

A Dedication Honoring

**Fr. Jakob Raile, S.J.**



1894-1949

*“Whoever saves one life is as though  
he saved the entire world.”*

April 10, 2016  
Center for Christian-Jewish Learning  
Boston College



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### An Introduction by Fr. James Bernauer, S.J.

Scholars have long recognized that the tragedy of the Hungarian Jews formed an especially disturbing chapter in the history of the Holocaust. At the beginning of 1944 there were approximately 750, 000 Jews who were still living in Hungary even though they were surrounded by the destruction of millions of their fellow Jews in other nations. The premier historian of Hungary's Holocaust, Randolph Braham, wrote that the destruction of this community was a "tragedy that ought not to have happened, for by then—the leaders of the world, including the national and Jewish leaders of Hungary, were already privy to the secrets of Auschwitz."<sup>1</sup> The twisted road of events that led to this tragedy will necessarily not be explored here. As has often been noted, however, the traditions of theological anti-Judaism and social anti-Semitism played their role in isolating Jews from their neighbors. There were certainly exceptions among the ranks of Christians but, in general, these heroic rescuers have been largely neglected in accounts of that period. That is in the process of changing as one may see in many books, articles and films.<sup>2</sup> Although Fr. Jakob Raile, S.J., has largely been eclipsed by his associate in rescue activities, the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, he has nevertheless not been ignored and his name appears at least briefly in numerous books. Braham identifies him as one of the "leading organizers and leaders of the rescue work in Budapest".<sup>3</sup>

We are most indebted to Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial for keeping alive the memory of the rescuers. When the Israeli Knesset passed the Law of the Martyrs' and Heroes Remembrance Authority in 1953, Yad Vashem was established in Jerusalem as a memorial to the six million Jews killed during the Shoah. Among the duties assigned to the institution was to discover and commemorate those non-Jews who had risked or lost their lives in efforts to save Jews during the period of the Holocaust. These were to be named "Righteous Among the Nations," an expression that was borrowed from the ancient literature of the Jewish sages. The title is awarded only after careful scrutiny of the testimonies attesting to the heroic efforts of individuals on behalf of Jews. Initially, individual trees were planted at Yad Vashem to celebrate these people, but now the lack of space entails that their names are inscribed on a wall of honor. As of January, 2015, over twenty-five thousand (25,685) righteous have been identified and this figure, in the judgment of some at Yad Vashem, may represent only ten per cent of those who extended heroic assistance to the Jewish people during the period of the Holocaust. This heroism is certainly the brightest light from that dark time and the former Polish courier Jan Karski, who was such a powerful presence in Claude Lanzmann's film "Shoah," has stressed the importance of recalling that courage which Lanzman ignored. Karski pointed out in a later interview that "it is not true that the Jews were totally abandoned. Over half a million Jews survived the Holocaust in Europe." "I repeat, the

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<sup>1</sup> Randolph L. Braham, "The Holocaust in Hungary: A Retrospective Analysis," in *Genocide and Rescue: The Holocaust in Hungary 1944*, edited by David Cesarani (New York: Berg, 1997) 29.

<sup>2</sup> As an example, I show how the work of the filmmaker Pierre Sauvage augments the very influential film "Shoah" by Claude Lanzmann: "The Flawed Vision in Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985) and the Corrective Lens of Pierre Sauvage" in *Through a Lens Darkly*, edited by John Michalczyk and Raymond Helmick (New York: Peter Lang, 2013) 107-114.

<sup>3</sup> Randolph Braham, *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary*, volume 2, revised and enlarged edition (New York: Graduate Center, City University of New York) 1994, 1123, also on 994, 1163 and 1193. Other mentions of Raile are to be found in Bela Fabian, *Cardinal Mindszenty: The Story of a Modern Martyr* (New York: Scribner's, 1949) 90-93, and Jenö Leval, *Hungarian Jewry and the Papacy* (London: Sands & Co., 1968) 104.

Jews were not totally abandoned. They were abandoned by governments, social structures, church hierarchies, but not by ordinary men and women.”<sup>4</sup>

Among those ordinary men and women are now inscribed fourteen Jesuits who have been formally recognized as “Righteous Among the Nations.” Five are Belgians: Fathers Jean-Baptiste De Coster (1896-1968); Emile Gessler (1891-1958); John Janssens (1889-1964) who was later to become General of the Society; Alphonse Lambrette (1884-1970); and Henri Van Oostayen (1906-1945). Five are French: Fathers Roger Braun (1910-1981); Pierre Chaillet (1900-1972); Jean Fleury (1905-1982); Emile Planckaert (1906-) and Henri Revol (1904-1992). One is Polish: Father Adam Sztark (1907-1942); another is Greek: Ioannis Marangos (1900-1989); another is Italian: Raffaele de Chantuz Cubbe (1904-1983); and finally the Hungarian: Jacob Raile (1894-1949). Fr. Raile is one of the very few Righteous who are buried in American soil and the Center of Christian-Jewish Learning at Boston College honors him now with a plaque that is affixed to his grave in the Jesuit cemetery at Weston, Massachusetts.



*Fr. Jakob Raile, S.J.*  
*Born October 6, 1894*  
*Ordained August 14, 1912*  
*Died September 6, 1949*

Fr. Vincent Lapomarda, S.J., of the College of the Holy Cross is owed a special debt for his work in seeking recognition for Jacob Raile. Our booklet of materials on Fr. Raile begins with the most beautiful of items, a eulogy that was not delivered at Fr. Raile’s funeral (September 9, 1949) because it was not the custom for Jesuits at the time. Dr. Béla Fábíán did publish it two weeks later in the Jesuit journal *America*. Dr. Fábíán was a Jewish leader who became president of the Independent Democratic Party in Hungary and who later survived Auschwitz. His undelivered eulogy is the best *introduction* to Fr. Raile’s spirit. Following this are two accounts of the Jesuit’s activities in Budapest. The first is taken from *The Encyclopedia of the Righteous Among the Nations: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust: Europe (Part I) and Other Countries*, edited by Israel Gutman (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2007) 303-304. The second is an excerpt from Vincent Lapomarda’s “Some Reflections on Catholics and the Holocaust,” *America* (December 27, 1986) 424-427. Following these are three letters giving accounts of his activities: from the scholar Randolph Braham, from Joseph Zrinyi who worked with Fr. Raile in Budapest, and from the Hungarian Jesuit Andrew Varga. Finally, from the archives of Yad Vashem is the 1988 statement from Peter Andrew Gyarfás that gives a testimony to Fr. Raile’s rescue of his father.

On behalf of the Center, I want to thank the three individuals who are most responsible for the mounting of the plaque: Fr. Robert Levens, S.J., Superior of the Jesuit Community in Weston; Mr. Mark Delorey, Director of Environmental Services at Campion Center in Weston; and Mr. John Tigges, President of the Davis Monument Company.

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<sup>4</sup> “The Mission That Failed: A Polish Courier Who Tried to Help Jews,” (an interview with Jan Karski conducted by Maciej Kozłowski) *Dissent* (Summer, 1987) 334.

# An undelivered eulogy

**Béla Fábíán**

A GREAT MAN was buried in Boston on September 9. His name was James Raile. He was a Jesuit priest, a Hungarian refugee, a teacher of German grammar at Boston College High School.

It is doubtful that the American Jesuit Fathers knew how great a man he was. They admired enormously, I could see, his prodigious energy, his ready humor, his robust holiness. They knew he had held offices of trust in his Order, that he had been Assistant to the Father Provincial of Hungary, that he was for a time the representative of the Vatican in Budapest, that he was a personal friend of Cardinal Mindszenty.

The schoolboys who attended the funeral had heard from Father Raile the story of Hungary's plight today. They had not heard the story of Father Raile because he seldom spoke about himself. Great men seldom boast of what they have done. Their silence, their modesty is a part of their greatness. It was so in Father Raile's case.

Father Raile did not speak, for instance, of what he had done for my people, the Jews of Budapest. When I told some of that story in my recent book, *Cardinal Mindszenty: A Modern Martyr* (Scribner's), Father Raile complained to a mutual friend that my making him out to be a hero was absurd, that a man should not be singled out for praise for doing his simple duty, that the chief credit should go to those simple Christian families who, despite threats of death, listened to their priests and hid the Jews. "Doing one's duty" as a Jesuit priest generally involves a succession of simple, unspectacular daily tasks. Teaching German grammar in a high school, for example. Doing what Father Raile considered his duty in Budapest during the nazi occupation called for high heroism, reckless bravery. For Father Raile considered it his duty to help harbor Jews. Such unselfishness in action in the midst of perils amounts to a greatness that cannot be left unpublicized.

What was the situation? With the war going against them, the Germans occupied Hungary on March 20, 1944. When the Regent, Admiral Horthy, sought an armistice from the Allies, the Nazis supported the coup of their local stooges of the Arrow Cross organization—many of whom are now figures of the communist regime in my native land. The fall of 1944 and the winter of 1945 saw the nazi terror at its height, with its cruelty directed, as always, against the Jews. As president of the Independent Democratic Party, I was immediately arrested along with all the other democratic political leaders of Hungary. Because of the special interest of my political enemy, a quisling, I was sent to Auschwitz. Later I was transferred to Oranienburg, then to Sachsenhausen and then to Ohrdruf, all concentration camps of fearful memory.

From Hungary alone, 600,000 Jews were shipped to

Dr. Béla Fábíán, president of the Independent Democratic Party in Hungary until the arrival of the Nazis, is the author of the recent best seller, *Cardinal Mindszenty: A Modern Martyr*. The following tribute is presented in grateful memory of Father Raile's heroic work to protect the persecuted Jews of Hungary.

Auschwitz to be systematically murdered—burned in crematories, their ashes thrown on the ground for fertilizer. From the city of Budapest 130,000 Jews escaped that tragic fate.

How did those 130,000 escape? Each has his own story to tell, different in detail but with a common conclusion, generally spoken with a shrug of the shoulders and hands pointed to heaven: "God helped me."

God helped those Jews through the charity of Christians in that time of peril. Among the Protestants László Vattay, leader of the "*Soli Deo Gloria*" student organization, must be remembered. Mindszenty, then Bishop of Veszprem, declared: "If today we do not do our utmost to save the Jews at the risk of our lives, the ineradicable brand of shame will remain upon us." Mindszenty sent one of the priests of his diocese, Father Béla Varga, to Budapest to organize rescue work in the name of the Church. Headquarters for the operation was in the Jesuit Residence at 25 Mária Utca in Josef Varos.

One of the 150 Jews who was hidden in the cellar of that Jesuit House during the long weeks of the nazi terror recently passed through New York on his way to Australia. Gabriel Gyárfás is a grateful Jew who wants the world to hear of the astonishing ingeniousness and courage of Father Raile, formerly of 25 Mária Utca.

In all of the stories told by the Jews of Budapest, explaining how with God's help they escaped the Nazis, two names are inevitably repeated. There is Raoul Wallenberg, the special commissioner of the King of Sweden, dragged away by the Russians a few days after the defeat of the Nazis. He was accused of being an American spy, and no one has heard of Wallenberg since. A smile used to appear on the faces of Budapest's Jews at the mention of Father Raile's name.

Father Raile, Father Raile, the Hungarian Jesuit with the Irish-sounding name, every one seemed to have a story about him, a story in which the sun always shone. In the foreground of the stories there were always instances of his fearlessness and humor. In the background was some hunted Jew, hidden and trembling.

There were stories of Father Raile gaily forging German stamps in his "document factory," of Father Raile learning the next move of the Nazis as he seemed to fraternize with drunken SS troops in the neighborhood tavern. Indeed, it was to the corner tavern that Father Raile went one night seeking a Jew named Halmos who had left his hiding place in the cellar of the Jesuit Residence in search of liquor which he loved not wisely and altogether too well. If Halmos were caught, the Nazis would discover from the drunken babbler the hiding place of hundreds of other Jews. "Was there a rather Jewish-looking crazy fellow here?" Father Raile asked

the bartender. Told that the Nazis had taken Halmos off to their headquarters, Father Raile sent word back to the cellar warning everyone and set off for the guard house.

"Didn't they just bring in a lunatic?" Father Raile asked the first soldier he met.

"They just brought in some guy," he was told.

"The fellow is half-witted. He helps around our House," Father Raile explained.

"He looks Jewish."

"He belongs to the Jesuit House. We want him back." Father Raile's nerve won.

When his merciful work was discovered and he had to flee from the Communists, he came to America and became a teacher of German grammar. It was something that would help the work the Jesuits were doing in Boston. On September 6, while riding with a fellow priest on a New Jersey road, he was killed in an auto accident. Having come unscathed through the terrors of the nazi and communist regimes, he was killed by a truck.

I have gone through many tragedies in my life. I lost my country, my property, the little house I loved, many of the much-loved members of my family. Russian and German concentration camps and prisons lie behind me.

There are memories of battles in which many dear friends fell beside me in heroic struggles. Against the background of such experience, such memories, when I heard that Father Raile had been killed by a truck, I suffered real grief. There was grief, too, in the Jewish community of Budapest when the Voice of America broadcast the news.

All this I wanted to say, and I traveled to Boston to speak at the funeral. I wanted to tell all who would listen that in Hungary 130,000 Jews who escaped the nazi terror and are now suffering under communist terror send their grief and sympathy, too, as a tribute of gratitude to Father Raile. They explained to me that it is not customary to have eulogies at Jesuit funerals. It was possible, however, to give to the New England Jesuit Provincial a copy of the words that were in my heart to say. He will forward the message to the Provincial of Hungary and thus to all of Father Raile's persecuted fellow Jesuits, to his aged mother and two brothers.

Standing there in silence in the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Boston, listening to the chant of the priests, I knew that Father Raile understood every word I wanted to say to everyone in the city, everyone in the world.

**Jakob Raile, Yad Vashem *Encyclopedia of Righteous Among the Nations***

Father Jakob Raile entered the Jesuit Order (Society of Jesus) on August 14, 1912, and served as the director of a monastery located at No. 52 Mária Street in Budapest. During the Arrow Cross period, the monastery in which Raile served was used as a hiding place for some 150 Jews. Raile was like a true father to these fugitives, worrying about their safety, and providing for all their needs. In addition to taking care of the Jews hidden in his own monastery, Raile was in contact with the Swedish Red Cross on behalf of the Apostolic Nuncio in Budapest, as coordinator of rescue activities carried out by groups associated with the Swedish Red Cross. When Arrow Cross gangs attacked, Father Raile stood heroically in the doorway, arguing with the intruders until the Jews inside the monastery had time to hide. On more than one occasion Raile was forced to let the Arrow Cross men enter the building. He led them from room to room, from the top floor to the basement. At the end of one such search, the Arrow Cross men entered the coal cellar, where Jews were hiding atop a pile of coal, under a dark blanket. Even under these tense circumstances, Father Raile remained calm. He turned out the light and quietly announced: "There is only coal here, be careful you don't get dirty." The Arrow Cross men quickly left the basement, without carrying out a thorough search. Army deserters and labor-servicemen who had run away from their units also found refuge in the monastery. Raile obtained guns and police uniforms for some of the army deserters and had them stand at the monastery's entrance when Arrow Cross intruders approached. They prevented the Arrow Cross men from entering. Raile entered the closed ghetto together with representatives of the Swedish Red Cross, giving food and medicine to ghetto residents. He also distributed blank baptism certificates, with which they could forge documents that would help them to escape from the ghetto. Throughout the battles of Budapest, Raile braved the constant bombing, wandering the city streets looking for food for the Jews he was hiding. When the Communists took over in Hungary, Fr. Raile escaped to the United States, and taught German at Boston College High School until his death in a traffic accident in September 1949. He was buried in the Jesuit cemetery in Weston, Massachusetts. In 2015 the Jesuits in Boston added a plaque to his grave, stating that Fr. Raile was recognized as Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem.

*On February 27, 1991, Yad Vashem recognized Father Jakob Raile as Righteous Among the Nations.*



# SOME REFLECTIONS ON CATHOLICS AND THE HOLOCAUST

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VINCENT A. LAPOMARDA

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*Even if a few priests may have helped Nazi criminals escape justice, many others remain among the unknown 'Righteous Gentiles' who risked their lives to help the Jewish people at the time of the Holocaust.*

**D**uring the past year, several articles in *AMERICA* have focused on Catholics and the Holocaust. Two columns by George W. Hunt, S.J. ("Of Many Things," 5/17 and 5/24) and "The Gentile Holocaust" (6/14) by William J. O'Malley, S.J., came out at the same time that the secular press (articles by Stephen Kurkjian in *The Boston Globe*, 5/7-8) and the religious press (an article by William Bole in *The Hartford Catholic Transcript*, 5/23) were not particularly complimentary in what they said about the role of Catholics in the Holocaust.

If it is true, as Pope Leo XIII once told historians, that the Catholic Church has no need of lies, then Catholics have nothing to fear even if a priest may have helped Nazi criminals escape justice, as alleged by those articles published last May. There is a difference, after all, between the formal policy of the Catholic Church and what an individual priest may choose to do. One need not be a Catholic to understand this, especially in light of the public image of Catholicism since the Second Vatican Council.

Nevertheless, reasonable people must wonder when they read articles describing the activities of the late Rev. Krunoslav S. Draganovic, a Croatian Catholic priest who lived in Rome after the war. Father Draganovic was allegedly involved in concealing Ante Pavelić (the head of the puppet state of Croatia in Yugoslavia) at St. Jerome's College in Rome, and in obtaining a passport for Klaus Barbie (the Nazi head of the region of Lyons in France). Yet it is not altogether clear that the evidence presented is irrefutable, especially since what these articles revealed does not tell us much more than what was already made

known in two articles by Charles R. Allen Jr., printed in *Reform Judaism* back in 1983.

There are valid reasons for reserving judgment about what the Vatican really knew of Father Draganovic's activities. Not only did the Vatican refuse to grant the Pavelić regime diplomatic recognition, but Ante Pavelić himself had more than once tried, without success, to persuade the Holy See to dismiss Cardinal Aloysius Stepinac from the See of Zagreb during the war. As head of the Catholic hierarchy in Yugoslavia during the first two years (1941-43) of Pavelić's regime, Cardinal Stepinac had actually protested 34 times against the persecutions of Jews and Serbs and against the regime's collaborationist policies with the Nazis. Among those rebuked in these protests were priests, such as Father Draganovic, whose religious and nationalist zeal blinded their moral judgment with respect to the nature of their actions.

**C**atholics in occupied France, especially Jesuits and Dominicans around Lyons, did oppose the collaborationist policies of the French with the Nazis. It is very doubtful, then, that what Klaus Barbie did received the formal support of the Catholic Church in Lyons, which was a center for the Resistance during the war. On the contrary, Klaus Barbie tried to thwart the help being given to Jews by Catholics like Pierre Chaillet, S.J., who almost single-handedly won the staunch support of Cardinal Pierre Gerlier, then Archbishop of Lyons. Thus, with ecclesiastical approbation, the opinion of the French in the area under Barbie's jurisdiction was consolidated against collaborating with the Nazis and in favor of assisting the Jews.

Perhaps the Vatican (with the United States), during the confusion and panic of those early days of the cold war,

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«Vincent A. Lapomarda, S.J., is associate professor of history and coordinator of the Holocaust Collection at the College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, Mass.»

was plagued by a siege mentality that allowed the political and religious zeal of certain functionaries to prevail in an attempt to check Communism at a time when the world did not know as much (or was not as concerned) about war criminals as it does today.

Yet, as Vatican expert Robert A. Graham, S.J., quoted in Father Hunt's column (5/24), has said, one cannot forget that the humanitarian work of the Vatican during the aftermath of World War II made it almost impossible for some of its personnel, involved in the relocation of displaced persons, to identify Nazi war criminals. Vatican officials engaged in refugee work were not equipped to recognize criminals of any kind; their major preoccupation was to assist the helpless and the homeless. If a cleric like Father Draganovic took advantage of the Vatican's humanitarian efforts to conceal the criminal identities of certain persons, that is truly reprehensible.

Since the U.S. Government, with all its resources, was not altogether diligent in bringing Nazi criminals to justice, it is not surprising that a number of them were able to escape because some key persons rationalized that their assistance was expedient for survival during the Cold War. If Father Draganovic was indeed guilty of knowingly helping Nazi war criminals to escape justice, we know that he paid for this with his life when he was apprehended in 1967 and, after a trial, apparently was executed by the Yugoslav Government, a point that the sensational revelations about him failed to bring out.

Despite what the documents from the Army Counterintelligence Corps reveal, there appears to be no substantial difference in the matter contained therein when compared to the allegations against the Vatican reported more than two years ago in such secular papers as *The New York Times* (1/26/84). The documents in question also may be quite vulnerable to criticism as examples either of disinformation or of intelligence based on hearsay.

Apart from the role of Catholics in helping alleged war criminals, there is the greater problem of the way people in general view the alleged failure of the Catholic Church to help the Jews at the time of the Nazi persecutions. Much of this historical illiteracy stems from the publication of Rolf Hochhuth's "The Deputy" in 1964, a play that presented a distorted view of Pope Pius XII at the time of the Holocaust. Few will deny the effectiveness of fictional ac-

counts in conveying an idea, even a questionable one, about the past.

If it is true that the story of the Holocaust has been told mainly by Jews, it is understandable that their interpretation has prevailed, much like the view of Anglo-Saxon historians about the role of the Catholic Church in American history prior to the 20th century. While Jewish historians may legitimately inquire why Christians were not more compassionate toward the Jews during the Nazi persecutions, such an inquiry is evidently rooted in their prevailing perspective about that horrible period.

**C**ontrary to the conventional wisdom, Pope Pius XII was very compassionate toward the Jews during World War II. An editorial in *The New York Times* (12/25/42) praised the Pope as "a lonely voice crying out of the silence of a continent" at the very height of the Nazi domination of Europe. François Delpech, a French scholar, found that Archbishop Cesare Orsenigo, papal nuncio to Berlin, had protested at least 300 times against the actions of the Third Reich. Even Golda Meir, Israeli Foreign Minister at the time of Pope Pius XII's death, declared: "When fearful martyrdom came to our people in the decade of Nazi terror, the voice of the Pope was raised for the victims."

Another Israeli official, Pinchas E. Lapid, wrote in 1967 that the Catholic Church was effective in helping to save from 700,000 to 860,000 Jews during the Holocaust. If one recalls the saying in the Talmud that saving a single life is like saving the whole world, it is very difficult to accept the view that Christians were lacking in compassion when millions of their coreligionists were being imprisoned and slaughtered and while Christianity itself was engaged in a struggle for survival against Nazism.

In "The Jesuits and the Holocaust," published in *The Journal of Church and State* (Spring 1981), I mentioned the large number of Jesuit intellectuals such as Stanislaw Bednarski, Victor Dillard, Albert Maring and Roger Regout who lost their lives because they were considered enemies of the Nazis. Others mentioned in the article also risked their lives to help Jews escape the Nazi terror in various countries of Europe.

When, several years ago, NBC aired the two-part miniseries on the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, there was little attention paid to the humanitarian efforts of the Catholic Church. This presentation did not even mention the efforts of a Hungarian priest, Jacob Raile, S.J., who like Raoul Wallenberg risked his life to save the Jewish people in Budapest during those dark months of World War II.

Born in Vaskút (Bács-Kiskun), Hungary, on Oct. 6, 1894, Jacob Raile entered the Jesuit order at the age of 18 on Aug. 14, 1912. Having prepared for the priesthood in Austria during the 1920's, he was working in Budapest when the Nazi occupation of the country began. Once Hungary was occupied, the Nazis stepped up the deporta-

***The Catholic Church was effective  
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tions of Hungarian Jews to extermination camps, already begun before the occupation. At this point the Catholic bishops of the country reacted vigorously.

One of them, Cardinal József Mindszenty, then Bishop of Veszprém, was instrumental in having the Jesuit church of the Sacred Heart at 25 Mária Utca in Budapest become the center of Catholic efforts to help the Jews. With the approval of his Jesuit superior, Father Raile, who was the procurator for the Hungarian Jesuits and the administrator of a Jesuit house in Budapest, became the leader of a band of Jesuits who risked their lives to save Jews from deportation.

**A**n organization known as the Arrow Cross (the Nyilas) was one of the major problems for anyone engaged in trying to save Jews in Budapest during the fall and winter of the last year of the war. Its members, mostly anti-Semitic and sympathetic to the Nazis, sought to ferret out Jewish refugees concealed in various places, particularly in religious houses. However, Father Raile was so adept at outwitting the opposition that he charmed at least one S.S. captain into assuring him that the Jesuit could rely on the Germans to take care of the intruders from the Arrow Cross should its members continue their harassment. Eventually the priest was able to handle the situation by having Christian refugees dressed like police on duty around the Jesuit property.

At the time of the crackdown on the Jews, housing was available near the Jesuit church in a building that served as the center of activities for Catholic organizations such as the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Here there were more than some 60 small rooms at the disposal of Father Raile, who used the building to house as many as 180 persons, both hunted Jews and political refugees. Since the occupants generally were a floating population, it is difficult to estimate the number that received his assistance during the Nazi occupation of Budapest.

Béla Fábíán, who was president of the Independent National Democratic Party in Hungary until the Nazis came, wrote that Father Raile's name was permanently linked with that of Raoul Wallenberg, who had helped many of the 130,000 Hungarian Jews rescued from the Nazis in Budapest. Béla Fábíán himself spent time as a political prisoner in a number of concentration camps, including Auschwitz. In "An Undelivered Eulogy" (AMERICA, 9/24/49), Fábíán wrote that "a smile used to appear on the face of Budapest's Jews at the mention of Father Raile's name."

Thanks to the rather large farm that the

Jesuits had outside the city, Father Raile was able to obtain, despite governmental control, the food necessary to feed so many fugitives. Because he could speak impeccable German, Father Raile was able to get past the guards and bring out of the ghetto a number of Jews on various pretexts and conceal them on Jesuit property.

The ingenious Father Raile went so far as to reproduce proper identity papers, even baptismal certificates from various parishes and what appeared to be genuine documents forged with the special stamp of the German eagle, in a country where there were 100,000 Catholics of Jewish background. In his *Black Book on the Martyrdom of Hungarian Jewry* (Zurich, 1948), Jenő Lévai records that "all day long [Father Raile] used to pull strings in the town, procuring false certificates of baptism for his protégés, the number of which increased at the rate of at least one or two a day."

Not only did Father Raile succeed, with the help of other Jesuits, in hiding those Jewish men who were bankers, lawyers and merchants (they lived in the Jesuit residence dressed in clerical garb). He also had at his disposal two houses in the same area where he hid about 50 Jewish women. For all these, Father Raile had a free hand in obtaining the shelter, food and clothing needed for Hungarian Jews at a time when 600,000 Jews were being deported to Auschwitz.

Once a Jew living in the Jesuit residence wandered off to a nearby tavern. Since this was dangerous for the others concealed by the Jesuits, Father Raile went in search of him. Although the man had already been seized by the Gestapo, the Jesuit was able to convince the occupation authorities that the man was employed at the Jesuit house and that the Jesuits wanted him back. Father Raile prevailed



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***A large number  
of Jesuit intellectuals lost their lives  
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and ended the possibility of the fugitive revealing under the influence of either drink or torture how the Jesuits were concealing Jews in Budapest.

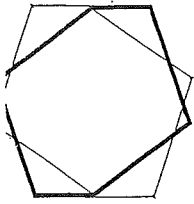
When the Communists took over Hungary after the war, Father Raile was eventually forced into exile here in the United States, leaving behind his mother and two brothers. He took an assignment at Boston College High School (located then in the South End of Boston), teaching German. When he was not teaching, Father Raile was on the lecture circuit explaining to American audiences the position of the church in his native land as the trial of his friend Cardinal Mindszenty was making headlines.

Father Raile was regarded in New England as knowledgeable on church affairs in Hungary as they related to the Communists. What he did on behalf of the Jewish people has remained largely unknown to most Catholics in this country at that time and to many historians of the

Holocaust since. When Father Raile was returning from a lecture, his car was struck by a truck on a highway, and he died in Newark, N.J., on Sept. 6, 1949.

At Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, Raoul Wallenberg and a number of others, including Catholic priests, are appropriately commemorated with trees planted in their honor along the Avenue of the Just. Yet Father Raile remains unknown and unrecognized among the "Righteous Gentiles" who risked their lives to help the Jewish people at the time of the Holocaust. To remember Catholics like him is to honor not only all those victims of the Nazi persecutions, but also those who risked their lives to defend human rights in those horrible years. As Jenő Lévai, author of *Hungarian Jewry and the Papacy* (London, 1968), has declared, Father Raile was "one of the most important leaders of the Budapest rescue operations."

If there is a bias against Catholics in historical writings about the Holocaust today, the blame for this must be shared partially by those of us who do that sort of work. Jews have given Christians an excellent example to imitate in telling their story about the Holocaust. Even with the 12 volumes of documents published by the Holy See and the works available from other European sources concerning the Catholic Church in World War II, there is still a long road for Catholics to travel before a more balanced view of the role of the Catholic Church in World War II becomes widespread. ■



**The Graduate School and University Center**  
of The City University of New York

Graduate Center: 33 West 42 Street, New York, N.Y. 10036-8099

June 24, 1987

Dr. Mordecai Paldiel  
Director  
Department for the Righteous  
Yad Vashem  
Jerusalem  
ISRAEL

Dear Dr. Paldiel:

I am writing with reference to your inquiry relating to Father Jacob Raile. While in my Politics of Genocide I have only a succinct reference to Father Raile (p. 866; obviously my sources at the time were inadequate to do justice to him), the documentation you enclosed clearly demonstrates that he was one of the few who, at the risk of his own life, worked for the rescuing of Jews during the Arrow Cross terror reign in Budapest. The horrors of that reign are described in my and in innumerable other works. It took great courage and unflinching devotion to the principles of humanity to provide succor to the persecuted Jews. In light of the evidence submitted by you I have no hesitation in supporting the request that he be recognized as a Righteous Gentile. I am convinced that he satisfies Yad Vashem's criteria for this coveted title.

With all my best wishes,

Cordially,

Randolph L. Braham  
Distinguished Professor and Director  
Institute for Holocaust Studies

RLB:kk

JESUIT COMMUNITY  
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20057

February 27, 1987

Rev. Vincent Lapomarda, S.J.  
Associate Professor of History  
College of the Holy Cross  
Worcester, MA 01610

Dear Fr. Lapomarda,

I have read with great interest your article in the Dec. 27, 1986 issue of the America magazine about Fr. Jacob Raile, S.J.

In your article you are referring to Fr. Raile as "the leader of a band of Jesuits who risked their lives to save Jews from deportation". I was member of that band.

During the siege of Budapest (Oct. 1944 - Febr. 1945) I had to interrupt my Regency year and stayed with my family in Buda in a two-apartment building. The tenants of the other apartment left Hungary with the retreating Germans. After consultation with Jesuits, including Fr. Raile, we decided that we are going to protect Jewish children in the empty apartment. I approached a Franciscan priest, a friend of mine, who had close connection with the Swedish Red Cross. With his help, shortly after, the staff of Rada Wallenberg brought fourteen Jewish children to us around Oct. 20. They were between seven and fourteen years of age. Most of them were baptized Protestants.

When my mother needed a helper to take care of the children, I went to Fr. Raile about it. A few days later he sent us a middle-aged Jewish lady, convert to Catholicism. Her name was not on the list of persons protected by the Swedish Red Cross. But we took her in anyway. Her sleeping accomodation was in a trunk in the boiler room covered with coal.

Food for the children was supplied by the Swedish Red Cross and Fr. Raile. On one occasion the agents of the Arrow Cross took the children away for one night. After the Russians occupied the area (around Jan. 15, 1945), we delivered the children to their friends and relatives. All of them survived.

Your report about Fr. Raile is totally accurate. You probably know that after the war he continued his work of charity. He was one of the principal organizers of the Papal Relief Program helping thousands of people in the devastated city. In this connection

he had to deal frequently with Western relief agencies and Western currencies. In the confusion of the time everybody was doing it. The Hungarian currency was worthless. Many essential things could be obtained only for dollar. When I needed \$ 35 to pay for my plane ticket from Prague to Brussels in Oct. 1947, he found it. In the meantime the Communist pressure was mounting. When he noticed that he came under suspicion of illegal transactions, he left the country. This is how he was forced into exile.

Thank you for your interest in Fr. Raile.

With best wishes,

*Joseph Zrinyi, S.J.*

Rev. Joseph Zrinyi, S.J.  
Associate Prof. of Economics

Jesuit Community

F O R D H A M U N I V E R S I T Y Bronx, N. Y. 10458

July 10, 1988

Dr. Mordecai Paldiel  
Director, Dept. for the Righteous  
P.O.B. 3477  
Jerusalem  
Israel

Dear Dr. Paldiel,

This is a rather belated answer to your letter of August 16 1987 regarding Fr. Jacob Raile.

In the meantime I have been expecting answers to my investigation but I will not wait any longer and send you the data I could get so far.

I am enclosing an article, An Undelivered Eulogy, by Dr. Béla Fábián that appeared in America, September 24, 1949. Dr. Fábián, who was himself a Jew, died several years ago.

The following story was told me by Msgr. Béla Varga, President of the Hungarian National Committee, who resides at 225 East 72nd Street, New York, NY 10031. Msgr. Varga was sought by the Nazis and was hidden by Fr. Raile in the Jesuit house in Horánszky utca together with some one hundred Jews and other persons persecuted by the Nazis. Fr. Raile managed somehow to feed and protect all his charges. He befriended a Gestapo officer and persuaded him secretly to help Jews and others sought by the Nazis. One day this Gestapo officer told Fr. Raile that he had got word that prominent Jews interned in the so called Gestapo House near the Forum movie theater would be transported to Germany. Fr. Raile, Raoul Wallenberg, the Gestapo officer and Msgr. Varga discussed the situation and decided to go the Gestapo House and bring out as many as they can. Msgr. Varga who lived under the assumed name of Fr. Rozmán, put on a cassock, changed his appearance and went with Fr. Raile, the Gestapo officer and Wallenberg to the Gestapo House. Wallenberg, however, did not enter the house, only Fr. Raile, Msgr. Varga and the Gestapo officer went in. Msgr. Varga was looking for his friends, Mr. & Mrs. Gábor Gyárfás, and for Mr. Samu Stern, president of the Hungarian Jewish Council. With the help of the Gestapo officer, they were able to get them out and to Father Raile's hiding place. Mr. Stern went to another hiding place later, but Mr. & Mrs. Gábor Gyárfás stayed there until their liberation. Later, Fr. Raile succeeded to bring to his house also their two sons, Péter and János. After the war, the Gyárfás family moved to Australia where Mr. & Mrs. Gábor Gyárfás died several

years ago. Their sons, Peter and János are still living in Australia. The address of Mr. Peter Gyárfás is 236 Oberon Street, Coogee 2034, NSW, Australia.

How did Fr. Raile succeed in hiding over a hundred persons without ever being discovered? He worked out elaborate hiding places and whenever there was a danger of inspection by the Nazis the alarm was sounded and people rushed to their hiding places.

If I get some more names and documentations concerning Fr. Raile's activities on behalf of Jewish persons, I will let you know.

With kindest regards and best wishes,

Sincerely yours,

131 17 *Andrew C. Varga S.J.*  
Andrew C. Varga, S.J.

Encl.

YAD VASHEM

Testimony Re: Raile, Jacob (S.J.) - (5111)

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I am Peter Andrew (Andras) Gyarfas, born in Budapest, Hungary, on the 14th April, 1922.

I am living at 236 Oberon Street, Coogee, N.S.W. 2034, Australia; and I am operating as a free-lance business and management consultant under my firm, P.A. Gyarfas and Associates, at the same address.

I am married, have two married daughters and three grandchildren who all live in Suburbs of Sydney.

I matriculated in 1940, and was living at the time with my parents at Delibab utca No. 6. in Budapest. I was top of my class but had my applications to enter the Technical University refused and worked in the factory owned by my father, Adria Silk Weaving Mills, as an apprentice loom tuner. In 1942, using considerable influence, my father managed to arrange entry for me in the Law Faculty of the University in Budapest, so I could get deferral of my call up into the "army service", that is into Jewish labour camps at the Russian front. I attended University as an external student while still working in the factory. In 1944 I passed my second year law exams with honours wearing the yellow star.

In April 1944, after the German occupation of Hungary, I had to answer a general blanket call-up and report at the village of Hangony. As a worker in an important industry, I was released into a special Jewish Work Camp of industrial workers, which for our area, Kobanya, was billeted in the local synagogue, and was taken from there to work every day.

After the Szalasi take-over in October, 1944 this camp was moved to other locations, (to some barracks and a school) in preparation to be marched to Germany. To one of these locations my father sent word to me through a trusted employee, Antal Pavel, to abscond without delay and proceed to the Jesuit Monastery in Horanszky utca and report to Father Raile.

My father was already there, and my brother joined us in a few days after absconding from a labour camp near Miskolc. We were put up in a room in the monastery, and when the siege conditions made it necessary, moved to the basement of the building. We lived there and received food and accommodation until we left in February, 1945 after Budapest was liberated. Father Raile has also arranged for several other members of my and my future wife's family to be hidden in adjoining colleges in the area run by orders of nuns.

*On Pavel*

YAD VASHEM

Testimony

RE: Raile, Jacob (S.J.) - (5111)

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I am certain my father and some of the others rescued who could afford it have made generous financial contributions which were fully used to obtain food under difficult circumstances for the persons rescued. I am not aware of the details of these financial arrangement, but I know for certain that a great number of others rescued under the same circumstances were not in a position to make any contribution at all.

I have not known Fater Raile prior to this time. As for the question of his motivation, I would presume it was basically to give protection to jews who have converted to the Catholic Faith, but this protection was also extended on humanitarian grounds to many other, such as the well known Orthodox Cantor Linetzky and his family.

Father Raile exerted strong influence in persuading his superiors and other members of the Jesuit Order to give protection to those rescued. (It was my impression that some needed very strong persuasion.) Father Raile has also shown great courage and has taken personal risks using his authority several times refusing entry to the vicious arrow-cross units.

Initially our presence was protected by using the right of the Monastery not to admit outsiders past a certain point. (Female members of our families in the adjoining colleges were all passed of as refugees from Transylvania, fleeing from the advancing Russian troops.) At the later stage, after the city was completely surrounded, everybody including kitchen staff and a Hungarian military unit stationed there, must have been aware of our presence.

We did not have much contact with other members of the order, except Father Raile and a Brother Janossy. As food shortage after the liberation was critical, several of the rescued stayed on in the basement of the monastery, survived on the food supplied and were given provisions when they left.

I have lost contact with Father Raile after the end of the war; I understand for political reasons a great number of the members of the order have left Hungary. I heard that Brother Janossy has died while beeing interrogated by communist authorities, and a few years later father Raile was the victim of a fatal traffic accident in America.

I can only guess the total number of jews rescued, as some were even hiding from each other, but in the actual Jesuit Monastery only the number must have been close to 200.



YAD VASHEM

Testimony RE: Raile, Jacob (S.J.) - (5111)  
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I can only remember the names of a small number of those who did not come to Australia, such as:

Cantor Linetszky,  
 Dr. Kornhauser,  
 Hugo Kemeny, (Owner of Carpathia Textile Mill.  
 moved to Vienna, now deceased.)

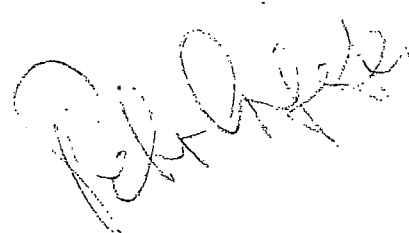
Those who came to Australia:

- ✓ Gabor Gyarfás, (my father, now deceased.)
- ✓ John Gyarfás (my brother, 21 Carrington Rd. Bellevue Hill)
- ✓ Lesley Huszar (now deceased)
- ✓ Dr. Ladanyi, (a lawyer, now deceased)
- ✗ George Ladanyi (his son,) somewhere in Sydney
- ✓ Robert Halmos (now deceased)
- ✓ Robert Holmes (Halmos, his son, 34/4 Bligh Place, Randwick, 2031)
- ✓ Paul Holmes, (Halmos, other son, Noosa, Queensland)
- ✓ Lesley Reeves (Revesz) 14 Olola Ave. Vaucluse.

Although we have not kept in touch with our rescuers, my wife and her mother were in contact with the nuns of the college. Even after their order has been disbanded, my wife corresponded with one of them, (Sister Viralda,) and visited her several times in Hungary right until her death this year.

I have no doubts that the protection I have received has probably saved my life and that of many others. It can be said that by that time the end of the war was close and this was obvious to most people, but at the same time I can say that the danger to my life was greater than at any other time during the war. Obviously many decent people contributed to the work of rescue, but it was the initiative and leadership of Father Raile that was needed to organize this difficult mission successfully.

I will be grateful to Father Raile and his memory as long as I live; I am certain so will many others. I also wish to express my admiration to Yad Vashem for undertaking this highly moral task and giving me the opportunity to make a record of my gratitude.



## Photographs



*Fr. Jakob Raile, S.J.*

*Sacred Heart Catholic Church at 25 Maria utca in Budapest, the Jesuit community where Fr. Raile hid and saved hundreds of Hungarian Jews.*



*Plaque outside Sacred Heart Catholic Church commemorating Fr. Raile's heroism.*





*The grave (front row, center) of Fr. Jakob Raile, S.J. at the Jesuit cemetery in Weston, MA*



*The memorial plaque in front of Fr. Jakob Raile's grave.*



Certificate of honor from Yad Vashem, designating Fr. Jakob Raile as "Righteous Among the Nations."

