

Greenberg, Z.

100320

JUL 22 1944

Dear Mr. Greenberg:

Secretary Morgenthau has asked me to acknowledge and thank you for your letter of July 17, 1944, with which you enclosed a newspaper clipping of Dante Almanzi's account of the Nazi persecution of the Jewish people of Rome.

The people and the Government of the United States are fighting side by side with the people and the Governments of the other United Nations to stop just such atrocities as are described by Mr. Almanzi. Our determination that the criminals shall not go unpunished has been made clear to the Nazis and to their satellites. The warning of what they may expect was repeated by the President in a statement on March 24, 1944, a copy of which is enclosed as a matter of interest to you. This statement has been widely broadcast to enemy territory.

Very truly yours,

(Signed) J. W. Pehle

J. W. Pehle
Executive Director

Mr. Z. Greenberg
General Delivery
Fort Worth, Texas

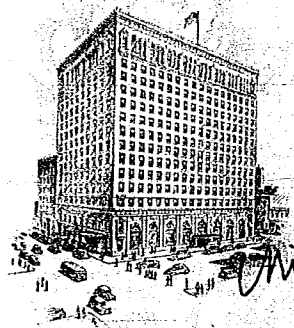
Enclosure

EBT JH EB Towler 7-20-44

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FORT WORTH

7/17/1944

Mr. Henry Morgenthau
Washington

Please excuse me to disturb you
written this few lines to you
about this article from
Signor. Sante Almagi president
Union of Jewish Communities
in Rome (Italy)
we hope that after this victory
war the allies and the
United States will take care
when judgement day comes for
this nazis criminals

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Respectfully yours.

W. Greenberg

General Delivery

Port Arthur Texas

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Pure Gold or 200 Jewish Heads, Rome Nazis' Edict

By DANTE ALMANZI

President, Union of Jewish Communities in Rome
(As told to Michael Chnigo, International News Service)

ROME, July 15.—(INS)—One hundred and 10 pounds of pure gold—or 200 Jewish heads!

Those words, spoken with Prussian harshness, constituted a horrifying ultimatum.

A Major Kapner, who had summoned me to the German embassy added with satanic sadism that there would be a 36-hour time limit. He volunteered:

"You are guilty of a double crime. You are Italians and you are Jews—that makes you twice our enemies."

It was Sunday evening. I trembled at the thought of failure. My brain raced for a way out. Shakily, I ventured to ask what price he would set in cash for the requested amount of gold. (An American value of 110 pounds of pure gold would be worth approximately \$31,000.)

NO PAPER MONEY.

He said through thin, bloodless lips:

"No, no you don't. We want none of your paper money. We can print all of that we want."

"From you it must be pure gold—or 200 Jewish heads, will roll—and a 6666 percentage of them will be women and children."

The interview was over. I was brusquely ushered out, made to wait a full, precious hour before being allowed to return home.

The ensuing hours were a nightmare. The telephone, my telephone and those of prominent Jews I could reach, passed word around of the terrible disaster we faced if we could not match gold for blood.

OUNCE BY OUNCE.

On Tuesday morning we convened in hundreds—each bringing with him what he possessed or could lay his hands on in the way of gold. We weighed, carefully, ounce by

ounce. Our hearts were in our throats. We had one, then five, 10, 20, 50 and finally at 11 a. m.—one hour before the deadline—we lacked but a few ounces for the full 110 pounds requested.

There was a mad rush. For three-quarters of an hour it looked as if Rome had not a particle of gold left. We began to despair—it might mean one life, it might mean the Nazis would turn the whole thing down, it might mean they would take what we had and carry out a mass slaughter because we were a few ounces short!

At 10 minutes before noon it finally came. We completed the last of 10 packets and drove to the German embassy.

We were two minutes late, and when we were made to wait in the outer hall we wondered whether the Nazis would exact further punishment for the delay.

HEARTS FALL

We knew Jews had been killed in Belgrade and in Warsaw for just such an "offense."

At 1 p. m. a Nazi S. S. captain came out to tell us we were to report at the notorious Gestapo headquarters on Via Tasso at 4 p. m.

We were shown the door. Our hearts fell.

We returned to our previous meeting-place, reweighed the gold, discussed the grim outlook. We were at Via Tasso one hour ahead of time.

At 8 p. m.—two hours after our arrival—a Captain Schultze, also of the S. S., appeared to inform us that he would take the gold.

I turned over the packets to him. He weighed them in, then turned around and announced that I was "short about 10 pounds."

There was no doubt but that this

was a real criminal. I repeated that the gold be reweighed. He insisted, declaring that "A German officer's word is good and is law." In utter desperation I lost my self-control, shouted at him that this was a "crime upon a crime," insisted he weigh the packets again in front of me.

ALL THERE

With a leer he finally consented. There were 110 pounds all right. Schultze picked up the packets and hurried to go. I stopped him, asked for a receipt.

This time he got really angry, dropped the gold on a table, raised his hand as if to strike me, held back, growled instead:

"No receipt, we give no receipt. The German Wehrmacht in all its operational requisitions gives no receipts."

He ordered me out.

I went to the Italian police, got the names of those who had summoned me and who were conversant with the transaction. It was all I could do. I still feared there was a trick in the Nazi agreement. I had not long to wait.

But three days had gone by when Nazi agents raided our Jewish community headquarters, took 2,500,000 lire (\$25,000) from our treasury and, worse still, took all the community documents.

SECOND RAID

Twenty-four hours later came a second raid. This time the Nazi S. S. men had a "specialist" in antique literature and they were interested in the rare collections which we had in the community library and the rabbi's college.

Among them there were manuscripts of enormous historical value and to them the "specialist" gave particular attention.

Brusquely I was informed that "if you touch one book or one manuscript you'll pay with your life."

A week later trucks rolled up to the library doors. The books and manuscripts were put in cases addressed to Munich. Even libraries were emptied.

It should be part of the record that in the interim we informed the Italian authorities of interior and exterior, the director general of libraries, by letter as well as verbally, of the Nazi intentions and requested their intervention.

CULTURAL DISASTER

The Fascists didn't move a finger.

It was a cultural disaster and we were helpless.

But two weeks later came one of the greatest tragedies Jews have had to suffer when armed Nazi squads carried out a "Hebrew hunt" taking 400 men, women and children from their homes.

To date we know 65 have been killed. We do not know the fate of the others.

Rome's Jewish families number but 12,000. The Nazis struck at one-third of them.

They took the gold, they sacked the libraries, they have 4000 more Jews to answer for when judgment day comes.