



Moral Leadership

André Trocmé

Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, France... Winter 1940 – After Germany defeated France in June 1940, the two countries signed an armistice. Under the terms of the agreement, the Germans occupied northern France and annexed the eastern provinces of Alsace and Lorraine. A newly formed French government, based in the town of Vichy, was given authority in southern France. The Vichy regime, led by Marshal Henri Philippe Pétain, immediately began to persecute the Jews. In October 1940 and again in June 1941, Pétain's government enacted anti-Jewish legislation that banned Jews from most professions and excluded them from public life. Beginning in the summer of 1942, they deported thousands of Jews from France to killing centers in Eastern Europe.

The village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, located in a mountainous region of the Southern Zone, was an enclave for French Protestants whose ancestors had moved there centuries earlier in order to practice their religion freely without fear of persecution. From the beginning of the German occupation, the inhabitants of the village adopted a spirit of resistance, encouraged by their pastor, André Trocmé. A minority themselves in Catholic France, the villagers of Le Chambon empathized with the Jews and felt an obligation to help them.

Late one night in the winter of 1940 someone knocked on the door of André Trocmé's home. A Jewish woman who had fled from Germany sought shelter; she thought perhaps the local pastor would understand her plight. Magda Trocmé, André's wife, knew that the woman would need false identity documents in order to avoid arrest. Magda went to the mayor's office to see if he would help. The mayor refused and demanded that the Jewish refugee leave Le Chambon the following day.

Realizing the danger this woman now faced, Magda asked a family if they would hide her. They agreed to do so and took the woman into their home.

Magda and André began to identify more families in and around Le Chambon who were willing to shelter Jewish refugees. People of all ages were hidden in homes, residential schools, and public institutions. The Vichy regime learned of the operation. In the summer of 1942, French police descended on Le Chambon to stop the community's rescue work. André delivered a forceful sermon to his congregation in which he urged them to uphold their religious values and to resist all actions that betrayed the teachings of the Gospel. Because of the increased police presence, many of the Jews were spirited out of Le Chambon and hidden in surrounding farms. Villagers helped Jews who were most at-risk to make the dangerous trek to the Swiss border. These refugees were smuggled across the border into the waiting hands of Protestant supporters on the Swiss side.

Throughout the rescue effort, André Trocmé urged his congregants to stand by their convictions and to continue to shelter the persecuted, both Jews and non-Jews. André and his accomplices had several confrontations with the Vichy police. In February 1943 he was arrested and sent to a detention camp in France. The camp commander demanded that André sign an oath of loyalty to the Vichy government. He refused but was released after five weeks. He went underground at that point but continued to oversee the community's rescue work. By the time France was liberated in September 1944, the villagers of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon and the eleven surrounding villages had saved approximately 5,000 people, including about 3,500 Jews.

THE JEWISH FOUNDATION *for the righteous*

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Raoul Wallenberg

Budapest, Hungary... July 1944 – Following Germany's defeat at Stalingrad in February 1943, which put the Wehrmacht (German army) on the defensive, Hungary reconsidered its loyalty to the Axis alliance and tried to negotiate an armistice with the Allies. Germany wanted to prevent this from happening and also wanted to annihilate the Jews of Hungary, the last large Jewish community left in Europe. German forces occupied the country on March 19, 1944. With the help of Hungarian officials, they forced the Jews to move into ghettos – sections of towns and cities to which they were restricted to live – and then deported the majority to Auschwitz. Most were murdered upon arrival. By the end of July 1944, nearly 440,000 Jews had been deported from the Hungarian countryside; only the Jews of Budapest remained. Although Miklós Horthy, the Regent of Hungary, attempted to prevent the forced removal of the 260,000 Jews living in Budapest, Hitler insisted that the deportations continue.

Swedish diplomats stationed in Budapest had begun to issue provisional passports to Jews in March 1944. With these documents, Jews were treated like citizens of Sweden, a neutral country. At the urging of a newly formed American organization, the War Refugee Board, and Swedish officials in Budapest, the Swedish government agreed to redouble its efforts. It sent Raoul Wallenberg, a thirty-two-year-old businessman, to the Swedish embassy in Budapest to see what might be done. Raoul arrived in the city on July 9, 1944, and he soon inspired hundreds of people to intensify the rescue work. He created a new document called a *Schutzpass* (protective passport), which protected the holder from deportation by declaring that he or she was under protection of the Swedish government. It also exempted the holder from wearing the yellow star of David. Raoul and his colleagues handed out thousands of these

protective passports, and employed hundreds of Jews to help with the operation.

In October 1944, the Germans orchestrated the overthrow of the Hungarian government, and the fascist, antisemitic Arrow Cross party took power. The Arrow Cross launched a reign of terror on the streets of Budapest and supported the Germans' deportation efforts. Raoul continued to issue thousands of protective passports and set up safe houses to which the Jews could move. He worked with diplomats from other neutral embassies, including Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, and the Vatican, to establish an "international ghetto" that came to house 30,000 Jews.

In November 1944, more than 70,000 Jews were forced to march on foot to the Austrian border. Many were shot along the way. Raoul followed the columns of Jews in his car and managed to secure the release of hundreds, providing trucks to bring them back to Budapest. He also organized checkpoints along the roads out of Budapest and at the border crossing. He enlisted members of his staff to demand the release of those carrying protective passports. Some colleagues even handed out passports secretly on the spot. Hungarian and German officials warned Raoul to stop his rescue activities, but he continued relentlessly until January 1945, when Soviet forces liberated the area of Budapest where the Jews were living.

On January 17, 1945, Raoul set out to meet with Soviet officials at Debrecen, a Hungarian city about 125 miles east of Budapest. He hoped to return in a week with food and medicine for the more than 100,000 surviving Jews. He was never seen again and likely died or was killed in a Soviet prison. During the six months he spent in Budapest, Raoul Wallenberg and his colleagues rescued tens of thousands of Jews.

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