

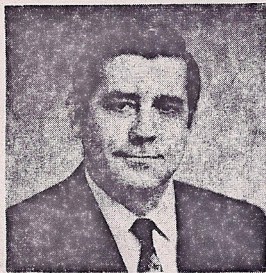
IN SEARCH OF ROSENTHAL

by

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On November 20, 1938, the nightmare state that was called Nazi Germany erupted in violence directed against its Jewish population. Synagogues throughout the land were put to the torch and



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Jewish citizens murdered, dispossessed and hounded into hiding. That day, a chapter in what has been emblazoned in human conscience as the "Holocaust," had a profound effect on a pixieish Baltimore sculptor named Louis Rosenthal.

Horrified by the event with all of the sensitivity that this Lithuanian-born Jew nurtured in his artistic soul, Rosenthal retired to his studio. For two days without stop he worked feverishly on a life-size clay model depicting the head of suffering humanity.

For inspiration he drew upon the Biblical prophet Jeremiah, who in his lamentations to the people of Israel predicted the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem.

Under Rosenthal's skilled hands the clay took the form of the head of a gaunt, bearded and aged man, his lips partially opened, his brow furrowed, his eyes upraised in apparent supplication.

In his work, Rosenthal was interrupted. A friend, a German and a Christian, dropped into the studio with a box of precious medals that had been in his family for generations. He gave the medals to Rosenthal with the suggestion that the artist might sell them to raise money for relief of persecuted German Jews.

This gesture of friendship made a deep impression on Rosenthal, who later told the story to a Baltimore Sun reporter.

A sculptor world renowned for his works in miniature, Rosenthal later used the head of Jeremiah for the frontal piece of a medallion he designed at the request of one of his patrons, a Baltimore foundation. In a corner of the medallion, beneath the head, he placed the figure of a weeping, bearded angel, a messenger of God, with a book in his lap opened to a page inscribed "1938."

On the back of the medallion, inspired by the gesture of his German Christian friend, Rosenthal designed three hands holding a torch (Jew, Protestant and Catholic?), and beneath it the inscription, "In the Union of Faiths We Are Fortified To Serve Mankind."

Five thousand of the medallions were struck in bronze in 1939 from Rosenthal's cast, and turned over to the foundation which apparently had had plans to sell them.

But the foundation went defunct soon afterwards, when only several thousand of the medallions had been distributed.

Since 1939 the remainder have been sitting in the basement of a home in Baltimore. Rosenthal died in 1964 and since then none of his works have been publicly available.

The owner of the medallions, wishing to remain anonymous, has donated them to the Maryland Region of the NCCJ. Some were presented to persons who served on our 43rd anniversary dinner committee, chaired by Mr. LeRoy E. Hoffberger. An art collector purchased one for \$70. Another has been presented as a gift to the Baltimore Museum of Art, which has a number of miniatures done by Rosenthal in its Epstein collection.



We are now making the medallions donated to the NCCJ available to our contributors, to those who donate \$25 or more, so long as the supply lasts. The contribution is fully tax deductible. The money so raised will further our youth and education work and local Maryland programming.