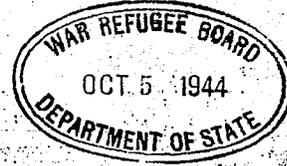


Sweden

000445

Copy for the War Refugee Board, Washington, D. C.



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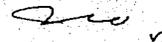
Stockholm
September 26, 1944

Stockholms Enskilda Bank A.B.
Stockholm

Dear Sirs:

I enclose check for 200,000 Swedish kronor which I request that you deposit to the credit of Mr. Raoul Wallenberg. Please acknowledge receipt and crediting of this check.

Sincerely yours,


Iver C. Olsen
Financial Attaché

Enclosure - 1

000446

September 20, 1944.

Dear Ivers:

Your letter of August 10, 1944, marked "personal and confidential" has been received and has been read with great interest. Once again I want to congratulate you on the fine job which you have been doing for us in Sweden. I personally appreciate very much the time and effort which you have given to our programs.

The items mentioned in your letter requiring formal Board action have been taken care of by cables. In this letter I want to take up the question you have raised concerning future War Refugee Board activities and the possibility of your being relieved of this work in a few months. It is our intention to wind up the War Refugee Board as such as soon as hostilities cease in Europe. Since that date now appears reasonably imminent, I suggest that you begin now to consider the winding up of your War Refugee Board work in Stockholm. We have already arranged for the closing out of our work in Portugal and Spain by December 1 in view of the military situation in France and we contemplate that our representatives in other areas will gradually do the same. Accordingly, as matters now stand, I see no reason why you can not anticipate closing up your War Refugee Board work by the end of November. I am sending a copy of this note to Harry White who will undoubtedly write you concerning your Treasury activities.

With kindest personal regards,

Sincerely,

(Signed) John

Mr. Iver C. Olsen,
Financial Attache,
United States Legation,
Stockholm, Sweden.

PH:JWP:dj 9/23/44

000447



LEGATION OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PERSONAL AND [REDACTED]

Stockholm, Sweden
August 14, 1944

Dear John:

Since writing the foregoing letter, I had lunch with the First Secretary of the Swedish Legation in Budapest, who is here for a short while. He is a fine chap and had many interesting comments to make. He said Wallenberg is working very hard and doing everything possible, which items he has also emphasized to the Foreign Office. He considers the situation in Hungary far from settled but he is confident that the Hungarian Government will continue to ease the Jewish situation so long as control is in their hands and not in German hands. This is, however, the big question. He is very skeptical as to the possibility of bringing to Sweden the 2,000 odd Jews who, up to now, have been issued Swedish papers. He stated that both the Hungarians and the Germans had agreed to provide transit visas (actually the German Legation in Budapest gave him personally the official assurances), but later the Germans said these must be a quid pro quo, which was that the rest of the Hungarian Jews of working age must be delivered to German labor camps. This chap is positive that the only real constructive move to be made just now is to get as many Jews as possible into Swedish camps, and then extend the Swedish protection to as many others as possible. I thoroughly agree and that is why I am so anxious to press the Swedish Red Cross in this matter. He also indicated, and please keep this as personal, that we should not take without a grain of salt the hopeful enthusiasm of the I.R.C. man there, who apparently drinks a lot and has delusions of grandeur, but very little in the way of practical judgment in approaching the problem.

He said that even he did not believe some of the atrocities until he himself was an eye-witness. He went over to a brick factory where they had over 10,000 Jews herded in an area so small that they were forced to stand up closely packed together for five days, old people and young children alike, without any sanitary facilities. He saw them himself standing there, and also being loaded into box cars, eighty (he said 80 were counted out very carefully) into each car, after which the doors were nailed shut. He said many died just standing in the brick factory. He also said that young girls of 14 and 15 were being stolen on the streets, taken into other areas where they had "war whores" tattooed on their arms. Some of them, young Hungarian Jewesses of good family, had been observed as far away as Hamburg. He lamented very much the total lack of courage among the Hungarian Jews, since they could do so much to help themselves even when they knew it was only a matter of a short time before they would be killed. He said it was very difficult to escape into Rumania or Yugoslavia because the country was too open and the Jews are too terrified. He mentioned

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- 2 -

that all Hungarian Jews escaping into Rumania are greeted with open arms by the Rumanian authorities, sign long statements as to how badly the Hungarians treated them, and how well the Rumanians greeted them. The Rumanians will produce these after the war.

Sincerely,

J. L.

000449

Iver C. Olsen
THE FOREIGN SERVICE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

APPROVED FOR FOREIGN
AC

Miss Hodel - 2410

Mr. John W. Pehle
Executive Director
War Refugee Board
Washington, D. C.

AM-VI
from
F.C.

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

000450



LEGATION OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

718

PERSONAL AND [REDACTED]

Stockholm, Sweden
August 10, 1944

Dear John:

Another letter for the purpose of giving you some of the background with respect to the situation here, which it is not possible to supply in my various cables. First of all I want to say how much I appreciate the strong support you are giving me on the various programs. It not only has been a great help in keeping things active here, but has been very important to me personally for reasons which you will understand.

I have continued to be terribly busy, but just now things seem to be much better organized and I'm able to push ahead on my various other duties as well. The next time you write I would like very much to get your views as to what you consider future W.R.B. activities will be. I have been going on the assumption that it will wind up with the close of the war in Europe. It is important to me since it soon will be a year since I've left home and I will be most anxious to be back with my family towards the end of November, even if I have to go back to the field after a while until matters are cleaned up. Consequently, I thought that perhaps you should be thinking about a replacement if you have any long-term plans. I am raising the same matter with Mr. White shortly, as well as our other friends, since I don't want to walk away and leave anything until appropriate arrangements have been made to carry on whatever work is essential. On the other hand, I am sure you will understand that I am disturbed about being away from Mildred and the boys too long without returning at least for a while.

With the longer nights now arriving, my Baltic operations are now beginning to show results, although they are very difficult. As I cabled you, I lost my man Vokietaitis, which upset me very much, and had a most serious effect on our Lithuanian operations, to say nothing of losing our best source of Baltic intelligence. He had shipped into Lithuania to complete all the rescue arrangements personally, and the first hint of bad news came when he or anyone else failed to show up at the appointed place when the boat went after him the following week. The same thing happened when the boat went the next week, and it was on the third trip that the evacuees reported he had been captured and shot by the Germans. He was a hell of a fine, fearless fellow and the most skillful operator I had. There are several things I could do to try and rescue him, but I am afraid to do it in case (a) he is simply caught behind the lines for the time being, in which case anything I did to stir things up would only focus attention on the fact that he is over there, or (b) he is in a German prison, in which case anything I did might blow the story he has told the Germans, and get him shot straightaway. Consequently, all I can do just now is to keep the boat going, with the hope he will show up. There is a

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tremendous number of political, religious and racial refugees hiding in the Lithuanian woods in the greatest possible peril, and these next two weeks are about all we have to work on.

The Estonians are doing very well, and I'm damned pleased with them. They are excellently organized with very good technicians and equipment, including radio, and know their business. Through secret arrangements with the General Staff, which avoided a few score years of imprisonment for espionage, I spent several hours at their operations base in restricted territory on the Baltic coast, and must say I was impressed. They have already gotten about 100 people out of Estonia, and through their excellent organization have made it possible for 2 or 3 hundred others to get out on boats not ours. I have been getting a list of the persons gotten out and without question they are people who are much wanted by the Germans. Those who are not politically compromised with the Germans are intellectuals who are certainly worth saving. As a rule, however, most of them have had very active connections with the recently organized Estonian National Committee which not long ago declared war on both Russia and Germany. This has somewhat complicated the picture, but I have continued operations on the basis that these persons are most seriously compromised with the Germans - over 700 of them have already been arrested and/or shot by the S.S. and Gestapo. The Estonian operation looks like it will last the longest, which hardly can be more than a month.

The Latvian operation is not going very well, although it is just now starting to show a few results. This is due in large part to the fact that there are very few Latvians in Sweden, as a result of which it has been impossible to recruit thoroughly competent crews to carry out the operations. Also, I continue to be very uncertain of Salnais, both as to his point of view and ability, which situation I have made quite clear to him with the hope that he would make every effort to show me that I was 100 percent wrong. We can expect some results, but they will not be remarkable. I am still satisfied, however, that we put our chips on the best local bet available, even though it wasn't surefire. The Latvian show will also, in all probability, be washed up in a couple of weeks or so.

I have made it clear to all three groups that their boats must be delivered to me in Stockholm upon demand, and that such time will come at the latest whenever the Russians are in command of the areas in which rescue operations in their respective countries can be carried out, and when it is clear that the danger of German persecution has cleared. I must say, however, that I feel very sorry for these Baltic peoples; they are in a hell of a mess and I see no answer to it. Some day I will tell you about it. I like the Estonians and Lithuanians very much - they are really fine people who can make this a better world to live in, and better because they are in it. I don't care for the Latvians very much; largely because they have a fairly general tendency to be quite unreliable, and are definitely trouble-makers.

With the Finnish situation looking quite optimistic, I am not pushing our program in that area any more, except that I got a promise from the Swedish Foreign Office that whenever they undertake to evacuate the Swedes from Finland (they have

made very complete plans), they would include in their transportation plans the evacuation of the Finnish Jews. Heretofore, however, I have had some hot going on the Finnish program, and temporarily had almost the entire Jewish community in Sweden mad at me. The truth of the matter was that they were dragging their heels in the most unconscionable way, on one pretext or another. The following is for your information only, but it is only too true that the Swedish Jews don't want any more Jews in Sweden. They are very comfortably situated here, have no anti-semitic problems, and are very much afraid that an influx of Jews will not only be a burden to them, but will create a Jewish problem in Sweden. Consequently, you will find them very interested in Jewish rescue and relief operations, so long as they do not involve bringing them into Sweden. For example, the fact that thousands of Jews got out of Denmark was due to a boldly conceived and executed plan of the Swedish Socialstyrelsen - the Swedish Jews were most apathetic. In the case of the Norwegian Jews, they were even frigid, since all these were of the poorer classes. They consider themselves a sort of Jewish aristocracy and they do not want it watered down. No more striking example could be found than the fact that a year or so ago about thirty Jewish children, orphans, arrived from central Europe - finally were taken into Christian homes. The Swedish Jews did not want to be bothered. This was again illustrated in connection with my recent cables regarding the possibility of getting some Jewish children out of Finland - less than fifty. The local community did not want to take any steps until full guarantees of American financial support were supplied. There should have been five hundred comfortable Jewish homes here available without a moment's hesitation for these children on a temporary basis. Their disinterest may be further suggested by the fact that not to this date has a representative of the Jewish community ever been down to the pier to receive any of the evacuees from Finland as they dribbled in. All of this has been done by Filseth of my office, including getting them through immigration, customs, the Socialstyrelsen, and then to camp. Only Filseth has been to the camp to see how they are getting along.

Another headache has been the Wolbe group, genuinely well meaning but the most hopelessly helpless group that I have worked with. All they can talk about is Shanghai and Ecuadorian passports, despite my assurances that the War Refugee Board is exploring all possible bets in that connection, and that their big task is to devise something that will help in Lithuania. Wolbe's comprehension of the urgency of this problem perhaps best may be suggested by the fact that the day after he received \$10,000 for Lithuanian rescue operations he went off on a month's vacation and I haven't seen him since. This vacation item, by the way, is something that the Swedes take very seriously, and is no laughing matter if you are trying to get something done during that period. I was really surprised that the Germans haven't caught on, and didn't take Sweden in July, since there was scarcely a brain left in town at any time. Since a Swedish General has approximately the individual authority and initiative of an American sergeant, I am sure that the whole defense formula would have been atrophied at the very start.

The Hungarian situation looks much better, although I do not believe that rescue or evacuation operations will be of any consequence, at least those requiring German transit visas.

It looks like the old game of the Germans permitting their satellites to make a fine variety of gestures for the record, but clamping down themselves at whatever point they become involved. However, the situation is much better inside Hungary wherever the Hungarian authorities have contact, but the trouble is that in too many places the Germans have control and the Jews are simply disappearing. I talked with a chap from Hungary yesterday who had tried to find some Jewish families. He said that the Jews are moved from camp to camp until trace is lost of them; He said an awful lot of young Jewish children, particularly girls 14 and 15, are being stolen on the streets and completely disappear. As you know, anybody has authority over them. The Jews are so terrified that they now are simply hiding in their homes. He believed that if the Jews weren't so terrified, the best thing they could do would be to take off their yellow stars en masse, which would cause so much confusion, particularly because of the air-raids around Budapest, that many of them could escape out into the country where they could be hidden. He said that about 80 percent of the Hungarian metropolitan population are quite unmoved by the Jewish persecutions, and simply shrug their shoulders. The others are too frightened to help. In the country, however, things are much better.

I get the impression indirectly that the Swedish Foreign Office is somewhat uneasy about Wallenberg's activities in Budapest, and perhaps feel that he has jumped in with too big a splash. They would prefer, of course, to approach the Jewish problem in the finest traditions of European diplomacy, which wouldn't help too much. On the other hand, there is much to be said for moving around quietly on this type of work. In any case, I feel that Wallenberg is working like hell and doing some good which is the measure. In a week or so the Swedish Red Cross is sending three men delegates to Budapest to construct camps for the Jews, which I think is the most tangible thing that can be done for the moment. I have a stake in this program. I have also arranged with Count Bernadotte that the Swedish Red Cross handle all negotiations with Kleist and Boening with regard to the evacuation to Sweden of approximately 4,500 Jews in Germany with South American visas. It is understood that Berlin has agreed in principle to the idea, but the nature of the proposition involved will not be available for a few days. I certainly hope that it is something that can be considered, since it would be a substantial accomplishment, but am rather dubious.

It seems to me that I must have run down a thousand or so straw possibilities in trying to obtain concrete results, and wish that more of them could have panned out. You might be interested in one of them, which I did not report for certain reasons. As you know, Goering's first wife (her second marriage) was the Swedish Countess von Rosen, through which marriage Goering acquired a step-son, now a strapping, nice chap of about 25, who is the apple of his eye. This step-son, who lives in Sweden (Swedish citizen, of course) visits Goering periodically and, in fact, has his own flat in Goering's home. It is also a well-known fact, even told to me by Jews who knew Goering personally, that Goering has been greatly opposed to the Jewish persecutions but has not been strong enough to stop them. Consequently, just before this step-son went to visit Goering in the latter part of June, I had him over to my flat and had a

very strong talk with him. I pointed out that Goering would soon be on trial for his life and, after Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Warsaw, etc., he would not exactly have many people on the other side of the fence who will testify as to his beautiful soul. I suggested that both from the point of view of his own Swedish humanitarian instincts, as well as his affection for his step-father, he should urge him in the strongest possible manner to do what he could to ease Jewish persecutions in the Balkans, Poland, Thereiedstadt, and elsewhere, and to urge him to take steps that would permit young children and old people to get out of Europe. This chap seemed very impressed and said that he would press the matter with Goering to the best of his ability. I haven't seen him since, but without anything to base it on, I believe that some good has been done.

I am keeping very careful records of the funds you have sent me to be used in my discretion, and am now thankful that I have them. I will be able to account for all of them, and I have receipts for virtually the full amount. This is also true with respect to my Baltic operations, where I have been able to get excellent accounting and receipts against a large proportion of the expenditures. Out of the funds which you have placed at my personal disposal the following are the more important outlays, actual and proposed:

(A) Wallenberg left in a hell of a hurry with no instructions and no funds for preliminary expenditures, such as purchase of easily carried barter articles for Hungarian relief. I placed 10,000 kronor at his disposal. In order to channel it through an organization so I could get a good receipt, I gave it to his Aunt, Countess Bondé who is head of the "Committee for Aid to Belgian Children", earmarked for "Special Hungarian Relief Activities."

(B) On the basis of several urgent requests that Chief Rabbi Ehrenpreis received from Bucharest for relief funds, I gave the Executive Committee for Relief of European Jews 25,000 kronor. They were able to get about 12,000,000 lei for this, which will do a lot of good. The need of Rumanian Jews for food and clothing is really desperate and it would be impossible to do enough. Excellent channels are available from Sweden.

(C) I am trying to get 25,000 to Wallenberg through intermediaries who are in a position to obtain favorable pengo rates on a satisfactory basis.

(D) I turned over 2,000 kronor to Mrs. Andersen for "special translating work and other services" with which she hired a Latvian fishing boat to go over and pick up 20 anti-Nazis in hiding. This seemed a very cheap gamble and I will know the outcome in a few days.

(E) I informed Count Bernadotte that the War Refugee Board was very interested in the proposal of constructing camps for Hungarian Jews, and that we would donate 50,000 kronor to further the program when all details were worked out. They were most appreciative and it will help push early action.

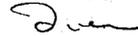
(F) I have told Mr. Cedergren's Committee, "Hjälp Krigeis Offer", that I would place at their disposal a special fund of 5,000 kronor which can be used to send food packages to families in concentration camps of refugees here in Sweden who are penniless and have no means of sending packages. This will be a strong morale boost both to these people and their families.

(G) The only unreceipted expenditures are my own personal outlays of about 300 kronor or so monthly in furtherance of our program, which heretofore I had been charging to our friends on Constitution Avenue.

I surely hope you will continue to feel that everything is going well here and will be satisfied in every respect. I can assure you that I'm doing the best I can but it is damned complicated going. One thing I would like your reaction to is my idea of using the "Baltic fleet" for Norwegian evacuations when Baltic operations cease, which looks like it will be about the first of September. Rescue operations through the Norwegian forests get very dangerous as soon as snow gets on the ground, but on the other hand sea evacuations should be quite easy, with proper skill, during September and October. Perhaps you will be able to indicate your reactions.

My very best regards to all of you.

Sincerely,



P.S. Just got very good news that my Lithuanian program is now in good swing, almost 100 have gotten out, and Vokietaitis apparently is safe. It looks like he got everything organized and then got out through Latvia.

I.C.O.

000451

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
WAR REFUGEE BOARD

To: Mrs. Wells

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(Room) (Bldg.)
(Room) (Bldg.)
(Room) (Bldg.)

For Special File

From:

(Date)
(Room) (Bldg.)

BEST AVAILABLE COPY

000457



LEGATION OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PERSONAL

Stockholm, Sweden
June 12, 1944

Dear John:

I have been very anxious for some time to get settled down so I could write you a personal note as to the general situation here. You will note that I have not been sending in monthly reports as to W.R.B. activities since it was my conclusion that while the program was in a formulative stage you would be able to get a rather clear idea of our activities from the numerous cables we sent in outlining specific projects. Once these programs get under way, however, I will keep you constantly advised of the results. I hope you will find this arrangement satisfactory, since I really have not been in a position to do otherwise.

The past two months have been extremely difficult, not from the point of view of finding cooperation, but instead from the difficulties of making the most of the cooperation that was extended everywhere, and trying to shape it up into something which would produce concrete results. As you probably have found, well-meaning people sort of kill you with kindness in this type of work, and waste an enormous amount of your time. On the average, I would say that my conferences produce about one part of workable facts to nine parts of well wishes, but the formula goes part and parcel with the problem and cannot be avoided. Consequently, the only way to cope with the problem has been to put in some terrifically long working hours, and all along the line to peel off everything except the most essential phases of my various activities. I also peeled off twenty pounds, but can't see that I'm exactly ruined. However, I must say that it is with some relief that the major part of program development appears completed, at least on the basis of current outlooks, and that it will be possible for me to adjust my work so that everything will move smoothly.

In general I feel that things have gone very well and that good results will be obtained. One obstruction has been the jealousies between various relief organizations and the difficulties of persuading them to work together towards an unquestionably mutual objective. Another has been the difficulty of making a sound appraisal of the capacity of certain groups to really carry out a complicated program and obtain the intended results. This has been particularly true of the Baltic group. They are somewhat of a curious group and I am not entirely sure of their attitude. However, I am sure that these were the only group in a position to carry out the operations in question, so it became a matter of imposing the strictest possible controls upon them and then simply hoping for the best. I am least sure of the Latvian group, due to a variety of elements. For one thing, there have been violent anti-semitic elements in Latvian politics, and unquestionably the Latvians themselves have shared greatly in the wars extermination of Jews. Internal politics are so complicated that it is difficult to determine with whom

000458

political refugees are politically compromised. Similar difficulties are involved with respect to intellectuals. Consequently, this program will be watched very closely as to actual results. I am working on a substitute Latvian program through Storch, which is somewhat fantastic and involves rescuing a group of Jews from the Latvian ghettos through measures which will not endanger the lives of the others. You will be advised when something takes definite shape. It has possibilities and is a C.O.D. proposition. So far as the Estonian and Lithuanian programs are concerned, I consider them to be in competent hands and should produce results in about two weeks unless the war situation in the Baltic cuts off operations.

Prospects in Norway look good and you will be advised of concrete results soon. In this instance we are benefiting from excellent organization and communications. There seem to be no current requirements in Denmark at the present time and my only Danish activity has been consulting with the local Danish relief office with respect to providing parcels to Danish deportees in Theresienstadt. Blockade authorities have recently permitted the shipment of food packages, but just at that time came several rumors that the Germans had taken all occupants in Theresienstadt of working age, or able to work, up to the age of 60, back to Germany. I have suggested that the local office at least send as many packages as possible to the older group, and make a sample shipment to the others. So far as Poland is concerned, there are certain groups here quite active in Polish relief and seem to be experiencing good results along limited lines. It is my definite impression that we could expand these activities through financial support, and a specific recommendation along those lines will be furnished in the near future.

Nothing definite has shaped up with respect to the Balkan countries as yet, but I am convinced of the opportunities of initiating certain actions from Sweden which will be generally helpful. Prospects appear the brightest with respect to Hungary, since good contacts are being made.

You soon will be receiving considerable material concerning what happened in Latvia, who was responsible, and who is known to be alive. This information is being supplied to me by a young Latvian Jewess who escaped about a month ago. She is truly a pathetic figure, has seen her father, mother and sister murdered, and is fighting a very strong urge to commit suicide herself. I have given her several little assignments for her to do to keep her mind occupied, and give her period pep-talks regarding the importance of her assistance, to keep her morale up. Her's is a most unusual story and certainly keeps you mindful of the fact that not for a thousand years should anyone forget what these murderous Nazis have done in Europe.

I appreciate very much your thoughtfulness in making certain funds available to me in furthering the activities of the Board, and will make expenditures from such funds subject to the strictest possible accounting. As of this time I don't expect it to be necessary to draw upon them much, but it is reassuring to have them available for any emergency. Heretofore, certain limited expendi-

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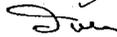
tures related to Board activities have been furnished out of funds with which you are familiar, and it will now be possible to avoid that. I hope, in this connection, you will find an opportunity to tell our friend R. how appreciative we are of his wonderful cooperation.

Your weekly summaries of developments in Washington are most helpful to me in keeping abreast of Board activities, and are greatly appreciated. I am very much impressed with the strong lines of action taken and how well things seem to be organized. I have noted with great interest your appointments with the President, which are reported in our radio news bulletin, and the implied confirmation of the importance being attached to your work.

The WRB "Bible" was also received. It is an excellent job and very useful.

Best regards to you and those associated with you, and best wishes for a successful program. Needless to say, I think about all of you a great deal and not infrequently wish that I was there.

Sincerely,



Mr. John W. Pehle
Executive Director
War Refugee Board.
Washington, D. C.

P. S. As a specific illustration of the difficulties of working with some of the local groups, you will be interested in the following. After the conclusion of negotiations with the Latvian group, I considered it desirable to give Storch (Balticum Committee and World Jewish Congress) the picture of developments on a secret basis, since I was afraid he would be running into other directions and break up everything. He immediately was very critical, stating that some of the group had belonged to pro-Nazi and anti-semitic parties. I asked him if he thought I should stop the plan, and he said no since he thought it had a chance of success. I asked him if he could suggest another group and he said no. I asked him if he had a plan of his own which might have better prospects, and he said no. Later he came in and said that in his opinion the former Latvian Minister here was dishonest, also his associates, and believed that there would be much graft in the operation. I asked him if he would serve on the committee and assist in supervising the control of expenditures and he said he didn't want to share any such responsibility without complete control. He then said that the group would not make any effort to rescue Jews. I asked him if he would serve as a consultant to the committee and provide them with lists of Jews, and their whereabouts, who could be rescued. He said no, since he didn't think prospects of success were good. I asked him again whether he thought I should abandon the program, and he said no. The whole thing is, of course, related to personal jealousies, and are terribly exasperating, to say nothing of time-consuming.

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