

"JEWISH COMMENT"

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"JEWISH COMMENT"

WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS

330 West 42nd St.,
New York City,
N.Y.

File

April 12, 1944

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

Dear Sir:

Enclosed you will find a marked copy of
our publication, Jewish Comment, making reference to
matters in which you are interested.

Sincerely,

Ben Halpern

Ben Halpern,
Editor.

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Dr. J. W. Peck, Jr.

Jewish Comment

APRIL 7, 1944

VOL. II No. 11

X RESCUE AND RETRIBUTION

THE NEW DANGER to European Jewry, arising from the German occupation of Hungary and the measures of control they have taken in other Southeastern European countries, has this time been promptly met by action of the United Nations. Acting with the knowledge and approval of Great Britain and Soviet Russia, President Roosevelt, on March 24, 1944, issued a specific warning of retribution for crimes against the Jews and other endangered groups, and called upon all persons of conscience to help rescue them. In reply to a question in the House of Commons on March 30, British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden declared that "the British Government . . . whole-heartedly associated itself with the United States in this matter."

President Roosevelt's statement is composed of two essential parts. The first is a declaration of the United States' purpose to continue its efforts to rescue the "victims of brutality of the Nazis and the Japs" through the medium of the War Refugee Board, and a call to others, specifically to "every German and every man everywhere under Nazi domination," as well as "the free peoples of Europe and Asia," to assist these efforts.

The second part of the statement is a pointed, explicit warning to the Nazis and Japanese and their accomplices that they will be held accountable, and punished for crimes they commit. Eden's statement before the Commons goes even further: "There are individuals and even *official authorities* among the German satellites who have resisted the evil German example and shown toleration and mercy. *In the hope of encouraging such good deeds and increasing their number, the British Government has made it plain that those who have followed the right path will also not be forgotten on the day of reckoning. If the time of respite is short, there is still an opportunity for the merciful to multiply their acts of humanity and try to make amends.*"*

Thus, these declarations at the same time attempt to deter Nazis and collaborationists from further atrocities and make an effort to

* Italics our. Ed.

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facilitate the evacuation and rescue of endangered persons to places of safety.

* * *

Unhappily, that part of the declaration which reiterates the United States' purpose to rescue the victims of brutality is so phrased that it may be seriously doubted whether it can have the desired effect. The statement is directed toward the "free countries of Europe and Asia," that is, evidently, to Switzerland, Sweden, Spain, Portugal, and Turkey, in so far as the Jews of Europe are concerned. It promises to find "havens of refuge" for any fugitives who may escape to those countries, and to find means for their maintenance and support if they cannot be evacuated. But those of the "free countries" from which the evacuation of fugitives to havens of refuge is impossible for geographical reasons, Sweden and Switzerland, have already given evidence of their willingness to extend their hospitality to the fullest degree possible; and, while it will give them reassurance they certainly deserve, the declaration cannot substantially increase the measure of their already great efforts. It is rather for the other countries that the declaration must have been intended. With these (particularly Turkey, the country nearest the danger zone) the main difficulty appears to be the demand that refugees admitted be speedily removed to other havens. Given a satisfactory guarantee on this point, Turkey has shown itself ready to adopt a more liberal policy towards fugitives.

The language used in the Roosevelt declaration, however, is hardly likely to convince Turkey that a rapid and large-scale transfer of refugees admitted will be undertaken. Do not the United States and Great Britain already possess such havens, particularly the haven of Palestine, which is so conveniently located for admitting these stricken people? Why, then, is it necessary to find havens? Would it not be more to the point and better calculated to encourage the free countries of Europe and Asia to assist in the work of rescue if the declaration had contained a simple, categorical promise, not to find havens, but to open up the doors of American and other United Nations possessions, and particularly of Palestine, for any number of refugees who may be rescued? Must it not appear to these free countries slightly incongruous that the United States, in the name of the United Nations, should ask them to open their doors to refugees, while the Allied nations have so far failed to make a specific pledge of doing the same with their own, at most half-open, doors?

Over a million Jews in Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria are still alive; but if we wish to rescue any considerable number of them, then there is no time to lose in remedying the lack in the Roosevelt statement of March 24. Lest these remarks remain merely abstract, we hasten to make the following specific suggestions: Let Great Britain and the United States guarantee to Turkey that any refugee from Nazi Europe admitted to its territory, through whatever channels, will be rapidly syphoned off into Palestine, without any limitations as to numbers. And secondly, we revert to a suggestion we previously made: that Soviet Russia, in view of its historic relationship with Bulgaria and its present continued diplomatic relationship with that country, should intercede with the Sofia regime and press them to cooperate by evacuating their own endangered Jews and permitting the transit to places of safety of others who may escape from Southeastern Europe.

* * *

In contrast to the first part of the statement of March 24, 1944, the other section (conveying a warning to those committing atrocities of their accountability and future punishment for their crimes) is, at long last, a specific and comprehensive declaration. It repairs many of the omissions which Jews and other groups have pointed out and criticized in earlier statements of this kind. Thus, the first in this series, the joint statement of the St. James Conference on January 13, 1942 (by the governments of seven countries under Axis domination, together with the French National Committee of General de Gaulle), was more specific than later statements by the major Western Allies, as might have been expected in view of the more direct concern of the signatories of the St. James statement with the problems of retribution. It included among those whom it warned of future retribution for their crimes the Germans committing atrocities in occupied countries, as well as their allies and satellites and their accomplices in occupied countries.

The major purpose of the declaration was to deter Nazis and collaborationists from further crimes. Yet, the St. James Conference gave no specific warning concerning the consequences of crimes committed against the Jews, whose peril was notoriously the greatest. The theory of this omission was that crimes against the Jews were covered by the general statement concerning all crimes committed in occupied countries. This viewpoint was hardly a valid one. It is clear that the Nazis and the collaborationists themselves do not consider a crime against the Jews to be in the same class as other atrocities, neither in their own nor in other non-Jewish opinion.

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Consequently, they could not be expected to refrain from such acts because of the deterrent effect of general warnings against crimes in occupied countries not specifically referring to the special category of crimes against Jews. Furthermore, the St. James' warning, referring specifically to crimes committed in *occupied countries*, could have no deterrent effect with respect to atrocities against Jews committed in Germany itself or in other Axis and satellite countries. Moreover, since it dealt only with crimes committed since the outbreak of war, it gave no guarantee of justice for such crimes, "legal" and extra-legal, as were committed against the Jews, chiefly by the Germans, in the period before September 1, 1939.

Jewish groups were not slow to point out the defects of the St. James statement with respect to a program for rescuing Jews, and for doing justice upon their persecutors after the war. On July 21, 1942, therefore, President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill sent parallel notes to a Madison Square Garden meeting in New York City, condemning atrocities against Jews and promising stern retribution. Later, a joint declaration by eleven Allied governments, including the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union, as well as the de Gaulle French National Committee, was issued (on December 17, 1942) specifically condemning the German campaign to exterminate the Jews *en masse* and "reaffirming their solemn resolution . . . to ensure that those responsible for these crimes should not escape retribution."

Even in these warnings, however, no promise was made that justice would be done with regard to crimes committed upon Jews in Axis countries, or before September 1939. Furthermore, although the December 17, 1942 statement promised that the signatory governments would "press on with the necessary measures," the plan for an international commission for the investigation of war crimes has to this day not progressed beyond its initial stages.

The next major warning of retribution, the Moscow Declaration of November 1, 1943, once more failed to make any specific mention of crimes against the Jews, even though other special groups were spoken of by name: Italian officers, Cretan peasants, French hostages. Moreover, like previous statements, the Moscow Declaration referred only to crimes committed in occupied countries and, of course, since the war. It also confined its warning of retribution (except for certain "major criminals whose offences have no particular geographical localization"—a description which may fit other Axis leaders as well as the chief Nazis) to crimes committed by "German officers and men and members of the Nazi Party."

As compared with the preceding statements of retribution, the President's declaration of March 24, 1944 is a significant improvement. It shows that the lessons of these more than four years of war, during which Jews have been so cruelly persecuted, have, even if tardily, been borne in upon the democratic world. Thus the warning makes specific mention of atrocities against the Jews as well as of other atrocities. It deals with a campaign of extermination which, it specifically states, began with the entry of Hitler into power over a decade ago, which thus preceded the outbreak of international hostilities. The warning promises justice, not only for crimes committed in occupied countries, but also for those perpetrated by the Nazis in their own country. Moreover, it is specific in declaring that functionaries and subordinates of the Nazi leaders in Germany, as well as in occupied countries, will be held accountable for participating in atrocities; and finally, it supplements the warning of retribution with a direct 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 the Nazis. Foreign Secretary Eden's statement supplements this with a promise that, just as criminals will be punished, so the "merciful," including both individuals and governments, will be rewarded.

These statements are an epitome of the lessons which have been learned with such difficulty and at such cost since the St. James Conference at the beginning of 1942. Yet even in the improved form the effectiveness of such warnings would be much greater if they were accompanied by concrete demonstrations of preparedness to put them into effect: if the International Commission for the Investigation of War Crimes were shown to be actually investigating them; if indictments were handed down and trials were actually held in time to have a deterrent effect, instead of waiting till the war is over.

The President's declaration called upon men in Hitler Europe to "keep watch and to record the evidence that will one day be used to convict the guilty." One wonders whether the United States itself is taking every possible measure to keep such watch and to record such evidence. American diplomats and other citizens are being repatriated. Are they being asked to make depositions on crimes against Jews and others? We are capturing Nazi and other Axis prisoners every day, and no doubt there are among them those who have witnessed such atrocities, or even participated in them.

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Are our officers under instructions to keep watch for evidence of such crimes and to record it? Do they make it a point to question prisoners specifically about these matters? Do they single out prisoners who are known to be responsible for atrocities, or do they simply give them the same status as other prisoners of war who have committed only such warlike acts as are permissible under international law?

One may easily imagine that a vigorous policy on the lines noted might have a much greater effect of deterrence in Germany and the occupied countries than any statement of intention to punish after the war, no matter how specific and how comprehensive.

Reports and Documents

PRES. ROOSEVELT'S STATEMENT

MARCH 24, 1944

THE UNITED NATIONS are fighting to make a world in which tyranny and aggression cannot exist; a world based upon freedom, equality and justice; a world in which all persons regardless of race, color or creed may live in peace, honor and dignity.

In the meantime, in most of Europe and in parts of Asia, the systematic torture and murder of civilians—men, women and children—by the Nazis and the Japanese continue unabated. In areas subjugated by the aggressors innocent Poles, Czechs, Norwegians, Dutch Danes, French, Greeks, Russians, Chinese, Filipinos—and many others—are being starved or frozen to death or murdered in cold blood in a campaign of savagery.

The slaughters of Warsaw, Lidice, Kharkov and Nanking—the brutal torture and murder by the Japanese, not only of civilians but of our own

gallant American soldiers and fliers—these are startling examples of what goes on day by day, year in and year out, wherever the Nazis and Japs are in military control—free to follow their barbaric purpose.

In 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 goes on unabated every hour. As a result of the events of the last few days hundreds of thousands of Jews who, while living under persecution, have at least found a haven from death in Hungary and the Balkans, are now threatened with annihilation as Hitler's forces descend more heavily upon these lands. That these innocent people, who have already survived a decade of Hitler's fury, should perish on the very eve of

triumph over the barbarism which their persecution symbolizes, would be a major tragedy.

It is therefore fitting that we should again proclaim our determination that none who participate in these acts of savagery shall go unpunished. The United Nations have made it clear that they will pursue the guilty and deliver them up in order that justice be done. That warning applies not only to the leaders but also to their functionaries and subordinates in Germany and in the satellite countries. All who knowingly take part in the deportation of Jews to their death in Poland or Norwegians and French to their death in Germany are equally guilty with the executioner. All who share the guilt shall share the punishment.

Hitler is committing these crimes against humanity in the name of the German people. I ask every German and every man everywhere under Nazi domination to show the world by his action that in his heart he does not share these insane criminal

desires. Let him hide these pursued victims, help them to get over their borders, and do what he can to save them from the Nazi hangman. I ask him also to keep watch, and to record the evidence that will one day be used to convict the guilty.

In the meantime, and until the victory that is now assured is won, the United States will persevere in its effort to rescue the victims of brutality of the Nazis and the Japs. In so far as the necessity of military operations permit this Government will use all means at its command to aid the escape of all intended victims of the Nazi and Jap executioner—regardless of race or religion or color. We call upon the free peoples of Europe and Asia temporarily to open their frontiers to all victims of oppression. We shall find havens of refuge for them, and we shall find the means for their maintenance and support until the tyrant is driven from their homelands and they may return.

In the name of justice and humanity let all freedom loving people rally to this righteous undertaking.

JEW IN FRENCH UNDERGROUND

RADIO PARIS in its midnight broadcast on February 13, 1944, indulged in words with the radio station of the French Committee of Liberation in Brazzaville (French Equatorial Africa). The Brazzaville radio had referred to posters covering the walls of Paris and showing the identity papers and photographs of ten saboteurs. These men were acclaimed by the radio station of the French Committee of Liberation as real liberators and true Frenchmen. In reply, *Radio Paris* triumphantly pointed out that a large proportion

of these persons had Jewish names. *Radio Paris* states: "Is Grieswachs, the perpetrator of two outrages, a Frenchman? No, he is a Jew, a Polish Jew. Is Elek, who was responsible for eight derailments and the death of dozens of people, a Frenchman? No, he is a Hungarian Jew. Is Weissbrod, who derailed three trains, a Frenchman? No, he is a Polish Jew. The other terrorists are also Jews: Lifschitz, Fingerweiss, Stockwerk, and Reimann."

This is only one of several items from various sources which have in-

licated the extent to which Jews participate in the French Underground movement. For example, on October 11, 1943, Charles Maurras wrote an article in *L'Action Francaise*, demanding a change in the procedure of trying suspects charged with Underground activity. Such persons have been turned over to courts-martial if caught in the act. Maurras agrees that this may be a natural and logical procedure in the case of "Frenchmen"; but he insists that "any alien, any naturalized foreigner, or any naturalized son of a half-caste, or a Jew, arrested in a riot," whether seen to be committing a "crime" or not, should be tried, not by the regular courts, but by courts-martial. If charged with "dissidence, the army should immediately apply to them the capital sentence."

Further indications of the part which is being played by Jews in the Underground movement in

France is provided by the newspaper *Au Pilon*, in the North Zone of France, which, on February 3, 1944, related the "crimes" of certain mayors and their agents, including "a Jew, Abraham, former *directeur de cabinet* to Jean Zay, now living under the name of Lefoyer." On February 14, 1944, the newspaper *Quoi* told of the arrest of a young Jew called Philippe Chaskiel, of Vienne in Chauvigny, who, together with an 18-year-old accomplice, sent letters to certain farmers asking for contributions to the resistance movement, and called in person in an attempt to collect such contributions. On February 19, 1944, both *Radio Paris* and the German news agency announced the trial, before German courts-martial, of a number of "dangerous terrorists," including 24 who were said to be responsible for "38 outrages and 14 derailments." Nine of the persons accused, according to *Radio Paris*, were Jews.

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FEB 25 1944

Dear Mr. Halpern:

Thank you for your letters of February 21, 1944,
to Secretary Morgenthau and to me, enclosing copies of
the February 18, 1944, issue of "Jewish Comment".

Very truly yours,

(Signed) J. W. Pehle

J. W. Pehle
Acting Executive Director

Mr. Ben Halpern,
Editor,
"Jewish Comment",
World Jewish Congress,
330 West 42nd Street,
New York, New York.

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Dr. J. W. Pehle, p. 1

Jewish Comment

VOL. II No. 5

FEBRUARY 18, 1944

X WRB DIRECTOR APPOINTED

LESS THAN TWO weeks after the establishment of the War Refugee Board, the announcement was made, on February 4, 1944, of the appointment of its executive director. Mr. John W. Pehle, Assistant to Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau, has been granted a leave of absence from his Treasury post to undertake the functions of acting executive director of the Board. That an acting executive director was appointed can only mean that the members of the War Refugee Board were unwilling to hold up its organization for the performance of its vital functions until full agreement had been obtained on a director of such international fame as would be consistent with the importance of the post. Under Mr. Pehle, whose Treasury post as director of foreign funds control brought him into close contact with organizations responsible for such rescue work as has been done, we may expect that the Board's organization will be speedily built up and set in motion with no loss of time. At his first press conference, the new director of the War Refugee Board expressed the view that the rescue project with which the Board has been entrusted "must be done *within months*, or there may be no job to do at all." The necessary conclusions are unquestionably being drawn and put into effect.

Reports and Documents

ABOUT TRANSNISTRIA

CONFIRMATION of reports that the Rumanian Government has agreed to allow the evacuation of Jews from Transnistria comes from two Swedish newspapers, the Stockholm *Dagens Nyheter* and *Stockholms-Tidningen*, of January 2, 1944. The former paper reports that the withdrawal of Jewish forced laborers from front zones was now to be permitted, thanks to the intercession of Mme. Antonescu and Mme. Veturia Goga, wives of prominent Rumanian officials and anti-Semites. Clothes, says the report, would have to be procured for these people before their return, since their rags were so deplorable that it would create a bad impression at home. 50 per cent of those sent to the front zone

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the German-Italian armistice commission and the clandestine spy organization, thus saving hidden arms. He prevented the arrest of patriots, providing effective protection for those who were planning the coup. On November 8, 1942, he thoroughly paralyzed any possible police action. At the moment when the resistance groups were being despatched on their assignments he repaired to the Central Commissariat of Police and directed from that spot the operations and liaison of occupation forces."

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he carried on his mission to the end, disdaining the perils which threatened him; during the night of November 7-8 he gave an example of courage and magnificent bravery. He personally directed the patriot action from the Central Police Commissariat of Algiers."

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Hon. Henry Morgenthau, Jr.
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had perished, owing to the lack of medical care and the scarcity of food and clothing.

The Hungarian correspondent of the *Stockholms-Tidningen* also writes that epidemics were ravaging Jewish camps in Transnistria, and that the Rumanian Government, which had hitherto denied that Jews were being treated inhumanely, had now admitted conditions in Transnistrian camps. Both papers corroborate reports of the extortionate demands made by the Rumanian Government upon the Jewish community for the return of these internees, and for their maintenance, etc.

The counterpiece to this story is provided by accounts in German-language newspapers of southeastern Europe late in October, upon the second anniversary of the fall of Odessa, after which event Transnistria passed over to the Rumanian administration. According to the Belgrade *Donauzeitung* (October 19, 1943) in a report from the Rumanian capital Bucharest, "Transnistria today not only supports its own population, but provides abundant surplus." The *Suedost-Deutsche Tages-*

zeitung, of Timisoara, Rumania, on October 24, 1943, contained a long article entitled "The Rich Land across the Dniester," describing the wealth and fertility of the Transnistrian area, which is pictured as the richest granary in the world, next to the Mississippi Valley, and on a par with the Ukraine. In a long statistical account of its cereal and oil crops, its orchards and pasture land, its Californian fruits, and its 130,000 Volksdeutsche, the author comes to the conclusion that Transnistria is "a virgin territory whose development is under way, and . . . has enormous possibilities for future exploitation." Already the area was supplying one-half of its products to the administration of the territory, the remainder being retained by the peasants for free marketing.

If the facts were truly described in these accounts, and there is no reason to doubt their general accuracy, the notorious starvation and systematic neglect of the Jews in Transnistria becomes an even more damning testimony against Rumanian administration.

"THE PURGE OF SPLIT"

THE BELGRADE *Donauzeitung* on October 8, 1943, contained an article by war correspondent Dr. Walter Gruber that is worth quoting, if only for the frankness with which it describes the fate of civilian refugees fleeing that city before the Nazi forces. We have not often been favored by German correspondents with an unvarnished statement concerning the machine-gunning of refugees by Stukas.

Gruber says: "Until recently Jews who emigrated from former Yugoslav territory to Split (Spalato) and

had purchased Italian passes or at least permission to remain in this ancient Croatian city were able to work relatively unimpeded against the German undertaking to reorganize the southeastern area.

"Following the treacherous capitulation of Badoglio, all Italian forces in Split and vicinity surrendered their arms and encampments to Communist bands; and the Jews and their ilk emerged as the real masters of the city. Persons suspected of sympathy for the German Reich, as well as Croat Nationalists, were impris-

oned, and those not transferred elsewhere were immediately shot. However, when the German troops came closer to the city, these Jews were the first to use every means in an attempt to escape. Part of them tried to flee in boats, and others who attempted to disguise themselves, by

hastily undertaken baptism, as Italians or Croats were immediately apprehended. *But even the fugitives will not escape their merited fate; and some of them were already given their deserts by our Stukas which pursued their boats.*"

THE SEARCH FOR REFUGEES IN ROME

THE FOLLOWING order by the German Commander in Rome was broadcast to the Italian people by Rome radio on December 22, 1943, indicating a determined effort on the part of the Nazis to round up fugitives and pro-Allied elements:

"1. Any change of residence is forbidden in the city of Rome, and exceptions are only permissible with the authorization of the police.

"2. House-holders or persons acting for them, as well as the proprietors of boarding houses and similar

establishments, must make a list of the names of the residents therein, and the list must be put up in a prominent position at the entrance of each building. The lists must be divided up according to the various floors in the house.

"3. Whoever gives lodging to persons who are not registered according to regulations will be punished according to German military law.

"4. This order comes into force on publication."

CITATIONS FOR LIBERATORS

IN A recent issue of JEWISH COMMENT (January 21, 1944) we published an account of the participation of the underground movement in bringing about the Allied occupation of Algiers, from which the outstanding share of Algerian Jews was apparent. One of the Jews who took part in this feat of daring, Lieutenant Jean Dreyfus, died on the night of November 8, 1942, and was posthumously decorated for his share in the exploit.

We now learn from the Tunisian Jewish newspaper, *La Voix Juive*, of November 12, 1943, that other leading figures of the local resistance were also granted citations of the Order of the Army, in a ceremony one year after the Allied landings.

The citations read as follows:

DR. ABOULKER, HENRI: "A magnificent soldier severely wounded during the war of 1914-1918, he was the counsellor and guide of those who organized resistance in Algiers. Possessed of a courage and devotion which never failed, he hid arms in his apartment and established there, during the night of November 7-8, the staff headquarters for the resistance groups which issued the first orders for the liberation of the soil of Africa.

"He reported at his post in the Algiers radio station, which had just been occupied, and broadcast the Order of the Day of the Commander-in-Chief. He conducted the struggle for resistance in North Africa against

the German-Italian armistice commission and the clandestine spy organization, thus saving hidden arms. He prevented the arrest of patriots, providing effective protection for those who were planning the coup. On November 8, 1942, he thoroughly paralyzed any possible police action. At the moment when the resistance groups were being despatched on their assignments he repaired to the Central Commissariat of Police and directed from that spot the operations and liaison of occupation forces."

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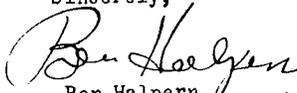
February 21, 1944.

Mr. J. W. Pehle, Acting Executive Director
War Refugee Board
Executive Office of the President
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Mr. Pehle:

Enclosed you will find a marked copy of
our publication, Jewish Comment, making reference to
matters in which you are interested.

Sincerely,



Ben Halpern
Editor.

Jewish Comment

VOL. II No. 3

FEBRUARY 4, 1944

X THE WAR REFUGEE BOARD

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT'S Executive Order establishing a War Refugee Board consisting of three important Cabinet members has been hailed by Jewish communities throughout the world as an historic act of statesmanship which marks a turning point in the attitude of Western democracies to the problems created by Hitler's extermination policy.

Military victory of itself cannot save the Jewish people in Europe; it is their tragic fate to be the only people threatened with total destruction as a prelude to the overthrow of their enemies. If they are to be saved in substantial numbers, the means and procedures at the disposal of the United Nations must be used to the full and used at once.

The provisions of the Order make it clear that the United States Government is resolved to use all available means and resources to deny victory to Hitler on this front.

The Order meets the objection which the World Jewish Congress, among other bodies, had raised to the policy hitherto outlined by the United States, in common with Great Britain. It establishes clearly that it is the policy of the United States Government not only to extend relief to refugees who have escaped from Axis and occupied countries, but also to participate in assisting such escape, as well as to extend relief to persons in danger of death at the hands of the enemy in any other way possible. This is stated distinctly in the preamble of the Order, which declares 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 to afford such victims all possible relief and assistance consistent with the successful prosecution of the war" and, later in the preamble, "in order to effectuate with all possible speed the *rescue and relief* of such victims of enemy oppression, it is hereby ordered, etc."; similarly, in the second, fourth,

*Italics ours.

fifth and sixth clauses of the Order reference is made to the *rescue and relief* of all refugees. The way has thus been cleared for a determined attempt to apply, within the limits consistent with the successful prosecution of the war, all those measures which have been advocated by the World Jewish Congress and other bodies for the rescue and relief of endangered groups in Europe: negotiation, through available channels, with governments for the evacuation of such groups, or at least for better treatment; assistance to Underground circles in defending and, wherever possible, aiding in the escape of such groups; shipment of supplies for relief such as food and medicaments.

The President's Order establishes not only the principle that the rescue and relief of Hitler's victims in Europe is an immediate aim of the United States, and an aim which it intends to pursue in common with the other United Nations (see clause 4 in the Order below), but it establishes the necessary machinery for an effective realization of these aims by the United States. The War Refugee Board consists of the heads of the diplomatic, financial and military services of this country, disposing of all the means necessary for the prosecution of rescue and relief work. By the establishment of the Board it is ensured that these means will be utilized most effectively and with the highest degree of coordination. The constitution of the Board as a body "directly responsible to the President" and the instructions given to appoint its own executive director clearly focus responsibility for this vital task, and the various clauses of the Order (1, 2, 3, and 5 especially) provide it with the necessary authority in detail for carrying out its assigned functions. Of particular importance is the clause instructed the State Department to appoint, on the recommendation of the Board, "special attaches with diplomatic status . . . to be stationed abroad in places where it is likely that assistance can be rendered to war refugees," and to work under the supervision of the executive director of the Board. In this way the Board is endowed with sufficient authority at the top. Its functions are clearly and adequately defined, and it is provided with the necessary power to implement these functions, both within the governmental structure in Washington and through operating officials stationed in strategic places as close as possible to the areas with which the Board is concerned.

One provision of the Order (clause 4) authorizes the Board and the several Departments chiefly concerned in its activities to accept the "services or contributions of private persons, private organiza-

tions, etc." This, naturally, is of particular interest to the World Jewish Congress, which has been in constant consultation with all the three Departments, State, Treasury, and War, for a long time past. These Departments know of the facilities of which the World Jewish Congress disposes in places strategically situated for the purposes of rescue and relief. Those facilities are now, as they have always been, at the disposal of the Board and the several Departments, and we may hope that, through the establishment of the Board, these will prove of much greater practical value than they have already shown themselves to be.

Reports and Documents

Executive Order No. 19417 — January 23, 1944

WHEREAS 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 to afford such victims all possible relief and assistance consistent with the successful prosecution of the war:

Now, THEREFORE, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the statutes of the United States as President of the United States and as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy, and in order to effectuate with all possible speed the rescue and relief of such victims of enemy oppression, it is hereby ordered as follows:

1. There is established in the Executive Office of the President, a war refugee board. The Board shall consist of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury and the Secretary of War. The board may request the heads of other agencies or departments to participate in its deliberations whenever matters specially affecting such agencies or departments are under consideration.
2. The board shall be charged with the responsibility for seeing that the policy of the Government, as stated in the preamble, is carried out. The functions of the board shall include, without limitation, the development of plans and programs and the inauguration of effective measures for the rescue, transportation and maintenance and relief of the victims of enemy oppression, and the establishment of havens of temporary refuge for such victims. To this end the board through appropriate channels, shall take the necessary steps to enlist the cooperation of foreign governments and obtain their participation in the execution of such plans and programs.

3. It shall be the duty of the State, Treasury and War Departments within their respective spheres, to execute at the request of the board, the plans and programs so developed and the measures so inaugurated. It shall be the duty of the heads of all agencies and departments to supply or obtain for the board such information and to extend to the board such supplies, shipping and other specified assistance and facilities, as the board may require in carrying out the provisions of this order. The State Department shall appoint special attaches with diplomatic status, on the recommendation of the board, to be stationed abroad in places where it is likely that assistance can be rendered to war refugees, the duties and responsibilities of such attaches to be defined by the board in consultation with the State Department.

4. The board and the State, Treasury and War Departments are authorized to accept the services or contributions of any private persons, private organizations, State agencies, or agencies of foreign governments in carrying out the purposes of this order. The board shall cooperate with all existing and future international organizations concerned with the problems of refugee rescue, maintenance, transportation, relief, rehabilitation and resettlement.

5. To the extent possible the board shall utilize the personnel, supplies, facilities and services of the State, Treasury and War Departments. In addition the board, within the limits of funds which may be made available, may employ necessary personnel without regard for the Civil Service laws and regulations and the classification act of 1923 as amended, and make provisions for supplies, facilities and services necessary to discharge its responsibilities. The board shall appoint an executive director who shall serve as its principle executive officer. It shall be the duty of the executive director to arrange for the prompt execution of the plans and programs developed and the measures inaugurated by the board, to supervise the activities of the special attaches and to submit frequent reports to the board on the steps taken for the rescue and relief of war refugees.

6. The board shall be directly responsible to the President in carrying out the policy of this Government, as stated in the preamble, and the board shall report to him at frequent intervals concerning the steps taken for the rescue and relief of war refugees and shall make such recommendations as the board may deem appropriate for further action to overcome any difficulties encountered in the rescue and relief of war refugees.

THE DANISH CASE: A SUMMARY

AT THIS TIME, four months after the rescue of the Danish Jews during the High Holidays at the beginning of October, a final summary of what results were achieved is possible.

The Jews in Denmark numbered about 6,000 nationals and some 2,000 refugees. Of these, according to a statement on October 25 by Henrik de Kauffmann, Danish Ambassador to the United States, some 5,000 Jews

had escaped to Sweden. There are now about 10,000 refugees from Denmark, Jewish and non-Jewish, in Sweden. Funds for the support of these refugees have been provided in the first instance by the Danish Government, and also by Swedish charitable institutions and by Jewish organizations in various countries of the world. A growing proportion of the refugees are being placed at work in Sweden. A number of Danish professors, for example, are now teaching in Swedish universities.

At the very beginning of the persecution it was reported by the Danish Press Service (October 4) that nearly 3,000 Gestapo and Elite Guard men had succeeded in apprehending 1,600 Jews. On October 16, the same source reported that about 1,000 Jews had been shipped from Copenhagen. On October 30, *Svenska Morgenbladet* told of 1,500 deportees. The arrests and deportations continued on a smaller scale thereafter, as the Germans tracked down the remaining Jews in hiding. They were applied against all of "Jewish race" including some who had been promised exemption, such as half-Jews and citizens of neutral or other foreign countries. Thus *Dagens Nyheter*, Stockholm, reported on November 30, 1943 that thirty Jews detained in the Horseroed internment camp after unsuccessful attempts to escape to Sweden had been released owing to foreign diplomatic intervention. The Swedish paper, *Ny Dag*, on December 2, 1943, identifies seventeen out of nineteen Jews who had been deported from the Horseroed internment camp to Terezin (Theresienstadt), a German prison town for Jews. It is understood that this is the destination to which all the Danish Jews who were seized have been sent. As late as December 19 it was reported that 52 children

were sent from the Vestre prison in Copenhagen to their parents in Terezin. The last Jews in the internment camp of Horseroed had been deported on December 14, according to the Danish Press Service.

Public Reaction in Denmark

The whole story of the Danish effort to rescue the Jews in their country cannot be told until after the war. But the public record of overwhelming opposition voiced by all sections of the Danish people is one of the most remarkable manifestations of conscience in this war.

According to a *Dagens Nyheter* report on October 13, 1943, the Danish Foreign Office realized what were the German intentions on the afternoon of October 1 and attempted to intercede at an appointment scheduled for that evening at 6 P.M. The appointment was cancelled on half an hour's notice, and all telephone lines were disconnected, including those of the Ministries. At 9:15 the Danish Foreign Office was informed that "elements hostile to the State" were being arrested. At 9:30 Danish officials met the German representative, Best, learned officially that by "elements hostile to the State" were meant Jews, communicated the King's protest, and attempted to persuade Best at least to intern the Jews in Denmark instead of deporting them. Best agreed to refer this suggestion to Berlin, and made various other promises: that only full Jews would be interned; that only those suitable for work would be sent to Germany while others would go to Bohemia, where they would "be looked after in a suitable manner," even being permitted to correspond with their Danish relatives; that (though plundering had already occurred) the property of the deported Jews would not be

confiscated. These promises were repeated to the Danish Foreign Office on the following days, both orally and in writing, but most of them were not kept.

The wave of protest which swept Denmark after the German deportations got under way spread to all sections of the population. On October 3 (according to *Svenska Morgenbladet*, October 6, 1943), the following pastoral letter of the Danish bishops was read in all churches:

"Everywhere where the Jews are persecuted it is the duty of Christian congregations to protest, in the first place because we will never forget that Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, according to God's promise, to the chosen people of Israel. In the history of the Jews before the birth of Christ there is to be found the preparation for the salvation which God had prepared for all human beings. This is shown by the fact that the Old Testament is part of our Bible. In the second place, because the persecution of the Jews conflicts with the humanitarian precepts and the altruism of the preachings of the Church. Christ said that every individual is dear to God. In the third place, because the persecution of the Jews conflicts with the sense of justice of the Danish people traditional in Danish culture through the centuries. According to the Constitution all Danish citizens have secured equal rights and a responsibility towards the law. We interpret religious liberty as the right to exercise our worship according to our vocation and conscience, and so that race and religion will never mean that a human being is deprived of his rights, liberty, or property. Regardless of differing religious views, we will fight in order that our Jewish brothers and sisters may secure the same liberty as ourselves, which

we consider more precious than life itself.

"We, the leaders of the Danish Church, fully realize that it is our duty to be law-abiding citizens, who do not unduly oppose those who exercise authority, but at the same time our conscience compels us to assert justice and to protest against every violation of it. Therefore we will, on all occasions, clearly confess to the world that we shall obey God rather than man."

One of the inducements offered to the Danes in the attempt to gain their sympathy or at least acquiescence was the release of prominent interned Danish officers on the occasion of the deportation of the Jews. The bribe, according to *Dagens Nyheter*, October 8, 1943, was scornfully rejected, and as a protest the officers refused to accept their release.

On October 12, 1943 the chairmen of twenty-one youth organizations, the Academic Architects' Association, the Danish Pharmaceutical Association, the Danish Engineers' Association, the Danish Medical Association, the Danish Veterinarians' Association, the Danish Dentists' Association, the Lawyers' Union, the Danish Chemists' Association, and the Gymnastic Teachers' Association sent Dr. Best a note of protest, declaring:

"The Danish population regards the Jews as fellow citizens on an equal footing with any other Danish citizens, and no antagonism exists between them and the Jews. The action against the Jews is therefore regarded as an action against the entire people, and only hampers the endeavors of our Associations to maintain quiet and order during present conditions. The undersigned Associations therefore earnestly request you to discontinue the action which

is being taken against the Jews in this country."

The Danish Government Officials' Joint Committee, representing thirty civil service organizations, requested the Foreign Office to forward to the German authorities the Joint Committee's protest against the internment and the deportation of Danish citizens by the Germans. Such measures, declared their statement, absolutely conflict with the principles of justice traditional in Denmark, and have provoked so much indignation and bitterness among the entire Danish people that *the quiet continuation of the work of the functionaries is at stake* (*Dagens Nyheter*, October 12, 1943.)

Other groups which protested included the Association Det Frie Nord, the Industrial Council, the Danish Employers Association, the Industrial Council of the Workers' Movement, the Danish Trade Union Council, the provisional Chamber of Commerce, the Shipowners' Association, and the Agricultural Council. (Danish Press Service, October 11, 1943.)

Danish Jews in Terezin

The old fortress town of Terezin in Czechoslovakia has long been

used by the Germans as a dungeon specially intended for Czech, German, Austrian, and Western European Jews. Although conditions there are bad enough (upwards of 50,000 Jews, most of them elderly, are now living there in quarters made available by clearing out 7,000 Germans), Terezin is apparently being administered on conditions which will allow the Germans to present it as an exhibit to prove they treated Jews humanely: that is, its inhabitants are not being killed off. The Germans have even permitted food packages to be sent in, as well as mail.

Possibly because of the strong attitude of protest taken by the Danes, it seems that the Germans have kept at least a part of Best's promises: they permit the Danish Jews to write home. *Svenska Dagbladet* on November 23, 1943, stated that 500 post cards had reached the Copenhagen municipal authorities from Terezin and were being distributed all over Denmark. After negotiations with the German authorities, the Danes obtained permission to send a limited supply of clothing to the internees.

TOTALITARIAN SCIENCE

ACADEMIC readers of Jewish Comment will be interested in hearing of the assignments to which Nazi psychologists are currently devoting themselves.

The German News Agency (November 8, 1943) reports from Berlin: At the annual meeting of the German Society for Psychology in Weimar, a number of papers by well-known German research workers on the psychological problems of

the peoples of the Eastern Area were discussed. Research was directed to three points:

First, examinations to determine the subjects' inherent expressive and creative forces and standard of performance; second, to extensive racial-biological records; and third, to serial comparative examinations of nations living in the same or very similar areas, from a cultural point of view. The comparison of the re-

sults, we are told, assures a high degree of objective truth. The examinations carried out during the past few years not only yielded fresh evidence of the profound differences in the mental make-up of the Eastern peoples, but led to other very important discoveries.

Conclusions with highly significant implications were reached as to the possibility of a co-existence of Central and West European peoples with those of the East.

The psychological effects of mix-

ing several of the Eastern nations were also investigated. Such a step, it appears, would entail far-reaching disturbances of psychological harmony, such as a reduction of vitality, a marked prevalence of exhibitionism, a mentality of social seclusion and a drop in the standard of efficiency. The realization, everywhere confirmed, that nationalities and racial groups in the East in no way correspond to linguistic distribution, but differ fundamentally in most of the area examined, is said to be of the utmost importance.

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In reply please
refer to: 132

FEB 18 1944

Dear Mr. Halpern:

Thank you for your letter of February
10, 1944, enclosing a copy of your publication,
"Jewish Comment".

Very truly yours,

(Signed) J. W. Pehle

J. W. Pehle
Acting Executive Director

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February 10, 1944.

Mr. John W. Pehle, Actg. Exec. Director
War Refugee Board
Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir:

Enclosed you will find a marked copy of
our publication, Jewish Comment, making reference to
matters in which you are interested.

Sincerely,

Ben Halpern
Ben Halpern
Editor.

2/12/44

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