

Swedish King Rescued Thousands from Nazis

(This is the final chapter in the series on the amazing underground that snatched thousands from death in Nazi-land. Today's story reveals how King Gustav of Sweden helped refugees.)

By ERWIN SAVELSON

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Eleven thousand victims of the Nazis live today because King Gustav of Sweden personally intervened on their behalf in 1944.

The King and Count Bernadotte not only have been



King Gustav of Sweden personally intervened on behalf of 11,000 Nazi victims in 1944. With him here, in garden of his Summer home at Solliden, an island of Oland, are (l. to r.) his granddaughters: Princess Birgitta, Desiree and Margaretha. (Other photos on Center Fold)

(AP Photo)

feeding the 11,000 as "guests" of Sweden, but even arranged to buy homes right in Nazi-occupied Budapest, where other Jewish refugees could live under protection of the Swedish flag.

These are only some of the facts culled from the private records of underground sources and private relief agencies.

Others disclose that Gen. Eisenhower sent trucks laden with food rolling through lines into 10 concentration camps, six weeks before the Germans surrendered.

Another sensational record showed that King Gustav, backed by the power and prestige of the U. S. Government, Allies and ambassadors of all neutral countries, forced Adm. Horthy to stop deporting thousands of refugees from Hungary to death camps and gas chambers.

King Gustav not only guaranteed safe conduct for thousands, but provided immigration visas, letters of protection, citizenship and provisional passports.

Rabbi Wilhelm Wolbe, in Stockholm, carried on the negotiations with the King's government on behalf of the Vaad Hatzala Emergency Committee, representing the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the U. S. and Canada.

Hitler was making good his threat to exterminate millions of

Jews. The Nazis were rushing prisoners out of Hungary by thousands, lashing them into crowded, filthy camps. Rabbi Wolbe's plea won quick action from King Gustav and Count Bernadotte.

On Sept. 9, 1944, J. W. Pehle, executive director of the War Relief Board, got a cable from the American Legation in Stockholm, advising that the Swedish ambassador and the envoys of other neutral nations had seen Horthy and "obtained the promise that the government of Hungary will take all measures to stop deportations."

The cable continued: "A special representative has been sent by the Swedish Government to Budapest for the purpose of handling all problems relating to the rescue of Jews. It is contemplated that HOUSES WILL BE BOUGHT for the account of the Legation of Sweden, pursuant to Swedish extraterritorial rights, and that Jews will live in these homes. "Immigration visas are being granted by our authorities, also

letters of protection, citizenship and provisional passports."

The chain of events leading to King Gustav's action also went back more than two years to the day the WRB was set up as a joint partnership of our government and private relief agencies.

The WRB immediately appealed to the Vatican, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Portugal and Spain to aid the humanitarian cause. The then Secretary of State Hull granted a long audience to Vaad Hatzala leaders in Washington; promised to do everything he could that would not interfere with the nation's war effort.

Former Treasury Secretary Morgenthau, ex-Assistant Secretary of State Berle and ranking Congressmen agreed to help where possible.

Fact Honored

Special messages for agents operating in Switzerland were included in diplomatic pouches. The chief understanding was that no money was to be spent without government approval. This pact was honored by all parties.

Isaac Sternbuch, chief agent of the underground in Switzerland, reported every penny expended to Roswell McClelland, WRB director in Berne.

All units working on rescue plans were ordered to conform strictly to the act prohibiting any trading with the enemy.

In the Fall of 1944, came word that the Nazis were about to move thousands out of Bergen-Belsen camp. King Gustav swung into action.

Other agents arranged to help refugees flee from Hungary, along the Danube and to a Black Sea port. They were sent to sea under guise of "pleasure trips," but many landed in Turkey. Some were lost when ships were smashed by storms at sea.

King Gustav continued his life-saving efforts. He personally paid for food for thousands. Later, Vaad Hatzala and other agencies prevailed on him to let them

share this cost.

The war rolled through 1944 and into 1945. Sternbuch heard of starvation conditions at Bergen-Belsen, Theresienstadt and eight other camps. His pleas were transferred through relief channels to Army authorities.

On March 26, 1945, Sternbuch reported trucks were driving straight into the camps—on special permission of Gen. Eisenhower. They were loaded with thousands of pounds of rice, noodles, cheese, biscuits, corned beef, white beans, chocolate, dried milk and matzoh.

The war ended within a few weeks. The task of reconstructing the lives of the shattered survivors of Europe began.

The Germans attempted to divert world attention from their slaughter of 6,000,000 Jews by claiming allied air raids were indiscriminately aimed at civilians and had killed countless non-combatants. Official figures, however, show not more than 500,000 out of 86,000,000 civilians were killed by such bombs.

The Vaad Hatzala leaders now are concerned with rebuilding the victims of Nazis. Within the last six weeks, Hifeia, "The Vaad Hatzala Overseas Agency," spent nearly \$125,000 to aid sufferers in Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, Germany, Italy, Holland, Belgium and France. The Vaad shipped more than 50,000 pounds of food to them.

On Monday night, the Vaad Hatzala and 1,000 civic and business leaders will honor Morgenthau, Pehle and Mayor-elect O'Dwyer, who also served as WRB director, for their aid in this work, at a dinner in the Hotel Astor.

The job of saving the victims of Hitler's savage persecutions is over. The challenge of rescuing tens of thousands from death at the hands of the Nazis had been met. Wrote Pehle of the entire great adventure:

"It was a symbol of American democracy and humanitarianism."