





## Glass House

The largest rescue operation in Holocaust history. Crowds gather at the entrance to the Glass House, hoping for diplomatic protection

Photo: Agnes Hirschi, Zurich Technology Institute History Archive





# The House That Krausz Built

As World War II drew to a close and the Nazis prepared to send Budapest's Jews to their deaths, salvation appeared in the curious form of a glass warehouse, a Zionist, foreign diplomats, and sheer hutzpa // *Ayala Nedivi*



Krausz ran the Palestine emigration office straight out of the Swiss Consulate, enjoying diplomatic immunity and traveling in the consular car with a Swiss flag

Zionist activist Moshe Krausz and Swiss diplomat Carl Lutz both risked their lives to save many tens of thousands

In the final year of World War II, the Holocaust engulfed Hungarian Jewry with unprecedented speed. The Nazis conquered Hungary on March 19, 1944, and within a month they were rounding up Jews from the countryside and transferring them to ghettos. Deportations to Auschwitz commenced a month later, and in just eight weeks, 440,000 Jews were sent there. Reports of the wholesale slaughter taking place in the camp combined with international pressure to halt the transports on July 9, and in August 1944, Hungarian regent Miklós Horthy attempted to negotiate a truce with the Russians. Hitler preempted his efforts by replacing him with Ferenc Szálasi, leader of Hungary's fascist Arrow Cross party. The Holocaust then began in earnest for the two hundred thousand Jews of Budapest, the last remaining Hungarian Jewish center. Over two-thirds of the eight hundred thousand Jews in the country at the start of 1944 were murdered.

Hungary was a Nazi ally for most of the war but resisted some policies while implementing others, especially toward the end of the conflict. Pro-Nazi officials deported the country's Jews, but anti-Nazis – particularly in the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Police – helped save Jews wherever they could. For example, emigration to Mandate Palestine was permitted throughout the war, and the Palestine Office in Budapest – a branch of the Jewish Agency's Immigration Department but in practice, run by a representative of the Mizrahi religious-Zionist movement – continued to

function. The bureau also serviced potential Jewish immigrants from neighboring countries such as Poland and Slovakia, where Zionist activities were banned.

The Zionist leadership in Hungary pursued two paths of resistance and rescue, both organized soon after the Nazi conquest. The first was initiated by Dr. Rezső Israel Kasztner, who headed the Aid and Rescue Committee in Budapest, set up by the Jewish leadership in Mandate Palestine to save European Jews. Kasztner negotiated directly with the Nazis to save Jews. The second was the brainchild of Moshe Krausz, who ran the Palestine Office in Budapest. Krausz refused to cooperate with the Germans, whom he distrusted. Instead, he exploited Hungary's complex political situation, enlisting the international diplomatic community in bringing as many Jews as possible under the protective umbrella of emigration.

### Palestinian Umbrella

Even as the Arrow Cross ran Budapest for the Nazis and prepared to deport its Jews, a daring rescue operation took place right under the fascists' noses. Totally original, it was surprisingly effective and saved tens of thousands of Jews, trumping more famous efforts, including Kasztner's. The apparatus was already in place by the second month of the Nazi conquest. Assistance was provided by Swiss vice-consul Carl Lutz as well as senior bureaucrats in the Hungarian Foreign Office, and Zionist youth served as vital couriers. Other neutral embassies in Budapest adopted the same method, multiplying its effectiveness many times over. But it was all Krausz's idea.

Moshe (Miklós) Krausz was born in 1908 in Mezolde, a village in northern Hungary. He studied in the Talmudic academy in the town of Miskolc under Rabbi Shmuel Osterlitz, one of Hungary's very few Zionist rabbis. Krausz received rabbinic ordination as well as a matriculation certificate. In 1925 he started a Zionist youth group in Miskolc,

Photo: Agnes Hirschi







and in 1932 he launched Hungary's first agricultural training program under the auspices of the Mizrahi movement. One participant, Yitzhak Greenwald, described Krausz as the heart and soul of the Mizrahi youth organization. An autodidact, Moshe gave private lessons for a living. He was extremely polite but somewhat disheveled, wearing the same suit on both weekdays and the Sabbath. Krausz moved to Budapest in 1934 and started working for Mizrahi (then the largest pioneer Zionist movement in Hungary), coordinating applications for immigration to Mandate Palestine. He soon ran the office, a post he held for eleven years.

After uniting with Hitler's Germany in the Anschluss in 1938, Austria expelled the Jews of its Burgenland region. Two hundred and forty of them hired a rickety ship and sailed down the Danube for weeks, seeking political asylum, but no country took them in. Krausz hoped to send them to Palestine via Hungary, so he approached Interior Minister Ferenc Keresztes-Fischer through the British ambassador. Fervently anti-Nazi, Fischer agreed to admit these stateless Jews temporarily. The Palestine Office provided immigration certificates on behalf of His Majesty's government in Mandate Palestine, creating a class of refugees whose theoretical British-Palestinian citizenship exempted them – as foreign residents – from certain areas

of Hungarian law, including anti-Jewish legislation.

Armed with this success, Krausz then redirected his energies to saving Hungarian Jewry by similar means. Britain broke off relations with Hungary in 1942, after the latter sent troops to join Hitler's invasion of Russia. From then on, British interests in Hungary – including responsibility for those holding immigration permits to British dominions – were represented by the neutral Swiss Consulate. These permits were the equivalent of Palestinian passports, at least under Hungarian law.

Whenever any problem arose concerning a Jewish refugee in Hungary – or a Hungarian Jew was arrested, imprisoned, or drafted – Krausz turned immediately to Carl Lutz, the Swiss vice-consul. Although Lutz's boss, ambassador Maximilian Jager, disapproved of procedural irregularities intended to help Jews, the vice-consul gave Krausz his complete cooperation. Lutz confirmed in writing that the Jew in question was soon to emigrate to Palestine and therefore under Swiss protection.

In fact, immigration to Mandate Palestine was severely limited during this period by the British White Paper of 1939, issued by Malcolm MacDonald to mollify Arab resentment of the growing Zionist presence there. From October 1943 until the German conquest of Hungary in the spring of 1944,

Though some Hungarians helped rescue Jews, many others identified with the Nazis. A sign on the bank of the Danube directing Jews to the beach reserved for their use, circa 1942

Hungarian regent Miklós Horthy planned to end his cooperation with Germany but was deposed first. Horthy in 1932





Arthur Weiss' glass warehouse housed the emigration department of the Swiss Consulate, thus becoming extraterritorial. The Glass House at 29 Vadász Street

New names were constantly added to the collective passport kept under wraps in the Swiss Consulate, allowing activists to hand out permits to anyone in need

the Mandate government issued only nine family certificates a week, allowing altogether a thousand Jews to escape Hungary. They were a drop in the ocean.

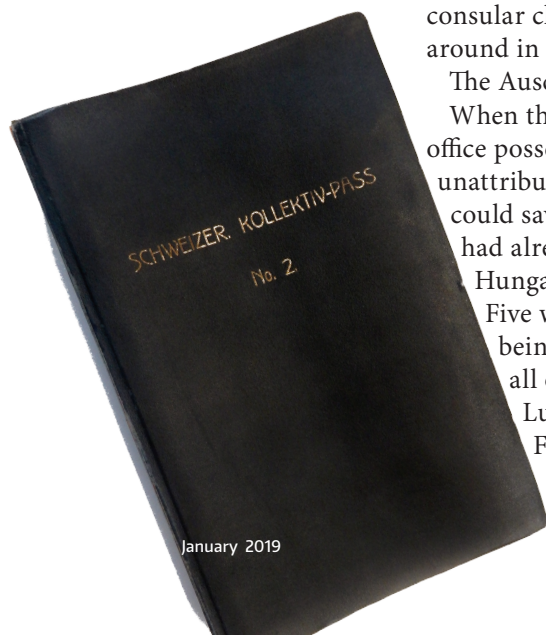
After the Germans entered Budapest, Moshe Krausz moved his operation into the Swiss Consulate, in the Chancery Building on Szabadság Tér (Freedom Square). From this location, which the Swiss had taken over from the American Embassy, Lutz also represented the interests of twelve countries who'd severed ties with Hungary. Krausz thus enjoyed diplomatic immunity and freedom of movement, and the Swiss consular chauffeur even drove him around in a vehicle with a Swiss flag.

The Auschwitz Protocols

When the Germans invaded, Krausz's office possessed fifteen hundred as yet unattributed family certificates, which could save 7,800 people. This number had already been acknowledged by the Hungarian emigration authorities. Five weeks later, as Jews were being concentrated in ghettos all over Hungary, Krausz and Lutz convinced clerks in the Foreign Office to relate to those 7,800 as families rather than

individuals, which, estimating an average family as five people, meant salvation for almost forty thousand Jews. As a representative of the British government, Lutz then requested citizenship documents from London for forty thousand people.

In mid-May 1944, as deportations from the Hungarian countryside to Auschwitz commenced, the first reports of what was happening in the Polish death camp began circulating. Rudolf Vrba and Alfred Wetzler, two Slovaks who'd escaped Auschwitz, were interviewed by the heads of the Rescue Committee in their homeland in April 1944, and their testimony was summarized in what became known as the Vrba-Wetzler Report, or the Auschwitz Protocols. The pair detailed the gas chambers, mass exterminations, and other atrocities perpetrated in the camp, as well as preparations to "process" Hungary's Jews. Kasztner received the report but communicated its contents only to a select few (see "Forgotten Story," p. XX). A month later, the document reached Krausz, who prepared a shortened version – including a description of how Hungarian Jews were being gathered





in ghettos and sent to Auschwitz – and had it delivered to Switzerland. George (Mandel) Mantello, a Romanian Jewish diplomat at the Salvadorean Consulate in Geneva, persuaded a colleague to visit Krausz in Budapest and bring back the report.

On June 24, Mantello publicized the appalling account through an international news agency in Switzerland. Hitting the mass media for the first time, the information quickly spread, provoking angry public debate. The few Western countries not yet under Nazi rule immediately pressured the Hungarian government to take action. Pope Pius XII sent his condemnation to Hungary's regent, and Franklin D. Roosevelt warned that those guilty of war crimes would be severely punished. The British prime minister and the king of Sweden added their voices too. With the Allies advancing, the Hungarian Council of Ministers buckled and halted the deportations to Auschwitz, albeit temporarily.

### Expanding Swiss Territory

During this respite, the forty thousand British citizenship forms arrived at Krausz's office in the Swiss Consulate.

Long lines formed outside the building as Jews eagerly registered for emigration to Mandate Palestine, thereby qualifying for Swiss protection.

To cope with demand, the consulate acquired a building at 29 Vadász Street, near the government offices and embassies. In fact, the purchase was a fiction. The structure belonged to Arthur Weiss, a major glass wholesaler. Like many other Jews, Weiss offered his premises to the Swiss consul to protect them as extraterritorial real estate belonging to a foreign power. The whole façade was glass, so the place was known as the Glass House. Krausz hoped its central, very public location would deter German attacks and subterfuge. Weiss lived and worked in the three-story building, which also boasted an attic, an extensive basement, and a large courtyard. The Swiss consular "emigration offices" now moved to the Glass House.

On July 9, 1944, the very day the deportations stopped, Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg arrived in Budapest to help with the rescue operation. At Krausz's request, Wallenberg asked his government for immigration permits for Hungarian Jews. Four hundred

Krausz and Lutz convinced the Foreign Office to recognize all their permits as family certificates, saving almost forty thousand Jews



Those lacking diplomatic immunity were concentrated in designated areas of Budapest prior to deportation. Jews being arrested on the streets of the city



and sixty such certificates arrived for those with Swedish relatives or business interests, and these Jews' departure was duly authorized by the Hungarian government.

Hoping to greatly expand their "emigration" program, Krausz and Lutz met on July 17 with government ministers and the German Embassy's expert on Jewish affairs, Theodor Horst Grell. To simplify registration, Krausz was permitted to issue a collective Swiss passport for his tens of thousands of emigrants. In addition, eighty Jewish bureaucrats were exempted from wearing the yellow star by now compulsory for Hungarian Jews, allowing these officials to move freely in expediting the exodus.

On July 24, the Palestine branch of the Swiss Consulate's Foreign Interests Emigration Department opened in the Glass House. Like any embassy, the site was considered extraterritorial and therefore outside Hungarian jurisdiction. The office produced the collective passport and constantly updated it. Every Jew registered was issued a Schutzpass (safe pass), certifying him as an emigrant to Palestine and thus under Swiss protection and not subject to deportation.

All the Zionist youth movements soon

moved into the Glass House, gaining not only shelter but extraterritoriality. Under cover of diplomatic immunity, they forged IDs and smuggled Jews into relatively safe Romania.

### Arrow Cross

After Hungarian leader Miklós Horthy was ousted in October 1944 and the Arrow Cross party took over, Adolf Eichmann returned to Budapest following a month's absence. He and Interior Minister Gábor Vajna mapped out the Final Solution for Hungary's remaining Jews, starting with the deportation of fifty thousand to Germany.

Dr. Rezső Israel Kasztner had already left Hungary, and senior members of the Jewish Council in Budapest had been forced into hiding. Krausz was therefore the last major Zionist leader in Budapest, scrambling to save every Jew possible.

In the days after the coup that deposed Horthy, no one dared leave home. Even the consul workers stayed safely within the Glass House, weighing how to proceed. Carl Lutz hoped that the new Arrow Cross prime minister, Ferenc Szálasi, would honor the Swiss documents. Lutz's Jewish colleagues were impressed by the Christian diplomat's

The Germans appointed Ferenc Szálasi, head of the fascist Arrow Cross party, to replace Horthy as prime minister. Arrow Cross poster, and Szálasi saluting Hitler

Stamped by the Swiss Consulate, the Schutzpass declared its bearer to be registered on a collective passport





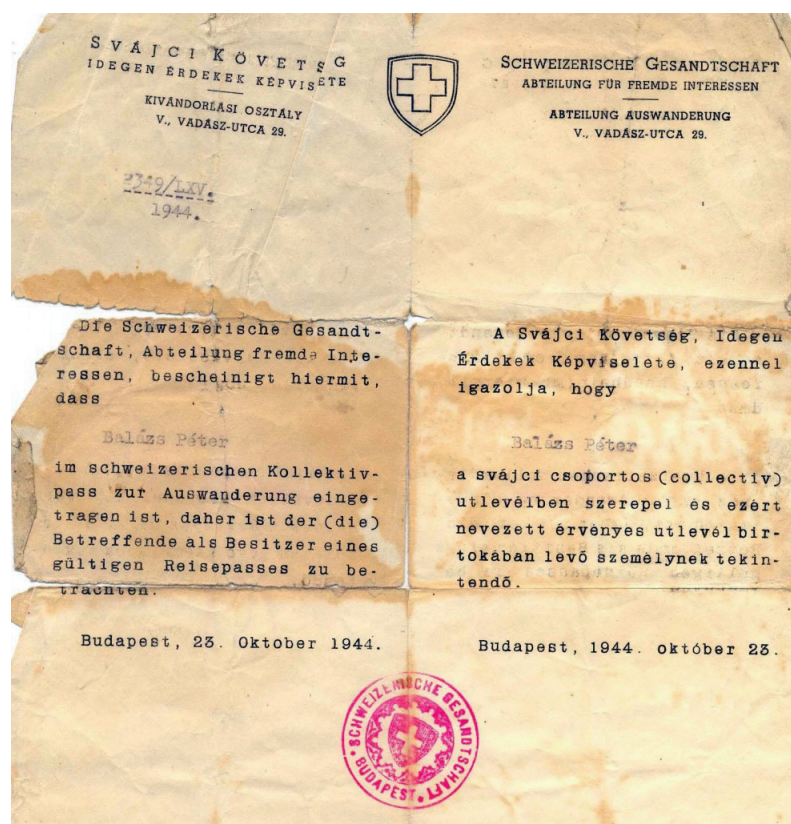
fearless and wholehearted commitment to saving Jews.

Krausz sent urgent letters to the U.S. legation in Istanbul and to Haim Pozner, his counterpart in Geneva, requesting international support. The very next day, the United States government, demanded that Szálasi end the deportations. Any Hungarian cooperating with further expulsions would stand trial for murder, the Americans warned.

In response, Szálasi met with Lutz and Swedish consul Karl Danielsson. The PM wanted the neutral powers to recognize his regime; in exchange, the diplomats insisted that the exit permits approved by the previous government be put to use and that all existing Schutzpasses be honored. Szálasi agreed but limited the number to the 7,800 originally recognized: they could emigrate to Mandate Palestine, and Sweden could take another four hundred and fifty. Their safety was to be guaranteed by Schutzpasses, each bearing the name of a potential emigrant and issued by the consular staff of the country concerned. Schutzpass holders would be concentrated in extraterritorial safe houses provided by the Hungarian government on behalf of neutral countries' embassies. Spain, Portugal, the papal envoy, and the International Red Cross were all included in the agreement.

Written in Hungarian and German, the safe passes confirmed that the bearers were registered for emigration on a collective Swiss passport and therefore to be protected as foreign nationals. The certificates were stamped with the Swiss Consulate's round insignia but lacked the consul's signature, making it easier to replicate forgeries. All were dated October 23, 1944, the day of Szálasi's meeting with Lutz and Danielsson, implicitly confirming the new, pro-Nazi government's approval of the original arrangement made by Lutz, Krausz, and Horthy's Foreign Office staff.

The Hungarian authorities did indeed house the prospective emigrants. Each residence was marked with a sign



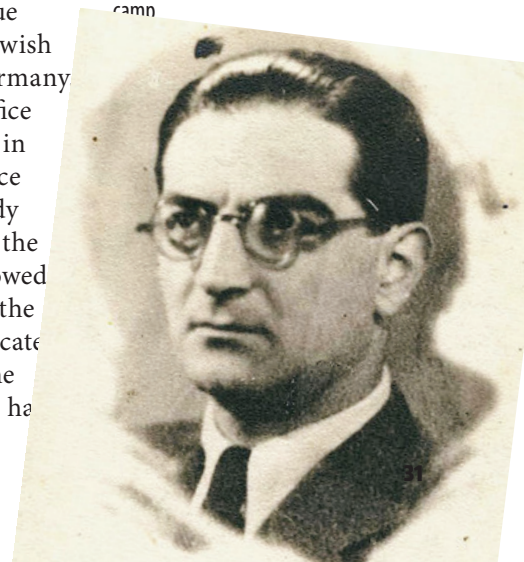
announcing which consulate it belonged to. "This building is under consular protection," the placards read. "Entry to foreigners is forbidden."

### Last Hope

The new regime honored not only the safe passes, but also the consular status of the Glass House and its emigration office. Schutzpass holders moved into safe houses in a section of Budapest's fifth district subsequently known as the Small (or International) Ghetto. Less fortunate Jews were either packed into the Big Ghetto – encompassing the Great Synagogue on Dohány Street, in the original Jewish Quarter of Pest – or deported to Germany.

The chairman of the Palestine Office committee, Mihály Salamon, wrote in his memoir that by the time the place opened every morning, a line already stretched four streets away. Even in the afternoons, when Jews were not allowed outside, many came knocking, and the police let them be. At first all certificates were prepared on the spot, but as the office became inundated, applicants ha

Though he'd hoped to achieve far more, Kasztner ultimately sent only one trainload of Jews out of Hungary. The 1,700 onboard – celebrities, Kastner's friends, and family, as well as random refugees – reached Swiss asylum up to five months later, after a precarious stay in Bergen-Belsen concentration camp





Disguised in Arrow Cross uniform, Kepes traveled to the Austrian border repeatedly, extricating dozens from the death marches each time

to come back the next day to pick up their passes. The pressure was such that registration was moved onto the street, with mounted policemen pushing back the throngs.

The safe passes were the last hope for Jews working in forced labor battalions, for instance, who were to be marched from Hungary to Germany. Some came to Krausz with lists of fellow laborers who'd been brought back from Russia and the Ukraine with the retreating German army. They showed up at the office night and day, and the exhausted staff worked round the clock to help them.

A radio announcement rounding up all seamstresses (for deportation) sent women running to the Glass House to obtain passes, but Lutz, who worked mostly from the consulate building in Freedom Square, wasn't on hand that day to stamp them. Applicants were given temporary certificates instead, asserting that their names were on the collective passport and that their papers would be ready in two days. Arthur Weiss, the Jewish industrialist who owned the Glass House, handed out the documents by candlelight, and the Hungarian police honored them.

When forms ran out, more were printed. The only problem was the Swiss consular stamp, locked in Lutz's drawer. Though the limit had long since been reached, and Lutz knew full well that he'd be

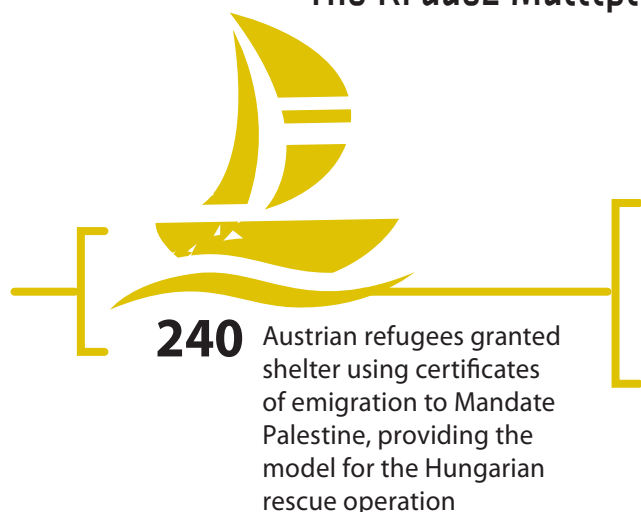
severely rebuked if that ever came out, he found an excuse to give the stamp to the Palestine Office staffers.

### In the Jaws of Death

While the Jews of Budapest were relocated – some in the Big Ghetto, others in the protected International Ghetto – the first group of deportees set out on foot for the town of Hegyeshalom, on the Austrian border. Leaving on November 8, 1944, they were handed over to Eichmann's aide Dieter Wisliceny on arrival. Every day after that, another two thousand Jews followed. Stripped of any food or possessions, they were kept in sheds belonging to a brick factory for two or three days in appalling conditions, then marched another two hundred kilometers through the cold and wet. Between thirty thousand and forty thousand Jews were subjected to such starvation marches, which lasted roughly a week. Many dropped along the way. Stragglers were shot; others were cold-bloodedly murdered by their guards.

November 15 was the last day to register for emigration and enter a safe house. Two and a half thousand people were already sheltering in the Glass House. There was no room to move, and the rescue operation, still struggling to register more occupants for the other safe houses, was under enormous strain. Krausz persuaded Lutz to "buy" another

## The Krausz Multiplication Table



become, by sleight of hand,





building, on Wekerle Sandor Street, this time the offices and storage space of a three-story textile factory also belonging to Jews. Yet another facility was rented next door to the Glass House, at 31 Vadász Street. About four thousand took refuge in these three buildings. Another seventy-six residential compounds protected many more holders of Swiss certificates.

Desperate to extricate as many as possible from the death marches, the Zionist youth movements set up an extensive system of forging and distributing Schutzpasses. This effort brought even more overwhelming numbers into the safe houses, giving rise

to a heated argument: Unable to keep up with registering so many applicants, the Glass House staff tried to limit the forgeries. The youth movements' underground resistance, in contrast, wanted to hand out certificates to anyone who asked. Who were they to choose whom to save, the youngsters contended? Their opinion carried the day.

Clandestine presses printed forms, and forged stamps gave them a seal of authenticity. One stamp was missing the "i" in "Suisse," however, exposing the fraud. It was soon discovered that only thirty-two thousand Jews were living unprotected in Budapest's so-called Big

When Krausz's report on the looming Hungarian Holocaust reached news agencies in Switzerland, the resulting international outcry temporarily halted the death marches to Auschwitz. Hungarian Jews marching



become



Used to issue

**50,000**

Swiss Schutzpasses, protecting Jews from deportation



**50,000**

forged Swiss Schutzpasses



# 1944-45

## Jewish Budapest's Year of Turmoil



**19.03.1944**

Hungary conquered by Nazi Germany

**15.05.1944**

Deportations to Auschwitz begin

**24.06.1944**

Abridged Auschwitz Protocols published in Switzerland together with Kraus' report on deportations and persecution of Hungarian Jewry



**25.06.1944**

Vatican denounces deportation of Jews; other countries follow suit

**26.06.1944**

Hungarian government decides to end deportations to Auschwitz

**9.07.1944**

Deportations end

**17.07.1944**

Kraus, Lutz, and Wallenberg seek government recognition of emigration certificates

**24.07.1944**

Glass House opens as Swiss Embassy emigration office

**15.10.1944**

Germany replaces Hungarian government with pro-Nazi Arrow Cross regime



**23.10.1944**

America protests resumed deportations and threatens to prosecute Hungarian leadership for murder

**8.11.1944**

Death marches to Austrian border begin

**15.11.1944**

Deadline for registration in international ghetto's safe houses

**21.11.1944**

Germans search safe houses for holders of fake permits

**03.12.1944**

Death marches end

**23.12.1944**

Arrow Cross attacks Swedish Embassy



**15.01.1945**

Arrow Cross members flee pending arrival of Red Army

**18.01.1945**

Red Army liberates Pest

**4.04.1945**

Hungary liberated

Ghetto – half the expected number.

The Hungarian government demanded the original list of 7,800 people confirmed for emigration in July, and the authorities insisted on inspecting all safe houses. Any Jews without consular certificates were to be moved into the Big Ghetto. The consulate took no responsibility for the forgeries but allowed the searches. The Swiss also demanded that the previous government's commitment to recognizing forty thousand certificate holders was to be upheld.

On November 21, the Hungarian police began sweeping the safe houses on Pozsonyi Street. Both Carl Lutz and his wife were present at most of these raids, where they were threatened at gunpoint more than once. The forgeries were discovered, but Krausz pleaded ignorance. Mercilessly, the police dragged those in excess of the 7800 to the Big Ghetto. Some were murdered, including a few holders of genuine certificates.

The Arrow Cross regime ordered all Schutzpasses replaced with new ones stamped in French. Yet the original roster of 7,800 was somehow withheld from the authorities, so dummy lists could be made up as needed to protect any given Jew.

Though he stood at the center of this diplomatic and personal fiasco, Lutz resolved to prevent the collapse of the rescue network; only his support could maintain its "legality." Disgusted by his connections with a bunch of counterfeiters, the Swiss government reprimanded him, leaving him to face the Nazi forces alone.

## On the March

About two weeks after the death marches began, Krausz urged Hungarian police officer Dr. Nandor Batizfalvy to exploit his rank in order to follow the column of marchers and come up with a rescue plan. He left on November 21 and returned two days later. After receiving Batizfalvy's report, Krausz called a meeting of all the neutral countries' consuls, the International Red Cross, and the Vatican representatives, which was held in Raoul

Wallenberg's office. So far, the policeman recounted, twenty-five thousand Jews had been marched to the Austrian border. The cruelty of their guards defied belief.

Batizfalvy had brought back as many deportees holding safe passes or other official permits as he could, as well as orders from the Hungarian directing the deportations, László Ferenczy, allowing consular officials to visit those Jews under their protection. They could then provide assistance and even take them back to Budapest.

The very next day, a delegation of neutral countries' representatives – including Wallenberg – set off to bring the deportees food, medicine, and clothing. Krausz's aides, Arye Breslauer and Ladislaus Kluger, went along on behalf of the Swiss Consulate, retrieving seven hundred Jews with the help of Swiss passports. The Spanish delegate freed another thirty already theoretically under his protection.

Batizfalvy's mission, the information he brought back, and the vital concessions

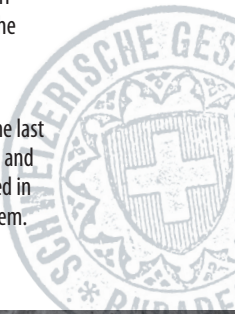
he managed to squeeze from Ferenczy opened the doors to similar activities. The policeman repeated the dangerous stunt, as did others. Lazslo Kepes (Eliezer Kadmon) and Zvi Reich Nedivi (my spouse's uncle), for example, were Zionist youth activists whose Aryan appearance allowed them more freedom than other Jews. Both donned Arrow Cross uniforms and pursued the marchers. Accompanied by a young Christian acquaintance, Zvi sought out other pioneer youth and their families, while Lazslo wandered around Arrow Cross headquarters, even delaying the departure of a thousand Jews overnight; by morning, most had run away. Kepes also made several journeys from Budapest to the Austrian border, saving up to two hundred Jews.

On December 3, 1944, as the Red Army approached, the Arrow Cross government finally discontinued the death marches. Not only had Switzerland, Sweden, and other neutral countries pressured the regime to do so, but the long, slow-moving columns were clogging the roads,

The forgeries placed Carl Lutz at the center of a diplomatic fiasco. Yet he kept the entire rescue network alive

Diplomatic vehicles followed the marchers, collecting bearers of safe passes, whether real or fake. Carl Lutz with his driver by the Swiss Consulate gates

Budapest's Jews were the last to be sent to Auschwitz, and the deportations stopped in time to save many of them. Insignia of Budapest



The Jewish journey through Hungary



# Unsung Heroes

Moshe Krausz and Carl Lutz ran the largest rescue operation of the Holocaust, so why have so few heard of them? Amit Assis

The case of Budapest's Jews, for whom the danger was greatest just when the end of World War II was in sight, is unique in Holocaust history. Allied victories, Hungarian regime changes, and the awareness that a reckoning would soon be made affected the decisions of all those in positions of power. Hungary was the first country in which the Jewish leadership in Mandate Palestine tried to save Jews before the Nazis' arrival. For example, the Jewish Agency masterminded the parachuting of volunteers from Palestine, notably Hannah Szenes and Enzo Sereni, into Yugoslavia to organize partisan resistance and Jewish rescue there and in Hungary. Likewise, considerable resources were invested in Israel Kasztner's Aid and Rescue Committee.

A controversial figure, Kasztner was accused of receiving information about Auschwitz from escapees Rudolf Vrba and Alfred Wexler but withholding it from the rest of the Hungarian Jewish community in order to safeguard the passengers on his rescue train, then still in Nazi hands. Furthermore, he was allegedly involved in the capture of the Jewish parachutists, and he testified on behalf of such senior Nazi officials as Eichmann aide Kurt Becher in the Nuremberg trials.

As a result, Kasztner hesitated before moving to Israel. Once there, however, he joined the Labor Party and was awarded a government job. But in August 1952, the accusations against him resurfaced, disseminated by Hungarian immigrant Malchiel Gruenwald in his weekly newsletter, *Letters to My Friends in the Mizrahi Party*. The State Attorney's Office sued Gruenwald for libel but

lost. The verdict was successfully appealed, but not before Kasztner's assassination by three young Jews on March 4, 1957.

Kasztner was a member of Ben-Gurion's Mapai (Labor) party, and was therefore an establishment figure. Moshe Krausz, by contrast, was affiliated with the Mizrahi movement. According to Dr. Ayala Nedivi, author of *Between Krausz and Kasztner: The Struggle for the Rescue of the Hungarian Jews*, this is why Krausz and Carl Lutz are relatively unknown.

The most challenging part of Nedivi's research was the lack of documentation, since government-funded bodies like Yad Vashem and the Israel State Archives present information selectively. Thus the protocol of the trial was unavailable on the Yad Vashem databases in the 1990s, and its publication remains restricted. Even the State Archives version is missing most of the evidence. "Yad Vashem keeps recordings of interviews with a host of Holocaust survivors and activists, but most were left-wing Labor Zionist pioneers," says Nedivi. "No one even bothered interviewing Moshe Krausz."

At Kibbutz Nir Galim, near Ashdod, Krausz's story is being told at last. The kibbutz was founded mainly by Holocaust survivors from Hungary and Central Europe. In 1991 they set up Testimony House, displaying archival material and artwork chronicling Jewish life before and during the Holocaust. Four years ago, after Nedivi published her research, an exhibit called *The Glass House* was mounted there; a model and audiovisual presentation dedicated to the destruction of Hungarian Jewry recounts Krausz's rescue efforts. The museum is open to the public, by appointment.

Commemorating a forgotten story. The Glass House model and audiovisual exhibit in Testimony House, Kibbutz Nir Galim  
Courtesy of Testimony House





Not everyone was saved by the rescue operation. *Shoes on the Danube*, a memorial to the hundreds of Jews thrown to their deaths from the riverbank, Budapest

Photo: Nikodem Niaki

making it hard for government officials and German “administrative staff” to escape the advancing Russian forces. As a result, Krausz claimed, some fifteen thousand marchers just turned around and went home.

Meanwhile, Arrow Cross thugs terrorized Budapest. The Swedish Consulate was attacked on December 23, so the Swiss legation took responsibility for the Jews under Swedish protection.

Nazi attempts to deport the residents of the safe houses were thwarted at last on January 15, when the Arrow Cross fled the city.

### Freedom!

The Soviet army conquered Pest on January 18, 1945, removing the threat to the city’s Jews once and for all. Tens of thousands had been deported and murdered under the Arrow Cross regime, but between 120,000 and 150,000 Jews had survived.

In his first interview after leaving Hungary, Carl Lutz maintained that the Swiss Consulate had issued some fifty thousand letters of protection, with “other sources” producing another fifty thousand forgeries. Lutz pointed out that Krausz’s power to choose the lucky recipients of the 7,800 “tickets” to Mandate Palestine won him no few

bitter enemies, but the Jewish community generally respected his honesty and directness.

Lutz later claimed that with more adequate funds, the safe houses could have saved many more Jews. Krausz had estimated that the protected buildings cost him about ten thousand dollars to run, most of it donated by two Jews sheltering in one of these facilities. Though the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee had transferred large sums to Budapest via Switzerland, not a penny reached Krausz and the Swiss Consulate’s rescue operation.

A Jewish Agency report delivered at the first Zionist Congress after the war stated that forty thousand Hungarian Jews survived under Swiss protection and were saved from deportation to Auschwitz by the immigration certificates. Yet that number reflects only the forty thousand citizenship certificates produced by the British Foreign Office, not the safe passes issued by neutral countries such as Spain and Sweden as well as the mass-produced forgeries. The true figure is thus clearly much larger.



**Dr. Ayala Nedivi**

Nedivi lectures at the Michlala Women’s College, Jerusalem. Her doctorate from the University of Haifa has been published as a book, *Between Krausz and Kasztner: The Struggle for the Rescue of the Hungarian Jews*