

Filderman, Wilhelm

(1882--1963), Romanian Jewish leader active in the rescue of his country's Jews.

Born in Bucharest, Filderman studied law and served in the Romanian parliament. He also acted as chairman of most of the important Jewish organizations in Romania, such as the Federation of Jewish Communities, the Union of Jewish Communities in the Regat [pre-World War I Romania], the Union of Romanian Jews, the Joint Distribution Committee's Romanian headquarters, and the Jewish Council.

In the fall of 1941 Filderman tried to stop the deportation of Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina to Transnistria, but was unsuccessful. He did succeed, though, in getting the government to cancel the order for Jews to wear the Jewish badge (see also Badge, Jewish). From 1941--1943 he sent aid to those Jews interred in Transnistria, and was even somewhat successful later on in getting them returned to their homes.

During spring and summer of 1942 Filderman established a secret Jewish leadership called the Jewish Council. This council was active in averting the Nazis' plan to deport the Jews of Romania to Poland during that fall. Filderman was able to turn the deportation into a national Romanian issue by convincing government officials that if they agreed to the Germans' demand, they would be dishonoring the institution of Romanian self-rule. Throughout the war, Filderman was in contact with important government officials, including the premier, Ion Antonescu, and his close colleague, Mihai Antonescu. He used those contacts to help improve the situation of his fellow Jews. However, his activities led to his deportation to Transnistria in May 1943. He continued working tirelessly for Jewish rights while there, and was allowed to return home in August. During that time the government had created a leadership alternative to Filderman, called the Jewish Center (*Centrala Evreilor*). However, they ultimately returned to Filderman and recognized him as the true leader of the Jewish community.

After Ion Antonescu was kicked out of office in 1944, Filderman continued his public activities. He fought for Jewish rights from 1944--1947, but was forced

to resign his posts and flee to France in 1948 after Jewish Communists took control of Romania's Jewish organizations. (see also Jewish Center, Romania.)