



January 2011

## Angelo Roncalli (John XXIII) Synopsis of Documents

**Introduction:** When reviewing Angelo Roncalli's activities in favor of the Jewish people across many years, one may distinguish three parts; the first, during the years 1940-1944, when he served as Apostolic Delegate of the Vatican in Istanbul, Turkey, with responsibility over the Balkan region. The second, as a Nuncio in France, in 1947, on the eve of the United Nations decision on the creation of a Jewish state. Finally, in 1963, as Pope John XXIII, when he brought about a radical positive change in the Church's position of the Jewish people.

1) As the Apostolic Delegate in Istanbul, during the Holocaust years, Roncalli aided in various ways Jewish refugees who were in transit in Turkey, including facilitating their continued migration to Palestine. His door was always open to the representatives of Jewish Palestine, and especially to Chaim Barlas, of the Jewish Agency, who asked for his intervention in the rescue of Jews. Among his actions, one may mention his intervention with the Slovakian government to allow the exodus of Jewish children; his appeal to King Boris II of Bulgaria not to allow his country's Jews to be turned over to the Germans; his consent to transmit via the diplomatic courier to his colleague in Budapest, the Nuncio Angelo Rotta, various documents of the Jewish Agency, in order to be further forwarded to Jewish operatives in Budapest; valuable documents to aid in the protection of Jews who were authorized by the British to enter Palestine. Finally, above all -- his constant pleadings with his elders in the Vatican to aid Jews in various countries, who were in danger of deportation by the Nazis.

2) In 1947, when he served as Nuncio in France, he acceded to the request of Father Alexandre Glasberg, following a plea to him by the Jewish Agency representative Moshe Sneh, to use his influence with the Vatican not to force the Latin American countries to vote against the UN partition plan, scheduled for 29 November 1947; in other words, for the creation of the Jewish State. For this purpose, Roncalli left for Rome to ask his superiors for the Pope's consent to instruct the nuncios in Latin American countries to inform the governments there that they have a free hand to vote on the UN resolution -- an effort crowned with success. As is historically known, the partition resolution passed by a two-third majority, as required. This role by Roncalli in the creation of Israel was confirmed by the former Minister of Absorption, Yair Tsaban, who

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heard it from Moshe Sneh, on his deathbed.

3) A few years after his elevation as Pope John XXIII, Roncalli decided on a major revision of the traditional Church's attitude in denying the legitimacy of Judaism and the Jewish people. He consequently removed the prayer in condemnation of Jews that was recited every year on the eve of Easter, when Christians prayed for eliminating the "blindness" and "stubbornness" afflicting the Jews in not recognizing Jesus as their Messiah. In a meeting with a Jewish delegation, Roncalli greeted them with unusual warmth, and with words: "I am John, your elder brother." Seeing the Jews as the "elder brother" of Christians subsequently became the standard viewpoint by the Church. Then, in 1962, John XXIII convened a special conclave of the Catholic Church in order, among others, to remove the traditional blame of "deicide" (the murder of Jesus) from the Jewish people. This became embossed in the document known as "Nostra Aetate," that appeared after Roncalli's death. Thanks to his intercession in favor of the Jewish people, the churches of all Christian denominations undertook drastic changes in their teachings of Judaism, and a new and positive page was henceforth opened in the Jewish-Christian dialogue.

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Clearly, not all the above mentioned deeds of Angelo Roncalli in favor of the Jewish people are relevant to the matter of the "Righteous Among the Nations" title, based on the criteria established for this honorific. We will therefore here concentrate on the deeds of Roncalli in favor of Jews during the period of the Holocaust; in particular, to the rescue efforts on his part in response to pleas by various Jewish sources, such as the Jewish Agency representative Chaim Barlas, the Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Levi Herzog, and other Jewish personalities.

A special item necessitating further in-depth research is the relationship between Roncalli and Franz von Papen, the German ambassador in Turkey, that went beyond efforts by both sides to bring a quicker resolution of the war, and included steps to alleviate the sufferings of Jews at the hands of the Nazi regime. As told by von Papen, this included help on his part with money to finance supplying with necessities Jews in transit in Turkey, as well as protection of Jews in France claiming Turkish nationality. Whatever the true nature of this collaboration, it is interesting for our purpose that von Papen attributed his aid to the initiative taken by Angelo Roncalli in this regard in turning to von Papen for his assistance.

All these elements point to Roncalli acting above and beyond his diplomatic assignment in Turkey, when concerning Jews in need of help. One may add, as alluded by Barlas, who often met with him, that Roncalli hinted that his endeavors in favor of Jews did not always meet with the approval and blessing of his superiors in the Vatican. The attached documents demonstrate how Roncalli constantly pressured his superiors in the Vatican to take steps to protect and save Jews threatened with deportations, with various modes of success. The initiative was his, not the other way around. This is a crucial point to bear in mind in light of the current debate on the role of the then serving pope.

Based on the multifarious and ongoing activity of Angelo Roncalli in favor of Jews in need of help (such as blocking the deportation of Jews in Bulgaria), as ascertained in the attached 15 documents, we sincerely believe that he earned the title of "Righteous Among the Nations."

We should like to add that one should treat the Roncalli case, not like the majority of other Righteous recognized cases by Yad Vashem involving isolated and incidental rescue stories, but similar to the rescue efforts of the other diplomats who were awarded the Righteous title, although they did not necessarily risk their lives, but acted above and beyond their diplomatic mandate, and not always in accordance with instructions from above, but at times even against them. The same condition applies to the case of Angelo Roncalli.

Following is a synopsis of the 15 documents presented in this case -- the full documents appearing separately, and attached herewith.

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#### **ANNEX A:**

#### **Actes et Documents du Saint Siège Relatifs à la Seconde Guerre Mondiale (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1974).**

Officially published documents by the Vatican on its role during World War Two, that also reveals Roncalli's constant and tireless efforts to help Jews escape the Nazi inferno (in Italy, France, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania), as well as his personal warm and compassionate feelings towards the Jewish people in general.

On **January 28, 1941**, Angelo Roncalli, the Apostolic Delegate in Istanbul, Turkey writes to the Vatican Secretary of State, Maglione with regard to Eduardo

Luberski, a Jewish refugee who plans to head to the USA, and Casimiro Bober, who is heading for Palestine.

On **September 18, 1942**, writes to Valeri, the Nuncio in France with a request for Valeri to intervene so as to facilitate the transit of a group of Jews living in Perpignan. The following year, on

On **January 22, 1943**, Roncalli informs Maglione that he had arranged for the Jewish Agency representative in Istanbul, Chaim Barlas to be in touch with Father Arthur Hughes, the Apostolic Delegate in Egypt. *“They understood each other well,”* Roncalli gladly underlines. Roncalli agrees to send Barlas’ request to Maglione for the Vatican’s intervention in aid to Jews by asking the neutral countries to admit fleeing Jews, allowing more Jews entry into Palestine, and for a direct radio appeal by the Pope on the Christian obligation to help Jews.

On **March 13, 1943**, Roncalli writes to Maglione on the Jewish Agency request for the Vatican’s intervention to prevent the deportation of the remaining 20,000 Jews in Slovakia. Also, for at least 1,000 Jewish children to be allowed to proceed to Palestine with British authorization. *“Intervention is urgent,”* Roncalli adds. Sadly, Maglione’s response of **May 4, 1943**, was noncommittal, although he assured Roncalli that the Vatican has repeatedly intervene with the Slovak government *“in favor of non-Arians,”* and was seeking the suspension of the deportation of Jews.

On **April 14, 1943**, in a private letter to Sister Maria Casilda de Sion, Roncalli bewails the tragedy of the Struma ship passengers. *“Poor sons of Israel. I constantly hear their laments around me. I lament their loss and I do my best to help them. They are Jesus’ relatives and fellow citizens. May the Divine Savior help them.”*

On **May 22, 1943**, Roncalli sends to Maglione a list of names of Jewish persons, received from Dr. Markus, the Ashkenazi rabbi in Istanbul, and requests Papal intervention for them, such as allowing them to leave countries under German occupation, and transit to other countries, via Italy. The list includes rabbis and eminent scholars and their families, whom he terms -- *“poor unfortunates, who are in such great danger.”* A week later, on **May 30, 1943**, Roncalli requests the Vatican’s intervention in favor of two groups of Jewish refugees in Slovakia and Croatia, one who has been interned in the Jasenovac concentration camp.

On **June 30, 1943**, Roncalli writes to King Boris of Bulgaria, asking for mercy for “*the sons of the Jewish people.*” In a separate private note, Roncalli adds his satisfaction that his appeal to the king proved successful. “*He has acted.*”

On **July 14, 1943**, Nuncio Cassulo, in Bucharest, in a note to Maglione, alludes to Roncalli’s request for help to a list of Jewish people in Transnistria that was delivered by Roncalli. Cassulo strikes a pessimistic note. “I fear that there is not much that can be done.”

On **August 20, 1943**, Roncalli excuses himself before Maglione for badgering the Vatican with continuous pleadings by Jews for the Vatican’s help, although these requests are not always crowned with success, but they nevertheless instill courage among those Jewish petitioners – “*who draw from it solace and are uplifted by it, even if the results of these actions do not always correspond to their wishes. The poor souls appear so satisfied that they regain the courage to try to solicit new interventions, either for different action or for the same actions but under different circumstances.*”

On **September 4, 1943**, Roncalli asks Maglione for Papal intervention in favor of Italian Jews, and suggests allowing them to travel to Palestine, adding that this is not all linked with any political considerations with regard to Palestine.

Rabbi Yitzhak Herzog, in a letter from Jerusalem, on **November 22, 1943**, thanks Roncalli for his efforts with regard to Jewish refugees, adding, “*I use this occasion to express to your Eminence my sincere thanks as well as my profound appreciation for your kind attitude towards Israel.*” Several months later, on **February 28, 1944**, Rabbi Herzog, before leaving Turkey, thanks Roncalli for his efforts on behalf of Jewish refugees. “*Before leaving, God willing, this evening, I wish to express my deep gratitude for the energetic steps done by you, and that you will continue to do, to save our unhappy people, the innocent victims of the unprecedented horrors by a cruel country in total ignorance of religious principles that form the very basis of humanity... May God bless you with the blessings of Zion and Jerusalem. With my deepest thanks of the good reception that you gave me as well as the honor bestowed on me.*”

On **March 23, 1944**, Roncalli informs Chaim Barlas that Nuncio

Cassulo, in Bucharest, will intervene in favor of Jews in Transnistria, as earlier requested by Rabbi Herzog and Barlas. *“Always at your service and the good disposition toward all the Jewish brothers.”*

On **August 18, 1944**, Roncalli writes to Ira Hirschmann, the War Refugee Board delegate, detailing Roncalli’s assistance to Jewish refugees, including the forwarding by diplomatic courier *“several thousands of [British] ‘Immigration Certificates’ destined for Jews in Hungary,”* and this has *“enabled their owners to escape transportation and to obtain the necessary permissions for emigration.”* Roncalli assures Hirschmann that *“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. It is also willing to recommend particular documents which may be useful. 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 Halberstan.”*

On **October 23, 1944**, Cardinal Domenico Tardini (the special and close aide to Pius XII) informs Nuncio Bernardini, in Switzerland, on the efforts of Vatican in favor of Jews in Hungary and Slovakia, as requested by Roncalli, who had earlier written: *“More than 5,000 Jews are being concentrated in the Sereed camp, among them approximately 2,000 are in danger of deportation, which means a certain death. We are permitted to request the intervention of the Holy See in favor of those 2,000 Jews to save them from deportation and death.”*

On **March 23, 1945**, Roncalli, who has been transferred to France as Nuncio, requests from Cardinal Montini information on Italian Jews who were deported to Germany.

Also included:

May 4, 1943: Maglione (Vatican) to Roncalli, with regard to Slovak Jews.

June 25, 1943: Maglione to Roncalli, on difficulties by the Vatican in rescue of Jews.

December 6, 1943: Barlas (Istanbul) to Roncalli, on request to assist Jews in Italy.

March 16, 1944: Cassulo (Bucharest) to Maglione, on conditions of Jews in Transnistria.

June 29, 1944: Bernardini (Berne) to Maglione on Roncalli's plea to aid Jews in Hungary.

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**ANNEX B:**

**Diary Entries by Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli; from: La Mia Vita in Oriente: Agende del Delegato Apostolico 1940-1944. (Bologna: Istituto per le Scienze Religiose, 2008)**

**October 10<sup>th</sup>, 1941.** *“Rome. Meeting with the Holy Father: 45 minutes.... He asked me if his silence concerning the behavior of the Nazis is judged negatively.”*

**May, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1943.** *“Meetings... Mr. Barlas, Jewish. The action that I initiated in order to prevent the transfer of 20 thousand Jews from Slovakia, thanks to the Holy Father’s intervention, has succeeded. This is encouraging.”*

**April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1944.** *“... I have noticed in the American representative in Ankara a keen receptiveness for my intervention in favor of Jews from Hungary, Romania, and the entire world...”*

**June 27<sup>th</sup>, 1944.** *“... In the afternoon, I received Barlas, who came to send an S.O.S. to the Holy See for the rescue of the Jews of Hungary.” [On August 16<sup>th</sup>, Roncalli wrote to Rotta, sending him additional certificates: “Since the parcels of certificates of immigration that we sent in the month of May contributed to rescuing the lives of the Jews to whom they were addressed, I have accepted to receive from the Jewish Agency for Palestine also these three parcels of certificates, which I now take the liberty of sending to Your Excellency, and kindly request that you give them to the person to whom they are addressed, Mr. Miklos Krautz (Moshe Krausz, Secretary of the Jewish Agency in Budapest).”*

**July 11<sup>th</sup>, 1944.** *“... Mr. Barlas and Mr. Eliezer Kaplan of the Committee for Jews came today again to offer thanks for the action in favor of Jews by the Holy Father, by his representatives and mine. However, I wonder: in practice, what results did this rescuing action bring? At least it served to demonstrate that Christ’s charity remains unaltered in the changing centuries. But the misfortune of the Jewish people is fatal. It will eventually sweep away the oppressor Nazi government as well. Degenerate or not, the people of Israel is nevertheless God’s people. What a mystery! Jesus’ blood continues to fall on it. But woe betide anyone who touches it. Mihi vindicta, and no one else.”*

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**ANNEX C:**

**Rabbi Isaac Herzog to Rabbi Dr. Arthur Hertzberg: From: Arthur Hertzberg, “The Catholic-Jewish Dispute That Won’t Go Away,” in: Reform Judaism Magazine, November 1999, pp. 1-7.**

*“Hertzberg, I want to tell you a story... Whenever I went, I met with the papal legate and always I was told, ‘What can I do? My hands are tied.’ Everywhere, I met with indifference or helplessness. The one exception was Istanbul, where I went to see the Vatican’s ambassador to Turkey, Archbishop Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli. As I told him of the mass murders, he started to cry, rose from his chair, put his arms around me, and said, ‘Rabbi, what can I do to help?’”*

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**ANNEX D:**

**Ira Hirschmann, Caution to the Winds (New York: D. McKay Co., 1962); pp. 182-3.**

*“Roncalli listened carefully while I described the desperate struggle of the Jews from Hungary... 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.”*

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**ANNEX E:**

**Meir Touval-Weltmann, “How Pope John Helped Rescue European Jews”  
The Jerusalem Post, June 26, 1973**

*“... I was in Istanbul as a member of the Rescue Committee for European Jews... When I visited Monsignor Roncalli from time to time, he always lent an attentive ear and expressed support and concern for the fate of the Jews under Nazi rule. One day I was pleasantly surprised when he turned with a request to me. Two young Jews from Anatolia appeared at my home with a letter of recommendation from Monsignor Roncalli asking me to assist them to immigrate to Palestine. Subsequently Roncalli asked me to assist in the immigration to Palestine of other young Jews, and he also took an interest in arranging for them to continue their education there. Naturally, I was more than happy to comply with these requests.”*

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**ANNEX F:**

**Diplomatic Dispatches, with regard to safe passage of SS TARI boat, with  
1,500 Jewish refugees – from Romania through Turkey, on its way to  
Palestine**

From: Secretary of State, Washington; To: American Embassy, Ankara  
Date: April 17, 1944; Number: 342

*“... Hirschmann [War Refugee Board] informs me that Simond [Red Cross] has expressed to him unequivocally, unreserved confidence that von Papen [German ambassador] would arrange to obtain this safe conduct without delay... Assuming that the German safeconduct has not been obtained Hirschmann urges that both Simond and the **Apostolic Delegate from Istanbul [Roncalli]** arrange to see von Papen in person in order to again urge granting of safe conduct without delay...”*

From: Steinhardt, American Embassy, Ankara; To: Secretary of State,  
Washington  
Date: April 22, 1944; Number: 726

*"... The **Apostolic Delegate to Istanbul** and Simond try to see von Papen to press the request and I confer with Simond personally without delay..."*

From: Steinhardt, American Embassy, Ankara; To: Secretary of State,  
Washington  
Date: May 2, 1944; Number: 795

*"...In spite of the fact that requests for safe conduct have been made by the Swedish and Swiss governments, by the **Apostolic Delegate in Istanbul** and the Vatican and by the International Red Cross... It seems unlikely that a safe conduct for the Tari will be granted by the Germans as I have reason to believe that the Germans wish to strike back at the Turks for their action in discontinuing all chrome shipments."*

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#### ANNEX G:

חיים ברלס, קטעים מתוך מאמרו, "פגישות בקושטא"; משואה 4, אפריל 1976, עמ' 133-125

ראשית הכרתי עם מונס' רונקאלי היתה ב-1941... בביקורי הראשון במשרד הנונציוס... עמדתי על טיבו של מונס' רונקאלי, ישיש מלא חיים ומעורה בנעשה בעולם, ושונה בגישתו מאחרים במעמדו גם בנוגע לבעיה היהודית. ביקשתיו לפנות אל טיסו [נשיא סלובקיה]... ולבקש רחמים על היהודים במדינתו. בשיחה נתגלה לפני ברוחב-ליבו ובהשתתפותו בסבל האדם והעם היהודי... הוא הבטיח לי להעביר את הדו"ח אל "הכס הקדוש" בצירוף המלצות לפעולה, ואם נקבל תשובה מרומא -- והדבר מוטל בספק, לדעתו -- לא ימנע את תוכנה ממני...

לימים הבאתי לפני מונס' רונקאלי את הדו"ח על אושוויץ... והוא הזדעזע לידיעות על ממדי ההשמדה במחנות-המוות. בדמעות קרא את התעודות שביקשתיו להעביר לפטרוננו ברומא... הורגשה מורת-רוחו על הממונים עליו, שכוחם והשפעתם רבים, אך הם נמנעים מפעולה בתושיה ובעזרה של ממש.

ניסיתי לשאול את הנונציוס למה נמנע האפיפיור מגילוי-דעת נגד מעשי האכזריות הבלתי-אנושיים של הנאצים, שהרי ברור שלהכרזה כזו יכולה להיות השפעה רבה לאין-ערוך על יחס העמים בימים הנוראים ליהודים בארצות הכיבוש. (עמ' 128) "אל תשאל ידידי על דבר זה - הוא השיב - אלוהים מנחה את דרכי האדם והן נסתרות ממני."

באחת השיחות על מאורעות הדמים בפולין... פניו החזירו ורעדו למקרא הדברים. הוא קם ממקומו כולו נרגש ומזועזע, התהלך בחדר המלא איקונין מחלון אל חלון ופתאום עמד בצאתי מלפניו. לווני על הדלת של גרם-המעלות, ואמר לאט: "בבואך הביתה, בני, קח בידך את ה"ביבליה" ועון ביחזקאל, פרק ל"ז, שמתמצא את התשובה לטענותיך כלפי מעלה." ובבואי אל חדרי במלון לקחתי בידי את ספר התנ"ך, וקראתי בפרק ל"ז של יחזקאל: "היתה עלי יד ה'... ותיחני בבקעה והיא מלאה עצמות... כה אמר ה' לעצמות האלה, הנה אני מביא בכם רוח וחיים."

באחת הפגישות עם מונס' אנג'לו רונקאלי שטחתי לפניו בקשה להיעזר בהשפעתו הרבה על בית המלוכה בסופיה... ידעתי שלפני בואו לקושטא היה מונס' רונקאלי נונציוס אפוסטולי בסופיה ורבה היתה השפעתו בחוגי בית-המלוכה שם, בהיותו כהן-הוויודי של גבירה רמת-מעלה שהיתה קטולית. מונס' רונקאלי קרא בעיון את הדו"ח (על הנישול הכלכלי שנקטו בהם השלטונות כלפי היהודים וצעדים אחרים), וכדרכו התהלך בחדר-הקבלה... לאחר שעת מחשבה והתרגשות, ניגש ללא אומר ודברים אל השולחן והתחיל מאיית במכונת-הכתיבה טלגרמה ארוכה, קרא למזכירו והורה לו לשלוח בלי עיכוב לתעודתה. היתה זאת, כפי שאמר לי, בקשה ותחנונים למלך בוריס בעניין הגזירה שצריך לבטלה מבלי להיכנע לדרישות 'הבלתי-נוצרות' של השגריר הגרמני בארצו. לימים קיבלתי ידיעה בכתב-ידו של מונס' אנג'לו רונקאלי כי המלך בוריס ביטל את גזירת הגירוש לפולין והחליפה בפיזורם של יהודי סופיה בלבד בערים ובכפרים בבולגריה. (עמ' 129)

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## ANNEX H:

מתוך: חיים ברלס, הצלה בימי שואה, בית לוחמי הגיטאות, 1975; עמ' 352-353  
"שיחה עם אנג'לו רונקאלי, נונציוס הואתיקן באיסטנבול"

"Mgr. Roncalli invited me to discuss the situation of Jews in Rumania, referring to a cable received from the Apostolic Delegate in Jerusalem. In the interview, the following questions have been discussed thoroughly:

1) **Transnistria:** I explained the situation which arose after the occupation of certain areas in Transnistria and Bessarabia by the Russian forces.... I informed Mgr. Roncalli that the Turkish government agreed to put a ship at our disposal for about 1,500 refugees for whom the immigration into Palestine is being assured, but the Rumanian government should be urged to facilitate the organizing of the transport by all means. I would suggest that an appeal should be made to the Apostolic Delegate in Bucharest to use his influence in this direction.

2) **Hungary:** ... It appears that the first step of the Nazis after the occupation of Budapest was to undertake anti-Jewish measures at once.... The fate of the 15,000 Jewish refugees who succeeded in escaping from the hell in Poland and Slovakia, is getting disastrous, as rumors are to the effect that they will be deported to Poland.

I asked Mgr. Roncalli to draw attention of the Holy See to the desperate situation and fatal danger which became now imminent for the remainder of European Jewry, who lived before comparatively well in Hungary.

**Mgr. Roncalli expressed profound sympathy and interest in helping our people and promised to address at once the Vatican and the Apostolic Delegates in Budapest and Bucharest in the lines of my proposal.**

I thanked Mgr. Roncalli for his help and sympathy in these vital problems for Jewry in Europe."

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### **ANNEX I:**

**Dina Porat, "Tears, Protocols and Actions in a Wartime Triangle: Pius XII, Roncalli and Barlas." In: Cristianesimo nella Storia, 2006, Vol. 7, No. 2; 599-632**

Roncalli did not confine himself to act merely as a channel to Rome and back: he also acted actively, if not independently, mostly with Barlas but with others as well, generously devoting time and effort in order to rescue as many as he could (600).

Barlas describes him as *"genuinely felt the sorrow, and was exceptionally ready to help and save."* (602) *"I could always come to him. I had a free entrance to the Nunciature, and even if I came late on an urgent matter he would be always glad to receive me and to help as much as he could."* On March 1943, Barlas came rushing in on a rainy night. Roncalli listened carefully and promised Barlas to transfer to Slovakia, and its ruler Josef Tiso a plea to have mercy and prevent the continuation of the deportations.(603-4) Before promising he prayed softly, in Barlas' presence, and then added: *"so be it, with God's mercy."* *"He himself wrote the cable to the Pope and sent that very day, and after five days told me he received an answer that an action such as we wanted was carried out."*(604)

When Barlas brought him the Auschwitz Protocols, Roncalli was shocked and read it with tears, and with delicate yet unambiguous resentment expressed towards his superiors [i.e., the Pope – IRWF], *"whose power and influence are great, but who refrain from action and resourcefulness in extending concrete help,"* in Barlas' words. (604)

This, in Barlas' words, constitutes a restrained criticism by Roncalli against the Pope's silence – in the presence of a Jewish delegate. Barlas tried to ask him for the reasons behind the Pope's silence. Roncalli responded by speaking about God's reasons that are hidden from human beings. Interestingly, he did not object at the question raised by Barlas. (605)

Barlas brought Roncalli part of a report on the mass killings of Jews in Poland, and Roncalli, pale and trembling, suggested that Barlas reread in Ezekiel 37 the prophesy that the dry scattered bones of the House of Israel will be brought to its resurrected land. (606)

Bader and another emissary, Venia Pomerantz (later Ze'ev Hadari) came urgently to Roncalli to ask for his help in preventing the deportation of Jews from Thrace and Macedonia. The following morning, Roncalli told them that King Boris promised him not to let the plan materialize. [Unfortunately, Boris did not keep his word and the deportations from these two areas went ahead – IRWF] (610) When the Jews in Sofia faced a similar danger, Barlas hurried to Roncalli, and Roncalli himself immediately wrote a cable to king Boris, and ordered his secretary to send it right away. In this, he acted independently, using his excellent relations with the King and Queen of a country he had spent ten years in.

Roncalli was the first one to warn the Vatican that Hungarian Jews faced an immediate danger following the German invasion. The information about the Auschwitz Protocols (written by two Slovak Jews escapees in April 1944) reached the Vatican for the first time from Roncalli, who got it from Barlas. (612) Barlas had received it from Dr. Chaim Pozner, in Geneva, who received it from Budapest. (617) When Barlas brought Roncalli the Protocols, Roncalli was really shocked. "*With tears he read the documents I asked him to transfer to his Patron in Rome,*" Barlas recorded. (618)

#### **Chaim Barlas -- Masu'ah 4 (1976), pp. 128-129**

I first came to know Msg. Roncalli in 1941, when I arrived in Istanbul as representative of the Jewish Agency... I could have a good grasp of his personality. He was an elderly person, full of vitality and knowledge in world affairs, and his attitude to the Jewish problem was different from that of others in his stature. I asked him to approach Tiso, the Catholic president of Slovakia, and plead mercy for the Jews in his (628) state. In our conversation, I discovered

his generosity and his compassion, feeling for the sufferings of men and the sufferings of the Jewish people, beyond the dogma of religion and church. He promised me to transmit the report to the Holy See together with recommendation for action and if he receives an answer from, which in his opinion is doubtful, he will not spare the answer from me...

In later days I presented to Msg. Roncalli the report on Auschwitz,... and he was shocked by the news about the dimensions of exterminations in the death camps. He read in tears the documents, which I requested him to transmit to his Patron in Rome.... One could feel his discontent with his superiors whose powers and influence were great, but who refrained from action and resourcefulness in extending concrete help.

I tried to ask the Nuncio why the Pope did not publish a public statement against the brutal and inhuman acts of the Nazis. It was clear that such a statement could be of great influence on the people's attitudes to the Jews in the occupied countries.... *"Don't ask, my friend,"* he replied, *"God guides man's ways and they are hidden from us."*

In one of our conversations about the bloody events in Nazi occupied Poland... his face turned white and trembling when I was reading this. He stood up all excited and shocked, walking up and down in he room,... and when I was about to leave, he suddenly stopped, accompanied me to the staircase door and said slowly: *"When you come home, take the Bible in your hands and look up Chapter 37 in the book of Ezekiel, and there you will the answer to your complaints to Heaven."* It was the prophesy of the dry bones coming to life. (629-630)

### **"Haboker," 14 June 1963**

When Rabbi Herzog arrived in Istanbul, in February 1944, Barlas immediately informed Msg. Roncalli and asked if he would be ready to meet with him. Not only did Roncalli agreed to the meeting, but he also hastened to fix it for the very same day at the Nuncio's residence... Rabbi Herzog expressed words of thanks for the Nuncio's assistance... and asked for help by the Pope and the Church... On his part, the Monsignor emphasized his positive approach regarding the rescue of Jews and promised that he, personally, will do everything required in order that the Holy See exerts his influence to promote rescue efforts. Although we know today that Roncalli's efforts and supplications fell on deaf ears, this does not diminish the importance of Roncalli's attitude, which one

can call without hesitation "Love of the People of Israel."... Chaim Barlas also recalls that Roncalli said to Rabbi Herzog: "*Let us hope that the People of Israel will also achieve redemption!*" (631-2)

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#### **ANNEX J:**

**Chaim Barlas, "John the XXIII and his attitude to Jews." Davar, November 4, 1959, p. 3. In Livia Rotkirchen, The Destruction of Slovak Jewry: A Documentary History (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1961), p. 32.**

*"In this chain of interventions [regarding Slovakia] ... the Apostolic Nuncio of Istanbul, Mgr. Angelo Roncalli, now Pope John XIII, played a decisive role... Ch. Barlas... implored him to intervene with the Holy See and, if possible, exhort the priests of Slovakia for a benevolent and merciful treatment of the remaining Jews in that country. 'So will it be; and so will God help in His mercy,' replied the Nuncio in a whisper, his hand raised. Later when Barlas received news from Switzerland and Slovakia about the cancellation of the deportations, he called at the Nuncio's residence to thank him. Smilingly, the Nuncio answered that he knew about this turn of events but did not want to disclose it before it would be confirmed 'through your superb channels.'"*

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#### **ANNEX K:**

**Words by Franz von Papen (German ambassador to Turkey, during 1939-1944), to Father Antonio Cairoli, as reported to Monsignor Dell'Acqua, with regard to the canonization of Angelo Roncalli (John XXIII), February 4, 1967**

Since his first meeting with the Apostolic Delegate (1939), the German Ambassador had the impression of facing a man of God - open, kind, charitable and understanding. His Excellency Roncalli was never his confessor: however, he [von Papen] considered him as his spiritual father, as he immediately understood that he was faced with a priest to whom he could confide anything. For this reason, he never hid anything from him and received from him enlightened advice and abundant support. During the war, Roncalli intervened with von Papen in favor of Jewish refugees coming from Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Greece, etc. Each arrival of

refugees was followed by a request for a meeting from the Apostolic Delegate: the German Ambassador generously gave supplies - of which he had a well-stocked deposit - and money. He acted in favor of those refugees in every way in order to allow them to reach their destinations: approximately twenty five thousand Jews were helped in this manner. When German troops occupied the south of France [November 1942], they received the order to deport to extermination camps in Poland the ten thousand Israelites that were present there. These were all Turkish subjects naturalized as French. In order to save them, Dr. Barlach (probably, Barlas), Secretary of the Zionist Committee, went to Istanbul and had previously made arrangements for a prior introduction to the German Ambassador **by the Apostolic Delegate**. He addressed the German Ambassador by saying: "Only you are able to help us". Von Papen immediately approached the Turkish Foreign Minister and asked him for his consent to send to Hitler a cable with the following content: "*The possible deportation of former Turkish subjects would provoke a profound commotion in the country and would gravely and negatively affect relations between Germany and Turkey*". The cable was sent and achieved the desired purpose: none of the [Turkish] Jews living in the south of France were deported..."

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#### **ANNEX L:**

#### **Documents on Angelo Roncalli provided by Prof. Alberto Melloni, October 2010**

Document # 11: On October 17<sup>th</sup>, 1960, John XXIII gave audience to 130 members of the United Jewish Appeal: Jewish Study Mission (USA). On that occasion, Rabbi Herbert Friedman stated: "*During many years Your Holiness, with great commitment and solidarity, has acted to alleviate the suffering of the persecuted of any religious creed. When Hitler had turned Europe into a dark prison, Your Holiness, as the Holy See representative in Turkey, acted tirelessly to save the Jews of Europe...*" In his response, the Pope said that he remembered very well what he was able to accomplish.

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### **ANNEX M:**

**Peter Hoffmann, "Roncalli in the Second World War: Peace Initiatives, the Greek Famine and the Persecution of the Jews." Journal of Ecclesiastical History, Vol. 40 (1989), No. 1; 74-99**

A detailed documented description of Roncalli's help to Jews during the Holocaust.

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### **ANNEX N:**

**Peter Hebblethwaite, John XXIII: Pope of the Century (London & New York, Continuum: 1984); Chapter 9; 82-95.**

A summary of Roncalli's assistance to Jews during the Holocaust.

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### **ANNEX O:**

**יאיר צבן -- מתוך דברים בטקס, ביד ושם, לשם הענקת אות חסיד אומות העולם לכומר אלכסנדר גלסברג, ב-12 בינואר 2004**

ספטמבר 1947; הימים ימי ההיערכות לקראת ההצבעה הגורלית באו"ם על הצעת החלוקה, לפיה תקומנה בארץ-ישראל המערבית שתי מדינות... כדי שההחלטה תתקבל היינו זקוקים כזכור לתמיכת רוב של שני שלישים מחברות האו"ם... והנה אומר לו [למשה סנה] משה שרתוק: "יש סיכוי סביר להשיג רוב של שני-שלישים. עתה הכל תלוי בארצות אמריקה הלטינית.. רבות מהן נוטות לתמוך בנו, אך הן חוששות מהוואתיקן. אתה, סנה, חייב להגיע לשיחה עם האפיפיור ולשכנע אותו שלא יטילו וטו ולא יפריעו.

משה סנה: "נחתה עלי במפתיע משימה כבדה ושאלתי את עצמי, 'כיצד, אני, משה בן שמעון.. מגיע עד הפופ, עד האפיפיור?' ואז סנה קורא לגלסברג להזוועץ בו. לגלסברג יש, כרגיל, עצה טובה: 'הנונציוס של הוואתיקן, נציגו של האפיפיור, בפאריס. הוא אישיות הומניסטית דגולה, הארכיהגמון אנג'לו רונקאלי, כבר סייע בהצלת יהודים כאשר שימש כנציג הוואתיקן בטורקיה בשנות המלחמה. הוא האיש שיוכל לפלס לנו דרך.' סנה נפגש עם רונקאלי (לימים האפיפיור הנאור יוחנן ה-23), הפגישה עברה באווירה חמה ואוהדת. לסנה הייתה תחושה שנוצרה כימיה בינו לבין רונקאלי, שהבטיח להשתדל. כעבור ימים ספורים נקרא סנה לרונקאלי והוא מתבשר שסודרה לו פגישה בוואתיקן שנועד להתקיים ב-3 באוקטובר 1947 (בסוכות תש"ז). סנה וגלסברג נוסעים לרומא. רונקאלי מקדים גם הוא את נסיעתו לוואתיקן כדי להיות נוכח במקום, אולי תתבקש עזרתו. ב-3 באוקטובר אכן נפגש סנה עם מספר שניים בוואתיקן, הקרדינל דומניקו טרדיני, הממונה על ענייני החוץ של הוואתיקן... לימים התברר שאכן הוואתיקן לא מנע מארצות אמריקה... הלטינית לתמוך בהקמת המדינה היהודית

גלסברג סיפר לי שכאשר נפגש סנה והוא-עצמו עם רונקאלי, דיווח רונקאלי על השיחה עם [החשמן]  
טרדיני, התבטא רונקאלי באורח בוטה למדי כנגד העובדה שהוואתיקן לא נקט עמדה חד-  
משמעית בזכות הקמת מדינה יהודית ורמז לכך שהאפיפיור פיוס ה-12 החמיץ הודמנות לכפר  
על מחדליו בהצלת יהודים בתקופה הנאצית

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