

Gabor Sztehlo Foundation for the Support of Children and Youth

Our foundation is named after a Lutheran pastor, Gábor Sztehlo, who was a rescuer of Jewish children during World War II., a pedagogue, who set up post-war orphanages on the basis of self-government, and an organiser of church homes for handicapped and retarded children as well as for the aged.

Within the framework of his pastoral tasks Sztehlo began his educational work in the 1930s by establishing and running a Lutheran high school college in Nagytarcsa for village youth, who had only eight years of schooling. After the German Nazi invasion of Hungary 1944, bishop Sándor Raffay appointed him to represent the Lutheran church in a Calvinist-led Protestant organisation, called the "Good Shepherd", which supplied food and clothing to Jews doing forced labour. Sztehlo's assignment was to establish and manage homes for Jewish children. In a few month he set up an extraordinary network of 32 homes, far exceeding the expectations of his colleagues and straining the resources of the International Red Cross and the Swiss Red Cross which funded the project and fed the children and the people who took care of them. His staff also provided documents to show that the children were Christians. Unbelievably enough, not a single one of his nearly 2,000 protégés was lost to the Nazis who kept combing the city for Jews, or to the shelling and fierce street fighting during the siege of Budapest.

Soon after the war ended in 1945, Sztehlo established homes complete with regular school and facilities for learning trades such as carpentry, for children who had nowhere to go because their families perished. He provided not only an environment, with family warmth, but he applied progressive educational principles such as giving the youngsters an opportunity to govern themselves. The children's "state" was known as "Gaudiopolis".

In 1951, the communist regime nationalised the homes, and Sztehlo returned to pastoral work. He organised church homes for disabled children and for the elderly and he did not want to leave them even after the 1956 revolution, when his wife and his two children left Hungary for Switzerland. Allowed to visit his for the first time in 1961, he suffered a heart attack and the doctors urged him to stay in Switzerland. After his recovery he served as a pastor in a small Swiss village.

In 1973, Israel's Yad Vashem Institute awarded him with a medallion, naming him a Righteous Gentile, in recognition for his work with Jewish children, and in the same year Swiss authorities nominated him for the Nobel Prize for Peace. On May 28,1974 he died in a second heart attack in Interlaken.

In 1991, a veteran team of his former saved students, protégés and coworkers established the Gábor Sztehlo Foundation for the Support of Children and Youth in order to return something - to others - of the great deal of welfare, care, cordiality they gained from the Denominator, including saving of life.

We, Gábor Sztehlo's former students and protégés, -- we call ourselves "Sztehlo children" -- as well as his colleagues and admirers wish to perpetuate his spiritual legacy by

helping those we believe need our support most; children, who grew up in institutions rather than family homes, who begin their independent lives at age 18. In the spirit of Szteblo's ideals and according to our strength our foundation intends to help these young adults in their studies and the institutions that raise them.