

Ira Hirschmann
Caution to the Winds
New York: D. McKay Co., 1962

“Roncalli listened carefully while I described the desperate struggle of the Jews from Hungary. I cited the poor statistics that I had and the numerous testimonies of undercover operations. Each time that I pointed out an important issue he agreed with empathy. In a certain moment, he moved the chair closer and asked in a low voice, ‘*Do you have people in Hungary willing to cooperate?*’” After my affirmative answer, it took him a few minutes before asking: “*Do you think that Jews would voluntarily accept to be baptized?*” The answer took me by surprise and I answered that in my opinion if that could save their lives, they would be willing to do it. He said, “*I know what I am going to do.*” He added that he had reasons to believe that some baptismal certificates had already been granted by religious women to Hungarian Jews. The Nazis had recognized those documents as credentials and allowed its bearers to leave the country. He agreed that we would make contact with his representative in Hungary and that I would communicate with our undercover contacts to organize massive baptism or at least certificates that were issued to women and children. It would depend on them whether they wanted to stay as members of the church or take their road. The agreement was reached in a few minutes. It was clear to me that Roncalli had considered this plan before my arrival and that he had created a plan before my arrival in which I could prove my credentials, my discretion and my skill to put the operation into practice. I had no doubts that the wheels of the Baptism operation would be put into motion in Hungary under the auspices of the Catholic Church.” (pp. 182-183)

Arthur Morse, in **While Six Million Died**; Giancarlo Zizola, in **L’utopia di Papa Giovanni** (1973), p. 109; Peter Hebblethwaite, in **John XXIII, Pope of the Council** (1985) – were led to believe that Roncalli himself issued false baptismal certificates, or mailed such certificates to his counterpart in Budapest, Nuncio Angelo Rotta. There has, so, not been any substantiation to this. But Hirschmann’s account does point that Roncalli was, in some way, involved in this effort.