

HANDLER, MILTON

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JAN 25 1945

Dear Mr. Handler:

I wish to thank you for your letter of January 20, 1945,
concerning the plight of the Jews in Bulgaria and Rumania.

We, too, have been deeply concerned with this problem and
I assure you that even within its limited terms of reference the War
Refugee Board has made every effort to have assistance brought to
these people. Until such time as the problem can be handled on a
more permanent basis, the Board has facilitated in all possible ways
the sending of relief into these areas.

If you should desire to discuss this matter in more detail,
we shall, of course, be glad to arrange to see you in Washington.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) H. Morgenthau, Jr.

Secretary of the Treasury.

Mr. Milton Handler,
Columbia University,
New York, N. Y.

JH *JWA* FH:hd 1/24/45

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Secretary of the Treasury.

Mr. Milton Handler,
Columbia University,
New York, N. Y.

Sent to Sec. M. for signature 1/24/45.

W. J. P.

FB:hd 1/24/45

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Sub B...
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Columbia University
in the City of New York
SCHOOL OF LAW

January 20, 1945.

Honorable Henry Morgenthau, Jr.
Secretary of the Treasury
Washington, D. C.

Dear Secretary Morgenthau:

I wonder whether you have seen the various news dispatches of Joseph M. Levy concerning the plight of the Jews in Bulgaria and Rumania, which have been published in the New York Times in recent months. His latest piece appeared in today's Times and I am taking the liberty of enclosing a clipping herewith.

From the conversations I have had with persons in and out of government I get the impression that very little is being done to save the lives of these unfortunate people. Of course, there are always the defeatists who say that nothing can be done. Where would we be in the conduct of the war if the same attitude had prevailed? Certainly something can be done for these people if there is the will to help them.

I appeal to you, Mr. Secretary, to give this most important matter your personal attention just as you did in the case of the establishment of the War Refugee Board. The terrible plight of these people demands bold and quick action if they are to be saved.

Respectfully yours,

Milton Handler
Milton Handler

MH:er

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JEW IN BULGARIA IN PITIFUL PLIGHT

Regime Does Nothing to Ease
Starvation of 45,000—Many
Envy Those Who Die

By JOSEPH M. LEVY

By Wirecast to The New York Times.

ISTANBUL, Turkey, Jan. 17
(Delayed)—Four months after Bulgaria's liberation from the Germans and the Bulgarian fascist regime the situation of about 45,000 Jews there today is deplorable and desperate. They are clotheless, shoeless and starving. They are existing, not living, under the most insanitary conditions, three and four families sharing a dingy little room which is unheated and without windowpanes.

The writer paid several visits to the quarters Hujbunar and Dortbunar where the vast majority of the Sofia Jews are concentrated and where nothing has been done to alleviate the conditions of these unfortunate human beings.

Most of them told the writer that they envy their 14,000 Macedonian co-religionists who were deported to Poland, where they had been exterminated by the Germans. One woman, with an infant in arms and two other children of 3 and 5 pulling frantically at her skirt crying for food, told me:

"My husband died in a forced labor camp and I was left with these children and my mother-in-law without the slightest means of support. If it were not for these poor little creatures I would have committed suicide long ago."

This is not an isolated case—hundreds of them talked similarly. The children's bitter cries for food and the agonizing moans of the sick are still ringing in the writer's ears.

Despite innumerable appeals for help, no relief from abroad has been forthcoming. The Bulgarian Government has done nothing to help these thousands of destitute Jews. It is not stingy with promises, however. Months ago it declared that all property that had been confiscated from the Jews by the Fascist regime would be returned to their owners, that Jewish funds blocked at different banks would be refunded and that the compulsory tax the Jews were forced to pay under the fascist government would be repaid.

Craftsmen were to get back their tools to enable them to work, the manufacturers and traders would have their factories and businesses restored—all this was promised by the present so-called Liberal government but to this day not a single promise has been fulfilled.

The excuse is that the Government's treasury is empty. The Government announced that no Bulgarian who acquired Jewish property of any description should suffer as a result of the Government's decision to restore Jewish belongings.

The Government could do much to alleviate the misery of Bulgarian Jews but does nothing. Yet the Government rarely misses a chance to exploit the Jewish question for political or propaganda purposes.

Over the radio and in the press it condemns the former Fascist regimes for enforcing anti-Jewish laws which it describes as cruel and inhuman. It declares that all Jews now are free and enjoying equal rights with all the rest of Bulgarians. This is a farce, because the only thing the Jews in Bulgaria are able to do with equal rights and freedom is to starve and freeze.

So desperate is the situation that it is no exaggeration to state that at least 25 per cent of them are anxious to leave the country and to go anywhere. But the "sympathetic" Government, at the instigation of the Communist Minister of the Interior, Anton Yugoff, has banned all Jewish emigration from Bulgaria.

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Columbia University
in the City of New York
SCHOOL OF LAW
New York 27, New York

October 23, 1944

John W. Pehle, Esq.
War Refugee Board
Executive Office of the President
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear John:

I warmly congratulate you on your inspiring address and thank you cordially for letting me have a copy. Nothing that you may ever do in your life will give you the abiding satisfaction of your present exertions for the rescue of the unfortunate and starving refugees of Europe. How justly proud you may be for what has been accomplished! And yet there is still so much to be done.

From a distance, there would appear to be the danger again of the ball falling between the various players. It is difficult to determine where the jurisdiction of the various agencies begins and ends. You know, John, that I am not writing in a critical spirit. Frankly, I am worried. Take the Jews that were rescued in Transylvania. Are they being adequately supplied with food, clothing, and shelter? Whose responsibility is it to see that they are so supplied? Manifestly the tremendous proportions of this task take it beyond the capacity of private agencies. And whose responsibility will it be to provide facilities for their removal to Palestine? I take it from your note that your board does not regard the relief and rescue of those in the Balkans who survived German occupation and are now in areas controlled by the Russians as within its province. Does that mean that no American agency is now concerned with their relief and rescue? What will happen to them before UNRRA takes over and begins to function in this part of the world?

I should think that an arrangement might be worked out with the Russians on a high level along two lines:

(a) The Russians should provide food, clothing and shelter (not to former enemies) but to the victims of Axis fury. The F.E.A. should authorize the use of lend-lease goods for this purpose and should immediately replenish the Russian stores so used.

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John W. Pehle, Esq.

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October 23, 1944

(b) The departure of those Jews who want to go to Palestine or other places outside of Europe should be facilitated by the Russian occupying forces, the other details concerning their movement after they leave the liberated areas to be handled as previously by your agency in collaboration with other American and British agencies.

Does this make sense?

I have written Oscar about (a). It's hard for me to understand why (b) shouldn't be more feasible today than it was 6 or 9 months ago.

I do hope we will be seeing one another real soon.

With warmest regards,

Cordially,

Mulim

MH:jf

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JWP file copy.

October 13, 1944.

Dear Milt,

I am glad to reply to your letter of October 6, and your inquiry with regard to the War Refugee Board.

The advance of the Russian forces through the Balkan countries has, of course, made a drastic change in our problem in such areas. The Balkan areas which have been liberated are separated by battle lines from the still occupied areas, particularly most of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and it is not feasible to rescue refugees through combat areas. The persons who have survived German occupation and who are now in the liberated portions of the Balkans are, of course, no longer any direct concern of the War Refugee Board and we are confining our operations to the protection of persons still in occupied territory.

I will be glad to discuss this matter with you further when I see you again.

Sincerely,

Milton Handler, Esq.,
50 Broadway,
New York, New York.

JWP:lhk 10-13-44

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LAW OFFICES
MILTON HANDLER

50
400 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

October 6, 1944

Mr. John W. Pehle
Executive Director
War Refugee Board
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear John:

I am immensely appreciative of your generous note of congratulation and good wishes. I shall by all means avail myself of your kind invitation to step in and say hello when I am next in Washington.

I am most anxious to get a first hand account of the progress made by the War Refugee Board during recent months. Am I correct in assuming that the rapid conquest of the satellite countries by the Russians has facilitated your tasks and finally opens a path for their removal and rescue from Europe? Off hand I would think that large numbers could now be moved. I'd greatly appreciate being brought up to date, if you have the time for a short note.

Again with many thanks and kindest regards,

Cordially,

Milton
Milton Handler.

MH:rk

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