

Rumania and Bulgaria

000303

American Consulate General
Jerusalem, Palestine

October 6, 1944

Memorandum of Conversation with Mr. Mikhailov, First
Secretary of the Soviet Embassy, Ankara, October 3, 1944.

In order to pay my respects and say "au revoir" to the Russian Ambassador and his First Secretary with whom I had been conferring at the request of the War Refugee Board during my incumbency in Ankara, I visited the Soviet Embassy by appointment on Tuesday, October 3, at 11:30 a.m. The ambassador was ill at home, and I spoke for an hour informally with Mikhailov with whom I had been conferring from time to time following my conversations with the Bulgarian and Rumanian ministers and the Hungarian consul.

The conversation covered general lines without any special disclosures except the following:

1. Mikhailov asserted that he was happy that he had advised me not to take the Bagrianov Government too seriously, that it was playing with the Nazis, and that the Soviet intention to eventually override it was implied in his previous conversations. He referred to the freedom from Soviet direction with which the new Bulgarian Government was permitted to operate, and he referred, of course,

to the

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to the complete reinstatement of the Jewish citizens and all minorities which, he emphasized, was part of the Soviet policy.

Mikhilov stated that the Soviet Government had watched the work of Balabanoff with interest and sympathy and that among all officials of the former Governments who were disposed of, Balabanoff was saved for future usefulness.

He referred, in the same manner, to Cretzianu, Minister to Turkey from Rumania, whose sympathies and abilities he also lauded. He stated that it was his opinion that the Board had worked wisely in taking these two ministers into our confidence, as they have demonstrated that their sympathies and actions have been consistently though carefully opposed to the Nazi superimposition in their respective countries.

He referred to the "withdrawal" of the military missions of the British and Americans from Bulgaria with the statement that "the Turks have played up this incident and made it political ^{far} ~~is~~ 'fair'; the Turks are ^{horrible} ~~honorable~~ people".

Early in the conversation, Mikhilov asked whether I had any opinion on the Arab Conference, which was currently in session ^{in Alexandria} with relation to Palestine. I replied that I was not familiar with the reasons for the convocation of

the Conference

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the Conference or the complex political situation in Palestine, but that I was planning to spend three or four days in Palestine with a view to learning something more about the country, the people and its possibilities; that Palestine was the one center where it had been possible to send homeless refugees; and that it interested me as a creative force in a world in the process of war.

Mikhailov volunteered that he had spent some weeks in Palestine making a study and that he was convinced that the country could not justify its aims as an independent Jewish State; that it was economically unsound and politically unnecessary. "With the United States treating its Jewish citizens as Americans, the British treating its Jewish citizens as Britains and the Soviet treating its Jewish citizens as Russians, there is no necessity in the future for a separate Jewish State," Mikhailov stated. He asked whether I had any opinion regarding the British attitude towards the Arabs and the Jews from a political point of view. I stated that I did not; though I had read a number of conflicting articles about this. Mikhailov then adroitly indicated, by implication rather than by a categorical statement, that the British skirts might not be entirely clean where the Arab unrest was concerned.

I stated

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I stated that I had read in a magazine, which my memory suggested was the "Atlantic Monthly", an article indicating that the Soviet policy regarding Palestine as an independent Jewish State had recently undergone a change in the direction of favoring such a State. Mikhailov stated that he did not know of this article or any propaganda tending to suggest this change. I then asked Mikhailov if he could tell me the official position of the Soviet Government with regard to Palestine. After some hesitation, Mikhailov stated that the Soviet official position, as he knew it, was opposed to an independent Jewish State in Palestine in view of the lack of need for such a state in the new society and political orientation that would be developed in the future.

I gathered from this statement that Mikhailov was indicating his own definite views which unquestionably must have some support in official circles; although my impression was that the subject was one which was under consideration and was probably not closed or settled in principle from the Soviet point of view.

I referred again to the creative force and contribution that was apparently being made in Palestine as a good society, but these opinions apparently fell on barren soil

After

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After Mikhilov paid his respects to the valor and vigor of the American Army and its successors and referred to the impending drives of the Russian Armies which, he said, would culminate on the date of celebration of November 8, at which time all Russian soil would be freed from the Nazi blight, we parted with warm and friendly salutations.


Ira A. Hirschmann
Special Attache of Embassy in Ankara
of the United States of America

000310

SEP 22 1944

TO: Mr. Warren

FROM: Mr. Pehle

For the files of the State Department, I am sending you herewith copies of several memoranda prepared by Mr. Hirschmann, War Refugee Board representative in Ankara, Turkey.

(Signed) J. W. Pehle

Attachments.

FH:hd 9/21/44

Jed

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AUG 13 1944

Dear Ira:

We were all shocked by the news of the MEFKURA disaster. It is fortunate that you are there on the spot to do everything that can be done, and particularly to make decisions concerning future evacuations by sea. As previously indicated, we will fully support the decisions made by you. I hope that this tragedy will not interfere too seriously with your future plans for rescue and relief now that the ground-work inside Rumania and Bulgaria has been so ably laid by you.

I am sorry that the press of every day business makes it so difficult to correspond personally. Cables are all right so far as they go but, unfortunately, they must of necessity leave much unsaid. Typical is our cable No. 697 of August 12 (WRB No. 96) advising you that your discussions with the Bulgarians and Rumanians should be confined to questions of immediate relief and rescue of refugees.

In borderline cases it is, of course, not easy to separate the political from purely refugee matters. Particularly now when the war appears to be approaching a climax in Europe, the State Department is likely to construe the term "political" in a broad manner. In this connection the State Department takes the position that you were on dangerous ground in your reference to the assistance which the United States Government would give for the rehabilitation of Bulgarian Jewish citizenry in paragraph 6 of the message which you had transmitted to certain Bulgarian officials. (Your cable No. 1414 of August 2.) Political discussions apparently have been taking place with representatives of the Bulgarian Government, who are particularly anxious to obtain substantial post-war commitments from the United States. The State Department has real doubts of Balabanoff's motives in this regard. Because of the delicacy of the question regarding the post-war period, the State Department requested me to make it clear to you that the War Refugee Board has no authority to bind the United States Government with a post-war commitment or to enter into discussions on such matters. Rather than enter into a prolonged debate, I agreed to the despatch of our cable No. 697 of August 12 (WRB No. 96).

Your No. 1446 of August 7 arrived in Washington after the despatch of our No. 697. Paragraph 5 of your cable indicated that you did in fact discuss post-war problems with Balabanoff although, of course, without making any commitments. At any rate, the State Department apparently is not pursuing the matter further.

Hereafter in dealing with foreign governments, whether enemy, neutral or friendly, it is suggested that you avoid any discussion of post-war problems, including the post-war relief and rehabilitation of refugees. Furthermore, in your dealings with friendly and neutral governments, it is suggested that unless there are cogent reasons to the contrary, general questions such as the one discussed in your conference with Mikhailov of the Soviet Embassy on August 7 (your 1439 of August 7; Ankara No. 120) be raised through Washington which is in a position to deal directly with the foreign government concerned.

I hope that these few observations will serve to give you some idea of the line which is being adopted in Washington by the State Department and the Board and which, for obvious reasons, I am unable to furnish you by cable. Notwithstanding the limitations which I have mentioned, I am sure you will be able to continue your good work in obtaining the cooperation of foreign governments in refugee rescue and relief matters.

With best regards,

(Signed) J.W. Pehle

J. W. Pehle
Executive Director

Mr. Ira A. Hirschmann,
Special Representative, War Refugee Board,
United States Embassy,
Ankara, Turkey.

JWP JWPehle:dg 8/18/44

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THE FOREIGN SERVICE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

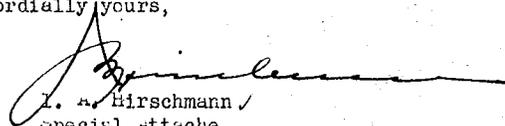
AMERICAN EMBASSY

Istanbul, August 5, 1944

Dear John:

I am enclosing copies of memoranda of my conversations held today with Cretzianu, the Rumanian Minister to Turkey, and Balabanoff, the Bulgarian Minister to Turkey, relative to the Board's rescue program. These reports cover in more detail the conversations reported by me to you through telegrams.

Cordially yours,


I. A. Hirschmann
Special Attache

Mr. J. W. Pehle
Executive Director
War Refugee Board
Treasury Building
Washington, D. C.

Encls.

copy sent to ...

000314

August 5, 1944

Memorandum for Mr. Kelley:

Subject: Conversation with M. Balabanoff,
Bulgarian Minister to Turkey

Place: Home of Gilbert Simond
42 Necati Bey Caddesi, Yonisehir

Time 5:30 p.m.

Monsieur Balabanoff arrived 30 minutes late and immediately appropriated a half-dozen of my Old Gold cigarettes for his wife. I took no steps against this overt act since I determined to take measures to make him pay for them in large proportions. I thanked Balabanoff for the letter which he had given to Simond for me and told him that I had transmitted it to our government. I requested permission to have it publicized, which he stated had not yet been authorized but that he would give me an answer to this within not more than two days. I referred to the fact that the letter said less than his conversation with me and he replied that this was naturally the case where the written word was concerned.

I informed him of the presence of the S. S. Vita and the S. S. Perin in Burgas and your arrangement with the Turkish authorities permitting these boats to enter Istanbul; also the suggestion that they continue on regular trips as a circuit. He made notes of the latter and promised to inform his government. He inquired what was holding up the boats and I stated it was my opinion that the Bulgarian Government was waiting for word from the Turkish Government regarding their release of transit visas.

I then launched into the subject of the two anti-Jewish laws. I told him that it was my opinion, and I believed that I was supported by our government in the conviction, that the efforts towards good will which the Bulgarian Government was attempting to show, as manifested by Balabanoff's letter, might result in the creation of ill will rather than good will on the part of our government in view of the technical difficulties involved in moving people out of Bulgaria at this time. "It may be weeks", I said, "before any appreciable number of refugees can depart, and this failure might be interpreted in Washington as a breach of faith on the part of the Bulgarian Government." I said that nothing would satisfy us until the two scandalous anti-Jewish laws were revoked. Balabanoff reasserted his position that these laws were to be abandoned gradually. I inquired as to the reason for such delay, in view of the present political situation. He did not reply to this directly, stating that it was true that the political situation had eased appreciably in the last week; that there was no real fear in Bulgaria of the Germans now and that a close relationship had developed between the Bulgarian Government and the Soviet. He stressed the latter point and spoke of it with enthusiasm.

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In the course of the latter discussion he referred to his pleasure at being able to meet with me not surrounded by German spies, stating that the air in Ankara was much better now that the Germans had departed. I agreed.

Balabanoff inquired whether much good will and publicity would result from the revocation of the two laws, and I was emphatic in indicating that this would make a dramatic story and impress our government of the true good faith in the field of humanitarianism by the Bulgarian Government. In fact, I asserted that nothing short of the abrogation of these two laws would satisfy us, as they were linked in our minds to the infamous Nuremberg laws and that it was up to the Bulgarian Government with one stroke at this time to disassociate itself with this black chapter in its history; otherwise it remains as a direct evidence of association with the Nazis in one of their most hideous convulsions.

Balabanoff seemed to get the point and replied that if it were within his power he would revoke the laws forthwith, but that he could only send a message as strong as my representation to his government, which he would do this night.

I read to Balabanoff a memorandum sent to me from Istanbul referring to the paragraphs below:

"In an address to an economic conference in Burgas, Hristo Vasilev, Minister of Commerce, declared that the elimination of the Jews from the economic life of the country was to a large extent responsible for the 'catastrophic' position of Bulgarian economy. This statement got by the censors and was printed in a Burgas paper read by sub-source.

"Sub-source states, nevertheless, that the economic situation of the Jews is as bad as it has ever been. Food rations, in some instances, are lower than for the gypsies. The newly appointed chief of the Jewish Commissariat, said to be Bogomil Protich, is alleged by sub-source and other Jews who have had dealings with him to be much more strongly anti-Semitic than Stomanyakov, the retiring chief."

Balabanoff asserted that he only knew Vasilev slightly, since he was a new Minister of Commerce. Here I emphasized the desirability in our view of rehabilitating Bulgaria's own citizens to build the new Bulgaria rather than to transplant them with all the attendant discomfort, expense, etc. to a strange land. I stated that reports indicated that there was plenty of food in Bulgaria, and that if it was a matter of financial aid I was of the opinion that some arrangement might be made through the International Red Cross to provide funds for the pauperized Bulgarian citizenry who happened to be Jews. Here I referred to the name of Guev, Director of the Bulgarian national bank, who is anti-Nazi and anti-Fascist, and who, according to Dr. Black's information, would probably be freely disposed toward assisting in finding local currency in Bulgaria, should it be necessary to secure Bulgarian levas to be made available to the Jewish people for the purchase of food. This seemed to interest Balabanoff.

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Balabanoff then referred again to the fine impression that was made on the Bulgarian Government and people as a result of the absence of bombing since March 20. He asked if I would be willing to make a bargain to continue the policy of this "happy omission" if the two laws were revoked. To this I replied that I was not in a position to discuss military questions, but that I had noted in a previous telegram to Washington to the effect that the absence of bombing had deeply impressed the Bulgarian population.

In questioning Balabanoff again on the reasons for his government's apprehension to wiping out the two odious anti-Jewish laws without delay, Balabanoff replied that there was justification, especially in the last weeks, for lack of fear at this time since there was only one German Division now occupying Bulgaria, and that the relations with Russia had vastly improved in the last days.

Balabanoff requested information regarding the nature of the good will which Bulgaria might build up through compliance with the steps I requested, especially with regard to the postwar period. He was desirous of knowing how long the United States Government would have a hand in European and Balkan affairs after the war. I stated that I was in no position to know or discuss this, but it was my impression that the government would be deeply concerned with the development of democracies and would continue to be interested in the protection of minorities. The latter seemed to interest him.

As the daylight was waning and Balabanoff was jumping from one subject to another, I had the impression that a strong representation made by me through Simond in a letter would be more logical and have more concentrated effect. I suggested that with Mr. Kelley's permission I might address a letter to Simond covering the points made above, and others. Balabanoff said he would be pleased to receive such a communication through Simond.

Balabanoff intends to remain in Ankara for the present. He promised to communicate the replies to his telegrams on the above subjects through Simond immediately upon hearing from Sofia.

I. A. Hirschmann
Special Attache

IAH:VH

000317

August 5, 1944

Memorandum to Mr. Kelley:

Subject: Conversation with Cretzianu, Rumanian
Minister to Turkey

Place: Home of Gilbert Simond
42 Necati Bey Caddesi, Yenisehir.

Time: 11:00 a.m.

Cretzianu introduced the conversations by reading to me what were purported to be the contents of a telegram received today by him from Istanbul in reply to his urgent request of his government to (a) facilitate the movement of the three Turkish ships now in Constanza; (b) to grant transit visas for all refugees arriving from Hungary to Rumania. He apologized for the inconclusiveness of his telegram, stating that it had been somewhat garbled in decoding, and that he was asking for it to be repeated.

The contents were, in effect, that (a) the departure of the Turkish ships had been delayed by the Turkish Government for technical reasons; (b) that the Rumanian Government would agree to grant transit visas for Rumania to the Hungarian refugees providing the Turks will grant transit visas for entry into Turkey. Regarding (a) I informed him of the arrival of the three Turkish ships in Istanbul waters today and thanked him for his government's cooperation. In connection with (b) I read to him some of the contents of the War Refugee Board's telegram No. 88 and part of the reference of 627 of July 11 relating to the Rumanian Prime Minister's broadcast connected with the intended permission for refugees to enter Rumania. I read to him also Barlas' transmission of Zissu's telegram announcing the Rumanian Government's agreement in principle to permit Hungarians to enter Rumania.

I thereupon emphatically urged upon Cretzianu to impress upon his government the essential importance at this time of permitting the Hungarian refugees to enter Rumania in spite of "technical walls" which could be constructed. I informed him of the pressures from numerous governments and the Catholic Church which had succeeded in breaking the will of the Hungarian Government under the Nazi yoke to permit the emancipation of Hungarian Jews. I referred specifically to the Swedes' agreement to accept all Hungarian children under the age of 10.

I called Cretzianu's attention to the good will which his government had built up in America, beginning with the abolition of the Transnistrian camp, and that any brake on this policy now with relation to Hungarian Jews, especially with the eyes of the civilized world upon Rumania, would serve to discredit the latter's former tendency in a humanitarian direction and create a backlog of ill will.

Cretzianu stated that he personally agreed wholeheartedly with the need for this move but that his government, now handicapped by serious bombing, would find it difficult to absorb a large foreign population and to supply the necessary transit facilities, food, clothing and housing. To this I replied that the International Red Cross would be, in my opinion, empowered to supply this need for the refugees enjoying temporary haven in Rumania, without delay.

Cretzianu reasserted the fact that his government had agreed in principle to grant transit visas for the Jews arriving from Hungary, and that the second step regarding havens must be strongly urged by him, which he agreed to do by telegram today. He indicated the pleasure of his government to interpret the apparent desire of the United States Government to remove the oppressed Hungarian citizens into Rumania as a temporary haven, as recognition on the part of our government that Rumania, in contrast to Hungary, now constituted a safe country for persecuted peoples. To this I replied that the results in Rumania related to the above would speak for themselves.

Cretzianu, who is leaving today for Istanbul, agreed to notify me through the Intercross representative, either in Istanbul or Ankara, depending upon the duration of his visit to Istanbul. I had the further impression that he was making all possible efforts to assist in the rescue program in and through Rumania, and was strongly urging his government to take steps in that direction.

I. A. Hirschmann
Special Attache

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OF REPLIES FROM BUCHAREST

I. A. Hirschmann
Special Attache

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WELLS
POTTER
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KIRKLAND

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THE FOREIGN SERVICE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

AMERICAN EMBASSY

Ankara, July 25, 1944

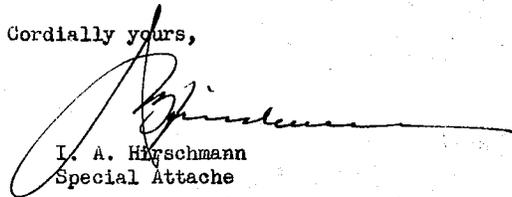
Dear John:

The attached memorandum concerned with my interview with Monsieur Balabanoff about which I telegraphed you today, is one which I believe you may wish to have in complete detail for your information and files. By the time you receive this I trust that the suggested action referred to will have been taken and will have resulted in the rescue of many more refugees.

I am attaching also a memorandum of my conversation today with Mr. Mikhailov, First Secretary of the Russian Embassy in Ankara, relating to the political situation connected with refugee rescue operations.

With good wishes,

Cordially yours,



I. A. Hirschmann
Special Attache

Encls.

Mr. J. W. Fehle
Executive Director
War Refugee Board
Treasury Building
Washington, D. C.

copy sent to [unclear] [unclear]

000323

July 25, 1944

Memorandum for Mr. Kelley:

Subject: Conversation with Monsieur Balabanoff,
Bulgarian Minister to Turkey

Thanks to your assistance with Monsieur Simond of the International Red Cross, an interview was arranged yesterday between Messieurs Balabanoff, Simond and myself at 5:00 P.M. at the home of M. Simond. The interview lasted about an hour and twenty minutes. M. Balabanoff entered the room in a buoyant mood. He immediately proclaimed that he had good news. He asserted that in his previous conversations with me in March and April he could not offer me any encouragement because of the policy of the old regime of the Bulgarian Government. The new regime, he avers, is liberal in tendency; headed by Bagryanov who is an agriculturalist interested in the people. (He mentioned that there had been some difficulty in selecting a Prime Minister and a Cabinet.) This regime, he said, is definitely changing its policy regarding the treatment of the minorities and the Jews in the following respects:

(1) The status of the Jews will be returned to them as before the war. For the present there will be "no persecutions, no abuses; the treatment will be mild;"

(2) Facilities are being granted to permit the Jews to leave the country, and all unnecessary formalities in securing the visas are being eliminated;

(3) The heads of the Jewish community have been called in by Bagryanov and Draganoff, and the announcement of the new policy towards the Jews was made to the latter's satisfaction.

Balabanoff revealed that the absence of the bombing of Sofia in the last month had made a deep impression on the new regime and had some indirect connection with the above stated policy.

I reminded Balabanoff of the two severe anti-Jewish laws which reduce the Jews to economic pariahs and requested information regarding the repeal of them.

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Balabanoff asserted that these laws would be eliminated in a short time, but that the change of policy would have to be gradual in order not to "fly in the face of the Germans."

I then requested of Balabanoff his interpretation of these new laws as related to both transportation of refugees by boat, ship and rail. Balabanoff stated that all instructions would be given for boats, preferably from Burgas, to depart for Istanbul without delay, and that my request for 400 to 500 refugees a week to be permitted to depart by rail would be granted, provided of course that the Turkish visas were available. I mentioned that I had been informed of the technical difficulties and delays involved in securing the necessary certificates to permit departure from Bulgaria, to which Balabanoff replied that the strictures regarding these were being withdrawn. I inquired whether it would be less onerous to secure such certificates for children. Here he asked for a definition of a "child", stating that the word had been defined as "up to 18." We agreed that a child would be considered for these purposes as under 15.

On the subject of the S.S.Teri Balabanoff was definite in stating that he had requested of his government the permission for this ship to sail from Burgas to Istanbul and that he had secured consent, but suggested that it would be better strategy to have the request made by the Ankara representative of the International Red Cross to the Sofia representative of the same organization, to which Simond assented.

Balabanoff was at pains to emphasize the attitude of the new regime as taking a complete reversal of position in the matter of minorities and Jews. I requested that he hand to Simond a statement of this position of the present Bulgarian regime

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for me to transmit to Washington, to which he agreed, stating that it would be in Simond's hands by Tuesday, July 25 at 1:00 P.M. At my suggestion to give such a statement wide publicity to develop good will for the present Bulgarian Government in America Balabanoff requested that I wait until he had authorization for such public release from Sofia, for which he would make inquiry at once.

Here I promised that action of any appreciable and especially dramatic nature resulting from the new policy of the government on the refugee question would be given ~~wide~~ publicity in America, which seemed to interest Balabanoff exceedingly.

Mr. Balabanoff questioned me on the attitude of the American people regarding the new government, to which I replied that I could not speak for the American people or the government on this question except relating to the refugee question, and that only the results of action of the Bulgarian Government could bring any required good will in the next crucial months. In this connection I inquired of Balabanoff the nature of the relationship of his government to the Nazi regime. Balabanoff replied that the effort of the government was to gradually "get out from under" and that there was definitely a closer affinity with the Soviet Government, which they do not regard without fear.

I referred parenthetically to the Bulgarian interest in tobacco markets, stating that it might be possible to encourage the reintroduction of those Bulgarian markets for American business after the war, which subject seemed to interest Balabanoff.

The total impression gained in the interview can be summed up as an apparent effort on the part of the new Bulgarian regime to gradually about-face and to bring their Jewish subjects step for step back to their former status, provided

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that it does not interfere with Bulgaria's present tenuous position with the Nazis, and to achieve for itself under the quickest and best possible circumstances good will in the United States.


I. A. Hirschmann

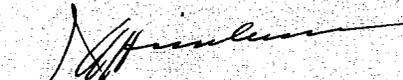
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July 25, 1944

Following the attached interview with the Bulgarian Minister, I arranged for conversations with Mr. Serguei Mikhailov, First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in Ankara. Mikhailov was informed by me of the steps taken in my conversations with the Rumanian and Bulgarian Ministers. The Soviets concurred in the desirability of these discussions but warned me that too much could not be expected in terms of practical results, especially from the Bulgarians. In the instance of the Rumanians he stated "these people are fools for not having accepted our terms for peace. The terms were even milder than those offered to the Finns."

In response to my inquiry regarding the "color" and status of the Bagryanov Government, Mikhailov replied that it was essentially under German domination, although there were remote reasons to believe that efforts were being made by the regime to gradually pull away from the Nazi yoke. It would seem that the Russians maintain little respect or intimate connection with this Bulgarian Government and not very much faith in its espousals in the direction of a liberal policy. Mikhailov was not unaware of the Bulgarians' desire to covet good will in the United States. He asserted that it was the Soviet's impression that the Germans, as a deliberate policy, were permitting the Bulgarians to display a face of alleged liberalism in order to use Bulgaria as a pivot for itself in the Balkans, especially since Bulgaria retained its neutral status with the Russians.

NOTE: We should not, in my opinion, confer any premature medals or arrange any publicity of a good will nature towards the Bulgarians until they have demonstrated with specific results their intentions to cease the abuses of the Jews and minorities and actively assist in the evacuation of them by ship and rail.


A. A. Hirschmann

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THE FOREIGN SERVICE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

AMERICAN EMBASSY ✓

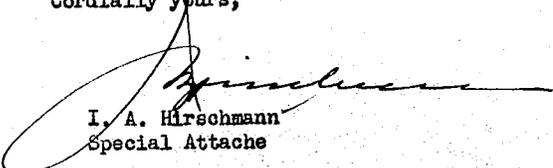
Ankara, July 24, 1944

Dear John:

In our efforts to break the deadlock in the interior situation in Rumania concerned with the release of vessels containing waiting refugees, I deem it desirable at this point to send to you through the pouch the enclosed memorandum covering my conversation of July 21st with Alexandre Cretzianu, Rumanian Minister to Turkey. The major points connected with the memorandum will have been received by you through telegram from me, but the situation is so involved and subject to "remote control" that I wanted you to have a play-by-play report on it. By the time this reaches you it may be stale (I hope). You may be assured that Katzki and I are pushing with all vigor and resource to break this bottleneck.

May I seize upon this occasion in writing to you to tell you of my satisfaction with the work of Mr. Katzki, and also of the two stenographers who have recently arrived. Mr. Katzki is an able and loyal associate who is giving devoted service.

Cordially yours,


I. A. Hirschmann
Special Attache

Mr. J. W. Pehle
Executive Director
War Refugee Board
Treasury Department
Washington, D. C.

Warm personal regards.

000324

Istanbul

July 22, 1944

Memorandum of conversation held at 7:00 P.M., July 21, 1944

with Messrs. Cretzianu and Jaquinet.

At my request Monsieur Simond of the International Red Cross arranged a rendezvous between Alexandre Cretzianu, Minister from Rumania to Turkey, Mr. Jaquinet and myself at the apartment of Simond's assistant, M. Beretta, 32 Abdul Hakhamid Caddesi, Talimhane, Taksim, Kucuk Palas, at 7:00 P.M., July 21. Cretzianu had not been informed that I would be present and seemed somewhat "deshabille." He seemed nevertheless pleased to see me and was intensely interested in the representations and requests made by me connected exclusively with the refugee situation vis-a-vis Rumania. I first thanked him for the copy of the statement issued by Mahai Antonescu of the Interministerial Committee which Antonescu had set up for dealing with the transportation of Jewish refugees, telegraphed to you in my No. 1321 of July 20. Cr. asserted that this was the first time that the aforesaid resolution had been divulged to anyone outside of his government. I informed him that I had sent a translation to Washington.

I then referred to the absence of any reference in the above memorandum of the enigmatic Mr. Zissu. Cr. stated that he had made a specific point of requesting information about Zissu and was also similarly surprised. I then requested Cr. to determine if possible for us the status of Zissu in his relationship to the Rumanian Government and the planned movement of refugees from Constanza. I informed Cr. of the successful arrival of the S. S. Kazbek in Istanbul, the unexplained delay in the release of the three Turkish ships now in the port of Constanza, and the information which I had been given concerning Zissu's allegations that the Rumanian Government had indicated its preference to send Rumanian ships with refugees. Cr. made what appeared to be copious notes of my conversation and promised to send a message to Bucharest to secure further advice for me on the above.

I then informed Cr. of the recent reports that the Hungarian Government had determined to permit Jewish refugees to depart from Hungary provided that they had certificates permitting them to enter Rumania and Palestine. I referred parenthetically to some trivial illegal movement of refugees across the Hungarian border into Rumania which Rumanians seemed to be aware of, and urged of him that he request his government without delay to issue thousands of transit visas for Hungarian Jews to move into and through Rumania to be embarked at Constanza for Istanbul. Cr. was unaware of the news regarding Hungary and asserted that it was his impression that his government might demur at the suggestion if it would mean that the Hungarian Jews would remain for any length of time in Rumania. I emphasized that the ship movement from Constanza was obviously one which the Rumanian Government was now encouraging and facilitating which would in effect guarantee that no congestion of Hungarian Jews remaining in Rumania would result. At the conclusion of the discussion on this point Cr. assured me with pointed emphasis that he would "warmly and strongly recommend it by telegram tonight." I promised Cr. that such a move would be received in Washington with enthusiasm and would be widely publicized in America as an earnest of good-will on the part of the present Rumanian Government in terms of its humanitarian interest.

On the subject of the engagement of ships to leave Constanza, Cretzianu and I discussed the alleged request emanating from Rumania that the ships departing from Constanza be of Rumanian registry. I indicated that a report had reached me that there might be an interest on the part of some Rumanian political figures to embark on these vessels with the refugees. Cr. asserted that he was not unaware of this possibility and it was not without possible foundation that some political figures in Rumania would at this time prefer to leave the country. On this point he was rather vehement and indirectly disclosed to me for the first time his identity with the so-called liberal faction in Rumanian politics. He stated that there were two categories of Rumanian

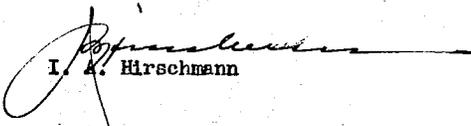
politicians, (1) those who would like to "abandon the sinking ship now", and (2) those who would remain to "fight it out." He asserted that he had no sympathy with the first category and he could see serious involvements occurring with refugee vessels that would include members of such a group in that they would not have Turkish visas and would not be permitted to enter the country. I retorted that this was a matter in which I could not be especially interested; that it was outside my province and our government's interest, but I hoped that no action would be taken by these politicians which would interfere with the successful embarkation of the vessels. I stated also that, in the event that members of the second category of so-called liberal Rumanians requested to come to Istanbul for political reasons which might be of value to a "new government", they would be assisted by me with the Turkish officials in securing visas, in the event that Cr. requested it of me. This, I asserted, I would attempt with the advice and agreement of Mr. Kelley in Ambassador Steinhardt's absence, as a courtesy to Cr. for his cooperation in refugee matters. Cr. made detailed notes of these points.

I then imparted to Cr. some of the contents of the telegram No. 641, July 17, WRB cable No. 82, in which Minister Johnson had advised the WRB of the efforts of Mr. Aurel Theodoru to arrange negotiations for the purchase of the celebrated Rumanian vessels, the S.S. Transylvania and the S.S. Bessarabia. Cr. reaffirmed the desire of his government to sell the boats for the purpose of transporting refugees, with a view to repurchasing them after the war. I indicated to Cr. that the door would not be closed on this question provided that, as a condition of sale, safe conduct by all governments would be included. Here Cr. insisted that it was his judgment that the difficulty of securing safe conduct would be on the part of the Russians and not the Germans. The matter was left with my statement that I would explore the subject in Ankara with the Russian Embassy.

* Cr.'s language verbatim

The subject again turned to Mr. Zissu, and Cr. volunteered the following interpretation: It is possible, he averred, that Zissu had some financial stake indirectly connected with the charter of Rumanian boats. He (Cr.) was also of the opinion that the absence of reference to Zissu in the Antonescu memorandum was significant, and that he would secure for me specific information from his government regarding the auspices of Mr. Zissu and other Jewish representatives connected with refugee movement. I informed Cr. that we entertained a high regard for Mr. Fildermann by virtue of his reliable and devoted efforts in the field of human welfare.

Cr. left with the statement that he would communicate with me through the International Red Cross immediately upon receipt of information from Bucharest in response to inquiries and representations related to the above.


I. A. Hirschmann



THE FOREIGN SERVICE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

7/23/44
Bolatov #
JUL 23 RECD

AMERICAN EMBASSY

Ankara, July 22, 1944

Dear Ira:-

Mr. Simond has just informed me that your appointment with Mr. B. is fixed for Monday afternoon at five o'clock. I told him that you would get in touch with him sometime before that hour, after your arrival from Istanbul.

Sincerely,

Robert F. Kelley,
Charge d'Affaires ad interim.

Ira A. Hirschmann, Esquire,
Care of American Consulate General,
Istanbul, Turkey.

DECLASSIFIED
State Dept. Letter, 1-11-72
By R. H. Potts Date SEP 27 1972

*See serials sent
to Turkey*

000334

NO.

THE FOREIGN SERVICE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL

SUBJECT:

THE HONORABLE
THE SECRETARY OF STATE,
WASHINGTON.

SIR:

000333

Rumania file

17417
Rumania

Translation of letter to Jaquinet from Simond, July 19, 1944

My dear Jaquinet,

Just a note which you will receive through the American Consulate.

This is what it is about, and it is under the heading of strictly confidential:

Mr. Hirschmann, delegate of the War Refugee Board of New York, would like to meet again with H. E. Monsieur Cretzianu, Minister of Rumania. These gentlemen have already met several times, in my presence, among other times once in the apartment of Beretta in Istanbul.

I would be very much obliged to you if you would be so kind, upon receiving this note, to make contact, on the one hand with Mr. Hirschmann at the Park Hotel, and on the other hand with H. E. Monsieur Cretzianu, who lives at Suadiye, telephone 227. These gentlemen have been informed as to your personality, so as to place you. It would be preferable if you made contact first with Mr. Hirschmann at the Park Hotel, and that with the greatest prudence. Especially, no conversation over the telephone on this subject.

When, on the other hand, you telephone to H. E. the Minister, would you be so kind as to tell him that you were charged by me to transmit a message to him, and that, on this account, you would appreciate it if he came to Istanbul. Arrange for an exact rendezvous, so as not to miss each other, since you do not know each other.

As for the rendezvous, I imagine that it will take place in Beretta's apartment. Mr. Hirschmann may arrive first, or else you yourself with H. E. Monsieur Cretzianu. As I told you, both of them know the place of the rendezvous.

I have confidence that you will conduct this affair under conditions of extreme ~~max~~ prudence, and thank you heartily in advance.

I confirm my arrival in Istanbul on Wednesday morning the 26th.

Now file and from Turkey

000336

To Jaquinet from Simond

-2-

Attached herewith is the "Transportbewilligung No. 2743 T relative to the shipment of supplies for France. Would you be so kind as to convey this authorization for transport as quickly as possible to Mr. Thommen. A thousand thanks in advance.

Very cordially yours, etc., etc.

(signed) Gilbert E. Simond
Delegat of the International Red
Cross in Turkey

P. S. I would be grateful if you would burn this letter as soon as read, and not make any copies for your files.

Yours etc.,

(signed) Gilbert Simond

*2, 1st - 1
Zal...*



THE FOREIGN SERVICE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

AMERICAN EMBASSY
Ankara, July 16, 1944.

Dear Ira:

I was informed by Simond of the International /
Red Cross yesterday that Mr. B. is expected in Ankara
toward the end of this week (commencing the 16th).
Simond said he would let me know promptly when Mr. B.
arrives. I shall of course relay such information
to you.

Sincerely yours,

Robert F. Kelley

And...

Ira A. Hirschmann, Esquire,
Special Representative,
War Refugee Board,
Istanbul.

See from files...

000338

Mr. Ira Hirschmann,
Special Representative,
War Refugee Board,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Hirschmann:

Reference is made to your memorandum of May 23 with regard to the situation of the Jewish population in Rumania.

This will confirm your understanding that all the information you have given me on this subject has been conveyed by me personally to the various officials of this Government mentioned in your memorandum, and that this information has been duly noted. I should like to add that this Government continues to have a deep concern in the situation of Jews in Rumania and consequently will observe with interest any further steps which may be taken to protect these people.

Very truly yours,

J. W. Pehle,
Executive Director

JBF:bbk - 5/24/44

*This taken from Mr. Hirschmann
files
Instructions for Mr. Pehle
re: this file*

000334

May 23, 1944

Mr. Pehle

Mr. Hirschmann

On April 21, 1944, I handed you a memorandum with regard to Alexandre Cretsiannu, Rumanian Minister to Ankara, and his cooperative attitude towards the work of the War Refugee Board in Turkey. I also handed you a communication dated March 15, 1944, said to be from Michel Antonescu, stating the position of the Rumanian Government with regard to the Jewish population in Rumania.

I now understand from our conversations that you have conveyed to Mr. Adolph Berle, Assistant Secretary of State, and to other interested officials of the Government, my memorandum of April 21 and the substance of my conversations regarding the friendly attitude manifested by Cretsiannu. I wish also to thank you for bringing this information to the attention of the three members of the War Refugee Board, and particularly to Mr. Hull, Secretary of State.

000340

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
WAR REFUGEE BOARD

INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

*file
JWB*

DATE April 21, 1944

TO Mr. Pehle
FROM Mr. Hirschmann

I refer to my verbal report to you in confirmation of my telegrams relating to my conversations with Alexandre Cretzianu, Rumanian Minister to Ankara. Cretzianu manifested a frank and friendly interest in the efforts of the War Refugee Board to help extricate refugees from the Rumanian and German yoke. He arranged to have Antonescu take concrete action, which I have specifically reported, and which has been confirmed by refugees coming out of Rumania, Mr. Kolb, the Rumanian Representative of the International Red Cross and the Office of Strategic Services.

Cretzianu's father, I understand, was the former Minister of the Rumanian Government in Washington. Alexandre Cretzianu, I am informed, has ambitions to follow in the footsteps of his father. In my conversations with him I implied that I would indicate the degree of his cooperation in helping us break the strangle-hold on the refugees in Rumania. My impression of Cretzianu is that he is forward-looking and sympathetic with the aims of democratic governments.

*copy given
to Mr. Pehle
4/22/44.*

000341

TO:

____ Secretary Morgenthau

____ Mr. Gaston

____ Mr. Paul

____ Mr. White

____ Mr. E.M. Bernstein

____ Mr. DuBois

~~____ Mr. Friedman~~

____ Miss Hodel

____ Mr. Lesser

____ Mr. Luxford

____ Mr. Stewart

____ Mrs. Taylor

Files

for official files

J. W. Pehle

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
WAR REFUGEE BOARD

000342

MR. FRIEDMAN:

4/21/44

For your information and files.
I should like to see a translation of
the document in French. Please make
no further copies of any documents
relating to Hirschmann's discussions
with the Rumanian and Bulgarian
representatives.

JWPehle

*This is the translation
requested.*

000343

COMMUNICATION DATED MARCH 15, 1944

(1) On March 13, 1944, the Rumanian Government decided to transport the Jews in Transnistria to Rumanian territory (in Bessarabia and Buchovina).

(2) The Rumanian Government is prepared to give all cooperation in aiding the emigration of the Jews.

(3) The Rumanian Prime Minister ad interim, Michel Antonesco, desires to make the fact known, moreover, that he has always favored the opinion that the emigration of the Jews should be facilitated.

Furthermore, in 1940, in his capacity of Minister of Justice, he categorically disavowed the outrages to which the Jews were subjected both in respect to their persons and their property, and he ordered the arrest of the guilty parties.

In March, 1941, on the day immediately following the rebellion, at a moment when the internal political situation in Rumania was still troubled, Michel Antonesco took the occasion to declare to the special envoys of the German Government that:

(a) The Rumanian Government is opposed to violence and measures of coercion and does not recognize crime as a legal institution and method;

(b) The Rumanian Government will approve only measures economic in nature which in the commercial field will have to be applied very slowly.

Subsequently, representations to the same effect were made with the Rumanian Chamber of Commerce. Up to this day, no Jewish property which was expropriated in 1940-1941 has been placed on sale.

The same view was later maintained before the German Government at the time that that Government, through the intermediary of the Ministerial Counselors, von Ritgenk, Richter, and Hoffman, and the Minister of State, Pflaumer, demanded that Rumania abandon control over the Jews completely to Germany, inasmuch as Germany desired that the Jewish question be solved on an international basis. The Rumanian Government refused to accede to this demand.

000344

The Emi-
gration
question

The Rumanian Government has authorized emigration every time that application was made for a positive departure. In 1941, departures of Jews were organized by certain persons of Jewish origin who unfortunately took advantage of the situation to exploit their co-religionists. The "Struma" affair is well known, painful, but true.

In 1942, when the British Government requested of the Rumanian Government, through the intermediary of the Swiss Minister in Bucharest, whether the Rumanian Government would agree to authorize the departure of the Jews, the latter government replied in the affirmative.

During the summer of 1943, when the Rumanian Government received a note concerning the same question, which originated from the British Government, the Rumanian Government replied similarly in writing that it did and will always favor the idea of emigration, but that these undertakings will have to be organized quickly in large groups and with all the earnestness implied in such business.

A similar reply was given to the representatives of the International Red Cross.

During the fall of 1943, the Zionist Congress, which met in Rio de Janeiro, addressed a personal telegram to Michel Antonesco requesting authorization for the departure of the Jews. The Rumanian Prime Minister replied that he was fully in accord and that the Rumanian Government desired to aid particularly the Jews who had been transferred to Transnistria.

Recently, persons of Jewish origin who were sufficiently ill-advised to make use of Communist agents in order to organize departures were liberated as a result of the intervention of the International Red Cross Delegate. This was done for the sole purpose of demonstrating that the Rumanian Government is not opposed to the emigration movement.

The German Minister of Foreign Affairs, von Ribbentrop, having learned of the Rumanian Government's approval of the emigration movement and of the exchange of notes on this subject with the British Government, sent a note to Marshal Antonesco stating that Germany had rejected similar requests because of her desire not to displease the Arabs. The German

Government counseled the Rumanian Government to do likewise. In his reply to the German Minister at Bucharest, Michel Antonesco stated that the Rumanian Government does not slaughter the Jews, that it does not intend to solve the problem by annihilating the Jews, that it favors the idea of emigration, and lastly that the Rumanian Government asked von Ribbentrop to have at least the same regard for Rumanian sensibilities as he had for those of the Arabs.

Unfortunately, the lack of organization regarding the departure of Jews for Palestine continues. The Jews of Rumania plead a lack of money and ships. Insofar as Rumania is concerned, she went so far as to open negotiations with the Turkish Government (as early as the spring of 1943) with a view to studying the possibilities of making use of the Rumanian ships "Transilvania" and "Besarabia", which were anchored in Istanbul under a neutral flag, on condition that the immunity and the title of these Rumanian ships be guaranteed.

The Rumanian Government desires to point out once again that it is completely convinced of the desirability of the departure of the Jews for Palestine and it will do everything in its power to aid those wishing to leave.

Jews who became established in Rumania before 1919 know that those who have rendered services to the state are deemed under the law to be Rumanian; as for those who became established in Rumania after this date, only those expressing the desire to leave will do so; unsettled elements who have arrived in the country during the past six years will have to leave.

In conclusion, the Rumanian Government deeply desires to organize as quickly as possible the departure of the Jews; to this effect:

(1) it authorizes the departure of the Jews -- children and adults, particularly those who until now have been in Transnistria. This statement is an undertaking;

(2) it is ready to reopen without delay discussions concerning the use for this purpose of the motorships, "Transilvania" and "Besarabia", on condition of certain guarantees.

(Translation from the French)

000345

TO:

Secretary Morgenthau

Mr. Gaston

Mr. Lesser

Mr. Paul

Mr. Luxford

Mr. White

Mr. Stewart

Mr. E.M. Bernstein

Mrs. Taylor

Mr. DuBois

Files

Mr. Friedman

~~Miss Model~~

FOR FILES. MAKE NO ADDITIONAL COPIES.

JWP

J. W. Pehle

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
WAR REFUGEE BOARD

000347

American Embassy, Ankara,
April 6, 1944.

MEMORANDUM TO THE AMBASSADOR

Mr. Simond arranged an appointment with Mr. Balabanoff, Minister from Bulgaria to Turkey, for me at Simond's home, and below is the gist of the discussion that ensued between us:

Mr. U. stated that he had no direct word to his telegram and long memorandum to his government resulting from our talk several weeks ago; that he had only word indirectly that they were relaxing their attitude towards the minorities and especially the Jews; he said it should be understood that he could not receive any word with Sofia almost destroyed from the bombardments. He referred to a castle outside the military zone which had been struck and destroyed and said that this needless bombardment was only strengthening the resistance of the Bulgarian people.

At the same time, he said that they were permitting the Jews to leave by both ship and train; that he himself had received a visit from a Mr. Isaac Mitrani, a Palestinian Jew, who gave him a list of 200 Bulgarian refugees which he, Balabanoff, had transmitted to his government with recommendations to release them.

He stated again that Christoff, one of the leaders of his government, had expressed himself in letters to him as sympathetic with the Jewish refugees. He took pains to attempt to justify the outrageous acts of his people in the persecution of the Jews stating that it was done only by a minority who got out of control when the Germans came in and that his country was now cornered.

I inferred that they had made the decision about Germany and that all I asked was that his government take the opportunity now to make a friendly gesture by resisting a tendency to persecute or annihilate innocent victims who could not help them win or lose the war.

He apologized again for not having direct word from his government and begged me to receive such a message when it would come any day through Simond in Washington which I promised to do.

I. A. Hirschmann

IAH/eb

Mr. Pahl
JAH 4/15/44

000348

COPY

American Embassy, Ankara,
April 6, 1944.

MEMORANDUM TO THE AMBASSADOR

Upon returning to Ankara today, Mr. Simond transmitted further data regarding his talk with Von Papen, the German Ambassador.

After importuning him regarding the SS Tary and the release of the Jews, V. P. is alleged to have said, "I don't understand my government when it has the opportunity to release these people and it fails to do so. They can be a dangerous fifth column besides everything else." V. P. is even worried about the children to be released asking if Simond was certain that they would be properly taken care of in Palestine. V. P. also said that he could not understand why the requests for safe conduct in other instances had not been forthcoming. He promised immediately to send a straight cable to Berlin to the effect that, "You must let these people go. It is not a military question."

V. P. said that he had already sent a report to his government protesting the German government's policy in molesting the Jews in Hungary. "Why kill them", he said, "It would be much wiser to put them in camps." Simond also reported that V. P. indicated, but not in any words, his lack of sympathy with the Hitler government; that he had never expected it to last so long; that as an aristocrat and a Catholic, he could not be in sympathy with it, and that V. P. has indicated on a number of occasions his record that he is not anti-Semitic and that in spite of what others say, he left many good friends in Washington among whom were some Jews.

At the end of the conference, V. P. said to Simond, "You can trust me--the ship will go." He made no restrictions whatever and did not resort to the usual reservation of promising subject to his government's authorization. Simond had the impression that V. P. had heard about the War Refugee Board's work and that V. P. was aware of the United States Government's profound interest in the subject. Simond sent a cable to Geneva covering the above situation. If he does not hear from Von Papen within a week, he will go back to him.

Simond volunteered and was rather emphatic in his statement that if and when I return, it would be valuable to have a talk with Von Papen and him.

I. A. Hirschmann

000344

To Mr. Pöhl from

I. A. Hirschmann - 4/13/44

American Embassy, Ankara,
April 6, 1944.

MEMORANDUM TO THE AMBASSADOR

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Simond volunteered and was rather emphatic in his statement that if and when I return, it would be valuable to have a talk with Von Papen and him.

I. A. Hirschmann

IAH/eb

000350

American Embassy, Ankara,
April 6, 1944.

MEMORANDUM TO MR. PACKER

Mr. Simond of the International Red Cross is going to be the liaison between the Rumanian and Bulgarian ministers with whom I have been confidentially talking, as you know, exclusively on the refugee question. Both these ministers have promised to transmit to Simond information from their respective governments on the progress of the situation in their countries relative to refugee emancipation.

Simond has asked me if he can send telegrams through the Embassy to me or the War Refugee Board in Washington. Since I alone, with the Ambassador's approval, have been dealing directly with these gentlemen, Simond will discuss this with you. Of course, we know that any messages will have to have the approval of the Ambassador.

The follow-through on these discussions, I think you and the Ambassador will agree, are of transcendent importance just now.

I. A. Hirschmann

IAH/eb

000351

TO:

Secretary Morgenthau

Mr. Gaston

Mr. Paul

Mr. White

Mr. E.M. Bernstein

Mr. DuBois

Mr. Friedman

Miss. Hodel

Mr. Lesser

Mr. Luxford

Mr. Stewart

Mrs. Taylor

Files

for "Secret" file

J. W. Pehle

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
WAR REFUGEE BOARD

000352

PARAPHRASE OF TELEGRAM RECEIVED

*War Refugee Bd
(Mr Pills)*

W.R.B. (Mr. Bundy)

W.R.B. (Mr. Brown)

3/27/44

cc

Copy only

FROM: American Embassy, Ankara

TO: Secretary of State

DATED: March 23, 1944

NO: 509
x

CONTROL COPY

The following message is No. 6 from Hirschmann for War Refugee Board.

The Department's telegram of March 20, 1944, no. 221, cites a case which tends to confirm rumors current in Istanbul for some time as well as statements a number of Jewish refugees recently arrived in Turkey made to me that representatives of Jewish Agency give priority to paid-up members of Zionist Party with respect to exit visas from the Balkans and entry certificates into Palestine and that difficulties in obtaining certificates into Palestine and in departing from Balkans are encountered by Jewish refugees in the Balkans who are not members of the Party or avowed Zionists. Since I recognize the implications inherent in these persistent rumors, I have taken pains to investigate the accuracy of those rumors and I am now satisfied that we must soon give serious consideration to eliminating grounds for any such complaints. If we assume that these reports are well-founded, they would reflect a policy which obviously could not be corrected or even controlled from

DECLASSIFIED
State Dept. Letter, 1-11-72
By R. H. Parks Date SEP 27 1972

000353

-2-

Ankara or Istanbul by the United States. I intend to make a detailed report to the Board along with recommendations for remedial steps when I return since the subject cannot be dealt with here.

The Board is referred to my cables Nos. 344, 388, 440, 455, 466, 474, 478, 497 and 499 with respect to the attitude of the Rumanian and Bulgarian Governments.

The Ambassador and I urge for obvious reasons that until I have had an opportunity to discuss the matter with the Board, the contents of this cable be kept secret.

STEINHARDT

000354

TO:

Secretary Morgenthau

Mr. Gaston

Mr. Lesser

Mr. Paul

Mr. Luxford

Mr. White

Mr. Stewart

Mrs. Taylor

Mr. E.M. Bernstein

Files

Mr. DuBois

Mr. Friedman

Miss Hodel

FOR "SECRET" FILE.

JWP

J. W. Pehle

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
WAR REFUGEE BOARD

000355

COMMUNICATION DATED MARCH 15, 1944

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(2) The Rumanian Government is prepared to give all cooperation in aiding the emigration of the Jews.

(3) The Rumanian Prime Minister ad interim, Michel Antonesco, desires to make the fact known, moreover, that he has always favored the opinion that the emigration of the Jews should be facilitated.

Furthermore, in 1940, in his capacity of Minister of Justice, he categorically disavowed the outrages to which the Jews were subjected both in respect to their persons and their property, and he ordered the arrest of the guilty parties.

In March, 1941, on the day immediately following the rebellion, at a moment when the internal political situation in Rumania was still troubled, Michel Antonesco took the occasion to declare to the special envoys of the German Government that:

(a) The Rumanian Government is opposed to violence and measures of coercion and does not recognize crime as a legal institution and method;

(b) The Rumanian Government will approve only measures economic in nature which in the commercial field will have to be applied very slowly.

Subsequently, representations to the same effect were made with the Rumanian Chamber of Commerce. Up to this day, no Jewish property which was expropriated in 1940-1941 has been placed on sale.

The same view was later maintained before the German Government at the time that that Government, through the intermediary of the Ministerial Counselors, von Ritgenk, Richter, and Hoffman, and the Minister of State, Pflaumer, demanded that Rumania abandon control over the Jews completely to Germany, inasmuch as Germany desired that the Jewish question be solved on an international basis. The Rumanian Government refused to accede to this demand.

000356

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affair is well known, painful, but true.

In 1942, when the British Government requested of the Rumanian Government, through the intermediary of the Swiss Minister in Bucharest, whether the Rumanian Government would agree to authorize the departure of the Jews, the latter government replied in the affirmative.

During the summer of 1943, when the Rumanian Government received a note concerning the same question, which originated from the British Government, the Rumanian Government replied similarly in writing that it did and will always favor the idea of emigration, but that these undertakings will have to be organized quickly in large groups and with all the earnestness implied in such business.

A similar reply was given to the representatives of the International Red Cross.

During the fall of 1943, the Zionist Congress, which met in Rio de Janeiro, addressed a personal telegram to Michel Antonesco requesting authorization for the departure of the Jews. The Rumanian Prime Minister replied that he was fully in accord and that the Rumanian Government desired to aid particularly the Jews who had been transferred to Transnistria.

Recently, persons of Jewish origin who were sufficiently ill-advised to make use of Communist agents in order to organize departures were liberated as a result of the intervention of the International Red Cross Delegate. This was done for the sole purpose of demonstrating that the Rumanian Government is not opposed to the emigration movement.

The German Minister of Foreign Affairs, von Ribbentrop, having learned of the Rumanian Government's approval of the emigration movement and of the exchange of notes on this subject with the British Government, sent a note to Marshal Antonesco stating that Germany had rejected similar requests because of her desire not to displease the Arabs. The German

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Government counseled the Rumanian Government to do likewise. In his reply to the German Minister at Bucharest, Michel Antonesco stated that the Rumanian Government does not slaughter the Jews, that it does not intend to solve the problem by annihilating the Jews, that it favors the idea of emigration, and lastly that the Rumanian Government asked von Ribbentrop to have at least the same regard for Rumanian sensibilities as he had for those of the Arabs.

Unfortunately, the lack of organization regarding the departure of Jews for Palestine continues. The Jews of Rumania plead a lack of money and ships. Insofar as Rumania is concerned, she went so far as to open negotiations with the Turkish Government (as early as the spring of 1943) with a view to studying the possibilities of making use of the Rumanian ships "Transilvania" and "Besarabia", which were anchored in Istanbul under a neutral flag, on condition that the immunity and the title of these Rumanian ships be guaranteed.

The Rumanian Government desires to point out once again that it is completely convinced of the desirability of the departure of the Jews for Palestine and it will do everything in its power to aid those wishing to leave.

Jews who became established in Rumania before 1919 know that those who have rendered services to the state are deemed under the law to be Rumanian; as for those who became established in Rumania after this date, only those expressing the desire to leave will do so; unsettled elements who have arrived in the country during the past six years will have to leave.

In conclusion, the Rumanian Government deeply desires to organize as quickly as possible the departure of the Jews; to this effect:

(1) it authorizes the departure of the Jews -- children and adults, particularly those who until now have been in Transnistria. This statement is an undertaking;

(2) it is ready to reopen without delay discussions concerning the use for this purpose of the motorships, "Transilvania" and "Besarabia", on condition of certain guarantees.