

ELUST, MORRIS

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*O'Dwyer telephoned  
Greenbaum this  
2/5/45  
JH*

February 1, 1945.

Brig. Gen. William O'Dwyer  
Executive Director, War Refugee Board  
The White House  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Bill:

Congratulations. I suggest that you have a confidential talk  
with John Pehle, with particular reference to one little sector on which  
I have been his errand boy.

If you get up to New York soon, let me know.

Yours,  


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APR 11 1944

Mr. Morris Brant,  
285 Madison Avenue,  
New York, New York.

Dear Morris:

I think that the greatest single contribution you can make to the War Refugee Board's program on your forthcoming trip to England is to convince interested groups, both within and outside the Government, that there has been a real change in this Government's attitude on refugee matters, and that the War Refugee Board really means business. It seems to me that in an entirely unofficial manner you may be able to make clear the fact that the creation of the War Refugee Board was not a political move in an election year, but an expression of our determination to do everything in our power to rescue the Jews and similar groups who are being systematically exterminated by the Nazis.

I have the impression that there is a substantial body of British opinion, perhaps even more outspoken than that in the United States, which favors effective action to rescue refugees and which is thoroughly in discord with the official policies which have been followed in the past. It is particularly important to convince this group of our sincerity in order that they may support our efforts. I think that you can probably best achieve this result by indicating to people in England some of the significant steps which have already been taken by the Board, as well as some of the projects which are under consideration.

Enclosed for your information are copies of informal progress reports prepared in the office.

It may be well to highlight some of the principal problems which face the Board in executing its program:

1. The Problem of Finding Temporary Havens of Refuge for Refugees.

We feel that this is the basic problem before the Board, and that the apparent unwillingness of the Allies to offer temporary havens to substantial numbers of refugees, particularly the Jews, is perhaps the principal

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reason why previous rescue efforts have not been effective. It seems indispensable to the success of any effort to get the Germans and their satellites to stop killing Jews and to permit their release, that the United Nations not merely threaten punishment for crimes but also offer to receive all of the intended victims into their territories. An offer of temporary asylum also appears necessary if we are to obtain the cooperation of neutral countries in an effort actually to evacuate refugees. The neutrals apparently will not cooperate in this effort unless they are assured that all refugees who enter their territories will promptly be taken elsewhere. In the case of Switzerland, there is the problem of feeding large numbers with no prospect of their removal until the war is over. Spain, Portugal and Turkey, for a variety of internal and other reasons, do not want large numbers of refugees on their soil, except for short periods of transit. At present the only important available havens of refuge are a small camp in North Africa and the approximately 26,000 Palestine entry certificates which are still available under the terms of the White Paper. These limited facilities do not furnish a basis either for effectively appealing to the Germans to release refugees or for successfully requesting the neutrals to permit entry of a greater number of refugees. Accordingly, the Board's principal effort at the moment is being devoted to finding other possible temporary havens of refuge. The Board is presently considering the possibility of admitting refugees to the United States for the duration of the war. The Board is also asking the British Government to share responsibility for the establishment of refugee centers in the old Italian colonies in Cyrenaica. While the Board has no intention of taking a position in support of establishing a Jewish National State in Palestine, I personally believe that an offer by the British Government to admit unlimited numbers of refugees to Palestine on a temporary basis would contribute materially to the success of the rescue program. If this were done, the refugees could remain in camps in Palestine until the termination of the war when they would be returned to their homelands.

2. Difficulty in Obtaining Cooperation by Neutral Countries.

As indicated above, it seems necessary to assure the neutral countries adjacent to occupied areas that if they encourage the entry of more refugees such refugees will be taken elsewhere. However, it is possible that a certain amount of pressure on neutral governments such as Spain, Turkey, and even Switzerland would be helpful in obtaining greater cooperation.

3. Remittances of Funds to and Communications with Enemy Territory.

The Board, since its establishment, has consistently taken the position that, at this stage of the war, the saving of human lives is more important than the possibility that relatively small amounts of free foreign

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exchange may fall into enemy hands. Accordingly, the Board has, in a number of cases, authorized financing and communication transactions by private organizations in an effort to evacuate people from enemy territory. The Board intends to continue this policy. The British Government, however, continues to express objection to the policy.

You may be questioned with respect to the relationship of the War Refugee Board and the Intergovernmental Committee. It seems to us at this moment that the IGC is more likely to be concerned with long-range post-war problems, while we are engaged in the short-term emergency rescue and relief program. We have been convinced all along that there will be no real conflict of activity. In general, we have expressed our intention to cooperate with the IGC and to have them execute projects whenever that seems to be the most expeditious way of getting things done. At the same time, we do not intend to turn over to the IGC projects which can be carried out more promptly by the Board itself or through other agencies. As you probably know, Sir Herbert Emerson, Director of the Intergovernmental Committee, and Mr. Patrick Malin have been invited to Washington to discuss these matters with us. I understand that Emerson has already arrived in New York.

Needless to remark, British cooperation seems indispensable to the real success of the Board's program. We, of course, intend actively to continue our effort to carry out the President's policy, but it would be much easier if the British would support us in all our efforts.

With kindest regards and best wishes for a successful trip, I am

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) J. W. Pehle

J. W. Pehle,  
Executive Director.

Enclosures.

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JBF:bbk - 4/7/44