Ira Hirschmann Papers
Box
Letters to Dr. Floyd H. Black, President of Hobart College
8/1/44 - 8/23/44
Istanbul, August 1, 1944

Dear Mr. Black:

Pursuant to our conversations I am confirming several of the points which were concurred in by you and me in our discussions relating to efforts to rescue victims of persecution and oppression in Bulgaria.

The conversations with and reports from Balabanoff for his government were encouraging as first possible steps. His letter written to Simond for our government, which has been transmitted to Washington, is confirmatory of the above. But I believe that you will agree with me that the Bulgarian Government is not going far enough at this crucial hour on these matters. I am thoroughly convinced that the government will take whatever possible steps are available to expedite the release, within technical possibilities, of their citizens who happen to be Jews. From information at hand, confirmed by you and Balabanoff, these steps at this time can result in only a pitifully small emancipation.

I am bothered by two aspects of the situation: a) that few refugees will be able to leave Bulgaria in the next important weeks and months; b) that the United States Government, watching daily for specific acts of large refugee movements out of Bulgaria, will have no choice but to interpret these negative results as a breach of faith by the Bulgarian Government in the face of its verbal and written representations by Balabanoff.

Considering the acute political situation today, the desire expressed by Balabanoff for his government to make such moves which would win the good will of the United States Government and its people, we stand today in a position where the fortuitous first steps in a program which could be productive of good on all sides could be unwittingly misconstrued. I therefore made to you today the proposal which I believe is the only solid and satisfactory move that should be offered by the Bulgarian Government without delay; namely, concrete steps to revoke and abolish forthwith the two notorious anti-Jewish laws on its books. In asserting the above I am not unaware of certain technical and political obstacles which the government in Bulgaria today may find it necessary to overcome. But these are days when I presume to suggest that governments will persist only by bold and forthright steps, especially with relation to the onward sweep of Allied victory, and if they wish to find themselves in some measure of good grace at the Peace Table.

As you know, I have no authority to speak in connection with the latter, but I am charged with a special responsibility and can offer now a specific opening for the good will that will result from broad strokes in the direction of humanitarianism, especially as related to refugees, which will not promise but fulfill a policy which will negate that of a former government in ruthlessly corrupting a helpless minority of its own people, and which will be designed concretely to rehabilitate these victimized members of its own citizenry.
One more point: I think the readers of the Buchanan government would

find difficulties in being associated with so much of the Buchanan government as it is.

Mysend them in just enough to secure their adherence to Buchanan, which is my opinion.

The Buchanan government is the new nation.

As I have said and expressed my own opinion on the subject of Buchanan, I am of the same opinion now as I was when I first expressed it.

I have pronounced Buchanan to be a man of good will and good faith, and I believe the Buchanan government will do good work in the world.

The Buchanan government is the only government that has any chance of success in the world.

I am convinced that it can do more good than any other government, and I am satisfied that it will do it.

The Buchanan government stands today in the position where
United States of America I repeat that we shall never be satisfied with these conversations and representations until these two laws are revoked. In the meanwhile the government can be completely lax in its enforcement of them.

Nor will this be sufficient: As I indicated above a state of economic depravity exists for the Jewish citizens resulting from these laws. What is the good of permitting people freely to leave their homes if they have nowhere to go, nor means of securing funds except by immoral and illegal means; if there are no possible available methods of reconstructing their lot or their dignity as human beings? Measures must be found at once to supply them with food, the necessary means of living as decent citizens, and economic assistance to rehabilitate their businesses, their families and their homes.

We propose to offer through the assistance of existing relief agencies, now represented in Turkey, along with that of our government, such means to rehabilitate this population as possibilities permit. Obviously it is not too much to ask that the Bulgarian Government permit this aid and assist it in every possible reasonable way. They have pauperized the population. We do not ask them to revive it but only to permit others to do so without let or hindrance so that they may contribute towards the wellbeing of their own country.

I hope to hear that the forthright and sincere steps suggested herein have been taken by the Bulgarian Government in order to fortify its position among the humane nations of the world and to win back the respect and good will of our people which they had so scrupulously built in the last half-century and which they have so sorely lost in the last black war years.

With thanks for your kindness and friendship,

Cordially yours,

I. A. Hirschmann
Special Attaché

Dr. Floyd H. Black
President
Robert College
Hissar
P.S. If the Bulgarian Government is seeking methods to demonstrate its sincerity in being helpful in this situation connected with refugee movements, we are informed that a number of refugees, possibly up to 2,000, will be leaving Hungary in the next few days. We have requested of the Romanian Government that they permit these refugees to enter Rumania in transit and we have been informed that the Romanians have agreed in principle to this procedure. Obviously the Bulgarians would not at this time wish to set up a blockade against these refugees in the face of their representations. It will therefore be necessary for them to agree to permit these refugees to come through Bulgaria and to provide for them the necessary transit facilities out of Bulgaria to Turkey without delay. The above will apply similarly to refugees who will be leaving Rumania, (who do not arrive from Hungary), and for whom transit facilities through Bulgaria will be required.

I.A.H.
Istanbul, August 23, 1944

Dear Dr. Black:

In a previous communication to you, I referred to the possibility of supplying money to feed the Jewish population of Bulgaria. It is my understanding that there is enough food there available, but the Jewish population is virtually castrated and unable to buy the necessary food. In addition, this same Jewish population has been deprived of its economic privileges and has been unable to indulge in business and professional activities in order to put itself on a self-sustaining basis.

I am prepared at this time to go a step further in the direction indicated above. While no commitment can be made at this moment in specific terms of dollars, I have every good reason to believe that the necessary funds could be promptly forthcoming to serve these purposes. It will be necessary, of course, to determine just what funds will be needed, where and how they are to be distributed, and for that purpose, a neutral agency would probably be required to make such a study in advance, and to handle the enterprise. Perhaps it could be the International Red Cross, or some other agency agreed upon by the Bulgarian Government and the intermediaries for the Government of the United States. It has occurred to me that such a definitive statement which could reach the Bulgarian Government at this time may be especially useful at this moment.

I take this occasion to repeat that our purpose is (a) to see that the Bulgarian citizens are reinstated to their normal position, socially and economically; (b) that they are given the wherewithal to indulge in their new freedom actively; (c) that they can become self-sustaining, with all of the independence and dignity attached to these qualities as Bulgarian citizens; (d) that they can immediately begin to
contribute to the resuscitation of the economic life of the new nation which, I understand, is now being forged.

The latter may be of interest to the Bulgarian Government, and it would seem to me that, if such work is to be done, the sooner it is begun the better for all concerned. I therefore have taken the occasion of addressing this note to you, so that in principle you will understand our views, and perhaps have them transmitted where they may do the most good at this crucial hour.

Cordially yours,

I. A. Hirschmann

Dr. Floyd H. Black, President
Robert College
Izmir