

A Cry from the Pages

by S. Fried

Several weeks ago Yaakov Fuchs, the son of the late R' Avrohom Fuchs, contacted the Rav Yisroel Moshe Dushinsky's personal assistant, asking for permission to copy his approbation for the book *Hungarian Yeshivot from Grandeur to Holocaust* (in Hebrew) into his father's other books. The assistant, to whom the caller's name was totally unfamiliar, replied that because the rov was very sick he would be unavailable to answer such questions. Subsequently, he responded that when HaRav Dushinsky heard him mention the name Avrohom Fuchs, a broad smile spread across his face and he granted permission, adding words of praise and blessing.

HaRav Dushinsky left this world

When asked about the relationship between his father and HaRav Michoel Dov Weissmandl, the subject of the book, Yaakov Fuchs provided a detailed account of the Hungarian Torah world before the Holocaust, its destruction and the efforts to save it—and the lifework of one man who tried to perpetuate Hungarian Jewry.

His Early Years in Hungary

R' Avrohom Fuchs was born in Tasnad, a small agricultural town in a remote part of Transylvania near the Romanian-Hungarian border. Jews lived there for hundreds of years, maintaining lives of Torah, labor and commerce.

For at least the last two hundred years, the area was home to rabbonim of distinction with *yiras Shomayim*. They did not allow the winds of reform and assimilation to penetrate the *kehilloh*, although some members of the community were drawn to a "modern" lifestyle during the years preceding the Holocaust.

The name Tasnad might have been forgotten, like the names of many towns throughout Europe that are now remembered only by those who formerly lived there, had it not been home to the yeshiva of HaRav Mordechai Brisk (the

Maharam Brisk), which was set up between the two World Wars and for several years was the biggest, most important yeshiva in Eastern Europe.

R' Avrohom Fuchs was among its *talmidim*. He was admitted at the age of 12, when he was still younger than most of his peers there, because he hailed from the town.

The Maharam Brisk was chosen as the rov of Tasnad in 1919 and began to organize religious life in the town with great zest. He improved *shechitoh* and set up religious institutions and mutual aid societies. Within a few years he founded the yeshiva and attended to both its spiritual and material needs. The *talmidim* ate at a common dining hall and slept in the homes of *baalei batim*.

By the year 5695 (1935) the number of *talmidim* had reached 400 and the Rov gave two-and-a-half hour *shiurim* to two separate classes. The tight daily schedule left no free time and the Rov would take note of everyone who was late or absent. Halachic inquiries were sent to the Maharam Brisk from all over Hungary, Romania and the surrounding areas and his responsa books were printed again and again.

Then the Second World War broke out. The town of Tasnad was transferred from Hungarian rule to Romanian rule and back again. Each time the Jews prayed for salvation, yet the situation only became more and more acute. The yeshiva was closed, residents were sent to "work camps" and the decrees and abuse worsened from day to day. In the summer of 5704 (1944) the Maharam was arrested and transferred to the Shimloi (Szilagysomlyo) Ghetto, where his beard was shaven off. On the 11th of Sivan 5704 he was killed in the gas chambers of Auschwitz, *Hy"d*.

The *kehilloh* faced a similar fate. The Jews were gathered together in a ghetto under harrowing conditions and from there were transferred to Auschwitz for extermination, in Sivan of 5704. Although it was possible to escape from the ghetto, the community was not alerted by the leadership in Budapest to the true meaning of Auschwitz. In addition, the local residents were antisemitic and would not have provided a safe haven.

The handful of Tasnad Jews who survived tried to return to their homes after the war, only to find that nobody was left. They tried to resume their previous existence there and even tried to bring collaborators to trial, but the prevailing atmosphere was unaccommodating and eventually they left the town, never to return.



Avrohom Fuchs recounts all this and more in his book, *Tasnad*. "Abba felt the pain of the forsaken town," says Yaakov Fuchs. "During the period it was published, the 1970s, a wave of memoirs and historical accounts of various *kehillos* swept through Israel. All of the books that appeared were on *kehillos* in Poland and Lithuania, and nothing on Hungary. Abba was working as a teacher but he felt a moral

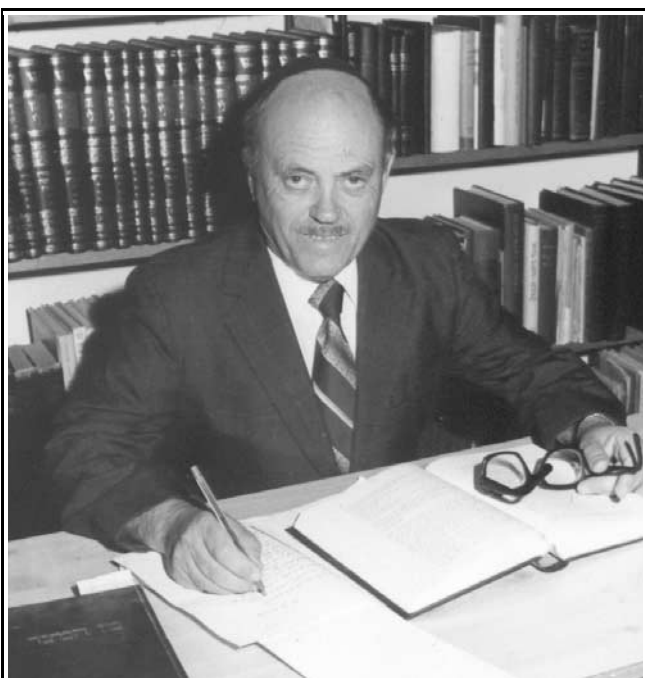
obligation to record the memory of his town."

As always Avrohom Fuchs did meticulous research, unlike many other books of this genre written in an amateur fashion by former members of the *kehilloh* and based primarily on memory – often selective memory. (Many books place great emphasis on Zionist activity and hardly mention religious life and rabbonim from past generations.)

Fuchs interviewed countless people and examined numerous documents. He gathered innumerable photographs, testimonies, letters, newspaper clippings— anything that offered additional information on the town. And he did not take a subjective stance, selecting only what appealed to his sensibilities. Everything went in, producing a monument to the memory of all members of the *kehilloh*. "Many say *Tasnad* is the best [Holocaust] memoir in print," says Yaakov.

Survival

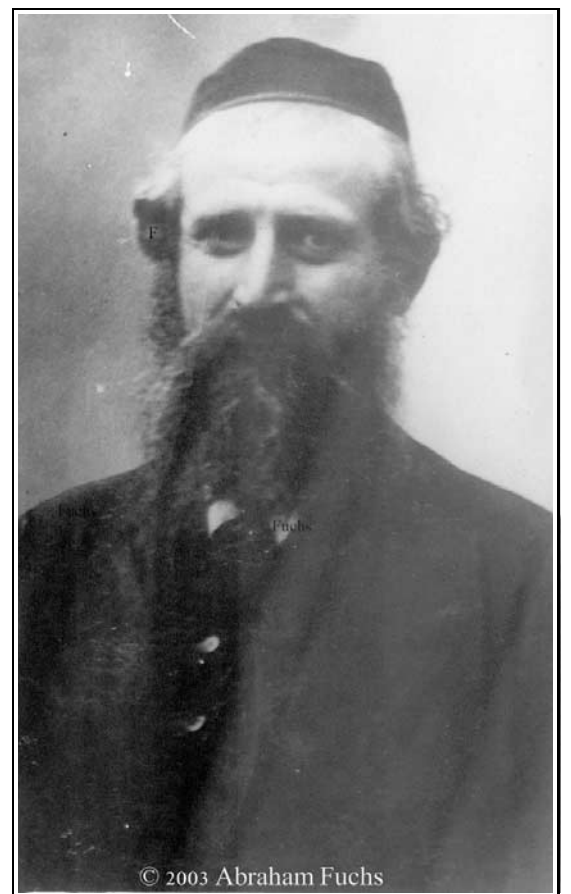
R' Avrohom survived the Holocaust by leaving Tasnad before it was too late. When antisemitism was stepped up and Hungarian collaborators closed Yeshivas Tasnad, R' Avrohom Fuchs fled, all alone, to the capital city of Budapest. Rumors of Nazi atrocities



Dr. Avrohom Fuchs (photo courtesy of the Fuchs family - all rights reserved)

before Pesach. Two weeks later, during *chol hamoed* Pesach, R' Avrohom Fuchs also returned his soul to his Maker. Then on the 27th of Nisan, HaRav Sholom Moshe Halevi Unger, *gavad* of Nitra, passed away as well after a long and difficult life. This was the closing of another circle, beginning in Hungary, continuing in the Holocaust and ending in eternal memory, completing yet another page in Am Yisroel's book of sorrows.

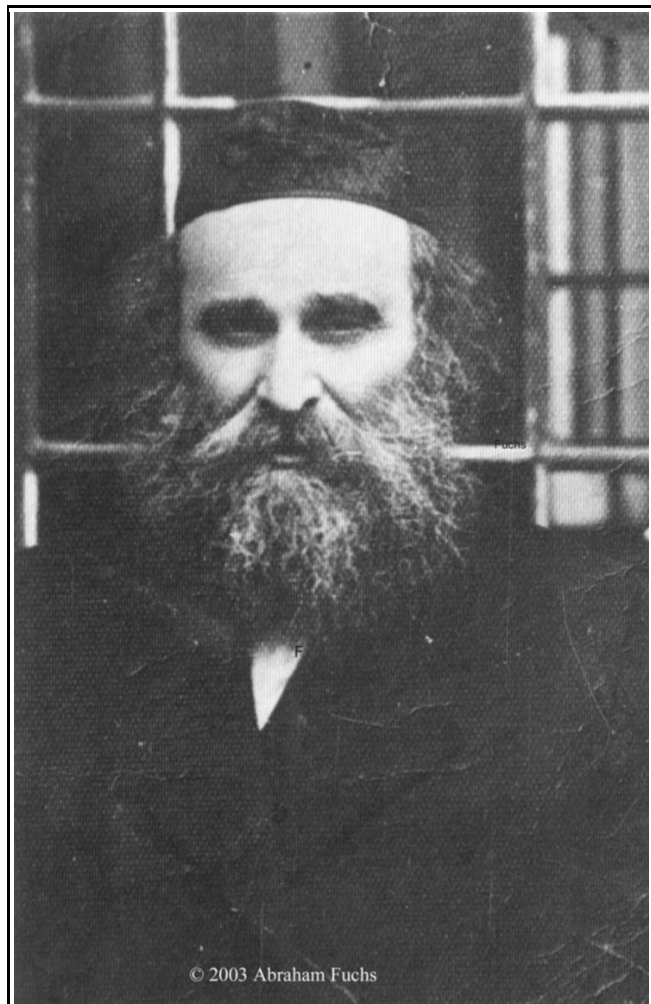
The name Avrohom Fuchs may not be familiar to the public, but if you say "the author of *The Unheeded Cry*," most people have something to say. *The Unheeded Cry* is one of the essential books on Holocaust history and a heartrending indictment of all those who failed to come to the aid of European Jewry before it was too late.



© 2003 Abraham Fuchs
HaRav Shmuel Dovid Ungar zt"l, Hy"d (photo courtesy of the Fuchs family - all rights reserved)

did not reach Budapest, perhaps because Dr. Reszoe Kasztner and his associates kept the reports away from the public since they had business dealings with Nazi leaders.

He spent two years in Budapest, and when the Germans occupied the city in 1944 he was sent to a work camp for youths where he remained until the end of the War, innocently thinking other Jews shared his fate. Only when



HaRav Mordechai Brisk zt"l (MaHaRam Brisk). (From *Tasnad and the Yeshiva of MaHaRam Brisk* by Dr. Avrohom Fuchs – used with permission)

he returned to Tasnad after the liberation did he realize the extent of the Holocaust. Of his entire family only one brother and one sister remained alive. When he heard his sister was at the displaced persons' camp at Bergen-Belsen he began to walk towards Germany on foot. At the time, crossing such international borders was still a dangerous prospect.

After reaching Bergen-Belsen R' Avrohom completed his secular studies at a school set up there. In 5707 he sought permission to go to Eretz Yisroel on aliyah, but was unable to secure a certificate. Instead he went to Canada and only after several years had passed did he arrive in Israel and start a family.

During the initial years following the Holocaust, survivors spoke very little about their painful pasts. In Eretz Yisroel the Yishuv did not want to hear about it. The atmosphere Zionist leaders created implied European Jews were cowards who went to their deaths like sheep to the slaughter. Meanwhile the survivors themselves yearned to rebuild normal lives. The Kasztner Trial and later the Eichmann trial altered the mood, and dozens of books and articles on the Holocaust began to

appear.

Tasnad was Avrohom Fuchs' first venture into his fervent involvement in Hungarian Jewry and the Holocaust. For many years to come he wrote one book after another.

Fuchs felt the history of Hungarian Jewry—particularly the yeshivas—had been neglected, even famous yeshivas like the Chasam Sofer's Yeshivas Pressburg (also known by its Slovakian name, Bratislava). He began to study the topic systematically, gleaning every available crumb of information with scientific thoroughness. The final result was a thick volume on Hungary's leading yeshivas. The book received great accolades, but alumni of yeshivas that went unmentioned expressed their resentment.

Undeterred, R' Fuchs launched a second round of research, this time focusing on all of the small, less-known yeshivas. The second volume of *Hungarian Yeshivot from Grandeur to Holocaust* completed the project, bringing every Hungarian yeshiva onto the pages of history.

Even when people with firsthand experience to share were located, the task of extracting the information from them was not always easy. "In those days [the 1970s] there were [few] telephones in Israel," recounts Yaakov Fuchs,

"Abba simply went from one person to the next, going from house to house, to hear firsthand testimonies. I was a young boy, but I spent a lot of time chasing around the country with him."

R' Avrohom would arrive, without advance notice, at each of the addresses he managed to obtain of Hungarian Holocaust survivors or Hungarian Jews who got out before the Holocaust. Generally, they were uncomfortable talking about the past, saying, "I don't have time. It's *bitul Torah*," or "I don't have the strength to open old wounds."

R' Avrohom would remain undaunted. "Maybe I could have a glass of water after coming so far?" That would gain him entry into their home. Then he would ask about photographs. "Do you happen to have pictures of the yeshiva or the town?" Invariably a conversation would develop as the memories began to flow.

"On more than one occasion," recalls Yaakov, "we would set a date for another conversation and upon his return Abba found the man had already passed away and there was nobody to talk to."

R' Avrohom also had an original way of gathering photographs. Since

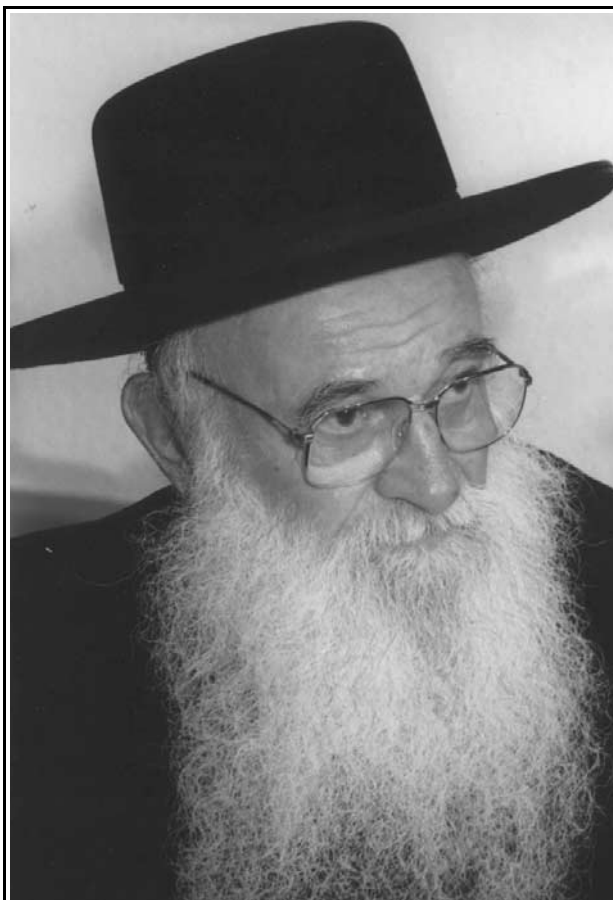
the photos were very valuable to their owners who were unwilling to let them out of their sight, he would carry professional photography equipment, thus producing a duplicate that rivaled the original.

When individual orders were placed, he often delivered the book in person, casually inquiring why the buyer was interested in the book. In many cases the ensuing conversation provided material for the next book.

In addition to personal testimony R' Avrohom spent many long hours poring over library materials, studying period newspapers, reading every relevant history book and all responsa *seforim*, from which he was able to derive considerable historical material. He would labor diligently over the source material, always striving to remain as objective as possible.

The Unheeded Cry

Through his industrious research, R' Avrohom grew familiar with the exceptional activities of HaRav Michael Dov Weissmandl and the unique personality of HaRav Shmuel Dovid Unger, *av beis din* of Nitra.



HaRav Yehushua Brisk, the current rav of *Tasnad* in Netanya (photo courtesy of the Fuchs family – all rights reserved)

HaRav Unger passed away during the War. HaRav Weissmandl passed away in 1957. Fuchs worked on the book about him during the 1970s. Although he did not know either of them personally, he was able to enter their lives and gain close familiarity with their personalities through considerable amounts of material he obtained from HaRav Weissmandl's brother-in-law and from many Nitra Yeshiva students, and in particular from HaRav Sholom Moshe Unger, who carried on his father's legacy until he, too, passed away just

weeks ago.

R' Avrohom was responsible for bringing wide publicity to HaRav Weissmandl's desperate attempts to save the remaining survivors, through negotiations with the Nazis, using money pledged by Jews from around the world. The money failed to arrive and HaRav Weissmandl's call fell on deaf ears.

After the war, HaRav Weissmandl published many of the letters he wrote during the war in a book called, *Min Hameitzar*. The book did not draw the response it deserved for several reasons: The rabbinical writing style used in the letters was very heavy and difficult to understand, and there was nobody to translate it into more readable Hebrew without losing the hidden meanings and suggestions the letters contained.

Another reason was the Mapai schemes still prevalent in Israel at the time. Party heads who had acted as "heads of the Yishuv and heads of world Zionism" during the war, were reluctant to have their apathy toward the fate of European Jewry divulged, making efforts to remove every book not to their liking from bookstore shelves, sometimes even threatening store owners.

But the primary reason was that Holocaust historians regarded testimonials by chareidi Jews with little respect. Had the cry gone out from a partisan, perhaps they would have listened to him, but when a chareidi Jew blasts Jewish leadership in his letters he meets derision, both at the time of publication and years later when establishment historians research recent history with apparent objectivity. Anyone who remembers the reception accorded to Ben Hecht's *Perfidy* can understand this.

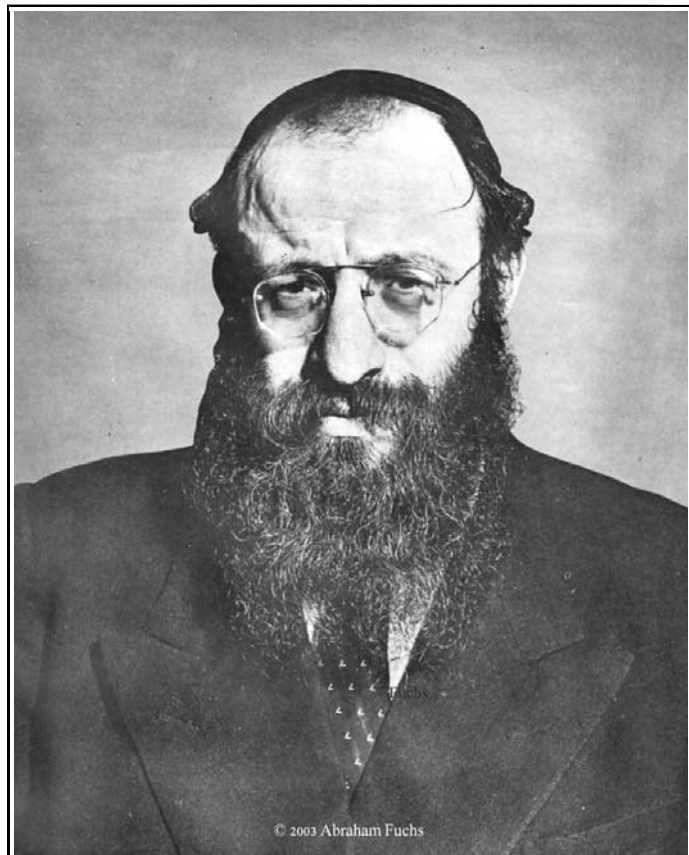
Later the national mood shifted. The Likud rose to power, making the time ripe to raise the painful subject once again. Avrohom Fuchs' book *Karati Ve'ein Oneh* (5743) redeemed *Min Hameitzar* and brought it to the public's attention, at least for a while. Once again it became impossible to overlook Zionism's part in silencing reports on the Holocaust, and its unwillingness to make monetary efforts to redeem the Jews from the gas chambers.

HaRav Weissmandl

HaRav Chaim Michael Dov Weissmandl was born in Debrecen, Hungary. While he was still a young boy he moved with his family to the town of Trnava, where his father served as a

shochet. He became a *talmid chochom* at a young age. He prepared his bar mitzvah *droshoh* himself and his grandfather, recognizing his ability, asked him to stash it away, promising him a sum of money not to deliver it.

HaRav Weissmandl delivered it



HaRav Michoel Dov Weissmandl, zt"l (photo courtesy of the Fuchs family – all rights reserved)

decades later before the *talmidim* of his yeshiva, who were greatly impressed by its acuity. Only afterwards did he reveal to them that he had prepared it at the age of 12 (and had not forgotten it despite the hardships of the war).

HaRav Chaim Michoel Dov was a *talmid* of HaRav Shmuel Dovid Unger when the latter was serving as the rov of Trnava. When HaRav Unger was appointed rov of Nitra, R' Chaim Michoel Dov tried to persuade him to stay in Trnava, but HaRav Unger said, "My heart tells me a time will come when there will be no yeshiva anywhere beside Nitra, and I want to be there."

Later his intuition proved true. The yeshiva in Nitra continued to operate almost until the end of the war and was the last yeshiva functioning in occupied Europe.

R' Chaim Michoel Dov moved to Nitra with HaRav Unger and absorbed himself in his learning. He also delved into the task of deciphering ancient handwritten Talmudic manuscripts, sometimes traveling as far as Oxford, England in the course of his work. In 5697 (1937) he married his rebbe's daughter, and by the time of the Holocaust he already had five children, *Hy'd*.

When the atrocities began, HaRav Weissmandl immediately enlisted himself to come to the aid of his brethren without anybody directing him to do so and without an official appointment.

His first action was to save 40 Austrian rabbonim whom the Nazis had put on a boat sailing to Czecho-

slovakia. The Czechs denied them entry and thus the boat remained adrift. HaRav Weissmandl flew to England where he persuaded the Archbishop of Canterbury and the British Foreign Ministry to grant them immigration visas to Great Britain, a daring initiative that succeeded

thanks to HaRav Weissmandl's strong personality.

A previous effort had already met a cool reception by the British and directives by the Foreign Ministry not to attend to the matter. R' Avrohom Fuchs found the original documents in the archives of the British Foreign Ministry, which was apparently unashamed to file the directives.

From this point on, HaRav Weissmandl devoted all of his being to saving Slovakian Jewry. He traveled back and forth between the capital city of Pressburg and his own town of Nitra, where he consulted with HaRav Unger every step of

the way.

Dr. Kasztner's later, and much more famous, negotiation with the Nazis was actually a belated negotiation attempt to save Jews. Actually, HaRav Weissmandl negotiated with the Germans as early as 1942 and managed to bribe them and to halt the deportations from Slovakia. HaRav Weissmandl attempted to build upon this success and expand it to all German-occupied territory in Hungary. This negotiation failed when HaRav Weissmandl was not able to deliver the \$2 million bribe he had promised. Thus, the million Jews were murdered. Later on, when Germany took over Hungary as well, Rabbi Weissmandl delivered a message to the Jewish community in Budapest to negotiate with the Germans.

Therefore, it was HaRav Weissmandl who gave Dr. Kasztner the idea of redeeming the Jews for money, an idea that was eventually carried out only through the famous trainload of dignitaries. HaRav Weissmandl was of course not responsible for Dr. Kasztner's failed ransom efforts and his success in managing to extract one train-load is arguably a continuation of HaRav Weissmandl's earlier efforts.

The idea to stop the deportations to the death camps was conceived by HaRav Weissmandl following several conversations he heard. He realized Dieter Wisliceny, the Gestapo expert on Jewish affairs attached to the German embassy at Bratislava (who was mentioned numerous times during the Kasztner trial), would be willing to

delay the deportations in exchange for large sums of money. HaRav Weissmandl of course did not have such resources available and he began to dispatch dozens of urgent letters to Jews around the world to raise the necessary funds.

One of the primary addresses was Saly Mayer, head of the Joint Distribution Committee's office in Geneva. Mayer responded to the desperate pleas with indifference. R' Avrohom notes that HaRav Weissmandl had never been a Zionist, but when he saw how the Zionist leadership did not care if the majority of non-Zionist European Jewry was annihilated, he became a radical anti-Zionist.

For example, Saly Mayer reacted to a demand by Mrs. Gisi Fleischmann—a Zionist leader from Slovakia (and one of HaRav Unger's relatives) who assisted HaRav Weissmandl greatly in his rescue efforts—by saying that the stories coming back from the Jews about what were going on were exaggerated. He alleged that Eastern European Jews (*Ostjuden*) had a habit of exaggerating to squeeze people for money. A sum of \$50,000 for the rescue of Slovakian Jewry was too high, he said, and also the Americans did not allow the transfer of funds to the enemy.

Ultimately an opportunity arose to save the remnants of European Jewry in exchange for \$2 million—\$2 per person—but the Joint claimed it did not have that much money available. After the war inquiries showed the organization had \$64 million at its disposal.

Even more astonishing was the response by a Zionist leader named Nathan Schwalb who claimed, "Only through blood will we get the Land," implying that the death of European Jewry would act as an incentive to the world's leading nations to grant the Land of Israel to the Jews.

HaRav Weissmandl's Other Efforts

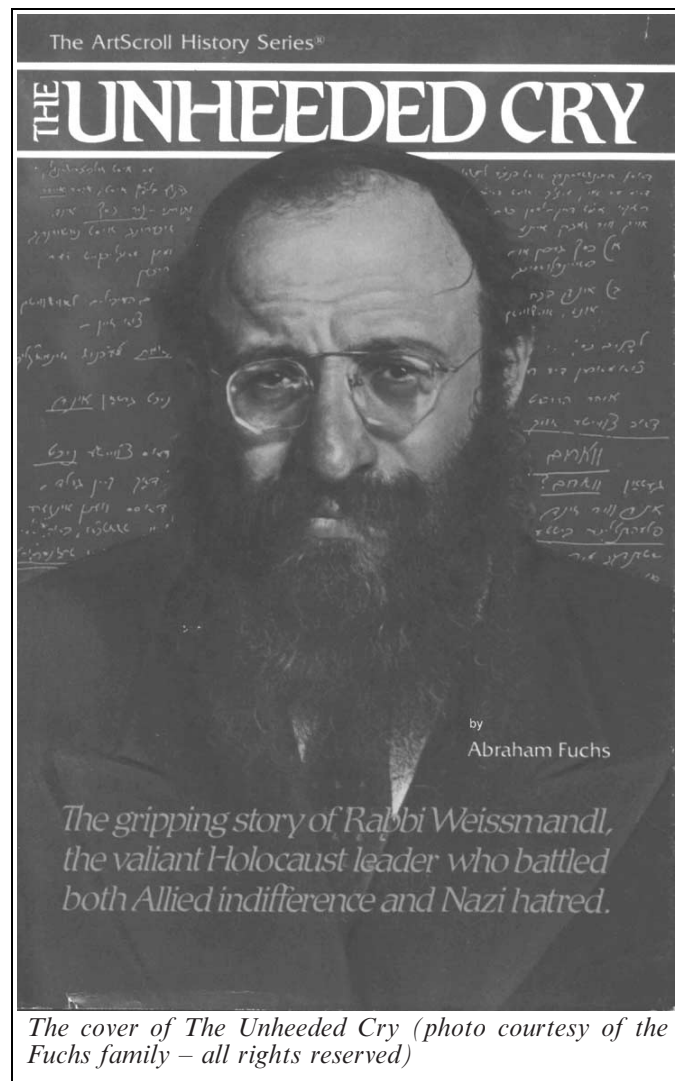
Even if we would prefer not to dig up the past—particularly since most of the key figures are no longer living and they cannot be judged in hindsight—it cannot be ignored. Events during the war left open wounds that constantly fester anew.

HaRav Weissmandl, a spiritual

giant, should not be underestimated. He could have dedicated his prodigious talent to Torah study, but instead he applied his head to the task of forging ideas to rescue his people.

"The HaGaon Rav Chaim Michoel Dov was a hero in Yisroel," writes R' Avrohom Fuchs. "He and his partners endangered themselves by making empty promises to the Germans when they lacked the funds to cover them . . . They had to invent lies . . . Through the slightest mistake, all of them could have been summarily executed. Negotiations of this sort required superb mental powers . . ."

One of the most imaginative lies HaRav Weissmandl invented was a character named Ferdinand Roth. He was supposedly the representative of world Jewry. Since the Nazis believed their own libel that all of world Jewry was linked monetarily, HaRav Weissmandl built on this myth, easily con-



The cover of *The Unheeded Cry* (photo courtesy of the Fuchs family – all rights reserved)

vincing them that such a figure existed and could provide them the money. These perilous tactics managed to stop the transport of Slovakian Jews to the death camps from 1942 to 1944. When the Nazis realized the money would not materialize, and following a national uprising in Slovakia in 1944, the deportations resumed.

One of HaRav Weissmandl's inventive ideas saved HaRav Unger and the yeshiva from being immediately deported to the death camps in 1942. At the time the Slovaks were still collaborating with the Nazis. One of the stipulations of their agreement, strangely, forbade harming the Chief Rabbi of Slovakia. HaRav Weissmandl discovered this clause and decided to secure HaRav Unger an appointment as the

Chief Rabbi of Slovakia. He called people in dozens of different government posts, sent telegrams and used his connections. A telephone was a rare and expensive item at the time, but HaRav Weissmandl spared no expense.

Eventually he received the appointment and with it came special protection for the yeshiva in Nitra, which acquired the status of a sort of "Jewish Vatican," a semi-autonomous authority whose subjects could not be harmed. This allowed the *talmidim* to continue learning relatively undisturbed almost until the end of the war. The yeshiva grounds, which were relatively protected, served as a hiding-place for other Jews as well. Although German soldiers conducted periodic searches, the fugitives were secreted into hiding-places prepared in advance.

As the war progressed the situation worsened. HaRav Weissmandl received precise reports on what was taking place at Auschwitz and tried to call on the whole world to halt the annihilation, by bombing the gas chambers and the railroad tracks leading to the camps. Yet these calls went unanswered.

"In the face of this horrible sight, those who are sane must go mad and those who have yet to go mad are not sane," wrote HaRav Weissmandl, but the world remained "sane" and complacent. His letters traveled through hell and high water to reach their destinations, yet it seemed as if they were never received. The Americans were less than eager to blow up the

killing machine.

The Partisans

The uprising by the Slovakian partisans spelled disaster for Slovakian Jewry. At the beginning of Elul 5704 (1944) HaRav Unger was on vacation in the forests near Nitra when he heard the Germans were liquidating the Jews of Nitra. He remained in the forest with his son, R' Sholom Moshe, and with a loyal *talmid*. They wandered through the forests and hid in caves. Even under such circumstances HaRav Unger refrained from eating *maacholos asuros*. On the 9th of Adar 5705 he related his will to his son and returned his soul to his Maker. R' Sholom Moshe survived the war and returned to Nitra.

Meanwhile HaRav Weissmandl was arrested with his family and, following various wanderings, was sent to Auschwitz in a crowded cattle car. Even here he continued to show extraordinary resourcefulness. He hid a miniature saw inside a loaf of bread and during the journey sawed through the door and jumped out, suffering anquish of conscience over the family he left behind. He arrived at one of the villages near Pressburg and from there made his way to a bunker where a printer from Pressburg hid a number of Jews, including the Stropkover Rebbe.

His sense of leadership intact, somehow he forged contact with Kasztner. Just days before the war ended, Kasztner dispatched a truck driven by SS soldiers to pick up Jews in several bunkers and drive them to Switzerland. In fact, the Jews were relatively safe in

the bunkers and were shocked to see the SS arrive at the bunker. Apparently the SS wanted to prepare excuses for the trials they expected after the war.

HaRav Weissmandl arrived in Switzerland broken in body and soul, but he began to take care of the yeshiva, which had returned and reopened under HaRav Sholom Moshe Unger.

Clearly the yeshiva could not continue to function in Nitra. HaRav Weissmandl, who had temporarily relocated to the US, worked hard to bring the yeshiva across the Atlantic. Yet the US did not receive them with open arms. American Jews were indifferent to the fate of Holocaust refugees and only through superhuman efforts was HaRav Weissmandl able to establish the yeshiva at Mt. Kisco, New York. He selected this rural site to provide a quiet place that would allow the Holocaust refugees to recover from their harrowing experiences.

Once again HaRav Weissmandl was able to devote himself to Torah study. He not only gave *shiurim* and served as *rosh yeshiva*, but he also tended to the needs of his *talmidim*, who were like his own children. For the rest of his life he continued to mourn over the *churban* of European Jewry and the loss of his family. On the 6th of Kislev 5718 (1957) he suffered a heart attack and passed away.

Following his *petiroh* HaRav Sholom Moshe Unger took over the yeshiva his father founded. Under his leadership for nearly 50 years it continued to grow. Today it is considered one of the leading Chassidic yeshivas in the US, with thousands of *talmidim* all

around the country.

R' Avrohom Fuchs's Further Research

R' Yaakov Fuchs notes that his father's literary research did not end at this point. One research project led to another. During the course of his work on Hungarian yeshivas R' Avrohom Fuchs gathered a large amount of material on the Satmar Rebbe, HaRav Yoel Teitelbaum, *zt'l*, who was spared through Kasztner's underground railroad and went on to set up an entire dynasty in the US. Fuchs released his book on the Satmar Rebbe shortly after his *petiroh* and the book was quickly disseminated and well received by Satmar *chassidim*.

His subsequent book was one of the first and most important books of its kind. Titled *The Holocaust in Rabbinical Sources*, it organized the responsa and *droshos* according to the respective lands where they were written, with an extensive introduction on the history of each place before and during the Holocaust.

Undoubtedly, R' Fuchs felt that *Hungarian Yeshivot from Grandeur to Holocaust* was his most important work even if it is not the best known. It was this work that he requested the family write on his tombstone.

R' Avrohom Fuchs was very sick for the last few years and was unable to publish any new books. The news of his *petiroh* went almost unannounced, since he left This World during Chol Hamoed Pesach. Perhaps this article will in some measure commemorate his lifework.

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About Tasnad



A photo of the building of the Tasnad Yeshiva. Across the top of the building it is written that it was donated by the "gvir hayoei" R' Naftoli Feurstein. He was the grandfather of Aaron Feurstein of Boston, owner of Malden Mills who made a big kiddush Hashem when he continued to pay his workers after a fire destroyed the building. (photo courtesy of the Fuchs family - all rights reserved)

It was 59 years ago on *yom tov Sheini Shel Shavuot* that the Tasnad community along with HaRav Mordechai Brisk were deported to Auschwitz. They arrived Auchwitz a few days later on 11 Sivan, when most of the community was murdered.

Tasnad, a small town in Transylvania on the border between Romania and Hungary, had a Jewish population of about 800 people. In this agricultural town, the Jews fulfilled an important economic role. Many of them were traders. They were active as merchants of wine, grains, cattle, poultry and as

shopkeepers. Part of this merchandise was exported abroad or distributed to other towns. Some of the Jews were involved in agricultural activities of handcraft. Many of them were also professionals, mainly doctors and lawyers. It was the home of several famous rabbonim, among them HaRav Chaim Betzalel Panet, the elder son of the Mar'ei Yechezkel.

Tasnad is only one of many such communities in Transylvania, but it became unique because of its famous yeshiva in the early part of the twentieth century. HaRav Mordechai Brisk was known as one of the greatest Talmudic scholars of the day and as an outstanding pedagogue. Tasnad became the home to Hungary's largest yeshiva, housing 400 to 500 *talmidim* every year.

During the war, the Hungarian authorities limited the freedom of the Jews and gradually made life unbearable there. Eventually, the yeshiva was shut down. In the days before the deportations, the Hungarian Police surrounded the HaRav Brisk's house, isolating him from contact with the community. Later on, he was forced to the Shimloi Ghetto where his beard was shaven off. HaRav Brisk watched silently as his congregation received similar treatment.

At the risk of his life, he put on his *teffilin* and *davened* in his tent and under the blankets while lying on the floor. Outside, one of his relatives stood on guard to warn him of an approaching guard. His son, Berale, was caught *davening* and was severely pun-

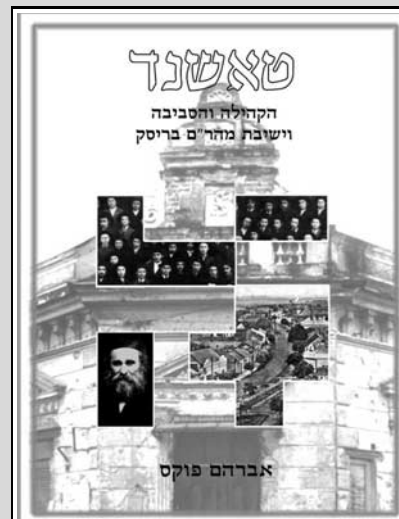
ished by the guards using their standard technique of hanging him by his hands handcuffed behind the back until he fainted.

In the ghetto, HaRav Brisk seldom spoke, and he would walk around while humming the tune to the words of "*Chamol Al Ma'asecho*" from the Rosh HaShonoh *davening*. A few days later, they were all taken to Auschwitz. May G-d avenge their blood.

Today, HaRav Yehoshua Brisk, grandson of the MaHaRam Brisk, continues the way of his forefathers and leads the Tasnad Yeshiva in Netanya.

R' Avrohom Fuchs, was born and raised in this town. The book *Tasnad and the Yeshiva of MaHaram Brisk* was his first book, written as a tribute to his community. This is also the first of R' Avrohom Fuchs' books to be reprinted by his children.

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The cover of *Tasnad and the Yeshiva of MaHaRam Brisk* (photo courtesy of the Fuchs family - all rights reserved)