



Canadian Institute for Jewish Research
Prof. Frederick Krantz, Director

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cijr@isranet.org www.isranet.org 514-486-5544

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P.O. Box 175 • Station H Montreal • Quebec • H3G 2K7 514-486-5544 cijr@isranet.org www.isranet.org

SKEWED PRIORITIES:

WHY SOME AMERICANS CHOSE TO SAVE PAINTINGS RATHER THAN EUROPEAN JEWS & WHY POLLARD IS STILL IN PRISON

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POLLARD, AMERICAN JEWISH LEADERS AND ANTI-SEMITISM

Isi Leibler

Jerusalem Post, Jan. 28, 2014

American Jews are experiencing a nightmare. They are finally accepting the reality that the draconian treatment of Jonathan Pollard emanates from anti-Semitic strains in the US intelligence hierarchy. Some had believed this to be the case for some time, but with additional convincing evidence, the realization is rapidly gaining ground.

American former naval intelligence analyst Jonathan Pollard is no hero. He is a convicted spy. He may have provided valuable intelligence to Israel relevant to the Gulf War, but was remunerated for his actions. One can appreciate the outrage of American intelligence authorities against an American Jew spying for Israel. However, Pollard’s punishment grossly exceeds his crime. Pollard entered a plea bargain agreement which would have effectively limited his sentence to a maximum of ten years but this was effectively reneged by the judge. Pollard is now serving his 29th year in prison – seven of which were in solitary confinement.

Israel is an ally, not an enemy of the US. There is no precedent for any other spy in the US undergoing such harsh treatment in the post-World War II era. Those convicted of espionage on behalf of US allies like

Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the Philippines served two- to four-year prison terms. The moral outrage US intelligence spokesmen express about Pollard spying on allies rings hollow, particularly following recent exposures that the US itself has the most consistent track record of espionage against allies of any Western country, including Israel.

In recent months, American political leaders, including retired intelligence heads, have created a groundswell of wide-ranging, bipartisan political support for commuting Pollard's sentence. This has been to no avail. In response to calls to free Pollard, *The New York Times* this month prominently published an emotional and jaundiced op-ed by M. E. Bowman, a former FBI deputy counsel who had coordinated the investigation against Pollard, urging that he remain incarcerated. Aside from numerous falsehoods and distortions, Bowman failed to distinguish between Pollard's espionage against an ally and that of American traitors like Aldrich Ames and Robert Hanssen who received life sentences for conveying information to the Soviet Union which led to the execution of numerous American intelligence agents. To bolster his case, Bowman made an unsubstantiated allegation that Pollard was also responsible for the deaths of American agents. He based this on a fantasy that Israel conveyed information obtained from Pollard to the Soviet Union in order to gain concessions toward easing Jewish emigration restrictions. This disgusting potpourri of concocted rumors and lies is surely indicative of the determination of those within the American intelligence community who wish to make an example of Pollard in order to intimidate the Jewish community. Nor is it coincidental that the "liberal" *New York Times* saw fit to publish such an illiberal, bigoted and unsubstantiated article at this time.

In response to the op-ed, *Tablet*, a respected American online magazine dealing with Jewish life, published an editorial that breaks new ground on the Pollard debate. It explicitly accuses the US government of anti-Semitism and discrimination against the Jewish community. The editorial accused the national security establishment of using the Pollard case to challenge the loyalty of Jews in order to cover up their own "incredibly damaging mistakes and failures." It asserts: "Pollard's continued incarceration appears, at this point in time, to be intended as a statement that dual loyalty on the part of American Jews is a real threat to America – and a warning to the American Jewish community as a whole." *Tablet* called on Jewish leaders to stand up against this "real injustice, whose perpetuation is clearly intended to suggest that all American Jews are, inherently, potential traitors to their country." It insists that "allowing the American national security establishment to play on classic anti-Semitic stereotypes in order to keep a man in prison as a 'lesson' to other members of his group or race is contrary to both the spirit and letter of the U.S. Constitution – and would surely and rightly never be tolerated by Muslims, gays, blacks, Chinese-Americans, or any other group." Furthermore the editorial accuses the American Jewish establishment of having failed to aggressively confront this issue because of its reluctance to be associated with a convicted traitor. This "metastasized into a real threat to the promise of legal and social equality that American Jews now take for granted."

Tablet insisted that by confining the Pollard case to a strictly humanitarian issue and merely appealing for a commutation of the sentence, Jewish leaders had "given an unwitting stamp of communal acquiescence to the message of suspicion that Pollard's punishment is intended to convey... The business as usual attitude of the American Jewish leaders has legitimized a noxious brand of political anti-Semitism which is being adopted by parts of the US political establishment – as well as by journalists, [and] academics... The injustice that is being done to Pollard pales next to this very deliberate injustice being done to American Jews by high-ranking US government officials in Pollard's name." In other words the Pollard issue should be based on demands for justice rather than compassionate or humanitarian appeals...

For the first time, Jewish leaders are now being called upon to confront the painful anti-Semitic motivations of those engaged in the ongoing incarceration of Pollard. Admittedly, the pressures confronting the American Jewish establishment are intensifying. Presenting the case for Israel and opposing the nuclearization of Iran has already created major tensions with the Obama administration. But the Pollard

issue can no longer be set aside, for it shakes American Jews' core beliefs that the American Diaspora is unique and that the US is the only country in the world, other than Israel, in which Jews can genuinely feel "at home" and are always treated as equal citizens. As the insinuations of dual loyalty become ever shriller, Jewish leaders need to review the situation and develop a strategy which will be consistent with justice and retaining their Jewish way of life in conformity with the multi-pluralism of American society. The Pollard case goes far beyond the issue of commuting an excessive sentence meted against a Jewish spy. Its outcome will impact on the essence of the relationship between the American-Jewish community and broader American society.

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**'THE MONUMENTS MEN' SHOWS HOW AMERICA
SAVED PAINTINGS WHILE LETTING JEWS DIE**

Rafael Medoff

[Tablet](#), Jan. 29, 2014

The story behind the creation of the "monuments men" team, depicted in George Clooney's new feature film by the same name, begins in the spring of 1943, after the Allies had confirmed that Hitler was carrying out what they called "his oft-repeated intention to exterminate the Jewish people in Europe"—while looting priceless works of art from their victims. Jewish leaders and members of Congress asked Allied leaders to take steps to aid the refugees. Roosevelt Administration officials replied that they could not divert military resources for nonmilitary purposes; the only way to rescue the Jews, they claimed, was to win the war. But to head off growing calls for rescue, the U.S. and British governments announced they would hold a conference in Bermuda to discuss the refugee problem. The talks had been "shunted off to an inaccessible corner so that the world would not be able to listen in," American Zionist leader Abba Hillel Silver charged.

Assembling the American delegation to Bermuda proved to be no simple task. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's first two choices to chair the U.S. delegation, veteran diplomat Myron Taylor and Yale President Charles Seymour, turned him down. So did Supreme Court Justice Owen Roberts, who said "the business of the court is in such shape" that he could not spare the time for the refugee conference. FDR expressed disappointment that Roberts would not be able to enjoy the lush beauty of the island, "especially at the time of the Easter lillies!" In any event, the president joshed, "You can tell the Chief Justice that while I yield this time, I will issue a subpoena for you the very next time you are needed!" And as it turned out, that next time was coming soon.

The conference was doomed before it started—because, as Synagogue Council of America President Dr. Israel Goldstein pointed out, its real purpose was "not to rescue victims of Nazi terror, but rescue our State Department and the British foreign office from possible embarrassment." The American delegates (led by last-minute choice Harold W. Dodds, president of Princeton University) arrived with strict instructions: no focus on Jews as the primary victims of the Nazis; no increase in the number of refugees admitted to the United States, even though immigration quotas were not even close to full; and no use of American ships to transport refugees—not even troop supply ships that were returning from Europe empty.

The conferees also rejected the idea of food shipments to starving European Jews. That would violate the Allied blockade of Axis Europe, and no exceptions could be made, they declared. (Just a year earlier, however, the Allied leaders had yielded to public pressure and made an exception for the starving population of Nazi-occupied Greece.) Closing off the last remaining options, the British delegates at Bermuda refused to discuss opening Palestine to refugees and scotched the idea of negotiating with the Nazis for the release of Jews. The release of large numbers of Jews "would be relieving Hitler of an obligation to take care of these useless people," one British official asserted.

When the Bermuda conference ended, the two governments kept the proceedings secret rather than acknowledge how little had been accomplished. But the meager results were obvious. As Congressman Andrew Somers (D-NY) put it in a radio broadcast, Bermuda proved that “the Jews have not only faced the unbelievable cruelty of the distorted minds bent upon annihilating them, but they have to face the betrayal of those whom they called ‘friends’.” It was becoming painfully obvious that when it came to saving European Jews, nobody had much interest. When it came to saving European paintings, however, the response was very different. Which is where the story behind Clooney’s *The Monuments Men* came in.

Shortly after the Bermuda meetings ended, the *New York Times* published an editorial titled “Europe’s Imperiled Art.” The newspaper, which showed little interest in the fate of Europe’s imperiled Jews, urged strong government action to rescue “cultural treasures” from the battle zones. The White House agreed: Here was something that did merit the diversion of American military resources. In June 1943, the Roosevelt Administration announced the establishment of a U.S. government commission “for the protection and salvage of artistic and historic monuments in Europe.” Finding a chairman for the new rescue agency was not too difficult: FDR turned to Justice Roberts, who may not have had time for the task of rescuing Jews but quickly found the time to chair a commission to rescue paintings and statues. The Roberts Commission set to work planning the mission that was to be carried out by the team that would come to be known as the *Monuments Men*.

Some refugee advocates openly questioned the administration’s priorities. In full-page advertisements in the *New York Times* and elsewhere, the activists known as the Bergson Group said the establishment of the monuments group was “commendable. . . . It shows the deep concern of the [Allies] toward the problems of culture and civilization. But should [they] not at least show equal concern for an old and ancient people who gave to the world the fundamentals of its Christian civilization, the Magna Carta of Justice—the Bible—and to every generation some of its most outstanding thinkers, writers, scholars and artists? A governmental agency with the task of . . . saving the Jewish people of Europe is the least the [Allies] can do.” In the autumn of 1943, the Bergson Group’s allies in Congress introduced a resolution urging the president to create a commission to rescue Jews. At a hearing on the resolution, New York City Mayor Fiorello La Guardia pointed to the creation of the monuments commission: “This very important problem . . . is not like the destruction of buildings or monuments, as terrible as that may be, because, after all, they may be rebuilt or even reproduced; but when a life is snuffed out, it is gone; it is gone forever.” The Roosevelt Administration dispatched Assistant Secretary of State Breckinridge Long to Capitol Hill to testify against Bergson’s rescue resolution. Long declared that the United States was deeply concerned about the Jewish refugees, but after all, “you cannot send a regiment in there to pull people out.” Paintings presented no such difficulties, apparently.

Historians have noted that the work of the *Monuments Men* was not the only instance in which the Roosevelt Administration diverted military resources, or altered military plans, because of nonmilitary considerations. A U.S. Air Force plan to bomb the Japanese city of Kyoto was blocked by Secretary of War Henry Stimson because of the city’s artistic treasures. Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy intervened to divert U.S. bombers from striking the German city of Rothenburg because he feared for the safety of its famous medieval architecture: That was the same McCloy who rebuffed requests to bomb Auschwitz, on the grounds that such air strikes would require “diverting” planes from battle zones. In fact, throughout mid- and late 1944, U.S. bombers—including one piloted by future U.S. Sen. George McGovern—repeatedly struck German oil factories adjacent to Auschwitz, some of them less than five miles from the gas chambers.

No doubt part of the problem was human psychology. When tens of thousands, then hundreds of thousands, then millions of people are murdered, they become a kind of faceless blur, a numbing statistic in the public’s mind. By contrast, the specific images of famous Rembrandt or Picasso paintings were personally familiar to many Americans—and that familiarity engendered the sympathy needed to bring about intervention.

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CHAGALL'S 'ALLEGORY OF AN AGE OF TERROR'

Lance Esplund

Wall Street Journal, Jan. 17, 2014

Think of the visionary artist Marc Chagall and romantic, fantastical and childlike images come to mind. Attending angels guide ethereal wedding couples, whose flesh glows like full moons. Flying lovers ride bouquets of lilacs, giant red roosters and painters' palettes. Cows carrying parasols and playing musical instruments float balloonlike through celestial skies. In Chagall's self-portrait "I and the Village" (1911), artist and beast see eye to eye, sharing not only the same landscape and mystical realm but the same consciousness. In his jovial, erotic and dreamy interior "The Birthday" (1915), a leaping man bends over backward and transforms himself into something resembling an eel—all to plant a kiss on a woman's lips.

But Chagall (1887-1985), who was born into a poor, Hasidic family near Vitebsk—a segregated, anti-Semitic community that was then part of the Russian Empire—experienced firsthand some of the major horrors of the 20th century. His subjects also encompassed war, the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, the Apocalypse, the Holocaust and the Crucifixion. Among the best of Chagall's darker paintings is his rarely exhibited "The Fall of the Angel," on view through Feb. 2 at New York's Jewish Museum as part of its show "Chagall: Love, War, and Exile."

After gaining international notoriety as an artist, Chagall fled the Soviet Union's hardships by moving to Paris in 1922. In 1940, he and his family narrowly escaped the Nazis by fleeing to the unoccupied south of France, but were forced the following year to seek refuge in New York, where his beloved first wife, Bella, died in 1944. Old and New Testament stories provided divine inspiration for Chagall, who believed that the Bible was "the greatest source of poetry of all time." Chagall's pioneering modernist pictures merged biblical scenes with familial Jewish traditions and Old Russian folktales. During World War II, the artist revived the theme of the martyrdom of Jesus on the cross, which he had explored briefly in his youth. Chagall held that the Crucifixion was the only image charged and powerful enough to represent the persecution, suffering and attempted annihilation of Europe's Jews. At times Chagall's crucified Christ is Jewish, with his tallit and phylacteries; or he is the Christian Jesus, with a halo; or he is secularized (every man). Sometimes, at Chagall's Golgotha, Nazis replace ancient Roman soldiers; and animals, rabbis and Russian peasants stand in for grieving angels.

A devout modernist, Chagall embraced the Symbolist mysticism of Paul Gauguin and Odilon Redon ; the wild-colored Fauvism of Henri Matisse ; and the nearly abstract Cubist framework introduced by Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso. Cubism's all-over, fractured planar structure allowed for the simultaneous depiction of disparate images, times, scale-changes and events. It offered the perfect metaphorical realm for Chagall, who delved into memory and dream. "I did not see the Bible, I dreamed it," he once said. Faithful to his own inward vision, Chagall's art fuses Old and New World, fantasy and reality, reverie and nightmare, celebration and lamentation. These themes are often explored within the same picture, as they are in Chagall's oil painting "The Fall of the Angel." Roughly 5 feet tall by 6 feet wide, the nocturnal landscape is one of Chagall's largest and most labored easel pictures. A dark sky crowded with multiple pocketed vignettes—a Madonna and Child, a Crucifixion, a falling man, grandfather clock and large red angel—the painting's figures and scenes all come toward us simultaneously, as if in a stream-of-consciousness rush. Our vantage point—hovering over the village at the picture's center—suggests that we too are falling. A hallmark of the Jewish Museum's exhibit, the work belongs to a private collection and is normally in storage at Switzerland's Kunstmuseum Basel. Chagall began the painting in 1923 and reworked it several times until he finished the picture in 1947.



Marc Chagall, *The Falling Angel*, oil on canvas, 1923

Chagall's biographer Franz Meyer described the painting as an "allegory of an age of terror." It's hard to argue the point. In a 1934 photograph of the unfinished work, its tone and temperament are relatively light: The painting includes a picket fence, behind which the viewer comfortably stands, looking up—out of harm's way—and the stricken angel resembles a boyish circus acrobat. The finished postwar picture is something else entirely: a work of cold, biting yellows, reds, greens and blues; of smoky blacks and dingy whites pitted like charred bone. Finally realized, the plummeting, fiery angel, like a flayed animal, is a blood-red fissure in a blackened sky. The angel is victim, guardian and avenger all in one—in a universe both hopeful and horror-stricken.

"The Fall of the Angel" depicts a world that has been overturned, shattered and is hurriedly advancing. It's a topsy-turvy space, a vortex; a performance in which nearly everything is airborne—and yet the juggler has left the stage. The nose-diving angel is in a tailspin. Its spread wings cut like blazing propellers. Looking into the angel's bullet-eye, I was reminded of those poor souls falling from the Twin Towers; and of the sudden shock once caused by a speeding bird as it crashed and flattened against my windshield. This sense of rupture is caused primarily by Chagall's angel, which is not only upside-down but is rotating parallel to and diagonally within the picture plane. The angel breaks as it inverts the composition. Yet even if we could right Chagall's angel, it's as if we're helpless, tumbling and twirling. Which end is up? Are we looking down at a world falling away from us; or up at a world crashing down on top of us? There's a sense of abandonment, of losing center; of the ground sinking out from under us as we spin out of orbit.

Chagall's realm is dark and aflame; the sun and time are falling. But all is not lost. The painter provides refuge from the storm. A candle is still burning strong; a man flees with the Torah (the cornerstone of the picture); Christ's halo shines like a beacon; Mother and Child rise from the flames; and a yellow cow serenades us with its blue violin. The falling angel is both the messenger of death and the messenger of mercy. Its leap of faith opens and bridges as it wrenches and topples space—creating a passageway between Chagall's heaven and Chagall's hell.

CIJR wishes all its friends and supporters Shabbat Shalom!

ON TOPIC

[Time To Put the Pollard Case to Rest—by Demanding He Be Set Free:](#) *Tablet*, Jan. 16, 2014—It should be ever more difficult for patriotic Jewish Americans—or anyone else, for that matter—to believe that Jonathan Pollard, who has spent 29 years in prison for passing secret intelligence documents to Israel, is being punished for the very real crime to which he pleaded guilty in 1986.

[Hollywood and the Nazis, Revisited:](#) David Mikics, *Tablet*, Jan. 6, 2013—One of us, either Mark Horowitz or I, must be misrepresenting the contents of Ben Urwand's *The Collaboration: Hollywood's Pact with Hitler*. Fortunately, Urwand's book is readily available, so anyone who's interested can check and see who to believe.

[Behind the Secret Plan to Bring Nazi Scientists to US:](#) Maureen Callahan, *New York Post*, Feb. 1, 2014—As the Allied troops advanced through France in November 1944, three experts in biological weapons huddled, by candlelight, in a grand apartment in Strasbourg, France, guarded by US soldiers.