PRIVATE MESSAGES SENT: MAYER, ANDRE

000289

war Refugee Bd
MW Pehle
1 copy only

PARAPHRASE OF TELEGRAM RECEIVED

FROM: American Legation, Bern

TO: Secretary of State, Washington

DATED: April 21, 1944

NUMBER: 2561

CONTROL COPY

[redacted]

Department's cable no. 1168 dated April 6 is referred to herewith.

Following is substance of message from Blochlaine for Andre Mayer:

Here there has been great interest in the President's statement but I agree with you that an effort must be made to give it more effect. Swiss Government's official attitude concerning Jewish and non-Jewish refugees is as you state, but at times there have been deviations from rules under pressure of public opinion, thanks particularly to tireless efforts of organizations and individuals. There is much arbitrariness and secrecy involved, and it is impossible to secure exact statistics.

For time being, apparently, rejections are not numerous, principally because of few arrivals due to danger in approaching heavily guarded frontier and travel difficulties, but restrictive policy undoubtedly has heretofore prevented arrival of great number of wretched Jews of both sexes who are now deported, imprisoned or dead and it still acts as

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State Dept. Letter, 1-11-73
By E. H. Parks Date SEP 11 1972

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acts as deterrent on efforts to escape.

Various persons concerned with the problem have been contacted by me and I believe it is useless to form new group here or stir up new movement here. There is being done or tried everything possible that can be done within the country.

United Nations Governments, to expect radical change in situation, should: 1. Refer to Government of Switzerland to take over substantial share of cost of upkeep of new refugees. 2. Give Swiss Government formal undertaking that with this reasonable length of time after end of war refugees entering after given date will be removed.

The first point is of secondary importance. Point number two is essential and is very core of the question, according to competent advice. We have reason to believe that, with such guarantee, Swiss Government could be induced to open its frontiers either under pressure of opinion or of its own accord. The time for such initiative to have effect appears ripe. /b

HARRISON

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WAR REFUGEE BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.
1944 APR 25 PM 3 48

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April 25, 1944

My dear Mr. Meyer:

The following is a paraphrase of a message transmitted for you to M. Bloch Laine on April 6, 1944:

"There have been appointed members of the War Refugee Board the Secretaries of War, State and Treasury for the purpose of taking all action to rescue victims of enemy persecution and bringing them relief. In a public statement on March 24 President Roosevelt urged the free peoples of Europe to open their frontiers temporarily to all victims of enemy oppression. It was stated by him that means will be found for their support and maintenance until the tyrant is driven from their homelands and they may return and in the meantime havens of refuge will be found for them.

"According to a report received here, the Swiss Government is not admitting Jewish refugees from France except children, old people, pregnant women and those having close relatives in Switzerland. I have consulted with the War Refugee Board and with their approval I ask you to enlist the aid of influential Swiss persons (1) to make inquiries into the accuracy of the report mentioned above and (2) if the report proves to be correct, to intercede with the appropriate authorities to obtain modification of the Swiss procedures on humanitarian grounds. We will appreciate whatever you can accomplish in this direction and you may have suggestions for action to be taken here by us. The American Legation at Bern will transmit messages to me through the War Refugee Board and you can report to me through this channel any developments in the matter which may take place."

The following is a paraphrase of M. Bloch Laine's reply which was transmitted by the State Department to the War Refugee Board on April 24:

"Here there has been great interest in the President's statement but I agree with you that an effort must be made to give it more effect. Swiss Government's official attitude concerning Jewish and non-Jewish refugees is as you state, but at times there

have

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have been deviations from rules under pressure of public opinion, thanks particularly to tireless efforts of organizations and individuals. There is much arbitrariness and secrecy involved, and it is impossible to secure exact statistics.

"For time being, apparently, rejections are not numerous, principally because of few arrivals due to danger in approaching heavily guarded frontier and travel difficulties, but restrictive policy undoubtedly has heretofore prevented arrival of great number of wretched Jews of both sexes who are now deported, imprisoned or dead and it still acts as deterrent on efforts to escape.

"Various persons concerned with the problem have been contacted by me and I believe it is useless to form new group here or stir up new movement here. There is being done or tried everything possible that can be done within the country.

"United Nations Governments, to expect radical change in situation, should: 1. Refer to Government of Switzerland to take over substantial share of cost of upkeep of new refugees. 2. Give Swiss Government formal undertaking that with this reasonable length of time after end of war all refugees entering after given date will be removed.

"The first point is of secondary importance. Point number two is essential and is very core of the question, according to competent advice. We have reason to believe that, with such guarantee, Swiss Government could be induced to open its frontiers either under pressure of opinion or of its own accord. The time for such initiative to have effect appears ripe."

You may be assured that the Board has been making every effort to satisfy the Swiss on the second point which M. Bloch Laine makes. Mr. Lesser expects to be in New York on Wednesday, May 3, and will call you on the telephone to arrange an appointment if possible to discuss these matters.

Very truly yours,

p.a. J. W. Pehle

J. W. Pehle
Executive Director

Andre Meyer, Esquire
Lazard Frerers,
44 Wall Street,
New York City.

LSLesser:db 4/25/44

L.S.L.

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War Refugee Bd
Mr Pike
1 copy only

PARAPHRASE OF TELEGRAM SENT

Files

TO: American Legation, Bern

FROM: Secretary of State, Washington

DATE: April 6, 1944

NO.: 1168

CONTROL COPY

[redacted]

Following is for Harrison from War Refugee Board.

It is requested that the following message from Andre Meyer, New York, be transmitted to Jean Frederic Bloch Laine, Hotel de l'Ecu, Geneva.

There ~~had~~ have been appointed members of the War Refugee Board the Secretaries of War, State and Treasury for the purpose of taking all action to rescue victims of enemy persecution and bringing them relief. In a public statement on March 24 President Roosevelt urged the free peoples of Europe to open their frontiers temporarily to all victims of enemy oppression. It was stated by him that means will be found for their support and maintenance until the tyrant is driven from their homelands and they may return and in the meantime havens of refuge will be ~~sought~~ found for them.

According to a report received here, the Swiss Government is not admitting Jewish refugees from France except children,

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State Dept. Letter, 1-11-78
By R. H. Parks Date SEP 11 1972

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children, old people, pregnant women and those having close relatives in Switzerland. I have consulted with the War Refugee Board and with their approval I ask you to enlist the aid of influential Swiss persons (1) to make inquiries into the accuracy of the report mentioned above and (2) if the report proves to be correct, to intercede with the appropriate authorities to obtain modification of the Swiss procedures on humanitarian grounds. We will appreciate whatever you can accomplish in this direction and you may have suggestions for action to be taken here by us. The American Legation at Bern will transmit messages to me through the War Refugee Board and you can report to me through this channel any developments in the matter which may take place.

RECEIVED
WAR REFUGEE BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.
MAY 15 1944
CSC

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March 28, 1944

10:20 a.m.

To: Mr. Stettinius

From: J. W. Pehle

Attention: George Warren

Please cable this message to Minister Harrison, Bern, from Andre Meyer, New York, for delivery to Jean Frederic Bloch Laine, Hotel de l'Ecu, Geneva. The cost of this message should be charged to Andre Meyer, 44 Wall Street, New York City.

(Signed) J.W. Pehle

LSLesser:als 3/27/44

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CABLE TO MINISTER HARRISON, BERN

Please deliver the following message from Andre Meyer, New York, to Jean Frederic Bloch Laine, Hotel de l'Ecu, Geneva:

The War Refugee Board which consists of the Secretaries of State, Treasury and War has been created here to take all action to bring relief to and rescue victims of enemy persecution. On March 24 in a public statement, President Roosevelt urged the free peoples of Europe temporarily to open their frontiers to all victims of enemy oppression. He said: QUOTE 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. UNQUOTE

Reports have reached here that Swiss government is not admitting Jewish refugees from France except children, old people, pregnant women and those with close relatives in Switzerland. I have consulted War Refugee Board and with its consent I ask you to enlist aid of influential Swiss personalities to inquire into correctness of this report, and if it appears to be correct, for them to intercede with appropriate authorities with view of obtaining on humanitarian grounds modification of Swiss attitude. I will be grateful for whatever you can accomplish or recommend should be done from here. Please let me know of any developments in this matter. You can communicate with me on this subject through the American Legation at Bern who will take messages for transmittal to me by War Refugee Board. Regards. Andre Meyer.

L.S.L.

LSLesser:als 3/27/44

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ANDRE MEYER

44 Wall Street,
New York 5, N. Y.
March 24, 1944.

Mr. Lawrence Lesser,
War Refugee Board,
Treasury Department,
Treasury Building, Room 164,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Lesser,

I am sending you herewith draft of a cable to be sent to Mr. Bloch-Lainé in Switzerland.

Please make any modification you may deem necessary as to its contents.

Let me thank you again for the very kind reception you gave me. I do not need to repeat how happy I will be to help you in the work you have undertaken.

Yours sincerely,

André Meyer

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Cmd By Mail
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SPECIAL DELIVERY

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Mr. Lawrence LESSER,
War Refugee Board,
Treasury Department,
Treasury Building, Room 164,
WASHINGTON, D. C.

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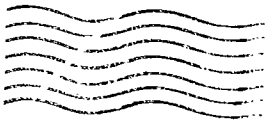
ANDRE MEYER

44 Wall Street,
New York 5, N. Y.



Jean
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March 21, 1944.

Jean Frederic Bloch Laine,
Hotel de l'Ecu,
Geneva, Switzerland.

American Government has been informed that in accordance with recent Swiss Government decision male adults of 18 to 60 escaping from France who are not political refugees will be stopped from entering Switzerland.

In view of circumstances and in addition to representations made by diplomatic channels the War Refugee Board wishes influential Swiss personalities to make independent efforts in view of obtaining modification of this decision from a humanitarian point of view.

American authorities have asked me to explore possibilities and approved my suggestion to call on you for your cooperation. Would be grateful for whatever you can accomplish or eventually recommend.

Please cable me through United States Embassy in Berne who will transmit.

For your information War Refugee Board is government agency which has been recently created by the State War and Treasury Departments to deal with refugee problems as a whole.

Regards

ANDRE MEYER.