

PRINCE CONSTANTIN KARADJA (1906-08)

He was born on 24 November 1889 and after leaving the College he qualified as a barrister. I am indebted to his great grandson, Stefan-N. Manescu, for help with this article and especially for the pictures below :-



1913



1916



1922 – as a Barrister at Inner Temple

He then became Romanian Consul at Budapest from 1920-25, followed by Consul General of Romania in Berlin from 1931-41 and director of the consular department in the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1941-44.

It was his role during WW2 that brought him to prominence, as he issued hundreds of Romanian visas to German Jews in Berlin, France and Hungary during this period.

The following is taken from a translation of an application for him to become honoured in Israel for his work during WW2.

Constantin Karadja was a diplomat in the Foreign Service of Romania and as such from 1931 to 1941 Romanian Consul General seated in Berlin. From 1941 to 1944 he was the director of the consular department in the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Thanks to his extraordinary commitment at diplomatic level over nearly one and a half decades, tens of thousands of Jews with Romanian nationality were extracted from the grasp of their Nazi pursuers. Through the commitment of Constantin Karadja more than 51,000 Jews could be saved from deportation to Auschwitz. His granddaughter, Mrs Irina Manescu, who lives with her family in Germany, will receive today (15 September 2005) the Yad Vashem-medal and certificate in Berlin.

The story of the Romanian diplomat Constantin Karadja deserves special attention.

His numerous documents deserve to be published. On the website of the embassy (<http://www.israel.de/>) you can find the minutes of a sub-commission meeting for the recognition of the "Righteous among the Nations", which took place on 18 April 2005 in Jerusalem:

Jerusalem, 18 April 2005: Minutes of the sub-commission meeting for the recognition of the "Righteous among the Nations" (excerpt)

File No. 10472 - Karadja Constantin - Romania

Dr. Govrin: The rescuer: Constantin Karadja (1889 - 1950), diplomat within the Foreign Service of Romania, who officiated as the Consul General of Romania in Berlin (1931 - 1941) and as director of the consular department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of fascist Romania (1941 - 1944), born in Holland, married a Romanian, specialised himself in England in international law. The request for his recognition as a Righteous among the Nations has been submitted to us by his granddaughter, who lives in Germany. She gave a substantial description of his intensive activity at diplomatic level for the rescue of Jews with Romanian nationality in Germany (1938 - 1941), in France and Hungary (1943 -1944). His granddaughter points on the fact that due to his assistance for Jews of Romanian and German nationality, the German authorities decided to label him as a "persona non grata." In the submitted documents there is no direct proof for this but as we will see in the following, it is plausible.

In consequence of the inquiry to "Yad Vashem", Dr. M. Fladiel asked Dr. Radu Ioanid for supporting evidence. Mr Ioanid is the director of the international archive project in the Holocaust Museum in Washington and author of the book "The Holocaust in Romania". This book contains a separate chapter on the fate of the Romanian Jews living abroad (under the Nazi regime in the occupied countries), of which thousands were saved thanks to the involvement of Karadja. The archive of the Holocaust Museum in Washington sent dozens of copies of Karadja's official documents addressed to Ion Antonescu, the dictator of fascist Romania in the years 1940 - 1944, as well as to the vice- Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Mihai Antonescu. In these documents Karadja urged the urgent necessity to seize appropriate measures in order to enable the Jews with Romanian nationality living abroad to return to Romania. These documents were stored by the archive of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and prove that he had great courage and was without fear in his inquiries to the leaders of the fascist regime in his country, which first accepted his position. However, this was later revised, as they gave way to the Nazi regime in Germany. Thanks to his efforts, some dozen Jews from Germany (until July 1942), approx. 600 Jews from France and 51,537 Jews from Hungary returned between January and May 1944, just a few days before the remaining Jews were sent to the extermination camps at Auschwitz. In all his efforts Karadja relied on the principles of human rights and international law. In addition, he could not be deterred from warning Ion and Mihai Antonescu of the fact that if Romania did not respect these principles it would be held to account at the end of the war.

In my opinion his numerous documents should receive broad publication.

Here are some of the main points:

1. In the years 1938 - 1939 he reports continuously about the Anti-Semitic policy of National Socialist Germany including the events of the "Night of Broken Glass", the sanctions against the Jews and the deportation policy behind the German border. Among other things he stresses: "If we will not enable the poor refugees (with Romanian nationality) to accommodate in Romania or in another, non-European country, they could be imprisoned in a concentration camp, in which many hundreds will disappear without a trace". Thus he demands "that the requests of the Jews with Romanian nationality, who ask to be enabled to return, should be treated with priority and without delay for humanitarian reasons."

2. On 7 March 1941 (during his term in office as a Consul General in Berlin) he receives instruction from the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to register the word "Jew" into the passports of the Romanian Jews. On 24 March 1942, Karadja sends a protest letter to the Romanian Minister for Foreign Affairs, in which he requests they take back this instruction and justifies this in such a way: "From a humanitarian point of view we will even worsen the situation of the poor people (i.e. the Jews with Romanian nationality in Germany), by putting up unnecessary obstacles into the way of their exodus, without taking any advantage of this administrative regulation. We can be sure that with the end of the war, the opinion of the American and Anglo-Saxon public, which also at present is not particularly positive, will interpret this regulation as further annoyance and missing humanity and will settle accounts with us in due time." He suggests not registering the word "Jew" into the passports but the letter X, which should only be known to the Romanian authorities. His opinion is accepted and the instruction is taken back.

3. With his appointment as the director of the consular department in the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he succeeds in passing an instruction of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs which is sent on 11.11.1941 for information purposes to the Romanian diplomatic agencies and consulates in Germany and the occupied European states and in which it is stated that: "All Romanians abroad must be protected without distinction,

and any discrimination against people or their possession must be reported." This means that the Romanian agencies must advocate the protection of their Jewish citizens in front of the German authorities. They thus have to be protected against the deportation and the expropriation of their possession, or by issuing them travel approvals for their return, containing the words "bon pour se rendre en Roumanie". This situation changes in August 1942. The Germans state that they agreed with Antonescu to cancel the instruction and to treat the Jews with Romanian nationality like the German authorities treat the local Jews. No documents concerning this agreement could be found in the German archives. Karadja for his part does not agree with the annulment of the instruction from November 1941. He continues his numerous efforts to make the new instruction, which is supported by the Romanian Minister for Foreign Affairs, invalid. He refers to the fact that this regulation lacks any legal basis.

4. In April 1943 Karadja succeeds to avert the worst. He suggests granting to the returning Jews a limited time to stay in Romania, until they have the possibility to emigrate to Palestine or to other countries far away from Europe. The Romanian Foreign Minister approves Karadja's demand to let Jews with Romanian nationality return to Romania from Germany, France, Greece and Italy, however under the condition, that they are sent after their arrival for a limited time to Transnistria, until they find asylum in other countries outside Europe. After Karadja's interference, the condition is cancelled by Ion Antonescu himself. An important reason for this is the approaching war front towards the Romanian border, whereby the defeat of Germany seems already certain.

5. Although National Socialist Germany was an ally of fascist Romania, Karadja warned in his letter to the Romanian Minister for Foreign Affairs of 24.11.1943 about how the Germans treat the Jews with Romanian citizenship and stressed: "The international law, the principles of the universal ethic and the fundamental rights of humanity were not taken into consideration by the German authorities and they also denied our rights, by discriminating against our citizens." Great courage was needed to express oneself that way at that time.

6. With increasing deportation of Jews from occupied France to the camps of Auschwitz, the authorities of Vichy made it possible for children with Romanian nationality to return to Romania provided that they were accommodated there. The authorities of Vichy set an ultimatum for an answer until the end of December 1943. If they should receive no answer up to then, it was said, the Jews would be deported. And again it was owed to the incessant actions and the pressure of Karadja on the authorities in Romania that the permission of the Romanian Minister for Foreign Affairs was given to the Jews to come in groups from Paris over Vienna and Bucharest to Romania. Karadja communicates in a letter to the Romanian Minister of the Interior of 29.02.1944 that a first group of Jews left France by train on 25 February 1944 with Romania as destination. The second train traveled on 6 March and the last one on 26 March. The total number of survivors was not called, which was not unintentional, since tensions were raised between Karadja and the Minister of the Interior because of the bad relationships with the Romanian Jews living abroad. 600 Jews were concerned, although the historian Dr. Jean Anchel estimated their number at 4,000.

7. With the beginning of deportations of the Hungarian Jews to the extermination camps in 1944, Karadja advocated again vehemently that the Jews with Romanian nationality could return to Romania. The Romanian Minister of the Interior made this dependent on the fact that the number of entering Jews would correspond to the number of Jews leaving the country to Hungary (i.e. of those with Hungarian nationality). Karadja opposed very decisively and again he received the approval of the Romanian Minister for Foreign Affairs. As a result more than 51,000 Jews could be saved from deportation to Auschwitz. It should be mentioned that Karadja stresses in his letter to the Romanian Minister for Foreign Affairs of 30.06.1944 among other things: "If these Jews in Hungary are not enabled to return to Romania they could face death there and the future authorities of Hungary will not miss the opportunity to report to the Englishmen and Americans of tomorrow, that we sent a large number of poor Jews to death."

Finally I would like to say that from my point of view there is no doubt about the fact that Karadja's decisive actions in favour of the Jews with Romanian nationality led to the rescue of thousands in Germany, France and Hungary. One needs courageousness of the heart to act as he did it with diplomatic means. In the file there is no complete testimony about the fact that they were saved from certain death, by returning to Romania. But the fact of their rescue is well-known to the Jewish community in Bucharest, which had furnished as a first admission office. Furthermore he is called in official documents, which are in the Romanian archive.

Even if it seems that Karadja thereby did not endanger his life, I recommend recognizing and honouring him for his actions as a "Righteous among the Nations".

On Tuesday 6th January 2009, the College held a Commemoration Service in the Chapel to remember and honour this former pupil, an outstanding man, recognised for his humanitarian achievements. See full article <http://www.framlingham.suffolk.sch.uk/news/details?contentid=24185> Also see below the article that appeared in the East Anglian Daily Times on 9th January 2009



A TRUE HERO: Above left, the Chaplain, Mr Steve Waters, is seen with the head of Framlingham College, Mrs Gwen Randall, and Rabbi Dr Andrew Goldstein after the service to commemorate Prince Constantin Karadja, above right

Photographs:
CONTRIBUTED

Remembering prince who saved 52,000 Jews

A SPECIAL service has been held at a school to honour a former student who saved more than 52,000 Jews from the Nazis.

Framlingham College held a commemoration service to

remember Prince Constantin Karadja.

It has been just over 100 years since he passed through the doors of the college before going on to study at Cambridge and then in London where he

specialised in International Law.

During his lifetime he is documented as having saved more than 52,000 Jewish people of Romanian citizenship from the clutches of the Nazis –

against opposition from his own government.

Rabbi Dr Andrew Goldstein from Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue recited *Kaddish*, the Jewish prayer of mourning, during the service.

Below is the original picture taken in the Chapel on 6 January 2009.



Stefan has helped a couple of Swedish authors publish a book about Prince Karadja. Unfortunately it is in Swedish only at the moment! Here is a link to the book <http://www.sivart.se/b/04/karadja.html>

We are still hoping that he will be included in a future book by Sir Martin Gilbert and in a TV documentary by Michael King. We also hope that Francis Harper's work entitled "A Prince in Time" will be made into a TV documentary.

