

Requests for Specific Aid: WILSON, CHIL-HEURYK

000388

FROM : Secretary of State, Washington

TO : American Legation, Bern

DATE : October 13, 1944

NUMBER: 3496  
X

To Minister Harrison and McClelland.

1. With reference to Department's 3120 of September 9, 3255 of September 21 and earlier communications regarding admission of Jewish children from Hungary, Paraguayan Minister of Education by communication of August 30 agreed in principle to extend to children from Hungary previous Paraguayan consent to give asylum to a number of refugee children from France to be determined later, subject to certain economic conditions.

On September 14, Ecuadorean ministry of foreign affairs informed Embassy that "it is believed that Ecuador would be able to receive up to three hundred children provided that UNRRA furnished the funds necessary for the case."

By note of August 31, Dominican Foreign Minister informed Embassy that since it made "no distinction in the nationality of the children which it would receive there is no inconvenience that they should also proceed from Hungary." This applies to a previous Dominican agreement to accept between 1000 and 2000 refugee children.

2. Substance of your 6469 of September 29 is being communicated to Embassy (note for appropriate action. In the meantime, the following Ecuadorean aide-memoire to Embassy of August 24 has been received.

QUOTE The Ministry for Foreign Affairs, having been informed of the persecution which at present is taking place in Hungary against persons of a certain race, among whom are many who possess passports issued in the names of American Republics, has addressed its diplomatic representative in Switzerland to arrange for the Federal Government as representative of the interests of Ecuador in Axis nations or satellites thereof to notify the Government of Hungary that the Government of Ecuador recognizes the validity of documents or passports issued in its name and that accordingly it is expected that the bearers of such papers will be accorded the rights, privileges and immunities which Ecuadorean nationals enjoy. Likewise it has been requested to state that the United States is authorized to negotiate the exchange of such persons.

The

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State Dept. Letter, 1-11-72

By R. H. Parks Date SEP 12 1972

000389

The Ecuadoran Ministry for Foreign Affairs, in replying to the aide memoire of the Embassy of the United States dated August 19, reiterates its intention of not declaring invalid passports granted illegally while they may serve to protect the life and property of their holders but (reiterates) that these persons are not thereby authorized to enter Ecuador. UNQUOTE

Pending further action by Ecuador, please try to make use of above to ensure prompt action by Ecuadoran consulate and Swiss government in defense of holders of Ecuadoran documents.

3. With reference to last paragraph of your 6469 of August 20, it is noted that the request by the Hungarian Government as implying a request to represent Ecuador in Hungary to the extent stated, and have adopted procedure analogous to that described in your 6219 of September 20. Department's 2490 of July 21 item six applies to this case.

4. By note of August 14 Haitian Foreign Ministry informed Amembassy that the following note has been sent on August 11 to Haitian legation Bern:

QUOTE Referring to cablegram of the 31st of July please ask Federal Government to communicate the following declaration to the German Government: 'Having learned that the following persons, namely, Abraham Berger, Eugenia Berger, Leon Muszynski and Lili Muszynski, holders of passports delivered in the name of Haiti, have been removed by the German authorities from the civilian internment camp at Wittel to an unknown destination, the Haitian Government protests energetically against the treatment inflicted upon the above-mentioned persons, STOP The Haitian Government urgently asks for information concerning their address and their health and expects their immediate transfer to a civilian internment camp where they would be easily available for exchange and where, in awaiting this exchange, they will be placed under the supervision of the Protecting Power and the International Red Cross. STOP. The Haitian Government also declares that it will not permit that Germany place in doubt the validity of any documents delivered in its name and that it expects that the German Government will accord the holders of these documents the same treatment which the German Government expects to obtain for its nationals in the Western Hemisphere. STOP. Finally, the Haitian Government reserves the right to take action against any ill treatment which might be inflicted upon the above-mentioned persons and upon all persons who may be in the same position. UNQUOTE

5. With

5. With reference to your 5281 of August 14, the following note from Cuban Ministry of State was received by Amembassy on September 19:

QUOTE Although the data on Gelernter are not sufficient to enable a quick search, since it is a humanitarian matter the Government of Cuba desires to avail itself of the good offices of the Government of the United States of America to the end that all possible protection be given to Gelernter through the means which the North American Government uses in similar cases. The Ministry will continue the investigation started in the Department of Citizenship and Immigration in order to verify the exactness of the information and the Embassy will be duly informed. UNQUOTE.

Please take appropriate action.

6. With reference to your 6524 of September 30, please express to Swiss authorities this Government's appreciation of their action in conveying to Hungarian officials the message referred to therein.

THIS IS MRB CABLE TO BERG NO. 213.

HULL

cc: Miss Chauncey (for the Sec'y) Abrahamson, Akzin, Cohn, Drury, DuBois, Friedman, Gaston, Hodel, Lesser, Larks, Fannon, McCormack, Pehle, Files.

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PARAPHRASE OF TELEGRAM RECEIVED

FROM: American Legation, Bern  
TO: Secretary of State, Washington  
DATE: September 30, 1944  
NUMBER: 6524  
X

Reference is made in the following to the Department's September 21 telegram No. 3255,

The Legation wishes to report in connection with second paragraph of message referred to above that, in accordance with instructions of the Department, it communicated to Inter-cross by letter the substance of numbered paragraphs one and two of the Department's August 19 cable No. 2863, numbered paragraph three thereof to Swiss Foreign Office for communication to the authorities of Hungary. The reply which Inter-cross made to Legation's letter is summarized in Legation's September 3 cable No. 5796. According to Swiss note dated September 26 the Swiss Budapest Legation communicated to the Hungarian Government the substance of numbered paragraph 3 of Department's telegram No. 2863, on the 6th of September. On the same date Hungarian Government was also advised by said Legation of substance of paragraph two under numbered section one of August 23 cable No. 2900 from the Department.

The Wilner Case mentioned in last paragraph of Department's cable under reference, which was also the subject of Department's September 2 cable No. 3038, is being taken up with Swiss authorities again by Legation. If cases involving individuals who claim U. S. nationality were made the subject of separate instructions from the Department it would be most helpful to us.

HARRISON

Miss Chauncey (for the Sec'y) Abrahamson, Akzin, Cohn, Drury, DuBois, Friedman, Gaston, Hodel, Laughlin, Lesser, Marks, Mannon, McCormack, Files, Pehle.

DECLASSIFIED  
State Dept. Letter, 1-11-72  
By R. H. Parks Date SEP 12 1972

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ORIGINAL TEXT OF TELEGRAM SWIT

FROM: Secretary of State, Washington  
TO: American Legation, Bern  
DATED: September 21, 1944  
NUMBER: 3255

FOR MCCLELLAND:

1. With reference to earlier communications regarding admission of Jewish children from Hungary, Amembassy Habana reports that by note of August 14 Cuban government agreed to lodge 1,000 refugee children now in France and Hungary. Amembassy London advised by IGC that Brazilian government is ready to accept 500 Jewish refugee children from Hungary.

2. With reference to your 5796 of September 3, clarification is desired. Since Department's 2853 (erroneously given as 2863) of August 19, WRB's 130 was aimed at Swiss government rather than Intercross action. Nevertheless, Intercross attitude is regretted and you are requested to convey to Intercross Board's feeling that fear of misinterpretation should not be allowed to stand in the way if supervision of deportations can alleviate suffering of deportees. The very presence of Intercross observers might have a salutary effect beyond mere humanization of treatment during deportation. Refer to Department's 1806 of May 25.

3. With reference to your 5888 of September 7, regret is expressed at the inability of Swiss authorities to transmit message contained in Department's 2933 of August 25. In the opinion of the Board, the purpose would be accomplished by the mere awareness of Hungarian government that outside world is informed of abuses occurring in Hungary, whether or not they would accept the message in a formal sense.

4. With reference to your 5805 of September 4, paragraph two, it is considered here that documents in question may be deemed to be covered by Salvadorian declaration reported in paragraph six of your 3871 of June 17. Accordingly, if in your judgment delivery of such documents would assist victims of enemy persecution, you may do so, simultaneously cabling Board indicating numbers of documents delivered and persons covered. It is also suggested that these persons be included in lists which you will present to Swiss authorities pursuant to Department's 2407 of July 13 paragraph numbered six and Department's 3180 of September 14 paragraph numbered one.

5. In the

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State Dept. Letter, 1-11-72

By R. E. Fink Date SEP 12 1972

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5. In the same connection, the wisdom of using the term "fraudulent" in any communication is seriously questioned, as being inconsistent with the stand taken by Department and Board and the Inter-American Emergency Advisory Committee for Political Defense.

6. With reference to your 5894 of September 7, please thank Swiss authorities for information reported therein and request them to continue pressing German government on basis of Department's 3180 of September 14, WRB's 164, and Department's 2490 of July 21.

7. Department's and Board's attention has been called to the case of Chil-Henryk Wilner, reported to be the son of an American citizen, and last known to have been in Belsenbergen.

Pursuant to Department's 1269 of April 13, 1944, please advise Swiss government that Wilner's claim to American citizenship, based on the citizenship of his father, is under investigation by the Department and that until the Swiss Government is specifically advised to the contrary by the Department, Wilner must be presumed to be a citizen of the United States in accordance with aforementioned Department's 1269. If necessary to protect Wilner, and consistent with protection of other claimants to nationality of any American Republic, Swiss may of course advise German authorities of the foregoing.

THIS IS WRB CABLE TO BERN NO. 175

HULL

Miss Chauncey (for the Secy) Abrahamson, Akzin, Cohn, Drury, DuBois, Friedman, Gaston, Hodel, Laughlin, Lesser, Mannon, Marks, McCormack, Fliess

000394

ORIGINAL TEXT OF TELEGRAM SENT

FROM: Secretary of State, Washington  
TO: AMLEGATION, Bern  
DATED: April 13, 1944  
NUMBER: 1269

FROM WAR REFUGEE BOARD FOR THE MINISTER

The War Refugee Board is informed that there are small groups of refugees from Poland interned at Vittel, France and Bergen - Belsen, Germany, who claim American citizenship. The War Refugee Board is further advised that the Germans may make inquiry of the Swiss Government as to the validity of such claims. You are instructed to advise appropriate officials of the Swiss Government at the proper time that all such inquiries are to be answered in substance as follows:

Upon the receipt from the Swiss Government of all pertinent information available to the Germans relating to any claim to United States citizenship, asserted by any person within territory under enemy control, the Department will undertake fully to investigate the matter. While any particular claim to United States citizenship is under investigation by the Department and until the Swiss Government is specifically advised to the contrary by the Department, the claimant must be presumed to be a citizen of the United States and must be accorded all the rights, privileges and immunities to which such citizens are entitled with the exception that financial assistance may not (repeat not) be extended until the Department specifically authorizes such assistance.

The foregoing is in reference to the Department's 1151, April 5, 1944.

Miss Gannaway (for the Sec'y) Abrahamson, Aksin, Bernstein, Cohn, Dubois, Friedman, Gaston, Hodal, Laughlin, Lesser, Lufford, Mann, Mannon, Marks, McCreack, Paul, Pehls, Pollak, Rains, Sargoy, Smith, Standish, Stewart, Weipstein, H. D. White, Files

DECLASSIFIED  
State Dept. Letter 1-11-78  
By R. H. Parks Date SEP 12 1972

000395

September 12, 1944

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILES

The purpose of the attached draft of a cable is to safeguard the life of Chil-Fenryk Wilner, born December 17, 1902 in Poland, reported to be the son and brother of American citizens and, in view of the reported naturalization of his father, David Wilner, to possess some prima facie claim to U. S. citizenship. His father's naturalization certificate number 2310860 is said to have been issued by the U. S. District Court in New York. David Wilner has also been issued a U. S. passport No. 3433.

It is not proposed that this claim be investigated by the Department of State, however speedily this could be done, prior to communicating with our legation at Bern. On the contrary, it is proposed that the cable be sent immediately and the investigation should follow. Should the investigation lead to negative results, it is expected, of course, that in line with our repeated requests to the other American republics, this Government would not communicate such results to Switzerland while the claimant's life is in jeopardy at the hands of the enemy.

The only difference between the procedure herein envisaged and the one provided in Department's 1269 to Bern of April 13, 1944, consists in the request that the Swiss government advise the German authorities of Wilner's status as claimant to U. S. citizenship under investigation by the Department, without waiting for an inquiry from the German authorities. This departure is believed justified in view of the fact that German authorities in the camp of Belsen-Bergen have been known in the past to pass on claims of internees to foreign citizenship without making inquiries of the governments concerned, and, upon having denied such claims, to deport such internees to death camps in the East. The U. S. Minister at Bern is invited, however, to exercise his discretion with due regard to the effect which such initiative may have on the fate of other internees at Belsen-Bergen on whose behalf no such initiative has been taken.

*B. Allen*

000396

Files

September 12, 1944

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The purpose of the attached draft of a cable is to safeguard the life of Chli-Henryk Wilner, born December 17, 1902 in Poland, reported to be the son and brother of American citizens and, in view of the reported naturalization of his father, David Wilner, to possess some prima facie claims to U. S. citizenship. His father's naturalization certificate, number 2310860 is said to have been issued by the U. S. District Court in New York. David Wilner has also been issued a U. S. Passport No. 3433.

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BAKzin/sg 9/12/44

200397

September 4, 1944

Dear Mr. Wise:

Regarding our last conversation, I would like to give you the reasons why I ask you to take up once more my brother's case with the War Refugee Board.

As I learned lately from the Palestinians who arrived with an exchange transport from Bergenbelzen to Palestine, Internees are constantly deported in groups from Bergenbelzen to be killed, unless one obtains protection as an American Internee by the Swiss Protective Power and as a result is transferred to an established American Camp.

My brother is still alive at that Camp and is the only U.S.A. internee among the South American Internees there. His life hangs by a thread. Besides that any day he might be deported, he suffers from the horrible conditions at that camp that makes his existence impossible.

As I told you, Mr. Wise, already my brother had to be executed as a Jew by the Germans and due to the statement I sent to him, signed by the German authorities at my Camp Lietenau that I possess the Original Citizenship Document of my father and I stated that he is the son of an American father, he was not executed but considered by the German Authorities as an American (U.S.A.) Internee and sent to Bergenbelzen.

Since he is recognized already by the German authorities as a U.S.A. Internee due to the mere, true fact that he is the son of an American citizen, his life depends now only upon word from the State Department to the Swiss Legation Power. A letter to the Swiss Legation, Protective Power giving him protection as an U.S.A. Internee can save his life. The German Authorities after being notified by the Protective Power that my brother is given protection as a U.S.A. Internee would recognize him as such one and thus my brother could be saved.

Concerning the letter you told me about that the Swiss Legation was notified to give protection if inquiry is made by the German Authorities, I would like to explain that this does not concern cases like my brother's but do help those internees kept at established camps.

The German authorities send inquiries to the Swiss Protective Power concerning only U.S.A. internees kept at established Internment Camps and naturally life of those depend then upon word from the Protective Power. My brother's case is different because Bergenbelzen is not an established camp but a concentration camp. Concerning U.S.A. internees kept in such camps no inquiry is made by the German authorities but the German authorities should be notified by the Swiss Legation, Protective Power in Berlin that my brother, Chil-Henryk Wilner is a U.S.A. Internee and protection is given him as such one. The German authorities would treat him then accordingly and thus he could be saved.

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I, myself was interned as a U.S.A. internee for two years and was kept in different German camps and therefore learned how such cases are handled by the Germans.

I, myself know cases that some internees were transferred from concentration camps to an established camp after the German authorities were notified by the Swiss Legation Power that Protection is given to those internees.

I would like to underline that the Swiss Protective Power should not put my brother in a doubtful position so as to convince the German authorities about my brother's protection as a U.S.A. internee. This is very important.

I have faith that you, Mr. Wise, will help me to save the life of the only remaining member of my family. I express my deepest gratitude for everything you do for me.

Very sincerely yours,

Halina Steinlauf

100399

# WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS

CONGRES JUIF MONDIAL . . CONGRESO JUDIO MUNDIAL

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W. R. B.

Filing Authority

To: Files

No. Ans. Req.

Date

CABLES: CONGRESS, NEW YORK  
TELEPHONE: LONGACRE 5-2600

April 3, 1944

Mr. John W. Pehle  
Assistant to the Secretary  
Treasury Department  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Pehle:

May I request the good offices of the War Refugee Board on behalf of the man of whom I spoke to you the other day. These are the facts:

Chil-Henryk Wilner, born December 17, 1902 in Poland, is now interned at Bergenbelzen bei Hanower, bei Celle, Germany for further investigation.

Father, David Wilner, was a United States citizen, Citizenship Certificate No. 2310860, Passport No. 3433.

His sister, Halina Szejnlauf, United States Citizen, was repatriated in March on the Gripsholm from the internment camp in Vittel.

His sister sent the following statement from the Concentration Camp on behalf of her brother in order to prevent his being sent to Poland and almost certain death:

"It is herewith stated that Halina Wilner-Szejnlauf, the U.S.A. internee, has in her possession the original document of the U.S.A. citizenship of her father, David Wilner. The above mentioned citizenship certificate was issued in the United States District Court, Eastern District of New York under No. 2310860.

"This statement is made in order to sent it to Chil vel Henryk Wilner, who is the brother of the above mentioned, interned American citizen.

Stabszahlmeister

(signature indistinguishable)

Internment Camp Liebenan April 28, 1943

Seal - Reservelazarett, Ravensburg  
Internment Camp Liebenan"

000400

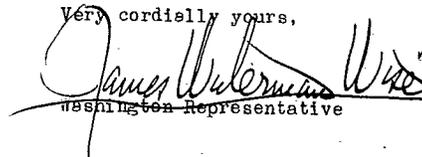
April 3, 1944

It is now requested:

1. That the Swiss Legation, Protective Power, Berlin, Pariser Platz 2, be notified that Chil-Henryk Wilner be considered an American citizen until investigation be completed.
2. That the Swiss Legation be requested to transfer Chil-Henryk Wilner from Camp Bergenbelzen (one of the most notorious of the concentration camps) to a regular internment camp where Americans are held.
3. That the United States State Department be requested to put the name of Chil-Henryk Wilner on the exchange transport list to the United States of America.

I am convinced, from talking to the sister of Mr. Wilner that his survival depends upon the action outlined above, and I should be profoundly grateful for any action you can take at the earliest possible moment in his behalf.

Very cordially yours,

  
Washington Representative

JWW:L

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