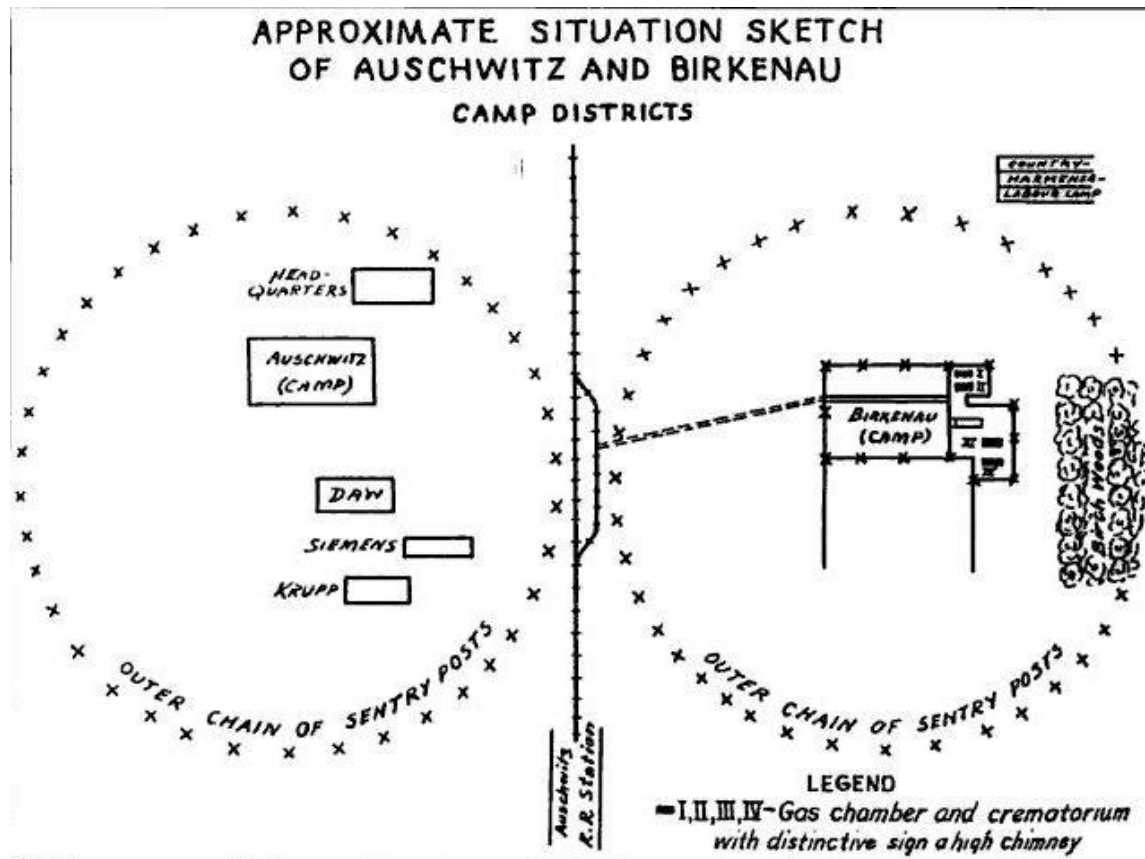


Aubrey Cox  
Prof. Marcuse  
UCSB Hist 133B Source Exploration  
6 March, 2019

### The Wetzler-Vrba Report Could Have Saved Many



Drawing by Rudolf Vrba (1924–2006) and Alfred Wetzler (1918–1988) - German Extermination Camps—Auschwitz and Birkenau, Executive Office of the United States War Refugee Board, 16 November 1944.

The U.S. War Refugee Board was the first to published this version of the report. See en:Auschwitz Protocols. Our source: Randolph L. Braham, Scott Miller, *The Nazis' Last Victims: The Holocaust in Hungary*, Wayne State University Press, 2002, 62., Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=50340014>

- “Report by Alfred Wetzler and Rudolf Vrba, two Escapees from Auschwitz (Late April 1944)” GHDI - Document. Accessed February 07, 2019. [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=1535](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1535).

Alfred Wetzler and Rudolf Vrba were two Jewish Slovaks who escaped from Auschwitz in April 1944. After a harrowing eighteen days Vrba and Wetzler finally arrived in Zilina, Slovakia where they connected with other Jews to whom they dictated their report. They compiled a report with as detailed information as they could with details of the camp and its

workings. Wetzler and Vrba's original aim was to warn Hungarian Jews of the horrors that awaited them in the planned deportations from Hungary. By the end of April 1944, the report had reached Hungary's Jewish leaders. Little credence was given to the warning however, and hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Jews were sent to Nazi death camps, particularly Auschwitz. According to GHDI it wasn't until the report was published in a Swiss newspaper--which brought the attention of the world to what was going on at Auschwitz--that the Hungarian government attempted to put a stop to the mass deportations. The Wetzler-Vrba report was one of the most important pieces of documentary evidence used in the Nuremberg trials. GHDI lists the source of the original English translation as the US National Archives and Records Administration.

- "Alfréd Wetzler." Wikipedia. February 02, 2019. Accessed February 07, 2019. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfréd\\_Wetzler](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfréd_Wetzler).  
Alfred Wetzler (b. 10 May 1918 – d. 8 Feb 1988) was a Jewish Slovakian who spent 2 years in Auschwitz concentration camp before escaping with fellow prisoner Rudolf Vrba and co-authoring the Wetzler-Vrba report in an attempt to save others from the terrible fate that awaited them at the death camp.
- "Rudolf Vrba." Wikipedia. February 02, 2019. Accessed February 07, 2019. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudolf\\_Vrba](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudolf_Vrba).  
Rudolf Vrba (b.11 September 1924 -d.27 March 2006) co-author of the Wetzler-Vrba report. Vrba was also a Jewish Slovakian who spent 2 years in Auschwitz before escaping and putting together this report.

#### **Annotated Bibliography in Chronological order**

- "NO PEACE WITH BUTCHERS." *The New York Times*. July 08, 1944. Accessed February 07, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/1944/07/08/archives/no-peace-with-butchers.html>.

This article was referenced in the article by Erich Kulka mentioned later. The article gives a staggering number of four million Jews having been killed by Nazis at that time. It states that the Swiss refugee organization Fluchtlingshilfe of Zurich is the source of information that 1,715,000 people had been systematically killed at two great camps in Upper Silesia. The report also says that the British Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, had confirmed reports that Hungary was deporting its Jews for extermination at Nazi death

camps. The author of the article also called for governmental appeals for Hungary to at least stop deporting its own people. The article does not specifically mention the report.

- Foust, Hal. 1944. "Nazi Brutality in Camps Told by 3 Who Fled." *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1923-1963), Nov 26, p. 1. <https://search-proquest-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/docview/177063296?accountid=14522>.

This news article discusses a report released that day by the War Refugee Board containing the stories of 3 death camp escapees. The names of the escapees are not given in the article to protect the identities of the men, but it does describe two of the escapees as “young Slovakian Jews who escaped last April after two years at Nazi concentration camps at Birkenau and nearby Auschwitz”

- "U.S. Board Tells of Nazi Atrocities." 1944. *Los Angeles Times*, Nov 26, 1. <https://search-proquest-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/docview/165542222?accountid=14522>.

The Los Angeles Times article reports on the document released by the War Refugee Board containing the two separate but parallel testimonies of three escapees. One of which is credited to two of the escapees are described as “young Slovakian Jews who for two years had clerical posts in the camp through which they could keep fairly close track of events...” for their safety their names were not released by the board.

- Trial of the Major War Criminals, vol. xxiv  
[https://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military\\_Law/pdf/NT\\_Vol-XXIV.pdf](https://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/pdf/NT_Vol-XXIV.pdf) (International Military Tribunal 1949)(Dist.file).

Report from the Nuremberg trials dated 14 November 1945 – 1 October 1946 document number 022-L refers to the Wetzler-Vrba report. References volume 3 page 568.

- “The Trial of German Major War Criminals : Proceedings of the International Military Tribunal Sitting at Nuremberg Germany.” Avalon Project – Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy. Accessed March 19,2019. <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/12-14-45.asp>.

This is the transcript from the Nuremberg trials From December 14, 1945 where the report number 022-L is referenced. It is also referred to as exhibit US-294. The report is used to show the number of people killed at Auschwitz. The transcript reads “On page 33 of this report is set for the number of Jews gassed in Birkenau in the 2-year period

between April 1942 and April 1944. I have been assured the number printed in this report is not a typographical error. The number shown is 1,750,000.”

- Vrba, Rudolf, and Alan Bestic. *I Cannot Forgive*. New York: Grove Press, 1964.  
Vrba’s memoir is cited by Miroslav Karny in his essay in the “Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp” as well as by Erich Kulka in his article “Attempts by Jewish Escapees to stop Mass Extermination.”
- Baron, and Frank. "The 'Myth' and Reality of Rescue from the Holocaust: The Karski–Koestler and Vrba–Wetzler Reports." KU ScholarWorks. January 01, 1970. Accessed February 07, 2019. <https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/handle/1808/6834>.

The authors of this paper highlight two particular reports by escaped prisoners deemed of special significance, one of which was the Vrba-Wetzler report. This paper recounts how many people believed the stories of the war atrocities at death camps to be war propaganda prior to the release of the reports like Wetzler and Vrba’s. The authors point out how, had these reports been distributed more quickly, and action been taken sooner, many lives might have been saved.

- Wyman, David S. *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945*. New York: New Press, 1984. P. 288-290  
Wyman details the 30-page report by Wetzler and Vrba including that the report gave details to the location of the railway that brought the Jews to the camps and the location of the camp. He then goes on to discuss various calls for bombing of the camp and the rail lines, but America failed to act. In fact, the answer from the war department was that it considered the operation impossible.
- Kulka, Erich. "Attempts by Jewish Escapees to Stop Mass Extermination." *Jewish Social Studies* 47, no. 3/4 (1985): 295-306. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4467305>.

Kulka details escape attempts as well as successful escapes including the escape of Vrba and Wetzler. He states that it is not known exactly how the report was disseminated or why it took so long for action to be taken (p. 301). Kulka does cite Both Vrba’s memoir and that of Wetzler (under the name Jozef Lanik) but does not cite his information for how it is not known how the report was disseminated. Further on he tells how the report ends up in the hands of the Czechoslovakian government in exile in London and subsequently is mentioned in articles printed in the *Chicago Sun*, the *London Daily* (in

June 1944) and the *New York Times* (July 1944), as well as how it is late June 1944 that Swiss papers begin releasing reports on what was happening at Auschwitz (p. 303). He gives the titles of two of the articles. The *New York Times* “No Peace with Butchers,” which does not mention the escapees at all. Kulka gives the title of the article in the *London Daily* “Czech Government Tells Allies How Nazis Massacred 1,500,000 Jews in Two Years,” however, I was not able to find the article anywhere.

- Kranzler, David, and קרנצלר דוד. "אוישוויץ הופצצה לא מדוע? / Why Auschwitz Was Really Never Bombed?" *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies / דקונגרס דברי* (1989): 411-17. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23535661>.

This paper examines why Auschwitz was never bombed. Kranzler discusses how War Refugee Board representative Roswell McClelland had received multiple copies of the Vrba-Wetzler report and yet chose not to take any action whatsoever. It also states that McClelland was “concerned with relief not, not military matters.” This failure to act is seen as one reason Auschwitz was never bombed.

- Karny, Miroslav. “The Vrba and Wetzler Report.” in: Gutman, Yisrael, and Berenbaum, Michael (eds.), *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994. pp.553-568.

Gutman and Berenbaum dedicate an entire chapter to the Vrba and Wetzler Report. The author not only tells of the harrowing escape but of the importance of the report that they made upon reaching Slovakia. Karny tells how while the leaders of Hungary’s Jews delayed publishing the information given in the report, Rabbi Meissmandel of the underground in Bratislava passed the report on to a representative on the Czechoslovak exile government in Switzerland. The author states how while Vrba and Wetzler were the authors of the report, their information was due to the diligent work of dozens of Auschwitz prisoners who collected top-secret information at great risk (p. 554). Vrba and Wetzler are celebrated for the absolute accuracy and the invaluable historical document that their report was. Among their sources are Co Dante nevidel(1964) where Alfred Wetzler described his escape under the pseudonym Jozef Lanik and the Memoir of Rudolf Vrba I cannot forgive (1964).

- Foregger, Richard. "Two Sketch Maps of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Extermination Camps." *The Journal of Military History* 59, no. 4 (1995): 687-96. doi:10.2307/2944498.

Foregger examines the map provided by Vrba and Wetzler in their report compared to aerial photographs of Auschwitz-Birkenau to determine whether bombing of the camp would have been feasible. He first states that due to censorship it may have been impossible for McClelland to have sent the entire report including the map to the Allied forces. He also claims that the map by Vrba and Wetzler was transposed and therefore not accurate.

- Levine, Alan J. *Captivity, Flight, and Survival in World War II*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000.

Levine recaps the escape of Wetzler (spelled Wexler by Levine) and Vrba. He briefly mentions the report written by them and tells how no action was taken. Levine also tells briefly of the escape of another pair of Jews from Auschwitz who tell the same story but still no action is taken to prevent the deportation of Hungarian Jews. In fact Levine states that the Hungarian Jewish leaders had known for some time but failed to act – even after receiving the Wexler (Wetzler)-Vrba Report. “Instead, they tried to negotiate with the Nazis, hoping they or the Allies would trade money or goods in return for sparing the remaining European Jews, or perhaps only part of the Hungarian Jewish community.” (p. 222)

- Bard, Mitchell Geoffrey (eds). *The Holocaust*. San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, 2001. A collection of essays on the Holocaust which contains an essay regarding the Auschwitz Protocol and was reprinted on the Jewish virtual library’s website.
- Bauer, Yehuda. "Rescue Attempts: The Case of the Auschwitz Protocols." In: *Rethinking the Holocaust*, 213-41. Yale University Press, 2001.

Bauer makes the case in his chapter about rescue attempts that the plight of the Jews was indeed known prior to 1944; he cites a report by a Polish journalist, Tadeusz Chciuk-Celt, in the fall of 1942 regarding the mass executions at Auschwitz.

- Lisciotto, Carmelo A. The Nuremberg Trial [www.HolocaustResearchProject.org](http://www.HolocaustResearchProject.org). March 07, 2008. Accessed February 07, 2019.  
<http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/othercamps/auschproto.html>.

On this page the complete text of the Vrba-Wetzler Report is reproduced. It was transcribed from the original O.S.I report of the US Department of Justice and the War Refugee Board Archives.

- "Escape from Auschwitz." PBS. September 30, 2011. Accessed February 07, 2019.  
<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/secrets/the-vrba-wetzler-report/45/>.

This episode on PBS tells the story of the escape. The episode focuses mainly on Rudolf Vrba. It tells the story of Vrba and Wetzler's time in Auschwitz, how they were able to gather the info that they did, their escape and subsequent attempts to warn others. Many people were interviewed in this documentary episode including historians Yehuda Bauer, Sir Martin Gilbert and Prof. David Cesarani, childhood friends of Vrba's Gerta Sidnova and Otto Pressburger who was also an Auschwitz survivor, another Auschwitz survivor, Freddie Knoller and Professor George Kline who saw the actual Vrba-Wetzler report first hand in 1944 Hungary.

- "Vrba–Wetzler Report." Wikipedia. January 30, 2014. Accessed February 07, 2019.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vrba–Wetzler\\_report](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vrba–Wetzler_report).

This Wikipedia article states that the Allies had known since November 1942 that Auschwitz was being used as a death camp where massive numbers of Jews were being murdered. The article states that "The Vrba-Wetzler report was an early attempt to estimate the numbers and the most detailed description of the gas chambers to that point." It goes on to tell how the report was written and distributed and how it was a crucial factor in the temporary halt to the deportation of Hungarian Jews.

- Fleming, Michael J. *Auschwitz, the Allies and Censorship of the Holocaust*. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2014.

Fleming makes many references to the Vrba-Wetzler Report throughout his book. He claims that the Allies were well aware of what was going on at Auschwitz for some time before receiving the report. It wasn't until the report was released and they were no longer able to censor news of the atrocities reaching the general population, were they compelled to do anything about it at all.

- Bard, Mitchell G. "The Holocaust." January 2016. Accessed February 07, 2019.  
<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-vrba-wetzler-report-auschwitz-protocols>.

This site reprints one of the essays from "The Holocaust." The essay briefly describes the Auschwitz protocol and what they were. It also cites its use as evidence in the Nuremburg trials with document number 022-L. It is not clear which essay this information came from.

A search on the website for the US National Archives and Records Administration for the “Wetzler-Vrba Report” yielded a link to the website for the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum:

- "Holocaust Remembrance." FDR Presidential Library & Museum. April 23, 2017. Accessed February 07, 2019. <https://fdrlibrary.org/holocaust-remembrance>.

This article published on Holocaust Remembrance Day announced a new collection of papers at the FDR Presidential Library and Museum. Here the bravery and heroism of Rudolf Vrba is remembered, and the importance of the report is highlighted. The FDR Presidential Library houses many of Vrba's papers on the subject. The report is also referred to as the “Auschwitz Protocols” and is touted as being “among the most significant documents of Holocaust history” by Ambassador William J. vanden Heuvel (par. 7).