

Rescuing Jews from the Holocaust

Dr. Abraham Silberschein and Saly Mayer

Dr. Abraham Silberschein established the Relief Committee for the War-Stricken Jewish Population (RELICO) at Geneva, Switzerland, in September 1939. Quickly moving beyond relief work, he turned his efforts to helping Jews emigrate from Nazi territory and to informing the world at large about the Holocaust. As president of the Schweizerischer Israelitischer Gemeindebund (Federation of Swiss Jewish Communities), Saly Mayer assisted Jewish refugees who had fled from Germany and other Nazi-occupied countries. He also represented the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in Europe. By bribing Nazi officials with money brought illegally from the United States in 1942, he stopped deportation of Jews from Slovakia. In 1944 he arranged for a shipment of tractors to the Nazis in exchange for Heinrich Himmler's pledge to end the deportation of Jews from Budapest. In their zeal to rescue Jews by any means necessary, both men clashed with other Jewish leaders.

An October 27, 1941, return card to Relico in Geneva from a Jew in Poland, censored at Frankfurt, recorded receipt of a relief parcel of food.



Reliquis (No 247)
(Suisse)

August 25, 1944, postal card from Seldi Blum, a Jewish woman inmate at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp to Saly Mayer. Bergen-Belsen was the holding center for German Jews who were awaiting permission to emigrate.

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