

L 15
Ira Hirschmann Papers

Box 2

Correspondence, 1943-1955 including personal
letters from Istanbul and Ankara

Passport Control Officer
British Embassy,
ISTANBUL

No. Pal/43/G

10th March 1943.

Sir,

With reference to my letter No. Pal/43/G of the 4th February, I have the honour to inform you that His Majesty's Government have now agreed that the selection of immigrants under this scheme need not be limited to Bulgaria, but may be extended to other Balkan countries including Hungary.

The total number of immigrants remains, of course, the same.

I am,

Sir,
your obedient servant,

H. M. Whittall

H.M. Passport Control Officer,
I s t a n b u l .

Ch. Parlas, Esq.,
Pera Palace Hotel,
I s t a n b u l .



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
WAR REFUGEE BOARD
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

OFFICE OF THE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Mr. Hirschmann:

In your letter of resignation to the Board, you expressed your gratefulness for being given the unique opportunity to save lives at a time when the main preoccupation of the world is that of killing. In this observation lies the essence of your personal approach to the difficult and heart-rending task with which the President charged the War Refugee Board. It explains your zeal and energy in carrying out your duties, your determination to do what others called impossible. It explains why at the very time of the creation of the War Refugee Board you were in Turkey, taking time from a busy and important business career, trying to do what you could as a private citizen to alleviate the suffering of the victims of Hitler. This convinced us that in you the Board would find the selflessness and the will to accomplish necessary to throw open wide the exit doors from the Balkans through Turkey. The Board was fortunate indeed in having you as its representative. And its faith in you has proved well justified.

It was not long after your appointment that the welcome news was first flashed in this country that once again refugees from the Balkans were being admitted into Turkey. At first they came in trickles. But it was not long before you succeeded in having the entire procedure for obtaining Turkish transit visas and Palestine certificates overhauled and streamlined. The trickle then increased to a flow, particularly when it became known that all refugees from the Balkans, with or without papers, would be admitted to Turkey and Palestine. All who arrived were transported through Turkey to Palestine in a matter of days after their arrival. Thus, the Turkish bottleneck was broken, due largely to your untiring efforts.

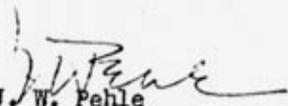
You then proceeded to attack with equal imagination and energy the obstacles placed by the satellite governments in the paths of those trying to escape from the Balkans. With the approval of Ambassador Steinhardt, you employed unprecedented methods in an unprecedented situation; when necessary, you disregarded traditional procedures and made full use of your extraordinary authority to deal with the enemy. As a direct result of your activity, thousands of

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refugees, doomed to extermination at the hands of the retreating German armies in Transnistria, were at the last moment removed into Rumania proper and thereby saved from the clutches of the Germans. It was in large part due to your efforts that the Rumanian and Bulgarian Governments finally came to realize how seriously our Government considered their inhuman treatment of the Jews and other minority groups. Thus, many not fortunate enough to escape were nonetheless unofficially protected inside Rumanian and Bulgarian territory; and even prior to the Armistice Declaration, the Bulgarian Government repealed its anti-Jewish laws.

It is with deep regret that your resignation as Special Representative of the War Refugee Board in Turkey has been accepted. The contribution which you have made to our work is indeed outstanding and should give you the deepest personal gratification.

Very truly yours,



J. W. Pehle

Executive Director

Mr. Ira A. Hirschmann,
Vice-President,
Bloomingdale's,
New York 22, N. Y.

NEW YORK TIMES - FEBRUARY 20, 1944

REFUGEE AID CHIEF AT WORK IN TURKEY

Hirschmann Cuts Red Tape
as He Maps Plans to Help
Oppressed Europeans

By JOSEPH M. LEVY

By Cable to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

ANKARA, Turkey, Feb. 19—

From his bed to which he was confined by an attack of influenza, Dr Isaac Herzog, chief rabbi of Palestine, at present in Ankara in connection with plans for the rescue of Jews from Europe, rose to greet Ira A. Hirschmann, vice president of Bloomingdale Brothers Inc., who has just arrived here to take up his duties as official representative of the newly formed War Refugee Board.

Mr. Hirschmann went to work within half an hour of his arrival in Ankara. He is invested with full responsibility of implementing the board's program and policy in Turkey.

One of his main tasks will be to develop the plans for the rescue and transportation as well as relief and maintenance of refugees. No American diplomat of this war has received such extraordinary powers in carrying out his duties as those granted to Mr. Hirschmann. Under the authority vested by the Treasury in the War Refu-

gee Board, Mr. Hirschmann will be the first and only United States citizen in Turkey to be allowed to disregard the Trading With the Enemy Act.

Asked whether he had an idea of the enormous difficulties that would confront him, Mr. Hirschmann said:

"Certainly, no one more than I realizes how complex and intricate is the task undertaken by the Refugee Board. A cursory glance at the position makes it clear that a full mobilization of every resource at our command will be necessary if we are to attain any measure of success. I fully expect to encounter great obstacles in my work, but how could we ever justify ourselves before the bar of history if we did not probe every avenue and left no stone unturned to try to save all that can be saved of those unfortunate human beings regardless of race or creed faced with annihilation in Europe.

"I expect help not only from individuals and organizations but from the entire civilized world. Let us pray that all other nations will follow the example of the United States and give us their unstinted aid in this great humanitarian undertaking."

To Rabbi Herzog's appeal not to waste time on red tape Mr. Hirschmann replied that the Refugee Board, headed by its dynamic director, John Pehele, was an instrument tempered for immediate and unreserved action, untrammelled by party restrictions and that it would be a grievous crime to allow this work of mercy salvation to be impeded by any formalities.

Ankara, February 21, 1944

Dear Dr. Magnes:

When I was in Jerusalem we talked a bit about the receipts for the food parcels. I was inspired by your story and the fact that you actually had worked out a method to secure written acknowledgments of the receipt of the packages. You recall that you promised to send me a number of them as they would be valuable in my propaganda work back in the United States. I hope to be helpful in this when I return and I should be grateful if you could send them on at your first opportunity. Please do not think that I am rushing you.

I wish you were able to give me some encouragement and the help that only you can provide to what is almost a heartbreaking task. For the first time in my life I see a problem that deals not with goods, enterprise, or even abstract ideas, but with human life itself, and I find all kinds of walls and vacuums hindering me in my efforts to alleviate the people who are entitled to their freedom as men, women, and children belonging to the world, the responsibility of every human being. For after all each one belongs to the other. Otherwise we are detached non-entities and statistical digits as the evil eye of Fascism would see it in its own myopic perspective. I'm working with vigor and enthusiasm on the ship. Also on the Bulgarian and Rumanian situation and I hope somehow to have some results.

With warm personal regards,

Cordially yours,

I.A. Hirschmann

Dr. Dodeh Magnes,
President, Hebrew University,
Jerusalem.

Ankara, February 21, 1944

Dear Mr. Agronsky:

When I arrived here last Monday I found my diplomatic status awaiting me with rather broad powers (confidentially) even to making an exception to their basic law permitting me to deal with the enemy, which I will only do in the last emergency. What the latter is I do not know. We seem to have been standing on the one yard line for some time.

The situation is immensely difficult and complicated, which I really don't mind as I have faced other problems that seemed insoluble, but the technic of delay and soft soap, etc., are not ones with which I'm familiar. Our Ambassador has been very kind and completely sympathetic and will be very helpful. My only concern now is the element of time for I am to go back to America soon. I hope eventually to outflank the situation. In the long run I think I will make some progress. The problem now is to get a ship and I have certainly put the heat on where that subject is concerned with directness and incisiveness.

I enjoyed meeting you immensely. Your vital and inspirational approach to a realistic subject was stirring. I hope to see you in Palestine on my way back. If I have something accomplished under my belt I may say it will be a happy meeting.

In the meanwhile let me hear from you. If you have anything to suggest, I will always be glad to have it. I wish it were possible for you to be here.

With warm personal regards,

Cordially yours,

I. A. Hirschmann

Mr. G. Agronsky,
Palestine Post,
Jerusalem.

Ankara, February 16, 1944

Dear Sedgewick:

A lot of things have happened since we talked last. I am fully installed here now, with the essential diplomatic status and rather broad powers. These in no way minimize the obstacles. They are prodigious. Fortunately Ambassador Steinhardt's standing here and his attitude are so affirmative that I may have a chance to accomplish something. I truly hope so.

Joe Levy has been very helpful. He is a fine fellow and sends his regards.

I want to thank you for the time you gave me and the sound background material. When I return, which will be somewhat deferred now, or even before, I may have a ripping story that will be exciting for you, journalistically and otherwise. It may not be superfluous to keep in touch with me.

Are you in touch with Matthews' operation through M.E.R.R.A. or U.N.R.R.A? He may have a base therefor a broader job in the Middle East. I still cannot reconcile the statement he made to me that he had to turn back a number of Jewish refugees to Yugoslavia due to lack of proper papers. The whole world is full of lacks and I gather that the old rules of the game are being broken here and there to save human lives wherever possible. Are we still going to be shackled by formalities and conventions instead of liberated by the human spirit?

Please give my warm regards to the two beautiful Greek ladies and let me hear from you.

Cordially yours,

I.A. Hirschmann
Attaché

Mr. Alexander Sedgewick,
Shepherds Hotel,
Cairo.

Ankara, February 10, 1944.

Dear Mr. Lourie:

As you will know, since talking with you on that hectic evening in Cairo I have been given diplomatic status, with broad powers. This is all very well but the obstacles I see here already are enormous. The door is locked from the outside in and to a degree vice versa. I have already begun to take some strong measures with our magnificent Ambassador here and we are bound to pry open the door to some degree sooner or later. I only hope it will not be too late. Obviously I shall be detained here longer than I had expected.

I don't know if you had an opportunity to meet W.T. Matthews, the head of the M.H.C.R.A. organization in Cairo. If so, I should be grateful for a letter from you giving me your views on that theater of rescue work and its possibilities relating to the broad, general, immediate plan. If not, you may have been able to pick up some information regarding the situation in Cairo, especially with relation to the refugees pouring out of Yugoslavia from Bari, Italy, and some from the Greek Islands, etc. Some constructive and basic work has been done connected with camps on a wholesale rather than a concentration camp pattern around Cairo, I am told. If you have been able to gather any facts of this kind and can give me your views it will be helpful in rounding out my survey of the entire situation, although as I see the picture Turkey is the bottleneck, literally.

I will be glad to let you know something of the things I have found and been able to develop after they are crystallized. If there is anything new on the Palestine situation I would be glad

to

Mr. Norma Lourie,
Care of Jewish Agency,
P.O. Box 92,
Jerusalem.

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to hear that too, especially in so far as it would relate to the basic rescue program now under way. I am sure you will be gratified to hear that the U.S. War Refugee Board has done even more than it promised in putting teeth into my efforts. The rest is up to me and it is a grave responsibility, but a profound privilege.

Please give my hearty regards to Mrs. Lourie and my very best wishes to you in anticipation of a reply.

Cordially yours,

I.A. Hirschmann
Attaché

Ankara, February 18, 1944

Dear Mr. Matthews:

First I want to thank you for the inspiring hour I had with you before leaving Cairo. It was indeed encouraging to know how much constructive work had already been done in this difficult and vital field of rescue. Your description and pictures of the camps "before and after" are something which I shall long remember. I do hope that you have found it possible to contrive to get some extra photographs and a copy of the booklet relating to Greece and relief which you showed me on your desk. They would be enormously helpful to Herbert Lehman and our leaders back in the United States.

It also occurred to me that you may have some outline of the developments and plans of your organization, with some vital statistics, which would be available to me. If at the same time it would not be too much trouble to send any information you care to on the future program for the extension of your rescue and relief work, I should be enormously grateful. I hope I am not putting you or any of your assistants to any undue trouble, but the discussion we had was of necessity a bit sketchy and it seems to me that your work is the heart-beat of a major constructive job in this complex field. If it can serve in any way as a pattern and a springboard for others to attempt to work similarly elsewhere, specifically in Turkey where the situation may disintegrate hourly, I know you will be happy to add that to your broad contribution in the field of human welfare.

Since talking with you last I have been given diplomatic status and have rather broad power to operate in the refugee field for my government, so that I am now in a more effective position to accomplish something if it is at all possible.

Again say I thank you for your courtesy, and looking forward to hearing from you,

Cordially yours,

I.A. Hirschmann

W.T. Matthews, Esquire,
Director of M.E.R.R.A.,
Cairo. 3 Sharia Ahmed Pacha.

Ankara, February 21, 1944

Dear Mr. Baerwald:

You will probably be hearing from me by cable and will receive a report either in the mail or by hand which will give you a fairly complete picture of the situation here relating to the efforts to rescue our people the problems, (if you can use that mild word) facing us, and the possibilities. I do not intend to attempt to sketch out the situation now as I have been here less than a week but I feel that it might be of some value and possibly a bit heartening if you heard from me through our pouch at this first possible moment.

The situation here is more intricate than one could visualize back in the States. There is no way of dealing with the problem through what we are accustomed to know as direction action. This having been my previous method, it is rather new for me to adjust myself to the diplomatic forms, delays, vacillations of the Middle East and especially the powers upon whom we are mostly dependent for our dealings. I think I shall manage somehow but the element of time is the great factor here now. It converges upon me from two spheres (a) the need for quick assistance to the victims in a situation which could disintegrate hourly, and (b) the need for my working quickly in order to fulfil my original first obligations back in New York.

The diplomatic status which the White House people gave me upon my arrival here should help immensely but nothing can change the slow-moving treadmill tempo with which we have to work.

The first need that I found was for the ship which I worked on immediately and about which you will unquestionably know some results by the time you receive this letter. You can believe that I have thrown all my energy into it. I have little hope of getting any quick and direction action from the Turks. They don't

know

Mr. Paul Baerwald,
Joint Jewish Distribution Committee,
Madison Avenue and 39th Street,
New York City, New York.

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know that language. The Swedes are my great hope now. I have found a valuable liaison in Mr. Simonds of the Red Cross. He may be immensely helpful. Joe Levy of the New York Times has thrown himself at my disposal. I find Barlas helpful, resourceful, and capable but not altogether accepted by the powers in government. In such a complex situation it would take a genius of the first order to work resultfully. They have welcomed my coming and status in Messianic terms but that does not help us break through. I'm also working to the end that we may accomplish something to break the Bulgarian and Rumanian bottlenecks. It takes time and I am developing connections with the Russians.

As I review what I have said above I believe this all boils down to the one point of the time element. We may have to make a different decision on that point with regard to my program and I may be in touch with you. As you see from this letter I am only beginning, reconnoitering, and trying to find a soft spot to break through. This seems to be even difficult for the military so you can imagine what it is on the alleged diplomatic front, especially on this subject which concerns a lost and, in the eyes of most people, a last people.

What is the Biblical phrase about "the last will come first, etc."? Perhaps this is a gleam of light but you can imagine my state of mind when I have to delve into the Bible to derive a bit of confidence.

Yet nothing will deter me now. I do hope to be worthy of your confidence and that of Walter Rothschild.

Please give my hearty regard to your associates, to Mr. Heymen, and Mr. Leavitt.

Faithfully yours,

I. A. Hirschmann

Istanbul, Turkey,
March 2, 1944.

Dear Fiorello:

I had been meaning to write to you before from Cairo and Ankara but I have been spinning around in circles from morning through night somewhat along the lines you described and acted with such foresight and ironic humor several nights before I left New York. You did not exaggerate at all. Dealing with these people in this part of the world is a separate art which one can only learn from instinctive birth or centuries of training and even then the chances of winning are slim. There is no generosity or interest in human welfare in this sector of the world. Any pleas in that direction are wasted effort.

The situation regarding the refugees is more heart-breaking and deplorable than can be pictured. What we try to comprehend in America as a tragic outgrowth of the war-convulsion which penalizes minorities is here seen in flesh and blood. That which was academic becomes real. A statistic becomes a human.

The other night I interviewed a little boy who had been walking for five years. He began when he was eight, escaping a firing squad after watching his mother, father and little sister murdered. His escapes from concentration camps, hiding in cellars, walking over the Carpathian mountains with a bribed guide, etc., constitutes a story that almost bleeds and one which I doubt will be believed. It is unfortunately true. Another man I interviewed was blinded by vitriol in his face. I cannot see and hear these stories of incredible suffering and human gallantry and remain silent or inactive.

You

Mayor F. H. LaGuardia,
City Hall,
New York City,
U.S.A.

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You may know from my temperament that I am energetically throwing every resource that I can command into efforts toward salvation, but we are dealing not with ourselves but others beyond our control. The blame for this outrageous and sadistic page in our history does not entirely rest with the Germans, the Turks, the Poles, or any single people. There are degrees of responsibility, of course. But when the entire world's governments closed their doors to minorities who are trying desperately to escape annihilation they closed their consciences and they will pay for it somewhere, some day, somehow.

The thing to do now is to save these people wherever they are and from this vivid experience of mine to try to help initiate a new conception of that which constitutes freedom to live and not to be tortured or displaced at will by gangster minorities in places all over the world, including America.

With your drive, power and great heart you can be helpful as no one else can with the possible exception of our great President. When I return I will have what may be a rather direct colorful and incisive report with some constructive suggestions. I also trust that I will have somehow succeeded in saving more lives. To date, they have been a relatively small number of men, women and children, but if only a single child found recourse to life through my modest efforts it would all have been worthwhile.

One sees the world in quite a different and more realistic perspective here, as you may know. It is not rosy. I really feel rather mature and grown up for the first time. I hope that you, Marie, and the children have been well and that you continue to win your daily battles over the evil forces always ready to surround you. The other day it occurred to me that evil never takes a holiday, not even a weekend. Therefore, there is need for more energetic vigilance without letting-up for a single moment.

Heartiest regards to you, the family, and all friends.

Faithfully yours,

P.S. I should be back in America some time in April. I do not know what will happen after that. I had only a six-weeks' leave of absence from my company. When I saw the situation here I forgot everything else. If I feel that the continuance of this work may succeed in saving any lives or establish some new course of action and I am asked to pursue it I shall do so. Of course, I will ask your advice.

האוניברסיטה העברית
THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY

Jerusalem

9.III.44

ירושלים

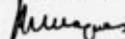
Mr. Ira Hirschmann
c/o American Embassy
A n k s r s

Dear Mr. Hirschmann,

I missed last week's pouch. Since then I had a talk with Dr. Eliahu who in his name and in the name of the Chief Rabbi would ask me to beg you to stay on and not to leave Turkey too quickly. They realize the discouraging factors in the situation, but it is just on that account that they think that a man like you with the powers vested in you and with your zeal could make a decisive difference. We are all crossing our fingers and hoping that that ship can be secured and the children and others can be rescued.

With very best regards, I am

Sincerely yours,


J.L. Magnes

JLM/lj

shertek Jewish Agency

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l o n d o n

1644 according information received from enser maritza milcom
awaiting constantza unallowed move unless shall cable that on
arrival here visas will be granted stop embassy asked whether
jewish agency arranging transport which have denied stop only
way enabling departure if colonial office instructing embassy
confirm statement re refugees succeeding escape to turkey stop
understand boats waiting there only till sunday next stop
reply immediatly

barlas

Ch. Barlas
Pera Palas
Istanbul, 13.3.44

C O P Y

barlas

Perapalas hotel

istanbul

Jerusalem 18/3

saw authorities here you may inform redcross that on arrival
immigrants maritza milka they will receive visas and be
transportes here

bernard joseph jewish agency

המוכנות היהודית לארץ ישראל
THE JEWISH AGENCY FOR PALESTINE
Immigration Department
JERUSALEM
P. O. B. 92

Istanbul, 15.3.1944

Mr. Ira Hirschmann
c/o American Embassy
Ankara

Dear Mr. Hirschmann,

I received your letter of the 14th inst. with regard to the boy whom you interviewed in my office. I took your generous proposal very seriously but in deciding upon the fate of a man one must consider not only the possible advantages of such an offer but the future of the child. Who knows, dear Mr. Hirschmann, where the boy would find happiness in his future life? It depends on so many factors, changes in life, etc. that nobody can foresee it.

The boy, like many others who are coming frequently to see me on their way to Palestine, had so much misfortune in the last years, that it would be sufficient for a lifetime tragedy. When asked the same day what he would desire now, he told me: "I want to be a Chaluz (Pioneer) in Palestine! Who can take the responsibility to deprive him from this aim? - Anyhow, I shall make inquiries about his status and background and I am furthermore ready to consult his relatives in Palestine; I shall then be glad to let you know the results as soon as possible.

I am sure, dear Mr. Hirschmann, that on thinking over the matter, you will find that I am right in my judgement and I look forward to your reply on this point.

With best regards

Sincerely Yours.

Ch. Barlas

Nakuru,
March 16, 1944

Dr. J. L. Magnes,
The Hebrew University,
Jerusalem.

Dear Dr. Magnes:

I cannot tell you with what warmth and satisfaction I just received your letter of March 3, 1944. It is amazing what can be done with faith, love and energy. I can say to you in the strictest confidence, and I beg of you not to disclose this to one single person unless it has otherwise reached you through an inadvertent source, that we now have a passenger ship, and I am off to Istanbul to make the necessary arrangements for its embarkation. The Ambassador and I are working on the concrete plan for a ship to make continuing passages to evacuate thousands. I am hopeful that this will materialize.

In this connection I cannot speak too highly of Ambassador Stainhardt's stalwart efforts in behalf of our great cause. Do not give me any credit. I am a mere instrument of fate and faith.

I should be grateful if the receipts about which I wrote you could be forwarded to me before I leave - sometime in early April.

Give my warmest greetings to Miss Scold and your wife and for you a hearty handshake across these miles.

Cordially yours,

Ira. A. Hirschmann
attaché

P.S. Since dictating the above I have also heard in the strictest confidence that Jewish refugees in Transnistria are being removed to the interior to safety. Someday when the story can be disclosed how this was achieved, I think it will make moving history and I am truly proud to have been instrumental

.. **
Y. A. H.

STWMA

Istanbul,
March 17, 1944.

Final

Mr. I.A. Hirschmann,
American Embassy,
Ankara.

Dear Mr. Hirschmann,

Many thanks for your letter of March 6th. I am extremely sorry I have not been able yet to send you the report you desire. Mr. Brod and I were to come together on Wednesday to prepare it, but he put me off to Saturday, he is a very busy man and difficult to get, but I hope I may succeed in forwarding you the report shortly after Saturday.

I had hoped to have another talk with you before your return to the States, but as I realize now I may not have a chance to see you, I am taking the liberty of writing you what I wanted to tell you before you go.

Mr. Hirschmann, if my understanding is correct, you have come out here with a definite aim: to try and save a certain number of persecuted Jews, to assure some relief to others. The difficulties and complications you will have to overcome are many, and I know the amount of energy, perseverance, and hard work you will require to finally achieve your end.

When you will have done it, when you will have saved 1000 people or 5000, it will be a great achievement, and yet a small achievement if one considers the problem as a whole. Don't misunderstand me, I am of those who attach importance to the life of a cat, how much more to the life of a 1000 people, and for this reason I say, even if you save 1000 lives, what about the 6,000,000 slaughtered in Poland, what about the other millions who are still in danger of being taken to the slaughter-houses in Poland if the problem is not tackled at its root: the universal visa laws applying only to Jews.

When following the example of Mussolini in making antisemitism a feature of state policy all countries within several months time closed their doors to Jews, the problem took for me its simplest form: If the world - as far as Jews are concerned - is divided into countries from where they are chased away and countries where they will not be admitted, then what is to become of them? I asked President

Roosevelt this question in a letter of which I have no copy in my possession, I must have written it in 1938 or 1939. And I added: What is to become of the 18,000,000 Jews? (then existing) Should they be exterminated?

When I spoke of extermination I did not realize there existed people in our times who could organize an extermination, but after my first experience with individual refugees when all efforts to get them an entry visa anywhere were fruitless even in cases of refugees having affidavits, I saw that a thorough application of the visa laws in force for Jews would leave no other theoretical possibility: No room in the world for Jews, then room for them only in the other world. And I asked President Roosevelt the question. I am still asking him the question through you, and I don't think the President will find my question extravagant since the 6,000,000 Jews who have been exterminated in the meantime are the saddest supporting evidence in justification of my fears - my fears of the past and my fears of the future.

Mr. Hirschmann, I earnestly request you to hand over to Mr. Roosevelt my report on the Struma, as it is, the one I gave you personally when you were in our office. That report was written by me two or three days after the wreck, it is not in final shape as you can see, but it is the open, bleeding wound, and the important part of it is not only the facts of the Struma, but my demand for remedies, for the one remedy, open doors, remedies which have never come as doors continued to remain closed for the bulk of Jews, and the 760 victims of the Struma became the 6,000,000 who perished in Poland. You said it is the Germans doing it in Poland. Yes, but the Germans could not have done it had all other countries not been closed to the Jews a long time before the idea of such a perfect organization of extermination occurred to them, and had it not been for the active cooperation of the governments of occupied countries and the passive cooperation of the anti-axis governments. How many Jews from all over Europe who had desperately and in vain tried for entry visas for anywhere as far back as 1938 and 1939, were finally taken to the Polish extermination quarters. And how many when the extermination actually started, could have escaped had visas been given. And here I come to the other chapter in which I have been mixed, the Bulgarian situation - and with another request to you, that you transmit to the President the enclosed correspondence.

At the time the deportations started from the regions annexed by Bulgaria, the British had but one word to say and the 12-15,000 persons who were deported to Poland within two-three weeks (while I was having this correspondence) could have been saved. Bulgaria was right at the Turkish frontier, had

the British given the collective Palestinian visa, the Turkish transit visas could have been obtained and these 12-15,000 people would not have been delivered to the Germans for the Polish slaughter-houses. This is what I mean by passive cooperation of the anti-axis governments, for in establishing responsibilities, it is clear that while these 12-15,000 people were murdered by the Germans, they would not have fallen in German hands had the British issued the visas. The provisional stop of exit visas by the Bulgarian authorities came later. All kinds of complications (transportation difficulties, exit visas) which are now given as reasons for justification kept developing and cropping up as the war developed, they did not always exist. The people on the Struma had had their exit visas, there were some 3000 Palestinian certificates available at the time, the Turks had proposed to transfer the passengers to a seaworthy vessel to continue the voyage as far as Mersine and from there on to Palestine, and yet the British would not issue the Palestine visas and these people were deliberately drowned.- The 2-300 passengers who had gone as far as Cuba some years ago - I forget the name of the ship - and were made to hover on the seas without possibility to land anywhere, had their exit visas and means of transportation. No country made the move at the time that Sweden made for the Jews of Denmark years later when it had come to a perfect kidnapping and slaughtering enterprise.

Mr. Hirschmann, I request you most earnestly to take these messages to the President from me as a simple individual. The sufferings and cruel waste of life which are prompting my writing are the justification for my taking this liberty with the President. and please also tell him from me:

One man started a movement of persecution, another man seconded it, and within a few years it became universal. Let him be the man who will start the redress. Not only by assuring transportation for and saving the life of a thousand or five thousand, but by rescinding the visa laws, and I finish with the first I told you when I met you: open countries, which I could see sounded so utopian to you, and which to me is so simple, as the world is large and there is room in it for all human beings and belongs to all human beings.

And dont give me the argument of means of transportation, first, the present situation will not last for ever, and then, open doors, give all the visas and leave it to the people running away from slaughter~~ing~~-houses to find the means of getting where they will be admitted, for

The "Struma" arrived at Istanbul on Monday, December 15th, at dawn with 769 Roumanian Jewish refugees. When Mr. Tanti went along side to get in touch with Mr. Segal, he was told they had no food nor water on board, and that the engine was out of order. The boat had been 10 days on her way from Constanza to Istanbul.

Water was only supplied to the boat at 4 o'clock, after guarantees had been given that it would be paid for in foreign exchange while permission to supply bread and food could only be obtained Saturday, December 20th, when the first bread together with some fish could be sent on board, in the afternoon.

S.V. took steps to obtain the necessary visas to land Mr. and Mrs. Segal and their 14 year old son, in transit, and arrange for them to proceed to Palestine by train. It was through them that we learned the conditions under which the trip had been started. Owner of the "Struma", a Greek by name of Pandelis, had collected 200,000 Leis (\$2000.-) per person for the trip Constanza-Haifa, guaranteeing that no more than 600 passengers would be taken on board. Three meals per day were supposed to be served. None of the passengers had any entry visas for Palestine and they had undertaken the trip expecting to be landed in a concentration camp in Haifa. Pandelis took on 769 passengers instead of 600, so that many of them had no berths and slept on the floor. Moreover the ship was so overcrowded that there was no moving space. The engine put on board was a benzine engine which had been for a few years (2-3 ?) in the sea in the wreck of another ship. So much for Mr. Pandelis' role.

The problem was a strange one: These people had no entry visas for anywhere and would not be allowed to set their feet on land. On the other hand, even though the engine might be repaired, the ship was not seaworthy and could not proceed on her trip. Steps were undertaken to obtain authority for the provisional landing of the passengers until the severe winter season was over. There was no result.

Bad weather set in at Istanbul December 26th, snowstorms, wind, temperature of 8 below 0, lasting 5 weeks with about one week respite. These people were left on board unprotected: no heat, exposed to the snow and dampness, insufficient food, insufficient fresh water, no possibility of maintaining the most elementary hygienic conditions. The poor quality of food which they received very irregularly caused many cases of diarrhea, there were also many cases of grippe, and the sanitary guard declared to me about the end of January that lice had made their appearance and that he was making a report to the sanitary department recommending that at least the women and children should be allowed to land for fear of a typhus epidemic. If the report was ever made, it was not taken into consideration, as there was no result. Also, a young man of 18 went off his head.

This situation continued 9 weeks, from December 15th to February 23rd, during which time the Turkish authorities repeatedly asked the British authorities to issue Palestinian visas, which would have permitted the people to land and proceed to Palestine by train. The British authorities repeatedly refused. The Turks finally applied to the Roumanian authorities for permission to repatriate the refugees, which was also refused. The Turks then went back to the British and told them that unless they gave the Palestinian

visas, the boat would be towed back to the Black Sea and be left to drift. The British were advised of this Monday, February 23rd, at noon. Their only reaction was that they should be given time to land the children who were about 53. It appears that the British had received authority to land the 53 children and advised the Vilayet already February 16th, but received no reply. However, if the British made a move for the 53 children, what about the rest of the passengers. At 5 pm. policemen went on board and started cutting the ropes off the moorings. The women on board fought with them and shouted and cried for help. The tug boat "Alemdar" towed the "Struma" up the Bosphorus. Passengers of the evening ferries told us the next day of the desperate calls and gestures for help of the "Struma" passengers, as they passed by. The "Struma" was left by the tug "Alemdar" in the Black Sea, 3 miles from the entrance of the Bosphorus, no food, no fuel, an engine out of working order, just left to drift to a certain doom. It was learned in town early in the afternoon, February 24th, that the "Struma" sank at dawn and was a total loss. There were four survivors, of whom three died later of exposure, the only one left may still be saved.

The direct physical cause which provoked the wreck is not yet known. There are rumors of all kinds: explosion, submarine, mine, desperate act on the part of the passengers, etc. Whatever it may be what actually caused the wreck is of secondary importance. The important point is that the boat was sent out to be wrecked, coldly and deliberately - no food, no fuel, no working engine, no seaworthy hull, just left to drift. (Crew?? Captain??)

Evidently, the Turkish authorities gave the order for the ship to be towed to the Black Sea, as she was, in any condition.

However, the British authorities knew at noon Monday such order was to be given unless they issued the Palestinian visas and yet did not issue them. It is said that steps were taken at the Turkish Ministry for Foreign Affairs for time to be allowed to February 23th until authority for the visas should be obtained and that this one week was refused by the Turks. As the British had had nine weeks time to do what should have been done, the claim that something would have been achieved between February 23rd and 28th leaves one skeptic. Moreover, since this one week was refused and the British knew the ship would be sent out drifting and could have been prevented it by issuing the visas, the British Government representatives in Turkey should have overstepped red tape and issued the visas to save 760 lives rather than going for a deliberate, cold-blooded wholesale murder. One proof that the British know that they are responsible for this act is that the B.B.C. had up to..... made no announcement of the wreck which occurred February 24th. Another reason for skepticism about the importance of that last week in which the British claim they would have arranged for the necessary visas, is that the British Passport Bureau refused after the wreck one Palestinian visa for a woman passenger who fortunately had been landed to hospital, and said they would have to wire about it.

What I demand is not just the establishment of responsibilities or the blame of the responsible, or sympathy for the 760 people murdered in cold blood and their families in the form of sentimental speeches or articles. What I demand is the rescinding of such laws and regulations which make it possible for authorities of any Government to refuse human beings their natural right to set their feet on

land, and even send them deliberately to be drowned. The universal visa laws applying only to Jews at present makes this possible. What ever artificial boundaries may have been set by peoples in the course of history, this planet belongs to all living organisms and no emperor, or king, or president, or dictator has the right to refuse stepping space to a human being. Unless anti-axis countries are opened immediately to Jews persecuted in Germany and countries controlled by Germany, any future loss of life due to this visa situation will be nothing but human murder on the part of anti-axis governments.

A few days after the arrival of the boat, the Turkish Police wrote to the Ministry of Interior and Foreign Affairs asking permission for 50-100 people to be sent through Syria. Contacted with the British Embassy.

A fortnight later they proposed ^{to the British} to take another Turkish boat and send the passengers to Mersine and from there have them go to Palestine.

About a week later the British Consulate was again asked for visas for the Struma. Mr. Page asked Mr. Whittall who replied that they had wired but had no reply.

The second director of Police, Kr. Kamurçin wanted to put on board the 21 survivors of a previous wreck, but he could not obtain authority from Ankara, as they said no further passengers could be put on the Struma which was considered unseaworthy.

With regard to the authority received to land the children, the British Consulate wrote to the Vilayet under date of February 16th asking them to release the relative travel documents and no reply was received. Mr. Brod went repeatedly to the Police asking them to wire for a reply, they only accepted to wire Monday, 23rd, at 4.45 p.m. which was only a comedy, in view of the fact that the orders to send off the ship were given at 5 o'clock on the same day.

When Mr. Brod learned after 5 that the Struma was being sent off, he went to Mr. Whittall's house and saw Mr. Whittall at 6.30. Mr. Whittall said he knew about the decision early in the afternoon and had rang up the British Embassy who said they could not do anything.

On February 21st a detailed list of the passengers was asked for by the Red Crescent. This was probably done on behalf of

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Dr. Junod of the Red Cross.

The Turks were very amenable in accepting foodstuffs for the ship during her stay to a value of T.L.29,000.

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FORM 4-5180

המוסדה היהודית לארץ ישראל
THE JEWISH AGENCY FOR PALESTINE

Immigration Department
JERUSALEM
P. O. B. 92

Istanbul, 20.3.1944

Mr. Ira Hirschmann
c/o American Embassy
Ankara

Dear Mr. Hirschmann,

I refer to our conversation regarding the S/S "Milcea" and the S/S "Milca" due to arrive shortly from Constanza, carrying Jewish refugees to Palestine.

In view of the fact that according to my information, the immigrants in question were not of the category for which I am authorized to approve immigration certificates to Palestine, I had to refuse any intervention on the matter. I informed the Executive of the Jewish Agency of this question, suggesting to approach the Colonial Office with a view to confirm that the immigrants will be allowed to enter Palestine if they succeed to escape from Roumania. I am sending you a copy of my cable of the 13.3.a.c. to Mr. Shertok, Jewish Agency, London, as well as the reply received via Jerusalem, saying that the immigrants will receive visas for Palestine on arrival in Istanbul.

I informed Mr. Simond, the Delegate of the IRC, accordingly.

For your information please.

Sincerely yours.

U. Bakula

Ankara,
March 22, 1944

Mr. Ch. Barlas,
Ankara Palace,
Ankara.

Dear Mr. Barlas:

I was moved today by your quick receptiveness in our discussion on the broad humanitarian basis which is the essence of our work. I know that your heart bleeds for those suffering people and that nothing can interfere with our unstinted effort in their behalf, especially in this eleventh hour.

You and I have a profound responsibility for which we must answer to our consciences and the consciences of mankind today and tomorrow and thereafter. Let us work hand in hand to make that liaison a bridge for some of our innocent victims to cross into the world of security. That will be the best piece of construction and affirmation of faith between us - for others. Any personal differences are like tears to be swallowed up in the great sea of travail which is almost at our shores.

With high regard,

Cordially yours,

SOCIALNÍ ÚSTAV PRO VYSTĚHOVALCE A UPRCHLIKY V BRATISLAVĚ, Č.S.R.

INSTITUT SOCIAL POUR EMIGRANTS ET REFUGIÉS. BRATISLAVA. Č.S.R.

S POVOLENÍM SOCIÁLNÍHO ODBORU
MINISTERSTVA VNITRA V PRAZE.

AVEC L'ACCORD DE LA SECTION SOCIALE
DU MINISTÈRE DE L'INTÉRIEUR A PRAGUE.

Istanbul March 25 1944
~~BRATISLAVA~~

MEMORANDUM

Your Excellency,

The Social Institute for Refugees of the Czechoslovakian Republic in Bratislava, which was liquidated by the Slovakian Authorities, now continues its activity under the direction of Emigrants in Istanbul, aided by members of the Czechoslovakian colonies of Budapest and Bratislava. It is in permanent contact with its own organs and trustees in Central Europe who are working underground.

Due to the latest developments in Hungary, the Jews in the first danger line are the approximately 10,000 Czech refugees, the 2,500 Polish refugees, about 1,000 emigrants from Yugoslavia, 10,000 Jews without citizenship, and finally about 800,000 resident Jews of Hungary. It is these that the present memorandum is purporting to try to rescue. The successive waves of persecution have increased in ruthlessness and speed in every country where the Germans have so far exterminated the Jewish population. Lately, in Italy, the most experienced departing personnel from Slovakia was rushed to the scene to speed up the deportations. Accordingly, no time should be lost to decide upon all possible rescue and relief measures that at this late stage can still be executed.

The first group of Jews in Hungary who must be dealt with are the Czechoslovak refugees. Approximately 10,000 Slovakian Jews escaped to Hungary before the deportations began in Slovakia, and they were joined by an indefinite number of Jews from Bohemia and Moravia who lost their Slovakian citizenship as a result of decrees issued by the Slovak Government, by which deported Jews and Jewish refugees are deprived of citizen rights. We discern a possibility of saving from massacre these refugees, or at least delaying their concentration in deportation camps, if

they would be given the status of prisoners of war entitled to all international rights

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Istanbul March 25 1944

under the international conventions concerning prisoners of war.

If such a demand could be put through to the present Hungarian authorities via the International Red Cross at Geneva, there is a chance of this group of refugees being interned as prisoners seized in a third country, instead of being encamped for immediate deportation.

Regarding action to be taken to save the indigenous Hungarian Jews, as distinct from immigrants sheltered there, who together with the Jews still in Bulgaria and Rumania represent the last remainder of the Jewry of Europe, all others having been exterminated by millions, some introductory advice seems appropriate. The Hungarian official and private attitude both with regard to economic cooperation with Germany and in Jewish questions during the last 2 years can safely be described as skillful and well-organized sabotage. As regards their policy towards the Jews, the very existence of nearly 1 million Jews in Hungary in 1944 is proof enough for the above. The composition of the present Hungarian Government, appointed after the German occupation, is undoubtedly pro-German and extremely right-wing, but does not include the declared Nazi element ("Arrow-Cross" Party). It is possibly a transition Government appointed by the Germans to break the Hungarian people in gradually and avoid difficulties in the first stage of occupation. The new Minister of the Interior, Andor Jaros, was a deputy in the Czechoslovak Parliament representing the Hungarian minority. His attitude is that of a conservative Hungarian patriot; his antisemitism extends to non-Hungarian Jews only, and it is well-known that he intervened personally for a Jewish functionary of the Hungarian Party in Presov (Slovakia) who applied for a permit to enter Hungary in order to escape persecution. He and other members of the new Hungarian cabinet are not on the same base-level as the Slovakian antisemitic Ministers and other German vassals.

The organs which take care of the evacuation of Jews from European countries to Palestine have learnt by experience that not more than 500 Jews, if so many, are rescued in any one year in this way; this is not the place to analyse the reasons for this or to allocate the blame. The fact is that even the few transit visas granted

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Istanbul
BRATISLAVA March 25 1944

by the Turkish authorities in recent months have not left the Turkish Foreign Ministry for the Turkish Consulate at Budapest,

The food transport action, for which the sum of 1 million Dollars has been authorized by the Joint Distribution Committee, has been delayed for several months now. Thus in the only place left in the world where the practical facilities for such an action are still available, viz. in Turkey, the means actually existing could not be used for desperately needed rescue and relief work due to the lack of a properly authorized organization to take charge and press its recommendations.

The ultimate moment for action has now arrived.
Only immediate action on the largest possible scale can still help. The fate of the remainder of European Jewry to a great extent depends upon the decision of Your Excellency, who have arrived here at the last moment with invaluable powers from the greatest advocate of humanity in the world to-day, the President of the United States. We take the liberty, therefore, to lay before you the following draft recommendations :

1. A declaration should be issued by the United Nations and all neutral countries, to the effect that refugees without citizenship who have migrated to Hungary from any country belonging to the United Nations, must be considered prisoners of war and interned as such with all rights belonging to them - unless the present status of this group is left unchanged by the present Hungarian Government.
2. In order to strengthen the morale and resistance against German pressure of The Hungarian, Rumanian, and Bulgarian Governments, these Governments should be notified that measures are proceeding for large scale evacuation of Jews from these countries and any transit transports. At the same time it should be made abundantly clear by wireless, pamphlets, and in any other way, that the full responsibility

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BRATISLAVA

for any act of repression or cruelty against Jews or any part in deportations in any capacity whatsoever will rest upon commanding and executive organs alike down to soldiers acting under orders.

3. All remaining neutrals should be influenced to give their full cooperation in the rescue work, including provision for temporary or permanent emigration, food and care generally.
4. The Hungarian people should be warned by broadcasts and leaflets, that the fate of Hungary at the Peace Conference will depend in large measure upon the attitude now shown to the Jews, both by the Government and the people;
5. A solemn warning should be directed by the Governments of the USA, Great Britain, and Russia to Germany, Slovakia, and Hungary, specifying a number of open cities or towns of no military importance which will be regarded by the Allies as hostages for the treatment of the Jews, and destroyed at a rate depending upon the progress of measures of repression against the Jews in Hungary and elsewhere. Towns in Germany, Slovakia, and Hungary should be selected, and the populations informed fully by broadcasts and leaflets of their character as hostages, and their and their countries' direct responsibility.
6. The despatch of food parcels should be pushed with the utmost urgency, even if only as a demonstration to oppressors and oppressed alike.
7. Neutral countries should be influenced to grant interim or emergency passports, if possible in valid citizenship passport form, upon which individual rescue operations could be based. Such passports should be officially countenanced by the countries issuing them, if necessary. (Example : Camp de Vitel in France).

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AVEC L'ACCORD DE LA SECTION SOCIALE
DU MINISTÈRE DE L'INTÉRIEUR A PRAQUE.

Istanbul, March 25 1944
~~BRATISLAVA~~

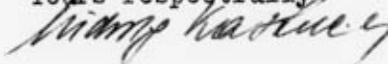
8. A secret political committee of limited membership should be created to contact the Hungarian Government and the Hungarian patriotic societies and organizations in America. One of the routes by which contact with the Hung. Government might be made would be through the connections at Istanbul of Minister Jaros.

For the execution of such or similar measures by Your Excellency we suggest that a limited number of collaborators be chosen here, who are versed in local conditions and possess accurate and up-to-date knowledge of the Jewish question in each of the countries concerned, i.e. Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Rumania, each of which should be represented by one advisers. These should be joined by a Turkish delegate. This advisory council should be in permanent session.

In closing these suggestions, we once more wish to stress with the utmost emphasis the time factor. Whatever is decided upon, must be done efficiently, and done now, so that what will be rescued from Hitler's slaughterhouse will not be urns of ashes and fragmentary lists of names of victims piled up in mass graves, but the few survivors of 10 million European Jews who can still be saved.

We need hardly add that we are completely at Your Excellency's disposal with the inadequate resources at our command.

Yours respectfully



Mr. Hirshman
c/o American Embassy
Ankara

Sender: Ludwig Kastner
Posta Kutusu 1008
Istanbul

URGENT!

March 26, 1944.

To: Mr. Ira A. Hirschmann
From: Ch. Barlas

I summarize in brief the proposals discussed in our today's conversation with a view to urgently intervene in the following matters :

1- Transit via Turkey

In view of the present situation, it is necessary to ask the Turkish Government to amend their transit regulations, abolishing the procedure of sending nominal visas from Ankara every week by courier. This proved unworkable, as it involves months, until the lists reach the Turkish consuls in Budapest, etc.

I suggest that the Turkish Government should amend the regulations so as to authorize the consuls in Budapest, Bucarest, and Sofia to issue visas to Jewish immigrants in possession of immigration certificates into Palestine, without reference to Ankara, or without awaiting lists from Ankara. The suggestion is to give 50 visas every week in Budapest, Bucarest, and Sofia respectively, on the confirmation of the Swiss legation to the effect that the emigrants are included in the lists of immigration certificates under the scheme of the Jewish Agency.

Since the British Government informed the Turkish Foreign Office officially that all Jewish immigrants arriving in Turkey will be granted permission to enter Palestine, there is no ground for the Turkish authorities to fear that the immigrants will remain in the country.

2- Warning to Hungary.

In consequence of the President's statement published yesterday, it is suggested that a warning be addressed to Hungary by radio or otherwise, to prevent deportations of Jews to Poland. In this warning should be indicated that eventual deportation would be considered as a warcrime.

3- Turkish ship.

Taking into consideration that a group of 600 emigrants ready for departure from Budapest to Constanza may perhaps be prevented from doing so because of the events in Hungary, it is suggested that the steamer, on her way from Constanza to Istanbul, should make a detour to Burgas, in order to take a group of Jewish emigrants from Bulgaria. This group consists of 600 persons who are, according to information, ready for departure, but for obvious reasons, unable to proceed from Bulgaria to Constanza.

Black

4- Persons under arrest in Bucarest.

Reliable information from Bucarest reached me to the effect that only 5 out of the 24 Jewish leaders were released. The remainder of 19 is still in detention and, according to information available, badly treated.

I suggest to intervene immediately through Mr. Gr. in order to save their lives.

C. G. Jones

W. H. ...

Ankara,
March 29, 1944

Mr. David Ben-Gurion,
* Jewish Agency,
Jerusalem

Dear Mr. Ben-Gurion:

The matter to which you referred in your telegram of March 26 has been urgently brought to my attention and I can assure you that all possible efforts are being made to secure the release of the representative Zionists.

Ambassador Steinhardt and I are bending our most energetic efforts in the work of the rescue of Jewish refugees from the Balkans.

Cordially yours,

Ira A. Hirschmann,
Attaché

I.H./ugl

P.S. I was deeply moved by my conference with you. Ambassador Steinhardt and I are making progress on our transport plans of refugees.

I.A.H.

286

18 JERUSALEM 29 26 1607 =

IRA HIRSCHMAN AMERICAN EMBASSY ANKARA =

WOULD DEEPLY APPRECIATE ANY POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE YOU
CAN GIVE IN PROCURING RELEASE REPRESENTATIVE ZIONISTS
ARRESTED ROUMANIA PARTICULARS OBTAINABLE FROM BARLAS
MANY THANKS = DAVID BENGURION +



SUW 1753 S.

Ankara,
March 30, 1944.

Mr. Ch. Barlas,
Fera Palas,
Istanbul.

Dear Mr. Barlas:

Ambassador Steinhardt was very happy to hear that you, for the Jewish Agency, had agreed to undertake to supply the food for the planned trip of the SS TARI with a maximum of 1500 passengers. He felt strongly however that the food should be placed on the ship at Istanbul and not at Constanza where we have no control of the situation and he has asked me to write you accordingly.

Please let me hear from you on this matter.

I am enclosing a telegram which I received and to which I replied that it was being referred to you. I should also be grateful if you would hand the enclosed letter to Mr. Brod.

I suppose you have heard that there has been much difficulty in the Turkish Foreign Office in securing the authorization for the landing of the passengers of the SS MILKA. Mr. Maby visited me on Tuesday evening deeply concerned about the matter. He informed me that Acikalin of the Turkish Foreign Office had overruled Kemal Aziz Payman. The British Minister Bennett had an audience with Payman and made some progress. Ambassador Steinhardt confidentially expects to see the Turkish Foreign Minister on this matter among others which we discussed. Please keep me informed of the situation regarding the MILKA. When do you plan to come to Ankara? I look forward to seeing you.

With good wishes,

Cordially yours,

Ira A. Hirschmann,
Attache

COPY

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Ankara, April 4, 1944.

Mr. John Pehle,
War Refugee Board,
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. Pehle:

I am seizing the opportunity presented by Mr. Hirschmann's return to Washington to tell you of the fine job that he has done while in Turkey. His quick grasp of the situation, energy and good judgment have been of invaluable assistance to me and have contributed largely to making effective the work of the War Refugee Board in Turkey.

I am disturbed at intimations from Mr. Hirschmann that his association with Bloomingdale Brothers as Vice President may necessitate his severing his connection with the War Refugee Board. The invaluable experience which he has gained here combined with the excellent judgment he has displayed on behalf of the Board impel me to urge you to take whatever steps may be necessary by enlisting the aid of Mr. Hull or Mr. Stettinius if necessary, to induce the officials of Bloomingdale's to make whatever arrangement may be necessary to permit him to give at least a part if not all of his time to the work of the War Refugee Board either in Turkey or Washington.

With kind personal regards,

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Lawrence Steinhardt

Ankara, April 6, 1944.

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

You and Mrs. Steinhardt have heard me speak a number of times of Carl Ebert and you will recall that you met him and his family at my reception. He is accepted in the world of drama and music as a signal figure. He occupied the preeminent position as State Operatic Director in Berlin before the war. I think I mentioned to you that when the Nazis came into power Goering offered him first position as artistic director of the new régime, which Ebert turned down flatly, at the risk of his life, saying that he was leaving because "the air in Germany will be too suffocating for me." (He and his family are completely Aryan)

Ebert is truly, aside from being a genius, a noble figure. I understand that he is a favorite of President Inönü and has done a work of sheer genius here, making flowers blossom from arid soil. As I indicated to you, I should like to bring him and his family to America, first because I think a man of his integrity and ability would be an asset in our country. He has plenty of the opposite type to offset; second, because I am eager to have the Museum of Modern Art, of which Marshall Field and I are on the Musical Committee, stage a series of opera under his direction; and third, as a member of the Board of Higher Education of New York I have been looking for two years for a man of his type to educate the young people in New York at the City College, of which I am a trustee. I can get letters from the City College and the Museum Art inviting him to America. As you no doubt know, many figures of such distinction and worth have come there by invitation.

Would it be imposing on you to ask if you could help with the arrangements for him to get the necessary papers to go to the United States? He has a Czechoslovakian passport. I believe he would want to go next spring or summer but I presume that arrangements would have to be formulated in advance. There is nothing to do about it now until the plans have been crystallized.

I trust this is not asking something of you which is too difficult to do. It would really mean a lot to me and when we are

all

-2-

all back in New York together some day I will invite you and Mrs. Steinhardt to the opening of his opera. (Although I gather this would not be too much of an inducement)

I will be carrying on some correspondence with Ebert regarding his productions, budgets, etc., for Marshall Field and the Museum crowd. If an exception could be made to have his replies to me sent by pouch I should be grateful.

Many thanks for your kindness.

I.A. Hirschmann

Ankara, April 6, 1944

Dear Rabbi Herzog:

I am leaving today for the United States. The urgency of my return is such that I shall not be able, as much as I deplore it, to stop in Jerusalem on this trip. I hope I shall be returning this way very soon and to pay a visit to you then.

I have reason to believe that the first steps in the program of the War Refugee Board are soundly under way and in good shape as I leave them. Barring radical unforeseen obstacles our ship should leave for Constanza very soon. I suppose you know about the fortuitous step that we were able to take with regard to the movement of the Jewish population from Transnistria to the interior. I am convinced at this moment that the Rumanian Government has desisted from all oppressive acts against the Jews and minorities and is actually assisting where it can in helping liberate them into the interior. We have also made some progress with the Bulgarians.

I want you to know that it was a pleasure and a matter of deep satisfaction for me to meet with you and to have the benefit of your advice when you were in Ankara. I trust this finds you well.

Cordially yours,

I.A. Hirschmann

Rabbi Herzog,
Jerusalem,
Palestine.

Ankara, April 6, 1944.

Dear Dr. Hanak:

I have been called back to the United States and am returning sooner than I had expected. I exceedingly regret that it has not been possible for us to have our meeting, especially since you were so kind as to suggest it. Mr. Packer will be handling refugee matters in my absence. Perhaps you will want to talk with him. Otherwise I will look forward to seeing you upon my return to Ankara. I hope that I will be coming back but if not, another representative of the War Refugee Board will and I will ask him to get in touch with you.

Please give my hearty greetings to your wife, and again with regrets,

Cordially yours,

I. A. Hirschmann,
Attaché

IAH/eb

Dr. Milos Hanak,
Czechoslovak Representative,
Ankara.

GUPF.....

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Istanbul, April 8, 1944.

Ira Hirschmann, Esquire,
Vice President,
Bloomingdale Brot hers,
59th St., & Lexington Ave.,
New York, N.Y.

Dear Ira:

With reference to your letter of April 6th,--as you may not have kept a copy it contains your request concerning Carl Ebert and his family--I have taken advantage of my visit to Istanbul to discuss the matter with the Consulate General and am reasonably certain that at the appropriate time every possible facility will be rendered them in connection with their visas.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your thoughtful personal memorandum and to tell you how highly I valued your work here and the extent to which I enjoyed our personal association. I hope we have only written the first chapter in this respect.

You will be please to learn that the Turkish authorities have today permitted the 244 refugees on the S.S. MARITZA to land and have promised to move them by rail to Palestine day after tomorrow. The resistance was less than I anticipated which may be a hopeful sign for the future with respect to illegal arrivals provided the number is kept within bounds so that the railroad is able to handle the movement. My guess is that if the illegal arrivals do not exceed 250 every two weeks, the railroad administration will find some way of moving them as the Foreign Minister has made it clear to me that he would rather move the refugees to Palestine than have them accumulate in Istanbul. There is still no word on the safe conduct for the TARI.

With every good wish and kindest regards in which Dulcie joins me,

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) Laurence A. Steinhardt

April 18, 1944

Mr. Michael Schaap
Bloomingdale Brothers, Inc.
59th & Lexington Avenue
New York, New York

Dear Mr. Schaap:

Just a brief note to confirm the fact that I am back, although I am still so shaky that I am not too sure of it myself. Turkish cognac, women, mountains and diplomatic braid are difficult to shelve over night. There were also other things I will tell about in more detail if you are interested when I see you. We really managed to save a lot of people but only because of the stalwart support I was given by Steinhardt and the White House.

I am sorry I missed you on Saturday and look forward to seeing you as soon as I return on Thursday or Friday. I hope you and Mrs. Schaap are well.

Warm regards,

Sincerely,

Ira Hirschmann

April 19, 1944

Mr. David Freudenthal
R.F.D. #2
Green Hill Farm
Doylestown, Pennsylvania

Dear David:

As you can see from the above, I am down here intensively working on the follow-through of my efforts in Turkey. It is absorbing and completely exhausting. Sometimes I wonder if I will ever feel rested again. But I have never been so moved and inspired in anything that I have undertaken.

I am glad that at least we had a chat over the telephone and happy to hear how you appear to have adjusted yourself to the new situation. I shall never forget your kindness and interest where I am concerned, especially during my absence where I was unable to defend myself. The question of publicity is always a touchy one. Ironically enough the one time when I would have preferred to stay in the background, the thing that I have done really constitutes news. I suppose you will find it difficult to believe but I consider it poor taste to expose in a public way one's efforts in this work of mercy. It is like wringing a superficial advantage out of a job of human salvation. Yet the War Refugee Board needs public support and they refuse utterly not to permit me to tell my story when it was the one and only back piece of news, an alleged accomplishment for the Board. I tried to throw the slant towards John Pehle and I hope it comes out that way, but I am afraid the Boys in New York will misinterpret it. This, I cannot help. I have made up my mind that I can do only the best that is possible in this strained situation, and will answer to my conscience -- and to no one else. I know you will be pleased as a close friend and a true humanitarian to know that I managed somehow to save a good number of our people. Clothed as I was with almost supreme authority it should not have been too difficult, although it was. While I will enjoy the advantages of this profound experience for the rest of my life, it has also left some scars, both physically and spiritually, but it is worth the candle.

** Since dictating this, the story did appear as a Pehle one, and I am happy.*

- 2 -

I was deeply interested in the veiled suggestion you made regarding radio, and of course aching to hear all about it.

The Boys down here are putting terrific heat on me to continue in this work. I have told them flatly that I must go back to my contractual duty. I fear that they are going to take some other steps, but they seem only determined and secretive about it.

I am lunching with Henry Morgenthau today, who seems to be a grand person, and what is more a very able and strong one, which impression was not previously conveyed.

I hope you are having a good vacation. I wonder when and if I will ever get another. Make the most of it. Give Dorothy my love, and to you again my hearty appreciation and well wishes.

Faithfully yours,

I. A. Hirschmann

New York Post
APR 19 1944

Washington Memo

New York Post
By Charles Yeh Devander and William O. Player Jr.

Encounter With a Citizen of Tomorrow On the Long Road to Palestine

APR 19 1944

Washington, Apr. 19.

Ira Hirschmann was winding up a press conference report of his experiences in the Middle East as a special representative of the War Refugee Board, and some of the reporters were pocketing their pencils and pads.

"But there's one thing more I might tell you about," said Hirschmann, a little self-consciously. "I don't know whether it interests you, but it certainly interested me—and that's the people themselves whom I saw over there—especially some of the children.

"There was one little boy, a Polish Jew—he couldn't have been more than 13—and he had been walking, walking from Poland to Turkey for five years. That means he was 8 years old when the Nazis came, when he saw his parents killed by a firing squad, his little sister trampled. She did get away, but only to be run down later in the road.

"This little fellow ran into a house and jumped into a barrel of water in the cellar and hid there all night with only his head sticking out. The Nazis didn't find him; and afterward he started walking. Once he walked right into a concentration camp and stayed there for a while, but the Nazis didn't have any record of him and he slipped out without their noticing it.

"He kept on walking and finally got to the Slovakian border. The underground movement helped him into Hungary, and from there on he traveled in a group of children like him—with a guide provided by the underground. Once he got so tired that he nearly gave up and wouldn't go any further, and they had to carry him.

"When I saw him at Istanbul he was nervous and talked so fast I could hardly understand all that he tried to tell me—but I have authoritative reasons to believe it was all true.

"And he showed me a picture that he carried around with him—it was a beautiful girl—she must have been about 19 at the most—and I asked him why he carried the picture. 'Oh, she was our leader, our heroine,' he told me. 'She did many brave things to save us.'

"Wonderful!" I said. 'And where is she now? I want to see her, and talk to her!' 'Oh, she was shot,' he told me, matter of factly. 'They caught her and killed her.' I said that was terrible, but asked him why he still carried the picture. 'We all do,' he told me. 'She is our symbol.' No, I don't believe he said 'symbol'—but, anyhow, that's what he meant."



IRA HIRSCHMANN

New York Post
APR 19 1944

Hirschmann paused, blushed at the realization that he had got lost in his own story, and looked embarrassedly about the room.

Then, with a nervous little chuckle, he added:

"It isn't news—and, of course, you wouldn't want to use it—but I wanted to adopt that kid. I tried to adopt him—I would have liked to bring him back to America with me. But the Zionists already had their eye on him—he's the kind of material they need in Palestine.

"And I spent a good deal of time talking with officials of Great Britain's Middle East Relief and Rehabilitation Administration over there and they told me it was people like this boy—that have been and will be rescued—that are going to make the best, the most freedom-loving people of the postwar world.

"They've squared their jaws—they've been through the fire—they're determined to fight—against the kind of things they've had to endure.

"They want to go back home some day—they're hoping for the time when their homes will be free again—free places for them to flourish in.

"And, when I think about that boy—I'll never forget him—I say to myself, 'What a CITIZEN that kid is going to be!'"

Ira Hirschmann looked around the room again, still a bit self-consciously—but, this time, proudly, too.

And he chuckled, nervously, to himself.

NEW YORK
Herald Tribune

APR 20 1944

The Rescue of Europe's Jews

Anxiety over the plight of Jews in Nazi-controlled Europe grows as time ticks away the possibility of rescue for whole segments of the Jewish population. The report of Ira Hirschmann, War Refugee Board representative just returned from Turkey, brings some relief. With the co-operation of the Russians and of Ambassador Steinhardt some hundreds, possibly thousands, are being rescued from Romania via Turkey. Equally welcome is the announcement by John W. Pehle, head of the board, of a proposal to offer temporary residence to refugees in certain ports here. Such temporary haven should be offered, for we cannot urge asylum elsewhere while not offering it ourselves.

Voicing the concern which many Americans feel, Mrs. Mercedes M. Randall, in a pamphlet entitled "The Voice of Thy Brother's Blood," has set down some of the cold facts on Nazi massacres and presented six proposals for action, several of which are now covered by the War Refugee Board. By way of round-up on what can be done and what is being done, the other proposals are discussed here. The first is that our "immigration laws should be administered so as to place the fewest obstacles in the way of refugees applying for entry" under quotas. Since European quotas are not filled, the process of issuing visas could be speeded by provision for post-arrival investigations to safeguard against spies. We trust that the refugee board is working to facilitate quota entries.

The situation in regard to relaxation by the British of restrictions on immigration to Palestine, urged by Mrs. Randall, was explained by Senator Barkley Tuesday night in an address for the United Jewish Appeal. He said that final settlement of the Palestine issue must await the peace, for "we cannot ignore the solemn advice of our military leaders, whom we hold responsible for the winning of the war with speed and a minimum loss of precious lives."

Finally, the pamphlet proposes a program like that in Greece for feeding nationals and refugees in Nazi-held territory. The problem of sending food to stem the effects of semi-starvation among the conquered Allies is attended by the same anxiety and intense wish for action as is the Jewish problem. But it, too, must await the word of military leaders.

The War Refugee Board is the repository of hope for timely action in behalf of the Jews. We add our voice to that of the Jewish community, and of mercy-loving men and women everywhere, approving and backing its efforts to save as many from the madness of the Nazi as is humanly possible.

April 20, 1944.

Mr. Isador Labin
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Labe:

I cannot restrain the temptation to reiterate the deep and incisive impression that I got in my conversations with refugees who came out of the Balkans and with whom I talked in Istanbul on the subject of our Great President. The stricken people in the Balkans have one and one hope only, and that is: "President Roosevelt". I heard this again and again. As I spoke to the refugees, somehow they all seemed to know of the President's Order creating a War Refugee Board, and that a representative was in Turkey to save them. Some of it was embarrassing to me as they tried to thank me, and I was only a privileged instrument of the President's Board. Apparently it was the one name on everyone's lips, and it has become a symbol for salvation to these lost people.

"Thank God for your Great President", they kept saying to me. "When is he sending the Americans to save us?" "We know he will. He is our God." This and similar variations are what I heard in a constant refrain. If the President knew about this, I think it would move him to know that his deeply founded humanitarianism is not lost in the hearts of other countrymen. They feel it intuitively and actually. I suppose good things are somehow never lost.

You can imagine my sense of pride and responsibility in finding this manifestation to such an intense and acute degree. I was proud but I also felt that it was about five minutes to twelve and that these people had to be snatched quickly from the death hands of the Nazis and their Satellites. One thing the President's Order and his broadcast did (we managed to have it repeated again and again in various languages through the Balkans.) It gave

- 2 -

these people who were becoming so demoralized and desperate that they stopped trying for themselves, a new hope to fight on for themselves, which is an extremely important element as we know too well that at some point in the process of degradation people are worn down to a state of resignation and then they really lose themselves.

I am trying wherever I can to tell this story to the press and to some of the big business opponents of our President. I hope it falls on fertile soil. I don't know.

Again, let me thank you for your efforts in helping me get over to Turkey. I shall not forget it.

Faithfully yours,

I. A. Hirschmann

April 20, 1944.

Honorable Felix Frankfurter
Justice of the Supreme Court
of the United States
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. Justice:

I have had an experience in Turkey relating to some of our acute problems with lost people, which may interest you. The President's forging of the instrument of the War Refugee Board and his subsequent Statement on the subject (which we managed to have repeatedly broadcast in the various Balkan languages) has had an electric effect in lifting up the morale of these innocent victims in blighted areas. His name is on everyone's lips. He is their Savior.

In the light of this, I believe it would be nothing short of a catastrophe, aside from all other considerations, if he were not to continue in office. To the people in the Balkans with whom I talked, it would mean in effect that a hovering angel had withdrawn. I cannot express this too strongly. My only fear is that it will sound exaggerated and that it will not be understood in the terms with which Europeans look to him.

In their eyes, Churchill is the "Empire Savior" but Roosevelt is the "Human Savior".

- 2 -

When I return to Washington I should like to see you -- especially to tell you of my conversations with Ben Guorgian and others. The situation in Palestine is more deeply problematic than it was, but it is an oasis.

With warm regards,

Cordially yours,

I. A. Hirschmann

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Mr. Hirschmann
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PZMG NEWYORK NY APR 18 1944 210P
HGN RIA A HIRSCHMANN CARE OF HON JOHN W PEHLE 1944 APR 18 PM 3 02
WAR REFUGGEE BOARD TREASURY DEPT WASHN DC
AMERICAN JEWISH CONFERENCE HOLDING SESSION OF COMMEMORATION FOR
WARSAW HEROES OF FORTY THREE WEDNESDAY EVENING APRIL NINETEENTH
CARNEGIE HALL IT WOULD BE FINE IF YOU WOULD MAKE YOUR FIRST
PUBLIC APPEARANCE AT SUCH COMMERATION MEETING SPEAKING BRIEFLY
ABOUT WHAT CAN BE SAID IN THE HOPE OF ~~RESCUE~~ RESCUE
STEPHEN S WISE 40 WEST 68 ST

STANDARD FORM No. 14 A
APPROVED BY THE PRESIDENT
MARCH 10, 1925

TELEGRAM

OFFICIAL BUSINESS—GOVERNMENT RATES

TREASURY DEPARTMENT
WASHINGTON

CHARGE TREASURY DEPARTMENT, APPROPRIATION FOR

~~WARSAW~~ *WRB.*

(The appropriation from which payable must be stated on above line)

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 2-14117

April 20, 1944.

STEPHEN S. WISE
40 WEST 68th STREET
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

REGRET INABILITY TO HAVE ATTENDED YOUR FINE MEETING ON NINETEENTH, AS YOU
WILL APPRECIATE I HAVE BEEN IMMersed HERE IN MAKING MY REPORT TO BOARD
AND LIAISON WITH STEINHARDT WHO IS WHOLEHEARTEDLY CARRYING ON THE WORK WE
STARTED. AFFECTIONATE REGARDS.

Continuing

IRA HIRSCHMANN

April 21, 1944.

Mrs. S. J. Keiser
3609 Fairview Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland

Dear Mrs. Keiser:

Before leaving Washington Mr. Hirschmann asked me to mail the enclosed to you. He said that it was typed by a refugee who was not especially adept in English and hopes you will forgive the errors and crudity but it gives a general impression of his talk with Ben Gourian, which he thought you would want to have.

Very truly yours,

Rose L. Okun
(Secretary to Mr. Hirschmann)

P.S. There is also enclosed a copy of telegram from Judah Magnes to Mr. Hirschmann.

Enclosures

April 21, 1944

Mr. Fred Lazarus, Jr.

Columbus, Ohio.

Dear Fred:

Thanks for your prompt reply to my telegram. I will get in touch with Bob and Jack in New York. I have had something of a rugged time to put it mildly. Somehow we have managed to get some people through and to set up some machinery with Ambassador Steinhardt's help to keep them moving out of the Balkans into security.

A lot of skulduggery goes along with this and other things that I could only mention when I see you. I look forward to that eagerly.

With warm personal regards,

Ira

155
July

OFFICE OF
I. A. HIRSCHMANN

April 22, 1944

Clear
return
to
Jalt

Schoff
Mr. Rothchild
To: Mr. Schaap
then 8/26

You have evinced such warm interest in my efforts in Europe and Asia that I am sending you, confidentially, a copy of a memorandum which I forwarded to Mr. Pehle, which conveys information regarding background material supplied to me by the Treasury Department's representative in Algiers, and which may be interesting to you.

1775
Hirsch
4-22-44

I. A. Hirschmann

Jalt

This is a supplement to my long "opine" last night.
Perhaps I. Schoff & W. Roth.
Will be interested in seeing the source of this activity.

MEMORANDUM

For: Mr. John W. Pehle, Executive Director
War Refugee Board

This refers to my conversation of Thursday, April 13th, with Messrs. Ackerman and Saxon in Algiers.

Mr. Ackerman asked me to report that he found himself in a position where it was not possible for him to obtain information which he considered essential for the War Refugee Board's program from Bari, Italy and Yugoslavia. As he informed you he appointed Mr. Saxon an associate under the WRB's auspices and instructed him to proceed to Bari and to bring a report to him on the situation in that area relating to refugees in Yugoslavia, and the possibilities of developing a program for the evacuation of refugees from Yugoslavia. On Monday, April 17, I handed you a sealed envelope containing a memorandum of a proposed telegram from Messrs. Ackerman and Saxon. On Wednesday, April 19, I sent you through your secretary two memoranda from Mr. Saxon, one of which had come from Popovic, a representative of Tito.

Ackerman and Saxon asked me to inform you that in Bari, Saxon had established contact directly with the Tito organization through the help of: (a) Joe Martin of the Associated Press, who "went all out" to help him. (b) Lt. Com. Young of the OSS, Major Arnoldi and Ensign Bucinich (?)

In Bari, Saxon asserted, all governments are represented including the emigre governments. The matter of their relations with the Partisans is "questionable." The situation in Bari is "badly organized" from our point of view, as it is concerned with a deep political question which has dominated this situation.

Ackerman's first steps were taken with General Devers who referred the matter to General Caffey. Ackerman's efforts, as I understood it, were in connection with sending a representative of the WRB to Bari and winning the support of the U. S. Army in furthering the program of the WRB. General Caffey reported to Ackerman and Saxon that the above-mentioned subject was presented formally to General Maitland-Wilson "in General Caffey's own way." General Caffey replied to Ackerman to the effect that the program of refugees was decidedly a secondary matter and that General Maitland-Wilson could not subscribe actively to any participation of the Board's program at this time.

Saxon asked me to further inform you that while the word "America" is magic in Yugoslavia, the Partisans are bewildered at our failure to help them. Also, the Partisans had never heard of the President's order creating the War Refugee Board. Saxon was under the impression that the above was the result of the political policy of the British and what he termed the "typical U. S. Army policy." Saxon recommended that you obtain from

Secretary Stimson the agreement to have "strong instructions" sent to Algiers regarding the WRB's authorized program.

Saxon also requested me to inform you of the delicacy of the entire question of the U. S. Government's relation with Tito and his organization; that Washington in his opinion is not aware of the enormous potential possibilities at this time in cooperating with the latter Yugoslavian interests.

Saxon asked me to reiterate his request for:

1. A direct letter to the Partisan Yugoslavian delegate at Bari in which the WRB will supply \$50,000 for re-equipment of vessels in Bari and as evidence of the good faith of the U. S. Government and the WRB.
2. The necessary documents to General Devers from the Secretary of the Treasury authorizing him to release \$50,000 to the Tito organization for operations within the Yugoslavian country. Saxon termed this "good faith money," and requested me to reiterate to you his conviction that as a result of his talks with the representatives of the Tito organization that he is satisfied that they are sincere. The latter is in spite of the opinions to the contrary expressed by General Caffey, who maintains that the Partisans "exaggerate and lie."
3. The memorandum of Popovic which I delivered to you through your secretary requesting assistance is to be followed by another memorandum from Popovic (Tito) supplying practical and concrete answers to questions put by Saxon to Popovic.

Saxon urged that the energies of your Board be directed toward sending a resourceful and energetic representative to Bari. (He recommended Joe DuBois.) This representative to be invested with authority in order that he may act "without explanations" and to commit the Board in reasonable proportions. Saxon also asserted that the OSS will convey messages to the War Refugee Board through Algiers. Saxon also asked me to inform you that:

- (a) Spain is not to be worked from Algiers.
- (b) Albania is passive and not important at this stage.
- (c) He was confident that you could secure the necessary funds and materials to recondition the Yugoslavian ships in the port of Bari under Lend-Lease.
- (d) There were numbers of Partisan ships now in Bari under the Italian flag.
- (e) Colonel Kirkwood, who is head of the Displaced Persons Sub-Commission of the AGC, would be perfectly happy if civilians would be able to arrive in Italy and help.

- (f) We should adhere to our main line and discontinue fighting the Russians in the Balkans as we are today.
- (g) Malin of the Inter-Government Committee proceeded to Bari several weeks ago and asserted that the WRB was a political instrument since this is a presidential election year. "Why didn't they give us the powers?"
- (h) Saxon was impressed with the fact that Malin and his organization could be useful in the postwar long-term era.
- (i) Our prestige in North Africa among the French was dwindling rapidly and that OWI makes no efforts to offset the propaganda through the French newspapers who daily publish information regarding the lack of delivery of supplies by the British and U. S. Governments.
- (j) There is a lack of perfect candor between the representatives of the British and U. S. Governments and the representatives of the alleged French Government.
- (k) Murphy and Wilson deal exclusively with the Royalist French who are all Algerian, and that they secure only the colored opinions of the "old guard."

I. A. Hirschmann

Istanbul, Turkey
March 20, 1944

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Memorandum of Discussion with Dr. Black

The real ruler in Bulgaria today is Beckerle, the German Minister who is a scoundrel. Prince Cyril is not only sympathetic to the Germans but is a German. He is the head of the board of regents having succeeded the King of Bulgaria. His position is now untenable and he is trying to find a way out.

It is true that the situation regarding the Jews has eased just a bit since Gabrovsky was ousted - he may come back, although this is doubtful but the Jewish population is in a catastrophic condition. Thousands are now eating in soup kitchens and there is not much in the soup. The bombing in Sofia, upon which we have no official reports as yet, has not eased matters.

Dr. Black thinks that the representations made to Balabanoff, Minister to Turkey, were well timed; that B. is now at a loss to know how to help saving his country and that his Government may regard this as a "straw". B. stands in well having been appointed to Paris at the beginning of the World War and now in this pivotal position. Dr. Black feels that this is exactly the time to exert pressure on B. and that it should reap rich rewards now. He believes that the Russians will eventually succeed in arousing the population to the point where they will overthrow the present Government. The extent to which the Bulgarian people will permit themselves to be dominated by the Russians is questionable.

Dr. Black referred to members of highly skilled medical and dental men and women coming out of Bulgaria who might be used effectively at this time in war zones. These men and women agree to offer their services in any sector. I promised to take this up in Washington.

22

April 22, 1944

Mr. John W. Fehle
Executive Director
War Refugee Board
Treasury Building
Washington, D.C.

Dear John:

I had a call today from Mr. Jabotinski asking for an appointment which I gave him, here on the coming Monday, April 24th. He informed me that the War Department had approved his priority, and that he was leaving for Turkey in a few days.

I wish to go on record as reasserting that I am of the opinion that in principle it would be a blunder to send him or others to Turkey at this time. My only reservation is, as expressed in your office, concerned with his capacities. If he is a "genius" he may overcome the natural impediments. If he is not, he will cause embarrassment and difficulties in the path of your representative in Ankara, whoever he may be.

Cordially yours

I.A. Hirschmann

rl

April 22, 1944

Mr. John W. Pehle, Executive Director
War Refugee Board
Treasury Building
Washington, D. C.

Dear John:

You may wish to have for your files the attached copy of the representations made to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by Ambassador Steinhardt with reference to the replacement of the Turkish Steamship Vatan.

Cordially yours

I. A. Hirschmann
Vice-President

iah:ret

TERRITORY OF ALASKA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
JUNEAU

April 24, 1944

Mr. Ira A. Hirschmann
3 East 85th Street
New York, N. Y.

Dear Ira:

Through the New York Times, which I read assiduously when it arrives here from a week to ten days after publication, I had already learned of your superlative work in the Near East. I was not surprised. I knew that you would break bottlenecks and cut red tape if breaking and cutting them were within the bounds of possibility. I am sure that your getting these results, where for years there has been nothing but talk, stalling and waste motion, will be universally appreciated.

Now I have your letter of March 14 from Ankara, which, as you see, has taken 40 days to arrive here.

I suspect that by this time you are back in the United States, so I am sending this letter to your home address. Let me know what your plans are, whether you expect to go back to Europe shortly or whether you will be here for a while.

Meanwhile, warmest congratulations on what you have succeeded in doing.

Cordially yours,

Ernest
Ernest Gruening ✓
Governor of Alaska



OFFICE OF
I. A. HIRSCHMANN

April 25, 1944

Dear Mr. Browning:

Mr. Hirschmann would greatly
appreciate your seeing this through
to the Ambassador for him.

Many thanks,

Sincerely

Secretary

Bloomington's
New York 22, N. Y.

His Excellency, Ambassador Laurence A. Steinhardt
c/o Chief Mailing Section
Department of State
via Ankara
Air Mail Pouch

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

It was indeed thoughtful of you to write to me so warmly and so promptly as you did on April 8th. From the several newspaper clippings enclosed you will gather with what interest and enthusiasm I was greeted.

The press releases were entirely in the hands of the War Refugee Board. I remained incommunicado for a few days until I could have a joint conference called by Mr. Pehle in his office. In my story I tried to throw the burden of the tale to President Roosevelt, to you, and the War Refugee Board. It did not always turn out that way, knowing newspapers as we do. The question of free ports in the U. S. that Mr. Pehle mentioned was snatched at by the reporters as first-page news. The Board intends to exploit this further. You will recall my mentioning it in your office as a possible vital issue.

I found the men at the War Refugee Board as I had suspected, young, dynamic, bold, clear and a bit brash. But they are affirmative and on the way toward accomplishments. What you did in Turkey with my help is the only concrete result today as I see it, although they have been energetic and I believe are moving into new territories with intelligence and possible effectiveness.

I wish you could hear the stories about you and your work from others. After all, that will be the test. I poured my heart out on this subject, only in justice to you. I think when you return to the U. S. you will find that the appreciation for your profound efforts will be understood and that there will be a new connotation to your name, which is only as it should be.

Obviously there was and will be much pressure to retain me in this work. They want me to go back to Turkey. My firm here has been extraordinarily considerate and generous - they also are going to put up a fight for me to stay. That is the situation today as I sit here on a bleak Monday morning. My inclination is to return and finish the job. I miss you, your driving energy and incisive activity, and I enjoy more the possibility of salvaging human beings than remnants in the basement, although there is a terrific potential in my radio plans and others which I will speak with you about when I see you, which I hope will be soon.

The trip home was a little on the rugged side as you may well guess, but it was speedy. Warm regards to you and Dulcie, and thanks for your prompt intercession in the matter of the Eberts. Perhaps Dulcie will find a moment to call them if she wishes. They are such lovely and charming company. Everybody here is speaking of you in enthusiastic terms and this letter is a mere echo.

Again with thanks for all your kindness,

Faithfully yours

iah:ret

I. A. Hirschmann

P.S. This is only the first story that will appear in P.M. Max Lerner insisted on treating it fully instead of in terms of one personality, which I think you can understand. But I am going to have more done where you are concerned. The Jewish press is in hand. This will take a little time, but I will see it through.

April 26, 1944

page two
Mr. John W. Pehle
April 26, 1944

Mr. John W. Pehle
Executive Director
War Refugee Board
Treasury Building
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear John:

When I was in Turkey about six weeks ago I had a telegram from Harry Sherman, President of the Book of the Month Club, who is a friend of mine, asking if I would speak at a dinner of the Hebrew University on my return. My friendship with him was such that I felt I could not refuse, and at that time did not consider any policy which would require permission to speak. My impression from your telegrams in Ankara indicated that you were eager to have favorable publicity before and after my return. I have tried to work to that end.

In view of our understanding and the fact that these invitations have already been sent out I'm afraid there is nothing we can do about it but to go ahead with it. I assure you I have no desire to make this speech, or any other, as I am more exhausted than I can tell. (I am now getting something of a reaction from the intensity of the return trip, etc. and hope to go away for a few days to pull myself together.)

I will be glad to send you a copy of my proposed talk at this dinner for approval in Washington, or to present anything which you

and the boys wish me to say. You can be assured that it will all be slanted at the magnificent work of the War Refugee Board and Secretary Morgenthau and Steinhardt's indispensable work.

With good wishes,

Cordially yours

lah:ret

I. A. Hirschmann
Vice-President

enc. letter of invitation to dinner

May 4, 1944

L. J.

John Peñle

I think it would be desirable if a letter was sent by you to some big mogul of the International Red Cross commending the productive efforts of Mr. Gilbert Simons, Ankara representative of the International Red Cross.

He has been a tower of strength to me and can continue to be so. I think he deserves commendation from his leaders.

Sordially yours

*file at
with
1944*

22

May 11, 1944

Mr. John W. Pehle
War Refugee Board
Treasury Building
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear John:

I am enclosing a paraphrased copy of a telegram to the Secretary of State from Ambassador Steinhardt regarding my proposed return to Turkey. I presume you already have this. As I indicated to you last week when we met I suspected that Steinhardt was of the opinion clearly indicated in the enclosed telegram. From the point of view of the War Refugee Board's program and my ability to function in Turkey, I believe it essential that this matter be cleared with Steinhardt either through you, or the Secretary of the Treasury, or the Secretary of State, before any further plans are considered. From our telephone conversation today I understood that you would somehow clear the matter.

Aside from the above, I wish to confirm to you our arrangement under which my company is willing to grant me \$1,000. a month during my leave of absence for the War Refugee Board for a period of three months, and not to exceed six months. As I understand it, the War Refugee Board will pay me \$1,500. a month in addition to the above for the same period, which I will require in addition to my expenses.

It is also essential that I have a definite commitment assuring my return within three months

May 11, 1944

of my departure, unless I then consent to a further stay not to exceed three months additional, predicated on the need of the assignment, which as I understand it you will leave to my judgment. As matters now stand, I cannot undertake the trip without assurance of this return as planned.

Do let me hear that this is satisfactory.

My health is a little on the ragged side and I do not want to leave for such a trip and assignment handicapped by illness or a run-down condition. Until I get clear with my doctor I will not leave. Otherwise I can plan to depart in the early part of June if that is satisfactory with you.

It may be not unwise now to begin work on the things that I will require, that is, the diplomatic passport, priority "2", telegram to Steinhardt, etc. You will know best about this.

I expect to come to Washington a number of days before I leave to work out plans and clear up some things with you and the boys. I am sure you will agree that that is essential.

With warm personal regards, I am

Cordially yours

lah:ret

I. A. Hirschmann

P.S. I hope you haven't forgotten our little talk about the President. Perhaps the Secretary of the Treasury would be interested in arranging this even if it were a brief moment. I think you will understand that it would give me a lot more backing in some of the things I hope to do and places I hope to be able to break through, just to be able to say that on my return I spoke and "reported" also to the President.

May 22, 1944

Mr. Jacob Rosenheim,
President, Agudas Israel
World Organization,
226 West 97th Street,
New York 25, New York.

Dear Mr. Rosenheim:

From my discussions here I am convinced that it would be unwise for your organization to transmit at this time the \$200,000 requested in the telegram of Griffel, Kastner and Klahrman. There may be some new developments in the situation of which we are not aware. Since I am definitely planning to go back to Turkey at the first opportunity, I would recommend that you take no action on the matter at this time.

Cordially yours,

I. A. Hirschmann

I AHirschmann:ro

הסתדרות העולמית, אגודת ישראל
Agudas Israel World Organization
THE UNION OF UNIVERSALLY ORGANIZED ORTHODOX JEWRY
(WORLD-AGUDAH OF ORTHODOX JEWS INC.)

CENTRAL EXECUTIVE: LONDON - BRANCH OFFICES: JERUSALEM AND NEW YORK

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
226 WEST 97TH STREET
NEW YORK 25, N. Y.

May 17th, 1944

Mr. Ira Hirschman
c/o Bloomingdale's
Lexington Avenue and 59th Street
New York City

Dear Mr. Hirschman:

We have received the following cable from our representatives in Istanbul through the State Department:

"You are informed that sea-transports started successfully. In the last five weeks about a thousand persons with our help; there is seen a possibility of enlargement. For this purpose we need \$200,000.- allotment, action is crucial in the next months to ensure continuation of this sea-transport. You are asked to please send this amount in free Swiss currency at our disposal.

(signed) Jacob Griffel
Ludwig Kastner
Klarman"

I should be extremely grateful if you would give me your opinion concerning the contents of this cable. First of all, I should like to know whether the persons referred to in the cable are exclusively Rumanian Jews or whether also groups of Hungarian Jews may be able to escape to Rumania and from there to Turkey.

I understand that the American Joint Distribution Committee has considerable financial means in Istanbul and I am not quite clear for which reason Mr. Griffel needs special funds for his action.

Thanking you in anticipation for your kind reply, I remain,

Yours faithfully,

Jacob Rosenheim
JACOB ROSENHEIM
President

JR:IB

Air mail

May 25, 1944

Page two
Mr. John W. Pehle
May 25, 1944

Mr. John W. Pehle
War Refugee Board
Treasury Building
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear John:

Yesterday when I saw Mrs. Shipley at the Passport Office she stated that it was her impression that I would be returning through the long southern route, which would preclude the opportunity for meeting the boys in Algiers and doing some missionary work there for the Board.

It may be that you will want to have someone check on this, and if possible to have me routed through North Africa. This would be desirable anyhow as it will cut the trip shorter, and I will get to Ankara sooner. Also, I believe that people returning to the States are coming through the North African route, and this may be important to check so that Steinhardt and I can meet in the event that he and I are moving in opposite directions at the same time. Will you let me know what, if anything, can be done about this?

I think it would be a gracious gesture if you could manage to get a letter from Stettinius or Hull for the members of the Bloomingdale Board for their cooperation in

giving me the first and the additional leave. Such a letter will be read before the Directors' Meeting which is to be held in the first week in June. The boys here have been rather generous and I should be grateful if you could arrange this. The letter should be addressed to James S. Schoff, President, Bloomingdale Bros., Inc.

I called Mr. Sickle yesterday afternoon and am arranging to see him in New York on Friday.

With good wishes,

Cordially yours

iah:ret

I. A. Hirschmann

page two
Mrs. Sara Friedman
May 26, 1944

May 26, 1944

Mrs. Sara Friedman, President
The Palestine Lighthouse, Inc.
2109 Broadway
New York 23, N.Y.

Dear Mrs. Friedman:

On my return from Washington I find your letter and I am touched by its contents. It is now indeed understandable how you are the eyes and spirit of the Lighthouse. One of the most satisfying results of my recent efforts in the interest of our people has been the new relationships which it has helped me to establish. I have met some of the most wonderful people in the world and I am inclined to think that you belong to that lonely circle. Apparently nothing good is ever lost.

So, don't give me too much credit. I can assure you that I gained more than I was able to give. No one can ever take away the inner spiritual light from seeing things illumined by truth and love. You of all people should know this from your profound experience and contribution.

I expect to return to Ankara very soon and I promise you that when I stop in Jerusalem I shall visit the Jewish Blind Institute after which I shall write to you my impressions.

Cordially

I. A. Hirschmann
Vice President

iah:ba

copy of this letter
and original from Mrs. Friedman
sent to Mrs. S.J. Keiser

BLOOMINGDALE'S
NEW YORK

22 N.Y.

file

EXECUTIVE OFFICES

May 26, 1944

Mrs. S.J. Keiser
3609 Fairview Avenue
Baltimore, Md.

Dear Mrs. Keiser:

Mr. Hirschmann asked me to write to you and send you the enclosed correspondence. It followed the speech he gave on the day he saw you. Perhaps you will return it to him at your convenience.

He will write to you in person shortly.

Sincerely yours

R. E. Strauss

Secretary to
I.A. Hirschmann
Vice President

enc.

*The
Palestine
Lighthouse, Inc.*

AID FOR THE BLIND IN PALESTINE
NEW YORK, N. Y.



JEWISH BLIND INSTITUTE, JERUSALEM
The Only Home — School — Workshop
Community Center in the Near East
and Europe for the Jewish Blind.



May 19, 1944

Mr. I.A.Hirschmann
Bloomingdale's
59 Street
New York City

Dear Mr. Hirschmann:

Before the Annual Luncheon passes into ancient history, we want you to know how much we appreciate your presence at our gathering on May 16th, 1944 at Hotel Plaza.

These war days have sharpened patriotism. It is good to meet a new dependable leader. And NEWS - electrifying and exhilarating that our great President has given the unfortunate a champion of their own! From your message to us last Tuesday, there was born a sense of over-riding faith in the ultimate conquest of good over evil! We need such healing escape from these moments of horror. As you talked to us, heavy-hearted American men and women, you were actively continuing your mission, for we are all part of the terrible tragedy through ties of kinship. You performed the miracle of giving us new gleams of hope, and to our occasion significance and inspiration for the promise of a better future.

On your next trip abroad, we sincerely hope there may be an opportunity for a visit to our Institution, called in Jerusalem, "Jewish Blind Institute". As you know, we aim to enlarge our Center with new buildings: to increase our usefulness for the sightless. For those in the Near and Middle East and for such European blind as can reach us.

We thank you again for your stimulating message.

"Our hearts, our hopes, are all with thee,
Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,
Our faith triumphant o'er our fears, are all
with thee - all with thee!"

Leah P. ...

Leah P. ...
President

May 27, 1944

air mail

Mr. John W. Pehle
War Refugee Board
Treasury Building
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear John:

The enclosed letter is for your information
and that of Mr. Katski.

My opinion is that any recommendation with
regard to this apparently confused situation
between these Jewish Rescue Agencies should
remain status quo until Katski or I arrive
in Ankara, and I am writing to Mr. Rosenheim
accordingly. Perhaps you would like to
write to him also.

Cordially yours

ishtret

I. A. Hirschmann

June 1, 1944

Mr. Simon Lazarus
The F. & R. Lazarus & Co.
Columbus, Ohio

Dear Simon:

Thanks for your nice note of May 29th.
I am planning to fly out to Cincinnati
on Sunday afternoon, June 4th, and to
work there with Jack throughout Monday.

I am not familiar with the train schedules,
but it seems to me that I should be
able to leave Cincinnati either Monday
night or early Tuesday morning in time
to put me in Columbus by noon on Tuesday
the 6th. I will let you know definitely
from Cincinnati.

Needless to say, I look forward to the
pleasure of seeing you and your fine
associates.

Cordially yours

iah:ret

I. A. Hirschmann

ESTABLISHED 1881

THE F. & R. LAZARUS & CO.

COLUMBUS, OHIO

May 29th,
1944

EXECUTIVE OFFICES

Saw A. L. G.

Mr. Ira Hirschman
Bloomingdale's
New York, N.Y.

Dear Ira:

It was nice to hear from you and we are counting on you being here June 6th. I just have a feeling the Government is going to give you a little additional time before asking you to leave the country - that is temporarily.

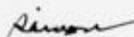
The meeting that we hold is for our United Jewish Fund which means raising money for quite a collection of agencies but principally for the United Jewish Appeal which you know includes the Joint Distribution Committee, United Palestine Appeal and the National Refugee Service. We gather, at this meeting, men who represent about 70% of our contributions and the plan has been very successful over a period of years. They will be more than interested to hear of your experience, I know, and I am sure the result of your visit here will be mighty beneficial to say nothing of the pleasure of having you with us.

I did talk to Jim Schoff at Westchester about your coming here and he was fully agreed, so I think that is clear all right.

I note in your plans that you might be going to Cincinnati the day before. That will work out perfectly all right but we would like to have you be in Columbus by noon-time of the 6th or, of course, any time previous to that. So when you have made definite plans just let me know.

Kindest regards.

Sincerely yours,



Simon Lazarus

June 2, 1944

Dear Miss Okun:

In accordance with our telephone conversation today I am herewith sending to you via registered mail the material for which you asked in your letter of June 1st.

Best wishes,

Secretary

June 1, 1944

Miss Ruth Trainor
Secretary to Mr. Hirschmann
Executive Offices
Bloomingdale Brothers Inc.
59th & Lexington Avenue
New York, New York

*3000 E -
Regent's Hall*

Dear Miss Trainor:

Would you be good enough to go through all of Mr. Hirschmann's War Refugee Board material and see if you can find about 50 mimeographed sheets beginning with "VI D. SWITZERLAND through VII C". This matter is highly confidential in nature and belongs in a book which we are getting up for Mr. Hirschmann's use. On April 15th Mr. Hirschmann was charged with receiving this material and somehow this particular section has disappeared. I have made a complete search for these pages here and thought that possibly by mistake this matter might be with some of the other things Mr. Hirschmann took back to New York with him.

A further description of the material is as follows:

Each of the mimeographed sheets is preceded by a green sheet with a tab on it. The tabs are listed below:

VI D.	Poland to Hungary (UOR)
SWITZERLAND	Poland to Hungary (JLC)
Abandoned Children	Czech.
JDC Operations	Norwegians
WJC Operations	VI F.
France and Italy (IRRC)	OTHER RESCUE MEANS
France (SECE)	Passports
Rab	Turk. Citizen.
VI E.	VI G.
OTHER EVACUATION	Temp. Havens
VI H.	
PERM. RESETTLEMENT	
VII.	
COOP. OTHER AGENCIES	

Please let me hear from you as soon as possible. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,


Rose Okun

June 9, 1944

To: Mr. John W. Pehle

I think that this was put on my desk in error.

I have kept the copy for my own files, on the assumption that it has or will be telegraphed to Ankara.

I.A. Hirschmann

Mr. John W. Pehle
War Refugee Board
Treasury Bldg
Washington, D.C.

CABLE TO AMBASSADOR STRICKHARDT, ANKARA, TURKEY, FROM THE WAR REFUGEE BOARD

Please refer to your No. 991 of June first.

Suggestion of the Secretary General of the Foreign Office appears entirely reasonable.

The Board feels strongly that differences of opinion between private refugee organizations must not (repeat not) in any way interfere with the basic task of rescuing the largest possible numbers of refugees in enemy territory. It is our earnest hope that the Embassy and Mr. Hirschmann will be able to coordinate and supervise all rescue activities in Turkey to the extent necessary to assure that each private refugee organization makes the most effective contribution to the overall program, avoiding unnecessary duplication of activity, etc. Accordingly, the Board will be guided by the recommendations of the Embassy and Mr. Hirschmann.

This is War Refugee Board Cable to Ankara No. _____

Personal

Ankara, July 26, 1944

Dear Jim:

I had hoped to write to you before this but after arriving in Ankara I was immediately dispatched back to Cairo, landed in the desert and laid low by a blood disease which delayed my efforts. Now I am back in my stride which, according to the tempo in this ancient part of the world in contrast to New York, is practically in reverse. I never knew I could walk backwards at such a rate and that there were so many dead-end streets in the entire world. Every time I seem to find a solution to a momentary problem I run into one of these. I am convinced that they are built over night.

This is not in the nature of a complaint or extenuation but only a desire to indicate that our methods and techniques are pretty useless out this way. I should have taken lessons in indirection and waiting around with the patience of Job. From what you know of my temperament you can imagine how well I am succeeding in these respects.

Altogether, however, I am convinced that your advice was sound. I would have been truly derelict in my duty not to have returned here at the request of the Government to attempt to finish so essential a job that had been started by me. The loose ends were all over the place (not referring to Turkish women), and from my experience here and happy association with Ambassador Steinhardt I should be in a better position to accomplish something than someone coming in fresh. (You only come in that way.) The results to date are rather pitiful in comparison to the need, and the efforts to break the dead-lock are at this stage pretty discouraging. But I hope to be able to report better results at a later time. You can understand that I must write in a general way.

As the political situation in the Balkans boils everything becomes more complex and the crises develop by the minute. We have them for lunch and to date they have not served the digestive process well. Or perhaps that was the putrid eggs. I miss everyone back in the States and the fun I was having in the job. It seemed to me that things were

-2-

really getting going, and I speak of Bloomingdale's even way out here with a real sense of pride.

Regarding my stay out here, according to the progress or lack of it to date it looks as if I shall be needed here at least several more months, but I shall let you know definitely about that as soon as Ambassador Steinhardt returns, which we expect should be in the middle or latter part of August. If you need me in any emergency of course I know where my first responsibility lies.

Through the pouch (see Miss Trainor) it is possible for me to receive a letter within three weeks and I should be grateful to hear from you. I hope you received a copy of my report on F. M. and Television, and I shall be interested in any comments regarding it as I had hoped to read it to you for your criticism and corrections before I left, but as you know that was not possible. I see in these two subsidiaries real possibilities for the expansion of the presentation methods of the business in addition to making them profitable ventures.

I should be grateful if you would convey my hearty regards to all the members of the Operating Board and my other associates in the store whom I miss. It goes without saying, of course, that I send warm regards to Mr. Schaap, Mr. Rothschild and to you.

Faithfully yours,

I. A. Hirschmann

Mr. James Schoff, President
Bloomingdale Bros., Inc.
59th and Lexington Avenue
New York City

Istanbul, August 11, 1944

Dear Mr. Rothschild:

I hope you will forgive my tardiness in writing to you, but as you may have heard I was taken down with an illness on my arrival here, and have since been virtually commuting between Cairo, Ankara and Istanbul. To refer again to the assignment here in terms of its complexity may sound like an old refrain. It is, however, a different variety from that which I encountered in my last efforts here, which contributes an element of novelty and new experience but subtracts in no way from the burdens and the discouragements from day to day. You are aware, I am sure, from the rapidly changing political situation in this part of the world, that its effect on our problem is one which reflects itself in "a crisis a day" and new situations which require a combination of scepticism and iron nerves. I regret that I do not possess them.

You have probably read of the sinking, by torpedo (as reported), of one of the three Turkish boats that left Rumania with numbers of refugees. It has been a heart-breaking experience all around; the kind that one will remember in his old age. There is a serious question whether our entire program may not be materially interrupted, if not shut off, but we are determined to go ahead with our plans to rescue as many people as we can from the Nazi grip in spite of the tragedy. The day before yesterday I saw a number of children, mostly orphans, who arrived safely on the first boat, depart on the train. It was a touching sight. The idea of seeing these in the flesh (such as there is left) and the realization that they will be free to become citizens of the world again, is worth many times our modest efforts and inconveniences. They were singing as the train pulled out and there was a quality of fervour in their voices which I have not heard before in any speech, sound or music. All of this is a sharp experience.

-2-

You know that it is not possible to write very much about the details of this work, especially with the political pot-boiling as it is here. We are endeavoring to capitalize on the new situation as it is developing and to do so quickly on the spot, especially in Bulgaria. It is for this reason that I am more than ever grateful to you for your generosity in permitting me to be here to function where it is really needed. There is no question of the latter point, and I would have indeed been derelict had I not accepted the invitation of the Government and taken advantage of your kindness.

The fact that the only haven in this part of the world is Palestine, with its advantages and drawbacks, has led me to introduce efforts with some Governments to reconstitute and rehabilitate the minorities in their very own countries, upon which program I am now working. I think you will agree that it is sounder and more useful to help arrange, if possible, to reestablish citizens in their own countries where they can be given back their honor, dignity and ability to sustain themselves, rather than transplant them into strange lands with all of the hardships, wrenches and unhappy aftermaths. Again, the Government auspices give me the broad opportunity to help accomplish this on a high level, and I am inordinately grateful for the unequivocal support which I am getting from Washington. I shall not forget this.

The work on this trip is progressing even more slowly than heretofore for reasons beyond reach. I had hoped to conclude a solid part of it in at least three months, but it looks as if this will not be possible at this writing. You can be assured that I am more eager than anyone to return to my home and job, but I shall not leave the ship this time until it seems more safely in port, especially since Mr. Schoff and you have given me six months' latitude. I am fortunate to have a good assistant whom I am training to take over when I leave, but it looks as if that will not be for several months yet, unless, of course, unforeseen favorable events occur -- God willing!

I miss my associates and work at the store, and also my absorbing efforts in connection with Municipal Television, Inc., which I hope to take up with vigor on my return.

-3-

In this connection, I trust that my report to the Federated Directors on electronics was adequate. I dictated the last part of it on the run as I was getting the plane for Ankara. If you care to send me any comments regarding it, or anything else of interest here, I should be grateful. My secretary can arrange for a letter confidentially to go through the pouch in Washington.

Faithfully yours,

I. A. Hirschmann

Mr. Walter Rothschild, President
Abraham & Straus, Inc.
Brooklyn, New York

IAH:VH

Istanbul, August 11, 1944

Dear Lube:

I don't know whether you have had a chance to read any of my telegrams which would indicate the efforts being made here, but the progress to date is pitifully slow. Large-scale movements of refugees seem delayed for reasons beyond our reach, especially in view of the rapid fire political developments occurring in this section. The latter seem so encouraging from the long point of view that we try to see a compensation for our discouragement in a complete emancipation of all minorities in a relatively shorter time. Getting a bird's eye view of the Balkan boiling pot from here is not uninteresting, to say the least.

As I write, the passengers of the first of a trio of Turkish boats from Constanza are en route by rail from Istanbul to Palestine. This group comprises about 310 refugees who had been waiting over a year for rescue, among whom are a number of the Transnistrian children we were able to salvage last March. In a way, it is heartening to see these children, for they will know the true meaning of liberty in their new life; in another way, an actual view of these little souls marching along with their skinny little legs supporting distended bellies and their aged and lined faces is a picture that remains graven, (and these are the ones who are saved).

In the meanwhile we have had the overwhelmingly tragic news of the sinking of the S. S. Mefkura in Turkish waters, on the Black Sea. (If ever a sea was well named this is it). I cannot describe the desperate efforts which we made towards rescue and our sadness from this ill-fated effort. Here were human beings who finally, after years of waiting, had managed to escape the steel grip of the Nazis, which was substituted for steel explosives in a raging storm on the Black Sea. Fortunately, this was the smaller of the boats and there were fewer children on it than on the others.

-2-

For a while we debated whether to go on with our rescue efforts, and have determined to do so with even more zeal. The incident has re-enforced the position which I had been developing to attempt to press the satellite Governments in their present malleable political frame of mind to ameliorate the conditions of their Jewish citizens in their own countries rather than to ship them out. I am making strong representations to the Bulgarian Government to revoke, absolutely and without delay, the two outrageous anti-Jewish laws which have reduced the Jewish population to economic pariahs. If we can reestablish and rehabilitate these Bulgarian citizens in their own land as human beings with their entitled share of opportunity and dignity, it will be sounder than transplanting most of them into strange lands.

Dr. Magnes and Mr. Kaplan were here a month or so ago and were enormously helpful. Magnes is a grand human being. I expect to visit Palestine after Ambassador Steinhardt returns and hope to bring you back some encouraging news and momentos. I hope you had an opportunity to visit with Steinhardt. He is certainly a remarkable fellow, and a stalwart friend of our people.

The scattered news which we are only able to receive here regarding the political situation in Washington is encouraging. The organization which you mentioned seems to be securing more concrete results than I had believed possible, and I have a suspicion that a big part of it is to your credit. When I return, which should be in about two months, I hope you will find a place for me to plunge into the campaign. I shall not be satisfied until I do, for I consider it the great issue of the moment and I want to contribute my small part. Please give some thought to this.

The very idea of the President's not being reelected is not considered even remotely possible in these parts. Again I say that any development which would interfere with his inevitable election would amount to nothing short of an international catastrophe and would serve as the greatest boon to Hitler's progress that the American people could contribute. I doubt if they want to do this.

-3-

Again thanks for your kindness and your help to me,
and with affectionate regards,

Cordially,

I. A. Hirschmann

P.S. I have intended to visit Palestine before this and to personally urge upon Pinkerton his assistance in opening the doors to Bob Nathan and his associates. I have written to him, requesting that he do all that is possible to assist them.

Isador Lubin, Esquire
The White House
Washington, D. C.

האוניברסיטה העברית
THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY

Joh
10/10/44

Jerusalem

21.VIII.44

ירושלים

Mr. Ir^o Hirschmann
War Refugee Board
c/o American Embassy
A n k a r a

Take to U.S.
W. - P. ...

Dear Mr. Hirschmann,

I am back from my two weeks' holiday which my wife and I enjoyed immensely.

Let me thank you for your letters of August 7, received 20th, and August 14th, 15th, 16th, received here on the 27th, and August 22nd, which was handed to me on the 29th. I have not yet seen Szynd inasmuch as he arrived while we were still away and he is now at his kibbutz where unfortunately his wife is laid up. He expects to be in Jerusalem next week.

I am exceedingly happy to read what you have written about your relations with Mr. Fassmann. You will increasingly find him a most reliable and competent man.

This week the dispatches brought the good news that the Bulgarian Government had rescinded the two main laws of its anti-Jewish legislation. I happen to be among those who know what a leading and decisive part you had in this; and your whole trip here can be regarded as entirely worth while if for nothing else than for that.

We follow the news about the Russian advance breathlessly, and where it not for the uncertainty concerning the Jews one would want to throw up one's hat and cheer each time the Russians move further on. I presume that the Jews in those parts of Roumania which are occupied quickly by the Russians will be saved. What will happen to the others in such parts as the Germans will have time to turn on them in? The Jews of Bulgaria are, I suppose, in the best position of all. Would it not be possible for Jews from Roumania and, what is of most importance, from Hungary, to get into Bulgaria? Finally, and most important, what will be the fate of the Jews of Hungary? Doubtless before the Germans and the Hungarians are defeated there will be great battles in and around Hungary; and with the war spreading nearer to the Reich in the west, the chance of any exit, let alone exodus of Jews from Hungary seems to become smaller. Doubtless the next few weeks will clarify this whole situation. But meanwhile ...

I have cabled to Mr. Fassmann asking if he can canvass the possibility of a JDC representative going into those parts of Roumania ~~and~~ as are liberated, and into Bulgaria as well. The Russians, you may know, have refused permission to any representative of any private relief organization to go into those parts of Russia where the Polish refugees are gathered. But the situation in Roumania is after all different. The Jews there are not refugees from a country such as Poland concerning which the Russians have plans of their own. At any rate the terms offered to Roumania by the Russians would seem to show that the situation in Roumania was different from that in Poland as far as the Russians were concerned.

*Remember
me to Joe.*

I was interested in what Joe Levy said about the gentleman who meanwhile has arrived in Turkey. I am sure that he has many good qualities and I know you will do your best to evoke them and work with him as much as may be necessary.

I wonder when the Ambassador is expected to return. I ask for two reasons, first because he said he would stop here on his way back, and second because then you will have the opportunity of coming here. We are looking forward to both events.

I saw Miss Wold yesterday and gave her your greetings, and she was very glad to have them. She is on the road to recovery but it will take some time before she regains her full strength.

I am with best regards from my wife & myself.

Sincerely yours,

J. L. Magnes
J. L. Magnes

JLM/lj

Personal

Istanbul, August 14, 1944

Dear Dr. Magnes:

Thank you for your letter of August 3 with the clippings and enclosures. We are waiting momentarily for the arrival of the survivors of the Mefkura and the passengers from the Bulbul. We will, of course, have the full story* from them and you will receive it from the Jewish Agency. Right now I am bending all efforts to start the movement of refugees on the two Bulgarian boats, the S. S. Vita and the S. S. Perin, and we have everything staged for that debarcation. I trust that there are no Zissus there.

Principally, I hope to succeed in my exertions to coerce the Bulgarian Government at this pivotal time in having it agree to abrogate the scandalous anti-Jewish laws. I am rather hopeful that we will see the entire Jewish population of Bulgaria reinstated without too much delay, and I already see symptoms of the inclusion of this principle in their proposed new program. You may be assured that I am pressing this from a number of angles on high levels.

By now you have my telegram regarding Eliash. As I indicated to Kaplan, when he requested my opinion, I believe that any temporary arrangement will be unsound and I am not convinced that Eliash will remain here on the basis which will be necessary for him to continue to function without regard to a deadline schedule. There are other reasons at this time which may argue against this selection. Joe Levy is eloquent on the subject and I am asking him to write you about it. In the long run the decision belongs to you and your associates. I am always hopeful that men will be chosen who do not see these jobs

* The report reaching me today by telephone from Katzki, after talking with the survivors, indicates that the Mefkura was definitely sunk by shell-fire, and the victims even machine-gunned. It is too horrible to contemplate. But we must go on, and I have confirmation from Washington today of my recommendations to proceed with all feasible operations.

-2-

(or opportunities) in terms of part-time patchwork in a difficult situation. This was my position when I was here the first time in the Spring, and it was a definite disadvantage. As you know, I intend to remain here until this phase of the assignment appears to be finished and an organization is set up that can carry through. Obviously I need not tell you that it would serve no useful purpose for Eliash to be aware of these comments. I respect him highly for his capabilities, especially in analytical and legal fields.

We are pressing hard on the Hungarian situation. Washington is at work day and night and we are in daily touch with them. The Catholic Church has been inordinately helpful in this situation. I hope to help broaden the basis of those Hungarian citizens who are being exempted from the strictures placed upon the Jewish citizenry.

You will hear more from me. In the meanwhile I trust this finds you and Mrs. Magnes well.

Faithfully yours,

I. A. Hirschmann

Dr. Judah Magnes, President
Hebrew University
Jerusalem, Palestine

Istanbul, August 16, 1944

Personal

Dear Jim:

Even in this remote part of the world I receive snatches of news which indicate an important tele-communications conference now under way in Washington. Remembering your conversations with me on the subject, connected with the post-war period, it naturally interested me. The only disadvantage that I can see from this work in Turkey is the necessity for my absence from the FM and television scene in America. That is the one thing that could have kept me back home, but none of us could or would want to refuse a call to duty. This latter is more of a privilege where I am concerned. Helping to rescue innocent victims of the Nazi steel grip is something of an experience in many ways.

You probably read of the sinking of one of our rescue boats and the machine-gunning of the would-be survivors while in the water. You can imagine that I am not engaging in a pleasant enterprise at the moment. Dealing with ultra-high frequencies will certainly be a pleasure compared with ultra-low degenerates.

I hope you are continuing to fight your battles with the same gallantry and courage which won your triumphs for you, as I had the privilege of observing them, and that I will be back on that scene of battle soon enough to participate and be helpful where I can. With this go my warm personal regards.

Sincerely yours,

I. A. Hirschmann

Hon. James Lawrence Fly
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D. C.

IAH:VH

Istanbul, August 23, 1944

Dear Lube:

Personal

In connection with the matter you mentioned to me while in Washington, I am attaching an excerpt of a reply from L. C. Pinkerton, American Consul General of Palestine. I presume that by the time you receive this you will already have been made familiar with the decision of the British Government connected with the visit of Robert Nathan. If there is anything more that you would like me to try to do in this connection I know you will not hesitate to write or telegraph me.

Since writing you last we have made some real steps forward in the Bulgarian situation which must be familiar to you now. My aim is to have the first Government which withdraws from the war establish the blue print for the treatment of its Jewish citizens; namely, to reinstate all of its citizenry and to give them back their rights, privileges and dignity to which they are entitled as human beings. To me this is especially important for the first country that withdraws, so that the precedent will be established, aside, of course, from the salvation of the individuals themselves.

It looks as if I shall still be here several months. The way the war seems to be going, perhaps the last word from you on leaving your office may come true. You may recall that you said "I hope you will be able to return to the States through Europe."

Again with thanks for all your kindness,

Cordially yours,

I. A. Hirschmann

Isidor Lubin, Esquire
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Encl.

IN REPLY REFER TO

FILE NO. 850 LCP/eh



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

THE FOREIGN SERVICE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL
Jerusalem, Palestine,
August 17, 1944.

Dear Mr. Hirschmann:

I have received your letter of August 5, 1944, with regard to a proposed visit to Palestine by Mr. Robert Nathan and some associates for the purpose of making an economic survey of the country. In a recent interview with representatives of the press the Chief Secretary said that, as the visit was not connected with the war, the Government did not feel inclined to give it facilities to come to Palestine. Recently the Chief Secretary told me the Government here felt the visit should not be made at this time but had offered to send Mr. Nathan such material as might be available. Mr. Nathan has outlined the information he wants and the Chief Secretary told me that most of it had been forwarded.

Since you have returned to Turkey, I have heard so many good reports of you that I wonder you are able to wear the same size hat you did when you came. These reports reach me from all quarters and from organizations that are not usually agreed on any subject. More power to you and continued success in your mission. We are all convinced that if anyone can succeed in it, you are the one.

With regards and looking forward to seeing you in Palestine.

Sincerely yours,

L. C. Pinkerton
L. C. Pinkerton.

I. A. Hirschmann, Esquire,
Special Attache,
American Embassy,
Ankara, Turkey.

הסוכנות היהודית לארץ ישראל
THE JEWISH AGENCY FOR PALESTINE
Political Department
JERUSALEM
P. O. B. 92

ad-50

Istanbul, Sept. 30, 1944.

Handwritten signature/initials

Dear Mr. Hirschmann,

with deep regret I have learned, that soon you intend to leave for the states.

During this past period we have had the opportunity to work with you in many important matters in connection with the fate of the most unfortunate of the Jewish people in occupied Europe.

We recognize the fact that you have had a very deep human understanding towards our goal. But it is not only this. In this few lines we would also like to let you know that your friendly co-operation was always welcomed as extremely helpful.

Your support to our cause was so great and we could approach you so freely and without ceremonies that you have proved that still in the hearts of people exists the wonderful thing "democracy".

It is really a great souvenir that you have left among us and you can be assured, that it will be carried on in our hearts for ever.

We hope, that our paths will meet again in the not too distant future.

Cordially
yours

J. E. Ueberall

P. D. Representative,
Turkey.

Mr. I. Hirschmann.
Istanbul.

הסוכנות היהודית לארץ ישראל
THE JEWISH AGENCY FOR PALESTINE

Immigration Department
JERUSALEM
P. O. B. 92

Istanbul, October 2, 1944

Mr. Ira A. Hirschmann
Special Attaché
Istanbul.

Dear Mr. Hirschmann,

It is with deep regret that we heard of your return to the U.S.A.

President Roosevelt's order for the establishment of the War Refugee Board, as well as your designation as his special delegate here - the place where the innumerable attempts to save our unhappy people were and are being made - was of historical importance.

You were one of the main factors and pillars of these efforts and attempts. The conditionless devotion to our common goal and the simplicity with which you were always at our disposal, will never be forgotten.

We wish and hope that your leave-taking from us does not mean a leave-taking from the work you undertook. It is a sad work, but also the most important and serious one which decides of the life and prosperity of our Nation

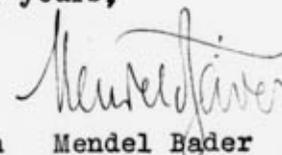
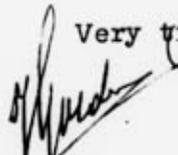
We feel confident that you will be our interpreter with the U.S.A. Government with regard to the necessity and directives in the next phase of our work.

We shall continue our efforts during your absence and you can be sure that it will be in full cooperation with Mr. Katzki.

May we, Dear Mr. Hirschmann, ask you to accept our sincerest thanks and the assurance of our esteem.

With best regards,

Very truly yours,



Dr. Joseph Goldin Mendel Bader

Representation of Yugoslav Jews
Jerusalem, 5, Pamban Street.

Tel-Aviv 10th Oct. 1944
Jerusalem

Dear Mr. Hirschmann:

I address myself to you as President Roosevelt's representative for the rescue of war refugees and beg to appeal to you in the name of Yugoslav Jewry which, on the day of the German invasion, numbered about 80,000 souls.

Perhaps 8,000 to 10,000 of us are alive today: Some 2,000, or more, are fighting with the Partisans. We estimate the number of Jewish officers and men in the Yugoslav Army, who are prisoners of war in Germany, to be a few hundred. In concentration camps in Yugoslavia there may be another thousand or more, and in Palestine, the U.S.A., Italy, Hungary and Switzerland some 3,000 to 4,000. That is all.

1,200 persons, elderly men and women with children are in Yugoslavia proper, saved by the Partisans. They are living in the liberated area, round the little towns of Topusko and Glina, without food, clothing or shoes, without medicine, among people who even in peace time had not too much to wear or eat, and who during war time have not remained immune from imported anti-semitism. The Partisans are protecting them and have agreed to send them, since the Dalmatian ports are still in German hands, by air to Italy. We have received letters and requests for help. They are free, but starting in the mountains and forests of Yugoslavia. It is unlikely that this part of Yugoslavia will be liberated before winter sets in and our refugees there, the last remnants of a Jewish community, can be saved from complete annihilation. In addition they are in daily danger of the Germans and Croat Ustachis.

Their situation is not identical with that of the other non-Jews there. These are not in danger of being killed by Germans or Ustachis and they have some food in their homes and fields, even if it is not too much. They, too, are suffering, but the situation of the Jews is incomparably worse. But they can be saved.

The Allies supply these areas by air, and by the same means the refugees can be transported to Italy. In the same way these 1200 Jews can be supplied with food, clothing and medicine.

I implore you, Mr. Hirschmann, to do your best to rescue these people who can be saved.

Yours very respectfully,

(Signed) Dr. Meir Weltmann

October 17, 1944

Mr. J. W. Pehle
Executive Director
War Refugee Board
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Pehle:

Since returning from my second mission in Turkey for consultation and having submitted my report to you, it is my understanding that the assignment given me by the War Refugee Board as Special Representative in Turkey has been concluded.

On October 4, 1944, I submitted to you a summary report of my operations in Turkey from June 18th through October 4th when I left Ankara. My previous reports to you covered fully my operations for the Board since you designated me the Board's Special Representative in Turkey on February 15, 1944. The job, as I perceived it, was to implement the policy of the United States Government, enunciated in the President's Order of January 22, 1944, to rescue through Turkey victims from the satellite countries. Turkey is well described as a window into the Balkans. Through the aegis of the Board, we succeeded in making of it first a small aperture, then a door, through which literally thousands of refugees were rescued. These refugees, I am confident, would not have been saved from persecution and annihilation without the eleventh hour efforts of the Board, working through its representatives with Ambassador Steinhardt in Ankara and Istanbul.

Your clothing of me with authority to deal with the enemy afforded me the opportunity of dealing with and persuading the Ministers of Bulgaria and Rumania to lessen the stricture against the oppressed minorities; to abandon the disease-ridden camp in Transnistria; to induce the Government in Bulgaria to revoke its nefarious anti-Jewish laws, reinstating a population of 45,000 citizens (who had been reduced to pariahs) to their normal state of human rights and dignity. Through the auspices of the Board, numerous other steps were taken to rescue stricken peoples in the Balkans, all of which steps are recorded in your files.

- 2 -

For military and political reasons, the door into Turkey is being sealed; also, the necessity for rescue is obviated in view of the liberation of Rumania and Bulgaria. My work is therefore terminated, and I herewith tender my resignation.

I cannot close, however, without again acknowledging your kindness and undeviating support of my efforts. In no single instance have you failed to support without reservation the requests and steps taken by me in the interest of the Board's program. This encouragement and assistance has been an invaluable aid to me.

In time of war, as I understand it, killing people seems to be the main job at hand. Through the Board I was privileged to undertake a job of saving people, instead of killing them. I wish to thank you for this broad and unique opportunity in the field of human welfare.

Cordially yours,

Ira A. Hirschmann

File
October 18, 1944

Mr. Pehle

Mr. Hirschmann

I know it isn't necessary, but I cannot resist the temptation of writing to tell you again how much I have been inspired by the assignment you gave me and the satisfaction I derived from working with you and your associates. I should be grateful if you would care to pass this note on to those who were so kind in their cooperation with me, so that they may know of my appreciation. Perhaps at some time in the future I may be in a position to reciprocate all your friendliness and understanding support.

October 21, 1944.

Mr. Herbert Katski,
Special Representative,
War Refugee Board,
Ankara, Turkey.

Dear Herbert:

I had a rather rugged trip back to America and still feel the effects of it. It is no fun.

Returning here I found the Board warmly appreciative of our efforts in Turkey, in fact they were laudatory. I believe you have all good reason to feel only gratification for your superlative efforts. I have passed this word around wherever I am going and am enclosing a copy of a letter I wrote to Mr. Baerwald from Washington. I also spoke immediately to John Pehle regarding the elevation of your status in Turkey, and I assume you have already heard about this.

The Board's work seems to be gradually diminishing but I am sure that any new possibilities will be explored by you. I told John Pehle that you were releasing one of the girls. If Mrs. Henderson or Miss Bixler returns to America please ask her to get in touch with me in New York where I am now back on the job. It seems very strange.

By the time this reaches you the election issue will have been resolved. Now the country is in a state of fermentation about it and it is rather discouraging to see how little they appreciate the stalwart and historic efforts of our great President. Dewey has made a fighting campaign and has hit under the belt on a number of occasions, which is no less than I expected of him. I returned just in time to get in a few licks in the campaign and feel happy that I have been able to make some contribution. Betting is for a Roosevelt victory but the results are not assured by any means.

You have done a grand job in Turkey and I am sure you will get your rewards in inner satisfaction and new concrete opportunity. Let me hear from you, letting me know how you are getting along, what you are doing and especially how I can help you on this side.

I called your mother and was happy to talk with her.

Remember me warmly to Mrs. Henderson and Miss Bixler. I should also be grateful if you would call up Mr. Gleason Holzmeister at Tarabia 13, giving him my regards. He speaks only German. Tell him also that cigars are on the way from me. These may be addressed to you and you will know to whom to forward them.

Sincerely yours,

ish.em
encl.

I. A. Hirschmann

P.S.

I dislike giving you an additional chore but I should appreciate it if it is not too much trouble. The above Mr. Holzmeister was the one who helped me shop at the Bazaar for gifts. I am of the opinion that he would not object to doing so again. I found on my return that I had lost a number of gifts on the way and I do not have sufficient to go around the family. Knowing families as you probably do, this might leave scars for generations. If you will ask Professor Holzmeister to buy about a half dozen total of the rings, pins, etc. which he helped purchase for me, of the same type, and either bring them yourself or have one of the girls bring them when she returns, I would be enormously grateful. Naturally, I will reimburse you. I was spending somewhere between 25 and 100 lire for each gift, but let him use his own judgment.

I.A.H.

October 26, 1944.

Hon. Emanuel Celler
Congressman 10th District New York
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

Dear Congressman Celler:

That was a very nice note you wrote me the other day. A word of commendation from you means a great deal to me, and I appreciate it.

What was done in Turkey in rescuing refugees demonstrated to me the tremendous weight that our Government can swing when it gets behind any issue, especially in Europe and the Middle East. Some day we must talk more about this.

With good wishes,

Cordially yours,

I. A. Hirschmann
Vice-President

iah.em

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

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NEW YORK CITY

1224 NEW HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON

NEW YORK SECRETARIES:
JACOB GRALLA MARY DOUGHERTY

October 24, 1944

Mr. Ira Hirschmann
Bloomingdale's
East 59th Street and Lexington Avenue
New York, New York

Dear Mr. Hirschmann:

I have been reading some excellent accounts of the work of your good self and the War Refugee Board in the Balkans, particularly in Bulgaria.

You did a wonderful job. May I add my note of appreciation.

Sincerely yours,

Emanuel Celler
EMANUEL CELLER

MAY LEWIS
130 EAST END AVENUE
NEW YORK 28, N. Y.

Book

File

October 27, 1944

Mr. Ira Hirschman
War Refugee Board
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Hirschman:

Last evening I listened with the utmost interest to your clear, forceful, high-minded, courageous and warm-hearted speech at the Zionist dinner. I am using many adjectives but in reality I have no words with which to express my admiration for the work you have done.

From the very beginning I have been appalled by the incredible destruction of the European Jews and at the same time amazed and horrified by the silence of both Christian and Jewish public. Therefore, when the call to rescue by the Emergency Committee to Save the Jews of Europe rang out I felt at last that a voice had been raised--a voice which has succeed in arousing an apathetic public and Government.

It was at one of the meetings of this group at the residence of Maj. Schwamm that I first heard you speak and, inspired by what you said, I wrote the enclosed poem, published later in the Answer.

Last evening when you mentioned a couple of agencies that had been of assistance in the rescue campaign I was grimly disappointed to note that you omitted the Emergency Committee---the very group who had worked tirelessly ~~for~~

MAY LEWIS
130 EAST END AVENUE
NEW YORK 28, N. Y.

to have a War Refugee Board appointed and whose efforts I am sure were largely instrumental in bringing this about.

How fair, just and magnanimous it would have been on your part, Mr. Hirschman, now that they are being venomously attacked by the Zionists, if you had given them even passing credit for this. I would then have been able to admire your manhood even as you said you admired that of Mr. Biddle.

I am writing this entirely on my own account as one who cannot abide injustice.

Yours sincerely,

May Lewis
(Mrs. Lafayette A. Goldstone)

May Lewis
(Mrs. Lafayette A. Goldstone)

22

November 7, 1944

Mrs. Lafayette A. Goldstone
130 East End Avenue
New York 28, N. Y.

Dear Mrs. Goldstone:

I am very pleased that you wrote to me as you did. It is so much better to say the things that are in our minds as frankly as you did.

Your reference to the War Refugee Board and the fact that the "Emergency Committee" was largely instrumental in bringing this about is one that I think bears investigation. I know of the good work of the Emergency Committee, and vice versa. Some time when the pressure that is on me upon returning has relaxed, I shall be glad to discuss this with you.

In the meantime, I want to tell you how much I was inspired by your poem, "Visa." I am writing a book covering my experiences and there will be a section devoted to the subject of visas. May I ask your permission to quote from your poem in the event that I can fit it in?

With good wishes,

EXCERPT FROM LETTER OF HERBERT KATZKI

ISTANBUL - NOVEMBER 10, 1944

"You would be as pleased as I am if you could see how this emigration has been passing through Istanbul during the last few weeks. Since October 25 and through this morning about a thousand people from Bulgaria and Roumania passed through. I have been keeping Mr. Pehle informed and I hope that he has been advising you. There was a group of 160 from Roumania which included 117 children, then the Salebattin turned up with 547 (everyone was satisfied with the distribution of places), then 80 from Bulgaria with about 50 children, a second group by R. R. from Bucharest with 43 Poles and finally 110 or 115 from Bulgaria including 87 children. The scheme with Jewish Agency confirmations is working smoothly and well. I have even seen people who arrived here with the confirmation as a travel document and the transit visas stamped on the back thereof. The weeks of effort to get this set up have finally brought the desired results. New groups are expected right along."

November 10, 1944

Dr. Judah Magnes, President
The Hebrew University
Jerusalem, Palestine

Dear Dr. Magnes:

I waited 'til Roosevelt was re-elected to write to you. The situation here was so feverish and so many "cats and dogs" were being tossed around during the campaign period that I did not feel that I should write a letter reflecting that situation. The mandate is clear and incisive and it is a great relief to many of us.

Somehow today as I write I feel as if our nation has been reborn. It is an overwhelming experience to return from the political confluence of the Middle East and to see our people with all of their restlessness and immaturity expressing their will in the truly democratic way of a free people. We are better than we have ever been, and better than we know we are.

Now I feel that we can move on to victory with a vigor and unity which was heretofore questioned. The stature of Roosevelt is beginning to be felt in his lifetime by his own people. That is rare for an American here. Someone dug out of the files some of the epithets that were thrown at Abraham Lincoln. They matched almost word for word with the things that were said about Roosevelt in this campaign. Somehow I

page two
Dr. Magnes
November 10, 1944

believe that Roosevelt will live in the hearts of his people with a degree of affection comparable to that which is accorded Lincoln.

I have tried to reach your son and daughter-in-law on the telephone several times without success. I wrote to them immediately upon my return transmitting your letter in rather battered shape. I have a letter today from them, which I enclose. I intend to see them within the next week, and shall write to you thereafter. I also delivered your manuscript to Miss Kirshway. You will probably hear from her direct.

I have not been in very close touch with the refugee situation since my return. The State Department and other officials seemed extremely well-satisfied with my efforts and I put all the pressure on that was possible regarding the continuance of the work of the Board and a more illuminated view of the Palestine situation. It is difficult to write to you on this now, but you can believe that I threw a searchlight on the glories of this land and the necessity for its independent autonomous functioning. I am afraid, however, that the tragic events of the last weeks in Cairo will not aid the situation. You probably recall that I conducted negotiations with the late Lord Moyne. In my instance they turned out to be satisfactory where he was concerned.

I cannot close this letter without again thanking you and Mrs. Magnes for the warm and rich hospitality you provided me while in Jerusalem. I shall not forget those pleasant days, and especially the hours of repose and friendship in your home on that memorable Saturday. I am confident that Mr. Pinkerton will permit a letter from you

page three
Dr. Magnes
November 10, 1944

to me through the pouch, which I am now using for this with the approval of Ambassador Stanhardt. If so, I should be eager to hear from you. Please give my warm regards to your wife, to Mr. Passman, Ben Gourian and my other friends in Palestine. I trust this finds you well.

Cordially yours

lah:ret

I. A. Birschmann

The Washington Post

**** Saturday, October 28, 1944

Rough And Tumble

1000 refugees admitted to Oswego by a presidential order suspending the immigration laws are survivors of the hideous Nazi reign of terror in Europe. They are pitiful, uprooted people, left now with no home on earth. And no home has been offered to them here. All that we have given them is momentary shelter from the storm. Can it seem strange or wrong to any American that the land of liberty should have reached out to save these human lives? If we have any cause for reproach about this deed, it is that we have afforded sanctuary to so few. Yet Governor Bricker in a speech at Denver last week actually used the order as a weapon with which to belabor Mr. Roosevelt. He descended to this jibe: "There was the usual hush-hush policy about the project. After the refugees arrived it became known that instead of the pale-faced children and frail women the group consisted largely of men. They were not laboring men, either, but writers, lawyers, artists and intellectuals generally. I am not saying that this group was 'cleared with Sidney.' I do not know." The ugly implications of the final sneer are too obvious to be mistaken.

We know of nothing hush-hush about the Oswego project. We applauded it openly at the time the President proposed it. The fact is moreover, that a majority of the refugees admitted to the Oswego camp are women and children. That among the men a number are persons of education and intellect seems to us cause neither for surprise nor for alarm. The principal targets of Hitler's persecution were the cultural and intellectual leaders of the conquered peoples. This Republic was founded by just such refugees and has been nourished by them throughout its history. In the present case, however, the entries are here only temporarily, merely to protect their lives while the Nazi scourge is raging. Now it is interesting that before Mr. Bricker became a vice presidential candidate, he appended his name to a petition sponsored by the late Al Smith and submitted to the President. Its words are the best reply that can be made to what Candidate Bricker said in Denver: "It is a moral obligation of the United States and all other freedom-loving nations to erect temporary havens where the refugees may find sanctuary until conditions in their native lands enable them to return and take up their lives in the atmosphere of respect and decency and charity that our certain victory will create."

November 13, 1944

Mr. John W. Pehle
Executive Director
War Refugee Board
Treasury Building
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear John:

I read an article in the National Jewish Monthly on the War Refugee Board which, I think, fails to stress the affirmative work done by the Board.

Do you think it worthwhile to have it answered as I believe in the connection of messages it fails to do justice to your accomplishments. I will be glad to answer it if you deem it desirable.

I am coming to Washington this Thursday and will call you in the hope of seeing you.

Cordially

Iahiba

I.A. Hirschmann

THE NATIONAL Jewish MONTHLY

NOVEMBER, 1944

**WRB—SUCCESS
OR FAILURE?**

By Murray Frank

**CAN EDUCATION
CURE PREJUDICE?**

By Stewart G. Cole

**B. B. PREEMPTS
THE CAMPUS**

By Dr. A. L. Sachar

**LABOR WINS
IN PALESTINE**

By Mark Krug

**WHO'S WHO IN
JEWISH
EDUCATION**

By Ben Rosen

*News of Jewish Life, B'nai
B'rith Activities, Books,
Letters, Editorials*

Published by
B'NAI B'RITH



John W. Pehle, Director Of The War
Refugee Board, Which Will Soon End
Its Work, Analyzed On Page 88



WRB—Success Or Failure

**It Has Saved Thousands Of Refugees,
But As It Nears End Of Its Work, The
Verdict Is: Too Little and Too Late**

By Murray Frank

RECENT military developments in Europe have practically brought to a standstill the rescue activities of the War Refugee Board. There is talk in Washington of an early winding up of the Board's functions and its possible dissolution. Such being the situation, it may not be remiss to recount its activities and accomplishments, as well as its shortcomings and failures. No attempt is made here to write a history of the Board's brief life; that will be left for the future, when all pertinent documents for an objective evaluation become available. What is attempted here is merely an objective analysis of the Board's work, its major problems, and the causes of its success or failure.

The historic American principle of asylum and the traditional concept of humanitarianism were faced with a supreme test during this war. It was a test of the degree of sympathy and understanding of the plight of our fellow-beings in Nazi Europe who have felt the cruel lash of persecution, a test of the true American spirit of help for the persecuted of the blood-stained European continent.

Sympathy, But No Help

Not a day passed without our seeing stories in the newspapers of some new persecution, some new tragedy which had befallen the remnants of Europe's Jews. We stood helpless to aid them or to rescue them. True, we have had numerous expressions of sympathy and commiseration in the long months of our bereavement, unquestionably encouraging to us in those trying moments. But what of our people in Europe? What, if anything, was being done for them? What measures were being taken to extricate them from the nightmare that is Hitler-Europe, to bring them forth from that continent of sorrow? The answer can be summed up in a few words: the anguished cries of Europe's persecuted millions and the remorseful compassion of their co-religionists in Allied countries have not stirred more than a ripple on a vast sea of tears.

After four years of war and the extermination of millions of Europe's Jews, the United States at long last took the initial step to live up to its world-renowned reputation as the benefactor of the oppressed. The War Refugee Board was created by President Roosevelt on January 22, 1944, comprised of

Secretary of State Cordell Hull, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, and Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr. In all probability, it was the President's intention that the Board remain small for more effective action. The Board's purpose was stated succinctly by the President in his Executive Order, where he says that "it is the policy of this government to take all measures within its power to rescue the victims of enemy oppression who are in imminent danger of death and otherwise to afford such victims all possible relief and assistance consistent with the successful prosecution of the war."

Obviously, the President and the members of the Board were keenly aware of the danger facing the surviving Jews in Europe and of the urgency to rescue them. Action was the order of the day. To attain the desired action, 35-year-old John W. Pehle, Assistant to Secretary Morgenthau, was designated as the Board's Executive Director. In his capacity as Director of the Treasury's Foreign Funds Control, Mr. Pehle gained wide experience in negotiating with foreign governments, which relation brought him into close touch with problems facing the War Refugee Board and made his name well-known to relief agencies in the United States. Shortly after assuming his position, he stated that the job of rescuing the remaining Jews of Europe "is one that has to be done in the next few months." He reiterated the same thought to this writer in a personal interview stressing that "speedy action" is imperative or else it will be too late.

For greater maneuverability and speedier accomplishments, Mr. Pehle operated with a small staff in Washington and with a handful of representatives in strategic neutral countries. When necessary, he would call on Federal agencies or international and private organizations, such as UNRRA, International Red Cross, Joint Distribution Committee, and others, for their help or services. The Board utilized their personnel, their experience and their funds. It was often asked: Why is the Board's work financed largely with private funds? There was an opinion prevalent that Congress should be asked to appropriate funds for the Board's operations, but the request never materialized. At a meeting of the Jewish Welfare Fund in Chicago last September 21, Mr. Morgenthau explained why this was never done:

"Let me explain why I think it better that it (i.e. financing) was done jointly by both private agencies and the Government. When the Board was first established, it was obvious that speed was essential. . . . It was quickly apparent that there were honorable, seasoned private organizations in this field who were equipped with everything except the kind of support which could come only from the Government of the United States. . . . It seemed perfectly logical that a relationship should be established between the private agencies and the Government. . . . For its part the Government could contribute the weight of its prestige, its diplomacy, its communication channels, its licensing and transportation facilities. . . . For their part the private agencies could give detailed knowledge, seasoned personnel, long experience, and quickly available funds. . . ."

Poor Psychology

There was no way of knowing whether greater accomplishments by the Board would have been possible if government finances had been available to it, instead of the limited resources of private organizations. Psychologically, the effect was bad. It aroused suspicion that this Government was not wholeheartedly behind the Board and the task it was to perform. Time and again the disquieting opinion was expressed that the Board was created not so much for the purpose of rescuing Jews as allaying the fears and pacifying the nerves of American Jews who clamored for action.

As outlined by Mr. Pehle, the Board was to stay out of direct operation as much as possible, its tasks being to

- ✓ Aid relief and rescue work of private and international organizations.
- ✓ Facilitate the sending of money for direct aid to the victims.
- ✓ Obtain government permission to help these organizations carry on and expand their activities.
- ✓ Help speed up their work by averting unnecessary delays.
- ✓ Facilitate the movement of people out of occupied countries.

In fact, the Board was to do all in its power to impress upon Germany that this country objects vehemently to its treatment of Jews and other minorities. Moreover, it was extremely interested in the European underground movement through which it hoped to obtain certain help. Thus, no stone was left unturned in the hope of getting refugees out of occupied territory. The Board solicited

the cooperation and suggestions of about 100 private agencies in the United States as to measures for rescue and relief. Its task may, therefore, be explained as three-fold: rescue, relief, and psychological warfare.

Disappointing Results

☛ The War Refugee Board has now been in existence for about nine months—really not a long time when it comes to questioning its accomplishments. But these are unusual times when innocent men, women, and children have been singled out solely because of their religious antecedents and have been barbarously mistreated for no other reason than that they are Jews; these are unusual times when each day is equivalent to a year in the harried and haunted existence of people exposed to the brutalities of crazed tyrants. Our casualty list—estimated at 500,000 souls, or one-third of world Jewry—is greater than that of any people in the present war, and the end is not in sight. The time for action and for concrete results in terms of numbers of victims saved was therefore long overdue.

The results—to be frank about it—are disappointing. The Board, in Mr. Morgenthau's words, "participated in the rescue of thousands from the Balkans across the Black Sea to Palestine—in the rescue of many over the Pyrenees to and through Spain and Portugal—in the relief of many weary victims of Hitler's persecution who had found sanctuary in Sweden and Switzerland. It has cooperated in establishing many refugee camps in Africa and, through the President's leadership, an Emergency Refugee Shelter at Oswego, in the United States." And that fairly well sums up its accomplishments. To this can be added that the Balkan rescue operations were actually carried on by the Jewish Agency of Palestine and the Joint Distribution Committee; that the latter organization shared the expense of feeding internees in European camps, and that the refugee camps in Africa are under the supervision of UNRRA.

Life-saving in occupied territory in wartime is not a simple task. Operating under terrible handicaps and against overwhelming odds, great care was necessary in such complex operations. We are aware of that, yet the trickle of refugees to come out of Nazi Europe was pitifully small when compared with our staggering losses. Probably no one knows how many Jews were rescued during the past year, but the figure is obviously an insignificant part of Europe's pre-war Jewish population. Down to the very end there was no unity of purpose and no clearly defined plan of action, all because of the fact that rescue work was begun too late. Until recent days rescue activities were still in the stage of talking, planning—and most of all, in hoping.

The best and most recent example is Hungary. By now everyone is aware that Hungary's offer to release its Jews resulted in a fiasco. For one thing, the

offer came too late; for another, we were not prepared to handle mass migration of people. By "we," I mean the Allied nations and the various international bodies, particularly the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, whose responsibility it was to prepare for such migrations. By "we," I also mean the War Refugee Board and the manifold Jewish organizations which were equipped to handle individuals or small groups, rather than masses. Late as the offer came from Hungary, it took more than a month before the Governments of the United Kingdom and the United States accepted it in principle. By the time it was accepted and the machinery set in motion, the military situation in the Balkans caused Germany to widen its control over Hungary. The offer was immediately negated and at present no one is getting out of Hungary. In this instance it was purely a case of talking and hoping; we had not



Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Secretary of the Treasury, who recently explained why the work of the War Refugee Board has been largely financed by private funds, instead of by government allocations. Speedy rescue, he said, was so essential that the government felt the many private experienced agencies in the field should establish a joint relationship with the government to speed up the process.

even reached the stage of planning, let alone rescuing.

If today we are criticizing the War Refugee Board, such criticism is not directed at its members or staff, but rather the fact the Board was created too late. In the short period of its existence the Board has shown that it worked sincerely and earnestly, that it was the proper instrumentality to conduct rescue work, and consequently it enjoyed the fullest cooperation and con-

fidence of Jewish organizations. American Jews were aware of the great problems and difficulties facing the Board, they realized that it had much to do and very little time in which to do it, particularly in a world disorganized by war.

Under the circumstances, one can only voice the deepest regret that the Board was not created earlier. The proper time was immediately after the war began, some five years ago, when it became apparent to the civilized world that Germany was out to exterminate European Jewry. At the latest, the Board should have been created three years ago, after United States' entry into the war, even then the eleventh hour. Neither the President nor the members of the Board, however, should be held responsible for that. To a large degree the blame is to be leveled against American Jewry as a whole, for lacking foresight and vision to realize the imminent danger and the fact that the last opportunity was at hand.

Some WRB Achievements

☛ To the Board's credit it can be stated unequivocally that it made many efforts to increase the outflow of refugees from occupied Europe, and in the Hungarian crisis it undoubtedly helped stay the deportation of Jews and relieved their condition. Time and the lack of preparedness were factors limiting extremely the Board's possibilities. With sufficient time on hand, the proper forethought and preparation of plans, plus full cooperation of our own officials, and greater pressure exerted upon European neutrals to relax their existing immigration or transit laws, the record of the Board's accomplishments would today be a more glorious page in the history of this country's many efforts in behalf of the persecuted.

Now the War Refugee Board is on the verge of writing "finis" to its activities. All in all, its work of rescue concerned a few hundred here, a few hundred there—all told, perhaps 5,000, perhaps 10,000, perhaps a few more. A glorious chapter in the Board's accomplishments is the refugee shelter established at Oswego, N. Y., for nearly 1,000 refugees, but to date few, if any, other countries have followed the example set by this government.

In summarizing, we may question the success or failure of the War Refugee Board. It depends on how we look at the results. If it is from the point of view of number of lives saved, it was evidently a failure. If we take into consideration the difficulties involved, we can conclude that under the circumstances it was fairly successful. The best appraisal is that, welcome as the help was, it was entirely too little and entirely too late.

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Letter from Herbert Katski, Istanbul, December 12, 1944.

Within the past few days, Mr. David Bengourion, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Jewish Agency of Palestine, made a trip to Bulgaria. Upon his return to Istanbul en route to Palestine, I had opportunity for speaking with him and with his assistant, who accompanied him to Bulgaria. You undoubtedly will be interested in knowing some of his first-hand observations, which I shall summarize below.

1. The situation of the emigrants from Rumania who were detained at Stara Zagora -- they are still there today -- is as follows: At Stara Zagora there are 278 refugees. These people are for the most part Hungarians, or Slovaks and Poles from the area west of the Curzon line, who had succeeded in escaping to Hungary and subsequently made their way to Rumania. These people at Stara Zagora were especially selected in Rumania, as they came from areas which were not being claimed by the Russians, in order to avoid any difficulties which might arise from such claims. The emigrants at Kazalnik, just outside of Stara Zagora, numbering 320 persons, are for the most part real Hungarians. These likewise had been selected because of their origin in an area not subject to Russian claim.

The emigrants at Stara Zagora, with the exception of some women and children, are still living in the railroad cars in which they arrived in that city. A number of the women and children have been given shelter by the inhabitants of Stara Zagora. It should be noted that those people living in the railroad cars have been there now for almost a month.

Mr. Bengourion made inquiry in Sofia to learn what might be done in order to solve this situation. He was referred from one quarter to another, no one apparently being able to state exactly who the responsible person was to approach. Finally, however, Mr. Bengourion was told by a Russian general in charge, a General Pantscheff, that the matter can be solved only in Moscow.

The detention of the emigrants at Stara Zagora has resulted in a stoppage of emigration by land from Rumania. Sofia has instructed the Bulgarian consulates in Rumania not to issue any transit visas to Rumanians, Poles, or Hungarians.

2. At the present time, restrictions have been placed upon emigration from Bulgaria. Until recently, although there were several sections where exit visas were not being issued,

- 2 -

their issuance was being continued in others. Now the issuance of exit visas generally has been stopped, and those persons who are now arriving in Istanbul are those who already had had their exit permits issued or authorized. This stoppage of emigration may be only a passing phase. This sort of thing has happened before, and it is not unusual to find that regulations made one day are annulled the next.

Several months ago the Bulgarian Government stated that they will do everything in their power to facilitate the emigration of those people who desire to leave the country. One of the difficulties connected with emigration, pointed out to the Bulgarian Government at that time, was the multiplicity of documents which had to be secured before an exit permit would be granted. These documents numbered up to 13 or 15. Despite the assurance given by the Bulgarian Government, there have been no changes in the number of documents which must be secured and presented by a prospective emigrant. An absurd result of this procedure is that, for example, a six-year-old child for whom an exit permit is requested must present documents that it does not owe any money for mortgages which it has contracted, or that it owns no forest-lands in Bulgaria. At the moment, in view of the discontinuance of the issuance of exit visas, the question of documentation is perhaps somewhat academic. In due course, however, the question again will arise, and will have to be met in some way by the interested organizations.

Despite assurances which have been given and steps already taken to remove disabilities which heretofore attached to the Jewish people in Bulgaria, the desire by the Jewish people to leave the country continues. This can best be indicated by the fact that, when Mr. Bengourion held a meeting in Sofia to discuss Palestine and emigration to that country, 7000 Jews, or over one-third of the Jewish people now in Sofia, attended the public meeting he held. The Jewish people in Bulgaria, by and large, are not satisfied that their future in that country is assured, according to Mr. Bengourion.

3. In general, living conditions in Bulgaria are bad. There is no clothing to be purchased, no shoes, no wearing apparel of any kind. The obtention of these items is dependent upon money. By way of illustration, one of the Bulgarian Ministers asked Mr. Bengourion to send him a pair of shoes from Palestine, not that this Minister was interested in having a pair of Palestinian shoes, but merely because he needed a pair and could not purchase any. Food, too, is scarce.

- 3 -

The Germans have taken out of the country all cattle, fowl, sheep, anything that could be eaten. The stores in Sofia literally are without merchandise. Medicines are not to be obtained, even with money. Living conditions have become quite difficult.

Those persons most affected by the general hardship in Bulgaria are the Jews. These people for four years have been without income, have been swayed in forced-labor camps, were forced out of their homes, were deprived of their possessions, were unable to purchase any clothing, remained without adequate medical care.

Of the 25,000 Jews who had resided in Sofia four years ago, and who had been expelled to the provinces, between eighteen and twenty thousand have returned. When they returned to Sofia, they found that the dwellings which they had been compelled to give up were pillaged, even the windows and doors had been taken out of the houses. At the time of the bombardment of Sofia, non-Jews had moved to the Jewish quarter, to the houses taken away from the Jews, in the belief that the Jewish quarter, for some reason or other, would escape bombardment. When they left the Jewish quarter, to return to their own homes, they took with them everything that could be moved. In consequence, the Jews now returning can find none of their possessions.

Fifteen thousand of the Jews who returned to Sofia are living in the Jewish quarters of the city. They are crowded together, living two and three families in one room, the children with the old people, the well with the sick. Subject to deprivation over a long period of years, these Jews, undernourished, ill-clothed, many with no shoes or only what might have passed for shoes a year or two ago, have no resources. Though having the right to work, they have no employment. Most of the men have been called up for military service. Their families receive the regular allowance for those whose breadwinners are in the army, but this amounts to 500 leva per month. At unofficial rates of exchange, this represents about one and one-half Turkish lira. Some idea of the purchasing power represented by 500 leva can be secured when one compares this amount, for a family, with the minimum amount one person must have in order to secure food and shelter. I have been informed by individuals from Bulgaria that one must have a minimum of six to eight thousand leva per month per person in order to have a minimum existence. The Bulgarian authorities told Mr. Ben-Gourion that they will raise the allocation to from eight to fifteen hundred leva per month.

The group among the Jews most hard hit are, of course, the children. There are upwards of 5,000 Jewish children in Bulgaria between the ages of six and fifteen. Most of these children are residing in the Jewish quarter of Sofia, undernourished and badly clothed. Many of them are without shoes. Although the Jewish children in Bulgaria now have the right to attend the Bulgarian schools, Mr. Bengourion stated that he saw many children who could not avail themselves of this opportunity, as they had no shoes or decent clothes to wear and perforce had to remain at home.

Despite restrictions which have been placed upon emigration to Palestine, heretofore reported to you, Mr. Bengourion proposes to recommend and to take steps to make efficacious the admission into Palestine of 5,000 children from Bulgaria. He proposes also to try to purchase in Palestine 10,000 pairs of shoes for export to Bulgaria, and also a quantity of medicines based upon the list which I transmitted to you in our letter of December 8. Medicines are urgently required because of the existence of typhus in the Jewish quarter, malaria, diphtheria, and other illnesses. There is no soap to be obtained in Bulgaria. As a result, it is not possible for the people in the Jewish quarter to wash themselves, to clean their clothes, and to take the necessary steps to delouse their apparel or to take elementary measures of sanitation for the crowded quarters in which they live.

4. While in Bulgaria, Mr. Bengourion learned that there are 300 Jews of Macedonia who have come out of hiding in the mountains and are now in Skopie. At this time, these are all the Jews known to be in Macedonia after the deportations which took place a year or two ago. Perhaps there are others still in hiding, but they have not yet disclosed themselves. This group in Macedonia is another which requires assistance, but it cannot be reached from Bulgaria. Perhaps, in due course, some channel will be found through which these people can be aided.

5. From here in Istanbul, it would seem that the following inferences can be drawn regarding the Balkans. With the exception of Italy, whose political position is somewhat unique, Rumania and Bulgaria are the first two Axis countries which have been fully liberated. The Jews in these two countries have felt in full measure all the pressures and disabilities, the deportations and sufferings to which the Jewish

- 5 -

people in Axis countries could have been subjected. In a limited sense, one might regard them as an example of what one might expect to find among the general population in other areas of Central and Eastern Europe which have been under Nazi control.

At the present time, the efforts of the Jewish people, or the Rumanian and Bulgarian Governments in their behalf, to reestablish themselves, must be regarded as an attempt to lift themselves by their own bootstraps. It cannot be done, and outside aid, in kind and in money, must be made available to aid them in their efforts.

Under the circumstances, it would seem that an early study of conditions in Rumania and Bulgaria, of problems which exist and which will arise, would be informative and profitable to some of the governmental agencies, such as the Intergovernmental Committee for Refugees, the UNRRA, and others which, in due course, might be called upon to aid refugees in liberated areas which formerly were Axis. If any of them expects to give assistance, generous and immediate aid, preferably in kind, should be sent if the assistance is to do any good.



THE FOREIGN SERVICE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

AMERICAN EMBASSY

Ankara, January 16, 1945.

*Fig out
this letter to her*

Dear Ira:

Many thanks for your letter of December 28. I am sure that Cecilia Agar did not mean the paragraph in her article to be interpreted as it undoubtedly has been interpreted by the general reading public to mean that I objected to your seeing Cretzianu. Of course, you and I know that by reason of our close personal relationship, had I objected, you would not have called to see him -- but the general public who read her article does not know this. It is unfortunate, therefore, that instead of merely saying that we "discussed it far into the night", she did not add a phrase explaining how we solved the problem. I say I am sure she did not mean it, for you will recall that when I was home last August, she did a very nice complimentary article about me -- indicating that her treatment of this particular paragraph was, as you say, not intended to be unfriendly. When you see her, please give her my kindest regards and tell her that I quite understand that the unfortunate impression that was doubtless created was not intentional.

While my plans are not as yet definite, I hope to be able to clean up here in about a month, and as soon as the slate here is clean, will start for Washington, via New York. Of course, I shall look forward to seeing you as soon as I reach New York.

With every good wish and kindest regards,

Sincerely yours,

Mr. Ira Hirschmann,
Vice President,
Bloomingdale Bros.,
New York, N.Y.

December 28, 1944

Dear Laurence:

The enclosed story following an interview with Cecilia Agar disturbed me very much as she put a twist on a reference I made to a discussion with you prior to talking with the Rumanian Minister which could be misinterpreted. I tried this out on a number of people who do not see in it the slant which I feared, but I do not like it. Miss Agar will tell you that I emphasized again and again, as I have with all newspapers and people with whom I have spoken since my return, your part in the refugee work. You know that I could have done nothing without you, and so does everyone else.

*I wish
to call
Miss
Agar
JAH*

Here again is an example of the dangers of publicity. Miss Agar says she is entirely innocent in the matter and did not intend it as it might be read.

I have asked the editors to write a story on your move from Turkey to Czechoslovakia with emphasis on the refugee work. I am confident that they will do it and we may make a virtue of this instance. I want you to count on me to continue to do this in every possible way, as nothing shall deter me from doing all within my power to advance your leadership as I have promised.

I am anxiously awaiting word of the time of your shift to know when I may see you or hear from you in order to take certain steps that may be of value at this time. I was distressed to hear that Dulcie has been ill. I do hope that by now she is fully recovered and that the strain of the shift from one capital to another will not be too arduous for her.

The country has sobered down to a blue funk since its falseseetation. You know how Americans swing from one extreme to another. I don't think you would enjoy this atmosphere too much at this time. I miss seeing you and talking with you, and will not be satisfied until we find the way and the circumstances of working together again.

Sincerely yours

Ambassador Laurence A. Steinhardt
American Embassy
Ankara, Turkey

OFFICE OF
I. A. HIRSCHMANN 2.1.45

lah

Dave White tells me that they are drafting a cable today to Katzki to return. Mrs. Henderson will remain in Turkey for four weeks after Katzki leaves to clear up any details that come up. (This is at Katzki's request.) Miss Bixler will remain in Turkey to work for another government agency.

ret

OFFICE OF
I. A. HIRSCHMANN

12/1/44

alt

Reminder:

To write

Mrs. Henderson

Please
phone to
Mr. Dave White
and ask him to
ask Henderson
has she got?
alt
rec

Istanbul, December 5, 1944

Dear Mr. Hirschmann:

I have received a letter from Mrs. Reichl in which she thanks you for the gift which you arranged with me, before your departure, to have made to her, and in which she goes on to say:

"But all this was covered by your letter with the included lines from Eric. I believe I need not tell you how happy it makes us to know that the children are in order -- it is seven months now since we had the last letter! And we do hope that there will be no difficulty for our further steps to emigrate to the States when the war is over. Will you be so kind and give Eric some advice what to do? And we most heartily congratulate you to the historical event that your President was elected for the fourth time -- Grand!

"And how did you find your family? Did Mrs. Hirschmann like all your 'trouvailles' from the Bazar?

"Here things have not changed much. Eberts are in a little better mood now and settled again in the Sumer Sokak.

"Imagine -- some days ago, we opened the German Radio and just heard: 'that the American Jew Hirschmann just arrived in Sofia to give all the Jews the chief positions and jobs.' Just as true as all the other news they say! Some people here say that there is a possibility you come soon again -- Oh, that would be fine. We really would enjoy it to have you here again. But I am afraid you won't come.

"I hope you have these lines soon, just right to get our heartily Christmas greetings for you and Mrs. Hirschmann. I don't dare to ask you a great favour -- would -- and could you send me some photos of my two grandchildren? and give all our love to Eric and Eve and tell them that we are all right and always waiting for their news.

"Best regards from all your friends here -- it is only yesterday that Back said 'Oh, if Hirschmann would be here, then we could have fine music!'

"And again a thousand thanks for all -- and much love. Please do write again and soon to Ella and Fritz."

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This was written on November 30.

By this time, you have probably received a communication from Mr. Jaquinet by way of the pouch.

I believe Mr. Katzki has just written to you, so he has undoubtedly told you all the news, and that we are all well.

I trust that you are not working too hard, and that this will be for you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Sincerely yours,

Virginia Henderson
Virginia Henderson



*File -
inc. Fax*

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Istanbul, November 27, 1944

Dear Dr. Korur:

In my letter to you of October 31 I advised you that I was writing to Mr. Ira A. Hirschmann, who is now in the United States, for information concerning your bill in the amount of T.L. 30 for professional services rendered to him last July.

I am now in receipt of a reply from Mr. Hirschmann, transmitting the amount of your fee, and asking me to express to you his sincere regret that the payment thereof was overlooked. I am, accordingly, enclosing herein the sum of T.L. 30, for which I should appreciate your giving me a receipt in order that I can forward it to Mr. Hirschmann.

Very truly yours,

Virginia D. Henderson
Virginia D. Henderson
Secretary to Mr. Hirschmann

Dr. Ali Korur
Adliye Sarayı Karşısında Hayati Bey Apt.
Ankara

Encl.

*I have received 30. T.L. from
Mr. Hirschmann.*

1.12.44



For Mr. Hirschmann

*I don't see why you will need
to send this in
view of the instructions
received from the State Dept
today on the same
point. The Dept has
apparently already acted
on this point.*

SECRETATE

WASHINGTON

No. March 9.

For Peble War Refugee Board from Hirschmann

The advance of the Russian army almost on the borders of Rumania endangers the lives of all 250,000 refugees in the concentration camps of Transnistria. Fear is expressed by refugees coming out of Rumania that these people will become victims of a last minute sadistic purge by the retreating Rumanians.

It is suggested that you bring every possible pressure to bear through neutral diplomatic sources as well as the International Red Cross on the Rumanian Government - which is now seeking ways and means to establish friendly relations with Britain and the United States particularly the latter - that it undertake to do all in its power to save those refugees in Transnistria. This can be accomplished only as Marshal Antonescu issues an order to the army commander and officers in Transnistria that they will be severely punished if they commit further atrocities against the refugees in that territory.

STEINHARDT

IAS/mgl

Original returned by...

May 2, 1945

General William O'Dwyer
War Refugee Board
Treasury Building
Washington, 25, D. C.

Dear General O'Dwyer:

I am enclosing a radiogram received by me today from Joel Brand. Miss Hodel knows the background of Mr. Brand's activities connected with the Board's operations when I was Special Representative in Turkey.

Brand was exceptionally helpful to the Board and exposed himself and his family to reprisals by his courage and resourcefulness. If anything can be done to aid him or his family I am confident that you will want to do so. Brand was extremely helpful to our government with the information he disclosed.

I shall be glad to talk with you or Miss Hodel about any aspect of the matter if you wish. In the meanwhile, if you would feel free to let me know of any efforts or success that you may have in aiding him I should be grateful.

Cordially yours

lahiret

I. A. Hirschmann

COPY

MACKAY RADIO RADIOGRAM

TELAVIV

MAY 2 PM 12 06

IRA HIRSCHMANN

Delr Bloomingdale's 62th St
Lexington Ave NYC - State Dept War
Refugee Board Washington DC

WHEN 1700 HUNGARIAN JEWS LEFT BERGENBELSEN
FOR SWITZERLAND FEW MONTHS AGO ONLY MY MOTHER
SISTER NOT PERMITTED LEAVE BERGENBELSEN ON
SPECIAL ORDERS EICHMANN STOP PLEASE CONTACT
COMMISSION NOW LEAVING FOR BERGENBELSEN AND TRY
ALL OTHER MEANS WITH VIEW ASCERTAINING WHETHER
MOTHER IDA BRAND NEE BRECHER AGED 73
SISTERS ELLA STEINER NEE BRAND AGED 60
MEAT SALGO NEE BRAND AGED 46 HANNA BRAND AGED
38 NIECE MARGIT SALGO AGED 19 ALL FROM BUDAPEST
STILL ALIVE STOP PLEASE GIVE ALL POSSIBLE
ASSISTANCE STOP MY WIFE HANSI BRAND AND TWO
SONS SUCCEEDED ESCAPE LIVING BUDAPEST 14 FR
ANCIAUTCA 33 WORKING INTERCROICROUGE PLEASE TRY
CONTACT AND ASSIST STOP DESIRING CONTINUE WORK
HELPING SURVIVING HUNGARIAN JEWS AND RAISING MONEY
THEIR RESETTLEMENT STOP WANTING VISIT STATES
FOR THIS PURPOSE COULD YOU PLEASE HELP WITH VISA
STOP THANKS FOR YOUR HELP AND GREETINGS

JOEL BRAND

TELAVIV ROTHSCHILDBLVD 89

ADDRESS OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS TO
THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON, D. C.



DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

February 14, 1946

My dear Mr. Hirschmann:

I have received your letter of January 31, 1946 in which you request a letter from the Department indicating the facts of your position "under the aegis of the State Department".

The President's Executive Order of January 22, 1944 establishing a War Refugee Board provided among other things that "the State Department shall appoint special attachés with diplomatic status, on the recommendation of the Board, to be stationed abroad in places where it is likely that assistance can be rendered to war refugees, the duties and responsibilities of such attachés to be defined by the Board in consultation with the State Department".

Subsequently, the War Refugee Board informed the Department that the Board proposed to appoint you as the Acting Special Representative of the Board with the designation by the Department as Special Attaché to the Embassy at Ankara on war refugee matters. Thereupon, the Department on February 12, 1944, in conformity with the President's Order, instructed the American Ambassador to Turkey immediately to advise you that you were so designated as Special Attaché and were to have diplomatic status. On February 16, Ambassador Steinhardt cabled the Department that he had communicated this advice to you.

Sincerely yours,

Under Secretary

Mr. I. A. Hirschmann,
654 Madison Avenue,
New York, New York.



October 9, 1946

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt :

One of the many superlative deeds of human salvation which your late husband performed was connected with the creation of the War Refugee Board. I know the story intimately as I was the Representative of the Board in Ankara during most of 1944. During that time, because of and only because of the undeviating support that the late President gave the Board it was possible to rescue some thousands of people from the Balkans who otherwise would not be alive today.

The most heart-warming experience that I had was in learning the reaction of "little people" in the peasant areas of the Greek islands and in the Anatolian Mountains who somehow had learned that Franklin Roosevelt was working for their welfare and looked to him as their President. I had the privilege of transmitting some of the quotes from these people to the late President through my friend, Isador Lubin.

The story of the rescue of many of these lost people was in the files of the State Department and in my own recollections. It was decided that the story really belonged to all of the American people as it was they, through their great leader, who had reached out some fourteen thousand miles from our shores and rescued the oppressed.

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This story has been put together in a book called, "Lifeline To A Promised Land," which it has been my humble privilege to write. I have taken the liberty (after talking with Elliott) of sending it to you because I owe whatever I was able to do in my small way to the vision, courage and humane concern for others of the immortal Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Cordially yours,

iah:em
encl.

I. A. Hirschmann

P.S. I am taking the liberty of sending you an advance copy of the book in page proofs.

Mrs. Franklin Delano Roosevelt
29 Washington Square West
New York City.