

Trocme, Andre

Pastor Andre Trocme was the spiritual leader of the Protestant congregation in the village of Le Chambon sur Lignon in Southeastern France. In 1942, he urged his congregation to give shelter to any Jew who should ask for it. The village and its outlying areas were quickly filled with hundreds of Jews. Some of them found permanent shelter in the hilly region of Le Chambon, until the liberation of France, and others were given temporary shelter until they were able to escape across the border, mostly to Switzerland. According to one estimate, some 5,000 Jews passed through Le Chambon and the surrounding villages in the three years during which the village served as a shelter for the Jews of Southern France. The Vichy authorities knew what was taking place, since it was impossible to hide such wide-scale rescue activities over time. They demanded that the pastor cease his activities. His response was clear-cut: "These people came here for help and for shelter. I am their shepherd. A shepherd does not forsake his flock... I do not know what a Jew is. I know only human beings."

Eventually, Trocme was arrested along with a number of his friends, but he was released after a few weeks, without having been persuaded by the authorities to sign a commitment to follow government orders regarding the Jews. The Germans arrested his cousin, Daniel Trocme, and sent him to Majdanek, where he died. Andre Trocme himself was forced to hide from the Germans. The residents of Le Chambon continued his legacy and provided shelter to Jews who hid in the homes of hundreds of the village's residents.

Andre Trocme, the spiritual leader, was able to leave his moral mark on his congregation, and to bring thousands of people together in the fulfillment of a supreme moral command. Thus, in this hilly region of Southeastern France, many Jews resided in relative calm until the end of the war, with the aid and encouragement of the local residents.