

During a critical time Mantello was, indeed, one of the most important *El Salvadors*: “The Saviors”, for the Jews of Hungary.

His major contribution toward saving Jews was finding and broadly publicizing the *Auschwitz Report*. Thru Budapest he obtained Rabbi Weissmandl’s summary of the Report from Mr. Moshe Krauss and lost no time publicizing it over major news networks. As a result there was a major grass roots protest in Switzerland. Sermons in Swiss churches focused on the tragedy and a leading Swiss Protestant priest quickly wrote and published a book “*Am I my Brother’s Keeper?*” There were over 400 major headlines in various Swiss papers deploring the depth of depravity to which Europe sank. This reaction was unprecedented in intensity and level of participation – and surely wasn’t matched in the USA or the Yishuv. These exemplary events in Switzerland were by the Swiss people and not the government or the banks, which have a different track record to account for<sup>1</sup>. The Swiss grass root movement in 1944 finally forced action by leaders of various countries, including President Roosevelt, who issued a grave warning to Admiral Horthy, the leader of Hungary. There were strong letters of protest and warning also from Churchill. Letters were sent to Horthy also by the King of Sweden and the Pope. The net effect of George Mantello’s actions was the stopping of the trains from Hungary to Auschwitz, which until then took the life of twelve thousand Jews a day – including many of my close relatives. Thus, Mantello is “the man who stopped the trains”<sup>2</sup>.

The Jewish Agency representative in Hungary, Dr. Rezső Kasztner, and the JOINT’s representative in Switzerland, Sally Meyer, urged Mantello not to publicize the report<sup>3</sup>. After the war Kasztner became a leading political functionary in Israel in Ben-Gurion’s party. He was accused of

collaboration with the Nazis and was character witness for one of the leading Nazis, Kurt Becher, head of the SS Economic Department<sup>4</sup>. Kasztner’s highly publicized trial in Israel was very damaging to Ben-Gurion<sup>5</sup> and his party. Later Kasztner was assassinated on a Tel-Aviv street under suspicious circumstances<sup>6</sup> somewhat similar to the rather puzzling Rabin assassination<sup>7</sup>. To date it is not clear who ordered Kasztner’s assassination. It may or may not be “coincidental” that an Israeli journalist, Dr. Moshe Keren, of Ha’aretz died of a “heart attack” in a German hotel room soon after he arrived from Israel to interview the Nazi Kurt Becher.

### *Recha and Yitzchak Sternbruch*

There were other exemplary Jews who saved many lives. Two of them were Mrs. Recha Sternbruch and her husband Yitzchak in Switzerland. They had to fight opposition and obstructionism by the JOINT leadership in Switzerland, mainly by Sally Meyer. They risked being jailed in Switzerland for breaking some regulations during their uncompromising saving Jews. One of their many achievements was release of a large number of Jews from Theresianstadt.

### *Rabbi Solomon Schoenfeld*

In his youth he went from London to the Slovak Nitra yeshiva and studied with Rabbi Weissmandl. They stayed in touch after Rabbi Schoenfeld returned to England and during the Shoah he was considerably influenced by Rabbi Weissmandl’s suggestions. He is

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<sup>1</sup> as in Israel

<sup>2</sup> title of a book by Prof. David Kranzler

<sup>3</sup> in part because they were concerned that negative publicity for the Nazis may jeopardize release of Jews on the “Kasztner train”

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<sup>4</sup> responsible for concentration camps, gold teeth, clothes, and “processing us” into fertilizer and soap (ref. Ben Hecht’s *Perfidy*)

<sup>5</sup> at the time Ben-Gurion’s son, a high-level Police officer, was involved in a scandal and that too was a source of embarrassment to Ben-Gurion

<sup>6</sup> one of the assassins, Ze’ev Eckstein, was apparently a paid undercover agent of Israeli intelligence until a few months before Kasztner’s murder (ref. *Perfidy*).

<sup>7</sup> where the Shabak was apparently deeply involved

credited with saving about 4,000 of us during the Shoah – mostly as part of the *Kindertransport*. He was a maverick and was not only an extremely talented organizer and rescuer who was always improvising to meet immediate challenges, but had a very warm heart. He was also the first to bring kosher food and a Jewish spirit to the broken women and men returning to their countries after liberation from the Nazi's hell. Unfortunately, like the other maverick rescuers, his noble and inspired efforts were often sabotaged by other Jews for petty reasons and gravely mistaken ideological reasons. Whereas Rabbi Schoenfeld raised many millions of dollars for rescue he lived in poverty and people were shocked to find out under what destitute circumstances this great man lived.

### **Anecdotes**

Two following fascinating anecdotes from the time of the Holocaust in Bratislava were heard in summer 2002 during a discussion with Mr. David Steiner, who personally witnessed them. He lives in Jerusalem and is originally from Bratislava, where he spent the Shoah era as a teenager. His memories of that time are vivid and he spends much of his time researching the Shoah's effects in Slovakia.

### *A Messenger*

One Succoth during the Shoah when Mr. Steiner was in a Bratislava synagogue, a messenger arrived with a *lulav* and *etrog*<sup>1</sup> smuggled into Slovakia during a dangerous time and sent by a well connected Bratislava Jew and currency dealer: *Shlomo Stern*<sup>2</sup>. After the prayers were said the *lulav* and *etrog* were sent to another synagogue.

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<sup>1</sup> used in Succoth prayers, a palm branch and a citrus variety called *etrog*

<sup>2</sup> who provided the initial sum to Rabbi Weissmandl, to bribe the Nazis who agreed to stop the Slovak transports. The money was literally dug out from under

### *Another Messenger*

At a certain stage of the Shoah many Bratislava Jews tried to survive by hiding in bunkers in the country side. Mr. Steiner recalls being in a bunker during Passover, and seeing a familiar person, a non-Jew called *Natalie* who operated a print shop in Bratislava. He brought some wine and matzo. They were prepared and sent by Rabbi Weissmandl from his bunker, the wine apparently prepared from raisins. After a small amount of each was taken the rest was sent to another bunker. During the story both Mr. Steiner and I got tears in our eyes. It is very touching that goodness and selflessness existed in that dark time. Rabbi Weissmandl was apparently an extremely capable man with a very warm heart, and there were many non-Jews with a pure and good heart who didn't lose their humanity.

### **References**

It is striking that the following books reflect a radically different reality than what is commonly presented by Holocaust historians and Holocaust museums. Seems that it is often difficult to find honest brokers of history whose aim is seeking and telling the truth vs. distorting truth in service of an ideology. History that is not gathered, distilled and told for the sake of truth<sup>3</sup> is as dangerous and damaging as any other form of propaganda. Historical analysis and publications guided by nationalism, party loyalty and despising the "other" leads to severe distortions, is very damaging and has limited life time since truth can't be hidden for long.

I am still somewhat shocked that most of the content of this note became known to me only in 2002, almost sixty years after the Shoah. Our propagandists and Holocaust museums apparently did an excellent job

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the ground, washed and ironed by Mrs. Stern, to look like it came from a Mr. Felix Roth in Switzerland, whom Rabbi Weissmandl invented

<sup>3</sup> *Le Shem Shamayim* ("For the sake of Heaven" - i.e. in the service of Truth alone. Notable is that one of God's names is "*Emeth*" or "*Truth*")



hiding the truth so well for so long. The time has surely passed for all of us to recall a story read in childhood, when our soul was still pure, and to exclaim without reservation “*The Emperor is Naked!*”.

There are a number of books on Jewish rescuers, and the deplorable track record of the free world modern Jewish leadership and leaders of the Socialist-Zionist establishment. Useful reference books include:

Dr. Abraham Fuchs, *The Unheeded Cry*

Ben Hecht, *Perfidy*

Prof. David Kranzler, *Thy Brother's Blood*

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

Prof. David Kranzler, *Holocaust Hero: The Untold Story of Solomon Schoenfeld, an Orthodox British Rabbi* (TO BE PUBLISHED IN 2003)

Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million*

Rabbi Moshe Shoenfeld, *The Holocaust Victims Accuse*

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

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

*NOTE: Perfidy and Min HaMetzar were apparently once banned in Israel.*