

Roncalli in the Second World War: Peace Initiatives, the Greek Famine and the Persecution of the Jews

by PETER HOFFMANN

Apostolic delegate in Turkey and Greece and archbishop of Messambria from January 1935 to December 1944, Angelo Roncalli¹ was confronted from 1939 to 1944 with extraordinary situations of human suffering. His response to some of the challenges has received little attention. Yet both public and private archives contain materials sufficient to throw considerable light on Roncalli's activities during those years.

Mgr. Roncalli had conventional contacts with the diplomatic corps in Turkey, on both sides of the war fronts. He was shrewd enough to recognise attempts to use him for the political ends of one state or another. The approaches of the German ambassador, Franz von Papen, served mainly that purpose, and the indications are that they failed to that extent. But Roncalli did lend a hand when Papen launched one of his unauthorised efforts to bring about a mediated peace.² The incident is illuminated by hitherto unused memoirs written by Papen's friend and

AA/PA = Auswärtiges Amt/Pöhlisches Archiv; ADAP = Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik; Actes = Actes et documents du Saint Siège relatifs à la Seconde Guerre Mondiale; FRUS = Foreign Relations of the United States; diplomatic papers; CZA = Central Zionist Archives; NA RG = National Archives, Record Group; DO = Department of State; AE GR = Ankara Embassy, General Records; WRB = War Refugee Board

¹ The author acknowledges gratefully the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada which made possible some of the research for this article.

² Peter Hildebrandt, *Pope John XXIII: shepherd of the modern world*, New York 1982, 141-5, 197.

Before the peace talks, Roncalli had met Papen on 8 Aug. 1939, 26 Jan. and 22 Mar. 1940, 18 Aug. and at Christmas 1940, Loris Capovilla, *Civismo XXIII: Quindici lettere*, Rome 1970, 572, 574; Sandra Zampa, 'Cronologia della vita di A. G. Roncalli', Bologna 1986, lists more, but not all, of Roncalli's meetings with Papen; Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, *Lettere ai vescovi di Bergamo*, Bergamo 1925, 79. There are no reports from Papen on these meetings in the German Foreign Office files in Bonn, AA/PA, letter 9 Sept. 1946. Papen was regarded with deep suspicion in the German hierarchy and in the Vatican. When his accreditation at the Vatican was renewed in Apr. 1940, Konrad Graf von Preysing, the

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intermediary, Dr Kurt Freiherr von Lersner, as well as the documents published by the Vatican. Roncalli and Papen enabled Lersner to travel to Rome on a peace mission in May 1942.³ Roncalli admired Lersner's passion for peace but also expressed doubts whether the initiative was really Lersner's and Papen's alone, or whether they followed 'higher orders'.⁴ But there is no evidence linking the initiative with the German government.

Upon his arrival in Rome on 20 May 1942, Lersner wrote to Cardinal Secretary of State Luigi Maglione and asked for an interview, adding that he was under surveillance.⁵ He went to the Vatican gardens on 21 May and found there Mgr. Testa, formerly secretary to the apostolic delegation in Turkey, now posted to Greece in the same capacity. 'Perambulating between the flowerbeds, from path to path, [they] arrived at the apartments of His Eminence the Cardinal Secretary of State', who was waiting for Lersner.⁶ Lersner told Maglione that; upon his arrival in Rome, Otto, Prince von Bismarck, the minister in the German embassy at the Quirinal, had instructed him not to conduct any political talks. Declaring to Maglione his unofficial status, Lersner said: (1) that all ordinary Germans believed that a German victory would not bring peace; and (2) that therefore 'we' needed to work for peace. Turkey would assist; but it would be better if the Holy See took the initiative, not least as an opportunity to increase the prestige of the Catholic Church. After the Holy See would have sounded out the powers, concrete steps might be taken by October. Cardinal Maglione replied that the Holy See desired to promote peace and had always said so.⁷ The present circumstances, as the Holy Father had stated recently, did not appear

bishop of Berlin, replied to an inquiry from Pius XII that Papen was 'a highly placed Catholic National Socialist', that a papal approval might lead German Catholics to believe that 'outrance or silence, action or non-intervention by the Holy See were influenced by this person's machinations', *Actes*, II, Vatican City 1966, 158-52.

³ When Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop prevented Papen from installing Lersner in the Ankara embassy, Papen brought Lersner to Turkey 'through the Wichemsch', ADAP, D. 2, Frankfurt am Main 1961, 200; Papen to Ribbentrop, 11 Mar. 1941; 'Heer von Lersner ist nie von mir, sondern von der Abwehr besondert worden', AA/PA, Akten betreffend Türkei, Bd. 9. Ribbentrop prohibited any peace contacts; Papen to Foreign Office, 17 Nov. 1940; Ribbentrop to diplomatic missions, 18 Nov. 1940, ADAP, II, VIII, Baden-Baden-Frankfurt am Main 1961, 327-8, 333-4; Ambassador Ritter to Papen, 26 Sept. 1941, AA/PA, Handakten Ritter 53 betr. Türkei 1941-1942.

⁴ Roncalli to Montali, 8 July 1942, *Actes*, VII, Vatican City 1973, 474; Roncalli to Montali, 23 Apr. 1942, *Actes*, V, Vatican City 1969, 329-30.

⁵ Minute by Mgr. Domenico Tardini, head of the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, 29 May 1942, *Actes*, V, 374-7. Lersner's account of the events in 'Memoires' (typescript), Corvus 1944/5, 126, shows that Lersner went to the Vatican on 20 May and made an appointment with Montali to whom Mgr. Gustavo Testa (formerly Roncalli's secretary in Istanbul, now his secretary in Greece) had introduced him just as Montali was leaving his superior, Maglione. ⁶ Lersner, op. cit. 129.

⁷ Tardini's minute, 29 May 1942, *Actes*, V, 373; Lersner, op. cit. 129. The two accounts agree in all salient points; Lersner's account contains more detail than Tardini's.

favourable for a peace initiative. Maglione deplored the persecution of Christianity in Germany even when unity of spirit was more necessary than ever. Lersner said he agreed wholly. The interview then covered concerns such as the provisioning of populations in occupied countries during the next winter.

On the same day, Lersner had a conversation with Substitute Secretary of State Mgr Montini. Although Montini had been present when the secretary of state reported to the pope on his discussion with Lersner, Montini went through the points with Lersner once more. Lersner, speaking 'privately', declared himself 'obsessed with peace'.¹³ But Lersner's mentioning Papan as having encouraged him to travel to the Vatican 'unfortunately produced silence', as it had done earlier when Lersner had mentioned Papan to Maglione. Lersner stressed again Papan's devotion and loyalty to the Church, but Montini 'maintained his eloquent silence'.

Lersner then repeated that Turkey was waiting for the right moment to attempt peace mediation but that it would be better coming from the Holy See.¹⁴ In Germany the military people, though confident that certain set objectives could be attained, were beginning to think that military victories would not solve matters and that a change of heart was necessary for a true peace. The most critical and most favourable time to invite everyone to discuss peace would be autumn - after Hitler's Russian spring offensive'. Separate peace treaties were certainly thinkable, said Lersner. He did not believe Germany wished to destroy the British empire; the peace should be generous; Versailles must not be repeated. Lersner would keep himself available to convey any messages. As Lersner took his leave, Montini told him he would be welcome at any time, day or night; but Lersner had little hope for a papal peace initiative.

Lersner's proposals revealed the thinking of the German anti-Hitler conspiracy that military setbacks would dispose certain military leaders to support the conspiracy.¹⁵ As Lersner had envisaged, by autumn 1942 the German forces faced crises at Stalingrad and in North Africa. But there was no prospect that the Allies would give an anti-Nazi German government better terms than they would give Hitler.¹⁶ The Washington

Pact of 1 January 1942 made Germany's unconditional surrender the official war aim of all signatories.¹⁷ Indeed, there was concern in summer 1942 that a papal peace proposal might embarrass the Allied prosecution of the war. President Roosevelt's personal representative to the pope, Myron L. Taylor, was concerned primarily, as he had been since his appointment in 1940, to keep Pius XII from making proposals for a compromise peace.¹⁸

When Greece was occupied by Italian and German armed forces in April 1941, German military commanders in the field at once pointed to the scarcity of food supplies in the Greek army.¹⁹ On 4 May the German plenipotentiary for Greece, Günther Altenburg, reported that the menacing situation was alleviated only by the release of supplies confiscated by German military authorities but that most of these supplies would be re-confiscated by the Italian authorities when they took over the administration of Greece.²⁰ On 17 May 1941 Hitler's directive number twenty-nine stated that, apart from bases in Thessaloniki, Athens and Crete, the Greek region would be under Italian administration and that German authorities must not be involved in any way in the security and administration of the country, nor must they accept any Greek requests for mediation.²¹ The chief of the general staff of the army, General Franz Halder, noted on 2 August that the food supply situation in Greece was 'difficult', the administration 'bad'; Italy was buying up supplies.²² The 1941 harvest was poor, and some of the principal grain-producing regions of northern Greece had been occupied by Bulgaria.²³ The shortage was aggravated by corruption and hoarding on the part of the Greek population; the Greek government lacked real authority.²⁴ As Italy failed to supply grain to Greece at the modest level she had agreed to, German

pastor; Bernd Martin, 'Verhandlungen über separate Friedensschlüsse 1942-1945', *Militärhistorische Mitteilungen II* (1976), 96-9. See also Roosevelt's fire-side address to the nation on 29 Dec. 1940, *The New York Times*, 30 Dec. 1940, 6; *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt with a Special Introduction and Explanatory Notes by President Roosevelt*, 1940: *War - and aid to democracy*, comp. and coll. Samuel I. Rosenman, New York 1941, 623-44; the 'Atlantic Charter', agreed by President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill on 14 Aug. 1941, with its stipulation in point eight that the disarmament of nations threatening aggression was essential for peace and security, *The Times*, late London edn, 15 Aug. 1941, 4; *FRUS 1941*, 4; Washington 1968, 367-9.

¹⁸ *FRUS 1941*, 4; Washington 1969, 1-30; *FRUS: the conference of Washington, 1941-1942*, and *Casablanca, 1943*, Washington 1968, 360-76.

¹⁹ Hull, *Memoirs*, 213-15; Owen Chadwick, *Britain and the Vatican during the Second World War*, Cambridge 1966, 215.

²⁰ Klaus Ottobruner, *Zwischenkrieg auf dem Balkan: Die deutsche Politik gegenüber Jugoslawien und Griechenland von März bis Juli 1941*, Stuttgart 1973, 246. ²¹ *Ibid.*, 246.

²² ADAP, D. 23, Göttingen 1969, 203-5.

²³ [Franz] Halder, *Kriegstagebuch*, III, Stuttgart (1964), 145.

²⁴ Hagen Fleischer, *Im Kreuzschatten der Mächte: Griechenland 1941-1945 (Oligarchie - Resistenz - Kollektivismus)*, Frankfurt am Main-Berlin-New York 1966, 180. Fleischer's is the most comprehensive and detailed work on Greece in the war to date. ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 170.

¹³ Lersner, op. cit. 132, also for the rest of the paragraph.

¹⁴ For this paragraph, Montini's minute, 'Colloquio con il sig. von Lersner', 22 May 1942, *Acta*, v, 577; Lersner, op. cit. 132-3.

¹⁵ Cf. Peter Hoffmann, 'Peace through complicity: the foreign contacts of the German resistance 1933-1944', *Central European History* xii (1985), 3-44; Hans Wilbrandt, 'Die Aktionen der deutschen Widerstandsbewegung gegen den Nationalsozialismus während des zweiten Weltkrieges in der Türkei', *Deutsch-Österreichische Gesellschaft e.V. Bonn: Mitteilungen*, no. xxv, Dec. 1975, 7-8; Michael Balfour and Julian Frisby, *Heimat von Moltke: a leader against Hitler*, London (1979), 286-7; Peter Hoffmann, *Widerstand, Staatsstreich, Attentat: Der Kampf der Opposition gegen Hitler*, 4th rev. edn, Munich-Zürich 1985, 275-83.

¹⁶ Hoffmann, 'Peace', 9-13; Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs*, 2 vols, New York 1948, 1; 701-13, 885-7; cf. *FRUS 1941*, III, Washington 1961, 772-800; Bernd Martin, *Friedensmission und Machtpolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg 1939-1945*, 2nd edn, Düsseldorf 1976,

authorities could foresee the time when they must act to protect the eastern Mediterranean region against catastrophic disruptions through famine.⁵⁰

The situation deteriorated through the inclusion of Greece in the British blockade against the Axis powers.⁵¹ Forty-seven thousand tons of Australian grain, which were to have replaced what British forces had confiscated and consumed in Greece, did not arrive,⁵² and neither did 350,000 tons of grain which the Greek government had bought and largely paid for.⁵³ The British government took the position that supplying occupied populations was the responsibility of the occupying powers.⁵⁴ The British war cabinet conclusions of 28 July 1941 record some discussion of this, with the secretary of state for foreign affairs suggesting a modification of the blockade policy, the minister for economic warfare opposing it, and Churchill's summary:

The Prime Minister emphasised the importance of maintaining the position that the Germans were responsible for the feeding of the people whose countries they had overrun. He was not aware of any great pressure from the United States of America, and thought that it would be wrong to make any concessions at the present time.⁵⁵

Mgr Roncalli, as apostolic delegate and archbishop of Messambria, expressed his concern to Cardinal Secretary of State Maglione in a report from Athens dated 24 July 1941.⁵⁶ Papan enabled Roncalli to travel directly to Greece, and Roncalli sought out German commanders. On 4 August 1941 Roncalli reported to Maglione from Athens that he had seen General Helmuth Felmy, the German commander-in-chief for southern Greece and commanding general of the twenty-fourth army corps, and that he had decided to approach Field Marshal Wilhelm List, then supreme commander south-east.⁵⁷ Papan asked List to help Roncalli; List agreed and asked Roncalli to hold a field service for his soldiers. Roncalli

celebrated mass on 24 August for wounded German soldiers and visited wounded British prisoners-of-war on 26 August and wounded German soldiers on 28 and 29 August.⁵⁸ But he saw List himself only on 19 September and once again around the end of the month.⁵⁹

On 6 August 1941 Roncalli suggested to Maglione a direct intervention by the Holy See.⁶⁰ The Holy Father would be able to speak 'to the heart of the Americans and the English' to persuade them to permit passage of grain shipments already purchased by Greece. The Holy Father could exert his great influence on the Germans to stop them looting products of the Greek soil and to persuade them to permit passage of foreign ships bringing food to Greece. The idea of ships sailing under the Vatican's flag was also mentioned.⁶¹

In August 1941, the chief of German military intelligence, Admiral Canaris, came to see Papan in Terapia, the ambassador's summer residence.⁶² Turkey, a neutral country inside the blockaded area, had the ability to send supplies to Greece. Papan and Canaris therefore discussed with the Turkish government a large-scale aid programme for the population of Greece. The German government agreed on 15 September to temporary relief measures for Greece.⁶³ Grain was supplied through Turkey by the end of October,⁶⁴ and German military authorities continued to procure grain for Greece from Balkan states.⁶⁵

The Vatican appealed to the British minister, Sir Francis D'Arcy Osborne, on 20 September.⁶⁶ His government's answer came on 17 October: Greece was the responsibility of the occupying power, Italy, which had 'flagrantly failed to fulfil that duty and responsibility', notably by allowing the Germans to denude Greece 'by a system of mixed extortion and pillage'; His Majesty's Government could not depart from

⁵⁰ Ohlhausen, *Zwischenkrieg*, 247-50; Fleischer, *In Kruschzeiten*, 118-19.
⁵¹ *FRUS 1941*, II, Washington 1962, 714-37; W. N. Medlicott, *The Economic Blockade*, II, London 1962, 254-67; Fleischer, op. cit. 120-31; Ohlhausen, op. cit. 246-7.

⁵² *Ibid.* 247.
⁵³ Fleischer, op. cit. 122; Chadwick, *Britain and the Vatican*, 191.
⁵⁴ 'War cabinet 75 (41)', conclusions of a meeting of the war cabinet held at 10 Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Monday, July 28, 1941, at 5 P.M., PRO, Cab. 65/19; Fleischer, *In Kruschzeiten*, 120-1; Chadwick, op. cit. 190-1.

⁵⁵ 'War cabinet', PRO, Cab. 65/19; Fleischer, op. cit. 120-1; Chadwick, op. cit. 190.

⁵⁶ Roncalli to Maglione, 24 July 1941, *Acta*, v. 99-103; Capovilla, *Giorni XXIII*, 575.

⁵⁷ Roncalli to Maglione, 16 Apr. 1941, Roncalli to Montini, 23 Apr. 1941, *Acta*, v. 543-3, 543-54; Giovanni [Lanzi] e Paolo [v.], *Due papie: scaglie di corrispondenza (1929-1960)*, ed. Loris Francesco Capovilla, Brescia (1968), 33; cf. ADAP, D. xlii, Göttingen 1970, 183-5; Angelo Martini a., 'La fame in Grecia nel 1941 nella testimonianza dei documenti inediti vaticani', *Cinque Centesimi civili* (1967), 413-27; Roncalli to Maglione, 4 Aug. and 14 Sept. 1941, *Acta*, v. 108, 110-14; Wolf Kießling, *Das deutsche Heer 1929-1945: Gliederung - Einsatz - Streitkräftigung*, loose-leaf ed., Bad Nauheim (1956-70), 211/201.

⁵⁸ Interview with Margrit and Isabella von Papan, 9 Nov. 1985; Franz von Papan, *Der Weltkrieg wie Gern*, Munich (1952), 543; Roncalli to bishop of Bergamo, 15 Sept. 1941, Roncalli, *Letters in exile*, 88; Capovilla, *Giorni XXIII*, 575; P. Antonio Calrossi, *Il pontefice generale in the beatification case for Pope John XXIII*, letter to the curia, 28 Jan. 1968.

⁵⁹ 'Wehrmachtbefehlshaber Südost (A.O.K. 12) [Saloniki], Tätigkeitsbericht in 1.7.41-31.12.41', Bundesarchiv/Militärarchiv, RH 20-12/104, 12-6; Erpänge des päpstlichen Delegierten Exs. Roncalli, Erzbischof von Messambria', Roncalli to Maglione, 2 Oct. 1941, *Acta*, viii, Vatican City 1974, 297.

⁶⁰ Roncalli to Maglione, 6 Aug. 1941, *Acta*, viii, 246-4.

⁶¹ Roncalli to Maglione from Athens, 25 Nov. 1941, mentions arrivals in Greece of items such as milk, cheese, noodles and rice from Italy, but does not mention quantities. *Acta*, vii, 726-7; see also memorandum of the Vatican secretariat of state, 1 March 1943, *Acta*, ix, Vatican City 1975, 144-5, concerning a number of some of food sent by the Vatican through the manufacturers in Berno and Budapest.

⁶² Papan, *Wahrheit*, 545.
⁶³ Fleischer, *In Kruschzeiten*, 118-19; ADAP, D. xlii, 419-20, 554-6.
⁶⁴ Ohlhausen, *Zwischenkrieg*, 249; ADAP, D. xlii, 554-6.
⁶⁵ Fleischer, op. cit. 120, and n. 26, cites several contemporary German military records and Roncalli's testimony at the trial of Field Marshal List after the war.
⁶⁶ Chadwick, *Britain and the Vatican*, 191.

the blockade.⁷⁷ The Vatican repeated the appeal on 21 October, adding that Roncalli had come from Turkey to Rome to appeal for the Greeks, and again on 24 November.⁷⁸ But the British position remained unchanged.⁷⁹ Only in January 1942 did the British government agree to let into Greece an amount totalling 8,000 tons of 'wheat or flour' under supervision of the International Committee of the Red Cross, declaring it a once-only exception and not a precedent for future occasions.⁸⁰

A Vatican appeal to the German government on 8 November 1941⁸¹ was at least not brusquely rejected. Altenburg was authorised by the Reich government to declare to the International Committee of the Red Cross representative in Athens, M. Brunel, on 11 November 1941, that foodstuffs from whichever country of origin might be imported into Greece; the Reich government guaranteed that such foodstuffs would be made available exclusively to the Greek civilian population; and the Reich government guaranteed safe conducts for grain ships to and from Greece, provided the Reich government was informed of such voyages at least two weeks in advance.⁸²

This enabled church officials, principally Mgr Roncalli, to bring some relief to Greece. During winter 1941-2, there was at least soup for all who came to the kitchens in Athens and in other large cities.⁸³ A Vatican memorandum of 1 March 1943 summed up:

Through the initiative of the Apostolic Delegate in Athens, kitchens for the people have been opened in various parts of Greece, where food is distributed to the poor free of charge or at a nominal price. These kitchens, called 'Foyers de la divine Providence', were founded in December 1941, on the arrival of the grain obtained by the Holy Father in Hungary. In less than a year they have served more than half a million meals, costing nearly 8,000,000 drams. At present, nearly 12,000 meals are distributed daily.⁸⁴

⁷⁷ Osborne to Vatican secretariat of state, 17 Oct. 1941, and Maglione's minute evidently of the same date, *Actes*, viii, 313-14; British legation to Vatican secretariat of state, 3 Oct. 1942, *Actes*, viii, 671-72; Chadwick, op. cit. 191.

⁷⁸ Vatican secretariat of state to Osborne, 21 Oct. and 24 Nov. 1941, *Actes*, viii, 319-21, 353-8.

⁷⁹ Osborne to secretariat of state, 11 Nov. 1941, and Godfrey to Maglione, 14 Nov. 1941, *Actes*, viii, 343-4, 350; memorandum of the Vatican secretariat of state, 1 Mar. 1943, *Actes*, ix, 144-5.

⁸⁰ Godfrey to Maglione, 28 Jan. 1942, Osborne to Maglione, 2 Feb. 1942, *Actes*, viii, 430-1.

⁸¹ Maglione to the nuncio in Berlin, Mgr Cesare Orsenigo, 8 Nov. 1941, Orsenigo to Maglione, 18 Nov. 1941, *Actes*, viii, 342-3, 347-8.

⁸² Conrad Ruediger, 'Die internationale Hilfsaktion für die Bevölkerung Griechenlands im Zweiten Weltkrieg', *Vierteljahrsschrift für Geschichte* xi (1963), 58.

⁸³ Roncalli to Maglione, 25 Nov. 1941, *Actes*, viii, 726-7; Stefano Trinchese, 'Roncalli diplomatico in Grecia e in Turchia', in Andrea Riccardi (ed.), *Pis XII*, Bari 1984, 236; Hebblethwaite, *Pope John XXIII*, 180.

⁸⁴ *Actes*, ix, 145; Trinchese, op. cit. 236, cites this passage with the figure of 6 million drachmas.

This accomplishment is the more important if it is seen against the background of the obstacles and war propaganda.

Besides mobilising Vatican and other authorities for aid to Greece, Roncalli provided the Vatican with the most accurate information he could find on the situation in Greece. He investigated the British claim that the Germans had stolen the 1941 and 1942 harvests and found it to be without substance: 'E assolutamente falso che le autorità occupanti in Grecia abbiano proceduto alla requisizione dell'intero raccolto di quest'anno.'⁸⁵ He had been a victim of propaganda when he had suggested otherwise to Maglione.⁸⁶ There was no systematic looting of Greek grain.⁸⁷ In the past year no grain had been confiscated for use by the occupation forces, only 'sometimes potatoes, oil and raisins'.⁸⁸ The principal commodities exported to Germany, however, were raisins and olive oil.⁸⁹ For 1942 and for the winter now beginning, 'no requisition of any kind' for the armed forces had taken place.⁹⁰ A 'Survey of Greek Relief' for 1941-3 prepared by the American department of state reached similar conclusions.⁹¹

Although the estimates in the literature are exaggerated, as they were based on impressions or inflated propaganda statements,⁹² thousands of Greeks starved to death. Roncalli researched municipal, medical and cemetery records, and he reported to Maglione on 24 November 1942 that the figure of 500,000 mentioned by the BBC was much too high.⁹³ The most recent and most thorough study of Greece in the Second World War comes to the conclusion, on the basis of Greek, Swedish and International Committee of the Red Cross sources, that the total figure of deaths directly attributable to starvation in winter 1941-2 was below 100,000.⁹⁴ It would have been higher without the efforts of Mgr Roncalli, which helped to arouse world opinion and the Vatican, and ultimately to induce the British and American governments to take action. After a terrible winter with widespread starvation, the belligerent powers, with mediation by Sweden, by the International Committee of the Red Cross and by the Swedish and Swiss committees of the Red Cross, reached an agreement in June 1942 with the following principal stipulations: (1) shipments to Greece of 15,000 tons of Canadian wheat per month; (2) free

⁸⁵ Roncalli to Maglione, 24 Nov. 1942, *Actes*, viii, 721-2. ⁸⁶ See above n. 31.

⁸⁷ Fleischer, *Im Kreuzschatten*, 119.

⁸⁸ *Actes*, viii, 721; Fleischer, op. cit. 119.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 119-20.

⁹⁰ Fleischer, *Im Kreuzschatten*, 119 and n. 24.

⁹¹ Olanhausen, *Zwischenkrieg*, 246-7, cites, *inter alia*, Dimitri Kitsikis, 'La famine en Grèce (1941-1942): les conséquences politiques', *Revue d'Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale* ix (1963), Avril, 17-41, who gives the figure of 360,000.

⁹² *Actes*, viii, 721-2.

⁹³ Fleischer, *Im Kreuzschatten*, 117-18; *Ravitaillement de la Grèce pendant l'occupation, 1941-1944, et pendant les premiers cinq mois après la libération: rapport final de la commission de gestion pour les secours en Grèce sous les auspices du Comité International de la Croix-Rouge*, ed. Bengt Hedger, Athens 1949, 36-8 ('Effets de la famine sur la mortalité') and 398-627 ('Les résultats obtenus' with extensive statistical analyses).

In a note to Maglione of 6 March 1943 the chargé d'affaires in the apostolic delegation in Bratislava, Mgr Giuseppe Burzio, requested a démarche to prevent the deportation to Poland of the 20,000 Jews in Slovakia. On 11 March he telegraphed that their deportation was very probable though not imminent; no certain information could be obtained from the authorities who were reserved and evasive.⁶⁵ Barlas, and the treasurer of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, Eliezer Kaplan, wrote a joint memorandum for Roncalli dated 11 March 1943, and they spoke, apparently on 13 March, to Roncalli at the apostolic delegation in Istanbul about the Jews in Slovakia, who were faced with deportation and death.⁶⁶ Barlas and Kaplan further asked Roncalli to obtain an intervention by the Holy Father and to intervene with the Slovak government to allow to remain temporarily in Slovakia some 2,000 children for whom they were able to obtain Palestinian immigration certificates under the British quota system; the Turkish government was permitting the children's transit through Turkey 'in principle'.⁶⁷ Roncalli telegraphed all this to Maglione on 13 March; Barlas saw Roncalli again on 25 March.⁶⁸

The Vatican secretariat of state considered inopportune the far-reaching pronouncement that Barlas (and similarly, the apostolic delegate in Washington)⁶⁹ requested, namely, a public and direct appeal against the extermination of Jews in Poland; for this might provoke Germany to intensify anti-Jewish measures.⁷⁰ But a few days later, on 7 April, Mgr Tardini, head of the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical

Affairs, noted that, as the Jewish question was a question of humanity, and the German persecutions violated justice, charity and humanity, therefore, the Catholic Church had ample reason to intervene, be it in the name of divine right or natural law. In Slovakia the head of state was a priest (Joseph Tiso): the greater was the scandal and the greater the danger that responsibility would fall on the Catholic Church. It seemed opportune for the Holy See to raise its protest again and to repeat all that had been set forth in the preceding year in a diplomatic note for Charles Sidor, the Slovak minister at the Vatican.⁷¹

On 1 May Maglione communicated orally to Sidor the contents of a note, which was transmitted in writing under 5 May.⁷² It referred to the Holy See's protest of 12 November 1941 against 'racial' legislation, which conflicted with Catholic principles, and exhorted the Slovak government: to follow the feelings of its people; not to proceed with deportation of persons of the so-called Jewish race; to modify the 'racial' dispositions in force now; and to abolish those in conflict with natural right and divine-positive right ('contrasta con i principi del diritto naturale e divino-positivo'). On 4 May Maglione telegraphed to Roncalli that, in this matter, the Holy See, with the pope's specific approval, had intervened with the Slovak government repeatedly 'in favour of non-Aryans with special regard to youth'.⁷³ Mainly this pressure caused the prime minister, Vojtech Tuka, to procrastinate successfully until September 1944, when German authorities took control and resumed deportations.⁷⁴ On 22 May 1943 Barlas came to thank Roncalli and the Holy See for their successful intervention on behalf of the Israelites of Slovakia.⁷⁵

On 23 February 1944 Chief Rabbi Herzog visited the apostolic delegation in Istanbul to ask for help to evacuate 55,000 Jews concentrated in Transnistria under Romanian occupation, who were in grave danger in view of the eventual retreat of German troops.⁷⁶ Maglione instructed

⁶⁵ Ibid. 233. Almost a year earlier, on 13 July 1942, Tardini had noted: 'Il guaio è che il presidente della Slovacchia è un sacerdote. Che la S. Sede non possa far stare a posto Hitler, tutti lo capiscono. Ma che non possa tener a freno un sacerdote, chi lo può capire?', *Atti*, viii, 597-8.

⁶⁶ *Atti*, ix, 275-7.

⁶⁷ 'Ripetutamente Santa Sede è intervenuta presso governo slovacco favore non ariani con speciale riguardo gioventù', *ibid.* 272.

⁶⁸ Minute of Vatican secretariat of state, 1 Apr. 1943, Burzio to Maglione, 10 Apr. 1943, *ibid.* 216, 245-51; Sister Slachta to Pio xxii, 15 May 1943, *ibid.* 299-300; Hilberg, *Destiny*, 735-42; cf. *Atti*, x, 418, 422-4, 433-435, 454-5, 461, 463-8, 475-8, 480, 491-3, 495-6, 512-15.

⁶⁹ Roncalli to Maglione, 20 May 1943, *Atti*, ix, 307. Zampa, 'Cronologia', does not list an encounter between Roncalli and Barlas, thinking perhaps that Roncalli was not in to see Barlas, which Roncalli's formulation leaves open: 'Oggi stesso il segretario della Agenzia Giudaica per la Palestina, signor Ch. Barlas venne a ringraziarmi ed a ringraziare la Santa Sede per il felicissimo successo delle sue pratiche a favore degli israeliti di Slovacchia'. But Barlas's letter to Roncalli of the same date, 20 May 1943, leaves no doubt: 'Me référant à l'entrevue que vous avez bien voulu m'accorder aujourd'hui', CZA, L 15/1 II. ⁷⁰ Roncalli to Maglione, 26 Feb. 1944, *Atti*, x, 154.

State Papers, session 8 November 1938-23 November 1939, vol. xviii, London 1939, limited Jewish immigration to Palestine to approximately 75,000 for the following five years. In October 1944 registered Jewish immigration to Palestine was still 14,000 short of the total set in the White Paper. The British-American-Russian declaration of 17 Dec. 1944 condemned the massacres and persecutions, and promised retribution, but avoided any suggestion of asylum or relief. See Secretary of State for War Henry L. Stimson to John W. Pehle, executive director of the War Refugee Board, Dept of the Treasury, 31 Mar. 1944, NA RG 59, DS decimal file 840.48, Refugees/3499; David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust 1941-1945*, New York 1984, 5-6, 260-8; Francis R. Nicosia, *The Third Reich and the Palestine Question*, Austin 1985, 157, 159, 162-3; *Palestine: Statement of Policy*; Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1929-1945*, London-Oxford 1979, 17-39, 81-96, 143-53, 169-82, 205, 269, 278, 330-1, 339, 342-3, 352; Barlas, *Hatzalah*, 214-15, 201, 240-53; *The Times*, late London edn, 18 Dec. 1942, 4; Ira Hirschmann, *Camino to the Winds*, New York 1967, 141-7; *The Holocaust, 14: Relief and Rescue of Jews from Nazi Oppression 1943-1945*, intro. John Mendelsohn, New York-London 1982, 82-94.

⁷¹ Barlas, op. cit. 349; Roncalli to Maglione, 13 Mar. 1943, *Atti*, ix, 183-6. Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, rev. edn, New York-London 1985, 735, estimates 25,000 Jews remaining in Slovakia in March 1943; Roncalli to Barlas, 23 Mar. 1944, Barlas, minute 25 Mar. 1944, Barlas to Roncalli 25 Mar. 1944, CZA S 06/1935-2.

⁷² Barlas, op. cit. 349; in Roncalli's reference to 1,000 Jewish children in his telegram to Maglione, 13 Mar. 1943, *Atti*, ix, 183, the figure 1,000 is followed by a question mark, placed apparently by the editors. ⁷³ *Ibid.* 185. ⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 206-7; cf. 171, 201.

⁷⁵ Minute of Vatican secretariat of state, 1 Apr. 1943, *ibid.* 217.

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passage guaranteed by all belligerent powers; (3) imports to be made available to the Greek population exclusively; (4) foodstuffs produced in Greece to be reserved for the Greek population; (5) Greek-produced foodstuffs consumed by the occupation forces and exported surplus food products to be compensated for by equivalent imports; (6) a Swedish-Swiss committee of fifteen members to supervise these arrangements.⁴⁴

In its numerous efforts to relieve suffering and to save lives, particularly lives of Jews, the Vatican preferred diplomatic methods to public statements of condemnation. The documents published by Roncalli's successor as pope, Paul VI, give strength to the Vatican's claim that everything practically possible was being done, and this was acknowledged by the best informed Jewish leaders. But Roncalli stretched his influence as far as it would go and cheerfully crossed the line between official intervention and unorthodox, quite unofficial, rescue methods. The chief rabbi of Palestine, Dr Isaac Herzog, wrote to Roncalli on 22 November 1943:

Je sais bien que S.S. le Pape s'oppose des profondeurs de son âme élevée à toute persécution et surtout à la persécution d'une férocité inouïe, sans pareil dans l'histoire du genre humain, que les Nazis appliquent sans cesse au peuple juif auquel le monde civilisé est si redevable sous l'aspect spirituel.⁴⁵

In February 1944 Herzog came to see Roncalli personally and wrote again to thank him and the pope for their aid to Jews in many forms. The chair of the Jewish Agency for Palestine immigration department, Chaim Barlas, also thanked Roncalli and the Holy See many times for their help.⁴⁶

The aid given by certain members of the Catholic hierarchy is the more remarkable in the face of internal obstacles. Cardinal Maglione was cool to immigration of Jews to Palestine, and Roncalli had doubts about its wisdom.⁴⁷ In a letter to Maglione of 4 September 1943 Roncalli wrote that conducting Jews to Palestine, 'quasi alla ricostruzione del regno

⁴⁴ Roodiger, 'Hilfsaktion', 50-62; Médlicot, *Shoah*, ii, 268-73; Fleischer, *In Kreuzschiffen*, 124-5. The wheat was a gift of the Canadian government, *Ibid.* 125.

⁴⁵ CZA, L 15/1 ii; *Actes*, x, Vatican City 1960, 154, 161; Pinchas E. Lapide, *These Papers and the Jews*, New York 1967, 179.

⁴⁶ Hayim Barlas, *Halalakh be-yome sho'ah*, Hakibbutz Hamo'ad 1975, 163; Barlas to Roncalli, 8 Mar. 1944, CZA, L 15/1 ii; Barlas to Roncalli, 23 Mar. 1944, *Actes*, x, 108-9; Barlas to Roncalli, 23 Mar. and 9 Sept. 1944, CZA, L 15/1 ii. In 1957, when Roncalli was patriarch in Venice, the Israeli consul there, Pinchas E. Lapide, thanked him for his help to Jews. "In all these painful matters", he [Roncalli] said, raising his hand in deprecation, "I referred to the Holy See and afterwards I simply carried out the Pope's orders: first and foremost to save human lives", Lapide, *These Papers*, 181. Cf. the statement by Chief Rabbi Herzog's private secretary, Y. Lipet, in 1963: "With the Vatican the Chief Rabbi communicated almost directly in Turkey thanks to Monsignor Roncalli in Istanbul, a true friend of Israel, who saved thousands of Jews", *Ibid.* 179.

⁴⁷ Maglione to, the chargé d'affaires of the apostolic delegation in Egypt (and Palestine), Arthur Hughes, 23 Feb. 1943. Roncalli to Maglione, 4 Sept. 1943, *Actes*, ix, 137, 469.

ebraico", caused him 'qualche incertezza nello spirito'. It seemed to him in poor taste that the simple and noble exercise of the charity of the Holy See could produce the appearance of co-operation in the realisation of the (Jewish) messianic dream.⁴⁸ But perhaps, Roncalli continued, this was only a personal scruple which he confessed so that it might be disposed of; it was certain that a reconstructed kingdom of Israel was utopian. Above all, he was concerned for the persecuted human beings.⁴⁹

Roncalli met Barlas for the first time, apparently, when Barlas sought him out in Istanbul on 20 January 1943.⁵⁰ Since Barlas did not speak French Roncalli thought it best to put him in contact with Fr Arthur Hughes, the chargé d'affaires of the apostolic delegation in Cairo, who happened to be in Istanbul.⁵¹ In a memorandum that Barlas left with Hughes, which Roncalli transmitted to Maglione, Barlas referred to the British-American-Russian declaration of 17 December 1942, which condemned the massacres and persecutions, and to the continuing slaughter of Jews in Axis and Axis-occupied territories. He proposed, in order to save the Jews before it was too late: (1) that the Holy See sound out neutral countries to seek temporary asylum for Jews, provided the Jewish communities in the United States guaranteed their sustenance and provided the refugees would not become charges of their host countries after the war - the host countries were asked merely to provide the air the refugees breathed and the soil for their camps; (2) whereas Jews were not allowed to leave Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland, and whereas there was no objection to their leaving Holland, Belgium and the Balkan countries, with the position in France being indefinite, that the Holy See sound out the German government to see if it would permit emigration of Jews who could gain admission to Palestine (the Jewish Agency had at its disposal 5,000 immigration certificates); and (3) whereas the papal statement (in the pope's Christmas broadcast) condemning racial persecution 'was a source of moral comfort for our brethren', it was suggested that the Holy See declare publicly 'that rendering help to persecuted Jews is considered by the Church as a good deed'.⁵² Maglione replied to Hughes, on 23 February 1943, that the Holy See had pressed the various states to permit Jews to emigrate and had facilitated emigration with notable success in cases where it was possible; but, unfortunately, these efforts had met with difficulties which had since become insurmountable.⁵³

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 469.

⁴⁹ Roncalli to Montini, 10 Feb. 1943, *Ibid.* 438 n.3; cf. Trinchese, 'Roncalli diplomatico', 256-7. ⁵⁰ Roncalli to Maglione, 23 Jan. 1943, *Actes*, ix, 87.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 87.

⁵² *Ibid.* 87-8; Pius XII's Christmas message in *Actes*, vii, 161-7. ⁵³ Maglione to Hughes, 23 Feb. 1943, *Actes*, ix, 137. No country was willing to accept Jewish immigrants quickly, unenthusiastically and in great numbers. As late as May 1944 a proposal to give a mere one thousand Jewish and other refugees a temporary haven in the United States got President Roosevelt into political trouble in the Congress, the British White Paper of 17 May 1939, *Palestine: statement of policy. Presented by the secretary of state for the colonies to Parliament by command of His Majesty, May, 1939, Accounts and Papers*, xii,

the nuncio in Bucharest, Mgr Andr   Cassulo, to see what steps might be taken to comply with the request.⁷⁷

In May 1944 the Hungarian government began, under the direction of SS Lieutenant-colonel Adolf Eichmann, to deport 400,000 Jews who had lived in Hungary in relative safety.⁷⁸ On 15 May the nuncio in Budapest, Mgr Angelo Rotta, sent the Hungarian foreign ministry and the president of the council letters of protest against the deportations: 'Tout le monde sait ce que la d  portation signifie dans la pratique.' But Rotta declared his protest 'pouss  e non par une fausse compassion, mais par un vrai sentiment de justice et de charit   chr  tienne et pour la d  fense des int  r  ts sacr  s des milliers et milliers de catholiques'. After insisting on the exemption of Christians from anti-Jewish measures, he also demanded that, in whatever measures the government adopted for reasons of state, 'les droits fondamentaux de la personne humaine' be respected. God had given them life, and no one had the right to take it from them, so Rotta argued, much less when they had not committed any crimes.⁷⁹

On 25 June 1944 Pius XII cabled the regent of Hungary, Horthy, to appeal to him on behalf of the 'great number of unfortunates who suffer by reason of their nationality or race', greatly strengthening the international chorus of protest.⁸⁰ The German plenipotentiary in Hungary, Minister SS Brigadier-general Edmund Veesenmayer, reported to Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, on 6 July, that a barrage of telegrams was reaching the regent and the government in Budapest; the king of Sweden, the pope, the Turkish and Swiss governments and many others within and outside Hungary had telegraphed repeatedly on behalf of the Jews, and 'the papal nuncio was seeing the regent and [Minister-president D  me] Szt  jay several times a day'.⁸¹ On, or shortly before, 29 June Roncalli conveyed to the nuncio in Berne, Mgr Filippo Bernardini, the urgent request of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, the chief rabbis of Jerusalem and the Jews of Budapest for a new, immediate intervention by the Holy Father on behalf of the Jews in Hungary of whom, they had said, 300,000 faced deportation to the death camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau, after 400,000 had already been deported; an appeal in favour of the Romanian Jews was appended.⁸² Maglione received this on 30 June. On 3 July a reply was sent to Bernardini saying that the Holy See was doing all in its power to aid the Jews in Hungary and Romania; the nunciatures in Budapest and Bucharest were actively involved.⁸³ On 6 July Horthy ordered the deportations of Hungarian Jews suspended.⁸⁴

⁷⁷ Maglione to Cassulo, 2 Mar. 1944, Cassulo to Maglione, 16 Mar. 1944, *ibid.* 167, 179-80.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 283-8; Hilberg, *Destruktion*, 837-8.

⁷⁹ *Actes*, x, 285-6; Hilberg, *op. cit.* 398, does not cite this point.

⁸⁰ *Actes*, x, 328, 329.

⁸¹ ADAP, E. viii, G  ttingen 1979, 172; Eugene Leval, *Black Book on the Martyrdom of Hungarian Jews*, Z  trich-Vienna 1968, 127-216, reproduces some of the protest letters from Rotta and other functionaries of the Church.

⁸² *Actes*, x, 333-5. ⁸³ *Ibid.* 335.

⁸⁴ ADAP, E. viii, 171-3; *Actes*, x, 351-2; Hilberg, *Destruktion*, 852.

Roncalli was able to help Barlas also in May, and in the first days of June 1944, by conveying through safe courier a number of immigration certificates for Hungarian Jews.⁸⁵ These certificates gave Jews some title to admission in Palestine. On 16 August Roncalli wrote to Rotta that, since the immigration certificates sent in May had helped to save the lives of the recipients, he had accepted from the Jewish Agency for Palestine another three packages of certificates, which he sent to Rotta with the request that he pass them to the Budapest secretary of the Jewish Agency.⁸⁶ On 18 August 1944 Roncalli wrote to Ira A. Hirschmann, the representative of the American War Refugee Board attached as a 'special attach  ' to the American embassy in Ankara:

The apostolic Delegation has forwarded by diplomatic courier several thousands of 'Immigration Certificates' destined for Jews in Hungary. These were delivered to the persons concerned by the good offices of the apostolic Nunciature in Budapest and the same apostolic Nuncio later informed that those certificates had enabled their owners to escape transportation and to obtain the necessary permissions for Emigration [*sic*].⁸⁷

Roncalli was connected with still another method of saving Jews in Hungary. Rotta's correspondence in *Actes et documents du Saint-Si  ge relatifs    la Seconde Guerre Mondiale* does not contain any reference to it. But in a footnote to a list of aid efforts compiled by Roncalli under 18 August 1944, printed in *Actes et documents*, the editors state that Hirschmann, during a meeting with Roncalli, 'had made the Apostolic Delegate Mgr Roncalli speak of baptismal certificates',⁸⁸ and that it was clear from Roncalli's account that not baptismal certificates but immigration certificates had been the issue ('il s'agissait plut  t des "certificats d'immigration"'). According to Hirschmann's story, during their meeting Roncalli said 'he had reason to believe that some baptismal certificates had already been issued by nuns to Hungarian Jews'.⁸⁹ Hirschmann did not confuse immigration certificates with baptismal certificates as the editors of the Vatican documents suggest. Hirschmann in fact told a story that differs substantially from the one the editors denied.

The background is this. On 8 July Szt  jay brought to a conference with Cardinal Prince Primate of Hungary Justinianus Ser  di, a letter from

⁸⁵ Roncalli to Barlas, 5 June 1944: 'Je suis bien heureux de Vous communiquer que les certificats en faveur des Juifs de Hongrie qu'on m'avait confi  s, ont pu   tre envoy  s    Budapest par un courrier s  r.' Barlas to Roncalli, 6 June 1944: 'Je tiens    vous remercier pour votre lettre du 5 crt, et pour le grand service que vous nous avez rendu en envoyant les certificats aux r  fugi  s en Hongrie, qui gr  ce    ces documents pourront   tre sauv  s', GZA, L. 15/1   .

⁸⁶ *Actes*, x, 391-3 and 391 n. 6.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 390.

⁸⁸ Commenting on Roncalli's responses to a list of questions he had invited Hirschmann to submit (*cf.* below nn. 114-15), the editors state: 'Dans son livre, *Causes et effets de la Sho  * (New York, 1966, pp. 179-185), M. Hirschmann, en se r  f  rant    cette m  me communication du 18 ao  t, faisait parler le d  l  gu   apostolique Mgr Roncalli des "certificats de bapt  me"', *Actes*, x, 390-1 n. 6. ⁸⁹ Hirschmann, *op. cit.* 181.

himself to Serédi dated 7 July, as Serédi had demanded, in which 'Jews of Christian faith' were exempted from deportation 'if at a future date the deportation of the Budapest Jews should come to pass'.⁸⁸ This, together with related regulations, was decreed publicly on 18 July 1944.⁸⁹ It led to a wave of conversions and to the production of thousands of forged certificates of baptism.⁹⁰

Rotta telegraphed on 17 July that the steps taken with the Hungarian government had disposed of it to permit (Jewish) emigration and added: 'Prego inviari sollecitamente certificati necessari'.⁹¹ Since the apostolic delegation in Istanbul 'forwarded by diplomatic courier several thousands of "Immigration Certificates" destined for Jews in Hungary',⁹² and since, apparently, Rotta addressed his telegram to the apostolic delegation in Istanbul, it is reasonable, though not compelling, to conclude that the certificates he referred to were immigration certificates.

But in the considerable context of spurious documents used to rescue Jews, certain enigmatic references still have to be convincingly explained. One of them occurs in a letter from the executive director of the War Refugee Board in Washington (created by President Roosevelt in January 1944), John W. Pehle, to Rabbi Abraham Kalmanowitz of the Vaad Hahatzala Emergency Committee in New York, dated 10 April 1944. The letter quotes a despatch from the American legation in Berné, dated 7 April 1944, containing messages for Rabbi Kalmanowitz 'from Messrs. Finex, Sternbuch, Rosenbaum and Rubinfeld', of which the first three are these:

1. To report on the situation a courier has been despatched by me to Hungary. It is my suggestion that the possibility of arranging an exchange of Jews in Hungary against German civilians from Africa or other Allied occupied territory be examined by you with the Government of America.
2. Aid us in obtaining Vatican certificates, number unlimited. Lists of thousands of families in Hungary could be telegraphed to Jerusalem by me. A certificate is useful in occupied countries for obtaining internment against exchange up to the present time.
3. Southern American passports for ten thousand families would be another possibility for rescue. Through the consulates of those countries in Switzerland, [passports] should be handed to us confidentially. Since the receivers would know that these passports are valid only during war time as a means of saving lives, they

⁸⁸ Levai, *Black Book*, 210-13.

⁸⁹ Hirschmann, 'Report', 19 Aug. 1944, Exhibit N, NA RG 84, Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State: Turkey; AE GR 1944, box 84.

⁹⁰ Levai, op. cit. 292; Jeno Levai, *Hungarian Jews and the Papacy: Pope Pius XII did not remain silent: reports, documents and records from church and state archives*, London 1968, 17-49; Károly Hefényi Varga, *Alkelt áldásokról az igazságról: Pápi szerok a hungarizmus és nyilatkozatai ényelése*, Budapest 1963, passim; cf. Leslie Laszlo, 'The role of the Christian Churches in the rescue of the Budapest Jews', *Hungarian Studies Review* xi. 1 (1984), 23-42.

⁹¹ *Actes*, n. 352 n. 6.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 390.

[passports] could not be misused. Only to well known Rabbis and other reliable persons would passports be given.⁹³

The context is clearly that of spurious documents for the purpose of rescue. There must exist further correspondence, including some with Vatican authorities, which was not published in *Actes et documents de Saint Siège relatifs à la Seconde Guerre Mondiale*. Thus far, the evidence does not warrant the conclusion that 'Vatican certificates' were immigration certificates for Palestine, which the Vatican could not issue.

Further, by 24 July, concern over the rush to conversion and violent disturbances brought about by Hungarian Nazis led Cardinal Serédi to issue a statement to the press insisting on proper dogmatic instruction of would-be converts and on strict adherence to the prescribed rites of baptism.⁹⁴ The inescapable conclusion is that infractions had taken place.

Indeed, Hirschmann reported from Ankara on 12 August 1944 that, during air raids in Budapest, 'hundreds of Jews are baptized in air raid shelters'.⁹⁵ Roncalli is not mentioned in this report. But in a report covering activities for the rescue of Jews from 19 June to 19 August 1944, Hirschmann put his account, now of 'the baptism of thousands of Hungarian Jews in air-raid shelters', in the context of a meeting with Roncalli,⁹⁶ and while he made no reference to the baptisms in a book published in 1946, *Lifeline to a Promised Land*, Hirschmann linked Roncalli explicitly with the baptisms in his 1962 book, *Caution to the Wind*.⁹⁷ The story runs as follows.

In seeking relief for Jews, Hirschmann had been successful in appealing to the survival instincts of certain Romanian and Bulgarian diplomats, holding out the prospect of American benevolence after the inevitable allied victory.⁹⁸ The representative of the International Committee of the

⁹³ Pehle to Kalmanowitz, 10 Apr. 1944, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York, NA RG 230, records of the WRB, 1944-5, box 26, Union of Orthodox Rabbis.

⁹⁴ Levai, *Black Book*, 292-3. The Lutheran and Calvinist Churches issued similar statements.

⁹⁵ Chargé d'affaires in the US Embassy in Ankara, Robert F. Kelley, to Secretary of State Hull for Pehle, WRB, from Hirschmann, NA RG 59, DS 840.48 Refugees/8-1944, Hirschmann had this information from Roncalli, Hirschmann, interview with the author, 14 Mar. 1968.

⁹⁶ Hirschmann, 'Report', 19 Aug. 1944, 19, NA RG 84, AE GR 1944, box 84.

⁹⁷ Ira A. Hirschmann, *Lifeline to a Promised Land*, New York 1946; *idem*, *Caution, 179-85*. Hirschmann's account of 'thousands' of baptisms is vigorously denied by Mgr Gennaro Verolino, who was auditor in the nunciature in Budapest in 1944 and who is the only potential witness among the hierarchy with whom a contact could be established. Verolino to the author, 23 Oct. and 13 Dec. 1987. Mgr Verolino adds that if baptisms took place which were exceptional, as in air-raid shelters, and under a perceived, immediate danger to life, then, 'if they happened, they must have been very few', or he should have heard about them. In fact, all that Mgr Verolino can assert is that he did not, and does not, know of cases such as those referred to by Hirschmann.

⁹⁸ Hirschmann, 'Report', 19 Aug. 1944, 4, NA RG 84, AE GR 1944, box 84; *idem*,

Red Cross in Turkey, Dr Gilbert E. Simond, had been helpful in the appropriate contacts. Hirschmann learned that Papen was asked to return to Germany but procrastinated, presumably in fear of the Gestapo, after the failure of the attempted coup d'état on 20 July; Hirschmann 'thought that this might be the time to make a deal with him', although it is 'not clear what Papen could have done in his presumably weakened position'.¹⁹¹ Simond soon 'made a sounder suggestion': that he and Hirschmann go to see Roncalli at his summer residence on the island of Principo (Büyükkada) in the Sea of Marmara.

They took a boat there on 31 July.¹⁹² Hirschmann wrote in his diary:

Roncalli [J] is a fascinator. Charming, vocal, amusing, political, friendly - he wins everyone. His palas at Principo is a gem, old stately rooms, pictures etc. He has helped the Jews in Hungary and I beseech his further help. He reminded me so forcefully of La Guardia with his charm and humor and cleverness that it seemed uncanny. His little eyes sparkled and rolled; his stomach protruded, his body swayed. He protested in the name of God his lack of differentiation between peoples.¹⁹³

Eighteen years later, in *Cautism to the Winds*, Hirschmann added details: upon hearing the description of the plight of the Jews in Hungary, Roncalli asked if Hirschmann had 'contact with people in Hungary who will cooperate'; and 'Do you think the Jews there would be willing to undergo baptism ceremonies?'. Hirschmann was taken aback but said he assumed 'if it meant saving their lives they would be ready to do so gratefully'. Roncalli 'went on to say that he had reason to believe that some baptismal certificates had already been issued by nuns to Hungarian Jews. The Nazis had recognized these as credentials and had permitted their holders to leave the country.' Hirschmann and Roncalli agreed 'to communicate with his [Roncalli's] representatives in Hungary and that I [Hirschmann] get in touch with our underground connections to arrange for either large-scale baptism of Jews, or at least certificates to be issued to women and children'.¹⁹⁴ Indications are that Roncalli's network operated through the Sisters of Zion, who had houses in Terapia and in Budapest and at whose house in Terapia Roncalli stayed from time to

¹⁹¹ 'Summary report', 4 Oct. 1944, 3, NA RG 84, AE GR 1944, box 84; idem, *Cautism*, 155-60, 162-8.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 173.

¹⁹³ Hirschmann, 'Diary', 31 July 1944, FDR Library, Ira Hirschmann Papers, box 1, 'Diary Feb.-Oct. 1944'.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.* In 1962 Hirschmann's tribute to Roncalli was undiminished: 'They [the Hungarian Jews saved with baptismal certificates] must number in the thousands. And all this was due to the kindly intervention of the benevolent Apostolic Delegate to the Middle East. Is it any wonder that I was moved to tears when in 1958 I read the headlines which announced to the world that Angelo Roncalli had been elected Pope, the ruler of the Catholic Church?' *Cautism*, 185.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 181; Hirschmann, interview, 14 Mar. 1988.

time and also conducted spiritual exercises.¹⁹⁶ The order had been founded in 1842 by a convert Jew for the purpose of further conversions. -- Numerous baptismal certificates, some genuine, many reproduced in the underground, came into the possession of Jews in Budapest in those weeks in July and August 1944.¹⁹⁷ Often priests or nuns gave out blank forms for baptismal or marriage certificates. Unusual numbers of adult baptisms were recorded in the Budapest parishes. In St Rochus 172 were baptised from 1 to 17 July 1944, of whom 114 were adults. In Zugliget parish as many as thirty baptisms were recorded on one day.¹⁹⁸ In thirteen other parishes in Budapest - seven Catholic, three Lutheran and three Calvinist - 5,582 conversions of Jews were registered in 1944.¹⁹⁹

In the meeting on 31 July, Roncalli had suggested that Hirschmann give him a list of questions so that he might write to explain what had been, and could be, done by church authorities on behalf of the Jews.²⁰⁰ In his reply to Hirschmann's questionnaire, on 18 August, Roncalli enumerated some of the efforts made by the Vatican secretariat of state and by himself on behalf of Jews, particularly those in Hungary. He referred to the 'several thousands of "Immigration Certificates" destined for Jews in Hungary' that had been forwarded by diplomatic courier and to telegrams sent to the papal secretariat of state requesting interventions

¹⁹⁶ Capovilla, *Giornali XXIII*, 578-6; Sister Kay MacDonald (Sisters of Zion) to the author, 22 Jan. 1988.

¹⁹⁷ Statement by Sister Katalin Koczman, 20 Feb. 1988, *News of Sisters of Zion, Rome*; Sister Kay MacDonald, 22 Jan. and 30 May 1988; Leval, *Black Book*, 292; Hilberg cites a Budapest newspaper, *Magyar Szó*, to the effect 'that many people had recently advertised the loss of personal and family documents' and that these persons 'were Hungarians who had sold their birth certificates to Jews', *Destruction*, 840; Peter Dr Georg Kis, letter, 28 Feb. 1988; Dr Kis reports that he and other clergymen and sisters 'provided hundreds of Jews with baptismal certificates of contemporaries. Then the baptismal certificate was the only document of identity and thus very many Budapest Jews were saved'.

¹⁹⁸ Hestényi Varga, *Állat*, 198 n. 2, 544; idem, letter, 23 Sept. 1987; I am indebted to Professor Leslie Laszlo of Concordia University in Montreal for translations from Hestényi Varga's work; Dr Joel Berger, rabbi for Württemberg, who grew up in Budapest, saw monks (probably Dominican), coming into the air-raid shelters in the Budapest ghetto in the summer of 1944, appearing to consecrate the shelters, and offering baptism; Dr Berger further relates that baptismal certificates were traded by the thousands, although the Churches refused to sell or hand out blank forms, Berger to the author, 9 Nov. 1987.

¹⁹⁹ Five selected parishes near Jewish residential sections - Krisztina tér (Catholic), Deák tér (Lutheran), Posonyi út (Calvinist), Gorkij fasor (Calvinist) and Belső Lipóváros (Calvinist) are covered in Victor Karady, 'Les conversions des juifs de Budapest après 1945', *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* LV (March 1985), 58-9; from 1932 to 1935 and 1945 to 1947, the annual numbers for the same five parishes were below 200 but larger, with significant peaks in the intervening years: 1936 (216), 1938 (1,016), 1939 (696), 1940 (527), 1941 (851), 1942 (908), 1943 (178), 1944 (3,000). Six further Catholic and two more Calvinist parishes registered 9,553 conversions of Jews for 1944. Karady, letter to the author, 28 Jan. 1988. Karady will have more comprehensive figures soon. Research in parish records will produce evidence only of duly registered conversions but not of those certified through false documents.

²⁰⁰ Hirschmann to Felde, 21 Aug. 1944, with copies of Hirschmann's questionnaire.

on behalf of the Jews in Hungary and Romania. He said that, in present circumstances, 'it would seem that the only assistance which the apostolic Delegation can render in facilitating the emigration of Jews is in forwarding by courier the Immigration Certificates'.

Questions five to eight in Hirschmann's questionnaire ran:

- (5) Does Your Excellency feel that you can do anything to extend protection to the oppressed people in Hungary now or to protect them against future deportation in the event that this procedure recommences?
- (6) Can Your Excellency be helpful in protecting people in Hungary who are Jewish by definition, but who are Catholic or of other religions by faith?
- (7) To Your Excellency's knowledge, has the Holy See obtained visas for any country for so-called non-Aryan Christians, or are such projects in prospect?
- (8) If possible, could Your Excellency be helpful in any way in organizing or taking intervening steps in connection with the emigration of Jewish people from Hungary?¹¹⁸

In Roncalli's replies, there is no question of any confusion of immigration certificates with baptismal certificates. There is, in answers '4' & '5', an enigmatic reference to 'other non-political documents which may be useful'; this and the other answers leave questions open:

4) & 5) It is not the intention of the Apostolic Delegation to make any further representations on behalf of the Jewish people in Hungary; the only means of doing so is through the Papal Secretariat of State and it seems certain the Vatican has done and is doing its best, both directly and through the Apostolic Nuncio in Budapest, to ameliorate the conditions of the oppressed peoples. The Apostolic Delegation in Istanbul is always willing to transmit by courier to Budapest Immigration certificates or other non-political documents which may be useful.¹¹⁹ It is also willing to recommend particular cases to the special care of the Apostolic Nuncio, as has been done, for example, in the case of Rabbi Salomon Halberstam.

6) There is no evidence that the Vatican has been instrumental in procuring special treatment for persons who are Jewish by definition but Christians by faith. The dispositions, however, promulgated by the Hungarian Government on July 8th (see copy enclosed) do distinguish between Jews in religion and converted Jews.

7) In years past, the Holy See, in agreement with the respective Governments, was able to obtain Immigration visas for some of the South American countries for limited numbers of Italian and German Jews. The Apostolic Delegation is unable to state whether any such projects are now in prospect.

8) In the present circumstances it would seem that the only assistance which the Apostolic Delegation can render in facilitating the emigration of Jews is in forwarding by courier the Immigration Certificates.

The 'non-political documents' are not identified. The denial of

Hirschmann to Roncalli, 1 Aug. 1944, and Roncalli's answers, Roncalli to Hirschmann, 18 Aug. 1944. FDR Library, NA RG 220, records of the WRB, 1944-5; box 35. Hungary 7b; see also Roncalli's answers, with some variations, in *Acta*, x, 390-3; Kelly to Hull for Pehle WRB from Hirschmann, 7 Aug. 1944. NA RG 59, DS 840.48, Refugees/8-744.

¹¹⁸ Hirschmann to Pehle, 21 Aug. 1944 (n. 109 above); *Acta*, x, 390-3.

evidence that the Vatican had an influence on the change in Hungarian policy towards Jews may seem odd; but Roncalli had declared at the beginning of his answers that his only sources of information on the situation in Hungary were the Jewish Agency for Palestine and the daily newspapers (those available in Turkey). What connection did Roncalli suggest between his statement that 'there is no evidence that the Vatican has been instrumental in procuring special treatment for persons who are Jewish by definition but Christians by faith', and his reference to the Hungarian government's distinction between 'Jews in religion and converted Jews'? It is clear, however, that explicit references to baptismal certificates were carefully avoided by both Hirschmann and Roncalli, notwithstanding cryptic terminology, while there was no such reticence in references to immigration certificates.

In the meantime, on 12 August, Hirschmann had sent a report to Washington which stated:

For your information following was received by me in Istanbul from an authentic source.

The Catholic Church in Hungary has taken an active part in rescuing many Hungarian Jewish citizens by means of technical device of conversion of Jews to Christianity. Nazis have attempted in numerous ways to oppose these measures to which the church and especially the Dominicans who have been most sympathetic, responded they have authority to baptize immediately any person who is in imminent danger of death. During air raids hundreds of Jews are baptized in air raid shelters. When religious classes for Jews were held in churches; groups of Hungarian Nazis entered and broke up the classes which resulted in most of the baptisms now taking place in the shelters. It is reported that in the past month more Jews have been converted to Christianity than during the last 15 years.¹²⁰

In his summary report for Pehle dated 19 August 1944, Hirschmann gave an account of the discussion he had with Roncalli on 31 July. He said he had specially brought up the subject of convert Jews and followed this immediately by emphasising that 'the Catholic hierarchy, which enjoys a large influence in Hungary, took unusual spontaneous measures to rescue Hungarian Jewish citizens wherever possible', explaining that this 'relates to the baptism of thousands of Hungarian Jews in air-raid shelters, in spite of energetic Nazi protests'.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ In *Acta*, x, 391, there follows a sentence not found in the version transmitted by Hirschmann to Pehle (n. 110): 'It is also willing to recommend particular documents which may be useful.' This combines parts of the following with parts of the preceding sentence and appears to be a typist's error.

¹²⁰ Kelly to Hull, for Pehle WRB, from Hirschmann, 12 Aug. 1944. NA RG 59, DS 840.48/Refugees, 8-1044 (the telegram received in Washington has 'by means of technical device on conversion'); this is 'Ankara's 131' to which Hirschmann refers in *Caution*, 183. Hilberg, *Destiny*, 840, cites a 'declaration by a representative of the archbishop vicar in *Deutsche Zeitung* (Budapest), July 14, 1944, p. 4' for the statement that, in July 1944, more Jews had been converted to Christianity than in the last fifteen years.

¹²¹ NA RG 84, AE GR 1944, box 84.

In February 1944 the question arose of using the Turkish SS *Tari* to transport Jews from a Romanian port to Haifa. The Turkish government was willing to make the ship available, the American government was ready to finance the voyage.¹¹⁴ Safe-conduct agreements had to be obtained from the German and the Russian governments; the Turkish government insisted on them and also refused to be satisfied by an American offer to replace this rather good passenger ship, in case of loss, by a cargo vessel of comparable age and tonnage.¹¹⁵ The War Refugee Board acceded to all other Turkish demands but said the Turkish government 'must be cognizant of the fact that the United States is not in a position to guarantee replacement of the *Tari* with a passenger vessel in view of present military necessities'.¹¹⁶ Numan, 'one of the shrewdest diplomats of our time', showed resentment at the American pressure and threatened a press conference. While the Turkish government - he pointed out - was making the *Tari* available, was allowing Jews without visas into Turkey and had offered to put the Turkish flag on any boat made available by the American government for a shuttle service between Istanbul and Palestine.

The American and British Governments insofar as he was aware had thus far taken no step to aid in the evacuation of refugees from the Balkans to Palestine other than to demand that others do so. . . . The two richest countries on earth which own or control practically all of the shipping of the world . . . were insisting that the Turk Government dedicate 16% of its passenger fleet to the movement of refugees.

while America and Britain could not come up with one 4,000-ton passenger ship for the purpose but . . . pose before the world as the saviours of the refugees'.¹¹⁷ When Steinhardt had reported the Turkish outburst, the American government guaranteed equivalent replacement.¹¹⁸

The Russian safe conduct was granted on 11 April.¹¹⁹ Concerning the

¹¹⁴ ADAP E. viii, 596; Barlas, minute of conversation with Ambassador Lawrence Steinhardt, 1 Mar. 1944, Steinhardt to Barlas, 3 and 16 Apr. 1944, Barlas, *Notizen*, 357-59; Steinhardt and Hirschmann to WRB, 27 Mar. 1944, NA RG 59, DS 840.48, Refuges/5460; Hirschmann, *Lifetime*, 64-71; Jürgen Rohwer, *Die Versenkung der jüdischen Flüchtlingspassagier Schiffe und Mafare im Schwarzen Meer (Februar 1942, August 1944)*, Frankfurt am Main 1965, 48.

¹¹⁵ Steinhardt and Hirschmann to Hull, 27 Mar. and 4 Apr. 1944, NA RG 59, DS 840.48, Refuges/5460 and 5537; Hirschmann, *Lifetime*, 68-9, suggested that in March only the German safe-conduct had not been obtained; in fact, the Russian safe-conduct was not obtained until 11 Apr. 1944, Steinhardt to Hull, 11 Apr. 1944, NA RG 59, DS 840.48, Refuges/5586.

¹¹⁶ Steinhardt and Hirschmann to Hull for WRB, 4 Apr. 1944, Hull from WRB to Steinhardt, 5 Apr. 1944, NA RG 59, DS 840.48, Refuges/5537 and 5486.

¹¹⁷ Steinhardt to Hull for Public, 12 Apr. 1944, NA RG 59, DS 840.48, Refuges/5606.

¹¹⁸ Hull from WRB to Steinhardt, 17 Apr. 1944, NA RG 59, DS 840.48, Refuges/5606.

¹¹⁹ Steinhardt and Hirschmann to Hull, 27 Mar. 1944, Steinhardt to Hull, 11 Apr. 1944, NA RG 59, DS 840.48, Refuges/5460 and 5586.

German safe conduct, Numan had offered on or shortly before 15 March to try 'to persuade [Papen] to request his Government to grant safe conduct'. Steinhardt reported on 4 April that Numan had done so.¹²⁰ At the same time the War Refugee Board asked the governments of Sweden and Switzerland, and the apostolic delegate in Washington, to support the request of a German safe conduct.¹²¹ Dr Simond predicted, based on information he had from Geneva, as much as two months' delay in obtaining the German safe conduct.¹²² Simond therefore suggested to Hirschmann that they approach Rongalli 'and have him urge von Papen to try to obtain the needed safe conduct'.¹²³

Hirschmann left Ankara for Cairo and Washington on 6 April; he returned on 19 June.¹²⁴ Before he left, he asked Simond to speak to Papen in support of the safe conduct.¹²⁵ On 4 April Simond talked with Papen who agreed (one) to urgently recommend to the German Government that safe conduct be given the SS *Tari* and (two) that the German Government exercise restraint in its treatment of the Jews in Hungary'. Steinhardt added: 'Simond was impressed with von Papen's sincerity and believes that he will make these recommendations' but is, of course, uncertain as to their reception' by the German Government.¹²⁶ Hirschmann received the impression that 'Papen had given his promise' to obtain the safe conduct.¹²⁷ He informed the War Refugee Board

¹²⁰ Steinhardt to Hull, 30 Mar. 1944, Steinhardt and Hirschmann to Hull for WRB, 4 Apr. 1944, NA RG 59, DS 840.48, Refuges/5480 and 5537. When, in January 1944, the *Belle Guit* was to take Jews from Constanta to Palestine, the commander of Naval Group South, Admiral K. Fricke, proposed to sink the ship unobserved on the open sea, but Naval High Command turned this down. Other ships brought several hundred Jewish refugees to safety. One of them, however, the *Melissa*, was fired on during the night of 5 August with canon and machine guns from a ship; she sank, leaving only five survivors. Rohwer's investigation established the identity of the vessel, the Soviet submarine SC-213, which sank the *Melissa*. This has since been acknowledged in Soviet Russian publications, Rohwer, *Vermischte*, 72-5, 87-95; Jürgen Rohwer, 'Jüdische Flüchtlingschiffe im Schwarzen Meer - 1954 bis 1944', in Ursula Böttner (ed.), *Das (Anschitzen) Internationale Festschiff der des Nationalsozialismus. Festschrift für Werner Jochmann*, a Volk, Hamburg 1986, II, 298 and n. 115, 65.

¹²¹ Hull to Steinhardt from WRB, 13 Apr. 1944, NA RG 59, DS 840.48, Refuges/5537.

¹²² Steinhardt and Hirschmann to Hull, 27 Mar. 1944, NA RG 59, DS 840.48, Refuges/5460.

¹²³ Steinhardt to Hull, 8 Apr. 1944, NA RG 59, DS 101.408/31; Hirschmann, 'Report', 19 Aug. 1944, I, NA RG 84, AE GR 1944, box 84; Hirschmann, *Contest*, 170, gives 8 Apr. 1944 for his departure from Ankara. ¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 170.

¹²⁵ Steinhardt and Hirschmann to Hull for WRB, 4 Apr. 1944, NA RG 59, DS 840.48, Refuges/5537. Simond to ICRC, 24 Apr. 1944, Principles and Law Department, ICRC, letter, 4 Aug. 1987, called the interview 'very cordial'; Simond explained to Papen that it was a question, based on humanitarian considerations, of saving 1,350 children and the 150 adults needed to look after them; Papen was very understanding and assured Simond he would telegraph Berlin immediately to request the safe-conduct; Papen apparently did not tell Simond that a similar request had been sent to Berlin on 31 Mar. 1944; ADAP E. viii, 596. Hirschmann quoted Simond: "'Don't worry about the *Tari*,' he said, 'I have seen von Papen and it will be all right'". *Contest*, 170. Cf. Hirschmann, *Lifetime*, 69.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

Simond has expressed unreserved confidence that this safe conduct would be secured without delay by von Papen . . . [and urged] that if German safe conduct has not been secured both Simond and the Apostolic Delegate in Istanbul endeavor to see von Papen in person in order to press the request again for the immediate granting of safe conduct.¹²⁹

On 7 April, having had no news from the German embassy, Simond went to the embassy again to ask that a 'second telegram' be sent to Berlin. Minister Albert Jenke in the embassy, who, was Ribbentrop's brother-in-law, did so on 9 April, requesting a routing for the transport.¹³⁰ On 14 April, again without news from the German embassy, he telephoned Papen, who promised to send a third cable to Berlin.¹³¹ When Simond was told by Karl Kolb, delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Bucharest, that the *Tari's* destination, Haifa, was the problem, Simond saw Papen on 22 April, apparently together with Roncalli,¹³² and proposed sending the boat to Alexandretta (Iskenderum). Papen told Simond that Minister Jenke had left that morning for Berlin with Papen's instruction to remind the German government of the requested safe conduct for the *Tari*. Papen also agreed to send a fourth telegram to Berlin.¹³³ The nuncio in Berlin, Orsenigo, intervened, too.¹³⁴

Simond informed Steinhardt on 23 April that Papen had sent four telegrams to the German foreign office to request a safe conduct for a voyage of the *Tari* from Istanbul to Constanza to Haifa to evacuate Jews.¹³⁵ These evidently included one dated 31 March 1944 and signed by the minister in the German embassy, Jenke. This reported that the Turkish government agreed to the use of the *Tari* and that Foreign Minister Numan Menemencioglu was asking Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop personally to give permission, adding that, in order to promote his (Ribbentrop's) policy, it was necessary from time to time to 'discharge ballast'.¹³⁶ Ribbentrop agreed on 21 April to grant the safe conduct, but revoked his decision on the same day. Between these two decisions Turkey announced that she was not neutral, but an allied state, and suspended chrome shipments to Germany.¹³⁷

Ambassador Steinhardt wrote to Barlas on 26 April 1944 that Roncalli had to Scinhardt, 17 Apr. 1944, NA RG 59, DS 840-48, Refugees/9566; ICRC, letter, 4 Aug. 1987.

¹²⁹ Jenke to Foreign Office, 9 Apr. 1944, AA/PA, *Inf. ng.* chxxvi.

¹³⁰ ICRC, letter, 4 Aug. 1987.

¹³¹ This meeting is not listed in Zampa, 'Cronologia', where Roncalli is said to have left Ankara on 21 Apr. 1944, but to have returned to Istanbul only on 22 Apr.

¹³² Papen to Foreign Office, telegram, 4 Apr. 1944, AA/PA, *Inf. ng.* chxxvi; ICRC, letter, 4 Aug. 1987; Steinhardt to Hull for WRB, 22 and 24 Apr. 1944, NA RG 59, DS 840-48, Refugees/5797 and 5812.

¹³³ *Aster*, x. 242-3, 235. Orsenigo had been instructed to try to obtain the safe conduct, evidently upon a request from the apostolic delegate in Washington, Mgr. Amleto Cicognani.

¹³⁴ Steinhardt to Hull for WRB, 24 Apr. 1944, NA RG 59, DS 840-48, Refugees/5812.

¹³⁵ ADAP, F. viii, 596.

¹³⁶ Minister von Altenburg to Legationrat Eberhard von Thadden (head of

was 'telegraphing the Vatican this afternoon requesting its intercession on behalf of the German safe conduct'.¹³⁷ This led Roncalli's former secretary, Mgr. Angelo Dell'Aqua, now in the Vatican secretariat of state, to note: 'Non credo che Mons. Roncalli possa fare qualche cosa in proposito.' Roncalli's position with the Turkish government was 'extremely delicate': the apostolic delegate was considered only a guest of the land. One could think of a *démarche* by Roncalli with Papen, given the good relations Roncalli had with him, Dell'Aqua continued, 'ma non mi sembra cosa opportuna'.¹³⁸

On 9 May Simond went to the German embassy and asked Counselor Gebhardt von Walther to send one last telegram to demand a reply from Berlin. On 12 May Simond went to the embassy again. Jenke now told him that the Turkish government's actions had been counterproductive and had given the affair a political stamp, and that the German government would now await further developments before replying to the International Committee of the Red Cross. In Simond's last report on the matter, dated 15 August 1944, he could only state that the latest plan to have the *Tari* sail under Turkish flag also encountered insurmountable difficulties.¹³⁹

Roncalli's impulses to act vigorously on behalf of those most in need found in Turkey during the Second World War unusual opportunities; his diplomatic skill and political insight encountered uncommon challenges. The pope's preference for quiet diplomacy may have placed constraints on what might have been even greater activity. Roncalli was conscious of the risks in supporting a peace initiative whose background had to be suspect, but in the end he saw no reason to regret his assistance.¹⁴⁰ He intervened on behalf of the starving population of Greece and made use of the existing power structure without compromising his neutrality; he practised the same discretion and sovereign independence, having

Judenreferat), 21 Apr. 1944, AA/PA, *Inf. ng.* chxxvi, equally telegram and written message, Altenburg to Thadden, 21 Apr. 1944, revoking the agreement of the same date, AA/PA, *Inf. ng.* chxxvi; ADAP, E. viii, 596; Papen to Foreign Office, 21 Apr. 1944, ADAP, E. viii, 593; Steinhardt to Hull, 22 Apr. 1944, NA RG 59, DS 811.20, Deissne (M) Turkey/999; *The Times*, late London edn, 4 Apr. 1944, 4; *ibid.*, 24 Apr. 1944, 4; Andreas Hillgruber and Gerhard Hönemann, *Christus als Zeuge der Wehrmacht, Königin im Taunus-Ditteldorf* 1978, 209; Walther to Foreign Office, 9 May 1944, Thadden to Ribbentrop, 11/13 May 1944, Thadden to Legation Counselor von Tüttschler, 13 May 1944, AA/PA; *Inf. ng.* chxxvi; Ribbentrop instructed Thadden not to inform the German embassy in Ankara of the German refusal of safe conduct for the *Tari*, hoping to use it as leverage to change the Turkish position. Hirschmann, who was not in Turkey at the time, stated in *Gestirn*, 170, that 'an enraged von Papen gained revenge by refusing safe conduct to 5,000 orphaned children'; cf. *Mens. Lebens*, 70. This is incorrect in terms of chronology, and in substance, in that Papen was not in a position to grant or refuse a safe-conduct.

¹³⁷ Barlas, *Hitler*, 359-60.

¹³⁸ ICRC, letter, 4 Aug. 1987.

¹³⁹ See Roncalli to Papen, 4 Aug. 1944, Karl Heinrich Peter (ed.), *Briefe zur Weltgeschichte*, Stuttgart (1961), 462-3.

reference to unorthodox methods in his rescue efforts on behalf of Jews, yet enabling the chief rabbi of Jerusalem to communicate with the Vatican "almost directly".¹⁴¹ The suggestion of 'baptism ceremonies', and the dispensation of baptismal certificates, with the understanding that the 'converts' were under no obligation once the danger had passed,¹⁴² is so controversial that even today it is difficult to find witnesses on either side - but not impossible.¹⁴³ Roncalli's greatest strength led Mgr Loris Francesco Capovilla, as private secretary to Pope John xxiii, to describe him as 'l'uomo della misericordia', who put human beings before institutions.¹⁴⁴ He struggled to overcome nationalism against which, as he knew, ecclesiastics were not immune.¹⁴⁵

The experiences of the Second World War modified Roncalli's views. In retrospect it is clear that his practical attitude and actions on behalf of the suffering and the persecuted contributed to his election as pope. In his 'Oratio de eligendo Summo Pontifice' on 25 October 1958, Cardinal Antonio Bacci described as desirable 'Pontifex animi fortitudine pollens cum incensissima caritate coniuncta'. For the new pope, it was necessary

Quamobrem ad populos praesertim qui insectationibus vel tyrannica potestate opprimuntur... Ad hos, dicimus, potissimum mentem animumque sumum convertat... sit pons inter Nationes universas, eas etiam quae catholicam religionem vel respuant, vel tulerario ausu insectantur.¹⁴⁶

Cardinal Bacci had described the qualities of Cardinal Roncalli.¹⁴⁷

There is some dispute as to who first suggested a council.¹⁴⁸ But there

¹⁴¹ Roncalli reckoned that he had been able to save 24,000 Jews - with the assistance of Papen, Höbbelchwaite, Pope John XXIII, 196; Giancarlo Zizola, 'Dise altri e io dopo 50 anni mosi le gambe', *Oggi* xv, 13 Apr. 1985, 52-6, reporting testimony from the beatification hearings for John xxiii on the basis of an interview with P. Antonio Carroli ord, the postulator general, now emeritus; Zizola to the author, 19 Mar. 1987. P. Carroli wrote to the author, 13 July 1987, that many notes and documents of the hearings were still secret because John xxiii's case had not yet been discussed by the congregation for cases for beatification, but that he could confirm Zizola's account; this is confirmed also by Mgr Capovilla to the author, 18 Apr. 1987; cf. Trinchese, 'Roncalli diplomata', 246-7, who states that Mgr Capovilla's archive contained evidence that Roncalli was able to save 30,000 Jews with Papen's assistance. The chief rabbi of Jerusalem communicating almost directly with the Vatican, Lapide, *Three Popes*, 179.

¹⁴² Hirschmann, *Camilla*, 151.

¹⁴³ Conceivably, Roncalli meant to indicate Pius xi's authorization for these actions, too, when he talked to the Israeli Consul in Venice, Pinchas Lapide. "In all these painful matters", he said, raising his hand in deprecation, "I referred to the Holy See and afterwards I simply carried out the Pope's orders: first and foremost to save human lives", Lapide, *op. cit.* 181.

¹⁴⁴ Giovanni xxiii, *Il Giornale dell' anima e altri scritti di pieta*, 9th edn, Rome 1985, 7, 14.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 370.

¹⁴⁶ *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, l, 22 Nov. 1958, ser. II, v. xxv, N. 18, 857, 859-60; Höbbelchwaite, *Pope John XXIII*, 281.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. *La Documentation catholique*, N. 1291, 23 Nov. 1958, col. 1483.

¹⁴⁸ Höbbelchwaite, *op. cit.* 203.

can be no doubt as to Roncalli's contribution to the changed attitude of the Vatican towards the Jews. On 15 June 1960 Pope John xxiii granted a private audience to Professor Jules Isaac. Isaac suggested a council committee to study the Jewish question. The pope replied, smiling: 'You are right in having more than hope... I am the head [of] but I must also consult... Here is not an absolute monarchy.'¹⁴⁹ On 18 September 1960 John xxiii received Cardinal Bea and charged the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity with the preparation of a declaration dealing with the Jewish people.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Alberic Stacpoole, *Vatican II by Those Who Were There*, London 1986, 70-3.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 73.