Ira Hirschman Papers
Box 3

Memo on Appointment of Representatives in Certain Countries by Sir Herbert Emerson, 12-29-43

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APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES IN CERTAIN COUNTRIES

1. Attached is a copy of a letter dated December 21st, 1943 from the United States Embassy to the Chairman of the Committee. A similar letter has been addressed to him by the Government of the United Kingdom. The letters contain the suggestion that there be established small offices of the Intergovernmental Committee at Algiers, Naples, Lisbon, Madrid and Ankara, for the purpose of assisting refugees. The following considerations are relevant to the proposal.

(a) Generally the Intergovernmental Committee will not be able efficiently to carry out its functions unless it has accredited representatives in the various countries concerned with refugees. It is contemplated that representatives will be necessary in many European countries as circumstances allow.

(b) It is clear that so far as Allied and Neutral countries are concerned, the principle of representation must be accepted by the government concerned. It is suggested, therefore, that the representative should be a person acceptable to the Government of the country in which he is appointed; that he should maintain close and friendly relations with that Government, and that he should be a person of sufficient standing and influence to have ready access to and inspire the confidence of the Government departments and authorities concerned.

(c) The duties of the representative will vary according to local problems, the scope of the operations, if any, of UNRRA in that country, and the efficiency of the voluntary organizations dealing with refugees.

(d) Similarly, the size of the staff required is likely to vary greatly. It is suggested that in the absence of particular reasons to the contrary, the normal procedure should be to appoint a representative with a small office staff and that if necessity arises, he should be given an assistant or assistants, with such increases in office staff as the actual work may justify.

(e) The representatives should be directly responsible to the Director and, through him, to the Executive Committee.

2. With regard to the countries suggested for the early appointment of representatives, the following facts are relevant:

i ALGIERS

The Executive Committee has the advantage of the advice, as a Member, of the representative of the French Committee of National Liberation. The French Committee has many refugee problems, some relating to French nationals, others to persons of non-French nationality. So far as the first are concerned, the Intergovernmental Committee is at the service of the French Committee for any help which it may be able to give. With regard to other refugees, the French Committee has followed a liberal policy and has recently given its consent to the opening of a camp in Morocco. Although that camp

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will not be under the administration of the Intergovernmental Committee, problems are likely to arise in connection with it, e.g. the ultimate disposition of the occupants, in which the Intergovernmental Committee will be closely interested. For this reason it is clear that, subject to the agreement of the French Committee, a representative working in close co-operation with the French Committee will be able to do work of mutual value.

(ii) NAPLES.

There are already a number of refugee problems in the portion of Italy occupied by the Allies. It is hoped that Mr. Malin, the Vice-Director, will be able shortly to visit Italy and to advise regarding the size and character of the representation and the duties of the representative; but it is already clear that the early appointment of a representative in Italy is most desirable.

(iii) LISBON.

Although the number of refugees in Lisbon is at present comparatively small, probably 500 or 600 only, Portugal is very important as a country of transit. Moreover, Lisbon is the European headquarters of several refugee organizations, and in particular of the Joint Distribution Committee, the American Friends Service Committee, and the Unitarian Service Committee. The Intergovernmental Committee has frequent contact with these bodies and it will be a great advantage to have its representative on the spot.

(iv) MADRID.

During the past year Spain (next only to Switzerland) had been the most important European country of temporary asylum. Although the inflow has decreased, developments in Western Europe may easily lead to a new and large inflow. In any case, current problems fully justify the appointment.

(v) ANKARA.

The immediate necessity of a representative at Ankara is open to doubt. There are very few refugees in the country itself, and, owing to the impossibility at present of getting refugees out of the Balkan countries, it is little used as a country of transit. On the other hand, if escape from the Balkan countries becomes possible, Turkey will be a very important country of transit.

In the Near East, however, with its headquarters at Cairo, there is the Middle East Refugee and Relief Administration, commonly known as MERRA, which is directly responsible for large numbers of refugees who come technically within the mandate of the Intergovernmental Committee and for whom the Intergovernmental Committee would have to provide if MERRA did not exist. It is not suggested that the Intergovernmental Committee should replace MERRA, but it may later have to undertake functions, e.g. the finding of homes for those unable to return to their own countries, for some of the refugees now under the care of MERRA. It, therefore, seems desirable that MERRA should have a representative of the Intergovernmental Committee on its committee, who would obtain practical experience of the field work in which MERRA is

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engaged, would acquaint himself with the various problems with which the Intergovernmental Committee may later have to deal, and would be within easy reach of Turkey and other Middle East countries should it be necessary for him to visit them to deal with a particular problem.

Should a representative be appointed to the committee of MERRA there is no reason why he should not be subject to the orders of the Director of MERRA for work directly concerned with that body. It is, therefore, suggested that as an alternative to the appointment of a representative at Ankara, the above suggestion should be considered, which might also have the merit of paving the way to an appointment at Ankara as and when the occasion shall require it.

3. It is suggested that the Executive Committee should:

(a) Approve in principle the appointment of representatives at Algiers, Naples, Lisbon and Madrid, and
(b) Approve the appointment of a representative at Ankara or, in the alternative, of a representative with Merra.
(c) Lay down the principle that representatives will be directly responsible to the Director and, through him, to the Executive Committee.
(d) Authorize the Director to enter into discussions with the Governments of the United Kingdom and of the United States of America with a view to seeking the assistance of their diplomatic representatives in approaching the Governments concerned, and to obtaining their advice regarding personnel, conditions of pay and service of such representatives, and
(d) Authorize the Director to approach the necessary authorities regarding the appointment of a representative on the committee of MERRA.

4. Independent of these proposals it is very desirable that the Intergovernmental Committee should have a representative in Switzerland. A favorable opportunity of making informal approaches to the Swiss Government is likely shortly to occur since Dr. Kullmann will be visiting Switzerland soon at the invitation of the Swiss Government with a view to a formal approach later, if the reactions are favorable.

H. W. Emerson,

Director