

Doubt cast on story of 'Italian Schindler'

Scholars find evidence suggesting that official was a Nazi collaborator

BY PATRICIA COHEN

He has been dubbed "the Italian Schindler," credited with helping to save 5,000 Jewish lives during the Holocaust. Giovanni Palatucci, a wartime police official in the port city of Fiume, has been honored in Israel, New York and Italy, where squares and promenades have been named in his honor, and in the Vatican, which is considering him for sainthood.

But at the U. S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, the tale of his heroic exploits is being removed from

an exhibition after officials there learned of new evidence that suggests he was a Nazi collaborator who was involved in deporting Jews to Auschwitz.

A letter sent to the museum's director by the Centro Primo Levi at the Center for Jewish Studies in New York stated that a research panel of more than a dozen scholars who reviewed nearly 700 original documents concluded that for six years, Mr. Palatucci was "a willing executor of the racial legislation and — after taking the oath to Mussolini's Social Republic, collaborated with the Nazis."

The letter said that the Italian and German records had not provided any evidence that he had helped Jews during the war and that the first mention of such a role surfaced years later, in 1952. Rather, they found documents that showed Mr. PALATUCCI, PAGE 5



Giovanni Palatucci has been credited with saving thousands of Jews from 1940 to 1944.