

Cooperation with Other Governments: Latin America: Bolivia

000929

A-221

4:35 P M

BY COURIER

June 2, 1944

SENT BY AIRGRAM

EMBASSY,

LA PAZ (BOLIVIA)

FOR THE PERSONAL AND INFORMATION OF THE OFFICER IN CHARGE.

In reference to your A-212 of May 16 and to clarify the nature of the problem with which the Department's A-161 of May 1 is concerned, as well as for your information and guidance in further informal approaches, there is given below the text of circulars of May 1 and May 11:

May 1, 1944, 7:35 p.m. The following airgrams have been sent by the Department to the American Ambassadors in certain South American countries and are repeated to you for your information:

March 31, 1944, 1:05 p.m. Information has been received that there are in enemy-occupied Europe a number of persons holding passports issued in the names of various Latin American countries including the country to which you are accredited. Our information is that in a large number of cases such persons are interned under conditions which are immeasurably better than the treatment they would receive if they did not have such passports. It is reported that without such passports, such persons would be transported to Poland and death.

The plight of these refugees was the subject of a memorandum presented to the Department by the Polish Ambassador in Washington on December 24, 1943, in support of the request of his government that this Government intercede on humanitarian grounds to save the persons concerned from deportation to Poland by interceding to prevent the withdrawal of these passports in cases in which they may have been improperly issued.

The following are excerpts from a report of Dr. Kullmann, Vice Director of the Intergovernmental Committee, who has recently made an exhaustive investigation of the matter in Switzerland: QUOTE It is estimated that 2,000 (passports) have been issued from Switzerland and it is known that others have been issued from other neutral countries including Sweden. Some informants estimated the total number to be as high as nine to ten thousand but some thought that it did not exceed 5,000. In Switzerland it (the securing of the passports) was organized by private individuals and reached such proportions that the Swiss Federal Government had to inter-

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By R. H. Parks Date SEP 13 1972

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vene. Legal action was taken against several of the organizers and at the same time enquiry was made regarding the authority of some of the representatives of the South American states to carry on these transactions.

There seems little doubt that the German authorities are aware of what has been going on but for reasons of their own they have hitherto not adopted a general policy of withdrawing the passports. While in many cases the possession of these documents has afforded the owners protection against persecution and even special treatment in some of the camps, in other cases they have afforded no protection at all and particularly so where the persons concerned were not interned. Originally the German authorities seem to have cherished the hope that the persons with these South American passports might constitute a basis for the exchange of German nationals in South American countries and it is not improbable that they still have vague hopes of this. Other reasons have been suggested for their lack of consistency. Recently however they have been making enquiries through some of the protecting powers of the South American Governments concerned regarding the genuineness of the documents and they have been submitting lists of persons concerned with a view to verification UNQUOTE

Sir Herbert Emerson, Director of the Intergovernmental Committee, on the basis of the foregoing recommends that the Latin American Governments in whose names such passports have been issued, be approached on two points, QUOTE (first) that the Governments should refrain from withdrawing the passports which have been issued and (second) that if and when the protecting power on the request of the German authorities submits lists of persons with such passports they should instruct the protecting power that the passports have been confirmed UNQUOTE

Although the Department does not condone the unauthorised issue of passports, it does not follow that the Department should withhold its intercession in a situation in which the lives of so many persons are at stake. The Department and the War Refugee Board agree with Emerson that where thousands of human lives lie in the balance because of war conditions and enemy persecutions, appropriate steps should be taken to avoid the nonrecognition by the Germans of such passports.

The Department understands that these passports, appearing on their face to have been issued by competent officials, are valid until they are cancelled. While Department agrees that the Government to which you are accredited is entirely within its right in cancelling such passports, it urges that the right of cancellation be not exercised until the holders shall have reached a place of

safety, so

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safety, so that the act of cancellation shall not be, in essence, condemnation of the holder to a terrible death. All that is here asked is that the Government to which you are accredited deal with the question at a time when it shall occasion the least possible measure of human suffering.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS TO THE AMBASSADOR

You are instructed to memorize the contents of this airgram, burn the document and discuss the matter orally with the government to which you are accredited. Such report as you submit to the Department on this subject should be by secret courier.

April 11, 1944, 11:00 a.m. "Minister Harrison at Bern has informed us that the Swiss Foreign Interests Division has advised him informally that the Spanish government had been requested by the Germans to inquire into the bona fides of certain Latin American passports, held by internees in enemy-controlled territory and that the Latin American governments have denied responsibility as well as any claims of the persons holding such passports. Please approach appropriate officials of the government to which you are accredited and inquire whether it has received any such inquiries through the government of Spain or otherwise from the Germans with respect to the validity of passports held by such internees and if such inquiry has been made, please ascertain the nature of the response, if any.

In view of the perilous situation in which these internees find themselves, the conclusion has been reached that perhaps the only way of safeguarding the lives of these unfortunate victims of Nazi persecution is forthwith to initiate through proper channels negotiations for an exchange of nationals for which these people will be eligible. In contemplating such exchange negotiations, it is not expected that the government to which you are accredited will physically admit any such persons into its territory even on a temporary or tentative basis. This Government is prepared to take full responsibility for all arrangements necessary to route these persons to places elsewhere.

Proceeding on this basis, please approach the government to which you are accredited with the request that it give its approval to the Government of the United States approaching the German government through appropriate channels with a view to initiating such negotiations. Please also advise appropriate officials of the government to which you are accredited that similar requests are being made of other Latin American countries, it being the hope of this Government that it will be put in a position to initiate

exchange discussions on a hemispheric basis. Please also advise such officials that in any exchange negotiations that may be entered into, it is of course understood that unquestioned citizens of the United States and of the Latin American countries will be considered by this Government as being in a category entitled to priority over others.

Please also request the government to which you are accredited, on humanitarian grounds, affirmatively to approach the German government through the protecting power with a demand that the lives of all persons holding passports issued in its name or claiming its citizenship on the basis of consular documents be safeguarded and that they be given all rights, privileges and immunities accorded to civilian internees of enemy nationality to whom the Geneva Convention regarding the treatment of prisoners of war is currently applied by analogy.

In view of the imminent danger in which the persons concerned find themselves, you are requested to act with the great possible dispatch.

Finally, we communicate to you, for communication to the government to which you are accredited, the substance of a cable which the Department has sent to our Minister at Bern as follows: QUOTE Although the motives of the Germans in according better treatment to Jews of Polish origin holding passports and other documents issued in the names of Latin American countries are not too clear, it would appear that they include (1) some hope that they might be considered exchange material against Germans in the Western Hemisphere and (2) some fear that their ill-treatment might afford the Latin American countries a pretext for further limiting the freedom and economic activities of Germans resident in such countries.

The measure reported in your 1938 of March 30 may be an indication that Germany is beginning to doubt whether such Jews are considered exchange material and whether their treatment would affect the treatment of Germans in Latin America. This Government regards it as essential that these doubts be promptly and effectively dispelled.

Accordingly, please request the good offices of the Swiss Government in informing the Germans that this Government is undertaking discussions with Latin American countries for a further exchange of Germans in the Western Hemisphere for persons in German-controlled territory and that in this connection, the United States considers that all persons in Vittel and elsewhere holding passports and other documents issued in the names of Latin American

countries will

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countries will be eligible for such exchange.

Simultaneously, please request the appropriate Swiss authorities to advise the Germans that in the meantime this Government expects that those persons will be accorded the same rights, privileges and immunities that the German government expects will be accorded to Germans in the Western Hemisphere. You may add that a considerable number of German civilians interned by various Latin American countries have been placed by such countries in the custody of the United States and are presently in such custody within continental United States.

For your information, the substance of this message is being communicated to our Missions in the Latin American countries concerned. We are also making inquiry of such Latin American countries with respect to the authenticity of the information informally conveyed to you by the Swiss Foreign Interests Division which you referred to in your T994 of March 31. UNQUOTE

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS TO THE AMBASSADOR

You are instructed to memorize the contents of this airmail, burn the document and discuss the matter orally with the government to which you are accredited. Such report as you submit to the Department on this subject should be by secret courier.

April 22, 1944, 7:30 p.m. Referring to the Department's circular airmails of April 11, 11:00 a.m., and of March 31, 1:05 p.m. the following is the substance of a message received from London by Sir Herbert Emerson, Director of the Intergovernmental Committee, who is now in Washington: QUOTE According cables Jewish Agency, Jerusalem, new commander Vittel Camp advised March 20 about 250 to 300 internees holding South American passports that they were not recognized by government concerned. It is alleged these persons already isolated for deportation which caused panic and despair. Agency here has partial list of people affected, mostly Polish Jews previously put on list of veteran Zionists, Rabbis, et cetera, for grant of Palestine certificates. Agency trying to obtain from Colonial Office formal assurance to Swiss protecting power that these persons placed on Palestine exchange list in order to stave off deportation. UNQUOTE

In view of the imminent danger which faces the persons involved, and in the light of this Government's deep concern for their welfare, you should communicate to appropriate officials of the Government to which you are accredited the urgency with which favorable responses and active measures along the lines described in our circular airmails of April 11 and March 31 are needed.

You may

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You may also wish to inform such officials that in addition to the approach to Switzerland referred to in our circular airgram of April 11, we have also requested Ambassador Hayes similarly to approach the Spanish Government. Please keep the Department promptly advised of all developments in this matter."

May 11, 1944, 7:30 p.m. "With reference to previous communications from the Department and the War Refugee Board regarding protection of refugees with Latin American documents in German-held territory, you are informed that pursuant to our instructions the Legation at Bern has advised the Swiss Government with respect to claims to American citizenship by refugees in German-controlled areas as follows:

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

You are authorized to advise the government to which you are accredited of the foregoing if you think it will help to obtain its effective cooperation in rescuing refugees with Latin American documents.

has

The Legation at Bern/also been instructed to request Swiss authorities to obtain from Germany immediate return to Vittal of previously deported refugees with Latin American documents. The Embassy at Madrid, pursuant to our instructions, has obtained assurance that Spain will endeavor to arrange for return of deported refugees to Vittal.

It is essential that demarche of Madrid Embassy be supported by similar urgent representations of other American republics in Madrid on various points covered in our circular airgram of April 11 and other relevant communications. Please act accordingly and advise us of results.

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AIRGRAM

FROM LA PAZ, BOLIVIA
DATED MAY 16, 1944
REC'D: May 22 3 pm

Secretary of State,

Washington.

A-212, May 16, 1944, 5:00 p.m.

Reference Department's airgram A-161, May 1, 1944,
10:45 a.m. concerning efforts to remove from Axis-
dominated territory Jews with Bolivian identification
documents.

I mentioned this matter unofficially to the Minister
of Foreign Affairs of the Bolivian Provisional Govern-
ment and he said that he did not recall having heard of
any bona fide Bolivian Jew, either naturalized or
native-born, who are now in Axis-dominated territory.
The Foreign Minister, Sr. Enrique Baldivieso, asked me
if I would find out as much as possible concerning the
identity of such Jews. Accordingly, it would be appre-
ciated if the Department could supply this office with
available information on the subjects.

WOODWARD

RF /ms

DECLASSIFIED
State Dept. Letter, 1-11-72
By R. H. Parks Date SEP 13 1972

cc: Sec'y, Abrahamson, Akzin, Bernstein, Cohn, DuBois, Friedman, Gaston, Hodel,
Laughlin, Leger, Komford, Mann, Mannon, Marks, McCormack, Paine, Sargey, Smith,
Standish, Stewart, Weinstein, R. D. White, Fehle, Files.

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APR 10 1944

Dear Mr. Woodward:

The Secretary of State has referred to me a copy of your Dispatch No. 3122, of February 10, 1944, and its enclosure, in reply to the Department of State's circular airgram of January 26, 1944, requesting information as to the Bolivian Government's attitude toward the rescue and relief of Jews and other victims of enemy persecution.

The War Refugee Board appreciates your cooperation in making this information available, and your recommendations are being carefully considered.

Very truly yours,

(Signed) J. W. Pehle

J. W. Pehle
Executive Director

Mr. Robert F. Woodward,
Charge d'Affaires,
Embassy of the United States,
La Paz, Bolivia.

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(Not to be used)

D. Brown

Refugees in Bolivia

(Source of information: Files of State Department, Visa Division Refugee Unit)

(1) Bona fide refugees are treated in Bolivia on the same basis generally as Bolivian nationals. A decree of July 15, 1943 provides that notary publics and other officials shall not legalize papers transferring property to Japanese, German and Italian nationals without the approval of the Superintendent of Banks. This decree makes it mandatory for the Superintendent to authorize transfers in cases of urban and country land where the purchaser is to begin work on the installation of factories or structures within ninety days from the date of transfer. This decree, of course, applies to refugees who are Japanese, German or Italian nationals. (No. A-713 from La Paz, November 13, 1943)

(2) On December 31, 1943 the legal attache in La Paz advised that there had been created in that city a vigilance committee composed of some 80 Jewish refugees for the purpose of protecting the Jews from acts of violence, if necessary. This group has been organized as an informative as well as defensive organization. It plans street fighting if necessary. (No. 2122 from La Paz, December 31, 1943)

(3) The State Department advised our mission in La Paz that the organization of the Jewish vigilance committee and its possible activities should give the local Jewish committee grave concern. Dr. von Terramare is apparently of that intelligent opinion and may wish to communicate his concern to a few of the most responsible leaders of the Jewish community expressing the expectation that they will immediately take measures with the young Jews to stop and prevent any action which may jeopardize Jewish interests. (No. 29 to La Paz, January 6, 1944)

(4) On January 10, 1944 Allan Dawson of the State Department called Charles J. Liebman, Chairman of the Refugee Economic Corporation, New York City, and told him confidentially of the Bolivian vigilance committee. Liebman stated in his opinion it would be disastrous to have a committee of this character in La Paz as it would only encourage anti-semitic elements. He said he had been in communication with Dr. Mauricio Hochschild, head of Mauricio Hochschild, S.A.M.I. and associated mining interests, the leading and wealthiest Jew in Bolivia who had considerable influence with the Jewish community. He felt a telegram to Hochschild would be helpful and stated he would send the same.

(5) There is a memorandum by G. G. Griffin of the Division of American Republics of the State Department, dated January 5, 1944, on the "Basis of Bolivian Anti-semiticism". It states that an

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immigration ring permitted 18,000 Jews to enter Bolivia upon payment to certain officials. The ring was headed by Senor Eduarda Dies de Medina, then Bolivian Foreign Minister. The number of 18,000 is enormous in relation to the population of Bolivia, where only three percent of the three million inhabitants can be classified as economic whites. One-third of the Jews who entered have left for other countries. The others have become active principally in various kinds of business. They have done much for Bolivia in establishing hotels, restaurants, and new small industries. At the same time, they have forced many native businessmen to the wall and created as a result a great deal of opposition from this group.

(6) There is a brief memorandum by Mr. Deming of State, dated January 7, 1944 to the effect that Mr. Goldman in discussing this situation said he appreciated the offers of Chile, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, etc. but that he was opposed to accepting the same on realistic grounds.

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CONTROL COPY

By airmail 2/11/44

Bolivia

La Paz, Bolivia, February 10, 1944

No. 3122

Subject: Comments on Possibility of Relief in Bolivia
of Jews and Other Victims of Enemy Persecution.

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington, D. C.

Sir:

I have the honor to refer to the Department's circular airgram of January 26, 1944, 7:00 p.m., concerning the rescue and relief of the Jews of Europe and other victims of enemy persecution. Reference is also made to the Department's telegram 160, February 2, 4 p.m., indicating that this Embassy's report, as requested in the circular airgram, should be based on the knowledge of the Embassy, without approaching the present Bolivian authorities.

In response to the itemized queries in the Department's airgram:

(a) The extent to which Jewish war refugees are at present permitted to enter Bolivia is practically impossible to determine in the present political circumstances in Bolivia. The Embassy has, however, received two indications of general policy in this respect from Major Gualberto Villarroel, the President of the Bolivian Junta.

The first of these indications was received as an answer to a routine note which this Embassy on December 13, 1943 had addressed to the Bolivian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the subject of the Inter-Governmental Committee in London, a week before the December 20 revolution. The revolutionary government took this note as a basis for a reply which was sent to this Embassy as a note verbale on December 27, 1943, in which it was stated that Major Villarroel had made the following declaration in an interview with the press (in translation):

"The Government of Bolivia will accredit a representative before the Intergovernmental Committee in London, in conformity with the suggestion made by Lord Emerson to all the

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State Dept. Letter, 1-11-78
By R. H. Parks Date SEP 13 1972

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American countries. Its conduct with respect to Semites will be in accordance with that adopted by the other nations of the Continent. Within the country, nationals and foreigners shall enjoy the same guarantees under the Political Constitution of the State without distinction as to whether they are Jews or not."

(A full translation of the note verbale was transmitted to the Department with this Embassy's despatch no. 2538 of December 29, 1943.)

The second of the indications occurred during the course of the only conversation held between Ambassador Boal and Major Gualberto Villarroel, President of the Bolivian Revolutionary Junta, on the evening of February 3, 1944. As reported in this Embassy's telegram 409, February 4, 10 a.m., Major Villarroel informed Ambassador Boal that he has absolutely no racial prejudices or feeling against the Jews, that the Jews are being allowed to continue in Bolivia, and that the only "concern" of the Bolivian Junta is that Bolivia obtain in future immigration persons who are technically qualified to fulfill the needs of the Bolivian economy.

This "concern" of the Bolivian Junta is a reflection of a general resentment - which has had unusual opportunity for expression during the period following the revolution of December 20 when there has been an outburst of pent-up criticism - a resentment that Jewish immigrants admitted to Bolivia in recent years have competed with established Bolivian merchants and small shop-keepers when many of these immigrants were officially admitted for the purpose of engaging in agriculture. During the first week or so following the revolution, certain of its participants or followers were reported as threatening to move all of such "agricultural" immigrants to agricultural areas, but this seemingly momentary idea appears now to have been abandoned. The President of the Revolutionary Junta, in making a public reply to a letter which was addressed to him by José Antonio Arze, leader of the PIR (Partido Izquierda Revolucionaria), seemingly made an opportunity to deny the rumor concerning a supposed plan to move the Jewish immigrants to agricultural regions. (An examination of Arze's letter indicates that he did not bring up the subject.) Villarroel stated in his reply (free translation):

"I must declare, however, that the government had not thought of the solution you suggest to the problem of Jewish immigrants, whereby you wish to take them to the agricultural zones, an idea which in 1942 the PIR deputies proposed through draft law no. 209 presented in the legislature. I think that many of the Jews in Bolivia

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are not suited to agriculture, being more suited to commerce, etc., and the fact that they were victims of a passport visa deal, admitted as agriculturalists, does not justify forcing them to do work they are unfitted for. I have always held that the value of a man cannot be judged by his race but by his labor and his yield."

(The full text of Villarroel's reply was reported in this Embassy's despatch no. 2966 of January 21, 1944.)

Another cause for local resentment concerning Jewish immigrants in recent years is that many of them purchased the privilege of entering Bolivia, at comparatively large fees, from Bolivian Consuls in Europe who were part of a ring in which the then Bolivian Foreign Minister, Eduardo Diez de Medina, was involved. This scandal resulted primarily, of course, in resentment against the Bolivians who sold the visas rather than against the Jews themselves, since even the Bolivian public which tended to resent the presence and competition of the Jews could understand the willingness of such victims of Nazi tyranny to resort to any method to find a place of refuge.

There are no accurate statistics concerning the number of Jewish refugees at present in Bolivia, but it is believed that from eight to ten thousand have entered Bolivia in the past nine or ten years, that about two-thirds of that number were German or Austrian (the remainder being Polish, Czech and to a lesser extent of other eastern European nationalities), and that about one-half of the total or about 4,000 have now left Bolivia for other countries such as Argentina, Chile, Peru and the United States. Most of the Jewish refugees who entered Bolivia have appeared to be from a lower intellectual and economic level than those who have entered the United States. It seems probable that most of the refugees who entered Bolivia tried to obtain permission to enter other countries, such as the United States, before coming to Bolivia. Although the average economic level of the Jews who came to Bolivia was not high, and although many of them were impoverished by Nazi tyranny and their purchase of Bolivian visas, they have been able to make enough money in Bolivia to live on the same economic basis as white Bolivians. Since white Bolivians are a comparatively small percentage of the population, and since the Jews are largely concentrated in the cities (about 40 percent in La Paz, about 30 percent in Cochabamba, and the balance in other places), the Jews have been unusually conspicuous despite their comparatively small numbers, and consequently the more resented.

Despite the statements of the President of the Junta, the Junta's Minister of Government (Major Alberto Taborga, notorious for his arbitrary measures) issued a resolution a few days after the December 20 revolution denying entry

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to Bolivia to a particular German Jewish technician now in Santiago, Chile, which the Hochschild Mining organization wished to bring into the country. The Hochschild organization renewed the application without success and has now decided to do nothing further about the case until political circumstances appear to be more favorable. On the other hand, the Bolivian Revolutionary Junta on December 31, 1943 granted 'juridical status' to a Jewish organization, the Sociedad Cultural Israelita, presumably as a gesture to indicate lack of prejudice. (See this Embassy's despatch no. 2974 of January 21, 1944.) Despite the statements of Bolivian authorities which have been made, or which may be made in the future, it seems probable that the reaction from the immigration of Jews into Bolivia during the past nine or ten years will result in Bolivia's not being a promising place of refuge for Jews in the immediate post-war period.

With respect to non-Jewish refugees from Nazi tyranny, and other non-Jewish emigration from Europe in the immediate post-war period, there have been many casual expressions by Bolivian officials indicating a recognition of the need for further immigration to develop the Bolivian economy. If immigrants were willing and able to settle in the eastern lowlands of Bolivia, which transportation facilities will undoubtedly eventually make the most important part of the country because of its rich agricultural land, it is believed that the Bolivian authorities at that time might very possibly be responsive to plans for large-scale migration. As an indication of the possible attitude of the Bolivian authorities toward large-scale organized immigration into Bolivia, there is enclosed a translation of a letter on this subject addressed by the Junta Minister of Government and Immigration to the Junta Minister of Agriculture and Colonization (as published in the La Paz newspaper El Diario on January 20, 1944). This letter seems to contemplate the possibility of large post-war immigration into Bolivia sponsored or assisted by the Bolivian Government, but it emphasizes principally the necessity for recovering to the Government all lands which are not being used in conformity with existing law.

As a further recent indication of the trend of thought in Bolivia on this subject, it is also of interest to note that a writer of the Liberal Party recently indicated that the Party's program should include: "(b) Promotion of immigration into Bolivia, asking the United Nations to assist in bringing to Bolivia from 300,000 to 500,000 refugees from the countries occupied by Germany."

(See this Embassy's despatch no. 3071 of February 4, 1944.)

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It should be borne in mind, however, that the narrow, provincial outlook of Bolivians, in their comparatively isolated country, tends to breed resentment against all outsiders. Those immigrants who have been most successful in establishing themselves in Bolivia have been of such nationalities as Yugoslav and Italian and they have gradually become accepted because they were not prone to live apart in separate "colonies".

(b) The extent to which Bolivia actually encourages and cooperates in the entry of Jewish and non-Jewish European refugees cannot be determined at present.

(c) The only instance in which a person who might be classified as a refugee (a German Jewish electrician now in Santiago, Chile) has been refused admittance to Bolivia since the revolution of December 20, 1943 is the instance of the technician for whom the Hochschild mining organization made an application which was rejected - and upon being repeated again was again rejected.

Recommendations. When normal relations with a Bolivian Government are restored, I believe that the most effective means of speeding Bolivian cooperation in the rescue and relief of the victims of enemy oppression might be to suggest to the Bolivian Development Corporation (a semi-autonomous corporation established for the purpose of promoting the development of the Bolivian economy with the use of Export-Import Bank funds and funds of the Bolivian Government) that it consider the feasibility of preparing and presenting to the Bolivian Government a plan for colonizing certain of the eastern tropical areas of Bolivia with agricultural refugees. The use of this agency for this purpose would not only be likely to promote the speed with which a plan might be prepared and carried out, but it would be likely to promote the efficiency of the plan and would at the same time provide a convenient method of safeguarding the expenditure of funds for the purpose.

I do not believe that any of the private organizations of Jews or of European nationality groups could be counted on to contribute anything very effective to a program for immigration into Bolivia and rehabilitation on any noteworthy scale.

Respectfully yours,

Robert F. Woodward
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.

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Enclosure: Translation, as stated

To Department in original and hectograph

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Enclosure no. 1 to despatch no. 3122 , dated February 10, 1944
from American Embassy, La Paz, Bolivia.

Translation

Source: El Diario
January 20, 1944

Communication addressed by the Minister of Government
and Immigration of the Bolivian Revolutionary
Junta to the Minister of Agriculture and
Colonization concerning the Desira-
bility of making Preparation for
Post-War Immigration.

Mr. Minister:

In this grave hour of destiny for the entire world, in which the foundation of present organization threatens to be shaken, leaving a free field for a new social structure, it is necessary not to close our eyes to the urgency which exists for the preparation of a realistic and scientific solution for the basic problems of nationality.

In the face of this reality, which does not permit equivocation, the Ministry in my charge, taking its due share of the labor which is appropriate to it and which is warranted by the present emergency which confronts the world, considers that it is its duty to set forth aspects which, because of their fundamental character, require the consideration of the Ministry of Agriculture and Colonization, in order that within a carefully prepared system of cooperation and planning between all or most of the agencies of the State, there may be found a satisfactory solution to the benefit of the institutional and material interests and progress of the country.

Upon the termination of the present war, the survivors of this formidable historical disturbance, wide-eyed before the aspect of the devastation of their fatherlands and homes, shall set forth toward these nations of our America in search of work which will give them new life and renewed hopes. In these circumstances, the principal task of the Ministry of Immigration will consist in the most careful selection of the persons who knock at the doors of the fatherland, in order that their presence among us may be of positive utility and may constitute a factor for progress and collective well-being. It should take care that these migratory currents shall be healthy, of known productive activity, free from prejudices, possessed of capital and disposed to conform with the discipline which may be required of them.

But if these brilliant nuclei of workmen do not find an appropriate and proper environment, either physically or economically, to develop their productive and consuming

potentialities

potentialities, what will they do after arriving in our territory? It is possible that they may disperse, some of them adapting themselves to the city environment as small shopkeepers, some dying and others emigrating anew to other lands which may offer a more substantial reception to this class of vitalizing currents. This has unfortunately been the experience in our country up to the present.

To avoid these possible consequences, the Ministry of Agriculture and Colonization under your able direction has the duty of preparing the ground--that is, those geographical areas which have means of access to nearby centers of consumption, in order that Bolivia may receive the currents of immigration which it should, accepting the quota that is appropriate to it in accordance with the most urgent necessities. And this cannot be done if we do not consider our agricultural problem which includes colonization, on a political basis, on the following vital points of view: economic, social and technical. Little would be accomplished by the State action if consideration were given only to the agricultural aspects with the eye of a farmer, without entering into the heart of the problem which is based upon a juridical plan for the appropriation of land in the feudal and semi-colonial economy of the country.

It is an axiomatic truth that for the purpose of colonization lands are required, and therefore the measures for making these available should be the following:

1. Expropriation of properties which, having advantageous conditions derived from the social progress, are not fulfilling the retributive function to which the community has a right in compensation in accordance with the provisions of Article 17 of the Political Constitution of the State. Upon taking this measure, care should be taken that no disadvantage is suffered by the agriculturists already established on the lands comprised in such measures, which agriculturists could be grouped into productive cooperatives under the care of the State in order to be converted into productive and consuming elements on a noteworthy scale.

2. The decreasing of reversion to the control of the State of all public lands whose claimants have not complied with the conditions set forth in the Law of October 25, 1905, under the provisions of which these lands were granted with complete liberality and entire lack of foresight.

There has been much discussion concerning a modus operandi for making use of administrative procedure for this recovery, and some have believed that only a law might bring about such reversion (to the State).

Invoking the fundamental interests of the country and making use of the full attributes of the de facto Government, there should be issued a decree law which would require the review

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of all claims to public lands for the purpose of ascertaining whether the grants have complied with all of the conditions stipulated as the reasons for their titles.

The cited law of October 25, 1905 sets forth as a sine qua non the condition that at least one family shall live on each 1,000 hectares. Consequently, if non-compliance with this requirement is proved in any case, the grant shall be declared void, despite the fact that Supreme Decree of June 26, 1921 was a hasty attempt to repeal Article 28 of the Supreme Regulatory Decree of June 20, 1907 which judiciously established this penalty.

The objective of the Organic Land Law with respect to the concrete point under discussion is in a high spirit of precaution on behalf of community interests, as is manifested and emphasized in its Regulations, issued on the basis of the same inspiration and at the same time. The Decree of June 26, 1921 which endeavored to abolish the penalty of cancellation of titles was issued in another era and as the result of the influence of other interests which, as always occurred, were not the interests of the majority.

To eliminate this cloud of uncertainty and doubt which has been caused by the conflict between the law and a simple decree, we must search for such assistance as we may obtain from the general principles of Law, and in doing so we find a solution for the difficulty of justifying the cancellation of titles, which should operate in accordance with the following of these principles: "that in bilateral contracts there is always implicit the condition /that the contract may be voided/ in case one of the parties fails in his commitment" with the difference that the Executive does not need to go to a tribunal in search of justice, but that it may declare the recovery through administrative channels, originating the action in order that the private person may, if he considers that his rights have been damaged by this administrative act, present himself before the Supreme Court of Justice in an administrative claim-suit.

The Ministry of Immigration at present in my charge takes the liberty of suggesting these measures of a fundamental character without presuming in the least to invade the attributes that pertain to your Ministry, but with the objective of contributing, however little, to the study and solution of this problem which it considers vital.

This occasion affords me the opportunity to reiterate to you the expressions of my most distinguished consideration.

(Signed) Major A. Taborga
Minister of Immigration

Refugees in Bolivia

(Source of information: Files of State Department, Visa Division
Refugee Unit)

(1) Bona fide refugees are treated in Bolivia on the same basis generally as Bolivian nationals. A decree of July 15, 1943 provides that notary publics and other officials shall not legalize papers transferring property to Japanese, German and Italian nationals without the approval of the Superintendent of Banks. This decree makes it mandatory for the Superintendent to authorize transfers in cases of urban and country land where the purchaser is to begin work on the installation of factories or structures within ninety days from the date of transfer. This decree, of course, applies to refugees who are Japanese, German or Italian nationals. (No. A-713 from La Paz, November 13, 1943)

(2) On December 31, 1943 the legal attache in La Paz advised that there had been created in that city a vigilance committee composed of some 80 Jewish refugees for the purpose of protecting the Jews from acts of violence, if necessary. This group has been organized as an informative as well as defensive organization. It plans street fighting if necessary. (No. 2122 from La Paz, December 31, 1943)

(3) The State Department advised our mission in La Paz that the organization of the Jewish vigilance committee and its possible activities should give the local Jewish committee grave concern. Dr. von Terramare is apparently of that intelligent opinion and may wish to communicate his concern to a few of the most responsible leaders of the Jewish community expressing the expectation that they will immediately take measures with the young Jews to stop and prevent any action which may jeopardize Jewish interests. (No. 29 to La Paz, January 6, 1944)

(4) On January 10, 1944 Allan Dawson of the State Department called Charles J. Liebman, Chairman of the Refugee Economic Corporation, New York City, and told him confidentially of the Bolivian vigilance committee. Liebman stated in his opinion it would be disastrous to have a committee of this character in La Paz as it would only encourage anti-semitic elements. He said he had been in communication with Dr. Mauricio Hochschild, head of Mauricio Hochschild, S.A.M.I. and associated mining interests, the leading and wealthiest Jew in Bolivia who had considerable influence with the Jewish community. He felt a telegram to Hochschild would be helpful and stated he would send the same.

(5) There is a memorandum by C. C. Griffin of the Division of American Republics of the State Department, dated January 5, 1944, on the "Basis of Bolivian Anti-semiticism". It states that an

immigration ring permitted 18,000 Jews to enter Bolivia upon payment to certain officials. The ring was headed by Senor Eduardo Diez de Medina, then Bolivian Foreign Minister. The number of 18,000 is enormous in relation to the population of Bolivia, where only three percent of the three million inhabitants can be classified as economic whites. One-third of the Jews who entered have left for other countries. The others have become active principally in various kinds of business. They have done much for Bolivia in establishing hotels, restaurants, and new small industries. At the same time, they have forced many native businessmen to the wall and created as a result a great deal of opposition from this group.

(6) There is a brief memorandum by Mr. Deming of State, dated January 7, 1944 to the effect that Mr. Goldman in discussing this situation said he appreciated the offers of Chile, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, etc. but that he was opposed to accepting the same on realistic grounds.