



TARGUM SHLISHI

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Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Enclosed you will find a copy of *A Race Against Death: Peter Bergson, America, and the Holocaust* by David S. Wyman and Rafael Medoff. We are gifting the book to 1,500 individuals who have the potential to foster positive change in and for the Jewish world at this critical time. We are asking you to read it and then pass it along.

Why are we sending this book?

We are sending *A Race Against Death* as a call to action. It is an appeal for those of us who advocate for the welfare of the Jewish world to respond to the very real threats to Israel's existence posed by a nuclear Iran, to focus on our common goals, and to transcend the political infighting and differences that all too often result in hampering each others' efforts. Which brings us to *A Race Against Death* – a cautionary tale of the terrible consequences of a lack of resolve and political infighting among Jewish groups during World War II.

I read *A Race Against Death* just a few months ago and it angered, motivated, and touched me. I hope you are similarly affected. The book resonated with my belief that Jewish leadership, despite the strong bonds Jewish people feel for each other, can be lethargic in responding appropriately to threats to the Jewish people and to Israel, as it was during the Holocaust. Unfortunately, today there are indications of a similar lack of action in response to the current situation.

A Race Against Death is the story of the advocacy work of Hillel Kook (Peter Bergson), who during World War II campaigned tirelessly for the rescue of Europe's Jews, appealing to the U.S. government and the public at large. Kook was the nephew of the Chief Rabbi of Palestine. At the outbreak of World War II he traveled to the U.S. and, under the name Peter Bergson, spearheaded a series of actions designed to bring about U.S. intervention on behalf of the Jews.

He lobbied Congress, organized large public rallies and events, and arranged for a series of full-page ads in major U.S. newspapers (approximately 200 ads ran in about 40 newspapers in 15 cities between 1942 and 1945). His methods were unorthodox – even shocking – at the time. The mainstream Jewish groups were appalled by his strategies, felt that his actions undermined Jewish power and unity, and continually discredited him, obstructed his efforts, advocated for his deportation, and in the view of many, including himself, prevented him from access to Roosevelt.

While Kook's efforts are widely attributed with leading to the establishment of the War Refugee Board, a U.S. government agency established to rescue Jews from the Holocaust and credited with saving an estimated 200,000 Jews, Kook himself viewed his efforts ultimately as a failure. That failure was due in no small part to the lack of action and the outright obstruction and hostility he experienced from mainstream Jewish groups.

A Race Against Death is organized around the edited transcript of a 1973 interview with Kook by the historian David Wyman (author of *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust 1941–1945*). The book also includes reproductions of some of the Bergson Group's ads as well as government documents and letters.

In the interview, Kook tells of his continued efforts to work with the mainstream Jewish groups and the opposition he faced. "There could have been no reason why we [and the Jewish leaders] shouldn't work together. There were a lot of very able people there. But we couldn't get them to budge," he recalls. "Jews could have been saved... If the Jewish leadership would have acted, if the Jews would have acted, the number of the survivors could have been doubled."

Ultimately, he leaves us with a warning. "Humanity is going to pay a price... I think... many of the mean and barbaric things that are happening... come from the fact that the people grew up with the knowledge that it was possible to deliberately exterminate millions of people, and there was no reaction."

Why now?

Why are we sending this book now? Recently, as the threat of a nuclear Iran intensifies, there has been much talk about a "second Holocaust" and comparisons made to the 1930s. We are well aware that today's problems are different from yesterday's; that today's world is not yesterday's. Nevertheless, the situation is dire:

- Israel is in mortal danger.
- We believe that when Ahmadinejad declares "Israel must be wiped off the map," he intends to do just that.
- When Israel is threatened, the Jewish people are threatened.
- Will there be an Israel in 50 years? If we do nothing about the threat posed by Iran, we risk Israel. Without Israel, the survival odds of the Jewish people are slim.

There is a thin line – and many contend there is no line at all – between today's anti-Israel sentiment and yesterday's anti-Semitism. Certainly, elimination of the Jewish state would be an act of genocide, a second Holocaust, an act of anti-Semitism, and it would usher in a wave of terror that would threaten not only the Jewish people but the world as a whole. And yet, Ahmadinejad's threats have not spurred outrage in the international community – there has been some token action, but it falls far short of adequate.



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Of equal concern is that, at the same time that Israel and the Jewish people are confronted with monumental external threats, we are facing erosion from within. We are failing – continually and unforgivably – in our efforts to educate the next generation. Without education, without understanding our rich tradition and heritage, how can we expect to continue? We are failing to teach our children what they need to know for our survival as a people.

What next?

We borrow Hillel Kook's words here: "we felt something ought to be done...It wasn't a question here that we had ideas, we hadn't any ideas, we'll take anybody's ideas...I didn't pretend that we had wisdom. I wasn't crusading for an idea. I was a guy yelling, 'Help!'"

This letter is our cry for help. We have no blueprint for how to solve the crises facing us. But we know it is necessary for all of us to realize the critical nature of our current situation and work towards the end goal of a vibrant and lasting Jewish world.

It is time for action.

It is time to respond, time to make noise, time to apply economic pressure through divestment and additional sanctions. We agree with Natan Sharansky, who says it is necessary for the Jewish world to mobilize in response to the current situation, demonstrate support for Israel, and campaign to stop Iran. In an opinion piece in the *Jerusalem Post* (on 2/12/07), he argues that stopping Iran is not a "parochial" Jewish concern, but is of international concern. "Already, Iran is fueling conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon and Gaza – and all this before the regime enjoys its own full, declared nuclear umbrella," he writes. "Ultimately, we overcame our fear of parochialism to stand up for Soviet Jewry...Now we must do the same to prevent a second holocaust, and in the process save the world."

We believe that Jewish power and Jewish sovereignty are the best assurance and the best defense against another Holocaust. Others will argue that we need to strengthen universal human values and understand that our common humanity transcends our relatively minor differences if we are to defeat hatred and genocide. While we believe this is a noble goal and one to strive for, we remain convinced that the Jewish people cannot rely on others. We must have sovereignty – must have Israel – if we are to defend ourselves against hatred and genocide. And, when threatened, we must respond. Our survival depends on it.

Who are we?

Targum Shlishi is a foundation dedicated to providing a range of creative solutions to problems facing Jewry today. We concentrate our philanthropic efforts in four areas: education, women's issues, Israel, and justice for Nazi war crimes. To learn more about us, visit our website at www.targumshlishi.org. The website includes resources for further information about the threat posed by Iran.

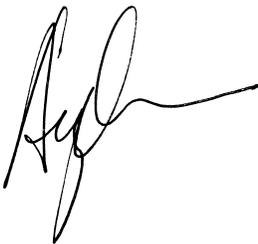
Who are you?

We have put considerable effort into identifying people with the ability, energy, and conviction to advocate for the positive change that is so necessary if Israel and the Jewish world are to continue to survive and to flourish. In compiling the list of recipients, rather than limit it to the "usual suspects" (heads of major Jewish organizations and well-established rabbis), we sought to identify people in a wide range of professions and at various stages in their careers who would be receptive to the book's message and inclined to act. Included are academics, journalists, philanthropists, university Hillel presidents and students, members of the Knesset, scientists, presidents of Jewish federations, heads of Jewish foundations and organizations, rabbis, physicians, lawyers, artists, entertainers, evangelical Christian leaders, and many others.

We end this letter as we began. Please read this book, and then pass it along.

I welcome your responses to our plea, and to *A Race Against Death*.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aryeh Rubin', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Aryeh Rubin
Director
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