

LINDER, HAROLD (COMMANDER)

000730

October 23, 1944

Mr. Pehle

Mr. Abrahamson

I am returning herewith the memorandum prepared by Commander Harold Linder on the post-war refugee problem in Europe.

The main point Linder seems to make is that a more complete program than now exists is needed to care for refugees in the post-war world, and that governments must take a major part in both planning and financing if any program is to be effective.

I cannot resist pointing out that Linder seems unduly concerned about political conditions and property rights. In the third paragraph of the first page, for example, he implies that UNRRA's activity is designed to prevent "the growth of unstable -- if not revolutionary -- political conditions." In the first lines of Page 2, and in the sentence in parentheses at the close of the second full paragraph on Page 3, he shows concern over the restitution of property rights as an important factor in solving the refugee problem.

Although I do not happen to agree that the motivation for UNRRA is or should be political, and although I am quite convinced that most refugees have only a theoretical interest in property rights, I agree with the general analysis of the problem as set forth by Linder. In fact, all of us at the War Refugee Board are convinced that the post-war problem will be almost fantastic in scope and that the private organizations will need all the government help they can get, both in setting up programs and in financing them.

But it also seems to me that this is hardly the time to worry about details of private and public responsibility in the post-war program. My reasons follow:

1. UNRRA is still groping, both for a program and for a proper set of relationships with the several governments. Until UNRRA is in fact invited to participate in relief and rehabilitation work, and until it shows whether it can handle these problems, it is quite impossible to work out any clear responsibility for private agencies in these

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fields. Theoretically, a well-functioning UNRRA should preclude the need for private agencies in relief and rehabilitation activities, except for special religious and sectarian approaches.

2. The Intergovernmental Committee, which will have the responsibility for the non-repatriable people, is feeling its way most carefully. Their estimates of this population are quite vague. Our latest discussion with Mr. Malin would indicate that the great bulk of their problem will consist of non-repatriable Russians and that the number of Jews involved will be relatively small. It is impossible to state at this time whether the Intergovernmental Committee will keep all its membership, whether it will succeed in obtaining the necessary finances, and whether it will have the vision and drive to do the job.

3. The size and distribution of the refugee population is also indeterminate at the present time. We know from the experience in France, for example, that the number of surviving Jews was greater than had been expected. On the other hand, it is quite possible that in the last days of a Nazi dominated Hungary, there may be wholesale slaughter.

My own conclusion is that Linder has raised some interesting questions, but that the answers cannot be available, at least until the war in Europe is over. Both UNRRA and ICG are, I believe, aware of the problems since they have established close relationships with private agencies.

If a gesture of some sort is necessary, it may be desirable for Linder and some others to sit down together and explore the problem in its general aspects.

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Mr. Pehle
Mr. Linder
Mr. Abrahamson
Mr. ...

JW-10/23/44

Oct. 20,
1944

Mrs. Klotz
J. W. Pehle

Returned herewith is the memorandum prepared by Harold Linder which you wanted to read. I have made a copy of the memorandum and am formulating my views thereon. I want to talk to Abrahamson about the problem when he gets back the first of next week.

(Signed J. W. Pehle

Attachment

JWPehle:1hh

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Subject: Refugees in Europe

In 1938 the President, recognizing the inhumanity implicit in the racial and political laws promulgated by the Nazis in Germany, called a conference of democratic governments at Evian in France which resulted in the creation of the Inter-Governmental Committee. The result of its labors were not particularly salutary largely because the participating governments were limited in their ability to accept refugees by their respective immigration laws, and because the German Government imposed so great a tax upon emigrants as to leave the vast majority of them without resources adequate to make a start in a new country. Arrangements were about to be concluded which promised a slight amelioration of the financial problem when hostilities in Europe broke out.

One of the products of the work of the Inter-Governmental Committee was the creation of the "Coordinating Foundation", a private eleemosynary organization sponsored by the Committee. Its trustees comprise a distinguished group of Americans and Englishmen, and its executive head is M. Paul Van Zeeland. The Foundation has, because of world conditions, been largely dormant for the past five years, but it is potentially a nucleus around which a good deal of work on a non-sectarian basis might be done.

By their participation in UNRRA the nations have recognized not only a moral responsibility for relief in war ravaged areas but have given tangible evidence of their appreciation of the fact that without such activity the soil will have been fertilized for the growth of unstable - if not revolutionary - political conditions. But the Director-General of UNRRA has stated that the problem of displaced persons who will wish to emigrate rather than return to their homelands was not within his province but rather was the concern of the Inter-Governmental Committee.

With the elimination of Fascist governments in Europe, a large number of political refugees will return to their own countries. What has already begun to happen in Italy will presumably follow in Germany, Austria and Eastern Europe. To some considerable extent, this may occur even in the case of Jews, but it should constantly be borne in mind that anti-Semitism - particularly in Eastern Europe - had not by

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any means been eliminated even during the dozen years which followed the last war. Needless to say, for those who were possessed of means their decision will be seriously influenced by the extent to which they may look forward to the restitution of their property. In this situation, at least, human rights will be greatly influenced by property rights. It is not unreasonable, however, to anticipate that a considerable number of these people will resist return being fearful of the fundamental attitude of their former compatriots. Except for the limited number who will be absorbed in the areas where they are now resident or being held in camps, and who will presumably fare as well or poorly as the balance of the population, there are then three possibilities:

- (a) They will be returned to their homelands; or
- (b) They will re-emigrate from their places of present refuge; or
- (c) They will emigrate to Palestine.

Assistance in return to homelands, which may include the necessity for United-Nations travel documents, etc., will presumably be made available by UNRRA which will have both funds and organization. Similar mechanism and funds will have to be provided for those endeavoring to emigrate. Such movement will, except for Palestine, be successful only as people infiltrate and take natural places in the economic life of their adopted homes. One should have no great confidence in the practicability of re-training the general run of migrants to become farmers or pioneers. Migration works well only when it works naturally. The evidence is clear - Alaska, resettlement experiments in the United States, the Dominican Republic, and under I.C.A. auspices in the Argentine - all point in the same direction.

As to those who will wish to go to Palestine, to what extent this will be feasible from the political point of view of the British, it is not possible for the writer to judge. Nor does he know whether the subject is one which has been included in any of the conversations between the President and the Prime Minister. It is fairly clear, however, that politically it is likely to be impractical to assume that this Government and others could justify expenditures for more than transportation for a selected group of refugees all of whom were going to Palestine. There is, furthermore, the problem of absorptive capacity of that country and the cost of settlement after arrival. Private funds will, of

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course, be available but they will be negligible in amount - even assuming unprecedented generosity - in relation to the problem. To immigrate and settle 500,000 Jews in Palestine - double the number now there - may well cost \$200 millions and that would account for only 15-30% of those estimated to be left in Europe.

The governments can, however, and must if unnecessary chaos is to be avoided provide the major portion of the funds and mechanisms necessary for repatriation, and to assist in general migration. Private organizations have in the past, and no doubt will continue in the future, to give liberally. In point of size and influence probably the most noteworthy has been the Joint Distribution Committee which over the past thirty years has expended almost \$150 millions for purposes of relief, education, training, medical care and economic rehabilitation. Since the inception of the Nazi regime, however, an ever increasing share of its budget has been devoted to assisting migration or to the support of refugees in their temporary havens.

The situation which private organizations will face in the immediate future will differ substantially from their past experience in that heretofore private American funds have gone to supplement the funds provided by the local community. Thus in pre-Hitler Germany, in France, in Italy, in North Africa e.g., private American assistance was not required; in Eastern Europe grants were added to local funds; and in recent years money provided to communities in France, Holland, Belgium to help care for refugees. Today not only are all these local communities impoverished, but in Central and Eastern Europe it is seriously questioned whether the nucleus of an organization on which to build exists. (Here too whether or not property restitution is accomplished will influence greatly the situation which will be faced.)

Current annual income of the Joint Distribution Committee approximates \$10 millions, a not inconsiderable sum raised privately from a small segment of the American people. It is a tiny amount if related to the problem of misplaced people in Europe. The current demands on it are such that only small fractions can be met. Moreover, there is genuine concern that in the all too natural tendency to rush in and succor the acute

Harold F. Linder
Age - 44, married, two children

Retired from successful business in 1938 and went abroad as volunteer representative of J.D.C.; at the request of Mr. Rublee then Director of Intergovernmental Committee, joined his Staff in London for duration of his tenure. Returned to United States August 1939, became Vice Chairman of J.D.C. and chairman of its Finance Committee. Assisted in organization of Coordinating Foundation and member of its executive committee. Assisted in negotiation, as representative of Coordinating Foundation, in the establishment of a refugee settlement in the Dominican Republic.

In 1941 volunteered for service with the Government and went with Navy Department, commissioned Lt. Comdr. January 1942. Present rank - Commander, USNR - Office of Procurement and Material, Navy Department.

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