

Strategic Services, Office of (classified)

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agreed, in January 1943, to pay the German military authorities a ransom of 3 thousand million Drachmas for the liberation of about 5,500 Jewish laborers. The Germans did not stick to their end of the bargain, but took the money. Following upon that, they completely destroyed the Jewish cemetery. In February 1943 all the Jews, women as well, were forced to wear a distinctive sign, the "star", to distinguish them from the rest of the Thessaloniki population. Under penalty of death all Jews had to declare their entire fortune, and hand over the keys to their shops to the German authorities. In the month of March, 1943, after having been despoiled of all their goods and concentrated within special sections of the city, they began being deported from Greece to unknown destinations, and under terrible conditions. All the Jews, including old men, pregnant women, children, invalids from the war, the sick and the mentally deficient, were herded in closed wagons containing some 100 to 150 people. According to the declaration made by the Germans to the International Red Cross, these were destined for Krakovia, in Poland. In this manner some 56,000 Jews were deported to Poland during the period March-April 1943, of which some 46,000 were from Salonica and some 10,000 from Macedonia and Thrace. The Jews living in Thrace, occupied by the Bulgars, as well as such parts of Macedonia as: Cavalla, Drama, Serres, Comotimi, Zanthie and Alexandroupoulos, were deported by the Germans to Bulgaria, in collaboration with the Bulgars, and thence to an unknown destination. The regions occupied by the Italians did not undergo such measures in 1943, as the Italian authorities declared themselves against such anti-Jewish measures, and as a rule the Italians protected the Jews from the Germans. When Italy was defeated, the Germans took over the administration of the whole of Greece, and the same measures taken in Thessaloniki against the Jews were taken over the whole of Greece. The concentration camps of Haidari, the forced labor camps of Thebes and Lianokladi, were also the grounds where many Jews were massacred. I do not know the exact number of those killed, but without doubt this number far exceeded the one hundred mark. The fate of those Jews who had been deported to Poland is unknown. In response to the inquiries I made in Athens in June 1943 about the Jews of Thessaloniki, the Central Committee of the International Red Cross at Geneva told me that unfortunately no trace remained of those Jews.

Refugees in Unoccupied Greece

I am happy to be able to say that thousands of Jews managed to escape from the German-made hell. This miracle is undeniably due to the EAM organization. This highly patriotic organization took an active interest in the Jews from the first. When the anti-Jewish Committee, "Commando Rosenberg", appeared on the Athens scene on 22 September 1943, the Central Committee of the EAM immediately ordered its members to open their doors to the persecuted Jews and afford them a refuge and protection. Also, if at the present time there exists in Greece a free corner, a large region freed of the barbarian Hitlerite masses, that is due to the heroic EAM organization, which, at the price of numerous sacrifices and supreme patriotism, managed to chase the enemy from those very regions; there the Jews not only have escaped death, but also can breathe freely, safely surrounded by men who are not only fighting for the liberation of Greece, but also for the application of world justice, which should remove once and for all the distinction between race and religion. I believe that the whole of Greece protected numerous Jews, but not having any details, I do not know the exact amount. It would appear, however, from some information which has currently

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reached me, that at least some 1,000 Jews are now in unoccupied Greece. Of those there are 150-200 Andartes, 50 who are actively engaged in work for parallel organizations such as the "National Unity", the "National Youth", etc.: there are still some 750-800 who are scattered over several cities and villages of unoccupied Greece. EAM gives them its full moral support, but in spite of all its willingness to help them that organization, cannot give them material support as well, as it is itself in a very difficult position in that respect. Doubtlessly, of all these refugees there are some who have private means, but the greater portion have already exhausted their resources, have sold even their most necessary possessions, and are now facing a tragic crisis. It is to be hoped that, thanks to the goodwill of the EAM, a way will be found to help these poor, starved naked people. Before ending this statement, I believe it my duty to express, in the name of all the Jews who were saved from the Hitlerite barbarism, my deep gratefulness to the EAM-ELAS organizations, the only organizations which have shown concrete proof of their patriotism, humanitarianism and philo-semitism.

14.6.44

The Great Rabbi of Athens
(sgd/ Elia P. Barzilai)

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(OSS)

1. At the time of the occupation, the number of Jews in Greece was about 90,000, living in about thirty towns. About two-thirds, however, of them resided in Salonika.
11. The extermination of the Jews living in Salonika and about fifteen other communities in Northern Greece occupied by the Germans and the Bulgarians took place between February and June 1943. They were all deported in the direction of Poland; and the information now available indicates that those who survived the rigors of the deportation were for the most part massacred. A small proportion, probably not more than four or five thousand succeeded in escaping and took refuge principally in Athens, where extermination measures against the Jews were not applied under the Halden regime.
111. After the end of September, 1943, the German extermination measures were extended to the Jews in Athens, Southern Greece, and the Islands. At the present time it is unlikely that there remain in Greece more than eight to ten thousand Jews, who are either well hidden by the Christians in the towns, especially Athens, or are in the mountains with the Partisans.
- IV. Since October, 1943, a certain number of Jews have succeeded in escaping from Greece. The number, however, is very small, not exceeding 500 souls, or on the average of less than two persons per day. One must recognize the fact that this number would have been much greater if the process had been organized more systematically.
- V. Practically all the Jewish refugees from Greece have been admitted up to now into Palestine; they have settled principally in Tel Aviv, where most of them have relatives and friends. The refugees in question belong to all classes of society. In the camps for Greek refugees in the Middle East there should by the same token be a number of Jewish refugees; these share the same conditions as their Christian compatriots.
- VI. There are two effective means of assisting the Jews who still remain in Greece. The first consists in strengthening the clandestine escape routes by sea; and the second, in furnishing supplies to those who are hidden in the towns or living in the mountains. The greatest risk encountered by the Jews remaining in Greece is the lack of remaining supplies to take care of the exceptional needs which they have had to face. After the ten months that they have already been hidden and pursued, it is only natural that most of them have arrived at the end of their resources. If they are not assisted very shortly, they will be obliged to surrender to the Gestapo. It is well to remember that all the Jews who still remain hidden in the towns do not benefit from the distribution of food made by the International Red Cross; they are therefore compelled to obtain their food from the black market at really astronomical prices. Those who are living in the mountains with the Partisans do not get any help at all from the International Red Cross, which is not authorized to render any assistance whatsoever in the regions controlled by the Partisans.

The result, therefore, of the above is that the most efficacious methods of helping the Jews in Greece is by sending supplies and by establishing a food distribution system, which is not an easy matter.

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VII. Once Greece is liberated, the immediate help of all Jewish organizations will be indispensable for the moral and physical rehabilitation of the small number of Jews who will have survived. The general assistance of UNRRA and of the Greek government will not be sufficient and in time. It is therefore necessary to organize at once a plan for the speedy relief of the Jews who survive the Nazi terror.

Cairo, August 21, 1944

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Make -
Copies -

- 1 Our O.S.S. File
- 2 Hoedel for
"Secret file"

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31 July 1944

Paraphrase of cable dated 24 July 1944 sent by General Donovan ✓
to Cairo.

We have given much consideration to cooperation with War
Refugee Board such as will be both practical and feasible.

Along the lines which you have already pursued, you are
instructed as follows:

1. Confer with representatives of WRB and study the practical aspects which would be involved in transporting or dropping gold; locating or setting up some group inside Greece with whom WRB could deal and which would accept and distribute gold; likewise, study the extent to which it is mutually believed we are in a position to help in view of our present undertakings. It must be definitely understood that we shall not be responsible for loss resulting from operational risks or from misuse of gold after delivery.
2. Following meetings, as indicated under Para. 1, submit to us such plans and proposed programs as seem necessary, feasible, and within our ability to perform.
3. At such time as operations permit, assist WRB to secure, at their own expense, crews and bases in Turkey, and boats for evacuation purposes. From our own experience, provide such information and guidance, as will aid them in establishing their own escape systems.
4. Refer to our #37814. Recommend that you tie in with Wood regarding WRB transactions.
5. Keep us currently advised of developments.

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