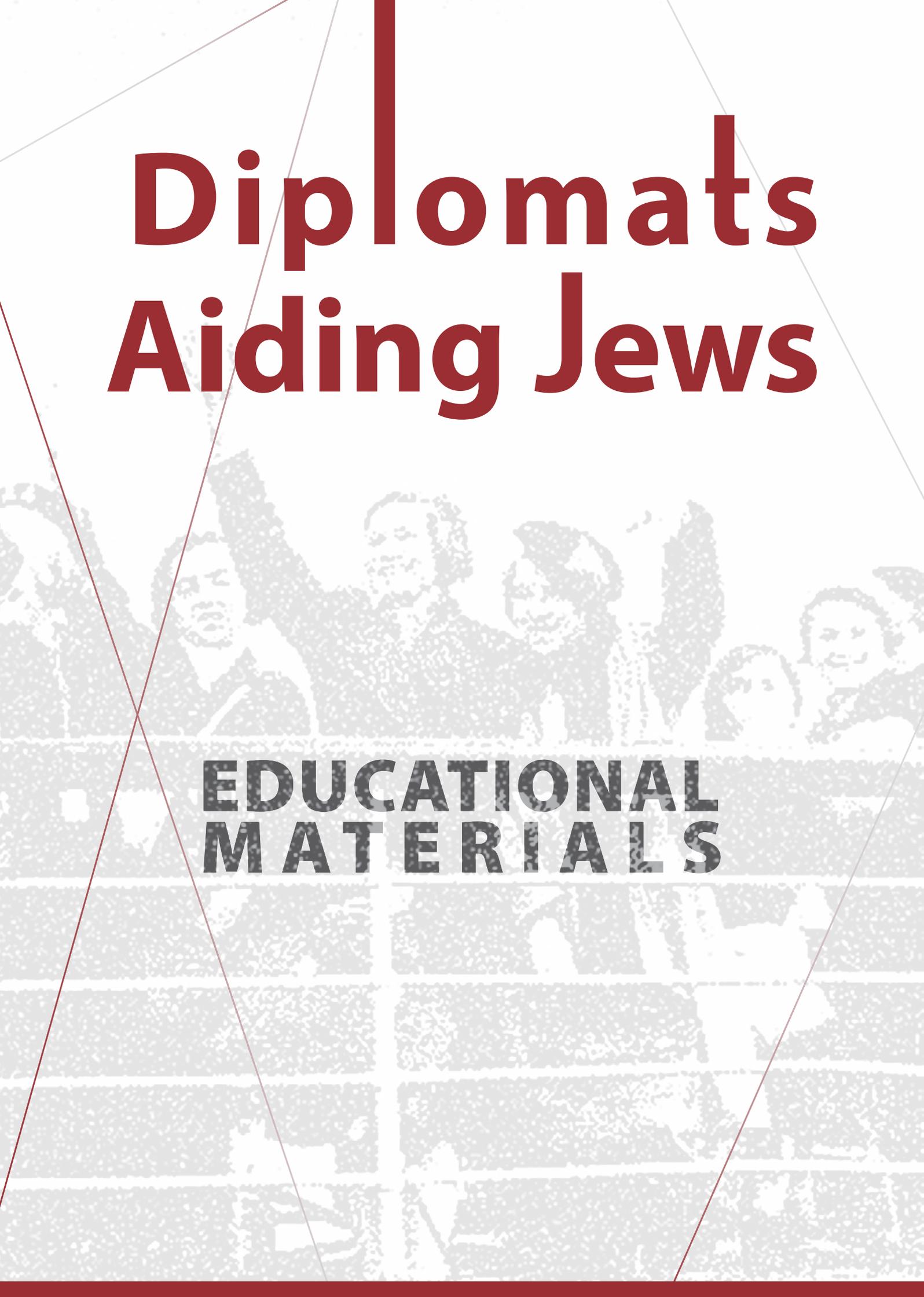


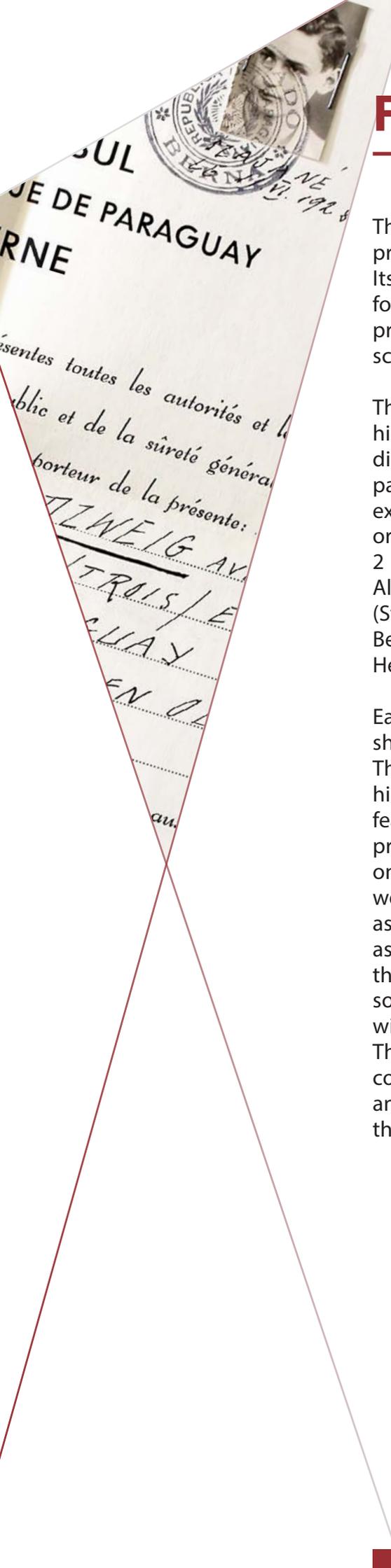
Diplomats Aiding Jews



**EDUCATIONAL
MATERIALS**

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Foreword

The educational package titled 'Diplomats Aiding Jews' has been prepared for teachers and learners interested in Holocaust education. Its objective is to facilitate learning about the contribution made by foreign diplomats in saving Jews from the Holocaust, as well as to provide teachers with proposals of methodological solutions for use at school when the topic is discussed.

The package contains three major parts. The entire set starts with a historical introduction outlining the notion of aid provided by foreign diplomats to Jews during the Holocaust. The second section of the package is the most extensive and includes five Work Sheets, presenting examples of aid provided to Jews by specific diplomats in chronological order. Sheet 1 focuses on the activity of Francis (Frank) Folley; Sheet 2 – Chiune Sugihara, Tadeusz Romer and Jan Zwartendijk; Sheet 3 – Aleksander Ładoś and his collaborators from the Polish Legation in Bern (Stefan Ryniewicz, Juliusz Kühl and Konstancy Rokicki), making up the Bernese Group; Sheet 4 – Raul Walenberg, Carl Lutz, Ángel Sanz Briz and Henryk Ślawik, and Sheet 5 – Archbishop Angelo Rotta.

Each sheet features longer biographical notes of key diplomats and shorter ones about the other ones, illustrated with their photographs. These biographical notes are preceded by a brief text providing the historical background of the aid provided. Further, each Work Sheet features auxiliary source material (such as texts, photos and maps) providing additional information and encourage the learners to reflect on the matter and work with them. In organising their methodological work with the sources, the teachers may find useful the sets of assignments to be found under the biographical notes and sources as well as the end of each Sheet. The former group refers directly to the material in the package, the latter – also to knowledge from other sources the learners are encouraged to seek. The package is complete with an extensive timeline of the Holocaust and events related to it. The information and photographs found there showing the origins and course of the Holocaust aim at providing a broader historical context, and thus ensuring a better understanding of the subject presented in the package.

Introduction

On 20 January 1942, in Wannsee near Berlin high-ranking state officials of the Third Reich under the chairmanship of the high-ranking SS and police officer Reinhard Heydrich met in order to discuss the logistical details of the plan for activities leading to the 'final solution to the Jewish question' (*Endlösung der Judenfrage*), as genocide of Jews was euphemistically called. The decision about the total extermination of Jews, however, had been already taken (most likely in mid-1941) once the leaders of Nazi Germany found that their anti-Jewish policy, mainly limitation of rights, persecution and encouraging emigration, was not sufficient to 'solve' what they called the Jewish problem. Murdering Jews on a large scale began already in the summer 1941 with mass shootings executed by *Einsatzgruppen* squads in Eastern European territories which after Germany's attack on the USSR came under control of the Third Reich. In the autumn of 1941, the Germans started trials of gassing people in the KL Auschwitz camp in order to improve the effectiveness of killing Jews. In November, the construction of the first extermination compound began in Belzec with stationary gas chambers, and from December that year Jews were murdered using mobile gas chambers in the Kulmhof (Chelmno) death camp. In the spring of 1942, three death camps – Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka – opened as part of Operation Reinhardt aimed at annihilating all Jews living in the General Government and *Bezirk Bialystok*. From the summer of 1942, mainly Jews from liquidated ghettos in the General Government were brought there and later also those from the Third Reich and other countries of occupied Europe. At the same time, mass deportations of Jewish people started to Auschwitz-Birkenau, a concentration and death camp located in the Third Reich.

Fleeing death, Jews were seeking refuge for themselves and their nearest outside of ghettos, on the 'Aryan side' yet the local people's responses varied, from passivity to active aiding, but also delivering hiding Jews to Germans or even murdering them. Some hiding Jews tried to reach other countries not controlled by Nazi Germany and certain diplomats came to their rescue. In this context, it should be noted that some of them had been engaged in activities aiming at aiding Jews also in the period preceding their physical extermination. Both just before the outbreak of the Second World War and in its first months, they supported Jews in obtaining documents required for emigration to neutral countries or outside of Europe. One of such people was Chiune Sugihara, a Japanese consul residing in Kaunas in Lithuania.

As testimonies of Holocaust survivors show, Jews could count on support of both foreign diplomats serving in occupied states and various international aid organisations operating during the Second World War like the International Red Cross, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JOINT), or the Relief Committee for the Warstricken Jewish Population (RELICO). Some of the diplomats aiding Jews worked in neutral countries such as Portugal, Spain, Turkey, Sweden or Switzerland, but also ones accredited in the Third Reich and other countries allied with it like Hungary, Italy, Romania and the Empire of Japan helped as

much as they could. Some of them came from or worked at diplomatic missions of the countries of the anti-Nazi coalition like Poland, Great Britain, the United States, and later also the Soviet Union.

The activities of diplomats aiding fleeing Jews focused mainly on issuing passports or visas of their respective countries. They also offered persecuted Jews refuge in buildings that belonged to diplomatic posts protected by international immunity. Thanks to the documents they issued, threatened Jews could apply for emigration to such places as Palestine or countries of the Far East or South America. For many, it was sufficient just to get a document confirming a different citizenship. Sometimes, the diplomats acted in an organised fashion, following the instruction of their governments and financially supported by them, yet many of them made those efforts against the official policy of their states. The success depended on the creativity and courage of the diplomats as well as others supporting them. It is impossible to say how many people survived thanks to the aid provided by the diplomats. It is estimated that in total even around 100,000 Jews could have benefitted from such aid offered by representatives of various diplomatic missions, Apostolic Nunciatures and the Red Cross. It must be noted, however, that not all Jews who received visas or support in some other form from diplomats lived to see the end of the war. That was because the aid they received from diplomats was often just one of many steps on the way to their survival from the Holocaust. In addition, chances of Jews' survival were conditioned by many unexpected circumstances and factors independent of the diplomats. It should also be noted that having learnt about the aid delivered to Jews by the diplomats, the Germans were undertaking numerous operations (also provocations), aimed at blocking the aid efforts.

Foreign diplomats involved in the cause of aiding Jews include such individuals as Raul Wallenberg, secretary of the Swedish Embassy in Hungary; Archbishop Angelo Rotta, apostolic nuncio in Hungary; Carl Lutz, Swiss vice-consul in Budapest; Ángel Sanz Briza, chargé d'affaires of the Spanish Embassy in Budapest; József Antall, refugee commissioner in the Hungarian government; Francis (Frank) Foley, an employee of the British Embassy in Berlin, and Aristides de Sousa Mendes, Portuguese consul in France. Jews were also aided by several Polish diplomats like Aleksander Ładoś and staff of the Polish Legation in Bern, the head of the Civic Committee for the Care of Polish Refugees in Hungary Henryk Sławik, or Tadeusz Romer, a Polish envoy in Japan.

The scale of the aid foreign diplomats offered to Jews is confirmed by the fact that after the war more than 30 of them have been honoured with the title of Righteous Among The Nations. Nevertheless, a number of diplomats aiding Jews during the war have not received the distinction as their actions needed to be kept secret.

WORK SHEETS

1

THE CONTEXT

Francis Edward Foley

The Nazis' assumption of power on 30 January 1933, which was warmly welcomed by the broad masses of German society, marked the beginning of discrimination of the roughly 522,000 German Jews. Following the Reichstag fire, the Nazis began to suspend civil liberties and eliminate political opposition. After 14 years since the Treaty of Versailles had been signed as well as after the outbreak of the Great Economic Depression, most Germans welcomed the new authorities and their politics. The Treaty which required 'Germany [to] accept the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage' was perceived by society as humiliating. Taking advantage of these sentiments, the Nazis and other populist parties questioned the terms of the treaty and demanded that Germany be restored to its rightful place in Europe. They called for the overthrow of the social-democratic government that headed the Weimar Republic, claiming that it was backed by Jews who were responsible for Germany's defeat in the war. Only a minority mounted resistance in reaction to the violation of human rights and the destruction of democracy.

On 1 April 1933, the Nazis carried out the first major anti-Jewish operation, a boycott of shops and business owned by Jews. Step by step, anti-Jewish rules and restrictions were implemented and stripped them of basic rights. The Nuremberg Laws of September 1935 defined Jews as a race and degraded them to second-class citizens. Since then, marriages between Jews and non-Jews were banned. According to numerous separate regulations, Jews were deprived of the opportunity to practice the profession of a lawyer, doctor, teacher and journalist; also artists were dismissed. Works of Jewish writers were publicly burnt, and access to education was restricted for Jewish youth. German Jews could only appeal and refer to the community of language and culture, they also cited examples of Jewish inventors, scientists and soldiers who died for Germany during the First World War. They truly believed that the situation was temporary and would change soon.

Nevertheless, an unprecedented event took place in the course of a nationwide pogrom by Nazi militias on 9 November 1938. The day is called the 'November Pogrom', 'Night of Broken Glass' (*Kristallnacht*) or 'Pogrom Night' (*Pogromnacht*). At the time, more than 30,000 Jewish men were imprisoned in concentration camps; about 100 people were murdered. During the pogrom, most synagogues in the Third Reich were set on fire or damaged, Jewish shops and businesses were devastated and plundered.

Many Jews, recognising how dangerous life in Germany was becoming, prepared for emigration. More than 300,000 Jews were able to flee Germany in the 1930s. Among the first wave were intellectuals, politically active individuals, and Zionists. After the November pogrom the emigration accelerated. They emigrated mostly to the United States, Western European countries like France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, or to Palestine. Between 1938 and 1940, transports of Jewish children (*Kindertransport*) were sent the United Kingdom. It is estimated that out of 522,000 Jews living in Germany in January 1933 214,000 remained in the country before the outbreak of the Second World War.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE



Credit: Yad Vashem

Francis [Frank] Edward Foley (1884–1958) was born in Highbridge, in a working class immigrant family of Irish decent. He was an accomplished learner, obtaining, for instance a bursary allowing him to study at Stonyhurst College (Lancashire). Later, he pursued education at a seminary in France, soon abandoning it for the Université de France in Poitiers. He graduated from the Royal Military College (Sandhurst) with the rank of a second lieutenant. He was involved in combat during the First World War.

Foley stood out among other young soldiers of the British Army. His escape from Germany, military experience as well as knowledge of foreign languages caught the attention of British intelligence whose offer of cooperation he accepted. Initially, he was busy setting up a network of British secret agents in France, Belgium and the Netherlands. In 1920, he was sent to Berlin, where he worked as a passport officer at the embassy but actually in the 1920s and 1930s recruited new intelligence agents as well as reported details of the German military machine.

He stayed in Berlin until 1939. Foley bent the rules, despite having no diplomatic immunity, and issued visas for British Mandatory Palestine. Thereby, he supported the escape of thousands of Jews from Nazi Germany. During the *Kristallnacht* pogrom (November 1938), Foley and his wife even sheltered Jews in their apartment. Due to his activity he is called the Spy who saved 10,000 Jews or 'British Schindler'. In 1939-1940 Foley worked as a passport control officer at the British Embassy in Norway. Before he left the country, Foley helped Norway's commander in chief, General Otto Ruge, contact Britain in order to request assistance against the invader. In 1942, Foley helped coordinate MI5 and MI6 in running a network of double agents.

Foley retired in 1949 and died almost ten years later. His story and the fact that he supported Jews while in Berlin came to light in 1961. It was his wife Katharine Eva Foley who told the story.

In 1999, Francis Edward Foley was recognised as a Righteous Among the Nations.



Answer the following questions:

- Which life and professional experiences could have helped Francis Foley in his action of aiding Jews?
- What was the aid provided to Jews by Francis Foley?
- Why is Francis Foley called 'British Schindler' today?

Source 1

An excerpt from memories of Miriam Posner, who was 16 when she traveled from East Prussia to beg for a visa to Palestine.

Foley saved my life. We heard that there was this man Foley who was kind to the Jews. My mother begged him. He just paced up and down a little and then asked for my passport and put the visa stamp on it. He did not ask any questions. [...] He was small and quiet. You would never suspect he was a spy.

The Righteous Among the Nations Department, Yad Vashem

? **Answer the following questions:**

- How does Miriam Posner characterise Francis Folley?
- Why was she surprised to learn he was a spy?

Source 2

An excerpt from memories of Ruth Schwiening, who survived thanks to Francis Foley's help.

A lorry came and fetched my father away. He was taken to Dachau, a concentration camp. My mother had no idea where her husband was. When my father was in the concentration camp he wrote a card to my mother: "Get a visa for me because then I can leave the concentration camp." The idea wasn't to keep the Jews in the country. The idea was to get the Jews out so anybody who could get a visa to leave the country was allowed to get out of the concentration camp [...] Mother spent hours, days trying at various embassies to get a visa. Frank Foley found a way to interpret the strict rules for immigration into Britain in favour of people who had to get out of Germany. So we are very grateful to Frank Foley, his staff for the fact that the father got out which enabled the mother eventually also to get a visa.

Source: Resources of Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office; Testimony of Ruth Schwiening

? **Answer the following questions:**

- How did Francis Folley help Ruth Schwiening's father get out of the Dachau concentration camp?
- Why did Folley have to find a way of 'interpreting' restrictive emigration legislation to be able to issue a visa for Ruth's father?

Source 3

Germans pass by the broken shop window of a Jewish-owned business that was destroyed during the Kristallnacht of 1938. It was a series of attacks against Jews throughout Nazi Germany carried out on 9–10 November 1938 by Sturmabteilung (SA) paramilitary forces and German civilians. Over 1,000 synagogues were burnt and over 7,000 Jewish businesses either destroyed or damaged.



Credit: USHMM



Look at the photo and answer the following questions:

- What were the consequences of anti-Jewish pogroms in Germany staged on 9/10 November 1938?
- What significance could they have had for removing Jews from Germany?

Source 4

Excerpts from the report by Robert Steiner (Paris) regarding the November Pogrom in Vienna.

Thursday, 10 November 1938

Started at 7 o'clock in the morning, a continual bugle call from the fire brigade, a commotion amongst the people, what is going on, where is the fire. After an hour everybody knew, the Jewish Tempel are burning so that no conspiracies could take place there. The Schmalzhoftempel was diligently bombarded with stones by HJ [Hitler-Jugend]-lads (white shirts), inside the Tempel it was already burning; the fire brigade was also present, who however merely had to protect the neighbouring houses, therefore (as at all Tempel) was not itself permitted to extinguish the Tempel fire.

[...]

Half an hour later:

A few minutes away is the Turnertempel, it was burning fiercely until the evening, but the coffee house owner will not have been very pleased as very many windows of his premises, which is opposite the Tempel, are shattered due to the heat. The swastika flag was already flying over the ruins of the Tempel some days later, about to build homes or barracks, as the signs show.

[...]

Some evidence

Mother, c. 40 years old, with her 9-year-old son just at breakfast, all at once four Party men burst in, drag woman and child into the bathroom (the husband was already taken to Dachau some months earlier), lock them in there, wreck the furnishings of the home – not one object remained spared –, unlocked the bathroom again, took the 9-year-old lad, placed him in the bath, ran cold water onto him, they held the woman, smeared his face with soap and gave him then the soap to eat with the sentence, 'Judenbengel, bite it off!' [...]

Reporter: Robert Steiner, 38 Rue Bisson, Paris XXe.

Document Courtesy of the Wiener Library in London

Answer the following question:

- What did the anti-Jewish pogrom in Vienna staged by Nazis on 9/10 November 1938 look like?

Source 5

Jewish child refugees from the first Kindertransport from Germany arrive in Harwich, England (1938). *Kindertransport* (Children's Transport) was an informal name for a series of rescue efforts which brought about 9,000–10,000 Jewish children to Great Britain from Nazi Germany between 1938 and 1940. Francis Foley informed British intelligence about the situation in the Third Reich. He also took part in a plan to rescue the Jewish children and transfer them to United Kingdom.



Credit: USHMM

? **Answer the following question:**
– *What does the photo tell us about the conditions in which the children travelled as well as how they were received in England?*

Source 6

Letters from children on the first *Kindertransport* dispatched to England in November 1938. As a result, several hundred Jewish children aged below 17 reached the port of Harwich on 2 December.

a) My beloved Parents,

We are being received splendidly in Holland. We were given every kindness, everything that you could think of, as you can imagine. Like princes. So farewell! I am terribly glad. Love and kisses, Jan. Forgive the writing, I am writing on the train on the journey to Rotterdam. Your faithful son Jan.

Hr. D. I., Lübeck

b) My dears,

We have safely crossed the border. My suitcase has not been opened. In Oldenzaal we were received splendidly, we were given hot food and soda. Even the press was there, we were photographed. I am writing against the wall, hence the scrawl. At 12 o'clock we travel from the Hook. Much love and kisses Werner. Harry sends much love.

Hr. H. A., Bremen

c) My dears,

The post is cheap, so I am writing already. The journey was splendid. We were cheerful and jolly. We have also already made acquaintances. The reception in Holland was excellent and the provisions first-rate. Greetings to everyone please, and particularly Helga, who I had almost forgotten. All the provisions are strictly kosher. I have hardly eaten any of my own rations. Now much love and kisses Kurt. Forgive the bad writing.

R. K., Bremen

d) Dear Tanten [Aunts],

Tonight we are travelling to Harwich. How are you? I hope you are [well] my dears. The reception in Holland [is] indescribable. Chocolate, food. I don't know what the reception in England will be like. I have got from Herr K. a book, an alarm clock, a dictionary, a book about Bremen in four languages. Please forgive my writing, the train is jolting so much. So, much love and kisses to Tante Betti, Tante Fritze, Ilse, Hugo and Hans. Walter sends much love and kisses.

The R. brothers and sisters, Oldenburg

Document Courtesy of the Wiener Library in London

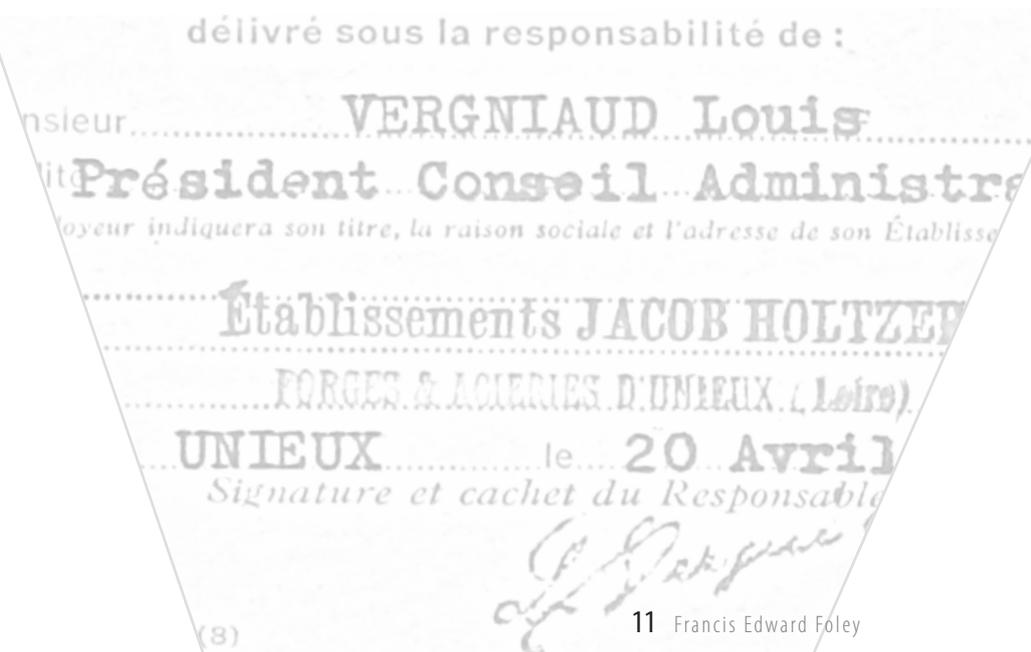
? Answer the following questions:

- What was the itinerary of the first transport of Jewish children from Germany to England?
- How do the Jewish children describe the journey?

Summary

Compare the sources, learn more and answer the following questions/do the following tasks:

- 1. Why did the Nazis support emigration of Jews from Germany until 1940? Did other countries willingly receive Jewish refugees?**
- 2. Find information about Great Britain's migration policy and evaluate the attitude of the British to Jewish refugees, particularly the possibility of their settling in Palestine.**
- 3. Learn about transports of children from Germany to England and reflect on why the British allowed them. What was the fate of the parents who stayed in Germany of the children who found shelter in England?**
- 4. Find information about Jews who during the war received false British passports thanks to aid of foreign diplomats and once their names were entered in the 'Palestinian List' managed to survive the war in the Bergen-Belsen camp.**



2.

THE CONTEXT

Chiune Sugihara

In 1940, once the Soviet occupation of Lithuania began, some local Jews and Jewish refugees from German-occupied Poland fearing persecution wanted to reach other countries. They dreaded not so much Soviet but mainly German repressions in case of their deportation to occupied Poland. It was so as the repressions inflicted on the Jewish population by the Soviets, unlike by the Germans, had no racist but a 'class' background and were applied regardless of nationality only to certain social groups, such as: entrepreneurs and land owners, the intelligentsia, political activists and members of the clergy. One of the directions Jews or persons of other ethnicity could take was the Far East. That is why hundreds would gather in front of the Japanese consulate in Kaunas, asking for visas allowing them to go to Japan. From there, they could try to get to other countries.

Although Japan was an ally of the Third Reich, it remained neutral in the 'Jewish question'. Fearing a mass influx of immigrants, the Japanese government did not agree, however, to issue short-stay visas for Jewish refugees. Nevertheless, the Japanese consul in Kaunas Chiune Sugihara provided them with Japan transit visas.

In 1940, war refugees from Eastern Europe started to come to Japan, including also/mainly Polish Jews. They were seeking support at diplomatic posts belonging to countries of their origin. One of such was a Polish diplomatic post in Tokyo, representing the Polish government-in-exile, operational until the autumn of 1941. The post of ambassador there was held by Tadeusz Romer hailing from a landed-gentry family. There were so many refugees seeking assistance that in October 1940 Romer established in Tokyo the Polish Committee to Aid the Victims of War, headed by his wife Zofia. It is estimated that by the summer of 1941 more than 2,000 Jews (mainly from the areas of Vilnius and Kaunas) came there. Most frequently, their route took them via Vladivostok. Upon reaching the stop-over port of Tsuruga, the refugees were directed to Kobe, Yokohama or Tokyo. Then, travel and asylum documents were arranged for them to Canada, the United States, Palestine and South American countries.

In October 1941, the Polish Embassy was moved from Tokyo to Shanghai, where Romer continued his activity until August 1942.

The aid offered to Jews who decided to flee once Lithuania became occupied by the USSR in June 1940 involved also Jan Zwartendijk, a Dutch diplomat and businessman, employed at the Lithuanian branch of Philips in Kaunas. Acting with approval of L.P.J. de Decker, the Dutch ambassador to the Baltic States residing in Riga, he facilitated outbound travel for some of them. The Jewish refugees would go to Curaçao in the Caribbean as well as Surinam, a part of Dutch West India, and other South American countries, where no entry visas were required. It is estimated that within a couple of weeks he provided exit documents for more than 2,000 Jews. After Lithuania's annexation by the USSR, the office of Philips where he worked as well as the Dutch consulate in Kaunas were closed. Zwartendijk returned to the Netherlands. Before departure, he managed to destroy documents confirming the departures of Jews so that they did not fall into the wrong hands.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE



Credit: USHMM

Chiune Sugihara (1900–1986) was raised in a medium-income large family. His mother was of old Samurai background and his father worked as a tax official. The parents wanted him to become a physician yet he preferred to be a teacher. In 1918, he began to study English Literature at Tokyo's Waseda University. Financial issues forced him to abandon the studies and he decided to work in the diplomatic service. Having completed his military service in the Imperial Army, he was sent to Harbin in China in 1922, where he studied Russian and German. A good knowledge of Russian and contacts he made there with a large community of emigrants from Russia helped him later become an expert on Russian affairs.

In 1937, he was sent to work at the Japanese Embassy in Helsinki, Finland. A year later, together with his wife and children, he went to Kaunas in Lithuania to open a Japanese consulate there. After the breakout of the Second World War, his task was to gather information about the situation in Eastern Europe and pass it on to Japanese military leaders so that they could predict when the German-Soviet war would start.

In June 1940, once the Soviet occupation of Lithuania began, Sugihara sent a wire to the Japanese Foreign Ministry asking whether he could issue transit visas to Jewish refugees. The reply he received was not encouraging. The Japanese Foreign Ministry let Sugihara issue visas only to people meeting the basic criteria, i.e. ones with money to cover the costs of travel to and a stay in Japan. Most refugees failed to meet that requirement. The diplomat was thinking what to do yet on reflection decided to help them regardless. Disregarding possible professional consequences, he was issuing transit visas to Polish and Lithuanian Jews despite the instructions from his superiors.

Sugihara had also to convince the Soviets to agree to the refugees' passage via the USSR. He was successful thanks to money he received from a Jewish organisation. He was active in that field from the end of July until the start of September 1940, when, as explicitly ordered by the Soviets, the Japanese consulate in Kaunas was shut. He issued many visas that could have been used by between 2,000 and 8,000 Jews. Witnesses have reported that when his train was leaving Kaunas for Berlin, paper sheets were thrown out of the window bearing the consul's seal and signature, so later usable for visa forging.

The Japanese authorities learnt that Sugihara had not adhered to their guidelines on visa issuance, yet they did not open any disciplinary proceedings against him. Sugihara became consul general in Königsberg and then sent to Prague (in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia), from where in 1942 he was ultimately moved to the Japanese legation in Bucharest in Romania. When the Red Army marched into the country in August 1944, he was incarcerated with his family in a camp for prisoners of war, where he spent 18 months.

Once back in his home country, Sugihara was released from the foreign service due to – as it was called – the 'incident in Lithuania'. His diplomatic career drew to a close and since then he worked in various private enterprises.

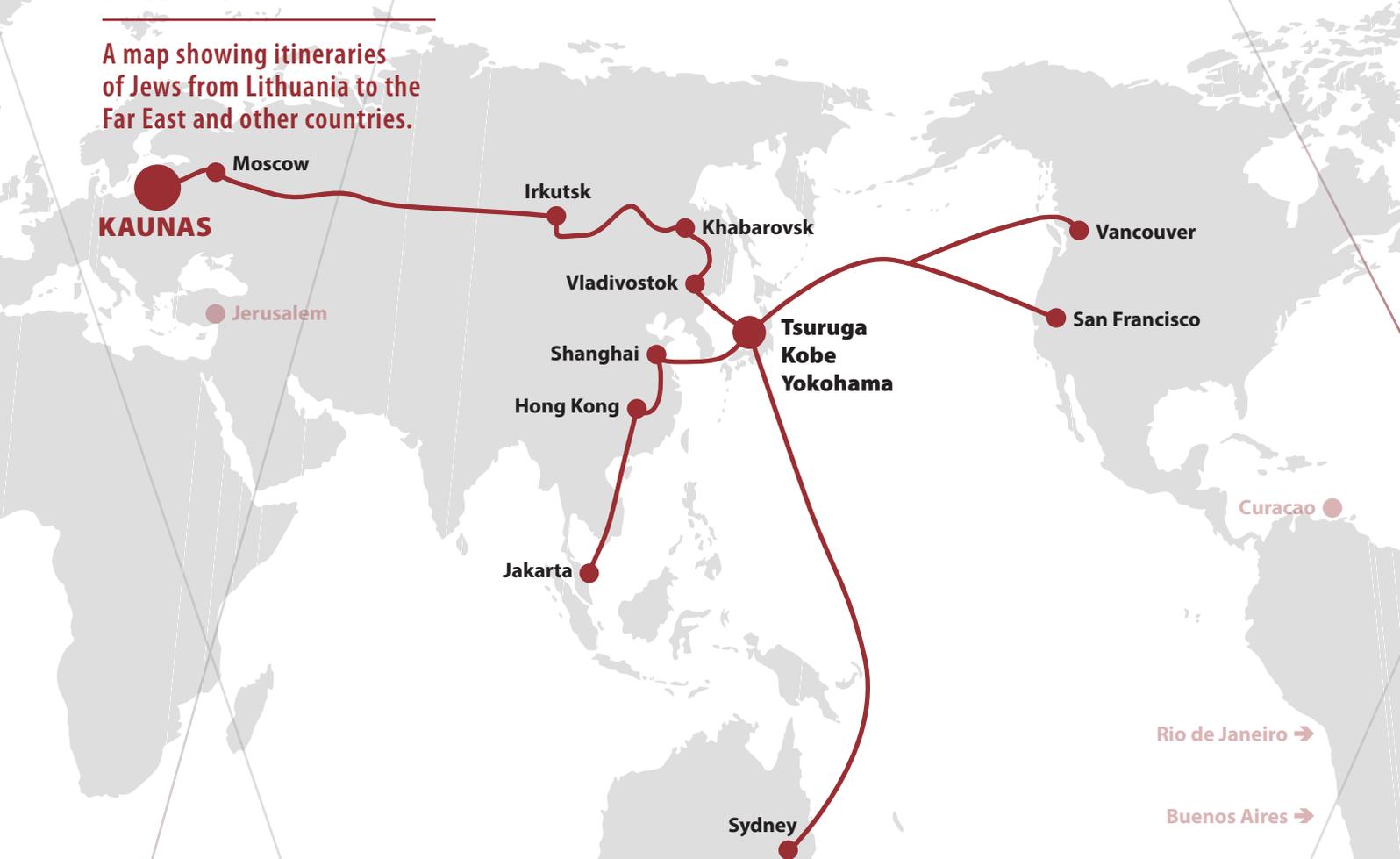
In 1984, Chiune Sugihara was awarded the title of Righteous Among the Nations in Jerusalem for aiding Jews. He was too ill, however, to receive the distinction himself, his wife and daughter doing it instead.

? Answer the following questions:

- Which life and professional experience of Sugihara could have proved useful in aiding Jews?
- What specifically was the aid Sugihara provided to Jews? Which challenges did he have to face and how did he cope with them?

Source 1

A map showing itineraries of Jews from Lithuania to the Far East and other countries.



? Look at the map and answer the following questions:

- What were the possible itineraries of Jews' escape from Lithuania? Evaluate them in terms of practicability and safety.
- Why did many Jews decide to leave for Japan?
- What was the itinerary of the refugees who decided to go to Japan?
- Why for many Jews Japan turned just a stopover on their road to freedom? Name the countries where they finally settled.

Source 2

An excerpt from an interview with/recollections of Chiune Sugihara after the war.

You want to know about my motives, don't you? Well, it is the kind of sentiments anyone would have when he actually sees the refugees face-to-face, begging with tears in their eyes. He just cannot help but sympathise with them. Among the refugees there were the elderly and women. They were so desperate that they went as far as to kiss my shoes. Yes, I actually witnessed such scenes with my own eyes... People in Tokyo were not united [on a refugee policy]. I felt it kind of foolish to deal with them. So I made up my mind not to wait for their reply.

I knew that somebody would surely complain in the future, but I myself thought this would be the right thing to do. There is nothing wrong in saving many people's lives. If anybody sees anything wrong in the action, it is because something 'not pure' exists in their state of mind. The spirit of humanity, philanthropy... neighbourly friendship... With this spirit I ventured to do what I did, confronting this most difficult situation – and for this reason I went ahead with redoubled courage.

Levine, Hillel (1996), *In search of Sugihara: the elusive Japanese diplomat who risked his life to rescue 10,000 Jews from the Holocaust*, New York: Free Press

? Answer the following questions:

- How did Chiune Sugihara explain the reasons for his decision to aid Jewish refugees?
- How do you understand Sugihara's words that 'there is nothing wrong in saving many people's lives' and that if anybody thinks otherwise they should purify their mind?
- Do you agree that the 'spirit of humanity, philanthropy... neighbourly friendship' gives people more courage in confronting difficult reality?

Source 3

An excerpt from an interview with Marcel Weyland, a translator of Polish poetry into English, architect and lawyer living in Sydney, Australia, who thanks to aid offered by Chiune Sugihara went to Japan with his family and has survived.

All that happened in Kaunas in Lithuania. That Sugihara guy was there. [...] To leave Russia, one needed a Japanese visa, a transit one. One was then allowed to travel across Japan but not to stay there. We had seven or ten days for that passage, I don't remember exactly, and then one needed to go elsewhere. First, one had to prove to that Sugihara, who was not paying attention to that, that one went somewhere else, that we wouldn't be a burden for the Japanese. And there were consuls who issued such visas. We had one for Lorenzo Marquez, a Portuguese colony in Africa. Obviously, we never had any intention to go there. [...]

And so with that paper my father and brother-in-law went to Kaunas, to Sugihara, and he put a stamp on that transit visa. Yet once he had put over two hundred stamps on so many visas, the government told him that was enough, don't do it anymore. And he didn't listen to his government and continued. And so finally they recalled him telling him to return to Japan. But even then, when he was already at the railway station leaning through a window of his train, people, a crowd of people, stood there with passports and he was stamping them away. [...]

Holding that visa, we jumped on a train straight away. There were just two such trains, later nothing else. We caught the first one, we would have been dead otherwise. We were on a Trans-Siberian train to Vladivostok, via Moscow, around Lake Baikal, via Omsk, Tomsk, Novosibirsk all the way to Vladivostok, where we went through a customs clearing. One was not allowed to take any jewellery, gold or foreign currency, or whatever we had, although not much as we fled almost the way we were. Obviously my mother and sister had taken something they carried in a small sac. [...] They confiscated almost everything. Mother had a medallion on a chain, with photos of her parents, and even that was also regarded as jewellery, so they took it away, together with other bits and pieces. And so stuff went from one official to the next and finally the last one. And then he looked at the papers, waved for Mother to come up and she nearly fainted of fear but did come up and he leant over the counter

then, took her by the hand and said 'all the best' as that was her birthday. [...] He read it in the papers. And he moved in her direction a pile of such bits and pieces taken away from her before. Here are the Russians for you, they have a soul. And that was how we entered Japan, but spent there not ten days but seven months. We stayed put there as long as they didn't throw us out. We were good, Japan was beautiful and I was learning English. I attended a school run by American Methodists. Yet the Japanese got angry finally as ten days meant ten days and seven months means seven months and so they set a condition that we should not be there in so and so days. And we boarded a ship leaving for Shanghai. Why there? Because it was an international port and there was no need for any visas, papers. Anyone could come to Shanghai.'

? Answer the following questions:

- *Why did Japan not want to issue short-stay visas to refugees? Given the situation, what was the role of transit visas? On what basis and thanks to whom could one obtain them?*
- *What was the itinerary of Marcel Weyland and his family to Japan? What was their means of transport and via which cities they went?*
- *What is your assessment of the Russian customs officers during the border clearing?*
- *How does Wayland recall the stay in Japan? Why did he have to leave the country and where did he go?*

Summary



Compare the sources, learn more and do the following tasks/answer the following questions:

- 1. Describe the situation of Polish Jews under German and Soviet occupation at the beginning of the Second World War. What were the similarities and differences and what was/were the reasons for them?**
- 2. Why did Jews in Lithuania decide to leave for other countries and why did they mainly decide to go to Japan?**
- 3. What was the essence of the aid provided to Jews by foreign diplomats residing in Lithuania – Chiune Sugihara and Jan Zwartendijk?**
- 4. What was the attitude of the Japanese government to Jewish refugees and why?**
- 5. What were the difficulties faced by Jewish refugees during their travel from Lithuania to Japan? What did their chance of survival depend on?**
- 6. How important for aiding Jews was material and legal assistance shown in Japan and who provided it?**
- 7. Where did the Jewish refugees saved by Chiune Sugihara and other diplomats residing in Lithuania ultimately find shelter? Trace back their fate after the war.**

3.

THE CONTEXT

Aleksander Ładoś and the Bernese Group

Actively aiding Jews during the Second World War were diplomats centred around the Polish diplomatic legation in Bern, Switzerland, a neutral country. Historians refer to them as the Bernese Group, the adjective deriving from the city that was the hub of the aid network. The diplomats of the Group operated in several countries of occupied Europe, bringing aid mainly to Polish but also Dutch and German Jews. The network included the following diplomats: Aleksander Ładoś, the Polish envoy in Switzerland and the informal leader of those activities; his deputy Stefan Ryniewicz and Konstanty Rokicki, both Polish vice-consuls in Bern; Juliusz Kühn, a young Polish-Jewish employee of the consulate in Bern, as well as representatives of Jewish organisations: Abraham Silberschein, Member of Parliament in the Second Polish Republic from the *Relief Committee* for the Warstricken Jewish Population in Geneva and Chaim Eiss from the Agudat Israel party in Zurich. Their collaborators maintaining contact with Dutch Jews were Recha and Yitschak Sternbuch residing in the Swiss town of Montreux. It should be emphasised that all diplomats acted with full approval of the Foreign Ministry of the Polish government-in-exile.

The aid activity of the Bernese Group began in 1941 with establishing informal cooperation with representatives of Jewish organisations in Switzerland. The Polish diplomats would obtain (typically buying) empty forms of Latin American passports, which they then filled in and transferred to Jewish organisations for distribution. The documents (passports and citizenship confirmations) were arranged in cooperation with diplomatic representatives of Paraguay, Honduras, Haiti and Peru. For diplomats of those countries that was an additional opportunity to make some money, while it was a chance of survival for Jews. As citizens of Latin American countries, people who received such documents not infrequently avoided deportation to death camps. They were taken to transit camps in France or Germany (like Vittel and Bergen-Belsen), where they were supposed to wait to be exchanged for interned German soldiers. Notably, the documents prepared by the diplomats from the Bernese Group also reached Jews from the Warsaw ghetto, who thanks to them had a chance to leave the occupied city.

Nevertheless, sending documents to occupied Poland was time-consuming and required involvement of many people operating secretly. Sometimes, such documents prepared with sacrifice by employees of the Polish Legation in Bern did not reach the addressees or were intercepted on their way by the Germans. When in the summer of 1942 they carried out a mass deportation of Jews from the Warsaw ghetto to the Treblinka death camp, some of the passports landed in the hands of the Gestapo. In 1943, already after the ghetto's liquidation, the Germans were selling them to Jews hiding on the 'Aryan side'. As it turned out, it was a provocation staged by the Gestapo aiming at making the hiding Jews leave their hideouts voluntarily. The Jews, who – hoping for survival – decided to buy the passports were instructed by the Germans to go

to a Warsaw hotel (The Polski Hotel), where they were detained and moved to the internment camps in Vittel and Bergen-Belsen. Some of them were transferred directly to the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp.

In the second half of 1943, the Germans carried out a wide-ranging operation of verification of documents held by Polish Jews in internment camps. As part of it, they requested governments of South American countries to confirm the authenticity of passports issued by them. In most cases, they received no such confirmation or the replies would be much delayed. That is why the Polish diplomats established contact with the Apostolic Nunciature in Bern and – with the agency of the Vatican – tried to influence the governments of Latin American states to confirm the authenticity of the documents. That operation proved of great importance for rescuing Jews, as those whose documents were negatively verified were deported to concentration and death camps, where most of them perished.

To conclude, it should be added that the diplomats of the Bernese Group offered not only assistance in obtaining passports but also material support for Jews living or interned in Switzerland. They also aided Jewish refugees in Shanghai and Polish Jews in France.

As historians have begun to study the activity of the Bernese Group relatively recently, such studies continue. To date, they have successfully established the names of approximately 800 Jews from the 'Ładoś List', who survived the war thanks to passports received from the Polish diplomats. However, given the estimates made by historians putting the number of people covered by the aid operation at 8,000-10,000, one should assume that the total number of those rescued was much higher, possibly 2,000-3,000 persons. Juxtaposing such numbers, one should remember that receiving a passport by a Jew was just (but also as much as) an aiding tool in their fight for survival yet the final success was conditional on many other subsequent positive circumstances, entirely independent of the diplomats' activities. It should also be noted that it is going to be difficult to establish the precise number of Jews saved by the Bernese Group as most of the rescued – given the operation was secret – had no idea about the source of the Latin American passports thanks to which they survived.

Handwritten notes on the left side of the page, including a list of numbers (40, 41, 42, 43, 44) and names (B. Citka, etc.).

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE



Credit: USHMM

Aleksander Ładoś (1891–1963) was born in Lviv (in the Austrian-controlled territory of partitioned Poland) where he also spent the first years of his life. He studied History at John Casimir University in Lviv, also engaging in political activity for the Polish People's Party 'Piast'. After the outbreak of the First World War, he left for Lausanne, where he continued studies. After he returned to what was now independent Poland in 1919, he started work in the diplomatic service. Later, he worked at the of Foreign Ministry, inter alia at diplomatic posts in Riga and Munich. In 1931, when Józef Beck became foreign minister, Ładoś was dismissed from the service. Since then, he started his activity as a feature writer. After the outbreak of the Second World War, in October 1939 Ładoś found himself in Paris. He served in the Polish government-in-exile as a minister without portfolio under Prime Minister Władysław Sikorski, in November replaced by Stanisław Kot. In 1940, Aleksander Ładoś was appointed head of the Polish diplomatic post in Bern. He agreed to have employees of his legation engage in the purchase, filling in and transfer of protective passports and visas to aid-seeking Jews. Ładoś also convinced the London-based Polish government-in-exile to grant money and aid to Polish Jews interned in Swiss camps. Once the Swiss police had discovered the passport scheme, Ładoś intervened with the foreign minister of Switzerland Marcel Pilet-Golaz. Ładoś stayed in Bern until July 1945, then left for a dozen or so years, living e.g. in Lausanne and near Paris. In 1960, he returned to Warsaw, where he lived until his death.



Public domain, Author Zbigniew Popadiuch. Private collection of Jacek Proszyk, drawing, pencil on cardboard, 2018 – with the consent of the author and owner

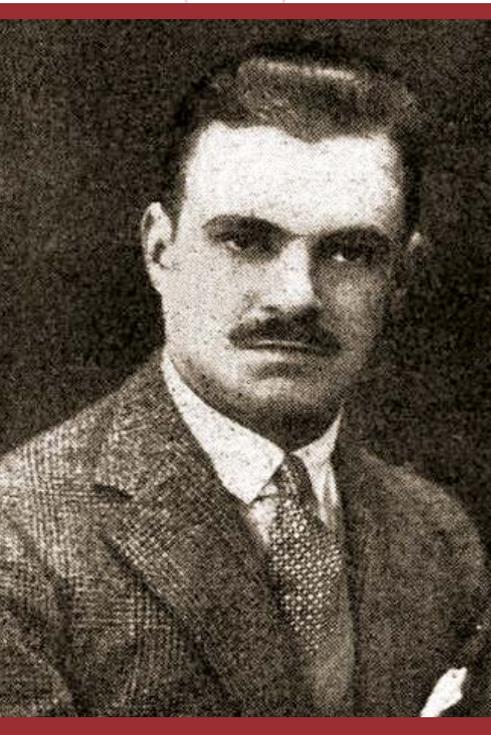
Stefan Ryniewicz (1903–1988) was born in Tarnopol (in the Austrian-controlled territory of partitioned Poland). He was educated in Lviv. In the 1930s, he began work in diplomacy. His first foreign post was the Polish Legation in Bern, where he was initially a regular employee and then head of the consular department. He worked in the cabinet of minister Józef Beck. Between 1935 and 1938, he was a consul in Riga. Just before the outbreak of the Second World War he was back at the Polish Legation in Bern, from 1940 a deputy of Aleksander Ładoś. Acting in strict secrecy, together with three other employees of the legation, he was aiding Jews. One of the things Ryniewicz did was filling in passport forms bought using bribes from the honorary consul of Paraguay Rudolf Hüggl. Once in 1943 the Germans found some clues about that activity and several members of the network were arrested, Ryniewicz effectively intervened with the chief of the Swiss police. He served there until July 1945. He emigrated to France and then to Argentina, where he ran a carwash. He died in Buenos Aires.



Credit: USHMM

Juliusz Kühl (1913–1985) was born in a family of Orthodox Jews in Sarnok (in the Austrian-controlled territory of partitioned Poland). He went to Switzerland to study at the University of Bern. In 1939, he completed a PhD dissertation on the Polish-Swiss trade relations, which came to the attention of employees of the Polish Legation. He was soon employed there as deputy head of the Consular Section. The Swiss authorities, however, did not recognise his diplomat status as they found he lacked appropriate education. However, together with other employees of the post he became engaged in issuing false passports for Jewish refugees. Juliusz Kühl cooperated with local Jewish religious communities and aid organisations. He was in charge of transporting forms bought using bribes as well as transferring financial resources and coordinating smuggling of copies of documents. Kühl constantly remained in contact with representatives of various Jewish organisations, such as Chaim Eiss of the Agudat Israel party, Abraham Silberschein from RELICO (Relief Committee for Jewish War Victims) or Recha and Yitschak Sternbuch of Montreux. It was they who provided some of that money as well as lists with the names of Jews in need of assistance. Although Kühl was detained by the Swiss police, also threatened with deportation, he did not stop his activities.

Juliusz Kühl stayed in Switzerland until 1949, then left for Canada and in 1980 moved to the United States, where he died.



Public domain

Konstanty Rokicki (1899–1958) was born in Warsaw. He was well educated and spoke several languages. He served in the army ranking a second lieutenant of cavalry and participated in the Polish-Bolshevik War of 1920. He was distinguished for his valour. From 1931, he worked in Polish diplomacy, inter alia at the Polish Consulates in Minsk and in Riga, as well as the Polish Legation in Cairo. From 1939, he held the post of a Polish vice-consul in Bern. Konstanty Rokicki became engaged in the activity of the 'Bernese Group', for example filling in passport forms then smuggled out of Switzerland to aid-needing Jews. It is estimated that Rokicki personally contributed to the production of around 50 per cent of all the documents known as the 'Ładoś passports'.

After the Second World War, he left the diplomatic service. He remained in Switzerland up until his death. Not much is known about his life. Importantly, as the only one of the four employees of the Polish Legation in 2019 he was posthumously nominated by the Yad Vashem Institute for the distinction titled Righteous Among the Nations. His family, however, refused to accept it protesting against the other members of the Bernese Group not having been considered.



Read the biographical notes and do the exercise below:

- Characterise the activity of individual diplomats within the ‘Bernese Group’ answering the following questions: What was their professional carer? What did they do and what were their responsibilities in the aid network? What was their fate during the war and after its end? This exercise can also be performed using the following table.

First name and surname

Aleksander Ładoś



Origin, education and profession

Course of diplomatic career

Tasks performed within the Bernese Group

Fate during the war and after its end

Additional information/Comments and reflections

Stefan Ryniewicz



Origin, education and profession

Course of diplomatic career

Tasks performed within the Bernese Group

Fate during the war and after its end

Additional information/Comments and reflections

Juliusz Kühl



Origin, education and profession

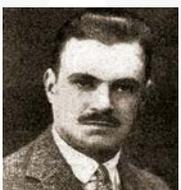
Course of diplomatic career

Tasks performed within the Bernese Group

Fate during the war and after its end

Additional information/Comments and reflections

Konstanty Rokicki



Origin, education and profession

Course of diplomatic career

Tasks performed within the Bernese Group

Fate during the war and after its end

Additional information/Comments and reflections

? Answer the following questions:

- How did the diplomats of the Bernese Group get passports for Jews?
- How did they get money to aid Jewish refugees, interned and staying in Switzerland?
- What were the risks the diplomats operating within the group were exposed to?

Source 1:

An example of an already completed passport document produced by the Bernese Group for the Goldzweig family in 1942.

PASSEPORT N° 425/1942

AU NOM DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE DE PARAGUAY

LE CONSUL
DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE DE PARAGUAY
À BERNE

SIGNALEMENT

Né le	26.11.1891
	1.11.1898
Profession	COMMERCANT
Taille	MOYENNE
	MOYENNE
Nez	NORMAL
	NORMAL
Cheveux	FONCÉS
	FONCÉS
Yeux	FONCÉS
	FONCÉS
Bouche	NORMAL
	NORMAL
Dentier	NORMAL
	NORMAL
Visage	OVALE
	OVALE

Signes particuliers: /

Signature du porteur:

Invité par les présentes toutes les autorités et les employés chargés du maintien de l'ordre public et de la sûreté générale de laisser passer librement et sans obstacles le porteur de la présente: MONSIEUR JOSEF GOLDZWEIG AVEC SON ÉPOUSE RIVKA ET SES 3/TROIS/ENFANTS originaire de PARAGUAY allant EN EUROPE ET EN OUTRE-MER

Le porteur est recommandé à la protection et aux bons offices des autorités.

Le présent passeport délivré est valable pour ~~un an~~ 2/DEUX/ANS

Donné à Berne sous notre scellum le 27/VINGT-SEPT/ du mois DECEMBRE 1942/HELV/

LE CONSUL:
R. Klingli
Consul

19.11.1942

Document Courtesy of the collection of the Polish Embassy in Bern, Public domain

👁️ Examine the document and do the following exercise:

- Analyse the document focusing on various information included there. While doing the task, you can use the following questions: What kind of document is it? When, in what language, by whom and for whom was it issued? When and where was it valid?

Source 2

'Passports', a poem by Władysław Szengel (1912/1914–1942). Its author was a Jewish-Polish poet, lyricist, journalist, and stage actor. Due to the poems written during his stay in the Warsaw ghetto, he is called a ghetto poet. Szengel died during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising executed by the Germans.

'Passports'

I'd like to hold a passport of Uruguay,
oh, what a beautiful country it is...
oh, how nice it is to be a citizen
of a country called Uruguay...
I'd like to hold a passport of Paraguay,
a country golden and free,
oh, how nice it is to be a citizen
of a country called Paraguay.
I'd like to hold a passport of Costa Rica,
the celadon sky... eternal May...
oh, how nice it is to say
that Costa Rica is my country...
I'd like to hold a Bolivian passport,
like two friends of mine...
Bolivia is a land that smells of resin...
oh, what a beautiful country it is...
I'd like to hold a passport of Honduras,
(Honduras sounds like an eastern paradise...),
It is nice to say from time to time
that Honduras, indeed, is the country of mine...
I'd like to hold a passport of Uruguay,
Costa Rica or Paraguay,
so that I can live peacefully in Warsaw,
the most beautiful of them all.

Władysław Szengel, *Co czytałem umarłym*



Read the poem and the following exercise:

– Analyse and interpret the poem, taking into account such aspects as: the author, historical context, genre, lead motif, lyrical subject, structure, stylistic means and cultural context.



Answer the following question:

– How important was it for Jews confined in the Warsaw ghetto to obtain a passport of one of Latin American countries?

Source 3

An excerpt from memories of Adina Blady-Szwajgier, a physician who survived the Warsaw ghetto, concerning the 'question of The Polski Hotel'.

We were walking the streets of Warsaw on 11 July 1943, like before. [...] I took him from that cellar at the greengrocer's to the district of Mokotów and to The Polski Hotel. To Długa Street. Near the cinema. Such a small hotel. [...] I don't remember what we were talking about or whether we talked at all on the way. We reached the end of the road and then probably there was someone in the gatehouse checking one's identity. Did he hand documents to him? Did he take them from him? I don't know, I don't remember. All I recall is a small dirty hotel at Długa Street, yet it appeared huge to me back then. In any case, he was given the number of a room somewhere upstairs. That's all I know. And my identity was not even checked. There were many people seeing others off. When we left that gatehouse and entered the hallway, it was like in a dream or a surreal film. Because there were Jews everywhere. Without armbands. Moving freely. Those were wealthy Jews, as the trip was costly. Papers sent to people whose ashes had been long turned into ash fertilising soil in Treblinka [a German death camp] were resold by the Gestapo for

high sums. That was expensive death. Yet before it one received two, three, four days of illusion for that money. Maybe that is also worth something? [...]

There was a café there, for sure, where coffee was available. Awful, but the place was packed. Because people were drunk on that foretaste of freedom and suddenly remembered that they were people, so they were talking. Normally, loudly. They were walking downstairs and upstairs. They were attending to children and instructing them. Because the children were running and making noise. Like freed from a cage. And I saw children who were laughing. [...]

Stefan said 'I will not say goodbye to you so that we can meet after the war.' So in the morning he just waved to me and went downstairs. 'Don't see me off,' he said. And then he shouted 'Stay safe!' from downstairs. And he went to the courtyard.

And I ran after him. Marysia too. And we saw it. We saw that no coaches had arrived but canvas-covered trucks. And the gendarmes were rounding people up and shouted: schnell, schnell! And the people didn't understand it yet and hurried up jostling one another while embarking making sure they got on the car. We barely avoided being rounded up with them.

Adina Blady-Szwajgier, *Wspomnienia lekarki*

? Answer the following questions:

- Why according to Adina Blady-Szwajgier the situation at *The Polski Hotel* was surreal?
- What made Jews from *The Polski Hotel* believe that the Germans would let them go abroad?
- Do you share the author's opinion that those few days of illusions about freedom during the stay at *The Polski Hotel* were worth all the money?

Source 4

An excerpt from a short story by Adolf Rudnicki titled 'Ginący Daniel' [Dying Daniel] describing the transit camp in Vittel.

People burnt alive and Vittel; mothers with children jumping into fire and Vittel; constantly waiting for death and Vittel; fear of blackmail, distrustful and nagging hostesses and Vittel; the bottom of hell and Vittel – it is not hard to understand the power of that temptation. Among those two thousand people, there was not one not understanding that it was a bait, that the Germans went fishing again, like a hundred times before. Yet those people had nowhere to go. Yesterday they lost their lodgings and were left with no roof over their heads for an umpteenth time, and no prospects of retrieving them. [...] Both wiseman and fools came. In constant conversations about whether that was a trap or not, regardless of what they said, they were all sceptical and not counted for more than one per cent of the chance of survival. Yet outside of the hotel, there was not even that one per cent. Outside of the hotel, only a denouncer waited to strip them of money and hand over to the Germans.

Adolf Rudnicki, *Opowiadania wybrane*

- ? Answer the following questions:
- What was the ‘Polski Hotel’ for the Jews of occupied Warsaw?
 - Why, despite being aware that the ‘Polski Hotel’ was a trap set by the Germans, did Jews decide to buy passports there?

Source 5

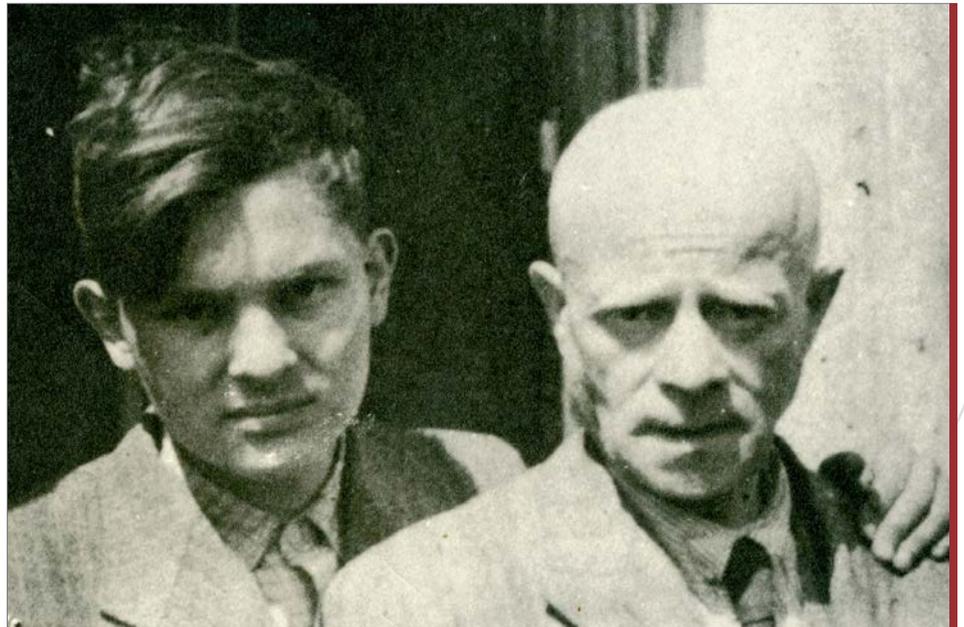
Women and children gather in the dining hall of the Vittel internment camp, September 1943.



Credit: USHMM

Source 6

Ichhak Kacnelson (right), a Jewish poet and playwright writing in Yiddish and Hebrew, an educator and translator. This photograph with his son was taken during their stay in the internment camp in Vittel in France in 1943–1944. Kacnelson went there via The ‘Polski Hotel’, where he received a Honduran passport issued by the Bernese Group. After a German operation of verification of the documents held by Polish Jews, he was moved to the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp, where he died in a gas chamber.



Credit: USHMM



Look at the photos and do the following exercise:

- Look at the photos from the internment camp in Vittel (Sources 5, 6) and describe the conditions there. Compare them with the conditions in other ghettos and German concentration camps. Search for information about Ichhak Kacnelson and other known prisoners interned in the Vittel camp and learn whether they survived the war.

Source 7

An excerpt from a letter from Alois Brunner to Adolf Eichmann on a visit paid to the Vittel camp by a special commission of the German Foreign Ministry aimed at registering and verifying documents of people of Jewish origin contained there suspected by the Germans of holding false passports.

There are approx. 150 Warsaw Jews in the Vittel camp for internees. They have been moved from Warsaw to Vittel on the basis of holding South-American citizenships. Most of those Jews managed to obtain them for money in 1942 via consulates in Switzerland, never having seen their 'home countries'. The names of those Jews have already been communicated to the country protecting them, i.e. Switzerland. In agreement with department II B4, I would like to ask you to ensure that qualified staff check the true nationality of the Jews from the East present in the Vittel camp. It is imperative to show the Swiss that the Jewish criminals may not leave the Reich by means of extorted passports.

Quote after: Joanna Podgórsaka, *Tajemnica Hotelu Polskiego*

? Answer the following questions:

- Why did the Germans suspect Polish Jews in the Vittel camp of holding false passports?
- What were the consequences that the interned Jews could face in case of negative verification of their passports by South American countries?

Source 8

A report of Ruth 'Tutti' Fishman née Lichtenstern rescued thanks to aid of the Bernese Group.

One of the reasons (or maybe the only reason) I am alive is the fact that we obtained an illegal Paraguayan passport issued from Bern. When we were detained in Theresienstadt my father was ordered to report to the train platform for 'resettlement' to Auschwitz. We all knew what that meant. He came by the women's/children's barrack to say goodbye. He threw himself on my barrack and cried bitter tears and held me close.

On line to board to cattle cars train he showed the passport to the Nazi in charge hoping against hope for a reprieve. Surprisingly he was excused and withdrawn from the train and we were held in Theresienstadt till the Russians liberated us.

K. Heidi Fishman, *Tutti's Promise: A novel based on a family's true story of courage and hope during the Holocaust*, MB Publishing, 2017

? Answer the following questions:

- Why does Ruth Fishman claim that one, or maybe even the only, reason why she and her family have managed to survive was holding a Paraguayan passport?
- How do you assess the attitude of the German guard who let Ruth's father get off the train?
- Why did he do it and what his motivation behind that decision may have been?

Summary

Compare the sources, learn more and answer the following questions/do the following tasks:

1. Learn about Switzerland's neutrality during the war and how the country's authorities treated Jewish refugees.
2. Who were the diplomats from the Bernese Group? What was the role of Aleksander Ładoś?
3. What was the aid provided to Jews by the diplomats from the Bernese Group? Who were the people receiving it and how did they manage to survive the war?
4. How did the Germans treat Jews who received passports of Latin American countries via the diplomats from the Bernese Group?
5. Why was it impossible to save many Jews who received passports from the diplomats of the Bernese Group? Which factors could have been at play? To what degree were the chances of survival dependent on the activity of the diplomats themselves and to what degree on other persons and circumstances?
6. Learn about the conditions for granting Righteous Among the Nations medals and think why not all people rescuing Jews during the war can count on receiving the distinction.

Salvador (Amérique Centrale) confirmé par ces pré
Le Consulat Général à Genève de la Ré
Monsieur FISCH Zoltan, né le 3/2 1891 à Budape
et sa femme
Madame FISCH née MANNHEIM Irene, née le 7/8
ainsi que son fils
Monsieur FISCH Otto Robert, né le 12/6 19
sont reconnus comme citoyens de la Républ
avec tous les droits et devoirs inhérents
Si les intéressés voulaient
en temps utile de leur intention à ce
même temps une photographie de date ré
de chaque membre de la famille. Ces p
chacune au verso la certification lé
compétente ou un officier ministériel
octobre 1942.



4

THE CONTEXT

Raoul Wallenberg and other foreign diplomats active in Hungary

Led from 1919 by the regent Admiral Miklós Horthy, Hungary belonged to the circle of countries supporting the Third Reich even before the start of the Second World War. Despite anti-Jewish legislation effected there after the war outbreak, Jews in Hungary were relatively safe and for a longer time the country was something of a safe haven for Jewish refugees from many countries occupied by Germany.

The situation changed in March 1944, when the country's German occupation began. The Germanophile Döme Sztójay became prime minister, who legalised the activity of a Fascist anti-Semitic grouping known as the Arrow Cross Party (*Nyilaskeresztesek*). Between April and July 1944 as ordered by the *SS-Obersturmbannführer* Adolf Eichmann, the main coordinator and executor of the 'final solution to the Jewish question' agenda, approx. 437,000 Jews were removed from Hungary. Most of the deportees perished in gas chambers immediately after their arrival at the camp. On 6 July 1944, regent Miklós Horthy suspended new transports planned to leave Hungary. The situation changed in October 1944, when Ferenc Szálasi became prime minister. Hungary ceased to be a safe place for the Jewish population.

A number of diplomats employed at posts in Hungary began to offer assistance to Jews, the best-known being Raul Wallenberg, secretary of the Swedish Embassy in Hungary, who with consent of his government and in cooperation with other employees of the office, as well as financially supported by the USA, would aid Jews approaching the Swedish Embassy.

Aid was also provided by Carl Lutz, vice-consul of Switzerland in Budapest, who arranged Palestinian visas approved by the British authorities for more than 10,000 Jews wishing to flee Hungary. Additionally, he agreed to issue over 50,000 'protective passports' saving the bearers from deportation to death camps. He was also instrumental in arranging 76 houses in the 'international ghetto' of Budapest, placing there more than 30,000 persons. He also provided shelter for Jews in a 'glass house' belonging to the Swiss Embassy, where at any given time 2,000-3,000 persons could stay protected by immunity. Another person involved in aiding Hungarian Jews was Ángel Sanz Briz, who from the summer of 1944 held the post of chargé d'affaires of the Spanish Embassy in Budapest. He saved over 5,000 Jewish lives, issuing them Spanish passports or placing them in rented houses in Budapest marked with the Spanish flag.

The foreign diplomats rescuing Jews in Hungary included Henryk Sławik, chargé d'affaires of the Polish representation in Budapest, also at the helm of the Civic Committee for the Care of Polish Refugees. In cooperation with such persons as József Antall, refugee commissioner in the Hungarian government, he would issue Polish Jews false documents confirming their 'Aryan identity'. That way, the official

aided approximately 5,000 persons. They also set up an orphanage in Vác, where Jewish children were hiding. It was officially called an 'orphanage for children of Polish officers'. As various rumours circulated concerning its operation, the apostolic nuncio in Hungary Archbishop Angelo Rotta came to visit the orphans in order to dispel the suspicions harboured by Hungarian authorities that Jewish children might be hidden in the institution. For his aid offered to Jews, the Germans detained Sławik and deported him to KL Mauthausen, where he was shot dead in 1944.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE



Credit: Yad Vashem

Raoul Wallenberg (1912–1947(?)) came from a family of Swedish bankers and industrialist. He studied architecture in the United States yet after graduation he returned to Sweden in 1935. In the home country, his diploma was not recognised, however, and he was unable to practise his learnt profession. He was fluent in English, French and German, which helped him find employment in an enterprise selling construction materials. Over time, he changed his job and worked at a branch of a Dutch bank in Haifa (Palestine). Thanks to his family contacts, he started cooperation with a trading company of the Budapest Jew Kalman Lauer, where he advanced rapidly to become its director. At the same time, he was meeting more and more Jews and learning about anti-Jewish legislation and repressions introduced by the Third Reich. He also had an opportunity to get familiar with that country's bureaucratic machine. He remembered the stories of Jews persecuted in the Reich.

In July 1944, Wallenberg became a secretary of the Swedish Embassy in Hungary. With approval of his government and in cooperation with other employees of the post as well as with financial support from the USA, Wallenberg made attempts at saving Jews approaching the Swedish Embassy. He distributed medicines and food, and issued Swedish passports and protective letters. It is estimated that approx. 10,000 such documents were issued. Wallenberg also assisted in placing Jews seeking refuge in buildings belonging to neutral countries or employing them at the Swedish Embassy, e.g. he was buying houses which under the Swedish flag offered protection against, for instance, deportation. He sometimes bribed Germans and Hungarian officials, seeking to have Jews removed from transports to death camps.

In January 1945, Wallenberg was detained by the NKVD and incarcerated in the USSR. He was accused of spying for the United States. Wallenberg never returned to Sweden, and the circumstances of his death have not been fully explained until today. The Russians initially claimed that he had died in Budapest. Over time, they admitted that they had imprisoned him and in 1957 confirmed Wallenberg's death. According to the information received, he died from a heart attack in July 1947 after more than two years of incarceration in the prison on Lubyanka Square.

In, 1963 Raoul Wallenberg was posthumously distinguished with the title Righteous Among the Nations, yet his mother refused to accept the distinction and the medal on his behalf still hoping he would do it himself once back home.

? Answer the following questions:

- What life experiences could have helped Raul Wallenberg in his operation of rescuing Hungarian Jews?
- Why was Raul Wallenberg's fate tragic?
- Were his accomplishments in rescuing Jews rightly appreciated, and his stance recognised as an example of extraordinary heroism during the war?

Source 1

Sandor Ardai, one of the drivers working for Wallenberg, recounts what Wallenberg did when he intercepted a trainload of Jews about to leave for the Auschwitz camp.

[...] he climbed up on the roof of the train and began handing in protective passes through the doors which were not yet sealed. He ignored orders from the Germans for him to get down, then the Arrow Cross men began shooting and shouting at him to go away. He ignored them and calmly continued handing out passports to the hands that were reaching out for them. I believe the Arrow Cross men deliberately aimed over his head, as not one shot hit him, which would have been impossible otherwise. I think this is what they did because they were so impressed by his courage. After Wallenberg had handed over the last of the passports he ordered all those who had one to leave the train and walk to the caravan of cars parked nearby, all marked in Swedish colours. I don't remember exactly how many, but he saved dozens off that train, and the Germans and Arrow Cross were so dumbfounded they let him get away with it.

Source: Yad Vashem

? Answer the following questions:

- What did Raul Wallenberg do to rescue Jews deported to the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp?
- How do you assess his behaviour? Why were German and Hungarian guards surprised by his attitude?
- What personal traits did he have to show to be able to do it?

Source 2

The view from atop the train on Jews lined up for selection on the ramp at the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp. Deportation of Hungarian Jews. The photo comes from the 'Lili Jacob's Album'.



Credit: USHMM



Look at the photo and do the following exercise:

- Describe the scene shown in the photograph (Source 2). Who are the people shown there and what are they doing? Look at other photos from Lili Jacob's Album and learn when and by whom they were taken as well as about their importance for documenting the Holocaust.

Source 3

Testimony of Agnes Grossinger, a survivor from Budapest saved by Raul Wallenberg and Carl Lutz.

My name is Agnes Rosner Grossinger, and I am an 80 year old survivor from Budapest, thanks to the effort of Raoul Wallenberg and in my case of Dr Carl Lutz whose *Schutzpass* saved not only my own life but my parents, too: my father Rosner Izidor and my mother Rosner Szerenke.

After 15 October 1944, I was drafted in an all female mandatory Labour Camp and sent to Sziget Monostor and Szent Endre from where I was able to escape and returned home to Budapest.

In my absence, some friends stationed in Labour Camps in Budapest visited my parents home finding only my desperate mother, because my father was also sent to a labour camp to Gonyu, not far from Budapest.

They offered help to my mother and bought her three Swiss *Schutzpasses*, because their whole battalion was under a blanket *Schutzpass*, and they had access to some more.

My mother and I lived in different Swiss Safe houses, until the end of November 1944, when we were able to get refuge to the 'Glass House' on Vadasz utca 29, which was considered an annex to the Swiss Embassy located on the Dunnapart, which by that time housed all the other foreign Embassies.

The 'Glass House' gave refuge to about 2000 Jews, mostly young Zionist, who constantly risked their lives, delivering passports, letters and news to people hiding in different safe houses, and living in the ghetto. Through those couriers dressed in *nyillas* arrowhead uniforms, we found out that my father was brought back from the Austrian border to the ghetto, because of his *Schutzpass*.

At the end of December 1944, the Arrowhead band and the Germans attacked our safe house on Vadasz utca overpowering the guards and got into the building taking out all the people, lining them up on the street facing the Danube. The owner of the building Mr Arthur Weiss got to the telephone on his belly and called the Embassy. Dr Lutz himself with the help of the Hungarian army cut off the street and made the *Nyillas* and Germans return the people to the building saving them for sure death to be shot directly to the Danube, which was by that time the method to kill Jews, not having enough trains for deportation.

Testimony of Agnes Grossinger, Document Courtesy of the International Raoul Wallenberg Foundation

? Answer the following questions:

- – How and thanks to whom did Agnes Rosner Grossinger and her family manage to survive?
- – What was the aid arranged in Hungary for Jews by Raoul Wallenberg and Dr Carl Lutz?
- – What was the 'Glass House' and what was its function in rescuing Hungarian Jews?

Source 4

Excerpts from memories of Jews rescued by Henryk Sławik in Hungary.

Tova Feldman née Steiner:

I had been always going hungry before but there was food in Vác. Sławik would send us marmalade. Being one of the older girls, I would spread it on bread and give it to the younger ones. Sławik rescued many Jewish children. If it had not been for him, we would have died. After all, the Germans came to Hungary, too, yet we have survived. How not to remember such a Man?

Cipora Lewawvi née Cyla Ehrenkranz:

I believe he was sent by God. It is because of the Germans that I was left all alone in this world. So if I am alive today and live in Israel and have such a large own family, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, more than 30 persons in total, it is because Sławik rescued me.

Sofi Magids aka Zofia Czerna

We would go on trips and bathe in the Danube. As if there had been no war. How much do we owe Sławik and Antall!

Henryk Zvi Zimmermann, Sławik's Jewish collaborator

In my relatively long life, I have not met many people as noble as Sławik and more honest than him. I know and I do not forget that many Poles were rescuing Jews risking their own lives. Among them, however, Sławik was someone exceptional. He put all his heart into that work, although he knew he would pay with his life.

Grzegorz Łubczyk, *Henryk Sławik*,
Series: *Bohaterowie Niepodległej*, Kraków 2019

? Answer the following questions:

- How do the Jews rescued from the Holocaust describe Henryk Sławik?
- What was the aid he provided and why was it so important to them?

Summary



Compare the sources, learn more and answer the following questions/do the following tasks:

1. Learn about the situation of Hungary during the war and the status of the country's Jewish population.
2. When and in what circumstances did mass deportations of Hungarian Jews to the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp take place and what happened to them there?
3. Analyse the possibilities foreign diplomats had in Hungary during the war.
4. Learn more about the aid for Jews arranged by Carl Lutz, Ángel Sanz Briz and Henryk Sławik. Who was it for, what was it exactly and what did it result in?
5. Trace the wartime and later fate of Raul Wallenberg, Carl Lutz, Ángel Sanz Briz and Henryk Sławik, and then think how it was impacted by their activities of aiding Jews.

5.

THE CONTEXT

Nuncio Angelo Rotta

Between 1933 and 1945, the Catholic Church was an institution commonly expected to refer to the then social and political situation, condemn the crimes of the Nazi and communist totalitarianisms as well as offer spiritual and material support to their victims. That proved of particular importance during the Second World War, when people were forced to make moral choices related to aiding the Jewish population, in many countries entailing the risk of facing various restrictions, and sometimes losing one's life. Of vital importance for building attitudes of empathy or reluctance towards Jews, and so taking decisive action, was the official stance on the Holocaust of the representatives of the Church's top leaders. However, also individual attitudes and activities of clerics and members of monastic communities who were closer to their congregations mattered. Those varied considerably.

Even before 1933, some German Catholic bishops prohibited Catholics in their dioceses to join the Nazi party. That ban was lifted after Hitler's speech at the Reichstag on 23 March 1933, where he called Christianity the 'basis' of the German values. That same year a concordat was signed between the Holy See and the Third Reich. In both the Catholic and Protestant Churches, there were clerics openly supporting the Nazi regime. Over time, however, with mounting terror as well as new legislation and discriminatory ordinances, anti-Hitler sentiments were on the rise among the clergy and the Nazi regime realised increasing opposition towards its policies among Church leaders, in particular after an encyclical titled *Mit brennender Sorge* (German for 'With Burning Concern') appeared in 1937, where Pope Pius XI rejected Nazism and condemned its pagan inclinations. Notably, however, although in sermons and the public sphere individual clergymen did criticise the Nazi racial ideology as well as spoke out in defence of the persecuted, including members of the Church and proselytes, the spiritual leaders in the Third Reich did not make any attempt at standing against the regime on those issues. Acts of resistance were a thing of single clergymen.

In the period 1933-1945, there were two popes serving in the Vatican. Pontiff from 1922, Pius XI passed away in the spring of 1939 before the criminal policy of the Third Reich gathered pace. He was succeeded by Pope Pius XII. In his encyclical titled *Summi Pontificatus* of 20 October 1939 he condemned the Nazi regime for having started the Second World War. In his Christmas statements, the pope appealed for peace as well as rejection of racist concepts discriminating against other groups. Although the pope emphasised the need to aid those in need, numerous researchers still criticise his silence on the Holocaust. Also criticised is his failure to issue specific instructions for the clergy and the faithful of the Catholic Church as regards aiding Jews, which might have influenced the fact that Catholics presented a variety of attitudes in that regard. Another important aspect was cooperation of certain members of the Catholic clergy with the Nazi regime.

During the war, various activities aimed at aiding Jews were undertaken by clerical and monastic individuals. The voice of those representatives

of the Church closest to the faithful on how to treat Jews seeking rescue had most impact on provincial populations as in small towns and villages priests were seen as representatives of local elites whose opinion was to be reckoned with. As a consequence, the views of the clergy could to some degree have contributed to how local populations behaved towards Jews. The same is true for the Christian clergy of other faiths than Catholic and their impact on the attitudes of the faithful.

Types of aid offered by Church institutions and members of the clergy varied, particularly at the start of the war. Some Jews hoped that their religious conversion could save their lives. That is why back then one of the forms of aid was teaching them prayers and the principles of Christianity as well as performing for them the sacrament of baptism and issuing baptismal certificates. Over time, however, particularly once the physical extermination scheme had begun, Jews were offered shelter with instructions operating close to churches. It was a common form of aid to provide Jews hiding on the 'Aryan side' with false baptismal certificates and hide children in cloisters. Some lay Catholic activists were also engaged in various actions aimed at encouraging Catholics to aid Jews.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE



Credit: USHMM

Archbishop Angelo Rotta (1872–1965) was born in Milan. He was ordained a priest at the age of 23 and soon began work in the diplomatic service of the Holy See. In the 1920s, he worked in Central America. Already as a bishop, he held the post of an apostolic nuncio in Balkan countries. From 1930, he served as a nuncio in Hungary. After the outbreak of the Second World War, he aided Jewish refugees, inter alia from occupied Poland, who got to Hungary. He was one of the first diplomats openly castigating discrimination against Jews and their deportations to death camps. In the summer of 1944, he signed an open letter from representatives of neutral countries, where they called for an immediate end to deportations of Jews as well as protection of Jewish children. He encouraged leaders of the Hungarian Catholic Church to act in a similar fashion. Over time, Rotta saw a chance to support Jewish proselytes and rescue them from deportation to the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp. Thanks to his efforts, Hungarian Jews (not only ones intending to convert) received more than 15,000 protective passports of the Vatican City State.

Notably, Archbishop Angelo Rotta supported the activities of the Italian businessman Giorgio Perlasca, who pretended to be a Spanish diplomat, trying to save Jews. The nuncio also cooperated with Nina Langlet, who together with her husband Valdemar led the Swedish Red Cross. They were both involved in an operation of saving Jews in Hungary.

The Germans were secretly watching Rotta, and his envoys were detained when the Arrow Cross Party took power in Hungary. Despite real risks, Archbishop Rotta continued his diplomatic efforts and Angelo Rotta remained a nuncio until 1957, when he retired. He died a few years later. In 1997, he posthumously received the title of Righteous Among the Nations.

? Answer the following questions:

- *What was the aid provided to Jews by Archbishop Angelo Rotta? Who helped him and what were the results?*
- *How important are letters of protest and public statements in defence of victims of persecution and discrimination?*

Source 1

An excerpt from the 1937 encyclical titled *Mit brennender Sorge* by Pope Pius XI. It concerned the situation of the Catholic Church in the Third Reich and was critical of the theological aspects of the policies pursued by Nazi Germany under Hitler, including the notion of racial supremacy.

Whoever exalts race, or the people, or the State, or a particular form of State, or the depositories of power, or any other fundamental value of the human community – however necessary and honourable be their function in worldly things – whoever raises these notions above their standard value and divinises them to an idolatrous level, distorts and perverts an order of the world planned and created by God; he is far from the true faith in God and from the concept of life which that faith upholds. [...] This God, this Sovereign Master, has issued commandments whose value is independent of time and space, country and race. As God's sun shines on every human face so His law knows neither privilege nor exception. Rulers and subjects, crowned and uncrowned, rich and poor are equally subject to His word. From the fullness of the Creator's right there naturally arises the fullness of His right to be obeyed by individuals and communities, whoever they are. This obedience permeates all branches of activity in which moral values claim harmony with the law of God, and pervades all integration of the ever-changing laws of man into the immutable laws of God.

Mit brennender Sorge, a 1937 encyclical by Pope Pius XI
On the Church and the German Reich

? Answer the following questions:

- *What was the attitude of Pope Pius XI, expressed in his encyclical, towards the Nazi ideology proclaiming the supremacy of the Aryan race over others?*
- *Why does the pope claim that the Nazi ideology distorts 'an order of the world planned and created by God'?*

Source 2

Excerpts from a letter exchange between Archbishop Angelo Rotta and the Holy See on the situation of Hungarian Jews and the aid they received.

An excerpt from memories of Tibor Baránszki (Baranski) who worked with Angelo Rotta as the executive secretary of the Vatican's Jewish Protection Movement in Hungary:

I myself had seen correspondence to the nuncio from the pope himself, as well as from other officers of the Vatican. I saw handwritten letters from the pope to the nuncio instructing him to do everything in his power to help the persecuted Jews. This included food, shelter, and protection. There were other letters from the pope that gave no detailed instructions but just general hints about aiding the persecuted Jews. And I must emphasise that there never could be any suggestion of doing anything that was not on legal, humanitarian grounds.

? Answer the following questions:

- *What were the instructions of the Holy See on aiding persecuted Jews? How effective were they in your opinion?*
- *Did the aid granted to Jews by Archbishop Angelo Rotta go beyond those instructions?*

A wire to Archbishop Angelo Rotta from Monsignor Tardini from the Vatican, 23 October 1944:

The Holy Father has received the news [of the atrocities] with sorrow. He is happy with the diligence with which you keep the Holy See informed. He sends special Apostolic Blessing. Weighty appeals continue to reach here imploring the intervention of the Holy See in favour of so many persons who are exposed to persecution and violence because of their religious faith, their race, and political beliefs. May your Excellency continue with the well-known zeal your beneficent activity, enjoying at the same time the collaboration of your episcopacy – supporting as much as possible the paternal preoccupations of the August Pontiff and showing to all that the Catholic Church leaves nothing untried in order to accomplish its universal mission of charity, even in the difficult conditions of the present.

? **Answer the following questions:**

- *What was the pope's reaction to the news reaching the Vatican concerning various acts of cruelty and persecution?*
- *On what basis can we say that the Holy See was aware of the tragic situation of Jews during the war?*
- *What is the pope's assessment of the charity activities of Archbishop Angelo Rotta in Hungary? Why does he suggest they should be continued?*

Rotta's reply of 27 November 1944

Not that any practical result can be expected, given the demonstrated mentality of religious ignorance and fanatical hatred against the Jews by the majority of the Arrow Cross, who in execution of given directives proceed with a truly incredible brutality. But it [actions of the Nunciature] which is required by a civilised and Christian conscience. The Nunciature for its part has made it possible to alleviate much suffering, by insisting to various concerned ministries and by releasing more than 13,000 letters of protection. These, to some extent, have helped at least to impede – for certain time – the deportation of many Jews.

The excerpts from Harvey Rosenfeld's book Raoul Wallenberg.
The Mystery Lives On, Lincoln [NE] 2005

? **Answer the following questions:**

- *How does Archbishop Angelo Rotta describe the stance of the Arrow Cross Party towards Jews?*
- *How does he assess the possibility and effectiveness of the Apostolic Nunciature's actions in support of persecuted Jews?*

Summary

Compare the sources, learn more and answer the following questions/do the following tasks:

1. Get familiar with various views of historians concerning the stance of the Holy See on the mass murder of Jews during the Second World War. Learn arguments for and against criticising Pope Pius XII for his passivity as regards the Holocaust and present your own opinion on the matter.
2. Assess the possibilities the Catholic Church had to force a change in the Nazi policy towards Jews before and during the war. Do you think its response was adequate?
3. Find information about the attitude of various leaders and priests of the Catholic Church and other Christian faiths towards the Nazi policy of persecuting and exterminating Jews. Juxtapose acts of aid and heroism with examples of collaboration and treason.
4. Think how Christians' behaviour towards Jews was impacted by anti-Judaism developing throughout the centuries. Could words condemning the persecution of Jews and appeals of Church leaders for aiding them have translated into rescuing them?

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Authors

Dr. Martyna Grądzka-Rejak (ENRS)

Prof. Piotr Trojański (Pedagogical University of Cracow)

Academic Consultant

Prof. Jan Rydel (Pedagogical University of Cracow)

Translation, editing and proofreading

Mikołaj Sekrecki

Graphic design

Danuta Błahut-Biegańska

si les intéressés voulaient envisager une émi
ur appartiendrait d'aviser ce Consulat Génér
de leur intention à ce sujet, en envoyant
photographie de date récente pour passer
e de la famille. Ces photos devraient p
la certification légalisée par une au
officier ministériel.

1942.



G. Rotta
PREMIER SECRE
DU CONSULAT