International Deception: The 1944 Red Cross Visit to

Theresienstadt and The Fraud of the Century

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1. **Theresienstadt**

We knew others would come to this place,

family, neighbors, strangers

to this place Hitler gave to the Jews

this “haven for the elderly.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

On June 23, 1944, the Nazis finally opened the gates, allowing the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to visit the Czechoslovakian fortress town of Terezín. In 1941, the Nazis turned the town into a concentration camp for elderly, veteran, and prominent Jews from the Protectorate. They called the camp Theresienstadt and insisted that it was an *Endlager* (end camp) for the Jews lucky enough to gain admittance.[[2]](#footnote-2) Advertising the camp as a “spa camp” or retirement town, the Nazis enticed many Jews in Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and the Netherlands to apply and pay handsomely for a chance to live out the rest of their lives in comfort, tranquility, and peace, within the walls of the town.[[3]](#footnote-3) Nazi propaganda concerning the camp not only fooled many Jews but it also fooled many in the international community.

After a transport of Danish Jews to Theresienstadt in 1943, pressure from the Danish government and the ICRC finally convinced the Nazis to allow an international delegation to visit the camp. Hopeful to use the visit as propaganda, and conclusive evidence dispelling the rumors about the terrible conditions at German concentration camps, the Nazis began an eight month beautification project at Theresienstadt. Their goal was to dupe the world into believing that Theresienstadt was a decent place to live for its Jewish residents. When the three man delegation arrived on June 23, 1944, Theresienstadt had undergone a face-lift. The Nazis forced the Jews to paint and renovate buildings, clean and polish the streets; and construct parks and recreational facilities. The Nazis also deported thousands of Jews to alleviate the apparent overcrowding of the town. The Nazis spared no expense in orchestrating a vast and elaborate scheme to deceive the delegation into believing that Theresienstadt was, in fact, a “spa town” for privileged Jews. They created stores, planted flowers and gardens, and trained a selection of healthy Jews as actors for their encounter with the delegation. The visitors also experienced athletic, cultural, and artistic performances during their visit.

After the visit, the two Danish diplomats (Dr. Frans Hvass and Dr. E. Juel-Henningsen) and the Swiss ICRC representative (Dr. Maurice Rossel) filed reports that portrayed the camp in a positive light. The wool had successfully been drawn over their eyes to such an extent that some international concern over the camp diminished. Soon after the charade ended, the Nazis resumed deportations to the East and dismantled some of the improvements made pursuant to the beautification program. Theresienstadt served its propagandistic purpose. Although the ICRC and Dr. Rossel underwent extreme criticism following the war, many questions remained unanswered. How did the Germans perpetrate such an elaborate hoax? Why hadn’t the Jewish actors done anything to alert the members as to the true nature of the camp? Most of all, how was it possible to fool three highly educated men into believing such a farce? The case of Theresienstadt was one of unparalleled deception upon the Jews, the international delegation, and many throughout the world. Nevertheless one question remains; was the sham so perfectly executed so as to avert all suspicion?

Declassified archival documents, the official reports of Dr. Rossel and the Danish delegation, and an interview with Dr. Rossel conducted decades after the visit hold some of the shocking answers. Given the circumstances of coercion, the Jews at Theresienstadt who assisted in the charade had little choice other than to cooperate. The international delegation, on the other hand, might have suspected deception; nevertheless the members were uncritical, refused to delve deeper, and ultimately, failed to report the truth. Regardless, even if the delegates had seen past the sham and informed the world of the truth in June 1944, such knowledge might not have made much difference to the international response. The dictates of war limited the feasibility of additional rescue efforts. Further, the erroneous reports appeased the Nazis, leading them to permit ICRC relief and aid packages into the camp. For that reason, because the reports were mistaken, they had some positive short-term implications for the Jews of Theresienstadt; the fraud of the century, it turns out, was far more complicated than originally believed.

As the members of the international delegation simply reported “what they saw,” the United States suspected the farce but believed that its bets option was to allow the Nazis to think that it, too, had been duped. The Nazis, confident in their deception to the world, continued to allow aid packages to flow into the camp and treated the Jews well throughout the summer, unfortunately, they resumed deportations to the East in September. In the end, the Nazi machine successfully used Jewish forced labor in the beautification process; it exploited healthy Jews to participate in the international visit; it fooled the ICRC and Danes who wrote favorable reports of the camp; and it diminished some international scrutiny over Nazi concentration camps. Despite these Nazi successes, the ICRC and the U.S. government knew the truth about Theresienstadt around the time of the 1944 Red Cross visit.

1. **Beautification**

The Nazis told us that our work would help protect us

and others we knew who would be arriving.

So we sawed, painted, hammered.

The Nazi promises proved to be nothing

when names appeared on the transport lists

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As they marched to the station

climbed into cattle cars that trembled

as the impatient locomotive dragged them into the dark

of no more promises.[[4]](#footnote-4)

In September 1943, Danish officials learned that the Nazis planned to gather and deport the Jews of Denmark. The news immediately roused significant opposition from King Christian, the Danish government, as well as the people of Denmark. The Danes refused to believe the Nazi promise that the aged and unemployable would be brought to Theresienstadt to live in comfortable conditions. Distrusting the German sophistry and in defense of their compatriots, the Danes secretly evacuated most of Denmark’s 7,000 Jews to safety in Sweden. The eventual German roundup of Danish Jews resulted in the deportation of only 456, all of whom embarked for Theresienstadt.[[5]](#footnote-5) Thereafter, Danish and Swedish authorities began to demand the release of the Danish Jews. Despite their persistence, the Nazis were not inclined to acquiesce to the demands. Denmark sent medicine and supplies to Theresienstadt, requested a formal inspection of the camp, and consistently and unrelentingly applied pressure on top Nazi officials. In late 1943, Adolf Eichmann finally acceded to the demands for an inspection of the camp, but the Germans determined that a visit before May “would be undesirable.” Instead, the Nazis approved the international inspection to take place on June 23, 1944, eight months after the Danish deportation.[[6]](#footnote-6)

The delay was intentional. “Very upset and unfavorably impressed by their visit,” the German Red Cross (controlled by the Nazis), which visited Theresienstadt months before the ICRC, demanded improvements to the camp. Its reports found the camp to be “frightfully overcrowded” and the residents to be “seriously undernourished.”[[7]](#footnote-7) The intervening months proved to be critical for the Nazis, who planned to present Theresienstadt to the world as a model camp.[[8]](#footnote-8) The farce would require significant changes to the camp’s façade. In reality, structural improvements rarely benefitted the Jewish residents. Nevertheless, the Nazis soon enlisted Jewish forced labor in order to transform the camp into a display for the world to see. By late 1943, the Germans launched the *Verschönerungsaktion* (town beautification) of Theresienstadt. Hans Günther, commander of the SS in Prague, placed Colonel Karl Rahm in change of the massive undertaking.[[9]](#footnote-9) One of the first orders of business for Rahm was to reduce the population and overcrowding of the town.

On September 1, 1943 the population of Theresienstadt stood at 45,635.[[10]](#footnote-10) Through a series of deportations, beginning in September 1943 and continuing through June 1944, the Nazis deported thousands of Jews to the East. Anticipating a follow up investigation of Auschwitz in the near future, the Nazis sent nearly 10,000 Theresienstadt prisoners to Auschwitz in order to inaugurate the creation of a new “family camp” (once it was clear that a visit to Auschwitz would not occur, the Nazis liquidated most of the Jews at the “family camp”).[[11]](#footnote-11) The majority of the Jews deported from Theresienstadt arrived at death camps and perished in the gas chambers. With less than a month to go until the visit, and in order to display new and improved residential quarters, the Nazis ordered a final deportation of 7,500 Jews to Auschwitz (mostly young and able-bodied men). Despite a continuous stream of new arrivals, the Nazis successfully reduced the population of the camp to approximately 30,000 by early June 1944. Despite the significant reduction in population, signs of severe congestion persisted.[[12]](#footnote-12)

Although the Nazis sought to reduce the overcrowding of Theresienstadt, the creation of their own Potemkin village required a massive deployment of Jewish slave labor. Eichmann and Rahm thought of every detail in their scheme to beautify the camp. Rahm ordered Jewish laborers to repair and clean the streets and to tear down old and dilapidated buildings. Orders also required them to repair, clean, and paint all of the remaining structures in the town.[[13]](#footnote-13) In addition, the Jews assisted the Germans in converting overcrowded first floor living quarters into commercial spaces. “Block by block, the beautification program proceeded. The stores which had been converted into living quarters were now transformed into elegant shops, painted, refurbished, with charming outdoor signs designating them: ‘grocery,’ ‘bakery,’ ‘pharmacy,’ ‘lingerie,’ ‘perfumery.’”[[14]](#footnote-14) The SS even stocked the shelves with merchandise in order to convince the visitors of their authenticity.[[15]](#footnote-15)

The creation of stores required the relocation of Jews formerly residing in those spaces. Newly arrived Danish Jews and the *Prominenten* often received the best living assignments in spacious, open, and well-furnished first floor living quarters; they immediately became part of the scheme. Quite simply, new arrivals appeared healthy and had not yet suffered the pains of camp life. Most of the incumbent residents suffered from hunger, malnutrition, disease, insect infestations, and the other terrible camp conditions that weighed them down physically and emotionally. These prisoners could only be described as unhealthy, unhappy, and shabby in the eyes of the SS; they were not the healthy and happy Jews that the SS wanted the delegation to see. The Nazis crammed the emaciated masses into upper floor communal living spaces, featuring bunks that soared to three, four, and even five in height.[[16]](#footnote-16) The Nazis specifically refused to show the upper floors as part of their tour, thereby showcasing only the spaces and people that they chose to display. Unauthorized Jews were strictly prohibited from leaving their cramped spaces during the visitation. Anyone residing outside of the ambit of the parade route remained neglected and persisted in deplorable, unsanitary, and overcrowded conditions.

While few residents of Theresienstadt benefitted from the creation of new stores or living quarters, some ancillary aspects of beautification did improve their lives, albeit temporarily. As part of the beautification program, the Nazis planted splendid gardens, 1,200 rose bushes, and a grassy park in the town square. They also installed a series of artistic signs pointing to the newly created facilities and re-named streets. In addition, they constructed a music pavilion, bandstand, concrete benches, and meandering paths through the newly constructed central park.[[17]](#footnote-17) This once prohibited section of the ghetto became the picturesque centerpiece in which the Nazis hoped to deceive the world. Besides the park, the Nazis ordered Jewish laborers to erect a children’s playground, a new café (complete with sidewalk tables), a restaurant, library, court, synagogue, school, and a theater. In reality, the school never held classes; the court never tried many cases; the synagogue never held services. Renovations to the hospital, children’s quarters, and public kitchens also temporarily improved living conditions at the camp.[[18]](#footnote-18)

In addition to the structural improvements, the Nazis created a bank and even a unique currency, exclusive to the camp. As a method of rooting out any additional national currencies that the Jews of the ghetto still might have in their possessions, the Nazis made Theresienstadt Crowns the only acceptable currency of the camp; all others were forbidden. The new bank issued notes in denominations of one, two, five, ten, twenty, fifty, and one hundred Theresienstadt Crowns. Vera Schiff commented, “None had any value and nothing could have been bought for it, but the institution had a calming effect on us, for it had a ring of familiarity, a feature of the past. Only we had to overlook the eyesore on each bill, the face of Moses, disfigured with a long, hooked nose, adorned with a long beard…holding up the biblical tablets.”[[19]](#footnote-19) The new currency and the bank served as an attempt to portray a normalized society in the camp. Though the money was worthless, the Nazis even created a ledger account for each Jew, into which weekly salaries were purportedly credited. Ironically, after the war the Czech government actually allotted a small cash value for the surrender of these absurd notes.

Despite the incidental standard of living improvements resulting from beautification, survivors like Mirko Turma argued that mentally and spiritually Theresienstadt was brutal. He said that Theresienstadt was the “worst hell of the German hells because delusions and hope and macabre pretensions were nourished there: in other camps the Nazis wanted the prisoners to manifest their Dantean suffering by screaming in infernal pain and terror, while in Theresienstadt the prisoners were required to smile as if they were in a photographer’s studio.”[[20]](#footnote-20) Other survivors appeared thankful for the snapshots of humanity and were grateful for the improvements while they lasted. At the very least, beautification provided work and ensured a temporary halt to the death trains.[[21]](#footnote-21) The Elders remained pessimistic, fearing that the time immediately after the inspection, “would be followed by a descent to the deepest pit of misery.”[[22]](#footnote-22)

Beyond physical improvements to Theresienstadt, the Nazis encouraged musical, artistic, cultural, educational, and athletic activities. While certainly integral to the Nazis’ propagandistic purposes, these events also served a functional purpose within the camp. Existing prior to the start of the official beautification program, the arts provided a retreat from reality for the prisoners of Theresienstadt. In many cases, they also provided at least some satisfaction and sanctuary amidst the helplessness of the ghetto. “The Germans permitted and secretly fostered the *Freizeitgestaltung*, the cultural and recreational activities. They knew only too well that as long as we were lulled into the belief of a semblance of normality and hope to live and see another day, we would hardly become unmanageable or stage a major revolt.”[[23]](#footnote-23) Psychologically, the Nazis saw the arts as a way to placate the Jews into docile and submissive pawns.

Freidl Dicker-Brandeis worked hard to bring art to the children of the ghetto, hoping to enrich their short lives. Music and theater also brought a semblance of normality to camp life and fostered a sense of hope and humanity despite their circumstances.[[24]](#footnote-24) Nevertheless, the Nazis used art, music, theater, and culture to exploit the Jews and fool the international delegation. “The arts were cultivated in this ghetto for their value as props intended to fool…the Red Cross…The Nazis went to some lengths to conceal their apocalyptic goal…Red Cross delegations were often fooled into believing…that the camp was a safe haven from war.”[[25]](#footnote-25) Yet many survivors knew the real Nazi motivations. Vera Schiff noted “Some of us knew the distressing final purpose of our internment and the rest suspected it. I believe that we all then guessed and feared that ultimately the Germans would succeed to put us to death…But we wanted to live and, therefore, we convinced ourselves that we had a chance and we nursed diligently our self-deception.”[[26]](#footnote-26) Other survivors also saw beautification with mistrust, fear, and sadness, especially after recent deportations. To the skeptical, “Theresienstadt [was turned] into a billboard for the outside world. He [Himmler] evidently wanted to have some evidence on hand, so that when special delegations from abroad addressed him on the issue of the murder of Jews and so forth, he could say, ‘That’s not true; go have a look at Theresienstadt.’”[[27]](#footnote-27)

Along with encouraging the arts for their psychological value, the Nazis also began to require the preparation of sophisticated artistic, musical, and theatrical performances in the months leading up to the inspection. They planned to put on a show for their visitors and even orchestrated a production of Verdi’s *Requiem[[28]](#footnote-28)* and a children’s opera musical rendition of *Brundibar[[29]](#footnote-29)* to be showcased on the day of the visit. Music in the park, music in the streets, artwork everywhere, and a theatrical opera to boot provided a real extravaganza for the Swiss and Danish visitors of June 23, 1944. However, it was all part of the Nazi deception scheme that went on without a hitch. Everything was in place for the performance, the charade, the masterpiece!

1. **Deception**

We had months to prepare

our show, a charade

to show them that there was no truth

to the pesky rumors about how

we treated our Jews.[[30]](#footnote-30)

On the morning of June 23, 1944, the stage was set and the actors well-rehearsed. The beautification process turned Theresienstadt into “a model ghetto, a Potemkin village, for a show designed to hoodwink the entire world.”[[31]](#footnote-31) Prior to the visit, the Nazis divided the population into the select few that would be on display for the international delegation to see and those who would remain hidden from the purview of the cameras and observers. The Nazis vacated Jews from lower “show” floors and relegated them to communal life in the upper floors throughout the town where they could be forgotten and out of sight during the visit.[[32]](#footnote-32)

The SS trained and prepared the “show” Jews for their grand debut. They prohibited mandatory saluting of the SS during the visit, instead requiring smiling and cheerfulness by all.[[33]](#footnote-33) The Jewish “mayor” Dr. Paul Eppstein and each Jewish actor who participated in the charade received direct orders in advance from the SS about what to wear, what to say, where to stand, and how to act in order to achieve the desired result of Stage Manager and Director Karl Rahm. The Nazis employed coercion and terror to ensure that the Jewish actors stuck to their scripts and did not jeopardize the scheme. For Eppstein, threats of reprisals ensured his compliance.[[34]](#footnote-34)

At eleven in the morning on June 23, 1944, two limousines rolled into Theresienstadt. The international delegation had arrived and the show was about to begin. The delegation was warmly greeted by both the SS and Eppstein (wearing a top hat and suit). Eppstein gave a welcome address as any provincial *burgomaster* ormayor might have been expected to do upon receiving foreign visitors. Obviously prepared by the SS, Eppstein’s speech described life in Theresienstadt and the duties and activities of the Jewish self-administration in the most favorable terms. The Nazis intended to show Theresienstadt as a town largely administered by Jewish self-governance. Forced by Rahm, Eppstein also informed the delegation that Theresienstadt was an end camp and that no deportations had occurred, though this could not have been further from the truth.[[35]](#footnote-35) After Eppstien’s welcome address, the visitors began their guided tour. The escort included Rahm (the only Nazi in a military uniform), six SS officers (in civilian attire), a member of the German Foreign Office, a member of the German Red Cross, and Dr. Eppstein.[[36]](#footnote-36)

The tour of Theresienstadt followed a pre-arranged route and the entourage stuck to the plans. The success of the grand scheme depended on impeccable timing and precision. The delegation first visited the bank and the band stand, where it was greeted with a musical performance that the Nazis planned for that exact moment. The delegation then visited the new laundry facilities, the living quarters of some prominent Danish Jews, the ground floor of a barracks, the hospital, the gardens, the post office, the café, and the pharmacy. They also took in a staged trial in the law court. The charade was unfolding perfectly.

They saw a group of healthy, tanned young women with rakes over their shoulders singing and laughing as the marched off to work in the fields; bakers wearing white gloves while handling white bread; elderly people listening to band music; chess players studiously plotting their next moves; and soccer fans erupting in cheers as a goal was kicked. They saw Schechter rehearsing the Verdi *Requiem* and they saw and heard the children’s cast of *Brundibar* singing the opera’s finale.

The tour ended with a visit to the children’s pavilion where they observed healthy-looking youngsters happily at play. They also heard them ask, “When are you going to play with us again, Uncle Rahm?” and heard Rahm reply, “I can’t right now, children. I have no time.”[[37]](#footnote-37)

The entire charade seemed bizarre to many of the Jewish actors. At the café, thirteen year old Danish Jew Paul Rabinowitz remembered the day clearly: “For me the main thing was that we Danish children were selected to eat as much as we liked that day. We were taken to a special restaurant that had just been built, with new wooden tables and chairs, and that was used only this one time…We were served pea soup and potatoes with gravy. We could eat as much as we could manage. I went back for thirds, and ate my fill.”[[38]](#footnote-38) Ironically, the cigar-smoking banker (who offered the delegates some cigarettes) just finished a three month jail sentence for smoking (prohibited at Theresienstadt); the chess players never played chess before; the music was staged; the people they encountered acted on cue; and the Nazis bribed the children with food to recite their lines perfectly. During the tour, jukeboxes turned on just as the visitors passed by so that they were serenaded with music throughout their entire visit.[[39]](#footnote-39) The visitors also watched the finale of *Brundibar*, performed by the children’s theater. The conductor Rudolf Franek recalled, “I got the first signal when the car entered the street; the second signal meant they were mounting the stairs; and at the third signal I dropped my arm and the music started…”[[40]](#footnote-40) Eva Herrmann, one of the children in the production remembered similarly,

We stood on the stage and they told us that when given our cue we should start with the finale…We waited a long time, and then someone came running in and said, ‘No, not yet.’ And so it went, back and forth. We knew, of course, that we were putting on a comedy act for somebody. But of course, since this was a commission of the International Red Cross, we also thought and hoped that this would help us in some way. They might say, ‘Those children sing so beautifully we just have to help them.’ We always hoped. Or at least most of us hoped—that maybe something would come of it after all.[[41]](#footnote-41)

Despite the hopes and optimism of the children and the Jewish actors who participated under Nazi coercion, their performance proved too good to unveil the dire situation beneath the façade.

During the visit, the Nazis only showed sections of the camp that had been beautified in order to impress the delegation. “The sole objects of the beautification campaign were public buildings and those quarters that were sure to strike the eye of the…visitors.”[[42]](#footnote-42) Throughout the day, the delegation was under constant Nazi supervision. Only two momentary glitches occurred. The first was a brief exchange between the Danish delegation and its countrymen in the Danish language. The second was a brief and unobserved discussion between Rossel and Eppstein. Rossel asked Eppstein what he thought might be the ultimate fate of the ghetto population. Eppstein replied that he did not know, but that he “saw no way out.”[[43]](#footnote-43) The exchanges were brief and apparently not noteworthy to the delegation. Quite impressed by what they witnessed at Theresienstadt, the three man international delegation departed the ghetto after an eight hour production. The encore, however, would not be determined until after the official reports of the Danes and Dr. Rossel confirmed the success of the deception. Upon such confirmation and pleased with his Jewish pawns and actors, “Uncle Rahm” gave them all extra rations and a day and a half of rest before returning Theresienstadt back to the status quo.[[44]](#footnote-44)

1. **Reports**

The inspectors

were in our town for a short time,

only long enough to see

what we wanted them to see.

No more.

They saw enough

to know that we were treating the Jews

in a civilized and humane manner.[[45]](#footnote-45)

The reports of the delegation could not have provided the Nazis with better propaganda. Dr. Rossel, in particular, noted that Theresienstadt “was a community leading an almost normal existence.”[[46]](#footnote-46) Yet, one has to wonder whether the beautification and orchestrated tour so completely concealed the truth or whether some other factors allowed the delegation to be deceived. Although the Danish report reserved some of the enthusiasm and exuberance that Rossel’s report contained, for all intents and purposes, the content of each report applauded the Nazis for the quality of life that they provided to the Jews at Theresienstadt. “Existing in the midst of war-torn Europe, [Theresienstadt] was supposed to show the world that the powers of the Third Reich were ‘compassionate,’ and that all the talk of hunger, torture, and death in concentration camps was nothing but allied ‘*Gruelpropaganda*.”[[47]](#footnote-47) If one takes the reports at face value, the Nazis ultimately succeeded in achieving this end. However, historians continue to question how a group of educated men could have fallen for such a farce. Particularly, how could Dr. Rossel of the ICRC have given such a glowing endorsement of Theresienstadt?

Contemporary historians question whether Dr. Maurice Rossel of the ICRC was dumb, whether he was swayed by his VIP treatment during the visit, or whether he harbored secret sympathies for the Nazis and their cause.[[48]](#footnote-48) In 1979, Claude Lanzmann conducted an interview of Dr. Rossel in Switzerland to be used in the production of a Holocaust documentary, entitled *Shoah*. In that interview, Lanzmann suggested that Rossel was manipulated by the Nazis and that he was willing to be fooled because of his own politics and prejudices. Rossel vehemently refuted the suggestion that he was pro-German, stating, “It is necessary to stop the really fantastic notion that there was in Germany a Hitler clique, good Germans, that is wrong. All Germans were Hitlerites.”[[49]](#footnote-49) Further, he criticized the Swiss government for being “Germanophiles” who aided the Germans on the Russian front. He argued that the Swiss were more nervous about communism than they were about Hitler.[[50]](#footnote-50) Aside from his criticism of the Swiss government, Rossel did not directly address the suggestion that he harbored anti-Semitic feelings or sympathy towards the German cause in his interview. Although he asserted that 90% of everyone in Europe was anti-Semitic in the 1940s, Rossel did not admit nor deny his own internal disposition towards the Jews.[[51]](#footnote-51)

Rossel’s interview in 1979 forced him to grapple with his 1944 report on Theresienstadt. Lanzmann ruthlessly berated Rossel on the details of his report while Rossel repeatedly denied knowing anything about the extermination of Jews. He claimed, “I was 25 [sic] years old, thus I was still quite naïve, if I say so myself, however a real naïve, a real know-nothing who had come from his village and studied in Geneva.”[[52]](#footnote-52) Moreover he claimed to have little experience inspecting civilian camps. His main duty was to investigate prisoner of war camps under the Geneva Convention.[[53]](#footnote-53) Rossel denied knowing anything about the “Final Solution” or the mass murder of Jews, and stated, “I never heard the word extermination.”[[54]](#footnote-54) He admitted to having a meeting at Auschwitz with the camp commandant prior to his investigation of Theresienstadt. “I knew that there was a concentration camp there where masses of Jews were deported and that the Jews died” and that “they were walking skeletons, because they had not been fed…Really only their eyes were alive,” yet Rossel refused to accept that the Germans engaged in the mass execution of the Jews, even at Auschwitz.[[55]](#footnote-55)

Rossel assured Lanzmann that Theresienstadt was known to be an exceptional camp and that nobody understood the visit to be a farce. He simply thought that it was a camp for Jewish notables, privileged people, and those who arranged their own situation by paying to be there.[[56]](#footnote-56) At that point, Lanzmann went on for several minutes listing all of the improvements that the Nazis made through the beautification process and the charade to which the delegation bore witness on its tour. Lanzmann argued, “They even had dress rehearsals before your visit, because the nervousness was palpable, they were so afraid that you might have doubts about something…your visit was…teleguided… you saw nothing of Theresienstadt.” He continued, “They lived in dreadful conditions…the people perished from hunger…that you were duped was no surprise, because they wanted to dupe you.”[[57]](#footnote-57)

Rossel’s report evidenced his alleged deception. From his warm reception by the Nazis to Eppstein’s welcome address, Rossel’s report represented a superficial view of Theresienstadt. Rossel consistently defended against Lanzmann’s interrogatories, citing that he was merely there to document what he witnessed in an objective manner. He was not to draw conclusions, but rather, to simply photograph and document what he saw. When Eppstein announced “You are about to visit a normal provincial town,” Rossel accepted it at face value.[[58]](#footnote-58) Rossel accepted and documented the demographic statistics, birth statistics, and death statistics that Eppstein and the SS provided to him without question. He also reiterated the rhetoric provided to him concerning the self-government of the camp by an elected Jewish council called the *Judenältestenrat*.[[59]](#footnote-59)

The remainder of Rossel’s report on Theresienstadt documented the choreographed visit that the Nazis orchestrated for him. Rossel’s only criticism of Theresienstadt was that it was crowded. Ironically, he made this criticism without even seeing the deplorable second and third floor accommodations that the Nazis kept hidden. Rossel reported, “In order to accommodate the overflow of population, it soon proved necessary to build one-story wooden barracks. These, however, are large and airy, well lighted, and the population often prefers them to the large central barracks.”[[60]](#footnote-60) He praised the furniture, curtains, carpets, and wallpaper available to decorate the two-family and three-family private houses and applauded the furnishings at the children’s homes. In terms of nutrition, Rossel stated that the Jews received 2,400 calories daily. “Immediately on entering the Ghetto, we were convinced that its population did not suffer from the same [malnutrition] as in the ‘Protectorate’ of Bohemia and Moravia…certain articles even reach the Ghetto, which are almost impossible to find in Prague,” though unbeknownst to him, dozens died daily of starvation.[[61]](#footnote-61) The clothing that he witnessed (arranged, of course, by the Germans) appeared in good condition and included a “variety of styles.” He noted that the clothing stores were well-stocked. As to the Jews that he saw, he stated: “The smarter women were all wearing silk stockings, hats, foulards and carried modern handbags. The young men seemed also well turned out, some of them even were flashily dressed.”[[62]](#footnote-62) In terms of work, Rossel reported that there was more than enough labor at Theresienstadt. The object of work was to keep everyone busy so that everyone felt useful. Professionals typically performed the jobs that they were trained to do. He then specifically applauded the bakery, the post office, the plumbing and sanitation departments, the baths, medical care, the hospitals, and the pharmacy.[[63]](#footnote-63)

Evidently impressed by the social and cultural activities that he saw, in his report Rossel applauded the amenities, social freedoms, and the arts purportedly available to the Jews of Theresienstadt. He concluded that “worship is practiced regularly and freely,” and that music, theater, opera, and sports provided the Jews with a plethora of choices during their leisure time. In addition, the well-stocked library and school provided educational opportunities for the residents. Rossel’s report concluded, “We must say that we were astonished to find out that the Ghetto was a community leading an almost normal existence, as we were prepared for the worst. We told the SS police officers who escorted us that what astonished us the most was that it should have been so difficult for us to obtain permission to visit Theresienstadt.”[[64]](#footnote-64) Early in his interview Rossel noted, “I made a report which I don’t deny and which I maintain to be absolutely valid.”[[65]](#footnote-65) When asked by Lanzmann at the end of the interview, “do you regret this report now?” Rossel replied, “I cannot see how I could have made any other.”[[66]](#footnote-66)

Several survivors maintain an even more sinister explanation for Rossel’s blindness. In her memoir Charlotte Opfermann stated that Rossel *wanted* to be misled. Survivor Klara Caro likewise asserted: “It was never clear to me to what extent the so-called commission was in league with the Nazi criminals. If it had been a serious commission who really wanted to investigate our living conditions, then they would have examined more than the façade built for the purpose…They on the other hand only saw what the Nazis showed and presented them.”[[67]](#footnote-67)

Towards the end of the interview, Lanzmann probed Rossel with respect to his view of the Jews of Theresienstadt. Rossel’s report indicated that the “Theresienstadt Ghetto is a communistic society, at the head of which sits a ‘Stalinist’ of high personal value: Eppstein.”[[68]](#footnote-68) Although Rossel admitted to including this statement due to his leftist education, it ironically also played upon the fears that the Nazis and many other Europeans had concerning the relationship between the Jews and communists.

Perhaps Rossel’s beliefs of Theresienstadt as a collectivist, socialist, or communist society were genuine, but his criticism of the Jews for not alerting him to the farce remains concerning. Lanzmann asked Rossel, “But, you say that the attitude of the Jews bothered you, actually, their passivity…” Rossel responded that if the Jews were damned and lost, why did they not alert him? “One expects…a wink…an assist…a nothing. But sir, nothing, it is nothing. And…now still, I don’t understand…”[[69]](#footnote-69) Later Rossel confirmed, “This passivity is something which is hard to swallow.”[[70]](#footnote-70) Lanzmann quickly pointed out that thirty five years later, Rossel was still “shocked by the passivity of the Jews, by their lack of courage…you impute them with…culpability…the Jews were the actors…but the directors were the Germans.” Rossel’s secret feelings towards the Jews likely will never truly be discovered but it seems clear that the objective report that Rossel hoped to provide to the ICRC was tainted by his own subjectivity and bias.

Although Rossel ended his interview with the admission that a deeper investigation was needed into life at Theresienstadt,[[71]](#footnote-71) he was not the only delegate to investigate the camp. Two Danish representatives, Dr. Frans Hvass and Dr. E. Juel-Henningsen, also accompanied Rossel on the tour. For the most part, the Danes concerned themselves mostly with the Danish prisoners. Unlike Rossel, the Danish representatives asked some difficult questions. In speaking with one Danish prisoner, Dr. Hvass asked him how long he had been living in his current apartment, to which the Jewish prisoner replied, “Since yesterday.”[[72]](#footnote-72) They also showed some skepticism about the notion of Theresienstadt as an end camp. Although he was impressed with the purported self-government of the Jews at the camp, Dr. Hvass noted that the positive attitude of the residents of Theresienstadt “depends on whether the population regards their stay in Theresienstadt as permanent.”[[73]](#footnote-73) In any event, the Nazi-controlled Danish Press Service reported on July 13, 1944, that “two Danish representatives, a physician and an administrator from the Foreign Ministry, have returned from a trip to Theresienstadt where deported Danish Jews have been sent. Conditions there are described as relatively favorable and rumors that a number of Jews will be sent to forced labor have been denied.”[[74]](#footnote-74)

Shortly after their return, the Danish delegation met in Stockholm, Sweden to report in person on their trip to Theresienstadt. Shortly after the meeting, the report entitled “Conditions in Theresienstadt, According to Danish Report,” made its way to the United States. The meeting report indicated that “the conditions were actually far better than imagined and the visit brought great cheer to the Danes down there who through it received proof that the authorities at home still considered them with the greatest interest.”[[75]](#footnote-75) The Danish report mirrors Rossel’s as to Jewish life at Theresienstadt, and in particular: Jewish self-government, the demographics, living quarters, food and caloric values, work, the bank, stores, health care, hospitals, social and cultural life, the library, and education. The one important difference was that the Danes emphasized the overcrowding and noted that the town contains four times the number of inhabitants for which it was designed.[[76]](#footnote-76) Nevertheless, the meeting concluded that “the favorable general impressions which the Danish Delegation had received coincides entirely with the impressions of the Swiss Delegate…[and] felt impelled to express…admiration for the Jews who stand at the head of the Government.”[[77]](#footnote-77) Although unable to repatriate the Danish Jews to Denmark, or even to Sweden, the delegation noted the Nazis willingness to allow packages and aid to be sent to the Danish prisoners. Recent scholarship has uncovered Danish anti-Semitism beneath their ostensibly pleasant and positive roles during the Holocaust. Some scholars even argue that Denmark embarked on a “collaboration policy” during the war; many viewed that as Denmark’s only option.[[78]](#footnote-78) Could the Danish reports on Theresienstadt have been tainted by anti-Semitism or its “collaboration policy”? We may never know the truth, but as more documents become declassified in Denmark, perhaps more will be learned about the Danish delegation to Theresienstadt.

1. **The Truth**

We waited a few months

to resume the transports.

The town was getting crowded

and the ovens of Auschwitz waited.[[79]](#footnote-79)

Following the Allied declaration of December 17, 1942, condemning Nazi atrocities and the extermination of European Jews, Reinhardt Heydrich’s camp at Theresienstadt became a tactical measure for the Nazis.[[80]](#footnote-80) His camp would become a “model institution whose existence could refute charges that the Germans mistreated or even killed Jews. Such a model camp would be the blond lie to disguise the black lie, an ambitious and intricate falsehood designed to ‘document’ the ‘truth’ of a still greater falsehood.”[[81]](#footnote-81) The beautification of Theresienstadt that occurred throughout 1943 and the farcical display perpetrated for the international delegation in June 1944 produced the propagandistic reports that the Nazis desired. The concentration camp, turned Potemkin village, succeeded to cover the truth and mask Nazi atrocities for international audiences. Nevertheless, the truth was not as elusive as might have been perceived. Information as to the true nature of Theresienstadt, though potentially concealed to the international delegation, was well known to the leadership of the ICRC and the United States.

The ICRC had knowledge of Nazi atrocities well before Maurice Rossel journeyed to Theresienstadt. The ICRC and Swiss governments were technically neutral during the war, yet both remained relatively friendly to the Third Reich until the tide of the war turned in the Allies favor in 1943.[[82]](#footnote-82) In fact, Dr. Carl J. Burckhardt of the ICRC acknowledged that by the end of 1942 he was very well informed that the Nazis had intended Germany to be *Judenfrei*. And, “Since there is no place where these Jews could be disposed of, in order to cleanse the territory from this race, the final result is obvious.”[[83]](#footnote-83) In addition, the United States received evidence from Poland and Hungary proving Hitler’s policy of destruction with respect to the Jews. “Thus even after the mass murder of Jews became known and had been verified by many reliable sources, the conspiracy of silence continued over a long period. It has been suggested…this could have been for the fear of a general impression that the war was waged in order to save the Jews, which of course could only harm the Allies’ war effort.”[[84]](#footnote-84) ICRC balked at issuing its draft appeal letter demanding the humane treatment of the interned Jews in 1942. The reason was because many in the organization and in the Swiss government viewed it as a violation of neutrality to do so.[[85]](#footnote-85) Nevertheless, it is naïve to believe that the ICRC misunderstood that Theresienstadt was a transit camp well before the ICRC visit in June 1943.

From the beginning of the war, the ICRC was one of the best informed organizations in the world, second only to the Vatican. As such, it was one of the first to know about German deportations.[[86]](#footnote-86) Prompted by the negative reports concerning conditions at Theresienstadt issued by the German Red Cross, the ICRC began to make formal requests to inspect the camp in June 1943. However, Danish intervention was the driving force that finally convinced the Nazis to permit a visit. News quickly reached the ICRC about the terrible conditions at Theresienstadt and deportations to the East. On January 1, 1944, the ICRC received a letter in Hebrew from Bratislava indicating that the conditions at Theresienstadt were bad, Jacob Edelstein was gone, the camp was about to be liquidated, and some had already been deported to Poland.[[87]](#footnote-87) Then in October 1943, the ICRC received a letter from Leo Janowitz addressed to Fritz Ullmann in Geneva indicating that 1,800 deportees from Theresienstadt arrived at Birkenau and requested aid shipments.[[88]](#footnote-88) Despite this information, the ICRC either did not inform Rossel or else he was so duped by the charade that in the conclusion to his report he commented, “Our report will change nobody’s opinion. Everyone is free to condemn the Reich’s attitude toward the solution of the Jewish problem. However, if this report could contribute in some small measure to dispel the mystery surrounding the Theresienstadt ghetto we shall be satisfied.”[[89]](#footnote-89) Leo Baeck responded to the visit by observing, “The [members of the delegation] appeared to be completely taken in by the false front put up for their benefit…Perhaps they knew the real conditions—but it looked as if they did not want to know the truth…We felt forgotten and forsaken.”[[90]](#footnote-90) Whether or not Rossel wanted to know the truth will forever remain a mystery.

In the years that followed the war, the ICRC received scathing criticism for its inactions, lack of communication, and its deception. Bernard Kouchner, co-founder of *Médecins sans Frontières* argued, “The International Red Cross, which was aware of the existence and purpose of the Nazi camps, chose to remain silent. Its explanations for that concealment are unprecedented in their shamefulness. Those who shared that extremely grave secret made no attempt to act.”[[91]](#footnote-91) In 1980, amidst criticism, the ICRC opened up its archives to Jean-Claude Favez. In his work, *The Red Cross and the Holocaust*, Favez concluded that the situation at Theresienstadt was known to the ICRC a year (almost to the day) before Rossel took his tour of the camp.[[92]](#footnote-92) Yet Favez dismissed Rossel’s report entirely as the ICRC already knew the truth about Theresienstadt. He stated, “Ultimately the basic question is not whether his naivety was a sham or real; it is what conclusions the ICRC drew from his fifteen-page report.”[[93]](#footnote-93) To that, Favez concluded, that the “ICRC decided against passing on Rossel’s general observations to third parties, such as national Red Cross societies, governments, or Jewish organisations…and that in any case no conclusions could be drawn about the fate of the Jews in German hands on the basis of a visit to a single confinement facility.”[[94]](#footnote-94) The ICRC knew better than to pass along the clearly inaccurate report and it refused to endorse or supply additional Nazi propaganda.

In 2002, the ICRC’s Director for International Law and Cooperation, François Bugnion admitted to the world that senior officials of the ICRC became aware of the genocidal policies of the Nazis by the summer of 1942.[[95]](#footnote-95) The ICRC’s position during the war was that: (1) civilian camps were internal matters; (2) there was no legal precedent for the ICRC to intervene; (3) the ICRC did not want to interfere with Allied missions; and (4) the ICRC was in no position to threaten the Nazis.[[96]](#footnote-96) Bugnion explained that ICRC’s inactions were a failure; notwithstanding this, it did act. He argued that the ICRC tried to monitor and seek news from the camps; it sent relief, food, and medicine; it appealed to the satellite states for tolerance; and in the end of the war it helped the survivors.[[97]](#footnote-97) He concluded that “overall, the ICRC’s efforts were a failure. That they amounted to a failure is undeniable…Yet the failure was, above all, that of the ICRC’s inability—or unwillingness—to fully recognize the extent of the tragedy that was unfolding, and to confront it by reversing its priorities and taking the risks that the situation demanded.”[[98]](#footnote-98)

The United States also knew more about Nazi atrocities (in general) and about Theresienstadt (in particular) than it made public. On September 26, 1942 President Roosevelt’s special envoy to the Vatican, Myron C. Taylor, wrote a note to Cardinal Maglione about the Nazi extermination of the Jews. About Theresienstadt he stated, “This place, however, is only an interim station and the people there await the same fate [as the others].”[[99]](#footnote-99) Roosevelt also established the War Refugee Board in January 1944 to help concentration camp victims. After the Danes met in Stockholm in July 1944, the U.S. State Department received a telegram from Sweden concerning their report. The telegram bluntly stated that “much of the visit suggests window dressing for propaganda purposes.”[[100]](#footnote-100) On September 7, 1944 a telegram to Roswell McClelland acknowledged recent deportations from Theresienstadt and noted “The well known tendencies in certain German official circles to exterminate a maximum number of Jews before the end of the war may result in a sudden deterioration of the position of Jews in Theresienstadt.”[[101]](#footnote-101) On September 15, 1944 another telegram was received by the War Refugee Board acknowledging that “Theresienstadt has constantly served as a transit camp for other less “privileged” Jews. In the main, it has been Jews of this category who have been deported to the extermination camp of Asuchwitz-Birkenau [sic].”[[102]](#footnote-102) Most strikingly in that telegram, its states:

The ICRC has expressly refrained from giving any publicity whatever to the June visit and observations of its delegate because it did not wish to gratuitously furnish material for German propaganda purposes…and because it was aware that the Germans quite possibly allowed Intercross to visit Theresienstadt in the hope that any Intercross report could be used to whitewash their treatment of the Jews in general.[[103]](#footnote-103)

Nor was the U.S. fooled by the content of Dr. Rossel’s report. In a letter from Roswell McClelland to John W. Pehle dated October 26, 1944, McClelland cautioned the War Refugee Board from believing Rossel’s report. He stated, “The picture he presents of the Ghetto can unfortunately not be taken at its face value.” The entire letter (which is attached here together with Rossel’s report in the Appendix) presents the degree to which the U.S. knew the truth concerning Theresienstadt. In part, McClelland stated:

In the first place, as is almost always the case with such “official” visits to camps or prisons, the reception of the ICRC’s representative as well as of the two delegates of the Danish Red Cross who also went along, was quite obviously prepared in advance. The various Jewish “officials” for example all gave interesting but clearly “prepared” speeches which they delivered without waiting to be questioned. The “party” spent only ten to twelve hours in Theresienstadt and was at all times accompanied by a number of SS men, including the ill-famed Dr. Günther from SS headquarters at Berlin, one of the German officials directly responsible for the creation of Theresienstadt. Dr. Rossel had only one or two very fleeting opportunities to exchange an unheard word with Dr. Paul Eppstein, the “Judenälteste” (Mayor) of the Ghetto. The impression gained was consequently somewhat superficial.[[104]](#footnote-104)

In short, the U.S. saw through the farce, but what could it actually do to help?

The fact of the matter was that the United States and the ICRC had information prior to the visit to Theresienstadt and should not have been, and in fact were not, fooled by the Nazi scheme of deception. Unfortunately, the dictates of war required both to remain selective in what they said and did. The ICRC’s priorities were to continue to supply aid to Nazi concentration camps and the U.S.’s priorities were to find a way to win the war and bring an end to the Nazi regime. While rank and file officials might have been fooled upon superficial examinations and reports concerning the same, the leadership in both entities knew the truth about Theresienstadt prior to June 23, 1944. “Playing dummy,” while at the same time not publicizing Rossel’s report, was the best that could be done given the circumstances. In an ironic sense, Rossel’s report hoodwinked the Nazis into believing that the world bought their elaborate deception scheme. As a result, the Nazis continued to allow food, aid, and medicine to arrive at Theresienstadt through the ICRC and national Red Cross organizations. While certainly not the righteous proclamation or denunciation that the Jewish organizations called for, functionally it aided the Jews of Theresienstadt until the deportations resumed in September 1944.

Following the ICRC and Danish visit, relative peace existed at Theresienstadt while the Nazis finished filming their infamous documentary, *The Führer Gives the Jews a City*.[[105]](#footnote-105) Then, beginning in September 1944, the Nazis deported 25,000 Jews to Auschwitz. By the end of 1944, only 10,000 Jews remained at Theresienstadt.[[106]](#footnote-106) Many of the deportees of September 1944 included prominent Jews, the protected construction workers, artists, and musicians; many considered themselves safe. One survivor described the autumn 1944 transports: “In Auschwitz I [heard] that all our leading personalities with their families, wives, children were, immediately after their arrival, killed by gas. Every transport had a separate carriage, the first with leading persons of Terezín dispatched by a special order of the Nazis.”[[107]](#footnote-107) On May 2, 1945 the Nazis removed the SS flag and abandoned Theresienstadt; the Red Army liberated the camp on May 8, 1945. At the time of liberation there were 17,320 survivors present at Theresienstadt, many of whom were recent arrivals.[[108]](#footnote-108)

Sixty years after the visit to Theresienstadt it is easy to see beyond the façade; it is easy to critique and to blame. It is also easy to see why so many people might have been deceived. The deception perpetrated at Theresienstadt was the fraud of the century, but ultimately, it was the Nazis who were duped in the end. While the beautification and orchestrated tours fooled some, perhaps even Dr. Rossel, those with the means and ability to force the Nazi regime into submission were not fooled. Maybe more could have been accomplished and more lives could have been saved; that thought is what makes the Holocaust such an emotional and regrettable event. Nevertheless, for a brief moment in time, Hitler gave the prisoners of Theresienstadt hope, hope for survival, hope for the future, and hope for humanity. For most, the hope did not last; but through the stories, music, art, and theater of Theresienstadt, their memories will live on in history and their tales will not be forgotten.

Appendix

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37. Berkley, *Hitler’s Gift*, 174-175. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
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39. Lederer, *Ghetto Theresienstadt*, 118. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Berkley, *Hitler’s Gift*, 175. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Brenner, *Girls of Room 28*, 228. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Ibid., 211. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Dawidowicz, “Bleaching the Black Lie,” 137. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Berkley, *Hitler’s Gift*, 180. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Lang, “SS Lieutenant Theodor Lang,” 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Maurice Rossel, *Theresienstadt Ghetto Report* (International Committee of the Red Cross: 1944), 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Tuma, “Memories of Theresienstadt,” 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Dawidowicz, “Bleaching the Black Lie,” 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Lotti Eichorn, "Transcription of the Shoah Interview with Maurice Rossel," *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum* (2009), accessed March 16, 2015, http://data.ushmm.org/intermedia/film\_video/spielberg\_archive/ transcript/RG60\_5019/A67D46B8-2B61-41F6-877D-6FF0E04279F4.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Eichorn, “Transcription of the Shoah Interview,” 5-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Ibid., 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Rossel was actually 27 at the time of the inspection. Ibid., 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Ibid., 2-3, 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Ibid., 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Ibid., 20, 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Ibid., 32-34 [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Ibid., 39-40. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Rossel, *Theresienstadt Ghetto Report*, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Ibid., 2-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Ibid., 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Ibid., 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Ibid., 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Ibid., 7-13. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Ibid., 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Eichorn, “Transcription of the Shoah Interview,” 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Ibid., 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Ruth Schwertfeger, *Women of Theresienstadt: Voices from a Concentration Camp* (New York: Berg, 1999), 84-85, cited in Brad Prager, “Interpreting the Visible Traces of Theresienstadt,” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 7, no. 2 (2008): 188. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Rossel, *Theresienstadt Ghetto Report*, 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Eichorn, “Transcription of the Shoah Interview,” 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Ibid., 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Ibid., 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Berkley, *Hitler’s Gift*, 176. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Ibid., 177. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Ibid., 177. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Otto Levysohm and Kai Simonsen, "Conditions in Theresienstadt, According to Danish Report" (Stockholm: 1944), 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Levysohn, “Conditions in Theresienstadt,” 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Ibid., 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Vilhjalmur Orn Vilhjalmsson and Bent Bludnikow, "Rescue, Expulsion, and Collaboration: Denmark's Difficulties with its World War II Past," *Jewish Political Studies Review,* 18, no. 3 (2006): 1-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Lang, “SS Lieutenant Theodor Lang,” 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Rothkirchen, *Jews of Bohemia & Moravia*, 243. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Dawidowicz, “Bleaching the Black Lie,” 127. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Swiss commerce with Germany and Italy drove the Swiss economy. It was vitally important for Switzerland to maintain a good relationship with Germany for as long as it could. Not to mention that among the 200,000 German and Italian citizens in Switzerland there were many fascists. Rothkirchen, *Jews of Bohemia & Moravia*, 247-248. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Carl J. Burkhardt is referring to Paul C. Squire’s Memorandum of July 11, 1942. Rothkirchen, *Jews of Bohemia & Moravia*, 249. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Rothkirchen, *Jews of Bohemia & Moravia*, 252. See also Richard Breitman, *Official Secrets: What the Nazis Planned, What the British and Americans Knew* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998). [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Rothkirchen, *Jews of Bohemia & Moravia*, 251. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Ibid., 248-249. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Ibid., 381 n. 104. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Ibid., 257-258. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Rossel, *Theresienstadt Ghetto Report*, 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Leo Baeck, “A People Stands before its God,” in Eric H Boehm, ed., *We Survived: The Stories of the Hidden and the Hunted in Nazi Germany* (New Haven, 1949), 293-294, cited in Rothkirchen, *Jews of Bohemia & Moravia*, 259. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Sebastien Farre, “The ICRC and the Detainees in Nazi Concentration Camps (1942-1945),” *International Review of the Red Cross*, 94, no. 888 (2012), 1382. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Jean-Claude Favez, *Red Cross and the Holocaust*, translated by John Fletcher and Beryl Fletcher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 43-44. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Favez, *Red Cross and the Holocaust*, 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Ibid., 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Francois Bugnion, “Dialogue with the Past: the ICRC and the Nazi Death Camps,” *ICRC Resource Centre* (2002), accessed March 23, 2015, https://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/misc/6ayg86.htm. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Monty Noam Penkower, “World Jewish Congress Confronts the International Red Cross During the Holocaust,” *Jewish Social Studies* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1979), 231. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Bugnion, “Dialogue with the Past,” 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Minister of Switzerland (Harrison) to Secretary of State Berne, October 16, 1942, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942 (Washington D.C., 1961), vol. 3, 775-777, cited in Rothkirchen, *Jews of Bohemia & Moravia*, 252. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Johnson, "Telegram to the War Refugee Board Re: Danish Report on Theresienstadt" (Stockholm: United States State Department, July 17, 1944). [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Leland Harrison, "Telegram to Roswell J. McClelland, Re: Jews in Europe (Theresienstadt)" (War Refugee Board, September 7, 1944). [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Leland Harrison, "Telegram to Roswell J. McClelland, Re: Jews in Europe (Theresienstadt)" (War Refugee Board, September 15, 1944). [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Roswell D. McClellan to John W. Pehle, 26 October 1944, letter (Bern, Switzerland). [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Only 25 minutes of the 90-minute film remain. The acting in the film was similar to the forced charade perpetrated during the international visit of June 1944. The film was designed as propaganda but never released to the public. Pager, “Interpreting the Visible Traces,” 177-178. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Dawidowicz, “Bleaching the Black Lie,” 139. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Rothkirchen, *Jews of Bohemia & Moravia*, 245. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Ibid., 247. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)