

EXHIBITS: WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS

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SEE: 1. WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS

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WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS
Rescue Department

SURVEY
ON THE RESCUE ACTIVITIES
of the
WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS
1940 -- 1944

Submitted to the War Emergency Conference
Atlantic City
November 28-30, 1944

by
A. Leon Kubowitzki

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N O T E:

The rescue work of the World Jewish Congress is not a closed chapter. Despite the reduced number of surviving Jews in German-held Europe and the apparent exhaustion of openings for rescue, every day brings new problems, new suggestions, and new attempts in this field. Every day the rescue department makes renewed representations, urges continued negotiation, tries new approaches.

The pressure of daily work makes it impossible to submit to the War Emergency Conference a report on rescue activities which would do full justice to the innumerable efforts that were made, or to the achievements which relieve the many failures.

We hope the Conference will be able nevertheless to form an idea of our manifold rescue attempts by studying the documents which are herewith submitted;

1. Program of general measures of Relief and Rescue of Jews, threatened with extermination by the enemy, which was submitted to the War Refugee Board on March 3rd, and which is at the same time an account of a number of past activities;
2. Part I of a Report on Rescue Problems and Activities from July 22nd to September 1st, 1944, which is an attempt to show the scope of the rescue field we have tried to cover; and
3. A Survey on the rescue activities of the World Jewish Congress, 1940 - 1944, which, though fragmentary and incomplete, is an attempt to convey a general idea of our efforts.

The undersigned realizes that it has been impossible to do justice to many activities and many collaborators. His apologies are herewith offered. He hopes that some day he will have a chance to prepare a more complete report of the rescue history, which would be an equitable and objective record and balance sheet.

A. Leon Kubowitzki

November 26, 1944

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SURVEY ON THE RESCUE ACTIVITIES
of the
World Jewish Congress

by
A. Leon Kubowitzki

Rescue, a new
task

1. Formally, the Rescue Department was established in April, 1944. However, the rescue activities of the World Jewish Congress started with the very beginning of the war, and the Executive Committee, the Political Department, the Relief Department, as well as the Department of European Jewish Affairs, devoted their main efforts to rescue long before the actual creation of the Rescue Department.

Of course, the full implications of the plight of the Jews in Nazi captivity did not become evident until some time had elapsed. Even World Jewish Congress leaders, who were among the first to realize the mortal threat to the Jewish people which the advent to power of the National Socialist Party in Germany represented, had to be convinced that the Third Reich had cold-bloodedly resolved to wipe out the Jewish population of Europe -- men, women, children, every last one of them. However, when in September, 1941, the German Government began the systematic deportation of the remnants of German Jewry to forced labor camps and penal reservations in occupied Poland and Soviet territory; when a rigid ban on exit permits was enforced inside the greater Reich and German-occupied countries (Until November 3, 1941, the Germans had allowed sealed trains to bring the Lisbon Jews who had acquired overseas visas); when finally, on the ninth anniversary of his accession to power (January 30, 1942), Hitler declared: "We know full well that the war can end only by the extermination of the Germanic peoples or by the disappearance of

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Jewry from Europe. Aryan peoples will not be removed from Europe, and this war will see the destruction of Jewry", no doubt was permitted any longer. It became clear that the Germans had resolved to execute their program of biological destruction of the Jewish people of Europe as a whole. Since that time the World Jewish Congress has known no rest in its efforts to engage the various governments and the Jewish people in a bold rescue program which would not be impeded by the cautions and conventional formalities which might have been proper under less pressing circumstances.

The functioning of the World Jewish Congress in the past had depended to a great extent upon the existence of international standards of law and order which the nations had been determined to uphold. This new rescue work, however, was to be carried out in the midst of the wreckage of international order and under wartime difficulties. New ways and means had to be sought to alleviate the unparalleled sufferings of the Jews in Europe.

Preliminary: Building Outposts. - Learning the Facts.

Disruption of
Congress
Activities

2. Relations with the Jewish communities had become more and more difficult as the Germans increased with tragic speed their occupation of vast European areas. Many of the Congress branches disappeared. Paris, which had been the center of the Congress movement and administration, was in Nazi hands. Outstanding Congress leaders had to be brought to safety in the United States, and the headquarters were established in New York. Outposts had to be rebuilt and contact with them developed and

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maintained in spite of the disruption of communications, Gestapo vigilance, and rigid enforcement of censorship regulations. The creation of underground channels was not an easy task for a private organization which did not enjoy diplomatic privileges nor benefit from any governmental facilities, while it was confronted with an inexorable enemy powerfully armed with all the resources of modern ingenuity. In addition, the restrictions on money transfers and the rigors of the blockade on the part of the friendly nations added to the almost insuperable barriers raised between rescuers and those to be rescued.

Building out-
posts

3. A first prerequisite for any rescue undertaking was a knowledge of the facts. This task of fact-finding was entrusted to our Geneva office, with Dr. Gernhart M. Riegner as secretary, whose achievements have been of truly historical importance. Through this listening-post we were able to maintain invaluable contacts which were possible only in Switzerland, island of neutrality in the middle of Axis-dominated Europe. The information Geneva conveyed to us was indispensable for an accurate and reliable understanding of the current situation. The next step was to create underground contacts with neutral and occupied countries and with the Jewish and national resistance movements. Dr. Isaac Weissman of Lisbon became responsible for this undertaking fraught with danger. A third outpost was established in Stockholm with Mr. Hilel Storch as Congress trustee, whose invaluable activities later led to the creation of the Swedish Section presided over by Chief Rabbi Marcus Ehrenpreis.

In New York, under the direction of Dr. Jacob Robinson, a research body - the Institute of Jewish Affairs - was created in

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order to receive and digest the authenticated information from the various Congress posts, together with other documentation collected through its contacts with governmental and research agencies.

Learning the facts

4. Thus it has been possible for the World Jewish Congress to receive, sift, and bring home to the Jewish people outside of Europe as well as to the governments and public opinion of the free countries the authentic facts of the German program to exterminate the Jews. The Congress built up such a reputation in Europe that persons possessing information relating to the Jews turned naturally to it as the proper agency to receive such news. Through its listening posts - Geneva, Lisbon, Stockholm; through its European headquarters established in London (Marchioness of Reading, S.S.Silverman, M.P., A.L.Easterman, Dr N.Barou) and the latter's relations with the various governments-in-exile concentrated in London; through its regular contact with the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem and Istanbul; through witnesses arriving in Palestine and other havens as well as through underground sources, reports of the true situation flowed in a constant stream into Congress headquarters. Carefully weighed and verified, this information was conveyed to governmental agencies and, whenever possible, to the public, and served as a basis for carefully planned programs of rescue and relief.

Reliability of our information services

5. At two critical moments at least, during this latest period of Jewish martyrdom, our listening posts proved to be better informed and more reliable in their judgment than celebrated governmental intelligence services.

By the end of August, 1942, our Geneva office reported that

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in the Fuehrer's headquarters a plan had been discussed and was under consideration, according to which all Jews in countries occupied or controlled by Germany (some three and a half to four million) should, after deportation to and concentration in the East, be exterminated at one blow in order to solve the Jewish question in Europe once and for all.

On April 4, 1944, Geneva wired that Germany planned to control the economic life of Hungary by establishing in Budapest a special German administration to send workers and foodstuffs to Germany; that special provision had been made for the destruction of the 800,000 Hungarian Jews within six months; that the yellow badge and the registration were preliminary steps which would be followed by arrests and deportations.

In both instances, governments were skeptical. Invaluable weeks passed before they satisfied themselves that our informants had told us the tragic truth.

First Period: Fight against starvation.

Starvation as
weapon of annihilation

6. To exterminate the Jews, the Germans had devised a number of methods: planned starvation, inhuman forced labor, and outright slaughter. Much time went by before it was realized that Germany had made starvation a frightful weapon of annihilation. It even took a long time before it was realized that Germany was engaged in a totalitarian food war and that her scientists had carefully worked out a system of feeding and starving which would result in a radical and permanent shift in the demographic balance of power; that some peoples were to be given enough to survive as helots and serfs of the master race; and that others who

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were marked for extermination would receive "rations which are but death by another name - slow death, doled out in chunks of fodder-like bread, a pinch of sugar, a few miserable potatoes." Jews in ghettos received no meats, no fats, no fruits, no vitamin bearing nutriments. Deprived of all protective foods, they must inevitably starve. Shut up in ghettos where disease was taking a terrific toll, the most fortunate among them were those who were kept as forced laborers by the Germans and given short rations of bread and potatoes hardly sufficient to keep them alive.

The result of the starvation rations was a decimation unparalleled in any other group. In the Warsaw ghetto alone, during the year 1941, 47,428 Jews perished, about one out of ten. Spotted typhus and tuberculosis were rampant. Most terrible was the situation of the children. In 1941, the death rate among Jewish children in the Warsaw ghetto was estimated to be thirty times as high as among the Polish children.

A Swedish journalist who visited Warsaw in 1941 wrote:

"Hunger in the ghetto is frightful. The inhabitants seem to be living corpses. Their faces and eyes are sunken Jewish life in ghettos is tragic, gloomy and hopeless. The Jews wait and long for a new Moses."

That starvation was an effective method of mass destruction was later confirmed by the statement of the Polish Soviet Extraordinary Committee for the investigation of crimes committed by the Germans in the extermination camp of Majdanek, from which we quote: (Information Bulletin of the Embassy of the U.S.S.R. October 17, 1944):

"A former inmate of the campinformed the Commission that people were always hungry to starvation. There was a state

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of general exhaustion among the prisoners, to which many succumbed. The prisoners ate carrion, cats and dogs. Most of them were either walking skeletons covered with skin or unnaturally obese as a result of edema and swelling caused by hunger.

"The starvation regime in the camp was an essential factor in the general system for the extermination of the inmates."

Feeding vs.
Blockade

7. However in 1940, 1941 and 1942 Jews and non-Jews who knew the facts and believed them were few. And those who knew controlled their sympathy for the innocent sufferers lest their feelings help Germany. It should be remembered that public opinion in Great Britain, in the United States, and among many of the Governments in Exile, believed that the blockade was the deadliest weapon in the British arsenal; that every scrap of food sent into Europe directly or indirectly would merely serve to relieve German shortages, and would thereby postpone the day of Hitler's downfall. It was also the conviction of some that Germany would not allow starvation to disorganize the social and economic structures upon which an important portion of the war effort depended. Catholic laymen, including six professors of the University of Notre Dame, issued a statement according to which "any attempt to force the British blockade and feed the conquered populations of Europe, is contrary to the best interest of Christianity and America." So did the Unitarian Service Committee. On March 9, 1941, the British Embassy in Washington confirmed the conviction of its Government, first stated by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons on August 20, 1940, "that no form of relief can be devised which would not directly or indirectly assist the enemy's war effort." On September 25, 1941, Secretary Cordell Hull opposed the plans to feed the conquered nations in a letter to the Foreign Relations Committee, asserting

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"that the responsibility and manifest duty to supply relief rests with the occupying authorities."

In Jewish circles opinions were so divided that in July, 1941, the offices of the Agudath Israel of America were picketed by the Joint Boycott Council because of the former's refusal to stop sending food packages to German occupied Poland. The Federation of Polish Jews yielded to the pressure and discontinued sending such parcels.

The Congress acts

8. While these controversies were raging here, our Geneva office, aware of the real situation, did not allow itself to be deterred from what it considered its primary duty. In a cable received here on August 23, 1941, Dr. Abraham Silberschein confirmed that, to his mind, food parcels for Polish Jews were of vital importance and almost the only help possible. Consequently he was sending some 1500 parcels weekly which were being properly delivered.

The services of our Lisbon office were enlisted for the undertaking and the Portuguese Red Cross proved very understanding and helpful.

In July, 1942, the World Jewish Congress established a special food subcommittee, which made a thorough study of the problem, and decided in favor of an all-out action for the feeding of European Jews.

In September 1942, we initiated, in consultation with Czechoslovak Jewish leaders in New York and London, negotiations with the Czechoslovak government in exile in order to obtain its active support for the feeding of Jews in Czechoslovak lands, and in particular in Terezin (Theresienstadt). We succeeded in

convincing the Czechoslovak government, which had earlier supported a program of total food blockade, of the justness of our cause. The conversations resulted in the government's decision, taken in February 1943, to allocate an amount of 6000 pounds for food to be sent to deported and interned Czechoslovak citizens, with the understanding that Jewish organizations in the United States would provide the funds required for feeding the non-Czechoslovak citizens, who, in Terezin, for instance, constitute the overwhelming majority. In March, our Czechoslovak JRC took up this matter with the JDC and the latter applied to the Treasury for a license which it was granted about the middle of May, permitting it to ship food parcels to Terezin. Lists of the camp inmates, totalling some 12,000 names, were successively provided by our Czechoslovak JRC with the assistance of Mr. Ernest Frischer, member of the Czechoslovak State Council in London.

Early in 1943, the Institute of Jewish Affairs published "Starvation over Europe", a documentary record by Warhaftig and Shub showing in terrifying detail the officially enforced privation of the Jews in the ghettos.

Program against
starvation

9. Since July 1942, we have had innumerable conferences with the blockade authorities, the Board of Economic Warfare, the Treasury Department, and the International and American Red Cross, with a view to convincing them of the need for some system of feeding the victims of Nazi oppression who were unable to leave the jurisdiction and the control of the Axis.

Our action went in three directions:

- a. To get the American and British authorities to agree to a program for feeding the Jews in ghettos, internment and labor

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camps, either as part of a general scheme to feed certain oppressed peoples of Europe, or else as a special program to feed those Jews against whom starvation is employed as an instrument of extermination.

Red Cross food parcels for concentration camps

b. To get Red Cross food parcels for Jews in concentration camps. The British and American Red Cross standard parcels were, in terms of the directions given by the Blockade authorities, reserved exclusively for recognized prisoners of war and civilian internees. It appeared however, that while the Germans refused to recognize the segregated Jews as civilian internees, they would sometimes permit food parcels to be delivered to them in certain camps. We requested that full advantage be taken of this de facto situation tolerated by the Germans, and that Red Cross standard parcels be allocated for the Jews confined in ghettos, concentration, and labor camps. These negotiations were carried on for months and years and lasted until August 1944, when the agreement of the Anglo-American Blockade Authorities were finally secured and the decision made to ship, for a trial period of three months, one hundred thousand 3 kg food parcels a month to inmates of concentration camps. A first shipment of some 15,000 parcels left for Goetsborg about August 20th and was dispatched from there to the camps from September 20th through November 11th.

In September 1944, the Congress Committee in Stockholm obtained from the Swedish Government a license for the sending of forty thousand $2\frac{1}{2}$ kg food parcels, to Jews in internment camps for which navicerts were secured from the blockade authorities.

This time no protracted negotiations were necessary. Both the American and British authorities showed deep understanding and extreme good will. Two years earlier this humane attitude might have saved thousands of human lives.

Funds for Red
Cross activi-
ties

c. To get funds for Red Cross activities. It was realized that the only organization capable of reaching the surviving Jews and of bringing them relief, was the International Red Cross. On September 16, 1943, Dr. Goldmann called the attention of Mr. Breckenridge Long, Assistant Secretary of State, to the inability of the Red Cross to send food, tonics, medicine, and clothing to the surviving Jews, because of the lack of financial means, and suggested that the Governments of the United States and Great Britain grant the ICRC an adequate sum of money to enable it to conduct its relief work whenever and wherever an opportunity would present itself. On November 26, 1943, Mr. Breckenridge Long reported as follows on this matter in a statement before the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives:

"I will give you another incident. One of the Jewish agencies came to us the other day and said they would like to get a clearance from the Treasury to send some money over to Switzerland so that, under the instrumentality of the Intergovernmental Committee, they could have money there so that when the opportunity arose, they could use it through the International Red Cross to buy food to take care of certain remnants of the Jewish populations in parts of Czechoslovakia and Poland; that there were still these remnants and they were going to starve unless they could leave, and would we be willing to endorse it? I said, 'Of course!'. They said it would cost about \$10,000,000. I said, 'All right; if you can get the project set up and go before the Intergovernmental Committee with the assurance that the International Red Cross can handle it, so that it does not fall into the hands of the German Government and the supplies sent in there will not be taken by the German Government we will be glad to approve it and to forward it as far as we can, and we will recommend it to the Treasury.'

"They wanted to put up \$2,000,000 and send a first amount of \$250,000. I asked them to make an application to the Treasury, which they have already done. We are supporting the application to the Treasury so as to have money there in cases of necessity which the Intergovernmental Committee can approve. We have agreed to finance half of the cost. It would be \$4,000,000 for each government if we are required to spend as much as \$10,000,000 -- \$2,000,000 from the United States, \$4,000,000 underwritten by the American Government, and \$4,000,000 by the British Government to finance this project."

However, in August 1944, the matter still seemed to have made no notable progress. In the cable received by the United States Delegation of the ICRC on August 4, 1944, the complaint was made that for months past the ICRC had in vain requested from the British and American governments contributions and funds for relief activities.

On August 16th we learned from the War Refugee Board that the ICRC had been assured that no lack of funds would hamper its work.

Second period: Breaking the Conspiracy of Silence.

Wall of silence

10. For years prior to the war and even long after its outbreak, Hitler's repeated declarations of his determination to destroy the Jews were generally regarded as rhetoric and propaganda, which would express itself in increased discrimination, humiliation, and economic persecution, but would never grow into outright wholesale physical destruction. When hostilities broke out and Jews were singled out for unparalleled savageries, a wall of silence enveloped the non-Jewish world in regard to Hitler's war against the Jews. The general public overburdened with the issues and incidences of a world conflict fraught with the gravest consequences, was not receptive to reports which it was ready to dismiss as atrocity stories; besides, the facts

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which would have convinced it were hidden from it, notwithstanding persistent and repeated endeavors to keep it informed.

Silence of
the St. James
Conference

11. A first attempt to break this conspiracy of silence was made by our British Section during the St. James Conference of January 1942, when eight governments in exile and the Free French National Committee met in London to confer upon Germany's crimes against Europe and her punishment. On January 13, 1942, the Conference made a declaration branding the "regime of terror" which Germany had instituted in occupied countries "characterized in particular by imprisonments, mass expulsions, execution of hostages, and massacres", and declared its determination to see to it that "those guilty and responsible, whatever their nationality, are sought for, handed over to justice, and judged." The crimes against the Jews were not considered specifically, nor were they referred to in the declaration. The British Section, in the name of the WJC, made formal representations on this subject to the Conference. On February 18th, it submitted to the Conference a memorandum stating that, while "the World Jewish Congress feels sure that the nine Governments participating in the Conference of St. James have had in mind the recognition of the many and special crimes against the Jews committed by the Nazis and their accomplices", it considers it desirable "that the declaration should include a specific statement with reference to these crimes and an explicit denunciation of those guilty of perpetrating them."

On May 9, 1942, General Sikorski, President, and Mr. Potulicki, Secretary General of the Conference, replied that as "the character, the race or religion of the victim ought not in any case to constitute an element susceptible of modifying the

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criminal nature of an act or the degree of its illegality, there was no reason explicitly to recall the sufferings endured by the Jews, all the more so as such a reference might be equivalent to an implicit recognition of the racial theories which we all reject."

Our British Section breaks the Conspiracy of Silence. - Roosevelt and Churchill speak up.

12. It was the World Jewish Congress' duty not to accept this evasion of the issue, and the decision was taken to make a determined effort to break the conspiracy of silence. On June 29, 1942, the British Section convened a conference of representatives of the press of the free world. The facts of the devastation of European Jewry were placed before them. The response was immediate. For the first time since the beginning of hostilities, the press told the terrible story of the Jewish tragedy. The British Broadcasting Corporation recounted the information; indignant voices were heard in the British Parliament; Twenty-three members of the House of Commons introduced a resolution, expressing "indignation and horror", and declaring that "retribution will be unfailingly exacted." Prelates of all Churches joined in denouncing German bestialities.

In the United States, the American Jewish Congress brought about the collaboration of all organized Jewish forces, for the first time since the outbreak of the war, in a mass demonstration which took place in Madison Square Garden on July 21st. The leaders of the United States and Great Britain utilized this demonstration as the first occasion since September, 1939, to address words of comfort and promise to the Jewish people. Prime Minister Winston Churchill, in his message to the meeting, recognized that "the Jews were Hitler's first victims, and ever since they have been in the forefront of resistance to Nazi aggression," and that "all over the world Jewish communities have

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made their contribution to the United Nation's cause." He recalled the resolve of President Roosevelt and himself to place retribution for the German "butcheries and terrorism ...among major purposes of this war." This assurance was expressed with even greater force in a message to Dr. Wise by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who stated that "the American people...will hold the perpetrators of these crimes to strict accountability in a day of reckoning which will surely come." The demonstration proved that the silence of the great statesmen, as well as the obstacles in the way of unified Jewish action could be broken and overcome. What was said by Roosevelt and Churchill established a firm basis for Jewish claims, not only on the "day of reckoning" with the enemy, but also on the day of building the just world order.

Unfortunately, the Germans, convinced that their march toward world domination could not be halted by any power on earth, not only refused to be deterred by these warnings, they even accelerated the pace of the massacres and brought their technique to ghastly perfection.

Third Period: Hitler's extermination program bared.-
Failure of the Bermuda Conference.

Geneva learns of
Hitler's extermination order.

13. On August 6th, the Administrative Committee of the World Jewish Congress discussed reports received from Europe, which seemed to prove that the Germans were bent upon making Western Europe judenrein, it being too conspicuous a scene for mass exterminations. A special committee was appointed to work out a program of rescue.

Toward the end of August, 1942, our Geneva office succeeded in transmitting to the New York headquarters and to the British

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Section through diplomatic channels a report from trustworthy sources, according to which in the second half of July plans had been discussed in Hitler's headquarters for the complete annihilation of European Jewry, as the final German solution of the Jewish problem in Europe. The report contained information that the Jews were being deported under appalling conditions to Eastern Europe, where slaughter on a mass scale was already being carried out systematically. While the Soviet Ambassador in London, on the basis of facts and knowledge on the part of the Soviet Government, readily accepted the accuracy of the Geneva information and advised immediate and full publicity, the major allied governments were disinclined to accept the possibility of so incredibly savage a plan as the extermination of a whole people, and were in favor of investigating the facts. Subsequently the investigations made by these governments confirmed the accuracy of the Congress reports, and the Polish government in exile published from its own sources the story of the wholesale slaughter of the Jews in Poland.

The Congress acts.

14. On September 6th, Dr. Stephen S. Wise, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Congress, took the initiative of calling a Conference of the leading Jewish organizations in the United States, in order to formulate a common plan of action in face of the threat confronting European Jewry. The meeting organized itself into a Conference on the Jewish Situation in Nazi Europe, and at its request Dr. Wise assumed the chairmanship of the body,

On November 25th, the Congress released to the press, with the approval of the State Department, a collection of authenticated documents which our Geneva office had submitted to the

American minister in Bern on October 22, 1942, and which verified the reports of the continuing mass atrocities and the fact that two million Jews had already perished. In the days that followed, the news was made known to the entire world by means of newspaper reports and radio broadcasts. The Geneva documents stated that the annihilation plan had since become a reality by an order of the Fuehrer, confirmed in the latter's speech in the Berlin Sportpalast on September 30th.

At the request of the Chief Rabbinate of Palestine, the Congress called for the observance of a Day of Mourning throughout the world on December 2, 1942, while a visit to the President of the United States was arranged for December 8th with the cooperation of the State Department. A delegation of representatives of the leading Jewish organizations in America headed by Dr. Wise - the first such delegation to be received since the outbreak of the war - submitted to the President at the White House a report of German atrocities against the Jews, and a memorandum asking him "to employ every available means to bring solemn protest and warning to the peoples of the Axis countries," and urging "that an American Commission be appointed at once to receive and examine all evidence of Nazi barbarities against civilian populations."

The President gave assurance

"that the United Nations will be prepared as the American Government would be, to take every step which would end these crimes against the Jews."

Declaration of
12.17.42.

15. Meanwhile, the British Section in London requested the United Nations, in a series of intensive negotiations, to issue a collective declaration, dealing specifically with the magnitude of the Jewish tragedy. This declaration was issued on December 17,

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1942, simultaneously in London, Washington, and Moscow, with the assent and support of all the Allied Governments and of the British dominion. In the House of Commons, the Declaration was read by Mr. Anthony Eden, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in reply to a Private Notice Question by Mr. S. S. Silverman, M.P., at that time Acting Chairman of our British Section. In this Declaration the Belgian, Czechoslovak, Greek, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norwegian, Polish, Soviet, United Kingdom, United States, and Yugoslav Governments, and also the French National Committee (Fighting French)

"condemn in the strongest possible terms the bestial policy of cold-blooded extermination. They declare that such events can only strengthen the resolve of all freedom-loving peoples to overthrow the barbarous Hitlerite tyranny. They reaffirm their solemn resolution to ensure that those responsible for the crimes shall not escape retribution, and to press on with the necessary practical measures to this end."

Accelerated
murder

16. As far as Germany was concerned the warnings proved of no avail. The German leaders reaffirmed their determination to destroy European Jewry. In his 1943 New Year's message to the German People, Hitler said:

"And if furthermore I gave assurance that the hope of international Jewry to destroy the German and other European nations by means of a new World War will be the gravest error committed by Jewry, for thousands of years, that it will in any case not destroy the German nation but will exterminate itself ..."

In his broadcast to the German people on February 18th, Dr. Goebbels made this reference to the protest of the United Nations:

"If hostile foreign countries raise a sanctimonious protest against our anti-Semitic policy and shed hypocritical crocodile tears over our measures against Jewry, that cannot prevent us from doing what is necessary. Germany in any case has no intention of yielding to this Jewish threat, but intends rather to exercise against Jewry our prompt and, if necessary, our complete and most radical suppression."

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It became clear that accelerated murder was to be the keynote of the 1943 German campaign against the surviving Jewish population of Europe. Mounting evidence reaching the Congress established that the drive was proceeding at a pace of desperate determination. German mobile annihilation squads were sweeping through the ghettos. Extermination cars were incessantly clearing Jews out of scores of towns and villages. On the Russian front retreating German armies were massacring Jewish men, women, and children, before their flight. In Vichy France "the liquidation of the Jewish problem" was entrusted to German care with the tempo of deportation increasing day by day.

U.S. Jewry
mobilized.
The twelve-
point program

17. The World Jewish Congress decided that the time had arrived for a public and forthright demand, addressed to the United Nations, for action to save the Jews of Europe. On March 1, 1943, a great demonstration, one of the largest ever held in the United States, took place in Madison Square Garden, at the Congress' initiative and under the joint auspices of the American Jewish Congress, the American Federation of Labor, the CIO, and the Church Peace Union. 22,000 people crowded the great hall, while 15,000 stood outside throughout the evening, listening to the proceedings through amplifiers. The demonstration was addressed by Dr. Chaim Weizmann, Dr. Wise, Governor Dewey, Senator Wagner, Mayor La Guardia, Mr. Wm. Green and others; The British Section transmitted cable messages from the Archbishop of Canterbury and the late Cardinal Hinsley, whose last public utterance it was before his untimely death a week later. The meeting laid down a Twelve-Point Program for the rescue of European Jewry, prepared by World Jewish Congress experts. The program demanded in its main

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items that negotiations with the Axis Powers be attempted through neutral countries for the removal to safe places of as many Jews as possible; that arrangements be made with the Germans through neutral countries to permit the feeding of Jews in the ghettos; that support be extended to neutral countries by the United Nations for the maintenance of refugees until their return home after victory, or their emigration to other permanent homes; that the immigration regulations of the United States be adjusted to make it easier for refugees to come here; and that, regardless of pre-war political decisions, Great Britain open Palestine to Jewish refugees.

The Bermuda
Refugee
Conference

18. On the following day, Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles, disclosed that a note had already been sent to Great Britain on February 25th, offering the cooperation of the United States in organizing a Conference for the study of methods to save "political refugees" in Europe. He promised that the demands of the Madison Square Garden meeting would be carefully considered, and stressed the abiding interest of the President in the tragic plight of European Jewry.

However, the proposed meeting, which was to be known as the Bermuda Refugee Conference, rapidly drifted away from its promising beginning to a disappointing end. It turned out that the State Department note to Great Britain, announced opportunely the day after the Protest Meeting in New York, was in answer to a previous communication of the English Government delivered to the State Department more than a month earlier, on January 20th, in which the need for further aid for European refugees had been emphasized. Then the Conference became so narrowed in its scope

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that nobody expected it to accomplish very much. Scepticism was increased by the secrecy with which the Conference was surrounded, by the emphasis on its purely exploratory nature, by the refusal to admit the attendance of representative Jewish bodies, and by the terms of reference proposed by Secretary of State Cordell Hull in his note to the British. The Secretary suggested that "the refugee problem should not be considered as being confined to persons of any particular race or creed." The problem was thus shifted from that of rescuing the stricken Jews of Europe, to the totally different and much less urgent question of "refugees" in the narrow, technical sense of the word.

The World Jewish Congress, as well as the Joint Emergency Committee for European Jewish Affairs, created at the initiative of the Congress, submitted to the Bermuda Refugee Conference, a program for the rescue of Jews. The WJC spokesmen did not

"hesitate to say that a solemn and inescapable obligation rests upon the Governments of the United Nations to concert measures immediately to save what may still be saved. Four months have elapsed since the existence of this problem was publicly acknowledged in a Joint Statement made by twelve Governments, yet no attempt has been made on an even partially adequate scale to deal with it. The Jewish people have a right to ask that action on behalf of the Jews who still survive the Nazi policy of extermination, shall be swift, bold, and on a scale commensurate with the gravity and urgency of the situation."

From unofficial reports, it appeared the Conference reached the following conclusions:

- (1) It rejected the proposal to enter further negotiations with the Axis for the release of the condemned Jews in the Axis death houses;
- (2) It did not consider itself empowered to recommend the shipping of food to the ghettos; and
- (3) It was unwilling to recommend setting up temporary reception centers on an adequate scale for European refugees in British or

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American held territories, offering as its excuse that such places were all war areas.

Two other conclusions were undoubtedly determined in advance of the Conference: The Governments of Great Britain and the United States agreed that no proposal would be entertained to alter British policy in Palestine, nor would the United States, for its part, be asked to liberalize its administrative immigration policy.

In the final communique issued by the Conference it was stated that

"from the outset it was realized that any recommendation that the delegates could make to their governments must pass two tests: would any recommendation submitted interfere with or delay the war effort of the United Nations, and was the recommendation capable of accomplishment under war conditions?"

No report on the proceedings of the Bermuda Conference and its decisions other than a brief final communique was ever published.

"The only concrete results of the Conference would seem to be certain recommendations concerning help to refugees in Spain, as well as in the Balkan countries, by enabling some of them to proceed to Palestine. Whether any steps have been taken to implement these recommendations and, if so, what are the results, has so far not been made public." (Tartakower and Grossman: The Jewish Refugee)

The following sentence from Jewish Comment of May 14, 1943, accurately reflects the reaction of the Congress to the Bermuda Refugee Conference:

"The truth is that what stands in the way of aid to the Jews in Europe by the United Nations is not that such a program is dangerous, but simple lack of will to go to any trouble on their behalf."

Fourth Period: Day by Day Rescue Work on all Fronts

Rescue through
all Openings

19. The failure of the Bermuda Refugee Conference, and the terrifying lack of all sense of urgency it revealed on the part of the two leading western powers, the failure of the Conference above all to establish an appropriate intergovernmental agency with full authority and power to implement a daring program of rescue, confirmed the Congress Executive in its conviction that it could not

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be satisfied with demands and projects, that it had done well in engaging itself in rescue; that now a program of day by day activities on all fronts had to be started to make use of all possible rescue openings - ordinary or extraordinary - to save those who could still be saved.

Contacts with
the O.W.I.

20. First, the fight against the conspiracy of silence had to be continued. It had been broken to some extent as far as the press and public opinion of the Allied and neutral nations were concerned. But there was still another aspect of this particular question: Was the population of Germany proper aware of the facts of the mass exterminations? Since the leaders of the Third Reich did not refer to their policy of annihilation in any terms other than somber circumlocutions, it appeared necessary that the German people be told the facts which apparently were concealed from them by their masters.

Congress spokesmen had conferences on this matter with representatives of the Office of War Information. The policy of this agency was guided by the apprehension that broadcasting reports of the German cruelties to the populations of Germany and German-held territories might fill the latter with terror and thereby serve the German policy of strength through fear. In a memorandum to the OWI we explained that, if this apprehension were justified, the German leadership would not refrain so consistently from revealing these cruelties to their populations, nor would the resistance movements in their underground publications make these facts known. In compliance with our request the OWI decided in September, 1943, to devote much more time in future broadcasts to authenticated material concerning the systematic annihilation of the Jews in Europe, and specified that such broadcasts would make it clear that the perpetrators of the crimes would be sternly punished.

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Status of
Civilian
Prisoners
of War

21. Next it was necessary to secure for the Jews confined in ghettos, labor, and concentration camps the status of civilian prisoners of war. Such status would entitle them to the care of the International Red Cross and could spell their physical deliverance. The Geneva Convention on Prisoners of War had been promulgated in Germany, and the Reich had declared that it would be applied by analogy to the civilians who would be interned. The Italian government had also accepted the extension of the 1929 Convention to interned civilians.

We repeatedly approached the Geneva headquarters as well as the Washington Delegation of the International Red Cross Committee, stressing that it was bound "to carry out the task of relieving sufferings arising out of war, sickness or disaster," and that our suffering people had the greatest moral claim to the assistance of the Committee. We wanted the International Red Cross to approach the German government and to ask for a justification of the distinction it had established between civilian internees and "detained civilians." We further wanted the Red Cross to make at least a public statement, announcing that it considers the Jews confined in ghettos, concentration, and labor camps as civilian internees. We made our viewpoint particularly clear and outspoken in a letter addressed on September 10, 1943, to Dr. Marc Peter, Washington Delegate of the ICRC. Negotiations with a view to inducing the ICRC to act on our suggestions were carried on uninterruptedly in Washington, Geneva, and London; yet the ICRC adhered to its doctrine that it was in no position to bring pressure to bear upon the governments, and that the success of its activities depended on discrete and friendly suggestions. However, we understand that in October, 1944, the ICRC finally decided to take some action along the lines of our repeated representations.

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Bulgarian Jews
saved from de-
portation to
Poland

22. Ever since on June 29, 1942, the Bulgarian Sobranje had given the government carte blanche to solve the Jewish problem on a racial basis, we had been on the alert and in constant consultation with the members of our Bulgarian Jewish Representative Committee. In March, 1943, the Sofia government began removing Jews from occupied Greek territory to Poland, which soon resulted in repercussions in Bulgaria proper. We immediately mobilized all contacts and enlisted the influence of every possible factor at our disposal. Representations to the State Department resulted in the intervention of high American officials. We urged the Stockholm Chief Rabbi, Dr. Marcus Ehrenpreis, formerly Chief Rabbi in Sofia, to avail himself of the relations he had maintained with the Bulgarian Metropolitan, and to appeal to the Bulgarian Church to appose the projected deportation. We were able further to take advantage of the friendly attitude of a number of Bulgarian personalities in neutral countries.

On March 27th the government was attacked in the Sobranje, and news followed that Jews who possessed Bulgarian citizenship would not be deported. This was confirmed in a cable from Dr. Ehrenpreis which we received on April 22nd, and which reads in part:

"Deportation Bulgarian Jews according information temporarily postponed. Observing development, doing my best."

It soon appeared that the Bulgarian government had so far committed itself to the Germans, that it would be impossible to prevent the expulsion of the Jews from Sofia, and that all efforts therefore had to be concentrated on preventing the deportation of the Bulgarian Jews to Poland. Mr. H. Shoemaker, former United States Minister to Bulgaria, broadcast a strong appeal to the Bulgarian nation. A protest from the Bulgarian-American Committee of New York was repeatedly beamed to Bulgaria. At the request of the World Jewish Congress and the Bulgarian JRC, the Sephardic Communities of Latin

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America intervened with the Spanish Ambassador and the Papal Nuncio accredited to their governments. On June 21, 1943, we were informed by the State Department that such steps as were possible under prevailing conditions had been taken on behalf of the Bulgarian Jewish community, and on June 30, 1943, Dr. Ehrenpreis informed us that the situation of the Bulgarian Jews had become less alarming. Thus, while it was impossible to save the Bulgarian Jews from expulsion and misery, physically at least they were saved. Instead of being compulsorily transferred to Poland, the Bulgarian Jews were dispersed in various towns and villages in the country itself.

The representations made by our affiliated Sephardic communities to the Spanish diplomats in Latin America, resulted in still another achievement. On July 26, 1943, we received from our representative in Buenos Aires the following cable:

"Spanish Embassy communicated readiness Spain admit all Spanish Jews and permit transit all Jews."

Rescue of
Danish Jews

23. At the end of September and the beginning of October, 1943, the Danish and Swedish peoples reaffirmed the validity and the worth of human ideals in rescuing a large part of Danish Jewry.

The Germans took over direct control in Denmark late in August, 1943. They immediately proceeded to seize the records of the Jewish population in the country, and arrested prominent Jews together with leading non-Jewish Danes. The German purpose with regard to the Jewish population became clear.

The Congress, while watching the situation with growing anxiety, had been for several months in close consultation with the Danish Minister to the United States. On Rosh Hashana night, Mr. Hendrick de Kauffmann, who had received alarming reports on the imminent development of events in Denmark, came to see Dr. Wise

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to confer with him upon a program of immediate action. It appeared that the Swedish government was prepared to receive the Danish Jews - with or without visas - if the German government would permit them to leave, and that the Danish Minister was ready to guarantee the expenses of their maintenance. It appeared further that the support of the United States government would encourage Sweden in its resolve to rebuke its powerful neighbor, in spite of its own precarious political position. On October 1st, Dr. Wise and Dr. Goldmann took up the matter with Assistant Secretary of State, Breckenridge Long. The State Department decided to join in the request addressed to Sweden that it aid in the rescue of the stricken Danish Jews. Sweden protested to Germany against the planned deportations, and offered publicly to receive the Danish Jews in its own territory, if Germany would agree to evacuate them. When the Germans began their round-up of Jews for deportation, hundreds of Danish small craft crossed the sea and brought refugees to Sweden, despite the danger from the German naval and air patrol. Of three German large vessels waiting in Copenhagen harbor to deport the Jews, two were sunk by efficient sabotage. More than six thousand Danish Jews reached Sweden's hospitable shores.

Relaxation of
financial
blockade

24. The Danish exploit however was an exceptional deed. The rescue of Jews nearly everywhere in German-occupied Europe fell now more and more within the sphere of underground activities; of commando and guerilla warfare; of contacts with Gestapo officials who could be bribed and induced to halt deportation, and extend their protection to already deported or interned Jews.

In Slovakia the expulsion of the entire surviving Jewish community was postponed three times with the help of money; Jews could be smuggled out of Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary with the

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help of money; and many things could be arranged in Rumania with the help of money.

However General Ruling No.11 presented a formidable obstacle.

On April 20, 1943, our Geneva Office advised us through the State Department that, provided the necessary funds were available, broad rescue activities would be possible from France and Rumania, and particularly from Transnistria, that Transnistria had appealed most urgently in the last few days for one hundred million lei, and that the greatest part of these funds -about sixty million lei- would have to be spent on equipment and clothing for orphans and children to be transferred to Palestine. Dr. Riegner's request implied that authorization would have to be given to him to communicate with persons in enemy occupied territory and to acquire enemy currency from persons in enemy occupied territory in order to rescue Jews from such territory. We immediately applied to the Treasury Department for an initial license of \$25,000 to be spent for the purposes and under the conditions indicated above. The obtention of this license required eight months of continuous negotiations and representations. While the Treasury was from the outset sympathetic to the proposed action, the State Department was rather reluctant to take such an unusual step. Dr. Wise then called in August upon the highest authorities of this country, and obtained their approval in principle. After the State and Treasury Departments had asked for and received further information from Dr. Riegner through the American Legation in Bern, the State Department also decided to act favorably. At this point however the British blockade authorities raised definite objections, and the decision was delayed once more. The license was finally granted on December 18, 1943, and the Treasury indicated that it would grant sym-

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pathetic consideration to all further requests for the remittance of funds as needed, and to any amendments to such license as would be necessary to facilitate the operations contemplated. The license addressed to the World Jewish Congress, and bearing No. W-2115, begins as follows:

"In order to arrange for the evacuation to places of safety of persons in France and Rumania whose lives are in imminent danger and, pending possible evacuation, to sustain and safeguard the lives of such persons, your representative in Switzerland (including such agents as he may appoint) is hereby licensed notwithstanding the provisions of General Ruling No. 11 to communicate with persons in France and Rumania in any manner he deems necessary or expedient and to take all other appropriate action, including the payment to persons in France of French francs and the payment to persons in Rumania of Rumanian lei for goods and services."

The license was considered by the Treasury Department, and in particular by the men who were to become instrumental in the activities of the War Refugee Board, as a very important achievement which might open the way for broad action along similar lines in the future. It was the first license of that kind granted in wartime to a private organization. Once more the World Jewish Congress had paved the way in the sphere of rescue and relief.

Fifth Period. Under the sign of the War Refugee Board (WRB).

Creation of
the War
Refugee Board

25. The innumerable difficulties the Congress had encountered in securing the license, in securing ways and means to carry out an essential rescue undertaking which had met from the beginning with the sympathetic understanding of the highest authorities in the country, convinced large circles in the administration itself that it was necessary to establish a single United States Government agency to deal with all the problems concerning rescue and relief in Europe. At the same time, the repeated appeals of enlightened public opinion and the numerous representations of the World Jewish Congress and other Jewish bodies in favor of the cre-

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ation of an appropriate intergovernmental agency with full authority and power for implementing a daring program of rescue, finally bore fruit. On January 22, 1944, the President set up a War Refugee Board, consisting of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, and the Secretary of War,

"to take action for the immediate rescue from the Nazis of as many as possible of the persecuted minorities of Europe -- racial, religious, or political -- all civilian victims of enemy savagery."

In its motivation, this document states 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 afford such victims all possible relief and assistance consistent with the successful prosecution of the war."

Mr. John W. Fahle, Assistant to the Secretary of the Treasury, with whom we had been in constant contact during the negotiations for license W-2115, and who had revealed a deep understanding for the tragedy that was going on in Europe and for the need for a bold program of rescue, was appointed Executive Director of the Board. He asked the Jewish organizations for their suggestions.

Program submitted by the World Jewish Congress to the WRB. Cooperation

26. On March 3, 1944, the World Jewish Congress submitted to the War Refugee Board a "Program of General Measures of Relief and Rescue of Jews threatened with Extermination by the Enemy."

In its introduction the "Program" stressed that

"if the purpose of the War Refugee Board is to be fulfilled, customary procedures must be superseded...On the way to the rescue of the remnants of European Jewry, many a Gordian knot will have to be cut. Any attempt to untie it would be wasting the little time left, and the cost would be counted in human lives which can still be saved."

The "Program" then went on to analyze in detail the political and practical, psychological and diplomatic, public and underground methods, which could still be resorted to in a situation that had "immensely changed for the worse since the World Jewish Congress representatives in Geneva first acquainted the United States Minis-

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ter in Bern with the facts relating to the extermination of the Jews of Europe."

The various aspects of the rescue problems were examined and probed in some twenty sections, and suggestions formulated with regard to each one.

It has been possible to establish a steady contact between the Congress and the headquarters of the War Refugee Board in Washington, as well as with the Board's representatives in Geneva, Lisbon, and Stockholm. Although it is too early to pass judgment on the Board's policy, its endeavours and its activities, since much is still hidden from the public, sincere tribute should be paid to the fervor, daring, and perseverance of its leading officers and collaborators. It may be regretted that, although one of the purposes of the creation of the Board has been to delegate to a single government agency the power retained by the various departments of the Administration as far as rescue is concerned, it soon appeared that the authority vested in the Board did not always suffice to overcome the cautions and formalities which had previously delayed and obstructed rescue undertakings in certain governmental circles. It may also be regretted that the Board did not consider it advisable to set up some kind of consultative body composed of representatives of the leading rescue agencies, in order to share with them its information and experiences, and to benefit from their knowledge and judgment in regular conferences. It may finally be doubted whether the secrecy in which the Board has screened many of its undertakings even from the anxiety of the leading Jewish organizations has proved a service to the rescue cause. It is, however, the consensus of opinion of all who beheld the Board in its work that, had it been created some two years earlier, it could have spared humanity many sufferings and

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many, many lives.

The Congress has given the War Refugee Board its full and wholehearted cooperation and has offered it, in the nine months of the Board's existence, an abundance of suggestions, a number of which were accepted and carried out. The gratitude of the Rescue Department goes in particular to those assistants and collaborators of the Board with whom it has been in frequent, sometimes daily consultations: Mr. Lawrence S. Lesser, Dr. Benjamin Akzin, Mr. Paul McCormack, and Mr. I. M. Weinstein.

Psychological Warfare

27. In its "Program" the Congress insisted, as it had done from the outset of the extermination process, on the immense value of solemn, specific and reiterated warnings from the leaders of the United Nations to the Germans, their satellites, accomplices, and agents. It stressed that there had been no specific warning on the Jewish massacres since President Roosevelt's and Prime Minister Churchill's messages to the July 21st, 1942, Madison Square Garden meeting. It recalled that during Dr. Wise's visit to the White House in August, 1943, the President seemed to agree that the time had come for a renewed and emphatic warning.

On March 24, 1944, Franklin D. Roosevelt, acting with the knowledge and approval of Great Britain and Soviet Russia, branded "one of the blackest crimes of all history -- begun by the Nazis in the day of peace and multiplied by them a hundred times in time of war -- the wholesale systematic murder of the Jews of Europe..." The statement said i.e.:

"It is therefore fitting that we should again proclaim our determination that none who participate in these acts of savagery shall go unpunished... That warning applies not only to the leaders but also to their functionaries and subordinates in Germany and in the satellite countries."

The warning of retribution was supplemented with a direct

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appeal to "Germans and others under Nazi domination" to demonstrate their disavowal of the Nazi crimes -- and thus prove their right not to be held accountable for sharing "these insane criminal desires" -- by specific acts to aid and rescue the victims of German barbarity. Foreign Secretary Eden supplemented this in the House of Commons on March 30th with a promise that, just as criminals would be punished, so the "merciful", including both individuals and governments, will be rewarded.

There is much evidence that psychological warfare has had salutary effects, at least in the satellite countries. Many instances have been reported of acts of hiding and protecting the Jews, and of resisting the anti-Jewish policy, which found their inspiration in broadcasts and leaflets originating from London and New York.

Even in Germany, Deputy Reichs Press Chief Helmut Sandermann found himself compelled to take up twice in his conferences with the foreign press the whole matter of the treatment of the Jews in Europe -- on October 8, 1943, and on July 19, 1944. In his explanations, he brazenly contended that the Jews had merely been incorporated "in the European production system in accordance with their professional training" and that "after having been put to work, the Jews are no longer under the control of the State police." In his July meeting, he boasted of German humanitarianism as exemplified by Terezin, which had just been inspected by a Commission of the ICRC, and said that negotiations were "in progress with the Red Cross about the dispatch of food parcels to other Jewish camps also."

Our contacts with the various agencies and departments concerned with psychological warfare have been too frequent and our

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suggestions too numerous to be told here.

In recent months we concentrated on the use of psychological warfare in order to forestall the slaughter of the Jews by the retreating German armies. We asked for instructions to be beamed to Maquis and resistance movements, adjuring them to make a special effort for the protection of the helpless men, women, and children confined in concentration and labor camps. We also requested that the German military authorities be reminded that all who participate in the murder of Jews will be held accountable for their crimes. In many instances, the WRB made our suggestions its own.

The most recent warning was issued by General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander in Western Europe, on November 7th. At the demand of our British Section, we have been urging such a statement on the part of the highest military authorities ever since June 13th.

Hungary -
lost asylum.
The catastrophe begins.

28. Less than two months after its creation, the War Refugee Board was faced with a crucial test: the rescue of Hungarian Jews.

On March 19th, German armies occupied Hungary, and Hungarian Jewry was struck with a suddenness, speed, and ruthlessness that are unparalleled even in our recent martyrology. The curtain rose on a major tragedy: Hungary had been for some time the only refuge for thousands of Jews who fled the persecutions in Poland, Slovakia, and even Rumania. On November 30, 1943, Dr. Silberstein wrote:

"The flow of escape from Poland to Hungary increases from day to day. It is now already organized. The problems are always merely of a financial character for the arrangements of the escape, and later for the hiding of the people. I established good connections in Hungary with governmental circles, and the refugee questions are gradually being settled there in a way which is even more favorable than in Switzerland."

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When the story of the extermination of Hungarian Jews is told, humanity will be amazed by the cruelty and hypocrisy of the chivalrous Magyars. While the Hungarian gendarmery were driving Jews to their death, Hungarian ministers were assuring the world that the extermination or even vexation of Jews was unworthy of Hungarians. Once more the civilized powers had to be convinced by the events that the Germans and their accomplices in many lands were capable of anything. In September, 1943, reports had already reached Washington, saying that Hungarian Jews were apprehensive because of the definite possibility that the Germans would occupy Hungary. A few days after its establishment, the War Refugee Board learned that Hungary was prepared -- under German pressure -- to deport foreign Jews. However, by the middle of June, American officials were still inclined to think that only foreign Jews would be removed from Hungary, but no Hungarian Jews. Ten days later, the WRB representative in Geneva cabled that 335,000 Jews had already been deported.

In our opinion, the first thing to do was to urge Hungarian Jews to avoid the mistakes which had doomed the Jews in Poland, Holland, and other countries. Consequently, on April 7th, we wrote to the WRB as follows:

"We know from the experience of other countries that the registers containing the lists of the Jewish population, and the yellow badges which Jews are compelled to wear, are indispensable instruments for the execution of measures of deportation and extermination. May we consequently suggest that the broadcasts beamed to Hungary should urge the Jewish population to abstain from wearing yellow badges and to destroy all registers which may reveal the identity of Jews who are in hiding or who intend to hide. The broadcasts should, at the same time, urge the Gentile population to assist their Jewish neighbors in their efforts to escape persecution."

We reiterated this suggestion on a number of occasions, and were informed that after careful consideration by several govern-

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ment departments, it had been discarded.

The interventions that brought about Horthy's offer. The lost opportunity.

29. There is no reliable information available on the number of surviving Hungarian Jews. However, at the beginning of November reports from a trustworthy source put it at some 338,000 of whom 100,000 were children, invalids, and aged people in the Budapest ghettos; the others being in various labor camps or engaged (including boys and girls of 14 years and upward) on fortification jobs. They have not been transferred to Poland and death because of the so-called Horthy offer of July 18th, which the Congress has helped to secure by its suggestions and demands.

The relaxation of Hungary's anti-Jewish policy at that time was brought about by four interventions: the United States note to the Hungarian government, the Swedish King's appeal to Horthy, the representations of the Vatican, and the intervention of the International Red Cross.

It may be assumed that the American demarche has been the most effective. It was an unprecedented action, and was the result of a suggestion the Congress made to the War Refugee Board on May 31st and confirmed by a memorandum which concluded as follows:

"We therefore submit that the United States Government address, through a neutral power, to the Hungarian Government, a formal note asking for a statement of its intentions with regard to its Jewish population, since all the preparations in which it is engaged, the segregation and concentration of Hungary's Jews, permit the horrible suspicion that the Hungarian Government is scheming their annihilation.

"We also submit that the note should request the Hungarian Government to give proof of its intention to limit its measures against the Jews to segregation, concentration, and elimination from economic and public life by inviting the International Red Cross to delegate representatives who should regularly visit the Jews in ghettos, labor, internment, and concentration camps, and care for the food and health of the inmates."

The United States Note Verbale was delivered to Hungarian officials on June 26th, and was worded in the strongest terms pos-

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sible. Two versions are known of the answer which was received from the Hungarian government: a lengthier one, which arrived late and which is mainly an elaborate justification of the Hungarian anti-Jewish policy; and a short one, dated July 18th, which declared that Hungary would permit the departure of all Jews who have entry permits to another territory, Palestine included, and that the German government would permit their transit through occupied areas.

Regarding the Swedish King's appeal to Horthy, it would appear that Chief Rabbi Marcus Ehrenpreis and Professor Hugo Valentin of our Swedish Committee were instrumental in securing it. Later, Horthy claimed that only through the King's letter had he learned the whole truth about the treatment of the Jews.

Our views were also given consideration in the Vatican's intervention. In our conversations with the VMB we stressed that to our mind new representations by His Holiness could be effective only if made publicly (we suggested a personal radio address to the Hungarian Christians), and if they would remind the faithful of the spiritual consequences of their acts. We understand that our suggestions were accepted in their essence.

On July 15th, the Apostolic Delegate in London wrote to our British Section:

"At this moment I have a telegram from the Holy See. The Holy Father has appealed personally to the Regent of Hungary on behalf of your people, and has been assured that the Regent will do all possible to help."

Finally, the action of the International Red Cross was also to a large extent the result of our persistent representations. It has been our conviction since the beginning of the war that the ICRC could play a decisive role in the protection and rescue of our people. On April 28th, we instructed our Geneva office to

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take up the Hungarian problem with the ICRC with the utmost vigor and determination. Between June 23rd and July 4th, our spokesman in Geneva, Dr. Riegner and Professor Guggenheim, had a number of decisive conferences with ICRC representatives, stressing the responsibility resting with the Committee, the distress in Jewish circles because of the Committee's failure to speak up on behalf of the Jews, and its inescapable obligation to explain its position at the end of the war. On July 6th, the ICRC president, Professor Max Huber, sent by special messenger a handwritten letter to Horthy. On July 18th, the Associated Press wired from Bern that the Regent had promised the ICRC that no more Jews would be "transported forcibly out of Hungary."

It seems that the large-scale deportations were really halted.

On August 17th, the State Department announced that the governments of the United Kingdom and the United States "have accepted the offer of the Hungarian Government for the release of Jews, and will make arrangements for the care of such Jews leaving Hungary who reach neutral or United Nations territory, and also that they will find temporary havens of refuge where such people may live in safety."

Thus a full month passed between the reception of the Hungarian answer and the State Department's announcement. The delay was due to differences of opinion between the United States and Great Britain concerning the implementations of the offer if it was accepted. One cannot help wondering whether, had bold and immediate action taken advantage of the Hungarian offer before the Gestapo could recover from its surprise, thousands would not have been saved. During the first two weeks following the offer, informed circles had been rather optimistic. For this, and other aspects of the Hungarian catastrophe, we refer to our

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"Report on Activities from July 22nd to September 21st" (pp. 12 - 41). This section (29) has been included in this survey for the sake of completeness only.

Eleven-point
Program sub-
mitted to the
Intergovern-
mental Committee

30. On August 15th, the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees met in London. Our British Section had been instructed by us to submit to the Committee the following 11-point program concerning the rescue of Hungarian Jewry:

(1) That the governments of the United States and Great Britain proclaim that Jews surviving in occupied Europe are under their protection and all who abuse their physical safety will be held accountable as if American or British citizens were concerned.

(2) That the International Red Cross issue a statement that it considers all Jews deprived of freedom of movement in occupied Europe to be civilian internees entitled to benefit, by analogy, of the 1929 Convention on prisoners of war.

(3) That the International Red Cross and the Churches make every effort to obtain for the surviving Jews in occupied Europe the said status of civilian internees.

(4) That the United States and Great Britain declare that territories under their administration are open to all Jews who can be rescued, and that they are responsible for the maintenance and for the post-war settlement of all Jews granted asylum in any European country.

(5) That the neutral countries declare their doors open to Jews escaping from occupied Europe.

(6) That the governments of the United States and Great Britain demand of Hungary through the protecting powers to repatriate her Jews already deported and establish machinery for the care and protection in Germany and Poland of the already deported Jews until their repatriation.

(7) That the International Red Cross increase its representation in Hungary so that at least one permanent delegate will be established in every important center.

(8) That the funds pledged by Great Britain and the United States for the relief work of the International Red Cross be put at the disposal of this organization, so as to permit it to carry out its work in behalf of Hungarian Jews.

(9) That said governments work out forthwith a program of implementation regarding the evacuation of Hungarian Jews, especially children, special consideration being given to Palestine as a country of refuge and Turkey as a country of transit.

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(10) That the food program for civilian detainees agreed to by the said governments and the International Red Cross, give proper attention to Jewish internment, labor, and extermination camps.

(11) That immediate measures be adopted to destroy the murder installations and facilities of the extermination camps.

Our Geneva office communicated this program to the ICRC, and urged its special attention for points 2 and 3.

Other activities for Hungarian Jews.

31. The American-British acceptance of August 17th arrived at a moment when the Gestapo again had the upper hand, and seemed resolved to prevent all Jewish emigration, except for ransom. Germany refused to grant exit permits and transit visas to groups of Jews who were already provided with Spanish and Swedish entry visas.

Additional measures had to be considered. A few of them are briefly summed up here:

a. In June Sweden had sent to Hungary a special mission, authorized to grant letters of protection to Hungarian Jews and to shelter their beneficiaries in annexes to the Swedish Legation. We urged the Swiss and Spanish governments to devise a similar procedure. We suggested further the dispatch of an Irish Red Cross mission for identical purposes. Our requests were received in a spirit of understanding and charity. It seems that the Swiss protection papers are generally being recognized by the Szolasi regime, which is not always the case with the passports issued by the Swedish Legation.

b. The Congress did not write off the deported Hungarian Jews. On August 2nd, we suggested to the War Refugee Board that Hungary be requested by diplomatic note to state what action she has taken and intends to take to ensure that the "Jewish manpower" which she has placed "at the disposal of the Reich" will be treat-

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ed decently. The Board agreed, and the American Minister in Bern was instructed accordingly on August 19th. The Hungarian government replied, on September 26th, that the Labor Office at the Hungarian Legation in Berlin has to take care of all workers of Hungarian nationality, regardless of their religion or race. We are following up this matter.

c. We organized a special service to register applications by Jews in America for Palestine certificates in favor of their relatives living in Hungary. The War Refugee Board consented to forward the lists of applications through the facilities of the State Department to the Jewish Agency in Istanbul. By November 1st, Istanbul had acknowledged the receipt of 20 lists, comprising 2026 families with 8037 individuals. Confirmations of the granting of Palestine certificates were dispatched to the parties concerned. To illustrate the importance of such confirmations, it will suffice to report that in August, the Turkish government agreed to admit into Turkey, without referring to Ankara, any refugee arriving without a Turkish visa at the Turkish land frontier at Svilengrad, provided he can produce a letter from Mr. Barlas or Dr. Goldin of the Jewish Agency Office in Istanbul certifying that he had been granted a Palestine immigration certificate.

Destruction
of the death
installations

32. Outside of the Jews who are known to be in Hungary, Slovakia, and Theresienstadt, and the Jews in hiding, the only Jews left in Germany, fascist Italy, and German-occupied lands are in labor and concentration camps which are for the most part also extermination camps. Oswiecim and Brzesinka (Birkenau) are the most tragically famous. There are definite reports that

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Himmler is bent upon the prevention of another Majdanek mistake. Instructions have been issued that everything be in readiness to have the inmates of these camps wiped out and all the buildings razed. The preparations have been made; it will suffice that Himmler issue the final order. Since June, the Congress has been adding representation to representation to representation in this matter. Its spokesmen have said to all whom it might concern: History will never understand that there have been death factories organized to kill human beings at a speedy pace, and that nothing was done to destroy these installations so as, at least, to slow down the tempo of the slaughters. We have asked that the instruments of annihilation -- the gas chambers, the gas vans, the death baths, the crematoria -- be attacked in force either by the underground or by Allied paratroopers. While the New York headquarters were conferring with the War Refugee Board, the War Department, and the Soviet Embassy, Mr. E. Frischer, Mr. A. Reiss, and Dr. I. Schwarzbart engaged in conversations with the Czechoslovak and Polish governments respectively. Our London friends were in favor of the precision bombing of the extermination chambers, which they thought possible.

One of the results of these various demarches has been the already-mentioned warning by General Eisenhower (27), issued at the request of President Roosevelt and in which the British government concurred. It reads as follows:

"Germans, attention! You have in your midst many people in concentration camps and labor battalions. My orders to you Germans are to disregard any order that you may receive to harm these people, no matter what their religion or nationality. The armies of the Allies are well established on German territory already. They expect to find these people alive and unharmed as they come upon them in the Allied advance. Severe penalties will be inflicted on any directly or indirectly responsible for mistreating such people. Warning is hereby given to those now in authority."

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Rescue of
Children

33. It seems fitting to conclude this survey with two items of particular significance.

On November 20, 1943, Marc Jarblum member of our Executive Committee, who had remained in France until the Germans had overrun the southern part of the country, reported from Switzerland:

"I am really happy that I succeeded in achieving good, concrete results in the field of real rescue, especially with regard to children...in France, in Belgium and a little farther, real rescue work can be done: escape, hiding, etc...Much has been done and much can still be done."

On September 2, 1944, Jarblum and Riegner sent us an interim balance sheet in a few terse, modest lines, glowing however with epic achievement:

"...the following has been done with respect to France: since October 1943, 1350 children and young people up to 20 years of age both with and without parents or relatives have reached Switzerland; 70 children have reached Spain while some 700 have been hidden in France. Further, some 700 young people have been evacuated to Spain as well as 200 parents accompanying their children. Our people in France have aided in hiding four to five thousand adults. Such rescue work is necessarily linked with illegal activity of all sorts especially the procurement of permits, baptismal and birth certificates monthly. Considerable expenditure has been necessitated by appropriate equipment for armed convoys to the frontiers. At the present moment, it is impossible to separate the rescue of children from that of adults according various funds used as action was organized as a whole by our people using all available means. Our own participation amounted to more than 18 million French francs."

Our French Jewish Representative Committee made a special effort to provide Jarblum with part of the means he needed, through a special campaign headed by Baron Edouard de Rothschild, which brought in an amount of some \$80,000.

Work in
Lisbon

34. On October 24, 1944, Robert C. Dexter, War Refugee Board representative in Lisbon, wrote to Mr. Weissman:

"I wish to take this opportunity, on the eve of your departure for America...to tender to you and to your organization my sincere appreciation of all that you have been able to do here in Lisbon. If you had not been here, there would have been no jail delivery

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and the many refugees, both Jewish and Christian, who have been and are now in Ericeira, would have still been in prison or in hiding. Then, too, it was largely, if not entirely, through your initiative that the beginnings were made in bringing both children and adults out of France into Spain and Portugal. It is not your fault that this number was not vastly greater, but the hundreds who did come through, whether under the auspices of your organization or in any other way, owe you and the World Jewish Congress a deep debt of gratitude. In view of the difficulties under which you have been laboring here, your accomplishments have been of an unusually high order."

Tentative
conclusion

35. A great number of endeavors which have required much study and much effort and have yielded some results have been omitted from this survey, some for the sake of discretion, most for reasons of brevity. The Jewish tragedy of our time has innumerable aspects, and we have resorted to innumerable attempts. We have no right to relax our vigilance. Through day by day representations, requests, initiatives, through the exertion of all our ingenuity, we must try to achieve. We will know later to what extent we have been able to achieve. One instance out of many will illustrate this expectation. Some time ago, a Greek refugee reported that he had been saved by Greek partisans who told him they had been instructed by radio appeals to rescue the Jews. These appeals may have originated from our action. On October 10, 1943, our Cairo representative, Leon Castro, cabled as follows:

"Received reliable information deportation remaining Jewish population in Greece imminent stop Contacted your name Greek Government and British Ministry of State here suggesting them give radio or secret instruction Greek population help Jewish compatriots view prevent deportation stop Please support my steps contacting Greek and British Embassies Washington."

We alerted the Administration, the Greek Embassy, our London friends, the appropriate agencies. The appeals were broadcast, and somewhere in the mountains of Greece guerillas heard these exhortations and a number of Jews were saved.

We have no illusions. With regard to the survival of the re-

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maining Jews in German-occupied Europe, we rely mostly on the will of our people to live, on their ingenuity, on the human solidarity of their Gentile neighbors, on the heroism of our youth, of which we have received so much heartening evidence in recent months. But our duty is to go on. The task of the Rescue Department will end with the last Jew to be saved from German barbarism.

My appreciation is herewith expressed to my collaborators, Kurt R. Grossman and Charlotte Weidenfeld, respectively assistant and secretary to the Rescue Department, who gave it the essential contribution of their unlimited devotion.

A.W.K.

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