

Cooperation with Other Governments Latin America: Mexico

000166

FFC-76
(11-42)

CROSS REFERENCE ON COOPERATION WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTS:
LATIN AMERICAN (MEXICO)

FOR:

Amendment to this License
Extension of this License
Renewal of this License
Correspondence concerning this application .
Other (Specify)

FOR MATERIAL RELATIVE TO THIS FILE

SEE: PROGRAMS WITH RESPECT TO RELIEF AND RESCUE OF REFUGEES: EVACUATION
TO SWITZERLAND

(EVACUATION OF ABANDONED CHILDREN FROM FRANCE)

000167

985 Paris
31-

March 5, 1945

Dear Mr. Leavitt:

The following message for you from Joseph Schwartz was received through the American Embassy in Paris under date of March 2, 1945:

"Regarding Mexican children emigration OSE here will not take any active steps select or transport children to Mexico or any other country without consulting us and giving us the opportunity of taking it up with other interested agencies. Wish point out also OSE will not as general policy emigrate children from France except for very valid reasons such as reuniting families, et cetera. Naturally we have long ago advised both International Red Cross and Filderman that we wish operate in our name and that Congress may not operate with our funds. Must again emphasize these difficulties cannot be cleared up until our representative admitted Bucharest and Sofia."

Very truly yours,

(Signed) Florence Hodel

Florence Hodel
Assistant Executive Director

Mr. M. A. Leavitt, Secretary,
American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee,
270 Madison Avenue,
New York, 16, New York.

RSH ✓
RBHutchison: 3/5/45

000158

DEPARTMENT
OF
STATE

INCOMING
TELEGRAM

DIVISION OF
CENTRAL SERVICES
TELEGRAPH SECTION

RECEIVED
DIVISION OF
CENTRAL SERVICES

*March 21
C. Sawyer*

JB-1597

1945 MAR 3 AM 11 37

PLAIN
Paris

DC/L
LIAISON

Dated March 2, 1945

Rec'd 12:15 a.m. 3rd

Secretary of State

Washington

985 Second

FOR MOSES LEAVITT AMERICAN JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE

FROM JOSEPH SCWARTZ

CONTROL COPY

"Regarding Mexican children emigration OSE here will not take any active steps select or transport children to Mexico or any other country without consulting us and giving us the opportunity of taking it up with other interested agencies. Wish point out also OSE will not as general policy emigrate children from France except for very valid reasons such as reuniting families, et cetera. Naturally we have long ago advised both International Redcross and Filderman that we wish operate in our name and that Congress may not operate with our funds. Must again emphasize these difficulties cannot be cleared up until our representative admitted Bucharest and Sofia".

CAFFERY

JMS

000164

DEPARTMENT
OF STATE LCC
STATE

OUTGOING
TELEGRAM

DIVISION OF
CENTRAL SERVICES
TELEGRAPH SECTION

FEBRUARY 19, 1945

0075 21 12 9 59

Walt R. ...
...

EMBASSY

CONTROL COPY

PARIS
668 Nineteenth

The cable below is through War Refugee Board.

Please deliver following message to Joseph Schwartz
from H. A. Leavitt of American Jewish Joint Distribution
Committee:

QUOTE OSE advises us Mexico granting one hundred
visas for children France and OSE Paris was asked select
children. We advised OSE here that question of emigration
of children from France must be determined by Jewish Com-
munity France in cooperation with agencies such as OSE
Jewish Agency JDC and others. Believe this is serious
problem which must be fully discussed in order that uni-
lateral decisions this character should not be taken.
Our position we concerned only with welfare of children
and we ready abide by judgment of organized Jewish Community
of country. If Community approves OSE Mexican project
naturally we prepared cooperate fullest extent. UNQUOTE

WRB:MMV:KG
2/19/45

GREW
(ACTING)
(GLW)

WE

000170

CABLE TO AMERICAN EMBASSY, PARIS, FROM WAR REFUGEE BOARD.

Please deliver following message to Joseph Schwartz from W. A. Leavitt
of American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee:

QUOTE OSE ADVISES US MEXICO GRANTING ONE HUNDRED VISAS FOR CHILDREN FRANCE AND OSE PARIS WAS ASKED SELECT CHILDREN. WE ADVISED OSE WE BELIEVE THAT QUESTION OF EMIGRATION OF CHILDREN FROM FRANCE MUST BE DETERMINED BY JEWISH COMMUNITY FRANCE IN COOPERATION WITH AGENCIES SUCH AS OSE JEWISH AGENCY JDC AND OTHERS. BELIEVE THIS IS SERIOUS PROBLEM WHICH MUST BE FULLY DISCUSSED IN ORDER THAT UNILATERAL DECISIONS THIS CHARACTER SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN. OUR POSITION WE CONCERNED ONLY WITH WELFARE OF CHILDREN AND WE READY ABIDE BY JUDGMENT OF ORGANIZED JEWISH COMMUNITY OF COUNTRY. IF COMMUNITY APPROVES OSE MEXICAN PROJECT NATURALLY WE PREPARED COOPERATE FULLEST EXTENT. UNQUOTE

copy sent to Leavitt 2/17/45

3:00 p.m.
February 16, 1945

Miss Chauncey (for the Sec'y), Akzin, Cohn, Drury, DuBois, Gaston,
Hodel, McCormack, O'Dwyer, Files

RS

RDrury

2/16/45

000171

I wa t of B

CONTROL COPY

AIRGRAM

~~RESTRICTED~~

From: American Embassy

Mexico, D. F., Mexico

Dated:

Rec'd: September 22, 5p.m.

Secretary of State,
Washington, D. C.

A-3408, Sept. 20, noon, 1944

Reference is made to the Department's telegram No. 1493 of August 10, 8 p.m., 1944, transcribing a message from the War Refugee Board for transmission to the Mexican Government. For the Department's information, I transmitted the War Refugee Board's message to the Foreign Minister on August 14, in a personal note and under date of September 6, have received a note from him reading in part and in translation as follows: "In this connection, it is my pleasure to express my appreciation and that of my Government, for the expression of the War Refugee Board, whose message has been conveyed to the competent Mexican authorities".

MESSERSMITH



CFOD/eer
848

000172

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
WAR REFUGEE BOARD
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.



OFFICE OF THE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

To : Mr. George L. Warren

From: Mr. J. W. Pehle

It will be appreciated if you will arrange for appropriate clearance and immediate dispatch in cipher of the attached proposed cable to Ambassador Messersmith in Mexico, D. F.

000173

CABLE FROM WAR REFUGEE BOARD TO AMBASSADOR MESSERSMITH, MEXICO, D.F.

Please refer to your letter of August 24, No. 19677 to the Department. The War Refugee Board appreciates your cooperation with Waldman and Landau in their successful efforts to induce the Mexican Government to establish a "Port of Refuge" for refugees from enemy occupied countries in Europe for the duration of the war. If you have not already done so, you may wish to convey to the Mexican authorities the message contained in the Department's cable No. 1493 of August 10.

000174

CABLE FROM WAR REFUGEE BOARD TO AMBASSADOR MESSERSMITH, MEXICO, D.F.

Please refer to your letter of August 24, No. 19677 to the Department. The War Refugee Board appreciates your cooperation with Waldman and Landau in their successful efforts to induce the Mexican Government to establish a "Port of Refuge" for refugees from enemy occupied countries in Europe for the duration of the war. If you have not already done so, you may wish to convey to the Mexican authorities the message contained in the Department's cable No. 1493 of August 10.

ML
MBargoytdh
9/2/44.

000175

FROM:
To:
DATED:
NUMBER:

ORIGINAL TEXT OF TELEGRAM SENT
Secretary of State, Washington
Amlegation, Bern
August 31, 1944
3004
x

FOR MCCLELLAND FROM WAR REFUGEE BOARD.
Please deliver the following message to Saly Meyer from M.A. Leavitt
American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee

QUOTE PLEASE CONTACT MEXICAN LEGATION BERN REGARDING INTRUCTIONS
THEY RECEIVED FROM MEXICAN GOVERNMENT TO OBTAIN FROM YOU LIST OF
400 OUTSTANDING HUNGARIAN JEWISH COMMUNAL LEADERS, RABBIS ETC. TO
WHOM DOCUMENTS WILL BE ISSUED BY SWEDISH LEGATION BUDAPEST ON BEHALF
MEXICAN GOVERNMENT. THESE DOCUMENTS WILL ENTITLE THESE HUNGARIAN
JEWS TO PROTECTION OF SWEDEN AS PROTECTION POWER FOR MEXICAN
NATIONALS. ASSUME YOU WILL COMPILE LIST OF OUTSTANDING
PERSONALITIES BASIS YOUR OWN KNOWLEDGE AND AFTER CONSULTATION WITH
WHOMEVER YOU BELIEVE DESIRABLE UNQUOTE

THIS IS WRB CABLE TO BERN NO. 152

HULL

DECLASSIFIED
State Dept. Letter, 1-11-72
By R. H. Parks. Date SEP 14 1972

000176

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

OUTGOING TELEGRAM

DIVISION OF COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS

August 10, 1944

8 p.m.

RD
This telegram must be paraphrased before being communicated to anyone other than a Government agency. (RESTRICTED)

CONTROL COPY

E. W. Peffer
M. J. O'Neil
1944 AUG 12 AM 11 4
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DIVISION OF COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS
(LIAISON)

EMBASSY,

MEXICO, D.F.

1493

If you deem it appropriate, please convey to the Mexican authorities the following message from the War Refugee Board:

QUOTE The War Refugee Board has been informed of the recent generous offer by the Mexican Government to permit the establishment in Mexico for the duration of the war of a colony of European Jewish refugees. The Board deeply appreciates this humanitarian action by the Mexican Government and believes that it will constitute a measurable contribution to the efforts of the United Nations to rescue Jews and other similar groups now in imminent danger of death in enemy territory. The Board wishes to assure the Mexican Government that should refugees be admitted to Mexico in accordance with the Mexican Government's pronouncement and at the request of the War Refugee Board, the Board will make necessary financial arrangements for the maintenance and care of such refugees in Mexico. UNQUOTE
Board prefers that if possible, any public announcement which may result from foregoing be made at Washington rather than Mexico City.

STETTINIUS
(Acting)
(GLW)

MA S/CR

WRB:MMV:KG
8/9/44

000177

11 10
C. BOARD

CABLE TO AMBASSADOR MESSERSMITH, MEXICO CITY, FROM THE DEPARTMENT AND THE WAR REFUGEE BOARD.

If you deem it appropriate, please convey to the Mexican authorities the following message from the War Refugee Board.

"The War Refugee Board has been informed of the recent generous offer by the Mexican Government to permit the establishment in Mexico for the duration of the war of a colony of European Jewish refugees. The Board deeply appreciates this humanitarian action by the Mexican Government and believes that it will constitute a measurable contribution to the efforts of the United Nations to rescue Jews and other similar groups now in imminent danger of death in enemy territory. The Board wishes to assure the Mexican Government that should refugees be admitted to Mexico in accordance with the Mexican Government's pronouncement and at the request of the War Refugee Board, the Board will make necessary financial arrangements for the maintenance and care of such refugees in Mexico."

12:10 p.m.
August 9, 1944

Miss Chauncey (For the Sec'y), Abrahamson, Cohn, DuBois, Friedman, Hodel, Laughlin, Lesser, Mann, Mannon, McCormack, Cable Control Files

827 JBFriedman:lhh

8/9/44

000178

DEPARTMENT
OF
STATE

OUTGOING
TELEGRAM
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DIVISION OF

DIVISION OF
COMMUNICATIONS
AND RECORDS

PLAIN

War Refugee Board

1944 AUG 5 AM 10 19

August 3, 1944

AMEMB MX,

MEXICO

1461, Third

COMMUNICATIONS
AND RECORDS
(LIAISON)

CONTROL COPY

Refugee Board has been informed by Joint Distribu-
tion Committee that President of Mexico has recently
issued a proclamation stating that Mexico will furnish
facilities for admission of refugees from enemy occupied
Europe for the duration of the war. Kindly secure and cable
if possible text of proclamation for use by Board in deal-
ing with offer by Hungarian Government to permit emigration
of refugees from Hungary.

STETTINIUS
ACTING

WRB:GLW:OMH S/CR MA
8/3/44

000179

File now

✓
COMMITTEE ON SPECIAL REFUGEE PROBLEMS

144 Bleecker Street, New York 12, N. Y.

ALgonquin 4 0722

May 12, 1944

Mr. Laurence Lesser
War Refugee Board
Treasury Department
Washington, D. C.

Dear Lesser:

I have been talking with del Vayo about Ambassador Messersmith's report from Mexico that there is a good deal of anti-Semitic feeling in the country and opposition to increased immigration.

Very confidentially I will report del Vayo's feeling that while there is anti-Semitism in Mexico as there is in the United States, nonetheless this does not characterize the attitude of the Mexican Government which is quite ready to welcome immigrants and believes that the prosperity of Mexico is in large measure due to past immigration.

Sincerely yours,

Charles R. Joy

Charles R. Joy

crj:ea

200180

3714
CONTROL COPY

Mexico, D.F., April 27, 1944.

No. 17,235

subject: Activities of the War Refugee Board and the Possibilities of Collaboration with it by the Mexican Government.

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, 7 p.m., informing this Embassy that the President had instructed the Secretaries of State, Treasury, and War to take action for the immediate rescue and relief of the Jews of Europe and other victims of enemy persecution. This Embassy has taken careful note of the Department's instruction. I have to refer to this Embassy's despatch No. 15,781, of February 8, 1944, in which we made a preliminary acknowledgment of the Department's instruction, as well as a preliminary report. I also have to refer to my despatch No. 16,011, of February 18, 1944, to the effect that the Department's instruction was discussed by the Embassy with the Foreign Office here. It will be recalled from this despatch that the Foreign Office informed this Embassy that, while Mexico is entirely in sympathy with the proposed activities of the War Refugee Board, it nevertheless cannot take any activity toward the transportation of refugees to this continent, as it has no transportation facilities available for this purpose nor can it assume any responsibility for the maintenance and care of such refugees in Mexico. The Foreign Office informed the Embassy that it is well known that Mexico is affording hospitality to large groups of Spanish refugees, as well as to large numbers of other refugees from Europe, many of them of the Jewish faith, in addition to cooperating in the settlement in Leon, Guanajuato, of approximately 1500 Polish refugees for the duration of the war.

This Embassy received in due course the Department's circular airgram of February 29, 7:30 p.m., instructing me to explore with the appropriate officials of the Foreign Office the possibility of Mexico's collaborating with the War Refugee Board through the issuance by the Mexican Government of a declaration of policy similar to that made by the President of the United States and by the issuance by the Foreign Office of instructions to its representatives in other countries comparable to the instructions contained in the Department's telegram of January 25.

In accord with this instruction, there was left with the Foreign Office a memorandum, No. 2461, of which a copy is transmitted herewith, on March 24, 1944, and the full purpose of the War Refugee Board and the policy of our government as expressed by President Roosevelt again set forth to the Foreign Office. We have had no further reaction of an official character from the Mexican Government beyond that already set forth in my despatch No. 16,011, of February 18, 1944.

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In the meantime, this Embassy has received the Department's confidential circular airgram of April 15, 7 p.m., referring further to its circular airgram of January 26, 7 p.m., and to subsequent communications, and informing this Embassy that the Department has now authorized the consular officers in Switzerland to issue up to 4000 quota immigration visas to refugee children up to 16 years of age without regard to religion, nationality or stateless status. The Department states that the purpose of this authorization is to facilitate the escape to Switzerland of orphaned or abandoned children by giving assurances to the Swiss Government that these children will not remain in Switzerland after the termination of hostilities in Europe. The Department instructs me to approach the appropriate officials of the Mexican Government in order to inform that government of our action as set forth in our airgram under reference, and to request the Mexican Government to give assurance to the Swiss Government of its acceptance up to a fixed number of refugee children in a manner similar to that of our own government.

In this Embassy's airgram No. A-1348, of April 26, 11 a.m., I informed the Department that, although the attitude of the Mexican Government with respect to the reception of refugees has been fairly liberal, it is my opinion that the Mexican Government is not particularly interested in receiving any considerable number of refugees from Europe either during or after the war. I stated that I had gathered the impression through confidential conversations from time to time with high officials of the Mexican Government when I have discreetly explored this situation, that this is the attitude of the Mexican Government. I therefore stated in my airgram that the probabilities were that the Mexican Government would not be willing to commit itself. I also stated that in order to secure anything like a favorable reception, it would be necessary to prepare the ground carefully in the Mexican Government and among the highest officials, and that I was taking the appropriate steps to this end.

I am sure it is not necessary for me to inform the Department of my deep interest in this refugee problem. The Department is aware that the circumstances of my service, both in the field and in the Department of State, have brought me in close contact with this problem. The Department is aware that from the very beginning of the Nazi regime when the persecution of Jews and others began on such a vast scale, I took a very determined stand with regard to such discriminations and persecutions and have constantly in my official capacity, done everything I could to further the steps taken by our government and other governments to alleviate the situation in which so many unfortunates found themselves. The Department will appreciate therefore that I view the initiative of the President as expressed in his executive order setting up the War Refugee Board with complete understanding and sympathy, and that I wish in my official and personal capacity to be as helpful in carrying through the objectives of the Board and of our government as may be possible.

As will have been apparent to the Department, however, from my despatches No. 15,781, of February 8; and 16,011, of February 18, only very limited collaboration can be expected from the Mexican Government in the refugee problem. Because of my deep interest in the refugee problem in general, I have not failed, during the more than two years that I have been in Mexico, to study the possibilities of Mexico's receiving refugees from Europe during and after the war. I have been in close touch not only with our official, but with our private organizations in the United States which are endeavoring to aid refugees. I have been

in

in close touch with the problem of endeavoring to find places where such refugees may go and to this end I have not failed during the past two years to explore this situation in Mexico and I have regretfully had to come to the conclusion that Mexico is not likely to offer facilities of refuge for any considerable number of refugees during or after the war.

Mexico has a fairly homogeneous population and up to the present time there has been no evidence of racial discrimination. The Mexican government has indicated consistently that it desires this situation to continue. Although it has maintained a rather liberal attitude with respect to certain types of refugees, it has been receptive more particularly to refugees of Spanish origin. The Department is aware that from the beginnings of the Spanish Civil War, Mexico opened her doors very freely to refugees from Spain of all types of political opinion. She received refugees of the extreme right and of the extreme left. She received these refugees in very considerable number and placed practically no limitation upon those endeavoring to enter Mexico. She received practically all who desired to enter Mexico and who could find facilities for leaving Spain or who could secure shipping accommodations.

Mexico also received a certain number of refugees from other countries of Europe, including many Jews, and she made no discrimination with respect to race or religion among the refugees she received from other countries. Mexico, however, did exercise the same measure of prudence exercised by us in the issuance of visas to refugees and admitted only those physically fit and who had no criminal or other unfavorable record. The number of refugees from countries other than Spain, however, was kept within the very definite limits that they set by the issuance of visas by Mexican consular and diplomatic officials.

The whole record in recent years has shown that Mexico was more particularly interested in receiving refugees from Spain than from other countries of Europe.

More recently, the restrictions on Mexican diplomatic and consular officers have been so strict with respect to the issuance of visas that she has been receiving practically no refugees from any other country of Europe. The reason for this change of policy, even with respect to Spain, has been that the experience of the Mexican government with a not inconsiderable part of these refugees has not been too satisfactory. So far as the Spanish refugees are concerned, they have in many respects shown themselves more adaptable to conditions in this country and have in many ways been able to incorporate themselves into the life of the country. Many of these refugees have been able to incorporate themselves into the business, professional, and working class of the country. Others, however, have made very little effort to incorporate themselves into the life of the country and have carried on political discussion and polemic within the country which from time to time has become a source of embarrassment and even concern to the Mexican Government. In a number of cases various groups of Spanish refugees have brought a good deal of pressure on the Mexican Government, to the point of embarrassment.

Unfortunately, some of the refugees from other countries of Europe than Spain have not, through their conduct, favorably influenced the attitude of the Mexican public and the Mexican Government towards refugees in general. A good many of the refugees from countries other than Spain came with fair amounts of money and they have, in a measure, instead of starting new in-

dustries

dustries or new businesses, acquired an interest in or control of businesses already established in Mexico and in Mexican industry. I will revert to this a little later, but there is no doubt that the attitude of some of the refugees in Mexico has unfavorably influenced the Mexican public and this is reflected in the Mexican Government.

The Department is aware that the Mexican Government has been exercising a very strict control in general over the admission of aliens, especially if they come to work. The Department is aware that American citizens entering Mexico for the purpose of engaging in any gainful occupation, whether it be professional, business, or otherwise, must secure special authorization, and that this is granted with difficulty. In fact, the attitude of the Mexican Government in this respect is far from liberal and this applies to aliens of any nationality and without respect to race, religion, or political opinion.

With specific reference to Jewish immigration, it may be said that there is at present no discrimination against Jews in Mexico, although there is a fair number in the capital and in other industrial centers. The Jews who have come to Mexico in the last 20 years have engaged almost entirely in business and have remained in the urban centers. Some of them have become very wealthy and a few of them very powerful. Some of these have not used either their wealth or their power with complete understanding. It may be said, however, that up to this time there is no discrimination against Jews and it has been my observation that the Mexican Government does everything in its power to avoid any such problem arising. My own observation would lead me to the opinion that the Jews in Mexico, who are for the most part in comfortable circumstances, are not particularly anxious that there should be any considerable Jewish immigration accepted by the Mexican Government, for they fear that it would lead to an unfavorable attitude towards Jews in general already in the country.

I have given the Department this background as it is necessary I believe to an understanding of the attitude of the Mexican Government. In addition to this, the Mexican Government does not believe that it is in need of any considerable immigration. The country has a population of 20,000,000, of which the overwhelming number live on a very low standard. The primary purpose of the Mexican Government is to improve and develop industry and to increase agricultural production. It believes that to do this it has adequate population and that its first obligation is to endeavor to provide a higher standard of living and more adequate employment for its present indigenous population. The attitude towards the reception of persons especially qualified for technical operation is likely to be liberalized, for such persons will be needed in the industrial and agricultural development of the country.

I have hesitated to take up with the Mexican Government directly, myself, the Department's confidential circular airmail of April 15 with regard to the granting of visas by Mexican diplomatic and consular officers in Switzerland to refugee children because I fear that the answer will be negative if the approach is made in this way at this time. I think there is a possibility that so far as refugee children are concerned under 16 years of age, it may be possible to get some degree of receptivity by the Mexican Government, although there are no organizations of any kind in Mexico which would be prepared to undertake the distribution and the care of these children within the country. Organizations such as we have in the United States and in some

other

other countries which can handle a problem of this kind do not exist here. The fiscal problems which the Mexican Government already has to face and which it will increasingly have to face through the decrease in revenue which is certain to come with the end of the war will make it reluctant to accept any refugees.

Nevertheless, in order to explore this matter before making any informal approach, I had an informal and confidential and off-the-record conversation with the Minister of Foreign Relations, Sr. Padilla a few days ago. In this conversation I raised the question of the President's executive order and the formation of the War Refugee Board, and the hope of our government for the collaboration of other governments in this important humanitarian work. The Minister immediately referred to my memorandum No. 2461, of March 24 (copy enclosed) which he said he had given careful consideration and had discussed with the President. The Minister said that I was aware of the high humanitarian motives and actuation of the President of Mexico. The President and the Government of Mexico and he were aware of the high humanitarian motives and actuation of President Roosevelt and of our government. He was sure that from the many conversations which I had had with him on similar matters, I had no doubt concerning his own understanding of these refugee problems and of his own desire to help as far as possible. He said that our memorandum, however, had raised a very real problem for the Mexican Government and he had not failed to discuss the matter fully with the President. He said that the Mexican Government, while it hoped to maintain its traditional policy of receptivity to immigrants and to those subject to political preoccupation and to refugees in general, was not in a position for the present to receive any further refugees. He called attention to the large number of Spanish refugees they had received during the Spanish Civil War and the problems which had been raised through the presence of some of these refugees in Mexico who, because of their racial affinity, should be easily assimilated. He called attention to the considerable number of refugees from other countries of Europe who had entered Mexico and he said that for the present the Mexican Government would not be in a position to make such a declaration as it had been invited to make, nor could it give any assurances that it was in a position to receive any immigrants for the present or for the immediately foreseeable future. He indicated that any request for admission by any specific group of refugees from any country would have to be refused as the Mexican Government was not in a position, for reasons which my presence in the country must have made clear to me, to receive any for the present. The Minister said that he wished to make it clear that they were not closing their doors, but that the Mexican Government must adhere for the present to its policy of receiving only a very limited number of people and those always on the basis of specific instructions issued to their diplomatic and consular officers stationed abroad.

I could see that the Minister was very anxious to collaborate with us but that he was unable to say that his government could for the present do so. I could see that he was regretful because in every matter on which we have approached him for collaboration in the inter-American and in the wider world picture, the Government of Mexico has been collaborative to an unusual degree. It was quite clear, however, that so far as refugees are concerned, the Mexican Government is not in a position to collaborate for the present and for this reason I do not believe that it would be advisable for the War Refugee

Board

Board or for us in any way to urge any measures on the Mexican Government. I do not believe that any such efforts on our part or of the War Refugee Board would have any usefulness and and I fear that they might have an unfavorable effect.

So far as the question raised in the Department's confidential circular airgram of April 15 is concerned, affecting children under 16 years of age, I have made no formal approach to the Mexican Government on this matter as I am confident from my knowledge of the situation here and from the remarks of the Minister of Foreign Relations and from the observations of the other officers of the Ministry, that the answer would be negative. I shall, however, endeavor in informal conversations with the Minister, to pursue this question of the objectives of the Refugee Board further and at my first opportunity I shall raise this question of refugee children.

I have written this long report on this matter to the Department as I believe the matter is of sufficient importance to warrant this full background and I have wanted it to be clear that if there is any response so far as Mexico is concerned, to the activities of the War Refugee Board, it is not because this Embassy has not foreseen the problem which has arisen and with which the Board wishes to deal, for during the past few years, I have endeavored in such ways as I properly and discreetly could, to develop a favorable attitude toward the reception of refugees.

Respectfully yours,

U. S. Messersmith

File 348-War Refugee Board
GJM/aw

To the Department in Original and 4 Copies.

Enclosure:

Copy of Memorandum No. 2461 of March
24, 1944.

000186

C O P Y

No. 2461

MEMORANDUM

It will be recalled that on February 11, there was left with the Official Mayor of the Ministry a personal memorandum respecting the establishment, on January 22, 1944, by an executive order of the President of the United States, of a so-called War Refugee Board to take immediate action for the rescue and relief of the Jews of Europe and other victims of enemy persecution.

The establishment of this board represents the determination of the Government of the United States effectively to carry out without delay the policy to take all possible measures for the speedy rescue and relief of the refugees in Europe. It is felt certain that this effort will not be unilateral, and it is desired to make clear that it continues to be the policy of the Government of the United States to encourage and participate in effective cooperative efforts with other governments. The board, of course, will cooperate with all interested international organizations.

While clarifying the position of the Government of the United States with respect to this entire problem, it is desired at the same time to express the hope for cooperative action upon the part of the Government of Mexico. It is thought that the action taken by the Government of the United States could be helpfully implemented through the issuance by the Government of Mexico of a declaration of policy similar to that made by the President of the United States.

Mexico, D.F., March 24, 1944.

RECEIVED

WAR REFUGEE BOARD

MAR 24 11 17 AM '44

000187

Ver O

STATE
WASHINGTON

AMEMB

FROM: American Embassy,
Mexico City
DATE: April 25, 1964
REF ID: April 29 1964

I have to acknowledge the receipt of the Department's confidential circular airgram of April 15, 1964, with further reference to the Department's circular airgram of January 26, 1964, and to subsequent communications on refugee matters. The Department requests the Embassy to approach the Mexican Government and inform it of the substance of the airgram under reference and to endeavor to secure its action vis-a-vis the Swiss Government along preliminary lines of our own action with respect to a specific number of visas which the Mexican Government may be prepared to authorize its representatives to grant to refugee children. The Department requests a report by teletype as to whether this suggestion is being favorably received by the Mexican Government, and if no information as to the number of children it is prepared to admit.

Although the attitude of the Mexican Government with respect to the reception of refugees has been fairly liberal, it is my belief that the Mexican Government is not particularly interested in receiving any considerable number of refugees from Europe either during or after the war. This impression I have gathered through confidential conversations from time to time with high officials of the Mexican Government when I have discreetly explored this situation. The probabilities are that the Mexican Government will be rather loath to commit itself and probably rather averse to commit itself.

In order to secure anything like a favorable reception towards the suggestion contained in the Department's airgram under reference, it will be necessary to prepare the ground carefully in the Mexican Government and among the highest officials. I am taking the appropriate steps to this end and I personally shall not fail to discuss this matter.

EXX 220008

DECLASSIFIED

State Dept. Letter, 1-11-72

By R. H. Parks Date SEP 14 1972

WAR REFUGEE BOARD

MEMORANDUM

April 20, 1944

file
JHM

I discussed with Mr. Warren telegram No. 506 of April 1, 1 p.m. Mr. Warren felt that we should do nothing about this situation at this time and that we should for the time ignore Messersmith's recommendation that no more refugees be brought to Mexico, etc. Mr. Warren felt that it would be better to handle this problem with Messersmith when a specific project arose.

The Board has no information regarding the 489 refugees to whom reference is made in the above-mentioned cable.

JHM

JHM:nedb 4/20/44

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dw

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2-W - Refugee Bd (possible)

GAR-140
This telegram must be paraphrased before being communicated to anyone other than a Government Agency. (BR)

Mexico

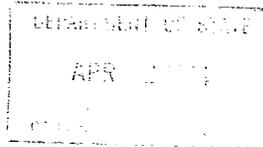
Dated April 1, 1941

Rec'd 5:42 p.m.

Secretary of State

Washington

506, April 1, 1 p.m.



Polish Minister has just informed me he learns from London that 489 refugees will shortly be brought to Mexico from India. Please advise Embassy of any information in this regard.

I repeat previous recommendations that no more refugees be brought to Mexico and if necessary (repeat if necessary) minimum five to six months advance notice required to arrange accommodations.

MESSERSMITH

CAW

*Memo written
4/20 JHM/ah*

000191



CONTROL COPY

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

3 WRB
(mass)
Mexico

Mexico, February 18, 1944.

X
No. 16011

Subject: Refugee Relief in Mexico

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

Sir:

Reference is made to the Embassy's despatch number 15781 of February 8, 1944, being a preliminary report as to the possible Mexican attitude with respect to the affording of relief to European refugees, in accordance with the program envisaged by the President in establishing the War Refugee Board.

This entire question was informally discussed with Señor Manuel Tello, Official Mayor of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, at which time a personal memorandum was left with him, explaining the duties of the Board and inquiring as to the extent to which Mexico might be prepared to cooperate in giving haven or rendering other assistance to European refugees at this time and in the future. Sr. Tello, in turn, took up the question with the Foreign Minister and he has now informed an officer of the Embassy that while Mexico is entirely in sympathy with the proposed activities of the War Refugee Board, it nevertheless cannot take any active part in the transportation of refugees to this Continent, nor can it assume any responsibility for the maintenance and care of such refugees in Mexico. He stated, in this connection, that, as is well known to the Embassy, Mexico is affording hospitality to large groups of Spanish refugees, as well as to large numbers of other refugees from Europe, many of them of the Jewish faith, in addition to cooperating in the settlement in Leon, Guanajuato, of approximately 1500 Polish refugees.

Sr. Tello likewise remarked that Mexico was stinting itself in order to make its financial contribution to UNRRA, despite the fact that large sections of the Mexican population were themselves in an impoverished condition.

So far as the question of Mexican hospitality to Jews is concerned, it may be stated that there is no particular problem here. As has been pointed out previously, Mexico has afforded refuge to large numbers of refugees without question as to their religion. Included among these refugees are Jews from many countries of Europe who have settled into Mexican life and are active in small business. Likewise there is a large number of Spanish, Italian and Levantine Jews in Mexico,

many of

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AIR MAIL

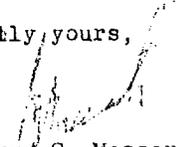
- 2 -

many of whom are intimately identified with the Mexican picture and are active and prominent in business, banking and industrial circles. Practically all of these individuals, many of whom are in the second and third generation of life in Mexico, have become and are considered as Mexicans.

Reports from the several consular officers in Mexico indicate that the Jewish families settled in their districts suffer no discrimination and in fact are active and, in some cases, prominent in local business circles.

I may add that during the course of an interview, last October, which Dr. Padilla, the Foreign Minister, granted to Mr. Jacob Landau, the Managing Director of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, he stated that Mexico had never discriminated against individuals of the Jewish faith but has accorded them the same hospitality accorded to all people desirous of living peaceably in Mexico and in accordance with its laws. He added that there were many Jews in Mexico and that they had been helpful in the national economy.

Respectfully yours,


George S. Messersmith.

SEOD:LC

In duplicate to the Department - original in ozalid

348 War Refugee Board

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[COPY: TMR: SS
[COMPARED: VS]

3 War Refugee
ad
(Trans)

CONTROL COPY

THE FOREIGN SERVICE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

AMERICAN EMBASSY

México, D. F., México, February 8, 1944

No. 15,781

Subject: Refugee relief in Mexico.

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

Sir:

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the Department's airgram of January 26, 7 p.m., 1944, respecting the establishment of a War Refugee Board, consisting of the Secretaries of State, Treasury and War, and also the President's statement that he expects the cooperation of all members of the United Nations and other Governments in carrying out the difficult and important task involved in the immediate rescue and relief of the Jews of Europe and other victims of enemy oppression. The Department directed the submission of an immediate report concerning the actual situation as it exists in Mexico, such report to include a full statement as to what is being done to rescue the Jews and other persecuted minorities from Hitler, including particularly (a) the extent to which these war refugees are permitted to enter Mexico, (b) the extent to which Mexico actually encourages and cooperates in their entry, and (c) the extent to which such refugees are not able to enter Mexico because of the latter's failure to cooperate in their entry.

The Department will recall from despatch no. 2462 of July 1, 1942, and related correspondence, that the Mexican Government had authorized the entry of a large group of political refugees from Europe. At that time when the so-called refugee vessels plying between Portugal, Casablanca and ports in the Americas were sailing on more or less regular schedules, considerable numbers of individuals, Jews and others, were admitted into Mexico as political refugees. Also at about this time the Mexican Foreign Minister stated "Mexico has been an energetic defender of the right of asylum and has freely opened its territory to the politically persecuted who come to it with honorable intentions of peace, work and discipline....Mexico cannot see without emotion the treatment which is being given to the civil populations in occupied territories".

During

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During the past eighteen months, the number of vessels calling at Mexican ports from Portugal and Spain have been practically nil so that the number of refugees entering Mexico during this period has been greatly reduced. There is no indication, however, that the Government of Mexico is not now, as it was in the past, prepared to cooperate in any measures looking towards the relief of persecuted European minorities and to afford asylum within the absorptive capacity of the country. This is substantiated by the fact that Mexico has entered into an agreement with the Polish Government-in-exile to take up to a maximum of 28,000 Polish refugees, irrespective of religion, who might be transported to Mexico. The Department will recall that slightly more than 1,500 have been brought to Mexico since July 1943 and are presently installed at the Colonia Santa Rosa in León, Guanajuato.

It will also be recalled that there is in Mexico an organization known as the Federación de Organismos de Ayuda a los Republicanos Españoles (FOARE) for the purpose of carrying on refugee and anti-Fascist propaganda; it has been active also in securing the release of political refugees in French North Africa. Through the activities of this organization and the cooperation of the Mexican Government, thousands of Spanish political refugees have found haven within the Republic. There is also in existence here a Jewish Refugee Committee which is in cooperation with similar organizations in the United States and which is principally concerned with refugees of the Jewish faith.

The Embassy will inform the Ministry for Foreign Relations with respect to the airgram under reference and endeavor to ascertain the extent to which Mexico is prepared to cooperate in the carrying out of the President's program of refugee relief. It is felt, in this connection, that Mexico will be prepared to cooperate within the limit of its fiscal and other capabilities; but that such cooperation will doubtless have to be limited to providing permission for refugees to reside within the Republic. It is extremely doubtful, considering the already impoverished condition and general living conditions of many of Mexico's citizens, whether the Government could, from a political point of view, afford to take over the responsibility of housing, feeding and caring for large groups of European refugees. The question, however, will be explored with the Mexican authorities.

It may be added that Mr. Gibson, of the Embassy staff, who was an adviser to the United States delegation to the recent Demographic Congress, states that this subject was not treated of during the Congress.

Respectfully yours,

HERBERT S. BURSLEY
Charge d'Affaires ad interim

SEOD:AP
In duplicate
848-War Refugee Board.

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