

Auschwitz Protocols

Two reports about the mass murders taking place at Auschwitz based on information provided by four escapees from the camp in 1944.

In April 1944 two Slovak Jews, Rudolf Vrba (originally Walter Rosenberg) and Alfred Wetzler, successfully escaped the infamous extermination camp at Auschwitz with the help of the camp's underground. They made their way to Slovakia, where they contacted Erwin Steiner, a member of the Jewish Council in Zilina. They met at Steiner's home, where they gave detailed testimony about the goings-on at Auschwitz, including how the camp worked, the number of Jews who had already been killed, and the Nazis' plans to deport and exterminate the 800,000 Jews of Hungary and 3,000 Czech Jews, who had been transferred to Auschwitz six months earlier. Steiner wrote a 30 page report based on the testimony, and sent it to Rabbi Michael Dov Weissmandel, a leader of the Slovak Working Group in Bratislava.

In mid-May the Working Group managed to send a message with a shortened version of the report to the representative of the Orthodox Va'ad ha-Hatsala (Rescue Committee) in Switzerland. The message also contained a plea to the Allies to help save Hungarian Jewry—the only major community that had not yet been annihilated—and to bomb Auschwitz and the railroad tracks leading up to it.

Rezso Kasztner of the Relief and Rescue Committee of Budapest also received a copy of Steiner's report. However, he did not publicize it, perhaps because he did not want to jeopardize the rescue negotiations between Hungarian Jewish leaders and Nazi representatives. Copies were also forwarded to the Jewish Council of Hungary, the Regent of Hungary, Miklos Horthy, and the Vatican.

In late May two more Jews, Czeslaw Mordowicz and Arnost Rosin, also escaped Auschwitz and reached Slovakia. New information about Auschwitz that they provided was added to the initial report. The expanded protocols were then sent through various channels to the West. The news reached the US State Department on June 16, while the BBC broadcast parts of the report on June 18. Finally, the free world knew the truth about Auschwitz.

