

Hirschmann Papers Box 3
Hirschmann Letter to Serge. M. Kharlov
2/18/44

Ankara,
February 18, 1944.

Dear Mr. Mikhailov;

I refer to our conversation today at the Soviet Embassy in which you expressed your sympathetic interest in our government's program for the rescue of Nazi victims and your desire to assist our representatives in their efforts to effectuate means of securing the release of these victims, especially from the Balkan satellite countries. You requested a memorandum covering the facts concerning the acute problem now existing in Bulgaria, which is the special problem on which I asked your assistance in obtaining some factual information, the background and data of which I set forth below to the best of our knowledge.

The Turkish Government permits nine families per country per week (approximately 80 people) to pass in transit to and through Turkey from Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria. In addition it allows children in groups of 75 per week to enter and pass through Turkey, provided that they arrive with the proper visas. The following is the record supplied us by the Jewish Agency indicating the number of Jewish refugees who have passed through Turkey from January 1943 through December 1943:

Jan.-Sept. 1943

Mr. Serguei Mikhailov,
First Secretary,
Russian Embassy,
Ankara.

- 2 -

Jan.-Sept. 1943

Youth Immigration
(children up to 16 years
and 3 convoyers)

Hungary	125	
Rumania	<u>74</u>	199
Bulgaria		<u>150</u>
		<u>349</u>

Oct.-Dec. 1943
Individually

Budapest	120	
Bucharest	50	
Sofia	82	
Athens	<u>312</u>	564

Refugees to Cyprus

Rumania	180	
Bulgaria	<u>72</u>	<u>252</u>
		<u>1165</u>

Since January 1st, Bulgaria, through which all refugees from Europe and the Balkan satellite countries must pass in transit to Turkey, is now withholding transit visas for those coming from other parts of Europe to the Balkans and is withholding exit permits from the Jews residing in Bulgaria. In the past fortnight only one Jewish family has succeeded in coming through to Istanbul.

It is difficult for us to ascertain whether the Bulgarians instructed their consuls in Hungary and Rumania to refuse transit visas or whether the present transport facilities through Bulgaria have in any way caused the "closing of the door" explained above.

It would be of great value to us if the present attitude of the Bulgarian Government in its policy of granting or withholding transit visas to refugees coming from Rumania and from Hungary via Rumania could be ascertained through your representative in Bulgaria; the reasons for the recent reversal of action in this field; also the reasons which led to the withholding of exit permits since January 1st from Jews residing in Bulgaria.

In our cordial conversation I trust that I made clear that I was requesting not that you take any

/ action

- 3 -

action in this matter, but that you would be good enough to obtain if possible information through your representatives who are on the scene in Bulgaria and may already be apprised of the facts dealing with this situation; or, as you indicated, through any other means which you may deem advisable in exploring the matter.

I should indeed be grateful for your assistance in obtaining this information for us, and I need not repeat that the emergency relating to innocent victims is such that it would be especially helpful if these data could be secured as quickly as possible.

With renewed thanks.

Sincerely yours,

I. A. Hirschmann,
Attache

IAH/mb/mgl