

Recognition at last for the ‘forgotten Schindler’

THE Gallery of the Culture Ministry of Slovakia recently hosted an exhibition about Aron Grünhut (1895–1974), a Bratislava native who helped save Jews during World War II.

“While Oskar Schindler and Nicholas Winton are world renowned saviors of Jews, an unknown man who helped many Jews escape to freedom in Israel lived in this city,” Alexander Ben-Zvi, the Israeli ambassador to Slovakia, said during the opening of the exhibition.

“I am glad that such an exhibition will spread knowledge about brave Aron Grünhut who risked his own life to help the others.”

During an interwar period Grünhut was doing business selling various goods, and owned a Jewish canteen. He was a member of the

Chamber of Business and Industry and a functionary of the orthodox Jewish religious community.

He headed the Chevra Kadisha and was a member of the board of the Jewish hospital and of various charity organizations.

In 1939, Grünhut arranged an illegal ship transport to Palestine. Though it was complicated and took 83 days, 1,365 Jews from Slovakia, Hungary, Austria and the Czech Republic were saved.

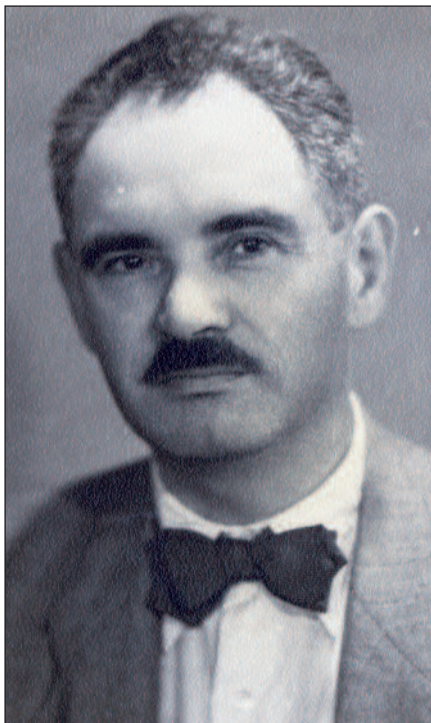
He also cooperated with Winton who arranged the transport of Jewish children to England in 1939.

In coordination with representatives of the central office of the Autonomous Orthodox Jewish communities, several rabbis were contacted, and after consulting them 10 boys from orthodox families were selected.

Among them was Paul Kohn, who

At the exhibition in Bratislava ... Benny Goren-Grünhut, son of Aron Grünhut, pictured in front of his photo taken in 1939





Aron Grünhut ... helped Jews escape

later became a reporter for The Jerusalem Post, and Tibor Weiss (now Yitzchok Tuvia Weiss), Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem.

During World War II, Grünhut hid from the Nazis in the cellar of the former Czechoslovak Embassy occupied by Germans in Budapest.

He was helped by a brave fire tender, Emanuel Zima. Other Jewish refugees were also hiding on the premises of the former embassy together with Grünhut and his wife. All survived until the arrival of the Red Army.

Grünhut ensured that Emanuel Zima would be awarded the highest Israeli badge of honor for his bravery in the late 60s, but he did not live to see it.

The award was accepted in Budapest as late as 2014 by the great-

grandson of the savior, Mr. Miklos Zima, who was found by journalist Martin Mozer. After World War II, Grünhut returned to Bratislava and did business selling goose liver that he was buying from farmers and then exporting to France.

After the communist overthrow in 1948, the family immigrated to Israel.

“His life is like a Hollywood box-office hit,” said Radoslav Ragač, head of the Slovak National Archive, and one of the organizers of the exhibition. “He devoted his determination and organizational skills to saving others, so he had to hide. He lived a full life and 40 years after his death we remember him in this way.”

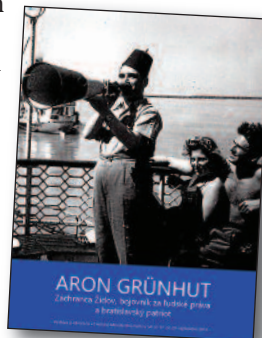
One of Grünhut’s five sons attended the exhibition.

“I returned after 75 years,” said Benny Grünhut who left Czechoslovakia thanks to Winton. “If my father were here, he would be proud of such recognition in the form of an exhibition.”

The exhibition, which closed on October 3, displayed old Bratislava before the reconstruction of its center, rare documents and items which had once belonged to Grünhut.

It was very popular with the public. Martin Mozer, initiator and main curator of the exhibition, said that his aim was to organize further exhibitions in neighboring countries – even in Israel if possible.

Left: Benny Goren-Grünhut speaking at the exhibition. Behind him, photos of fellow refugees including Paul Kohn (left) and Tibor Weiss



An exhibition poster



Reporter who wanted to find out more about hero

MARTIN MOZER is a journalist working for the private Slovak Television TV JOJ in Bratislava (also known as Pressburg). He heard for the first time about Aron Grünhut and his deeds during an interview in Carmiel which he was doing for his documentary film, “Forgotten Children Express from Bratislava to England in 1939”, which is the story about The Ten (boys) of Bratislava.

Mozer then invested a lot of work to find out more about Grünhut. After 50 years of Communist rule nobody knew about him in Bratislava. He was a Forgotten Hero.

Mozer found bits of information in the State archive. Two

years ago Mozer came across Paul Kohn, (a Kindertransport child who lives in Israel,) and later the only living son of Grünhut, Benny, who resides in Florida (he changed his name to Goren).

Benny helped Mozer with more information, and then Mozer again researched in various archives and conducted interviews with witnesses, historians and others.

Says Mozer: “Aron Grünhut’s story is so fascinating that I decided to do more. Not just reports, but to bring this hero to the attention of people in his hometown, Bratislava,,and also abroad.”