

Hirschmann, Ira

(1901–1989), Jewish American businessman who helped rescue Jews during the Holocaust.

In 1943 Jewish rescue organizations asked Hirschmann to check out the possibility of shuttling Jews from Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary to safety via Turkey, a neutral country. In February 1944 Hirschmann traveled to Turkey on behalf of the American government's War Refugee Board (WRB). He and the American ambassador to Turkey managed to convince the Turkish authorities to allow refugees to land in Turkey, and ensure the rescue of or at least better conditions for thousands of Jewish refugees in Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary. In fact, almost 7,000 Jews reached Turkey and Palestine with the help of Hirschmann and the WRB.

Next, Hirschmann helped convince the Romanian authorities to return to Romania the remaining 48,000 Jews who had been deported to Transnistria. During the summer of 1944, Hirschmann influenced Monsignor Angelo Roncalli to provide Hungarian Jews in hiding with baptismal certificates; the Romanian authorities to allow Hungarian Jews to leave Romania for Turkey; and the Bulgarian government to stop persecuting its country's Jews and restore them their full rights.

In 1946 Hirschmann was sent to inspect the situation of Jewish displaced persons in Germany as the special inspector for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. (see also Displaced Persons, Jewish.)