

ABOUT TIME: THE HISTORY OF THE WAR REFUGEE BOARD

by

Rebecca L. Erbelding
A Dissertation
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of
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ABSTRACT

ABOUT TIME: THE HISTORY OF THE WAR REFUGEE BOARD

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President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the War Refugee Board (WRB) in January 1944 to formulate and effectuate plans for the relief and rescue of Jews and other persecuted minorities from the threat of Nazi atrocities (what we now know as the Holocaust). This dissertation is a chronological narrative history of the WRB and, by relying on primary source documentation, presents the agency's work within the context of World War II and of the information and possibilities known to the WRB staff, most of whom were Treasury Department lawyers with little experience with relief work. As the War Refugee Board was the official response of the United States to Nazi genocide, this work is meant to provide a reference work on the agency itself and to complicate overly simplistic assumptions on the topic of American response to the Holocaust.

INTRODUCTION

The War Refugee Board was an independent government agency, nominally headed by the Secretaries of State, Treasury, and War, created in January 1944 and tasked with saving the lives of Jews and other persecuted minorities in territories occupied by Nazi Germany. Even though it was America's only official response to what we now call the Holocaust, most people, even those with an interest in World War II or in the Nazi genocide of the Jews have never heard of it.¹ However, nearly every major relief and rescue effort during the final sixteen months of the Holocaust involved the War Refugee Board in some way.² Many non-scholars know the name of Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish businessman-turned-diplomat sent to Budapest in the summer of 1944. They may know that nearly 1,000 displaced persons, mainly Jews, were brought from Italy to live in a refugee camp, Fort Ontario, in Oswego, NY. And many people hold strong opinions over whether or not the United States should, or could, have bombed the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. All of these decisions—and many, many, more—came across the desks of the War Refugee Board.

¹ Throughout this text, I use the “War Refugee Board,” “WRB,” and “the Board” interchangeably.

² The WRB staff did not have a solid definition of what they meant by “relief” and “rescue,” and historians of the United States and the Holocaust have also not attempted to provide working definitions for these terms. I accept Dan Michman's definition of “rescue” as “an action taken to extricate Jews from an immediate Nazi menace or total removal of Jews from an area that the Nazis' tentacles reached.” Michman does not provide a definition of “relief” but describes it as activities that could be performed without creating extraordinary agencies or adopting unusual approaches; it “created maneuvering room for use in developing rescue actions.” Dan Michman. *Holocaust Historiography: A Jewish Perspective: Conceptualizations, Terminology, Approaches, and Fundamental Issues*. (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), 181.

The War Refugee Board staff consisted mainly of Treasury Department lawyers, who are rarely the heroes of any story—but they are in this one. They were young, idealistic New Dealers, and the vast majority had no experience on refugee matters. But they learned quickly, soliciting suggestions from American embassies and consulates abroad and from more than one hundred relief organizations in the United States. Over the sixteen months between the Board’s establishment and the end of the war, the staff explored every suggestion and opportunity that arose. They were up against serious obstacles. The progress of the war meant that prospects for their work changed constantly, and the Board staff struggled to seize opportunities for action before it was too late. Intelligence coming out of occupied Europe, funneled through the Office of War Information (OWI) or through relief organizations, was spotty and unreliable. For most of 1944, the United States had no on-the-ground information about life inside Nazi Germany. They received intelligence from people who escaped over the border, from informants, or from radio and newspaper broadcasts, all of which could—and, at various points, were—manipulated. Even if the information was accurate, communications between Europe and the United States, even using State Department cables, could take days or weeks. The main impediment to any success, however, was not time, nor information, but the determination of the Nazis to murder as many Jews as possible before the end of the war. This determination—to murder the elderly, the young, and the weak; to eke out any labor while starving the strong; and to hold Jewish lives for ransom in exchange for money or material goods—meant that the WRB was never dealing with a predictable or rational enemy. Though traditional diplomatic methods sometimes worked

in negotiations with neutral nations or Nazi satellite states, they rarely worked with the homicidal German regime.

For the most part, the WRB dealt with “wholesale” rescue—trying to provide relief or means for rescue for as many people as possible, regardless of age, sex, religion, or profession. They knew the vast majority of the refugees were Jews, and fought to make sure that others in the American government publicly recognized that fact as well.³ Though some relief agencies sought to rescue certain types of individuals—important rabbis, or labor leaders, for instance—and the Board supported their efforts to do so, the WRB staff members themselves did not differentiate between types of refugees. The hundreds of thousands of refugees were mainly nameless and faceless to the WRB staff in Washington and as such, remain that way in the text of this monograph.

To obtain more intelligence and provide more aid, the Board appointed representatives in the neutral nations of Europe—Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, and Turkey, as well as in Great Britain and in Allied-occupied North Africa and Italy.⁴ These representatives not only initiated their own rescue projects, they acted as facilitators and liaisons, assisting the multitude of private relief organizations already on the ground in these countries so they could receive increased funding, streamline communications, and inevitably reach and assist more people. The WRB staff purchased ships to rescue people from the Baltic nations; fought through a myriad of bureaucracy to bring thousands of refugees from Romania to Palestine; warned would-be perpetrators of post-war justice

³ The Board used the word “refugee” to mean anyone who fell within their purview, those still in danger in Nazi-occupied territory, and those who had been in danger but were now in a neutral or Allied nation. For lack of a better term, I will do so throughout this text as well.

⁴ Despite their efforts, the WRB staff were unable to place a representative in Spain, and did not try to place anyone in Ireland.

through radio broadcasts and leaflets dropped from the sky over German-occupied territory; participated in ransom negotiations with the Nazis; and sent hundreds of thousands of food packages into concentration camps in the final days of World War II.

This is the first monograph about the entirety of the War Refugee Board—who they were, what they did, and how they did it. When I set out to write a dissertation, I asked my colleagues at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum for advice on a project that could add to the scholarly discourse. To a person, they advised me to write about the War Refugee Board. Though scholars—from David Wyman to Richard Breitman—have publicly called for a monograph on the WRB, the agency has not received a manuscript-length study until now, at least, not one that focused on the entirety of their activities. Many scholars who wanted to figure out the Board’s activities and importance have relied upon the Board’s own written history, compiled in 1945 as the agency was dissolving. For a scholarly, more critical, treatment of the Board, one could find chapters here and there in longer scholarship on the entirety of American response to the Holocaust—tomes that invariably saw the War Refugee Board as an afterword in a decade of indifference and even malice.

I came to this project with no particular interest or personal stake in what I would find as I delved into the records. I also had no personal opinion on the members of the WRB staff—whether they were merely bureaucrats facilitating relief activities between 9:00am and 5:00pm or whether they saw themselves on a mission to save lives. I planned

to write what I found, and what I found was a group of remarkably impressive people. They were dedicated, hardworking, and believed in the immediacy and import of their work. They were good people in difficult times.

The War Refugee Board was dissolved on September 15, 1945, and released a final summary report of their activities to the press, totaling 72 pages. The following year, thirty-five people—the members of the WRB’s professional staff, other government officials, and Moses Leavitt of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee—received a three volume “History of the War Refugee Board,” brought to them by courier.⁵ This report was much longer—more than 300 pages of narrative, and an additional 1,000 pages of supplemental documentation—and included information on ransom negotiations and other WRB activities deemed too controversial for the public release. Still, these two publications, while fairly thorough and accurate, cannot substitute for a scholarly examination of the Board’s work. The “final summary” was released to the press under the signature of the Board’s final director, William O’Dwyer, who was, in September 1945, two months away from winning the New York City mayoral election. With a final section emphasizing the need to improve the lives of displaced persons and open immigration to Palestine, O’Dwyer was correct in his assessment—and it probably did not hurt him politically to emphasize this. The Board’s longer “History” was more detailed, but had a very limited distribution and, most importantly, was composed by the same people who lived through the events. It is an autobiographical agency history and, while an excellent reference, does not substitute for a scholarly monograph.

⁵ Florence Hodel papers, 2014.300.1, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC.

For more than twenty years, the War Refugee Board faded from public consciousness—if it was ever there to begin with in the cacophony of the worldwide events of 1944-1945. In 1968, journalist Arthur Morse published *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy*, the first book to examine American response to the Holocaust.⁶ Morse contacted many former members of the War Refugee Board staff and was likely the first private citizen to receive permission to delve into the Board's papers, which had recently been transferred to the Franklin Roosevelt Library in Hyde Park. *While Six Million Died* is remarkably well-researched, particularly as he had almost no secondary literature on which to draw. Morse's focus was on "bystanders"—defined particularly as the United States and Great Britain (but really the United States, as evidenced by his subtitle) and how, after "the Nazis' blatant announcement that they intended to destroy every Jew in Europe" the United States responded to that "clear-cut challenge."⁷ Though the final third of Morse's book is entitled "The Rescuers," describing (with some error) the work of the War Refugee Board, the title of his book—and his argument—rests on the idea of the "apathy" of the United States. (In this, Morse was the forerunner of a large number of historians, who praise the War Refugee Board but damn the Roosevelt administration, ignoring the fact that the War Refugee Board staff were government employees, and the Board, located within the Executive Office of

⁶ I do not believe there was a monolithic "American response" to the Holocaust. Americans, and the American government, have never spoken with one voice on any issue, and the atrocities in Europe were no different. Some Americans shouted the need for intervention, some tried to assist, some protested any involvement, some did not care at all about people being persecuted all the way over in Europe. I use the term "American response" to mean the study of the United States and the Holocaust. Usually, this means the actions of the United States government (which include the actions of the War Refugee Board) but is also used as a catchall for the field of scholarship studying American (citizens and government) choices in response to information about Nazi atrocities.

⁷ Arthur Morse, *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy*. (London: Secker & Warburg, 1968), 1-2.

the President, was headed by the Secretaries of War, State, and Treasury. They were the Roosevelt administration.)

Morse, with his argument of American apathy, is the intellectual sire of one stream of literature of American response to the Holocaust (But not the godfather. That is, without a doubt, David Wyman, whom I will discuss in the next few paragraphs). Henry Feingold is the sire of the other. His 1970 book, *The Politics of Rescue*, equally well-researched, also using the newly-available War Refugee Board papers, was written as a contextual history of the Roosevelt administration's response to the atrocities in Europe. In his introduction, Feingold called Morse a "moralist," while his book, in contrast, "attempts to move beyond the moral aspect to examine the political context in which America's response was conceived. To go beyond the moral aspect is not to ignore it...The existence of choice is accompanied by questions of morality...The accusation that the Roosevelt Administration did not do enough has no meaning until we determine how much might have been done...Even today, with all our perspective, it is still difficult to determine possibilities."⁸ The different approaches to this history in 1970 between Morse, the "moralist" (to borrow Feingold's term) and Feingold, the "contextualist," still constitute the lines of delineation between historians studying this field today.

In 1978, David Wyman published an article in the journal *Commentary* entitled "Why Auschwitz was Never Bombed," which was later revised into a chapter of his 1984 masterwork *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945*. Months after Wyman's article appeared, the CIA released newly-discovered aerial

⁸ Henry Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue: The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust, 1938-1945*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970), ix.

photography of Auschwitz taken in 1944 along with photographic interpretation; the photographs, which had not been not identified or analyzed during the war, depicted railcars, lines of prisoners, and the gas chamber and crematoria, smoking in the summer air. The convergence of Wyman's popular article and these striking photographs turned any discussions about American response to the Holocaust specifically to the question of whether the United States could, or should, have bombed the rail lines leading to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp or bombed the camp itself. More than thirty-five years later, this remains one of the dominant debates in the study of the Holocaust.

The Abandonment of the Jews is a master narrative. Thirty-one years after it was published, it remains the obvious fulcrum of all scholarly literature related to American response to the Holocaust. Wyman's narrative and arguments were—and are—so pervasive in the public sphere that any historian who disagrees, wants to advance another thesis, or wants to write anything that may contradict Wyman is forced to rehash the nature and context of the scholarly debates about the United States and the Holocaust as set forth by Wyman. *The Abandonment of the Jews* covers the period of 1941-1945, with the fourth and final segment of the book covering the activities of the War Refugee Board. It is a powerful book, meticulously researched, but flawed by an author who fit his sources to a pre-determined argument.⁹ For example, Wyman painted the State Department as a near-monolithic antisemitic entity prior to the establishment of the War Refugee Board, writing that after the Board was created, the State Department “furnished

⁹ Wyman's footnotes are nearly illegible, forcing the reader to trust him—and most do. But once a reader deciphers them even a little bit, it is easy to see that he carefully chose what to include in his book while ignoring sources—or parts of sources—that did not support his thesis. His is a Holocaust with perfect, universal governmental knowledge and without a war.

some valuable early help” but “often stood in the way of board operations...the State and War departments offered almost as much encumbrance as help.”¹⁰ His only cited evidence for this assertion is the fact that six cables got stuck in the State Department awaiting clearance in mid-March 1944. Wyman ignores the constant and invaluable help of embassies and consulates abroad, the Board’s close partnership with George Warren (who was a specialist in refugee matters) and with Undersecretary (and later Secretary) of State Edward Stettinius—and most importantly, the fact that the cable problem he mentioned was cleared in a week.¹¹ Though there is certainly evidence that some State Department officials held antisemitic beliefs, it was not the monolith Wyman—and many others—argue. This sort of predetermination and scholarship haunts the pages of *Abandonment*.

If one can ignore Wyman’s arguments—particularly his pronouncements in the preface about what “could have been done” though he provides no evidence, context, or argument how any of his ideas for American action could have been accomplished within the realm of possibility—*Abandonment* remains a remarkable book and maintains a dominant presence in the scholarship of American response. Everything that came after has been in reaction to David Wyman’s book. In 1997, William Rubinstein published *The Myth of Rescue*, a monograph-length pointed critique of Wyman’s arguments section

¹⁰ David Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 212-214.

¹¹ Wyman and WRB director John Pehle were both guests on a 1985 episode of the news program “Nightline.” During the segment, host Ted Koppel asked Wyman about government obstructionism, and Wyman confirmed that the State Department firmly stood in the way of the WRB’s work. When asked for confirmation, Pehle disagreed, responding that after the creation of the WRB, they actually received quite a lot of help from the State Department. Wyman pushed back and Pehle finally reluctantly conceded that perhaps there were a few instances where they could have done more. One gets the clear impression from this footage that Pehle thought Wyman went too far in his criticism. “Nightline” episode 1985 January 28; as found in “News Segments on Auschwitz 40 Years After Liberation/News Reports from ABC, CBS, and NBC television,” VHS collection, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC.

by section. Rubinstein argued that instead of the “hundreds of thousands” Wyman claims could have been saved by earlier Allied action, the war and the determination of the Nazis to exterminate the Jews of Europe made rescue impossible after 1941. While Wyman wrote positively about the War Refugee Board (though, like Morse, maintained his praise of the WRB and condemnation of the Roosevelt administration without acknowledging the contradiction) and claimed that the WRB “helped save approximately 200,000 Jews and 20,000 non-Jews,” Rubinstein argued that the Board did not “save” anybody. Focusing his chapter on the War Refugee Board specifically on rescue statistics, Rubinstein criticized Wyman’s assertions that the WRB helped save the Jews of Budapest, the Jews of Transnistria, and tens of thousands of others who were not in Nazi-occupied territory when they were “rescued” by the Board.¹² Wyman’s book is much better researched than Rubinstein’s, who relied mainly on published sources, and Wyman’s argument, however flawed, is more reasonable. Wyman did not argue that *all* Jews could have been saved, but that *many* could have been; Rubinstein’s assertion that *none* could have been rescued given the realm of what was proposed and what was possible is a vast and flawed attempt at overcorrection.¹³

As Rubinstein’s book directly addresses the arguments of Wyman (and other “moralists”), *The Myth of Rescue* received more popular attention than other books by “contextualists” which had quietly appeared throughout the 1980s and 1990s. These historians addressed specific aspects of American response to the Holocaust rather than

¹² For more on the “rescue” statistics, please see Appendix A.

¹³ See Henry Feingold’s review of *The Myth of Rescue* here: Henry Feingold, Reviewed Work: *The Myth of Rescue: Why the Democracies Could Not Have Saved More Jews from the Nazis* by William D. Rubinstein. *The International History Review*, vol. 21, No. 1 (Mar., 1999), pp. 214-216.

attempting inclusive tomes. Yehuda Bauer's *American Jewry and the Holocaust: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1939-1945*, published in 1981, provided a meticulously researched narrative on the Joint, which had an extensive relief network in Europe during World War II and were by far the War Refugee Board's closest collaborators (and funders). Richard Breitman wrote on the Allied refugee policy (*American Refugee Policy and European Jewry 1933-1945*, 1987, with Alan Kraut), on the Riegner telegram (*Breaking the Silence*, 1994, with Walter Laqueur), and on the reality of Allied intelligence (*Official Secrets: What the Nazis Planned, What the British and Americans Knew*, 1998).

While these scholars were working on productive studies of the United States and the Holocaust based on archival scholarship, heated arguments played out in scholarly journals stemming from Wyman's *Commentary* article and *Abandonment* chapter about the possibilities of bombing the rail lines leading to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, or of the camp itself, in the summer of 1944. The War Refugee Board, as the conduit of requests of this nature, is almost always discussed in these articles. Over the span of years, various authors argued back and forth with increasingly personal vitriol, both in articles and in letters to the editor, of the possibilities—nay, the probabilities—nay, the certainty that Auschwitz could (or could not) have been reached and successfully bombed and that this action would (or would not) have saved the lives of the camp's prisoners or those destined to arrive there in the future. The debate is angry, resulted in a book of compiled essays, *The Bombing of Auschwitz: Should the*

Allies Have Attempted it?, and has made very little progress since 1984.¹⁴ Yet these arguments, more than anything else save perhaps the action (or inaction) of President Franklin Roosevelt, have taken hold in the public sphere.

In 1999, fifteen years after *The Abandonment of the Jews*, David Wyman published a thirteen-volume source series entitled *America and the Holocaust: A Thirteen-Volume Set Documenting the Editor's Book The Abandonment of the Jews*. This source series, which reproduces many of the cables, transcripts, memos, and letters Wyman used in his own research, has done as much as *Abandonment* itself to continue Wyman's arguments in present-day scholarship. Since the publication of the source series, the vast majority of authors working on issues related to American response to the Holocaust—particularly those who write anything about the State Department, the Treasury Department, or the War Refugee Board—have relied largely on Wyman's series for their primary source research.¹⁵ The *America and the Holocaust* volumes are an excellent resource for undergraduates, but terrible for anyone interested in advancing a new argument or new scholarship. They are Wyman's self-selected sources. He reproduced pieces of transcripts, selected parts of reports, and by definition, everything that appears in the volumes has already been seen and used. In at least one instance, a document (some which include handwritten notes from the period) is clearly Wyman's

¹⁴ Michael J. Neufeld and Michael Berenbaum. *The Bombing of Auschwitz: Should the Allies Have Attempted It?* New York; St. Martin's Press, 2000.

¹⁵ Most notably, the late historian Theodore Hamerow relied on the Wyman source series almost exclusively for *Why We Watched: Europe, America, and the Holocaust*. Theodore Hamerow, *Why We Watched: Europe, America, and the Holocaust*. New York: Norton, 2008.

personal copy with his handwritten notes still intact.¹⁶ Obviously, the writers who use the source series for their books come to the same conclusions as Wyman did.

After the publication of the *America and the Holocaust* source series, Wyman opened the “David Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies,” which has the self-described goal of bridging the gap between the scholarly community and the public to educate about “the abandonment of Europe’s Jews during the Nazi era, the efforts to promote rescue, and the moral and historical lessons of those experiences.”¹⁷ The Wyman Institute’s founding director, Dr. Rafael Medoff, has steered much of the “moralist” argument for the last fifteen years, and has done so by attacking historians who attempt to contextualize—but not excuse, though Medoff has argued otherwise—any aspect of the United States in relation to the Holocaust.¹⁸ Since 2001, scholars, such as Martin Gilbert

¹⁶ There is no indication in the source series that these are Wyman’s notes, rather than notations from the period. It is only in comparing the volumes with the original archival document that one can determine that they are Wyman’s notes. See Wyman’s copy of the transcript of the “Jewish Evacuation” meeting in the Treasury Department, 18 December 1943, in *America and the Holocaust*, vol. 6. The notes on page 2 (“Thru this, DuBois sounds truly shocked and upset”) are Wyman’s.

¹⁷ <http://www.wymaninstitute.org>

¹⁸ After spending time reading the Wyman Institute’s articles and books, one may wonder why Medoff (and, one can assume, Wyman) are so determined to publicly attack any historian who presents a counter-narrative, in whole or in part, to the arguments of *Abandonment*. It is possible that the Wyman Institute’s dedication to the narrative of an indifferent, antisemitic Roosevelt and an apathetic American government may have as much—if not more—to do with modern politics than with World War II. In 2008, Rafael Medoff wrote an article for the *Jerusalem Post* entitled “Wyman Aliya” about a visit Wyman made to Israel. The article was about a group of Ethiopian teenagers who were brought to Israel in 1985 as part of an emergency airlift ordered by Vice President George Bush, purportedly in part because American congressmen, the public, and Bush’s own staff had read the newly-published *Abandonment* and connected it to the current plight of the Jews in Africa. On his trip to Israel many years later, Wyman met with some of the group who had come on the airlift; they “repeatedly thanked the American historian who authored the book that saved their lives.” Filmmaker Haim Hecht, also in attendance, reportedly toasted Wyman for telling the story of “how Roosevelt abandoned the Jews.” The two Ethiopian Jews, however, were proof that “the Jews will never again be abandoned as they were during the Holocaust.” Medoff concludes his piece by hoping that, since waves of immigration (aliya) are sometimes named, “[p]erhaps one day the Zionist lexicon will also include the ‘Wyman Aliya,’ and Israeli schoolchildren will learn the unique and compelling story of the American Christian historian whose chronicle of the abandonment of the Jews helped ensure that they would not be abandoned again.” By creating the public impression of President Roosevelt as a man actively or passively opposing rescue efforts, and an American government obstructing any attempt at action which would have surely saved lives, it is possible that Medoff (and the

and Richard Breitman, who have published books and articles contextualizing aspects of American response have made unwanted appearances on the annual Wyman Institute “Ten Most Absurd Statements About the Allies’ Response to the Holocaust” press releases.¹⁹ The Wyman Institute has written open letters to scholarly journals and newspapers attacking new works of scholarship and have issued competing books, self-published and timed specifically to provide a counter-narrative to the perceived argument of contextualist historians. When Richard Breitman and Alan Lichtman announced the upcoming publication of *FDR and the Jews*, scheduled for March 2013, the Wyman Institute quickly self-published *FDR and the Holocaust: A Breach of Faith* in February. In early 2015, Medoff and collaborator Bat-Ami Zucker cold-mailed brochures to college professors nationwide. Entitled “Breaking the Rules: Violations of Academic Standards in the Debate over FDR’s Response to the Holocaust,” the text specifically attacked the scholarship of Breitman, Lichtman, Richard Levy, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, William vanden Heuvel, and Robert Rosen, accusing vanden Heuvel and Rosen of plagiarism.²⁰

These impediments to productive scholarship on the United States and the Holocaust have hurt both the “moralists” and the “contextualists,” and, obviously, the entire field itself. Contextualist historians must anticipate a barrage of negative publicity

Wyman Institute) are advancing this argument—whether consciously or subconsciously—to maintain strong American support for the state of Israel. Rafael Medoff, “The Wyman Aliya,” *The Jerusalem Post*, 11 August 2008. See also Laurence Zuckerman, “FDR’s Jewish Problem,” *The Nation*, 5-12 August 2013.

¹⁹ A practice that has mercifully ceased in recent years.

²⁰ Rafael Medoff and Bat-Ami Zucker, “Breaking the Rules: Violations of Academic Standards in the Debate over FDR’s Response to the Holocaust,” 2015; in my personal collection.

and criticism to anything written on the topic.²¹ Moralists have stopped publishing very much productive scholarship at all. In 2003, the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* dedicated their fall issue to “David S. Wyman’s *The Abandonment of the Jews, Twenty Years After: Its Impact and Legacy*” with guest editors Rafael Medoff and Racelle Weiman. Rather than take aspects of Wyman’s work and delve deeper into his arguments, the majority of the pieces merely rehashed attacks on historians who dared criticize some aspect of *Abandonment*. In his afterword on the volume, Wyman called the articles “refreshing and encouraging.”²² Since so much of the “moralist” literature has focused on the role of Roosevelt, the bombing of Auschwitz, and an overall theme of American failure, it has also, necessarily, gotten less nuanced. (Journalist Jack Schwartz, in an article in *Ha’aretz* in 2013, responded to a typically angry Medoff review of the Breitman and Lichtman book on FDR—a conflict of interest to say the least—by critiquing Medoff’s argument using quotations from *Abandonment*.)²³ Since contextualists depend on nuance and shun absolutes, the scholarly battles show no sign of waning.

Polemicists like Medoff, who usually win public opinion because they reject complicated arguments, have convinced the general public that the story of American response to the Holocaust is one of failure and apathy. I do not have a strong argument to make about this prior to 1944—there is certainly more that could have been done to let

²¹ I quite expect it for this dissertation, in fact.

²² In his afterword, Wyman also gave a “word of warning to those who may choose to work in this area of human history. Or, better, let me state it as a challenge rather than a warning. The scholar who enters this part of history will unavoidably live with some level of anguish. Constantly in the background is one’s knowledge of the unfolding disaster and horror of systematic killing of a whole people. And, in the foreground is the fact that our beloved nation failed, and failed dismally, when confronted with one of history’s most compelling moral challenges.” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* XL, no. Fall 2003: 461-462.

²³ Jack Schwartz, “Misreading History: FDR an anti-Semite?”, *Ha’aretz*, 2013 July 5.

more refugees in during the 1930s and early 1940s, but the issue becomes much more complicated when presentism is eliminated and the problem of how the United States should respond to Nazi atrocities is placed in the context of the day. There was no concept of “Holocaust,” and no knowledge or understanding of what was to come, and, once the State Department confirmed the Nazi plan to exterminate the Jews, many previous opportunities to assist Jews had already been lost. There are also many Americans who were not apathetic—relief workers in Europe, people in the United States raising awareness of atrocities against the Jews, and those sponsoring and caring for newly arrived refugees. The world—and this story—is not stark black and white. After 1944, with the establishment of the War Refugee Board, the American government’s stated policy was one that advocated the relief and rescue of those suffering under Nazi persecution. There were those in the government who disliked the policy, and those who were not sure how it should be implemented. But the War Refugee Board staff, and many of their collaborators—both inside the government and in the field of private relief—were certainly not apathetic.

Through my work as an archivist, I have become convinced of the primacy of original documentation. Even if I were not, the current state of the historical scholarship of American response requires a significant degree of skepticism of most secondary source literature on the topic. Since Arthur Morse’s *While Six Million Died*, books about American response to the Holocaust have taken two distinct and combative pathways—polemics against the State Department and President Roosevelt, and those scholarly works that have attempted to provide context for the actions of the American

government. Despite the heated rhetoric, mainly coming out of the Wyman Institute, providing context for historical events by revisiting the original documentation is not providing excuses for the historical actors. In writing the history as it actually was—or as close as we can understand—instead of how we wish it had been, it is introducing a gray zone in a world that was, and is, full of them. But it has been far too easy and publicly acceptable to judge American response from the throne of the present.

Beyond the scholarly debates about the United States and the Holocaust, there lies the simple fact that the War Refugee Board is an agency that is frequently discussed and often pointed to, but has never been studied in depth. Scholars, even well-known scholars, have repeatedly gotten the names of WRB staff members wrong, or have mixed them up. David Wyman, in *Abandonment*, has, until now, written the most detailed account of the Board's work, but as I have noted, it is flawed and incomplete. Wyman, and others, with conclusions already in mind, have created scholarly arguments about various aspects of the Board's work—many of which have no basis in reality.²⁴ This dissertation is an attempt to strip away all the present-day debates and study the War Refugee Board staff's work at their time, on their terms.

²⁴ One of the most prevalent arguments about the Board is that it was poorly funded, and could have done so much more had Roosevelt provided them with the funding necessary for life-saving work. The Board staff certainly did not feel they were poorly funded at the time, and even returned money to the federal government when the agency dissolved in 1945. The Board's funds, which came from the President's Emergency Fund were meant for administrative expenses only. The Board was not set up to fund relief work directly, and rarely did so, but instead was meant to facilitate the activities of independent organizations already working the field. To argue that the Board was poorly funded—and that this demonstrates Roosevelt's indifference to the plight of the Jews—is like complaining that your car is not also a boat. Perhaps it would be more helpful to have a vehicle that functions both on land and on water, but a car was not designed to do such things. See Appendix B.

This manuscript is entitled “About Time” for two reasons. First, it is a reference to the colloquial expression of an event being “about time.” For many in 1944, the establishment of some sort of organization dedicated to putting stated American democratic ideals of human dignity into practice was long overdue. It was “about time” the government did something to help the poor persecuted victims of Hitler’s wrath. In a more literal sense, the War Refugee Board’s activities—their successes and failures—were all about time. Too often, historians and others who write about the Holocaust—particularly about American responses to the atrocities—write without placing the events in time or space. It is equally problematic—perhaps even more so—to ignore the context of World War II. As the power differential shifted from the Axis to the Allies, so too did the prospects for relief and rescue. What was possible in 1944 may not have been possible in 1942. Ignoring the realities of time, space, and war renders the debates fantastical. To account for these important variables, this dissertation is both organized chronologically and tells the story of the War Refugee Board as the members of the staff experienced it.

The Board’s recordkeeping and therefore the archival arrangement of their papers does not lend itself to an easy scholarly analysis, particularly if the intention is to write a chronological narrative. The Board—specifically Florence Hodel, one of the Assistant Executive Directors, who seems to have been in charge of making sure the records were complete—kept one set of alphabetical correspondence folders for individuals and organizations, and a separate set of files by subjects. The “subjects,” “Relief and Rescue in Turkey,” for instance, were determined early in the Board’s history, and though some

of the subjects turned into multiple and varied projects stretching out for months, the files were never organized further, leaving thousands of unorganized pages designated “Relief and Rescue in Turkey” that cover a wide variety of plans and projects. The contents of the alphabetical and subject files constantly overlapped, so, for example, if the World Jewish Congress corresponded with the Board regarding activities in Turkey, that document might be in the general “Relief” file, in a “World Jewish Congress” file, or in a file under the last name of the individual WJC correspondent. Without reading everything, it is difficult to get a sense of the Board’s activities and decision-making.

In researching this monograph, it was important to address the problem of the WRB’s record keeping—how to make sense of the approximately 60,000 pages of letters, reports, and memos while establishing the connections between a letter which may be in one folder with a response which was filed in another, perhaps thousands of pages of documentation later. I chose a simple approach, and put all of the documents in chronological order. I worked first with the Lexus-Nexus microfilm of the papers of the War Refugee Board, and supplemented them with digitized images of the boxes of records that had not been microfilmed, as well as records from a host of other repositories and sources. After gathering digitized copies of my sources, I developed a system to name files of individual documents so that the digitized documents sorted themselves chronologically while retaining the metadata of the original location of the document. The digitization and organization of the approximately 150,000 pages took over a year, but the result was well worth it. I can read back and forth correspondence that, since the time it was filed by WRB staff members, had been located thousands of documents apart,

and have even found multi-section cables that had been split up and filed in different locations for the last seventy years. It is important here to recognize that this project would have been much more difficult had it not been for the scholarly software that ingested these documents and allowed me to take notes and set up a keyword structure to help with further organization. I used the program Papers—and loved it—but there are other scholarly software packages on the market and my generation of historians is incredibly lucky to have these research tools at our disposal. A project like mine would be virtually impossible without it.

There is an important caveat to a primary source-driven approach. The WRB staff dealt with imperfect intelligence, communications delays, an unpredictable enemy, and groups of refugees—who, while the WRB treated them as a unit, rarely acted like one. With so many variables, the Board's assumptions were not always correct and their efforts sometimes failed miserably. My narrative of their work is told through the documents, correspondence, cables, and transcripts of the WRB staff, in Washington and overseas. This monograph provides the events of 1944-1945 as they understood them and as they lived them. I have attempted to place the same emphasis, in terms of time and attention, on their efforts as they did, and, as importantly, have presented their choices as they understood them. Sometimes they were wrong, and the text will reflect that. (I have tried to note misperceptions in the footnotes, but I am sure this is incomplete.)

My chapters are strictly chronological. In fact, I wrote them in stages—reading all of the primary source material within the chronological boundaries of a chapter, and then writing that section. At times, I did not know what would happen next, or how a certain

“storyline” would end. This is particularly true for the final chapters, as even the historians who have written about the War Refugee Board gloss over the Board’s work in the final months of the war almost entirely. I feel this process is of benefit, as I emphasize the stories the WRB staff spent the most time working on, whether or not they were ultimately successful. The chapter breakdown is as follows:

- **Chapter 1 (August 1942-November 9, 1943):** This chapter begins with the Riegner telegram, includes the Bermuda Conference, the Emergency Conference to Save the Jews of Europe, and concludes with the introduction of the Rescue Resolution in both houses of Congress.
- **Chapter 2 (November 9, 1943-January 16, 1944):** This chapter deals with the conflict between the State Department and the Treasury Department, culminating in the establishment of the War Refugee Board.
- **Chapter 3 (January 17, 1944-March 24, 1944):** This chapter begins with the early days of the War Refugee Board, as the staff appointed new representatives and solicited ideas for relief and rescue. It concludes with President Roosevelt’s “Statement on Atrocities,” issued on March 23, 1944, which originated with the War Refugee Board, and came right after the Nazi invasion of Hungary.
- **Chapter 4 (March 25, 1944-June 12, 1944)** This chapter covers the rest of the spring of 1944, from reaction of the “Statement on Atrocities” to the President’s announcement of the establishment of the Fort Ontario Emergency Refugee Shelter in June.

- **Chapter 5 (June 13, 1944-August 11, 1944):** This chapter covers the busiest period for the War Refugee Board and includes information on the selection of the Fort Ontario refugees, the arrival of Turkish ships, requests to bomb the Auschwitz concentration camp, and the selection of Raoul Wallenberg, ending with the American response to the Horthy offer.
- **Chapter 6 (August 12, 1944-November 26, 1944):** This chapter covers the early ransom negotiations, the aftermath of the Kasztner group's arrival, the sinking of the *Mefkure*, and the Horthy offer, and ends with the WRB's release of the "German Extermination Camps" report.
- **Chapter 7 (November 27, 1944-January 27, 1945):** This chapter covers changes in the WRB, John Pehle's new responsibilities and a shift to planning for the post-war world, ending with Pehle's resignation and the appointment of William O'Dwyer.
- **Chapter 8 (January 27, 1945-September 21, 1945):** This chapter includes the final months of the war, the Board's efforts to get food packages into concentration camps, and the plans to dissolve (or continue) the WRB.

I have also included appendices of brief biographies of many of the people who appear in this dissertation, an examination of the Board's finances, and a reflection on the number of people the WRB may have "rescued."

It is my hope that this manuscript will contribute to the historiography of American response in big and small ways. The story of the War Refugee Board has been

told piecemeal—even those scholars who have described the Board and have dared to dip into the original archival records have tended to use the same subject designations as the records. So, for example, the story of the Board’s activities in Turkey will be described in isolation of other events, and, devoid of context, one is unable to understand how the Board made decisions. Although telling the story chronologically is much more complicated, I hope to provide a context for the Board’s work that I have found lacking in other examinations.

Moreover, I hope—and I know this is optimistic—that this dissertation will help move some of the scholarly debate about American response to the Holocaust forward. First, I hope that we can change the nature of the debate over the “bombing of Auschwitz” (inclusive of the railways leading to the camp, the gas chambers and crematoria, and the camp complex itself). These discussions have stagnated over the years. Like any paralyzed debate, each new article, editorial, or speech only entrenches the combatants in their own political position, rather than reaching any sort of compromise or agreement.²⁵ The debate over the bombing has largely devolved into an argument over whether success would have been feasible on a technical level—whether the right planes could have reached the area and successfully completed targeted bombing raids. Largely ignored is a potentially more productive—and useful—debate over whether the United States should use the military to alleviate humanitarian crises, a debate that could have present-day ramifications.

²⁵ The WRB staff spent a very small amount of time dealing with proposals to bomb Auschwitz. Though the idea came up a number of times in the summer and fall of 1944—and John Pehle ultimately came to endorse the proposal in November 1944—they spent far more time and energy debating and attempting many other projects.

In contrast to the current “bombing” debate, the Holocaust—and the work of the War Refugee Board in particular—raises many questions that are perfectly suited for intellectual debate and have real-world ramifications. Should the United States have supported the payment of ransom in 1944-1945? How should the War Refugee Board have allocated time and resources in the pull between relief and rescue? Should the War Refugee Board have supported attempts to rescue individuals deemed important for political or religious reasons, or should the emphasis have been on saving the largest number of people, regardless of who they were? Should humanitarian efforts take precedence, even at the risk of prolonging a war? Does the War Refugee Board’s work give us any useable tools to react to present-day humanitarian crises? These are far more interesting debates and discussions, with present-day implications, than any discussion of whether or not the United States should have bombed Auschwitz.

The War Refugee Board was America’s only official response to the Holocaust and the agency through which relief and rescue work was funneled from January 1944 to the end of the war. Debates about the nature and value of American governmental action (or inaction) to Nazi atrocities have been heated for years, yet there has been no monograph exploring the work of the WRB. It is my hope that this examination of the Board’s work—who they were, what they knew, and what they did about it—will provide a baseline for future scholarship and more productive debate.

CHAPTER ONE: INACTION, OBSTRUCTION, AND DELAY: AUGUST 1942—NOVEMBER 9, 1943

Prior to January 22, 1944, when President Roosevelt announced the creation of the War Refugee Board, no defined American policy regarding the persecution of Jews and minorities in Europe existed. The creation of the War Refugee Board provided a firm and resolute direction, finally announcing American policy as one of relief and rescue. The events of the year-and-a-half preceding the creation of the War Refugee Board illuminates why the agency so desperately needed to effect tangible action. Officials in the State Department, notably Assistant Secretary Breckinridge Long (who supervised the Visa Division), largely tailored their activities to stave off public pressure, not to put rescue proposals into practice. Since the United States had no policy to guide what should be done—if anything—to save the Jews and persecuted minorities trapped in Europe, administration officials like Long gave varied responses to rescue demands, based on their own sympathies, beliefs of what might be possible, and public pressure. Beyond this, the State Department was simply not bureaucratically equipped to deal with plans that required boldness. The speed of the persecution and mass murder in Europe and the danger for Jews and other minorities was so great that boldness became the only option. The State Department, the most conservative of the executive departments, was simply not able to devise schemes or put any idea into practice that required immediate action. Thus, the State Department treated the crisis as it treated other wartime problems and

subjected proposals to endless consultation cables, attempted international cooperation, and ultimately deadly delays.

Six months after the State Department confirmed the Nazi extermination plan in Europe, the United States and Great Britain met at the Bermuda Conference in April 1943, at which the discussions of what could actually be done were so limited that the results of the conference were kept secret. The State Department hoped that the mere fact of holding the conference would ameliorate activists. It did not. Over many months, Jewish organizations—those who attempted to collaborate with the State Department and those who angrily decried it—held conferences, met with officials, and presented proposals of rescue. The proposals were met, as multiple memos indicate, “with sympathetic consideration,” and, at times, with some exploratory overseas cables. But these cable conversations dragged on and representatives understandably grew restless. Months would pass with little information. The Bermuda Conference reconstituted the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, which had been inactive since the war began. With a large and politically divided membership and an executive committee that did not meet formally until four months after the Conference, the situation appeared hopeless.

As it appeared that nothing was being done, public pressure mounted. The Emergency Committee to Save the Jews of Europe angrily decried the inaction and staged a series of public events. Congressional supporters of the Committee ultimately introduced joint resolutions asking President Roosevelt to create an agency designed for relief and rescue. Simultaneously, officials in the Treasury Department uncovered

evidence of State Department obstructionism and delays, and began to systematically build a case for removing the State Department from rescue policy.

The creation of the War Refugee Board, taking the responsibility for persecuted minorities out of the direct hands of the State Department, defined American policy as proactively in favor of relief and rescue and created a staff and mechanism to effect proposals. The victory implicit in the creation of the War Refugee Board can only truly be understood through the details of the year 1943, as the State Department struggled to maintain control.

On April 19, 1943, police and SS auxiliaries entered the Warsaw ghetto intending to begin the last of the Jewish deportations from Warsaw to the extermination camp Treblinka. They were met with armed resistance and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising began. On the same day, 4,300 miles away, delegates from the United States and Great Britain opened the Bermuda Conference. The representatives of the United States—consisting of a Senator from Illinois, the president of Princeton University, and the chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs—were not privy to information about the ongoing destruction of the Warsaw ghetto. State Department officials, however, could not have been surprised. They had been receiving atrocity reports that talked about the situation in Warsaw for months. In fact, a report from late 1942 mentioning Warsaw was the catalyst for the American confirmation of the existence of a Nazi plan to exterminate the Jews of Europe. The official confirmation led to public pressure to act. The public pressure to act led them to Bermuda.

The Riegner Telegram

On August 8, 1942, Gerhart Riegner, the 31-year-old representative of the World Jewish Congress in Geneva, Switzerland, met with Howard Elting, Jr., an American vice-consul. In his report back to Washington, Elting wrote that Riegner was “in great agitation.” A German businessman, unidentified at the time but now known to be industrialist Eduard Schulte, traveled to Switzerland to deliver news that reached Riegner through trusted sources.¹ Riegner repeated to Elting that “there has been and is being considered in Hitler’s headquarters a plan to exterminate all Jews from Germany and German controlled areas...and the object is to permanently settle the Jewish question in Europe.”² Riegner asked the State Department to try to obtain information to confirm the reports, and also to pass the information to Rabbi Stephen Wise, the president of the World Jewish Congress in New York and a friend of President Roosevelt. When transmitting the report from Bern to the State Department in Washington on August 11th, Minister Leland Harrison added a note that he had no information to confirm this report,³ and furthermore, “The report has earmarks of war rumor inspired by fear and what is commonly understood to be the actually miserable condition of these refugees who face

¹ For a fascinating account of the search to determine Schulte’s identity, see the prologue in Walter Laqueur and Richard Breitman. *Breaking the Silence: The German who Exposed the Final Solution*. (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1994), 1-10.

² Howard Elting Jr., “Memorandum of Conversation with Gerhart Riegner,” 1942 August 10; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2234; National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD (NACP).

³ At the time, “Minister” and “Ambassador” were not used interchangeably but were both used to indicate the person who was the chief representative of his government. Ambassadors were the chief representative to a sole nation and in charge of an embassy, while ministers were representative to multiple nations and in charge of a legation. Harrison, by virtue of being the US representative to Switzerland and Liechtenstein, was a minister, not an ambassador. The differences between a legation and an embassy were confusing to all. Assistant Secretary of State Breckinridge Long noted in his diary on May 19, 1943: “Dined with Benes at Czech legation (or Embassy, I forget which—as all distinction between embassies and legations have been extinguished by elevation of practically all Legations to the higher rank).” Breckinridge Long, Diary entry, 14 May 1943; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 5, Folder “Diaries”; Library of Congress, Washington, DC (LOC).

decimation as result physical maltreatment persecution and scarcely endurable privations malnutrition and disease.”⁴

Upon receipt of the cable, the members of the European Division, on the third floor of the State Department overlooking the White House, debated what to do.⁵ Both Elbridge Durbrow, the assistant chief of the Eastern European Affairs division, and Paul Culbertson, assistant chief of European Affairs, drafted messages to Rabbi Wise. Culbertson wrote a handwritten note attached to his draft. "I don't like the idea of sending this one to Wise," he wrote, "but if the Rabbi hears later that we had the message and didn't let him in on it he might put up a kick. Why not send it on and add that this legation has no information to confirm the story. I can't see any justification for them to have put this thing in a telegram."⁶ Durbrow's opinion was equally forceful, but more revealing. He suggested to not forward the message to Wise due to "the fantastic nature of the allegation, and the impossibility of our being of any assistance if such action were taken..."⁷ Neither message was sent. Between Culbertson and Durbrow, a theme emerges, which appears repeatedly in State Department correspondence. Officials did not see why atrocity information was transmitted, and were such reports true, they believed any assistance to the victims to be impossible. On August 24, 1942, Paul Squire of the Geneva consulate sent Riegner a letter, informing him that the main consulate in Bern

⁴ Leland Harrison. State Department cable 3697, 1942 August 11; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2233; NACP.

⁵ Most of the State Department staff were located in what was then called the "Department of State Building" (now known as the Old Executive Office Building) on the west side of the White House property. The Visa division was located nearby at the Winder building, on the corner of 17th and F Streets NW.

⁶ Paul Culbertson, Handwritten note attached to cable 3697, 1942 August 13; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2233; NACP.

⁷ Elbridge Durbrow, Memorandum regarding cable 3697, 1942 August 13; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2235; NACP.

sent his message to the State Department as requested. Regarding delivery to Rabbi Wise, however, the State Department was “disinclined to deliver the message in question in view of the apparently unsubstantiated character of the information which forms its main theme.”⁸ Riegner was advised to obtain evidence of an extermination plot; if he could do so, his request to transmit the information would be reconsidered.

Rabbi Wise received the cable anyway. Riegner had also approached the British with the information, who transmitted it to the Foreign Office in London. Frank Roberts, the junior diplomat who received the message, responded similarly to Durbrow: “I do not see how we can hold up this message much longer... Naturally we have no information bearing on the story.”⁹ They added to Riegner’s message that the Foreign Office was unable to confirm the report, but they transmitted it to the intended recipient. There was more pressure on the Foreign Office to transmit the message than there had been on the State Department. Samuel Sydney Silverman, the British representative of the World Jewish Congress, was also a member of Parliament. To Silverman’s message, Riegner had appended “Inform and consult New York.”¹⁰ “New York” meant Stephen Wise.

Since Silverman sent it through Western Union rather than through a governmental channel, Wise received the telegram on August 28th, more than a week after it was sent. Wise consulted with his staff for several days, then contacted Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles.

⁸ Paul Squire, Letter to Gerhart Riegner, 1942 August 24; World Jewish Congress New York Office, D-Series (Rescue and Relief), Digital collection, Folder 107-16; United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC (USHMM).

⁹ Laqueur and Breitman, 152.

¹⁰ Sydney Silverman, Cable to Stephen Wise, 1942 August 29; World Jewish Congress New York Office, D-Series (Rescue and Relief), Digital collection, Folder 107-16; United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC (USHMM).

Though the State Department saw several reorganizations during the administration of President Franklin Roosevelt, the structure of the officials at the top rarely changed. Cordell Hull, a former Tennessee politician, became Secretary of State at the beginning of Roosevelt's first term in March 1933. He had previously served eleven terms in the House of Representatives, and resigned halfway through his first Senate term to take the position at State. While in Congress, he was best known for his strong support of international free trade and the reduction of tariffs. He did not have a lot of diplomatic experience, but Roosevelt, who preferred to control international relations from the White House, knew that Hull would follow the President's course. As Secretary, Hull was not a skilled administrator; this was known by the public,¹¹ by his staff,¹² and by staff in other departments.¹³ But he defended the work of State officials from critics, and when internal personnel battles raged, he usually won. Hull suffered from health problems, and by 1943, he was out of the office frequently due to hospitalizations, for needed rest, and for international conferences. Had Hull been in the office more often at the State Department, however, it is doubtful that the trajectory of State Department activities would have changed. Hull appears to have had very little interest in refugee issues and did not interfere with the work of his Assistant Secretaries, or, due to a close personal relationship with James Clement Dunn in the European division, with the details of the negotiations of that area. Instead, until the conflict between the State and Treasury

¹¹ Hull "will never go down in history as a great executive." Robert Bendiner. *The Riddle of the State Department*. (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1942), 143.

¹² "He [Hull] is an odd person. He is not an administrator, nor an executive. He is indecisive." Breckinridge Long. Diary entry, December 9, 1943. Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 5, Folder "Diaries"; LOC.

¹³ "The Secretary of State has never professed to be, and hasn't, in fact, been the kind of administrator you are. He just doesn't know a lot of things that are happening inside of the Department until they eventually explode in his face." [Transcript of a "Jewish Evacuation" meeting, Oscar Cox speaking to Henry Morgenthau, Jr.] Transcript, Jewish Evacuation meeting, December 19, 1943. The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688II, Document 103-130; LOC.

Departments drew his attention in the late fall of 1943, he did not seem to believe there to be a problem.

Directly below Secretary Hull was Undersecretary Sumner Welles who was, in many ways, Hull's complete opposite. Independently wealthy, highly educated, well-connected—as a child, he was a page in President Roosevelt's wedding to Eleanor—Sumner Welles had all the trappings of a stereotypical aristocrat in a department that still valued such things. The President preferred Welles to Hull, both in the realm of diplomatic negotiations and personally. This fact, too, was well-known outside of the State Department, which infuriated Hull, who felt these slights were deliberate. They were. Roosevelt wanted a Secretary who would stay out of his way, but still needed a diplomat on occasion. When Rabbi Stephen Wise received the Riegner telegram and wanted to get the information to President Roosevelt, he knew to go to Sumner Welles.¹⁴

On September 3rd, Welles spoke with Wise on the phone and asked him to delay publicizing the Riegner report until more information could be obtained.¹⁵ Sympathetic to humanitarian concerns, Welles was also a realist. If the European Division claimed they had no official information to support the story, why publicize something so unbelievable and upsetting?

Atrocity reports kept coming, though. Only two days after receiving the Riegner telegram from the London branch of the World Jewish Congress, Wise received a telegram from the Geneva branch of the Jewish Agency for Palestine. Non-Jewish

¹⁴ “As a prodigiously hard-working Chief of Staff, eager to assume the powers so readily relinquished by Hull, Welles has been the guiding spirit of the Department.” Bendiner, 165.

¹⁵ Stephen Wise. *Challenging Years: The Autobiography of Stephen Wise*. New York: Putnam and Sons, 1949.

eyewitnesses were reporting the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto and the creation of remote camps specifically for extermination purposes. Wise sent Welles a copy of the telegram, which Welles designated as “triple priority” and repeated to Myron Taylor, the American representative to the Vatican, asking Taylor to see if the Vatican had any information to confirm these reports and to discuss them with the Pope at his next audience.¹⁶ Welles also sent the Bern legation a message from Wise, requesting that Riegner meet with Minister Harrison.

At the end of September, the State Department received another telegram from consul Paul Squire in Geneva passing on atrocity rumors from Gerhart Riegner. Riegner reported that the corpses of murdered Jews were being sent to Germany where they were being repurposed for the production of glue, soap, and lubricants.¹⁷ He also passed on coded messages sent from the Warsaw ghetto to Switzerland, announcing that large numbers of Jews in the Warsaw ghetto were being deported from the city to be murdered. Squire, who had sent the letter to Riegner informing him that that his earlier telegram was not sent to Rabbi Wise for lack of verifiable information, added that he [Squire] had heard from his own German source confirming the extermination plan.¹⁸ Convinced the

¹⁶ Sumner Welles, Cable to Myron Taylor, 1942 September 23; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, 740.0116), 597A; NACP.

¹⁷ This was a common wartime rumor but most historians agree that it never became a widespread practice, and there are only a few documented experiments of this nature. See: Joachim Neander’s article “The Impact of “Jewish Soap” and “Lampshades” on Holocaust Remembrance” in Christina Guenther and Beth A. Griech-Polelle. *Trajectories of Memory: Intergenerational Representations of the Holocaust in History and the Arts*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008. Joachim Neander, “The Danzig Soap Case: Facts and Legends around ‘Professor Spanner’ and the Danzig Anatomic Institute, 1944-1945,” *German Studies Review*. Vol. 29, no. 1 (Feb. 2006), 63-86.

¹⁸ Squire had a trustworthy German source known as “Frank,” who fed him information. “Frank” told Squire the plan to exterminate the Jews included Poles as well: “There is no longer the slightest doubt that it is the objective of the Nazi leaders to exterminate the Polish people. High Party officials who have to do with Governor General Frank confirm this aim.” “Frank’s” report accepted the extermination plan against the Jews as a matter of fact. Paul Squire, Memorandum entitled “Jewish Persecutions,” 22 September 1942; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2242; NACP.

reports were accurate, Squire repeated Riegner's request that the information in the memos be forwarded to Rabbi Wise.

A few days after sending the request, Squire received instructions from Bern. He wrote to Riegner that "[i]t affords me much pleasure in conveying the information contained in this letter." Welles had cabled Minister Harrison to set up a meeting with Riegner and Richard Lichtheim (at Wise's request). In the letter to Riegner conveying the meeting request, Squire—who must have felt vindicated for his decision to support the transmission of Riegner's message—added a message from Harrison: "[I]n the event you are apprehensive regarding the safety in the transmission of reports which you have been making, the Legation will be glad to offer you such assistance..."¹⁹

Even in light of clearly corroborating atrocity reports, and Welles' obvious desire to assist Wise, the State Department still waited until the end of November to confirm the ongoing systematic extermination plan for the Jews of Europe. Part of the delay could be explained by the sheer incomprehensibility of the atrocities. Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, when confronted in July 1943 by Jan Karski's testimony of his experiences in Poland, famously replied that he was unable to believe Karski. He did not think Karski was lying, but was simply unable to believe him.²⁰ Much of the delay, however, was due to the nature of the State Department itself. Promotion in the Foreign Service was based on an efficiency rating calculated in part on the veracity of an official's reporting.²¹ This inherently led to strong risk-aversion and an overabundance of caution in verifying or

¹⁹ Paul Squire, Letter to Riegner, 1942 October 8; RG-84, General Records, Box 13, Folder "Jews"; NACP.

²⁰ E. Thomas Wood and Stanislaw M. Jankowski. *Karski: How One Man Tried to Stop the Holocaust*. (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1994), 261.

²¹ Bendiner, 127.

reporting on any kind of information. Squire, by adding his own note to Riegner's messages, clearly demonstrated that for him, the accuracy of the information outweighed any risk in the transmission.

The State Department had a reputation of being highly suspicious, conservative, and susceptible to paranoia. Their suspicions were shared by the Office of Censorship, which sent an extensive report to the State Department in September 1942, only a few days before they received the two memos from Gerhart Riegner and the Geneva consulate. The report indicated individuals and groups who were suspicious—chief among them, organizations that dealt with “so-called refugees.” Identifying most of the Jewish relief organizations operating in the United States as a threat, the report stated that they were “tricky, deceitful, and absolutely unreliable. Those charged with the national security cannot afford under any circumstances to predicate their actions upon any representations or statements made by any of these groups. Their activities, as known to Censorship, must be said to involve dangers to the security of this country.”²² The Office of Censorship included the World Jewish Congress and Rabbi Wise in this report, stating that they had ties to questionable individuals and organizations.

In October 1942, the State Department itself produced a similar report, with the ominous title, “Campaign to Undermine the State Department.” The majority of the report constituted a person-by-person examination of the signatories of a December 1941 petition to President Roosevelt regarding State Department action in the Free French occupation of St. Pierre. The signatories included James Waterman Wise, son of Stephen

²² “Introduction to Report on Various Organizations and Individuals Engaged in Refugee Migration Activities,” 1942, September 26. General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 33), 3479; NACP.

Wise and an official in the World Jewish Congress. Various relief agencies were also examined and critiqued for their supposed attacks on the State Department, and though the World Jewish Congress is not mentioned by name, “only a few of the groups consistently attacking the Department have been covered in this survey.” Most illustrative, however, is the conclusion of the report:

It is clear that they are trying to build up a huge, international pressure movement to force decisions by various governments in line with their program. There is a liberal sprinkling of aliens in these groups, alien political refugees who fancy themselves as the inheritors of leadership in the Axis countries, France, and Spain when the war is over. It would seem that alien politicians partly responsible for the rise of dictatorship in their own countries should not violate the sanctity of political asylum by criticizing or actively interfering in the domestic or foreign affairs of the host country.²³

This was the State Department at its basest. Certainly not all officials felt this way (as evidenced by Welles and the activities of the legation in Switzerland), nor was it indicative of the treatment the World Jewish Congress and other relief agencies received from the State Department. Indeed, Jewish organizations, including those privately identified within the Department as belligerent, held many meetings with high-ranking officials throughout 1942 and 1943. However, many officials in the State Department believed that Jewish organizations were overstepping their boundaries in their pressure and demands for American action. Requests for information and aid were often seen through this lens.

In late November 1942, Sumner Welles received a report from the Vatican confirming the existence of the “Final Solution.” The two-page report contained this

²³ “Campaign to Undermine the State Department,” 1942 October 23; Cordell Hull papers (Library of Congress Microfilm Collection 16, 160-118P), Reel 55, Folder “Attacks on the State Department”; LOC.

sobering statement: "An early end to the extermination of Jews in Poland is foreseen, [sic] as well as the urgent need by the special detachments, trained for such work and incapable of interrupting the daily shedding of blood, for new victims."²⁴ Welles also received four reports from the Bern embassy that confirmed not only that the atrocities were ongoing but that they were part of a systematic plan to rid Europe of Jews.²⁵ On November 24, 1942, Stephen Wise went to Welles' office with his son, James, to hear what Welles had discovered. Wise later wrote in his memoir, "I shall never forget the quiet but deeply moving way in which he turned to us and said, every word etching itself into my heart, 'Gentlemen, I hold in my hands documents which have come to me from our legation in Berne. I regret to tell you, Dr. Wise, that these confirm and justify your deepest fears.'²⁶ Wise wrote that Welles then gave him the memos and said that while he [Welles] could not publicize them, there is no reason that Wise could not do so. Wise immediately held a press conference. In many of the papers that carried the story on November 25th, the articles about Wise's announcement were bundled with atrocity reports from other organizations, including the Polish government in London, which further bolstered the veracity of Wise's assertion.²⁷

But others in the State Department were not pleased that Wise had received this information. In a series of memos related to the censorship status of mail designated in

²⁴ Holy See staff, Translation of report from the Vatican, 1942 November 23; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, 740.0116), 726; NACP.

²⁵ Paul Squire, Letter to Welles, 1942 October 29; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, 862.4016), 2942; NACP. Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern to Welles, 1942 November 23; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, 740.0116), 653; NACP.

²⁶ Stephen Wise. *Challenging Years: The Autobiography of Stephen Wise*. (New York: Putnam and Sons, 1949), 275-276.

²⁷ James MacDonald, "Himmler Program Kills Polish Jews," *New York Times*, 1942 November 25, pg. 10. Associated Press, "2 Million Jews Slain by Nazis, Dr. Wise Avers," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 1942 November 25, pg. 4. *Christian Science Monitor*, "Jews Explore Reported Plot by Nazis to Wipe Out People," 1942 November 25, pg. 7.

the State Department as “Dr. Wise” mail, one official wrote that someone needs to “speak to Wise directly in an effort to call off, or at least to tone down, the present world-wide publicity campaign concerning ‘mass murders’ and...to avoid any implications that the State Department furnished him with official documentary proof of these stories.”²⁸

The State Department feared that the confirmation of the extermination plan would result in pressure to act. This fear was almost immediately justified. On December 10th, Robert Borden Reams of the European Division met with William Hayter of the British embassy to discuss a joint declaration condemning the atrocities which the British were pushing, in part due to the “[e]xtreme pressure [that] was being encountered from various groups.” Reams expressed his concern that such a statement would be interpreted as confirmation of the reports. The result would only be that “various Governments of the United Nations would expose themselves to increased pressure from all sides to do something more specific in order to aid these people.” Reams informed Hayter of the background of Rabbi Wise’s statement, which he believed to be “responsible for most of the present anxiety” and stated his personal belief that President Roosevelt’s audience with a Jewish delegation led by Wise on December 8th should be enough. Were the draft declaration still to be desired, he recommended removing the language that indicated the mass murder reports were verified.²⁹ Reams’ reaction to the potential declaration was in line with State Department reaction to proposals throughout late 1942 and 1943. They tried to prevent any information that would cause an outcry from reaching the public but,

²⁸ Memorandum regarding “Dr. Wise mail,” 1942 December 9; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2251; NACP.

²⁹ R. Borden Reams, Memo to Atherton and Hickerson, 1942 December 10; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, 740.0116), 848; NACP.

when it did, they created a smokescreen of action rather than working to achieve real results. The smokescreen rarely worked for long, and the State Department was consistently reacting to new pressures with various deflection techniques. In this case, Reams' warning of the trouble that could come with the joint declaration was not enough.

The Joint Declaration by Members of the United Nations was announced on December 17, 1942. In stark language, the governments of Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Yugoslavia,³⁰ as well as the French National Committee, condemned “in the strongest possible terms this bestial policy of cold-blooded extermination.”³¹ The statement specified that Jews were the main target.

Under Pressure for Action

With the atrocity reports confirmed in the press—if not within the European Division—the pressure Reams feared increased, and with it, criticism of State's inactivity. When a Treasury Department official complained to consul general Samuel Wiley of the Algeria consulate in mid-January 1943 about a three to four month delay in remitting relief funds for refugees, Wiley answered that “there had been so much criticism of things done that 'they' (he and others) were becoming 'hard skinned' about it

³⁰ Anthony J.D. Biddle, Jr. was the American ambassador accredited to the governments-in-exile of Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, and Yugoslavia, all of which were in London. This certainly helped to streamline the approval process for the language of the declaration.

³¹ United Nations Declaration on Atrocities, 17 December 1942, Papers of the War Refugee Board (Microfilm Publication Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, c2002). Microfilm LM0305, Reel 28, Folder 7, Document 835; USHMM.

and 'the only guide was whether or not their conscience was clear about this and similar matters.'³²

The British were also pressured to act, and answered bureaucratically. On January 23, 1943, Sir Ronald Campbell of the British embassy brought an *aide-mémoire* to Sumner Welles for his consideration and requested an early reply. In the memorandum—riddled with the caveats of strong German control of borders, the paramount importance of ultimate Allied victory, the fear of raising false hopes, and the acknowledged practical limitations—the British still suggested a joint approach to some sort of proactive measures toward relief and rescue. Attached to the memo was a statistical report of the number of refugees currently supported by the Great Britain and her colonies, with the additional information that Palestine could not accommodate large numbers of refugees due to food shortages.³³

The task of preparing a reply was given to Assistant Secretary of State Breckinridge Long.³⁴ Born in St. Louis to a moneyed family with a storied lineage, Long had been appointed as Third Assistant Secretary of State under President Woodrow Wilson.³⁵ A friend of Cordell Hull and a long-time supporter of President Roosevelt,

³² Josiah DuBois, "Conference with Consul General Wiley re: Jewish refugees," 1943 January 18; The Morgenthau Diaries (Microfilm Publication Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, c1995-1997). Microfilm 23,392-73P, Volume 688I, Document 19-20; LOC.

³³ "Refugee Problem," 1943 January 20; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 33), 3633; NACP.

³⁴ Rightly or wrongly, Breckinridge Long has emerged as the ultimate example of State Department anti-Semitism and callousness. He is a villain in David Wyman's book *The Abandonment of the Jews*. Excerpts of Long's diaries were published in 1966 by Fred Israel (*The War Diary of Breckinridge Long: Selections from the Years, 1939-1944*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966). The only other book dedicated specifically to Long is Neil Rolde's *Breckinridge Long, American Eichmann?? An Enquiry into the Character of the Man Who Denied Visas to the Jews*. (Solon, ME: Polar Bear and Company, 2013). On the cover of this book, Rolde superimposed a photograph of Long over a swastika on an American flag. Needless to say, the book is not a balanced examination of Long. For the amount of attention he has received as a character in the larger narrative of American response, his biography is due for a scholarly examination.

³⁵ In the Wilson administration (and through 1924), Assistant Secretaries of State were ranked.

Long had served as Ambassador to Mussolini's Italy between 1933 and 1936 before resigning for health reasons, but also, it was suspected, due to his favorable view of Italy's invasion of Ethiopia.³⁶ He returned to the State Department at the outbreak of war in Europe and became one of four Assistant Secretaries directly under Hull and Welles. The Assistant Secretaries—Long, Dr. Adolf Berle, Dean Acheson, and G. Howland Shaw—oversaw the operation of the various divisions and policy areas of the State Department. One of Long's policy areas was "Special War Problems," which—much to his dismay—included the oversight of the Visa Division, and with it, refugee policy. At 62, Long was tired. In his diary in 1943, he continually complained of illness and exhaustion. Dealing with refugee matters and the constant pressure for State Department action seemed to tire him the most, as Long's "refined manners belied the bitter feelings he harboured toward Jewish and other immigrants."³⁷ Like many other State Department officials, he was consistent in the belief that the Department had already done much for refugees, and resented the accusation that more was necessary.

In the January 25th internal memo asking his subordinates to prepare statistics related to how many refugees the United States had already admitted, Long stated that the British request "deserved serious consideration." However, it "proposes a treatment to the serious situation in which some minorities find themselves at the hands of the Axis—a situation with which we are familiar and which we have done a great deal to alleviate

³⁶ Bendiner, 179.

³⁷ Sarah E. Peck. "The Campaign for an American Response to the Nazi Holocaust, 1943-1945." *Journal of Contemporary History* 15, no. 2 (April 1980): 368.

during these last three years.”³⁸ The State Department response to the British memo took nearly a month to write. On February 6th, Long wrote in his diary that he “must try to write a resume of refugee movements and backgrounds,” planning to single out for special mention an American plan to bring 2,000 Polish refugees—the vast majority non-Jews—to a refugee camp at Santa Rosa, Mexico.³⁹

In the meantime, cable 482 from Gerhart Riegner arrived at the State Department on January 21. Sumner Welles passed the contents on to Stephen Wise. Riegner’s two-part message was composed with the aid of his associate Richard Lichtheim and took advantage of the Bern legation’s willingness to aid in transmitting his cables. The report was similar to his previous transmissions: He described mass murders and deportations in Poland and the deprivations suffered by Romanian Jews in Transnistria, a swampy region between the Dniester and Bug rivers in the former Ukraine, to which the majority of Romanian Jews had been deported.⁴⁰ The message was similar to others that arrived at the State Department from Switzerland, and with the extermination reports already confirmed, passing the information on to Wise seemed harmless. On February 10th, however, members of the European division of the State Department drafted a cable, numbered 354, to Bern in response to the message. Identifying it as a response to cable 482, State wrote, “[I]t is suggested that such reports in the future should not be accepted unless extraordinary circumstances make such action advisable.” Citing concerns that

³⁸ Breckinridge Long, “Re. mem fr. Br Emb, Sir Ronald Campbell,” 1943 January 25; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 202, Folder “Refugees 1”; LOC.

³⁹ There is currently no English-language monograph specifically addressing the Santa Rosa camp, but (even though the majority of the refugees were not Jewish) the camp is discussed in detail in Daniela Gleizer’s *Unwelcome Exiles: Mexico and the Jewish Refugees from Nazism, 1933-1945*. Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2013.

⁴⁰ Leland Harrison, Cable 482 from Bern to Washington, 1943 January 21; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2256A; NACP.

sending private messages over government channels subverted the censorship of the originating country, the cable effectively chastised Leland Harrison, the minister to Switzerland, for sending atrocity information.⁴¹ The cable would come back to haunt the State Department.

While the State Department tried to shut down the flow of atrocity information, they could not stop the rise in public pressure. On February 13th, a *New York Times* article by C.Z. Sulzberger announced from London that “Rumania Proposes Transfer of Jews.”⁴² The article stated that the Allied officials had been approached by the government of German-occupied Romania with an offer to release the Jews who had been deported to Transnistria, with a tax levied per person.⁴³ Sulzberger noted the many difficulties with the plan and reported that the Allies had yet to reach a decision. This was technically true, since the United States had not been approached by the Romanian government at all. President Roosevelt and Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr. both requested more information, and Welles sent cables to London and Ankara asking embassy staff to investigate. Both returned with information from Jewish Agency representatives confirming some of the details of the story, but also indicating the suspicious nature of the offer. The British Foreign Office dismissed the offer as “blackmail,” or perhaps an attempt by the Romanians to appear as humanitarian.⁴⁴ The London embassy took the liberty of discussing the offer with Sulzberger himself; the

⁴¹ Cordell Hull, Cable 354 from Washington to Bern, 1943 February 10; RG-84, General Records, Box 13, Folder “Jews”; NACP.

⁴² C.L. Sulzberger, “Rumania Proposes Transfer of the Jews.” *New York Times*, 1943 February 13.

⁴³ I will be using the contemporary spelling of “Romania”, but will revert to the contemporary spelling of “Rumania” when I am using direct quotations.

⁴⁴ Matthews, Cable 1274 from London to Washington, 1943 February 19; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 33), 3605; NACP.

journalist replied that “he does not attach much importance to it and considers it to be probably a Nazi trick.”⁴⁵ The State Department did not investigate further.

The State Department still had to address public interest in the potential Romanian offer. Three days after the Sulzberger article appeared, a group calling themselves the Committee for a Jewish Army paid for a full-page advertisement, also in the *New York Times*: “For Sale to Humanity; 70,000 Jews, Guaranteed Human Beings at 50\$ A Piece.” Sulzberger’s article appeared on the left of the advertisement, though the Committee edited the article heavily to delete practical concerns about the offer, and added a number of sentences. They highlighted one addition, which read: “If the refugees were British, American, or Russian, the United Nations would be up and doing something despite all difficulties.” The advertisement included a fundraising coupon asking the public to support their campaign “to save European Jewry by action—not pity, and to help publicize your messages.”⁴⁶ Members of the public, and more importantly, their Congressional representatives, wrote to the State Department enclosing a copy of this advertisement and requesting action. The staff of the Visa Division was obligated to send reassuring letters, indicating that they received information that the offer’s “probable source is the German propaganda machine which is always ready to use the miseries of the people of occupied Europe in order to attempt to create confusion and doubt within the United Nations.”⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Matthews, Cable 1300 from London to Washington, 1943 February 19; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 33), 3606; NACP.

⁴⁶ Committee for a Jewish Army. “For Sale to Humanity” advertisement. *New York Times*, 1943 February 16.

⁴⁷ Sumner Wells, Letter to Senator James Davis, 1943 March 11; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 33), 3603; NACP.

On February 25th, more than a month after the British shared their *aide-mémoire*, the State Department dispatched an eight-page response which focused almost exclusively on informing the British of assistance the United States has already rendered to refugees and as well as ongoing responsibilities, including the “110,000 persons of the Japanese race...being housed and maintained at public expense.” The State Department suggested that organized aid would best be effected by the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (IGC), an international committee with a large and divisive membership, which had been created after the Evian Conference in 1938. The Executive Committee of the IGC, based in London, had not met since October 1939. To provide recommendations to the IGC, the State Department suggested “British and United States representatives might meet at Ottawa for this preliminary explanation.”⁴⁸

A week after sending the memo to the British, the State Department released it to the press. A lengthy article in the *New York Times* was titled “U.S. Invites British to Refugee Parlay.”⁴⁹ The Canadian government expressed surprise that they had not been consulted about the idea of an international conference on their soil prior to the American announcement. The State Department had to contact them and explain that the memo “which in the ordinary course of events would not have been published...[but] because of the New York eleven-point program on refugees and the intense public interest in the United States in the subject” their hand was forced.⁵⁰ The “New York eleven-point program” was a reference to a massive rally at Madison Square Garden held on March 1,

⁴⁸ Cordell Hull, Cable 1241 from Washington to London, 1943 March 11; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 33), 3609; NACP.

⁴⁹ *New York Times*. “U.S. Invites British to Refugee Parlay,” 1943 March 3.

⁵⁰ Lewis Clark, Memo from US embassy in Ottawa, 1943 March 4; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, 840.48), 3739; NACP.

1943 and organized by the American Jewish Congress (led by Stephen Wise), the American Federation of Labor, the Congress of Industrial Organizations, the Church Peace Union, and the Free World Association. Wise claimed that over 75,000 people tried to gain admittance to the rally, which had been designed as a memorial service to the murdered Jews of Europe and resulted in an eleven-point proposal for consideration by the United Nations.⁵¹ A front-page article in the *New York Times*, “Save Doomed Jews, Huge Rally Pleads,” proved enough for the State Department to quickly decide to release their response to the British, containing all the actions the United States supposedly had already taken. This was one tactic the State Department used to quell public pressure: a release of information that, they imagined, would mollify the protestors.

The Committee for a Jewish Army⁵²

On March 9th, again at Madison Square Garden, the Committee for a Jewish Army presented “We Will Never Die”—a performance so popular that there was a second show the same evening. The Committee for a Jewish Army, the organization which had published the “For Sale to Humanity” ad in the wake of the Sulzberger article in February, was founded by a small group of Palestinian Jews who were affiliated with the Irgun Zeva’i Leumi, a paramilitary organization that was an offshoot of the Haganah. Irgun philosophy was based in Revisionist Zionism, founded by Ze’ev Jabotinsky (whose son, Eri, was a member of the Committee), which contended that all Jews had a right to

⁵¹ Committee for a Jewish Army, “For Sale to Humanity” advertisement. *New York Times*, 1943 March 2.

⁵² The Bergson group—and their various organizations: the Committee for a Jewish Army, Emergency Committee to Save the Jews of Europe, and the Hebrew Committee for National Liberation—have many passionate supporters even today. A scholarly and balanced look at the group can be found in Judith Tydor Baumel’s *The ‘Bergson Boys’ and the Origins of Contemporary Zionist Militancy*. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005).

Palestine and only armed force would secure a Jewish state. The group arrived in the United States in 1940 and was led by Hillel Kook (who adopted the pseudonym Peter Bergson). They immediately began to fundraise for Irgunist activities in Palestine. On the outbreak of war, they formed the American Friends of a Jewish Palestine, which soon became the Committee for a Jewish Army of Stateless and Palestinian Jews, lobbying extensively for the creation of a separate Jewish Army under Allied direction. They gained prominent supporters almost immediately; only a year after arriving in the United States, the Committee received a telegram from Secretary of War Henry Stimson offering them best wishes for the success of their movement.⁵³

When they learned of the State Department's confirmation of Nazi extermination plans, the Committee stepped up their activities. In January 1943, Senator Edwin Johnson (D-Colorado) entered a speech into the Congressional Record that he gave as the National Chairman of the Committee for a Jewish Army. In the speech, he criticized the press for hiding atrocity stories on the back pages and promoted the Committee's idea to send suicide squads of Palestinian Jews into Germany to bomb residential areas in retaliation for every 10,000 Jews slaughtered.⁵⁴ Throughout 1943, Committee's full-page advertisements in prominent newspapers and in their own magazine, *The Answer*, attracted a great deal of attention. Masters of propaganda, the Committee knew how to gain and retain non-Jewish followers, but had few supporters within organized Judaism. Unafraid to insult officials in positions of power, demand action from them, and publicize

⁵³ Henry Stimson, Telegram, 1941 December 3; Palestine Statehood Committee Papers (Scholarly Resources, Inc. Microfilm Publication), LM0399, Reel 1, Folder 5; USHMM.

⁵⁴ Sen. Edwin Johnson, Congressional Record, 1943 January 14; Palestine Statehood Committee Papers, LM0399, Reel 4, Folder 7; USHMM.

any reply deemed to be a disappointment—which amounted to nearly every reply—the Committee made so many enemies that few Jewish organizations were willing to associate with them for fear of losing access to governmental officials. More than any other, the Bergson group (as they became known) brought atrocity stories and American failure to act to the non-Jewish public. Throughout 1943, every time the State Department thought they could quiet public pressure, the Bergson group immediately, publicly, and audaciously pointed out failures.

“We Will Never Die” was a spectacle. Written by Ben Hecht, produced by Billy Rose, directed by Moss Hart and with music by Kurt Weill, the cast numbered in the hundreds and included Edward G. Robinson. In the pageant, the cast, which included elderly rabbis, listed the accomplishments of prominent Jews in history, the contributions Jews had made in times of war, and highlighted their absence at a future peace table. The end of the play involved a lengthy recitation of various German *aktions*, each told from the point of view of a murdered Jew and each ending with the refrain, “Remember us.” In the official program for “We Will Never Die” the frontispiece implored, “When you leave Madison Square Garden tonight, there will be 4,000,000 pairs of eyes watching your fading form as it merges with the night. There will be 4,000,000 hearts praying for you to return, and with you you will bring means of escape.”⁵⁵ The New York performances were so successful that the pageant traveled across the country between April and July 1943. It was performed at Constitution Hall in Washington, DC (where Eleanor Roosevelt was in attendance and wrote favorably of it in her “My Day” column);

⁵⁵ “We Will Never Die” program, 1943 March 9; Palestine Statehood Committee Papers, LM0399, Reel 1, Folder 5; USHMM.

Philadelphia's Convention Hall; the Chicago Stadium; Boston Garden; and at the Hollywood Bowl, each time with a different cast of prominent actors. Later performances added a new section acknowledging the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Plans for additional performances were hampered due to the contentious relationship between the Committee for a Jewish Army and other Jewish organizations, which refused to support performances and tried to deter local organizers.⁵⁶

The Bermuda Conference

With two recent rallies for increased action, it was evident that the publication of a State Department memo to Great Britain was not going to be enough to placate an interested public. Throughout the rest of March 1943, the State Department and British embassy staff met frequently to plan for a conference to discuss joint action. The British did not want the conference to be held in Ottawa; the State Department refused to consider Washington, DC, due to "the pressure which would be coming from the locally organized groups in this country."⁵⁷ Breckinridge Long was the chief organizer for the

⁵⁶ Direct claims of this obstructionism are not found in internal Committee for a Jewish Army correspondence, but the clear ongoing conflict between the Bergson group and other Jewish organizations lends credence to the claims. On April 23, 1943, Bergson member Samuel Merlin wrote to publisher William Ziff, with whom he had been corresponding regarding the antagonism. He revealed in the letter that the March 1st rally at Madison Square Garden sponsored by the American Jewish Congress was scheduled after the performances of "We Will Never Die" were already organized. The Bergsons, claiming to want to avoid duplication, approached the AJC and offered to merge the events—to stage a political rally after the performances. "It is our understanding that these proposals were hooted down at the meeting [sic] and that it was decided as a matter of policy to hamper and destroy any activities of our Committee no matter how worthwhile." Samuel Merlin, Letter to William Ziff, 1943 April 23; Palestine Statehood Committee Papers, LM0399, Reel 1, Folder 8; USHMM. Additional evidence can be found in an internal report describing attempts to stage "We Will Never Die" in Kingston, NY; Rochester, NY; Buffalo, NY; Baltimore, MD; Gary, IN; and Pittsburgh, PA. Though the report is likely hyperbolic, it complains that in each town, fundraising and promotional plans were disrupted by the American Jewish Congress and/or the Zionist Organization of America, accusing them even of calling all the individuals who promised to attend a fundraising luncheon in Niagara Falls and convincing them otherwise. "Report on Attempts to Stage 'We Will Never Die,'" 1943 December 31; Palestine Statehood Committee Papers, LM0399, Reel 5, Folder 7; USHMM.

⁵⁷ Breckinridge Long, Diary entry, 1943 March 19; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 5, Folder "Diaries"; LOC.

intended conference and, determined to protect State Department interests, planned to orchestrate the events and the outcome. He saw the British *aide-mémoire* in January as an attempt to try “to put responsibility and embarrassment on our laps.”⁵⁸ The British complained of Long’s long-standing anti-British bias, which he denied for several pages in his diary with examples, giving even a casual reader the suspicion that the accusation was true. In late March, he complained again: “Their note of January 20 (or thereabouts) was a plain effort to embarrass us by dumping the international aspects of that question plum in our lap. I picked up the ball and by our February 25 reply put the baby very uncomfortably back on their laps. That is too recent to be forgotten or forgiven—and it is another evidence of my anti-British bias.”⁵⁹ On March 22, 1943, Long learned that the Archbishop of Canterbury was planning to make a speech in the House of Lords calling for the British to do everything in their power, including eliminating immigration quotas, to save the Jews of Europe. Long, by his own admission, “blew up...After some very profane expostulation I...called a stenographer and dictated a statement for us by the British Government in answer to Canterbury...It pushed the conversations away from Washington and from London and said just what I had striven for. They objected to Ottawa—were willing to try Bermuda.”⁶⁰ Long saw the upcoming conference as the way to quiet public pressure, and he was not going to let the British get in the way.

Long’s goal with the conference was to reconstitute the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, envisioning that any proposal for proactive relief and rescue could be addressed to that committee for consultation and implementation. If successful,

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Breckinridge Long, Diary entry, 1943 March 28; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 5, Folder “Diaries”; LOC.

⁶⁰ Breckinridge Long, Diary entry, 1943 March 22; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 5, Folder “Diaries”; LOC.

Long could defer all proposals to the IGC and refugee matters would no longer be his responsibility. In preparation for the conference, Myron Taylor, who served as the American representative to the IGC in addition to his duties at the Vatican, prepared a memo to Long detailing the history of the Committee. Created at the Evian Conference in 1938, the IGC had 32 member nations, six of whom—the United States, the United Kingdom, Brazil, France, the Netherlands, and Argentina—served as the Executive Committee. Drafted to address prewar concerns, the IGC mandate covered those who were still in Germany or Austria but needed to emigrate, and those who had emigrated but had not yet reached a final destination. The mandate was appropriate prior to the war, but less so in 1943, as the IGC would have no means of reaching out to any potential refugee still alive in Germany or Austria. In fact, the Intergovernmental Committee had not met in plenary session since prior to the outbreak of war. Taylor consulted with Sir Herbert Emerson, the British director of the IGC, and together they formulated a revision of the mandate that could work. They proposed expanding the membership to more countries, including the Soviet Union; adjusting the membership of the Executive Committee; defining their mandate as covering those of all races and creeds; and proposed a potential financial and staff expansion to facilitate a more active role.⁶¹

Relief organizations also submitted recommendations for the upcoming conference. The “Joint Emergency Committee for European Jewish Affairs,” with representatives from the American Jewish Congress, B’nai B’rith, the Jewish Labor Committee, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Agudas Israel, the Union

⁶¹ Herbert Emerson, Letter to Taylor with memo about IGC, 1943 March 24; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, 840.48), 3759; NACP.

of Orthodox Rabbis, and other prominent organizations, presented a list of conservative suggestions. These suggestions are worth noting, as they appeared again and again throughout 1943 from these organizations and others as viable solutions to the practical problems of rescue. The Committee suggested establishing temporary havens—areas in Allied-occupied or neutral countries where refugees could be housed and cared for until they could be repatriated to their countries of origin. They proposed verbal and financial assurances to the neutral nations of Europe currently supporting refugees that the Allied nations would contribute to their care. Relief parcels could be brought through the blockade for delivery to those trapped in occupied territory. An intergovernmental agency should be established to focus on relief plans. The recommendations also included the most common suggestion, which was also the least likely to occur: the United States and Great Britain should relax immigration barriers and Britain should open the gates of Palestine to unrestricted Jewish entry.⁶²

Three weeks before the conference, set for Bermuda in late April, invitations were sent to Supreme Court Justice Owen Roberts, Senator Scott Lucas, and Congressman Sol Bloom, the delegates chosen by the State Department and Roosevelt to represent the United States. Bloom, as a Jewish Congressman from New York City with many refugee constituents and as chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, was familiar with the wartime situation. Long, writing in his diary on April 13th about the makeup of the delegation (as well as that day's dedication of the Jefferson Memorial, which he missed due to illness), wrote that "Rabbi Wise and a few of his colleagues object to Sol Bloom—

⁶² Myron Taylor, Letter to Breckinridge Long submitting "Memorandum submitted on behalf of the Jewish Emergency Committee for European Jewish Affairs," 1943 March 23; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 33), 3850; NACP.

as not being a representative of Jewry. I reacted that he was a representative of America.”⁶³ Senator Lucas, a Democrat from Illinois, was briefed on April 10th on the history of the crisis, the plan to reconstitute the Intergovernmental Committee, and on possible proposals the Senator might support. On April 8th, Justice Roberts bowed out, stating that he could not get away from judicial matters. Dr. Charles Seymour, President of Yale University, agreed to go in the Justice’s stead, but backed out when Yale’s trustees objected. A week before the Bermuda Conference began, Princeton University President Dr. Harold Dodds, president of Princeton University agreed to head the delegation. With no experience in refugee matters, he also had to be briefed.

The American delegation included R. Borden Reams of the State Department, who served as the delegation’s secretary, and several technical advisors.⁶⁴ Five journalists accompanied the delegation from different news syndicates, though prior to the conference the British requested strict control over outgoing reports, citing the importance of “barring the conference to the press with the explanation that the proceedings were to be held in private and that such information as may be given to the press would be communicated in the form of press releases.”⁶⁵ The British also requested that the State Department “let the British Embassy know before we should grant permission for the representatives of any refugee groups to go, since it would be very embarrassing to the British Government should we grant permission when they had

⁶³ Breckinridge Long, Diary entry, 1943 April 13; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 5, Folder “Diaries”; LOC.

⁶⁴ Reams’ full name was “Robert Borden Reams,” but generally used his first initial.

⁶⁵ W.G. Hayter, Memo of conversation “Refugee Conference at Bermuda,” 1943 April 2; Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees the West’s response to Jewish emigration. Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, a part of Cengage Learning, 2010.

refused permission to such representatives."⁶⁶ The State Department did not even consider inviting representatives of refugee organizations, so this was also easily agreed upon.

In March, Gerhart Riegner had tried to send two messages through the Bern legation to Wise, not knowing about cable 354 and believing that Harrison's October 1942 offer to assist in the transmission of reports was still valid. Both times, Squire had to inform Riegner that the message was not going to be passed on to Wise, though he asked permission (and Riegner agreed) for the messages to be transmitted to Washington for the State Department's information only. Frustrated, Riegner cabled Wise outside of the legation's channels: "Was unsuccessful transmitting two messages through Berne, please inquire whether old instruction October not more in force, eventually have State Department reiterated instruction."⁶⁷

So, in the midst of State Department planning for the Bermuda Conference, Sumner Welles received a letter from Stephen Wise on March 31, 1943, requesting that the consulate in Geneva get in touch with Riegner, who had potentially interesting information to share.⁶⁸ Seemingly unaware that the European Division had informed Leland Harrison not to send any more messages from Riegner, Welles passed the message on to his staff. After discussion, the State Department cabled Harrison on April 9th to get a summary of Riegner's information.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Paul Squire, Letter to Harrison, 1943 April 14; RG-84, General Records, Box 14, Folder "World Jewish Congress," NACP.

⁶⁸ Stephen Wise, Letter to Sumner Welles, 1943 April 5; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2266; NACP.

⁶⁹ Cordell Hull, Cable 877 from Washington to Bern, 1943 April 9; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2266A; NACP.

Harrison's reply on April 20th was carefully worded. He had refrained from sending messages from "R." and will request that "R." distinguish carefully between fact and unverified rumor. However, "[m]ay I suggest that messages of this character should not (repeat not) be subjected to the restriction imposed by your 354, February 10, and that I be permitted to transmit messages from R. more particularly in view of the helpful information which they may frequently contain?"⁷⁰ As a separate cable, Harrison transmitted Riegner's message, which incorporated information from the two rejected cables; stated that possibilities for relief existed in Romania and in France were funds to be made available; and reported on the situation in Poland, Germany, and the difficulties encountered by people in hiding. On April 26th, the State Department confirmed that Harrison could once again transmit messages from Riegner, though further transmission to Wise would be at the Department's discretion.⁷¹

The American delegation—with the exception of Senator Lucas who, for health reasons, joined the conference on April 20th—flew from LaGuardia airport at 10am on Friday, April 16th for a five-hour flight to Bermuda.⁷² In Bermuda, the delegation met with the British representatives, consisting of Richard Law, Osbert Peake, and George

⁷⁰ In late April, Harrison asked Squire to convey his best personal regards to Riegner, and to tell him that "There does not appear to be full understanding regarding the type of information which it may be permissible for me to transmit to Washington in Dr. Riegner's behalf. I am endeavoring to arrive at such an understanding, not only with the Department of State, but also through the Department with Rabbi Dr. Wise..." Leland Harrison, Cable 2450 from Bern to Washington, 1943 April 20; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2268; NACP. Leland Harrison, Letter to Squire, 1943 April 22; RG-84, General Records, Box 13, Folder "Jews"; NACP.

⁷¹ Cordell Hull, Cable 982 from Washington to Bern, 1943 April 26; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2268; NACP.

⁷² The conference was housed at the Horizons resort, and the legislature of Bermuda, honored to host an international conference, voted unanimously to cover the resort fees, which included lodging, food, transportation by carriage, and use of the beach. The State Department tried to insist that the donation was against American policy but was informed by the Hamilton consulate that this would be seen as an insult. Hamilton consulate staff, Information about hotels, 1943 April 8; Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees the West's response to Jewish emigration. Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, a part of Cengage Learning, 2010.

Hall, all three Parliamentary Undersecretaries. The conference itself opened on Monday April 19th and lasted to Friday, April 30th. The briefing memos given to the American representatives made it clear that Long and the State Department had already formulated the direction in which the conference was to proceed. The delegates could not pledge any American money for any relief plan (though favorable consideration would be given to suggestions that necessitated funding); could not transport refugees any appreciable distance—and certainly not to the United States; must use existing agencies whenever possible; should call for an early meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee; should request that neutral nations take refugees, noting that they would need to be consulted and governments-in-exile should agree to accept repatriated refugees after the war; shortages may block the dispersal of food and relief packages; and while the representatives should remind the British of American quota laws “which are the most liberal of any nation in the world,” Congress will not be willing to amend them.⁷³ By restricting the delegates to so narrow a path, the State Department controlled the conversation at Bermuda.

With such strict constraints, the delegates were forced to focus on small plans. They discussed removing refugees currently in Spain to a haven in North Africa to convince the Spanish government to keep the borders open to those escaping from France—this suggestion necessitated asking permission from the Joint Chiefs, since North Africa was Allied-occupied territory. As Long suggested, the American delegation drafted a reconstitution of the Intergovernmental Committee, broadening the

⁷³ Byington, Cable of press reports, 1943 April 22; Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees the West's response to Jewish emigration. Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, a part of Cengage Learning, 2010.

membership, putting a financial structure in place, and widening the mandate to include all refugees, not just those in Germany and Austria. Most of the debates centered on the details of these prearranged suggestions. The State Department sent a daily summary of American press reports about the conference to the Hamilton consulate for transmission to the delegates. The reports were generally accurate but vague, understandable since the journalists in Bermuda could only conduct supervised interviews with the delegates; these, they were told, were off the record. The recurrent theme in the reports, however, was that large-scale rescue seemed impossible.⁷⁴

At the end of the conference, British and American delegates, who knew they would be pressured to divulge the details of negotiations upon returning home, “agreed that none of the delegates, and neither of their governments would disclose any of the proceedings of the conference or its recommendations except by mutual agreement sought through the diplomatic channel.”⁷⁵ On Thursday, April 29th at 5:00pm, the last full day of the conference, the delegates released a joint communiqué, stating that they examined a difficult problem thoroughly but that “[s]ince the recommendations necessarily concern governments other than those represented at the Bermuda conference and involve military considerations, they must remain confidential.”⁷⁶ By Friday, public opinion rendered the communiqué insufficient. Hull dispatched the State Department’s Howard Travers to meet both delegations when they arrived at LaGuardia airport Friday

⁷⁴ State Department staff, Memorandum: “Views of the Government of the United States Regarding Topics Included in the Agenda for Discussion with the British Government”, 1943 April 19; Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees the West’s response to Jewish emigration. Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, a part of Cengage Learning, 2010.

⁷⁵ Beck, Cable from Hamilton that US delegates have reached agreement, 1943 April 28; Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees the West’s response to Jewish emigration. Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, a part of Cengage Learning, 2010.

⁷⁶ Beck, Cable from Hamilton with text of joint communiqué, 1943 April 28; Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees the West’s response to Jewish emigration. Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, a part of Cengage Learning, 2010.

afternoon, informing Harold Dodds that “[i]n view of adverse press and public criticism which may follow the withholding of information as you propose the department feels that it is most repeat most important that as frank a statement as possible of your recommendations be published immediately after arrival.”⁷⁷ Needless to say, Dodds’ frank statement, as well as the subsequent joint declaration and speeches, did nothing to quell the adverse press and criticism.

Increased Pressure in the Wake of Bermuda

The Committee for a Jewish Army’s advertisement, “To 5,000,000 Jews in the Nazi Death-Trap Bermuda was a Cruel Mockery!” took up a full page of the *New York Times* on May 4th. It did not mince words. “Wretched, doomed victims of Hitler’s tyranny!...You have cherished an illusion. Your hopes have been in vain. Bermuda was not the dawn of a new era, an era of humanity and compassion, of transmitting pity into deed. Bermuda was a mockery, and a cruel jest.” On the left of the advertisement, the Committee blocked off a quotation from their 1942 “Proclamation of the Moral Rights of Stateless and Palestinian Jews” and listed over 100 names of prominent Congressmen and politicians who signed the declaration, pledging their nominal support for a campaign of rescue.⁷⁸ The blocked quotation with the list of supporters had appeared before on a fairly tame Committee ad on April 20th, addressed “To the Gentlemen at Bermuda,”

⁷⁷ Cordell Hull, Telegram to Dodds about secrecy, 1943 April 30; Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees the West’s response to Jewish emigration. Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, a part of Cengage Learning, 2010.

⁷⁸ Committee for a Jewish Army. “For 5,000,000 Jews in Nazi Death-Trap” advertisement. *New York Times*. 1943 May 4.

which argued that rescue was possible if bold action was to be taken.⁷⁹ The “Cruel Mockery” ad, though, was much more confrontational. On May 6, 1943, the Senate, with Scott Lucas newly returned from Bermuda, spent a great deal of time discussing the ad. Various senators dissected the ad in great detail, affirmed their support of the important role Lucas clearly played at Bermuda, and decried the implication of support for the ad inherent in the appearance of their names. Lucas read a letter into the record from the absent Senator Edwin Johnson, the national chairman of the Committee for a Jewish Army, apologizing to Lucas personally and explaining that he did not know of the ad prior to its publication or he would have prevented the use of the names of his fellow Senators. Lucas spoke at length, complaining that “[t]he authors of this advertisement did not wait for the facts. They rushed into print and condemned individuals about whom they knew little or nothing...It is a serious matter to charge the United States with empty lies in connection with statements which they have made on behalf of the oppressed and persecuted peoples of Europe.”⁸⁰ Lucas noted that he met with Peter Bergson the day before but, to much laughter, the Senator stated that he would not repeat what he told Bergson.

Discussion about the ad continued on Monday, May 10th; when Lucas was singled out again for congratulations for his role at the Conference, the Senator took the opportunity to make another statement. He had discovered that Bergson was not an American citizen and wanted to let his fellow Senators know of this fact, adding, “The time may come for a showdown with respect to the alien groups, regardless of who they

⁷⁹ Committee for a Jewish Army. “To the Gentlemen at Bermuda” advertisement. *New York Times*. 1943 April 20.

⁸⁰ Congressional Record, 1943 May 6; Palestine Statehood Committee Papers, LM0399, Reel 4, Folder 9; USHMM.

may be, who are here under temporary sufferance at the hands of a benevolent Government which accords them better treatment than they can get in any other place under God's shining sun, and while they are here they take advantage of the courtesy and kindness extended to them."⁸¹ The Senator's statement echoed the language in the October 1942 Office of Censorship report; to many, the Jewish organizations were supposed to be grateful, not demanding.

The Committee for a Jewish Army, which thrived on publicity for their campaign, was delighted. As one Committee member wrote to Bergson, "It certainly is an accomplishment to have finally gotten under their skin!"⁸² The June issue of *The Answer* continued to trumpet the failure of the Bermuda Conference but also prominently featured the Congressional speeches. An article entitled "An Incident Between a Martyred People and an Offended Senator" featured a photograph of an angry Senator Lucas and called his speeches xenophobic and embarrassing.⁸³ Several Congressmen, including Senator Harry Truman, withdrew their names, and even Edwin Johnson requested that his name not be used in connection with an advertisement.

While the Committee for a Jewish Army moved quickly to react to the Bermuda Conference, the gears of the executive branch moved more slowly. The same day as the first discussion on the Senate floor, Lucas, Dodds, and Bloom met with Hull and Long at the State Department to go over the recommendations. The expected Executive Committee meeting, which the American representatives were instructed to request, did

⁸¹ Congressional Record, 1943 May 10; Palestine Statehood Committee Papers, LM0399, Reel 4, Folder 9; USHMM.

⁸² Alex Wilf, Letter to Bergson, 1943 May 7; Palestine Statehood Committee Papers, LM0399, Reel 1, Folder 8; USHMM.

⁸³ "The Answer," 1943 June 5; Palestine Statehood Committee Papers, LM0399, Reel 10, Folder 2; USHMM.

not materialize. Myron Taylor, who had been selected at the Evian Conference in 1938 to be the American representative, wanted to move slowly, and wrote to Sir Herbert Emerson, the director of the IGC, that he would prefer to discuss the transport, maintenance, and destination of refugees prior to any IGC meeting.⁸⁴ Hull and Roosevelt discussed the possibility of housing refugees in North Africa—a plan for which the French, who held the region politically, agreed in principle, but the Joint Chiefs, responsible for military security, did not. The President cautioned, “[T]here is plenty of room there...but I raise the question of sending large numbers of Jews there. That would be extremely unwise.”⁸⁵ In a follow-up letter to Roosevelt on May 22nd, Hull’s staff used Myron Taylor’s estimate that there were 73,050 refugees from Iran, Cyprus, Spain, Bulgaria, France, Switzerland, and Portugal who could be removed from these countries to safe haven elsewhere. Costs of transport and maintenance would be difficult to calculate, but an estimate of \$2,000 per person per year “is considered not unreasonable. The moving of all these 73,000 on that basis would cost \$150,000,000.” The letter questioned whether costs could be reduced by transporting the refugees to a place where the State Department’s Office of Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation, under the direction of former New York Governor Herbert Lehman, could take over.⁸⁶ Still, the number was daunting. So too was the proposal that IGC meetings be held in Washington in the future. Hull expressed his doubts to Roosevelt: “A meeting of that character would attract world-

⁸⁴ Myron Taylor, Letter to Herbert Emerson, 1943 May 25; Holocaust Refugees and the FDR White House (Microfilm Collection, Bethesda, MD: UPA collection from LexisNexis, 2006). LM 0255, Reel 14, Folder 5, Document 649; USHMM.

⁸⁵ Franklin Roosevelt, “Memorandum for the Secretary of State”, 1943 May 14; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688I, Document 1; LOC. Taylor’s statistical report is here: Myron Taylor, “Number and Location of Refugees,” 1943 May 15; RG-59, “War Refugee Board,” Box 1, Folder “Misc. 1943”; NACP.

⁸⁶ This department shifted out of the State Department and turned into the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) in late 1943.

wide attention. It could not be allowed to fail. Unless the American and British Governments were determined in advance as to the purposes which they would pursue and as to the extent to which they would commit themselves on financial accounts, the Conference could not come to any satisfactory conclusions.”⁸⁷ State Department concerns about financing, transport, and the situation in North Africa were legitimate. However, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the Department allowed itself to be stymied by them, rather than re-approaching the problems creatively. Hull’s message to Roosevelt about the location of the Executive Committee meeting is revealing. He was concerned about hosting a meeting in Washington unless they could prove that something was being done—and he did not think that would happen.

With negative attention in the wake of the Bermuda Conference, Breckinridge Long reverted to his argument that the criticism existed because the State Department had not properly advertised all the good work it has done for refugees over the years. On May 4th, as the Bergsons’ ad in the *New York Times* shouted that Bermuda was a “Cruel Mockery,” Long sent a memo to Visa Division head Howard Travers, asking him to look over a draft he had written. “I have drawn it up rather crudely...with the idea of giving a brief picture of the history of our refugee policy. It is my belief that some publication should be given to our activity in this respect.”⁸⁸ By May 15th, Long felt his memo was ready for Sumner Welles, submitting it to him with the explanation, “[T]he time has arrived when the Department might instigate a story, for instance in *Collier's*, which

⁸⁷ Cordell Hull, Letter to Franklin Roosevelt, 1943 May 22; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 33), 4034; NACP.

⁸⁸ Breckinridge Long, Memo to Howard Travers, 1943 May 5; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 203, Folder “Refugee Hearings”; LOC.

would give a picture of the activities of the Department of State in the refugee movement...It all gets back to the thought that the Department has been very close mouthed. A good deal of the criticism that has come to us has been because we have said nothing...I think it may be a good time to do this."⁸⁹ Long's memo was a narrative history of the war and the intense work of consulates abroad to deal with the refugee crisis. He emphasized that visas could not be given to all and that some who presented themselves for visas were Nazi agents or were being coerced by the Nazis who held loved ones captive in exchange for acts of sabotage. This was a frequent rumor with little basis in truth, but played upon fifth-column hysteria and the antisemitic belief in the questionable loyalty of Jews.⁹⁰ In Long's draft, most of the statistics of how many visas had been issued are underlined in pencil with a question mark written in the margin. Long was unsure about exact numbers, a fact which would plague him in the coming months.

World Jewish Congress Proposal for Romania and France

On May 3rd, a few days after he received the April 20th message from Gerhart Riegner (who was once again able to transmit information to his colleague through State Department channels), Stephen Wise contacted Sumner Welles to follow up. In his message, Riegner had stated that the real possibility existed for relief and rescue for Romanian Jews in Transnistria, as well as possibilities for the evacuation of refugee children in hiding in France. This was not a ransom scheme, the way the hypothetical

⁸⁹ Breckinridge Long, Memo to Sumner Welles on "Refugee Problem", 1943 May 15; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 203, Folder "Refugee Hearings"; LOC.

⁹⁰ Joseph Bendersky. *The "Jewish Threat": Anti-Semitic Politics of the US Army*. (NY: Basic Books, 2000), 289-290.

“70,000 Romanian Jews” offer in February had been. Instead, Riegner proposed that relief funds from the World Jewish Congress could be held in Switzerland and he could borrow against them, with reimbursement to the lenders coming after the war. This would prevent any money from reaching the enemy. Wise asked Welles to investigate, as “[s]uch an arrangement appears to be the only way to save thousands of Jews, who otherwise would be doomed to death in Transnistria, Rumania and France, whence they are being deported.”⁹¹ After discussion with the World Jewish Congress, State Department economic advisor Bernard Meltzer cabled the Bern consulate on May 16th, reiterated the Riegner plan as he understood it, and requested more information from Riegner—namely, who would be the source of the local currency, and whether official Romanian permission would be needed for the evacuation.⁹² Meltzer’s cable seemed positive. The State Department asked more questions in a May 26th cable.

Inside the State Department, however, the staff of the European division was already questioning the details of the plan. Reams indicated to Long that he had initialed Meltzer’s telegram because it sought information but “does not envisage immediate action. I have certain definite doubts.” In addition to his belief that acceptance of the proposal properly rests with the still-defunct Intergovernmental Committee and his questions about the practical matters of shipping, Reams added, “[I]t is believed that the sum desired by the American Jewish Congress may be for the purpose of a paying

⁹¹ Stephen Wise, Letter to Sumner Welles, 1943 May 3; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 34), 3821; NACP.

⁹² Bernard Meltzer, Cable 1249 from Washington to Bern, 1943 May 16; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2269; NACP.

ransom."⁹³ The Riegner proposal clearly did not involve a ransom scheme, as the funds were to be in blocked accounts for the duration of the war.

Riegner's proposal was not a novel one. Also in May 1943, Assistant Secretary of State Dean Acheson wrote to Henry Morgenthau to seek permission for the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee ("the Joint") to write a promissory letter to an Italian Jewish relief agency. The letter would allow the Italians to borrow money during the war for relief purposes, with Joint repayment to the lenders after the war.⁹⁴ The scheme was almost identical to Riegner's; if anything, the Joint plan had less oversight. A more revealing example had come in December 1942, when the State Department discussed a request from Dr. Charles Joy, director of the Unitarian Service Committee, seeking permission for his staff in France to borrow funds for relief with repayment after the war. An internal State memo acknowledged that Morgenthau and Welles were interested and sympathetic to the plan, but, echoing Reams' warnings regarding the United Nations declaration, "the Department should definitely refuse to consider favorably the Unitarian Service Committee's request in as much as approval of one such application would probably lead to further requests."⁹⁵

On June 14th, nearly a month after Meltzer cabled Bern for information, Leland Harrison transmitted a lengthy response. Harrison's staff had been meeting and corresponding constantly with Riegner to gather information about the request. Riegner

⁹³ R. Borden Reams, Memo to Breckinridge Long, 1943 May 17; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2269; NACP.

⁹⁴ Dean Acheson, Letter to Henry Morgenthau, 1943 May 31; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 27, Document 982; USHMM.

⁹⁵ Edmund Dorsz, Memo regarding conversation with J. J. Reinstein, 1942 December 18; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 33), 3519; NACP.

noted that in Romania food was abundant but could not be purchased by destitute Jews; clothing, on the other hand, was harder to procure. Wealthy Romanian Jews would put up the money in Romanian lei, and an equivalent amount would be placed in a blocked Swiss bank account, payable only after the war. The International Red Cross could assist with the distribution of the supplies. Riegner was already in the process of securing a boat to transport Jews as part of a plan to evacuate 4,000 children from Romania and Bulgaria to Palestine, utilizing Palestinian entry visas already available. The Americans and British had agreed upon this plan at the Bermuda Conference.⁹⁶ Relief in France would be more difficult, as money was needed both for the evacuation of Jews to Spain and for assistance to prominent Jews and Jewish children who were in hiding.⁹⁷ Moreover, the black market for French francs in Switzerland was lively, and Riegner did not believe a plan that involved blocked accounts was feasible. Instead, he proposed to buy French francs directly with Swiss francs, taking care not to purchase from anyone with ties to the Axis. Harrison noted for the State Department the funding differences between the Romanian and the French plan and indicated that direct supervision of the dispersal and utilization of funds would be impossible. Riegner would also be likely communicating in enemy territory, which may need special permissions. Harrison also presumed that the

⁹⁶ This plan was hampered by complications. The Turkish government refused to allow the group to proceed by land and by the end of June, the Romanian government seized the vessel which was to transport them by sea. The group was subsequently transported to the interior of Bulgaria and the borders were closed. Breckinridge Long, Diary Entry, 1943 June 29; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 5, Folder "Diaries"; LOC.

⁹⁷ The State Department received independent confirmation of the dire need for funds in France from Donald Lowrie of the Worlds Alliance YMCA in Geneva. In a telegram from Harrison on June 9th, Lowrie stated that nearly 4,000 children between the ages of 2 and 14 had been deported from Paris to an unknown destination. The situation for children was "wretched" and "resort to their clandestine transportation is envisaged," but permission to enter Spain, Portugal, or Switzerland would be granted more readily if the host country had assurances that the children would be cared for through relief funds. Leland Harrison, Cable 3465 from Bern to Washington, 1943 June 9; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688I, Document 29-30; LOC.

plan would be discussed with the British.⁹⁸ On June 25th, Bernard Meltzer transmitted both his May 25th cable and Harrison's June 14th reply to John Pehle in the Treasury Department.

The Treasury Department needed to be consulted in rescue schemes that involved any sort of financial transaction overseas. The long delays inherent in State Department correspondence are both indicative of the bureaucracy of the Department itself—which was slow and favored long, deliberate consultations—but also of the bureaucracy of a wartime government. The plethora of new and existing agencies meant that policy jurisdictions overlapped, or were split in unnatural places. In schemes of rescue and relief, which would naturally involve financial, diplomatic, military, and intelligence cooperation—and there were several agencies responsible for each—progress was plodding at best.

At least one man was already thinking about the possible creation of another agency; this one would streamline the refugee and rescue discussions. On June 16, 1943, Oscar Cox, who had drafted the Lend-Lease Act in 1941 and served as general counsel in the Lend Lease Office, met with Henry Morgenthau about refugee matters. Later that day, he sent the first draft of a memo to the Secretary's office. Cox called for the establishment of an executive committee, consisting of three “outstanding citizens, representing all major faiths” who would consult with the Secretaries of State and Treasury and the Lend-Lease Administration on “all aspects of the war refugee problem which are not the direct responsibility of the State Department.” He envisioned that

⁹⁸ Leland Harrison, Cable 3567 from Bern, 1943 June 14; RG-84, General Records, Box 14, Folder “World Jewish Congress”; NACP.

private citizens and organizations could make contributions to this Committee to finance the “resettlement, transportation, maintenance, rehabilitation, and eventual return of refugees.”⁹⁹ Cox also shared the memo with Congressman Bloom and Senator Lucas (as Bermuda delegates) and asked Morgenthau if the three might meet with Sumner Welles about it. Five days later, Morgenthau’s aide, Captain Charles Kades, told the Secretary that “[i]f such a Committee is appointed, it is recommended that the Treasury should refrain from participating in its operations and should disapprove plans for any drive for donations to the Government for the resettlement of refugees.”¹⁰⁰ Kades advised that the use of private funds was not legal (Cox derived permission for this from the Second War Powers Act, which allowed for private donations made to the government for war related purposes) and furthermore, many agencies already existed for this work. Undeterred, Cox began examining the possibility of using Lend-Lease funds to pay for refugee activities, and continued to revise his memo.¹⁰¹

Most of the activity related to relief and rescue matters in June manifested merely in memos and cables. Breckinridge Long was relieved. On June 23rd, he wrote in his diary that “[t]he refugee question has calmed down. The pressure groups have temporarily withdrawn from the assertion of pressure. Information which we have received indicates very plainly that they now see the correctness of the position which we have maintained from the beginning...”¹⁰² The Executive Committee of the IGC had not

⁹⁹ Oscar Cox, Letter to Henry Morgenthau with memorandum, 1943 June 16; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 642, Document 210-213; LOC.

¹⁰⁰ Capt. Charles Kades, Memo to Henry Morgenthau, 1943 June 21; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 643, Document 278-280; LOC.

¹⁰¹ Edward Stettinius, Memo to Oscar Cox, 1943 July 9; Oscar Cox Papers, Box 101, Folder “Refugees”; FDRL.

¹⁰² Breckinridge Long, Diary entry, 1943 June 23; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 5, Folder “Diaries”; LOC.

yet met, and nearly a month passed with both President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill believing that the other owed them a response about a possible North Africa camp. There was still confusion over the location of the refugee camp, who would pay for it and maintain it, and whether it would be a permanent haven until the end of the war or a way-station to a more permanent refuge somewhere else.¹⁰³

The Emergency Conference to Save the Jews of Europe

Long's relief that pressure had died down was short-lived. The Committee for a Jewish Army decided in mid-June 1943 to call an "Emergency Conference to Save the Jewish People of Europe," scheduled for July 20th-26th.¹⁰⁴ The Bergson group spent most of June and early July gathering prominent attendees and speakers, and soliciting messages of support from those who could not attend, including President and Mrs. Roosevelt, Myron Taylor, and many other public figures. Rabbi Maurice Perlzweig of the World Jewish Congress wrote to his colleagues to express concern: "Whether anything can be done to prevent this proposed Conference from stealing the thunder of the Joint Emergency Committee and perhaps of the American Jewish Conference, I do not know... I saw a formidable list of names including Hoover and Wilkie...if only half of them

¹⁰³ It was also once again made clear that the United States would not be an option as a refugee haven. On June 21st, the House of Representatives voted on a rule that would allow them to consider HR 1941, which proposed to make the bureaucratic paperwork for citizenship easier on immigrant parents with children serving in the American military. Quotas would still apply, and the immigrants would still need to wait for citizenship to be granted, but they would not need to make a declaration of intention before becoming naturalized. The debate in the House quickly turned xenophobic. Representative John Murdock of Arizona stated, "Ours has been a glorious melting pot, but at times we had too much 'slag' in the pot." The rule was voted down 122-33. *Interpreter Release* (1943 June 21): 169-175, 185, as seen in David Wyman, *America and the Holocaust*. (New York: Garland Pub., 1990), volume 5, document 47.

¹⁰⁴ It was originally scheduled at the Hotel Commodore in New York City from July 7th-11th.

attend the Conference, its public effect will be devastating."¹⁰⁵ Joseph C. Hyman, the director of the Joint, wrote to Clarence Pickett of the American Friends Service Committee that "if you glance over the list, you will find that it is quite conspicuously devoid of Jewish representation... neither Stephen Wise, nor Joseph Proskauer, nor the Jewish Labor Committee, nor the B'nai B'rith; nor any of the groups that have for years devoted themselves to these problems... Certainly, the objective is one on which we all agree. The methods, the means, the organization are not acceptable to any of us who have worked for years, with a sense of responsibility."¹⁰⁶ Had he read the Conference's early brochure draft on plans for rescue, Breckinridge Long would have been fearful of the statement "it is surprising how little the international moral forces of democracy have been mobilized and utilized for this purpose."¹⁰⁷

Lacking support from established Jewish organizations did not deter the Bergson group. The group justified their antagonism of American Jewish organizations by arguing that, unlike these organizations, they were not trying to speak on behalf of American Jews. The group saw themselves as representative of a Hebrew nation, made up of Jews who saw themselves first as Hebrews. They "are under the moral obligation to respect the attitude of a Jew who believes that he can integrate himself into another nation such as the American Nation."¹⁰⁸ However, they claimed to represent Hebrews—those in

¹⁰⁵ Maurice Perlzweig, Memo to Wise, 1943 June 16; Stephen J. Wise papers, Series 12, Subseries 1, Folder 1, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA, as seen in David Wyman, *America and the Holocaust*. (New York: Garland Pub., 1990), volume 5, document 1.

¹⁰⁶ Joseph Hyman, Letter to Clarence Pickett, 1943 July 13; American Friends Service Committee Refugee Section, File 1943, Folder "Joint," American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, PA (AFSC).

¹⁰⁷ Bergson group staff, Emergency Conference to Save the Jews of Europe brochure, 1943 June 30; World Jewish Congress New York Office, D-Series (Rescue and Relief), Digital collection, Folder 107-07; USHMM.

¹⁰⁸ Committee for a Jewish Army, West Coast newsletter, 1943 July 17; Palestine Statehood Committee Papers, LM0399, Reel 10, Folder 4; USHMM.

Palestine and trapped in Europe who saw themselves as members of a Hebrew nation above the patriotism of their homeland. Bergson explained this philosophy in a letter to the Selective Service, explaining why he and his colleagues should not be drafted into the American military: "Our Delegation is the only body in this country which speaks for the Hebrew people of Europe and Palestine, as Hebrews and as Palestinians whose sole allegiance is to their Nation and Country. It is mistakenly accepted that the many charitable and philanthropic institutions operating in this country for the European and Palestinian Jews are also the spokesmen for this People's national and political interest...it is wrong to assume that they are our spokesmen."¹⁰⁹ This philosophy, they believed, gave them the moral authority to speak on behalf of Jews trapped in Europe and the victims of Nazism in a way that organized American Jewry could not.

The Emergency Conference opened on the evening of Tuesday, July 20th with several speeches and invocations. The next six days consisted of mainly of evening sessions open to the public involving speeches and panel discussions, as well as closed day sessions of discussions. The five topics were "International Relations," "Relief and Transportation," "Military Affairs," "Public Opinion," and "Religion." Many of the active participants were, as Hyman noted, not Jewish, though some—like President Hoover and Mayor LaGuardia—certainly had political experience. In addition to those already heavily involved in Bergson activities, the participants included some from the entertainment industry, including Stella Adler, Jimmy Durante, Zora Neale Hurston, and Dorothy Parker. Even though very few of the participants had experience with refugee

¹⁰⁹ Peter Bergson, Letter to Director Lewis Hershey, Selective Service, 1943 June 18; Palestine Statehood Committee Papers, LM0399, Reel 1, Folder 9; USHMM.

policy, and far fewer had any direct means to affect current policy, the recommendations were reasonable. The conference called for the creation of a government agency “specifically charged with the task of saving the Jewish people of Europe.” They suggested warning Axis satellite nations to treat Jews the same as other inhabitants; urged relief through the blockade; implored the Allies to approach neutral nations and encourage them to grant Jews safe-haven; requested the use of neutral shipping to transport refugees; and asked that Palestine be given consideration as a refugee destination. The committee also suggested warnings and reprisals for atrocities (with any physical reprisal using voluntary Jewish manpower), the constitution of Jewish military units, and encouraged the continued flow of accurate information to the public. In short, the conference’s recommendations were not unlike those suggested at the Bermuda Conference, and nearly identical to those proposed by the Joint Emergency Committee for European Jewish Affairs in advance of Bermuda.¹¹⁰

In the closing sessions of the Emergency Conference, the participants announced the formation of the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe. The Committee for a Jewish Army continued to exist, but functionally and in regards to public advertisements and programs, the Bergsons shifted their focus to the Emergency Committee. Bergson and his colleagues went to Washington in early August 1943 to meet with various government officials and present the Committee’s proposals. Henry Morgenthau met with Bergson briefly on August 4th, asking Captain Kades to listen to Bergson’s presentation. A week later, Kades wrote a memo about the meeting for

¹¹⁰ Emergency Committee staff, “Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe” booklet, 1943 July 20; Palestine Statehood Committee Papers, LM0399, Reel 4, Folder 12; USHMM.

Morgenthau and enclosed a copy of the Committee's plan,¹¹¹ but when Morgenthau asked at a staff meeting whether Bergson's proposal was anything special, Kades said no.¹¹² Hull received the delegation on August 12th and instructed Long to investigate whether the Emergency Committee could send representatives to Turkey, Spain, and Palestine to investigate rescue possibilities directly.¹¹³ The group also met with Eleanor Roosevelt on August 12th, who wrote about the plight of the Jews in her August 13th "My Day" column.¹¹⁴ Despite repeated attempts to meet with the President, including a trip by several Emergency Committee members to Canada to try to meet with him during the Quebec Conference in late August, they were unsuccessful.¹¹⁵

Though the Emergency Committee proposed finding temporary havens for refugees and was having some success getting their proposals to government officials, plans within the government to establish a refugee camp in North Africa through the Intergovernmental Committee were still moving quite slowly. As Myron Taylor was not involved in day-to-day operations of the IGC, the British wanted an American to serve in a leadership role with Sir Herbert Emerson.¹¹⁶ Patrick Murphy Malin, who had been working with Lehman at United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration

¹¹¹ Capt. Charles Kades, Memo to Henry Morgenthau with enclosures, 1943 August 11; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688I, Document 36-75; LOC.

¹¹² Transcript, "Group" meeting, 1943 August 5; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 654, Document 2-15; LOC.

¹¹³ Breckinridge Long, Memo to George Brandt, 1943 August 12; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 202, Folder "Refugees 2"; LOC.

¹¹⁴ Eleanor Roosevelt, "My Day", 1943 August 13; George Washington University Eleanor Roosevelt Papers project (<http://www.gwu.edu/~erpapers/>), accessed 2015 January.

¹¹⁵ Edwin (Pa) Watson, Letter to Max Lerner, 1943 August 10; President's Official File, File 76-C, Box 9, FDRL. Max Lerner, Telegram to Stephen Early, 1943 August 21; President's Official File, File 76-C, Box 9, FDRL..

¹¹⁶ After Myron Taylor attempted to resign as American delegate to the IGC, Roosevelt persuaded him to designate an alternate; Taylor selected Robert Pell, a State Department official and delegate at the Evian Conference. Pell was also not heavily involved in IGC activities; Ambassador to the Court of St. James, John Winant, was normally the American representative in Executive Committee meetings.

(UNRRA),¹¹⁷ was selected as Vice-Director. When the IGC Executive Committee finally met for the first time on August 4th in London, the major areas of discussion were the financing of IGC operations and the relationship between the IGC and UNRRA. John Winant, the American ambassador to the Court of St. James's, who attended the meetings on behalf of the United States, was issued instructions in advance of the August Committee meeting. He was to recommend that all projects be considered individually and that, as the British and the United States were seemingly responsible for financing these projects, the two countries should have to approve of them.¹¹⁸ At the August 4th meeting, the proposed expansion of the IGC mandate was accepted unanimously. The Committee also agreed to offer membership to additional countries, including the Soviet Union, and discussed the financing of their activities. The North Africa camp was not discussed. Though the exact delineation of responsibilities between the IGC and UNRRA was confusing, the members agreed on the idea that the IGC would be responsible for transportation and maintenance of refugees until they reached a site of temporary haven, when Lehman's department would take over.

The aftermath of the August 4th Executive Committee meeting—which almost exclusively discussed administrative matters rather than any actual relief or evacuation plans—demonstrated the problems a highly bureaucratic solution brought to an urgent rescue problem. A few days after the meeting, Winant cabled to the State Department that

¹¹⁷ In June 1943, President Roosevelt proposed the creation of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, which encompassed the Office of Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation and her staff. Governor Lehman became the head of this new agency, and though the UNRRA charter was not signed until November 1943, it was immediately referred to by the new name and acronym.

¹¹⁸ Cordell Hull, Cable 4579 from Washington to London, 1943 July 26; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 35), 4104A; NACP.

in looking over the minutes of the meeting, he noticed the sentence, “The Member Governments should share the administrative expenses of the Committee.”¹¹⁹ He cabled the State Department (which had not yet received the minutes) and informed them that he had proposed the phrase “borne equally” rather than “share.” Though administrative expenses were almost entirely hypothetical at this point—Herbert Emerson did not take a salary for his position¹²⁰ and the United States had already assented to share operational expenses with the British—this resulted in a string of cables. When Winant brought the substitution to the attention of Emerson and suggested that they could add the word “equally” to the existing phrase, the IGC director consulted with British representative, Lord Winterton. They informed Winant that they were not comfortable inserting anything without bringing it to the full Executive Committee. Hull suggested that perhaps Winant could approach each member and request his government’s assent to the addition of the word.¹²¹ On August 17th, Emerson agreed to obtain the consent of the Executive Committee members. At the next meeting on September 30th, the members agreed that “equally” could be added to the phrase. They also set up a subcommittee, consisting of the United States and Brazil, to explore what should be included in administrative

¹¹⁹ Winant’s actual complaint uses a different wording of the phrase but this is the wording in the final version of the minutes that was sent to Washington on August 12th. John Winant, Cable 5528 from London to Washington, 1943 July 26; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 35), 4128; NACP. John Winant, “Transmission of August 10, 1943 Letter from the Director to Member Governments of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees”, 1943 August 12; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 35), 4178; NACP.

¹²⁰ In fact, Emerson did not want to take a salary. Emerson also served as League of Nations High Commissioner of Refugees and received a salary that was untaxed. Any salary from the Intergovernmental Committee would be taxable, which Emerson wished to avoid. John Winant, Cable 5049 from London to Washington, 1943 August 4; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 34), 4115; NACP. John Winant, Cable 5138 from London to Washington, 1943 August 6; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 34), 4124; NACP.

¹²¹ Cordell Hull, Cable 4815 from Washington to London, 1943 August 10; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 34), 4124; NACP.

expenses and how they should be shared. The subcommittee did not meet until the end of October. Bureaucratic delays of this type were emblematic of the frustration felt by Jewish relief organizations, by the Emergency Committee, and by interested members of the public. Small things took months.

The Treasury Department Gets Involved

In Washington, negotiations for the Riegner proposal also dragged on—and the situation did not look good.¹²² On July 1, 1943, John Pehle, director of Foreign Funds Control at the Treasury, met with Nahum Goldman, the chairman of the Executive Board of the World Jewish Congress. Responsible for seizing and blocking the financial assets of enemy nations, Foreign Funds Control enforced the World War I-era “Trading with the Enemy Act,” which had been amended in 1941. In regards to relief activities, Foreign Funds Control had the authority to issue licenses, which established the rules under which approved organizations could transmit set amounts of money for an authorized purpose. Foreign Funds had to give permission to the World Jewish Congress to transfer funds to Riegner, and could negotiate the limitations for the use of the funds.¹²³ Pehle expressed his concerns about the World Jewish Congress plan (as explained by Goldman) in a memo to Morgenthau; the plan, he had learned, did involve blocked funds but the purchased Romanian lei would be used to bribe officials to permit

¹²² Negotiations also continued in Bern. Documents, meeting minutes, and correspondence are located at the National Archives in College Park, RG-84, General Records, Box 14, folder “World Jewish Congress.” Though these documents do not seem to have been explored or cited by historians—and will not be explored in depth here—they demonstrate that the Bern and Geneva legations were actively working and meeting with Riegner. Any delays were not due to their neglect or intransigence.

¹²³ See Appendix A of Martin Domke. *Trading with the Enemy in World War II* (New York: Central Book Company, 1943) for a full text of the amended act.

evacuations. Pehle concluded with, “The financial arrangements involved, particularly the ransom aspect, are very troublesome. Similarly, the extensive communication with enemy territory necessary to carry out the program is contrary to all existing policies in this matter.”¹²⁴ The Red Cross alerted the American delegation in Switzerland to the fact that Romania imposed an enormous tax on the Jewish community, which would make it difficult to obtain money from wealthy Jews, though the Romanian government would allow organizations to forward money or supplies to Transnistria. Harrison also noted that Riegner had not yet provided promised information about financing.¹²⁵

On July 16, 1943, Pehle met with State Department economic advisor Meltzer and informed him that “Treasury's approval can be obtained in view of the humanitarian considerations involved provided that the scheme proved to be workable and no foreign exchange is made available to occupied territories during the war.”¹²⁶ After the meeting, Pehle called the State Department to add that the approval extended only to evacuation schemes, not relief proposals—the delineation between the two could be worked out when the plans were “a little more concrete.”¹²⁷ Three days later, Meltzer met with Reams, who had not changed his mind about the Riegner plan since May. Reams “stated that he might consider such a program but that because he did not think the clandestine evacuation scheme would work...he would not approve transmitting funds to blocked accounts in Switzerland.” Referring to the Intergovernmental Committee, still several

¹²⁴ John Pehle, Memo to Morgenthau about WJC plan in Romania, 1943 July 1; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 646, Document 68; LOC.

¹²⁵ Leland Harrison, Cable 3929 from Bern to Washington, 1943 July 3; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2276; NACP.

¹²⁶ Memo of Conversation between Bernard Meltzer and John Pehle, 1943 July 16; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 35), 4074; NACP.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

weeks from meeting for the first time, Reams noted that “negotiations with the various governments on refugee evacuation were proceeding... chances of their success might be prejudiced if a clandestine scheme offering opportunities for obtaining bribes and ransoms to public officials were inaugurated.”¹²⁸ After reporting on the Reams conversation, Meltzer lent his support to the plan, suggesting that blocked American bank accounts may have desirable advantages over Swiss accounts. Still, the future of the proposal did not look bright.

In July 1943, Stephen Wise unknowingly intervened with the Riegner plan for the second time. In April 1943, the Rabbi had caused the State Department to lift the prohibition on Riegner messages by approaching Sumner Welles and asking him to get in contact with Riegner through the Switzerland legation. At the end of July 1943, through a conversation with Roosevelt, he brought the Riegner proposal back to life. On July 22nd, as the Emergency Committee held their conference in New York, Rabbi Wise met with President Roosevelt.¹²⁹ In a note of thanks after the meeting, Wise (who referred to Roosevelt as “Chief”) wrote that “[i]t gives me deep satisfaction to find while with you yesterday that...you welcome the proposal which is now before the State and Treasury Departments to permit funds to be forwarded to Switzerland by Jewish organizations

¹²⁸ Conversation between Bernard Meltzer and Robert Reams, 1943 July 19; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 35), 4102; NACP.

¹²⁹ Wise’s meeting with Roosevelt was not merely important for its contribution to revitalizing the Riegner plan. On August 9th, Drew Pearson, the Washington Post gossip columnist whose “Merry-Go-Round” column seemed to be read by all, reported that on Roosevelt’s desk during his meeting with Wise was a proposal from the State Department advocating that any discussion of Palestine should be deferred until after the war. Wise, according to Pearson, convinced Roosevelt to postpone the decision. Drew Pearson, “Washington Merry-Go-Round,” *The Washington Post*, 1943 August 9; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 6881, Document 21; LOC.

from our country.”¹³⁰ Wise reiterated the broad details of the plan for Roosevelt and how thrilled he was that Roosevelt lent his support for the plan. Both the Treasury and State Departments received copies of the note; in the State Department copy, the sentences attesting to Roosevelt’s agreement are underlined. On July 30th, Morgenthau wrote to Wise, indicating that the Treasury Department is fully sympathetic, and indeed, has already expressed support for the plan—a reference to Pehle’s July 16th assertion that the Treasury would support the proposal for humanitarian reasons but they had concerns and restrictions.¹³¹

The same day, Bernard Meltzer produced a detailed memo entitled “Proposed Arrangement for Relief and Evacuation of Refugees in Rumania and France.” Meltzer described the plan with explanations of various facets and the secure steps that would prevent funds reaching the enemy. At the end of the memo, Meltzer questioned whether there were any objections from a foreign policy standpoint. “Indeed, in view of the Department’s humanitarian interest in rescuing refugees, it would appear that, unless there is some countervailing foreign policy objection, the Department should endorse, rather than veto the proposal.”¹³² Meltzer suggested that his memo be transmitted to Riegner to see if he could act within the proposed structure. Stephen Wise—and more importantly, President Roosevelt’s support—resurrected the World Jewish Congress plan. Time was of the essence. Harrison cabled the State Department on July 29th that Riegner

¹³⁰ Stephen Wise, Letter to Franklin Roosevelt, 1943 July 23; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 35), 4212; NACP.

¹³¹ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Draft and letter to Stephen Wise, 1943 July 30; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 652, Document 228-229; LOC.

¹³² Bernard Meltzer, “Proposed Arrangement for Relief and Evacuation of Refugees in Romania and France”, 1943 July 30; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 35), 4211; NACP.

wanted to correct press reports in the United States indicating that there were four million Jews living under Nazi rule. The real number was between one-and-a-half and two million; nearer to four million were already dead.¹³³

Even though Roosevelt assented to the plan, some members of the State Department still objected to the Riegner scheme. The internal battles at State did not go unnoticed in the Treasury Department. In the same August 5th meeting in which Captain Kades reported on his meeting with Bergson, Morgenthau's general counsel, Randolph Paul, briefed the Treasury staff on the Riegner plan. "There is a great division of opinion over there... There are certain elements in the State Department, which you may well imagine, are opposed to it."¹³⁴ Morgenthau, though he previously wrote to Wise about the Roosevelt meeting, also needed to draft a reply on behalf of the President. Instead of writing a letter indicating the Treasury Department's approval and State Department's opposition, Morgenthau decided to send a letter indicating that the World Jewish Congress license for Riegner would be granted. He planned to clear the letter through Hull, who given the choice between agreeing and openly dissenting—and then having to explain this to the President—would likely agree.

The plan worked. The next day, Hull sent a modified version of Meltzer's proposal to Bern for Harrison and Riegner's opinions and on Saturday, August 7th, Hull responded to Morgenthau that "the Treasury itself is entirely free to act on this matter and to grant the necessary licenses if it should so desire... the State Department would be pleased to send the appropriate notification through State Department channels to our Legation at

¹³³ Leland Harrison, Cable 4558 from Bern to Washington, 1943 July 29; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2280; NACP.

¹³⁴ Transcript, "Group" meeting, 1943 August 5; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 654, Document 2-15; LOC.

Bern.”¹³⁵ At the bottom of the short note, Hull stated his belief that “any view that this would make funds available to the enemy is not correct.”¹³⁶ It was a strange addition but explicable, since a member of his staff had argued earlier in the week that the plan would make funds available to the enemy.¹³⁷ On Saturday, August 14th, Roosevelt wrote to Wise to inform him of the Treasury Department’s readiness to issue a license to Riegner. They were just waiting on an exchange of cables between the State Department and Bern regarding some details.¹³⁸

The conflict at the State Department over the World Jewish Congress license was not the only battle, nor was it the largest. In the middle of August 1943, two days after FDR’s letter to Wise was signed, Sumner Welles submitted his resignation to the President. The longstanding tension between Welles and Hull had threatened to boil over for months. Long commented on it frequently in his diary, reducing one argument to “[j]ust another indication of their difficulties.”¹³⁹ A front-page article in the August 3rd *New York Times* bore the headline “Conflicts Impair State Department, President is Told” with the subtitles “‘Rivalries’ are Mentioned” and “Diplomats Described as Puzzled by Varying Statements of Different Officials.” The article pointed out that the interdepartmental rivalry between Hull and Welles is “common knowledge”—but it had erupted in August 1943 for reasons beyond personal and professional conflict.¹⁴⁰ In

¹³⁵ Cordell Hull, Cable 1887 from Washington to Bern, 1943 August 6; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2269; NACP. Cordell Hull, Memorandum for the Secretary of the Treasury, 1943 August 7; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688I, Document 10; LOC.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ George Brandt, Memo to Herbert Feis, 1943 August 3; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 35), 4212; NACP.

¹³⁸ Franklin Roosevelt, Letter to Wise, 1943 August 14; President’s Official File, File 76-C, Box 9, FDRL.

¹³⁹ Breckinridge Long, Diary entry, 1943 May 14; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 5, Folder “Diaries”; LOC.

¹⁴⁰ Crider, John H., “Conflict Impairs State Department.” *New York Times*. August 3, 1943.

September 1940, on Roosevelt's train returning from the funeral of a former Speaker of the House, Sumner Welles had drunkenly and unsuccessfully solicited homosexual relations with two African-American railroad porters. There had been a minor, and very quiet, FBI investigation. The former Ambassador to France, William Bullitt, who hated Welles, learned of the incident. Nearly three years later, with some encouragement from Hull, Bullitt spread the information to several Congressmen, intoning that the rumors might make Welles susceptible to bribes.¹⁴¹ Rather than be subjected to a scandal, Welles submitted his resignation. While Hull was at the Ottawa Conference, the former Undersecretary quietly left the State Department on Sunday, August 22nd, and went to his estate in Bar Harbor, Maine. Originally, Roosevelt suggested that Welles might be sent to the Soviet Union, as Ambassador William H. Standley had resigned in May 1943 and had yet to be replaced, but Welles recognized that such an important appointment would only be successful if the international community believed he had the support of the Department.

Welles' resignation was a blow to the development of a State Department policy in favor of rescue. Hull was only involved in these matters when the situation forced action upon him, and Welles was no longer in place to act as a foil to Long's department. Moreover, by August 27th, Drew Pearson's gossip column in the *Washington Post* reported that Long was the favorite to succeed Welles as Undersecretary.¹⁴² Long wrote

¹⁴¹ Breckinridge Long, Diary entry, 1943 August 29; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 5, Folder "Diaries"; LOC. Adolf Berle, Diary entry, 1943 September 1; Adolf Berle Papers, Box 215, Folder "Diaries" Franklin Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, NY (FDRL). The version of the story is recounted from many sources including a biography written by Sumner Welles' son, Benjamin. Benjamin Welles. *Sumner Welles: FDR's Global Strategist*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 273-274. The Riegner telegram is covered on pages 230-232.

¹⁴² Drew Pearson. "Washington Merry-Go-Round." *Washington Post*. August 27, 1943.

in his diary that he did not believe the rumor to be true and feared that should he not be selected, it would now be interpreted as a deliberate slight. Still, he pasted multiple articles speculating about his promotion into the diary.¹⁴³

In the weeks after Welles' resignation, the Treasury Department handled the cables related to the Riegner plan. On August 22nd, a few hours before Welles packed his office and left for Maine, the State Department received a cable from Bern. In the cable, Riegner provided answers to some of the questions posed to him on August 7th about the specifics of the plan, asked a few questions of his own, and requested an initial deposit of \$25,000 to begin his work in financing the evacuation of Jews from France. He stated that he would provide a suggested deposit for evacuation from Romania after he consulted with Romanian officials.¹⁴⁴ Four days later, the State Department transmitted a response to Bern; a handwritten note on the side of the State Department's copy indicates that the response was drafted by Pehle's office in the Treasury. There were no objections to Riegner's suggestions, but the Treasury requested that the Bern embassy check on the background of whomever Riegner found to supply him with French francs.¹⁴⁵ A few days later, State transmitted another message from Treasury to Riegner, answering more of his questions.¹⁴⁶ State Department staff did not interfere with the text of either cable. George Brandt, a member of Long's staff who had been vocal in his disapproval of the license, wrote on the bottom of the August 26th cable, "I consider this matter of financial policy

¹⁴³ Breckinridge Long, Pasted clippings in diary, 1943 August 26; Breckinridge Long Papers. Box 5, Folder "Diaries"; LOC.

¹⁴⁴ Leland Harrison, Cable 5149 from Bern to Washington, 1943 August 22; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2285; NACP.

¹⁴⁵ Cordell Hull, Cable 2177 from Washington to Bern, 1943 August 26; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2283; NACP.

¹⁴⁶ Cordell Hull, Cable 2182 from Washington to Bern, 1943 August 28; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2285; NACP.

not something for my concurrence.”¹⁴⁷ It seemed as though Riegner and the Treasury Department were satisfied.

The difficulties with the World Jewish Congress license give the impression that the process was difficult for all organizations. In fact, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (the Joint) had a relatively easy time getting permission for their representatives to send money overseas for relief work. On September 2, 1943, only days after the cables from Treasury to Riegner, Pehle’s office in Foreign Funds Control received a request from the Joint regarding opportunities for relief in France. The Joint asked the Treasury to transmit a message to their representative in Switzerland, Saly Mayer, authorizing him to borrow \$100,000 a month for the next six months.¹⁴⁸ He could borrow money in France or purchase French francs in Switzerland, with the permission of the Bern legation, to fund these relief efforts.¹⁴⁹ By September 14th, Mayer not only had permission for \$100,000 a month for relief in France, he could also borrow \$100,000 a month for relief in Italy.¹⁵⁰ Since the Joint had approached the Treasury Department rather than State, Pehle was able to shepherd State’s permissions through Bernard Meltzer, who was sympathetic to relief efforts. In contrast, Riegner plan had already been stuck in Long’s department for five months, though their plan involved far less money.

¹⁴⁷ Cordell Hull, Cable 2177 from Washington to Bern, 1943 August 26; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2283; NACP.

¹⁴⁸ Moses Leavitt, Letter to John Pehle, 1943 September 2; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 27, Documents 978-979; USHMM.

¹⁴⁹ Rella Shwartz, Draft cable from the Treasury Department to Bern, 1943 September 4; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 28, Documents 1051-1053; USHMM.

¹⁵⁰ Rella Shwartz, Cable from Washington to Bern, 1943 September 14; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 27, Documents 976-977; USHMM.

Treasury finished the Joint's authorizations in two weeks, without the formality of issuing Mayer a formal license.¹⁵¹

Despite Treasury Department approval of the Riegner plan on September 4th, the formal license was not transmitted to Bern. On September 10th, Leland Harrison wrote from Bern to inquire as to whether a license had been issued, since American law prohibited "transactions with enemy nationals except under license."¹⁵² An internal State Department memo three days later questioned sending the license at all, despite Roosevelt's agreement to the plan and the Treasury Department's satisfaction regarding the financial aspects. The Riegner plan "appears to be a departure from the Treasury Department's previous policy, will probably give rise to renewed requests for similar assistance on the part of organizations interested in similar relief... Are we now prepared to do the same for them? If not, have we an unanswerable reason for continuing to refuse their requests? We shall no doubt need it."¹⁵³ The Treasury Department learned the license had not been transmitted when Governor Lehman called Henry Morgenthau on September 15th. Citing the State Department excuse that the license was a departure from Treasury policy, Lehman suggested that Morgenthau write a letter to Hull explaining that he authorized the license and directly requesting it be transmitted.¹⁵⁴ Instead, the next day

¹⁵¹ In Bern, Daniel Reagan (the legation's financial attaché) transmitted the messages, but reminded Mayer that "the telegram itself does not constitute the authority to carry out the operations proposed therein" and that he would still need a license. The Joint did not apply for one and the Treasury Department did not follow up about it. In their correspondence with Mayer (which Reagan gave to Mayer), the Joint referenced payments of \$100,000 per month for six months beginning in September 1943. Several months later, the Treasury Department issued Mayer a license as a formality (see Chapter 2).

¹⁵² Leland Harrison, Cable 5598 from Bern to Washington, 1943 September 10; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2288; NACP.

¹⁵³ JHK, Memo questioning license approval, 1943 September 14; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195), 4502; NACP.

¹⁵⁴ Phone Conversation between Henry Morgenthau and Herbert Lehman, 1943 September 15; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688I, Document 79-80; LOC.

Morgenthau called Hull and complained that it was “discourteous” of Hull’s staff to refuse to send a license the Treasury Department authorized and not to inform them that it had not been sent. Hull agreed, and on September 20th the State Department confirmed with Morgenthau’s office that the license was transmitted to Bern.¹⁵⁵ Despite this reassurance, the cable to Bern instructing the legation to issue the license to Riegner was not actually sent until September 28th, nearly two weeks after Morgenthau’s complaint.¹⁵⁶

The Intergovernmental Committee Moves Slowly

Everything in the summer and fall of 1943 seemed to move slowly. Despite the fact that one of the chief recommendations of the Bermuda Conference was to open a camp in North Africa for refugees from Spain, State Department staff and the Joint Chiefs in North Africa negotiated only sporadically throughout the summer. At the end of July, UNRRA was allocated \$500,000 out of the President’s Emergency Fund for the care of refugees in North Africa.¹⁵⁷ On August 17th, Fedhala (also known as Camp Marechal Lyautey), an abandoned military installation near Casablanca, was selected as the site of the future camp.¹⁵⁸ Less than two weeks later, on August 30th, Myron Taylor told President Roosevelt that Ambassador Carlton Hayes in Spain reported there were 1,600 refugees were eligible for transport to North Africa, 500-600 of whom had entry

¹⁵⁵ Phone Conversation between Henry Morgenthau and Herbert Lehman, 1943 September 20; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688I, Document 81-84; LOC.

¹⁵⁶ Cordell Hull, Cable 2373 from Washington to Bern, 1943 September 24; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2288; NACP.

¹⁵⁷ Herbert Lehman, Memo to G. Howland Shaw, 1943 July 26; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 35), 4157; NACP.

¹⁵⁸ The name “Camp Marechal Lyautey” (spelled Marshall Lyautey by many of the State Department staff) was used interchangeably with “Fedhala,” a reference to the nearby city of Fédala, 8 miles to the northeast. In 1960, the city was renamed Mohammédia. Cordell Hull, Cable 1520 from Washington to Algiers, 1943 August 17; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 35), 4143; NACP.

visas for Palestine. Since the United States had assumed there to be 7,000 refugees in need of transport, Taylor suggested that perhaps another solution might be easier—even to keep them in Spain with the support of relief organizations.¹⁵⁹ Despite the major reduction in the number of expected refugees, this did not make the negotiations easier. For months, cables traveled between the State Department and officials in North Africa about whether restrictions would be imposed on the movement of the refugees in the camp, and how they should be screened for security and health reasons before leaving Spain. At the end of 1943, Fedhala was still empty.

The bureaucracy of the Intergovernmental Committee continued to interfere with any progress toward tangible results. Rather than discussions of meaningful proposals, the Executive Committee meetings held on September 30th and November 18th focused on administrative details, including the proper approval of meeting minutes; the appointment of a secretary and an honorary chairman; whether decisions would be made on majority vote; and the financial estimates for the coming year. A discussion of the relationship between the IGC and UNRRA was tabled until after the Atlantic City conference concluded in December (which was the first formal conference of the UNRRA member nations). The Executive Committee also considered the relationship between the IGC and relief organizations, concluding that while the leadership of the

¹⁵⁹ Myron Taylor, Memos to Franklin Roosevelt and Cordell Hull, 1943 August 31; Holocaust Refugees and the FDR White House (Microfilm Collection, Bethesda, MD: UPA collection from LexisNexis, 2006).LM 0255, Reel 14, Folder 5, Document 683-684; USHMM.

Committee may someday seek advice and would certainly be available to these groups, they would not be permitted membership status.¹⁶⁰

Proposal for Red Cross Aid

On September 16th, Nahum Goldmann of the World Jewish Congress approached Breckinridge Long with a proposal. Asserting that private Jewish organizations could raise \$2,000,000 for the International Red Cross, he asked if the United States would dedicate \$8,000,000 for Red Cross distribution of food, clothing, and medicine throughout Europe. Long told Goldmann the State Department did not have access to that amount of money.¹⁶¹ However, the United States and Great Britain agreed to split the operational costs of IGC programs; if plans could be funneled through the IGC, they would be more likely to be implemented. It took almost two weeks for Long to send a cable to Ambassador Winant, asking him to consult with Sir Herbert Emerson. The cable was lost. A month later, Long told Goldmann he would let him know when there was information. On November 11th, Winant transmitted a request from IGC for a list of the Treasury licenses for ongoing relief projects. They also wanted the Red Cross to submit a list of potential projects to determine those that would meet IGC specifications.¹⁶² The

¹⁶⁰ Howard Bucknell, "The Minutes of the Refugee Executive Committee, Meeting of September 30, 1943", 1943 October 22; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4750; NACP.

¹⁶¹ Actually, this is untrue. In January 1944, while checking Long's claim that the State Department did not have money, Ansel Luxford discovered that the President's Defense Fund had eighty million dollars, and the State Department piece of this had eight million dollars currently unobligated. Ansel Luxford, "Memorandum for the Files," 1944 January 13; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 693, Document 232; LOC.

¹⁶² John Winant, Cable from London about IGC, 1943 November 11; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4762; NACP.

Treasury Department and Red Cross both responded at the beginning of December, but like the North Africa refugee camp, nothing happened before the end of the year.

Riegner's relief and evacuation plan had also still not been put into action. On September 28, 1943, the State Department sent instructions to Leland Harrison in Bern to issue a license to Gerhart Riegner. On October 6th, Harrison wrote to the State Department that, as instructed, he had consulted with British legation in Bern, which disapproved of the project.¹⁶³ The British Commercial Secretary sent a note to Harrison, writing that the "type of adventurers who would undoubtedly participate, suggests to me that no means can be devised which would prevent the scheme from giving rise to grave abuse."¹⁶⁴ The Treasury Department was not informed about the British objections, or the fact that the license had not been issued, for another two weeks.¹⁶⁵ On October 23rd, three days after receiving word that the Riegner license was still a problem, John Pehle spoke with J. J. Reinstein of the State Department. Pehle, no doubt frustrated, asked that the State Department instruct Harrison to issue the World Jewish Congress license notwithstanding the British objections. Reinstein responded that he would transmit the message as an order from the Treasury Department, but that State would not endorse it. Pehle asked to be kept informed.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ Leland Harrison, Cable 6269 from Bern to Washington, 1943 October 6; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2292; NACP.

¹⁶⁴ British Commercial Secretary, Note about Riegner plan, 1943 October 10; RG-84, General Records, Box 14, Folder "World Jewish Congress," NACP.

¹⁶⁵ Leland Harrison, Paraphrase of cable 6269 from Bern to Washington, 1943, October 20; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688I, Document 88-89; LOC.

¹⁶⁶ Memo of Conversation between John Pehle and J.J. Reinstein re: "American Jewish Congress Relief Proposal", 1943 October 23; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 209, Folder "Riegner"; LOC.

Edward Stettinius Joins the State Department

Early in the week of October 25th, State Department staff debated whether to endorse the issuance of the license over British objections. R. Borden Reams, who had expressed his disapproval in May and July, had not changed his mind. “I do not believe that we can or should accede to the desire to Treasury and send this message as a joint message from Treasury and from the Department...this proposal is objectionable... We are granting to a special group of enemy aliens relief measure which we have in the past denied to Allied peoples.”¹⁶⁷ One office chose not to initial an outgoing cable draft “because it prescribes action not in accordance with procedure.”¹⁶⁸ Breckinridge Long, however, wrote a memo in favor of the transmission of the license. Citing the relief funds sent to Saly Mayer from the Joint as precedent and noting the President’s approval of the plan, Long argued that “if the Department should refuse to forward the message requested by the Treasury, the Department would be assuming responsibility for the failure of relief to be extended to a category of persons who are in serious need...I have come to the conclusion that the telegram may go forward.”¹⁶⁹ On Tuesday, October 26th, the new Undersecretary of State, Edward Stettinius, sent a cable to Bern instructing Harrison that the Treasury Department wished him to issue the license notwithstanding British objections. While not ordering Harrison to do so on behalf of the State

¹⁶⁷ R. Borden Reams, Memo to Matthews and Long, 1943 October 25; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2292-4; NACP.

¹⁶⁸ J. Henderson, Memo to Long, 1943 October 26; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2292; NACP.

¹⁶⁹ Breckinridge Long, Memorandum, 1943 October 26; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 209, Folder “Riegner”; LOC.

Department, Stettinius added, “You should, of course, comply with the Treasury Department’s desires.”¹⁷⁰

On September 25, 1943, Edward Stettinius had been announced as the new Undersecretary of State. Breckinridge Long heard the news from his secretary, who called him after hearing it on the radio. Hull claimed not to have had a chance to tell Long himself, but the choice had been Roosevelt’s; Long agreed that Stettinius was the best of all the suggestions he had heard.¹⁷¹ Edward Stettinius came from a wealthy family and became chairman of the board of US Steel in the mid-1930s. When war broke out, Roosevelt asked him to chair the War Resources Board; he became the administrator of Lend-Lease in 1941, serving in that position until his selection as Undersecretary. Stettinius had little foreign relations experience, but was an able administrator, sympathetic to humanitarian concerns, and prized forward momentum.¹⁷² He was also a close personal friend of Oscar Cox, who served as Lend-Lease general counsel and who, in June, had written a proposal to create a group tasked with advising on relief and rescue matters brought to the US government.¹⁷³ Less than two weeks after he became Undersecretary, Stettinius was Acting Secretary of State since Hull was absent due to illness and to his participation in the Moscow Conference.

¹⁷⁰ Edward Stettinius, Cable 2626 from Washington to Bern, 1943 October 25; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2292; NACP.

¹⁷¹ Breckinridge Long, Diary entry, 1943 September 26; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 5, Folder “Diaries”; LOC.

¹⁷² Weil, 142-143.

¹⁷³ The correspondence between Oscar Cox and Edward Stettinius in Cox’s files indicate a true personal friendship. In one letter, Stettinius asked for a photo of Cox for his den; another note invites his family to the Stettinius “farm” (an 881 acre estate in Rapidan, VA, called “Horseshoe Farms”) for swimming and to their home in Pompano Beach, FL. Each year, Stettinius arranged for a Horseshoe Farms turkey, fully dressed, to be delivered to the Cox residence for the holidays. In December 1941, Cox responded to the gift of the turkey by writing “Our four-year-old was so excited about it that he telephoned me immediately upon its arrival to say that it was the biggest and bestest turkey he had ever seen.” In February 1942, Stettinius gave a purebred Dalmatian puppy to the Coxes (he also gave one to Ronald Campbell of the British Embassy); the Coxes named their puppy Admiral Stett. Oscar Cox Papers, Box 32, Folder “Edward Stettinius”; FDRL.

Soon after arriving, Stettinius requested a briefing on State Department activities related to refugees; the briefing memo, written by Reams and given to the Undersecretary on October 9th, was not the most optimistic. Reams wrote that the State Department had continued to give assistance and make special effort on behalf of refugees. However, as the war began, military and public security concerns had interfered. In the aftermath of the Bermuda Conference, “It was...obvious that the results of the conference must necessarily be disappointing to a large section of British and American public opinion which was not fully aware of these limitations. There had come into existence...groups which endeavored to exert pressure upon the two governments concerned for the adoption of extreme measures. These groups were both vocal and influential.” Reams stated that the groups had two recurrent suggestions: negotiation with Germany to release Jews, and feeding “all Jewish people in Europe” through the blockade. Of course “there was always the danger that the German Government might agree to turn over to the United States and to Great Britain a large number of Jewish refugees at some designated place for immediate transportation to areas under the control of the United Nations...In the event of our admission of inability to take care of these people the onus for their continued persecution would have been largely transferred from the German Government to the United Nations.”¹⁷⁴ Variations on this fear, however manipulative and misguided, were a theme at the end of 1943 and early 1944. Instead of welcoming the prospect of large number of Jews prepared for evacuation, the idea was viewed as a “danger” or a Nazi trick to embarrass the United Nations.

¹⁷⁴ R. Borden Reams, Memorandum to Stettinius, 1943 October 8; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 202, Folder “Refugees 2”; LOC.

As the two men were friends, Stettinius was already aware of Cox's relief agency proposal when he became Undersecretary. On October 13th, Cox sent Stettinius a new draft. Now called the "War Refugee Relief Committee," it still featured advisors of major faiths who would form plans to rescue victims, establish temporary havens, and raise relief funds. Cox reverted to his idea to fund the Committee's activities through the Second War Powers Act, with additional contributions funneled through the Foreign Economic Administration. In order to act with haste, it might be best to have the Secretary of State and the Foreign Economic Administrator as ex-officio members.¹⁷⁵ Stettinius shared the proposal with his new staff, and received a four-page memo as a reply. The majority of the response trumpeted the Intergovernmental Committee, President's Advisory Committee on Political Refugees, and "Coordinating Foundation," which addressed the majority of the functions Cox identified. Other segments of the plan were deemed already solved, or inadmissible. Cox's suggestion that this committee be granted "primary responsibility for refugee problems and provides only for liaison with the Department of State," was one of the inadmissible suggestions.¹⁷⁶ Cox kept working.

The Emergency Committee Makes Plans

The Emergency Committee to Save the Jews of Europe also kept working. On September 1st, Peter Bergson met with Breckinridge Long and brought a guest, a 42-year-old vice-president of Bloomingdales department store, named Ira Hirschmann. Following

¹⁷⁵ Oscar Cox, Cover letter and memorandum to Stettinius, 1943 October 13; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 38), 5129; NACP.

¹⁷⁶ "Confidential Memorandum for Mr. Stettinius," 1943 October 18; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 38), 5129; NACP.

up on the Emergency Committee suggestion to send representatives overseas, Bergson requested that Hirschmann be allowed to travel to Turkey to investigate the situation for possible refugee evacuation from the Balkans.¹⁷⁷ Two days later, Long cabled Ambassador Laurence Steinhardt in Turkey to see if he had any objection to Hirschmann's trip.¹⁷⁸ Steinhardt did not.¹⁷⁹ At the same meeting, Bergson requested permission to travel to Great Britain himself; when Bergson admitted he was not an American citizen, Long suggested Bergson write a letter to the Department explaining the purpose of his intended visit; the Department would then consider the request.¹⁸⁰ When a press release about the possibility of Emergency Committee representatives traveling overseas reached the British embassy in Washington, William Hayter visited the State Department and suggested caution: "[T]wo or three members of this Committee are 'suspected' by the British Government on one ground or another. In particular he said Mr. Bergson is believed to be a bomb-thrower."¹⁸¹

After two months of relative quiet since the Emergency Conference, the Committee planned a big event in October. Their skill at raising public ire had not been forgotten and they had clearly garnered a reputation in Washington. At the beginning of October, two royal sons of King Ibn Saud of Arabia came to Washington, DC, on an

¹⁷⁷ "Memorandum of Conversation between Breckinridge Long, Peter Bergson, and Ira Hirschmann", 1943 September 1; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 202, Folder "Refugees 2"; LOC.

¹⁷⁸ Cordell Hull, Cable 726 from Washington to Ankara, 1943 September 4; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 13, Folder 5, Documents 616; USHMM.

¹⁷⁹ On October 15th, Long and Bergson met again, when Bergson requested permission to send Henry Pringle in addition to Hirschmann. Long denied the request. Laurence Steinhardt, Cable from Ankara about ECSJPE request, 1943 September 7; Palestine Statehood Committee Papers, LM0399, Reel 4, Folder 61, USHMM. Memorandum of Conversation between Breckinridge Long, Peter Bergson, and Henry Pringle, 1943 October 15; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 202, Folder "Refugees 2"; LOC.

¹⁸⁰ "Memorandum of Conversation between Breckinridge Long, Peter Bergson, and Ira Hirschmann", 1943 September 1; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 202, Folder "Refugees 2"; LOC.

¹⁸¹ J. Hickerson, Memorandum regarding Hayter meeting, 1943 September 25; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4736; NACP.

official visit. Senator Edwin Johnson warned the Emergency Committee in advance of the visit that, “Confidentially, the State Department is hopeful that no one in this country will raise embarrassing issues regarding Near East policy while our officially invited guests are here and that all organizations will refrain from public criticism and advertising.”¹⁸² Two days after the princes left Washington, the Emergency Committee invited their own guests: rabbis, reporters and friends, to march in Washington on behalf of rescue.

On September 29, 1943, Max Lerner of the Emergency Committee wrote to President Roosevelt’s secretary, Marvin McIntyre, informing him of the upcoming rally. Lerner explained that the rabbis, who represented the Union of Orthodox Rabbis and Union of Grand Rabbis of the United States and Canada, planned to hold a service at the Lincoln Memorial and meet with members of Congress. Lerner asked McIntyre who at the White House might receive a petition for rescue on the afternoon of the march.¹⁸³

McIntyre informed Lerner that an appointment with the President could not be arranged, but that as the President’s Secretary, he would receive a petition on Roosevelt’s behalf.

¹⁸⁴ A telegram from Rabbi Rueben Levovitz received the same answer.¹⁸⁵ Wanting to meet with the President, the Emergency Committee did not give up. Two days before the rally, Bergson wrote to Oscar Cox who, in addition to his role as general counsel to Lend-Lease, was also an aide to Roosevelt’s advisor Harry Hopkins, to see if Cox could

¹⁸² Sen. Edwin Johnson, Letter to the Committee for a Jewish Army, 1943 September 23; Palestine Statehood Committee Papers, LM0399, Reel 1, Folder 10, USHMM.

¹⁸³ Max Lerner, Letter to Marvin McIntyre, 1943 September 29; President’s Official File, File 76-C, Box 9, FDRL.

¹⁸⁴ Marvin McIntyre, Memo to Edwin Watson, 1943 October 4; President’s Official File, File 76-C, Box 9, FDRL.

¹⁸⁵ Edwin (Pa) Watson, Letter to Rabbi Reuben Levovitz, 1943 October 5; President’s Official File, File 76-C, Box 9, FDRL.

intervene at the White House.¹⁸⁶ An hour before the rabbis arrived in Washington, Bergson called Cox's office, but did not reach him.¹⁸⁷

A little after noon on Wednesday, October 6th, two days before Yom Kippur, an estimated 400 rabbis along with 100 reporters and sympathetic protestors arrived at Union Station, mainly from New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. They marched three blocks to the Capitol, where they were received on the Capitol steps by Vice-President Henry Wallace, all the Jewish members of the House of Representatives (including Sol Bloom), and members of the Congressional leadership of both Houses.¹⁸⁸ Rabbi Eliezer Silver of Cincinnati read a petition in Hebrew and in English; Wallace also read a statement. The group then marched to the Lincoln Memorial and offered a prayer on the steps. After this, the vast majority of the group traveled to Ohev Sholom, the National Synagogue, for food and rest, while a small delegation proceeded to the White House to present a petition to Marvin McIntyre. When the delegation rejoined the others, they "caused a storm by their reporting that the President had not received them. One of the leading Rabbis from Brooklyn said that this was a slap in the face not only to the delegation but to American Jewry."¹⁸⁹ Some press reports highlighted the "chilly

¹⁸⁶ Peter Bergson, Letter to Oscar Cox, 1943 October 4; Oscar Cox Papers, Box 2, Folder "Peter Bergson", FDRL.

¹⁸⁷ Since Bergson did not send the letter to Cox until October 4th, it's unknown whether Cox received it before the rally began. Cox wrote back to Bergson on October 6th to say he would do what he could, but if Cox did attempt to intervene at the White House, his efforts were either too late or in vain. Oscar Cox, Phone Log, 1943 October 6; Oscar Cox Papers, Box 144, Folder "Calendar"; FDRL. Oscar Cox, Letter to Peter Bergson, 1943 October 6; Oscar Cox Papers, Box 2, Folder "Peter Bergson"; FDRL.

¹⁸⁸ The same afternoon as the rabbis' march, Breckinridge Long held a meeting with Nahum Goldmann and Stephen Wise of the World Jewish Congress. Goldmann and Wise discussed their dislike of Emergency Committee tactics and asked the State Department to deal only with "the regularly established Jewish organizations." Long reiterated State Department policy of meeting with all responsible groups of people related to matters of public interest, including the Emergency Committee. Memorandum of Conversation between Breckinridge Long, Nahum Goldmann, Stephen Wise, 1943 October 6; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 202, Folder "Refugees 2"; LOC.

¹⁸⁹ After the march, Eri Jabotinsky summarized the day's events in a letter sent to Emergency Committee supporters. He described the efforts Bloom and others made to dissuade the march from occurring, but, according to Jabotinsky, "Congressman Cellar of New York told us that the Jewish Congressmen had held a meeting and decided that we had

reception” the group received at the White House, and the “considerable resentment” they felt, as they were “[e]xpecting to see the President personally.”¹⁹⁰ Since it was clear that Peter Bergson, who was one of the organizers of the march, knew in advance that Roosevelt was not planning to receive the delegation personally, it seems that the Emergency Committee manipulated the incident so they could continue to claim the administration was ignoring their pleas.

The next month was busy for the Emergency Committee. A number of national Christian leaders promoted Sunday, October 10th as a Day of Intercession at the request of the Emergency Committee. They hoped to reach 6,000 churches and encouraged religious leaders to ask their congregants to “form themselves into a committee to work with the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe.”¹⁹¹ On October 31st, the Committee sponsored an event at Carnegie Hall honoring the people of Sweden and Denmark for the rescue efforts on behalf of Danish Jews.¹⁹² In keeping with the Bergson group’s talent at utilizing prominent supporters, Orson Welles narrated part of

licked them and that they would appear in a body to greet the Rabbis.” In writing *The Abandonment of the Jews*, David Wyman used the text of this letter to further his argument regarding the obstructionism of Sol Bloom. In his letter to supporters, Jabotinsky wrote that Bloom “spoiled the soup by telling one of the Rabbis, as an additional inducement for not going, that it would be very undignified for a group of such un-American looking people to appear in Washington.” In Jabotinsky’s telling, this made the rabbis even more eager to march in Washington. Wyman presents Bloom’s supposed statement as fact, ignoring the fact that Jabotinsky’s letter was clearly meant to drum up further support and is full of other demonstrable exaggerations and inaccuracies. Historians since Wyman have cited *Abandonment* to tell this story, notably Theodore Hamerow. In *Why We Watched* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), Hamerow told the same story, citing only Wyman, but expanded upon the supposed incident, writing that it was Roosevelt who felt the rabbis were “unmistakably Jewish. They had long beards and earlocks, they wore black coats and hats, and many of them spoke English with a pronounced Old World accent. Quite a few, in fact, resembled the anti-Semitic caricatures that the *Sturmer* was circulating...” (346). Hamerow is not alone—multiple historians take this anecdote as fact, citing Wyman, who only cites Eri Jabotinsky’s propaganda letter.

Eri Jabotinsky, Letter to Supporters, 1943, October 12; Palestine Statehood Committee Papers, LM0399, Reel 1, Folder 10; USHMM.

¹⁹⁰ “The Answer,” 1943 November 1; Palestine Statehood Committee Papers, LM0399, Reel 10, Folder 3; USHMM. The text quoted the press report of the Washington *Times-Herald*.

¹⁹¹ Henry St. George Tucker, “Memo to 6000 Churches on Week of Compassion Starting Sunday, October 10”, 1943 October; President’s Official File, File 76-C, Box 9, FDRL.

¹⁹² Published Telegram sent to Moscow Conferees by the Emergency Committee, 1943 October 31; Palestine Statehood Committee Papers, LM0399, Reel 1, Folder 10; USHMM.

the Carnegie Hall program. But the ultimate example of harnessing influential followers came on November 9th, when Congressmen, acting on behalf of the Emergency Committee to Save the Jews of Europe, introduced identical resolutions in the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Almost a year had passed from the State Department's confirmation of the Nazi extermination plan as laid out in Riegner's telegram. In December 1942, the United Nations announced in the Declaration on Atrocities that "the German authorities not content with denying to persons of Jewish race in all the territories over which their barbarous rule has been extended, the most elementary human rights, are now carrying into effect Hitler's oft-repeated intention to exterminate the Jewish people of Europe."¹⁹³ Yet neither the American nor the British governments had put comprehensive programs of rescue into place. Public protests at this inactivity (as evidenced in the American Jewish Congress rally and the performances of "We Will Never Die") lead to the Bermuda Conference. The few and insubstantial programs to come out of Bermuda were kept secret, but when it was clear that no large-scale rescue would be attempted, the Bergson group held the Emergency Conference; the Emergency Committee to Save the Jews of Europe was constituted out of the conference. Feeling their demands for action were being ignored, the Committee next turned to supporters in one of the few institutions the State Department could not ignore: Congress.

¹⁹³ United Nations Declaration, 1942 December 17; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 28, Folder 7, Document 835; USHMM.

CHAPTER TWO: THE TIME TO ACT IS LONG PAST DUE: NOVEMBER 9, 1943—JANUARY 16, 1944

On January 16, 1944, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Randolph Paul, and John Pehle met with President Franklin Roosevelt in the Oval Office. They presented him with an eight-page memo that began:

One of the greatest crimes in history, the slaughter of the Jewish people in Europe, is continuing unabated. This Government has for a long time maintained that its policy is to work out programs to save those Jews of Europe who could be saved. You are probably not as familiar as I with the utter failure of certain officials in our State Department, who are charged with actually carrying out this policy, to take any effective action to prevent the extermination of the Jews in German-controlled Europe.¹

Roosevelt did not read the memo; a mere twenty-minute meeting and summary of the contents were enough to convince him of the necessity of the formation of the War Refugee Board.

The Board solved numerous problems. In early November 1943, the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe used Congressional allies to propose a joint resolution calling for the creation of a government agency tasked with relief and rescue. In House Foreign Affairs Committee testimony, Assistant Secretary Breckinridge Long explained the important work the State Department had done to save the victims of Nazism. He felt his testimony so compelling, it would surely convince the public that

¹ Transcript, “Jewish Evacuation” meeting, 1944 January 15; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 694, Document 59-110; LOC.

such an agency was unnecessary and the State Department would gain deserved accolades. Instead, he was accused of grossly manipulating immigration statistics, which drew even more public attention to the supposed failure of American action. At the same time, officials at the Treasury Department protested the long delays and obstructions in the issuance of a license that would allow a representative of the World Jewish Congress in Switzerland to obtain money to attempt relief operations in France and Romania. In investigating the cause of these delays, the Treasury staff built a case that the State Department, while attempting to deflect public pressure and maintain a façade of activity, had actually been deliberately suppressing information. The State Department was internally and externally vulnerable. The creation of the War Refugee Board released both Congressional pressure by addressing the Rescue Resolutions, and pressure within the administration by removing the State Department from the main responsibility for relief and rescue.

The Rescue Resolution

The “Rescue Resolution” was the nickname given to the identical House Resolutions 350 and 352 introduced by Representative Joseph Baldwin (R-NY), and Representative Will Rogers, Jr. (D-CA), and Senate Resolution 203, introduced by Senator Guy Gillette (D-IA) and cosponsored by eleven other Senators.² The identical non-binding resolutions urged “the creation of a commission of diplomatic, economic, and military experts to formulate and effectuate a plan of immediate action designed to

² Robert Taft (R-OH); Elbert Thomas (D-UT); George Radcliffe (D-MD); James Murray (D-MT); Edwin Johnson (D-CO); Joseph Guffay (D-PA); Homer Ferguson (R-MI); Bennett Clark (R-MO); Frederick Van Nuys (D-IN); Sheridan Downey (D-CA); Allen Ellender (D-LA)

save the surviving Jewish people of Europe from extinction at the hands of Nazi Germany.”³ The idea of a commission had been one of the main proposals of the Emergency Conference in July 1943; though Bergson had presented the Conference recommendations to Cordell Hull at the beginning of August, they had yet to receive a formal response from the State Department.⁴ Bergson, accompanied by Congressman Rogers, brought another copy of the recommendations to Stettinius on November 8th.⁵ The Emergency Committee’s Congressional supporters were behind the resolutions; now Bergson would get an official answer one way or another.

The Senate resolution went to the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, where it was voted out of committee on December 20th and scheduled for a full vote in the Senate in late January 1944. The House Foreign Affairs Committee, however, was chaired by Congressman Sol Bloom, who was sensitive to the criticism of government inaction due to his involvement in the Bermuda Conference. Bloom scheduled hearings immediately, much to the surprise of the resolution’s co-sponsor Will Rogers, Jr. (who missed the first three of the five days of hearings).⁶ The resolution itself was a total surprise to the newly

³ Congressional Record introducing House Resolutions 350 and 352, 1943 November 9; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 24, Folder 34, Documents 915-918; USHMM.

⁴ Breckinridge Long, Memo to Brandt about Hull meeting, 1943 August 12; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 202, Folder “Refugees 2”; LOC.

⁵ Edward Stettinius, Day report, 1943 November 8; Cordell Hull papers (Library of Congress Microfilm Collection 16, 160-118P), Reel 49, Folder “Stettinius”; LOC.

⁶ On November 10, Rogers wrote to Bloom, explaining that he felt this resolution, in addition to all the work the State Department has done recently as well as many other positive relief efforts, “conspire toward getting more aggressive relief activity for all groups, Jewish and non-Jewish.” At the same time, Rogers was leaving Washington for almost two weeks, asked for the hearings to be delayed until his return, and argued “With the progress of action by the Executive, I think this is the type of resolution which could well be held in abeyance until we see whether the executive action is going to materialize or not. Will Rogers Jr., Letter to Sol Bloom, 1943 November 10. Records of the U.S. House of Representatives. RG-233. Box 67, Folder: H. Res. 352; National Archives Building, Washington, DC (NAB). Bloom responded to Rogers’ letter the very next day, on November 11th, criticizing the manner in which the resolution was introduced and the perceived outcome Rogers desired. Bloom wrote “I told you that as long as you introduced the resolution we are in duty bound to bring it to the attention of the Foreign Affairs Committee and then have them act upon it... What is the use of introducing a resolution if it is for the sake of publicity, unless you are going to have

reconstituted Intergovernmental Committee, which was supposed to act as a relief agency. Ambassador Winant, having learned of it through a report from the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, cabled to State Department on November 16th to ask for more information.⁷

The House Foreign Relations Committee hearings began on November 19, 1943, and continued on November 23rd, 24th, 26th, and December 2nd.⁸ Instead of focusing on the idea of a commission, Sol Bloom used the power of his position to express his frustration about the Emergency Committee's tactics and about public perception of the hearings. Testimony on November 19th and 23rd involved discussion of an Emergency Committee fundraising telegram sent to supporters asking for funds to "force" the passage of the resolution, and testimony about the radio broadcast "Confidentially Yours," which aired a small piece accusing Bloom of "forcing the issue" by scheduling the hearings in Rogers' absence.⁹ Peter Bergson testified on three of the five days of

hearings and go through with it?" Bloom held three of the five days of hearings before Rogers' return. Will Rogers, Jr., Letter to Sol Bloom, 1943 November 10. Records of the U.S. House of Representatives. RG-233. Box 67, Folder: H. Res. 352; NAB.

⁷ John Winant, Cable 7970 from London to Washington, 1943 November 16; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4772; NACP.

⁸ Transcripts of the hearings were published in *Problems of World War II and Its Aftermath, Part 2: The Palestine Question, Problems of Postwar Europe*. Selected Executive Session Hearings of the Committee, 1943-50. U.S. House of Representatives, Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976.

⁹ On November 23, Bloom dictated a rather astounding four page typed letter to broadcaster Herbert Moore, journalist Arthur Hale, and Miller McClintock, President of Mutual Broadcasting, to further express his anger. Bloom addressed the issue of Rogers' absence with the statement, "If Congressman Will Rogers had the interest of the Jews at heart, he would have been here..." Then he addressed the portion of the broadcast about himself: "You say further that 'large Jewish groups are said to be identified with the attitude of Congressman Bloom in opposing any action by the United States Government to help rescue their compatriots.' If there ever was a lie, that statement is the biggest lie I have ever heard in my life, and you know it. Sol Bloom is not identified with any special group of [sic] clique, and there has never been a single person, by telegram or telephone or any other way, who has opposed the passage of this resolution now before the Foreign Affairs Committee and, the Government of the United States has always done everything possible to help the oppressed Jews and I wish that you and your broadcasting company and the people you are supposed to be representing, would be half as considerate in trying to rescue not only the Jews, but all the refugees throughout the world, as the government of the United States has been...your statement is absolutely false with a capital 'F.'" Sol Bloom, Letter to Herbert Moore, Arthur Hale, Miller McClintock, 1943 November 23; Records of the U.S. House of Representatives. RG-233. Box 67, Folder: "H. Res. 352"; NAB.

hearings, and on November 19th described the purpose behind the resolutions. When asked how the Emergency Committee had been received at the State Department in August, Bergson testified:

[T]he difficulty was that the State Department and we spoke on two different subjects. We have come to plead and discuss possibilities...the State Department told us what they were doing about refugees who are outside Europe. We repeatedly said—and this happened four or five times—'Gentlemen, this is very fine... We are here to plead for the 4 million Jews who are inside Europe. The answer always was, 'The Intergovernmental Committee is doing so and so,' or that, 'The Intergovernmental Committee is next week going into a session in London in which it will discuss all these problems.'¹⁰

Bergson stated the State Department had yet to formally reply to the Emergency Committee recommendations, adding that he saw the decision to turn to Congress as “no contradiction, controversy of position, and we view it as a supplementary measure.”¹¹ He argued the proposed agency would not replace the IGC, but would focus instead on relief efforts for those trapped inside Europe. Once they had been removed to safety, the IGC would perform its mandated duties to provide aid to the refugees.

Breckinridge Long Provides Testimony

It was evident that someone from the State Department would need to testify about their previous and ongoing activities. Before the end of the first day of testimony, some Congressmen expressed concern about the claims they were hearing and the implication of deception on the part of the President and Secretary of State. Bloom responded to the concern by answering, “I think we can all take the word of Cordell Hull

¹⁰ *Problems of World War II and Its Aftermath, Part 2: The Palestine Question, Problems of Postwar Europe*, Selected Executive Session Hearings of the Committee, 1943-50 (U.S. House of Representatives, Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), 63.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

and his messages and his promises that everything that possibly can be done is being done and will be done.”¹² Following the hearings closely, Breckinridge Long realized that he needed to address the recommendations Bergson had given to Stettinius a few weeks earlier.¹³ On November 20th, Long gave his staff instructions to draft cables to neutral countries asking them to receive Jews who managed to escape, expressing American appreciation for the asylum, and noting that the United States was also prepared to receive more refugees. The Emergency Committee’s request that telegrams of warning be prepared to send to Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and France, stating that they will be “punished for every Jew forcibly deported from these countries for murder by the Nazis,” could not be fulfilled. Long wrote that the State Department was afraid of the “adverse effect” such warnings “would have upon the Jews which would result from advising the Germans that the Jews in a locality were the persons responsible for the bombing attacks which occurred upon that locality.” Long also stressed that the response letter to the Emergency Committee should include his instructions regarding the warnings and reiterate that the IGC is responsible for rescue activities.¹⁴

To substantiate his faith in the activities of the State Department, Sol Bloom published and distributed a booklet on behalf of the House Committee before the second day of hearings, which contained speeches, statements, and resolutions made by the President and other prominent figures regarding the atrocities. Originally Bloom intended

¹² Ibid, 90-91.

¹³ Eldred Kuppinger and Knowlton Hicks, both of whom worked for Long, attended the hearings and reported extensively to Long. Eldred Kuppinger, Memorandum for Breckinridge Long, 1943 November 22; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 38), 5029; NACP.

¹⁴ Breckinridge Long, Memo to Grant and Travers, 1943 November 20; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 202, Folder “Refugees 2”; LOC.

the booklet “for the specific purpose of showing the Committee, the witnesses and the sponsors of these Resolutions, the great amount of work that has been done by the State Department on the refugee problem.”¹⁵ Soon the booklet was distributed publicly and to members of the press. Despite Bloom’s efforts, editorials in major newspapers pressed for passage of the resolution. Ted Thackrey of the *New York Post* argued, “It is high time our executive knew what Congress and our citizens think about this slaughter of Jews...The creation of the commission called for by resolution is a first step, and a necessary one, to halt the greatest massacre in history, so let’s have it.”¹⁶

The second and third day of hearings saw more contentious questioning of Bergson about Emergency Committee activities; the tension was only relieved when one Congressman asked for clarification on whether the hearings were simply going to be “an investigation of the charges to force Congress on the resolution.”¹⁷ Toward the end of the afternoon on November 24th, Bloom announced that Breckinridge Long would appear in a closed session two days later. The purpose of the testimony, Bloom explained, was so that “Breckinridge Long himself, and the other people who have had charge of this matter...want to tell this committee what they know. We can certainly take the words of our representatives of our own Government...the pressure is on. We have received many telegrams, all written at the same time, all in about the same language, and coming from

¹⁵ Bloom sent a several copies to Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle on November 20th. Berle responded on November 24th, “I think that the State Department has done a good deal more work on the refugee problem than it gets credit for, and some of the things it has done cannot be told even yet lest they prejudice the fate of refugees still in Europe.” Sol Bloom, Letter to Adolf Berle with enclosures, 1943 November 20; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4807; NACP. Adolf Berle, Letter to Sol Bloom, 1943 November 24; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4807; NACP.

¹⁶ T. O. Thackrey, Telegram to Will Rogers, Jr., 1943 November 23; Records of the U.S. House of Representatives. RG-233. Box 67, Folder: H. Res. 352; NAB.

¹⁷ *Problems of World War II and Its Aftermath*, 105.

many places.”¹⁸ The telegrams Bloom referenced may have been a result of Emergency Committee advertisements, which encouraged readers to write to their Congressmen in support of the resolution. That day, the Emergency Committee had published a full-page ad in the *New York Times*, with the headline “How Well Are You Sleeping?” The ad described the hearings and solicited both letters and “substantial financial support” for the Emergency Committee to carry on their activities.¹⁹ An advertisement in *The New Republic* on November 22nd specified that the Emergency Committee was hoping to raise a half million dollars.²⁰

On November 26th, the day after Thanksgiving, Breckinridge Long arrived on Capitol Hill to provide the sole testimony in the day’s hearings. He spoke for almost four hours in a closed session, describing his arrival in Washington; refugee and quota issues; the Bermuda Conference; the reconstitution of the Intergovernmental Committee; and relief efforts currently underway. For the first time, he described in detail the results of the Bermuda Conference and read into the record the mandate of the IGC, both of which were still considered secret outside of the State Department. When he finished, the praise was effusive. One Congressman asked if Long’s testimony could be publicized if the Committee voted down the resolution as superfluous. Long, careful not to seem as though he was trying to purposely impede the passage of the resolution, responded, “I think it would be very dangerous to vote it down, very unwise, in a way...I think this is a very important moment in the history of this refugee movement and I think the Jewish people

¹⁸ Ibid, 157.

¹⁹ Committee for a Jewish Army, “How Well are You Sleeping” advertisement. *New York Times*. 1943 November 22.

²⁰ Ben Hecht, “My Uncle Abraham Reports...”, 1943 November 22; Palestine Statehood Committee Papers, LM0399, Reel 11, Folder 10; USHMM.

are looking forward to this action...’’²¹ Even the co-sponsor of the resolution,

Congressman Rogers, newly returned from California, was impressed, stating:

There has been an impression around that the State Department and the Intergovernmental Committee had not been active, and I think that that is false and fallacious. I think a statement such as you have just made... would do a great deal toward allaying fears. I think it is an excellent statement and an excellent record and one which you and this country should be proud of and one which, if you feel it can be said openly, should be published. I do not envy you your position.²²

The final minutes of the day’s hearing consisted of discussion regarding how and whether this information could be released to the public, as it was clear to the congressmen that such a relief agency already existed in the form of the Intergovernmental Committee. Congressman Wadsworth suggested the State Department generate a public report of activities, while Congressmen Bloom, Johnson, and Vorys suggested that Long work with the British and the IGC to release a joint statement. The praise was unanimous, as was the feeling that public pressure would be relieved if only this important information could be shared with the public.

Long also felt as though his testimony was successful. The next day, at 7:00pm, he sent a telegram to Ambassador Winant in London stating that “because of the very active popular demand for information as to concrete results obtained by the Intergovernmental Committee for saving the Jews from Hitler,” he would like British and IGC permission to release information about the Bermuda Conference and about the

²¹ *Problems of World War II*, 185.

²² *Ibid*, 199.

creation of a refugee camp in North Africa (which still had yet to receive anyone).²³

Winant—who had recently received a lot of press in the United States and abroad when it was announced in early November that his oldest son and namesake had been captured and was being held as a German prisoner—did not respond as quickly as Long would have liked. The next day, Sunday, November 28th, Long cabled again:

We are confronted here by a serious internal pressure based on humanitarian impulses and surrounded with doubt, uncertainty and suspicion on the part of high officials and a large part of the public including groups naturally interested on account of race and religion. We have been unable to satisfy them... The prohibition upon publication... prevent the Department from enlightening this large and important section of our people...²⁴

Winant responded Monday night with the news that he discussed the request with the IGC and with the British; they suggested a joint communiqué.

In early December, the London embassy worked to clear the communiqué with the necessary authorities, while Long waited impatiently. Explaining that the statement could be “mutually modified in phraseology to some extent to meet respective needs,” and in the United States would be used “in connection with the statement Long made to the House Committee,”²⁵ the State Department did not release Long’s extensive testimony to the British for clearance.²⁶ Winant received a copy of the text of the Rescue Resolution for the first time on December 6th. The cable transmitting the text included the

²³ Cordell Hull, Cable 7719 from Washington to London, 1943 November 27; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4772; NACP.

²⁴ Breckinridge Long, Cable 7526 from Washington to London, 1943 November 28; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4816A; NACP.

²⁵ Cordell Hull, Cable 7616 from Washington to London, 1943 December 2; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4826-2; NACP.

²⁶ Breckinridge Long wrote in his diary of the “whirlwind” of the past week in advance of the release of his testimony, adding “My testimony has been checked by all the divisions of the Dept—today was finished—the typed transcript retyped—70 odd pages...” Others were also asked to review the testimony. Undersecretary Stettinius asked Oscar Cox to review it on December 2nd. Breckinridge Long, Diary entry, 1943 December 6; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 5, Folder “Diaries”; LOC. Oscar Cox, Phone Log, 1943 December 2; Oscar Cox Papers, Box 144, Folder “Calendar”; FDRL.

caveat “at this writing, there seems little chance that they [the resolutions] will be adopted by the Committee.” (George Brandt of Long’s staff recommended the deletion of the phrase, calling the addition “unwise” as that information was confidential and unnecessary for Winant).²⁷ On December 8th, the British asked again to review the American text before it was released, but this cable was ignored. Breckinridge Long’s testimony was released in its entirety on December 10th, 1943.

In his testimony, Long had mentioned a new relief project, one that came directly from President Roosevelt. At a lunch with the President on November 10th, the day after the Rescue Resolution was introduced in Congress, Edward Stettinius reported that FDR “mentioned...his feeling that there are some things that can be done that are not being done...He felt it might be possible to have a small office in Algiers, Naples, Portugal, Madrid, and Ankara with an American official in each to assist the Jews.”²⁸ On November 20th, Long’s office had cabled Winant about the project (without mentioning that the idea was from the President), suggested several financing options, listed the permissions that would need to be obtained, and requested the Ambassador discuss the prospects with the Intergovernmental Committee and with British authorities.²⁹ Though he had received no response from London to the cable, during his testimony Long had revealed that, “It has been proposed that the Intergovernmental Committee establish agencies of its own in Spain, Portugal, Algiers, Africa, Sicily, and other places, and we

²⁷ Cordell Hull, Cable 3463 from Washington to London, 1943 December 6; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4772; NACP.

²⁸ Edward Stettinius, Memo to Breckinridge Long re: Jewish Refugee Problem, 1943 November 11; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4843; NACP.

²⁹ Cordell Hull, Cable 7346 from Washington to London, 1943 November 20; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4796; NACP.

are transmitting that proposal...with our endorsement that they do so..."³⁰ Winant did not send a response to the proposal until December 18th, and then, merely asked several questions and passed on Emerson's request that any decision be deferred to the January 1944 Executive Committee meeting.³¹ By the 18th, however, Long's testimony including this information had been already public for a week. During the end of December and beginning of January, the State Department and British discussed the financing and preferred nationality of the hypothetical representatives and drafted cables to the countries that would theoretically host the offices. The World Jewish Congress submitted personnel suggestions.³² The IGC Executive Committee meeting on January 4th approved representatives in Algiers, Naples, Lisbon, and Madrid in principle, adding notes on staff qualifications and necessary next steps.³³ At the beginning of November, Vice-Director of the IGC Patrick Malin began planning an informational trip to Italy and North Africa. After the plan for regional offices was approved, he planned to investigate those locations as well. Typical of IGC bureaucracy, by the middle of January there were no tangible results related to the offices, and Malin was still in London.

The World Jewish Congress License Delays Continue

Delays still existed with the Riegner plan as well. On October 26th, Undersecretary Edward Stettinius had instructed the US Embassy in Bern to issue the

³⁰ *Problems of World War II*, 194.

³¹ John Winant, Cable 8795 from London to Washington, 1943 December 18; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4885; NACP.

³² Nahum Goldmann, Telegram to Howard Travers, 1943 December 31; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4945; NACP.

³³ John Winant, Cable 223 from London to Washington, 1944 January 10; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 38), 4978; NACP.

license to World Jewish Congress representative Gerhart Riegner, over British objections. Two days later, Breckinridge Long and the Treasury Department's director of Foreign Funds Control John Pehle discussed the problem. Long contended that British objections to the plan were fair and that Leland Harrison had been correct to submit the license to them for approval. Pehle countered, pointing out that Great Britain was funneling money to feed children on the Channel Islands, which were occupied by Germany without submitting their plan to the United States.³⁴ They did not reach consensus in the conversation, but the point was theoretically moot, as Harrison had already received his instructions from Washington. But he still did not issue the license, and no one informed the Treasury Department of this fact.

On November 13th, nearly three weeks after Stettinius instructed Harrison to issue the license and three months after President Roosevelt informed Stephen Wise that there were only a few logistical details left to be worked out, John Pehle received a letter from the British Embassy about the World Jewish Congress. The letter informed Pehle that "[t]he Ministry have not heard of this proposal previously and are unable to judge its merits until they have received details." It was the first time the Treasury Department had reason to suspect, once again, that the State Department had still not issued the license.³⁵

Their suspicions were confirmed the following week, on November 20th, when the Treasury Department received a copy of a cable from Leland Harrison to Washington. In the cable, Harrison stated that the British refused consent, and in light of that, "if I am

³⁴ Memo of Conversation between John Pehle and J. J. Reinstein re: American Jewish Congress Relief Proposal, 1943 October 28; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 209, Folder "Riegner"; LOC.

³⁵ Guy Thorold, Letter to John Pehle, 1943 November 13; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688I, Document 119; LOC.

expected to comply with Treasury Department's desires expressed in your telegram under reference in opposition to present British position or in advance of their subsequent concurrence, specific instructions would be greatly appreciated."³⁶ In October, when Pehle had discussed the text of the license with the State Department, he had urged that the instructions come from both Departments, fearing that if it came just from Treasury, Harrison—as an employee of State—would not feel bound to comply. Pehle was right. Harrison had not interpreted Stettinius's addition to the October cable—"You should, of course, comply with the Treasury Department's desires"—as a directive. Consequently, he continued to question the license and delayed issuing it, waiting for direct State instructions to do so. The State Department had received Harrison's request for clarification on Sunday, November 14th, but did not send a copy of it to the Treasury Department for another week.

On November 23rd, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr. met with his staff about the difficulties with the Riegner license.³⁷ Morgenthau, a longtime friend of President Roosevelt, had been Secretary of the Treasury since 1934. Though, like Hull, he did not come to his position with a great deal of experience—having worked mainly as a farmer and with agriculture policy prior to his appointment, rather than financial matters—Morgenthau, unlike Hull, was a talented administrator. His father, Henry Morgenthau, Sr., had been the American Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I and had reported back to the United States information regarding the

³⁶ Leland Harrison, Cable 7141 from Bern to Washington, 1943 November 14; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11) 2295; NACP.

³⁷ In this and the many Treasury department meetings held in November, December, and January about the Riegner plan, the "staff" in question refers to Randolph Paul, John Pehle, Josiah DuBois, and Ansel Luxford. Morgenthau's personal secretary, Henrietta Klotz, was also usually in attendance.

Armenian genocide. Morgenthau had learned from his father's experiences; he felt the tension between his own humanitarian impulses and his role as Secretary of the Treasury, and was fearful that as the only Jewish member of Roosevelt's Cabinet, his actions would be closely scrutinized. In matters of refugee policy, he was cautious. Under his supervision, the Treasury Department transitioned from an agency dealing with the Great Depression to an agency funding the American—and to some extent, the entire—war effort. He facilitated Social Security and revised the income tax structure. The differences between the culture at the Treasury Department and at State were obvious. Many of Morgenthau's staff were New Dealers, drawn to Washington for the opportunity to make a difference, highly educated, younger, and motivated.³⁸ Inefficiency frustrated the Treasury staff—and Morgenthau.

The meeting, held at 2:45pm, was largely informational. Randolph Paul, Morgenthau's general counsel, had written the Secretary a briefing memo about the Riegner plan at the beginning of November, but at this meeting, Pehle and other Foreign Funds staff—Josiah DuBois and Ansel Luxford—filled Morgenthau in on the new details regarding British objection. The Secretary questioned whether his staff perhaps should have gone to the British preemptively. After they informed him of the long list of cables, objections, and delays, Morgenthau responded:

Gentlemen, I can say on the record that I am delighted at your motives....
Unfortunately you are up against a successive generation of people like those in the State Department who don't like to do this kind of thing, and it is only by my happening to be Secretary of the Treasury and being vitally interested in these

³⁸ "They were social workers, farm economists, liberal lawyers, union organizers, all of them political chiropractors eager to get their thumbs on the national spine, to snap it and crack it until the blood again flowed outward to all the extremities of American life, returning it to health and prosperity. Who gave a damn about these rich socialites? Their day was over." David Brinkley. *Washington Goes to War*. (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1988), 12.

things...that I can do it. I am all for you...But don't think you are going to be able to nail anybody in the State Department to the cross.³⁹

At the end of the meeting, Morgenthau suggested that he ask Hull to send a cable endorsing the license, pointing out that even with Roosevelt's support, nothing would happen unless Hull stepped in.

The next day, November 24th, Morgenthau's staff wrote a three-page letter to Hull for the Secretary's signature. Laying out the history of the Riegner plan beginning in June 1943, the letter concluded, "I fully appreciate that some delays are inherent in handling these problems by cable. However, it is hard to understand the delays that have occurred in this case over the relatively simple matter of getting our Minister in Switzerland to issue a license at my direction and with your concurrence."⁴⁰ The Treasury staff also helpfully provided Hull with a draft cable to Winant in London requesting the British remove their objections to the licensing.⁴¹ Though Hull sent the cable to Winant on November 27th, the State Department did not respond to Morgenthau's letter for another two weeks.⁴²

One State Department official did discuss the government's responsibility toward refugee matters. On November 26th, while Breckinridge Long testified in front of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Edward Stettinius spoke with his friend Oscar Cox about Cox's revised memo proposing a refugee agency. Stettinius questioned the internal

³⁹ Transcript, "Jewish Evacuation" meeting, 1943 November 23; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688I, Document 111-118; LOC.

⁴⁰ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Letter to Cordell Hull, 1943 November 24; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2297; NACP.

⁴¹ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Draft cable to John Winant from Cordell Hull, 1943 November 24; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688I, Document 137-138; LOC.

⁴² Cordell Hull, Cable 7506 from Washington to London, 1943 December 1; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688I, Document 139-140; LOC.

politics inherent in the creation of a new agency, though he revealed his true feelings in doing so. He cautioned that the existing government groups tasked with refugee and relief matters “all think they are doing a wonderful job. I think you will get into trouble if you duplicate.” The phrase “they all think they are doing a wonderful job” is telling. Clearly, Stettinius did not think the State Department (and others) were actually doing a good job—they just believed they were. When Cox suggested that Stettinius and Leo Crowley (the Foreign Economic Administrator) be designated to discuss the idea with existing groups, like the Intergovernmental Committee and the President’s Advisory Committee on Political Refugees, Stettinius asked Cox put his proposal on paper.⁴³ The next day, Cox sent Stettinius a memo and a draft press release. Instead of creating a new agency headed by representatives of different faiths (the most recent iteration of the plan), this proposal suggested that Leo Crowley be tasked with formulating plans for rescue and relocation of refugees, financed by Lend-Lease, and the State Department be tasked with effectuating those plans. In the memo, which was written under Stettinius’s name and addressed to Hull, the Undersecretary offered his services as State Department liaison. This plan, much more conservative than Cox’s previous plans, never made it to Hull.⁴⁴

On December 6th, Cordell Hull sent a very long and detailed reply to Henry Morgenthau’s November 24th complaint about the Riegner plan delays. Describing the history of the negotiations, Hull addressed Morgenthau’s complaints point-by-point with explanations of why each individual delay was necessary—and in most cases, why it was

⁴³ Oscar Cox, Phone Log, 1943 November 26; Oscar Cox Papers, Box 144, Folder “Calendar”; (FDRL).

⁴⁴ Oscar Cox (as “Edward Stettinius”), Memo to Cordell Hull, 1943 November 27; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 38), 5128; NACP.

the fault of the Treasury Department. Referring to the plans in Romania and France, Hull claimed "[t]he two proposals referred to in your letter have...never been fully developed" by Treasury. The proposal to purchase French currency rather than using blocked accounts was "impossible of fulfillment." Hull blamed the three-and-a-half-month delay to issue the license on the Treasury's own stipulated conditions—that the funds would not reach the enemy—which he argued had yet to be successfully addressed; in fact, Riegner's requests made it impossible to guarantee that the enemy would not benefit from the plan. Hull argued that the Treasury Department had not even authorized the license until September 28th. After he received the license, Leland Harrison had submitted it to the British for approval as part of the State Department's standard procedures, and, Hull claimed, was being put in a difficult position. The British objected to the license, but the Treasury Department wanted Harrison to issue it, even though the license restrictions were going to be impossible to fulfill. While the plan had Hull's sympathies, "[t]he Department, on the other hand, cannot accept responsibility for putting into operation a plan to which are attached conditions which our Mission, in light of the information available to it, states are impractical." If, as a result of discussions with the British, the Treasury was still willing to proceed with the plan, the State Department "will be glad" to transmit the license.⁴⁵

Hull's response both deflected any blame for the delays onto the Treasury Department and directly contradicted his previous statement regarding the potential for funds to reach the enemy. Back in August, the day after Hull sent the cable to Harrison

⁴⁵ Cordell Hull, Letter to Henry Morgenthau, 1943 December 6; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688II, Document 20-23; LOC.

requesting the issuance of the license with Treasury stipulations, he had sent a message to Morgenthau confirming the license had been transmitted. It concluded with “[a]ny view that this would make funds available to the enemy is not correct; the funds would remain blocked in Switzerland until the end of the war.”⁴⁶

When Morgenthau returned to Washington after several days on his farm in Fishkill, he met with his staff on December 13th to discuss Hull’s response and strategize their next move. Morgenthau began by commenting, “Whoever prepared that letter was nobody’s fool,” and challenged his staff to answer it.

Before examining Hull’s letter in depth, however, the Treasury staff informed the Secretary of a very interesting development. On December 9th, Josiah DuBois, a lawyer for Foreign Funds Control, had lunch with Bernard Meltzer, who had worked with the Riegner plan on behalf of the State Department during the summer of 1943 before retiring to take a military commission. Meltzer had told DuBois about the arguments that took place within the State Department regarding the Riegner plan. This had not been a surprise to DuBois—in fact, he had been waiting for this lunch since August, when Meltzer, frustrated by the internal machinations of his colleagues, had promised to tell DuBois the details “after he was in the Army.”⁴⁷ After Hull’s response to Morgenthau, and with Meltzer in the military, the lunch came at a perfect time. Meltzer revealed that originally he had schemed to keep the plan away from Breckinridge Long and his staff, but when the State Department got more details from Riegner in June, Long had gotten

⁴⁶ Cordell Hull, Memo to Henry Morgenthau, 1943 August 7; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688I, Document 10; LOC.

⁴⁷ Though Meltzer apparently promised to tell the details “after he was in the Army,” Meltzer actually resigned to take a Navy commission. Josiah DuBois, Memorandum about meeting with Bernard Meltzer, 1943 December 9; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688I, Document 198-202; LOC.

involved and was immediately against the plan. Meltzer had tried to argue that only the Treasury could judge the plan in terms of economic warfare, but Long's staff held a meeting with Hull—to which Meltzer was not invited—arguing that the plan would give funds to the enemy. Receiving pressure from Morgenthau, and as a result of Stephen Wise's meeting with President Roosevelt, Hull had decided not to raise objections, though his staff continued to protest the license based on economic concerns. Meltzer also revealed to DuBois that he had not attempted to clear the plan with the British, fearing further delays. However, the British embassy had heard about the plan from Nahum Goldmann of the World Jewish Congress, and Meltzer furnished them with copies of the cables. It was clear, then, that the British embassy in Washington knew about the Riegner plan months before Harrison submitted the plan to London for approval.⁴⁸ After DuBois described the conversation, he added that as a result of the lunch with Meltzer, the Treasury staff had called the British embassy; an official there admitted that they had known about the plan in advance. DuBois wanted to emphasize this fact: “Realize, too, the significance of that, when the whole program is now being held up because of failure of clearance with the British.”⁴⁹

The Treasury staff then focused on Hull's letter, with Pehle commenting “[T]here is no question as to what the underlying facts and motivations are...the exchange...has been very helpful, because it has put Mr. Hull on the record with this strong statement.”⁵⁰ Morgenthau and his staff agreed that the State Department was deflecting blame on

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Transcript, “Jewish Evacuation” meeting, 1943 December 13; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688II, Document 1-19; LOC.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Treasury, in particular for placing restrictions on the license that the embassy could not facilitate. They brainstormed whether there was another person in Switzerland who could monitor the license instead of the embassy, perhaps a committee or representative. They planned to explore this possibility and draft a response addressing Hull's argument.

Long's Testimony is Released to the Press

Breckinridge Long's testimony to the House Foreign Affairs Committee was released on Friday, December 10th, three days before Morgenthau's meeting with his staff. Long's enthusiasm and pride in the success of his testimony was reflected in its distribution. He arranged for a long list of Jewish relief organization representatives to receive copies of the testimony, hoping—as he did throughout 1943 when he urged for magazine stories and information releases—to gain praise for State Department activities and finally quell organizational and public pressure.

The press and relief agencies immediately questioned details Long revealed in his testimony, particularly his use of statistics. In his quests for recognition earlier in the year, Long had been inexact in his use of certain numbers and had asked his staff to check on these for him. In his diary, Long claimed that he gave his House Committee testimony for four hours without notes. So when the statistics were called into question, Long's testimony quickly became a problem for the State Department, resulting in the opposite effect than he intended. When describing the screening process for visas, Long had stated, "We have taken into this country since the beginning of the Hitler regime and

the persecution of the Jews, until today, approximately 580,000 refugees.”⁵¹ Initial newspaper reports on the testimony had emphasized this statement, with titles like “580,000 Refugees Admitted to United States in Decade,” and “US is Haven for 580,000 War Refugees.”⁵² Long’s use of this number was not out of line with other statistics used by the State Department in 1943; in public and in private, the Department claimed to have issued 547,775 visas to natives or nationals of Axis and occupied countries.⁵³ Long’s claim that 580,000 refugees had actually arrived, however, led to scrutiny. The day after the testimony was released, even before the statistics could be examined in detail, Congressman Emanuel Celler issued a statement: Long “drips with sympathy for the persecuted Jews, but the tears he sheds are crocodile... Frankly, Breckinridge Long is least sympathetic to refugees in all the State Department. I attribute to him the tragic bottleneck in the granting of visas.”⁵⁴ On December 14th, New York newspaper *PM* printed one of the first articles questioning Long’s numbers. Entitled “Bunk, Because...”, the article quantified refugee statistics, revealing that according to the Department of Justice, 476,930 immigrants had been admitted to the United States between January 1933 and the end of June, 1943. Only 209,932 of them were Jewish refugees.⁵⁵ The World Jewish Congress also quickly began trying to account for the 580,000 figure, figuring out how many were actually from Europe, and how many were Jewish. By the end of December, their findings were even more sobering than *PM*’s calculations: only

⁵¹ *Problems of World War II*, 171.

⁵² Frederick Barkley, “580,000 Refugees Admitted to United States in Decade,” *The New York Times*, 1943 December 11. Associated Press, “US is Haven for 580,000 War Refugees,” *Washington Post*, 1943 December 11.

⁵³ Hugo Speck. “Jews’ Fate Pondered,” *Washington Post*, 1943 March 4.

⁵⁴ “Jews Debarred, Celler Declares,” *New York Times*, 1943 December 12.

⁵⁵ “Bunk...Because” *PM* magazine, as reproduced in Palestine Statehood Committee Papers, LM0399, Reel 4, Folder 14; USHMM.

18.3% of American immigration quotas were used in the years 1934-1943, and only 190,000 of the immigrants were Jewish.⁵⁶

Breckinridge Long was in a vulnerable position. He could not explain where he got the number 580,000. In a memo to one of his staff on December 16th, Long wrote, “We ought to be able to justify completely the statements we made. They ask the question where we got the figure 580,000. We ought to be able to answer that.”⁵⁷ Long had received many letters complaining about his testimony—from other government officials, from the public, and from representatives of Jewish relief organizations. At the end of December, Long wrote to Sol Bloom correcting his testimony. Claiming the State Department only kept track of how many visas were authorized rather than how many were issued or how many people actually arrived, Long found his excuse. He changed his claim to be that “568,856 visas were authorized, of which 544,999 visas were actually issued.”⁵⁸ These statistics were still high compared to the Department of Justice and World Jewish Congress numbers, but the correction formed the basis of the form letter Long used to respond to complaints.⁵⁹ By January, his staff was answering complaints for him.⁶⁰

In addition to myriad complaints about the incorrect use of refugee statistics, Long

⁵⁶ Kurt Grossman, Refugee Statistics, 1944 January 4; World Jewish Congress New York Office, D-Series (Relief and Rescue), Digital collection, Folder 107-04; USHMM.

⁵⁷ Breckinridge Long, Memo to Howard Travers, 1943 December 16; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 202, Folder “Refugees 2”; LOC.

⁵⁸ Breckinridge Long, Letter to Sol Bloom, 1943 December 31; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 202, Folder “Refugees 2”; LOC.

⁵⁹ For an example of one of Long’s letters, see Breckinridge Long, Letter to James McDonald, 1944 January 10; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 38), 5031; NACP.

⁶⁰ For an example of a letter from one of Long’s staff, see Howard Travers, Letter to Isidor Shaffer, 1944 January 22; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4914; NACP.

was also criticized for the rest of his testimony. He grew frustrated and defensive.⁶¹ On December 14th, Winant, who still had not received a copy of the testimony, cabled to question a Reuters article quoting Long as stating, “[W]e are ready to take all the new refugees who come out of France or other occupied territory.” Winant urged the State Department to send the testimony, as he was getting lots of questions in London; copies were finally sent that day.⁶² On Christmas Day, Winant sent a cable passing on “examples of complaints” he received about Long’s testimony. Rather than questioning the statistics, the complaints from London were that Long had revealed too much. The Red Cross felt that Long’s revelations about the potential collaboration with the Intergovernmental Committee—which was still entirely in limbo—were “regrettable... We feel that publicity to our efforts will compromise our slender chances... extreme discretion is essential.” The World Jewish Congress in London had also complained about Long’s statement on the Red Cross scheme: “It is difficult for us to understand how Mr. Long comes to make public the details of a scheme which it has been strongly impressed upon us must be maintained strictly confidential.”⁶³

On December 17th, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency noticed something else in Long’s testimony: his claim that the Intergovernmental Committee’s mandate included

⁶¹ In response to IGC complaints about his testimony, Long responded on December 27th that “[i]f the correspondents of the Intergovernmental Committee would communicate to the persons in the United States on whose account they are acting abroad and suggest to them that they advise their associates and others here to desist in their demands for an indulgence in publicity with its consequent danger to the persons we are all trying to assist it would no doubt be a help to all concerned and would, if the advice were heeded, permit the various agencies to operate in that atmosphere of confidence which the Department considers necessary to the better attainment of the objectives. And that advice might also be heeded by those here who malign the instrumentalities of relief and impugn the motives of responsible officers.” Breckinridge Long, Cable 8171 from Washington to London, 1943 December 27; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4901; NACP.

⁶² John Winant, Cable 8680 from London to Washington, 1943 December 14; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4865; NACP.

⁶³ John Winant, Cable 8975 from London to Washington, 1943 December 25; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4901; NACP.

the ability to negotiate directly with Germany.⁶⁴ On December 21st, Congressman Celler publicly claimed to have asked the IGC about this claim and was reassured that Long had been incorrect. The next day, Long sent a lengthy cable to London, reminding the British and the IGC that direct negotiations had been part of the discussion at the Bermuda Conference, and asked for an official statement denying Celler's accusation.⁶⁵ On December 29th, IGC director Herbert Emerson responded. Having discussed the matter with the British, they agreed Long had, in fact, spoken in error, since the mandate did not include direct negotiations. The Bermuda statement had never been put in front of the Executive Committee and the agreed-upon IGC mandate did not include direct talks with Germany.⁶⁶ At the beginning of January, the State Department accepted the IGC's understanding of their mandate.⁶⁷ The fact that all parties had conflicting interpretations of the IGC mandate is additional evidence of the problems inherent in a bureaucratic multi-country organization.

The Treasury Staff Confronts the State Department

As Long's testimony was beginning to draw complaints, Henry Morgenthau's staff in the Treasury Department tried to figure out how to present their own criticisms of Long and his staff to Secretary Hull. On the same day that the *PM* article

⁶⁴ Jewish Telegraphic Agency, "Intergovernmental Committee Authorized to Initiate Direct Negotiations with Germany," 1943 December 17; World Jewish Congress New York Office, D-Series (Relief and Rescue), Digital collection, Folder 107-04; USHMM.

⁶⁵ Cordell Hull, Cable 8071 from Washington to London, 1943 December 22; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4920A; NACP.

⁶⁶ John Winant, Cable 9033 from London to Washington, 1943 December 29; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4921; NACP.

⁶⁷ Cordell Hull, Cable 53 from Washington to London, 1944 January 4; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4935; NACP.

“Bunk...Because” was published—the day after the meeting in Morgenthau’s office plotting a response to Hull—Randolph Paul presented the Secretary with a ten-page report, drafted by Josiah DuBois and Ansel Luxford, addressing Hull’s letter. They had refrained from directly accusing the State Department of falsifying the history of the Riegner plan, but stated that Hull’s “conclusions...are predicated upon his incomplete knowledge of the facts.”⁶⁸ Hull had been misinformed: the Treasury Department’s plan had been workable; many of the license delays had occurred before the British had objected; and the State Department had discussed the plan with the British months earlier without informing Treasury. The report reminded Hull of his August 7th note confirming that funds would not go to the enemy, and also that Leland Harrison had been asked for his comments and suggestions two months before he indicated any concern about the plan. “Although it is difficult to understand why the significant facts mentioned above were not included in Secretary Hull’s letter,” the Treasury staff presumed it may have been because Dr. Herbert Feis and Bernard Meltzer, who had been the primary Treasury points of contact, were no longer with the State Department.⁶⁹

On the morning of December 17th, Morgenthau met with his staff to go over the report. Pehle summarized their entire discussion with the comment, “You never can be sure that you won’t get a blast-back, but we have gone to every length to be sure this letter is sound, and shows the first letter [was] sound.”⁷⁰ Morgenthau’s draft cover letter to Hull transmitting the report indicated that the “confused state of record makes

⁶⁸ Randolph Paul, Memorandum to Henry Morgenthau, 1943 December 14; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688II, Document 25-34; LOC.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Transcript, “Jewish Evacuation” meeting, 1943 December 17; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688II, Document 50-62; LOC.

comment necessary. Your letter gives impression that Treasury handled the matter in such a way that Bern has not been in a position to issue a license...After you have again reviewed this matter I feel sure you will understand why I was greatly concerned...’’⁷¹

The Treasury’s rebuttal never reached Hull, since a response from the British to the Riegner plan changed the situation significantly.

At the same Friday morning meeting in Morgenthau’s office, the Treasury Department also discussed a copy of a cable from the British Ministry of Economic Warfare, a response to the Treasury’s November 27th request that the British withdraw their objections to the Riegner plan. The British would theoretically agree to the financial structure of the license, but the Foreign Office had “grave objections in general” which would be cabled separately. The sheer fact that the British would agree with the plan but had still raised general objections was a “strong, shocking thing” to John Pehle.⁷² He was even more shocked later that afternoon, when he finally got a copy of the Foreign Office cable—which the State Department had received two days prior. The “grave objections” of the British harkened back to Reams’ arguments in October about the Riegner plan:

The Foreign Office are concerned with the difficulties of disposing of any considerable number of Jews should they be rescued from enemy occupied territory. They foresee that it is likely to prove almost if not quite impossible to deal with anything like the number of 70,000 refugees whose rescue is envisaged by the Riegner plan. For this reason they are reluctant to agree to any approval being expressed even of the preliminary financial arrangements.⁷³

At noon on Saturday, December 18th, Morgenthau’s staff gathered specifically to

⁷¹ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Letter to Cordell Hull, 1943 December 17; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 685, Document 71-73; LOC.

⁷² Transcript, “Jewish Evacuation” meeting, 1943 December 17; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688II, Document 50-62; LOC.

⁷³ John Winant, Cable 8717 from London to Washington, 1943 December 15; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688II, Document 48-49; LOC.

discuss the British Foreign Office memo. They were all upset, but not entirely surprised by the general objection to rescue. Ansel Luxford had predicted the objections would be exactly that. In a way, the admission clarified the conflict; as Randolph Paul put it, “We are away from all this smoke screen now; we are into the real issue.” Morgenthau was dissuaded from his initial impulse to go straight to the President. Since the issue was clearly one of foreign policy and not financial matters, any official American objection to the British position needed to come from Hull. The British objections combined with State Department delays and obfuscation had convinced Josiah DuBois that even more drastic measures were needed:

Mr. Secretary, the only question we have in our mind, I think, is the bull has to be taken by the horns in dealing with this Jewish issue, and get this thing out of the State Department into some agency's hands that is willing to deal with it frontally. For instance, take the complaint, ‘What are we going to do with the Jews?—we let them die because we don't know what to do with them.’

Pehle suggested the formation of a commission or a committee. Still, this would need to come from the President, who, they imagined, would ask what Hull’s opinion had been. Morgenthau set up a meeting with the State Department on Monday, December 20th, at 9:30am to discuss the British objections.⁷⁴

The Treasury staff spent late Sunday afternoon preparing for the meeting. During the day, they drafted another memo to Hull pointing out how shocking the British response had been: “In simple terms, the British position is that they apparently are prepared to accept the possible—even probable—death of thousands of Jews in enemy territory because of 'the difficulties of disposing of any considerable number of Jews

⁷⁴ Transcript, “Jewish Evacuation” meeting, 1943 December 18; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688II, Document 82-94; LOC.

should they be rescued.”” The memo concluded by proposing that after a delay of many months, the United States should issue the license over British objections, confident “the benefits of this program may be just as effectively lost through delay as through the failure to issue a license.”⁷⁵ Much of the meeting was spent editing the memo in detail, with Oscar Cox in attendance to provide an independent critique. Cox also took the opportunity to present his views on the situation, detailing for the Treasury staff his impressions of the rescue possibilities; his familiarity with the plans for the camp in North Africa and the operations of the Santa Rosa refugee camp in Mexico; and his own idea for a commission. At the meeting, Cox presented a version of his plan in which Morgenthau, Stettinius, and Crowley would act in concert, with their relief activities financed through Lend-Lease. The President, Cox assured them, would be in favor of the commission, but the State Department would protest. Cox suggested using their objections to make the British into “a straw man, because their attitude is basically not different than the attitude of the people who have been working on this thing. And you can get these people out....if you really want to do it.” At the meeting, the Treasury staff decided to “marry” Cox’s plan for a rescue committee with their complaints about the British and about the State Department. Ansel Luxford summarized their new goal: “Oscar has a whale of a good plan, but he has to have an excuse to get it to the President. We have the excuse to get it to the President. We have a beautiful issue here to take to the President and say, ‘We want a solution to it. The British have taken a dogmatic attitude

⁷⁵ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Memo to Cordell Hull, 1943 December 19; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688II, Document 131-132; LOC.

that we can't solve any of these problems.' There is where you marry them.”⁷⁶

At 9:30 am on Monday, December 20th, after a brief, last-minute meeting at Treasury to go over the memo one more time, Morgenthau, Paul, Pehle, and Cox went to the State Department to meet with Cordell Hull and Breckinridge Long. They quickly learned the State Department had also been busy over the weekend. The Treasury staff's dismay over the British Foreign Office objections had, unbeknownst to them, been echoed by Hull in a December 18th reply to London. Hull had written to Winant that the British telegram was “read with astonishment,” and that “the philosophy set forth in their telegram is incompatible with the policy of the United States Government and of previously expressed British policy as it has been understood by us.”⁷⁷ Winant had replied on Sunday that he had not been a party to the British meetings, but would certainly investigate what might have happened. Hull's response had been excellent. In regards to the Riegner license, Breckinridge Long had ordered Leland Harrison to issue the license over British objection.⁷⁸ That cable had also been sent on Saturday, after Morgenthau had called to set up the meeting for Monday. The State Department actions had rendered the Treasury report moot. But the Treasury Department had another, secret, plan which they would begin that afternoon.

Back at the Treasury Department, Morgenthau recounted the meeting for DuBois and Luxford. It was clear that the Treasury still saw the meeting as a victory and as a

⁷⁶ Transcript, “Jewish Evacuation” meeting, 1943 December 19; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688II, Document 103-130; LOC.

⁷⁷ Cordell Hull, Cable 7969 from Washington to London, 1943 December 18; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688II, Document 97; LOC.

⁷⁸ Cordell Hull, Cable 3168 from Washington to Bern, 1943 December 18; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2295; NACP.

display of the State Department's vulnerability in general, and Breckinridge Long—who was being publicly criticized for his House testimony on the Rescue Resolution—in particular. Morgenthau was sure they were afraid:

From the time I called the State Department and said that I wanted to have an appointment with Mr. Hull—from that time on something must have happened damn fast. Because Hull must have answered this cable from Winant. I told him in the message what I was going to see him about. He must have gotten hold of Breckinridge Long. Long must have issued a license. When I walked in there Monday morning, the decks were clear.⁷⁹

Morgenthau had still left the memo with Hull, and hoped that things might be smoother now that the Secretary was directly involved in these matters. Luxford pointed out that regardless, nothing substantial would be done with Long still responsible for refugee matters—an observation which Morgenthau called “over-obvious.”⁸⁰

The Secretary was in a good mood, gossiping with his staff and crowing about forcing State Department action. Morgenthau informed them that Long had pulled him aside and told him the real problem at the State Department had been the troublemaker and anti-Semite Bernard Meltzer, who, unbeknownst to Long, was both Jewish and the man who had filled DuBois in on the State Department's internal arguments regarding the Riegner plan. Morgenthau had responded by saying that rumors were that Long himself was antisemitic, an accusation Long asked the Secretary to help dispel. Morgenthau clearly thought the exchange had been quite funny. When his staff tried to turn to practical matters, Morgenthau was not ready: “Excuse me just one moment. This is the biggest victory that has happened on this front this year, and I am not going to let

⁷⁹ Transcript, “Jewish Evacuation” meeting, 1943 December 20; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688II, Document 148-171; LOC.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

you couple of old owls sit there and say, 'Yes, this is good, but what about tomorrow?'"⁸¹

Morgenthau's teasing was actually fortuitous. Although the Treasury staff could no longer go to the President with the British complaint and the Oscar Cox proposal, they were already working on something better.

The Treasury Department Investigates Cables 354 and 482

On Monday afternoon, Josiah DuBois got to work on the Treasury Department's secret plan. Two days earlier, on Saturday, December 18th, after Morgenthau's staff had met about the British objections to the Riegner license, Josiah DuBois had gotten a call from Donald Hiss at the State Department. The two men were personal friends, and DuBois had asked Hiss for a favor. While researching the history of the Riegner plan for one of the Treasury Department memos to Hull, DuBois had discovered an April 20th cable, which was the earliest one the Treasury Department had about the plan. The cable referred to a February 10th cable numbered 354; when DuBois had asked about it, he was told it was not related to Treasury work. He would not be allowed to have a copy. Undeterred, DuBois asked Hiss, who was an aide to Assistant Secretary of State Dean Acheson, if he could use Hiss's access to see a copy. Hiss found one and invited DuBois to come over to the State Department to see it, but confided that he had been expressly prohibited from showing this cable to the Treasury staff. At the State Department, DuBois not only saw cable 354, which instructed Harrison that he was no longer to transmit such messages, but Hiss had also found cable 482, Riegner's January 21st report

⁸¹ Ibid.

of ongoing atrocities in Poland and Romania. On two pieces of scrap paper, DuBois hurriedly scrawled a summary of the text of Riegner's message and a transcript of the entire text of the State Department's cable 354 prohibiting messages like Riegner's from being transmitted. He was careful to note that cable 354 had been a response to Bern's cable 482, Riegner's message.⁸² DuBois quoted directly from the cables, and, in his subsequent report to Morgenthau, reminded the Secretary that the prohibition of messages from Riegner would still be in effect had Harrison not asked for permission to transmit the April 20th cable.⁸³ The Treasury Department now had a new reason to go to the President: knowledge that the State Department deliberately tried to suppress atrocity information from reaching the United States. They knew the proof existed—cables 354 and 482—but they needed official copies to prevent the State Department from simply denying those cables ever existed.

The Treasury Department had not discussed DuBois's new information at their Sunday meeting, likely fearful that Oscar Cox would let the information slip to his good friend Edward Stettinius.⁸⁴ But Morgenthau went into the Monday morning meeting with Hull and Long armed with a plan. After the State Department surprised Morgenthau and his staff with their response to the British and with the issuance of the Riegner license, Morgenthau put his plan into action. At the end of the meeting, after Long asked Morgenthau to dispel rumors that he was an anti-Semite, Morgenthau had asked Long for

⁸² Josiah DuBois, Copies of scrap paper, 1943 December 18; 2014.115.1, William Spiegler papers related to Josiah E. DuBois, Jr., Box 1; USHMM.

⁸³ DuBois did not know that Riegner had complained to Wise, who in turn had asked Welles to cable Harrison to get in touch with Riegner. Harrison's April 20th cable was in response to Welles's instructions. Josiah DuBois, Memorandum for the Files, 1943 December 18; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688II, Document 98-100; LOC.

⁸⁴ DuBois's memo to Morgenthau about his meeting with Hiss has a handwritten note attached: "This memo not to be shown to Oscar Cox. Confidential." Ibid.

a copy of a cable 354, along with several others.⁸⁵ With the request coming directly from the Secretary of the Treasury, Long agreed, and had one of his assistants, William Riegelman, bring the paraphrased cables over to the Treasury building.⁸⁶

To some extent—when Meltzer told DuBois over lunch about State Department arguments and when Hiss showed DuBois the secret cables—the Treasury Department was already involved in espionage within the State Department. William Riegelman wanted to be their spy. Riegelman, a young lawyer who had recently returned from service with an American Field Service ambulance brigade in North Africa, was Bernard Meltzer's replacement and worked for Breckinridge Long. He was also Henry Morgenthau's second cousin. When Riegelman brought the cables Morgenthau had requested over to the Treasury Department, he got into a conversation with one of Pehle's assistants. Riegelman revealed his relationship to Morgenthau—who did not know his young relative was now working at the State Department—and told the Treasury staff that Jewish matters would not be a problem anymore. He would take care of everything. Riegelman had helped to draft Hull's detailed response to Morgenthau's first letter, and he had drafted the Riegner license that was sent the previous Saturday.⁸⁷

William Riegelman's involvement raised a host of potential problems. In a Treasury staff meeting later that afternoon, they strategized what to do. Should they call Long and reveal Riegelman's relationship to Morgenthau? After all, Long could be planning some sort of trick. Should they try to get Riegelman moved to another

⁸⁵ Breckinridge Long, Memo to Henry Morgenthau listing enclosures, 1943 December 20; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 209, Folder "Riegner"; LOC.

⁸⁶ Transcript, "Jewish Evacuation" meeting, 1943 December 20; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688II, Document 172-185; LOC.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

department? The Treasury staff all agreed they could not possibly use him as a State Department insider. He was too naïve, inexperienced, and indiscreet. Riegelman certainly had no qualifications to write licenses, and seemed to believe that the conflict between State and Treasury was minor and strictly bureaucratic. Though Riegelman thought his relationship with Morgenthau was a secret, Morgenthau knew differently: "In the first place, in his application he gives me as reference and thinks that they don't know who he is."⁸⁸ Morgenthau got involved in the intrigue, and through an elaborate scheme, got in touch with Riegelman and told him to visit him at his home that evening.⁸⁹

While the Treasury staff considered this new wrinkle, there was also the matter of cable 354. Riegelman had brought the paraphrase of cable 354, but when Long had copied the telegram for Morgenthau, he had deleted the reference to cable 482. The original cable 354 requested that Harrison refrain from sending cables like Riegner's, with the reference that it was a response to "Your 482." The copy Long sent did not have this reference. The Treasury staff believed the omission to be deliberate; Hiss had shown DuBois the originals of both cables, and to be able to prove a State Department cover-up they would need to show that cable 354 had been a response to cable 482, Riegner's atrocity report. They needed to see the "Your 482" so they could ask for a copy of that cable. This time, Ansel Luxford got to be the spy. Feigning confusion about the cable, Luxford went over to the State Department on late Monday afternoon. Morgenthau had been grateful that Long sent the cables so promptly, but Luxford explained the paraphrase

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Morgenthau called Charles Riegelman—President of the National Refugee Service—and asked him to call his son. Riegelman was instructed to return his father's call from outside the State Department. When he did so, his father told him to visit Morgenthau at home. Ibid.

of cable 354 was confusing. Luxford asked to see the original, feigning hope it might clear up the matter. After stalling, Long finally showed Luxford the original text of the cable. Luxford pointed out the omission of the reference to 482 in the paraphrase and asked for a copy of the original cable. The file rooms were already closed for the day, so Long promised to send it over first thing Tuesday morning.⁹⁰

Monday December 20th, which began with a meeting at the State Department during which Hull and Long surprised the Treasury Department, ended with Secretary and Mrs. Morgenthau entertaining William Riegelman, the Secretary's second cousin and one of Breckinridge Long's newest employees.

At a meeting the next afternoon, Morgenthau warned his staff that Riegelman was inexperienced, trusted Long, and, like many State employees, had been given the authority to send cables under Hull's signature. It was not that Riegelman himself was untrustworthy. He was merely in over his head. Morgenthau had convinced Riegelman to officially inform Long of his relationship to the Secretary, but confided to the Treasury staff that he was fearful his young cousin would be "ruined" just like Meltzer.⁹¹

At the same meeting, Luxford informed his colleagues of his own experiences with Riegelman. When the State Department had not sent over a copy of cable 482 by 11:00am as Long had promised, Luxford called to check on it. Riegelman had answered, saying that he had five people looking, but the original had been checked out from the file room by Dean Acheson's office and had not been returned. Riegelman had heard that

⁹⁰ Ansel Luxford, Memorandum for the Files, 1943 December 20; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688II, Document 186-188; LOC.

⁹¹ Transcript, "Jewish Evacuation" meeting, 1943 December 21; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688II, Document 201-218; LOC.

“Acheson's assistant, Hiss, had requested it and according to one of the girls in his office, he showed it to someone in the Treasury.”⁹² The cable had not been replaced after Hiss showed it to DuBois three days earlier. Riegelman did not suspect any intrigue, though the observation could have been dangerous to both Hiss and the Treasury staff. An hour later, Riegelman called Luxford. He had found the original cable and read it over the phone, promising to send a paraphrased copy to the Treasury later that day.⁹³ They finally, officially, had both cables 354 and 482.

The Treasury staff debated what to do with their newfound proof.⁹⁴ Morgenthau claimed to have known it would have been too soon for the cable to be re-filed; they should have waited a few extra days before asking for a copy. The Treasury staff decided to write another memo to Hull, this one exposing the cables as an ultimate example of his staff's obstruction. The letter will “hit them again while they are wobbling” and might possibly even force Long out. Morgenthau asked his staff to include Oscar Cox in the drafting, since Cox could feed information to Stettinius if necessary. They believed the State Department was scared and acting defensively. It had been a busy few days: the British had received a strongly worded cable in response to their objections to Riegner; the Riegner license had been issued; Treasury had received the cables they requested, which State knew were damning; and the Rescue Resolution had been voted unanimously out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and would be scheduled for a vote.

⁹² Ansel Luxford, Memorandum to the Files, 1943 December 21; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688II, Document 199; LOC.

⁹³ Ansel Luxford, Memorandum, for the Files, 1943 December 21; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688II, Document 200; LOC.

⁹⁴ This meeting also concluded a bet between Henry Morgenthau and Josiah DuBois. Morgenthau swore that he did not receive a copy of DuBois' memo about his meeting with Hiss; DuBois promised the Secretary had received a copy. It must be lost in his office. Morgenthau's secretary found it, and DuBois received a pack of Camel cigarettes as winner of the bet.

Morgenthau, still a farmer at heart, took the opportunity to congratulate his staff on their hard work: “Let's see if I can do this correctly, as a member of the 4-H Club: the hand, the heart, the head, and health. I don't know what you do when you demonstrate health, but, anyway, I congratulate you on the heart and the head, anyway.”⁹⁵

On Thursday, December 23rd, the Treasury staff presented Morgenthau with a memo summarizing all they had learned about cables 354 and 482.⁹⁶ Though the Secretary knew all the information in the report, the language was “terrifically upsetting.”⁹⁷

To put it bluntly, Mr. Secretary, it appears that certain responsible officials of this Government were so fearful that this Government might act to save the Jews of Europe if the gruesome facts relating to Hitler's plans to exterminate them became known, that they...attempted to suppress the facts... We leave it for your judgment whether this action has made such officials the accomplices of Hitler in this program and whether or not these officials are not war criminals in every sense of the term.⁹⁸

Morgenthau clarified with his staff that this memo was just for him, not for Hull. They would continue to work on a version incorporating the facts that could go to Hull—

⁹⁵ Transcript, “Jewish Evacuation” meeting, 1943 December 21; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688II, Document 201-218; LOC.

⁹⁶ The same day, William Riegelman presented Secretary Hull with a twenty-four-page report of the history of the World Jewish Congress proposal and the conflict between the State Department and Treasury Department. In regards to language, it was similar to the Treasury memo for Morgenthau: an in-depth narrative citing and quoting various cables and a defensive indignity at accusations of delays. Riegelman wrote that the Treasury “accusation we believe to be completely unjustified, and I do not feel that the record can be allowed to stand as it now is. In view of the fact that this Department has at all times been eager to pursue any project which offers real hope of bringing aid to the persecuted people in enemy-occupied territory and has in fact actively engaged in many such operations, no statement that this Department has delayed a plan which might have alleviated the condition of the Jews in Europe can be allowed to go unchallenged.” Hull does not appear to have transmitted or mentioned this rebuttal to Morgenthau. William Riegelman, Memo to Secretary Hull, RG-59, “War Refugee Board,” Box 1, Folder Misc. 1943; NACP.

⁹⁷ Transcript, “Jewish Evacuation” meeting, 1943 December 23; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688II, Document 223-223I; LOC.

⁹⁸ This paragraph was a last-minute addition to the memo. DuBois’ draft from December 22nd does not include this paragraph, but his draft dated December 23rd (edited with the assistance of Pehle, Luxford, and Schmidt) includes a handwritten addition of this paragraph to the main text. The copy Morgenthau received incorporated the paragraph into the typed text, so it must have been added that day. “Memorandum: For Secretary Morgenthau’s Information Only”, 1943 December 23; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688II, Document 223J-223X; LOC.

something that Hull could not question and that would leave the State Department staff with no defense.⁹⁹

The Treasury Department Plans to Reveal State Department Delays

Even with a report to Hull being prepared, Morgenthau debated how to proceed. The day after Christmas, Morgenthau called Randolph Paul from his farm in New York. Morgenthau had spoken to Stephen Wise, who reminded him that Roosevelt had expressed agreement with the Riegner plan. If Morgenthau could update the President that the license had now been issued, he could take the opportunity to explain the five-month delay. Paul was less enthusiastic about this approach. The Treasury staff was still working on a report with all the facts, and it might be better to present them to Hull, and then to the President, instead of following up later to report on the obstruction with cables 354 and 482.¹⁰⁰ In a meeting on December 31st, the Treasury staff briefed Morgenthau on everything: the Riegner telegram of the summer of 1942; cables 354 and 482; and the Bermuda Conference.¹⁰¹ Since their last meeting, Josiah DuBois had started to draft the memo for Hull, mixing portions from the December 23rd memo to Morgenthau with accusatory language against the State Department staff.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Transcript, “Jewish Evacuation” meeting, 1943 December 23; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688II, Document 223-223I; LOC.

¹⁰⁰ Transcript, Phone Conversation between Henry Morgenthau, Randolph Paul, Harry Dexter White, 1943 December 26; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688II, Document 227-235; LOC.

¹⁰¹ Transcript, “Argentina/Jewish Evacuation” meeting, 1943 December 31; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688II, Document 237-249; LOC.

¹⁰² Later in his life, DuBois claimed to have drafted the memo entitled “A Report to the Secretary on the Acquiescence of this Government in the Murder of the Jews” on Christmas Day, December 25, 1943. Various historians and authors—most prominently Rafael Medoff, who based the main premise of his book, *Blowing the Whistle on Genocide: Josiah E. DuBois Jr. and the Struggle for a U.S. Response to the Holocaust*, on the heroism of DuBois’s authorship—have taken this claim at face value and ascribed the entire authorship of the memo to DuBois. Based on his own drafts of the documents that eventually led to the “Acquiescence” memo, it is clear that DuBois played a large role in the

But this memo would never get to Hull. The Treasury staff decided that rather than write another rebuttal to the State Department, they wished to write an official report for Morgenthau laying out all the evidence necessary to convince him to bypass Hull and go straight to President Roosevelt. When Morgenthau pointed out that Hull had recently been very responsive—sending the cable to the British and issuing the Riegner telegram—DuBois countered, “That is just peanuts compared with this overall problem.”¹⁰³ He wanted more. So did Oscar Cox. The same day, Morgenthau responded to Cox, who had sent a new copy of his refugee committee proposal¹⁰⁴ complete with draft press release and executive order,¹⁰⁵ to tell him that the Treasury department was still at work on the issue.¹⁰⁶ Everyone had to wait.

Licenses

Meanwhile, Saly Mayer was having trouble in Switzerland. In September 1943, the

writing of the documents, and in the “Acquiescence” memo. However, other Treasury staff (Pehle, Luxford, and Schmidt) also played a significant role in writing, editing, and debating the drafts. On December 25th, the Treasury staff was still planning to send a memo to Hull. The plan was to take the factual information verbatim from their December 23rd memo to Morgenthau and insert new language in the introduction, conclusion, and in the arguments in between the factual examples. If DuBois did draft anything on December 25th, it was likely this language. Sometime between December 23rd and December 28th (the draft is undated), DuBois wrote language for the Hull memo, leaving large portions of the page clear where the text from the December 23rd memo would be inserted. Since this language was specifically written for Hull’s attention, very little of it was actually incorporated into the eventual “Acquiescence” memo. Though DuBois was one of the lead authors of the “Acquiescence” memo, he was not the sole author, nor did he draft the memo on Christmas Day 1943. The drafts are located in 2014.115.1, William Spiegler papers related to Josiah E. DuBois, Jr., Box 1; USHMM.

¹⁰³ Transcript, “Argentina/Jewish Evacuation” meeting, 1943 December 31; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688II, Document 237-249; LOC.

¹⁰⁴ Cox also sent a copy to Sol Bloom, and spoke with him in the final days of December, suggesting that Roosevelt could issue this executive order as an alternative to the Rescue Resolution. Cox also sent a copy of Roosevelt’s advisor, Judge Samuel Rosenman, on January 1st. Oscar Cox, Memo to Sol Bloom, 1943 December 28; Oscar Cox Papers, Box 101, Folder “Refugees.” (FDRL). Oscar Cox, Phone Log, 1943 December 28; Oscar Cox Papers, Box 144, Folder “Calendar”; FDRL. Oscar Cox, Proposal, 1944 January 1; Samuel Rosenman Papers, Box 1; FDRL.

¹⁰⁵ Oscar Cox, Letter to Henry Morgenthau with enclosures, 1943 December 20; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688II, Document 191-194; LOC.

¹⁰⁶ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Letter to Oscar Cox, 1943 December 31; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 688II, Document 250; LOC.

Foreign Funds Control office in the Treasury Department and Bernard Meltzer's office in the State Department had granted permission for Mayer, as the Joint representative in Switzerland, to borrow up to \$100,000 a month for relief work in France. The Joint plan—in contrast with the World Jewish Congress's Riegner plan—had been approved quickly, largely because Pehle had managed to avoid working through Breckinridge Long's office. But Pehle had never issued Mayer an official license for his relief work, and Mayer was running into problems. On New Year's Eve, Moses Leavitt of the Joint wrote to Pehle, explaining that Daniel Reagan, the commercial attaché at the Bern embassy who was supposed to approve the people from whom Mayer was purchasing French francs, was refusing to do so. Leavitt asked if Pehle would issue a formal license to the Joint so Mayer could continue his relief work.¹⁰⁷

On January 3, 1944, without consulting the State Department staff, John Pehle wrote a license for Saly Mayer with much simpler language than Riegner's license, though Pehle authorized Mayer to purchase significantly more: 2,500,000 Swiss francs (approximately \$580,000), whereas Riegner had been authorized \$25,000.¹⁰⁸ Pehle still had to go through the State Department to transmit the license. With Bernard Meltzer gone, Pehle sent a cover letter to Breckinridge Long, asking him to send the cable to Bern. He had reason to believe that Long would transmit it without a problem. Knowing he was personally vulnerable, Long had been especially cooperative with Treasury since

¹⁰⁷ Moses Leavitt, Letter to John Pehle, 1943 December 31; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 28, Documents 1007-1009; USHMM.

¹⁰⁸ Both Riegner and Mayer were purchasing currencies in a wartime economy in which exchange rates fluctuated and percentages were added by the owners of the desired currency. Still, in 1944, the exchange rate reached as high as 4.29 franc to dollar ratio, making Saly Mayer's 2,500,000 Swiss francs the equivalent of \$580,000—more than twenty three times higher than Riegner's license, though Riegner was also purchasing Romanian lei and French francs. John Pehle, Cable to Bern with cover letter, 1944 January 3; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 28, Documents 1003-1006; USHMM.

their December 20th meeting and had been working with them to issue a much smaller license of \$20,000 to the Joint for relief work in Italy.¹⁰⁹ Pehle did not discuss the much larger Joint license with the State Department before sending it for transmission. Pehle did not consult Morgenthau either—a fact he was forced to defend in front of the Secretary. Morgenthau, concerned that Pehle’s initiative would undo the gains Treasury had made against the State Department, was somewhat placated by the reminder that Mayer’s license was only to formalize what State and Treasury had agreed upon over the summer.¹¹⁰ The State Department, however, did not see it that way.

The next afternoon, Pehle found that the license had yet to be sent to Bern. He also learned that Riegelman had informed Long of his relationship to Morgenthau; Long had responded that perhaps the Treasury Department would be less suspicious of State as a result. Upon recounting this, Pehle joked, “Only more so.” Riegelman was assigned to transmit the license, to which Pehle made a minor change, adding a paragraph to the end indicating that the plan had the endorsement of both State and Treasury. Morgenthau insisted the license be transmitted that afternoon before sunset, which Pehle was directed to inform Riegelman, would be at 5:31pm “and no damn fooling.”¹¹¹

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the license did not go out as planned. With Pehle’s addition to the cable indicating that the State Department approved of the program, Riegelman insisted on investigating Mayer’s plan—ignoring the fact that this license was

¹⁰⁹ John Pehle, Memorandum to Assistant Secretary Long, 1944 January 3; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 38), 5039; NACP.

¹¹⁰ Transcript, “Jewish Evacuation” meeting, 1944 January 4; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 690, Document 23-30; LOC.

¹¹¹ Transcript, Phone Conversation between Henry Morgenthau and John Pehle, 1944 January 4; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 690, Document 92-94; LOC.

formalizing a program that had been agreed upon by his predecessor, Bernard Meltzer. Meeting on the morning of January 5th, Riegelman informed Pehle of his concerns that there would be conflict between the Joint and the World Jewish Congress. The organizations occasionally clashed, and Riegelman felt as though their representatives—Mayer and Riegner—would interfere with each other’s work and compete to obtain funds. Riegelman wanted to warn Leland Harrison in Bern that he may be called upon to arbitrate between the two organizations. Pehle refused. This, he thought, would only give the State Department in Bern an excuse to obstruct relief efforts. Instead, Pehle said that he would meet with representatives of both organizations in Washington and warn them to make sure Mayer and Riegner did not conflict with one another. Morgenthau approved of the solution.¹¹²

At 6:08pm that evening, William Riegelman called the Foreign Funds Control Department at the Treasury and spoke with Florence Hodel, a lawyer who worked as one of Pehle’s assistants. He read her the paraphrased license for Mayer, and “reluctantly” provided a paraphrase of a second cable with instructions for Harrison in Bern. Against Pehle’s direct orders, Riegelman’s cable to Harrison detailed the differences between the Joint and the World Jewish Congress license. It warned Harrison that the two organizations working for the same purpose may make "possible the development of certain difficulties. The entire program may well be endangered by competition between them. In order to insure that the objectives...are attained...you are requested to take such reasonable action as may appear expedient or advisable to you.” Riegelman admitted that

¹¹² Transcript, “Jewish Evacuation” meeting, 1944 January 5; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 691, Document 55-65; LOC.

he knew this cable was against Pehle's wishes, however "State felt that it is a better judge than [Treasury] of operations in the field."¹¹³

The next morning, Pehle complained to Morgenthau. "They had no business sending that memo...he realized it was not in accordance with my views. They sent it anyway. It is just another example, Mr. Secretary. We will have continual trouble with that guy."¹¹⁴ With Morgenthau's blessing, Pehle set up a meeting with Riegelman in his office, careful to have a stenographer present to record the conversation.¹¹⁵ Conveying that the Treasury Department was "very, very disturbed" that the Joint license went out with the added cable to Harrison, Pehle made it clear that if anything like that happened again, the Treasury would refuse to deal with Riegelman. Riegelman countered, "Mr. Pehle, I want to ask you something: Don't you agree the Department of State has the right to send any telegram to its missions it wants? You made a great point, as did the Secretary, that it was vital that this plan should have our approval.... You convinced us when we were here yesterday to recommend to Mr. Hull that he should approve of it and Mr. Hull did approve." Riegelman then confirmed that Pehle had heard him correctly: Hull approved of the second cable, knowing that the Treasury Department did not. "That is what the Treasury is complaining about and feels very strongly about," Pehle replied.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Florence Hodel, Memorandum for the Files, 1944, January 5; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 28, Documents 992-993; USHMM.

¹¹⁴ Transcript, "Jewish Evacuation" meeting, 1944 January 6; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 691, Document 161-171; LOC.

¹¹⁵ The meeting was held at 4:30pm in room 501 in the Sloane Building at the corner of 12th and G Street NW. The Foreign Funds Control headquarters (and Pehle's office) was in this building rather than in the main Treasury building, which three blocks away at 15th and G, NW.

¹¹⁶ Transcript, Conversation between John Pehle and William Riegelman, 1944 January 6; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 691, Document 175-180; LOC.

When the Treasury staff met the next morning, on January 7th, Morgenthau asked when he would have their report laying out the State Department actions. DuBois had finished an eighteen-page draft, but it was not yet ready for presentation. The last paragraph of the draft was about Riegelman. DuBois wrote that it was “obvious that [Riegelman] was selected in order that the guilty State Department officials could point to the fact that these matters were now being 'handled' by your cousin, thus attempting to cover up part of their guilt at his expense.”¹¹⁷ But at the Treasury meeting, it became clear that if the State Department wanted to cover their guilt by pointing at Riegelman, they had misjudged Riegelman’s lack of discretion. (Morgenthau commented, "I will say this much for Riegelman, he does tell us a lot.")¹¹⁸ At their meeting the day before, after arguing over the cable to Harrison, Pehle and Riegelman had taken their conversation off the record. Riegelman revealed that “Breckinridge Long's testimony before the House Committee was deliberately misleading. It contained false statements and they were made up deliberately to cover up the inaction of the State Department.” Riegelman had informed Pehle that the British did not want to have to defend their position regarding the Riegner plan—and since the State Department refused to take new refugees into the United States, the British were concerned that Palestine might become part of the discussion.¹¹⁹ When the British responded to Hull’s strongly worded cable of December

¹¹⁷ Josiah DuBois. “Memorandum for Secretary Morgenthau,” 1944 January 5; 2014.115.1, William Spiegler papers related to Josiah E. DuBois, Jr., Box 1; USHMM.

¹¹⁸ Transcript, “Jewish Evacuation” meeting, 1944 January 7; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 692, Document 15-31; LOC.

¹¹⁹ Also on January 7th, the Joint wrote to William Hayter of the British Foreign Office to complain. The Joint had previously requested that Switzerland agree to receive refugee children from France. The Swiss were hesitant to receive the children for the duration of the war, but would consent if the United States or Great Britain would confirm that they would be removed after the war. The Joint proposed that Great Britain hold Palestine visas (within the quota) in reserve

18th, their response had not been substantially different from their original objections. They still did not object to the plan for financial reasons, but thought the accommodation and transportation issues that could come from the success of the plan “might be embarrassing” to both the United States and Great Britain.¹²⁰

A few days later, Riegelman informed Pehle of a similar sentiment within the United States military. For several months, the State Department had been receiving reports and requests to aid people who had managed to escape to the Yugoslav island of Rab in the Adriatic Sea. Reports varied as to how many refugees were there (some of whom were reported to have been freed from concentration camps by Yugoslav partisans) and whether they were still in danger. In October 1943, the World Jewish Congress had asked the State Department if they could help those trapped on Rab. The State Department had referred the question to the IGC, which in turn asked the State Department to inquire about the situation with the Joint Chiefs. In mid-December, Admiral E.J. King had responded that the military situation did not allow them to aid refugees on Rab. In addition, he was concerned that “such action might create a precedent which would lead to other demands and an influx of additional refugees for the care of whom the military authorities would be unable to provide facilities and supplies.”¹²¹ The Allied military forces would continue to care for refugees who managed to reach Italy on their own. Less than two weeks after the State Department received the Admiral’s reply,

for the duration of the war for the children. The British refused and the Joint asked for reconsideration. Moses Leavitt, Letter to William Hayter, 1944 January 7; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 692, Document 37-38; LOC.

¹²⁰ John Winant, Cable 139 from London to Washington, 1944 January 8; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 692, Document 32; LOC.

¹²¹ Adm. E.J. King, Letter to Cordell Hull, 1943 December 15; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4852; NACP.

they received notice that the Island of Rab was now occupied by Germany.¹²² In a letter to the World Jewish Congress on January 3rd, Breckinridge Long's staff wrote only that "our efforts have been interrupted by the recapture of the Island," and that they would inquire with the IGC if any assistance could be rendered to the refugees.¹²³ This was a clear deflection: there were no ongoing efforts to aid the refugees on Rab, nor would there be due to the military's concerns about setting a precedent.

On January 6th, the State Department received word that the island was back in the hands of the Yugoslav partisans¹²⁴ and on January 8th Undersecretary Edward Stettinius wrote a memo to Hull protesting the military's reaction: "If that is a true expression of military policy, and I question if it can represent the considered opinion of high military leaders, we might as well 'shut up shop' on trying to get additional refugees out of occupied Europe."¹²⁵ On January 10th, Riegelman told Pehle about the conflict, provided him with copies of some of the cables about the island, and informed him that the IGC was considering a proposal from the World Jewish Congress to fund the evacuation of the refugees.¹²⁶

By January 12th, Morgenthau was impatient for the memo his staff promised him about the State Department. The Treasury staff had been working on their report for several weeks, but the writing had proven difficult. That morning, Pehle accompanied

¹²² Roger Grant, Memorandum, 1943 December 27; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4882; NACP.

¹²³ Howard Travers, Letter to Nahum Goldmann, 1944 January 3; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4735; NACP.

¹²⁴ Memorandum of Conversation between Grant and Hogdon, 1944 January 6; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4735; NACP.

¹²⁵ Edward Stettinius, Letter to Hull re: Refugees, 1944 January 8; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4735; NACP.

¹²⁶ Florence Hodel, Memorandum for the Files; 1944 January 8; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 17, Folder 6, Documents 573-575; USHMM.

Morgenthau to a meeting at the State Department about the freezing of Argentinian assets, a policy about which the State and Treasury also differed. Before they left, Pehle warned Morgenthau that Breckinridge Long would be at the meeting and might try to trick the Secretary into admitting that refugee problems were improving. Morgenthau should not think that Long's minor efforts were evidence of a new rescue policy. Their report for Morgenthau would be ready the next day, and the Treasury staff planned to advise the Secretary to bypass Hull and go straight to Roosevelt.¹²⁷

At the State Department meeting, after a long discussion of the Argentinian assets problems, the Treasury Department brought up the British response regarding the Riegner plan. Long brought R. Borden Reams and Howard Travers of his staff into the meeting, but when Morgenthau asked for an introduction, Cordell Hull did not know their names. In reporting back to his staff, Morgenthau expressed his shock that Reams and Travers were so involved in all the refugee issues, but Hull did not know them, nor did he have any real memory of the British cable. It was evident to the Treasury staff that Long had been controlling State Department policy in this matter for a long time, with little productive input from Hull. At the State Department meeting, Long had informed the Treasury staff (and Hull) that he had met with Sir Ronald Campbell of the British embassy to discuss the matter. Long had suggested that Tripoli and Cyrenaica in North Africa be considered as potential refugee havens. Back at Treasury, Morgenthau's staff admitted the sheer fact that Long had suggested a plan made them nervous, figuring that

¹²⁷ Transcript, "Argentina" meeting, 1944 January 12; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 693, Document 70-78; LOC.

this must be evidence of some sort of trick.¹²⁸ Morgenthau was cautiously optimistic and willing to organize a meeting with relief agencies about this: “I kept saying to you that I am more interested in getting these Jews out and doing something than I am in building the record.”¹²⁹ Cognizant that the Secretary had not yet read the memo his staff spent so long preparing, Pehle suggested caution:

You see, we are at the deciding point, right here, as I see it. The Treasury can follow one of two different paths: One is the one of saying, 'I can't get results working through Long and his group of people over there,' and go to the President and try to get somebody else to take the job; the other is to help them in what little ways the Treasury can to make Long's program a success in the mild way in which it is going to be a success. I don't object to that because it makes the record. Nobody cares about the record, but what it does, it enables Long to say to anybody who criticizes, 'Well, I have the plans working; the Treasury knows all about them; Mr. Morgenthau is very enthusiastic about them.'¹³⁰

This meeting, and Long's new proposal about refugee havens, was not enough to stop them from moving forward with their report.

“Report to the Secretary”

On Thursday, January 13th, 1944, Henry Morgenthau's staff gathered at 11:00am to finally discuss their report, entitled “Report to the Secretary on the Acquiescence of this Government in the Murder of the Jews.” It was written under Randolph Paul's signature, but had been initially drafted by Josiah DuBois, with collaborative edits and additions, truly making the report a group effort. The Secretary quite liked the title, though he

¹²⁸ The Treasury staff were not the only people nervous about the plan. In a conversation that afternoon, William Riegelman confided in Pehle that he believed Long “had a bear by the tail” by proposing the evacuation of Jews to those areas. Riegelman had been stationed in the region as part of an ambulance corps and believed the cities to be abandoned—without water supplies and unable to easily receive relief aid. John Pehle, Memorandum for the Files, 1944 January 12; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 693, Document 102; LOC.

¹²⁹ Transcript, “Jewish Evacuation” meeting, 1944 January 12; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 693, Document 79-93; LOC.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

learned little new information; the staff had even copied some of the paragraphs from the memo they had presented to him on December 23rd. The report was long, full of impassioned talking points, and intended to convince Morgenthau to go straight to the President. On the first page, the Treasury staff had written, “Unless remedial steps of a drastic nature are taken, and taken immediately, I am certain that no effective action will be taken by this Government to prevent the complete extermination of the Jews in German controlled Europe, and that this Government will have to share for all time responsibility for this extermination.” The report described the history of the Riegner plan with all the State Department delays, along with the obstruction of information evident in cables 354 and 482. Breckinridge Long was singled out as a major part of the problem. The report concluded with the statement: “If men of the temperament and philosophy of Long continue in control of immigration administration, we may as well take down that plaque from the Statue of Liberty and black out the 'lamp beside the golden door.’”¹³¹ This was the passion they wanted Morgenthau to bring to the President. It was important for Morgenthau to spend time with the “Acquiescence” memo, learn all the facts, and able to convince Roosevelt that it was imperative to remove the State Department from refugee and relief matters. The Treasury staff had already started drafting a less provocative statement for the President to read. The important thing to focus on was getting the day-to-day relief operations out of the State Department.

Morgenthau, who was going out of town to give a speech for the War Bonds Drive, set up a staff meeting for Saturday morning, inviting Oscar Cox, Samuel Rosenman, and

¹³¹ “Report to the Secretary on the Acquiescence of this Government in the Murder of the Jews,” 1944 January 13; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 693, Document 212; LOC.

Ben Cohen to help them prepare for Roosevelt.¹³² When he was invited, Rosenman expressed concern that if there was publicity for the meeting, the plan may be criticized if it was revealed that Morgenthau invited three Jews; Morgenthau reassured him, but was privately incredulous at such a concern.¹³³ Oscar Cox's assistant, Milton Handler (with the help of Ben Cohen and Harry Dexter White) spent part of Friday working on final versions of the draft Executive Order and press release which Cox had been tinkering with for seven months. It was time to marry Cox's plan with the Treasury's evidence.

At 9:30am on Saturday, January 15th, a group, including Oscar Cox and Ben Cohen, gathered in Morgenthau's office. Sam Rosenman was not present, and in fact, never made it to the meeting; he was at the White House for the President's routine briefing ("in the bedroom," as he called it) and had warned he might be late, but the President had the flu and had slept in.¹³⁴ By the time Roosevelt's briefing was over, so was the meeting at Treasury. Before reviewing the new "Personal Report to the President"—a much shorter version of the "Acquiescence" memo, still with many facts but with toned-down rhetoric—Pehle informed his colleagues of a puzzling new development. William Riegelman had informed Florence Hodel of a memo he had written about the refugee problem, proposing a committee of State, Treasury, and Foreign Economic Administration staff, under the direction of Howard Travers. Cox commented, "It looks like some of the heat is beginning to work a little bit."¹³⁵ Whether his plan was serious or

¹³² Rosenman and Cohen were advisors to President Roosevelt.

¹³³ Transcript, "Jewish Evacuation" meeting, 1944 January 13; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 693, Document 187-211; LOC.

¹³⁴ Roosevelt was certainly tired from illness, and likely also from the Democratic National Committee, which was meeting that weekend in Washington, DC to discuss nominating the President for an unprecedented fourth term.

¹³⁵ Transcript, "Jewish Evacuation" meeting, 1944 January 15; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 694, Document 59-110; LOC.

not, Riegelman had come to the same conclusion as Oscar Cox had in June, the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People had in July, and the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee had in December. The time for a relief and rescue agency had arrived.

Pehle read the “Personal Report to the President” aloud, periodically pausing to answer questions, mainly from Ben Cohen, about why the State Department would decide to prevent the transmission of information. Ansel Luxford read the Executive Order, which called for the establishment of a “War Refugee Board” (the first time the eventual name of the agency was used) as “it is the policy of this Government to take all measures within its power to rescue the victims of enemy oppression who are imminent danger of death and otherwise to afford such victims all possible relief and assistance consistent with the successful prosecution of the war.” According to the final version of Cox’s Executive Order, the Board would consist of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, and the Foreign Economic Administrator (Hull, Morgenthau, and Leo Crowley) and would be charged with the responsibility to effect relief and find safe haven for refugees. Cox envisioned the Board could accept private contributions and would strive to work through existing government facilities—appointing overseas attachés with diplomatic status—but also through other governmental and private relief agencies. Paul read a draft memo to the Director of the Budget requesting an unspecified amount from the President’s Emergency Fund for the Board’s operations, while Luxford read a draft letter for Roosevelt to send to Hull informing the Secretary of State of the Executive Order. There was some debate over whether it should indicate that the State Department’s work in this regard had been unsatisfactory, and also how Hull might respond to such a

letter. Cox argued that perhaps Morgenthau should go to Hull first and warn that he was bringing these proposals to the President. Ben Cohen disagreed, fearing Roosevelt would give the State Department the opportunity to explain all the delays, rendering the Treasury proposals unnecessary in his eyes.¹³⁶

At this point in the meeting, Morgenthau called the White House to schedule a noon meeting the next day with Roosevelt. The conversation switched to suggestions for the Executive Director. Names of representatives of relief agencies were put forth, including Clarence Pickett of the American Friends Service Committee and Moses Leavitt of the Joint. Since they all agreed the most important trait for the director was drive and determination rather than religious affiliation, Ansel Luxford suggested John Pehle. Morgenthau agreed. “I dreamed of that, too. I have been thinking about nothing else, but the question is whether I want to give him up.” Pehle was clearly the choice of the room. Morgenthau also decided to have Pehle and Randolph Paul accompany him to his meeting with the President the next day. At the end of the meeting, Ben Cohen reiterated the need for an Executive Order and a full-time director, using words that would have resonated for Roosevelt: “We want a new deal.”¹³⁷

Meeting with Roosevelt

In the “Personal Report to the President” memo the Treasury staff quoted the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, which had issued a statement after unanimously voting in support of the Rescue Resolution: “We have talked; we have sympathized; we

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

have expressed our horror; the time to act is long past due.”¹³⁸ At 12:45pm on Sunday, January 16th, Henry Morgenthau, Randolph Paul, and John Pehle met with President Roosevelt for about twenty minutes. After being handed the “Personal Report,” Roosevelt indicated he preferred the information be summarized verbally. Pehle explained what they had discovered. Morgenthau mentioned his father’s experiences as a witness to the atrocities in Armenia and argued that if concerted effort were made, they could achieve results. Roosevelt agreed. The President asked that Stettinius be involved with the Board, and also wanted Henry Stimson, as Secretary of War, to be one of the main members instead of Leo Crowley. Morgenthau agreed to the change.

That evening, Morgenthau invited Paul, Pehle, Rosenman, and Edward Stettinius to his home. The Treasury staff briefed Stettinius on their report to the President. The Undersecretary, who was not surprised to hear that Long had been a problem for Treasury, had some news to share of his own. On January 15th, the day before the Treasury staff met with President Roosevelt, a State Department reorganization planned since October 1943 went into effect. In an enormous coincidence, Breckinridge Long had been removed from his duties in the Visa division. He retained his role as Assistant Secretary, but had been charged with acting as State’s Congressional liaison.¹³⁹ The Treasury Department’s “Personal Report to the President” had singled out Long as a particular problem at State; Pehle had also mentioned Long in his verbal summary of the report to Roosevelt. The President had known of Long’s new role at the State Department

¹³⁸ “Personal Report to the President”, 1944 January 15; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 694, Document 111-118; LOC.

¹³⁹ “Organization of the State Department”, 1944 January 15; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 23, Folder 19, Documents 393-483; USHMM.

and had alluded to the reorganization at the meeting, a reference the Treasury staff had not understood at the time. Still, Roosevelt, approved the new War Refugee Board. Had the Treasury Department waited any longer, they might have been forced to work with the new organization at State, since one of their main arguments in favor of the War Refugee Board had been Long's obstructionism. As it happened, the timing was perfect. The Treasury Department had nothing to do with it, but Long had been removed from refugee matters that weekend anyway.

After reading the new Executive Order, Stettinius thought it was "wonderful." Pehle would prepare an Executive Order incorporating the President's substitution of Henry Stimson for Leo Crowley and give it to Rosenman the next day for Roosevelt's signature. At the end of the meeting, Morgenthau proposed John Pehle as his nominee for the acting Director of the War Refugee Board. Stettinius agreed.¹⁴⁰

Pehle began work the next day. It was 1944. For the first time, the United States had a policy advocating for the relief and rescue of those persecuted by the Nazis. The time to act was long past due.

¹⁴⁰ John Pehle, Memorandum for the Secretary's Files, 1944 January 16; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 694, Document 190-192; LOC.

CHAPTER THREE: IT IS THE POLICY OF THIS GOVERNMENT TO TAKE ALL MEASURES: JANUARY 17, 1944—MARCH 24, 1944

After the success of Sunday, January 16th—with President Roosevelt agreeing to the creation of the War Refugee Board and an interesting meeting at Morgenthau's house—Monday began with the potential for disaster. On Sunday evening, John Pehle, no doubt full of excitement and adrenaline from the day, left Morgenthau's for another meeting. Pehle invited his co-conspirators, Ansel Luxford and Josiah DuBois, to his home in Bethesda, Maryland, where the three Treasury employees put the finishing touches on the Executive Order, memos to Secretary Hull and to the Director of the Budget, and a press release announcing the hard-fought establishment of the War Refugee Board. On Monday morning, Pehle was to drop the documents off to Roosevelt advisor Samuel Rosenman so they were ready for the President at his morning briefing. But the Treasury Department car service, used for important occasions such as this, never came.

John Pehle

John Pehle did not grow up with a personal driver and, unlike many of senior staff over at the State Department, his elevation into a position of power was not foreordained. Born in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1909, John was the eldest son of Otto and Agnes Pehle; Otto, a German immigrant from Braunschweig, became a naturalized citizen in

1905, while Agnes was the daughter of Swedish immigrants. The Pehle family spent most of John's childhood in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, where Otto managed a Loose-Wiles biscuit factory. In the 1920s, Otto, Agnes, and their four children moved to Omaha, where Otto entered the oil business and where John graduated high school in 1926. He stayed in Omaha to major in English at Creighton College, where he participated in ROTC and was in the military fraternity Chi Delta Chi. Obviously intelligent and thoughtful, Pehle interned at a New York law firm after graduating and before entering law school at Yale. There, Pehle studied under Thurman Arnold, a pioneer of the philosophy of legal realism. Legal realists argued that legal rulings should be based on subjective rather than static interpretations of the law, taking into account the general welfare of society and addressing the fact that the law, as generally written and interpreted, favors those with money and prestige. In a 1944 interview, Pehle credited Arnold's liberalism with "influencing his general philosophy of government and law more than any other person with whom he has come in contact."¹ Pehle earned his law degree (LLB) in 1933. Pehle had not only found a mentor and a guiding philosophy at Yale, he also found a wife. In 1934, Pehle married former Yale art student Francha Elster, whose father had been a professor at Cornell medical school.

When John graduated in 1935 with his JSD (Juris Scientum Doctor, an academic step above an LLB), the Pehles immediately moved to Washington, where John joined the staff of the Treasury Department General Counsel's office. In September 1940, Pehle was promoted to the position of Assistant to the Secretary and placed in charge of

¹ William O. Player, "John W. Pehle—Refugee Board's Chief," *New York Post*, 1944 January 31; Papers of the War Refugee Board, Box 61, Folder 2; FDRL.

Foreign Funds Control. Basing most of its work on the Trading with the Enemy Act of 1917, Pehle's office was responsible for controlling all trade with enemy nations and with seizing enemy assets in the United States. In June 1941, Pehle's workload increased immensely when Roosevelt ordered the freezing of all German and Italian assets in the United States; even more so when Japanese assets were seized in July. Pehle and other Foreign Funds employees traveled to California in 1942 to oversee the seizure and protection of property owned by Japanese-Americans who were being interned in relocation camps.² As his office controlled the flow of money between the United States and enemy belligerents, Foreign Funds Control had to issue licenses for any organizations that wanted to send money overseas for relief purposes. In the summer of 1943, Pehle and his staff received the World Jewish Congress request for a license for Gerhart Riegner. The long delays issuing the license after Treasury approvals led Pehle's team to uncover obstructions within the State Department; to overcome them, they proposed a War Refugee Board. With Morgenthau's support and Pehle's willingness to favor action based on humanitarian need, the WRB was going to be a reality. And so, at age thirty-four, John Pehle needed to get to work.

Despite the fact that he had requested and confirmed the car the night before, no one showed up for Pehle on Monday morning. In a phone call to Morgenthau, Pehle related that it was only because he was able to find a car to use that he dropped the documents off with Rosenman; if he had not, Rosenman "would have missed the meeting

² United States. Army. Western defense command and fourth army. Final Report: Japanese Evacuation From the West Coast. 1942. Washington: U.S. Govt. print. off., 1943.

and it might have thrown this whole thing off.”³ Despite Pehle’s promptness, the Executive Order formally announcing the War Refugee Board was not issued until Saturday, January 22nd, nearly a week after Roosevelt received the Treasury’s draft. Rosenman told Morgenthau that the President did not even look at it until January 18th, wanting to get Hull’s opinion of the idea first. Hull, according to Rosenman, “is agreeable to this. I don't think he is very enthusiastic, but he says it's okay... Now I also told him that the President would like Ed [Stettinius] to handle it...”⁴

The First Days of the War Refugee Board

Though Hull and Stettinius knew that the War Refugee Board was being formed, it seems they did not inform the State Department staff, who were adjusting to the major reorganization. Breckinridge Long, still nursing public wounds, was thrilled to be removed from his responsibilities related to refugees. “The reorganization of the Dept. has created some temporary chaos and some very bad feeling.... I am still happy about it and had the quietest day since [I] have been back in the Dept.”⁵ Adolf Berle—who inherited Long’s responsibilities for the Visa Division under the new State Department reorganization—lamented his fate, writing in his diary that “the plan is a sloppy, botched job; I do not fare too well myself though events have a habit of transcending organization

³ Morgenthau recognized how serious the error was and demanded a full report of the location of every car and driver that morning. “When I get in tomorrow morning I want a written report where every car is and I'm not going to take any God-damn excuse either.” Transcript, Morgenthau phone conversation, 1944 January 17; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 694, Document 186-189; LOC.

⁴ Transcript, Morgenthau phone conversation, 1944 January 18; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 695, Document 31-37; LOC.

⁵ Breckinridge Long, Diary, 1944 January 19; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 5; LOC.

charts."⁶ But with no knowledge of the War Refugee Board and wanting to help the State Department save face after Long's public debacle with immigration statistics, Berle needed ideas and asked Stettinius on January 20th for help with plans to aid for refugees. "I understand that various programs have been worked out in various quarters... One of them apparently is sponsored by Treasury; others come in from other quarters... Could you let me have them for purposes of getting to work? I may add that I think it is essential for this Department to work itself into the clear and get something done along this line as rapidly as possible."⁷ Stettinius gave Berle a copy of a report he himself had prepared on Jewish refugees, but did not mention the forthcoming Board. Further evidence that news of the War Refugee Board had not reached State Department employees comes from a memo sent to Berle on January 21st, the day before the Executive Order was formally issued. In the memo, Joseph Hooker, Jr. recommended to Berle the creation of a committee comprising members of four departments from State together with representatives of the Treasury Department and Foreign Economic Administration, "for the purpose of centralizing the consideration of all refugee problems within the Government."⁸ When he saw the press release for the War Refugee Board two days later, Hooker must have been surprised at how quickly a similar plan was being implemented.

While the State Department staff were ignorant that Roosevelt was about to make a major announcement related to refugee policy, the Treasury Department staff knew, but

⁶ Adolf Berle, Diary entry, 1944 January 18; Adolf Berle Papers, Box 215, Folder "Diaries"; FDRL.

⁷ Adolf Berle, Memo to Stettinius, 1944 January 20; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 38), 5193; NACP.

⁸ Joseph Hooker, Letter to Berle, 1944 January 21; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 38), 5062; NACP.

could only act quietly. Pehle moved his office from the Sloan building to the main Treasury building, setting up temporarily in empty offices on the first and second floors. With him, he brought five other Treasury employees. Four of them, Joseph B. Friedman, Florence Hodel, Lawrence Lesser, and Ward Stewart were later all named Assistant Executive Directors of the War Refugee Board, while Josiah DuBois was named their General Counsel. DuBois was the most familiar with refugee issues, having been intimately involved in the fight that led to the creation of the WRB. Originally from New Jersey, DuBois was a prodigy who graduated high school at fourteen and college at eighteen. Though he had been with the Treasury Department in the 1930s, he briefly left to go into private practice in 1940 before the war called him back to Washington. The oldest of eight children, DuBois had a brother who had been a prisoner of war in Germany since late 1942. Friedman's background was remarkably similar to Pehle's: the son of a German-speaking immigrant, Friedman grew up in Ohio and came to the Treasury Department in 1935. Florence Hodel, a rarity as a female lawyer, came to Washington and the Treasury Department in 1939 after working with Legal Aid in New York City. Though married—albeit unhappily—to American serviceman Christopher Wagner, Hodel used her maiden name. Lawrence Lesser had been an special assistant district attorney in New York County in the 1930s before coming to the SEC, and then, to Treasury. On January 12th, just a few days before the creation of the WRB, Lesser's wife, Frances, a lawyer with the State Department, had given birth to their first son, George. Ward Stewart facilitated the organization and administration of the group, a position to which he was uniquely suited, having written his master's thesis at the University of

Chicago on “The Allocation of Administrative Duties in Different Types of Institutions.” They were all in their thirties; Hodel and Lesser were the oldest at thirty-six. Pehle, Friedman, and Lesser were all children of German-speaking immigrants; Hodel was descended from French-speaking Swiss immigrants. Unlike the State Department, none of them came from old money or high society, but all were hardworking and intelligent, and had the academic credentials to prove it: Pehle’s law degree was from Yale; DuBois went to the University of Pennsylvania; Friedman attended Ohio State; Hodel graduated from Cornell; and Lesser was cum laude at Harvard. The sole non-lawyer in the group, Ward Stewart, held a PhD in political science from Harvard.⁹ The Treasury Department was able to recruit idealistic New Dealer lawyers because, as Pehle later explained, “Young lawyers...like me were given responsibilities far beyond those they would get in private practice. We felt that we were working for something above and beyond what we were being paid to do.”¹⁰

Despite the obvious talent of the Treasury staff, the War Refugee Board needed a director. In the days following Roosevelt’s decision, most of the meetings with Morgenthau centered on discussions of names. Pehle’s name was floated in almost all of the conversations about the prospective director, though there was a general feeling that he would never be chosen—that the important thing was to find someone with a more prominent name. Morgenthau was convinced that Pehle would be a hard sell, but not impossible. At a staff meeting, he told Pehle that “the way to get you in there [is] through Stettinius, because Stettinius described you...He said what he wanted

⁹ Stewart later received his JD in 1949 at George Washington University.

¹⁰ Katie Louchheim, ed. *The Making of the New Deal: The Insiders Speak*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 269.

was some tough son of a bitch. I said there was one right here. Excuse me, ladies. But that is what he said he wanted. Now we will fight for you up to the bitter end.”¹¹ Still, the reality that a nominee would need to be approved by Hull, Stimson, and President Roosevelt meant that Morgenthau’s staff needed to discuss alternatives. After dismissing Donald Hiss and Professor Joseph P. Chamberlain (“He has a foot and a half in the grave.” “And the other half on a banana peel.”) as potential directors, it was clear that the WRB would be announced with no permanent Executive Director in place.¹²

A director was not the only administrative detail to be worked out. Financing the Board’s operations was still an unresolved issue. Prior to the Oval Office meeting with Roosevelt on January 16th, Oscar Cox and Milton Handler had drafted a letter Roosevelt could send to the Director of the Budget. In the draft, “Roosevelt” requested twenty-five million dollars for the operations of the WRB. When Pehle, Luxford, and DuBois worked on the final drafts, they left the amount blank (though they were smart enough to keep in the word “million,” only leaving the exact number blank). President Roosevelt granted the Board one million dollars from the President’s Emergency Fund.¹³ Private contributions were a little more straightforward. After meetings with the Justice Department and the Bureau of the Budget, it was agreed that the War Refugee Board

¹¹ Transcript, “Jewish Evacuation” meeting, 1944 January 18; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 695, Document 38-47; LOC.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Keith Pomakoy, in his book, *Helping Humanity: American Policy and Genocide Rescue*, argues that Roosevelt’s decision to provide the War Refugee Board with administrative funds only was in keeping with the tradition of American philanthropic organizations. Both Roosevelt and Morgenthau had been involved in the Near East Relief organization during World War I, which collected aid for Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and funneled this aid through American governmental channels. Unlike the WRB, the NER—though it enjoyed vast governmental support—was a private organization. Keith Pomakoy. *Helping Humanity: American Policy and Genocide Rescue*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011.

could accept private contributions under the Second War Powers Act, "as long as the operations of the Board can be shown to be in furtherance of the war program."¹⁴

There was also the question of jurisdictional responsibility. The Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, while clearly ineffective, had international membership and a similar stated purpose to the WRB, as did the new United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency. To get around this question, Hull requested that the Executive Order for the WRB be amended to add that the Board "shall cooperate with all existing and future international organizations concerned with the problems of refugee rescue, maintenance, transportation, relief, rehabilitation, and resettlement."¹⁵ Hull wanted to make it clear that the War Refugee Board was not created to step on any toes—which of course, it did. The addition of the sentence did not clarify any jurisdictional questions and anyway, some hoped that the WRB would actually supplant the Intergovernmental Committee. A few days before Roosevelt issued the Executive Order, Rosenman asked Morgenthau, "Where does that leave this Committee that hasn't done a darned thing, but has an office in London and is supposed to represent all the United Nations? Is this a crack at them?" A few minutes later, Rosenman came to his own conclusion: "I hope that they'll say that this is the end of the Committee because that Committee's a joke."¹⁶

Herbert Lehman, director of UNRRA (and Henry Morgenthau's uncle by marriage), learned of the War Refugee Board from Wayne Coy, Assistant Director of the Budget,

¹⁴ Phil Thorson, Authority of the War Refugee Board to accept contributions, 1944 January 20; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 60, Folder 5; FDRL.

¹⁵ Executive Order 9417, 1944 January 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 1, Documents 2-3; USHMM.

¹⁶ Transcript, Morgenthau phone conversation, 1944 January 18; The Morgenthau Diaries (Microfilm Publication Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, c1995-1997). Microfilm 23, 392-73P, Volume 695, Document 31-37; LOC.

who told Lehman as much as Coy understood. Lehman was irritated until he spoke with Morgenthau, who explained the situation, and Lehman proved willing to wait for the Board to begin to function before discussing operational authorities.¹⁷

The task at hand could not wait, however. The new War Refugee Board team from Treasury immediately got to work, and by Tuesday, January 18th, already had a memo of plans and proposals. Foreign Funds Control would be placed under the supervision of the Assistant Director, Orvis Schmidt, and the WRB staff would meet every afternoon for coordination. Beginning to devise a plan, they had already talked with representatives of UNRRA, the Joint, the American Jewish Congress, the American Red Cross, and George Warren at the State Department, likely asking for discretion. The one concrete plan that came out of the week was an idea that had been under discussion for quite some time—the World Jewish Congress had written a report and the IGC had already looked into the possibilities—to issue 5,000 American visas for refugee children escaping over the border from France into Switzerland. The idea was to grant American visas for children under the age of 17 who arrived in Switzerland after January 1, 1944, in the hopes that if the Swiss understood that these children were guaranteed to be repatriated (or allowed to immigrate to the United States) after the war, they would be more lenient in accepting larger numbers of refugees.¹⁸ It was a start.

¹⁷ Memo of conversation between Paul and Lehman, 1944 January 19; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 695, Document 104; LOC.

¹⁸ Lawrence Lesser, Draft instructions for issuing visas to refugee children in Switzerland, 1944 January 19; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 16, Folder 6, Documents 619-623; USHMM.

Executive Order 9417

On January 22nd, 1944, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9417, establishing a War Refugee Board.¹⁹ In the Executive Order, he stated that as it “is the policy of this Government to take all measures within its power to rescue victims of enemy oppression who are in imminent danger of death and otherwise to afford such victims all possible relief and assistance consistent with the successful prosecution of the war,” he was establishing a War Refugee Board, consisting of the Secretaries of State, Treasury, and War. The Board was charged with the responsibility of carrying out this policy by developing plans for rescue, maintenance, transportation, and relief of victims of enemy oppression, as well as overseeing the establishment of havens of temporary refuge.²⁰

Public response was overwhelmingly positive. Telegrams and letters poured in from interested individuals and from relief organizations. Newspaper articles praised the announcement. An opinion column in the *El Paso Herald-Post* entitled “Rescue the Refugees!” stated that, “Rarely has the President made a more desirable and popular move than his appointment of the Secretaries of War, State and Treasury as a war refugee board to rescue as many as possible of Hitler's victims.”²¹ In his congratulatory cable to Roosevelt, Peter Bergson tried to take credit for the WRB in his typical flowery fashion: “Three years ago I came to these shores with my colleagues... We raised the cry of our tortured and forgotten people... These three years have taught us the meaning of

¹⁹ The joint Congressional resolutions calling for an agency were both permanently tabled after the announcement of the WRB.

²⁰ Executive Order 9417, 1944 January 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 1, Documents 2-3; USHMM.

²¹ “Rescue the Refugees!” editorial, *El Paso Herald Post*, 1944 January 25, page 4.

democracy for the American people have heeded our cry and yesterday you, Mr. President, heeded them. By your action you have become to us a living symbol of Democracy.”²² Breckinridge Long commented in his diary: "The Pres't has appointed a Refugee Board consisting of Sect State, Sect War and Sect. Treas—they to appoint a director to save the refugees in German control. And it is good news for me. The ‘Director,’ when chosen, will take over. I am out of that anyhow... What they can do [that] I have not done I can not imagine. However they can try.”²³ The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) donated \$100,000 to the War Refugee Board after Lawrence Lesser visited their offices in New York; his aunt, Elizabeth Lesser, was the president of HIAS’s Women’s Division. Perhaps the most touching response came with a check for ten dollars from Arthur Werner of Piqua, Ohio. Mr. Werner, who had been sent to the Buchenwald concentration camp after Kristallnacht before being released to emigrate to the United States, explained in his letter that he and his wife were “among those fortunate Jewish people, who after years of persecution and concentration camps found refuge and a real home in the blessed U.S.A.” While they did not know the fate of his mother or any of their friends, the Werners had found a home in Piqua and had been accepted by the community. Although the ten dollars wasn’t a lot of money, he hoped the new Board could use the contribution.²⁴ Morgenthau wrote back to Werner personally.

A few were troubled by the announcement of the War Refugee Board. Robert Pell,

²² Peter Bergson, Telegram to President Roosevelt, 1944 January 23; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 25, Folder 2, Document 67; USHMM. For a thorough examination of the veracity of Bergson group (and ultra-Orthodox) claims of “credit” for the creation of the War Refugee Board—and why this is still debated—see Judith Tydor Baumel. *The “Bergson Boys” and the Origins of Contemporary Zionist Militancy*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005) 162-174. Baumel’s book is by far the most even-handed and well-researched book on the Bergson group.

²³ Breckinridge Long, Diary, 1944 January 24; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 5; LOC.

²⁴ Arthur Werner, Letter to Henry Morgenthau, 1944 January 23; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 60, Folder 5; FDRL.

Myron Taylor's alternate as the American representative on the Intergovernmental Committee, wrote to Taylor on the day the Executive Order was announced, "It is not my place to comment on and [sic] order of the President, but at least we are relieved from any further responsibility."²⁵ When it became clear that the IGC was still active, Pell wrote again. He explained to Taylor his understanding of the organization of the WRB, adding that he has already heard that some countries, including Canada, were planning to withdraw from the IGC, since it seemed the United States would take over and foot the whole bill for relief work. Within the State Department, "there is considerable criticism of singling out Jews for special attention and the belief is generally expressed that this will incite further anti-Semitism which is on the increase in most countries. However, this is what the President wishes and the Department will help as post office and messenger boy on the understanding that all responsibility will rest with the Director."²⁶ John Winant, the American ambassador in London, was irked that he was not informed about the Board in advance; Herbert Emerson, director of the IGC, received questions from reporters and had no information to provide.²⁷ Reflecting this irritation, Helen Kirkpatrick, reporting for the *Chicago Daily News* from London, wrote that "American, British and Allied relief officials here appear to have been surprised and confused by President Roosevelt's recent announcement... Setting up of another organization to overlap the intergovernmental committee, UNRRA, and the Army will be a positive

²⁵ Robert Pell, Letter to Myron Taylor, 1944 January 22; Holocaust Refugees and the FDR White House (Microfilm Collection, Bethesda, MD: UPA collection from LexisNexis, 2006). LM 0255, Reel 14, Folder 6, Document 705; USHMM.

²⁶ Robert Pell, Letter to Myron Taylor, 1944 January 25; Holocaust Refugees and the FDR White House (Microfilm Collection, Bethesda, MD: UPA collection from LexisNexis, 2006). LM 0255, Reel 14, Folder 6, Document 708-709; USHMM.

²⁷ John Winant, Cable to State, 1944 January 24; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 38), 5041; NACP.

guarantee that money will be wasted in Europe, in the view of experts.”²⁸

The Board Needs a Director

Public knowledge of the Board and opinions—good and bad—led to speculation about a potential Executive Director. The topic continued to dominate internal meetings as well. On January 26th, Morgenthau again pushed Roosevelt on the idea of John Pehle, but was told, “You can't have your cake and eat it too... You can't have a man who both knows it and is prominent.”²⁹ Over the course of ten days following the establishment of the WRB, at least thirty names were floated, each dismissed for various reasons. Of those mentioned frequently, Tom Finletter (Deputy Director of the Office of Foreign Economic Coordinator) would not work as Director, but could be a liaison with State; Aubrey Williams’ National Youth Association was a disaster from the start; James McDonald was “the guy that fell down before”³⁰; Sumner Welles’s appointment “would be a little crazy”³¹; Rufus Jones, the “Quaker Pope” was too old at 80. They liked the ideas of Clarence Pickett or William O’Dwyer, but later attempts to get them to join the staff failed—the American Friends Service Committee could not spare their director, Pickett, while Colonel O’Dwyer’s work with the War Department was too important for him to be released. Consensus rested on University of North Carolina president Frank Graham,

²⁸ Helen Kirkpatrick, "Naming of Refugee Board Complicates Allied Relief Picture," 1944 January 28; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 25, Folder 1, Document 49; USHMM. After agreeing that they need to keep the British informed of their actions, Morgenthau ended a conversation with Pehle by joking in a British accent that "[w]ell, somebody had better prepare an extra scotch and soda for the whole foreign office." Transcript, Pehle and Morgenthau conversation, 1944 January 27; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 697, Document 87-89; LOC.

²⁹ Transcript, “Jewish Evacuation” meeting, 1944 January 26; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 696, Document 193-228; LOC.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Transcript, Morgenthau phone conversation, 1944 January 27; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 697, Document 79-86; LOC.

though Stettinius feared he did not have enough drive. Roosevelt met with Graham the afternoon of February 1st, and though Graham had been his hand-picked favorite, the President dismissed Graham's candidacy with no explanation.³² The momentum was running out, and Morgenthau was scheduled to leave Washington for nearly a month on February 4th, with Hull leaving town soon after. To avoid continuing the discussion long-distance and to end the "regular whispering gallery around here"³³ Morgenthau informally and then formally met with Stettinius, Stimson, and Hull, to agree that Pehle should be appointed on an acting basis. The press release, emphasizing Pehle's vast experience with international affairs as Foreign Funds Control director, was issued just before Morgenthau caught his train on the afternoon of Friday, February 4th.³⁴

The morning discussion on February 4th was the second official War Refugee Board meeting; they would not meet again for nearly two months. But the meetings on January 26th and February 4th with Stimson, Hull, and Morgenthau laid the groundwork for the way in which the Board staff would operate. The three secretaries were the official members of the WRB; Pehle was the Acting Director, and his people, the staff. Each secretary designated an alternate who would be available for consultation when the secretary was not. Hull picked Edward Stettinius, who acted in nearly every capacity for him. Stimson, who was amenable to most proposals so long as Hull and Morgenthau agreed, alternated between McGeorge Bundy and John McCloy. Morgenthau picked his longtime friend Herbert Gaston, who had been tangentially involved in the fight to create

³² Transcript, "Group" meeting, 1944 February 3; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 700, Document 12-39; LOC.

³³ Transcript, Morgenthau phone conversation, 1944 January 31; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 698, Document 186-188; LOC.

³⁴ Press Release announcing John Pehle's appointment, 1944 February 4; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 25, Folder 7, Documents 692-695; USHMM.

the Board. They held official meetings only when necessary to approve concrete proposals—most activities were handled through the alternates, though Morgenthau tried to be as involved as he could.³⁵ The official War Refugee Board meetings were quite rare—day to day operations were run out of the Treasury Department.

The WRB is Explained to Embassies Abroad

The first official meeting of the War Refugee Board, on January 26th, was almost purely administrative. The Secretaries designated their alternates, briefly discussed the selection of a director, and reviewed a cable announcing the Board that had been sent to American missions abroad. The cable described the new policy, asked each legation to submit a report describing the treatment of refugees in the country to which they were accredited, and asked the legations to make the new American policy clear to their host governments.³⁶ The fight to send out this cable emphasized to the WRB staff that their problems with State were not magically going to be fixed by the Executive Order.

Though the contents of the cable seemed benign, State Department staff wrote and rewrote it extensively, arguing with Board staff along the way.³⁷ When Josiah DuBois

³⁵ On February 2nd, Herbert Gaston, John Pehle, Josiah DuBois, Harry Dexter White, Ansel Luxford, Randolph Paul, and Henrietta Klotz all signed a memo to Morgenthau thanking him and acknowledging his important role in the establishment of the War Refugee Board. It read, in part, “The change which has been brought about in this government's attitude towards saving the Jews and other persecuted peoples from extermination as a result of your effort is, we know, more than sufficient reward for you. Nevertheless, the fact is that the courage and statesmanship you have displayed will live always with you and with those who knew what you really did.” Memo to Morgenthau, 1944 February 2; Morgenthau Presidential Diaries, Reel 2; FDRL.

³⁶ Copy of cable 634 to London, 1944 January 25; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 23, Folder 11, Documents 900-901; USHMM.

³⁷ Unbeknownst to the War Refugee Board, the War Department staff also argued over what to tell theater commanders about the new policies. Lt. Gen. Joseph McNarney sent a memo to McCloy on February 6th stating that “the most effective relief which can be given victims of enemy persecution is to insure the speedy defeat of the Axis.” To that end, McNarney shared McCloy's “concern over further involvement of the War Department.” Having been presented with a draft of a proposed cable from Morgenthau's office, three members of the War Department staff—McCloy's aide Col. Harrison Gerhardt, Col. Davis, representing the ASF (Army Service Forces), and Lt. Rockefeller representing

complained that the State Department changed the language of the cable to indicate that legations should only pass on refugee-related information if they deem it in harmony with Roosevelt's policy, he was told that State was merely trying to prevent "time that would be wasted in sending perfectly silly and futile suggestions." DuBois was also asked "why...communications was any business of the Treasury Department."³⁸

The cable was finally sent on January 25th, and responses from American embassies and consulates trickled in throughout February. With a few exceptions, most of the responses were negative. The Foreign Service staff largely reported that their countries could not take increased immigration, especially if the immigrants were Jewish. Even those countries that thought it might be possible to accept refugees faced financial and transportation problems and would need help. It was clear there would be no easy solution to the problem of havens, temporary or permanent.

Though there was certainly available space in Central and South America, responses from these nations varied. From Tegucigalpa, they were told that there were 185 Jewish refugees in Honduras, with no desire for any more: "[I]t is unlikely that the immigration of other races incompatible with the mass of the present population

the Navy—met in the early morning hours of February 11th to discuss their options. Gerhardt had to remind his colleagues that the President had endorsed the proposal, as Davis did not want to inform the theater commanders at all: "I cannot see why the Army has anything to do with it whatsoever....We should word the cable so that we let him [the commander] understand that he is still running the show and his primary job is winning the war." The three men discussed whether the WRB should be allowed to use military communications (eventually deciding it would be up to the theater commander) and whether, for example, this meant that the WRB could request the use of ships (Davis again argued that "the cable ought to be worded so that the theater commander doesn't have to do anything at all if he doesn't feel that he should.") At the end of February, the War Department finally sent a cable to theatre commanders informing them of the WRB's existence and responsibilities, and the War Refugee Board agreed to inform the War Department if there were any specific projects for which the theater commanders could be of assistance. Joseph McNarney, Memo to the Assistant Secretary of War, 1944 February 6; RG-107, Entry 183, Box 63, Folder: War Refugee Board, NACP. Harrison Gerhardt, Memo of meeting, 1944 February 11; RG-107, Entry 183, Box 63, Folder: War Refugee Board, NACP. John Pehle, Letter to McCloy, 1944 February 16; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 23, Folder 14, Document 997; USHMM.

³⁸ Joseph Friedman, Memo of meeting with Howard Travers, 1944 January 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 13, Documents 710-713; USHMM.

(Spanish-Indian) would be permitted.”³⁹ This was a common response from the majority of Central and South American countries. There was a fear that any Jewish immigration would only result in an increase in antisemitism, partly for racial and religious reasons, but also because, as the American *chargé d'affaires* in La Paz put it, of "a resentment that Jewish immigrants...have competed with established Bolivian merchants."⁴⁰ Of the countries who might agree to further immigration, most preferred agricultural immigrants rather than merchants. The antipathy was not universal, however. Mexico had an agreement with the Polish government-in-exile to accept 28,000 Polish refugees, and was also partial to accepting Spanish Republicans stuck in North Africa, though they admitted a need for some financial help. Neither of these groups, however, were Jewish. The poor island nation of Haiti was enthusiastically supportive. On January 31st, only four days after receiving the State Department's cable about the War Refugee Board, Ambassador John Campbell White reported that Haitian president Élie Lescot proposed to donate of \$10,000 from the State lottery, the proceeds of ticket sales for a movie about Lescot's visit to the United States, and the money raised from a new stamp surcharge on parcels leaving the country.⁴¹ Eleven days later, Lescot gave White \$500 from the ticket sales and informed him that Haiti had formed its own refugee committee.⁴²

In North Africa and the Middle East, the easiest location for temporary havens due to the problem of transportation, the response to the cable ranged from caution to

³⁹ Facci, Cable from Tegucigalpa, 1944 February 4; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 23, Folder 19, Documents 385-386; USHMM.

⁴⁰ Woodward, Cable from La Paz, 1944 February 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 3, Folder 10, Documents 940-949; USHMM.

⁴¹ J.C. White, Cable from Port-au-Prince, 1944 January 31; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 4, Folder 6, Documents 141-142; USHMM.

⁴² J.C. White, Cable from Port-au-Prince, 1944 February 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 4, Folder 6, Documents 143-144; USHMM.

dismissal. Ambassador Moose in Jidda [now Jeddah], Saudi Arabia, reported that the instructions had no application to his country, for “in the past two years one Jew is known to have come to Saudi Arabia... That he ever came to Arabia is believed to have been due to a misconception of where Jidda is on his part, and to ignorance on the part of the Saudi officials that he was a Jew.”⁴³ Baghdad was unwilling to even let Jews cross Iraqi territory.⁴⁴ Egypt was willing to take refugees—and was indeed already home to thousands of Balkan refugees living in British camps—but they would need to be repatriated immediately after the war.⁴⁵ The local authorities in Algeria were cooperative, but not in the Spanish-occupied areas of North Africa.⁴⁶

In Europe and elsewhere, nations affiliated with the Allied cause, including members of the Intergovernmental Committee, expressed their opinions frankly. Australia, reported Ambassador Johnson, “is not interested in taking any initiative looking toward admittance of refugees, or in rescuing or assisting them.” Moreover, their membership on the IGC was “partly a matter of prestige and partly a fear of appearing to be disinterested in the humanitarian side of the question.”⁴⁷ In Calcutta, recent epidemics and a 1943 famine meant that there was no way to support refugees.⁴⁸ Afghanistan had a similar problem: “The willingness of the Afghan Government to admit qualified

⁴³ Moose, Cable from Jidda, 1944 February 16; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 4, Folder 21, Document 442; USHMM.

⁴⁴ Henderson, Cable from Baghdad, 1944 February 28; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 2, Folder 5, Documents 155-157; USHMM.

⁴⁵ Kirk, Cable from Egypt, 1944 February 18; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 4, Folder 16, Documents 409-413; USHMM.

⁴⁶ Elbrick, Cable from Tangier, 1944 March 7; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 4, Folder 23, Documents 473-475; USHMM.

⁴⁷ Johnson, Cable from Canberra, 1944 February 24; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 14, Documents 739-742; USHMM.

⁴⁸ Patton, Cable from Calcutta, 1944 February 23; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 2, Folder 4, Document 151; USHMM.

Europeans is probably exceeded by the reluctance of such persons to come...living conditions...are hard.”⁴⁹ The American embassy at Chengdu, China, found it difficult to determine Chinese policy, since so few refugees attempted to come to China, and they did not know Japanese policy in the occupied areas.⁵⁰ The embassy in Yunnan reported a growing scorn for Jews, though there were only about twenty German Jews in the province and most Chinese had never met one.⁵¹ The Norwegian government-in-exile was sympathetic and would cooperate, but the Jews of Norway had either been deported to Poland or escaped to Sweden; though "there are no special obstacles apart from the measures adopted by the Nazi regime," that was surely enough to exclude the possibility of Norway.⁵² Ireland thought scarcity of food and transportation might prove an obstacle, though they agreed to accept 500 Jewish refugee children if those issues could be overcome.⁵³ Iceland had no restrictions on Jewish immigration and had no visa requirements, but “since Iceland has never been approached...it has not been in a position to 'cooperate' in their entry.”⁵⁴ Though the responses from the American embassies, consulates, and legations were informative, they also showed the staff of the War Refugee Board that there would be no easy fixes. The United States was not alone in having a complicated relationship towards the issue of Jewish refugee immigration and

⁴⁹ Van Engers, Cable from Kabul, 1944 March 5; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 4, Folder 15, Documents 368-369; USHMM.

⁵⁰ Though the State Department was aware that thousands of Jewish refugees were in Shanghai, which was an open city for which no entry permits were needed, this was in Japanese occupied territory and there was no official American presence.

⁵¹ Gauss, Cable from Chungking, 1944 March 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 17, Documents 786-796; USHMM.

⁵² Rudolph Schoenfeld, Cable from London on behalf of the Norwegian government-in-exile, 1944 March 3; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 2, Folder 8, Documents 218-220; USHMM.

⁵³ “Ireland” is nearly exclusively referred to as “Eire” in these documents, but for clarity, I have used “Ireland.” Gray, Cable from Dublin, 1944 February 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 2, Folder 14, Documents 400-402; USHMM.

⁵⁴ Morris, Cable from Reykjavik, 1944 February 19; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 4, Folder 19, Document 426-427; USHMM.

aid.

The WRB Investigates State Department Activities

While the staff of the WRB waited to see what other countries were willing to do for relief and rescue, they decided to gather information on what the Visa Division had been working on for the past few years. As the State Department had promised to make all the cables and memos from the Visa Division available to the Board, Pehle sent some staff from Foreign Funds and the Treasury General Counsel's office to the other side of the White House, where they holed up in the file office at the State Department. Joseph Murphy, Lawrence Hartwig, and Robert Smith collectively wrote dozens of memos tracing various projects and proposals. From "Dutch Refugees in Spain" to "Jewish internees in French camps who possess Latin American passports," these reports, quoting from correspondence and meeting notes, formed the basis of discussion at the some of the early War Refugee Board staff meetings in February. Even though much of the information was either outdated or already familiar, the WRB staff now had some idea of what the Visa Division had been doing. In addition to the Board's own detective work in the State Department files, Howard Travers, the head of the Visa Division, sent Pehle a thirty-six page memo of the activities of his department. Pehle reported, "[R]eading it through, it is the worst indictment I have seen yet on the way they kick this stuff around. I mean, there are very vital things that all of a sudden, right in the middle of something,

they will refer to the Intergovernmental Committee and nothing will happen."⁵⁵

Pehle Meets with Individuals

On February 19th, Morris Ernst and his wife held a dinner party so that John Pehle could meet with private citizens interested in the work of the War Refugee Board. The guest list was impressive: Ernst was the founder of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and a prominent lawyer; Samuel Grafton a syndicated columnist; Quincy Howe a celebrated CBS radio broadcaster; Russell Leffingwell was chairman of the executive committee of JP Morgan and Co.; George Fielding Eliot a military commentator and journalist; Helen Shaw worked for the *New York Herald Tribune*; and Chet Shaw was managing editor of *News Week*. The group discussed the Emergency Committee, psychological warfare, and the problem of the disunity of Jewish groups in the United States. After the party, Ernst took Pehle to see Dorothy Thompson, who emphasized the importance of psychological warfare, particularly in the satellite nations.⁵⁶ A few weeks later, Ernst contacted Pehle again with an offer. "Friends of mine have flattered me by putting into my hands \$100,000 to be used in collateral aid of your efforts...I am at the moment not in the least concerned with anything but saving life...If with propriety you find at any time individuals or groups or particular situations which you should consider as fitting occasions for the expenditure of such moneys, I do hope you will send on such

⁵⁵ Transcript, "Jewish Evacuation" meeting, 1944 February 13; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 701, Document 165-178.

⁵⁶ John Pehle, Memo on dinner meeting, 1944 February 19; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 16, Folder 11, Document 154-155; USHMM.

recommendations for my consideration.”⁵⁷ Over the next six months, Pehle would take advantage of this money, which was used without any governmental oversight or accounting.

The WRB Surveys Private Relief Agencies for Ideas

Determined that his Board would succeed, Pehle looked for proactive rescue and relief ideas. The embassies and legations reported what their host countries would be willing to do and the State Department records indicated what the Visa Division had done, but the War Refugee Board needed to figure out where they should focus their activities. Whereas the Intergovernmental Committee would not seek the advice of relief agencies, on February 8th, John Pehle sent letters to ninety-four organizations asking for ideas. After explaining the purpose of the WRB, the form letter explained that “[t]he Board is not unmindful of the fact that private agencies, including yourselves, have for some time been active in seeking means to effect the relief and rescue of Jews and other minority groups...the Board would appreciate...a detailed statement in writing of such specific action as you believe the Board should take...”⁵⁸ Some of the relief agencies were large and well-known—the Joint received a letter, as did the World Jewish Congress—but Pehle also wrote to the Little House of Saint Pantaleon in Ventnor, New Jersey, and to the Greek Fur Workers Union Local 70 in New York.⁵⁹ The Board issued a press

⁵⁷ Morris Ernst, Letter to John Pehle, 1944 March 6. Morris Leopold Ernst papers, box 35, folder “War Refugee Board, February 1944-February 1945, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

⁵⁸ John Pehle, WRB asks Agudas Israel for suggestions, 1944 February 8; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 4, Documents 333-334; USHMM.

⁵⁹ Lawrence Lesser, List of organizations solicited for suggestions, 1944 February 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 24, Folder 7, Documents 448-468; USHMM.

release about the request for recommendations, adding that any organization that did not get a letter should write in. Many more did, and the total number of groups solicited was well over one hundred. As with the embassy information requests, the responses from relief agencies trickled in throughout February and March.

Similar themes ran through the recommendations, and since the War Refugee Board staff were already meeting with representatives of many of these organizations, the ideas were nothing new. Many of the smaller organizations did not respond or—like the Coordinating Council of French Relief Societies, which explained that they focused solely on sending clothes to French refugees in Spain—wrote that their limited scope disqualified them from offering broad suggestions. Some, like B’nai B’rith, wrote in to support the recommendations of others—the American Jewish Conference in B’nai’s B’rith’s case. The Joint Emergency Committee, though most of the member organizations submitted their own plans, sent a copy of their recommendations written in advance of the Bermuda Conference; the WRB noted the suggestion of the formation of a government agency.

The Board created an extensive report based on the suggestions of the sixteen largest relief organizations, clearly demonstrating the overlap of the various ideas.⁶⁰ A popular suggestion involved appealing to Germany and requesting the release and evacuation of Jews, though details of how this should work varied. At least four

⁶⁰ Agudas Israel, American Committee of the OSE, American Friends of Polish Jews, American Friends Service Committee, American Jewish Conference, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee [“the Joint”], Catholic Committee for Refugees, HIAS, Jewish Labor Committee, Joint Emergency Committee for European Jewish Affairs, League for the Liberation of Lithuania, National Council of Jewish Women, Netherlands Jewish Society, Union of Orthodox Rabbis, United Palestine Appeal, World Jewish Congress (WRB staff, Digest of Suggestions Submitted to the War Refugee Board by Various Private Organizations in Response to Circular Letter, undated, PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 24, Folder 7, Documents 427-226; USHMM.

organizations—the American Friends Service Committee, HIAS, the American Committee of the OSE, and the Jewish Labor Committee—thought that they should start by asking for children and the aged. Agudas Israel suggested offering an exchange for German prisoners in the United States, while the Union of Orthodox Rabbis wanted to ensure that any potential exchange included rabbis and scholars. Those refugees who could not be evacuated should be protected in other ways—through material aid, with protective papers identifying them as under the protection of Allied governments, or with formal identification papers like the Nansen passes issued by the League of Nations. Whether or not the Germans agreed to release prisoners, those who could be evacuated should be smuggled out through the underground, or by using bribes. The Balkans were recognized as the most logical area for this work, with multiple organizations pointing out the need for shipping and for Turkish visas.

The use of psychological warfare—direct appeals to the German people and to those in satellite nations—was also highly recommended. Whether through leaflets dropped from the sky or radio broadcasts, the War Refugee Board needed to make American policy clear to the populations of these countries, and remind them that the Allied governments had already pledged to bring those who participated in persecutions to justice after the war. Though finding areas of temporary refuge was explicitly listed in the Executive Order as one of the WRB's stated purposes, many organizations still reiterated this idea. Of the larger organizations polled, seven—the Joint, American Jewish Conference, Union of Orthodox Rabbis, American Friends Service Committee, Agudas Israel, World Jewish Congress, and United Palestine Appeal—suggested that if the Board

could remove refugees from neutral nations to designated safe havens, there would likely be more opportunity for refugees to escape from occupied countries to the neutrals. Ideas as to where the safe havens should be located ranged from large camps in the neutral nations (Jewish Labor Committee) to southern Italy (Joint) to Iraq (American Friends Service Committee, which clearly had not asked the American ambassador whether Jews were allowed in Iraq).⁶¹ For more permanent settlements, there was the United States, and there was Palestine.

Palestine

The idea of Palestine as a temporary or permanent safe haven was a hot topic in the spring of 1944. The White Paper of 1939 controlled Jewish immigration into the area for five years, and was set to expire on March 31, 1944. Without any announced extension (though the British privately told the State Department by February 1st that the deadline had been indefinitely suspended), the date was rapidly approaching.⁶² On January 27th, less than a week after the establishment of the War Refugee Board, Congressmen James Wright and Ranulf Compton introduced identical resolutions, HR 418 and HR 419, into the House of Representatives. Senators Robert Wagner and Robert Taft issued an identical resolution five days later. The resolutions, which included the text of a 1922 Congressional resolution in support of Palestine as a homeland for the Jewish people, proposed that the United States “should use its good offices...that the doors of Palestine shall be opened for free entry of Jews into that country, and that there shall be full

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Joseph Friedman, Memo to Pehle advising the White Paper has been suspended, 1944 February 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 16, Folder 50, Document 914; USHMM.

opportunity for colonization so that the Jewish people may ultimately reconstitute Palestine as a free and democratic Jewish commonwealth.”⁶³ The Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Sol Bloom, told Adolf Berle that he would call his committee for February 1st. Unlike the Rescue Resolution of several months previous, there would be no hearings; Bloom planned to read a statement from Churchill objecting to the White Paper, take a vote, and report the resolution out of committee favorably.⁶⁴ Berle advised the British that the resolution was likely to pass with a large majority, if not unanimously;⁶⁵ Ronald Campbell of the British embassy told Berle that British policy might be influenced should the United States make some kind of future commitment to Palestine, possibly with the use of military.⁶⁶ The resolutions came up in the second formal War Refugee Board meeting on February 4th, and Hull expressed a desire for the WRB to remain silent on the issue. Though the Board staff recognized the usefulness of Palestine as a haven, War Department and State Department staff planned to testify in opposition to the resolution, “on the ground that it will stir up a revolt among the Arabs.” Of course, as Pehle confided to McGeorge Bundy at the War Department, “obviously if the doors of Palestine were opened for at least temporary refuge it would ease the work of the War Refugee Board enormously.”⁶⁷

⁶³ Adolf Berle, Memo with text of HR 418 and HR 419, 1944 January 28; Adolf Berle Papers, Box 59, Folder 1; FDRL.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Adolf Berle, Memorandum of Conversation between Berle and Campbell, 1944 January 28; Adolf Berle Papers, Box 215; FDR.

⁶⁶ Adolf Berle, Memorandum of Conversation between Berle and Campbell, 1944 January 31; Adolf Berle Papers, Box 215; FDRL.

⁶⁷ Transcript, Morgenthau phone conversation, 1944 February 10; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 701, Document 11; LOC.

The State Department Liberalizes License Restrictions

Though the State Department was not going to push the British to make Palestine fully open to Jewish immigration, Adolf Berle did help the War Refugee Board immensely when he agreed to liberalize license restrictions. Through Pehle's work with Foreign Funds Control, he had helped to oversee the granting of licenses for commercial and relief purposes, licenses that also had to be approved by the State Department. In order to ensure that there would be no benefit to the enemy, the rules for the licenses were usually quite stringent, especially in the early years of the war. Gerhart Riegner's World Jewish Congress license for relief in Romania and France and Saly Mayer's Joint license for relief in France were no exception. According to Riegner's license, written by William Riegelman at the State Department and sent to Riegner in December 1943, he was authorized to deposit \$25,000 in a bank account in Switzerland, but no one could withdraw or make any claim on the money without prior Treasury approval. Riegner could communicate in enemy territory to select a representative for the World Jewish Congress who would assist them in obtaining Romanian lei to use to evacuate Jews from Romania. Riegner had to guarantee that the currency suppliers were not affiliated with the enemy in any way and that they had held this amount of currency prior to the war. In order to further guarantee that no aid would be given to the enemy through these rescue plans, no one would be reimbursed until after the war, and only after Riegner and the Treasury Department agreed. Riegner's license held similar restrictions for aid in France,

though for France, he was authorized to find holders of French francs in Switzerland.⁶⁸

Mayer's license, issued by the Treasury Department at the beginning of January, was only a little more lenient in terms of restrictions. Mayer was authorized for 2,500,000 Swiss francs (about \$580,000), to communicate with people in France, and to purchase French francs to fund his relief activities. He had two options to obtain his currency. Mayer could exchange his Swiss francs for French francs through private currency markets in Switzerland, as long as the American legation in Bern was satisfied that the seller had these French francs prior to the war and was not affiliated with the enemy. Or, he could put his money from the Joint in a blocked account in Switzerland, arrange to obtain the equivalent amount of French francs in France (with the same approvals from the legation) from lenders who would be reimbursed after the war.⁶⁹ On January 20th, Riegner received a new license granting him \$100,000 instead of \$25,000, and bringing his restrictions in line with Mayer's—he was now allowed to purchase francs or lei directly in Switzerland, or in France or Romania against a blocked account.⁷⁰

Even these restrictions it would be difficult for both Riegner and Mayer. Finding people who were not affiliated with the enemy was one thing. But obtaining straightforward exchanges or finding lenders for such large amounts of currency on the open market was challenging, leaving them subject to the demand for high rates of exchange (especially if they could not reimburse lenders until after the war). Both

⁶⁸ Cordell Hull, Cable to Bern, 1943 December 18; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM195, Reel 11), 2295; NACP.

⁶⁹ John Pehle, Memo to Morgenthau with copy of Mayer license, 1944 January 4; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 690, Document 31-37; LOC.

⁷⁰ William Riegelman, Cable to Bern authorizing new license for Riegner, 1944 January 20; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM-195, Reel 11), 2302; NACP.

Riegner and Mayer had concerns about the terms of their licenses. Daniel Reagan, the commercial attaché in Bern who handled much of the correspondence with relief agencies in Switzerland, reported on January 15th that evacuation plans had not yet begun. “In each plan, the key question is the acquisition of French francs within the limitations laid down in the Treasury licenses...Dr. Riegner...appears to be placing hopes on the purchase of French francs...from Jewish refugees in Switzerland who have hidden resources in France; Dr. Meyer [sic], in addition to obtaining francs from individuals, hopes to work through banks...”⁷¹ With time passing and with such large amounts of currency involved, the license restrictions clearly stood in the way of active relief and rescue.

On January 19th, Adolf Berle held a meeting, with Rabbi Abraham Kalmanowitz of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis and Michael Tress of Agudas Israel, during which the Orthodox leaders asked for a license to assist them in evacuating Jews from Poland to Hungary.⁷² Though Poland had been invaded by Germany in 1939 and fully occupied by the Nazis since 1941, there was still a Jewish population of over 600,000 across the border in Axis-aligned Hungary. Kalmanowitz and Tress’s arguments were clearly convincing, as Berle expedited a license for \$100,000 to go to their representative in Switzerland, Isaac Sternbuch. Berle also tried to convince the Swiss government to authorize the purchase of francs from Swiss banks at the official exchange rate of twenty-three cents to the franc. There was no possibility for this, and Berle’s staff informed him

⁷¹ Daniel Reagan, Memo from Reagan to Harrison about the World Jewish Congress and Joint evacuation plans, 1944 January 15; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 70, Folder 9; FDRL.

⁷² Abraham Kalmanowitz and Michael Tress, Letter to Berle, 1944 January 19; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 38), 5061-5062; NACP.

that Sternbuch would have to purchase francs on the open market, where he would likely pay forty cents to the franc. The two options given to Riegner and Mayer would have to suffice.⁷³ William Riegelman used the Joint license as a template, got the details of the plan from Tress, and sent a draft to Pehle.⁷⁴

On January 22nd, the same day that the Executive Order for the War Refugee Board was issued, Pehle returned a new license draft to Riegelman. Instead of two options for obtaining currency, the license for the Union of Orthodox Rabbis had three. The third possibility, to be used when the other two were not feasible, authorized Sternbuch to obtain currency through free exchange in enemy territories. If he could not find lenders, and could not trade for currency in Switzerland, he could exchange Swiss francs for foreign currency in enemy territories. Riegelman called Pehle that afternoon and asked him about the addition. “Pehle advised me that this matter had been carefully considered in the Treasury, and that they felt that under the circumstances, it would no longer serve any useful purpose to attempt to prevent the Germans from acquiring a small amount of foreign exchange involved in payments of this kind, in view of the over-all humanitarian objectives of the program.” Riegelman pointed out that this was a major change in policy, effectively ending America’s “no ransom” policy. Pehle, likely confident from the day’s announcement of the War Refugee Board, agreed. Riegelman took the question to Adolf Berle, who sided with Pehle. In a memo, Riegelman wrote, “Mr. Berle was firmly of the opinion that the 'no ransom' policy was probably no longer suitable to the times, and that

⁷³ Joseph Hooker, Letter to Berle, 1944 January 21; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 38), 5062; NACP.

⁷⁴ William Riegelman, Memo to Ribble, 1944 January 21; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 38), 5135; NACP.

in this case, he definitely approved permitting payment of free foreign exchange into Axis or Axis-occupied territories.” Berle also did not see the need to confer with the British about this change in policy.⁷⁵

Whether it was the Union of Orthodox Rabbis plan that convinced him or whether he saw the creation of the War Refugee Board as evidence of a changing policy, Adolf Berle removed a major blockage to actual relief and rescue activities in occupied Europe by agreeing with Pehle’s changes in license restrictions. The WRB staff soon reissued licenses for Saly Mayer and Gerhart Riegner giving them the same opportunities for exchange. Riegner “gladly confirmed” his new license, noting that “I appreciate highly the liberal spirit which has motivated the amendment made in the above license.”⁷⁶ In the next two months, the Board issued nearly twenty additional licenses, all with the more liberal options.⁷⁷ SelfHelp asked for a license for \$3,000 for their representative in Geneva, Fanny Schultheiss-Hirsch, for aid in France; her license was soon increased to \$20,000. The Geneva representatives of the Jewish Labor Committee received \$50,000 for evacuation from Poland to Hungary, and from France to Switzerland. The International Rescue and Relief Committee received permission for \$45,000 to aid Spanish Republicans in France and \$60,000 for general evacuation plans. The Unitarian Service Committee sent money to three of their representatives: \$9,000 to buy material in Lisbon for food parcels, \$51,000 for relief and office administration in Switzerland, and

⁷⁵ William Riegelman, Memo to Ribble, 1944 January 26; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 38), 5136; NACP.

⁷⁶ Gerhart Riegner, Letter to Reagan, 1944 March 19; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 70, Folder 9; FDRL.

⁷⁷ Though many of the licenses were active for specified periods of time (for instance, the Union of Orthodox Rabbis license was for six months, I am using the total amount of money authorized for remittance rather than dividing the funds by month. Also, just because the license covered a certain amount does not necessarily mean that the total was remitted.

\$30,000 for medical care in French internment camps. The Joint even obtained a license to send money to the British government, about \$20,000, to be used for aid to Jews in Northern Italy. In the month of February alone, exclusive of the new licenses for Riegner and Mayer, the War Refugee Board staff approved licenses totaling nearly \$300,000.

Relationships with Other Agencies

Since the WRB's creation was both quick and surprising to those outside of the Treasury Department, there were many of jurisdictional kinks to be worked out—with the IGC and UNRRA to be sure, but also with governmental agencies who worked with money for relief purposes. Almost immediately, Board staff were approached by the War Relief Control Board, which had been created by President Roosevelt in July 1942 to oversee what became the National War Fund. In the wake of American entry into the war, so many foreign relief organizations and community groups all over the country began raising money, duplicating efforts and overwhelming private citizens with the many and varied charity appeals. Philanthropist and chairman of Chase National Bank Winthrop Aldrich suggested streamlining the process. By the time it was set up in late 1942, Aldrich's idea had evolved into the National War Fund. Private relief organizations that wished to participate had to register and could then petition for some of the money raised for the War Fund. In exchange for participation, however, these private organizations could no longer do their own fundraising. Within four years, nearly 600 agencies for foreign relief had registered, and the National War Fund had raised nearly

600 million dollars.⁷⁸

The War Refugee Board granted very few licenses to organizations that were also registered with the War Relief Control Board, which had very specific rules for registration. Each organization registered with the WRCB had to have a unique mission, and they had to dispense their relief money without regard to any religious or political affiliations. By definition, this excluded most of the Jewish relief agencies. However, relief organizations interested in projects for specific countries were registered with the War Relief Control Board, and this did involve the WRB.

The United Czechoslovak Relief and American Relief for Norway—the organizations registered with the War Relief Control Board for these countries—petitioned for additional funds for their organizations. The United Czechoslovak Relief asked for \$150,000 for relief for those in hiding, those in ghettos, and families of Czech soldiers as well as aid for refugee evacuation to neutrals.⁷⁹ American Relief for Norway asked for \$200,000 for the families of Norwegian seamen and for the families of those imprisoned by the Nazis.⁸⁰ Since the War Relief Control Board had strict accounting rules regarding the use of relief funds, they was hesitant to grant the money, since neither organization could promise to properly document the use of the funds. The American Federation of Labor (through their Labor League of Human Rights organization) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (through their National CIO War Relief Committee)

⁷⁸ Harold J. Seymour. *Design for Giving: The Story of the National War Fund, 1943-1947*. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 1-8.

⁷⁹ Lawrence Lesser, Organized Labor's Program of Rescue and Relief, 1944 February 18; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 16, Folder 47, Documents 809-812; USHMM.

⁸⁰ Siegmund Jeremias and Suzanne LaFollette, Letter to Lawrence Lesser, 1944 February 24; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 18, Folder 4, Document 308-309; USHMM.

could not be official members of the War Relief Control Board since they did their own fundraising, but were designated as coordinating organizations. The AFL and CIO pressured the War Relief Control Board to grant the money; the War Relief Control Board in turn came to the WRB to make sure the relief organizations would not be duplicating the Board's plans. The WRB staff asked the Czech and Norwegian relief agencies to submit more details. At the end of March, both agencies received licenses for their relief work, with the money paid from the National War Fund. Thankfully, the War Relief Control Board's rules regarding membership made for a clear designation between their work and the War Refugee Board. As War Relief Control Board director James Brunot reported to Lawrence Lesser, "His Board was somewhat troubled by possible jurisdictional overlapping...he [Brunot] said he felt that any such overlapping was in the realm of theory rather than of practice."⁸¹

The War Refugee Board, UNRRA, and the IGC

There was no question that the War Refugee Board's responsibilities overlapped with the Intergovernmental Committee, and no way that the potential for conflict would be easily overcome. Fewer such conflicts existed with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. President Roosevelt had proposed the formation of UNRRA in June 1943, and the UNRRA Agreement was signed by forty-three nations on November 9, 1943, the same day the Rescue Resolutions were introduced in Congress and only a few months prior to the creation of the WRB. Herbert Lehman, the Director

⁸¹ Lawrence Lesser, Memo of meeting with James Brunot, 1944 February 23; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 16, Folder 47, Documents 807-808; USHMM.

General of UNRRA, was well known to the War Refugee Board staff; their offices were located just a few blocks away, across the street from the State Department. UNRRA also had clearly defined the scope of their activities—so clearly that the distinction between UNRRA and the WRB was delineated in a single three-page memo written by Edward Miller at the State Department on January 31st, with no further debate needed. Miller’s memo, which was approved by Stettinius, Acheson, and Long, was meant to clarify some of the wording of the War Refugee Board’s Executive Order, namely the part about establishing havens of refuge. The UNRRA agreement specified that UNRRA would administer relief to victims of war in any area under United Nations [Allied] control, and would be responsible for post-war repatriation from these areas. If the War Refugee Board managed to assist refugees escaping enemy territory to Allied territory, UNRRA would care for them. Arranging for the escape and caring for refugees who could only make it to neutral territories would be the Board’s responsibility.⁸² Unfortunately, just ten days earlier George Brandt, also at the State Department, had written a memo about the distinction between UNRRA and the Intergovernmental Committee. Brandt defined the IGC’s responsibilities as exactly the same as Miller defined the WRB’s.⁸³

It was obvious from the beginning that the IGC and WRB relationship would be problematic. Robert Pell, Myron Taylor’s alternate on the IGC and a career State Department man, thought the creation of the Board meant that the IGC was automatically done. Breckinridge Long wrote in his diary a few days after the Board’s creation that “[i]t

⁸² Edward Miller. Memo, Division between UNRRA and WRB, 1944 January 31; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 699, Document 272-274; LOC.

⁸³ George Brandt, Memo to Long, 1944 January 21; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 38), 5148; NACP.

will, if followed out, duplicate the course of the Intergovernmental Committee and may result in the abandonment of that course by the IGC—to let us do it alone at our own sole expense and effort, without the cooperation of other governments.”⁸⁴ Howard Travers told the Board staff that “the British and Canadians are apparently upset by the establishment of the War Refugee Board and that it was quite possible that the Intergovernmental Committee would break up.”⁸⁵ Travers also asked Berle whether the State Department should even continue to send telegrams to the IGC; since they will undoubtedly duplicate projects, perhaps these telegrams should be now cleared through the Board.⁸⁶

The Intergovernmental Committee did not break up, and it did not lose any members after the creation of the War Refugee Board. Instead, the WRB and the IGC remained in constant conflict for several months and the State Department refused to choose sides, letting the two agencies run parallel and often conflicting courses. The IGC had already discussed opening offices in neutral and Allied territories, though the War Refugee Board was also planning to appoint special representatives in the neutral nations. On January 27th, without informing the WRB, Cordell Hull alerted Foreign Service officers in Algiers, Naples, Madrid, and Lisbon that the IGC was planning to open offices in these areas and that State Department staff should assist in the selection of a representative.

⁸⁴ Breckinridge Long, Diary, 1944 January 24; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 5; LOC.

⁸⁵ Joseph Friedman, Memo of meeting with Travers and Taft, 1944 January 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 13, Documents 708-709; USHMM.

⁸⁶ Adolf Berle, Letter to Kalmanowitz, 1944 January 27; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4870; NACP.

There was also the question of money. The United States was committed to paying a share of the administrative costs of the IGC, as well as half of its operational budget. The creation of the War Refugee Board did not relieve this obligation, and so, on January 28th, Assistant Secretary of State G. Howland Shaw asked the Director of the Budget to transmit a request for \$5,000,000 to Congress for the Intergovernmental Committee. This amount, five times the amount granted to the War Refugee Board from the President's Emergency Fund, was divided into \$1,000,000 for operational expenses and \$4,000,000 for "carrying out of agreements for rescuing and assisting refugees in various parts of the world."⁸⁷ Pehle found out about the appropriations request when the Budget Office, confused about the relationship between the IGC and WRB, contacted him for information. Annoyed, Pehle noted to Morgenthau that the appropriation request was made "without consulting us in any way" but also that State's description of IGC's activities "constitutes an inadvertent but nevertheless conclusive indictment of the Intergovernmental Committee for its inaction."⁸⁸ Pehle got a copy of the State's justification for the request from the Budget Office and insisted that the matter be held in abeyance until he could examine it. Stettinius's assistant, Hayden Raynor, called Pehle to urge his approval; the United States' share of IGC administrative costs for February, £51,998 [\$209,811.93], was due immediately.⁸⁹ On February 7th, Stettinius sent a memo to Pehle asking him to tell the Budget Office that the War Refugee Board did not object

⁸⁷ G. Howland Shaw, Request for IGC appropriation, 1944 January 28; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 21, Folder 6, Document s 585-593; USHMM.

⁸⁸ John Pehle. Memo, Pehle to Morgenthau about the IGC budget, 1944 February 2; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 699, Document 260; LOC.

⁸⁹ Hayden Raynor, Memorandum for the Files, 1944 February 4; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 38), 5156; NACP.

to the appropriation, in order to avoid misunderstandings in London and keep American commitments. Stettinius added, "I presume, therefore, that the Board will wish to consider promptly appropriating funds for this purpose out of funds available to the Board."⁹⁰ Two weeks later, the matter was still up in the air. The Budget Office told Ward Stewart that the President did not want the funding to come out of his Emergency Fund, but there was no time for an appropriation to meet the deadline of the end of February.⁹¹ The War Refugee Board's budget was the only option. On February 26th, Pehle told Stettinius, "I am in agreement that the payment of £51,998 should be made from the War Refugee Board's allotment from the President's Emergency Fund..." Pehle made it clear that he made no future commitments, wanted the IGC to be informed of where the money originated, and wanted the ability to approve any projects using this money.⁹² At a meeting on February 29th, State, Budget, and WRB representatives agreed that State would request direct allotments from the President's Emergency Fund for future IGC appropriations and would not take more money from the War Refugee Board. Though Ward Stewart believed that the arrangement might put the WRB "in the driver's seat" regarding the State Department and the Intergovernmental Committee, the blow to the Board's budget was significant.⁹³ Out of the President's Emergency fund allotment,

⁹⁰ Edward Stettinius, Memo to Pehle about IGC funding, 1944 February 7; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 21, Folder 6, Document 573; USHMM.

⁹¹ Harold Pollak, Minutes of WRB staff meeting, 1944 February 21; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 24, Folder 34, Documents 962-963; USHMM.

⁹² John Pehle, Memo to Stettinius about IGC funding, 1944 February 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 28, Folder 8, Document 968; USHMM.

⁹³ Ward Stewart, Memo to Pehle on New Developments on question of funds for the IGC, 1944 February 29; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 21, Folder 6, Document 568; USHMM.

the Board spent \$228,792.36 in the month of February; all but \$18,980.43 was sent to the Intergovernmental Committee.⁹⁴

The War Refugee Board Takes Over the Red Cross/Joint Project

While the War Refugee Board was sending money to the Intergovernmental Committee out of their own budget, the Board was also taking from the IGC—but instead of taking money, they were taking over projects. In September 1943, Nahum Goldman of the World Jewish Congress had met with Breckinridge Long to propose that the United States and Great Britain each contribute to a \$10,000,000 fund for the International Red Cross. Long sent the request to the Intergovernmental Committee. Over the next four months, the State Department and the IGC solicited plans from the Red Cross; discussed what organizations and licenses were currently authorized for Europe; decided that the IGC needed to give permission to any proposed projects on an individual basis; debated whether supplies could be sent through the blockade; and tried to figure out where the money would originate. As 1944 began, even as Jewish organizations contemplated contributing \$2,000,000 toward the fund and as the Red Cross proposed a smaller allocation, the project had yet to result in any money for the Red Cross.⁹⁵

The Treasury Department learned about the plan in the middle of January. On January 13th, as the Treasury staff prepared their memos for Roosevelt about State Department obstructionism, Ansel Luxford used the World Jewish Congress's proposal

⁹⁴ Ward Stewart, WRB Financial Obligations for February 1944, 1944 March 19; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 60, Folder 3; FDRL.

⁹⁵ Ralph Getsinger, Memorandum of Conversation between Getsinger and Riegner, 1944 January 6; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 70, Folder 9; FDRL.

as an example to Morgenthau of one of the State Department's "run-arounds... Long first tossed it into the waste-paper basket; namely, the Intergovernmental committee."⁹⁶ When Riegner repeated the World Jewish Congress's appeal for Red Cross funds, William Riegelman at the State Department added a cover note on January 24th: "It is my understanding that the Intergovernmental Committee is not prepared yet to carry this plan through."⁹⁷ The War Refugee Board was willing to carry the plan through, however. On January 27th, Pehle sent a cable to the Red Cross referencing their October response to the IGC about the possibility of using funds for feeding programs, and inquired what they [the Red Cross] might be able to do if funds were made available.⁹⁸ A week later, Hayden Raynor sent Pehle the State Department's file on the IGC/Red Cross negotiations, as he had noticed the inconsistency of sending the Board's cable to the Red Cross and a proposed State Department cable to London continuing negotiations. The War Refugee Board "may wish to review this file and perhaps draft a more appropriate communication to London on the matter."⁹⁹ Three days later, as Florence Hodel reported in a memo, there was a meeting in Pehle's office. "In view of the immediate need for 300,000 Swiss francs and the possible delays contemplated by the regular Intergovernmental Committee procedures, it was decided that the War Refugee Board would approach the JDC for an immediate remittance to the International Red Cross of \$100,000 so that the program

⁹⁶ Transcript, "Jewish evacuation" meeting, 1944 January 13; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 693, Document 187-211; LOC.

⁹⁷ Joseph Hooker, Letter to Berle, 1944 January 24; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication LM-195, Reel 11), 2303; NACP.

⁹⁸ William Riegelman, Cover note to Cable from Bern, 1944 January 27; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 38, Folder 5, Documents 668-670; USHMM.

⁹⁹ Hayden Raynor, Raynor transmits cables from Red Cross, 1944 February 2; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 9, Folder 5, Documents 649-660; USHMM.

could get under way at once."¹⁰⁰ Moses Leavitt of the Joint approved the funding immediately, and the cable to the Red Cross alerting them of the available money was sent on February 9th. It was not the \$10,000,000 that Goldmann had proposed, but the International Red Cross received \$100,000 a mere seven days after the War Refugee Board received the State Department's file. In his response to the War Refugee Board, Max Huber, the president of the International Red Cross, wrote that the cable was "a matter of special satisfaction since for several months past our most urgent concern has been to draw the attention of Allied authorities to the almost tragic condition of various categories of civilians in Europe."¹⁰¹ After learning of the Board's actions, the Intergovernmental Committee decided to drop the Red Cross plan entirely.¹⁰²

The WRB was not always able to work so quickly, especially when rescue plans could not be accomplished unilaterally. In October 1943, the World Jewish Congress alerted the State Department to the plight of the Jews on the Island of Rab, off the coast of Yugoslavia. The State Department and the IGC began to explore the idea of rendering assistance to prevent the Jews on Rab—many of whom had escaped from internment camps—from potential deportation. In the ensuing months, the island changed hands between the German military and Yugoslav partisans several times, and the Joint Chiefs stated that the military situation did not permit any assistance to them (with Admiral E.J. King explaining that "it is considered that to take such action might create a precedent

¹⁰⁰ Florence Hodel, Memo approving the Red Cross plan with Joint money, 1944 February 5; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 9, Folder 5, Documents 641-647; USHMM.

¹⁰¹ Max Huber, Red Cross thanks the WRB, 1944 February 17; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 20, Folder 16, Documents 638-639; USHMM.

¹⁰² Leland Harrison, Bern acknowledges cable to Red Cross, 1944 February 21; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 20, Folder 16, Document 655; USHMM.

which would lead to other demands and an influx of additional refugees").¹⁰³ William Riegelman had confidentially passed information about the Island of Rab to Pehle at the beginning of January and at the beginning of February, when it was clear that the island was in the hands of the partisans, Henry Morgenthau suggested a plan.¹⁰⁴ Instead of providing direct military assistance, if the WRB could get currency in the hands of the partisans, perhaps the partisans could hire boats to transport the Jewish refugees to Italy, where they could be cared for in a camp in Bari.¹⁰⁵ Stettinius agreed, and Stimson forwarded the request to the Joint Chiefs for their consideration. It took six weeks to hear back.

The WRB Appoints the First Overseas Representative

While the Intergovernmental Committee abandoned their plan to provide funds for the Red Cross, and stopped actively pursuing ideas on how to help the refugees on Rab (though the War Refugee Board did keep the IGC informed on the Board's proposal), the IGC did not abandon the idea of offices and representatives overseas. Neither did the War Refugee Board. In fact, the Board recognized that having on-the-ground information in the neutral nations would be of paramount importance to them and began to consider possible candidates.

¹⁰³ Adm. E.J. King, Letter to Cordell Hull, 1943 December 15; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4852; NACP.

¹⁰⁴ Florence Hodel and William Riegelman, Memo with Riegelman cables about Rab, 1944 January 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 17, Folder 6, Documents 573-575; USHMM. Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Memo about Rab, 1944 February 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 28, Folder 3, Documents 322-323; USHMM.

¹⁰⁵ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Memo about Rab, 1944 February 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 28, Folder 3, Documents 322-323; USHMM.

One man was an obvious choice. Forty-two year old Ira Hirschmann was an accomplished pianist, a vice-president of Bloomingdales Department Store, and heavily involved in philanthropic, political, and musical organizations in New York. Hirschmann had worked on Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia's first campaign, and had attended the Evian Conference in 1938 as an observer. In September 1943, Peter Bergson had introduced Hirschmann to Breckinridge Long, as the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe wanted to send him to Turkey as their representative. By October, the Emergency Committee was proposing someone else, but Hirschmann was still planning to travel to Turkey on the invitation of Ambassador Laurence Steinhardt, to gather information about the situation there. Hirschmann, who was married but had no children, seemed to know and get along with everyone.¹⁰⁶ He was friendly with such diverse personalities as Peter Bergson and Breckinridge Long, sharing Bergson's impatience for action and Long's desire to receive credit for his work. The necessary paperwork for Hirschmann's trip was already in place when the War Refugee Board was announced, and Hirschmann met with WRB staff on January 24th, right before he was scheduled to leave. Hirschmann explained his plans and his hope for some sort of diplomatic paperwork to assist him on his trip, but since the formal War Refugee Board (Hull, Morgenthau and Stimson) had not yet met, Pehle could not make any promises.¹⁰⁷

The lack of diplomatic paperwork really did create a problem for Hirschmann, since travel overseas was done on a priority basis, with space available for "priority one"

¹⁰⁶ Hirschmann was even mentioned by Isador Lubin as a possible candidate for the WRB director position. Isador Lubin, Memo to Roosevelt, 1944 January 24; Holocaust Refugees and the FDR White House (Microfilm Collection, Bethesda, MD: UPA collection from LexisNexis, 2006). LM 0255, Reel 4, Folder 10, Document 416; USHMM.

¹⁰⁷ Florence Hodel, Meeting between Hirschmann and the WRB staff, 1944 January 24; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 60, Folder 18; FDRL.

most readily. Hirschmann started with priority three, but even after successfully pleading for a priority two, it took him twenty days to reach Ankara.¹⁰⁸ Hirschmann flew from New York to Florida; Florida to Puerto Rico; from there to Natal, Brazil; to Accra; to Cairo; to Jerusalem; and finally, to Ankara, arriving on February 14, 1944. By the time he got there, Hirschmann had been officially designated the War Refugee Board's representative in Turkey, the cable arriving in Ankara about the same time he did. His responsibilities were broad. Hirschmann was instructed that he was designated a special attaché to the American embassy and charged with the responsibility for carrying out War Refugee Board policy in Turkey. Hirschmann should maintain constant communication with Ambassador Steinhardt and with the War Refugee Board, should aid private agencies whenever possible, and should develop projects related to relief and rescue. Most importantly, Hirschmann was authorized to communicate in enemy territory to carry out the Board's program.¹⁰⁹ Hirschmann was clearly excited about his new role, reporting to Pehle, "See possibilities for immediate action but tempo exasperatingly slow. Get ready for concrete cables from Ankara."¹¹⁰

After his arrival in Ankara, Hirschmann was able to assess the situation. Turkey's policies toward refugees were not based on humanitarian concerns—a fact which Hirschmann learned quickly and repeated often. In February 1942, the Turkish authorities had towed an overloaded ship full of Romanian refugees—but without a working

¹⁰⁸ Some of the delay was due to the Allied landings south of Rome, which necessitated transporting specialized military personnel to the area, bumping him from flights in Miami. Allen, George, Letter to Steinhardt, 1944 February 1; Laurence Steinhardt Papers, Box 43, Folder "Correspondence A-C; LOC.

¹⁰⁹ Ira Hirschmann, Cable of Instructions to Hirschmann, 1944 February 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 11, Documents 593-595; USHMM.

¹¹⁰ Ira Hirschmann, Cable from Hirschmann to Pehle, 1944 February 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 23, Folder 42, Document 781; USHMM.

engine—from Istanbul harbor into the Black Sea. The refugee ship had been sitting in the harbor for over a month, but since the refugees did not have the proper Turkish transit visas or Palestine entry visas, the Turks refused to let them land. Within hours of being towed, the *Struma* was torpedoed by a Soviet submarine; there was only one survivor. In his memoir of his time in Turkey, *Life Line to a Promised Land*, which he published in 1946, Hirschmann began his narrative with the story of the *Struma*, as he considered it indicative of the problems he faced in Turkey.

Progress in Turkey

Refugee passage through the country was one of the first major concerns. In April 1943, the Turkish government had agreed to allow seventy-five children with adult supervision and nine “families” (about eighty adults) to travel by train from Istanbul to Aleppo every ten days. The next group could only arrive after the first group had departed Istanbul, and all visa paperwork needed to be in order. In his response to the War Refugee Board’s January 25th request for information about refugee options in Turkey, Ambassador Steinhardt noted that although this arrangement had been in place, not a single group of refugees had made it through since that nobody has been able to escape from Axis territory. In the whole of 1943, only about 2,000 refugees had traveled through Turkey to Palestine, the vast majority having arrived on small boats from Greece.¹¹¹ The Turkish government refused to increase the number of refugees allowed to travel by train to the Syrian border until the current arrangements proved lacking. By

¹¹¹ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable from Ankara, 1944 February 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 23, Folder 42, Documents 764-776; USHMM.

February 18th, Hirschmann identified the bottleneck: Bulgaria. Beginning on January 1st, 1944, Bulgaria refused to let refugees exit the country, and since so many had to travel through Bulgarian territory to get to the coast to board ships to Turkey, the situation was at a standstill. Hirschmann met with Soviet ambassador Vinogradov in Ankara, asking him to pressure the Bulgarian ambassador to release a group of 150 children who had the necessary permissions but were being held up by Bulgarian refusal to let them leave.

The Bulgarian bottleneck was the main reason the flow of refugees stopped, but the bureaucracy was also a major problem. In his first long report to the War Refugee Board, Hirschmann explained to Pehle the various steps needed for a refugee to be allowed to travel to Palestine—a process that could take more than three months. Chaim Barlas, the Jewish Agency representative in Istanbul, made lists of refugees based on information he received from representatives in the occupied countries—this took two to three weeks. The names were then sent to Palestine and, from there, to Great Britain to make sure the entrance visas could be approved—another two to three weeks. The officials in London sent the names to the British passport officer in Turkey—two to three weeks more. One week to send the names of the families from Istanbul to Ankara, and three to four days to send the names to the Turkish Foreign Minister in Ankara. It would take two to three more weeks to send the names through Turkish bureaucracy, and then to dispatch them to the Turkish embassies in Sofia, Bucharest, and Budapest. The bureaucracy involved in refugee movement from the Balkans was staggering.

After meeting with Turkish and British officials about the delay, Hirschmann determined that Turkish authorities were holding up refugees who had already been

approved because they had no general guarantee from the British that entrance visas to Palestine had been authorized for all refugees reaching Turkey. No formal guarantees should have been needed; the British had informed the State Department in September 1943 that all refugees who reached Palestine and successfully passed through security screenings would be granted an entrance visa. But the British were “anxious that in the interest of the refugees themselves this decision should be kept secret” and had not informed the Turkish government of this new policy.¹¹² Hirschmann was even questioned by the British Minister in Turkey, who did not believe that visas for Palestine were available.¹¹³ From the Turkish point of view, the guarantee was clearly necessary. The letter with the guarantee was located on February 25th, though a British official told Hirschmann that the letter had not been the cause of a delay. Instead, he claimed, the delay was caused by a new Turkish regulation necessitating approval from Ankara for any foreigners to enter Istanbul.¹¹⁴ With both cleared up, and Bulgarian exit arranged, the first group of 140 children and 10 adults, traveling by rail, arrived in Istanbul on March 4th. Held up for eight months in Bulgaria by bureaucracy and Bulgarian controls, the movement of this group effectively broke the bottleneck, and Hirschmann and Barlas anticipated that the quota the Turkish placed on rail transport for refugee children would be filled indefinitely. Within three weeks, Hirschmann met with great success.

¹¹² William Hayter, Hayter tells Pehle refugees could go to Palestine, 1944 February 18; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 22, Documents 982-984; USHMM.

¹¹³ Pehle was informed of British policy in this regard on February 18th when W. G. Hayter of the British embassy in Washington gave him a copy of a September 1943 letter to Hull confirming that visas would be available. Pehle sent a copy of the September letter to Hirschmann, but the bottleneck had broken by the time the cable arrived. Ibid; John Pehle, Pehle tells Hirschmann about Palestine visas, 1944 February 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 28, Folder 2, Documents 137-138; USHMM.

¹¹⁴ Ira Hirschmann, Memo about the SS Bella Cita, 1944 February 25; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 8, Folder 5, Documents 741-746; USHMM.

The Need for Refugee Boats

Hirschmann also focused on obtaining sea transportation for refugees to escape from the Balkans to Turkey. Chaim Barlas had been working on the boat problem for some time. Only two days after his arrival in Ankara, Hirschmann received a cable from Moses Leavitt of the Joint, asking him to contact Barlas about “utilizing his boat.” At the end of January 1944, the Joint had successfully chartered a boat, the *Nyassa*, and legally transported 750 refugees from Spain and Portugal to Palestine.¹¹⁵ With the transport complete, Barlas hoped that the boat could proceed to Constanța, a Romanian port, to carry refugees to Istanbul. Leavitt warned Hirschmann that safe conducts (“navicerts”) were not forthcoming, which would likely render the plan impossible.¹¹⁶ Still, Hirschmann should look into what kind of shipping facilities were available, and what the potential costs might be. Two days later, on February 18th, Hirschmann sent a lengthy cable to the War Refugee Board. After explaining the Bulgarian bottleneck, Hirschmann reported that the Jewish Agency was negotiating the charter of the *Vatan*, a Turkish ship that might be able to bring 800-1,000 refugees from Constanța to Turkey. Since shipping facilities were limited, the Jewish Agency could only charter the vessel if the owner had some sort of guarantee of replacement should the ship sink or be destroyed. Could the War Refugee Board provide such a guarantee? Hirschmann was also exploring the possibility of negotiating for a Swedish ship that was being used to carry food to Greece

¹¹⁵ Joint Digest, March 1944, 1944 March; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 2, Folder 2, Documents 245-251; USHMM.

¹¹⁶ Moses Leavitt, Cable to Hirschmann about boat, 1944 February 16; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 11, Folder 7, Document 1031; USHMM.

as part of a relief program. “The point is that we must under all circumstances get a ship at once.”¹¹⁷

When the War Refugee Board received Hirschmann’s request for a guaranteed replacement for the *Vatan* should it be destroyed, they acted immediately. The process was still too slow for Hirschmann, who complained on February 26th that he had sent five informative cables since arriving in Turkey, but had thus far received no reply.¹¹⁸ The problem was not necessarily with the War Refugee Board, but with the nature of wartime cable communications. In order to send a message to Hirschmann, the WRB needed to draft a cable and give it to George Warren at the State Department. State would paraphrase the message, usually encode it, and then transmit it. Some of the more complicated or controversial messages got delayed for a few days within State Department bureaucracy before the cables were sent on. Replies went through the same procedure and after they arrived, were decoded, paraphrased, and finally given to the Board. As a result, it could take a week or more from the time a cable was drafted by the War Refugee Board to the time it was delivered to the overseas embassy. Hirschmann’s cable about guarantees took four days to reach the WRB.

Although Hirschmann was concerned his cables were being ignored, they were not. The War Refugee Board staff met at 7:30pm on February 23rd, the evening after receiving Hirschmann’s plea. Pehle reported that the guarantees were already in place; he had been hard at work as soon as Hirschmann’s cable arrived. When he read it, Pehle

¹¹⁷ Ira Hirschmann, Cable from Ankara from Hirschmann to Pehle, 1944 February 18; Holocaust Refugees and the FDR White House (Microfilm Collection, Bethesda, MD: UPA collection from LexisNexis, 2006). LM 0255, Reel 6, Folder 20, Document 428-429; USHMM.

¹¹⁸ Ira Hirschmann. Cable 345 from Hirschmann to Pehle, 1944 February 26; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 704, Document 45-48; LOC .

immediately asked Stettinius to call Admiral Land at the War Shipping Administration to alert him to the situation, so Land was prepared when Pehle and DuBois arrived at his office at 10:00am the next day with a request for replacement guarantees. By the time the WRB staff met that evening, Pehle had a letter from Admiral Land guaranteeing that the United States would replace the *Vatan* if the ship was destroyed, and had also cleared the transaction with the Foreign Economic Administration offices. In his weekly report of activities to Morgenthau, Pehle added a cover letter letting the Secretary know that “[w]e are particularly proud of what we were able to do on Ira Hirschmann’s request for help... We regard this as a most significant precedent in so far as our shipping problems are concerned.”¹¹⁹ Hirschmann received the cable giving him permission to proceed four days later, and wrote in his diary that “[t]he tone of the Wash. reply to my telegram was exactly right, giving me complete coverage on the boat.”¹²⁰ The cable arrived just in time: Hirschmann was in Istanbul ready to negotiate the terms of the lease of the *Vatan*.

Clearing a path for refugees in the Balkans to slowly begin moving through Turkey and into Palestine was the first major triumph for the War Refugee Board. The success came from clearing bureaucracy and inducing Bulgarian authorities to allow refugees to leave the territory. It would become the template for War Refugee Board projects. The staff consistently tried to streamline bureaucratic red tape and induce cooperation from those countries (and agencies) which were not predisposed to provide rescue or aid.

¹¹⁹ John Pehle, Pehle letter to Morgenthau, 1944 February 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 3, Document 312; USHMM.

¹²⁰ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 February 28; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

The Declaration on Atrocities

To that end, the War Refugee Board staff believed their best chance of large-scale rescue was in the field of psychological warfare. On February 5th, Hayden Raynor sent Pehle a letter the British office had delivered to the State Department. Explaining that the World Jewish Congress was petitioning the British for a public statement condemning Nazi atrocities, the letter included British arguments against issuing a such a statement: if the Moscow Declaration in 1942 did not work, there was no reason to suspect that Nazi policy would change with another statement. A declaration would only serve to “indicate to the Germans a means whereby they could distress and embarrass Allies while among Jews it raised hopes and expectations of far-reaching action whose fulfillment has in circumstances of war proved impossible.” Since the World Jewish Congress was “American in inspiration”, the British wanted to get assurances of support for their response.¹²¹ Raynor asked Pehle for the War Refugee Board’s advice. Josiah DuBois, who was impatient with bureaucratic politeness and rarely tactful when he felt the issues too important to be caged in niceties, was tasked with the response draft. In the reply, DuBois wrote that the War Refugee Board was actively considering issuing such a declaration as it was the only chance to save hundreds of thousands of lives. He concluded the draft with “[w]hether this Government will issue a declaration on Hitler's atrocities against the Jews depends on whether we feel that the issuance of such a declaration would help to save some Jews from death.”¹²² In other words, the British had

¹²¹ Hayden Raynor, British do not want another declaration, 1944 February 5; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 22, Documents 1014-1015; USHMM.

¹²² WRB staff, Proposed reply to the British, 1944 February 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 22, Documents 1000-1001; USHMM.

no say in the matter. The State Department changed DuBois's draft to be more "friendly and courteous," since the European Division was "unable to understand how the plight of the Jew can be ameliorated through an argument with the British government."¹²³ Still, DuBois's text was surprisingly close to what Stettinius finally sent to the British on February 25th, though his estimation of "hundreds of thousands of lives" was more cautiously revised to "thousands," and his blunt conclusion was deleted.

The War Refugee Board was not bluffing, either. Pehle sent a draft of a declaration on atrocities to Morgenthau on February 19th; if the Secretary approved, Pehle hoped it could go to Stettinius (as Hull was out of town) and Stimson, so the President might issue it soon. Pehle stressed the urgency: "At this stage of the war, if we can convince the people in Germany and particularly in the satellite countries, of the seriousness with which we view this matter, we have a chance of saving many of these people from death."¹²⁴ Fourteen months had passed since the December 1942 United Nations Declaration, in which the signatories (including Great Britain) "condemn[ed] in the strongest possible terms this bestial policy of cold-blooded extermination."¹²⁵ The language of the War Refugee Board's draft for a 1944 declaration was equally strong: "One of the blackest crimes in history, the systematic murder of the Jews of Europe, continues unabated."¹²⁶ The draft announced that Nazi leaders had not abandoned the

¹²³ Hayden Raynor, Memo to Reams, Note from EUR Division, 1944 February 12; RG-59, "War Refugee Board," Box 1, Folder Misc. 1944 January-March; NACP.

¹²⁴ John Pehle, Memo from Pehle to Morgenthau about atrocities declaration, 1944 February 19; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 702, Document 141; LOC.

¹²⁵ United Nations Declaration on Atrocities, 1942 December 17; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 28, Folder 7, Document 835; USHMM.

¹²⁶ This sentence was taken almost verbatim from the "Acquiescence of this Government" memo. WRB staff, Draft Declaration by the President of the United States, 1944 February 19; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 702, Document 148-149; LOC.

plan to exterminate the Jews of Europe; more than two million had already been killed. As American young men are fighting for “a world based on freedom, equality, and justice...it is therefore, fitting that we again proclaim that our determination that none who participate in such acts of savagery should go unpunished.” The declaration implored that individuals living in satellite nations should “by his actions demonstrate to the world that in his heart he does not share these insane desires.” The draft ended with a call for other nations to rally around the declaration.¹²⁷

Pehle sent the declaration to Stettinius on February 23rd, who promised to get it to his people immediately. John McCloy told Pehle that it “would be improved if it were a little ‘less lurid’,” while McGeorge Bundy questioned whether the United States actually had committed to punish war criminals after the war. Pehle assured him yes, but promised to check the United Nations Declaration to confirm.¹²⁸ With Stimson out of town and in spite of the ever-present State Department bureaucracy, the draft was finally approved with no changes and signed by Hull, Stimson, and Morgenthau on March 6th. The same morning, Stettinius presented the declaration to Roosevelt’s press secretary, Steve Early, to give to the President.¹²⁹

Safe Havens

The War Refugee Board staff were optimistic. Since the secretaries approved the text, there was every reason to think that President Roosevelt would issue the declaration

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ John Pehle, Memo of meeting with McCloy and Bundy, 1944 February 23; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 4, Folder 24, Document 576; USHMM.

¹²⁹ Transcript, Morgenthau phone conversation, 1944 March 7; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 707, Document 2-4.

on atrocities very soon. It was time to think bigger. On March 6th, the same day the declaration went to Steve Early, Josiah DuBois and Joseph Friedman collaborated on a memo about a controversial idea to open safe havens for refugees in the United States. The eight-page report, addressed to Hull, Stimson, and Morgenthau, argued that the War Refugee Board could not continue to ask other countries to take in refugees when the United States has not expressed a willingness to do so. The declaration on atrocities, which the secretaries had just approved, included a “call upon the free peoples of Europe to open their frontiers to the victims of oppression. We shall find havens of refuge for them...” Yet the United States had not established a rescue haven. It was becoming obvious and embarrassing. In the response to the War Refugee Board’s request for information, the American ambassador to Nicaragua had reported that Nicaragua “will permit the entry of war refugees under the same condition as the United States and in a number proportionate to the population of both countries.”¹³⁰ Nicaragua was not going to do anything if the United States was not. DuBois and Friedman feared a more damaging accusation, writing, “The enemy must not be given the pretense of justification that the Allies, while speaking in horrified terms of the Nazi treatment of the Jews, never once offered to receive these people... The moral aspect of the problem is pre-eminent...”¹³¹ Their report stated that the War Refugee Board’s major challenge was the failure of the United Nations to offer a large haven of refuge, which made them weak in two ways: morally weak in front of Germany and Nazi satellites, and physically weak, because there

¹³⁰ Stewart, Cable from Managua, 1944 February 25; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 4, Folder 9, Document 211; USHMM.

¹³¹ Josiah DuBois and Joseph B. Friedman, Report to the War Refugee Board, 1944 March 6; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 707, Document 235-244; LOC.

was nowhere for refugees to go if the War Refugee Board got them out. The Board should encourage refugee traffic through Spain and Turkey and then take the initiative to “announce to the world that it will provide temporary havens of refuge in this country for all oppressed people escaping from Hitler.”¹³²

DuBois and Friedman knew there would be public criticism of the plan; though the majority of letters the Board received after it was established were positive, there was also a vocal minority of the public who sent letters with complaints such as, “There will be a great uprising in our country if all the Jews that want to come be sent here... The Jews are not wanted anywhere.”¹³³ For Roosevelt, it might be a hard sell in an election year. DuBois and Friedman had ideas to make it more palatable. Refugees should be treated like prisoners of war; there were thousands of POWs already in the United States. They could come outside of immigration quotas, as the United States would mandate their repatriation to Europe after the war. DuBois and Friedman reasoned there could be no complaints of mistreatment, since an American prisoner of war camp was much better than a Nazi concentration camp.

Morgenthau was dubious that the plan would find support outside of the Treasury Department. “Of course it is a magnificent idea...I just don’t know whether we have courage enough.”¹³⁴ In a meeting on March 8th, DuBois did not have to argue the idea to Morgenthau, but he did anyway. “I am convinced, Mr. Secretary, that it is the heart of our whole program... We are approaching all other governments, asking them on

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ FBL, Letter to Morgenthau, 1944 February 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 2, Folder 17, Documents 463-464; USHMM.

¹³⁴ Transcript, “Jewish Evacuation” meeting, 1944 March 8; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 707, Document 219-234; LOC.

humanitarian grounds to do something. We, ourselves, look like hypocrites.” Morgenthau thought they might be able to get it through the other secretaries, but the question was whether Roosevelt would act. He suggested Pehle take the idea to Samuel Rosenman, who was also the Board’s liaison with the President on the declaration on atrocities. They must be careful to keep the two issues separate, however. “[Roosevelt] will think we are trying to put something over on him.”¹³⁵

By the next afternoon, Pehle had already met with both Stimson and Stettinius about the idea of havens in the United States. Stettinius, about to go to New York for a minor operation prior to leaving for a trip to London, advised it go forward, though Pehle admitted, “I can’t say he thought it through.” Stimson was much more hesitant about the idea. He felt that if the United States brought refugees over, there would be strong pressure on Congress to adjust the immigration laws so they could stay. “He told me...what political pressure he thinks the Jewish groups could organize...He thinks they are a very powerful political force.” (Morgenthau: “I wish they were.” Pehle: “Sometimes they are, and sometimes they are not.”) Stimson was against the idea of additional immigration, but he was not going to reject the camp issue outright, and when Pehle asked whether he could bring it up at the next formal War Refugee Board meeting, Stimson was resigned to the fact that there was no easy answer: “I haven’t much of an alternative, have I?”¹³⁶ On March 21st, at the next formal War Refugee Board meeting, Hull, Stimson, and Morgenthau gave “careful consideration” to the idea, and finally

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Transcript, “Jewish Evacuation” meeting, 1944 March 9; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 708, Document 42-47; LOC.

agreed that Pehle could approach the President with the idea to open refugee havens in the United States.¹³⁷

Fedhala Still Delayed

Near Casablanca, Fedhala had yet to open. In August 1943, following a recommendation at the Bermuda Conference to open a refugee haven in North Africa, Camp Marechal Lyautey, a military camp also known as Fedhala, had been selected to host refugees from Spain. The State Department, Joint Chiefs, UNRRA, and the IGC had spent the fall and winter of 1943 negotiating the organization, security, supervision, and other logistics of the camp. In January 1944, the camp was still empty. Though the jurisdictional lines had already been drawn, with UNRRA responsible for the operations of the camp and the Intergovernmental Committee responsible for the ultimate repatriation of the refugees after the war, there were still too many involved parties to make any decision a simple one. The British and the United States were funding the camp, which was in territory controlled by the French Committee for National Liberation, who were concerned about security. The Joint Chiefs were also involved, as the area was still partially controlled by the Allied military. The War Refugee Board just wanted the refugees to leave Spain and get to Fedhala to make more room for new refugees to enter Spain. With so many bureaucratic complications, it is not surprising that discussions and negotiations carried on into the spring of 1944.

¹³⁷ WRB staff, Minutes of the Third WRB meeting, 1944 March 21; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 25, Folder 5, Documents 510-512; USHMM.

At least they were beginning to talk about actual refugees, though. On January 23, 1944, Moses Beckelman, a social worker with the Joint who was appointed by UNRRA to be the director of the Fedhala camp, wrote a letter from Madrid to the UNRRA office in Algiers. He was in Spain to investigate the number of refugees available to go to Fedhala; his work was delayed by the sailing of the *Nyassa*, which was preparing to take 550 Spanish refugees to Palestine. With those refugees legally immigrating to Palestine, Beckelman determined there were likely less than 1,000 left in Spain who might be available to go to Fedhala. Beckelman did some informal interviewing and discovered that out of 81 refugees interviewed, only 25 were interested in leaving for Fedhala, while 15 were indifferent and 41 were actively opposed to the idea. Of those opposed, many disliked the idea of being in French territory, wanted to see if other immigration opportunities (like the *Nyassa* voyage) would arise, or thought they would have more freedom in Spain.¹³⁸ Beckelman could not blame them. The French kept changing their minds about whether the potential refugees would be able to find employment in North Africa, or if they would even be allowed to leave the camp. Beckelman argued in his report that, “[i]t now appears clear that the North African project, when it finally materializes, will be a much smaller-scale venture than has heretofore been anticipated. I think every possible effort should be made to liquidate it at the earliest possible moment, both because of the inherently unsatisfactory situation which it seems unavoidable that

¹³⁸ Moses Beckelman, Beckelman report from Spain to UNRRA, 1944 January 23; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 2, Documents 248-254; USHMM.

the camp shall represent and because of the large capital investment and large per capita outlay..."¹³⁹

Nevertheless, Beckelman wrote up an announcement of the camp and an application for refugees in Spain to complete if they were interested. On January 31st, security parameters were established: the British and Americans would check the applications against refugee files in Madrid, then forward the list of names to Algiers, where the French would review them. As Beckelman looked around Madrid and Barcelona for applicants, the War Refugee Board decided to get more involved in the project. On February 7th, Joseph Friedman wrote a memo encouraging Pehle to contact UNRRA director Herbert Lehman to see what the Board could do to urge this program to move faster. To do this, they needed their own source of information.

The War Refugee Board Appoints a Representative in North Africa

On February 13th, Leonard Ackermann, a Treasury representative stationed in Algiers, wrote a personal letter to his longtime friend, Lawrence Lesser. Referring to Michael Hoffman, head of the Treasury offices in North Africa, Ackermann wrote, "Mike also asked me whether I was interested in the problem on which you are working, and of course I responded in the affirmative. Just what we'll do is not certain yet as we have not as yet had the conferences with the boys upstairs. If you get any ideas about the part that we might play let me know as official communications sometimes fail to convey the real

¹³⁹ Ibid.

feel of a subject."¹⁴⁰ It's fortunate that Ackermann was willing to help, as five days later, likely before Lesser even received the letter, Ackermann was appointed the War Refugee Board's representative in North Africa. A graduate of Columbia law school, Ackermann had joined the Securities and Exchange Commission in 1938 before transferring to the Treasury Department in 1942. Funny and artistic, Ackermann was familiar and friendly with the Treasury staff and was likely appointed specifically because they all knew him so well.

Ackermann was determined to do a good job. After learning on February 28th that he had been selected, Ackermann immediately wrote to Pehle with questions about his duties, his jurisdiction, and asked for any information that might help him. "I deeply appreciate your confidence in me in making this appointment and assure you that I will do my best to justify it."¹⁴¹ Ackermann was less formal in writing to Lesser. "Yesterday afternoon, the message arrived announcing my new appointment. I can see your fine Roman hand in this—always taking steps to see that I won't sit back on my feet and be my usual lethargic self. Seriously. However, I'm tickled pink. The job (even though I'm still somewhat confused as to what it entails) sounds interesting and I'm going to do my damndest to make it worth while."¹⁴² While awaiting a response from Pehle about his official duties and projects, Ackermann correctly assumed that Fedhala would be among them and held a meeting on March 1st with the British and Moses Beckelman.

¹⁴⁰ Leonard Ackermann, V-mail to Lawrence Lesser, 1944 February 13; Lesser family papers, private collection.

¹⁴¹ Leonard Ackermann, Letter to Pehle, 1944 February 29; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 2, Documents 270-271; USHMM.

¹⁴² Leonard Ackermann, V-mail to Lawrence Lesser, 1944 February 29; Lesser family papers, private collection.

There had been little progress since Beckelman's report in January. The French originally insisted on receiving six copies of each application, with photographs and thumbprints,¹⁴³ but backed off on that requirement a few days later after American and British protests.¹⁴⁴ A group of about 400 Sephardic Spaniards, mainly Balkans who were descended from the Jews expelled from Spain in 1492 and who had been granted Spanish passports in the 1920s, arrived on the border at the beginning of February.¹⁴⁵ Many of them had been in concentration camps and the Spanish government had allowed them entry as long as they left Spain as soon as possible. At the meeting on March 1st, Beckelman presented a new question to the French: exactly what kind of refugee would be allowed to come to Fedhala? Originally, everyone had agreed that only stateless persons could apply for admission, but since the number of refugees in Spain had dropped since the summer of 1943, it seemed reasonable to be more flexible. Perhaps the Sephardim—who needed to leave Spain as soon as possible even though they had Spanish papers—could be included. There were also refugees who had arrived in Spain prior to 1933; the Spanish-born wives and children of stateless refugees; White Russians; and those on Nansen passes.¹⁴⁶ This seemed to be the major question now—which applications the French would accept, and which they would reject. Rejection would likely be partially based on whether the French believed the refugee had a place to go after the war, and though this was the designated responsibility of the Intergovernmental

¹⁴³ Moses Beckelman, Letter to Dewey Anderson, 1944 February 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 2, Documents 267-269; USHMM.

¹⁴⁴ Joseph Schwartz, Schwartz asks if Sephardim can be included, 1944 February 23; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 11, Folder 4, Document 653; USHMM.

¹⁴⁵ Moses Beckelman. Letter to Dewey Anderson, 1944 February 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 2, Documents 260-266; USHMM.

¹⁴⁶ Leonard Ackermann, War Refugee Board meeting about Marshal Lyautey camp, 1944 March 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 11, Folder 4, Documents 650-652; USHMM.

Committee, “the Committee, however, has developed no plans of any definite nature at the moment.”¹⁴⁷ So no assurances could be made.

The same day, Joseph Murphy of the Treasury Department (who had assisted in going through the State Department files and writing reports) wrote a note to Joseph Friedman and attached copies of cables about the bank accounts for Fedhala. He had spoken to Carolin Flexner at UNRRA who was “again pointing out this in no way concerned us, said we'd be smart in staying out of this.”¹⁴⁸ Friedman ignored the warning, and the next day sent a letter to Louis Dolivet, a French leftist activist living in New York who was a member of the Free World Association. Friedman explained the necessity of obtaining more cooperation from the French in expediting the departure of Spanish refugees for Fedhala. Could Dolivet help? Dolivet wrote a cable to Henri Bonnat of the *Commissaire à l'information* in Algiers on March 6th, complaining about the delays and asking him to do all he could to streamline the process. Three days later, at Pehle's direction, Morris Ernst paid Dolivet \$300.00, likely for his assistance in this matter.¹⁴⁹ On March 13th, Pehle sent a copy of the telegram to Ackermann, and asked him to deliver the French version to Bonnat. However, “it must be accomplished without letting anyone know that any Americans have seen the cable. It must also be done without the knowledge of any other persons whatsoever”; perhaps Ackermann could claim it was

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Joseph Murphy, Note to Friedman, 1944 March 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 20, Folder 8, Document 388; USHMM. Russell, Cable from Casablanca, 1944 February 21; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 20, Folder 8, Documents 389-392; USHMM.

¹⁴⁹ Morris Ernst, Account sheet, 1944 August. Morris Leopold Ernst papers, box 35, folder “War Refugee Board, February 1944-February 1945, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

hand-carried from the United States, sealed and unopened, by someone who recently arrived.¹⁵⁰

The War Refugee Board's attempt at secrecy, however, probably did nothing to speed along opening of Fedhala. Ackermann wrote on March 21st that he had been in the hospital with a bad cough and fever, but that on the 17th, the French security representative returned to Algiers and announced that of the 484 applicants to Fedhala, the French rejected only 30 (though they would not say on what grounds the refugees were rejected). As those who met on March 1st had predicted, the French questioned 116 of the applicants, including those who arrived prior to 1933, most of whom were Jews displaced by the fighting between Turks and Greeks after World War I. There was also a second set of applications for 415 additional refugees, including many of the Sephardim, whom the French ultimately decided could be included. Ackermann talked to the British representative, as the British would be supplying ship transportation, about getting two boats, so the first set of applicants could leave immediately. It was not to be. By the end of March 1944, nearly a year after the Bermuda Conference, no refugees had arrived at Camp Marechal Lyautey near Fedhala.

Problems in Spain

As frustrated as the WRB staff were with their inability to expedite the exit of refugees from Spain, they were also stymied by the attitude of the American ambassador to Spain, Carlton Hayes. Hayes, who had been a history professor at Columbia in civilian

¹⁵⁰ John Pehle, Cable to Ackermann about Dolivet letter, 1944 March 13; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 8, Folder 49, Document 703; USHMM.

life, arrived in Spain in the summer of 1942 and generally enjoyed a good relationship with Franco's government. He had been steadily working to keep Spain out of the war. Since Franco preferred the Americans and British over the Nazis, but the Nazis over the Soviets, Spain had initially announced non-belligerency rather than neutrality, and Hayes wanted to make sure Spain had no reason to side with the Axis powers. In the fall of 1943, however, what Hayes perceived to be a series of trumped-up misunderstandings in the American press about Spanish loyalties led the State Department to request Hayes demand an embargo of Spanish exports of wolfram (now more commonly referred to as tungsten) to Germany. Wolfram, which was essential to the manufacture of German weaponry, was also an important part of the Spanish economy, especially during the war; the American government had a policy of buying massive amounts of wolfram to keep it out of German hands. By January 1944, the Spanish had not agreed to the embargo, so Hayes had been instructed to announce that the United States was withholding petroleum shipments to Spain as a bargaining technique, and relations between the United States and Spain were at a low. The relationship between Hayes and the State Department was also quite poor. He was frustrated. "The State Department, yielding to the extremist press in the United States, was more insistent than ever that we must get the embargo at once...I can't suppose that everybody in the State Department was 'taken in' by this propaganda, but apparently enough were to harass the Embassy with complaints and to prevent the adoption of a realistic plan for obtaining the desired embargo."¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ Carlton Hayes. *Wartime Mission in Spain, 1942-1945*. (New York: The Macmillan company, 1945.), 206.

Hayes also believed that he was doing a good job in dealing with refugees in Spain. In January 1943, Hayes had set up the “Representation in Spain of American Relief Organizations.” After meeting with representatives of various relief organizations, including the Joint and the American Friends Service Committee, Hayes believed that “the independent participation of these organizations in such work would inevitably result in confusion and duplication of effort, and that their effective participation could be assured only by a unification of their operations through a single directive agency.” He suggested they select one representative, pool their money (though the representative would make sure to keep careful accounting), and coordinate relief work. The office was established on January 27, 1943, with twenty-seven-year-old David Blickenstaff as director. Blickenstaff, who grew up partially in India as the child of missionary parents, was a member of the Church of the Brethren. As the Church of the Brethren was also a peace church, Blickenstaff was a natural fit for the American Friends Service Committee, which had sent him to Spain in 1937. Between 1937 and 1943, Blickenstaff was an AFSC delegate, mainly providing relief in Spain and in the unoccupied areas of France. When southern France fell to the Germans, Blickenstaff and his wife moved to Madrid, where he was appointed head of all the American relief operations in Spain.

Hayes thought this sufficient. On February 8th, 1944, Joseph Friedman drafted a cable to Hayes on behalf of the War Refugee Board, asking him to approach the Spanish government and ask them to ease border control measures so more refugees could enter Spain from France. Though he should assure the Spanish that refugees will be removed as quickly as possible, he should also request that the Spanish open refugee centers near

the border, which the War Refugee Board would finance and maintain.¹⁵² The State Department did not want any part of this, and held a meeting with WRB staff requesting that the cable make it clear that the message was from the War Refugee Board and not from the State Department. Pehle and Friedman protested, but were informed that the refugee center request might interfere with negotiations over the wolfram crisis. Moreover, if the War Refugee Board really wanted to get involved in diplomatic machinations, their cables would need to be cleared with the political departments at State. On February 18th, the State Department sent a cable to Hayes advising him of the War Refugee Board's requests. Though the text made it clear that the instructions came from the Board, the State Department added, "We anxiously desire to support the Board's program given above and it is requested that you approach the Spanish government at the earliest possible moment," urging Hayes to view this as a humanitarian measure rather than a political or diplomatic one.¹⁵³

Though the WRB did not receive his cable until February 25th, Hayes had already replied to the Board's January 25th request to approach the Spanish government and inform them of American policy. He refused. "I do not consider this an opportune moment in our relations with Spain to approach Spanish Government," Hayes began, adding that the Spanish were familiar with American policy and that he had already cabled a lot of information about the situation of refugees in Spain, indicating the dates and numbers of these cables. He concluded by offering that "formal representations at

¹⁵² Joseph Friedman, Cable to Madrid, 1944 February 8; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 10, Folder 14, Documents 785-786; USHMM.

¹⁵³ Edward Stettinius, Cable from State to Madrid, 1944 February 18; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 7, Folder 5, Document 521-523; USHMM.

this time would be less helpful than they will be a little later when the present crisis in our relations with Spain has been successfully passed.”¹⁵⁴ As delays in cable traffic meant that the War Refugee Board did not receive his cable until ten days after he sent it, their cable about approaching the Spanish regarding refugee centers was already on its way to Hayes.

Hayes responded to the Board’s February 18th cable on February 28th; the response only took two days to arrive in Washington. The cable arrived in three sections. The first addressed two questions he saw in the WRB proposals—the question of evacuating refugees currently in Spain, and that of bringing in more refugees. Hayes explained the situation with Fedhala (which the Board already knew). Refugees were hesitant to go and were fearful of the French, and Hayes questioned what to do with refugees who refused to apply or leave for Fedhala.¹⁵⁵ In the second section, Hayes stated that the refugees in France could easily enter Spain, were not being turned back at the border, and after they arrived, were well cared for by Blickenstaff’s offices. There was no need to ask for relief centers, nor to ask Spain to broadcast a willingness to take refugees. Any announcement could potentially result in the tightening of German border controls along the Pyrenees.¹⁵⁶ The third section of the cable explained that the best chance of success would be for Franco to approach Germany directly and ask for refugees to be released, but this would not be likely until larger havens than Fedhala were found. Hayes summarized his main

¹⁵⁴ Carlton Hayes, Cable from Madrid, 1944 February 15; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 7, Folder 5, Document 491; USHMM.

¹⁵⁵ Carlton Hayes, Cable from Madrid, part 1, 1944 March 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 7, Folder 5, Documents 483-485; USHMM.

¹⁵⁶ Carlton Hayes, Cable from Madrid, part 2, 1944 March 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 2, Folder 17, Documents 695-696; USHMM.

point by concluding, “I am, for the present, making no approaches to Spanish Government on subject of department's telegram pending consideration of points raised herein...it is still my opinion that present political and economic crisis with Spain is apt to have adverse effect on receptivity of Spanish Government even to proposals of purely humanitarian character.”¹⁵⁷

The WRB Tries to Appoint a Representative in Spain

Meanwhile, the War Refugee Board had been considering a representative in Spain. They settled on David Blickenstaff, since he was familiar with relief organizations and already working in Madrid. On February 25th, Pehle asked Stettinius to cable Madrid proposing Blickenstaff as the War Refugee Board representative to Spain. Hayes, who had already told the Intergovernmental Committee earlier in February that Blickenstaff could handle any representation duties for them, was not happy with the idea.¹⁵⁸ The morning of March 4th, the WRB received Hayes’ response: the ambassador had not yet approached Blickenstaff about the offer. “As I have taken great pains to point out the problem of the care of these refugees is being very competently handled by Blickenstaff and his organization which was set up at my suggestion to unify efforts of participating private agencies and I wish to avoid any changes which might impair effectiveness of this work.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Carlton Hayes, Cable from Madrid, part 3, 1944 March 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 7, Folder 5, Document 448; USHMM.

¹⁵⁸ Carlton Hayes, Cable from Madrid about Blickenstaff and the IGC, 1944 February 3; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 7, Folder 5, Document 492; USHMM.

¹⁵⁹ Carlton Hayes, Cable from Madrid about Blickenstaff and the WRB, 1944 March 3; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 3, Folder 10, Documents 474-475; USHMM.

The War Refugee Board grew frustrated with Hayes. He had refused to alert the Spanish government to the formation of the War Refugee Board, would not request relief centers or the relaxation of border controls, and declined the Board's request to approach Blickenstaff about becoming the WRB representative. To Hayes, none of this was necessary—Spain was open for refugees and knew American policy, and Blickenstaff's offices were perfectly sufficient. So the Board made another offer on March 16th. Recognizing Blickenstaff's obvious value in his current role and the fact that the WRB representative position would be full-time job, they suggested appointing James Saxon. Saxon, a roving Treasury staff member who, during the war, had been in Hawaii, the Philippines (where he had escaped the Battle of Corregidor on a submarine), Puerto Rico, and in North Africa for the past thirteen months, was most recently working with Ackermann. He was young and unmarried, with both a law degree and a finance degree—as well as a reputation as a risk taker—and was such a valuable employee that Morgenthau personally signed his deferment from the military service.¹⁶⁰ While waiting for a reply, the War Refugee Board sent Hayes the text of a license granted to the Joint for \$100,000 for evacuation and relief work on the Spanish border.

The request to appoint Saxon angered Hayes, who dropped his façade of apologetic diplomacy. The first section of his response, which arrived on March 22nd, seemed to be an explosion of everything he wanted to say in previous cables. He did not hold back. He began the cable with “[I]t has not yet been demonstrated to my staisfaction [sic] that the proposed program of the War Refugee Board without incurring risks which

¹⁶⁰ Transcript, “Deferments” meeting, 1944 January 10. The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 692, Document 305-321; LOC.

would outweigh the possible humanitarian benefits could make any substantial contribution toward the rescue of refugees.” If that were not enough to make his point, Hayes continued. “I find myself firmly disagreeing with the Board as I have already pointed out, for reasons...regarding the efficacy and wisdom of the program.” According to Hayes, the Board’s proposed program would actually jeopardize the effectiveness of relief efforts as well as objectives of military and strategic import.¹⁶¹ The second section of the cable, which arrived a day later, specifically addressed the offer of Saxon. If the Board continued to insist on the appointment of a representative, they should use Blickenstaff, since he was already doing an excellent job and would likely be approved by the Spanish government. To introduce a ‘new’ person to the situation would cause a duplication of efforts and would be a waste of time.¹⁶²

Hayes also refused to inform Samuel Sequerra, the Joint representative in Spain (who would be operating near Barcelona rather than through Blickenstaff’s operations in Madrid) about the new license. The War Refugee Board had not encountered this before. In March 1944, the Board approved at least ten new licenses, including licenses for the American Committee for Christian Refugees for relief in Switzerland; the Greek government for Greeks in Northern Italy; and the Vaad Hatzalah to send relief packages from Tangiers to concentration camps in Czechoslovakia. The total relief money approved was more than \$550,000; \$100,000 of which was supposed to go to Sequerra. In a cable that arrived on March 23rd, Hayes refused to transmit the license, arguing that Blickenstaff was the designated representative through which all activity should be

¹⁶¹ Carlton Hayes, Cable from Madrid, 1944 March 20; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 46, Folder “Evacuation Through Spain”; FDRL.

¹⁶² Ibid.

directed, and questioned Sequerra's loyalty as a neutral Portuguese subject who might try to deal with the enemy. He expressed concerns that the Nazis would learn of the evacuation program and exploit it, endangering the escape of captured Allied airmen and jeopardizing military objectives. Not only should the Joint Chiefs have to approve any programs, the Board was risking all relief and evacuation programs in Spain: "For any American charitable organization or its representatives to engage in clandestine operations of the type contemplated by the license could jeopardize position of these organizations in Spain."¹⁶³

Also on March 23rd, the War Refugee Board sent Hayes a response to his refusal to approach the Spanish about refugee centers. Though they had already received his angry cables about Blickenstaff and Saxon and his cable refusing to transmit the Joint license, responses took so long to draft and send to the State Department for transmission that the Board was unable to answer quickly. Their cable to Hayes was evenhanded. The Board explained that Fedhala would not be the only haven of refuge, hoped the Spanish would continue a liberal border policy, and expressed a desire that the Spanish will not feel burdened by refugees when the snow melts over the Pyrenees and traffic increases. To that end, the proposed WRB representative (and embassy's special attaché) would take charge of all refugee evacuations out of Spain to North Africa, as well as managing three reception centers which the Board wanted to open along the Spanish border. By being near the border, the center staff would work with border control agents to identify refugees; house them for security purposes; provide them with food, clothing, and

¹⁶³ Carlton Hayes, Cable from Madrid about license for Sequerra, 1944 March 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 28, Folder 3, Documents 359-360; USHMM.

medical care; and arrange for their further evacuation to the safe havens.¹⁶⁴ The Board wanted to proceed, and staff began to draft a memo proposing personnel for the reception centers. Pehle also began work on a draft memo to Morgenthau, detailing the ways in which Hayes was obstructing their work.¹⁶⁵ Hayes' desire to maintain the status quo was unacceptable when the War Refugee Board thought more could be done.

The War Refugee Board and the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees

Myron Taylor, the American representative to the Intergovernmental Committee, likewise wanted to maintain the status quo. On February 25th, as the WRB was getting ready to formally transmit the United States' share of the IGC's February funding, IGC director Herbert Emerson sent John Pehle a formal letter of support. "I am writing to say that you can rely on the full co-operation of the Intergovernmental Committee in the pursuance of our common aims, and that any information or help I can give is at your disposal, so do not hesitate to ask for it at any time."¹⁶⁶ Emerson's support was echoed in Parliament. On March 1st, the British House of Commons debated IGC funding for two and a half hours; while most supported the continued funding, the debate was between those who favored supplementing the IGC with a British version of the WRB and the supporters who argued that those who wanted both did not understand the inherent differences between the British and American systems of government. Richard Law, who

¹⁶⁴ John Pehle and Myles Standish, Draft cable to State for Madrid, 1944 March 23; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 11, Folder 3, Documents 321-325; USHMM.

¹⁶⁵ Since Morgenthau had complained about Hayes to the President on March 18th, before they received his recent refusals, the memo would not come as a surprise. Memo related to Morgenthau conversation with Roosevelt, 1944 March 18. The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 711, Document 208-214; LOC.

¹⁶⁶ Herbert Emerson, Cable to WRB expressing support, 1944 February 25; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 21, Folder 8, Documents 772-773; USHMM.

had been one of the British representatives at the Bermuda Conference, argued that the British government already had a cabinet committee dealing with refugees which was effectually similar to the WRB, rendering the creation of a new committee superfluous. Law added that “His Majesty's Government welcomed most heartily the institution of the War Refugee Board in the United States, and we shall be willing, and indeed anxious, to give that War Refugee Board...our very warmest support and sympathy,” and pointed out that the British sent instructions to their embassies and legations ordering them to cooperate with Board activities.¹⁶⁷ But despite these public and diplomatic statements of support, American representative Myron Taylor was angry.

The day after the Parliamentary debates in London, Taylor met with representatives of the State Department, the War Relief Control Board, and Pehle and DuBois of the War Refugee Board.¹⁶⁸ The meeting, held in Stettinius' office, began with Taylor describing the history of the Intergovernmental Committee; he emphasized that the IGC was Roosevelt's idea, and argued that with all the extant agencies there were “overlapping jurisdictions and the need for coordination.” Since the United States needed British help, it was important to “not make the other governments sore if we wanted to get any cooperation from the IGC.” Ultimately, Myron Taylor and Robert Pell argued

¹⁶⁷ Transcript, House of Commons debate about IGC, 1944 March 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 21, Documents 952-959; USHMM.

¹⁶⁸ My description of the meeting comes from Josiah DuBois's memo for the War Refugee Board. George Warren's memo of the meeting—which is similar but without DuBois's colorful language and descriptions—does not contradict DuBois's description. George Warren, Memorandum of meeting 1944 March 3; RG-59, “War Refugee Board,” Box 1, Folder Misc. 1944 January-March; NACP.

that all approaches to other governments should be made through the IGC, which should also be consulted before all War Refugee Board actions.¹⁶⁹

When specific issues began to be discussed, the divide between those who favored action through the IGC and those who saw the value of the War Refugee Board's speed was clear. Pehle described the Board's propaganda program and the importance of reminding those in the satellite countries that participation in persecutions would be punished after the war. The State Department had no official comment on the program, while Pell disagreed strongly, arguing that when he had been in Germany prior to the war Jewish leaders had asked him not to draw attention to Nazi persecutions. Pell warned that the Board plan would only accelerate Nazi persecutions.¹⁷⁰ DuBois compared the WRB success obtaining a ship guarantee for Hirschmann with the IGC's attempt to get ships for refugees from Rome in August 1943; when that matter had been referred to the IGC, Emerson had attempted to convene an Executive Committee meeting, but when that was unsuccessful, had to hold an informal meeting, which all took valuable time. The IGC was simply not designed to function quickly.

At one point in the meeting with the Board staff, Taylor unwittingly underscored the WRB's arguments when Pehle explained the Board's ideas for action in Spain. When he questioned how WRB actions would overlap with IGC actions in Spain, Breckinridge

¹⁶⁹ Josiah DuBois, Memo about meeting in Stettinius's office, 1944 March 2; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 24, Folder 34, Documents 947-951; USHMM.

¹⁷⁰ A few days after this meeting, Pell wrote a memo for the State Department Policy Planning Committee arguing that the State Department, British, OWI, and Joint Chiefs all disagree with the use of psychological warfare to warn and dissuade perpetrators. As part of the memo, he made a list of arguments against this type of propaganda. The list included an argument that warnings would lead to another Kristallnacht, and that "The Nazi and his fellow in satellite countries is a fanatic recognizable psychological type: at one stage a sadist who is not affected by verbal threats or wheedling and in a later stage a masochist who enjoys the prospect of suffering but is determined that everyone shall suffer with him, notably the Jews. This psychological type will be incited to accentuate rather than be dissuaded from practicing his torture of the Jews by threatening propaganda from his enemy." Robert Pell, Memorandum for the Policy Committee, 1944 March 6; RG-59, "War Refugee Board," Box 1, Folder Misc. 1944 January-March; NACP.

Long had to remind Taylor that the IGC was not working in Spain. The North Africa plan was being accomplished largely without their input, and the American vice-director of the IGC, Patrick Malin, had still not visited Spain. DuBois was likely delighted to account in his memo about the meeting that “There followed a brief debate between Mr. Taylor and Mr. Long as to what the IGC had done if anything in connection with the evacuation of refugees to and from Spain.”¹⁷¹ At the meeting, DuBois also read from a letter Taylor sent to the State Department after the Bermuda Conference, which included, “It is my opinion, as it was before the Bermuda Conference, that the position of our Government and of the British Government must be thoroughly clarified and clearly understood in advance and if nothing constructive can be assured, such a meeting will only be another failure.”¹⁷² Taylor claimed that his concerns had been adequately addressed in the ensuing months. Still, the meeting was quite intense. Though Pehle and DuBois continued to maintain that the WRB would not undertake any programs that the IGC would be better equipped to handle, they would neither agree to seek IGC approval of plans nor to defer to them in approaching other governments.¹⁷³

After the meeting, Myron Taylor wrote a memo to President Roosevelt. He described the discussion, emphasizing that Roosevelt “founded the Intergovernmental Committee and thirty-six nations are members,” suggested that Pehle and Pell prepare statements about the scope of their respective work and that John Pehle proceed

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

immediately to London “to clear up the uncertainties between the British Foreign Office and the Intergovernmental Committee.”¹⁷⁴

Edward Stettinius, who had worked under Myron Taylor at US Steel and succeeded Taylor as chairman of the board in 1938, wanted to avoid any disagreement with his former colleague. Before the contentious meeting, Stettinius had called Pehle to warn him that Taylor would be “obstreperous,” and told Morgenthau afterwards that Taylor was proud of the Intergovernmental Committee and annoyed at what the WRB had accomplished in such a short period of time. So anxious was Stettinius to avoid a confrontation that he was forced to enlist Morgenthau in a complicated fabrication. Morgenthau commented, “[A]s nice a fellow as Stettinius is, I know Stettinius and when it gets tough, he won't handle it; he never has... I have never seen Stettinius handle a disagreeable thing.”¹⁷⁵ After the big meeting with Taylor, Stettinius—who had to leave early to go to Capitol Hill—called Robert Pell into his office, likely lost his temper, ordered Pell to have nothing to do with refugee issues anymore and that Morgenthau was very upset over Pell’s complaints about the War Refugee Board.¹⁷⁶ Pell complained to Taylor, who informed the President about what had happened. So Stettinius asked Morgenthau to confirm that he was upset if President asked. Since Morgenthau had not called Stettinius to complain about Pell, he was understandably confused. “Now let me see if I got this straight. What happened, evidently, you told Pell and these people I'd be

¹⁷⁴ Myron Taylor, Memorandum for the President, 1944 March 3; Breckinridge Long Papers, Box 202, Folder “Refugees 2”; LOC.

¹⁷⁵ Transcript, “Jewish Evacuation” meeting, 1944 March 3; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 706, Document 22-31.

¹⁷⁶ Taylor wrote a cable to Winant explaining his version of the meeting and the aftermath, reporting that Pell turned in his resignation as IGC alternate, but since it was a presidential appointment, nothing would happen. Myron Taylor, Letter to John Winant, 1944 March 20; Holocaust Refugees and the FDR White House (Microfilm Collection, Bethesda, MD: UPA collection from LexisNexis, 2006). LM 0255, Reel 14, Folder 6, Document 735-736; USHMM.

very much upset—is that right?" Stettinius answered, "That's right...I just want you to back me up on that."¹⁷⁷ Morgenthau reported to Pehle that Stettinius "was using me."¹⁷⁸ Still, Morgenthau wrote a note to Roosevelt's secretary, Grace Tully, asking her to make sure the President did not do anything about Taylor's memo.

On March 8th, two days after the draft declaration on atrocities was sent to the White House and the same day Friedman and DuBois drafted the memo on opening safe havens in the United States, Roosevelt forwarded Taylor's note to Morgenthau and asked him to collaborate with Stettinius on an answer. Morgenthau laughed when he told Stettinius, who immediately suggested coming up with a policy about the IGC at the next formal War Refugee Board meeting and just telling Taylor about the policy. Since Stettinius was about to leave for New York and then for London, he would not be able to attend this meeting. When Morgenthau pointed out that this had not been Roosevelt's instruction, Stettinius' obvious discomfort with the prospect of having to meet with Taylor is revealed in the transcript of his response: "I don't—no, the—it's just a matter of time...I'm not—I'm not—I'm not trying to duck it. It's just a question of doing it and having the time to do it...I would think—I don't—I would think that it would be an easy

¹⁷⁷ The conversation devolved into a complicated series of comedic clarifications. Morgenthau: "I'm upset?"

Stettinius "Yeah."

Morgenthau "Is that right?"

Stettinius" That's right."

Morgenthau: "Have I got it now?"

Stettinius: "That's all there is to it. And you told me that."

Morgenthau: "I told you that?"

Stettinius: "Yeah."

¹⁷⁸ Transcript, "Jewish Evacuation" meeting, 1944 March 3; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 706, Document 22-31; LOC.

way though, to—for you, so that you don't have to get in a lot of discussion about it—to just deal with it at the meeting of the Board. Don't you?”¹⁷⁹

Morgenthau was on his own. He did not want to bring the issue to a War Refugee Board meeting for fear that Hull would suggest merging the IGC and the WRB, but he was also annoyed—but not surprised—at having to handle it himself. After all, “Stettinius would have to tell Myron Taylor to pipe down. 'Now, you didn't do anything for two years. To hell with you.' But club members don't talk like that.”¹⁸⁰ By March 17th, though, things calmed down. Morgenthau hosted Taylor at a meeting in his home, and it clearly went well (though Taylor did ask the whereabouts of Stettinius).¹⁸¹ Morgenthau confirmed that Pehle would try to define the relationship of the WRB to the IGC in writing. They would also invite Herbert Emerson and Patrick Malin to come to Washington, rather than Pehle traveling to London, which would also enable the IGC, WRB, and UNRRA to meet together. Taylor also sent Morgenthau copies of correspondence and memos about the Intergovernmental Committee so the secretary could acquaint himself with their work. The crisis seemed to be averted.

The War Refugee Board Adds More Staff

It was a good thing, too, because work in the War Refugee Board offices was so busy that it would have been difficult to spare Pehle if he had been forced to go to

¹⁷⁹ Transcript, Morgenthau phone conversation, 1944 March 9; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 708, Document 30-34; LOC.

¹⁸⁰ Transcript, “Jewish Evacuation” meeting, 1944 March 11; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 709, Document 216-223; LOC.

¹⁸¹ Transcript, “Jewish Evacuation” meeting, 1944 March 17; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 711, Document 94-104; LOC.

London. The core staff originating in the Treasury Department—Pehle, Lesser, Hodel, Friedman, DuBois, and Stewart—had grown significantly between January and March. One of the first additions was Albert “Jim” Abrahamson, the sixth and final Assistant Executive Director. An economics professor from Bowdoin College, Abrahamson, the child of Polish refugees, grew up in Maine and was the first full professor at Bowdoin who was Jewish. In the 1930s, Abrahamson, though a Republican, had been a Works Progress Administrator in Maine and became the director of the National Refugee Service between 1941-1943, before resigning to become a private in the military and member of the OSS. He was also a longtime friend of Oscar Cox, who knew him from Maine and had been constantly trying to recruit him for projects in which they could work more closely together. Abrahamson was pleased with his new position, telling Morgenthau that it was “a very pleasant shock to me over the past month to see what the War Refugee Board is doing. For twenty-two months I was with a private agency on the outside wondering why things weren't done, and you can say...that every reasonably promising idea in the field of refugee work is being followed and followed rather toughly—sometimes a little brashly—but even that is good.”¹⁸²

To assist the War Refugee Board staff with State Department matters, the Board recruited another longtime friend, though he came from a bit farther away. James Mann (who also went by “Jim”) was stationed in Buenos Aires. Formerly a member of Foreign Funds Control in the General Counsel’s office, Mann had been Pehle’s “little man Friday” (as Mann put it) in 1939 and 1940. Pehle wrote to Stettinius on February 10th

¹⁸² Transcript, “President’s Committee—Economic Warfare” meeting, 1944 March 27; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 714, Document 160-181; LOC.

asking for Mann to be released from the State Department to work with the WRB. By the 15th, Stettinius had sent a cable to Buenos Aires and though the Embassy “reluctantly agrees to his release,” Mann “gladly accepts.” He arrived in Washington in the second week of March and found an office at the State Department, where he was tasked to work with George Warren on War Refugee Board matters. Mann was frustrated by the situation, since he was not authorized to negotiate with anyone at State except through Warren and also uncovered problems with several State Department employees.¹⁸³ Still, it was nice to have a friend on the inside of the State Department.

Others were new to the War Refugee Board staff, but few were new to refugee issues. The WRB added three special assistants, who were assigned various projects and reported on the feasibility of suggestions, all with their own areas of expertise. Paul McCormack first got in touch with the War Refugee Board through his work at the American Red Cross, where he had been handling refugee matters. Less than a month later, he joined the WRB staff. Anne Laughlin had been with the National Youth Association from the beginning; by the time it closed in 1943, she was in charge of the regional offices in Kansas with responsibility over several states. Eleanor Roosevelt knew Laughlin and requested that she join the Board staff if possible, which, given Laughlin’s background, was an easy choice for Pehle.¹⁸⁴ The third special assistant, Benjamin Akzin, was the only staff member who was himself a Jewish immigrant. Born

¹⁸³ A week after his arrival, Mann attempted to get copies of the cables sent to American embassies and legations on January 25th. His request for copies was refused on the grounds that making the copies would slow other State Department business, and he could not make the copies himself because the master copies were State Department property and he could not use them. The matter was deferred. James Mann, Memorandum to the File, 1944 March 18; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 23, Folder 10, Document 780; USHMM.

¹⁸⁴ Transcript, “Jewish Evacuation” meeting, 1944 February 13; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 701, Document 164-178; LOC.

in Lithuania, Akzin held doctorates in political science from Vienna, law from Paris, and jurisprudence from Harvard. Immigrating to the United States in the early 1930s, Akzin had an extensive list of publications, a command of multiple languages, a long interest in refugee matters—he had attended the Evian Conference in 1938—and had for the past three years been a foreign affairs expert at the Library of Congress.¹⁸⁵ Akzin was also one of the few successful applicants for a position, having written to James Dunn at the State Department immediately after the formation of the Board. When Dunn passed the letter along to Pehle, Akzin was interviewed and hired at the end of February.

To deal with publicity and press matters, the Board added Virginia Mannon, who was the widow of a coal-mining executive, a former press columnist, and former head of publicity for the League of Women Voters. Mannon handled all the requests for interviews, quotes for newspaper articles, and photo requests on behalf of the Board. At the end of March, Isadore “Peter” Weinstein, a former journalist from New York, joined the staff as a consultant, also working on press and publicity issues. The Board also added a staff assistant, Myles Standish, a former Foreign Service officer who had been serving in France when the Germans invaded, had worked with the deluge of refugees who swarmed the consulate in Marseilles, and assisted Varian Fry in his rescue efforts.

The WRB Appoints Additional Overseas Representatives

In addition to the staff in Washington, the WRB staff considered appointing more special representatives overseas. These appointments took much longer than Hirschmann

¹⁸⁵ Benjamin Akzin, Benjamin Akzin curriculum vitae, 1944 February 21; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 60, Folder 11; FDRL.

and Ackermann's had, though at least the Board reached a bureaucratic agreement with the State Department. The attachés would officially be State Department staff (unless, like Ackermann, they already had a government position) and their salaries would come from the State Department, though the WRB would reimburse those expenses.¹⁸⁶ With Hirschmann in Turkey and Ackermann in North Africa, the Board still wanted people in Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, and Sweden. Despite Ambassador Hayes' reservations, David Blickenstaff remained their first choice for the position in Madrid, though his appointment was still pending at the end of March. For Switzerland, the Board wanted Roswell McClelland, who, like Blickenstaff, was a American Friends Service Committee's representative. McClelland received his offer and cable of instructions at the end of February, but it took him a week to accept. Several more weeks passed as Ambassador Harrison obtained the agreement of the Swiss and by the end of March, McClelland was still waiting to begin his new job. Iver Olsen, who had worked with Harry Dexter White and was the Treasury Department's new financial attaché in Stockholm, was appointed on March 28th. He would add the WRB job to his other two sets of responsibilities—that of financial attaché and of OSS operative. For Portugal, the Board drafted a letter of instruction for Robert Dexter, the Unitarian Service Committee representative who, with his wife Elisabeth, had been running their offices in Lisbon for several years. But he had not yet been appointed.

¹⁸⁶ Ward Stewart, Memo to Pehle on Meeting with Budget Bureau and State Department, 1944 February 29; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 11, Documents 645-647; USHMM.

Ira Hirschmann Tries to Negotiate for Boats

Ira Hirschmann was in Istanbul, his work having begun as soon as he landed in Ankara in mid-February. Having received word that the United States would guarantee the *Vatan* against loss, Hirschmann was ready to begin negotiating the cost of the ship's passage to Romania, where it would pick up refugees and take them to Palestine. Ambassador Laurence Steinhardt suggested Hirschmann keep the WRB informed. "I think it is important that the Board should not be left under the impression that because a guarantee was given to replace the VATAN that the negotiations for this vessel can be closed up within a few days. The tone of their telegrams indicates that they think things move here as fast as they are supposed to move in the United States."¹⁸⁷ Unfortunately, all Hirschmann could report were delays, since discussing the details of the *Vatan* with the boat's owner did not make sense until the Turkish authorities agreed to the charter, which had not yet happened.¹⁸⁸ The WRB arranged for Myron Black of the War Shipping Administration to proceed from his post in Cairo to Istanbul to help Hirschmann negotiate for a boat. Since it would be several weeks before he arrived, and since Hirschmann could not make any progress with the *Vatan* until the Turkish Council of Ministers approved, Hirschmann returned to Ankara on March 3rd.

Over the next week, as he waited to hear about the *Vatan*, news arrived regarding other potential vessels. The War Refugee Board sent Hirschmann a cable on March 5th about the *Bellacitta*, a Bulgarian boat that was to transport Jewish orphans from Romania to Istanbul (the first group of 140 orphans and 10 adults having arrived by train since the

¹⁸⁷ Ira Hirschmann, Letter to Ambassador Steinhardt, 1944 February 28; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Miscellaneous Official; FDRL.

¹⁸⁸ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 February 29; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

Bellacitta was not yet available). The ship still had not been granted safe conduct by the Germans or the Soviets, but “[i]t was apparently considered that a further postponement of the proposed evacuation was undesirable and it is expected that operations may have commenced by the time you receive this advice.”¹⁸⁹ Hirschmann decided to pursue the purchase of the *Necat*, a Turkish cargo ship, for \$400,000. He updated the Board on March 7th that negotiations for that ship were on hold for the same reason as the *Vatan*, but Hirschmann hoped that an agreement to permanently donate the ship to the Turkish Red Crescent after it brought 5,000 refugee children from Romania to Palestine might be enough to convince the Turkish authorities to let him purchase the vessel. A few days later, Pehle confirmed that the Joint would provide the funds for the ship if it were approved. Both the *Bellacitta* and the *Necat* looked promising. But the potential loan of a Swedish boat was increasingly unlikely. The *Bardaland* was near Salonika on another mission, but was a cargo ship with no passenger accommodations. Sweden would keep looking for a potential boat to loan.¹⁹⁰

Transnistria

While Hirschmann was waiting to get approvals for the *Necat* and the *Vatan*, he nervously decided it was time to approach the Romanian government about the situation in Transnistria. On March 9th, Hirschmann sent a cable to Pehle about what he was hearing in Turkey regarding the changing military situation in Romania. “The advance of

¹⁸⁹ Joseph Friedman, Cable to Hirschmann about the *Bellacitta*, 1944 March 5; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 4, Document 359; USHMM.

¹⁹⁰ Bostrom, Letter from Swedish ambassador about borrowing a boat, 1944 March 7; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 1, Documents 117-118; USHMM.

the Russian army almost on the borders of Rumania endangers the lives of all 50,000 refugees in the concentration camps of Transnistria. Fear is expressed by refugees coming out of Rumania that these people will become victims of a last minute sadistic purge by the retreating Rumanians.”¹⁹¹ The next day, Hirschmann received notice that his leave of absence at Bloomingdales was extended. He also met with Romanian Foreign Minister Alexandru Cretzianu for the first time. They met at the home of Gilbert Simond, the representative of the International Red Cross in Ankara, who arranged the meeting. Hirschmann reported that the conversation was friendly. He explained the background of the War Refugee Board, while Cretzianu reported “[I]t has been the policy of the Rumanian government recently to improve the situation regarding the Jewish refugees.” To that end, and in light of the fact that the Transnistria area recently transitioned from a civil to a military zone, Cretzianu agreed to cable Antonescu to get guarantees that “no bodily harm will be done to any of the Jewish refugees.” Though the military situation was volatile, if possible, they would begin to evacuate Jews from Transnistria to Romania and would expedite transit visas and transportation for refugee children to emigrate.¹⁹²

Pleased with this victory, Hirschmann met with the Bulgarian Foreign Minister, Nicholas

¹⁹¹ The text of the cable indicates that there were 150,000, but the “1” is crossed off. Ira Hirschmann, Cable from Ankara, 1944 March 9; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 2, Folder Correspondence; FDRL.

¹⁹² Later in his life, Hirschmann claimed in oral histories and in his books *Caution to the Winds* (1962) and *Obligato* (published posthumously in 1994) that Cretzianu arranged for the release of the Jews of Transnistria because Hirschmann promised visas to the United States for the foreign minister and his family. The Cretzianu family has vigorously denied this claim. As there is no evidence from 1944 that this happened, as Hirschmann’s story of the offer changed in each telling, and as it is very unlikely Hirschmann could have effected this deal if he wanted to (not to mention the fact that if Cretzianu did get visas from Hirschmann, he never used them), the story is not credible. Hirschmann’s testimony about most of his experiences grew more exaggerated and fantastical as he grew older, and this seems to be one of those stories. Ira Hirschmann, Memorandum for the Ambassador, 1944 March 11; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Miscellaneous Official; FDRL. Ira Arthur Hirschmann. *Caution to the Winds*. New York: D. McKay Co, 1962. Ira Arthur Hirschmann. *Obligato: Untold Tales From a Life with Music*. New York, NY: Fromm International Pub. Corp., 1994. Alexandru Cretzianu, and Sherman David Spector. *Relapse Into Bondage: Political Memoirs of a Romanian Diplomat, 1918-1947*. Iași: Center for Romanian Studies, 1998.

Balabanoff on March 17th, and insisted that Bulgaria relax its treatment of the Jews and facilitate evacuation. Balabanoff blamed the Nazis but promised something would be done.¹⁹³ In Istanbul on March 18th, Hirschmann and Cretzianu met again, as Cretzianu had a message from Antonescu announcing that transportation of Jews from Transnistria to Romania had already begun, and that the Romanian government would do all possible to facilitate emigration of the Jews. By March 20th, the International Red Cross reported that 48,000 Jews had already been evacuated from Transnistria.¹⁹⁴ Hirschmann wrote in his diary, "This is a monumental achievement and I can hardly believe it. I predict that it will not be recorded that I did it. But I did as this record and Simond of the R. Cross will attest and it is my finest hour."¹⁹⁵

Negotiations for Boats Continue

While Hirschmann was focused on Romania and Bulgaria, Ambassador Steinhardt held a meeting with the Turkish Foreign Minister about the shipping situation.¹⁹⁶ The Turks committed to allowing a passenger vessel to be used for one trip from Romania to Istanbul. Neither the *Vatan* nor the *Necat* could be used, since they were not passenger vessels and could not be retrofitted. However, if Hirschmann wanted to use the ship for more than one trip, the United States would have to find a substitute

¹⁹³ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 March 17; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

¹⁹⁴ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable from Ankara, 1944 March 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 15, Folder 7, Document 773; USHMM.

¹⁹⁵ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 March 18; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

¹⁹⁶ The date for this meeting is a bit uncertain. In his diary, Hirschmann writes that it took place on Tuesday (March 14th) but in a cable to the War Refugee Board on March 15th, he referred to the meeting as happening "this morning." Both could be correct—Steinhardt could have gotten the guarantee of the ship one day and found out the name of the ship in question the next day, but this is unclear. Even Hirschmann admitted confusion, writing in his diary, "I do not recall such exciting confluence of main streams into a boiling vortex." Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 March 13; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL. Laurence Steinhardt, Cable from Ankara, 1944 March 16; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 2, Documents 292-293; USHMM.

vessel for the Turks to use—neither equivalent shipping space nor money would suffice.¹⁹⁷ Though Hirschmann cautioned the War Refugee Board staff not to publicize his efforts as "the cooperation... would easily be lost to us"¹⁹⁸ he also excitedly wrote to the President of Hebrew University, Judah Magnes, that "I beg of you not to disclose this to one single person... that we now have a passenger ship and I am off to Istanbul to make the necessary arrangements for its embarkation."¹⁹⁹ On March 16th, Hirschmann reported to the Board that the *Tari* was waiting in Istanbul and the Red Cross was trying to obtain safe conducts, but that Barlas of the Jewish Agency reported that refugees would not be ready to depart Romania for five to six weeks "despite his repeated assurances" they could be ready at any time.²⁰⁰

On March 17th, having met with Balabanoff earlier in the day and with Myron Black recently arrived from Cairo, Hirschmann caught the express train to Istanbul to negotiate the terms of the *Tari*. Arriving on the 18th, Hirschmann began the trip with a fitting conclusion to his efforts of the previous week: he met with Cretzianu and got official word that the Jews of Transnistria were being evacuated to Romania. Hirschmann then spent the next several days meeting with the Director General of the Turkish steamship lines along with Black, Simond, and Barlas. Just as with his previous trip to Istanbul, nothing was settled by the time he returned to Ankara on March 21st. But Hirschmann was optimistic about the *Tari*, reporting to the War Refugee Board that the

¹⁹⁷ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable from Ankara, 1944 March 15; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 11, Folder 7, Documents 972-975; USHMM.

¹⁹⁸ Ira Hirschmann, Cable from Ankara, 1944 March 16; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 24, Folder 27, Documents 722-723; USHMM.

¹⁹⁹ Ira Hirschmann, Letter to Judah Magnes, 1944 March 16; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 2, Folder Correspondence; FDRL.

²⁰⁰ Ira Hirschmann, Cable from Ankara, 1944 March 16; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 2, Documents 292-293; USHMM.

ship was excellent, well-equipped, and could carry 1,500 refugees. They would need the ship for 30-36 days, and the shipping company was asking \$4,000 a day and insisting on an insurance premium of \$80,000²⁰¹ for a potential total cost, irrespective of unforeseen circumstances, of \$224,000. Hirschmann “urgently request[ed] an immediate reply” giving permission to enter into a contract for the *Tari* presuming that the price would not exceed \$4,000 a day.²⁰²

The Invasion of Hungary

Hirschmann was not being dramatic in his request for urgency. When he returned in Ankara, he learned that Hungary, with a Jewish population of approximately 800,000, had been invaded by Nazi Germany.²⁰³ Hirschmann wrote in his diary, “Bad news for refugees. [sic] Hungary is occupied by Germans. It is another sign of the boiling point of the Balkans. It is preparing to explode into a battlefield.... What a race against time!”²⁰⁴

Back in Washington, the War Refugee Board staff also recognized what the invasion of Hungary meant. Hundreds of thousands of Jews were now at risk; and rescue

²⁰¹ Ira Hirschmann, Cable from Ankara about the *Tari*, 1944 March 21; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 2, Documents 289-290; USHMM.

²⁰² Ira Hirschmann, Cable from Ankara, part 2, 1944 March 21; Holocaust Refugees and the FDR White House (Microfilm Collection, Bethesda, MD: UPA collection from LexisNexis, 2006). LM 0255, Reel 14, Folder 5, Document 476-478; USHMM.

²⁰³ When Hirschmann returned to Ankara from Istanbul, he also met Patrick Murphy Malin, the Vice-Director of the IGC, who had recently been in North Africa. Hirschmann wrote his impressions of Malin and the IGC in his diary: “He is a weak charmer, a do-nothing, former teacher at Swarthmore. He rushed to Ank. from Cairo when he heard what I was doing. He asked whether his London committee should send a rep. here. We said ‘no.’ He was relieved. He showed me a memo dated 12/29/43 recommending that it was not necessary to send anyone to Turkey to help rescue the refugees. Imagine. Ambass. St. thinks they are facade who wish to do nothing. I agree. It is a crime. Here is the ‘committee’ against action.” (Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 March 21; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.) When he wrote to Washington about the meeting, he conveyed the substance of the conversation in a more official way: “He implied in the course of his questioning that he would prefer to have the work of his committee operated through the War Refugee Board’s representative in Ankara. The Ambassador and I were of a like opinion...” Ira Hirschmann, Cable from Ankara, 1944 March 28; Holocaust Refugees and the FDR White House (Microfilm Collection, Bethesda, MD: UPA collection from LexisNexis, 2006). LM 0255, Reel 7, Folder 20; USHMM.

²⁰⁴ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 March 21; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

plans to get refugees from Poland into Hungary were clearly terminated. The declaration on atrocities was imperative. Back on March 6th, Edward Stettinius had given the draft declaration to Steve Early to pass to the President for his review. By March 7th, it was with Samuel Rosenman for editing, and the War Refugee Board staff were quite curious as to what Rosenman was doing to it. They wondered whether Roosevelt would try to add language about the Palestine resolutions still pending in Congress, or if they could influence him with their new draft promoting safe havens in the United States.²⁰⁵ After Morgenthau reported that he heard from Stettinius the President felt the draft was “too much for the Jews,” DuBois, immediately frustrated, argued that the “declaration isn’t much good” without the emphasis. Pehle reminded Morgenthau of the 1942 United Nations Declaration, a copy of which he would send the Secretary. In the meantime, Pehle needed to see Rosenman.

Early in the morning on March 9th, the same day Morgenthau talked to Stettinius about dealing with Myron Taylor, Pehle met with Morgenthau to detail the meeting with Rosenman the night before. Rosenman, while he had not removed any of the language of the text, had retitled the text to be a “Statement on Atrocities” rather than a “Declaration on Atrocities.” He made another change that Pehle disagreed with even more: “Instead of being a statement on the systematic murder of the Jews, it's now a statement on atrocities of all kinds which mentions the Jews among others... The thing we were trying to bring home is that this country is opposed to the Hitler plan to exterminate the Jews. That is

²⁰⁵ Morgenthau had a meeting with President Roosevelt on March 7th, the day after the White House received the draft statement. FDR claimed not to have seen the statement yet, but expressed his pleasure with the WRB’s work. He also stated that he wanted Great Britain to publicly announce their intentions to allow all Jews who escaped as a result of the Board’s work to enter Palestine. Memo on meeting with Roosevelt, 1944 March 7, Morgenthau Presidential Diaries, Reel 2; FDRL.

buried in this statement.” Morgenthau disagreed, pointing out that instead of burying a reference to Jews in a long list of other victims, Rosenman drew attention to them in a separate paragraph. The paragraph began, “One of the blackest crimes in all history—begun by the Nazis in the day of peace and multiplied by them a hundred times in time of war—the wholesale systematic murder of the Jews of Europe goes unabated every hour....” Morgenthau “would be delighted to see the President give this thing out.”²⁰⁶

Rosenman’s edited text was not significantly different from the one the War Refugee Board staff submitted. While their text began by noting, “The world will not forget the Japanese torture of our soldiers nor the slaughters of Lidice, Kharkov and Nanking. The world will not forget the murder of the Jews,”²⁰⁷ Rosenman made these two sentences into separate paragraphs. He expanded on wartime cruelty and the slaughters of both soldiers and civilians throughout the world, and also on the murder of the Jews.²⁰⁸ Pehle was resigned to the fact that it was “better than nothing,” while DuBois, ignoring the fact that the idea of safe havens in the United States had not yet been introduced to Roosevelt or Rosenman, concluded, “In the case of Europe, I don’t think this is going to be very effective. I think it has lost 90% of its effect. If the suggestion of camps in America is not in it, I think 90% of what we can do is lost.”²⁰⁹ Pehle cleared the new text with Stettinius, who thought they should maybe push including the camps, and Stimson, who thought the new text was stronger and was not

²⁰⁶ Transcript, Meeting about declaration on atrocities, 1944 March 9; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 708, Document 1-4; LOC.

²⁰⁷ John Pehle, Memo that Secretaries signed the declaration on Atrocities, 1944 March 6; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 25, Folder 6, Documents 581-583; USHMM.

²⁰⁸ Samuel Rosenman, New Draft of Statement on Atrocities, 1944 March 9; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 708, Document 5-7; LOC.

²⁰⁹ Transcript, Meeting about declaration on atrocities, 1944 March 9; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 708, Document 1-4; LOC.

ready to support safe havens in the United States. On March 10th, Rosenman gave the new text to the President for his approval, and they all waited.²¹⁰

When Morgenthau met with Roosevelt on March 18th about Randolph Paul's recent resignation, he brought up the draft statement and asked for an update. Roosevelt informed Morgenthau that the draft was still with Rosenman, who was going to clear the text with the British. Morgenthau also brought up the idea of changing Pehle from acting director of the War Refugee Board to permanent director. Roosevelt agreed: "I'll be very glad to do it. The reason I didn't do it in the first instance was that Pehle wasn't well enough known. I think he is doing a swell job."²¹¹ Roosevelt's claim regarding the location of the statement was confusing, and Morgenthau called Rosenman to clear up matters. Rosenman surmised immediately what had happened: "Well, my God—the last I saw of the thing, Henry, it was on his bed in the bedroom a week ago...I don't think he's done anything about it. It's probably in his basket...I'd better talk to him about it."²¹² Less than three hours later, Rosenman left a phone message for Morgenthau to let him know that the draft was on its way to the State Department to be shown to the British.²¹³

Pehle followed up on Monday, March 20th, after the news reached Washington about the invasion of Hungary. Stettinius's assistant, Hayden Raynor, assured Pehle that the declaration would be issued very soon. The draft had not been given to the British for their comments or approval, but merely for their information. As the War Refugee Board

²¹⁰ Transcript, Morgenthau phone conversation, 1944 March 10; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 708, Document 192-196; LOC.

²¹¹ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Conversation with the President, 1944 March 18; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 711, Document 208-214; LOC.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Samuel Rosenman, Phone message for Morgenthau and statement on atrocities, 1944 March 18; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 711, Document 215-217; LOC.

staff waited for the President to issue the statement on atrocities, the third formal War Refugee Board meeting was held in Cordell Hull's office on March 21st. Pehle summarized the Board's work since the beginning of February, Morgenthau reported that he had cleared the air with Myron Taylor, and there was a brief discussion of the idea of safe havens in the United States. At the end of the meeting, Pehle left the room as Hull, Stimson, and Morgenthau agreed to request that Roosevelt name him the permanent director of the War Refugee Board. At the end of the meeting, photographers took official pictures of the secretaries and of some of the Board staff. Pehle posed with a pipe in his mouth, and Hull warned a photographer taking his picture that he "never look[s] animated unless someone throws a rock at me."²¹⁴

Roosevelt Issues the Statement on Atrocities

On Wednesday, March 22nd, Morgenthau heard from Grace Tully that the President would issue the declaration at his Friday press conference, on the 24th. The delay gave Pehle and Rosenman time to add an additional few sentences to the paragraph in the statement on atrocities against the Jews. They added

As a result of the events of the last few days hundreds of thousands of Jews, who while living under persecution have at least found a haven from death in Hungary and the Balkans, are now threatened with annihilation as the forces of darkness descend more heavily upon these lands. That these innocent people, who have already survived a decade of Hitler's fury, should perish on the very eve of triumph over the barbarism which their persecution symbolizes, would be a tragedy unparalleled.²¹⁵

²¹⁴ Washington Post, "The Federal Diary," 1944 March 23; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 25, Folder 1, Document 31; USHMM.

²¹⁵ John Pehle, Memo to Rosenman about adding an additional paragraph, 1944 March 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 4, Folder 24, Documents 545-546; USHMM.

At his March 24th press conference, after passing on a message of goodwill to the Filipino people on the tenth anniversary of the Tydings-McDuffie Act for Philippine Independence, announcing the resignation of Leo Crowley as Alien Property Custodian, and discussing the distribution of farming equipment through Lend-Lease, President Roosevelt issued the text of his statement on atrocities. When he finished reading it, the President was asked whether the United States planned to open itself up as a refugee haven. He responded, “No, not yet; because there aren't enough to come, which is one reason—a pretty good one...”²¹⁶ That day, Roosevelt signed John Pehle’s official appointment letter as Director of the War Refugee Board.²¹⁷

The invasion of Hungary dramatically changed the refugee situation in Europe. Roosevelt’s statement on atrocities provided the War Refugee Board with the basis of a strong psychological warfare campaign. Pehle’s appointment was official, and the War Refugee Board was just over two months old.

²¹⁶ Franklin Roosevelt, Transcript of press conference, 1944 March 24; Presidential Press Conferences, Series 1; Press conference 944; FDRL.

²¹⁷ Franklin Roosevelt, Letter appointing John Pehle, 1944 March 24; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 60, Folder 7; FDRL.

CHAPTER FOUR: TO TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF ANY OPPORTUNITY: MARCH 25, 1944—JUNE 12, 1944

On March 25, 1944, the front page of the *New York Times* announced the latest war news, including “Churchill Pledges Invasion Soon.” Under a photograph of Churchill and Eisenhower reviewing troops, but above the fold, was another headline: “Roosevelt Warns Germans on Jews: Says All Guilty Must Pay for Atrocities and Asks People to Assist Refugees.” The paper called Roosevelt’s statement an “unusual step” and reprinted the entire text on page four, next to a photograph of John Pehle clutching his pipe.¹ To *The Stars and Stripes* (“Germans Warned Not to Persecute”), Roosevelt spoke “earnestly” and “sternly”; “Observers considered the President's mingled warning and appeal to ordinary Germans one of the most dramatic distinctions yet drawn by a United Nations leader between Nazi officials and the common man in the Reich.”² Newspapers all over the Allied and neutral world covered the statement. *L’Echo d’Alger* published “Le president Roosevelt menace les criminels de guerre,” while the Bari, Italy, *Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* announced “Roosevelt per l’aiuto alle vittime del nazismo,” and Lisbon’s *Diario de Noticias* proclaimed in a front page editorial “Yes, Mr. President.” Since the British had the text of the statement in advance, they had already informed the BBC to report it “fully in all languages as a reaffirmation of the attitude of the United

¹ John Crider, “Roosevelt Warns Germans on Jews,” *New York Times*. 1944 March 25, A1.

² *Stars and Stripes Weekly*, “Germans Warned Not to Persecute,” 1944 March 25; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 2, Document 216-217; USHMM.

Nations...toward the Nazi and Japanese war crimes and atrocities.”³ The State Department asked Ambassador John Winant to remind the British of the “extreme importance” of the statement in the formation of a renewed psychological warfare campaign.⁴ Less than a week later, on the eve of the official expiration of the White Paper, Anthony Eden responded to a likely planted question about “whether...he had any statement to make” in the House of Commons. Noting Roosevelt’s proclamation, the British “at once wholeheartedly associated themselves with the United States Government in this matter,” and reiterated a call to prevent future persecutions. Eden agreed that his statement should receive the “widest publicity...so that the message may be read by the people and not only by the Governments, possibly by leaflet as well as by radio.”⁵

Psychological Warfare

The War Refugee Board had already come to the same conclusion. Since the desired audience for Roosevelt’s statement on atrocities was potential Nazi collaborators, any meaningful psychological impact of the statement was dependent on widespread dissemination and repetition on the ground in occupied and satellite countries. Cables went out to the neutrals asking the American embassies and consulates to “make every endeavor to have this publicity included in such radio broadcasts for foreign consumption

³ Cordell Hull, Cable to Winant about approaching the British, 1944 March 24; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 4, Folder 24, Documents 526-527; USHMM.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ John Winant, Winant forwards House of Commons discussion, 1944 March 31; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 21, Documents 872-873; USHMM.

as might emanate from the country to which you are accredited.”⁶ Cooperation with the Office of War Information was also essential; though the success of psychological warfare is difficult—if not impossible—to measure, the OWI highly publicized the statement. By March 27th, the OWI broadcasts into Germany had already referenced Roosevelt’s statement fifty-one times, including a recitation of the full text eleven times and a slightly abridged text another ten times. However, the broadcasts reached Hungary, Poland, and Bulgaria only three times.⁷ Leonard Ackermann, who kept the WRB well-informed about how the statement was being publicized in North Africa, reported a great amount of interest in the final days of March. By April 1st, however, the story had died. Ackermann reminded Pehle that the "OWI principally broadcasts news," and would not continue to repeat the same statement.⁸ Though the WRB staff reiterated the importance of Roosevelt’s warning in interviews and speeches, by April 10th, publicity related to the statement was not an objective listed on the Psychological Warfare Branch’s weekly directives.⁹ The success or failure of the warning was always going to be intangible, dependent on changing individual behavior. It was also, apparently, dependent on that individual hearing Roosevelt’s broadcast within a fairly short period of time.

Since the War Refugee Board was convinced that their greatest successes could come by convincing would-be Nazi collaborators of the reality of post-war retribution, further cooperation with the Office of War Information was imperative. On April 1st,

⁶ Cordell Hull, Cable from State informing missions of FDR statement, 1944 March 24; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 7, Folder 5, Documents 470-473; USHMM.

⁷ Office of War Information, Office of War Information report on use of FDR statement, 1944 March 27; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 4, Folder 24, Documents 511-513; USHMM.

⁸ Leonard Ackermann, Letter to John Pehle, 1944 April 14; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 2, Documents 158-165; USHMM.

⁹ Allied Force Headquarters, Psychological Warfare Branch weekly directive, 1944 April 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 2, Documents 166-167; USHMM.

Isadore “Peter” Weinstein visited the Overseas branch of OWI with the intention of forming a partnership. The OWI wanted content for their broadcasts, while the WRB wanted to “terrify refugee oppressors, encourage potential refugee aid in enemy territories, [and] encourage Allies and neutrals to establish refugee havens.”¹⁰ As a result of this meeting, Weinstein, who split his time between Washington and New York (which also had an OWI office), became the Board’s dedicated OWI liaison, which resulted in much closer cooperation. The OWI attempted to reference Roosevelt’s statement while reporting on various news items, and also began to broadcast pleas and declarations by other well-known figures into Hungary. By the end of April, Reverend Dr. Geza Takaro, the chairman of the Hungarian Emergency Committee of the Red Cross had written a broadcast for Easter Sunday; Louis Toth, chairman of the Hungarian Victory Council, proclaimed, “We, Americans of Hungarian descent still have faith in the Hungarian people which will not deny their past and will not mar Hungarian honor and Hungarian chivalry;”¹¹ and Reverend Monsignor Elmer Eordogh of St. Stephens’ Church in Toledo, Ohio, sent a special plea on behalf of Hungarian-American Catholics, asking them to aid refugees by “do[ing] all that is in your power to ease their fate... This has been the way of Hungarian honor for [a] thousand years, may it be now also.”¹² Senator Alben Barkley and the Archbishop of Canterbury made pleas of their own, all broadcast into Hungary in April 1944.

¹⁰ Franz Katz, Conversation with Mr. I.M. Weinstein, 1944 April 1; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 57, Folder “Office of War Information”; FDRL.

¹¹ Louis Toth, Office of War Information broadcast, 1944 April 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 6, Folder 4, Documents 371-373; USHMM.

¹² Elmer Eordogh, Office of War Information broadcast, 1944 April 19; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 6, Folder 4, Documents 374-378; USHMM.

Hirschmann Continues Work in Turkey

In Turkey, the OWI sent Ira Hirschmann clippings from Turkish, French, Greek, and Armenian newspapers regarding Roosevelt's statement, and told him of their plans to drop leaflets over the satellite nations in the Balkans. Hirschmann, wrapped up in his own negotiations and projects, did not comment on the statement in his diary. His days in Turkey were coming to an end. On March 17th, Hirschmann had informed Pehle that "it is now essential that I bring to the War Refugee Board in Washington a personal account...Furthermore, the second extension of my leave of absence from Bloomingdales where I am under contract expires the second week of April."¹³ He planned to leave April 1st. Hirschmann's successes—breaking the Bulgarian bottleneck, requesting that Cretzianu pressure his government to release Jews from Transnistria—had come quickly and with relative ease, but by late March, bureaucracy and red tape entangled everything. His late February plan to charter the *Vatan*, the replacement guarantees for which had been such a measure of pride for the WRB staff in Washington, had come to naught. The *Necat*, too, was an impossibility. The Turkish government, however, had agreed on March 15th to allow the United States to charter the *Tari*, a larger passenger vessel. After ten days of negotiations, during which time the State Department requested safe conduct for the vessel, Admiral Land authorized a replacement guarantee if the ship were to be lost (or at least a replacement of a ship with similar cargo space), and Pehle formally authorized Hirschmann to enter into a charter agreement, the Bloomingdales executive

¹³ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable message from Hirschmann to WRB, 1944 March 17; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 711, Document 31; LOC.

turned War Refugee Board representative got to see the vessel. In the driving rain, Hirschmann and Myron Black of the War Shipping Administration were taken by a “tough-looking sea-man” out on a tugboat to inspect the *Tari*. “Tho' drenched and feet wet, it was adventurous—chartering a boat in the Bosphorous.” The *Tari*, a passenger vessel, could crowd as many as 1,500 refugees aboard since the trip was so short from Constanța to Istanbul. The ship needed some railings on the stairs, but otherwise could be put into use quickly. Hirschmann was characteristically pleased with himself, adding to his diary: “My tactics, restraint and direction have been productive. We are going forward in spite of all dire predictions and insuperable obstacles.”¹⁴

On March 27th, Steinhardt sent the details of the proposed *Tari* charter. The ship would cost \$97,200.00 (175,000 Turkish pounds) for an eight-day voyage, with \$3,245.00 for each additional day. The ship would not be able to sail without safe conducts from the belligerent nations, and the replacement guarantee had to be for a comparable passenger vessel, not merely cargo space. Steinhardt asked for \$160,000 to cover the charter and the necessary insurance. When the WRB received these final terms, they responded with a strongly-worded cable that had gone through many drafts to get the wording just right. “The Board is deeply concerned with the turn which the negotiations for a Turkish vessel have taken. For more than two months you and Mr. Hirschmann have been carrying on painstaking negotiations...[the WRB] has immediately acceded to practically every condition...However up to now the Turkish Government has failed to make a boat available.” The Board would allocate the money, but invited Steinhardt to

¹⁴ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 March 25; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

issue a threat: "If the impression were created in this country that the Turkish Government is not fully cooperating in the refugee rescue program there would undoubtedly be a reaction here quite unfavorable to Turkey."¹⁵ Steinhardt responded on April 12th with a long, incredulous cable. The *Tari*, Steinhardt pointed out, was one of only six passenger vessels available to the Turks; since the United States and British have been unable to find even one passenger vessel that could replace the *Tari* if destroyed, they should have a unique understanding of the value of such a ship. Furthermore, Steinhardt sympathized with the Turkish failure to understand why the United States could not find a passenger vessel "in light of incessant U.S. propaganda emphasizing the construction by the United States of over a million and a half tons of shipping in a month." After his discussions with the Turkish Foreign Minister, Numan Menemencioglu, on behalf of the War Refugee Board, Steinhardt could report that Menemencioglu was

[T]ired of protestations from the two richest countries on earth, which own or control practically all the shipping in the world, who stated that they wished to rescue refugees from the Balkans and were insisting that the Government of Turkey dedicate 16% of its passenger fleet to the movement of refugees while unable or unwilling themselves to furnish a four thousand ton passenger ship and while posing as the saviours of refugees before the rest of the world.¹⁶

The War Refugee Board had no response, and Admiral Land quickly guaranteed a passenger ship replacement. The *Tari*, however, was still waiting on safe conducts before she could sail.

¹⁵ War Refugee Board, Cable to Ambassador Steinhardt, 1944 April 5; PWRB. Microfilm LM0304, Reel 12, Folder 2, Documents 251-254; USHMM.

¹⁶ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable to the WRB, 1944 April 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 2, Documents 221-227; USHMM.

At the end of March, hopes were pinned on the *Tari*, which was starting to look like the only way out of the Balkans. The same day as his tour of the ship, Hirschmann received word that only a small handful of refugees were arriving from Bulgaria—certainly not the “nine families every ten days” the deputy director general of the Turkish Foreign Ministry, Kemal Aziz Payman, had agreed to allow to travel through Turkey to Aleppo. Hirschmann met with Payman, who assured him that the visas were being sent to Bulgaria and Romania—though since the German invasion none could be sent to Hungary—so the delay must be on their end. A few days later, Payman revealed the likely reason refugee traffic from Bulgaria had halted: since there had been no courier between Turkey and Bulgaria in March, the ministry sent the names of approved families through the mail. It must have gotten lost. Hirschmann urged Payman to cable the names immediately, and wrote in a memo to Steinhardt that “[f]rom the confession wrung out of Asiz Kemal I am convinced that there is either 'bureaucratic red tape' holding up the flow of refugees or that it is the result of instructions from above.”¹⁷ Hirschmann never informed the War Refugee Board staff in Washington of the problem, and though Steinhardt met with the Foreign Minister to discuss the matter, among a host of other issues, it is the only item on the agenda left off his report back to Washington.¹⁸ It seems likely that Hirschmann and Steinhardt wanted to preserve the illusion that Hirschmann’s actions had permanently broken the bottleneck for small but continual refugee evacuations.

¹⁷ Ira Hirschmann, Memo to the Ambassador, 1944 March 29; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Miscellaneous Official; FDRL.

¹⁸ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable to the WRB, 1944 March 30; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 2, Documents 266-270; USHMM. Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 March 30; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

The Bulgarian Boats

Despite any deliberate or accidental actions on the part of the Turkish Foreign Ministry, Bulgarian Jews were attempting to escape anyway. On March 29th, the *Milka* arrived in Istanbul, carrying 239 illegal refugees. The boat's arrival was not a surprise. The War Refugee Board knew of three Bulgarian boats that might be used to transport refugees: the *Milka*, *Maritza*, and *Bellacitta*. Of them, the *Bellacitta* was the preferred ship. It was fitted for passengers, was under the command and flag of the Red Cross, and was originally meant to transport the agreed-upon 140 refugee children and 10 adults every ten days. As of the end of March, it had yet to sail from Constanța. Steinhardt reported to Washington that the delay may be due to the failure to get Soviet safe conduct or to complications regarding some sort of illegal traffic in refugees. The *Milka* and *Maritza* were under the auspices of private Jewish organizations and were sailing under the Bulgarian flag; throughout March the reasons for their failure to sail for Turkey varied between being unseaworthy and being superfluous, since the *Bellacitta*'s refugees would fill the allowed quota.

With the *Bellacitta* still in Constanța, very few refugees moving by rail, and renewed desperation due to the invasion of Hungary, the *Milka* sailed. With 239 refugees crowded aboard a tiny 150-ton ship, the *Milka* arrived in Istanbul on March 29th. Gilbert Simond of the Red Cross and Chaim Barlas of the Jewish Agency warned Steinhardt that the ship had sailed, so the American embassy was ready when it arrived. Though Barlas had originally told Hirschmann that he would be unable to issue Palestinian entry visas

for “*Milcea*” [sic] refugees since “the immigrants in question were not of the category for which I am authorized to approve immigration certificates,”¹⁹ he must have received permission by the time the ship arrived. The refugees’ entry into Palestine was, of course, dependent on being able to disembark in Turkey, which was less certain. Initially, Steinhardt was forced to report to Washington that “it is the intention of the authorities of Turkey to refuse permission for the landing in Istanbul,”²⁰ and reminded them that future illegal transports may also be refused, since the Turks were already issuing transit visas for the legal arrivals (again, not mentioning that many of those authorized had not arrived). When Steinhardt met with Foreign Minister Menemencioğlu on March 30th, Menemencioğlu confirmed the Ambassador’s suspicions. The Turkish government would provide food and medical care for the refugees, but could not let them land for fear that it would “open the flood gates to many similar voyages by unseaworthy ships without papers carrying refugees who had not been cleared by any recognized authorities.”²¹

By the next day, likely fearing the publicity that would result in turning the ship back, the Turkish government decided to make an exception, and let the *Milka* refugees land. Barlas was thrilled; Hirschmann reported to Steinhardt that he “telephoned me...to tell me in great glee how smoothly everything has gone. He was amazed to learn that you were responsible...I was quite definite and emphatic in telling him about...your

¹⁹ Chaim Barlas, Letter to Ira Hirschmann, 1944 March 20; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 2, Folder Correspondence; FDRL.

²⁰ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable to the WRB about the Milka, 1944 March 29; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 4, Documents 384; USHMM.

²¹ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable to the WRB, 1944 March 30; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 2, Documents 266-270; USHMM.

indispensible intervention.”²² Hirschmann always made sure to inform Steinhardt whenever he praised the Ambassador’s work, but he gave less credit in private. In his diary, Hirschmann wrote, “Steinh. saved the situation...But I saved the group in the emergency...I have kept discreetly in the background pushing St. forward. The record will show someday that I did the pushing, prodding, and driving. I cannot act for an Ambassador, but I can direct—and see that the action is concluded.”²³

The Turkish Foreign Minister’s prediction that the *Milka* would “open the flood gates” came to pass almost immediately. On April 7th, Hirschmann’s last day in Turkey (his trip having been extended by a week), the *Maritza* landed in Istanbul, carrying 245 refugees, only 15 of whom had Turkish transit visas. Steinhardt arranged for their rail transport to Palestine. Even without Hirschmann’s “pushing, prodding, and driving,” as ships continued to arrive, Steinhardt secured permission for them to land. The *Bellacitta*, which was legally allowed to transport refugees and did not need Steinhardt’s intervention, brought 152 new arrivals on April 24th. On May 1st, the *Milka* brought another 272 refugees, and on May 17th, 316 refugees arrived on a second voyage of the *Maritza*.²⁴ In his report to Washington after the *Milka*’s second arrival, Steinhardt requested that the Board “refrain from expressing publicly at this time our appreciation of Foreign minister's action in allowing transit to Palestine of Jewish refugees arriving in

²² Ira Hirschmann, Memo to the Ambassador, 1944 March 31; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Miscellaneous Official; FDRL.

²³ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 March 30; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

²⁴ The voyage also proved to be the *Maritza*’s last. On May 31st, Steinhardt reported that the *Maritza* sank in a storm on the way back to Romania. He wrote, “[I]n view of the recognized unseaworthiness of the *Maritza*, we must regard it as an act of providence that the ship did not sink while carrying refugees en route to Istanbul.” Laurence Steinhardt, Steinhardt cable on the sinking of the *Maritza*, 1944 May 31; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 4, Documents 344; USHMM.

Turkey illegally,” as it might hamper Turkish relations with Arab countries.²⁵ It was too late for such warnings. On April 11th the *New York Times* had announced, “Steinhardt Helps 245 More Exiles,” touting his success with the *Maritza* refugees. It also may have been too late to discourage future voyages. When the Red Cross informed Hirschmann in late March of how much enthusiasm the arrival of the *Milka* had garnered among Romanian refugees, Hirschmann reported that he “strongly discourage[d] refugees from embarking in this illegal way.”²⁶ This did not prevent Hirschmann, in Cairo on his way back to the United States, from declaring to the *New York Times* that “it would be possible to establish a 'bridge of ships' from the Balkans over which the remaining communities of refugees might pass to safety.”²⁷

Hirschmann Leaves Turkey

Unlike his twenty-day journey before arriving in Turkey, Hirschmann’s return trip lasted only eight days. Leaving Ankara on Friday, April 6th, Hirschmann was in Cairo by Saturday. He took a camel (an “undulating animal, who swells with dignity as he stretches his neck forward and growls ominously”) on a sightseeing tour, finding the Sphinx “disappointing” but was impressed by the “dignity” of the Pyramids of Giza.²⁸ A

²⁵ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable to the WRB, 1944 May 2; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 4, Documents 350-351; USHMM.

²⁶ Ira Hirschmann, Memo to the Ambassador, 1944 March 31; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Miscellaneous Official; FDRL.

²⁷ *New York Times*, “Steinhardt Helps 254 More Exiles,” 1944 April 11; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 15, Folder 4, Documents 563; USHMM.

²⁸ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 April 8; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

few days later, Hirschmann arrived in Algiers, where he met Leonard Ackermann and James Saxon, who “divulge [a] startling story of efforts.”²⁹

Yugoslavia and Italy

Though the situation on the ground in North Africa was fairly quiet from a military perspective, Ackermann and Saxon had been hard at work for the War Refugee Board. The Fedhala camp was still not open to refugees, and there were never-ending negotiations over which entity—the Americans, British, Free French, or UNRRA—had responsibility for selecting, shipping, supplying, securing, and staffing the camp, as well as for the ultimate disposition of the refugees after the war. At the end of March, though, Ackermann and Saxon were focused on the Mediterranean. The War Refugee Board did not have a representative designated for Italy, but since the Allied Force Headquarters for the Mediterranean was located in Algiers, Ackermann was consulted about the situation in Yugoslavia and Italy. His involvement began with discussions regarding the Isle of Rab. Since October 1943, first the State Department and the Intergovernmental Committee, and eventually the Treasury Department and the War Refugee Board, had been monitoring the situation on the small island of Rab off the coast of Croatia. With the island changing hands multiple times between the Germans and Yugoslav partisans during those months, Henry Morgenthau had, on February 1st, proposed funding the partisans to finally remove refugees from the island and bring them to Italy. The War Department sent the proposal to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, but for weeks there was

²⁹ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 April 11; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

no response. In the beginning of March 1944, the Joint Distribution Committee offered to send \$25,000 to the British Foreign Office to disburse to the Yugoslav partisans, but they still had to wait for the official military reply. On March 23rd, Ackermann was the only non-military personnel at a meeting about the evacuation from Rab, where he was informed that the Combined Chiefs were initially not enthused about the idea. The supply situation made increased evacuations into Italy burdensome, and there was also “constant trouble between the Chetniks and the Croats.” However, both situations had eased, so the group agreed that a cable be sent to Marshal Tito informing him of the money for boatmen and asking for his recommendations as to the method of payment. When Ackermann asked if Yugoslav refugees in general, not just those evacuating from Rab, could be accepted into Italy, “all persons indicated this could be done.”³⁰

Ackermann sent a letter to Pehle a few days later to give him a more candid version of the meeting. Despite a minor request related to security—wanting the boats to land in designated places so the refugees could be screened—the military had been “quite cordial and appeared sympathetic to the project and...I did not get the same reaction previously mentioned, to wit, a questioning attitude as to my presence in the picture.”³¹ They were sending a cable to Tito, though it would be subject to a slight delay owing to the recent eruption of Mount Vesuvius. To get more information about expanding the project to cover all refugees wishing to evacuate from Yugoslavia, Ackermann and Saxon decided that Saxon should go to Bari, Italy, to meet with both Allied military personnel

³⁰ Leonard Ackermann, Memorandum to the Files, 1944 March 23; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 17, Folder 6, Documents 593; USHMM.

³¹ Leonard Ackermann, Letter to Pehle, 1944 March 25; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 2, Documents 211-215; USHMM.

and Yugoslav partisans. To assist him, Ackermann wrote a formal letter, officially “sub-delegating” his authority as War Refugee Board representative to Saxon, who was still awaiting a designation of his own, as the WRB’s proposed representative in Spain.³² By the time he returned to North Africa, the War Refugee Board had sent a cable officially designating Saxon as a War Refugee Board representative to assist Ackermann, and had expanded Ackermann’s jurisdiction to be “special representative of the War Refugee Board for the Mediterranean area.”³³

James Saxon, newly sub-delegated War Refugee Board representative, arrived in Bari on March 31st. Six months after the city was liberated, it was still chaotic; Saxon had trouble making appointments, as there was no centralized directory or information hub. His first meeting, with Colonel Kirkwood of the Displaced Persons Subcommittee of the Allied Control Commission, was somewhat troubling. When asked about general refugee policy, Kirkwood reported, “[I]t has been and is the policy not to encourage evacuation but to accept those who come.”³⁴ When Saxon pointed out that this was inconsistent with the War Refugee Board’s policy and the Secretary of War’s subsequent directive to military personnel, Kirkwood claimed not to have seen either document. Though “trying to do a good job,” Kirkwood was hampered by lack of medical personnel, the need for increased counterintelligence, and transportation difficulties. Still, the refugees under his supervision enjoyed many freedoms, and Saxon noted Kirkwood was “clearly moved by

³² Leonard Ackermann, Letter to Saxon sub-delegating duties, 1944 March 30; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 9, Documents 278-279; USHMM.

³³ Cordell Hull, Cable to Ackermann, 1944 April 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 7, Documents 405-406; USHMM.

³⁴ James Saxon, Report to John Pehle, 1944 April 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 14, Documents 812-829; USHMM.

the humanitarian aspect of it.”³⁵ Saxon’s next meeting was with Major General Nathan Twilling, the head of the 15th US Air Force and the highest-ranking American in the area. Twilling had never heard of the War Refugee Board and said he would like to help but was focused on bombing objectives. Saxon’s meetings grew repetitive, and he noted that he was gathering “further evidence that information about the Board and its objectives had not been disseminated even among military personnel doing work closely related to the Board's activities.”³⁶ More than once, Saxon was mockingly asked “whether I intended to move the entire population of Yugoslavia to Italy.” Some officials were supportive but emphasized the many difficulties, while others adopted an exclusively negative attitude. After recounting a particularly depressing meeting, Saxon wrote, “[I]t is interesting to note that those who were closest to the problem and clearly more thoroughly informed on it, fell into the first category.” When Saxon began to meet with the Yugoslav partisan representatives, the meetings became more positive and practical. One overarching theme became clear: The War Refugee Board should “accept the Yugoslav challenge that if the facilities were put in their hands they could actually do something.”³⁷

When Saxon returned to North Africa on April 8th, he, Ackermann, and Harold Glasser (another Treasury Department representative) requested a meeting with General Benjamin Caffey of Allied Forces Headquarters, whose “strong position was already known.” Despite the fact that the trio had agreed to report very little to Caffey, the General informed them that “[t]hose Yugoslavs are congenital liars!” Consequently,

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

“nothing could be accomplished, no assistance could be expected from AFHQ...[and]if any plan providing for AFHQ assistance in any project of ours came across his desk, he would not approve it and we might as well know that now.”³⁸

In light of the confused situation in Algiers—with some members of the military supportive of evacuation attempts related to Rab and with General Caffey’s refusal to support any plan regarding Yugoslav partisans, claiming that other high-ranking military personnel concurred—Ira Hirschmann’s trip through North Africa could not have come at a better time. After discussing the situation with Hirschmann, Saxon and Ackermann asked him to hand deliver their memo of recommendations to Pehle when he arrived in Washington. The cautiously worded cable Ackermann had been preparing was never sent, and Saxon no longer needed to be recalled to Washington for consultation. To aid refugees evacuating from Yugoslavia—which they hoped would include Jews escaping from Hungary—Saxon requested a remittance of up to \$100,000 to the Refugee Committee of the Yugoslav National Committee in Bari, and asked Morgenthau to recommend an additional \$50,000 in gold coins. Equipment for boat repairs and food could be placed under Yugoslav supervision under the terms of Lend-Lease. The effort demanded a full-time War Refugee Board representative for Italy; though Ackermann’s new designation as representative to the Mediterranean area included Italy, the situation needed a “resourceful and energetic” representative focused on the situation. Saxon recommended DuBois.³⁹ When the Yugoslav National Committee sent a detailed memo

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ James Saxon, Memo to John Pehle, 1944 April 14; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 14, Documents 830-831; USHMM. Hirschmann Ira, Hirschmann report on meeting with Ackermann and Saxon, 1944 April 13; Holocaust

to Saxon on April 20th regarding their specific needs, they echoed the request for WRB staff stationed in Bari. In addition to a six-page list of supplies for ship repairs and for the care of refugees, the Committee required a large fund upon which to draw and reiterated their desire to help all refugees to evacuate, including Jewish refugees from Hungary and Romania.⁴⁰

The War Refugee Board took the request for financial assistance and a designated Board representative seriously. On April 28th, the Board reassured Ackermann: “We are convinced of importance of matters discussed by you with Hirschmann and will do all possible to carry out your suggestions.”⁴¹ Unfortunately, their attempts to secure the services of Lt. Commander John Lawler of the US Coast Guard, who had worked for the General Counsel’s office at the Treasury Department in 1940-1941, were unsuccessful, since his superiors considered Lawler’s duties for the Allied Control Commission too important to transfer him to the War Refugee Board. While awaiting further instructions, Ackermann gathered more information and planned a trip to Bari himself. On May 4th, however, after cabling the Board the good news that Marshal Tito had specifically agreed to aid Hungarian refugees if he could receive the requested funds, Ackermann received a blow. In a letter to Pehle, Ackermann recounted: “[M]y pleasure was of short duration for I learned almost immediately thereafter that it was planned to send out a directive to the Allied forces in Italy directing them not to carry Yugoslav refugees to the Italian

Refugees and the FDR White House (Microfilm Collection, Bethesda, MD: UPA collection from LexisNexis, 2006). LM 0255, Reel 6, Folder 23, Document 66-68; USHMM.

⁴⁰ Wayne Vucinich, Memo on the Yugoslav partisans, 1944 April 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 13, Documents 749-750; USHMM.

⁴¹ Cordell Hull, Cable from WRB to Ackermann, 1944 April 28; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 18, Folder 1, Documents 9-10; USHMM.

mainland except under certain circumstances. . . . before I had a chance to see [Ambassador Robert Murphy] the cable was dispatched.”⁴² Over the next few days, during which he received a cable from the WRB letting him know they had secured the requested funds, Ackermann tried to figure out what had happened and why. Murphy told him the directive was a misunderstanding and would be rescinded, but when Ackermann spoke with an unnamed British military representative, he learned the directive had come from them with Murphy’s assent. The majority of Yugoslav refugees arriving in Italy were soon further evacuated to refugee camps in Egypt which were run by UNRRA and the British. The refugee quota in Egypt of 25,500 refugees was almost reached, so the quota needed to be raised and alternative camps found. Until this could be accomplished, the British recommended that “no encouragement should be given to the evacuation of refugees from Yugoslavia.” Murphy had agreed, and gone further: “[T]he increasing number of refugees was raising a serious problem and that positive steps should be taken to discourage their evacuation.”⁴³ Until the military would officially agree to support—or at least tolerate—evacuations from Yugoslavia, it did not matter how much support the War Refugee Board was willing to send to the partisans.

Protective Papers and Vittel

As Hirschmann said goodbye in Ankara and Saxon met with the Yugoslav partisans in Bari, half a world away, Henry Morgenthau held a late afternoon meeting in

⁴² Leonard Ackermann, Letter to Pehle, 1944 May 7; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 1, Documents 116; USHMM.

⁴³ Leonard Ackermann, Letter to Pehle, 1944 May 11; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 1, Documents 111-115; USHMM.

his office. April 6th was windy, with Washington experiencing a late season cold front, but the meeting was likely more uncomfortable than the weather. Three representatives from the Union of Orthodox Rabbis—Rabbis Shabse Frankel, whose parents were in the Vittel internment camp; Abraham Kalmanowitz, who was familiar to the WRB, having been the chief correspondent on behalf of the Union; and Baruch Korff, who acted as their spokesman—were in Washington regarding Vittel. An internment camp in northeastern occupied France, Vittel was used to house American and British citizens as well as prisoners who had protective papers—passports, entry visas, or some other form of identification attesting to their claim of Allied citizenship (usually from Latin American countries). It was generally recognized that the prisoners were not legally born or naturalized citizens of any Latin American country, but had purchased or been given legitimate or falsified papers attesting to this claim to save their own lives. In December 1943, the Intergovernmental Committee was alerted to the situation in Vittel, as Orthodox groups in Great Britain had heard rumors that the Paraguayan government had informed Germany that these papers were invalid. Emerson sent a cable to Asuncion requesting that, for humanitarian reasons, Paraguay maintain the validity of the papers in order to prevent the deportation of prisoners holding this identification.⁴⁴ Paraguay agreed and assured the State Department and IGC that they had no intentions of canceling these documents.

In February 1944, as the War Refugee Board was gathering information to begin their work, Lawrence Lesser had written a report on Polish Jews who held these

⁴⁴ W. Gallman, Cables about the validity of Paraguayan papers, 1943 December 18; General Records of the Department of State (National Archives Microfilm Publication 1284, Reel 37), 4913; NACP.

protective papers. He recounted the correspondence regarding Paraguay, but added that the Agudas Israel organization was claiming that the Swiss government held a negative attitude towards the papers, considering them to be illegally held. To ensure the safety of the prisoners in Vittel, the Board needed to intervene. On February 21st, John Pehle had sent a draft cable to the State Department for dispatch to Bern, instructing them to “take appropriate action calculated to induce the Swiss Government to take active steps to avoid the seizure or other non-recognition of passports by the Germans of the Latin American passports held by internees at Vittel and elsewhere.”⁴⁵

The State Department did not send the Board’s cable. On March 14th, nearly a month later, the War Refugee Board found out about a March 2nd cable from John Winant in London, which the State Department had failed to forward to them.⁴⁶ In his cable, Winant had warned that the IGC had information indicating the Germans were beginning to question the validity of the papers. In light of this information, and upon the discovery that the State Department had not transmitted their February cable, the Board drafted a strongly worded cable to Bern requesting that Harrison inform Switzerland that the United States considered these papers to be valid. The Board also sent cables to Latin America, requesting that each country likewise inform the Swiss that the protective papers issued in their names were recognized as valid.

On March 30th, Harrison sent a message to the War Refugee Board from Isaac Sternbuch, the Union of Orthodox Rabbis’ representative in Switzerland. Sternbuch had

⁴⁵ John Pehle, Cable to Bern about protective papers, 1944 February 21; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 19, Folder 1, Documents 107-110; USHMM.

⁴⁶ In fact, the WRB only learned of the cable when George Warren of the State Department asked if they planned to rewrite their cable to Bern in light of the new information. John Pehle, Memo to Henry Morgenthau, 1944 April 14; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 721, Document 4-8; LOC.

information that 238 prisoners in Vittel had been isolated for imminent deportation to Poland. Their only hope was immediate recognition of the validity of their papers and a prisoner exchange with German civilians or POWs. When the Board received Harrison's cable, Pehle immediately sent the text to Kalmanowitz, and Benjamin Akzin prepared a report on the logistics of a prisoner exchange. Despite the fact that it was the day before the beginning of Passover, Kalmanowitz, Frankel, and Korff boarded a train from New York and came to Washington on April 6th. That morning, the Rabbis enlisted the support of House Majority leader John McCormack (D-MA) and Senator James Mead (D-NY)—who had been the best man at Korff's wedding in 1943—vowing to complain to the press if they were not satisfied that all possible was being done for the prisoners in Vittel.

Morgenthau was sympathetic to their distress (“Now, look, you get upset and you get me upset”) but had not been involved in the discussions regarding Vittel and needed to be brought up to date. Pehle and DuBois told him about their March 21st cable to Bern, which, like the first cable from February, had been languishing unsent at the State Department. While the Board wanted Bern to induce the Swiss to confirm the validity of all protective papers, the State Department wanted Switzerland to confirm only specific cases. The implications were enormous: either the Swiss would inform the Germans that everyone with papers should be protected, or the Swiss would wait and assume that the Germans would ask about individuals prior to deportation, at which point the Swiss would then confirm that the papers had been recognized as legitimate. Pehle believed the Latin American countries would support the WRB's plan, and anyway “[w]e can pretty well force a Latin American country to refrain from revoking these things until after the

war.”⁴⁷ Pehle pointed out that the Germans were not asking for permission: “They are just starting to ship these people out. We are quibbling on this sort of thing while this goes on.” Moreover, Korff informed the group that Paul Culbertson in the State Department was holding up the cable not just because the wording dispute, but because “he has reason to believe that these passports...were issued by Gestapo agents...and on this assumption he refused to cooperate.” Morgenthau tried to get in touch with Hull to let him know that he and Pehle would like to see him that evening or, in lieu of that, to call a meeting of the Secretarial heads of the War Refugee Board for the morning so that the cable could finally go out. After Morgenthau, Pehle, and DuBois thanked the Rabbis and dismissed them, they commiserated with each other about how many people—at the State Department, in Congress, at the White House—were claiming to help but were not. Pehle was particularly frustrated by the State Department’s accusations that the delay was due to the Board’s intransigence: “They told [the Rabbis] there were just a few words difference...and we were just quibbling.” DuBois defensively added, “A few words make all the difference in the world.”⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Pehle’s confidence was not misplaced, but the spring of 1944 was full of cables to Latin American countries, explaining and reiterating what was being asked of them. The State Department felt the War Refugee Board was incensing the other American republics rather than mollifying them, as “the approach used in the telegram may well fail and will almost certainly cause resentment.” The Board received fairly universal support for a request to confirm the validity of protective papers in Vittel with the exception of Peru, who had already told the Swiss that the papers were invalid but promised to be more sympathetic with any requests in the future. When the Board asked Latin American countries to recognize protective papers in general—at least until the end of the war or until the holder was removed to safety—and to allow the holders of these papers to be eligible for prisoner exchanges, this was a bit of a harder sell. The Holy See had already sent a similar cable to Latin America, but was not clear on whether these countries were expected to actually receive the refugees. By the time the War Refugee Board asked, confirming that none of the holders of protective papers would ever arrive on their shores—some Latin American countries had already informed their protecting powers that the papers were invalid. The Board asked them to issue new instructions, which most did. Transcript, “Jewish Evacuation” meeting, 1944 April 6; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 718, Document 2-25; LOC. John Cabot., Memo to Raynor, 1944 April 12; RG-59, “War Refugee Board,” Box 1, Folder Misc. 1944 April-May; NACP.

⁴⁸ Transcript, “Jewish Evacuation” meeting, 1944 April 6; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 718, Document 2-25; LOC.

At 6:00pm, Morgenthau finally reached Hull by phone and explained the Rabbis' visit: "[T]he poor fellows broke down and cried here in my office, and we had quite a time." Morgenthau explained the issue with the cable and the Secretaries read it over together. Hull had no objection to the Board's wording requesting the Swiss give blanket recognition to the protective papers and agreed to send George Warren to the Treasury Department to get a copy of the agreed-upon text. Warren arrived at 6:45pm, but he refused to send the cable that evening without specific instruction from Hull, who had already left the State Department for dinner. Morgenthau, upset and frustrated, called Hull's Secretary, while Warren sat in front of him and waited. "He's not questioning my word in my conversation with Mr. Hull, but he says he can't act until Mr. Hull gives him instructions," Morgenthau complained. "[T]his thing has been delayed so long...I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask that it be read to Mr. Hull tonight...So that it could still, after all, if it goes out tonight, it will be in Switzerland tomorrow."⁴⁹ Warren left with a copy of the draft, and Morgenthau finally went home.

Early the next morning, Pehle told Morgenthau that Warren had called him at home at 10:00pm. Warren had the cable and Hull had agreed to send it, but first they were going to have a meeting at the State Department, with Culbertson, to talk about the language one more time. A few minutes after Pehle had hung up with Warren, Rabbi Korff had also called Pehle, excited that Warren was sending the cable out with no changes. "So right in the space of two minutes they were giving them one side of the story and giving me another. That is where we stand." Pehle had informed the Rabbi that

⁴⁹ Transcript, Phone conversation between Morgenthau and Brown, 1944 April 6; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 718, Document 111-113; LOC.

the State Department had not sent the cable but was planning a meeting about it the next morning; Korff decided that if he did not hear that the State Department had sent it by mid-morning, some publicity may be necessary. Morgenthau was entirely sympathetic: "I don't blame him. It is time somebody began to shout from the housetops."⁵⁰ At 11:30am, Morgenthau heard the cable had been dispatched.⁵¹ He gathered Pehle, DuBois, and six other members of the WRB staff in his office to thank them. "Nothing has pleased me more than being able to get the State Department to send out this cable in regard to Camp Vittel. It just shows that if we put enough heat in the right place it can be done..." Pehle thanked Morgenthau for "going to bat on this thing," and Morgenthau crowed that from now on, Culbertson will call him "that God-damned Jew. It is a badge of honor."⁵²

While thanking the War Refugee Board staff, Morgenthau also pointed out that it was likely too late for the prisoners deported from Vittel, including Rabbi Frankel's parents and siblings. The Board staff spent the next few months trying to find out more information about the deportation—who was deported, and where they had been sent.⁵³ They requested Latin American countries to approach their protecting power and request the return of the prisoners to Vittel. Though they had no success in securing the return of the prisoners, Morgenthau's work was certainly not in vain. Pehle reported to Morgenthau on April 19th that the State Department was sending the War Refugee Board's cables in record time—even keeping employees late to make sure the cables get

⁵⁰ Transcript, "Jewish Evacuation" meeting, 1944 April 7; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 718, Document 54-56; LOC.

⁵¹ Morgenthau's fear that the cable would be further delayed if it were not dispatched until Friday was justified. The cable did not arrive in Bern until Monday, April 10th: Cordell Hull, Cable to Bern about protective papers, 1944 April 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 20, Folder 1, Documents 97-99; USHMM.

⁵² Transcript, 'Jewish Evacuation' meeting, 1944 April 7; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 718, Document 221-222; LOC.

⁵³ The WRB ultimately learned that the group had been sent to Drancy and from there, to Auschwitz.

out. "There is no question but that the situation has greatly changed for the better. Of course, we can't say how long this happy state of affairs will continue."⁵⁴

Hull was not that happy. Despite the fact that the cable was sent to Switzerland the morning of Friday, April 7th, Drew Pearson's radio broadcast on Easter Sunday, April 9th, reported on the situation. Though he erroneously stated that the WRB's unsent cable from February had been specifically about the 238 prisoners deported from Vittel, Pearson was otherwise well-informed. Naming Culbertson and James Dunn as the guilty parties, "[F]or six long weeks that cable to Europe to aid 238 people about to be shipped to Poland was held up on a State Department desk...the 238 Refugees who awaited that cable may now be dead."⁵⁵ On Monday morning, Hull was furious, accused Pehle ("[he] talks too much") and demanded Morgenthau undertake an investigation to ferret out the leak. By the time Herbert Gaston presented his investigation later that day clearing the War Refugee Board staff, the culprit had willingly come forward. In an afternoon meeting, Rabbi Korff confirmed to Morgenthau that he had been Pearson's source, and related the meeting he had that morning with Hull. Hull had begun the meeting by continuing to rail against Pehle: "And if Mr. Pehle chooses to give out information to a notorious liar like Mr. Pearson, he shouldn't do that. I am the head of the War Refugee Board. He should come to me." Korff "explained to him that Mr. Pearson's utterances last night were not due to Mr. Pehle. I was the one that informed Mr. Pearson. And I told the Secretary that I shall use every medium at my disposal. It is not in the form of a threat,

⁵⁴ John Pehle, Memo to Morgenthau, 1944 April 19; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 722, Document 73; LOC.

⁵⁵ Fred Smith, Transcript of Pearson broadcast, 1944 April 10; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 719, Document 81-82; LOC.

but every medium at my disposal to save these people."⁵⁶ DuBois admitted to Morgenthau that he had spoken freely in front of Korff, likely revealing the names of the State Department staff holding up the cable.⁵⁷ (At this point in the conversation, Morgenthau sarcastically asked for the German word for "patience.") DuBois was in the middle of drafting a cable to Ambassador Hayes in Spain letting him know of the situation in Vittel and asking Spain to also approach the Germans regarding the validity of protective papers. They all agreed that nothing would likely come of it, given Hayes' obstinacy. Korff, mixed with gratitude and a desire to prevent DuBois from getting into trouble for leaking information, concluded the meeting by confiding to Morgenthau: "Mr. DuBois has been so helpful, sir, that either he will convert me to Christianity or I will convert him to Judaism."⁵⁸

Problems with Ambassador Hayes

In the meeting with Korff on April 10th, Morgenthau expressed his frustration with Ambassador Carlton Hayes thusly: "[T]he Ambassador is the personal representative of the President. How can the Ambassador be there if he doesn't carry out the President's wishes?"⁵⁹ Two weeks prior, Pehle had presented a memo about Hayes to Morgenthau. After listing the various ways in which Hayes had obstructed the WRB's

⁵⁶ Transcript, "Jewish Evacuation" meeting, 1944 April 10; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 701, Document 86-93; LOC.

⁵⁷ In an interview later in life, Josiah DuBois claimed to have had lunch with Drew Pearson on Saturday afternoon, the day before the broadcast, and had told him the entire story. The two men were friends, and this claim is likely true. Since DuBois was also friendly with Rabbi Korff, it's likely either Korff admitted to talking to Pearson to cover for DuBois, or Pearson heard the story from both sources. Oral History interview with Josiah DuBois, conducted by Laurence Jarvik, 23 October 1978; copy located in KE 96059, Morgenthau family papers, USHMM.

⁵⁸ Transcript, "Jewish Evacuation" meeting, 1944 April 10; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 701, Document 86-93; LOC.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

work—from not presenting Spain with the new American policy, to refusing to allow a WRB representative, to stating he would not inform Samuel Sequerra of the Joint's license arrangements for his work—Pehle firmly concluded the memo:

[T]he War Refugee Board's experience with Hayes is not the first one of its kind...the Intergovernmental Committee found it impossible to get any cooperation...Hayes has made life miserable for other government agencies...He has been responsible for having OSS representatives recalled...he has hamstrung private organizations by making them all subject to the control of his assistant, Mr. Blickenstaff...the operations of the Board in Spain are completely paralyzed and we are losing practically the only opportunity we have at the moment for actually bringing people out of occupied territory.⁶⁰

The WRB staff began to work around Hayes. In late March 1944, Joseph Friedman proposed approaching the Spanish government through their ambassador in Washington, with the idea that if the Spanish government expressed direct interest to Hayes in facilitating programs of rescue, Hayes would be unable to protest.⁶¹ During the meeting with Rabbi Korff, there was a brief discussion of sending a copy of DuBois' cable about the recognition of protective papers directly to the Spanish Ambassador, but Morgenthau cautioned them against giving Hayes justification to complain that his authority had been compromised. The WRB's concerns about Hayes were somewhat validated: ten days after receiving the cable, Hayes responded that he had passed the request to the Spanish government, but as of May, the WRB had no reply from Spain. The WRB could only work through the official channels, but they could still use indirect means to influence Hayes. At the end of April, Clarence Pickett, the director of the

⁶⁰ John Pehle, Memo to Morgenthau, 1944 March 27; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 714, Document 91-92; LOC.

⁶¹ Joseph Friedman, Memo, 1944 March 30; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 2, Folder 17, Documents 662-663; USHMM.

American Friends Service Committee, met with Josiah DuBois and then with the Spanish ambassador, sharing with the ambassador a memo detailing the AFSC and Board's requests to encourage the entry of refugees and to set up reception centers for those crossing the border.⁶²

In a cable on April 6th, Hayes argued that, "I do not feel that steps should be taken to putting in effect any such plan of operations...until it is evident that the War Refugee Board's efforts...will result in fact in an increase in the number of refugees."⁶³ In other words, the Ambassador would not allow WRB to work in Spain until they could demonstrate success working in Spain. Hayes rejected the appointment of James Saxon as the Board's representative to Spain, claiming, "I can state with assurance that the Government of Spain would prefer that this work be left in the hands of Blickenstaff and his organization."⁶⁴ In the wake of this cable, Morgenthau sent a telegram to President Roosevelt, who was vacationing in South Carolina, informing the President that "[d]ue to the attitude of Ambassador Hayes, War Refugee Board has not been able to accomplish anything in Spain...It is essential that a big man go over as your representative."⁶⁵ Morgenthau proposed Wendell Willkie, but Hull disliked the idea, though he agreed that Hayes was a problem.⁶⁶ On May 11th, the Board informed the State Department of their intention to try appointing James McDonald, the former League of Nations High

⁶² Clarence Pickett, Letter to Spanish Ambassador, 1944 April 28; American Friends Service Committee Refugee Section, Box 5, Folder "Spanish Embassy," American Friends Service Committee Archives, Philadelphia, PA (AFSC).

⁶³ Carlton Hayes, Cable to the WRB, 1944 April 6; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 2, Folder 17, Documents 655-656; USHMM.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Telegram to the President, 1944 April 13; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 720, Document 66-67; LOC.

⁶⁶ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Memo to the File, 1944 April 15; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 721, Document 32-33; LOC.

Commissioner on Refugees, as their representative in Spain. When the Board received Hayes' response on May 26th, they must have initially been encouraged, as Hayes began, "I certainly have no objection to the visit of my friend James G. McDonald." Of course, the Ambassador then added, "[A]lthough I am reasonably confident that the existing Embassy machinery, in conjunction with the Blickenstaff organization, can serve adequately the proper purposes of the War Refugee Board."⁶⁷ Still, the Board began to plan McDonald's visit.

Lisbon

As for Samuel Sequerra's work for the Joint to assist refugees escaping over the border from France to Spain, Hayes' refusal to inform him of his license was only a temporary problem. On March 14th, the Joint had been approved for a \$100,000 license (W-2155) for Sequerra's operations in Barcelona. Hayes refused to transmit the license, claiming to doubt Sequerra's Allied loyalties and fearing that any operation that did not go through Blickenstaff would endanger all refugee activities in Spain. A few weeks later, the Joint sent \$25,000 more to Sequerra, though he was instructed to await further information. In the middle of April, the WRB staff prepared a memo on the relationship between Blickenstaff and Sequerra, which seemed to justify the approval of the Joint's projects. Since Blickenstaff was based on Madrid and Sequerra in Barcelona, there was little jurisdictional overlap, and since the Joint funded two-thirds of Blickenstaff's total operations, there were no funding conflicts. In addition, Sequerra sent 30% of his license

⁶⁷ Carlton Hayes, Cable to the WRB, 1944 May 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 10, Document 453; USHMM.

funding to Blickenstaff.⁶⁸ Since the Joint's European Director, Joseph Schwartz, was based in Lisbon, he was able to communicate with Barcelona directly, and informed Sequerra of his license. Schwartz traveled to Madrid in mid-May to speak with Hayes, and on May 23rd cabled to the United States about a wholly positive meeting. Hayes was informed that Sequerra's license would be used to pay Spanish guides to bring children over the border, and the Ambassador was fully supportive. Schwartz also reported that Hayes was amenable to officially appointing Blickenstaff as a WRB representative. The cable was clearly too good to be true and it took only three days for Hayes to angrily contradict Schwartz's claims. Not only had they not discussed Sequerra's activities, Hayes had made no expression of sympathy, nor had his views on clandestine operations changed. The Ambassador once again emphasized, "I am in full sympathy with the humanitarian purpose for which the War Refugee Board was established but...it should not be allowed to carry on its operations in such a way as to endanger objectives of more immediate importance."⁶⁹ Until McDonald could travel to Spain to smooth things over, Hayes remained obstinate and angry, Sequerra continued his work for the Joint, and the War Refugee Board did not have a representative in Spain.

The Board did have a new representative in Lisbon, however. Dr. Robert Dexter was a Unitarian minister, one of the founders of the Unitarian Service Committee (USC), and the Committee's Executive Director. Since the fall of 1942, Dexter and his wife, Dr. Elisabeth Anthony Dexter, had been running the USC offices in Lisbon. Robert Dexter

⁶⁸ E.F. Rains, Memo re: Samuel Sequerra, 1944 April 13; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 23, Folder 14, Documents 271-272; USHMM.

⁶⁹ Carlton Hayes, Cable to the WRB, 1944 April 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 10, Folder 15, Documents 911-912; USHMM.

happened to be in the United States at the beginning of 1944 and met Pehle and DuBois in New York at the end of February, which likely led to his selection. By the time he returned to Lisbon at the end of March, Dexter was preparing to assume his work for the WRB. By far the oldest War Refugee Board staff member at 57, Dexter's new duties were announced in the press on April 17th. Elisabeth Dexter took over the USC's operations in Lisbon. Since the couple had been in Lisbon for so long (though Dexter still did not speak any Portuguese), they were familiar with the refugee agencies operating there, including the Joint and the World Jewish Congress. Joseph Schwartz was responsible for the Joint's offices and had been based in Lisbon since 1940, while the World Jewish Congress's representative was Isaac Weissman, a Turkish-born Jew who had lived in Vienna since World War I and Paris since the early 1930s before coming to Portugal.⁷⁰ The pair, and their organizations in Lisbon, did not get along, and it quickly seemed that Dexter's main occupation would be keeping the two organizations civil and their programs productive.

Days after his appointment, the WRB asked Dexter to speak with Weissman regarding his plans to establish a reception center in Portugal for children being brought clandestinely from France, through Spain, and into the country.⁷¹ Ambassador R. Henry Norweb did not think there would be difficulty in securing permission from the Portuguese for the centers, but Weissman suffered from a lack of funding. If he were to arrange for the care of 300 children, Weissman estimated this would cost \$100,000 per month. On April 27th, the WRB asked Dexter to contact Schwartz regarding the World

⁷⁰ Benjamin Akzin, Biography of Isaac Weissman, 1944 May 25; Lesser family papers, private collection.

⁷¹ Cordell Hull, Cable to Ambassador Norweb, 1944 April 15; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 10, Folder 15, Documents 872-873; USHMM.

Jewish Congress' proposal, since the Joint already had a license for the same type of operations. They added, "It is appreciated that the problem of working with the various private organizations in Portugal cannot be resolved from this end...[T]he Board feels that the program to rescue children from France would be greatly endangered if two organizations without coordination through you should be trying to rescue the same children."⁷² Dexter's first report to the WRB, on May 2nd, included a narrative of the conflict. The World Jewish Congress had long been engaging in illegal measures to get refugees out of France and through Spain, while the Joint preferred to act through legal routes. Dexter estimated the WJC could potentially rescue children for less money than the Joint, though the WJC felt it imperative that children without family should ultimately go to Palestine, and would not compromise on this.⁷³

As the conflict played out, Weissman vocalized his complaints. He claimed to Dexter that his organization had rescued a small group of children and about 40 adults, but the Joint was now claiming credit for rescuing these refugees. Weissman also reported that he could not afford to care for the six children the WJC had recently brought out of Spain; Dexter agreed to provide some funding since Weissman refused to relinquish control of the children to the Joint, which did have money. Weissman requested a license to fund his activities, but the War Refugee Board did not want to grant the license until there was some sort of coordination with the Joint. Dexter hoped the situation could be resolved, as "it seems to me that the children are a bit like the

⁷² Cordell Hull, Cable to Norweb, 1944 May 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 10, Folder 15, Documents 859-862; USHMM.

⁷³ Robert Dexter, Preliminary Report on Activities, 1944 May 2; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 2, Folder 15, Documents 488-498; USHMM.

unfortunate child on whom Solomon was asked to pass judgment.”⁷⁴

By May 10th, Dexter had not made any progress and recommended the WRB authorize the World Jewish Congress license, unless they could convince Joint officials in New York to allocate some of Schwartz’s \$100,000 license to Weissman.⁷⁵ The Board agreed, but granted the license with a new restriction. The World Jewish Congress authorized a \$50,000 license with an initial remittance of \$10,000 for Weissman, but Dexter, as War Refugee Board representative, would be responsible for the funds. Weissman could only access the money if Dexter was convinced that his activities would not duplicate any other organization’s programs. Weissman was pleased to finally receive funds and was perfectly willing to abide by the necessary terms. But the rhetoric between the organizations had not improved. Weissman declared the Joint “practically enemies”⁷⁶ and accused them of “thwarting maneuvers,”⁷⁷ including possibly causing the arrest of several WJC frontier guides.

For observers, including Dexter and the War Refugee Board, the conflict was frustrating since the stated goal—rescue of refugees—was the same. An American consular secretary in Lisbon wrote home with exasperation:

Truth of the matter is that I have come into contact with some of these relief organizations and have had my lofty ideals considerably disillusioned. These Jewish organizations are the worst. Really you would be surprised at some of the stuff that goes on. They have money to burn and there are only a few refugees

⁷⁴ Robert Dexter, Transmitting Preliminary Report on Activities for Refugees in Portugal for War Refugee Board, 1944 May 2; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 2, Folder 15, Documents 488-498; USHMM.

⁷⁵ R. Henry Norweb, Cable to the WRB, 1944 May 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 2, Folder 15, Documents 484-485; USHMM.

⁷⁶ Isaac Weissman, Report from Representative World Jewish Congress Regarding Rescue Work on Iberian Peninsula, 1944 May 25; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 27, Folder 1, Documents 57-62; USHMM.

⁷⁷ Isaac Weissman, Cable to the World Jewish Congress, 1944 May 24; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 2, Folder 15, Document 476; USHMM.

filtering into Spain and Portugal from France so these various organizations actually fight over the ones that get through... They are too busy fighting each other to do much actual good.⁷⁸

Fed up, the War Refugee Board pulled James Mann from his office in the State Department and, after less than three months back in the United States, sent him to Lisbon on the May 29th clipper.

Stockholm

Iver Olsen, the War Refugee Board's representative in Stockholm, had a much easier first few months in his new position. There were very few relief agency representatives in Stockholm, and the major refugee traffic—from Denmark to Sweden—had taken place six months prior to his appointment. The Board did not consider WRB duties in Sweden to be a full-time job, which was fine since Olsen already had two full-time jobs. He had arrived in Stockholm in December 1943, where he was simultaneously the Treasury Department's financial attaché and an OSS agent, charged with monitoring the movement of war materiel and currency from Sweden to Germany. Born in Norway and raised by a single mother, Olsen immigrated to the United States at the age of eleven. He had been one of Harry Dexter White's aides in the Treasury Department prior to his appointment to Stockholm, so Olsen knew the War Refugee Board staff quite well. Leaving behind a wife and two sons in Washington, thirty-nine-year-old Olsen was lonely, and did not mind the long work hours, though he reported losing twenty pounds

⁷⁸ Jane King, Letter to Margaret Frawley, 1944 August 1; American Friends Service Committee Foreign Service, Box "Spain, General 1944," Folder "Spanish—General"; AFSC.

from his slight frame by June 1944.⁷⁹

Olsen's WRB appointment was announced on April 12th, and he reported that, "The press items brought a deluge of callers into the office and telephone calls far into the night. It is clear that a large proportion of the 50,000 refugees in Sweden has construed my appointment as a mission to solve all their personal problems."⁸⁰ Even after a few months, Olsen was still experiencing the effects of being one of the only Americans in Sweden working on refugee issues, and lamented in a letter to Pehle that "well-meaning people sort of kill you with kindness in this type of work, and waste an enormous amount of your time. My conferences produce about one part of workable facts to nine parts of well wishes..."⁸¹

Despite Olsen's many meetings and callers, the WRB's operations in Stockholm got off to a slow start. One of his first projects involved a small group of refugees in Finland. Nervous about the German invasion of Hungary, which, as one of the refugees put it, "shows how quickly it can happen something in every belligerent country in Europe that makes every help to late. If something would happen here in Finland in one or other way we would be the first victims" [all sic].⁸² Despite the Swedish government's stated belief that the refugees were not currently in danger, and promises that they would be able to enter immediately if there was a credible threat, the group of 113 refugees were not pacified. Olsen helped to obtain permission for them to enter Sweden by May 1944.

⁷⁹ Allied Force Headquarters, Psychological Warfare Branch weekly directive, 1944 June 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 28, Folder 11, Documents 457-460; USHMM.

⁸⁰ Iver Olsen, Letter to Pehle with clippings, 1944 April 18; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 3, Folder 3, Documents 203-218; USHMM.

⁸¹ Iver Olsen, Letter to Pehle, 1944 June 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 28, Folder 11, Documents 457-460; USHMM.

⁸² Iver Olsen, Olsen forwards letters to the WRB, 1944 May 16; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 3, Folder 3, Documents 148-154; USHMM.

Since very few American agencies had representatives in Sweden, Olsen rarely had to act as a conduit of correspondence or money, with a few exceptions. The International Rescue and Relief Committee sent \$1,000 to its representative, Elise Ottesen-Jensen, to use to support refugees within Sweden. The Vaad Hatzalah applied for and received permission for a \$10,000 license to be sent to Rabbi Wilhelm Wolbe and Rabbi Marcus Ehrenpreis to be used to rescue rabbis and religious leaders in the Baltic countries, though Olsen reported the rabbis “do not know what can be done in those countries nor are they in a position to effect a program if they had one.”⁸³

But by and large, work in Sweden was not about licenses for relief—it was about the War Refugee Board sending money directly to agencies based in Sweden. To facilitate the Board’s goals of rescue, Olsen began to explore the risk inherent in evacuating refugees from Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. In a report to the Board, Olsen wrote, “[E]xcept for the most skillfully organized type of underground operations...the Baltic countries are now virtually sealed for everything...The rescue of those in hiding is the only possibility.”⁸⁴ Olsen selected three underground groups—one each for Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia—and arranged for each to receive Swedish kroner to fund their rescue efforts. After a confidential discussion with an official in the Swedish Foreign Office, Olsen reported that although the operations would be dangerous, the possibility existed of rescuing 600-700 intellectual, racial, and political refugees from each country.⁸⁵ The difficulty would be in the funding; though the War Refugee Board could

⁸³ Herschel Johnson, cable to the WRB, 1944 June 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 17, Folder 8, Documents 718-719; USHMM.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Herschel Johnson, Cable to the WRB, 1944 May 22; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 734, Document 92; LOC.

supply the funds directly, a large deposit in a Swedish bank would draw suspicion. So the Board tried something new. At the end of May, WRB staff approached the Goodyear Tire Company, which had a factory in Norrköping, Sweden. The company agreed that if the Board transferred \$50,000 to the account of their headquarters in Akron, Ohio, the Swedish factory would remit the equivalent in Swedish kroner to Olsen. In the second week of June 1944, Olsen transmitted 50,000 kroner (approx. \$12,000) for Estonian rescue, 30,000 kroner (approx. \$7,000) for Latvian rescue, and 25,000 kroner (approx. \$6,000) for Lithuanian rescue.⁸⁶ Each group promised to keep detailed accounts and to turn over any property purchased with the funds to the War Refugee Board once their work was completed.

The British Express Concerns

Had they known about the free currency being given to the underground movements in the Baltic countries, the British would likely have been quite upset. The British War Cabinet Committee on Refugees and the Ministry of Economic Warfare were still vocally critical of the State Department and WRB's license arrangements. On Monday, April 17th, the Board received two documents from the British: an *aide-mémoire*, written on March 27th, and a follow-up letter written on April 8th. The British were "perturbed" to learn that the WRB was issuing such lenient licenses, particularly after the lengthy discussions about security in the fall of 1943 regarding the license for

⁸⁶ The kroner for Lithuania was given to Vytautas Gyls and Dr. Algirdas Vokietaitis on June 6th; the kroner for Estonia to Heinrich Laretei, August Rattiste, and Jaan Ots on June 7th; and the kroner for Latvia to Voldemars Salnais and Feliks Cielens on June 9th.

the World Jewish Congress.⁸⁷ Their main criticism had not changed since the fall: "The Committee is much concerned that licenses are now being issued for transactions which, by making dollars or Swiss francs available in enemy countries, may be directly harmful in the successful prosecution of the war."⁸⁸ The British proposed a credit scheme instead. They suggested giving coupons to wealthy individuals in neutral nations who would lend money in the currency the relief agencies desired. The lenders would then be reimbursed after the war from a pool of money collected by the relief agencies, supplemented by the United States and Great Britain, and administered by the Intergovernmental Committee.

The British criticized the permissions granted in the Board's licenses as actually contradicting Roosevelt's Executive Order, since they "cannot be described as action 'consistent with the successful prosecution of the war' as laid down in the War Refugee Board's terms of reference." Moreover, by continuing their current license policy, the WRB was aiding the enemy and hurting refugee organizations. The Board was risking "confusion and competition between different interests, and above all, the licensing of remittances, once begun, may become of such dimensions and so get out of control that substantial advantage to the enemy would be the result." When the British began their credit scheme, the WRB's position would cause serious problems: "[T]he use of dollars or other hard currency on a scale sufficient to be of any real use would be an embarrassment to the organizations concerned... Those who up to now have accepted

⁸⁷ Drogheda, Ministry of Economic Warfare letter to Riefler, 1944 April 8; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 2, Documents 166-167; USHMM.

⁸⁸ British embassy staff, Aide-mémoire, 1944 March 27; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 2, Documents 143-146; USHMM.

credit would be encouraged to demand cash.”⁸⁹

The IGC and WRB Leadership Meet

The day after the War Refugee Board received copies of these documents criticizing their programs, Pehle met with Herbert Emerson and Patrick Malin. The Director and Vice-Director of the Intergovernmental Committee had traveled to the United States at the suggestion of Myron Taylor to clarify the relationship between their organization and the WRB. If Taylor’s anger at the establishment of the WRB and the British rhetoric about Board license policies were any indicator, the meetings should have been quite fiery. Instead, they were quiet and respectful. There were lunches, a formal War Refugee Board meeting on April 20th in honor of Emerson (with McGeorge Bundy acting for Stimson), and a joint press conference at the end of the week. There were no major policy changes, no change to the status quo regarding the relationship between the WRB and IGC, and only a financing question that needed to be worked out. In their meetings, they discussed the British *aide-mémoire* about licenses, and Emerson described the IGC’s credit scheme, which would be enacted with or without War Refugee Board collaboration. In the State Department’s official response to the British Embassy, sent after the meetings with Emerson, they refused to accede to the British demands. Stressing the importance of the current license arrangements—since “any danger involved in permitting entry to require relatively insubstantial quantities of foreign exchange is far outweighed by the saving of lives”—the State Department wrote that such arrangements

⁸⁹ Ibid.

could exist simultaneously with the IGC's proposed expansion of credit operations.⁹⁰

The visit seemed entirely positive, though the *New York Times* article "Refugee Boards to Fuse Operations" certainly overstated the outcome of the meetings.⁹¹ In the aftermath, the secretarial heads of the War Refugee Board sent a memo to President Roosevelt about the future financing of the Intergovernmental Committee. In late February, the WRB had allocated \$200,000 of its own funding to fulfill prior commitments to the IGC, and did not want to be responsible for future payments. Therefore, the Secretaries requested Roosevelt to authorize \$2,000,000 from the President's Emergency Fund to be given to the WRB. The Board would then receive reimbursement for \$200,000 and would immediately arrange for \$500,000 to be sent to the IGC to fulfill quarterly commitments. The remaining \$1,300,000 would be used for future IGC needs, which the WRB would send upon London's request. On May 15th, Roosevelt allocated the required \$2,000,000 from his Emergency Fund to the WRB. Rather than parse out funds later, Pehle just arranged for the entire \$1,800,000 commitment to be given to the IGC representatives at the beginning of June 1944. It was the best of all possible outcomes: the WRB continued with their license arrangements, they were reimbursed for most of their previous IGC allocation, the IGC received their funding, and the formerly frustrated Myron Taylor reported to Roosevelt, "The two groups now find themselves in perfect harmony."⁹²

⁹⁰ State Department staff, Aide-mémoire, 1944 April; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 28, Folder 8, Documents 949-952; USHMM.

⁹¹ *New York Times*, "Refugee Boards to Fuse Operations," 1944 April 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 22, Folder 2, Documents 108; USHMM.

⁹² Myron Taylor, Letter to President Roosevelt, 1944 May 25; Holocaust Refugees and the FDR White House (Microfilm Collection, Bethesda, MD: UPA collection from LexisNexis, 2006). LM 0255, Reel 14, Folder 6, Document 747-748; USHMM.

Hirschmann Returns to the United States

The press conference with Herbert Emerson was not Pehle's only press conference with a collaborator newly arrived in the United States. Ira Hirschmann was back in Washington, having arrived in New York on April 15th and traveling to Washington two days later. Hirschmann claimed to have a bit of culture shock returning to the United States—"Turkish cognac, women, mountains and diplomatic braid are difficult to shelve over night"—but once in Washington he threw himself into meetings.⁹³ On Tuesday, April 18th, Pehle and Hirschmann held a joint press conference to champion the WRB's successes in Turkey. Pehle announced that Hirschmann's leave from Bloomingdale had expired, but that the WRB was going to attempt to retain his services. Hirschmann then spoke, explaining his success with the rescue of Jews from Transnistria; the "electrifying effect" the establishment of the War Refugee Board had on refugees; and on his hopes for the *Tari*, which could carry 1,500 refugees and was merely waiting on German safe conduct. He also related the story of a young refugee, an orphaned Polish boy who had been wandering through Eastern Europe for five years before finally making his way to Istanbul. Hirschmann, after describing the boy's devastating experiences, stated that he wished to adopt the child and bring him back to the United States, but "the Zionists already had their eye on him—he's the kind of material they need in Palestine."⁹⁴

⁹³ Ira Hirschmann, Letter to Michael Schaap, 1944 April 18; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 2, Folder Correspondence; FDRL.

⁹⁴ The boy is not mentioned in Hirschmann's diaries, and Pehle later admitted that they had created the story of the boy for the press. William O. Player, "Encounter with a Citizen of Tomorrow on the Long Road to Palestine", *New York Post*, 1944 April 19; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 15, Folder 4, Documents 569-570; USHMM. Secretary's Address on War Refugee Board meeting transcript, 1944 September 19; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 772, Document 82-91; LOC.

Free Ports

While normally Hirschmann's touching story of the young boy would have been the focus of any story about the press conference, Hirschmann was almost entirely overshadowed. Instead, a "reporter apparently was tipped off to ask the question about 'free Ports' which got the headlines....,"⁹⁵ so instead of articles about Hirschmann or Turkey, the press reported "Refugee Board Considers Plan for Free US Ports,"⁹⁶ and "Free Ports" to Admit Refugees may be set up under US Plan."⁹⁷ More than a month earlier, DuBois and Friedman had written a lengthy memo advocating for the establishment of temporary havens in the United States, where refugees could remain until the conclusion of the war. At the end of March, buoyed by the Board's success with Roosevelt's statement on atrocities, Pehle drafted a memo to the President on the concept of temporary havens, and an optimistic press release announcing their establishment.⁹⁸ Morgenthau was supportive of the idea but thought it would be difficult. Stettinius was also in favor but said he did not have time to consider it at length, and Stimson had reservations. Stimson believed that the idea ran counter to American immigration laws, which were based on a fear of "uncontrolled immigration...[and] the proportion of racial stocks." Since the American people would fear refugee havens were merely a guise for permanent immigration, it would be a difficult sell, though "with the support of the

⁹⁵ Ira Hirschmann, Letter to Steinhardt, 1944 June 10; Laurence Steinhardt Papers, Box 43, Folder "Correspondence G-I"; LOC.

⁹⁶ *Washington Post*, "Refugee Board Considers Plan for Free U.S. Ports," 1944 April 19; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 15, Folder 4, Documents 579; USHMM.

⁹⁷ *New York Times*, "'Free Ports' to Admit Refugees may be set up under US Plan," 1944 April 19; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 15, Folder 4, Documents 577; USHMM.

⁹⁸ John Pehle, Draft memo to the President, 1944 March 29; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 716, Document 2-5; LOC.

overwhelming humanitarian reasons and with adequate safeguards,” the WRB might find Congressional approval.⁹⁹ Less than a week after Stimson expressed his concerns and stressed the need for public and Congressional support, Samuel Grafton, who had been a guest at Morris Ernst’s dinner for Pehle in February, brought the idea of free ports to the public.

Grafton, whose newspaper column “I’d Rather Be Right” was syndicated nationwide, dedicated his April 5th column to advocating for the establishment of what he called “free ports.” Explaining that a free port was a place in which an importer could store goods while deciding whether to bring them into a country, Grafton argued that the United States could provide similar space for refugees from Nazism. Outside of immigration laws, refugees could come and be cared for, returning to their homelands after the war. The War Refugee Board clearly worked with Grafton on the article, since he made every argument that DuBois and Friedman had advocated, and ended his column by writing: “If we set up a system of refugee free ports, our fine new War Refugee Board can then properly appeal to other countries to do the same. If we do not go at least that far, the Board will be answered with a snicker should it make such requests of other lands.”¹⁰⁰ Pehle rewrote his memo to Roosevelt to address Stimson’s concerns, but the Board clearly believed that public support, drummed up by columns like Grafton’s, would be necessary to convince Roosevelt to act. When Al Gregory of the United Press asked his question at Hirschmann’s press conference, it was either planted or just

⁹⁹ Henry Stimson, Letters to Morgenthau and Pehle, 1944 March 31; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 717, Document 34-37; LOC.

¹⁰⁰ Samuel Grafton, “I’d Rather be Right,” *New York Post*, 1944 April 5; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 717, Document 92-93; LOC.

incredibly fortunate.¹⁰¹

Within days, public awareness of the idea of free ports increased tremendously. Grafton rewrote his column for the radio, where Raymond Gram Swing gave his support, as did Norman Jay in his “Very Truly Yours” broadcast. Jay’s broadcast was in the form of a letter to Pehle, in which he hoped the Board would be successful with free ports, so that “America can heave a national sign of relief as it forsakes the unnatural role it has played in barring refugees from its shores.”¹⁰²

At the beginning of May, Morgenthau held several meetings to discuss Pehle’s memo to Roosevelt on the subject of free ports. On May 2nd, Pehle reported the overwhelmingly positive support the idea had received; not only had Senator John McCormack entered Grafton’s column into the Congressional record, but the White House had ordered a Gallup poll revealing that 70% of those polled approved of the plan. The Board had received a few letters of opposition, “most of which are anonymous letters of the crank type,” but the relief organizations were all for it. Pehle’s memo explained that Roosevelt had four options: taking Executive action; consulting Congress and then taking Executive action; urging Congress to act; or having a bill introduced in Congress followed by a Presidential message of support.¹⁰³ Regarding Congressional support, Pehle interviewed McCormack, who answered, “I am for this thing, but you let the

¹⁰¹ In the aftermath of the press conference, Morgenthau asked Pehle whether he had come out in favor of temporary havens, as the press was reporting. Virginia Mannon wrote a report about Pehle’s use of the term in the press conference, stating that Pehle merely mentioned Grafton’s column and acknowledged that many things were under consideration, but the press had run with the story anyway. Virginia Mannon, Memo to John Pehle, 1944 April 19; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 722, Document 71-72; LOC.

¹⁰² Norman Jay, Transcript of “Very Truly Yours” broadcast sent to Pehle, 1944 April 25; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 724, Document 71-75; LOC.

¹⁰³ John Pehle, Memorandum to the President, 1944 May 1; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 726, Document 11-17; LOC.

President do this thing by Executive Order then you see the wolves jump on him and the Congress takes action to vitiate what he has done.”¹⁰⁴ Morgenthau believed that Roosevelt could not act through Executive Order and Congress would never pass a bill allowing the establishment of havens. After a long debate about what might happen with this decision or that, Harry Dexter White suggested they just give the President the options:

I think there are some things in which the President has to lead, provided he doesn't jeopardize the major issue; merely because he may get some people sore at him who won't vote for him anyhow, or some other people sore who might vote for him is not at issue. The question is, is it a desirable thing to do? What is the cost of doing it? What is the cost of not doing it? I said if it doesn't jeopardize his chances of election, then it is his function as a leader...¹⁰⁵

Morgenthau asked for an addition to the memo, stating that he believed the President should consult with Congress before acting, but ultimately decided, “I am not recommending the method. I am recommending the project.”¹⁰⁶ The next step was to take the memo to the President.

The WRB Appoints a Representative in Switzerland

The very busy week in April during which the Board hosted Emerson and Malin of the Intergovernmental Committee and held the press conference with Ira Hirschmann that led to a public discussion about free ports, had one other major news item for the WRB: it

¹⁰⁴ Transcript, “Jewish Evacuation” meeting, 1944 May 2; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 726, Document 65-83; LOC.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

now had a representative in Switzerland.¹⁰⁷ Roswell McClelland received his formal instructions on February 26th, and on March 6th McClelland told Leland Harrison he would be willing to accept the position. By March 22nd, Harrison had received the approval of the Swiss government for the appointment of McClelland as a “Special Advisor” to the Minister, and Harrison cabled the Board to ask about McClelland’s salary and administrative arrangements. Then they waited.

Thirty-year-old Roswell McClelland had been living overseas for much of his twenties. He spent time in Italy and Germany in the late 1930s before marrying Marjorie Miles in 1938. After obtaining a master’s degree from Columbia University in 1940, McClelland was awarded a fellowship from the American Friends Service Committee to study for his PhD, but instead of studying, he couple ended up going to Europe to work for the Committee. Roswell and Marjorie were in charge of the AFSC offices in Rome until June 1941, worked providing relief in concentration camps in southern France until September 1942, and had been in Geneva ever since. In February 1943, Marjorie gave birth to the couple’s first son, Barre; by the time Roswell was appointed the WRB representative in Switzerland, she was pregnant with their second. McClelland was initially hesitant about his appointment. Not only would he be forced to resign his position with the AFSC, the American legation was located in Bern, not Geneva, which meant McClelland would be separated from his family for at least half of every week.

Though he took some time to think about it, he related to a friend that “this appointment

¹⁰⁷ On April 22nd, in the midst of all the other events of the week, the President informed Morgenthau that the Luftwaffe sunk a Navy destroyer in the Mediterranean on April 20th. His 24-year-old son, Lt. Robert Morgenthau, had somehow survived the attack, which had cleaved the boat in two. Morgenthau memo to the file, Morgenthau Presidential Diaries, Reel 2; FDRL. *New York Times*, “Nazi Flyers Sink a Destroyer; Morgenthau’s Son is a Survivor,” 1944 May 11; pg. 1.

had more the tone of a designation than an offer; and even if it had happened to be a job of a different nature it would have been difficult to refuse...what element of choice was left to me was not easy to make."¹⁰⁸ Like Elisabeth Dexter in Lisbon, Marjorie McClelland was placed in charge of her agency's operations in Switzerland so her husband could assume his new role.

But after McClelland's reluctant acceptance and the Swiss consent to the appointment, the War Refugee Board did not send any salary or other information to Bern. On April 17th, nearly a month later, Ambassador Leland Harrison sent a letter to McClelland in Geneva. He had received a cable from the WRB asking McClelland to meet with an Italian rabbi in Switzerland and, while transmitting the message, the Ambassador added, "I am not quite clear whether the implication of the foregoing request...is the result of the belief of some official of the War Refugee Board that you are actually now representing the Board in Switzerland. As far as the Legation is aware, your status has not yet been definitely determined..."¹⁰⁹ Harrison cabled the WRB asking for clarification of McClelland's status. Florence Hodel investigated the problem and discovered that Harrison's March 22nd cable asking for details about the appointment was never delivered to the WRB; George Warren "was at a loss to know why we had not received this cable and...stated that he was worried as to why we had not answered." Despite his apparent confusion over the matter, the Records Office at the State Department found the "action" copy on Warren's desk, where it had been sitting for a

¹⁰⁸ Roswell McClelland, Letter to Rodolfo Olgiate, 1944 March 21; American Friends Service Committee Foreign Service, Box "1944 Switzerland-New York," Folder "Switzerland—Letters From Geneva"; AFSC.

¹⁰⁹ Leland Harrison, Letter to McClelland, 1944 April 17; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 67, Folder 3; FDRL.

month.¹¹⁰

The Red Cross/Joint Proposal Gets Underway

When McClelland's appointment was finally announced on April 22nd, he began working on projects inherited from Daniel Reagan, the legation's financial attaché who had been handling most of the license transactions prior to the establishment of the WRB and pending McClelland's appointment. One such project had many owners before becoming McClelland's responsibility. In September 1943, the World Jewish Congress had proposed that the United States and Great Britain contribute to a \$10,000,000 fund for the International Red Cross's projects. There was much back and forth between the two organizations about the approval of projects. After the WRB was established, the Board staff learned of the proposal and asked the Joint to provide \$100,000 for the Red Cross, which was sent to Switzerland on February 9th. The Red Cross planned to use these funds to purchase relief packages to send to Romania, Hungary, Croatia, Slovakia, and Theresienstadt. While they did not need to get the Joint's approval for projects, the Red Cross was instructed to consult with the Joint's representative in Switzerland, Saly Mayer, as well as the American legation. The British, upon learning of the funding, issued familiar protestations on February 29th about money falling into the hands of the enemy, and the Board agreed to supply information about how the money was being spent. But the WRB refused to rescind the money or submit the Red Cross's purchases to blockade authorities for approval. But the British had also transmitted a copy of their

¹¹⁰ James Mann, Memorandum, 1944 April 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 11, Document 542; USHMM.

complaint to the Foreign Economic Administration in Washington, which decided they wanted more information about the Red Cross plans. The correspondence dragged on, since it involved so many parties in so many different cities (even within Switzerland: the Red Cross was in Geneva, Saly Mayer in St. Gall, and the legation in Bern). At the beginning of April, the Red Cross asked if they were authorized to purchase medical supplies, particularly surgical dressings; Harrison asked the State Department to confirm that the purchase did not need British approval. The week Roswell McClelland was appointed, there were mixed messages. The Foreign Economic Administration told the WRB that British approval of Red Cross purchases should be required, while Daniel Reagan reported that his British counterpart in Bern did not feel the British needed to approve anything. The Red Cross also asked for permission to purchase apple jam and green peas to send to Theresienstadt, and to purchase pre-made food packages in Portugal to be sent to Croatia. By the time McClelland transitioned into monitoring the project, the fed-up Bern legation was threatening to issue a blanket approval of all Red Cross purchases, since no one could decide whether British approval was needed and since the British were so slow to respond. Finally, in May, the Bern legation received word that the British decided to be lenient in approving Red Cross purchases and so, three months after the funding was approved and eight months after the program was first proposed, the Red Cross began to spend their \$100,000.

Even with available funds, however, the Red Cross was struggling to find goods in neutral countries that they could purchase for relief packages, and was having difficulty bringing supplies into Switzerland through the blockade. On March 13th, Paul

McCormack, who had worked for the American Red Cross prior to joining the WRB staff, wrote a memo on establishing a stockpile of goods in Geneva upon which the International Red Cross could draw after receiving War Refugee Board approval. To preempt any criticism of the plan on the grounds that it did not involve immediate rescue, McCormack wrote, “Appreciating that we must and should continue to think and act in terms of actual release and rescue, it will become necessary, at one time or another, to actually engage in a program of some form of feeding to insure the availability of people to release and rescue.”¹¹¹ More than a month later, with no progress, McCormack compiled a memo of excerpts from cables and letters indicating the importance of a stockpile. On May 28th, the WRB cabled Bern asking whether the stockpiles would benefit all groups, what camps would receive materials from the stockpile, and how many packages the Red Cross could produce with their current supplies. Roswell McClelland, who had been studying previous cables on the stockpile issue, wrote on his copy of the WRB’s cable, “Saw Schwarzenberg [of the Red Cross] at length about this” [emphasis in original].¹¹² A few days later, Johannes Schwarzenberg sent a formal response, summarizing the discussion with McClelland and assuring the War Refugee Board of the good they would be able to do given the necessary provisions. In early June, the Board cabled Ambassador Winant in London to inform him that the State Department, Foreign Economic Administration, and War Refugee Board were all in accord that the Red Cross should be given permission to establish stockpiles in Geneva.

¹¹¹ Paul McCormack, Memo to Joseph Friedman, 1944 March 13; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 30, Folder 2, Documents 262-263; USHMM.

¹¹² Cordell Hull, Cable to Harrison, 1944 May 28; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 68, Folder 4; FDRL.

Visas for Refugees in Switzerland

McClelland also inherited another of the Board's first projects, related to issuing visas to refugee children in Switzerland. Only three days after Roosevelt issued the Executive Order creating the War Refugee Board, Lawrence Lesser had written a memo proposing a plan to make 5,000 visas to the United States available to children who entered Switzerland after January 1, 1944. Lesser's proposal, which was transmitted to Switzerland at the end of February, suggested that the Swiss approach the Vichy government to arrange for children to legally leave France. Vichy refused to facilitate the departure of any refugee children to safety in Switzerland, so the visas went largely unissued. By April 1944, the War Refugee Board decided to split the available visas: 4,000 would be available to children arriving in Switzerland, and 1,000 for children arriving in Portugal. Realistically, the numbers of children illegally crossing the border were not even close to the number of available visas. Donald Lowrie of the YMCA reported that only 120 eligible children had entered Switzerland in the first four months of the year. The War Refugee Board remained optimistic, even cabling Latin American countries to request they join in offering visas to refugee children in Switzerland. The Board rejected the OSE's request to raise the age of eligibility from sixteen to eighteen, and also rejected McClelland's suggestion to issue the visas to children who arrived prior to 1944, on the grounds that the motivation of the project was to induce the Swiss to accept more refugees, not to aid those already in Switzerland. By the beginning of June 1944, the Joint reported that 500 children had entered Switzerland from France, though not all of them were eligible for the 4,000 available visas.

Unbeknownst to McClelland, the Board was also working on a plan to reissue visas for adults who had been granted admittance to the United States after July 1, 1941, but had been unable to use them prior to American entry into the war. The visas had since expired, but Pehle surmised that if the United States guaranteed that they would be issued again, that guarantee might protect a refugee from deportation. When Pehle initially proposed the plan, Berle disliked it, claiming that the State Department could not guarantee they would reissue the visa until the refugee could be re-examined by an American consular officer. More eager to facilitate escape than aid refugees who had already reached the safety of a country with an American presence, Pehle proposed that the Swiss inform Germany of the plan in the hopes that they would allow those who held expired American visas to depart enemy territory. He also suggested issuing visas to those who had otherwise qualified in 1941 but had been unable to appear at a consulate in person prior to American entry in the war; to those who were closely related to American citizens; and to those who had close relatives serving in the United States military. Berle was still unconvinced, and Pehle appealed to Stettinius, writing on June 12th, “I do not believe you will agree with the position currently being taken by your Department.”¹¹³ As the plan would undoubtedly result in many refugees crowding the American legation and consulates in Switzerland, the War Refugee Board and the State Department needed to be in complete agreement before anything could be done.

¹¹³ John Pehle, Memo to Stettinius, 1944 June 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 9, Folder 15, Documents 582; USHMM.

Protective Papers

Pehle and Berle were also at odds about another plan regarding protective papers. On April 22nd, Pehle and Lesser met with Berle about a discussion they had with unofficial representatives from the Dominican Republic (including President Trujillo's eldest daughter), who were offering blank Dominican papers to save refugees. When Berle met with the Dominican ambassador two days later to discuss the plan, the ambassador rejected it. Undeterred, Lesser proposed to regulate the issuance of these papers by collecting names. Then, an authorized Dominican representative would send letters into enemy territory stating that the recipient will be granted a passport as soon as he or she appears before a Dominican representative, but until that time should be afforded all the rights and privileges of a citizen of the Dominican Republic.¹¹⁴ Rumors flew among the relief agencies, with Vaad Hatzalah, the Joint, and World Jewish Congress all independently contacting Pehle to encourage the plan. On May 27th, Pehle submitted a list of fifteen names of persecuted Jews and their families from all over Europe to Berle to serve as a test case for the revised plan.¹¹⁵

Instead of passing Pehle's list to the Dominican ambassador when they met on May 31st, Berle had written his own memo, a watered down version of Lesser's plan. Berle suggested that a Dominican representative send letters to specific refugees claiming to have received the recipient's citizenship application which would be considered when the

¹¹⁴ As "the present Dominican representative in Switzerland has been stripped of all official character except as custodian of archives it might be preferable...to have all these applications executed before a regularly recognized Dominican representative in Spain or Portugal." Lawrence Lesser, Memo, 1944 May; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 28, Folder 12, Documents 910; USHMM.

¹¹⁵ The list included Emanuel Ringelblum, now well known for establishing the Oneg Shabbat archives in the Warsaw ghetto. Unbeknownst to the relief agency that suggested Ringelblum, he and his family had been executed in March 1944 when his hiding place was discovered.

individual presented himself at a Dominican embassy or consulate. Berle argued that this letter could act as protection, since the refugee “could not be dealt with as a non-Dominican without violating the Dominican right to pass, for itself, on claims made upon it.”¹¹⁶ The ambassador agreed to send the plan to his government for approval, while Berle informed the War Refugee Board of the new proposal, beginning his memo with, “As you know, I have never supported the idea that you could get passports from the Dominican Republic.”¹¹⁷ Pehle wrote an angry response, indicating that Berle had never before expressed his objections, correctly assuming that Berle had not even presented the Dominican ambassador with the Board’s list or proposal, and arguing that it was “the most wishful of wishful thinking” that Berle’s proposal would save anyone and might even put the holders of such letters in even more danger.¹¹⁸ In the end, Pehle never sent his memo, but had another meeting with Berle on June 3rd. He then drafted a more strongly-worded draft Dominican letter than Berle had proposed—a letter which emphasized that the bearer was considered to be under Dominican protection until he could reach a consulate. He also sent Berle drafts of a similar letter guaranteeing the protection of the United States in the hopes that the State Department would also agree to send such letters.

In Bern, Roswell McClelland was busy enough adjusting to his new role even in the absence of refugees holding expired visas or protective letters issued by the United States. The vast majority of his time was spent meeting with the many and varied relief

¹¹⁶ Adolf Berle, Memo to John Pehle, 1944 May 31; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 28, Folder 5, Documents 199-200; USHMM.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ John Pehle, Memo to Adolf Berle, 1944 June 3; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 28, Folder 5, Documents 194-195; USHMM.

organizations operating in Switzerland, as well as many refugee callers who pleaded with McClelland to aid them or to rescue their families in danger. Though it was difficult for him to split his time between his family in Geneva, with whom he spent long weekends, and the legation in Bern, it turned out to be advantageous for his work as he was available to organizations based in both cities. McClelland facilitated a \$100,000 account provided by the Joint against which the DELASEM organization for Jews in Italy could draw, and met many times with Michael Banyai, the representative of the Swiss Committee of Assistance for the Jews of Hungary, about ways in which the War Refugee Board could aid Hungarian Jews.

Intelligence Regarding the Situation in Hungary

Although one of the very first licenses issued by the new War Refugee Board in January 1944 was designed to encourage escape from Poland into Hungary, the situation changed immediately in March 1944. For the first week after the invasion of Hungary, much of the information the WRB received was from newspaper reports and columns. Reporters anticipated that Jewish persecutions in Hungary would follow the same lines as other countries. They were right. At the beginning of April, Gerhart Riegner requested the Bern legation send a cable to the World Jewish Congress offices in New York with information he received about the plan to quickly concentrate the Jews of Hungary in various areas.¹¹⁹ The legation began learning about the economic deprivations; the new political personalities who had been installed in the Hungarian government; and where

¹¹⁹ Gerhart Riegner, Letter to Paul Squire with telegram text, 1944 April 3; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 1; FDRL.

and in what numbers Jews were being concentrated. Relief organizations pleaded for increased broadcasts into Hungary to remind potential perpetrators of post-war justice, for the Red Cross to increase their representation there, and for protective papers to be handed out to Hungarian Jews. On May 4th, the WRB in Washington heard from Ambassador Winant in London (who had heard it from the Jewish Agency) that the deportations from Hungary to Poland had begun.¹²⁰ Allen Dulles of the OSS confirmed to the legation staff on May 18th that negotiations between Hungarian and German railway authorities had reached an advanced stage in the plans to ship 300,000 Hungarian Jews to Poland.¹²¹ As the reports increased, both in detail and in desperation, relief agencies in the United States continued their call for warnings and protective papers. The World Jewish Congress and Vaad Hatzalah tried to be creative: the World Jewish Congress considered asking for visas to get specific Hungarian rabbis to Mauritius,¹²² while the Vaad wanted their representative, Isaac Sternbuch, to sneak money to specific rabbis and religious leaders in Hungary so they could rescue themselves.¹²³ The impossibility of the schemes demonstrates both the desperation and the incomprehensibility of the situation. McClelland tried to gather his own intelligence reports, aided by a Hungarian refugee, Laszlo Hamori, who had worked with the AFSC and acted as a liaison to underground

¹²⁰ John Winant, Cable to the State Department, 1944 May 4; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 4, Folder 27, Documents 853; USHMM.

¹²¹ The Hungarian minister to Bern, Baron Bakach-Besseney, who opposed the new Hungarian government, acted as one of Dulles's informants and is alternatively referred to in OSS reports as "684" or "BB." On May 18, Dulles reported that BB "learned that negotiations were being concluded for the deportation to Poland, and presumably to their deaths, of approximately 300,000 Jews...BB suggested that publicity be given to this fact over the radio in America and England, and that notice be given that all those who had any part in planning or carrying out this deportation would be included among the war criminals." Allen Dulles, Memo to the Ambassador, 1944 May 18; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 2; FDRL.

¹²² A. Leon Kubowitzki, Letter to John Pehle, 1944 May 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 6, Folder 5, Documents 484; USHMM.

¹²³ Cordell Hull, Cable to Bern transmitting message from Vaad Hatzalah, 1944 May 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 20, Folder 1, Documents 42-43; USHMM.

groups.¹²⁴ But by June 1944, it was clear that all they were doing was gathering information about the deportations from Hungary, unable to do anything about them.

The Board received so many cables and pieces of information from various sources, it was difficult to accurately determine what was happening thousands of miles away. Delays and errors inherent in cable traffic did not help, nor was it easy to determine the proper spelling, location, or size of many of the concentration camps the WRB learned about. For example, in June 1944, a letter from Kubowitzki of the World Jewish Congress asked for WRB help in transmitting relief packages for Czech nationals in the camps of “Oswierzim,” “Bilenau,” and “Ravenheim” (likely Auschwitz, Birkenau, and Ravensbrück).¹²⁵ The Board asked McClelland to investigate the situation at a camp called “Dost or Tost.”¹²⁶ When the request reached him, cable traffic had eliminated the spaces between the words, forcing McClelland to report back that he could find no information, not even a geographic location, for “Dostortost.”¹²⁷ Over the next month, multiple cables went back and forth with questions about the mysterious “Dostortost” camp.

Reports of Relief Projects Directed from Switzerland

Though there were as yet no realistic plans for rescue and relief in Hungary, relief agencies in Switzerland did have plans for other areas, and had obtained WRB licenses for funds. McClelland was responsible for making sure these groups fulfilled the terms of

¹²⁴ Hamori’s parents were deported to Auschwitz in the spring of 1944 and perished.

¹²⁵ A. Leon Kubowitzki, Letter to Pehle, 1944 June 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 27, Folder 2, Documents 66-67; USHMM.

¹²⁶ Benjamin Akzin, Cable to Bern, 1944 May 30; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 737, Document 75; LOC.

¹²⁷ Roswell McClelland, Memo to the Ambassador, 1944 June 9; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 64, Folder 2; FDRL.

their licenses, including providing the War Refugee Board with an accounting of the activities funded. These reports more complicated for some than others. Isaac Sternbuch, who represented multiple agencies of the American Orthodox community—the Vaad Hatzalah, the Union of Orthodox Rabbis, Agudas Israel, and HIJEFS (Schweizerischer Hilfsverein für jüdische Flüchtlinge im Ausland)—had a difficult time with the many demands placed upon him. Since the Orthodox organizations placed an emphasis on the aid and rescue of yeshivas, rabbis, and religious leaders, their relief programs tended to be targeted toward individuals and small groups rather than toward a needy population at large. The plans were never straightforward. For instance, the Vaad received a license in March 1944 to send money to a rabbinical group in Shanghai, and required Sternbuch to transmit an elaborate series of coded cables so that the authorities in Shanghai would not know where the money originated. Agudas Israel asked Sternbuch to convince Latin American consulates in Switzerland to give him blank passports and protective papers to distribute at his discretion to those in danger—an audacious request which had little to no chance of success. Sternbuch also had trouble with his small advisory relief committee in Switzerland. On May 5th, he wrote to the Bern legation that his relief committee voted to establish a children’s home in Switzerland, using 1/8 of the money from his January 1944 license (about 50,000 Swiss francs). Sternbuch reported, “[M]y committee has contrary to my will decided to do this and the majority declined to ask Washington...”¹²⁸ McClelland informed him that this would likely be a violation of his license. Though Sternbuch was warned to keep close accounting of his expenditures, it was clear due to the multiple

¹²⁸ Isaac Sternbuch, Letter to Getzinger, 1944 May 4; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 70, Folder 2; FDRL.

sources of his projects and finances that this would never be possible. McClelland did not even try.

While the Joint tended to be the most coordinated relief organization with the largest budget, Saly Mayer initially found it difficult to provide such accounting. After not filing a report for the month of April, Mayer met with McClelland on May 5th, and, when informed that he needed to provide specific information to fulfill the terms of his license or he risked having it revoked, Mayer "said nothing for some time and then said he was doing his best and he felt this to be was an affront to his integrity. Mr. McClelland promptly told him this was nothing of the kind and that the Legation only required information in full accordance with the terms of the license." Mayer sat in silence for five minutes before leaving the meeting.¹²⁹ Ten days later, Mayer and McClelland met again and Mayer explained that he was more willing to provide details verbally since many of his collaborators were hesitant to have their names put in writing. McClelland was pacified, and wrote in his notes, "From what SM has told me I would be inclined to let him go ahead with a minimum of control since requests for more detailed information regarding his financial transactions seem to throw him into such a stew."¹³⁰ On June 7th, McClelland's patience and understanding were rewarded when Mayer provided a detailed breakdown of the Joint's recent expenditures as well as a description of their accounts between September 1943 and May 1944—spending that amounted to a total of \$1,829,400 in relief and rescue funds.¹³¹

¹²⁹ Roswell McClelland, Memorandum of an interview with Saly Mayer, 1944 May 4; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 71, Folder 7; FDRL.

¹³⁰ Saly Mayer, Draft report on Joint transactions, 1944 May 15; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 71, Folder 7; FDRL.

¹³¹ Saly Mayer, Report on financial transactions, 1944 June 12; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 71, Folder 7; FDRL.

Gerhart Riegner, the World Jewish Congress's representative, was much more willing to share the details of the operations he funded—perhaps too willing. On April 28th, Riegner sent an accounting of the WJC's activities to Daniel Reagan. The World Jewish Congress had been using their license for relief and rescue in France to aid the evacuation of young adults and children; the procurement of identity documents; aid for those in hiding; and the publication of an underground newspaper (temporarily suspended due to the arrest of the publisher). It was also used for the training of a Jewish "Maquis" resistance group and the purchase of their firearms, and for the "punishment of traitors," with Riegner reporting that "[s]everal traitors have already been destroyed for having denounced and sold Jews to the Germans."¹³² The Bern legation sent a summary of Riegner's report to the War Refugee Board on May 2nd. Though Riegner was clearly fulfilling the terms of his license, his report was not universally welcomed in the United States.

On May 10th, the War Refugee Board forwarded a summary of Riegner's report to Stephen Wise of the World Jewish Congress.¹³³ They likely did not know that the report had caused a stir in other governmental departments. As with the majority of cable transmissions, the Bern legation's cable had gone to the State Department for decoding and the Bureau of Censorship for review before being given to the Board. On May 8th, Censorship sent George Warren a lengthy memo, reporting that the Bern legation's cable "endangers the national security" and instructing the State Department to "take

¹³² Gerhart Riegner, Report on rescue activities, 1944 April 28; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 70, Folder 9; FDRL.

¹³³ Leland Harrison, Cable to WRB with summary Riegner report, 1944 May 2; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 17, Folder 1, Documents 59-60; USHMM. John Pehle, Letter to Stephen Wise, 1944 May 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 17, Folder 1, Documents 48-49; USHMM.

immediate steps to prevent the transmission through its cipher systems of such information.”¹³⁴ The problem was bigger than just the Riegner cable; Censorship had been intercepting cables and letters from private citizens regarding the possible immigration of family members, or of attempts to purchase protective papers. As all of these messages necessarily involved “almost open communication with enemy territory,” Censorship proposed that the War Refugee Board be responsible for clearing all incoming and outgoing messages intended to or from private individuals related to refugee matters. This would involve providing any necessary context for the censors to help them decide whether or not to transmit messages, not only for the Board’s own correspondence, but for any correspondence related to refugees at all. The proposal also included the censorship of messages prior to their transmission to the United States. To this end, the State Department should send “an instruction with the concurrence of the War Refugee Board...to the chiefs of the American missions in those countries which are transmitting telegrams...instructing that all telegrams on refugee matters omit all political and military information.”¹³⁵ The Bureau of Censorship was arguing that Riegner’s report should never have been sent at all.

Censorship

On May 13th, Byron Price, the Director of the Office of Censorship, wrote to John Pehle, who had heard from his staff about the proposal to involve the Board in censorship of private messages. In his letter, Price expounded on their larger plan, including the

¹³⁴ W. DeCourey, Memo to George Warren, 1944 May 8; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 23, Folder 3, Documents 197-199; USHMM.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

instructions to embassies and legations not to even transmit certain information. Pehle and his staff went through several drafts before finally responding to Price on May 27th. While the Board "understands your concern from a security standpoint" and "wishes fully to cooperate," it would be impossible to do so, given the many agencies working with refugee issues, the Board's lack of intelligence reports on private citizens to provide the requested context for messages, and the amount of staff time it would take. Instead, Pehle proposed Censorship send a staff member to the Board's offices to acquaint himself with some of the more prominent relief agencies and personalities. On June 2nd, Pehle and Abrahamson met with Price to work out a compromise. Price stated that Pehle's letter convinced him that the Board could not be responsible for clearing all cables related to refugees, but Censorship still needed their help and support. Consequently, the Board would provide a liaison to share information, but the ultimate authority for determining the security risk of a message would remain with the Office of Censorship.¹³⁶ In addition, all incoming messages would be transmitted to the Board for informational purposes, even if Censorship forbade their further transmission to private individuals and organizations.¹³⁷ A few days later, Censorship also overturned their policy of refusing to transmit messages from private individuals abroad requesting relief funds from family and friends in the United States. Between the Censorship proposal and the British demands related to license agreements, Pehle proved himself to be quite deft at successfully defending and protecting the work of the War Refugee Board from outside

¹³⁶ As Edward J. Behuncik of Foreign Funds Control was already acting in this capacity for that office, he agreed to represent the War Refugee Board as well. Albert Abrahamson, Memo to Pehle, 1944 June 2; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 23, Folder 3, Documents 179-182; USHMM.

¹³⁷ Byron Price, Memo to Pehle, 1944 June 3; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 23, Folder 3, Documents 176-178; USHMM.

interference.

Administration and Financing

Despite Pehle's desire for control over the way in which the War Refugee Board set about fulfilling its mission, its administration was never wholly independent. Originally, the Bureau of the Budget allowed the War Refugee Board a maximum of twenty-five staff members. This increased to thirty at the beginning of June 1944, when Foreign Funds Control agreed to reduce their maximum number of staff by five. This number, however, only related to staff specifically hired for the War Refugee Board and paid for out of the \$1,000,000 President's Emergency Fund allotment. Many of the Board staff, Pehle included, were paid by the Treasury Department and were considered to be merely detailed to the Board. Overseas, Leonard Ackermann, James Saxon, and Iver Olsen were also paid by the Treasury department, since they were serving in multiple roles including as financial attachés. Robert Dexter and Roswell McClelland, having been forced to suspend their duties with their respective relief organizations to become official Board representatives, were considered to be working for the State Department. Other than Ira Hirschmann, who was reimbursed for his expenses and given a healthy per diem, only a few members of the professional staff were hired and paid specifically by the Board.¹³⁸ The majority of the staff on the Bureau of the Budget's list worked as secretaries, clerks, and messengers. By the end of May 1944, the War Refugee Board had only spent \$17,532.55 in staff salaries, and another \$2,580.32 in reimbursing Hirschmann. When it

¹³⁸ The Board did budget with the idea that some of these salaries and expenditures may need to be reimbursed, and set aside \$30,063.92 in case the Treasury and State Departments asked.

became clear that Hirschmann would need to return to Turkey in June 1944, Pehle arranged for him to be paid a salary as well, though the money was entirely under the table and did not use WRB funds. Morris Ernst sent a check for \$1,500 directly to Hirschmann's secretary in New York, Ruth Trainor, each month.¹³⁹

In other expenditures, the Board was just as thrifty. Relying on the Treasury Department for office space and the State Department for overseas cable traffic, the Board had very few major expenses. Besides the large transfer to the Intergovernmental Committee of more than \$2,000,000, the Board only spent \$11,371.83 on staff travel, communications, and equipment prior to May 31st. By far, the most expensive items on the Board's budget were their own relief and rescue projects. While the vast majority of projects were funded by private agencies, there were a few that were funded out of the presidential allocation. The \$160,000 reserved for the chartering of the *Tari*, for instance, made up the majority of the Board's \$259,069.32 project expenses, which also included \$10,000 each for the confidential use of Olsen, McClelland, and Dexter, and the \$50,000 reimbursement to Goodyear Tire to send funds into in Sweden. For all the relief projects and plans the War Refugee Board facilitated, they still had more than \$700,000 in the bank at the end of May 1944.¹⁴⁰

The WRB Tries to Appoint Additional Overseas Representatives

Throughout the spring of 1944, the War Refugee Board actively tried to increase

¹³⁹ John Pehle, Letter to Morris Ernst, 1944 May 27; Morris Leopold Ernst papers, box 35, folder "War Refugee Board, February 1944-February 1945", Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

¹⁴⁰ Ward Stewart, Advanced report on expenditures, 1944 May 31; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 60, Folder 4; FDRL.

their representation overseas and explored additional ideas for projects and plans. The examples of Hirschmann and Ackermann showed the Board how valuable on-the-ground staff were to enacting projects and providing accurate information. With representation in the neutral countries either in place or under negotiation, the Board looked to assign staff members in Allied territory to explain their programs and enlist local aid. On April 20th, the War Refugee Board sent a cable to Ambassador Harriman proposing to appoint Robert Scovell, who had spent three and a half years in Moscow working for Red Cross, as the Board's representative to the Soviet Union. Harriman responded that he did not think the appointment advisable, as the Soviets would only deal with official representation and Scovell would not be allowed to travel or meet with any government representatives. In May, Harriman traveled to the United States, where he met with the Board and proposed they only send a representative on a mission rather than a permanent appointment. He explained, "[T]he minute you send them to stay there, the Russians aren't interested, but if you come in they will open their doors and will really put on a show and let you see really what is going on."¹⁴¹ Pehle believed Harriman would be helpful once back in Moscow.

The Board also wanted a representative in London, but had trouble with this. They asked Mrs. LaRue Brown, affiliated with the Unitarian Service Committee, to go with her husband to London where he had been appointed a consultant to Ambassador Winant. She would assist the as-yet-named WRB representative, but her husband's health kept

¹⁴¹ Transcript, "War Refugee Board" meeting, 1944 May 20; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 734, Document 1-10; LOC.

them in the United States.¹⁴² The Board considered appointing Lt. Commander Arthur Becker of the War Shipping Administration as their representative, but despite Becker's interest, Admiral Land refused to release him.¹⁴³ Ambassador Winant suggested another Arthur, Professor Arthur Goodhart of Oxford University, an American—and Morgenthau's cousin—who had been in England since 1919.¹⁴⁴ While Winant planned to ask Goodhart if he was interested, Lawrence Lesser prepared for a trip to England, planning to either act as representative himself or to acquaint whomever was appointed with the Board's plans and programs.

Charles Joy

Charles Joy, the Unitarian Service Committee's Acting Executive Director, was desperate to be of assistance to the War Refugee Board, and believed he had proven his service enough to merit an appointment as an overseas representative. In late February 1944, Joy met with Pehle, DuBois, Lesser, and Friedman in New York at the offices of the Free World Association, a liberal organization of labor activists and writers. From this meeting, Joy organized a group called the Committee on Special Refugee Problems, meant to act as an advisory board for the War Refugee Board. The Board supplied some funding, and Joy's committee eventually submitted at least thirty-two project proposals. Most of the projects were either already being addressed by the Board, such as using the

¹⁴² Mrs. Brown's first name was Dorothy, but she was consistently referred to in WRB documents and transcripts as "Mrs. LaRue Brown," LaRue being her husband's first name. Dorothy Brown, Letter to Friedman, 1944 April 20; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 60, Folder 15; FDRL.

¹⁴³ WRB staff, Memo on Arthur Becker, 1944 April 4; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 9, Document 336-337; USHMM.

¹⁴⁴ John Pehle, Letter to Winant about Goodhart, 1944 May 25; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 9, Document 324; USHMM.

radio to transmit warnings into enemy territory and trying to secure exit visas for refugees in Hungary to go to Switzerland, or were too far-fetched.¹⁴⁵ For instance, the Committee proposed paying bounties to those aiding or hiding Jews and other refugees, though Joy noted that the logistics would be difficult and the proposal “might become a great historic joke. It might be considered by some as an attempt to set a value on humanity and sacrifice.”¹⁴⁶ They also proposed allowing private agencies to have access to diplomatic pouches and State Department codes to ask about the whereabouts of individuals, a plan that the War Refugee Board did not even bother to transmit to State for their consideration.¹⁴⁷

On April 21st, Joy tried to parlay this work into a War Refugee Board appointment, writing to Pehle that “I hope that the work I have been doing for you recently with the Committee on Special Refugee Problems has been worth while...it is doubtful whether you will need such a consultative group very much longer, and if necessary someone else can be found to take my place here.”¹⁴⁸ Pehle proposed a position in Cairo, but at the end of May, the State Department rejected the appointment.¹⁴⁹ When Joy demanded an explanation, Adolf Berle explained to him that the position held diplomatic status and

¹⁴⁵ Charles Joy, Project 5: The Use of the Radio, 1944 March 17; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 3, Folder 25, Documents 1036-1037; USHMM. Charles Joy, Project 25 Evacuation of Hungarians to Switzerland, 1944 May 9; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 3, Folder 25, Documents 970-971; USHMM.

¹⁴⁶ Charles Joy, Project 26, Reimbursement of Expenses for Sheltering Refugees, 1944 May 11; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 3, Folder 25, Documents 1008-1010; USHMM.

¹⁴⁷ Charles Joy, Project 16 Use of Official Pouch and Codes by Private Agencies, 1944 March 29; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 3, Folder 25, Documents 1026-1027; USHMM.

¹⁴⁸ Charles Joy, Letter to Pehle, 1944 April 21; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 14, Folder 20, Documents 937-938; USHMM.

¹⁴⁹ In internal State Department memos, Berle told Stettinius that “there would be widespread attack both on the Board and on the Department in certain quarters in the labor movement in Joy, who is generally taken to be a ‘front’ for the Extreme Left, were permitted to acquire diplomatic position.” The FBI reported, “reputable and reliable persons who know him describe him as ‘untrustworthy,’ ‘totally unscrupulous,’ and as one who ‘would do anything to arrive at his ends.’” Adolf Berle, State Department memos about Charles Joy, 1944 May 9-11; RG-59, “War Refugee Board,” Box 1, Folder Misc. 1944 April-May; NACP.

that "Mr. Joy in private life had taken strong stands on a number of issues...this would subject him to attack if he were given a station in which the completest impartiality was essential."¹⁵⁰ Berle reported that Joy seemed satisfied, and indeed, when he wrote to Pehle, Joy stated that while "I do not find myself in complete sympathy with this point of view," he understood the State Department needed someone who would play "a cautious game."¹⁵¹ Joy had a difficult several weeks at the end of May 1944. Not only was his appointment as a War Refugee Board representative rejected, he was investigated and chastised by the Relief Refugee Trustees group (a subcommittee of the National War Fund) for not being forthright about the Committee for Special Refugee Problems, and the War Refugee Board informed Joy that it would no longer financially support his Committee. On May 29th, Joy wrote to the other members that "other factors beyond our control would make it necessary for us to finance our own operations if we are to continue. On the whole it seems best now that we should liquidate our operations."¹⁵² While Joy professed that he understood the Board's decision and was still willing to assist in any possible way, he added an indirect criticism of the way Pehle handled the situation: "When I have had the opportunity to stand off and look back on the work of this committee with some objectivity, I want to write you my observations...in the hope that they may be of some value to you in future relations with concerned and well-meaning groups who wish to hold up your hands."¹⁵³ At Pehle's request, Morris Ernst

¹⁵⁰ Adolf Berle, Memo of meeting; Rejection of Mr. Joy, 1944 May 23; Adolf Berle Papers, Box 216; FDRL.

¹⁵¹ Charles Joy, Letter to Pehle, 1944 May 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 14, Folder 20, Documents 933-934; USHMM.

¹⁵² Charles Joy, Letter to the Committee on Special Refugee Problems, 1944 May 29; Unitarian Service Committee digital collection, RG-67.028, Box 26, Folder 2, Document 10-11; USHMM.

¹⁵³ Charles Joy, Letter to Pehle, 1944 June 7; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 3, Folder 25, Documents 953-954; USHMM.

sent Joy \$461.44 as a reimbursement.¹⁵⁴

David Zagha

Joy was not the only person who believed himself to be aiding the War Refugee Board only to find his work come to a dubious end. In early March 1944, Pehle wrote a letter appointing David Zagha, a Syrian Jew who had also lived in North Africa, as a “special agent” of the War Refugee Board. Zagha—who came with vague references from the military that he had been of aid to them—proposed to sneak into Spain to get refugees from France across the border. He must have made a significant impression on the Board staff, as Hodel even tried to get a license to fund Zagha’s work, though the State Department argued about breaking their general policy of not issuing licenses for individuals. Accompanied with his letter from the Board and \$2,000 in his bank account, Zagha made his way to South America and met with government officials in Brazil, Uruguay, and supposedly even with Juan Perón, at that time Argentina’s Vice President and Secretary of War. But by the time Zagha arrived in Algiers in May, the Board was less convinced of his value to their work. Ackermann reported that Zagha “has some apparently grandiose ideas” and was deciding whether to work clandestinely in Spain or approach Franco directly to change Spanish policy, though he admitted to Ackermann that he had not discussed his plans with Pehle.¹⁵⁵ On May 18th, Pehle responded that the Board would monitor the situation in Spain but Zagha’s trip might do more harm than

¹⁵⁴ Morris Ernst, Account summary, 1944 August; Morris Leopold Ernst papers, box 35, folder “War Refugee Board, February 1944-February 1945, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

¹⁵⁵ Leonard Ackermann, Letter to Pehle, 1944 May 7; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 1, Documents 116; USHMM.

good. Ackermann could feel free to thank Zagha for his services and let him know that if the opportunity for work arose, he would be called upon.¹⁵⁶ In response, Zagha wrote a note to Ackermann complaining that his work for the Board was the only reason he was in Algiers and without that connection, was fearful that he would be arrested and placed in a camp. However, he fully expected to be called back to the United States soon for secret work with another government agency.¹⁵⁷

The Hebrew Committee of National Liberation

The War Refugee Board had to navigate another potentially tricky relationship when, on May 17, 1944, the Bergson group announced the formation of the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation. The Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe had been relatively quiet after the formation of the War Refugee Board. Peter Bergson hosted a dinner in Pehle's honor on February 21st, and in April DuBois and Pehle both addressed local chapters of the organization, DuBois in Washington and Pehle while he was in Chicago. Members of Bergson's organizations asked for several quotes and articles for their various publications, some of which the Board provided, and they forwarded several donations sent to the Emergency Committee but meant for the Board. Despite a rather public and vicious fight in print with Pierre van Paassen, the former chairman of the Committee for a Jewish Army, in the spring of 1944 the Bergson group did not invite the controversy they had in 1943. As it turns out, they were planning a

¹⁵⁶ John Pehle, Letter to Ackermann, 1944 May 18; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 1, Documents 109-110; USHMM.

¹⁵⁷ Leonard Ackermann, Letter to Pehle, 1944 June 5; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 27, Folder 12, Documents 467; USHMM.

move that would upset American Jewish organizations more than the Emergency Committee and the Committee for a Jewish Army ever had.

On May 17th, Peter Bergson held a press conference at a mansion at 2315 Massachusetts Avenue had been purchased for \$63,000. On the second floor, in a room filled with gold chairs and a bar, Bergson spoke to fifty “slightly nonplussed members of the Washington press corps” and issued a statement entitled "A Call by the Hebrew Nation For Help in its Moral Struggle for Life and Liberation."¹⁵⁸ Explaining, as he had previously, that his group did not represent American Jews but rather “Hebrews,” Bergson explained his definition of the term: "The Jews who live today in the hell of Europe together with the Jews of Palestine constitute the Hebrew Nation. There is no other Nation to whom they owe allegiance but the Hebrew Nation." The Hebrew Committee members, therefore, were opening the mansion as an embassy, and “in this spirit of desperation, and with humility and reverence that we...have undertaken to be the servants and spokesmen of the Hebrew Nation, until such time as our Nation shall be free to elect its own spokesmen and representatives in a democratic form.”¹⁵⁹

Within a day, the American Zionist Emergency Council (representing the major Zionist groups) issued a press release pleading for the American people and press not to be taken in by the Bergson’s “colossal hoax”; the Hebrew Committee was a “self-appointed committee...made up of a half a dozen adventurers from Palestine with no

¹⁵⁸ *The Washington Post*, "Hebrew Nation is 'Reborn' in Bare Mansion," 1944 May 19; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 731, Document 220; LOC.

¹⁵⁹ Peter Bergson, "A Call by the Hebrew Nation," 1944 May 17; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 731, Document 211-214; LOC.

standing, no credentials, no mandate from anyone...”¹⁶⁰ On May 19th, Nahum Goldmann, in his capacity as representative of the Jewish Agency, issued a press release stating, “The Jewish Agency for Palestine is the only international body recognized under Article IV of the Mandate for Palestine by the British government, the United States, and League of Nations, as representing the Jewish people in all matters concerning the building of a Jewish National Home in Palestine.” Goldmann sent his press release to all the embassies in Washington so they would not be fooled by “a few men, whom a normally organized people would deal with as traitors to the common cause.”¹⁶¹ The War Refugee Board, which had an established policy of working with all groups who were dedicated to relief and rescue, had to figure out how to react to the new Hebrew Committee of National Liberation.

On May 20th, Morgenthau and Pehle met about the Hebrew Committee. Pehle began his briefing by saying that Bergson “purports to speak for the Jews of occupied Europe. It is a very bold and daring thing. I, myself, don't see any possibility of its going over...The American Jewish group[s] are just so mad that they want to kill him. I mean, really mad.” Morgenthau seemed to remember Pehle telling him not to worry about Bergson, but Pehle did not think he would have said that: “I worry about him constantly...as far as I know, he is sincere. But he always worries me because you never can tell what he is going to do next.”¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Leon Feuer, Statement on the Formation of a ‘Hebrew Committee of National Liberation’, 1944 May 18; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 701, Document 208-210; LOC.

¹⁶¹ Transcript, “Meeting re: Peter Bergson” meeting, 1944 May 24; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 735, Document 22-37; LOC.

¹⁶² Transcript, “War Refugee Board” meeting, 1944 May 20; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 701, Document 1-10; LOC.

Four days later, Morgenthau met with a larger group—Abrahamson, Pehle, DuBois, and Luxford—to talk about Peter Bergson. The meeting took so long they had to reconvene later in the day to finish, but Morgenthau wanted a full briefing, since he had “been doing a little kidding around town about this Bergson. Every time I kidded about it, everybody gets so excited, so I stopped kidding.” So he wanted to know about Bergson’s relationship with the Board and where they stood, both officially and unofficially. Pehle explained the Emergency Committee, stating that they had been the ones to advocate for the Rescue Resolution in the fall of 1943. Morgenthau claimed that this was the first he was hearing of Bergson’s involvement in the creation of the War Refugee Board, since Oscar Cox had brought the idea of a refugee board to his attention in June or July 1943. The group tried to remember when the Emergency Committee began to agitate public opinion but finally decided that Bergson had made a contribution to creation of the Board by stirring up public support, and appealing to the American people for action rather than just Jewish groups. In the week since the establishment of the Hebrew Committee, the War Refugee Board had managed to stay out of the controversy, though several representatives from Jewish organizations called to complain that Bergson was taking credit for the establishment of the Board and for Pehle’s own appointment as director. Morgenthau could not believe the Bergson group could take credit for Pehle, since “good heavens, what I went through, and how I had to humiliate myself to subordinates in order to get the President even to consider Pehle,” but DuBois assured him that Bergson had also made calls, though there was no way to know whether they had any influence.¹⁶³

¹⁶³ Transcript, “Meeting re: Peter Bergson” meeting, 1944 May 24; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 735, Document

When the group reconvened in the afternoon, Pehle had gathered more information about the establishment and metamorphoses of Bergson's groups—which Abrahamson likened to a dance of seven veils of which four layers have been removed—and had also more to report on the near-violent relations between Bergson and representatives of American Jewish groups. The Board did not plan to take a side, but would be forced to get involved if the Hebrew Committee applied for a \$1,000,000 license to sell ten-year-bonds to supporters, which Bergson had suggested they would. Pehle did not think they would ever put in the application. When Morgenthau asked for their individual impressions of the man, DuBois and Luxford reported that Bergson was sincere, honorable and an idealist. Abrahamson agreed that they should continue to meet with Bergson if he had a plan to present—in keeping with the Board's official policy—but he personally did not like how Bergson operated, especially in regards to his fundraising techniques, in which those sending money could easily believe they were directly aiding refugees. Pehle agreed: "They do tend to shade publicity problems quite a bit...that is the one field in which I have found them to be difficult to deal with, and that is if you say, 'Well, I will do this,' they tend to add to it and build it up. The first thing you know it is more than you said it was." The group ended the meeting by deciding to be careful and non-partisan.¹⁶⁴

Representatives of Private Agencies Cause Problems in Turkey

On May 26th, there was an article about the Bergson group in Tel Aviv's

22-37; LOC.

¹⁶⁴ Transcript, "Meeting re: Peter Bergson" meeting, 1944 May 24; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 735, Document 55-85; LOC.

Mitteilungsblatt newspaper, but it did not even mention the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation. In the fall of 1943, the Emergency Committee had proposed to send a representative to Turkey, originally suggesting Ira Hirschmann. Hirschmann later split from the committee but planned to go to Turkey anyway, and through an act of serendipity was in place to become the War Refugee Board's first representative. The Emergency Committee still wanted their own representative and planned to send Eri Jabotinsky. It took over two months, and the War Refugee Board needed to involve the State Department, War Department, Justice Department, and Turkish ambassador to assist in getting Jabotinsky's visa and travel paperwork in place before he could depart. At the end of April, Jabotinsky had finally been granted air priority for his trip. Even though Hirschmann warned the Board that "it would be a blunder to send him or others to Turkey at this time,"¹⁶⁵ Jabotinsky left, stopping in Palestine before continuing to Turkey. According to the *Mitteilungsblatt*, in an article more generally critical of the Bergson group and the Irgun Zeva'i Leumi, Jabotinsky held a press conference claiming to be a representative of the War Refugee Board being sent to Turkey. The claim was convincing, since Jabotinsky would have needed special intervention to travel by plane, and the article warned, "Normal Palestinians who suffered under the terror of the Irgun [Zeva'i] Leumi will not understand how come that agencies of the American Government should get the idea to deal precisely with that group."¹⁶⁶ On June 2nd, Jabotinsky sent a cable to Pehle with his suggestions for rescue in Turkey, including a less-than-novel

¹⁶⁵ Ira Hirschmann, Letter to Pehle, 1944 April 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 4, Document 244; USHMM.

¹⁶⁶ Translation of an extract from *Mitteilungsblatt*, 1944 May 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 6, Folder 2, Documents 109-112; USHMM.

proposal that the United States provide ships and railcars to Turkey to encourage further rescue, and urged Pehle to help him obtain some sort of official status.

Jabotinsky was not the only relief agency representative operating in Turkey. Chaim Barlas was perhaps the most powerful, as he represented the Jewish Agency and had some control over Palestine certificates. Reuben Resnik of the Joint worked very closely with the embassy, providing aid for refugees arriving in Turkey and sending food parcels to Romania. The Orthodox representatives of the Vaad Hatzalah and Agudas Israel, Jacob Griffel and Louis Kastner, who received a \$25,000 license for their relief work at the beginning of April, began collaborating with Joseph Klarman, a revisionist leader formerly from Poland. On May 15th, Pehle forwarded a message from the trio to the Vaad offices in New York. Reporting that sea transports have brought 1,000 refugees in the last five weeks (referring to the *Milka*, *Maritza*, and *Bellacitta*) the cable claimed that this rescue work could be enlarged and continued if the Vaad could send them \$200,000 immediately.¹⁶⁷ Five days earlier, the Board had received a panicky message from Barlas. He knew the Vaad representatives were requesting money for ships, and wanted to make sure that the Board knew "the movement they referred to was arranged solely by the Jewish Agency with the active assistance of the Ambassador. The persons sending the cable have taken no part...and no funds are required by them." He also explained that the Vaad did not know of Steinhardt's agreements with the Turkish Foreign Ministry to let the illegal boats land, and could jeopardize the continued success

¹⁶⁷ John Pehle, Letter to the Vaad Hatzalah, 1944 May 15; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 13, Folder 5, Documents 611; USHMM.

of the rescue.¹⁶⁸ In Turkey, Griffel tried to explain to Steinhardt that he and his committee had the opportunity to purchase a Bulgarian boat and since they were tasked with doing all possible to facilitate rescue, they had requested the money from their committee to buy the ship.¹⁶⁹

The Vaad and Agudas Israel offices in New York tried to figure out what to do; the money would be more than they had sent to any other representatives, and they solicited advice about whether to send it. Hirschmann recommended that they not send the money and wait for his now-inevitable return to Turkey, while Isaac Sternbuch in Switzerland said there was no way he could give them an informed opinion. On May 25th, the Board forwarded a cable from Abraham Kalmanowitz in New York to Jacob Griffel in Istanbul, reporting that it was Kalmanowitz's understanding that the "difficulty consists in shortage of shipping rather than lack of money, and fear competitive bidding for shipping without increasing total of persons rescued." He instructed his representatives in Turkey to meet with Barlas and Resnik and transmit a joint recommendation.

On May 24th, Jacob Rosenheim of Agudas Israel sent a copy of a cable to Ira Hirschmann, which he had received from Griffel. The cable was an open telegram which had not gone through the State Department's channels or been directed to the War Refugee Board. Griffel reported that the entire thing was a misunderstanding now cleared up with Barlas. Barlas's complaint had been issued because he was "completely uninformed re our agreement with competent factors who are entrusted by competent

¹⁶⁸ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable to the WRB, 1944 May 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 13, Folder 5, Documents 596-597; USHMM.

¹⁶⁹ Jacob Griffel, Letter to Steinhardt, 1944 May 16; Laurence Steinhardt Papers, Box 43, Folder "Correspondence G-I"; LOC.

institutions this rescue work and achieved it till now. Barlas regretted and declared having rectified his cable. Thus we acted bona fide...Repeating proposal please wire decision.” Rosenheim asked Hirschmann if Barlas had, in fact, recounted his complaint, and wondered in writing whether it would be possible for the organizations to ever cooperate.¹⁷⁰ The World Jewish Congress, on the other hand, received a cable from Barlas stating that Griffel and Kastner agreed the funds were unnecessary and were withdrawing their request.¹⁷¹ The whole situation was getting out of control; even Jabotinsky got involved, cabling Bergson that Griffel’s scheme was the only plausible one and Bergson should “intervene with all his strength” on that angle.¹⁷² The World Jewish Congress sent a cable to Barlas, with a copy to Kalmanowitz of the Vaad, that they were receiving differing reports and would appreciate his suggestions for an agreement.

The disagreements between the various Jewish relief organizations, much like the conflicts in Lisbon between the Joint and the World Jewish Congress, were proving to be an impediment to actual relief and rescue. On June 1st, Steinhardt spoke with the Secretary General of the Turkish Foreign Office, who reported that the Turkish government “had become confused as the result of influx of individuals claiming to be representatives of various Jewish organizations.” There was no collaboration between the individuals or regarding their proposals, and it was clear “that some of these individuals

¹⁷⁰ Jacob Rosenheim, Letter to Hirschmann, 1944 May 24; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 13, Folder 5, Documents 606; USHMM.

¹⁷¹ Benjamin Akzin, Memo to Lesser, 1944 May 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 24, Folder 23, Documents 547; USHMM.

¹⁷² Abraham Kalmanowitz, Phone message, 1944 June 5; World Jewish Congress New York Office, D-Series (Rescue and Relief), Digital collection, Folder 107-06; USHMM.

had grossly exaggerated connections and importance.”¹⁷³ The Turks asked Steinhardt to centralize all further requests through an authorized representative of the American embassy. The War Refugee Board wholeheartedly agreed, as did Barlas. The State Department reminded the Board to make it clear to “interested Jewish agencies the fact that Hirschmann and/or the Embassy is the WRB spokesman, and that it would be most unfortunate for individuals or private agencies to step out of this framework.”¹⁷⁴ Hirschmann would have to deal with the conflict when he returned to Turkey.

Projects in Turkey Continue

After his press conference on April 17th, which started the public fervor over the idea of free ports in the United States, Ira Hirschmann—who was in the marketing business after all—began to publicly share his experiences in Turkey. He wrote a letter to Steinhardt reporting without a hint of irony that:

I have spoken before a number of groups 'off the record' as I did not wish to publicize myself further and I had made such an agreement with John Pehle and the State Department. Among the meetings were The Foreign Policy Association, The Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe, The American Jewish Congress (Stephen Wise), The Hadassah, The Palestine Lighthouse at which a thousand women attended, etc.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable to the WRB, 1944 June 1; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 48, Folder “Turkey, Volume 5-AF1-10A”; FDRL.

¹⁷⁴ Edward Stettinius, Letter to Pehle, 1944 June 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 13, Folder 5, Documents 588-589; USHMM.

¹⁷⁵ Ira Hirschmann, Letter to Steinhardt, 1944 June 10; Laurence Steinhardt Papers, Box 43, Folder “Correspondence G-I”; LOC.

In his speeches, Hirschmann emphasized the importance of Turkey as an “observation tower into the Balkans. It's a window. What we tried to do was make a door of it.”¹⁷⁶ He also emphasized Steinhardt’s role in the Board’s success and shared some details of ongoing negotiations, included details about the *Tari*, which had yet to sail. It is clear through his speeches that Hirschmann’s definition of secrecy was one in which he controlled the information, and dispersed it as widely as he saw appropriate. He received many accolades for his work in Turkey, and though he was originally undecided about returning, by May 15th Hirschmann had successfully obtained permission for another leave of absence from his job at Bloomingdale’s. He would not be working alone. The Board was also sending Herbert Katzki, a former representative of the Joint, to assist Hirschmann, as well as two secretaries, Virginia Henderson and Mary Harriet Bixler. Since Steinhardt was being recalled to Washington for much-needed consultation and vacation, Hirschmann planned to depart in mid-June so he could either see the ambassador prior to Steinhardt’s departure from Turkey or meet him en route. On June 11th, after eight weeks in the United States, Ira Hirschmann left by plane to return to Turkey.

While preparing to leave, Hirschmann sent a quick memo to Joseph Friedman of the Board. "Ambassador Steinhardt," Hirschmann wrote, “should be importuned not to let the boat out of our hands until I get there.”¹⁷⁷ The boat in question was the *Tari*, which was still waiting in Istanbul. When Hirschmann had left Turkey, it looked like the *Tari*

¹⁷⁶ Ira Hirschmann, Speech for American Friends of Hebrew University, 1944 May 4; Laurence Steinhardt Papers, Box 43, Folder “Correspondence G-I”; LOC.

¹⁷⁷ Ira Hirschmann, Memo to Joseph Friedman, 1944 May 24; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 2, Documents 146; USHMM.

might sail, as long as the boat's charter was fulfilled, necessitating a guarantee that it would be replaced with a similar passenger vessel if the ship were destroyed as well as safe conduct agreements from all belligerents. On April 17th, Admiral Land confirmed that in the event of total destruction, the *Tari* could be replaced by a similar vessel. She could now sail as soon as the safe conducts were obtained promising that the ship would not be treated as belligerent and fired upon. Safe conducts trickled in, from Sweden, the United States, Turkey, and the Soviet Union. Switzerland refused to grant safe conduct, fearing it would break the country's strict neutrality, but this was not a problem since Switzerland was not considered a threat on the open waters.

It was imperative, however, to get safe conduct permission from Germany—the ship could not sail without it. Gilbert Simond held repeated meetings with the Fritz von Papen, the German ambassador to Turkey, who Simond reported “was still optimistic that he would receive the safe conduct as he was certain no decision had as yet been arrived at as he had not received a negative reply.”¹⁷⁸ Both Simond and Steinhardt believed that von Papen was trying to obtain the safe conduct, but since Turkey had, on April 20th, finally succumbed to Allied pressure to reduce chrome shipments to Germany from 90,000 tons per year to 4,500 tons per year, it seemed likely Germany would withhold safe conduct for the *Tari* as a retaliatory gesture.¹⁷⁹ It was not the only reason the Germans would not grant safe conduct. At the end of May, Leland Harrison in Bern learned from an “authentic source” [Schwarzenberg of the Red Cross] that the Germans were refusing to

¹⁷⁸ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable to the WRB, 1944 April 24; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 2, Documents 173; USHMM.

¹⁷⁹ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable to the WRB, 1944 May 2; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 2, Documents 162-163; USHMM.

grant safe conduct since the refugees were destined for Palestine: “Germans consider Arabs their friends and have no intention of aiding Jewish immigration viewed with disfavor by the Arabs.”¹⁸⁰

After a month and a half of delays, Steinhardt sent a cable to the War Refugee Board updating them on the situation. He had yet to sign the *Tari*'s charter, to prevent the WRB from “a hemorrhage of 5,000 Turkish pounds daily” as she sat in the harbor, but the ambassador advised the Board to anticipate having to negotiate a fee with the Turkish government even if the ship never carried refugees. To reduce future payments, Steinhardt made an agreement with Foreign Minister Menemencioğlu to allow the *Tari* to make short commercial voyages, with the idea that the ship could be called back to port if the German safe conduct arrived. The *Tari* was originally supposed to transport refugees from Constanța to Haifa, but Steinhardt proposed using the ship to pick up refugees from a Bulgarian port and sailing without safe conduct to Istanbul. The shorter sailing distance would reduce the amount of time the ship was vulnerable to German attack. In Istanbul, the refugees could be slowly transported by rail to Palestine. Surprisingly, Menemencioğlu had agreed, though he requested Bulgarian safe conduct, which would be difficult to obtain as the Bulgarian Cabinet had just resigned en masse.¹⁸¹

At the same time, in the United States, the War Refugee Board and the British worked on another plan to convince the Turkish government to let the *Tari* sail without safe conduct. The Allies had previously lent five small ships, known as the Adana ships,

¹⁸⁰ Leland Harrison, Cable to the WRB, 1944 May 29; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 12, Folder 2, Documents 145; USHMM.

¹⁸¹ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable to the WRB about the *Tari*, 1944 May 23; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 2, Documents 150-151; USHMM.

to Turkey, and the loan was about to expire. The British and WRB planned to include repeated voyages of the *Tari* without needing safe conduct as a clause of the negotiations to recharter the Adana ships. It seemed clear to all that either *Tari* needed to sail soon, or the War Refugee Board needed to try something else. The Jewish Agency thought that it was too late, and that the plan to use the *Tari* was doomed due to Hirschmann's publicity of the ship before the charter was signed or safe conducts granted. They began a cable of suggestions to the War Refugee Board with the line, "Proposed use of steamship *Tari* for rescue Jews from Rumania is now out of the question because of publicity given to project," but advised that another ship might be possible.¹⁸²

Attempts to use the *Bardaland*

The War Refugee Board had another ship in mind as well: the *Bardaland*, a Swedish ship used to transport grain to Greece. The *Bardaland* had some advantages over the *Tari*. Though not a passenger ship, she was sailing under the neutral Swedish flag and already had safe conduct permissions from all the belligerent countries for Greek relief activities. The *Bardaland* had been under discussion for some time, but the ship was in use for most of the spring. Hirschmann called it "a beauty in dock at Istanbul,"¹⁸³ and hoped the Swedes would lend the ship before it was scheduled to leave at the end of April. Initially, the Swedish legation in Ankara promised to look into reequipping the ship to carry passengers, but on April 20th, Stockholm informed the legation that the boat was going to return to Sweden to be taken out of service and could not be diverted for

¹⁸² L.C. Pinkerton, Cable from Jewish Agency to WRB, 1944 June 2; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 6, Folder 1, Documents 91-92; USHMM.

¹⁸³ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 April 7; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Handwritten Diaries; FDRL.

refugee transport.¹⁸⁴ The Board was persistent, and asked Ambassador Winant in London to secure British support for the proposed use of the *Bardaland*; the British agreed to allow the ship to be removed from Greek relief service and would extend safe conduct for any refugee transports.¹⁸⁵ Minister Herschel Johnson in Stockholm cabled the WRB to act quickly; he had learned that the *Bardaland* was to sail for Sweden on May 18th, so the Board needed to get Swedish permission immediately. On May 16th, only two days before the ship was to sail, the War Refugee Board must have been quite encouraged to receive a cable from Johnson that the Swedes were “distinctly cooperative and if all details can be satisfactorily worked out...[are] willing to divert the boat.”¹⁸⁶ The Board immediately sent information about covering costs, the number of refugees to be transported, the logistics of the voyage, and suggested the ship be chartered under the Red Cross. The *Bardaland* waited at the dock. On May 25th, the WRB sent a long cable to Steinhardt letting him know that the *Bardaland* would be used to transport refugees from Romania to Istanbul, since they learned from the *Tari* negotiations that the Germans would not look favorably on transports to Haifa. The boat needed to be fitted to carry passengers, and the Board and Steinhardt debated by cable whether it should be fitted in Istanbul harbor (the WRB’s choice) or sail for Egypt to be equipped there (Steinhardt’s suggestion). The debate turned out to be unnecessary. On June 1st, Johnson reported that the Germans were denying safe conduct to the *Bardaland*, and “even expressed

¹⁸⁴ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable to the WRB about the Bardaland, 1944 April 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 1, Documents 109; USHMM.

¹⁸⁵ John Winant, Cable to the WRB about the Bardaland, 1944 May 4; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 1, Documents 99-100; USHMM.

¹⁸⁶ Herschel Johnson, Cable to the WRB about the Bardaland, 1944 May 16; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 1, Document 82-83; USHMM.

resentment at the Swedes' making the request.” Johnson continued, “As the Government of Sweden and the Swedish Red Cross very much desired to take part in this humanitarian undertaking, the Swedish Foreign Office expressed regrets over this outcome.”¹⁸⁷ Two days later, Winant wrote from London that the *Bardaland* would sail for Sweden on June 10th unless the War Refugee Board wanted the British to convince the Swedes to wait. The delays involved in wartime cable traffic may have doomed the prospects for using the *Bardaland*, as the War Refugee Board staff continued to write memos about how and where the ship should be retrofitted. They received Winant’s cable by June 9th, but by the time their response—which began “War Refugee Board urgently requests that British do not accept notice of sailing of SS Bardaland,”—arrived in London, it was too late.¹⁸⁸ The *Bardaland* sailed for Sweden.

Fedhala Still Delayed

In Spain, nearly 800 refugees were awaiting a ship of their own, which would transport them to the Fedhala refugee camp outside of Casablanca. The planning for Fedhala began in April 1943 after the Bermuda Conference, but a year later, the camp was still not open. Enthusiasm, and the need for the camp, was waning. Joseph Schwartz, writing from Lisbon to the Joint in New York, reported that many refugees had freedom in Spain and feared confinement when they reached North Africa; in addition, many refugees had relatives still in France and wanted to be close to them. The British were in

¹⁸⁷ Herschel Johnson, Cable to the WRB about the Bardaland, 1944 June 5; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 1, Document 55; USHMM.

¹⁸⁸ Edward Stettinius, Cable to Winant, 1944 June 9; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 1, Documents 42-44; USHMM.

charge of transporting the refugees from Spain to Fedhala and had originally planned to transport them in groups as the applications were approved. At the end of March, the British announced that due to urgent shipping needs a vessel would not be available until the end of April, but would be able to transport all the Fedhala refugees.¹⁸⁹ The end of April came and went, and the refugees remained in Spain. On May 1st, Moses Beckelman, the UNRRA director of the empty Fedhala, suggested that the next French convoy include a small group of skilled refugees—mechanics, cooks, and carpenters—who could help prepare the camp for the arrival of the others. Beckelman reported that the sole delay was caused by an inability to find a ship, but he hoped the larger group could leave Spain on May 17th. In the second week of May, the first 38 refugees arrived at camp Fedhala, but there was no ship waiting for the larger group on May 17th. On May 23rd, the British announced that the ship would leave Spain on June 7th. Six days later, Ackermann reported to the Board that it would be delayed a fourth time, sailing no earlier than June 20th.¹⁹⁰ Ambassador Hayes complained that the delays were having the opposite effect on the Spanish government than the project had intended: the “Spanish Government...has become increasingly disturbed over repeated delays in evacuation of these refugees...This reaction may in turn result in reimprisonment and reinternment of many stateless refugees...[and] to discourage entry into Spain of further numbers of such refugees”¹⁹¹ Though Hayes was no doubt correct that the repeated delays upset the

¹⁸⁹ Selden Chapin, Cable to WRB, 1944 March 31; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 11, Folder 3, Document 300; USHMM.

¹⁹⁰ Selden Chapin, Cable to WRB, 1944 May 29; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 11, Folder 2, Document 176; USHMM.

¹⁹¹ Carlton Hayes, Cable to State Department, 1944 May 31; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 11, Folder 2, Document 171; USHMM.

Spanish government, the British could not reveal the real reason the ship could not sail from Spain on June 7th. Ackermann received a cable that while the Joint representative [possibly a reference to Beckelman] was angry about the delay, "it was impossible to mention operational requirements, he was told that ship needed repair and could not be available until about June 20th."¹⁹² The refugees remained in Spain, and on June 6th, the “operational requirements” were made clear: the Allied forces landed on the Normandy beaches.

On June 6, 1944, Morgenthau’s regular 9:30am “Group” meeting with his assistant secretaries began fifteen minutes early. They were all clearly excited, and Morgenthau joked that anyone who slept rather than stay up all night listening to the radio should leave. But even with all the excitement, and even with all the business the most powerful men at the Treasury Department could be discussing on the day they all knew would be historic, the attention quickly turned to John Pehle. The War Refugee Board was also having a very busy week.¹⁹³

Pehle Meets with Roosevelt about Free Ports

Just over a month earlier, on May 2nd, Morgenthau had given Pehle approval to meet with President Roosevelt to present his memo regarding the establishment of free ports in the United States. Since the President would not return from his fishing vacation in South Carolina until May 7th, Pehle took the opportunity to tie up some loose ends. He and Morgenthau met with Cordell Hull, who agreed with Morgenthau that the President

¹⁹² British representative in Algiers, Memo to Ackermann, 1944 June 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 11, Folder 5, Document 541-542; USHMM.

¹⁹³ Transcript, “Group” meeting, 1944 June 6; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 740, Documents 1-15; LOC.

should consult friends in Congress before deciding how to proceed.¹⁹⁴ Pehle also got all of the secretaries to sign a cover letter that summarized his memo and indicated their support for the project. On May 11th, with Morgenthau's assistance in securing the appointment, Pehle met with Roosevelt for fifteen minutes in the Oval Office. Roosevelt indicated that he had heard good things about the Board's work, and listened as Pehle summarized the Board's proposal to establish free ports in the United States. Pehle suggested using a former War Relocation Authority camp in Jerome, Arkansas, which would soon be vacated by Japanese-American internees.¹⁹⁵ Roosevelt did not like the term "free port" but seemed otherwise open to the plan, and was especially pleased to see all the newspaper clippings and letters of support Pehle showed him. As Morgenthau suspected, the President was hesitant to bring in large numbers of refugees without Congressional approval, but suggested Pehle find "an emergency situation" involving about 1,000 refugees. Roosevelt would bring them into the United States and then send a message to Congress indicating the reasons for his action.¹⁹⁶ Pehle was very optimistic, reporting to Morgenthau that the President was "very, very favorably disposed to the whole idea."¹⁹⁷

Pehle did not have to create an "emergency situation"—he found one almost immediately. On May 7th, Leonard Ackermann had alerted Pehle to the new military

¹⁹⁴ Transcript, "Appointment with Secretary Hull" meeting, 1944 May 6; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 728; LOC.

¹⁹⁵ In April 1944, Anne Laughlin of the WRB toured several Japanese internment camps to study their operations. She reported back that she was amazed at the "splendid work" that was being accomplished; "[T]he job accomplished is so superior to the impression held by the public due to newspaper publicity." Anne Laughlin, Letter to Oscar Chapman, 1944 May 6; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 22, Folder 6, Documents 704; USHMM.

¹⁹⁶ John Pehle, Memo to Hull, Morgenthau, Stimson, 1944 May 20; Holocaust Refugees and the FDR White House (Microfilm Collection, Bethesda, MD: UPA collection from LexisNexis, 2006). LM 0255, Reel 4, Folder 1, Document 24-25; USHMM.

¹⁹⁷ Transcript, "War Refugee Board" meeting, 1944 May 16; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 731, Document 62-66; LOC.

directive in the Mediterranean to stop encouraging refugee evacuations from Yugoslavia to Italy due to the overcrowding in the camps in Egypt, where the refugees were being taken. The letter took about a week to reach Pehle, who reported during a meeting in Morgenthau's office on May 16th that the Board just "got more information which indicates that it is a real emergency and that it has very vast proportions, and if something isn't done—just that many lives that won't be saved, that is all."¹⁹⁸ By May 18th, Pehle had already written a new memo to the President, reminding him that he had asked Pehle to find an emergency situation that could be ameliorated by bringing refugees to the United States. Pehle explained that due to limited facilities in Italy, military authorities had not been able to encourage refugees to escape, and that recently "the facilities for the care of refugees in southern Italy have become so overtaxed that the military authorities have taken steps actually to discourage the escape of further refugees to that area" [emphasis in original]. Pehle also provided the President with three additional drafts of documents: a message to Congress announcing the plan; a cable to Robert Murphy requesting he make arrangements for the transportation of 1,000 refugees from Italy to the United States; and a message to the Secretaries of War, Navy, Interior, the Bureau of the Budget, and the Director of the War Refugee Board, asking them to prepare to receive the refugees.¹⁹⁹ Before the afternoon's Cabinet meeting, Morgenthau gave Pehle's memo and the drafts to Roosevelt's secretary, Grace Tully, who promised to make sure the President took it with him when he left for Hyde Park that evening.

Though Morgenthau did not think Roosevelt had read Pehle's second memo or any

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ John Pehle, "To the President," 1944 May 18; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 733, Document 10-17; LOC.

of the drafts, there was a minor row at the next Cabinet meeting on May 26th. As the second item of discussion, the War Refugee Board asked Morgenthau to present a memo of a conversation between DuBois and John McCloy in the War Department. Obviously trying to press the President to commit himself to establishing free ports, the memo stated that McCloy had called DuBois to express his concern over the critical refugee situation in Italy. DuBois supposedly responded that the issue was not about transportation but about finding available havens for the refugees.²⁰⁰ That afternoon, Morgenthau met with Pehle, DuBois, and Luxford to complain about having to present the memo: "You people give me the damndest things to bring up! I am the catch-all for everything, and I have to do all these fights." Morgenthau informed the Board staff that after reading the memo, Roosevelt had immediately responded that under no circumstances should the refugees be sent back. Instead, the President proposed sending the refugees to the Termini resort on Sicily. Morgenthau "saw he wasn't ready to bring them over here yet...He isn't ready." They should not give up on the plan, "but his mind hasn't jelled on the thing. He says he wants a good name. But there is something, somewhere, that I think he is a little afraid of, that is all."²⁰¹ Until they figured out how to proceed with the President, the Board needed to pursue other possibilities to relieve the refugee crisis in Italy.

The next day, Pehle, Luxford, DuBois, and Friedman met with General John Henry Hilldring on Stimson's suggestion. After discussing the situation in Italy, Hilldring stated that the Army would do nothing to impede the flow of refugees and he would cable a message to this effect to the Mediterranean Theater. The Board staff would meet with

²⁰⁰ Josiah DuBois, Memo of Conversation with McCloy, 1944 May 26; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 736, Document 73-74; LOC.

²⁰¹ Transcript, "Re: Cabinet" meeting, 1944 May 26; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 736, Document 67-72; LOC.

other agencies to see if UNRRA could possibly take over the management of refugee camps in Italy, and if the Foreign Economic Administration would allow supplies to go to these camps through Lend-Lease. The meeting was positive, and the WRB staff sent a cable to Ambassador Murphy asking him to determine if there were other possibilities for refugee havens near the Mediterranean.²⁰²

The War Refugee Board staff also found the \$50,000 that Ackermann and Saxon had recommended they send to Yugoslavia. Morris Ernst's lawyer sent Pehle a check from Ernst's account, in keeping with their earlier agreement, with a memo of understanding that "the funds would be disbursed by US Army in Bari in accordance with purposes agreed upon." The money was delivered to Col. Milentije Popovich of the Yugoslav Refugee Committee at Bari on June 3rd.²⁰³

Tuesday, May 30th was Decoration Day. Friedman attended a meeting with Oscar Cox, who indicated that refugee camps in Italy "or in havens of refuge elsewhere to which refugees entering Italy are removed" could be supplied through existent Lend-Lease procedures.²⁰⁴ Ward Stewart sent a letter thanking the War Relocation Authority for making their film *The Challenge of Democracy*, about Japanese internment, available to the War Refugee Board staff; they had had a "very successful" showing.²⁰⁵ And at his press conference that afternoon, President Franklin Roosevelt surprised them all.

On May 31st, Pehle excitedly called Morgenthau to make sure the Secretary had

²⁰² Joseph Friedman, Memo of meeting, 1944 May 27; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 23, Folder 14, Document 981-982; USHMM.

²⁰³ Harold Stern, Letter to Pehle, 1944 May 31; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 28, Folder 14, Document 703-704; USHMM.

²⁰⁴ Joseph Friedman, Memo about meeting in Cox's office, 1944 May 30; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 13, Document 741; USHMM.

²⁰⁵ The film is viewable here: <http://archive.org/details/Challeng1944> Ward Stewart, Letter to Leland Barrows, War Relocation Authority, 1944 May 30; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 22, Folder 6, Document 702; USHMM.

heard the news. In his press conference the previous afternoon, Roosevelt was asked about free ports. The President responded that he did not like the name, but he liked the idea—though he emphasized that most refugee havens would be overseas—and the government was working on it. Lest Morgenthau think the President may have only been supporting more refugee camps overseas, Pehle had already checked the transcript, and “he clearly gave a good boost for the free ports.”²⁰⁶ Less than twenty minutes after Pehle’s call, Morgenthau called the White House to try to get an appointment to see the President. Morgenthau indicated that since Roosevelt mentioned free ports at his press conference, “I think the sooner he does something on that, the less pressure on him.”²⁰⁷ They got an appointment for 12:30pm on June 1st, but since Roosevelt was running late, Morgenthau and Pehle met with the President a little after 1:00pm. Pehle reminded the President of their previous conversation about bringing refugees to the United States, and Morgenthau reminded him of the discussion at the May 26th Cabinet meeting. While the President wanted to make it clear to Congress and to the public that the majority of refugees would be cared for elsewhere, he stated that he was not adverse to bringing 1,000 to the United States if Pehle could find a camp for them. Pehle, now tasked with securing a camp, also provided Roosevelt with a list of alternate terms for “free port,” since the President had indicated his dislike for the phrase.²⁰⁸ “Emergency Refugee Shelter” was the favorite, since “it connoted the temporary character of the refugees' stay in the United States and also because the word 'shelter' is an honest word and that we

²⁰⁶ Transcript, Phone conversation between Morgenthau and Pehle, 1944 May 31; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 737; LOC.

²⁰⁷ Transcript, “Group” meeting, 1944 May 31; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 737; LOC.

²⁰⁸ War-Time Refugee Haven; Station of Safety (SOS); Liberation Camp; War Refugee Center; War Rescue Shelter, International Transient Center; War Victim Shelter; V-Camp; Emergency Refugee Shelter; Wartime Protection Depot

won't be able to provide much more than shelter.”²⁰⁹

The WRB Secures Fort Ontario

On June 2nd, Henry Morgenthau and John McCloy met at Morgenthau's house before traveling to work together. Among other things, they discussed the need to find an abandoned army camp to house refugees. At noon, McCloy called Morgenthau to report that he had a camp; he was not sure which one, but General Marshall had said the War Refugee Board could have one. A camp would definitely be necessary, since Roosevelt had held another press conference that morning. The President “revealed that consideration is being given to the possible use of an army camp area no longer needed by the military as a temporary haven in this country for refugees.” With this information now public, less than 24 hours after Roosevelt had agreed to it, Morgenthau could only tell McCloy “you better get it, that's all.”²¹⁰ Two hours later, they had it. McCloy offered Morgenthau the use of Fort Ontario, in Oswego, New York. A minute after McCloy's call, Morgenthau called the White House to ask Tully to inform the President that “it's now exactly twenty-four hours and twenty minutes [since Roosevelt instructed the WRB to find a camp]...And the War Department has just notified me that they have room for a thousand refugees at Fort Ontario.”²¹¹

After his call to the White House, Morgenthau summoned Pehle to his office. Pehle wanted to try to get the message to Congress and draft cables into the President's

²⁰⁹ John Pehle, Memorandum for the Files, 1944 June 1; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 738, Document 39-51; LOC.

²¹⁰ Transcript, Phone conversation between Morgenthau and McCloy, 1944 June 2; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 738, Document 225-231; LOC.

²¹¹ Ibid.

briefcase before Roosevelt left town that afternoon for a weekend in Charlottesville.

Morgenthau thought Pehle clearly had an unrealistic idea of how difficult it was to get a meeting at the White House, to which Pehle responded, "[O]ne reason these things go so far is that we ask unreasonable things, that is all. Of course they are unreasonable."

Morgenthau told him about Fort Ontario,²¹² and showed him Oswego on a map: "That is a nice place—it has a good climate." After a few minutes, Morgenthau called in nine other members of the War Refugee Board staff: Josiah DuBois, Ansel Luxford, Florence Hodel, Lawrence Lesser, Jim Abrahamson, Isadore Weinstein, Virginia Mannon, Joseph Friedman, and Ward Stewart. The Secretary made a short speech:

I just wanted to tell you all how pleased I am at the way you people have been working so hard in the last month to take care of the refugees in this country, and you have actually accomplished that. I think you ought to feel a personal satisfaction. As you know, it is very nice for America not to be high and mighty and tell the rest of the world what to do, and demonstrate themselves, and set an example. So I am very happy. I want to thank each and every one of you.

After the group left, Pehle and DuBois remained. They would be ready when the President returned on Monday. Morgenthau was not worried about the Roosevelt's motivation for action: "He has had a mental block on this thing... Suddenly, it clears; he is satisfied; he goes overboard a hundred percent. I would let her ride."²¹³

²¹² McCloy also offered the WRB the use of a camp in Kentucky, though he informed Morgenthau he believed Fort Ontario to be a better choice. Pehle originally wondered whether Roosevelt should make the final choice between the two camps, but Morgenthau and his secretary, Henrietta Klotz, both felt Kentucky was the wrong place since it was full of "Southern Democratic prejudices." Transcript, "War Refugee Board" meeting, 1944 June 2; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 738, Document 164-178; LOC.

²¹³ Ibid.

Increased Representation in Hungary

While they were waiting for the President to return, the War Refugee Board staff focused on a new proposal. Instead of coming from their offices, though it came from Hungary, and was nothing they had ever dealt with before. The Board had been trying to get reliable information from Hungary since the Germans invaded in March. Unable to place American personnel in Hungary, the Board petitioned neutral countries and agencies to enlarge their representation and spread their people throughout the country, both to provide accurate intelligence reports and possibly act as a deterrent—or a witness—to violence. The Red Cross agreed to increase representation, but only had one delegate currently in the country, and emphasized the difficulty of finding suitable personnel.²¹⁴ Hayes felt there was no reason to ask the Spanish to increase their representation, since he knew they were trying to distance themselves from the Hungarian government.²¹⁵ Ambassador Norweb also did not approach the Portuguese with the Board's request, as he "had made fairly strong representations...seeking to persuade the Government of Portugal not to recognize the puppet regime in Budapest, we found ourselves in an awkward position of which the WRB may not have been aware."²¹⁶ The Turks likewise could not increase their representation, as they were having a difficult time communicating with the representation they already had in Budapest. Miklós Kállay, the Hungarian prime minister deposed during the invasion, had taken refuge with

²¹⁴ Roswell McClelland, Cable to the WRB, 1944 June 11; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 6, Folder 3, Documents 312-313; USHMM.

²¹⁵ R. Henry Norweb, Cable to the State Department, 1944 June 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 5, Folder 3, Documents 522-523; USHMM.

²¹⁶ Carlton Hayes, Cable to the War Refugee Board, 1944 June 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 5, Folder 3, Documents 441-442; USHMM.

his family in the Turkish embassy, and the Gestapo was guarding the building.²¹⁷ Only Sweden expressed her willingness to increase its representation in Hungary.²¹⁸

Joel Brand

On May 25th, Ambassador Steinhardt reported that some information had come out of Hungary in the form of a man, a Hungarian Jew named Joel Brand.²¹⁹ Brand had recently arrived in Istanbul from Budapest. Upon his arrival, he had submitted an audacious proposal to Chaim Barlas, stating that Eichman [sic, described as the Commissioner for Jewish Affairs]:

[I]n exchange for two million cakes of soap, two hundred tons of cocoa, eight hundred tons of coffee, two hundred tons of tea, and ten thousand trucks... would agree to stop the deportation and extermination of Jews in all areas in which the Germans occupy and including Romania, and he would further agree to permit the exit of Jewish limited numbers to Palestine and in unlimited numbers to Spain.²²⁰

Barlas submitted Brand's proposal to the High Commissioner in Jerusalem the next day, though his report differed a bit from Steinhardt's initial cable. The exchange would be for one million Jews, who would be released only to Spain or Portugal, not to Palestine.

Brand stated that he had the impression that "the terms of negotiations can be prolonged if evidence is forthcoming that the scheme is being earnestly considered in high Allied

²¹⁷ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable to the WRB, 1944 May 25; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 28, Folder 5, Document 544; USHMM.

²¹⁸ Herschel Johnson, Cable to the WRB, 1944 June 9; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 5, Folder 4, Document 673; USHMM.

²¹⁹ Documents from this period alternatively use the spelling "Brand" and "Brandt." Since most scholarly works have used the spelling "Brand," this is also the spelling that I have used, with the exception of direct quotations using "Brandt."

²²⁰ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable to the WRB, 1944 May 25; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 28, Folder 5, Document 544; USHMM.

quarters.”²²¹ Barlas’s report on the proposal included a plea:

The Jewish Agency fear that in light of past experience and of this fresh authentic information there cannot be the slightest doubt that fate of Hungarian Jews is sealed... They firmly hope that the magnitude and the seemingly fantastic character of this proposition will not deter the high allied authorities from undertaking a concerted and determined effort to save the greatest possible number.²²²

Upon learning of the offer, Steinhardt asked Reuben Resnik of the Joint to interview Brand and write a report of his impressions to transmit to Washington. Resnik’s report began with a statement of the facts. Brand was in his thirties, married with children, spoke near fluent English, and was born in Budapest. He claimed to have been taken by car from Budapest to Vienna, where he and a man named Andre Gyorgy boarded a plane to Istanbul. They must have had Gestapo assistance to make the trip, though Brand also had a letter of introduction from the Jewish Community in Budapest. Resnik came up with several interpretations of Brand’s proposal, which amounted to a ransom scheme. It was possible that the scheme was a cover for an eventual peace proposal, or designed to embarrass the Allies, who would not be able to handle the large influx of released prisoners. It could also be an attempt to affect a split between the Allies, or could indicate a split between various German groups. Whatever the motivation behind the proposal, Resnik, like Barlas, ended with an emphasis on keeping the negotiations open: “Everyone with whom I have talked recognizes the impossibility of carrying out the proposals as they have been stated, but everyone believes that all should

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Jewish Agency for Palestine, Memo to High Commissioner regarding Joel Brand, 1944 May 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 6, Documents 464-465; USHMM.

be done to continue exploration...”²²³

Through the British embassy, the War Refugee Board received Barlas’s report to the High Commissioner on June 5th. The British included an *aide-mémoire* of their initial impressions: the plan was a “sheer case of blackmail or political warfare.” The British could not make any bargain designed to stave off Germany’s defeat, nor could they care for a million released prisoners, as the prisoners’ needs would force the suspension of military operations. At the same time, “[W]e realize the importance of not opposing...any genuine proposals involving rescue of any Jews and other victims which merit serious consideration by Allied Governments.” The British would inform Chaim Weizmann of the proposal, and assumed the Board would inform Nahum Goldmann. The British hoped the United States would agree with their assessment that “although we cannot enter into the monstrous bargain now proposed by the Gestapo, we are yet far from indifferent to the sufferings of the Jews and have not shut the door to any serious suggestions which may be made and which are compatible with the successful prosecution of the war.”²²⁴

So it happened, at Morgenthau’s morning “Group” meeting, after professing their excitement that the day of the Allied invasion had finally arrived, the Secretary of the Treasury and his assistants talked about Joel Brand. After Pehle gave a short synopsis of the proposal, Morgenthau suggested that “you and some of your boys should go over and see Stettinius because he is very much excited about it...Now, don't let him say we held up on it.” They agreed that the best thing to do would be to keep the ransom negotiations

²²³ Reuben Resnik, Memo to the Ambassador on Joel Brand, 1944 June 4; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 5, Documents 328-333; USHMM.

²²⁴ British embassy staff, Aide-mémoire, 1944 June 5; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 739, Documents 242-246; LOC.

alive.²²⁵ The next day, Pehle and Morgenthau continued to brainstorm about what to do, especially in light of the British *aide-mémoire*, which made it more difficult for them to act unilaterally. Pehle reported on a suggestion to use Hirschmann's imminent departure for Turkey as a pretext to keep negotiations alive, stating that "we are sending a special representative of the War Refugee Board to Ankara, that has the views of this Government in reference to this matter." Though Pehle was nervous about not coordinating with the British and about not telling the Russians, Morgenthau pointed out, "While you are waiting to coordinate with the Allies, it means [waiting for] the Combined Chiefs of staff and these poor people will all be dead."²²⁶ In his office at the State Department, Edward Stettinius informed Nahum Goldmann of the ransom proposal. Reflecting on the offer later in the day, Goldmann suggested that the Americans and British inform the Soviet Union, since "it is quite likely they will learn about it...and, you know how touchy they are..." Stettinius and Goldmann also agreed that they should give the impression that the proposal was being considered.²²⁷ With the War Refugee Board and the State Department in agreement, they sent a cable to Steinhardt in Ankara. Although the United States would need to consult with the British and Soviets before accepting any proposals, "every effort should be made to convince the Germans that this Government is sufficiently concerned with the problem that it is willing to consider genuine proposals for the rescue and relief of Jews and other victims." Steinhardt was instructed to inform Joel Brand that the War Refugee Board was sending a special

²²⁵ Transcript, "Group" meeting, 1944 June 6; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 740, Documents 1-15; LOC.

²²⁶ Transcript, "War Refugee Board" meeting, 1944 June 7; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 740, Documents 231-236; LOC.

²²⁷ Nahum Goldmann, Letter to Pehle transmitting copy of letter to Stettinius, 1944 June 7; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 14, Folder 8, Documents 632-633; USHMM.

representative to Turkey to meet with him, and was also instructed to inform the Soviet Union of the proposal.²²⁸

John Pehle attended two very important meetings on June 8th. The first was with Ira Hirschmann, in Washington for one last time before he departed for Turkey. Though Hirschmann originally planned to stay in the United States until the middle of the following week, Pehle stressed the importance of leaving as soon as possible, which would be on Sunday, June 11th. Hirschmann was nervous about meeting Brand and spent a sober train ride to back to New York and a sleepless night pondering the problem. In light of the circumstances, Steinhardt agreed to wait for Hirschmann's arrival in Ankara so they could confer before the Ambassador left for the United States. Armed with a letter of general support from President Roosevelt and a new set of challenges ahead of him, Hirschmann flew to Turkey.

Roosevelt Announces the Fort Ontario Emergency Refugee Shelter

Pehle's other meeting on June 8th was with President Roosevelt about the emergency refugee shelter. As with his previous appointments with the President, it was lunchtime and lasted about fifteen minutes. In his report, Pehle noted that the first thing Roosevelt said was, "How soon can I make an announcement about this matter?" Pehle informed him he could make the announcement at once, as soon as he signed the cable to Ambassador Murphy and the instructions to the various agency heads. The President read the memos carefully, asked for a health inspection of the refugees to be included in the

²²⁸ John Pehle, Cable to Stettinius, 1944 June 7; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 6, Document 432; USHMM.

arrangements, and signed them. Roosevelt seemed pleased that the Board would be using Fort Ontario. He and Morgenthau, who joined Pehle at the meeting, shared a memory of campaigning near the fort, and the President remarked that, "Fort Ontario is my camp. I know the fort very well. It is a very excellent place." Roosevelt stated his plans to announce the camp at his press conference the next day. Pehle took the opportunity to inform the President that the military was considering raising the quotas for the number of refugees who could be cared for in Italy and the number who could be cared for in North Africa. Pehle wrote that the President seemed pleased by this, and was also interested to hear of the alleged German offer which Joel Brand had transmitted, agreeing with Pehle and Morgenthau that negotiations should remain open.²²⁹

In Pehle's May 18th meeting with the President, Roosevelt had instructed him to find a crisis, an excuse to bring 1,000 refugees to the United States. Pehle had written a memo about the situation in Yugoslavia and Italy, and included a draft message to Congress explaining the reason for the creation of refugee shelters. After the May 26th Cabinet meeting, Morgenthau had commented to Pehle that he did not believe the President had read Pehle's memo. The President, Morgenthau reported, was not ready. Morgenthau was wrong. Unbeknownst to Morgenthau or to the War Refugee Board, Roosevelt had forwarded Pehle's memo and drafts to the State Department, asking them to make some minor edits.²³⁰ Berle, Warren, and Stettinius all worked on the draft message to Congress. Berle commented that although the message to Congress states that the refugees would be returned to their homelands after the war, "Probably they will not

²²⁹ John Pehle, Memorandum to the files, 1944 June 8; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 741, Documents 47-50; LOC.

²³⁰ Franklin Roosevelt, Cover note sending memos to State Department, 1944 May 20; RG-59, "War Refugee Board," Box 1, Folder "Fort Ontario"; NACP.

go back home but will agitate legislation permitting them to remain in the United States.” Berle was not concerned. This, he wrote, “can be dealt with when it arises.”²³¹ Stettinius noted and wrote justifications for all of his edits. In one paragraph, Stettinius wrote, “As the hour of the final defeat of the Hitlerite forces nears, the fury of their insane desire to wipe out the Jewish race in Europe continues undiminished. Knowing that they have lost the war, the Nazis are determined to complete their program of mass extermination.” The Board’s draft had originally used the term “minority groups” rather than “Jewish race,” but Stettinius made the correction, noting that “[t]he Jews are the only minority group which the Germans are exterminating.”²³² Stettinius’s forceful edit was included in the final version of the message, though another sentence was later added stating: “This is but one example: Many Christian groups also are being murdered.”²³³

At 11:15am on June 9th, President Roosevelt held a press conference announcing that the United States was bringing 1,000 refugees from the Mediterranean area to Fort Ontario in Oswego, New York. Pehle had someone read him the President’s remarks over the phone, and he then wrote a letter to Samuel Grafton: “I can’t let this great day go by without thanking you for your Free Port pieces and for the support you obtained for us...”²³⁴ Three days later, as Ira Hirschmann was somewhere over the Atlantic Ocean, Roosevelt sent a message to Congress. The “Message from the President of the United

²³¹ Adolf Berle, Memo to Hull, 1944 May 29; Adolf Berle Papers, Box 59, Folder 1; FDRL.

²³² Edward Stettinius, Stettinius draft of FDR message to Congress, 1944 June 8; Holocaust Refugees and the FDR White House (Microfilm Collection, Bethesda, MD: UPA collection from LexisNexis, 2006). LM 0255, Reel46, Folder 1, Document 66-68; USHMM.

²³³ Franklin Roosevelt, “Message from the President of the United States Notifying the Congress that Arrangements Have Been Made to Care for Approximately 1,000 Refugees in the United States,” 1944 June 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 8, Folder 54, Documents 984-985; USHMM.

²³⁴ John Pehle, Letter to Samuel Grafton, 1944 June 9; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 20, Folder 12, Documents 689-695; USHMM.

States Notifying the Congress that Arrangements Have Been Made to Care for Approximately 1,000 Refugees in the United States” included a sentence that survived intact from Pehle’s initial draft. It was an appropriate summary of the Board’s work and motivation for the trials ahead: “In the face of this attitude of our enemies, we must not fail to take full advantage of any opportunity, however limited, for the rescue of Hitler's victims.”²³⁵

²³⁵ Franklin Roosevelt, “Message from the President of the United States Notifying the Congress that Arrangements Have Been Made to Care for Approximately 1,000 Refugees in the United States,” 1944 June 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 8, Folder 54, Documents 984-985; USHMM.

CHAPTER FIVE: WORKING LIKE HELL AND DOING SOME GOOD: JUNE 12, 1944—AUGUST 11, 1944

June 1944 marked a significant turning point, not just in World War II with the D-Day invasions and the liberation of Rome, but also in the activities of the War Refugee Board. The arrival of Joel Brand in Istanbul forced the Board staff to confront for the first time the idea of ransom negotiations to rescue potential Nazi victims. It was a difficult concept with which they would struggle for the rest of the war. The establishment of the Fort Ontario Emergency Refugee Shelter was a tangible indication of the success of the Board's work, though save for interviewing and selecting the refugees in Italy, the Board had almost nothing to do with the operations of the shelter. June also saw the first proposals to bomb the rail lines leading to the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. In July, Raoul Wallenberg, who was appointed to the Swedish legation in Budapest at the behest of the Board, began his work rescuing and protecting Jews in Hungary. There were plenty of ongoing projects, too—Red Cross relief packages, refugee boats arriving in Turkey, protective papers, prisoner exchanges, licenses—which made for a very long and busy summer.

Joel Brand

On June 22nd, an unbearably hot day in Cairo, Ira Hirschmann finally met the mysterious Joel Brand. Having left the United States on June 11th, it took Hirschmann six

days to arrive in Ankara—far less than the twenty days the trip had taken him in February. The realities of military transport, even with a number two air priority, meant that Hirschmann still had to stop in Casablanca, Algiers, Cairo, and Adana, Turkey, before landing in Ankara on Saturday, June 17th. The time spent en route had not been wasted. While being held in Casablanca for two days due to cancelled flights, Hirschmann met with Moses Beckelman and saw the Fedhala camp, which he had also visited on his way back to the United States in April. The camp was still deserted, save for the UNRRA staff and a few dozen refugees who had arrived in mid-May to help set up in anticipation of the larger group still stuck in Cadiz, Spain, waiting for a British boat. Hirschmann arrived in Algiers on June 15th and met with Ackermann, who briefed him on plans to select refugees in Italy for Fort Ontario, and on the work of the Yugoslav partisans. Ever the marketing executive, Hirschmann advised Ackermann to “write a dripping telegram,” as soon as the Fort Ontario refugees left for the United States. He was pleased that \$50,000 had been provided to the reportedly desperate partisans, and in his diary took some credit for the payment since “I had urged [this] in my memo of April 20th.”¹ In Cairo, Hirschmann met S. Pinkney Tuck, the newly-arrived United States minister, who was replacing Alexander Kirk (who had been reassigned to Italy). Tuck, who had spent a year-and-a-half in a Nazi internment camp, sympathized with the War Refugee Board and shared a story of his attempts to rescue 5,000 children as *chargé*

¹ Hirschmann wrote in his diary that Ackermann had just returned from a trip to Bari. This is likely a misunderstanding on Hirschmann’s part, as Ackermann wrote a cable to the WRB from North Africa on June 13th about planning his trip to Italy, met with Hirschmann on June 15th and left for a long trip to Italy on June 19th. If Hirschmann were correct, Ackermann would have spent just a day in Italy (June 14th), including travel time, and made no mention of this fact to the War Refugee Board in any of his cables. Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 June 15; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

d'affaires in Vichy France.² After Hirschmann arranged a four-seat plane from Adana at the suggestion of the former Pennsylvania governor, George Earle, who was returning to his role as naval attaché (and spy) in Turkey,³ Hirschmann arrived in Ankara late in the afternoon on Saturday, June 17th.

Hirschmann only spent two days in Ankara before leaving again, and he spent them in a foul mood. There were personal reasons; he learned his German conductor friend in Ankara, Carl Ebert, was quite ill, and he received some disturbing personal telegrams from home.⁴ Hirschmann also seemed to have expected a hero's welcome, and was disappointed when this did not occur. Steinhardt, Hirschmann wrote on more than one occasion, "did not want me back," and, though the Ambassador hosted Hirschmann at his home on Sunday, "he has not behaved especially well towards me."⁵ Though they

² Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 June 16; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

Tuck was alluding to a plan to assist refugee children to emigrate from France to the United States under the auspices of the United States Committee for the Care of European Children (USCOM). The children would be chosen by the Quakers and have the financial support of the Joint. As the McClellands were among the American Friends Service Committee representatives in Marseilles at the time, Marjorie McClelland assisted in the selection of the children. A planned extension of the program was cancelled after the Allied invasion of North Africa, when diplomatic relations between the United States and France were severed. Tuck was imprisoned and approximately 250 children were ultimately able to escape out of France to Lisbon and eventually to the United States. Tuck was finally released in February 1944 as part of a prisoner exchange. For more information, see: Richard Breitman and Lichtman, Allan. *FDR and the Jews*. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), 202-203. Yehuda Bauer. *American Jewry and the Holocaust: the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1939-1945*. (Jerusalem: The Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University, 1981), 259-263. Deborah Dwork and R. J. van Pelt. *Flight from the Reich: Refugee Jews, 1933-1946*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009), 242-243.

³ Earle was returning to Turkey from Washington, having just presented Roosevelt with a report on the Katyn Forest massacre, in which Earle concluded that the Soviet Union was responsible. Crister S. Garrett and Stephen A. Garrett. "Death and Politics: The Katyn Forest Massacre and American Foreign Policy." *Eastern European Quarterly*, XX, no 4, January 1987, 429-446.

⁴ Though his diary does not give details, it seems as though Hirschmann was having marital difficulties. He frequently alluded to his loneliness and wrote of "hysterical dreams in thoughts of New York." Hirschmann's personal troubles were apparently noticeable, as Pehle mentioned during a meeting in Morgenthau's office that Hirschmann's wife and brother Alvin had both requested permission to send uncensored correspondence to Turkey through diplomatic pouch. Pehle refused unless he could read the letters before they were sent. Pehle told Morgenthau, "I think there is some trouble on the home front." (Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 June 27; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL. Henry Morgenthau, Jr., "Group" meeting, 1944 June 20; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 745, Document 113-139; LOC.

⁵ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 June 19; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

had worked well together during Hirschmann's first trip to Turkey and had exchanged friendly letters after his return to the United States, Hirschmann felt the relationship had soured. A few days later he wrote, "Steinhardt is concerned only with his immunity from trouble and political future. The jobs to be done...will require organization, tact, patience, time, energy and toughness... Obviously, I was needed here even more than before."⁶ It was Reuben Resnik of the Joint, however, who received the brunt of Hirschmann's ire. Likely learning upon his arrival in Turkey that Resnik had been the first American to meet with Joel Brand rather than himself, Hirschmann wrote that the Joint representative "has worked nasty intrigue in my absence and is obviously my enemy."⁷ The grudges seemed to be largely one-sided; regardless, Hirschmann's instinctual resentment of Steinhardt and Resnik lasted for the next few months.⁸ Perceiving himself the maligned underdog, Hirschmann wrote in his diary, "I am disconsolate, but bounce back in a

⁶ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 June 20; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

⁷ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 June 18-20; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL. Outwardly, Hirschmann seems to have displayed no malice towards Resnik, and the day after writing in his diary that the Joint representative was "obviously my enemy," Hirschmann wrote a friendly note: "Dear Rube, Greetings from America! I had hoped to see you in the next few days, but am rushing back to Cairo... I am glad to know of your continuing progress. I hope you have been well..." Before receiving Hirschmann's note, Resnik sent one of his own to "extend warm greetings of welcome and hope that too much time will not elapse before we see each other," signing it "with renewed good wishes and kindest personal regards." If there was a rivalry other than in Hirschmann's perception, it was a strange one. Ira Hirschmann, Letter to Resnik, 1944 June 21; Collection: 1937-1949: Istanbul Records of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee - IST 37-49, Sub Collection: Administration - IST 37-49/1, File 108_00904; American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archives, New York (JDC). Reuben Resnik, Letter to Hirschmann, 1944 June 21; Collection: 1937-1949: Istanbul Records of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee - IST 37-49, Sub Collection: Administration - IST 37-49/1, File 108_00902; JDC.

⁸ Hirschmann's resentment of Resnik led him to scheme to get the Joint representative fired, or at least replaced in Turkey. At the end of July, Hirschmann sent a letter to Joseph Schwartz reporting Resnik had not known of the arrival of a train of Bulgarian children, and had been confused at a meeting. (The meeting minutes do not mention Resnik's questions or confusion.) In his letter to Schwartz, Hirschmann wrote, "I mention this to you because I think the refugees coming through Istanbul should know of the assistance they received through the Joint. I think you will agree this incident of the children's transport does not help in forwarding the JDC's position, insofar as the refugee work undertaken from Istanbul is concerned." In his diary the next day, Hirschmann wrote, "Resnick...is dumb and insincere, but a schemer. I pacify him momentarily. He must go." Ira Hirschmann, Letter to Schwartz, 1944 August 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 14, Folder 7, Documents 862-863; USHMM. Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 August 2; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

fighting mood.”⁹ There was little time for self-reflection, as Hirschmann was almost immediately briefed on new developments related to the Joel Brand ransom proposal.

Back on June 5th, the War Refugee Board had received the High Commissioner’s report on Brand, along with an *aide-mémoire* containing British reaction to the ransom offer. Calling it a “monstrous bargain,” the British declared they “could not bargain over any scheme with Gestapo and agree to trade lives against military and economic concessions.”¹⁰ While they debated a reply to the obstinate British, the Board sent cables to Ankara and Moscow. Steinhardt received the High Commissioner’s report and was informed that Washington would like to give the Germans the impression that the offer was being considered. The Ambassador was instructed to tell Brand that an official representative (Hirschmann) was coming to meet him and hear more about the proposal. The United States also needed to formally notify the Soviet Union of the scheme, so as not to give the impression that they were keep secrets from their ally, so Ambassador Harriman in Moscow was copied on the cable to Steinhardt and asked to share its contents. Joseph Friedman of the WRB staff drafted a response to the British, reassuring them that they were sending Hirschmann to meet with Brand, but was he “not authorized to enter into any understanding with the Germans but simply...to explore the circumstances surrounding the proposal.”¹¹ Though Friedman’s draft was sent to the State Department for transmission, there is no evidence it was forwarded, which is just as well since it would have been obsolete almost immediately.

⁹ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 June 19; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

¹⁰ British embassy staff, *Aide-mémoire*, 1944 June 5; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 739, Document 242-246; LOC.

¹¹ Joseph Friedman, Proposed reply to British, 1944 June 13; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 21, Documents 862-863; USHMM.

As Ira Hirschmann waited in Casablanca and toured Fedhala, Steinhardt had cabled the War Refugee Board to say “neither British Embassy nor we are informed as to Brand's present whereabouts.”¹² There was no reason to panic, since the British intelligence certainly knew where Brand was, but he was not in Istanbul anymore to meet with Hirschmann, who was due to arrive soon. On June 19th, Hirschmann’s first full day back in Ankara, Steinhardt finally received word that Brand was now in Cairo with Jewish Agency representative Moshe Shertok, “with the expectation of conferring [sic] with the British Resident Minister, Lord Moyne.”¹³ Though he tried to convince Steinhardt to demand Brand’s return to Ankara, Hirschmann finally conceded and packed his bags to fly back to Cairo. Once it was decided that he would go, Hirschmann’s mood lightened and he seemed to feel restored to his position of importance. He was being sent on an important mission to interview an agent of the enemy. In his diary, he wrote, “I have the inside track as the government representative—and I must use it with care and energy for my only purpose at heart—to save others.” The flight on June 21st was “delightful,” featuring “tasty food (relatively).” Hirschmann expressed sympathy for a sick passenger, wrote of his desire to stay in North Africa despite the 118-degree heat, was excited by a sandstorm, and playfully compared the sandflies to planes bombing him. There was a prestigious job to be done, and Ira Hirschmann was in his element.¹⁴

Unbeknownst to Hirschmann, had he remained in Ankara for one more day, he probably would not have had the opportunity to interview Brand at all. As Hirschmann

¹² Laurence Steinhardt, Cable from Ankara, 1944 June 13; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 6, Documents 423-424; USHMM.

¹³ Cordell Hull, Cable to Ankara, 1944 June 19; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 6, Documents 402; USHMM.

¹⁴ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 June 20; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

was flying to Cairo, the War Refugee Board received a response from Harriman in Moscow. In a secret note to the American embassy, Deputy People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs Andrey Vyshinsky reported that the Soviet government, in response to being officially informed of the Brand offer, "does not consider it permissible or expedient to carry on any conversations whatsoever with the German government on the questions which the note from the Embassy touched upon."¹⁵ As soon as the Board received this message, Pehle called Hayden Raynor at the State Department and arranged for an immediate response, sent to both Harriman and Steinhardt: "Please take no, repeat no, further action of any nature with respect to this matter pending further instructions."¹⁶

Pehle's cable was not sent to Cairo. Upon his arrival, Hirschmann went immediately to the American legation, where Tuck explained that after a conversation with Lord Moyne earlier in the day, it was decided that Hirschmann should instead proceed to London for meetings to centralize a response to the ransom offer. Hirschmann refused, brandishing his letter of support from President Roosevelt, and insisted that his instructions were to brief Steinhardt after interviewing Brand. The tactic worked.

The afternoon of June 22nd, less than two weeks after leaving Washington, Hirschmann was shown to a small apartment where Joel Brand was being kept. Two members of the British military and a stenographer, who took a nearly verbatim account of the meeting, joined them. Hirschmann proved himself a deft interviewer, asked creative questions, and was upfront with Brand about the slim chance the offer would be accepted. Brand was clearly fearful for his family and nervous that he may not be able to

¹⁵ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 June 19; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

¹⁶ John Pehle, Memo to the file on Soviet reaction, 1944 June 21; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 6, Documents 394; USHMM.

return to Hungary.¹⁷ At the same time, Brand also recognized the offer as a victory for the Germans no matter what. They could get their goods or possible immunity from prosecution if the Allies accepted, but if they did not, there was an opportunity for, as Brand put it, “some big propaganda. To say that they wanted to set the Jews free and the Allies did not want it, so there was no other way but for them to kill them off.”¹⁸ At the end of the formal interview, which concluded with Brand reiterating his fear that his wife, children, and friends would be punished in retaliation if he were not to return, he and Hirschmann had a conversation over tea that was not recorded by the stenographer.

In his report to Steinhardt about the interview, Hirschmann wrote that Brand saw the ransom offer as an act of desperation: “[T]he fact that a high German officer tells to the Jew, Brand, ‘We need things—go get them.’ This, Brand said, appeared to him to be a great confession of weakness.” Hirschmann described Brand as “honest, clear, incisive, blunt, and completely frank...I could find no shadow of evidence to support the reservations contained in the report of Mr. Rueben B. Resnik [sic]...My impressions were distinctly the reverse.” The proposals were serious, the details ripe for negotiation with the Germans, and the discussion of sending refugees out through Spain was credible, as it reflected known German concerns about antagonizing the Arab population in the Middle East by increasing Jewish immigration to Palestine. Hirschmann recommended convincing the British to keep the door open; letting Brand remain in Cairo rather than

¹⁷ This was a valid fear: that very day, the Jewish Agency told Steinhardt they had received a message from Budapest that the Germans were furious Brand had yet to return, and “unless Brand and Georgy return immediately to Budapest, ‘all efforts are useless.’” Laurence Steinhardt, Cable to Washington, 1944 June 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 6, Documents 390; USHMM.

¹⁸ Ira Hirschmann, Interrogation of Joel Brand by Mr. Ira Hirschmann, 1944 June 22; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 3, Folder Joel Brand; FDRL.

taking him to London, so he could be returned to Hungary quickly; and reiterating the need to avoid all publicity. Hirschmann also proposed making plans for a possible meeting between Nazi officials and American and British representatives in a neutral location.¹⁹ Joseph Schwartz, the director of the Joint's European offices, who happened to be in Cairo and met with Hirschmann there, cabled his organization's headquarters in New York to report that Shertok and Hirschmann had both found Brand to be reliable, and agreed with their recommendation that he should be allowed to return to Hungary.²⁰

Hirschmann spent most of the day after the interview working on his report for Steinhardt. He was scheduled to leave the morning of Saturday, June 24th, but immediately after the plane took off, one of the motors died. Though Hirschmann was very matter-of-fact in his diary, describing sweat dripping down the face of one passenger and a young woman with the Red Cross trying to break the tension with jokes, it was clearly a terrifying experience. To keep it high enough to land safely, the passengers assisted in throwing bags of mail off the plane into the desert, then crowded into the back to keep the nose elevated. Eventually, with fire engines and Red Cross vehicles screaming towards them, the plane crashed into the sand. Hirschmann spent another day in Egypt, rewriting his report and sleeping fitfully. By the time he returned to Ankara the next day, he was ill. Diagnosed with malaria, Hirschmann's fever eventually hit 105 before it broke, and he spent the next week delirious and suffocating in his hotel room.²¹

¹⁹ Ira Hirschmann, Hirschmann memo to Steinhardt about interview with Joel Brand, 1944 June 22; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 3, Folder Joel Brand; FDRL.

²⁰ S. Pinckney Tuck, Cable to Washington, 1944 June 23; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 6, Documents 386; USHMM.

²¹ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 June 25; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

In London, the negotiations over the Joel Brand offer progressed slowly. On July 1st, the WRB received a cable from Anthony Eden, who had conferred with Moshe Shertok, now in London. The problem was really twofold: "[S]uch a conversation would ruin Soviet confidence in the Allies unless they had been asked and had agreed. The idea of compensation, trading in concert with a Gestapo agent, Jewish blood against Allied goods, looked equally dangerous."²² A week later, the WRB sent a long cable to Harriman to update the Soviets. They provided details about Brand and the offer, reiterated that neither the United States nor Great Britain were being deceived by the Nazis, and implored the Soviets not to shut the door completely on this or future offers, if only as a stalling technique. But before the Soviet Union could reply—if they were planning to at all—the British unilaterally decided to publicize the offer. Claiming that they had new intelligence indicating the ransom offer was really just intended as “an approach to us or to the Americans on the question of a separate peace not seriously intended no doubt except in an attempt to prejudice our relations with the Soviet Government,” the British gave details of the offer to reporters from the *New York Herald-Tribune* and the *Chicago Sun*, as well as to multiple British papers. The articles ran on July 19th, and due to wartime cable traffic, it is likely the Board staff saw the newspaper coverage before they received the July 18th cable from the British alerting them to the

²² WRB staff, Text of telegram from Anthony Eden, 1944 July 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 6, Documents 375; USHMM.

upcoming publicity. The British also decided that Joel Brand would remain in their custody in Cairo.²³

In the end, Ira Hirschmann's report of his interview with Joel Brand had little bearing on the outcome of the affair, especially as the United States was removed from any further negotiations. In a letter to Judah Magnes in Jerusalem, Hirschmann lamented the apparent end to the Joel Brand offer. "The Brand incident seems to be closed and I am sure you can interpret the circumstances which terminated it so dramatically and publicly. I am still at a loss to understanding how this man was ever permitted and urged by the Jewish Agency representatives to travel in your direction. This might be put down as one of the blunders of strategy."²⁴

Hirschmann recovered from his illness in enough time to say goodbye to Laurence Steinhardt, who was returning to the United States for vacation and consultation. The parting must have been uncomfortable, as Hirschmann was resentful that Steinhardt had not visited him during his illness and Steinhardt was coming down with a bad case of dysentery that plagued him for his entire trip to the United States. For the next several months, the embassy in Turkey was in the hands of Robert Kelley, a career Foreign Service officer who had been stationed in Ankara since 1927. Besides Kelley, Hirschmann had another new collaborator in the form of Herbert Katzki, who had arrived on June 30th. Katzki, the same age as Hirschmann and a fellow New Yorker, was an ideal fit to assist with the War Refugee Board's activities in Turkey. He had worked

²³ K.I. Poate, British embassy transmits messages, 1944 July 18; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 5, Documents 290-291; USHMM. British Foreign Office, Cable about Joel Brand proposals, 1944 July 19; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 5, Documents 292-293; USHMM.

²⁴ Ira Hirschmann, Letter to Judah Magnes, 1944 July 25; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 14, Folder 7, Documents 945-946; USHMM.

for the Joint since 1936, headed their Paris office in the months prior to the invasion of France, and later worked in Lisbon. In 1944, he joined the American military and was almost immediately tasked to the War Refugee Board as part of his official duties. He was also an OSS agent. The Board envisioned that Hirschmann would remain in Ankara while Katzki would work in Istanbul. In reality, however, Hirschmann still traveled continually between the cities, vastly preferring to be in Istanbul. Katzki was congenial, and Hirschmann liked him. Two secretaries, Virginia Henderson and Mary Harriet Bixler, traveled from the United States to assist—Henderson was assigned to Hirschman, and Bixler to Katzki.

Refugee Ships and Border Crossings

Though Hirschmann had lost nearly a month due to travel, interviewing Brand, and his illness, he was anxious to get back to rescue work. As the *Tari* negotiations had been dragging on since April, Hirschmann met with Gilbert Simond of the Red Cross about the stalled attempts at obtaining safe conducts for the ship, among other things. Despite German ambassador Von Papen's repeated attempts to convince his government to issue a safe conduct for the *Tari*, the Germans continued to refuse. Simond explained that while Hirschmann had been in the United States, Steinhardt had asked the Turkish Foreign Minister to approach the Germans directly about the safe conduct. Since the Turkish government had been involved in a diplomatic crisis with Germany regarding a reduction in chrome shipments, their request regarding the *Tari* was ill-timed. When Simond had asked Steinhardt about his decision to involve the Turkish Foreign Minister

rather than simply allowing it to be a Red Cross request, the Ambassador implied it had been at Hirschmann's urging. Needing very little reason to assume the worst of Steinhardt's actions, Hirschmann was angry at what he perceived to be a deliberate betrayal, with Steinhardt blaming him for the failure of the project.²⁵ Whether it was due to the involvement of the Turkish Foreign Ministry at the wrong time or to the fact that the Germans did not want to allow refugee evacuations, the safe conduct for the *Tari* did not seem likely.

On July 5th, the same day as his discussion with Simond regarding the safe conducts, Hirschmann met with Romanian minister Alexandru Cretzianu in Simond's house. Cretzianu emphasized Romanian willingness to assist with refugee escape and described a recently-created committee of government and Jewish organization representatives in Bucharest tasked with facilitating departures. There was chaos due to Allied bombings which were making things more difficult, and Romania was unwilling to grant overt aid and risk being invaded by Germany, but Cretzianu was willing to forward any of Hirschmann's suggestions to Bucharest. Hirschmann asked for additional information about refugee movement out of Transnistria, about the organization of the refugee committee, and about their methods for aiding emigration. Cretzianu promised to report back.²⁶

If the Romanian government was aiding emigration, the fruits of this labor had yet to appear in Istanbul. No refugee ships arrived in the month of June. With the *Milka* tied

²⁵ Ira Hirschmann, Hirschmann memo of meeting from Simond, 1944 July 5; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 49, Folder "Turkey, Volume 8"; FDRL.

²⁶ Ira Hirschmann, Memo to Kelley on Cretzianu meeting, 1944 July 5; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 8, Folder 3, Documents 424-426; USHMM.

up in Burgas—the Germans ordered the Bulgarian government to retain it in port—and the *Maritza* having sunk on its’ return voyage from Istanbul, boats were still a valuable commodity. Hirschmann was excited on July 8th to see the *Kazbek*, a Turkish ship, arrive from Constanța carrying 739 passengers, 251 of whom were children.²⁷ Hirschmann went to the dock to watch the passengers disembark and transfer to the train at Haydarpaşa terminal that would take them to Palestine. In his diary, Hirschmann wrote:

258 children are among those I had brought out of Transnistria. Spindle-legged, emaciated little orphans, carrying all their life's possessions in their skinny arms in a bundle. Large bellies, aged faces. Thus has Hitler wrought!...The sight of these children...is graven on my heart and will stay with me. It serves only to urge me to re-double my efforts.”²⁸

The *Kazbek* was the only refugee ship to arrive in Istanbul in July.

Back in Washington, the War Refugee Board heard rumors that refugees were having difficulty crossing the Turkish border on foot; without visas, border guards were turning them back. It was the subject of cables, and a little bit of intrigue on the part of the Board. On June 2nd, with Hirschmann still in the United States, the WRB wrote to Steinhardt, pleased at his report that small boats of Greek Jews were being allowed to land near Izmir and were granted visas along the same lines as those given to refugees arriving on larger boats in Istanbul. The Board asked Steinhardt whether the Turkish government would allow the same courtesies to refugees crossing the border on foot from Bulgaria. A few days later, Steinhardt responded that “it is thought the Turkish agreement

²⁷ Robert Kelley reported on 739 refugees. Hirschmann wrote in his diary that there had been 758, while Joseph Schwartz, now in Istanbul, told the Joint there had been 742. Robert Kelley, Cable from Ankara about the *Kazbek*, 1944 July 18; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 7, Documents 601; USHMM. Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 July 10; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL. Burton Berry, Cable from Schwartz to Joint, 1944 July 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 18, Folder 9, Documents 403; USHMM.

²⁸ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 July 10; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

to an ‘arrangement’ involving violation of their own laws by allowing refugees or any other individuals to enter Turkey without Turkish visas an extremely remote possibility,” but he was sure that on a case-by-case basis, the refugees would “be treated with the same kindness” as the Greek refugees.²⁹

Steinhardt’s certainty was not enough for the Board, which was receiving pressure from the World Jewish Congress and other Jewish organizations to get the President to appeal directly to Turkey to instruct her border guards to allow refugees safe entry. The Board sent a polite response to Steinhardt’s cable, asking him to reconsider in light of the danger posed to refugees waiting on the border for bureaucratic intervention. The same day, they decided to try another tactic. Earlier in the spring, when the Board did not believe Ambassador Hayes was alerting the Spanish to the situation regarding protective papers, they had asked Clarence Pickett of the AFSC to appeal directly to the Spanish ambassador—on behalf of his organization, but presenting the Board’s requests. This time, the WRB used Rabbi Baruch Korff of the Vaad Hatzalah, and their involvement was even more direct. On June 15th, one of the Board’s Assistant Executive Directors, Lawrence Lesser, drafted a memo explaining that it was his understanding that refugees without Turkish visas were allowed to disembark boats, but if they arrived by land, they risked being turned back by border guards. Lesser concluded the memo by writing, “[I]f Turkish border guards were instructed not to interfere with refugees until they crossed the border...it would seem that many additional lives would be saved.” Lesser sent his memo

²⁹ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable to Washington about separate representations, 1944 June 5; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 5, Folder 6, Documents 981; USHMM.

to Rabbi Korff.³⁰ As soon as he received the memo, Korff sent it to the Turkish ambassador under his own signature and in the name of the Vaad and other Orthodox organizations.³¹ The text was identical to Lesser's draft. A week later, Rabbi Korff met with Edward Stettinius at the State Department, presented him with a copy of the memo, and asked the United States to officially intervene.³²

Despite the Board's secret attempt to appeal directly to the Turkish government, there is no evidence it made a difference. Steinhardt remained involved and asked for specific anecdotes about refugees being turned back, since the Turkish border guards had been under instruction to hold people who presented themselves as refugees until they could be investigated. Neither the Board nor any of the relief agencies could supply any specific incidents, and though Hirschmann explained that fewer than twenty people even attempted to cross the border in May and June (most of whom were granted visas) the proposal remained in active discussion all summer.³³

Robert Murphy

Refugees were still escaping from Yugoslavia into Italy, and the Board wanted to keep it that way. In the spring, the War Refugee Board had discovered that the military had issued a directive discouraging refugee evacuations from Yugoslavia to Italy, since

³⁰ Lawrence Lesser, Memo proposing Turkey allow land border crossings, 1944 June 15; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 11, Folder 6, Documents 919; USHMM.

³¹ Baruch Korff, Letter to the Turkish ambassador, 1944 June 16; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 24, Folder 23, Documents 538-539; USHMM.

³² Edward Stettinius, Minutes of meeting between Stettinius and Korff, 1944 June 22; RG-59, "War Refugee Board," Box 2, Folder Vaad Hatzalah; NACP.

³³ Ira Hirschmann, Cable about border crossings, part 1, 1944 July 15; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 18, Folder 6, Documents 996; USHMM. Ira Hirschmann, Cable about border crossings, part 2, 1944 July 15; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 18, Folder 6, Documents 1000-1001; USHMM.

facilities to care for refugees there and in North Africa were dangerously overburdened. The Board used this information to appeal to the President, who agreed that refugee arrivals should not be impeded and announced the establishment of the Fort Ontario Emergency Refugee Shelter. Still, the Board wanted to be sure that the directive had been rescinded. On June 10th, Ambassador Robert Murphy, informed that the President disagreed with the directive, told the WRB, “I should like to make it quite clear that there has been no intention on the part of AFHQ [Allied Forces Headquarters] to discourage escape of refugees from the Balkan countries.”³⁴ In a long cable, he explained that the situation in Yugoslavia had made it more difficult for refugees to leave, but that the military was exploring the establishment of new refugee havens in North Africa to care for them. He added that UNRRA personnel would be needed to staff the facilities, as the military was engaged in operations elsewhere, but otherwise the situation had improved. The cable was meant to be reassuring.

Murphy was not being deceptive. In response to the overburdening of temporary havens in North Africa, the military—with the assistance of the British and the Free French—was actively seeking new camps for refugees. The British agreed to open a small camp for 1,500 in Tripolitania, which had first been mentioned as a possible location at the Bermuda Conference, while the United States took the lead in Philippeville, a new camp also known as Camp Jeanne d’Arc, in northeast Algeria. The military designed Philippeville to hold 8,000 refugees, but it could expand to 40,000 if necessary, as long as medical personnel could be found to staff it. The WRB was only

³⁴ Selden Chapin, Murphy updates WRB on refugee possibilities, 1944 June 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 13, Documents 700-704; USHMM.

marginally involved in the plans for the camp, which was a military project, with UNRRA scheduled to take over on October 1st.

Although Murphy's June 10th cable was a carefully-worded explanation of the military's plans regarding refugees, the Board was not satisfied. Pehle wrote to Stettinius on June 19th that he was "somewhat surprised" (the draft of Pehle's memo used the phrase "frankly amazed")³⁵ to receive Murphy's cable claiming that there was no intention of discouraging refugees, as the Board's information indicated the opposite.³⁶ Pehle attached a strong cable to Murphy demanding clarification and asking explicitly whether the April directive was still in effect.³⁷ Pehle was proud of his missive, reporting to Morgenthau that, "There may have been stronger cables sent to Ambassadors, but I don't know of any."³⁸ The State Department debated the text for nine days before sending it. Though one of his aides felt that all the disparaging language should be removed, since the cable "practically accuses [Murphy] of bad faith," Adolf Berle was willing to send it, convinced there was a logical explanation:

I do not think it is a case of bad faith; I think Murphy is talking about a different type of refugee and that his memorandum of April 29 probably related to the possible flight, en masse, of great numbers of Partisan Yugoslavs which might have embarrassed the coming drive against Rome. Pehle's "refugees" are, of

³⁵ John Pehle, Draft memo to Stettinius about Murphy, 1944 June 16; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 13, Documents 738-740; USHMM.

³⁶ John Pehle, Memo to Stettinius about Murphy, 1944 June 19; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 13, Documents 736; USHMM.

³⁷ Josiah DuBois, Draft cable to Murphy, 1944 June 17; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 13, Documents 694-699; USHMM. In a letter on June 17th, Leonard Ackermann indicated that the directive was rescinded on June 14th. Leonard Ackermann, Letter to Pehle, 1944 June 17; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 1, Documents 99-102; USHMM.

³⁸ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., "Group" meeting, 1944 June 20; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 745, Document 113-139; LOC.

course, Jews and minority groups who are being driven out. But there is no reason for not sending the telegram along and finding out.³⁹

Hull gave the final word. “Tone down a little the reflections on Murphy and send.”⁴⁰ The Board’s “We are somewhat puzzled by your cable” became “Board will appreciate clarification.”⁴¹ There is no record that Murphy ever responded to the cable.

Fedhala

While the military authorities planned for new camps in North Africa, one officially opened. After fifteen months of preparation, stretching from the Bermuda conference in April 1943 through and past D-Day; after endless negotiations between the United States, the British, the Free French, UNRRA, the War Refugee Board, and the Intergovernmental Committee of Refugees; after negotiating new supply chains, since the Allied forces were moving out of the area; and after an interminable wait in Spain as four planned dates of departure passed by, 573 refugees arrived in Fedhala. Three weeks later, Valentin Smith of the IGC wrote to Emerson in London to suggest that Fedhala be closed. He was serious.

Had he heard of Smith’s suggestion, David Blickenstaff in Madrid would have protested, if only out of his incredible frustration over the whole project. Responsible for gathering the refugees in Spain, a process in which he had been involved since February and which was left to him alone once Moses Beckelman returned to North Africa to set

³⁹ George Warren and Adolf Berle, Notes regarding WRB draft cables, 1944 June 23; RG-59, “War Refugee Board,” Box 2, Folder Misc. July; NACP.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Cordell Hull, Cable to Italy transmitting message from WRB, 1944 June 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 13, Documents 689-693; USHMM.

up the camp, Blickenstaff had to deal with the long delays waiting for a boat.⁴² The delays caused both logistical and political headaches. Not only did Blickenstaff have to arrange for an indeterminate period of housing and supplies for all the refugees before they left, the delay gave a representative of the Jewish Agency time to try to pull 64 Sephardic Jews out of the group so they could wait for transport to Palestine instead. In response, Spain threatened to hold up the entire evacuation unless everyone left as soon as possible, and Blickenstaff had to convince the Jewish Agency that refugees could also leave for Palestine from Fedhala.⁴³ In a letter to the American Friends Service Committee, Blickenstaff explained:

It often seemed that complications and difficulties were purposely put in the way to retard the whole process from beginning to end—from the filing of applications; preparation and despatch to the various authorities of the applications; screening of the lists; preparation and processing of exit visa requests; preparation of identity documents; synchronization of rail transport, lodging of such a large group in such a small town as Cadiz; medical, customs, and police control in Cadiz; to the mechanics of getting everyone on board in a minimum time. [sic]⁴⁴

His frustration had not ended on June 21st, when the group sailed. Twenty-two of the refugees were found to have lice and were left behind in Spain, leaving Blickenstaff to frantically contact local police and bureaucrats to adjust their papers, find them housing—which resulted in a 14-hour trip to another town only to be turned back because

⁴² After the British delayed the departure four times due to the lack of an available boat, Mr. Sasseville of the Algiers office of the War Shipping Administration stepped in and procured one “on the first try and five days earlier than originally anticipated.” Leonard Ackermann, Letter to Pehle, 1944 June 17; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 1, Documents 99-102; USHMM.

⁴³ Selden Chapin, Ackermann asks Blickenstaff to intervene with Jewish Agency, 1944 June 16; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 11, Folder 4, Documents 525; USHMM.

⁴⁴ Lois Kellogg Jessup, Jessup shares letter from David Blickenstaff, 1944 August 11; American Friends Service Committee Refugee Section, Box 5, Folder “Spanish Refugees”; AFSC.

the mayor of the town would only allow them to remain for 24 hours—and finally arrange for passage on a French convoy leaving a week later.⁴⁵ The experience seemed to encapsulate the whole Fedhala project perfectly.

As with Philippeville, the Board was not involved in the everyday operations of Fedhala, but since they had been involved in planning for the camp they were still consulted on larger issues. For example, since the camp was designed to hold 2,000 people, the Board pressed the French to allow small groups of refugees to travel on their convoy ships from Spain to North Africa to fill the available space at the camp. The Board also arranged to pay the port dues for the ship that finally carried the Fedhala refugees, a detail which had been overlooked.

On July 17th, Herbert Emerson cabled the WRB to share a message he had received from their representative, Valentin Smith, in Algiers. Smith argued that since no more large groups of refugees were expected in Fedhala, the camp was a waste of money. It would be more cost-effective to close Fedhala and transfer the refugees to one of the larger North African camps holding Yugoslav refugees. Emerson felt the move premature, and indicated that it would be the decision of the United States and Great Britain rather than the IGC and WRB specifically. Pehle agreed, calling the suggestion “difficult to understand” since the Allies were engaged in expanding and opening new camps, not shutting down ones that (finally) existed. A few days later, the Board learned that Moses Beckelman had cabled UNRRA headquarters on July 7th, only two weeks after the main group of refugees arrived in his camp, to suggest closing the camp and

⁴⁵ Ibid.

transferring the refugees.⁴⁶ UNRRA was willing to consider closing it, but the Board and IGC in London were not, resulting in cables and investigations to determine what entity, exactly, was responsible for the camp. Eventually, it was decided that the Foreign Economic Administration was still in charge, using UNRRA staff, with the plan to transfer authority to UNRRA at some point in the future.⁴⁷ Since both the FEA and UNRRA were willing to consider closing the camp, it seemed likely that the camp would not remain open into the fall.⁴⁸

Fort Ontario

Leonard Ackermann had been attending meetings about Fedhala since he had been appointed a War Refugee Board representative in North Africa, but by June 1944 it was just a matter of waiting for the refugees to arrive. Once President Roosevelt announced the creation of Fort Ontario, Ackermann's focus turned almost exclusively to details regarding that camp. The War Department, accustomed to organizing operations in a short amount of time, delegated work immediately. On June 10th, three days before he even received Roosevelt's official communication about Fort Ontario, Robert Murphy was already making arrangements for a ship and priority for the refugees. In Oswego, the War Relocation Authority began preparing the camp. By June 17th, there was a boat, a sailing date, and agreement on details as specific as the group responsible for medical

⁴⁶ UNRRA staff in Casablanca, Cable listing reasons why Fedhala should be closed, 1944 July 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 20, Folder 18, Documents 846-848; USHMM.

⁴⁷ Cordell Hull, Cable to London confirming FEA is responsible for Fedhala, 1944 August 11; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 11, Folder 2, Documents 137; USHMM.

⁴⁸ Matthew Marks, Memo to Friedman about Fedhala, 1944 August 9; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 11, Folder 2, Documents 138-139; USHMM.

examinations for the refugees and the information that would need to be on their nametags. But they did not have refugees. Two days later, leaving James Saxon in charge of things in Algiers, Ackermann went to Italy to find some.

Within days, he discovered what a daunting task it would be. Refugees were spread throughout Allied-occupied Italy—some in camps, but many not. Ackermann, Captain Lewis Korn (a reparations officer assigned to the Displaced Persons subcommission), David Hartley of the American Friends Service Committee, and Max Perlman of the Joint decided to split up and make a motor tour of Italy to gather applications. A Lt. Col. Tethergill and Sir Clifford Heathcote-Smith of the IGC assisted in Naples and Rome. Ackermann and Korn stayed together, with Hartley working as an advance man, going to towns and camps to announce the coming arrival of men who would interview refugees interested in traveling to the United States.⁴⁹ By July 12th, Ackermann had traveled from Bari to Santa Maria di Bagni, to Taranto, and Ferramonti. He had spent three days in a hospital with stomach problems, slept on straw, and was bitten by so many bed bugs he joked that he should get the Purple Heart for it. He answered hundreds of questions—many of which were about whether the refugees could remain in the United States after the war—and received criticism from Zionist groups who wanted to use the opportunity to push for more immigration to Palestine instead. Ackermann and Korn collected more than 3,000 names of interested refugees and interviewed hundreds of them.⁵⁰ In a letter to his family, Ackermann described the pain

⁴⁹ Leonard Ackermann, Letter to Pehle, 1944 June 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 1, Documents 90-94; USHMM.

⁵⁰ Leonard Ackermann, Letter to Pehle, 1944 July 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 1, Documents 74-81; USHMM.

of these interviews and the sight of refugees who looked twenty years older than they should, presenting him with passports stamped with a “J.”⁵¹ In the end, Ackermann and Korn selected 778 refugees, with half coming from either Santa Maria di Bagni or Ferramonti. The remaining 203 came mainly from Rome, for a total of 981.⁵² They tried to create a demographically mixed group, with lots of families but few men of military age, and no Yugoslav partisans (though Heathcote-Smith was later criticized for ignoring these guidelines and selecting young men). Fourteen different nationalities were represented, and 918 of the refugees were Jewish. It was, Ackermann concluded in a letter to Pehle, “one of the most difficult and heartrending jobs that I have ever undertaken.”⁵³ In late July, the refugees sailed on the *Henry Gibbons* for the United States, landing in New York on August 3rd, and after taking a train to Fort Ontario, arrived there August 5th.

Since the War Relocation Authority was in charge of camp administration, the arrival of refugees did not receive much attention from WRB staff. With the exception of Leonard Ackermann’s work, none of the Board staff were involved with Fort Ontario after Roosevelt’s announcement, except to answer questions from the public looking for information or asking if relatives could be included; from the press seeking access to the

⁵¹ Leonard Ackermann, Letter from Ackermann to his family, 1944 July 30; Lesser family papers, private collection.

⁵² By the time the refugees arrived at Fort Ontario, there were 982. Little Henry Maurer was born in a jeep on the way from the refugee camp to the ship. The other refugees nicknamed the infant “International Harry”. Though another young child died on the ship, the number of refugees who arrived in Oswego was reported as 982. Dr. Ruth Gruber, who accompanied the ship from Italy on behalf of the War Relocation Authority, wrote her memoir, *Haven*, about the experience. *Independent Jewish Press Service*, “Oswego Welcomes 982 ‘Token Refugees’ on their Arrival,” 1944 August 7, World Jewish Congress New York Office, D-Series (Rescue and Relief), Digital collection, Folder 107-02; USHMM.

⁵³ Leonard Ackermann, Letter to Pehle, 1944 July 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 1, Documents 74-81; USHMM.

refugee camp; and from some isolationist members of Congress asking for legal justification for the administration's perceived circumventing of immigration laws.

The number of letters about Fort Ontario, however, was dwarfed by the number of letters from the public about the situation in Hungary, most either pleading for more active measures to save Hungarian Jews or asking for assistance saving relatives. In June and July alone, the Board received several hundred messages from private citizens about Hungary, and many more from Jewish relief organizations.⁵⁴ These pleas fell on sympathetic ears, and much of the summer was spent trying to figure out how to save the Jews of Hungary.

Psychological warfare

Though the results were intangible, the Board continued to act on the premise that the most effective way to save lives was in the realm of psychological warfare—either convincing active or would-be perpetrators to cease their actions or encouraging bystanders to save would-be victims. The nearly constant flow of speeches broadcast into Europe from prominent Hungarian-Americans had slowed; instead, the Office of War Information made broadcasts and dropped leaflets featuring American political and religious figures. Roosevelt's announcement of Fort Ontario was broadcast widely, and his March 24th statement on atrocities was also rebroadcast. Cardinal Francis Spellman, the Archbishop of New York, wrote his own three-page statement, which he gave to the

⁵⁴ The number of letters from the public is likely much higher, possibly in the thousands, but the WRB only retained a sampling of this correspondence, mainly from authors with a last name beginning with "A" or "B."

Board to broadcast provided they did not edit it in any way.⁵⁵ Spellman professed shock at the persecution of Jews, stating that it was against all Catholic doctrine, and, invoking Hungarian hero St. Stephen, concluded, "It is incredible that a people with such profound Christian faith... would join in a hymn of hatred and willingly submit to the blood lust and brigandage of tyranny."⁵⁶ The statement was broadcast by radio, covered in the national and international press, and dropped in leaflet form over Hungary. Both the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee unanimously approved separate resolutions condemning the persecution of the Hungarian Jews, which were also transmitted.⁵⁷ The House Committee was "not content merely to join with those who have expressed their horror at the barbarism of the governments involved... but hereby expresses its determination that the criminals who are guilty of this inhuman conduct shall be brought to justice..."⁵⁸ When Cordell Hull was asked at a press conference about the House Committee's statement, he replied that many people in this country were concerned, and "we could not have too many persons, officials, or groups join in that sort of strong and indignant protest."⁵⁹ At another press conference in the middle of July, Hull issued a statement threatening post-war punishment, saying, "The puppet Hungarian Government, by its violation of the most elementary human rights, and

⁵⁵ Steinhardt reported editing the text to delete the reference to persecutions by the Turks, which Spellman had included as part of an appeal to Hungarian solidarity. Laurence Steinhardt, Cable to WRB about Spellman statement, 1944 July 3; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 7, Folder 1, Documents 72; USHMM.

⁵⁶ Lawrence Lesser, Draft cable to neutral embassies transmitting Spellman statement, 1944 June 28; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 747, Document 280-281; LOC.

⁵⁷ In another instance of relying on his network of colleagues and associates, Pehle pointed out to Morgenthau that David Delman, formerly a member of the Foreign Funds Control staff and lately an aide to Senator Robert Wagner, was influential in obtaining the signatures of the Senators. John Pehle, Memo to Morgenthau, 1944 June 6; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 740, Document 133; LOC.

⁵⁸ Cordell Hull, Cable to neutral embassies about House Resolution, 1944 June 28; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 4, Folder 25, Documents 705-708; USHMM.

⁵⁹ Cordell Hull, State Department bulletin, 1944 June 27; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 4; FDRL.

by its servile adoption of the worst features of the Nazi racial policy stands condemned before history.”⁶⁰ Hull’s statements, too, were distributed for dissemination in Hungary and other belligerent countries.

Protests against the persecution of Hungary’s Jews came from outside the United States as well. The World Council of Churches in Geneva made a public appeal to Switzerland and to the International Red Cross to do everything possible to intervene in Hungary, citing evidence that there were four crematoria in Auschwitz-Birkenau working continuously.⁶¹ The King of Sweden made a personal appeal to Admiral Horthy in Hungary. After receiving requests from the War Refugee Board and many of the Jewish relief agencies, Archbishop Amleto Giovanni Cicognani in Washington communicated an appeal to the Cardinal Secretary of State. On June 25th, Pope Pius XII addressed an open telegram to Horthy asking him to do what he could to in favor of the “many unfortunate people who are suffering because of their race or nationality.”⁶²

The War Refugee Board not only appealed to the Pope to send a message to Hungary, they sent their own protest through Switzerland. On June 13th, the Swiss Foreign Office accepted a note from the United States and agreed to transmit it verbatim to the Hungarian government. The short note began:

The Government of the United States requests that the appropriate authorities in Hungary state their intentions with regard to the future treatment to be accorded to Jews in ghettos and concentration camps, particularly whether the Hungarian authorities contemplate the imposition of discriminatory reductions in food

⁶⁰ *New York Times*, “Hull Again Scores Nazi Massacres,” 1944 July 15; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 6, Folder 7, Documents 829; USHMM.

⁶¹ *The Evening Star*, “Swiss Churches Hit Terrific Persecution of Jews in Hungary,” 1944 July 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 6, Folder 7, Documents 842; USHMM.

⁶² A.G. Cicognani, Letter to the WRB about appeal to Hungary, 1944 July 7; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 6, Folder 8, Documents 968-969; USHMM.

rations, forced deportations to Poland or elsewhere, or the adoption of other measures which, like those mentioned, will be tantamount to mass execution.⁶³

The note concluded by reminding the Hungarian government of the seriousness with which the United States considered these offenses, and of the promise of postwar punishment. The Board hoped their request, based on a suggestion by the World Jewish Congress in light of the fact that Hungarian authorities continued to deny that Jews were being deported and murdered, would work as a deterrent.⁶⁴

Some began to publicly worry that this method of psychological warfare—of changing the minds of perpetrators by appealing to morality—was not enough. Gabriel Wechsler of the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe wrote a letter to the editor of the *New York Times* on July 10th to suggest that the Allies threaten retaliation against the Hungarian [Christian] population if the exterminations did not stop. Johan Smertenko, also of the Emergency Committee, suggested in a letter to Roosevelt that the Nazis' continued use of poison gas should be considered a provocation for retaliation in kind. It was not just the Emergency Committee. A private citizen, Carl Beck of Orangeburg, New York, wrote a letter to the *New York Times* suggesting that the Allies announce that for every prisoner the Nazis killed, the Allies would kill ten random German civilians as soon as they crossed into Germany.⁶⁵ A. Leon Kubowitzki of the World Jewish Congress, who brought the letter to Pehle's attention, remarked that, "I think that the fact that the 'New York Times' publishes such a letter is revealing of the

⁶³ Bern embassy, Message to Swiss Foreign Office, 1944 June 13; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 3; FDRL.

⁶⁴ A. Leon Kubowitzki, Letter to the WRB about request for Hungary, 1944 June 6; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 5, Folder 2, Documents 322-324; USHMM.

⁶⁵ *New York Times*, Letters to the Editor: Reprisals on Enemy Sought, 1944 July 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 2, Documents 135; USHMM.

change of mind which has occurred in the public opinion of this country with regard to the question of retaliation..."⁶⁶ As its title suggested, a *Washington Post* editorial entitled "Useless Pleas" did not support continued appeals to Hungary, but noted that some British newspapers had recently advocated wiping one German town off the face of the earth as a retaliatory gesture. While some would feel this is inhumane, the *Post* editorial board felt that the real argument against it was military: "Any reprisal which diverts our arms from the central task of bringing the enemy to his knees is wasteful... Look to the end!"⁶⁷

The Bombing of Rail lines and Extermination Facilities⁶⁸

In response of the hundreds of appeals received from interested members of the public to do something—anything—to save the Jews of Hungary, the WRB staff explored all suggestions that seemed feasible. On June 18th, Rabbi Jacob Rosenheim of Agudas Israel sent letters to Secretaries Hull, Morgenthau, and Stimson, as well as to John Pehle, appealing for decisive action to slow the deportation and extermination of Hungarian Jews. He implored them that this "could be achieved by paralyzing the railroad traffic from Hungary to Poland, especially by an aerial bombardment of the most important railway junctions of KASCHAU and PRESOV, through which the deportation-

⁶⁶ A. Leon Kubowitzki, Kubowitzki alerts Pehle to *New York Times* letter, 1944 July 21; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 27, Folder 2, Documents 134; USHMM.

⁶⁷ *Washington Post*, Editorial: "Useless Pleas", 1944 July 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 6, Folder 7, Documents 847; USHMM.

⁶⁸ This topic has garnered a great deal of scholarly and public debate. While this work is confined to the role of the War Refugee Board, interested readers should refer to *The Bombing of Auschwitz: Should the Allies Have Attempted it?* This collection of articles from both sides of the debate—those who argue a bombing action was feasible and would have saved lives and those who argue the opposite—is by no means complete but it will introduce the reader to the leading arguments and contains the most oft-cited articles. Michael J. Neufeld and Michael Berenbaum. *The Bombing of Auschwitz: Should the Allies Have Attempted It?* New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.

trains pass. By such a procedure, precious time would be won and thousands of human lives preserved."⁶⁹ Rosenheim's idea to bomb the railway junctions came from Isaac Sternbuch, who had sent a cable through the Bern legation to the Union of Orthodox Rabbis on June 2nd.⁷⁰ In the cable, Sternbuch included an extensive array of pleas and complaints as well as provided his organization with the terrible information he was hearing about ghettos and deportations in Hungary. He asked about the Vittel internment camp, begged for forged passports he could distribute, and for more money for his work. He also passed along a twofold request from the Rabbi of Neutra in Slovakia: for the destruction of the railway junctures by air, and for at least \$1,000,000 for the rescue of his community.⁷¹ Upon receiving the cable, the Board acted as it did with all cables between organizations and their representatives that had passed through the censor — they delivered it on June 12th to the intended recipient without comment.

At first, most of the attention went to the Rabbi of Neutra's financial request. The Union shared the cable with other relief organizations, including Agudas Israel. Vaad Hatzalah representatives went to the United Hungarian Jews of America and to the World Jewish Congress to request money to send to Sternbuch.⁷² They must have gone to the

⁶⁹ Jacob Rosenheim, Letter to Henry Morgenthau, 1944 June 18; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 6, Folder 7, Documents 734; USHMM.

⁷⁰ Rosenheim's proposal was actually not the first message the Board in Washington had received which mentioned bombing the railroad lines. On June 2nd, the Board received a cable from the Jewish Agency about several topics, including the *Tari* and other Turkish boats, but also about the confirmed deportation of Jews from Hungary. The cable included the line "Suggest deportation would be impeded if railways between Hungary and Poland could be bombed." On the copy of the cable in the War Refugee Board's records, there is a handwritten annotation next to this sentence by an unknown author. The annotation reads, "If Germans want to kill Jews, this will not stop them." L.C. Pinkerton, Jerusalem sends WRB message from Jewish Agency, 1944 June 2; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 2, Documents 140-141; USHMM.

⁷¹ Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern transmitting message from Sternbuch for Union of Orthodox Rabbis, 1944 June 2; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 6, Folder 5, Documents 428-431; USHMM.

⁷² Mitchell Luftman, Letter to Kubowitzki, 1944 June 16, World Jewish Congress New York Office, D-Series (Rescue and Relief), Digital collection, Folder 107-06. USHMM.

Joint as well, for Moses Leavitt cabled Saly Mayer to ask him to meet with Sternbuch about his request for that much money. The Vaad sent \$100,000 to Sternbuch, but, unable to secure the rest of the funds from the World Jewish Congress or the Joint, the Union of Orthodox Rabbis representative Abraham Kalmanowitz wrote to the War Refugee Board on June 23rd to “request you to designate funds under your control, whatever sums necessary to completely exploit the rescue possibilities in these plans submitted.”⁷³ Kalmanowitz knew that no plans had actually been submitted. In fact, despite repeated requests, neither the War Refugee Board, nor Roswell McClelland, nor even Isaac Sternbuch, knew the reason the Rabbi of Neutra was appealing for so much money. The Joint sent a cable to Mayer, and the Union of Orthodox Rabbis to Sternbuch, asking them to meet with Roswell McClelland about the money.⁷⁴ In the United States, after Rosenheim sent his letters, attention turned to the bombing request.

On June 24th, Pehle saw Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy about Rosenheim’s proposal. In a memo of the conversation, Pehle wrote that he had made it clear that the request was merely

for whatever exploration might be appropriate by the War Department, but I had several doubts about the matter, namely, 1) whether appropriate to use military planes and personnel for this purpose; 2) whether difficult to take this rail road line out of commission for a long enough period to do any good; and 3) even assuming that this railroad line were put out of commission for some period of time, whether it would help the Jews in Hungary.⁷⁵

⁷³ Abraham Kalmanowitz, Letter to the WRB, 1944 June 23; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 11, Document 710; USHMM.

⁷⁴ Cordell Hull, Cable to Bern from Kotler to Sternbuch, 1944 June 21; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 11, Documents 703-705; USHMM. Cordell Hull, Cable to Bern from Leavitt to Mayer, 1944 June 16; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 11, Documents 695-696; USHMM.

⁷⁵ John Pehle, Memo to the files, 1944 June 24; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 6, Folder 6, Document 722; USHMM.

Pehle added that he was not requesting action, just exploration. He wrote to Rosenheim to let him know the appeal was under consideration.

The same day, Roswell McClelland sent a long cable from Bern, one he had been preparing for several weeks.⁷⁶ He had gathered evidence from the Hungarian and Czech underground, from Hechaluz in Geneva (which shared messages they were receiving from Bucharest and Budapest), from other relief organizations, and through his own research. To help him visualize the situation, McClelland even hired a Swiss refugee architect to draw him a map of Hungary that included the railroad lines to Poland, based on information gathered by McClelland's assistant, Laszlo Hamori, at the library at the League of Nation headquarters.⁷⁷ The cable began, "Now there is no doubt that the majority of the Jewish population east of the Danube especially in eastern, northern, and north eastern Hungary has been deported to Poland." McClelland listed the sources for his information, requesting they remain confidential. He explained in detail the process of ghettoization and the period of deportation, which he believed to have lasted from May 15th to the middle of June and involved 12,000 people per day, all of whom were

⁷⁶ It is extremely important to note that the War Refugee Board staff, War Department, and Jewish relief organizations did not have the information about Auschwitz-Birkenau that exists today. The Board in Washington had yet to receive copies of the Auschwitz Protocols, which would have given them some additional information, and aerial photography of the camp taken during this time was not discovered until 1977. Two documents are instructive in demonstrating the lack of reliable information. On July 5th, Kubowitzki of the World Jewish Congress sent a cable to Ernest Frischer of the Czech Ministry in London asking his advice on the Rabbi of Neutra's plea and requesting information about Birkenau, writing "Shocked by Birkenau extermination. Were convinced Birkenau only labor camp." In Switzerland, Roswell McClelland received repeated letters from Isaac Sternbuch asking about the money and the bombing. Sternbuch could not understand why the United States would not bomb "Treblinka" [likely Treblinka, which had been destroyed by the Nazis in 1943]...Poniatow...Trawniki...[and] the well known place of Oswiecim in East-Prussia." The southernmost border of East Prussia was approximately 280 miles north of Auschwitz. Sternbuch felt that if McClelland, "as mandatory of Mr. Roosevelt wired and demanded the bombing of these places, they would act quicklier in America." A. Leon Kubowitzki, Kubowitzki asks Pehle to send message to Frischer, 1944 July 5; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 20, Folder 8, Documents 555; USHMM. Isaac Sternbuch, Letter to McClelland, 1944 June 27; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 70, Folder 2; FDRL.

⁷⁷ McClelland made the map for his own use; it was not transmitted to Washington. Map of Transcarpathia, 1944 June 15; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 1; FDRL. Frank Otten, McClelland letter to Otten, 1944 July 4; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 72, Folder 6; FDRL.

spending 2-3 days in cattle cars on their way to Auschwitz-Birkenau. He listed five railway stretches, including between Kaschau (Košice) and Prešov, that were used frequently, and wrote that:

It is urged by all sources of this information in Hungary and Slovakia that vital sections of these lines be bombed, particularly the bridges along above numbered stretch 1) [Kaschau-Prešov], as the only possible means of retarding or putting a stop to further deportations. (I am not able to venture an opinion on the utility of this suggestion, which I submit as the proposal of these agencies.)

McClelland concluded by listing how many people had been deported from various areas of Hungary and the names of the Hungarian officials responsible, as well as requesting continued warnings and leaflets.⁷⁸ When he received McClelland's cable, Pehle sent a copy to McCloy, asking him to note the paragraph about bombing the railway lines.⁷⁹

While awaiting McCloy's response, Benjamin Akzin of the Board's staff sent Lawrence Lesser a memo advocating not for the destruction of the rail lines, but for the wholesale destruction of Auschwitz and Birkenau. He admitted the Jews would be killed in the process, "But such Jews are doomed to death anyhow. The destruction of the camps would not change their fate, but it would serve as visible retribution on their murderers and it might save the lives of future victims."⁸⁰ Kubowitzki of the World Jewish Congress arrived at the Board's office on July 1st, and met with Lesser to express his opinion on the matter, having seen the cable from Sternbuch. Kubowitzki did not support bombing the gas chambers and crematoria from the air, since "the first victims

⁷⁸ Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern transmitting message from McClelland, 1944 June 24; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 3; FDRL.

⁷⁹ John Pehle, Pehle forwards McClelland cable to McCloy, 1944 June 29; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 6, Folder 6, Documents 717-720; USHMM.

⁸⁰ Benjamin Akzin, Akzin memo to Lesser, 1944 June 29; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 6, Folder 6, Documents 713-714; USHMM.

would be the Jews who are gathered in these camps, and such a bombing would be a welcome pretext for the Germans to assert that their Jewish victims have been massacred not by their killers, but by Allied bombings.” Kubowitzki wanted them destroyed from the ground using Russian paratroopers or the Polish underground, and was bold enough to suggest Lesser draft a cable to the Polish government-in-exile in London to express the Board’s agreement.⁸¹ Nahum Goldmann also arrived, advocating that the Soviets and Americans “look for a way to destroy these camps by bombing or other means.”⁸²

On July 4th, McCloy sent his response to Pehle, writing that although the War Department appreciated the humanitarian motives of the appeal, it was “impracticable.” He explained that, “It could be executed only by the diversion of considerable air support essential to the success of our forces now engaged in decisive operations and would in any case be of such very doubtful efficacy that it would not amount to a practical project.”⁸³

The discussion did not end with McCloy’s negative response. Throughout July and August, the Board received several messages urging the destruction of the rail lines, the crematoria at Auschwitz-Birkenau, and the entire camp complex. Appeals came from the Czech Ministry in London, the Jewish Agency in Geneva (which also proposed the bombing of all government buildings in Budapest and reprisals against Germans in Allied hands), and the Emergency Committee. Leon Kubowitzki continued to remind the Board

⁸¹ A. Leon Kubowitzki, Letter to Pehle, 1944 July 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 6, Folder 6, Documents 715-716; USHMM. A. Leon Kubowitzki, Letter to Lesser, 1944 July 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 6, Folder 6, Documents 712; USHMM.

⁸² Nahum Goldmann, Letter to Jan Masaryk, 1944 July 3, World Jewish Congress New York Office, D-Series (Rescue and Relief), Digital collection, Folder 107-13. USHMM.

⁸³ John McCloy, Letter to Pehle, 1944 July 4; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 6, Folder 6, Documents 711; USHMM.

of his opposition to aerial bombings and advocated the use of partisan movements to destroy the gas chambers and crematoria from the ground. By August, other groups were willing to support the use of the underground, either exclusively or in conjunction with Allied military action. The American Jewish Conference held a mass meeting on July 31st to protest the persecution of Hungarian Jews; one of the resolutions from the meeting stated that “[a]ll measures should be taken by military authorities, with the help of the underground forces, to destroy....places where the Nazis have carried out their mass execution.”⁸⁴ When Israel Mereminski of the Jewish Labor Committee received a cable from the Yishuv in Jerusalem advocating bombing, he replied, “[S]uggest you negotiate directly with Polish underground and partisans for destruction of gas chambers and crematories.”⁸⁵

Like the relief agencies, the Board was hesitant to dismiss the suggestion. On July 13th, Pehle sent a draft memo to Stettinius, envisioning that when it was complete, Secretary Hull would send a copy to Stimson in the War Department and a copy to President Roosevelt. The memo opened with a description of the continuing deportations from Hungary, then stated, "Numerous suggestions have been made that some sort of military operations should be considered to meet the situation. While we are by no means convinced that any practicable action of this nature can be taken, we do feel that the military authorities should thoroughly explore this possibility." Optimistically, Joseph Friedman of the Board staff drafted a cover note for Roosevelt to sign, asking Stimson to

⁸⁴ American Jewish Conference, Text of declaration sponsored by mass meeting, 1944 July 31; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 16, Folder 4, Documents 18-20; USHMM.

⁸⁵ Since Mereminski consulted with the War Refugee Board prior to sending his response, he may have advocated this after being told that the War Department had deemed aerial bombings impractical. Israel Mereminski, Letter to Hodel 1944 August 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 19, Folder 11, Documents 673; USHMM.

take action on the request.⁸⁶ There is no evidence the memo was ever sent on to Hull, but it was clearly under serious consideration.

A few days after sending the draft to Stettinius, the War Refugee Board issued a “Memo on Actions Taken in Hungary” to Secretaries Hull, Stimson, and Morgenthau. In the six-page report describing all the WRB activities related to Hungary, Pehle added a section including all the suggestions that had been posited regarding “forestalling or hindering German extermination operations.” Since his draft memo was still with Stettinius, Pehle wrote that, “Arrangements are under way for the examination of these proposals by the competent military authorities.”⁸⁷ Even when not advocating for the action, Pehle and the Board staff always seemed to search for additional information, only dismissing proposals when they were convinced the idea would not work. The proposal to bomb the railway lines, and the gas chambers, and crematoria at Auschwitz remained under WRB consideration.

Money for Rescue

When Roswell McClelland and Saly Mayer met with Isaac Sternbuch about the Rabbi of Neutra’s request for \$1,000,000, they could not have been impressed with the scant amount of information he provided.⁸⁸ Sternbuch did not know any details of the rabbi’s plans, privately telling McClelland that he assumed the request was for use in

⁸⁶ John Pehle, Memo to Stettinius, 1944 July 13; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 5, Folder 2, Documents 268-270; USHMM.

⁸⁷ John Pehle, “Summary of Steps Taken by the War Refugee Board With Respect to the Jews of Hungary,” 1944 July 15; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 25, Folder 8, Documents 811-817; USHMM.

⁸⁸ Sternbuch also divulged that he had received a similar appeal for a large amount of money from Philip von Freudiger, who was part of Joel Brand’s group in Budapest, the Vaada. Josef Blum, Letter from Josef Blum in Budapest, 1944 June 12; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 3; FDRL.

Slovakia rather than for rescue or ransom in Hungary.⁸⁹ In his cable responding to the War Refugee Board, McClelland wrote that Sternbuch and Mayer were in agreement that the request for \$1,000,000 was either connected to Joel Brand's ransom proposal or might have been meant for the rescue of Orthodox Jews. McClelland also explained that prior to Joel Brand's departure for Istanbul in May 1944, the Jewish community of Budapest had paid the Germans \$200,000 as a down payment to prevent deportations. The deportations that immediately followed were the result of "overzealous" Hungarians, and the million-dollar request was possibly an attempt to pay a larger portion of the ransom in the hopes that further deportations would be avoided. The three men decided that "hereafter the financial leadership in the whole Hungarian question should remain in New York in the hands of the JDC. Regardless of the source, all funds available in USA should be centralized with JDC and transmitted to Mayer for relief or rescue...."⁹⁰ Mayer, in turn, agreed that all money he received from Orthodox sources would go towards the rescue of Orthodox groups. While McClelland was dubious that any rescue would be possible, he requested the Board make arrangements for emigration destinations for Hungarian Jews should they be allowed to leave, and for the Joint to send Saly Mayer a large sum of money, "at least one million dollars...of course such funds will be subject to any control desired, will remain in Switzerland, and without prior submission of proposal and specific authorization, will not be used."⁹¹

⁸⁹ Roswell McClelland, McClelland notes on meeting with Sternbuch, 1944 July 5; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 70, Folder 3; FDRL.

⁹⁰ Leland Harrison, Cable from McClelland to WRB, 1944 July 5; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 11, Documents 720-723; USHMM.

⁹¹ Ibid.

Three days later, the WRB received McClelland's cable and immediately contacted the staff of the Joint, who confirmed they could send \$1,000,000 to Mayer, though they may have to borrow some of it. Pehle also fixed another problem: Saly Mayer had been having trouble with Swiss banks regarding the large sums of money the Joint was licensed to send him for his work. The banks were withholding one-third of the funds as part of an unexplained "francs versus dollars problem."⁹² Wanting all of the Joint's money to be available for the rescue of Hungarian Jews, rather than tied up in a bank, Pehle consulted his colleagues—including his carpool partner, Edward Bernstein, then at the Bretton Woods Conference in New Hampshire.⁹³ Upon the advice of his colleagues, Pehle went to speak with the Swiss minister to the United States, Charles Bruggmann. Bruggmann's wife, Mary, was Vice President Henry Wallace's sister; the couple was friendly with Morgenthau and the minister had assisted the War Refugee Board in the past.⁹⁴ Though Pehle offered to increase the quota of American gold available to Switzerland, to give something in return for the favor, Bruggmann indicated this would not be necessary and arranged for \$1,500,000 to be transferred to Switzerland

⁹² John Pehle, Pehle sends Leavitt message from Mayer, 1944 July 4; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 18, Folder 9, Documents 421; USHMM.

⁹³ Bernstein was at the Bretton Woods Conference in New Hampshire along with many of the Treasury Department staff, including Henry Morgenthau and Ansel Luxford, participating in the conference that would eventually establish the International Monetary Fund. For more information on the Treasury Department staff at Bretton Woods, see: Benn Steil. *The Battle of Bretton Woods: John Maynard Keynes, Harry Dexter White, and the Making of a New World Order*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013.

⁹⁴ At the same time, Bruggmann, like some of the staff at the State Department, questioned the Board's actions as being counterproductive. In April 1944, Paul Culbertson of the Western European Division of the State Department wrote that Bruggmann complained during a meeting that "the manner in which the War Refugee Board's efforts were being put forward brought the subject into political controversy between two belligerents, "and thus not only tended to defeat its end but made it quite impossible for the Swiss Government to inject itself into the problem because to do so meant that Switzerland, a neutral, takes sides in a political controversy between two belligerents." Paul Culbertson, Memorandum of Conversation, 1944 April 18; RG-59, Subject File: "War Refugee Board," Box 1, Folder Misc. 1944 April-May; NACP.

in Swiss francs.⁹⁵ This amount covered the \$1,000,000 for Mayer as well as an additional \$500,000 for the Joint's payments to the Jewish Agency to cover the boats, train travel, and sustenance for Jews escaping to Istanbul by boat. So in the end, \$1,000,000 was sent to Bern for the relief and rescue of Hungarian Jews, but it went to Saly Mayer rather than Isaac Sternbuch.

Raoul Wallenberg

On June 9th, Sweden became the only neutral nation to agree to the War Refugee Board's request to increase their diplomatic representation in Hungary.⁹⁶ Two days later, the Board and the Swedes had their man. Johnson sent a message to the Board: "Have found a Swede who is going to Hungary in very near future on business trip and who appears willing to lend every possible assistance on Hungarian problem. Am having dinner with him...for the purpose of exploring possibilities and to obtain in some measure his capabilities along those lines."⁹⁷ Johnson did not send the War Refugee Board any details about this meeting, but announced on June 21st that this gentleman, Mr. Raoul Wallenberg, had severed his business connections and was planning to devote his attention in Hungary full time to relief and rescue activities. The Swedish government planned to appoint him as an attaché to the delegation in Budapest and were not concerned about securing the necessary visas, since they would just refuse to recognize

⁹⁵ Charles Bruggmann, Letter to Pehle, 1944 July 14; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 11, Documents 760-761; USHMM.

⁹⁶ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm to WRB, 1944 June 9; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 5, Folder 4, Documents 673; USHMM.

⁹⁷ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm to WRB, 1944 June 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 29, Folder 3, Documents 251-252; USHMM.

the newly arrived Hungarian *chargé d'affaires* if the Hungarians did not recognize Wallenberg. At the end of the cable, Olsen and Johnson requested the Board consider sending a list of proposed activities and look into financing for the operation. Likely due to delays in cable traffic, Johnson made this request four times—on June 21st, 27th, 29th, and July 1st—before the Board finally sent instructions for Wallenberg on July 4th, which the State Department transmitted three days later.⁹⁸

The Board's extensive instructions to Wallenberg reflected the fact that he was not a representative of the United States and would have much more freedom of action as a citizen of the neutral nation of Sweden. The Board was clear on his position, explicitly stating, "While he cannot, of course, act as the Board's representative, nor purport to act in its name, he can, whenever advisable, indicate that as a Swede he is free to communicate with Stockholm where a representative of the Board is stationed."⁹⁹ The first suggestion involved bribes: "[S]ince money and favorable post-war conditions might motivate action...it should be ascertained in what quarters such inducements may be effective." To that end, the WRB asked Robert Kelley in Ankara to transfer \$50,000 of the money being held to pay for the *Tari* to Olsen to hold for any projects Wallenberg may propose. The Board supplied Wallenberg with a list of names they had gathered of

⁹⁸ The WRB did not even acknowledge the appointment of Wallenberg until July 6th, when they sent Johnson and Olsen a copy of McClelland's June 24th cable about the situation in Hungary, advising them they could share the cable with Wallenberg at their discretion. It is likely that much of the delay was due to cable traffic. Based on the incoming stamps on the documents, the average cable took two days to reach the State Department, and at least another day (at a minimum) before it reached the WRB. The more controversial the cable, the longer it took to pass through Censorship and the State Department; it is likely that discussions about using a Swedish citizen to unofficially work on behalf of the War Refugee Board may have raised some red flags at one or both of these departments that may have delayed the Board's receipt of the cables. The Board was typically very quick to respond to cables, usually within a day of receipt. Delays occurred due to clearance with the State Department and Office of Censorship. Cordell Hull, Cable to Stockholm with possible plan for Wallenberg, 1944 July 7; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 5, Folder 4, Documents 617-620; USHMM.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

politically and economically important Hungarians who might be sympathetic to his program and willing to give advice. At the same time, Wallenberg was encouraged to think “on various levels such as high official, low official, and unofficial, central and local,” and was given the suggestion of reaching out to the Transylvanian Unitarian Church and local communist groups to use their workers to assist refugees. He should work with the Catholic Church and the International Red Cross, and push for permission to visit concentration camps and ghettos. They were “confident...that further lives will be saved.”¹⁰⁰ Wallenberg was already in Budapest by the time Stockholm received his instructions.

The Board in Washington never had direct communication with Raoul Wallenberg and knew no details about the man personally, save for a mention from Johnson that Wallenberg was half-Jewish. They sent messages to Stockholm, where either Olsen or Johnson passed them to the Swedish Foreign Office for transmission to Wallenberg in Budapest. The cable delays inherent in each stage of this process meant that it took a month, on average, to receive replies to messages. The Board relied mainly on the periodic reports of activities Wallenberg sent through Olsen.

After two weeks in Budapest, Wallenberg already had a clear grasp of the ways in which he could be effective. He reported that the Germans and Hungarians had granted permission for two groups totaling 850 people to evacuate to Sweden (650 adults with Swedish papers and 200 children under age 10; though Wallenberg noted 60-70 of the adults had already been deported and efforts were being made to locate them). They were

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

merely waiting on transportation. Wallenberg observed that the deportations seemed to have stopped, though the situation was still quite bad in Hungary, and to that end proposed creating a refugee camp for 1,000 people near Budapest under the care of the Swedish legation. To facilitate his activities, he had rented a 16-room office in Budapest which he used for meetings and also used to house several prominent Hungarian rabbis and religious leaders.¹⁰¹ The Board staff were pleased by these reports, and wrote on August 3rd to thank Wallenberg as well as to request more information about his proposed refugee camp.¹⁰² By August 10th, Olsen did not have the reply for the Board, but wrote in a letter to Pehle that he feared the Swedish Foreign Office “perhaps feel that he [Wallenberg] has jumped in with too big a splash.” Wallenberg was apparently already constructing the refugee camps with the help of the Swedish Red Cross and was, as Olsen put it, “working like hell and doing some good.”¹⁰³

Rescue from Stockholm

In the same letter to Pehle in which he praised Wallenberg, Iver Olsen took the opportunity to update his friend on the headaches caused by rescue work in Stockholm. The summer had been stressful, involving a ransom scheme, Hermann Göring’s stepson, unhelpful locals, hapless relief organization representatives, and his own “Baltic fleet.” He did receive a part-time assistant, Isaiah Dorfman, who was transferred from London

¹⁰¹ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm transmitting report from Wallenberg, 1944 July 25; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 29, Folder 3, Documents 276-278; USHMM.

¹⁰² Edward Stettinius, Cable to Stockholm about Wallenberg, 1944 August 3; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 29, Folder 3, Documents 282-283; USHMM.

¹⁰³ Iver Olsen, Letter to Pehle, 1944 August 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 29, Folder 4, Documents 355-360; USHMM.

and also worked for the OSS, and two Swedish secretaries, Ulla Afwirsen and Toue Filseth. But there was still a lot of work to be done.¹⁰⁴

At the end of June, Olsen had been approached about a ransom offer involving three Nazis asking for 2,000,000 Swedish kroner—the offer was later changed to asking for material goods—in exchange for all the Jews left in Latvia, which they guaranteed would be a minimum of 2,000 people (of the 93,000 there prior to the outbreak of war).¹⁰⁵ While Olsen was gathering more information for the WRB, the Soviet Union advanced into Latvian territory in mid-July, and the ransom scheme died. Around the same time, Olsen hosted Thomas von Kantzow, Hermann Göring’s stepson, in his Stockholm apartment. Von Kantzow was the son, by a first marriage, of Göring’s beloved late wife Carin and was a Swedish citizen, but he frequently traveled to Germany to visit his stepfather. Relating to Pehle that “[i]t 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,”¹⁰⁶ Olsen implored von Kantzow to pressure his stepfather to do what he could to ease the persecutions, with the reminder that when the war ended, Göring would be on trial for his life. He reported that “[t]he chap seemed very impressed and said he would press the matter with Goering to

¹⁰⁴ Ward Stewart, Memo about funding for overseas reps, 1944 August 2; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 11, Documents 597-599; USHMM.

¹⁰⁵ The War Refugee Board responded by asking, among other things, what why the scheme only dealt with 2,000 Jews when statistics indicated that there were 93,000 Jews in Latvia prior to the war. Herschel Johnson, Stockholm transmits message from Olsen for WRB, 1944 June 28; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 16, Documents 1016-1019; USHMM. Lawrence Lesser, Draft cable to Stockholm about ransom proposal, 1944 July 5; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 16, Document 1011; USHMM.

¹⁰⁶ Iver Olsen, Letter to Pehle, 1944 August 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 29, Folder 4, Documents 355-360; USHMM.

the best of his ability.”¹⁰⁷ Until the persecutions eased, however, Olsen had to keep working.

Several hundred Jews still in Finland, frightened by the speed of the German invasion of Hungary, requested admission to Sweden. Olsen arranged for their entry and boat passage for some—others trickled in on smaller vessels—but he complained of the lack of assistance from the Swedish Jewish community, which he claimed did not want any more Jews in Sweden. He reported that “not to this date [August 10] has a representative of the Jewish community ever been down to the pier to receive any of the evacuees from Finland...All of this has been done by Filseth of my office, including getting them through immigration, customs, the *Socialstyrelsen* [National Board of Health and Welfare], and then to camp.”¹⁰⁸ There were very few American relief organization representatives in Stockholm, and none Olsen thought he could count on. He was particularly annoyed by the Vaad Hatzalah’s representative, Wilhelm Wolbe. Wolbe’s organization was “the most hopelessly helpless group that I have ever worked with.”¹⁰⁹ Olsen urged them to focus on the rescue of Orthodox Jews in Lithuania, but they seemed determined to use their resources to provide relief of Jews in Shanghai and try to obtain Ecuadoran passports. To demonstrate the issues he was dealing with, Olsen wrote: “Wolbe's comprehension of the urgency of this problem perhaps best may be

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

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.”¹¹⁰

At the beginning of June, Olsen began working on rescue operations in the Baltic states. He had selected three groups representing Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, and had given each money to attempt to save their compatriots, most of whom were not Jewish but labor leaders and political opponents of fascism.¹¹¹ He supplied additional money at the end of July, providing 20,000 kroner to the Latvians, 50,000 to the Estonians, and 10,000 to the Lithuanians. This money came out of the WRB allocation from the President's Emergency Fund (as opposed to money from any of the Jewish organizations) and, as an example of WRB creativity, was funneled to Sweden through Goodyear Tire. Each group either purchased or hired small boats with motors and took advantage of the long summer nights to attempt evacuations. It was a dangerous business.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. In another example of the heartbreaking lack of understanding of the reality of the situation, the Vaad Hatzalah wanted Wolbe to send a special messenger into Lithuania to find specific rabbis, religious leaders, and yeshiva students and give them money to save themselves and their communities. By the summer of 1944, however, more than 90% of the Jewish population in Lithuania had already been murdered. After many cables, Wolbe finally responded to say that the military situation made rescue in Lithuania impossible, but asked to use the money to set up a religious home for Finnish children. Herschel Johnson, Johnson sends WRB message from Wolbe for Vaad Hatzalah, 1944 August 3; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 20, Folder 6, Documents 256; USHMM.

¹¹¹ In a June 12th letter, Olsen gave the selection of the Latvian rescue group as an example to Pehle of the difficulties he had with the relief organization representatives, however few there were in Stockholm: “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 [sic] 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 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.” Iver Olsen, Letter to Pehle, 1944 June 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 28, Folder 11, Documents 457-460. USHMM.

The Latvian group was led by Feliks Cielens, former head of the National Democratic Socialist Workers Party, and Voldemar Salnais, a former Latvian delegate to the League of Nations. The experiences of their group underscored the breadth of the danger faced by those attempting this rescue work. June and July saw trouble with the boat's motor, storms, a casualty, and the capture in Latvia of some of the boatmen. August, however, was more successful, though one boat was captured at the beginning of the month. By the end of the month, the Latvian group reported bringing about 200 refugees to Sweden, including approximately 60 women and 15 children.¹¹²

The Estonian group, led by Heinrich Laretei, the former Estonian ambassador to Sweden; August Rattiste, a military attaché; and Jaan Ots, a technician, provided Olsen with an itemized receipt for the purchase of their motorboat and supplies.¹¹³ They had even worse luck at the beginning than the Latvian group: on their first attempt to take their boat to Estonia, the Swedish general staff mistakenly routed them over a mine field, then arrested and jailed them.¹¹⁴ Things were quickly sorted out, and Olsen reported that they were doing quite well, having rescued 100 people, and arranging for 200-300 to be rescued on other boats. He visited their operation and approved of the type of people they were bringing out: “[W]ithout question they are people who are much wanted by the Germans.” Many of the refugees were also involved with the new Estonian National Committee, which complicated the matter since the Committee had recently declared war

¹¹² Iver Olsen, Report on Evacuation activities during June-August 1944, 1944 August; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 28, Folder 12, Documents 562-566. USHMM.

¹¹³ Iver Olsen, The situation of the Estonian Evacuation fund, 1944 June 17; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 28, Folder 13, Documents 569-571; USHMM.

¹¹⁴ Iver Olsen, Cable to WRB about Baltic deals, 1944 July 3; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 30, Folder 1, Documents 21-24; USHMM.

on the Soviet Union, but Olsen was allowing rescue to proceed as the refugees were also in danger from the Germans.¹¹⁵

The Lithuanian group was in the hands of Vytautas Gylys, Lithuanian ambassador to Sweden until 1940, and Dr. Algirdas Vokietaitis, a teacher who in charge of technical arrangements. Olsen liked Vokietaitis best, calling him “most certainly the cleverest operator in all three groups.”¹¹⁶ In his August 10th letter to Pehle, Olsen reported that Vokietaitis had gone into Lithuania to personally make arrangements for rescue, but had failed to appear the next week to meet the boat sent for him. For two more weeks, boats motored to Lithuania to pick him up, and on the third trip, the boatmen were told he had been captured and shot. Olsen hoped that Vokietaitis was just in hiding and would reappear, telling Pehle, “He was a hell of a fine, fearless fellow....”¹¹⁷ On August 11th, Olsen met with Gylys and provided him with another 10,000 kroner. In turn, Gylys gave Olsen a list of names, ages, and occupations for the 163 refugees his operation had brought out of Lithuania.¹¹⁸ He also brought sad news, which Olsen conveyed in a cable to the WRB: “Regret and am shocked in most personal way to inform you, according to newly-arrived Lithuanian evacuees, Vokietaitis was caught and executed by Germans.”¹¹⁹ Olsen planned to keep trying to rescue him, in case the reports were wrong.

¹¹⁵ Iver Olsen, Letter to Pehle, 1944 August 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 29, Folder 4, Documents 355-360; USHMM.

¹¹⁶ Iver Olsen, Cable to WRB about Baltic deals, 1944 July 3; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 30, Folder 1, Documents 21-24; USHMM.

¹¹⁷ Iver Olsen, Letter to Pehle, 1944 August 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 29, Folder 4, Documents 355-360; USHMM.

¹¹⁸ Unknown, List of refugees arriving in Sweden from Lithuania, 1944 August 11; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 28, Folder 12, Documents 481-484; USHMM.

¹¹⁹ Herschel Johnson, Johnson reports to WRB that Vokietaitis was executed, 1944 August 11; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 17, Folder 8, Documents 707; USHMM.

Lisbon

As in Stockholm, the War Refugee Board staff in Lisbon had to deal with the complications that arose in secreting refugees out of enemy territory. Whereas Olsen was able to select the refugee groups to support, there were multiple and competing organizations trying to rescue Jews from France to Spain and into Portugal. As Robert Dexter had been living and working in Lisbon more or less permanently since 1941, the WRB had hoped his pre-established relationships would work to his advantage once he was designated the WRB representative. In the spring of 1944, the conflict between the World Jewish Congress and the Joint was ugly, with each side accusing the other of sabotage and of stealing the credit for refugees rescued through the other agency's work and money. Since Dexter was not able to fix the situation, on May 29th, the Board sent James Mann to Lisbon to see if he could work out a solution. He arrived there on June 2nd, but did not communicate with the Board for more than two weeks. Even then, his June 17th cable was a quick message to say that things were complicated, with lots of personalities involved; that he needed to talk to Joseph Schwartz of the Joint, who was in North Africa; and that Mann was departing for Spain. The cable ended with, "Am not cabling detailed report of findings and impressions thus far since feel it would serve no useful purpose."¹²⁰ It would be three more weeks before the WRB heard from him again.

Mann had been busy. Before he sent his next cable, he had worked out an agreement between the World Jewish Congress and the Joint, toured two towns in Portugal where refugees were being housed, met with Ambassador Hayes in Madrid,

¹²⁰ R. Henry Norweb, Cable to WRB from Mann, 1944 June 17; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 2, Folder 15, Documents 469-470; USHMM.

visited with David Blickenstaff, and traveled to Barcelona to investigate whether the rescue operations really were interfering with the escape of Allied airmen.

The idea that the movement of refugees escaping over the French border into Spain was jeopardizing the similar escape route of Allied airmen was common. Carlton Hayes thought the relief organizations were endangering Allied troops, and had used this as justification in refusing to forward a license from the Joint to their representative in Barcelona. The British thought so, too. At the beginning of May, after hearing that the War Refugee Board had issued this license to the Joint, the British embassy in Washington had called George Warren at the State Department to inquire whether the license was approved by the Joint Chiefs. Warren informed them that the license was being withheld pending Hayes' approval, but later learned that it was in effect and Joint representative Samuel Sequerra had spent about \$30,000. On June 21st, the British called again to share cables they had received about two groups of Allied airmen who were trying to cross the border; rhad attached themselves to the groups, slowing them down, and putting them in enough danger that one group was captured and the other narrowly escaped. While sending the information about the incidents to the United States, Anthony Eden added a message, "I would recommend that the strongest pressure be put on the headquarters of these Jewish organizations in London and Washington and that agents in the field be order under no circumstances to help such refugees" [sic].¹²¹ The Board cabled Mann in Lisbon and instructed him to go to Barcelona to investigate Sequerra's operation.

¹²¹ George Warren, State Department forwards cables from British to WRB, 1944 June 28; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 11, Documents 609-612; USHMM.

On the way, Mann stopped in Madrid to visit with Carlton Hayes, who was about to travel to the United States for meetings and a vacation. Hayes was still adamant that Blickenstaff's organization was adequately handling all necessary refugee matters and no official War Refugee Board representative was needed.¹²² When Mann argued that no one at the embassy was doing the sort of work the WRB envisioned, Hayes snapped back, "I understand now. So this is all for the glory of the WRB."¹²³ Finally, Hayes agreed that James Saxon could travel from North Africa to Spain and spend several months surveying the situation, but he could not be officially appointed or attached to the embassy. If after several months, Saxon could show Hayes the value of a War Refugee Board representative, the ambassador might reconsider.¹²⁴

In Barcelona, Mann met with Sequerra and impressed upon him the importance of avoiding any activities that would endanger Allied military personnel. In a cable reporting his findings, Mann stated that "results of investigation indicated that it is highly unlikely that cases of interference with escape of Allied airmen can be traced to Sequerra's current operations," as his work did not involve many clandestine activities. It seemed as though the two incidents discovered by the British were the result of wealthy Jews independently attempting to buy their way onto groups of Allied soldiers being escorted over the mountains.¹²⁵ Once he determined to his satisfaction that the rescue

¹²² With Mann going to Portugal and Spain, James G. McDonald's planned trip to Spain was delayed indefinitely.

¹²³ James Mann, Report on visit to Portugal and Spain, 1944 August 30; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 6, Documents 208-297; USHMM.

¹²⁴ Carlton Hayes, Cable to WRB about Mann's visit, 1944 July 5; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 10, Documents 449-450; USHMM.

¹²⁵ W. Walton Butterworth, Cable to WRB with message from Mann, 1944 July 13; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 11, Documents 585-587; USHMM.

programs in Spain posed no danger to military personnel, Mann returned to Lisbon to make sure the programs would be successful.

In his lengthy report about the trip, Mann divulged one of the major impediments to War Refugee Board work in Portugal: their representative, Robert Dexter. Instead of being an advantage, Dexter's previous relationships with the other relief organizations meant that the War Refugee Board's work in Lisbon was as biased as Dexter himself. Mann ascertained that Dexter and his wife, Elisabeth (now the acting director of the Unitarian Service Committee in Lisbon) had long resented the Joint, and privileged the work of the World Jewish Congress. Mann wrote:

Apparently, the JDC has always considered itself on a little higher plane than the Unitarian Service Committee because of its larger operation staff, greater amount of funds, etc. That, I am sure, both Dexters resent and I gathered that they had attempted to use the appointment of Dexter to the Embassy staff to bring Dr. Schwartz and the JDC to recognize them and their newly acquired authority—to heel, so to speak.¹²⁶

According to Mann, Dexter spent his days working on cables sent to the embassy for transmission to the various relief organizations, often paraphrasing them into incoherence, and generally carrying on as he had as the Unitarian Service Committee representative, “largely in caring for refugees in Portugal” rather than in opening any channels of rescue. Moreover, Dexter felt the WRB spent too much time worrying about the rescue of Jews, and, when Mann questioned him about this, referred to the problem of “Alsatian girls...forced to bear German children. This, Dr. Dexter considered a fate worse than death and felt that a widespread problem [sic, likely meant to be “program”]

¹²⁶ James Mann, Report on visit to Portugal and Spain, 1944 August 30; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 6, Documents 208-297; USHMM.

of rescuing Alsatian girls should immediately be instituted.” It was his bias against the Joint and in favor of the World Jewish Congress, however, which caused the most problems. The Joint staff were disappointed with the selection of Dexter as the War Refugee Board representative, and as “Schwartz knew him before...and recognized his incompetence for such a position,” had been trying not to deal with him. While Mann was in Lisbon, the representatives of HICEM (the European counterpart of HIAS) gave a dinner, inviting the Joint, members of the Portuguese community, and embassy staff, including Dexter. Dexter inquired as to whether Isaac Weissman of the World Jewish Congress had been invited, and when he was informed that Weissman was not, Dexter refused to attend. Mann, incredulous, told Dexter that Pehle would be “both amazed and disgusted when he heard this story.” Still, Dexter would not attend the dinner, so Mann requested and received an invitation, and attended on behalf of the War Refugee Board. Mann concluded the anecdote by writing, “This story further shows the ineptness (to put it mildly) with which Dexter has handled the JDC-WJC situation.”¹²⁷

Mann refused to let the rivalry between the World Jewish Congress and the Joint fester and, in the absence of any leadership by Dexter, would see to a compromise himself. The July 13th agreement, which was as much a truce as a division of labor between the World Jewish Congress and the Joint, was the only one capable of settling the fundamental differences and making for more effective work in this area.” When

¹²⁷ Ibid.

Mann finally returned to Washington in late July, he showed the War Refugee Board staff the compromise, as he had not wanted to explain it via cable.¹²⁸

The agreement between Eliahu Dobkin of the Jewish Agency, Robert Pilpel of the Joint, and Isaac Weissman of the World Jewish Congress set forth six provisions.¹²⁹ It announced the formation of a rescue committee in Spain, with each of the three agencies naming representatives (the Jewish Agency named David Sealtiel; the Joint, Jules Jefroykin; and the World Jewish Congress, Joseph Croustillion). This rescue committee was to avoid all publicity, share information with each other, and cooperate completely—and so would their organizations back in Lisbon. It was determined that all refugees entering Spain would be cared for by the Joint, with the exception of children under the age of sixteen, who would be sent to Portugal. The Jewish Community of Lisbon would arrange for all the practical details regarding the children's care, with a Youth Aliyah Committee—consisting of Pilpel, Weissman, and Lichtenstein of the Jewish Agency—approving their budget.¹³⁰ The compromise was at least temporarily a success; Dexter wrote to Mann that “on the whole the agreement seems to be working splendidly...The World Jewish Congress and the JDC are working together very well indeed and I am getting to be reasonably optimistic about the future...I am quite hopeful that there may be

¹²⁸ R. Henry Norweb, Cable to WRB with message from Mann, 1944 July 14; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 2, Folder 15, Documents 450-453; USHMM.

¹²⁹ With Schwartz still traveling, the Joint offices in Lisbon were overseen by Robert Pilpel, an attorney who had been working with the Joint on refugee rehabilitation in Latin America, before being called to Lisbon in February to assist Schwartz. The agreement was also signed by the Jewish Agency which, while not engaging in evacuation operations from France themselves, was still responsible for future emigration to Palestine and was interested in the future of those escaping.

¹³⁰ Robert Dexter, Dexter sends Mann copy of agreement, 1944 June 27; RG-84, Subject File: “War Refugee Board, Lisbon,” Box 1, Folder War Refugee Board; NACP.

a considerable increase in children coming through.”¹³¹ By August 5th, Joseph Schwartz sent a message to the Joint that 402 people had been rescued through Spain in recent months, including the parents of some children who had been rescued previously. The agreement seemed to be working, though there was still deep antipathy between the organizations and James Mann was no longer in Lisbon to oversee the implementation of the truce.¹³²

Spain

Though Hayes was relatively pleasant to James Mann, he could not have been looking forward to visiting Washington upon his return to the United States. On June 21st, Congressman Emanuel Celler—who had once complained of the “crocodile tears of Breckinridge Long”—issued a statement demanding Hayes’ official recall as ambassador for his failure to assist the War Refugee Board. Celler called Hayes’ actions “reprehensible” and “cruel,” his attitude “cold-blooded,” and wondered aloud, “Has Ambassador Hayes grown so inhuman as to fail to realize that human lives are at stake?”¹³³ The statement, which was detailed enough to indicate that Celler had received information from an inside source, received national and international press.¹³⁴

While in Washington, Carlton Hayes met with John Pehle twice, on July 17th and 20th. The first conversation was pleasant enough, though Hayes expressed his anger at

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² R. Henry Norweb, Cable from Lisbon transmitting message from Schwartz to Leavitt, 1944 August 5; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 10, Folder 14, Documents 748; USHMM.

¹³³ Emanuel Celler, “Efforts to Aid Refugees Completely Stymied in Spain by our Ambassador Hayes,” 1944 June 21; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 23, Folder 14, Documents 269-270; USHMM.

¹³⁴ The former Uruguayan consul in Spain, Gabriel de Biurrun, wrote a seven-page letter to the American embassy in Montevideo to defend Hayes against Celler’s accusations. Dudley Dwyre, Montevideo embassy transmits letter to State Department, 1944 July 6; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 4, Folder 13, Documents 293-304; USHMM.

Celler's attack and continued to insist that no War Refugee Board representative was needed in Spain. As he had with Mann, Hayes agreed to someone coming to Spain to survey the situation, but he did not want this person to be attached to the embassy, and was even hesitant to allow him to come on a special passport.¹³⁵

The second conversation, held at Hayes's request, was more confrontational. At a subsequent press conference, Hayes had been asked about the refugee situation, with a member of the press informing him that the War Refugee Board indicated he was being uncooperative. In his memo of the conversation, Pehle wrote, matter-of-factly, "Hayes said he could not understand how anyone could get the impression he was not cooperating with the War Refugee Board."¹³⁶ Pehle again explained the Board's dissatisfaction with not having an accredited representative in Madrid. Hayes argued back that he had offered Blickenstaff, but heard no more about a representative until Mann arrived in June. Pehle, clearly still upset while documenting the conversation, wrote that he then "pointed out to Hayes the true facts," that the Ambassador had not been willing to allow the Board to appoint Blickenstaff. In addition, the Board was frustrated at Hayes's unwillingness to even present their requests or programs to the Spanish government for consideration. Pehle explained the different types of refugee activities going on in other countries, to which Hayes replied that he had no objection to operations in Spain, but did not think it wise to give money to "an un-American citizen such as Sequerra."¹³⁷ At the

¹³⁵ John Pehle, Memo of conversation with Hayes, 1944 July 17; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 23, Folder 14, Documents 247-249; USHMM.

¹³⁶ John Pehle, Memo of second conversation with Hayes, 1944 July 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 23, Folder 14, Documents 244-246; USHMM.

¹³⁷ Sequerra was a Portuguese citizen. Whatever antipathy Hayes bore towards Sequerra, the ambassador defended the Joint representative to the Spanish government. On July 18th, the day after Hayes' first meeting with John Pehle, Sequerra was attacked in Barcelona by 15 uniformed members of the Falange, and his offices were ransacked. Upon his

end of the meeting, Hayes presented Pehle with a ten-page memo summarizing relief and rescue activities in Spain, mainly from 1943. Pehle—normally a patient, even-tempered man—wrote a five-page memo for his files, in very small typed font, “taking exception to the following aspects of Ambassador Hayes’ conduct.” Part of the detailed list read: "So convinced is the Ambassador that Executive Order No 9417 [the establishment of the War Refugee Board] was not a major policy of the United States Government that he adamantly refuses even now to make known to the Spanish Government the President's declared policy!" Pehle concluded by writing, “The memorandum handed to me by Ambassador Hayes also makes numerous other unfounded accusations against the War Refugee Board which unfortunately appear indicative of the Ambassador's whole general attitude on this subject.”¹³⁸

There was one positive outcome to Hayes’ visit to Washington: it got him out of Madrid. In the first month Hayes was away from Spain, W. Walton Butterworth, in charge of the embassy in the Ambassador’s absence, sent 19 cables to the War Refugee Board; in the six months prior, Hayes had sent only 35.¹³⁹ With Hayes in the United States, Butterworth sent the WRB copies of the notes he had sent to the Spanish Foreign Ministry informing them of Roosevelt’s Fort Ontario announcement and Cardinal

return to Madrid, Hayes sent several *note verbales* to the Spanish Foreign Office to insist on the continued investigation and arrest of the perpetrators “in this deplorable affair.” Carlton Hayes, Letter transmitting Note Verbale, 1944 September 28; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 2, Folder 2, Documents 188-189; USHMM.

¹³⁸ John Pehle, Pehle memorandum for the file, 1944 July 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 23, Folder 14, Documents 229-233; USHMM.

¹³⁹ The sheer number of Butterworth’s discussions with the Spanish Foreign Embassy is even more impressive since for much of the month, the Spanish government was in summer residence in San Sebastián, and on August 3, 1944, the Spanish Foreign Minister, the Count of Jordana, died.

Spellman's statement on Hungary.¹⁴⁰ He made a request—and Spain agreed—to provide 500 visas for Hungarian Jewish children and 1,500 visas for adults if they were allowed to leave Hungary.¹⁴¹ (After being informed of this development, the World Jewish Congress's Leon Kubowitzki wrote, "This remarkable initiative on the part of the Spanish government was attributed by the WRB to the fact that the USA is no longer represented in Madrid by the Ambassador himself!")¹⁴² Butterworth complained to Spanish officials about rumors that refugees were being turned back at the border. He was told that in response, the Ministry took drastic and immediate steps to countermand any provincial order about refusing refugee entry.¹⁴³ In the first month Hayes was away, Spain also agreed to host future exchanges of prisoners on her territory.¹⁴⁴ Butterworth reported that, "in response to Embassy's efforts the Spanish government has shown its willingness to cooperate...by acceding to all requests made of it thus far."¹⁴⁵ Butterworth's actions proved Pehle's arguments correct: things could be done if Ambassador Hayes would allow them.

Spain's cooperation was not only due to Hayes' absence, but to the presence of an American businessman named Dannie Heineman, who had been managing director of SOFINA, a major public utility and holding company in Belgium, for nearly forty years.

¹⁴⁰ W. Walton Butterworth, Cable from Madrid about transmitting statements to Foreign Office, 1944 July 18; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 2, Folder 16, Documents 577-580; USHMM.

¹⁴¹ W. Walton Butterworth, Cable from Madrid, 1944 July 31; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 5, Folder 3, Documents 507; USHMM.

¹⁴² A. Leon Kubowitzki, Memo on conversation with Hodel and Lesser, 1944 July 21, World Jewish Congress New York Office, D-Series (Rescue and Relief), Digital collection, Folder 107-03. USHMM.

¹⁴³ W. Walton Butterworth, Cable from Madrid about border concerns, 1944 July 25; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 2, Folder 16, Documents 574-576; USHMM.

¹⁴⁴ W. Walton Butterworth, Cable from Madrid, 1944 August 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 19, Folder 5, Documents 595-596; USHMM.

¹⁴⁵ W. Walton Butterworth, Cable from Madrid about rumors, 1944 July 28; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 2, Folder 16, Documents 571-573; USHMM.

Friendly with the WRB staff, particularly Lawrence Lesser, Heineman traveled to Spain on business in the spring of 1944; though the trip was personal, he also had a letter of endorsement from John Pehle. He traveled with James Mann and the two men discussed a plan. Heineman introduced Mann to the Marquis de Foronda, a trusted associate and a friend of Count Jordana, the Spanish Foreign minister. After this meeting, the Marquis presented news of the War Refugee Board's existence and proposals to Jordana, who promised to cooperate provided the American embassy made the first approach. So when Hayes left and Butterworth presented the WRB's requests, the Spanish government—already aware of them—responded quickly and positively. There is no evidence that either Hayes or Butterworth ever learned of the Board's secret diplomacy.¹⁴⁶

Two days after his second meeting with Hayes, Pehle sent a memo to Undersecretary of State Edward Stettinius. Explaining that the Ambassador had agreed a member of the War Refugee Board staff could travel to Spain but would not concede to an appointed representative attached to the embassy, Pehle argued that this restriction would impede the Board's work. He requested that the State Department grant diplomatic status to the WRB representative for Spain. On August 8th, Pehle requested that Stettinius appoint James Mann to Spain over Hayes' objections. In case Stettinius balked at this, Pehle wrote, "I cannot believe that the Department of State will wish to share in the responsibility of denying to the War Refugee Board the right to have a representative of its own choosing in this crucial area."¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ James Mann, Report on visit to Portugal and Spain, 1944 August 30; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 6, Documents 208-297; USHMM.

¹⁴⁷ John Pehle, Pehle memo for Stettinius about appointing Mann, 1944 August 7; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 10, Documents 447; USHMM.

The Horthy Offer

The same week John Pehle met with Carlton Hayes about rescue operations through Spain, rumors came from Hungary that a major change had taken place. On July 19th, the *New York Times* featured an article on page 5 entitled “Horthy Promises not to Oust Jews.” Reporting from Bern, the article was short—only two sentences long—but it was enough to get the Board’s attention.¹⁴⁸ Roswell McClelland found out when he was handed a message, a short handwritten note in a mix of French and English to say that Gustave de Koever, the Hungarian delegate to the International Red Cross, had called to inform him of a list of concessions which the Hungarian government was making in regards to their anti-Jewish policy.¹⁴⁹ McClelland immediately cabled the WRB to alert them that rumors were flying; the Board advised him of the *New York Times* article and asked him to confirm its veracity. Over the next few days, the WRB also heard about the offer from London, Lisbon, Ankara, and the Apostolic delegate in Washington.¹⁵⁰

Ambassador Norweb in Lisbon gave the most detailed account of the message.

The Hungarian government was willing to accede to requests made by various groups:

¹⁴⁸ The text read, “Admiral Nicholas Horthy, Regent of Hungary, has promised the International Red Cross Committee that no more Jews will be transported forcibly out of Hungary, it was learned today, and authorized the committee to direct evacuation of Jewish children to countries willing to receive them. A private informant said Admiral Horthy also authorized the committee to remove any Jews possessing visas to Palestine.” *New York Times*, “Horthy Promises not to Oust Jews,” 1944 July 19; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 6, Folder 7, Documents 824; USHMM. The article was next to one about Bretton Woods, entitled, “British Give Up Fight to Retain London as World Fund Center: Keynes Withdraws Resolution, but Asks that Final Decision on Location Be Deferred—U.S. to Be Headquarters Now.”

¹⁴⁹ Bern legation staff member, Phone message from de Koever, 1944 July 18; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 6; FDRL.

¹⁵⁰ Madrid did not cable to inform the State Department of the rumors; instead, Butterworth cabled to inform that he had already brought the unconfirmed newspaper reports to the attention of the Spanish government and requested Spain to facilitate any exodus that may result if the reports were accurate. W. Walton Butterworth, Cable from Madrid about bringing Hungary report to Spanish attention, 1944 July 24; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 5, Folder 3, Documents 519-520; USHMM.

the Swedish government's request to allow the departure for Sweden or Palestine of all Jews with relatives or business connections in Sweden; the Swiss request, on behalf of the British, for emigration to Palestine of all with Palestine certificates; and the Swiss request, on behalf of the War Refugee Board, for Red Cross aid in all camps and ghettos and for the emigration to Palestine of all Jewish children under the age of ten. Horthy also announced the suspension of the deportation of all Jews from Hungary.¹⁵¹ Since the *New York Times* report was on the same day that the British leaked the Joel Brand ransom offer to the press, the War Refugee Board was hesitant to publicly confirm the new Hungarian offer until they figured out how to reply. It was impossible to keep the proposal a secret for very long, however, since the International Red Cross shared details with the press and with relief organizations. The Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe immediately issued a press release—in which they implied that the details had been shared with their organization exclusively—calling for Great Britain to grant Palestine certificates, or for Allied nations to grant Nansen-like passports, to all the Jews remaining in Hungary.¹⁵² Publicly, the Board remained silent.

¹⁵¹ R. Henry Norweb, Cable from Lisbon transmitting information about Hungary, 1944 July 19; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 5, Folder 3, Documents 435-436; USHMM.

¹⁵² In their annual report of activities, issued in early August, the Emergency Committee took credit for Horthy's offer: "Mr. Wechsler and Dr. Smertenko reported on the latest news concerning the easing of the situation of the Hungarian Jews, emphasizing that this was, to a great extent, a result of the appeals made by the Emergency Committee to the Holy See, and to the Red Cross." On July 27th, the *New York World Telegram* published an article about the Hungarian proposal stating that the American League for a Free Palestine revealed that the Hungarian government had offered to release all Jews with Palestine certificates, and that the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation had cabled Great Britain to demand more certificates be offered. The article went on to say that similar views were expressed by Louis Bromfield, Ben Hecht, Will Rogers, Jr., and Congressman Andrew Somers. The article did not indicate that the League and the Committee were offshoots of the same group, nor that the individuals identified were all members. Emergency Committee, Press release: "Jewish Situation in Hungary Appears to be Abating," 1944 July 21; FBI declassified file "Emergency Committee." (My thanks to Steve Luckert of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum for sharing his copy of this document with me.) Emergency Committee, "A Year in the Service of Humanity," 1944 August 7; Palestine Statehood Committee Papers, LM0399, Reel 5, Folder 22; USHMM. *New York World Telegram*, "Hungary Agrees to Release Jews," 1944 July 27; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 6, Folder 7, Documents 816; USHMM.

Behind the scenes, however, the War Refugee Board in Washington and the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees in London began to look into the logistics of accepting the offer. Despite Jewish Agency urgings, the IGC was reluctant to send a representative to Budapest to gather information, since it would involve the approval of all the member countries. Herbert Emerson was concerned about financing the operation, the transportation aspects, and finding homes for the Jewish children who might be released, but acknowledged that "it was essential that there should be some quick response to the offer...one which would show that the American and British Governments, in particular, were taking the offer seriously and were not putting it in the same category as the Brandt affair."¹⁵³ The British government's main concern was finding havens for Hungarian Jews who might be permitted to leave. Jews with Palestine certificates could legally enter Palestine, but if the emigration of Jews without certificates were offered, they needed a place to go. (The Emergency Committee publicly proposed establishing emergency refugee shelters in Palestine, but the British did not acknowledge this suggestion.) On July 26th, the British embassy wrote to George Warren that they were considering three possibilities for havens: the United States, asking Latin and South America to receive refugees, or approaching Portugal to ask for the Hungarian Jews to be received in Angola.¹⁵⁴ British territory was not an option. To ensure a coordinated response, they wished to refer the entire matter to the IGC. The Red Cross sent a message through their representative in Washington, Alfred Zollinger, urging the United States to

¹⁵³ John Winant, Winant sends summary of Jewish Agency meeting, 1944 July 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 3, Documents 155-156; USHMM.

¹⁵⁴ K.I. Poate, Cable from British embassy to State Department, 1944 July 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 3, Documents 143-144; USHMM.

publicly announce an increase to the number of entry visas available to Hungarian Jews. They felt that “such a statement would impress the Government of Hungary as a visible sign of a favorable reaction to its decision to put a stop to the persecution of the Jews” and would make it more difficult for the Hungarians to withdraw the offer or blame the Allies if the plan failed.¹⁵⁵ But more than a week after first hearing of Horthy’s offer, and despite the Red Cross’s urgings, neither the United States nor Great Britain had even publicly acknowledged the offer, much less responded.¹⁵⁶

On July 29th, the same day the War Refugee Board finally received official acknowledgement from Bern that the offer was legitimate, John Pehle sent a draft response to Stettinius at the State Department. Arguing that the offer was a direct challenge to the United States and Great Britain, it was Pehle’s “strong opinion... that the British and American Governments... accept completely and unequivocally the Hungarian proposal without any limitation as to number.”¹⁵⁷ The matter should not be referred to the IGC for consideration, nor should the number of refugees the Allies were willing to accept be dependent on how many Latin American nations would welcome. Pehle attached a draft cable to Bern with a message for the International Red Cross to present to Hungary. It read in part:

¹⁵⁵ Edward Stettinius, Cable to Bern with McClelland’s handwritten notes, 1944 August 3; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 7; FDRL.

¹⁵⁶ The delay in response created some misunderstandings. On July 29th, a reporter from the Jewish Telegraphic Agency called the WRB to ask if there would be an official response to the offer. Virginia Mannon contacted Pehle, who told her to tell the reporter that the “whole thing was charged with dynamite” and that all they could say was that they received the message and were working on it. The next day, the JTA published an article stating that Pehle had confirmed the WRB was trying to secure havens for Jewish children. Mannon confronted the reporter, who seemed embarrassed and claimed her message had gotten garbled. Alfred Zollinger, the Washington representative of the International Red Cross, contacted the reporter, disturbed that she had apparently gotten a response before he did. Virginia Mannon, Mannon memo to Friedman, 1944 August 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 5, Folder 2, Documents 207-209; USHMM.

¹⁵⁷ John Pehle, Memo to Stettinius about the Hungary proposal, 1944 July 29; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 3, Documents 128-129; USHMM.

In view of the desperate plight of the Jews in Hungary...this Government now wishes to repeat specifically its assurance that it will arrange for the care of all Jews permitted to leave Hungary who reach neutral or United Nations' territory, and will find for such people havens of refuge where they may live in safety...This Government now awaits some concrete evidence of the willingness of the Hungarian government to carry out its proposal.¹⁵⁸

On the morning of Monday, July 31st, Joseph Friedman called George Warren at the State Department to inquire whether the Board's response to Horthy's offer had been given to the British.¹⁵⁹ Warren said that the documents had been ready to give to the British since Saturday afternoon, but Stettinius had been busy and promised to do it immediately that morning. Friedman also requested that Warren make sure the International Red Cross office in Washington and headquarters in Geneva were informed that a reply would be transmitted no later than August 7th.¹⁶⁰ With their response ready, the War Refugee Board began to wait for the British.

Protective papers and visas

As indicated by the Horthy offer, protective papers—whether they be Palestine certificates or nationality certificates issued in the name of an Allied country—could be invaluable. In the spring of 1944, the Board, after learning of the deportations from the Vittel internment camp of people holding protective papers, spent quite a bit of energy to

¹⁵⁸ John Pehle, Draft cable to Bern about Hungary proposal, 1944 July 29; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 3, Documents 133-134; USHMM.

¹⁵⁹ John Pehle was out of the office for two weeks beginning July 30th, though the WRB staff remained in contact with him. Lawrence Lesser was on vacation, so Joseph Friedman was in charge of the WRB offices in Washington. Though neither were involved in the day-to-day operations of the WRB, Henry Morgenthau and Josiah DuBois were also preparing to leave Washington for London to discuss war crimes trials, among other issues. Morgenthau was also readying his "Morgenthau Plan" for the post-war partition and subjugation of Germany.

¹⁶⁰ Joseph Friedman, Friedman memo about talking to Warren, 1944 July 31; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 3, Documents 120; USHMM.

ensure that the Germans would be forced to respect the holders of these documents. The Board cabled the governments of Latin and South American countries—in whose names most of the papers had been issued, either legally or illegally—to request they protest the deportations from Vittel, demand the return of “their” citizens, and insist that all people holding nationality certificates should be treated as verified nationals, including the possibility of participation in prisoner exchanges.¹⁶¹ Most of the countries contacted their protecting power as the Board requested.

As they learned more of the situation in Hungary, the Board now made another request: to ensure that all Latin and South American countries had designated a protecting power—a neutral nation that could communicate on their behalf—not just for Germany, but also for Hungary. The matter was of paramount importance. For instance, Switzerland was appointed Chile’s protecting power for Hungary, which meant that the Swiss could make requests about and on behalf of people holding Chilean certificates, and would treat them as under the protection of Switzerland.

For most Latin American countries, the number of people in Hungary holding their nationality certificates was negligible, with the exception of El Salvador. In the early years of the war the Salvadoran Consular General in Geneva, Col. Jose Castellanos, had appointed a Romanian-Jewish businessman, George Mandel-Mantello, to serve as the

¹⁶¹ The Special War Problems Division of the State Department disagreed with the Board’s desperate tactics. In an internal memo written in response to the War Refugee Board’s request to send a cable to Switzerland about approaching the German government regarding prisoner exchanges, J.H. Keeley wrote, “This Division has itself been working on the problem for some time, believing that if the matter were properly presented the German Government would of its own accord cease persecuting these unfortunate people upon learning that a possibility exists for their exchange for German nationals in this hemisphere. We were given to understand that the War Refugee Board was not interested in our views. The War Refugee Board’s communications as drafted totally ignore this Division’s experience in having successfully negotiated and carried out five unprecedented exchanges of nationals with two of our principal enemies. It is our opinion, based on this extensive experience, that the War Refugee Board’s course of action has appreciably decreased, if not wholly eliminated, the chances of success for this humanitarian project.” J.H. Keeley Memo to Raynor, 1944 April 12; RG-59, “War Refugee Board,” Box 1, Folder Misc. 1944 April-May; NACP.

consulate's first secretary. Throughout the war, Mantello issued thousands of Salvadoran nationality certificates, sending copies of them through diplomatic courier or via underground channels to the intended recipient. After the invasion of Hungary, Mantello began issuing hundreds of certificates for Hungarian Jews.¹⁶² There was one problem, of which Roswell McClelland was all too aware: El Salvador did not have a protecting power in Hungary, so there was no one to protect people carrying these certificates. On June 21st, McClelland complained in a letter that no fewer than five people had visited him about Salvadoran papers in the previous week.¹⁶³ The Bern legation asked the WRB to remind El Salvador to appoint a protecting power for Hungary, although McClelland was not sure Hungary would agree, since there were likely no legitimate Salvadoran citizens there. Though Castellanos asked Switzerland to be El Salvador's protecting power, the request needed to come from San Salvador, not from the consulate in Geneva. Moreover, McClelland feared that an influx of these nationality certificates, carried by people who were obviously not Salvadoran citizens, would put everyone holding protective papers at risk. He commented: "There is unfortunately a rather dangerous element of digging one's own grave about this whole matter."¹⁶⁴ Though the War

¹⁶² Mantello was born in a Hungarian speaking area of what is now Romania, near the present-day town of Iclănzel. David Kranzler published a monograph of Mantello's work, entitled *The Man Who Stopped the Trains to Auschwitz: George Mantello, El Salvador, and Switzerland's Finest Hour*. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000.) Though the book purports to be a scholarly account, Kranzler openly admits his friendship with and admiration of Mantello, and the book is uncritical of Mantello's work. It is also riddled with un-cited claims, blatant factual errors, and exposes Kranzler's unfounded disdain for Roswell McClelland; a section of the book is entitled "McClelland—A Silent Antagonist." In it, he writes that McClelland "took an even harsher stand than the State Department, which was not especially known for its sympathy toward the Jewish plight." A balanced scholarly account of Mantello's work has yet to be written. David Kranzler. *The Man Who Stopped the Trains to Auschwitz: George Mantello, El Salvador, and Switzerland's Finest Hour*. (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 216.

¹⁶³ Roswell McClelland, McClelland letter to Kopecky about El Salvador papers, 1944 June 21; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 64, Folder 2; FDRL.

¹⁶⁴ Roswell McClelland, McClelland letter to Kopecky about El Salvador papers, 1944 June 21; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 64, Folder 2; FDRL.

Refugee Board sent multiple cables to El Salvador requesting they appoint a protecting power in Hungary, by the end of the summer the Salvadoran government still had not done so.¹⁶⁵ In Bern, the implications were clear, as McClelland had to explain to Michel Banyai, the head of the HIJEFS committee, that the Swiss had no grounds to protest the deportation of his family, who held Salvadoran papers in Hungary.¹⁶⁶

Though there was nothing the War Refugee Board could do to validate the Salvadoran papers, with the collaboration of Undersecretary of State Adolf Berle, the Board staff had been working on a plan related to Dominican papers.¹⁶⁷ In the spring, Berle had met several times with the Dominican ambassador about the WRB's desire to issue blank passports, which was later negotiated to be letters (rather than passports), attesting the bearer had filed a citizenship application with the Dominican Republic. The Board hoped that these could serve as protective papers, but not everyone supported the idea. After a meeting of the Policy Committee of the State Department's Office of American Republic Affairs (which was not attended by WRB staff members), Laurence Duggan wrote, "The general sense of the Policy Committee is this is a tawdry piece of

¹⁶⁵ In fact, in the summer of 1944, the Salvadoran government informed the Spanish government, which acted as their protecting power in German territory, that they wished to make a change to their previous statement regarding protecting papers. On April 17th, the Salvadoran Foreign Minister had requested Spain extend protection to all who bear Salvadoran passports or claim Salvadoran citizenship. In July, the new Foreign Minister requested the phrase "claim Salvadoran citizenship" be changed to "prove Salvadoran citizenship." The Spanish ambassador in El Salvador confidentially told the American embassy that he felt the two words so similar he did not transmit the request to Madrid. Gerhard Gade, Cable from San Salvador about protective paper terms, 1944 July 14; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 19, Folder 3, Documents 296-297; USHMM.

¹⁶⁶ Michel Banyai, Banyai letter to McClelland, 1944 August 9; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 68, Folder 1; FDRL.

¹⁶⁷ The Dominican Republic has received attention and accolades for their offer during the Evian Conference in 1938 to receive 100,000 Jewish refugees. In 1937, President Trujillo's regime had massacred thousands of Haitians in the Dominican Republic, and he was actively trying to change the racial balance of his country. (R. Henry Norweb was the American ambassador to the Dominican Republic at the time.) Trujillo "continued to be interested in attracting light-skinned immigrants to replace Haitian and West Indian laborers in his country." Eventually, only about 500 European Jews settled in the Dominican Republic, mainly in an agricultural colony called Sosúa. Therefore, the State Department discussions with the Dominican Republic were more complicated and nuanced than they may seem. For a good description of the relationship between the Dominican Republic and the Holocaust, see: Eric Roorda. *The Dictator Next Door: The Good Neighbor Policy and the Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic, 1930-1945*. (Durham: Duke University, 1998), 144.

business but that the Department is under explicit instructions to 'go along' with the War Refugee Board in its plans, of course exercising to the extent possible a corrective influence but not to the extent of blocking what the War Refugee Board wants to do.”¹⁶⁸ Berle again met with the Dominican ambassador at the beginning of August, and it was decided that Roswell McClelland would send a short list of names (about 200) to the Dominican *chargé d'affaires* in Bern, who would issue letters to these people. McClelland would then endeavor to transmit the papers through the underground. Berle did “not have too much faith in this scheme.”¹⁶⁹

Another War Refugee Board effort involving protective papers required no such diplomatic maneuvers. On March 16, 1944, Pehle had written to Berle about the possibility of reissuing American visas to people caught in occupied territory, provided they had been granted their visas after the July 1, 1941 change in immigration regulations.¹⁷⁰ The visas had only been valid for a limited amount of time, and all had since expired. During his meeting, Berle indicated that the people who had been granted these visas would need to again present themselves to an American consulate and be reapproved before they could be reissued.

In June 1944, despite numerous meetings and memos, Berle had not changed his position. However, he indicated the State Department might be able to develop a procedure to allow family and friends to apply for the reissuance of expired visas on

¹⁶⁸ Laurence Duggan, Duggan memo about protective papers, 1944 June 16; RG-59, “War Refugee Board,” Box 2, Folder Misc. July; NACP.

¹⁶⁹ Adolf Berle, Berle memo on Dominican plan, 1944 August 5; RG-59, “War Refugee Board,” Box 2, Folder Misc. Aug-Dec; NACP.

¹⁷⁰ For more details on the July 1, 1941 change in the rules regarding the issuance of American visas, and the impact this had on refugees, please see: David Wyman. *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis, 1938-1941* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1968), chapter 9.

behalf of loved ones still in occupied territory. He was also willing to discuss extending this consideration to include close relatives of American citizens who were eligible for non-quota visas, and to close relatives of resident aliens serving in the United States Army. It was not enough to satisfy the WRB. Pehle sent copies of all of his correspondence with Berle to Stettinius and asked him to review it, “since I do not believe you will agree with the position currently being taken by your Department.”¹⁷¹ Involving Stettinius must have worked, because on July 20th Berle announced a shift in State Department policy. Consular officers were now instructed to reissue visas to anyone who had been granted an American visa after July 1, 1941, provided they had been in enemy-occupied territory after the outbreak of war, had passed a security screening, and were not considered to be inadmissible or in need of further consideration.¹⁷² Two weeks later, Berle agreed to expand the program to include the spouse, parent, or unmarried minor child of American citizens, and the spouse or minor child of resident aliens.¹⁷³ In theory, this meant that the United States was providing American protective papers to individuals who had been granted permission to immigrate, but were unable to come due to the outbreak of war, and for the loved ones of American citizens and of refugees in the United States. The Board staff alerted relief organizations to the new procedure and asked for help making lists of people who had received American visas after July 1941. The WRB also combed through all the letters they had received from private citizens about

¹⁷¹ John Pehle, Memo to Stettinius, 1944 June 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 9, Folder 15, Document 582; USHMM.

¹⁷² Adolf Berle, Memo from Berle to Pehle, 1944 July 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 9, Folder 15, Documents 543-544; USHMM.

¹⁷³ Adolf Berle, Memo from Berle to Pehle, 1944 August 5; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 9, Folder 15, Documents 536-542; USHMM.

loved ones in danger and wrote back to those who mentioned visas to see if the loved ones might be eligible.

American visas could mean eligibility for prisoner exchanges, as could Palestine certificates. In May, the Emergency Advisory Committee for Political Defense, a committee of western hemisphere member nations, met in Montevideo. They unanimously approved a resolution submitted by the War Refugee Board, agreeing that bearers of protective papers were eligible for prisoner exchanges. Although this was a very positive step, the resolution was non-binding, so the Board reminded Latin and South American nations to contact their protecting power for Germany to insist “their” citizens, whether on legitimate or unverified papers, should be considered for exchanges. These exchanges, however, were dependent on finding German citizens in Allied territory to exchange; the WRB also contacted Latin and South American countries about whether there were German citizens in their territory who might be eligible. At least two exchanges took place in the summer of 1944, but neither involved people on unverified papers. In July, a group of 261 Bergen-Belsen prisoners holding Palestine certificates, among them Gertrude van Tijn, were exchanged for German civilians in Palestine.¹⁷⁴ In Lisbon, a group of expatriate Americans who had been caught in occupied Europe arrived in mid-July. Robert Dexter interviewed some of them, including an African-American wife of a jazz pianist, who had spent two years in German concentration camps with her teenage daughters. He concluded his report of these interviews by writing, "It seems very

¹⁷⁴ Gertrude van Tijn, who collaborated with the Joint regarding Jewish emigration from the Netherlands in the 1930s, was appointed by the Nazis to the Jewish Council in Amsterdam prior to her deportation to Bergen-Belsen. She is the subject of Bernard Wasserstein’s book *The Ambiguity of Virtue: Gertrude van Tijn and the Fate of the Dutch Jews* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

much worth while that when these individuals arrive in the United States, they be seen and their stories be taken down in detail."¹⁷⁵

Relief packages

In the spring of 1944, Paul McCormack of the WRB staff had written, “Appreciating that we must and should continue to think and act in terms of actual release and rescue, it will become necessary, at one time or another, to actually engage in a program of some form of feeding to insure the availability of people to release and rescue.”¹⁷⁶ By the end of May, the Board, Foreign Economic Administration (FEA), and State Department had all agreed that the Red Cross should be allowed to establish stockpiles of food and clothing in Switzerland for distribution in concentration camps. On June 12th, the day Roosevelt sent the announcement of Fort Ontario to Congress, representatives of the State Department, the War Refugee Board, and the British met in Adolf Berle’s office. They met again the next day, and in the two meetings hammered out an agreement regarding Red Cross distribution of pre-packaged relief parcels that would be sent to Switzerland instead of bulk supplies for a stockpile. The British delegation, led by Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Economic Warfare (MEW) the Hon. Dingle M. Foot, were initially conservative in their concessions, grumbling that “a great

¹⁷⁵ Dexter interviewed Ida Johnson, “a very aggressive and intelligent colored woman,” who had spent two years in the Amersfoort and Liebenau concentration camps with her teenage daughters, Jacqueline and Marilyn. He felt her testimony especially valuable, “as she is obviously not Jewish.” Her husband, pianist Freddy Johnson, had been arrested in Amsterdam late December 1941 as an American citizen. He was released in a prisoner exchange in February 1944. The entire family had been born in the United States. After returning to the United States, Ida Johnson shared her experiences with an African American newspaper in Pittsburgh. Padmore, George, “Spends 19 Months in Nazi Camp,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1944 September 2, pg. 1. Edward Crocker, *Treatment of Jews and Anti-Nazis in Dutch and Polish Prison Camps*, 1944 July 24; *The Morgenthau Diaries*, Volume 757; LOC.

¹⁷⁶ Paul McCormack, Memo regarding stockpile of relief packages, 1944 March 13; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 7, Documents 262-263; USHMM.

deal of pressure now being exerted on both Governments on the feeding question might be removed if the British and American publics were informed of all the steps previously taken with a view to assisting victims of Nazi oppressions."¹⁷⁷ They also feared that bringing any relief materials through the blockade would assist the enemy.¹⁷⁸ But finally, the British acceded to allow the Red Cross to distribute 100,000 food parcels per month for three months as a trial, although Pehle had it added to the record that he did not feel the agreement went far enough. Since clothing parcels were considered to be more valuable (as non-consumable goods), food parcels would be used to test the efficacy of the program before clothing was distributed.¹⁷⁹ Pehle proudly informed President Roosevelt, along with Secretaries Hull, Morgenthau, and Stimson, of the agreement, writing, "At this stage, sustaining the lives of these unfortunate people may be quite as important as attempting to rescue them from enemy territory."¹⁸⁰

The British preferred that the food come from neutral or occupied Europe rather than brought in through the blockade. Coincidentally, a cargo ship, the *SS Christina*, had been beached near Sète, France at the beginning of June 1944. She carried 315,120 POW relief packages that had been purchased by the French and Belgian governments, which included tinned food. The American Red Cross recommended salvaging the tinned food that, while damaged and not fit for POWs, could be sent into concentration camps. (The *Christina* also carried 28 million cigarettes, which were lost.) After purchasing the

¹⁷⁷ Eldred Kuppinger, Memos and minutes of discussions about expanding relief packages, 1944 June 17; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 24, Folder 8, Documents 519-532; USHMM.

¹⁷⁸ Dingle Foot, Letter from Foot to Berle, 1944 June 13; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 7, Documents 210-212; USHMM.

¹⁷⁹ Eldred Kuppinger, Memos and minutes of discussions about expanding relief packages, 1944 June 17; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 24, Folder 8, Documents 519-532; USHMM.

¹⁸⁰ John Pehle, Pehle memo to Roosevelt, 1944 June 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 7, Documents 185-186; USHMM.

packages from their owners at a reduced rate, the blockade authorities at first agreed to distribute salvageable food to internment camps in southern France, under the supervision of the Red Cross. But when inspection facilities could not be found there, the packages went by train to Geneva. At the beginning of July, the Red Cross reported that all but 400 packages had been damaged, and that they were being sorted and dried. The parcels would supply usable amounts of powdered milk, margarine, tinned meat, corned beef, salmon, pâté, jam, and some amount of coffee, soap, sugar and cheese.¹⁸¹

On July 7th, Dr. J. E. Schwarzenberg of the International Red Cross presented an *aide-mémoire* to the American legation in Bern in response to the June 12th agreement with the British in Washington. While the Red Cross was pleased that blockade authorities were considering sending supplies to civilian prisoners, they cautioned against asking for official German permission, since it was likely to be denied.¹⁸² They could handle repackaging the materials from the *Christina*, but the WRB, with the help of the American Red Cross, would need to prepare any additional parcels in the United States and ship them to Switzerland. The 300,000 packages would be identified by International Red Cross stickers after they arrived in Geneva but prior to distribution.¹⁸³ To pay for the food and boxes, the War Refugee Board requested and received \$1,125,000 from the

¹⁸¹ Paul Squire, Geneva consulate cables about *Christina* salvage, 1944 July 7; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 24, Folder 8, Documents 490-491; USHMM.

¹⁸² Schwarzenberg confided at a meeting that Red Cross delegates were allowed to visit Dachau, Oranienberg, Buchenwald, and Ravensbrück; the visits were unofficial and tolerated by the camp commandants. He feared that asking formal permission would restrict their access to these camps. Howard Elting, Jr., Memo of meeting in Geneva with International Red Cross, 1944 July 4; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 68, Folder 4; FDRL.

¹⁸³ Edward Stettinius, Cable to Bern about relief packages, 1944 July 31; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 7, Documents 166-168; USHMM.

President's Emergency Fund.¹⁸⁴ On August 9th, the American legation in Bern heard that the British agreed to the plans. The British Foreign Office granted permission for the United States to send 300,000 relief packages through the "Gothenburg" shipping route (the route normally used to send POW packages); to use salvaged material from the *Christina*; and to the Red Cross's requests regarding the handling and distribution of the packages. After alerting Schwarzenberg that the project was underway, a British consulate staffer reported that the International Red Cross "needless to say, is delighted."¹⁸⁵

Free Currency

During the two days of meetings in Berle's office in June where the British and Americans reached an initial agreement on the 300,000 relief packages, Dingle Foot of MEW again expressed concern about the Board's licensing authorizations. The British had been complaining about the licenses all spring, and had proposed a credit program instead. The plan would require the War Refugee Board to cancel all the licenses they had issued and instead restrict relief organizations to only purchase currency on credit for post-war reimbursement. The War Refugee Board, with the support of the State Department, refused. Instead, the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees began preparing the credit program and, with the Joint acting as their agent, planned to

¹⁸⁴ Franklin Roosevelt, Memo on relief package program, 1944 September 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 24, Folder 10, Document 772; USHMM.

¹⁸⁵ H.B. Livingston, Letter from British consulate in Geneva to Elting, 1944 August 9; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 68, Folder 4; FDRL.

authorize \$930,000 for the quarter ending on September 30, 1944.¹⁸⁶ Though the British did not agree with the American position, the credit program and the Board's licenses actually complemented each other. This way, Joint programs that could be funded on credit could be authorized by the IGC, but for programs that needed free exchange of currency the Joint had the option of a license through the WRB. The Board and IGC staffs, any previous tension having dissipated since their meeting in April, sent multiple telegrams of congratulations and thanks to one another throughout the summer for the establishment of the credit program. The WRB thanked the Joint as well for assisting the IGC; on July 28th, Pehle wrote to Paul Baerwald of the Joint that, "From a broader standpoint, we are sincerely gratified that the combination of the efforts of a private agency, a Federal agency, and an international agency has resulted in a plan which, directly and indirectly, will bring a substantial measure of relief and assistance to the suffering people of Europe."¹⁸⁷

Even though the WRB and IGC were supportive of each other, the British still disapproved of the Board's licenses, particularly the clause that if relief organization representatives could not deal in blocked dollars or exchange currency in neutral nations, they were allowed to elicit free currency exchange in enemy territory. A few weeks after the June meeting, Pehle contacted the British embassy to formally respond to their concerns. Explaining that as of June 1st, the War Refugee Board had licensed a total of \$2,088,100 for relief and rescue operations in enemy territory, Pehle hastened to add that

¹⁸⁶ John Winant, Cable from London transmitting message from Emerson to Hirschmann, 1944 July 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 21, Folder 7, Documents 688-689; USHMM.

¹⁸⁷ John Pehle, Pehle letter to Baerwald, 1944 July 28; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 14, Folder 2, Documents 222; USHMM.

this was the amount licensed, not how much the relief organizations had actually remitted, nor the much smaller amount that had been exchanged in enemy territory.¹⁸⁸

In an attempt to preempt future British concerns, the Board cabled their representatives abroad and asked them to determine just how much free exchange had taken place. After inquiries of all relief organizations, the Board was able to inform the British on August 8th that only \$269,400 had been exchanged in enemy territory. The investigation revealed that Saly Mayer in Switzerland had been the only representative to take advantage of the free exchange provision of his licenses, directly sending the Swiss franc equivalent of \$135,000 to Hungary, \$105,000 to Slovakia, \$17,000 to Romania, \$9,400 to Italy, and \$3,000 to Poland.¹⁸⁹ Though the Joint was normally the most conservative of the relief agencies with which the WRB worked, they were also spending the most money in enemy territory.

Turkey

Though Ira Hirschmann only had one relief agency to ask about the use of their license—the Vaad Hatzalah, which had not spent any of their \$25,000 remittance when he asked—he had by far the most representatives to deal with. He took partial credit for this, writing in his diary that, "The enormous excitement created by my work here originally has sent representatives here from all over the world to claim credit."¹⁹⁰ Still, the sheer number of interested organizations was causing problems, leaving Steinhardt to

¹⁸⁸ John Pehle, Pehle letter to Thorold about license authorizations, 1944 June 29; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 8, Folder 1, Documents 29; USHMM.

¹⁸⁹ Saly Mayer, Mayer send McClelland list of remittances, 1944 July 14; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 71, Folder 7; FDRL.

¹⁹⁰ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 June 20; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

report on June 1st that the Turkish government was being inundated with "the numerous persons whose versions of the same situation have often varied and whose requests have frequently conflicted."¹⁹¹ The Turkish government requested that the United States coordinate these relief appeals through Steinhardt or Hirschmann.

On July 2nd, as Hirschmann was finally recovering from his bout of malaria, Steinhardt, getting ready to leave for the United States, hosted a luncheon with eight representatives of relief organizations operating in Turkey. Hirschmann reported to the Board that they formed a coordinating committee, headed by Hirschmann and Katzki, to centralize relief work, particularly attempts to charter relief ships.¹⁹² The first official meeting of the coordinating committee was held on Monday, July 10th, and was attended by nineteen representatives. The meeting focused on the establishment of a smaller advisory committee, with the larger group only meeting for informational purposes.¹⁹³

For the rest of July, this advisory committee—consisting of Reuben Resnik of the Joint; Zeev Shind and Chaim Barlas of the Jewish Agency; and David Schweitzer of HIAS—met on Monday afternoons in Istanbul to discuss the problems related to relief and rescue work in Turkey.¹⁹⁴ Katzki headed the meetings with Hirschmann in attendance if he happened to be in Istanbul. Their discussions mainly related to boats: the four Turkish boats and one Greek boat were all waiting to depart Constanța; the

¹⁹¹ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable to the WRB, 1944 June 1; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 48, Folder "Turkey, Volume 5-AF1-10A"; FDRL.

¹⁹² Robert Kelley, Cable from Hirschmann about coordinating committee, 1944 July 6; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 13, Folder 5, Documents 582-585; USHMM.

¹⁹³ Ira Hirschmann, Minutes of Informal Meeting, 1944 July 11; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 14, Folder 5, Documents 600-605; USHMM.

¹⁹⁴ Joseph Schwartz of the Joint and Eleazer Kaplan of the Jewish Agency also each attended one meeting.

demographic makeup of those who would leave on the ships; and whether organizations could independently charter vessels to carry “their” people.

Jacob Griffel, the Vaad Hatzalah’s representative, had been complaining to Hirschmann and to his home office in New York that the Jewish Agency was not granting enough Palestine certificates and ship berths to non-Zionist Orthodox Jews. After giving priority to youth, women, and those who had been training for life in Palestine (mainly through Hachshara programs), the Jewish Agency was allotting 6% of the total spaces to Orthodox Jews. Griffel located a firm willing to rent him his own boat, used some of his license money to issue a down payment, and got Hirschmann’s blessing for the plan. At the July 31st meeting, Zeev Shind of the Jewish Agency expressed his anger that Hirschmann would guarantee Palestine entry visas for anyone who might arrive on Griffel’s ship, since only the Jewish Agency could issue those certificates; Hirschmann was unable to defend himself but reminded Shind that rescue was the ultimate goal. It remained to be seen whether Griffel’s plan would work.¹⁹⁵

Eri Jabotinsky, the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People’s representative in Turkey, had plans of his own. The Board received newspaper articles and heard rumors reporting that Jabotinsky was claiming to be a War Refugee Board representative, but the WRB was unable to prove this—and unwilling to call attention to it by issuing a public denial—though they did cable Ankara to clarify that he was not.¹⁹⁶ After two weeks in Ankara, Jabotinsky wrote a long, chatty letter to Pehle requesting, among other things, a bank account and a *New York Post* press pass. He claimed to be

¹⁹⁵ Ira Hirschmann, Meeting minutes, 1944 July 31; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 49, Folder “Turkey-9-1”; FDRL.

¹⁹⁶ John Pehle, Cable to Ankara, 1944 June 27; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 4, Documents 261-262; USHMM.

working on a project related to the wholesale release of Romanian Jews which would necessitate spending \$1,000,000-\$2,000,000 before the cost of evacuation, but he did not share details or seem to worry about where to find the money, writing that “[m]y present mood is to undertake financial obligations as they come and let the future take care of itself.”¹⁹⁷ Jabotinsky worried about mending his relationship with Ambassador Steinhardt; they had gotten off on the wrong foot, which Jabotinsky claimed, “came about, my John, because you did not inform him of my coming.”¹⁹⁸ Jabotinsky included with his letter a sixteen page handwritten report of his opinions about the situation in Turkey, the prospects of rescue from neighboring countries, and what he thought of his fellow relief organization representatives. The report was clear and interesting; Jabotinsky had clearly been doing a great deal of investigative work in his first two weeks in Ankara. The Emergency Committee, never a group that believed in discretion, released the entire text of Jabotinsky’s report to the press in early August, including his opinions of the personalities involved and some of the pending rescue ideas.¹⁹⁹

Jabotinsky’s plan related to Romanian Jews was never mentioned again, but every week he seemed to create another problem. On June 24th, Pehle wrote a memo to the file that the British embassy had issued a complaint about Jabotinsky’s demands to use their diplomatic pouch and cyphers. Since he represented a “private and more or less discredited organization” they would not allow this.²⁰⁰ At the beginning of July, Moses

¹⁹⁷ Eri Jabotinsky, Jabotinsky letter and report to Pehle, 1944 June 14; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 5, Documents 305-327; USHMM.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ *La Idea Sionista*, "Importantisimo Informe de Eri Jabotinsky sobre el Rescate de Refugiados via Turquía", 1944 August 11; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 3, Folder 9, Documents 912-923; USHMM.

²⁰⁰ John Pehle, Memorandum to the file, 1944 June 24; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 4, Documents 243; USHMM.

Leavitt of the Joint shared with the WRB an exchange of correspondence he had with the Emergency Committee about Jabotinsky's work. The Emergency Committee had approached the Joint for \$200,000 for Jabotinsky's underground rescue work, claiming that while Hirschmann could not officially approve it since the refugees would come through underground channels, Pehle knew and approved of the plan. When, under instructions from the Joint, Reuben Resnik asked Jabotinsky about his work, he claimed to have no definite plans.²⁰¹ After a heated exchange in the United States, wherein the Joint refused to give \$200,000 for projects for which there were neither details nor WRB approval, the Emergency Committee set about on another tactic. They sent telegrams to supporters in the United States requesting each recipient send \$200 immediately to help rescue 1,200 Jews from the Balkans to Turkey.²⁰² After learning of this, the War Relief Control Board informed the Emergency Committee they were not allowed to solicit funds for rescue work without formal authorization.²⁰³

These problems continued, one after another. In mid-July, Jabotinsky asked for Hirschmann's help in sending a telegram to the United States about his plan to approach Turkish President Inonu's personal dentist, a Dr. Ginsburg, asking him to "use your good offices to facilitate transit of thousands of Jews desiring to escape," presumably through Ginsburg's access to the President.²⁰⁴ It does not appear as though Hirschmann transmitted Jabotinsky's message, though Hirschmann later wrote in his diary that he

²⁰¹ Burton Berry, Cable from Istanbul transmitting message from Resnik to Joint, 1944 July 17; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 13, Folder 5, Documents 570; USHMM.

²⁰² Charles Brown, Charles Brown letter to the WRB, 1944 July 16; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 2, Folder 66, Documents 935; USHMM.

²⁰³ James Brunot, Letter to Pehle, 1944 July 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 2, Folder 66, Documents 930-931; USHMM.

²⁰⁴ Ira Hirschmann, Hirschmann letter to Jabotinsky with cable enclosure, 1944 July 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 13, Folder 6, Documents 793-796; USHMM.

“unearthed a plot against me by Jabotinsky with a Dr. Ginsburg to discredit me.”²⁰⁵

(Alas, Hirschmann never described the details of this supposed plot of dental deceit.) On July 24th, the Emergency Committee sent \$5,000 to Jabotinsky, though the Board added a clause to his license that he would need Hirschmann’s permission to spend it. Only two days after Katzki informed Jabotinsky the funds had arrived and reminded him of the license’s requirements, Hirschmann learned that Jabotinsky was planning to spend the funds without seeking permission.²⁰⁶ Katzki and Hirschmann once again had to remind him of his legal requirements.

At the end of July, Jabotinsky presented Hirschmann with a plan to hire a wooden boat in Turkey, sail up the Danube, and evacuate refugees from Budapest. Hirschmann responded with a list of concerns—from the boat being too tall and deep to navigate the river, to the mines possibly strewn on the Danube, to the number of occupied countries through which the boat would need to travel. Ultimately, he questioned the possibility of Jews being allowed to escape in this way. Though the Emergency Committee had publicized the Horthy offer in the United States, there was no evidence that Hungary would allow this kind of refugee evacuation. Hirschmann would neither approve nor disapprove Jabotinsky’s program without further details; Jabotinsky responded to Hirschmann that the boat was called the *Taurus* and would leave the first week of August.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 August 5; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

²⁰⁶ Ira Hirschmann, Hirschmann memo to Katzki, 1944 July 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 13, Folder 6, Documents 751; USHMM.

²⁰⁷ Ira Hirschmann, Letter to Jabotinsky, 1944 July 29; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 9, Documents 846-848; USHMM. Eri Jabotinsky, Letter to Hirschmann, 1944 July 31; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 13, Folder 6, Documents 785-786; USHMM.

Back in the United States, the Emergency Committee began to advertise that Jabotinsky was opening rescue channels from the Balkans.²⁰⁸ They also continued to complain about the Joint's refusal to give them money. When the Joint shared Resnik's cable stating that Jabotinsky had no definite rescue plans, the Emergency Committee wrote to the WRB to say that the Joint was lying: "[R]eally these people have reached the limits of unscrupulous dealing. What do they hope to gain by these machinations?"²⁰⁹ By the second week of August, Jabotinsky had reserved his boat but was still waiting for money to fund the trip.

In New York City, the Emergency Committee held the Second Annual Emergency Conference to Save the Jews of Europe on August 7-8. Although the Committee issued repeated invitations, neither Pehle nor DuBois attended, though Jim Abrahamson went to New York at the last minute to participate in their Rescue Committee panel. Also at the beginning of August, the Emergency Committee applied for permission through the War Relief Control Board to conduct a national fundraising campaign. Planning to establish a "Fund for Hebrew Rescue and Relief," they submitted a \$5,000,000 budget, which included the purchase of two ships, almost \$2,000,000 for food and clothing, and \$750,000 for administrative expenses. The War Relief Control Board sought the WRB's opinion. Responding that the Emergency Committee had been a "singularly forceful 'propaganda' group," the Board promised to continue their policy of working through all

²⁰⁸ Reuben Resnik, Resnik cable to Schwartz, 1944 August 2; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 13, Folder 6, Documents 695; USHMM.

²⁰⁹ Johan Smertenko, Smertenko letter to Pehle, 1944 August 5; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 6, Folder 1, Documents 81-84; USHMM.

approved organizations.²¹⁰ The response was remarkably non-committal.

In Istanbul, Jabotinsky and Griffel were both waiting for boats to sail—Griffel’s carrying Orthodox Jews, and Jabotinsky’s up the Danube to rescue Jews from Budapest. They were not the only people waiting for transportation. On July 3rd, the Jewish Agency gave Hirschmann a list of four Turkish boats—the *Kazbek*, *Morina*, *Mefkure*, and *Bulbul*— and one Greek boat—the *Smyrna*—that were ready to sail from Constanța.²¹¹ These boats, which were small and sailing without safe conduct permissions, were being chartered through the Jewish Agency, with funding from the Joint (through one of Saly Mayer’s licenses).²¹² But the *Kazbek* arrived alone on July 8th. On July 11th, Hirschmann discovered that the Turkish consul in Bucharest was holding back the other ships because there was no collective visa paperwork listing names, passport numbers, and dates of original visas.²¹³ Kelley, acting in Steinhardt’s absence, protested through the Turkish Foreign Office and was told the matter would be resolved. But the ships still did not come, and Hirschmann did not know why.

In an effort to break out the impasse, Hirschmann requested another meeting with Alexandre Cretzianu, the Romanian Minister to Turkey, on July 21st. Though the meeting was pleasant and the two discussed minor details about the refugee movement, there was

²¹⁰ John Pehle, Pehle letter to War Relief Control Board, 1944 August 9; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 6, Folder 1, Documents 57-61; USHMM.

²¹¹ The names of the ships vary widely in the WRB’s records and Hirschmann’s notes. I am using the most common post-war spelling of the ships. Ira Hirschmann, Hirschmann memo of meeting from Shind, 1944 July 3; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 49, Folder “Turkey, Volume 8-4”; FDRL.

²¹² The Joint also paid for the two voyages each of the *Milka* and *Maritza* in the spring. The four total voyages of those ships brought 1,074 passengers at a cost of \$453,220.00. The Joint estimated the four Turkish boats and one Greek boat would bring 3,700 passengers at a cost of \$752,720.00. Reuben Resnik, Resnik sends Hirschmann copy of message from Schwartz, 1944 July 19; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 13, Folder 6, Documents 733-734; USHMM.

²¹³ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 July 11; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL. Ira Hirschmann, Hirschmann memo for Kelley, 1944 July 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 15, Folder 1, Document 207; USHMM.

no evidence the problem was in Romania.²¹⁴ With the help of Floyd Black, a professor at Roberts College in Istanbul and an expert in Bulgarian affairs, Hirschmann planned a meeting with Nicolas Balabanoff, the Bulgarian Minister to Turkey. Balabanoff was in Sofia for the first half of July, so Hirschmann transmitted memos to Bulgaria asking authorities to increase the movement of refugees to 500 individuals per week, ensure ships travel promptly, and issue an ordinance that all persecutions would cease. When Balabanoff returned to Istanbul and met with Hirschmann on July 24th, he reported that the new government in Sofia was liberal and would slowly rescind anti-Jewish laws and policies. All refugee boats would leave without delay and, moreover, the Bulgarian government accepted Hirschmann's request to increase the number of Jews allowed to depart by rail. The meeting was almost entirely positive, though Hirschmann demanded that as a show of goodwill, the Bulgarian government should immediately annul the existing anti-Jewish laws. Balabanoff protested that this was not yet possible, but Hirschmann insisted.²¹⁵ A few days later, forty Bulgarian children between the ages of 12-17 arrived by rail to Istanbul; they had left soon after Hirschmann received the assurances from Balabanoff that refugees would leave without delay.²¹⁶

On Tuesday, August 1st, Burton Berry, the consular general in Istanbul, called a brief meeting to make a major announcement: the next day, Turkey was breaking off diplomatic relations with Nazi Germany. Berry told consulate staff the chance of

²¹⁴ Ira Hirschmann, Letter to Pehle with memo of conversation with Cretzianu, 1944 July 24; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 28, Folder 7, Documents 329-333; USHMM.

²¹⁵ Ira Hirschmann, Letter to Pehle with memo of conversation with Balabanoff, 1944 July 25; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 28, Folder 7, Documents 323-327; USHMM.

²¹⁶ Ira Hirschmann, Memorandum on 40 Bulgarian Children, 1944 July 31; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 8, Folder 5, Documents 692-697; USHMM.

Germany bombing Turkey was 50%. The streets were chaotic, with the entire German diplomatic community (many staying at the same hotel as Hirschmann) moving out quickly. Hirschmann instructed Katzki to withdraw 2,000 lire, to gather chocolate, cigarettes, flashlights, and to purchase suitcases for their confidential records.²¹⁷

A few days earlier, Hirschmann had learned that the war was interfering with the refugee boats, too. Due to enemy torpedoing on the Black Sea, no Turkish passenger boats were being allowed to sail. So it was a nice surprise to hear on August 2nd, the day Turkey left neutrality, that one of the small Turkish vessels, the *Bulbul*, had left Constanța and was on the way to Turkey. Hirschmann was tired but in a relatively good mood when, on August 5th, he again met separately with both Cretzianu and Balabanoff in Ankara. Cretzianu began by reading a telegram he had sent to Bucharest to facilitate the movement of the small ships, and explained what Hirschmann already knew—that the ships had been delayed for technical reasons by the Turkish government. Hirschmann urged Cretzianu to convince his government to establish havens for Hungarian Jews in Romania with any necessary support from the Red Cross; since the Horthy offer was public (and Hirschmann had a copy of the United States' as-yet-undelivered response), both knew the havens might be needed.²¹⁸ Balabanoff, who began his meeting by stealing six of Hirschmann's cigarettes for his wife, asked lots of questions about the kind of goodwill the Bulgarian government could earn in the United States. Hirschmann again urged that nothing short of the abrogation of the two main anti-Jewish laws would suffice, so Balabanoff promised to send a strong message to his government, though he

²¹⁷ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 August 1; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

²¹⁸ Ira Hirschmann, Hirschmann memo of conversation with Cretzianu, 1944 August 5; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 7, Documents 320-321; USHMM.

cautioned that Bulgaria was still fearful of German invasion and may not want to do something so public.²¹⁹

In his diary that day, Hirschmann wrote that he had “[t]alked well with Cretzianu. Not so convincingly with Balabanoff.” But most of his entry was about the rumors concerning the ships coming from Romania. On the same day, 5,000 miles away, the *Henry Gibbons* arrived in New York harbor carrying the Fort Ontario refugees. Hirschmann was focused on waiting for three of his own: the *Morina*, the *Mefkure*, and the *Bulbul*. First, the rumor was that one had arrived, then all three, then just one, and finally, that the *Bulbul* had arrived and was safe. In fact, none of the refugee boats were in Istanbul. The next day, August 6th, there was silence until late evening. At 9:20pm, during the blackout, Hirschmann, working late at the embassy, received a phone call from Herbert Katzki in Istanbul that one of the boats had been torpedoed.²²⁰

On August 7th, after lots of rumors and chaos and conflicting reports, it was confirmed that the *Mefkure* had been torpedoed and sank in the Black Sea. She was carrying approximately 320 passengers. While the reports were coming in, a violent storm raged in Istanbul, and Hirschmann and Katzki sat on the phone. Katzki hopefully “stated that there was something out in the distance which could be seen with a glass and which might possibly be one of the refugee boats.”²²¹ That afternoon, the *Morina* arrived in port carrying 308 refugees.²²² Details finally came that the *Mefkure* had gone down

²¹⁹ Ira Hirschmann, Hirschmann memo of conversation with Balabanoff, 1944 August 5; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 8, Folder 4, Documents 672-674; USHMM.

²²⁰ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 August 6; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

²²¹ Ira Hirschmann, Memo of phone conversation between Hirschmann and Katzki, 1944 August 6; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 6, Documents 573; USHMM.

²²² Hirschmann reported to the WRB that the *Marina* brought 340 refugees. A British passport control list of the passengers, likely a more reliable source, totaled 308.

near Port Igneada. Since the *Bulbul* had been traveling nearby, it picked up the five surviving refugees and six surviving crew members and was currently anchored near Port Igneada for safety. The American legation arranged for food and medical supplies, and for the passengers to be brought by train to Istanbul rather than continue sailing in dangerous waters. The War Refugee Board in Washington, while asking for further information on the tragedy, told Hirschmann that they would support his informed decision regarding any possible future voyages. It would be up to him whether it was safe enough to continue refugee evacuations this way.²²³ Hirschmann would need to make up his mind soon, but it was too late to stop the *Bellacitta*, which was rumored to have left Bulgaria for Istanbul on August 8th, carrying 150 passengers, 120 of them children.²²⁴

Hungary

On August 5th, as the *Henry Gibbons* steamed into New York harbor and the *Mefkure* passengers were attacked on the Black Sea, the government of Hungary finally responded to the War Refugee Board's June 13th request to state their intentions regarding the Jews of Hungary. The Royal Hungarian Ministry's response, transmitted by the Bern legation, began with a survey of the "Jewish problem" in Hungary: they argued that since Hungarian Jews had secured such prominent positions in Hungarian life, the country had been forced to take precautions to protect their own race. They claimed the Jews were a greater problem than "for instance Negroes or Japanese for white population

²²³ Edward Stettinius, Cable to Hirschmann about the Mefkure, 1944 August 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 6, Documents 527-529; USHMM.

²²⁴ This was just a rumor. The *Bellacitta* was still stuck in Bulgaria. Ira Hirschmann, Memo that the Bellacitta has left, 1944 August 8; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 49, Folder "Turkey, Volume 8-2"; FDRL.

of the United States.” When Hungary was threatened militarily, they needed to eliminate the “defeatist propaganda and agitation of Jews.” Some Jews had been sent to Germany as forced laborers, while others were subjected to the same food rationing as non-Jewish Hungarians, though they were allowed fewer luxury goods. The response then summarized the details of the Horthy proposal and some additional concessions regarding Jews who became baptized Christians prior to August 1, 1941.²²⁵

By the time the War Refugee Board received Hungary’s reply, they had still not sent a formal response to the Horthy offer. Having rejecting the British proposal that the whole matter be referred to the IGC, the Board remained firm that the offer should be accepted in its entirety with no reservations, and the response should be delivered as promptly as possible.²²⁶ The State Department transmitted a copy of the planned American response to Bern, with the instructions that barring any directive to the contrary, it should be delivered promptly on the morning of August 7th. The British had until then.

On August 3rd, the British embassy asked George Warren at the State Department if the United States would consider delaying delivering their response until August 11th. The matter was going to be discussed at a War Cabinet meeting in London. Warren and Friedman agreed, but would not delay past August 11th, nor change the tone or substance of the response. Friedman suggested answering, “[T]his Government intends to advise the International Red Cross of its willingness to find havens of refuge for all Jews who

²²⁵ Leland Harrison, Bern transmits Hungarian response, 1944 August 5; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 5, Folder 5, Documents 781-790; USHMM.

²²⁶ Presumably, this was a reference to their upcoming plenary session in London in mid-August. The WRB had been invited to send a representative, but declined. Josiah DuBois, who happened to be in London with Morgenthau, ultimately attended as an observer.

reach neutral or United Nations' territory from Hungary. It is our hope that the British Government will join in this representation.”²²⁷ Perhaps unsurprisingly, the War Cabinet meeting on August 4th did not result in a decision; Ambassador Winant cabled that it would be discussed again on August 8th, but warned that there was a fear the “motive of the Horthy offer is a plot by the Germans to break up the delicate political situation in the Near East by putting there thousands of people who are regarded by the local inhabitants of such places as being undesirable, some [War Cabinet] members are opposed to acceptance.” With the implication that those opposed to acceptance would rather keep Jews in Hungary than bring them to safe havens and risk upsetting local populations, Winant noted that the official British reply might be “less sympathetic than would be indicated by the attitude of the Foreign Office by itself.”²²⁸

On August 10th, J.W. Russell of the British embassy in Washington sent a letter to George Warren announcing that the British had finally decided to accept the Horthy offer and were ready to make a joint declaration, but would have to agree on the terms. There were a few reservations. First, the British noted that “it cannot...be sufficiently emphasized” that the British capacity to accommodate refugees was limited, and though they will accept an indefinite commitment in theory, they were counting on the United States not to force them into accepting a commitment in practice. They recommended using havens in North Africa and Italy, working through the representatives of the IGC, and again approaching Latin American countries regarding the acceptance of refugees.

²²⁷ Joseph Friedman, Memo on suggested State Department reply, 1944 August 3; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 3, Document 100; USHMM.

²²⁸ John Winant, Cable to WRB that War Cabinet is not making progress, 1944 August 5; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 3, Documents 75; USHMM.

With some sense of self-awareness, the British wrote, “It is not thought that reference to the [IGC] would be interpreted in Axis Europe as a delaying gesture....”²²⁹ During his meeting with Warren, Russell noticed that the message did not indicate that the British minister in Bern was being instructed to deliver their response to the Red Cross. He asked if the delivery of the American response to the Red Cross could be delayed until he investigated this with London so the identical responses could be delivered simultaneously. Warren said no.²³⁰

On August 11th, Paul Squire of the American legation in Geneva delivered the American reply to the Horthy offer at the offices of the International Red Cross. In Bern, Minister Leland Harrison delivered the text to the Swiss government. In regards to the public statement, Warren and Russell discussed using the language of the American response as the main text of the statement—though they planned to change the last sentence of the text before it was released to the public. Warren told the War Refugee Board that the sentence, which read, “The United States is now awaiting information with regard to the concrete steps which the Hungarian Government will take to carry out its proposal,” should be modified to “sound a little less like a dare to the Hungarians.”²³¹ Which, of course, it was.

The Horthy offer had been a dare, too—challenging the Allies to figure out a way to accept without jeopardizing the war effort, and determine just how much they wanted to save the Jews of Hungary. During July, in the wake of the failure of the Brand offer,

²²⁹ J.W. Russell, British embassy sends Warren terms of British agreement, 1944 August 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 3, Documents 67-68; USHMM.

²³⁰ Joseph Friedman, Friedman memo on Warren and Russell discussion, 1944 August 11; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 3, Documents 62-64; USHMM.

²³¹ Ibid.

the subsequent publicity, and the rumors of the Horthy offer, three different situations arose: one involving an active ransom scheme, one a proposal from a refugee, and one a meeting with the enemy.

Roswell McClelland learned of the scheme on July 17th. It seemed as though he was one of the last to know—apparently it was another ransom offer, and apparently Isaac Sternbuch and Saly Mayer had known about it for some time. On that day, McClelland received a letter from Sternbuch stating that he had promised to grant the Nazis monetary credit for the purchase of tractors in order to prevent 1,200 Jews from being deported. McClelland wrote on the memo “First time I have heard of this!”²³² Mayer, who after their agreement several weeks earlier was in charge of all relief funds for Hungary, would not help him, so Sternbuch was now informing McClelland of the situation.²³³ In a follow-up letter, Sternbuch gave more details: 1,200 rabbis and important religious personalities had left Bratislava on July 6th and were headed by train for Vienna. If he granted credit by depositing money in a bank account for the purchase of tractors, the train would go to the Spanish border and the passengers released, but otherwise they would be deported to Poland.²³⁴

The next day, McClelland learned that this offer had a long and complicated background, stemming from a June request from the Vaada in Budapest for a large sum of free currency, in an attempt to trade lives in exchange for the purchase of cocoa, wool, sheepskin, soap, and tractors. Sternbuch had offered a guarantee of one million Swiss

²³² Isaac Sternbuch, Letter to McClelland, 1944 July 17; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 5; FDRL.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ McClelland made notes trying to figure out the math regarding the length of the train trip to various places, but ultimately could not figure this out, finally assuming that the train must already be waiting in Vienna. Isaac Sternbuch, Letter to McClelland, 1944 July 17; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 5; FDRL.

francs for the purchase of tractors, though neither he nor his organization had access to that amount of money. By the time he brought the matter to McClelland, the Vaada was sending messages stating that Sternbuch had 48 hours to make the money available or the rabbis and religious figures who had been put on a train would be sent to Poland.²³⁵

Mayer told McClelland he could not provide funds unless he knew where the “1,200 holy men” on the train were, who was providing them with supplies, the plans of their journey, and most importantly, a contract that guaranteed their release if funds were provided.²³⁶

On July 21st, McClelland sat down and wrote a narrative of the previous four days, which had to be full of cables and pleas that provided very little concrete information. Sternbuch could not provide him with details other than the payment information; could not confirm that the plan was supported by the representatives of the whole Jewish community, not just the Orthodox; and also claimed that he was not convinced the information about the train was authentic. Instead, Sternbuch just shared copies of pleading telegrams he received which included accusations such as, “Are shaken by your irresponsible refusal which has endangered well organized business contacts.”²³⁷ Sternbuch insisted that McClelland “must decide immediately on the basis of [his] own ‘Vollmachten’ since it is too late to put the matter up to Washington. We do not wish to gamble with the lives of 1,200 people.” (McClelland wrote on the side of the narrative, “I have no such powers.”) McClelland finally told Sternbuch that, with regret, it was impossible to make a decision on such short notice, especially a *fait accompli*,

²³⁵ HIJEFS, Cable to McClelland, 1944 July 18; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 6; FDRL.

²³⁶ Saly Mayer, Letter to McClelland, 1944 July 19; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 6; FDRL.

²³⁷ Roswell McClelland, Memo on tractor ransom, 1944 July 22; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 6; FDRL.

adding, "I still do not feel that the facts hang together to a degree which would enable us to make an intelligent decision."²³⁸

The day after McClelland found out about Sternbuch's tractor scheme, the WRB in Washington found out about it too, when the Vaad Hatzalah called. Sternbuch had cabled them about the scheme to complain that Saly Mayer was not cooperating, but since Sternbuch did not send the cable using the facilities of the Bern legation, McClelland never saw it. The WRB requested more information. On July 26th, McClelland responded with a lengthy cable outlining the scheme as he understood it, reporting his investigations to verify details and the existence of the train, and noting the similarities between this scheme and Joel Brand's offer.²³⁹ McClelland also explained that he had been consistently requesting details from Sternbuch about the plan and about previous requests, such as the Rabbi of Neutra's petition for \$1,000,000, but Sternbuch could never provide any information. Instead, "Sternbuch decided recently to pass on to me rather incoherent and desperate appeals made by his contact men in Budapest and Bratislava which involved a forty-eight hour time limit..."²⁴⁰ McClelland asked the WRB to consult with the Joint—since the money would have to come out of Mayer's \$1,500,000—and advise him. Mayer also heard from his home office in New York: "Sternbuch claims that this group may still be rescued by repatriation if immediate action is taken, and that you have refused to assist in saving them... This situation is deeply

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Leland Harrison, Bern cable from McClelland, 1944 July 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 11, Documents 767-770; USHMM

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

disturbing to [O]rthodox groups here, which are exerting great pressure on us.²⁴¹ Though the War Refugee Board concurred with McClelland's assessment that there was not enough information to pay the ransom, McClelland sent one more cable to address the Vaad Hatzalah's accusations of Mayer:

Neither Saly Mayer nor myself have ever refused to grant serious consideration to any objective and acceptable proposal for effecting the rescue of endangered Jews in Hungary regardless of the quarter from which such a proposition came. Our primary concern has been not 'It can not be done' but 'How can this be done.' In view of the contradictory and often unreliable nature of many of the proposals of Sternbuch, we have had to handle them with considerable circumspection.²⁴²

McClelland also reported that he had received a reliable report that the convoy of 1,200 had been taken to Bergen-Belsen.²⁴³ A few days later, the WRB held a meeting with Michael Tress from Agudas Israel and gave him the background information McClelland had provided about the proposal. Tress agreed that the WRB was right to refuse the scheme, and planned to contact the Jewish Agency to secure Palestine certificates for the rabbis.²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ Edward Stettinius, Cable to Bern with message from Leavitt to Mayer with McClelland's notes, 1944 July 30; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 71, Folder 8; FDRL.

²⁴² Leland Harrison, Bern cable from McClelland, 1944 August 5; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 12, Documents 791; USHMM.

²⁴³ It seems as though Sternbuch conflated the messages he was receiving into a new ransom scheme. In reality, the ransom scheme Sternbuch related to McClelland—monetary credit for tractors in exchange for the lives of 1,200 rabbis and religious personalities—was a result of miscommunications and the confusion of desperate coded telegrams from the Vaada in Budapest. The monetary credit for tractors was, in fact, a reference to the offer posed to Joel Brand requesting trucks. The 1,200 rabbis and religious leaders were actually 1,690 rabbis, religious leaders, and other Hungarian Jews, who were selected and ransomed by Reszö Kasztner, a member of the Vaada in Budapest. The train left Budapest on July 1st and arrived in Bergen-Belsen on July 8th—therefore, the refugees were already in Bergen-Belsen before Sternbuch brought the situation to McClelland's attention. There are many monographs and documentaries about what was called the "Kasztner train"; about Kasztner's post-war trial in Israel, where he was tried for failing to warn the Hungarian community about deportations and for placing family members on the train; and about his assassination in 1957. As Kasztner's activities evoked (and still evoke) tremendous emotions, most of these works are heavily biased either towards or against Kasztner.

²⁴⁴ Florence Hodel, Memo on meeting with Agudas Israel, 1944 August 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 12, Document 799; USHMM.

Like McClelland, the WRB had pledged to seriously consider every proposal for relief and rescue. On July 14th, a Hungarian Jewish immigrant named Eugene Bogdanffy, now living in Los Angeles, contacted Henry Morgenthau. He had heard Cordell Hull's condemnation of the Hungarian deportations on the radio, and had an idea to save lives. Morgenthau passed the message to the War Refugee Board who contacted Bogdanffy. When Bogdanffy said he wanted to discuss the idea in person, the WRB helped secure air priority for him to come to Washington. His complicated scheme involved contacting a high-ranking Nazi named Otto Braun and convincing him to meet Bogdanffy in Lisbon, where Bogdanffy would then bribe him to cease deportations using money raised from Hungarian refugees.²⁴⁵ Though the WRB was hesitant about sending a private citizen to negotiate directly with a Nazi, Bogdanffy had several influential friends who contacted the WRB to vouch for his character. The Board made elaborate plans: the Bern legation would contact Alfred Schaeffer, the manager of the Union Bank in Switzerland, and the Stockholm legation would ask Wallenberg to contact a man in Budapest named Felix Szertirney. Szertirney would go to Switzerland, where Schaeffer would help him get pengos to use to bribe Braun. Szertirney would know the request came from Bogdanffy because Wallenberg would reference "ruby cuff links, his pocket watch, his wife's gold bracelet, and his wife's brooch with the green stones."²⁴⁶ But by the beginning of August, Bogdanffy was back in Los Angeles, Censorship had added him to their watch list, and

²⁴⁵ Chauncey Waddell, Letter to Morgenthau about Bogdanffy, 1944 July 24; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 4, Documents 160-162; USHMM.

²⁴⁶ Lawrence Lesser, Draft cables regarding Bogdanffy plan, 1944 July 27; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 4, Documents 168-173; USHMM.

OSS had sent a report on both Bogdanffy and Braun. It looked as though the proposal was not dead, but perhaps too convoluted for the WRB.

Even though Bogdanffy's plan to rescue Hungarian Jews was not straightforward at all, it was clear that freedom could be bought, if one had enough money. At the end of June, a group of nearly forty Hungarian Jews—members and important associates of the family that owned the Manfred Weiss factories in Budapest (one of the largest industrial concerns in Europe)—arrived unannounced in Lisbon. They had turned over the factories to the Hermann Göring Werke and paid 1,500,000 Swiss francs in order to buy their own lives. Although they were the subject of rumor and speculation, it was reported that a few of the family members were still in German hands, so the group would not meet with embassy staff or refugee organization representatives in Lisbon to provide any information about the situation in Budapest.²⁴⁷

On July 19th—the day the Horthy rumors began, the day Sternbuch contacted McClelland, and the day the British leaked the Joel Brand offer to the press—Ira Hirschmann in Ankara drafted a cable for John Pehle in Washington. Rudolph (Reszö) Kasztner, a member of the Vaada, had sent coded telegrams to Menachem Bader of the Jewish Agency requesting that a representative meet with a Nazi official in lieu of Joel Brand. If Brand was not going to return to Hungary, someone else had to negotiate for him. When the Jewish Agency refused to allow Bader to travel to Budapest, Kasztner suggested Joseph Schwartz meet a German agent named Schroeder in Lisbon at the end of July. Since Schwartz was the director of the European offices of the Joint, he would

²⁴⁷ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm with information about Manfred Weiss group, 1944 August 6; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 28, Folder 4, Documents 178-179; USHMM.

theoretically have the power to negotiate a deal and the money to pay for it. The cables also mentioned the lives of 1,700 Jews—though the Board was never sure whether the 1,700 were the same as, or in addition to, the 1,200 for whom Sternbuch was simultaneously pleading.²⁴⁸ The response was swift: on July 20th, the British embassy, who received news of the request from Eliahu Dobkin of the Jewish Agency, made it clear that the United States should refuse to have anything to do with the proposals. Pehle agreed, and sent a memo explaining the situation to Stettinius, who in turn cabled instructions to London, Lisbon, Ankara, and Madrid that Schwartz was not to meet with Schroeder. Schwartz had already arrived in Lisbon, but when informed, “reluctantly accept[ed] Department's decision.”²⁴⁹

On August 11th, Roswell McClelland sent a long cable to the War Refugee Board in Washington. All of the ransom offers and rumors they had heard in the past month were not a coincidence. He reported, “In spite of preliminary reassuring news of an agreement between the Hungarian Government and ICRC to permit Jewish emigration [the Horthy offer]...it now appears that ranking Gestapo agents...have no intention of permitting them to emigrate freely.”²⁵⁰ The Gestapo now wanted to eke out every bit of financial gain from their victims—be it through the confiscation of their money and property, forced labor, or ransom. No one would leave for free. A Gestapo agent told Reszö Kasztner that it was his desire “to pump out necessary labor from Jewry of

²⁴⁸ They were. See footnote 243. Robert Kelley, Cable from Ankara transmitting message from Hirschmann, 1944 July 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 5, Documents 256-259; USHMM.

²⁴⁹ R. Henry Norweb, Cable from Lisbon to WRB about informing Schwartz, 1944 August 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 5, Documents 222-223; USHMM.

²⁵⁰ Leland Harrison, Cable to WRB transmitting message from McClelland, 1944 August 11; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 7; FDRL.

Hungary and sell the balance of valueless human material against goods with value.”²⁵¹

Despite plans for the emigration of 8,700 families with Palestine certificates, the German exit visas had not yet been issued.

In his cable, McClelland was finally able to link Sternbuch’s tractor scheme to the Joel Brand offer; when Brand had failed to return, the Jewish community in Budapest approached the Gestapo with the offer of money for tractors. On the basis of the offer, the Gestapo were holding 17,290 people whom they were threatening to send to Auschwitz, including the 1,690 now at Bergen-Belsen (which included Sternbuch’s 1,200 religious leaders), 15,000 the Gestapo were keeping “on ice” in Austria, and 600 people confined in Budapest.²⁵² The Gestapo representatives had hoped to meet with Joseph Schwartz in Lisbon to negotiate a deal for the fate of the 17,290. With the Allies refusing to allow this since Schwartz was an American, the Gestapo now proposed to meet with Saly Mayer, a Swiss citizen. The Germans agreed to unconditionally release 500 people from Bergen-Belsen to Switzerland and would not touch the 17,290 until after meeting with Mayer. It was clear that McClelland had thought a great deal about this cable and chose his language carefully. He knew what he was proposing, which was “that Saly Mayer should be allowed to meet agents of the Gestapo...in an attempt to draw out negotiations and gain as much time as possible, without making commitments...In view of the rapidly

²⁵¹ Leland Harrison, Cable to WRB transmitting message from McClelland, 1944 August 11; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 7; FDRL.

²⁵² The 1,690 people in Bergen-Belsen were the Hungarian Jews from the Kasztner train. Leland Harrison, Cable to WRB transmitting message from McClelland, 1944 August 11; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 7; FDRL.

changing military situation, any time gained is in favor of the endangered Jews.”²⁵³

McClelland wanted to negotiate.

In the summer of 1944, the Allies finally had boots on the ground in western Europe. Previously, the War Refugee Board’s work had focused on psychological warfare, protective papers, and licenses—important issues, but ones for which they could not measure success. After June 12th, with the President’s declaration of the establishment of Fort Ontario, the Board’s work became much more tangible. Things were happening, and they were happening quickly. Refugees left for the United States, Fedhala, Stockholm, and Istanbul; Raoul Wallenberg was in Budapest; organizations were demanding military intervention to save Jews; and Gestapo agents were demanding monetary compensation to release them. There was a definite sense that the tides were shifting—that Allied victory was only a matter of time, and the WRB either needed to sustain people until then or get them out immediately. In the summer of 1944, the War Refugee Board adopted a policy of action on all fronts.

²⁵³ Leland Harrison, Cable to WRB transmitting message from McClelland, 1944 August 11; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 7; FDRL.

**CHAPTER SIX: GAIN AS MUCH TIME AS POSSIBLE:
AUGUST 12, 1944—NOVEMBER 26, 1944**

For the War Refugee Board, 1944 could be divided into three phases. In the first months after the Board's creation, the staff made overt efforts to show that the newly-formed agency would be one of action, soliciting proposals and exploring possible avenues of rescue. The summer brought a frenzy of activities, as those proposals were put into place and the avenues explored, while the progress of the war opened up new opportunities. By the late summer of 1944, the Allied armies in the west were streaming across France, and the Red Army was marching through Poland. The war would be over soon, with the Allies the clear victors, though what victory would look like was still unclear. For the War Refugee Board, a busy summer led to a cautious fall. The plans they had implemented would be seen to completion—and new opportunities seized—but the WRB did not seek out new ideas for rescue and relief. The hopes were pinned on military progress, with the WRB trying to keep Jews and other would-be victims alive until they could be liberated and safe from last-minute slaughter.

In early August 1944, Veronica Ladislaus was eighteen years old and eight months pregnant; her husband, Phillip, was 22. After the Nazi invasion of Hungary, the couple fled from Budapest across the border to Romania, finally reaching the port city of Constanța. Three small boats, ostensibly sailing under the flag of the Romanian Red Cross, were sitting in the harbor, ready to take refugees to Istanbul, where they could

move on to Palestine. The boats were rickety and crowded, and the crew only spoke Turkish. In the evening on August 3rd, the *Morina* left first, then the *Bülbül*, then the *Mefkure* and with it, Veronica and Phillip. The ship quickly developed motor trouble and soon the *Morina* and *Bülbül* were far out of sight. For the first seven hours of the trip, the ship was escorted by a Romanian vessel, but in the early hours of August 4th, the *Mefkure* left Romanian waters and the escort vessel turned back. Soon after, Captain Kâzim Turan realized they were not alone; he began tracking a large black object in the water slowly following the ship, which due to the mechanical problems was only traveling at about five miles an hour. A little after midnight on August 5th, a rocket blasted over the mast of the *Mefkure*. Between the rocket, cannon fire, and machine guns erupting from the submarine that had trailed the boat, a fire broke out. Turan and his crew abandoned the passengers, jumping onto a dinghy and trying frantically to escape. There was no one left in charge to give instructions and no life rafts. The vast majority of the 300 passengers—among them 80 Jewish orphaned children—died when the ship sank, or in the flames, or were caught in machine gun fire in the water, or drowned. Veronica and Phillip, both champion swimmers back in Hungary, managed to stay afloat and escaped the destruction. They were two of only five survivors among the passengers of the *Mefkure*.

The *Bülbül* had been far ahead of the *Mefkure* but had encountered its own mechanical difficulties, and was nearby during the attack. The *Bülbül* went dark to escape detection, and no attempt was made to save any of the *Mefkure* passengers until the submarine was long gone. After recovering the five surviving passengers and the dinghy carrying the *Mefkure* crew, the *Bülbül* docked in Port Igneada. After a few days, the

Turkish government, urged by the Joint and the American embassy, began supplying the ship with food for the 400 passengers. No one knew if the waters were safe to continue. Veronica, Phillip, and the rest of the passengers traveled over land on fifty ox carts, walking and riding for 60 kilometers over the Yıldız (Istranca) Mountains to the small ancient town of Vize. There, they boarded trucks to the nearest major train station, 40 kilometers away in Çerkezköy. The passengers of the *Mefkure* and the *Bülbül* finally arrived in Istanbul the evening of August 14th. A week later, Veronica Ladislaus told her story to the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* while in an American hospital in Istanbul, waiting to give birth to her first child.¹

The day after the *Mefkure* passengers arrived in Istanbul, Paul McCormack was in New York to avert a minor crisis. It had been less than two weeks since British blockade authorities had finally given approval for the War Refugee Board to send 300,000 three-kilogram relief packages into Europe for distribution in concentration camps by the International Red Cross. John Pehle convinced the American Red Cross to give up space on the *Gripsholm*, a humanitarian ship mainly used for prisoner exchanges, which was set to leave New York harbor in late August. There was not much time, and while the Red Cross could pack the remaining 285,000 packages over the next several months, Pehle wanted to send the first shipment immediately. Since the Board had not yet secured funding for the packages, the Joint stepped in to handle the actual procurement and loaned the money to pay for the first 15,000 parcels. With ten days to go before the

¹ Kâzim Turan, Statement of the Captain, 1944 August 24; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 5, Documents 466-471; USHMM. Herbert Katzki, Memo of conversation with passengers on the *Bülbül*, 1944 August 14; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 6, Documents 508-512; USHMM. "Jewish Woman Rescued from the 'Mefkure' Tells How Germans Shelled Ship," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 1944 August 22.

shipment was due on the docks, Macy's and Gimbels, the original suppliers, both pulled out; neither had the manpower to handle such a large order in such a short amount of time. McCormack hurried from Washington and worked with the Joint to select two other commercial companies: Wallace, Burton, and Davis, Co.; and Prince Company.² Wallace charged \$2.91 for each of 10,000 packages, containing cheese, Kraft whole milk powder, sugar, dehydrated soup, raisins, and prune butter.³ Prince Company's packages were a bit more expensive, at \$3.00 each for the 5,000 parcels, containing tinned meat and meat spread, cookies, fruitcakes, dehydrated soup, marmalade, tea, and processed cheese.⁴ The War Refugee Board arranged for the necessary export license for the goods and convinced the Office of Price Administration to give them 73,125 red ration points and 2,000 sugar coupons.⁵ On August 23rd, the *Gripsholm* left New York for Gothenburg, Sweden, carrying 15,002 relief packages. At a meeting with Morgenthau, Pehle boasted, "[t]hat is the first time that any food has been sent to people in concentration camps. We had to beat the British down on it. We had to talk the Red Cross out of space on the ship. We had to buy the food in New York. We did the whole thing."⁶

² Henrietta Buchman, Memo on 15,000 food packages, 1944 August 11; Collection: 1945-1954: New York Records of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee - NY 45-54, Sub Collection: Administration - NY 45-54/ 1, File 00193_1108; JDC.

³ Henrietta Buchman, Order paperwork, 1944 August 14; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 24, Folder 9, Documents 628; USHMM.

⁴ Henrietta Buchman, Order paperwork, 1944 August 14; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 24, Folder 9, Documents 630; USHMM.

⁵ John Pehle, Letter to the Office of Price Administration, 1944 August 16; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 7, Documents 161-162; USHMM. John Pehle and Paul McCormack, Letter to the Office of Price Administration, 1944 August 23; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 24, Folder 9, Documents 587-588; USHMM.

⁶ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., "Group" meeting, 1944 August 22; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 764, Document 47-75; LOC.

Ransoming the Jews of Hungary

While Pehle informed Morgenthau of the Board's successful relief package shipment, Saly Mayer traveled to the St. Margrethen bridge between Switzerland and Germany to meet with Nazi officials for the first series of ransom negotiations to save the lives of Jews under Nazi control. The Joel Brand proposal had ended in failure, and the Allies would not allow Joseph Schwartz to meet with Nazi officials. The challenge fell to Saly Mayer, the Joint representative in Switzerland and a Swiss citizen—so he had access to money and was a citizen of a neutral government. As a token of good faith, Nazi officials arranged for the release and transport to Switzerland of 320 Hungarian Jews from Bergen-Belsen, all of whom had been on the Kasztner train, a saga which Roswell McClelland had finally pieced together a few weeks prior.

On August 11, 1944, McClelland had sent a long cable to the War Refugee Board, advocating for Mayer to meet with Nazi officials “in an attempt to draw out negotiations and gain as much time as possible without making commitments....”⁷ Theoretically, Mayer's negotiations would act as a backup plan in case the Horthy offer failed. The same day McClelland sent his cable, Howard Elting—the same man who had met with Gerhart Riegner two years earlier and transmitted the first cable regarding the extermination of the Jews—delivered the American response to the Horthy offer to the International Red Cross offices in Geneva. The answer was simple: The United States accepted Horthy's offer, all of it. Jews bearing protective papers could leave; Jewish children under the age of ten would go to Palestine; deportations would officially cease.

⁷ Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern proposing ransom negotiations, 1944 August 11; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 7; FDRL.

Moreover, Ambassador Harrison sent a separate memo to the Red Cross to reiterate: "The Government of the United States, taking into account the humanitarian considerations involved as regards the Jews in Hungary, now specifically repeats its assurance the arrangements will be made by it for the care of all Jews who in the present circumstances are allowed to leave Hungary...."⁸ Though there were "substantial difficulties and responsibilities...involved," the United States had informed the neutral nations of this position and would figure out the bureaucratic details later.⁹ But whoever Horthy would release, the United States would care for.

This was not necessarily what the British wanted, but the American response was an ultimatum, not up for negotiation. When the British finally succumbed—and the United States privately confirmed that the British would not be saddled with an indefinite commitment—there was still the matter of a public statement of acceptance. Josiah DuBois, the War Refugee Board's general counsel, had been in London with Henry Morgenthau for a series of meetings, and remained to work with the British on a joint declaration. Pehle was critical of the "terrible position...the British have taken—that we will take all the responsibility and they will cooperate with us" and was wary that the true reason for British hesitation was the fear that release of a significant number of refugees would raise the issue of emigration to Palestine.¹⁰ The British proved both of Pehle's suspicions correct. When DuBois finally sent the agreed-upon joint declaration to the

⁸ Leland Harrison, Harrison sends response to Red Cross, 1944 August 11; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 7; FDRL.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ The original draft proposed by the British stated, "[T]he United States Government, with whom his Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will cooperate to the extent of their resources, will arrange for the care of all Jews leaving Hungary...." Henry Morgenthau, Jr., "Group" meeting, 1944 August 17; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 763, Document 62-85; LOC. British embassy staff, Draft British public statement for Horthy offer, 1944 August 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 25, Folder 3, Documents 40-42; USHMM.

United States, he noted that the British insisted on changing the phrase, “arrangements for the care of all Jews” to “arrangements for the care of such Jews,” to denote that the acceptance was only for Jews who fell into the specific categories of Horthy’s offer. DuBois pointed out that the official American response had stated “all Jews” and encouraged the WRB to use “all Jews” when publicizing the joint declaration in the United States.¹¹ A few days later, after the public statement was issued and received some minor publicity in the United States, Herbert Emerson, the director of the IGC, held a meeting to discuss implementation of the offer, including transportation routes, financial maintenance of the refugees, and the type of refugee who should leave first.¹²

Though the text of the public statement was important as a reiteration of the American position regarding Hungarian Jews, and though tentative planning for the care of any Jews Horthy might release continued, no one was very optimistic. In the same cable in which he advocated for ransom negotiations, McClelland observed that, “[i]n spite of preliminary reassuring news of an agreement between the Hungarian Government and ICRC to permit Jewish emigration to Palestine and elsewhere...it now appears that ranking Gestapo agents...have no intention of permitting them to emigrate freely....”¹³ Ira Hirschmann, writing on August 12th about the fact that a group of 2,000 Jews rumored to be released from Hungary had not yet arrived, observed, “Information received in Istanbul from reliable sources indicates that although the Hungarian

¹¹ John Winant, Cable from DuBois about joint statement, 1944 August 16; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 6, Folder 1, Documents 34-36; USHMM.

¹² John Winant, Cable reporting on informal conference, 1944 August 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 6, Folder 1, Documents 19-23; USHMM.

¹³ Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern proposing ransom negotiations, 1944 August 11; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 7; FDRL.

Government has agreed to provide the necessary exit facilities, final authorization must be granted by the German military and political organizations...such authorization has not until now been granted."¹⁴ By the beginning of September, it was public knowledge that the Nazis were preventing any emigration from Hungary. A *New Republic* editorial on September 4th criticized a Congressional resolution urging Roosevelt to press the British on opening Palestine to 400,000 Hungarian Jews, reminding readers that "[t]heir departure would depend on the consent of the Nazis rather than of the Hungarian government...Proposals, at this late date, to evacuate Jews from Hungary by way of available troop ships and transport planes are unrealistic, since they do not take Nazi opposition into account. It seems that the delivery of Hungary's Jews will come through military liberation rather than evacuation."¹⁵

Nazi opposition to the release of Jews could apparently be overcome, in exchange for money or material goods.¹⁶ While waiting for the War Refugee Board in Washington to respond to his recommendation about ransom negotiations, McClelland met with Mayer—who was sometimes accompanied by his lawyer, Marcus Wyler—every few days throughout August. Mayer was clearly intimidated by the prospect of negotiating with the Nazis, whom he referred to as “Willy” or “Willies”¹⁷, but was determined to be as prepared as possible. The tractor deal—which originated with Brand and had been

¹⁴ Robert Kelley, Cable from Ankara that Hungarian arrivals delayed, 1944 August 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 3, Documents 57-58; USHMM.

¹⁵ *The New Republic*, “Jews of Hungary”, 1944 September 4; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 6, Folder 7, Documents 756; USHMM.

¹⁶ Ransom negotiations with Nazi officials were a complicated business. This dissertation focuses solely on what the War Refugee Board in Washington knew, and how they reacted to this knowledge, as well as Roswell McClelland’s involvement and knowledge in Switzerland. Those looking for additional information and context should consult Yehuda Bauer’s excellent book *Jews for Sale*. Yehuda Bauer. *Jews for Sale: Nazi-Jewish Negotiations, 1933-1945*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994.

¹⁷ “Willy” was a generic code name for Nazi officers, originating as a nickname for SS officer Dieter Wisliceny, who had accepted a ransom in exchange for a group of Slovak Jews in 1942.

misinterpreted by Sternbuch—had not been formally rejected and involved the release of 1,691 Jews who had been on the Kasztner train as well as additional groups of Hungarian Jews (the makeup of which were unclear to Mayer), in exchange for material goods.¹⁸ Mayer met with Swiss officials and the Red Cross to obtain permission to enter into negotiations for the release of these prisoners into Switzerland; consent was given, with the unsurprising caveat that “any goods transaction (barter) with respect to such matters [is] to be entirely excluded.” However, the “proposition of S.M. to continue negotiations, and thereby deferring a definite break-off or solution is approved.”¹⁹ The War Refugee Board sent a similarly-worded cable on August 18th: “[R]ansom transactions of the nature indicated by German authorities cannot be entered into or authorized...If it is felt that a meeting between Saly Mayer and the German authorities would have possible effect of gaining time the Board does not object to such a meeting.”²⁰ The Swiss had also informed Mayer that entry for the negotiators was unlikely to be approved.²¹ Since Mayer was understandably hesitant to enter Germany, that left the Swiss-German border, halfway across the St. Margrethen bridge.²²

Rudolph (Rezső) Kasztner, a member of the Zionist group Vaada in Budapest—of which Joel Brand was also a member—had been negotiating with the Nazis since they entered Hungary in March. In late June, Kasztner had delivered approximately seven

¹⁸ Though there were actually 1,684 Jews on the Kasztner train, the WRB documents originally used 1,691 as the figure. I am unable to explain the discrepancy, but will be using both numbers, as the WRB staff switched between them.

¹⁹ Marcus Wyler, Notes on ransom negotiations, 1944 August 13; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 7; FDRL.

²⁰ Cordell Hull, WRB responds to McClelland, 1944 August 21; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 10, Documents 641-642; USHMM.

²¹ Marcus Wyler, Notes on ransom negotiations, 1944 August 13; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 7; FDRL.

²² Today, the St. Margrethen bridge links Austria and Switzerland. As Austria had been annexed to Germany in 1938, during the war the bridge was considered to be on the Swiss-German border.

million Swiss francs (about \$1,000 per person) to the Germans in exchange for the release of the 1,691 Jews, among them members of his own family as well as prominent Hungarian rabbis. Even with the ransom payment, the Jews were taken by train to Bergen-Belsen rather than released to a neutral country. To bring them to Switzerland, Mayer might have to pay again. The Nazis, communicating through Kasztner, offered to release 500 Hungarian Jews in exchange for the meeting with Mayer and for 1,000,000 Swiss francs—though Kasztner told Mayer that Jews would be released for free “just to show [the Nazis’] good faith and their decent ways.” The payment could be deposited somewhere for future deliveries.²³

On August 23rd, Mayer had a long meeting with Roswell McClelland to brief him on the St. Margrethen bridge encounter, which had taken place two days earlier. Mayer had met with a four person delegation—Rudolph Kasztner and three SS officers, led by SS- Untersturmführer Kurt Becher. Thereafter, Mayer’s negotiation with the Nazis was known by the code name “ARBA,” Hebrew for “four.” Becher, who was nicknamed “cup” in McClelland’s notes after the German meaning of his name, worked directly for *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler and had previous experience as a concentration camp guard and leader of a SS-unit tasked with killing partisans, but mostly in the relevant field of expropriating Jewish goods. It was Becher who had “arranged” for the transfer of the Manfred Weiss corporation in Budapest to the Nazis in exchange for the lives of the

²³ Robert Pilpel and Roswell McClelland, Pilpel message to Mayer with McClelland’s notes, 1944 August 13; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 7; FDRL. Saly Mayer, Notes on ransom negotiations, 1944 August 14; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 7; FDRL.

managers and their families.²⁴ Becher made it clear that the negotiations with Mayer were preliminary and were taking place with full knowledge and approval of Himmler. As a token of good faith and as a display of power, Becher had arranged for 320 of the Hungarian Jews from the Kasztner train to be sent from Bergen-Belsen; they arrived in Basel on the morning of the meeting.²⁵ (The arrival of an additional 200 prisoners—to fulfill the promised release of 500—was promised but did not materialize.) In exchange for the safety and release of one million additional Jews, the Nazis wanted 10,000 trucks, which they knew would have to come from the United States. They claimed that the idea to ask for trucks came from Jewish circles, including Kasztner, but Mayer warned that the United States would likely categorically refuse to deal in war materiel.²⁶ The group agreed on a ten-day break, during which Becher would come up with a list of other goods the Nazis might settle for, and Mayer would come up with some way to show the Allies were taking the negotiations seriously. As Saly Mayer explained the negotiations to Roswell McClelland, he used the word “Menschenhandel” [slave trade], a word he apparently also used in front of Kurt Becher, leading the SS officer to become “visibly annoyed over this and [he] tried to pretend it was a different thing.”²⁷

²⁴ For more information on Kurt Becher, see: Gábor Kádár and Vági, Zoltán. *Self-Financing Genocide: The Gold Train, the Becher Case and the Wealth of Hungarian Jews*. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004.

²⁵ The selection of those to be released was determined by last name. Prisoners with last names starting with “A” through “F” were sent to Switzerland. Roswell McClelland, Notes on ransom negotiations, 1944 August 27; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 8; FDRL.

²⁶ At first, the WRB staff in Washington was confused by the insistence on tractors, but in September, *Life* magazine published a photograph that seemed to provide an explanation. Pehle wrote to James Mann, “By the way, *Life* Magazine recently published a picture illustrating why the Germans are so interested in tractors. It showed a little agricultural tractor pulling several carloads of German war materiel through the streets of Paris during the German evacuation of the city.” Virginia Mannon asked the photo editor at *Life* if they would send the WRB a print of that particular photograph. John Pehle, Letter to James Mann, 1944 September 28; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 10, Documents 574-576; USHMM. Virginia Mannon, Request to *Life* magazine, 1944 September 23; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 15, Folder 60, Documents 714-715; USHMM.

²⁷ Both McClelland’s notes, and Marcus Wyler’s notes, which were written separately, reference Mayer’s use of “Menschenhandel.” Marcus Wyler, Notes on ransom negotiations, 1944 August 23; War Refugee Board Papers, Box

McClelland sent a lengthy cable to Washington explaining the first round of negotiations and asking for some sort of evidence that Mayer had \$2,000,000 at his disposal.²⁸ The Board agreed that Mayer could indicate he had access to this money, but could make no commitments of payment or goods. Instead, Mayer should induce the Nazis to make a list of the quantity and types of goods they desired, while continuing to employ delaying tactics related to the contents of the list. Though McClelland was duty-bound to follow the direction of the War Refugee Board, when he met with Mayer on August 30th he had not yet received these instructions; he wrote in his notes, "It has been decided by RDM [McClelland] and SM that SM shall have a free hand as far as funds in SM's possession are concerned. With exception actions prejudicial to satisfactory prosecution of war."²⁹

Mayer met with the ARBA negotiators in St. Margrethen (this time without Becher) again on September 3rd, 4th, and 5th. Every night, after the meetings, he spoke at length by phone with McClelland. On the first day, the Nazis floated amounts as high as 100 million Swiss francs, and claimed that the cost for the rest of the Kasztner group was 1.2 million Swiss francs, sheepskin, and tractors.³⁰ Mayer made it clear he wanted the promise of Red Cross supervision of all labor camps in occupied territory. The second day was more frustrating. Mayer was given 24 hours to report on the type of goods that

66, Folder 8; FDRL. Roswell McClelland, Notes on ransom negotiations, 1944 August 23; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 8; FDRL.

²⁸ This copy of the cable states McClelland's request as "\$2,000" but as the WRB replied with permission for \$2,000,000 (and that is what is in McClelland's notes), the erroneous number is likely a transmission or paraphrasing error on this particular copy. Leland Harrison, McClelland updates WRB on ransom, 1944 August 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 10, Documents 625-630; USHMM.

²⁹ Roswell McClelland, Notes on ransom negotiations, 1944 August 30; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 8; FDRL.

³⁰ Roswell McClelland, Notes on ransom negotiations, 1944 September 3; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 7; FDRL.

could leave Switzerland, and, according to McClelland's notes, was told that it is "[n]ot money we want. US to be held responsible for what happens to Jews...Becher wants material. No means death." On the third day, the Nazis asked for \$50 million dollars for goods, and Mayer made promises, though he rightfully claimed not to have access to that much money. When Mayer explained this to McClelland, one question lingered, "What will ARBA offer in return?," with a perhaps rhetorical response: "Keep them alive."³¹

McClelland did not update the War Refugee Board in Washington until September 16th, and even then, wrote only a short cable about how trying the negotiations were. Mayer was attempting to stall for time, but "all time possible has now been gained and that in all probability the Gestapo has lost patience so that these negotiations can be considered as having lapsed, negotiations which after all were ultimately doomed to failure."³² It is impossible to know why McClelland wrote this—and his characteristic handwritten annotation on the cable is absent—since he was still meeting frequently with Mayer to discuss strategy. After September 5th, though, Mayer did not meet with the Nazis again for nearly a month, and when he did, on September 29th, it was more of the same. Mayer claimed to not be able to select goods in Switzerland without a specialist sent by the Nazis, and there was no way to know when the Swiss would grant an entrance visa to such a person. Mayer did obtain assurances that the deportations of Jews in Slovakia would cease, and that the remaining Jews from Bergen-Belsen would be

³¹ Roswell McClelland, Notes on ransom negotiations, 1944 September 5; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 7; FDRL.

³² Leland Harrison, Cable from McClelland updating the WRB, 1944 September 16; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 10, Documents 563-564; USHMM.

released soon.³³ McClelland reported to the Board, “By bluffing it has happily been possible to draw matters out another time although whole affair is becoming very strained.”³⁴ It would be another month before the negotiations continued.

The confusing and tense ransom negotiations being carried out in Switzerland were constantly at risk, possibly more from the outside than the inside. While Mayer and Becher had reason to continue the talks—Mayer to buy time and Becher to obtain any tangible goods or, in lieu of that, continued access to the west for a possible negotiated peace—there were plenty of groups knowingly and unknowingly putting them at risk. Abraham Kalmanowitz of the Vaad Hatzalah wrote to Pehle and Morgenthau almost weekly—and made frequent trips to Washington to meet with them in person—to ask for money to be placed at the disposal of Isaac Sternbuch in Switzerland in order to pay ransom to the Nazis. After being informed of the arrival of the first group from Bergen-Belsen—but not about the ARBA negotiations—Kalmanowitz wrote, “It is evident that these are part of the 1200 (later known to be 1695) who were made the especial concern of Our Committee in Switzerland headed by Mr. Sternbuch. We firmly believe that these were rescued through the judicious use of funds placed at the disposal of Mr. Sternbuch.”³⁵ His repeated pleas even called Pehle’s judgment into question for failing to comply with his requests (“Fully confident in Mr. Pehle’s sincerity...we still cannot

³³ Roswell McClelland, Notes on ransom negotiations, 1944 September 29; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 7; FDRL.

³⁴ Leland Harrison, Cable to WRB about Slovakia, Hungary, ransom negotiations, 1944 October 5; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 5, Folder 5, Documents 728-731; USHMM.

³⁵ Abraham Kalmanowitz, Vaad asks for meeting, 1944 August 28; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 24, Folder 23, Documents 522; USHMM.

restrain our fears”).³⁶ Pehle obviously knew of the ongoing ARBA negotiations, but only what McClelland had informed him in the two cables. He could only acknowledge Kalmanowitz’s concerns but could not specifically address them, running the very real risk that the Vaad would make their complaints public.³⁷ On September 9th, Byron Price, the director of the Office of Censorship, alerted Pehle to a set of cables that had recently arrived about Mayer’s negotiations.³⁸ Pehle responded that the situation was known to the WRB, was being monitored, and that the contents of the cables would serve as the basis of discussion with the Joint, though not transmitted to them directly. A month later, Price, who had also sent a letter to Hull to make sure he knew of the situation, wrote to Pehle that Censorship was “duty bound to suppress the three messages”; he was “sure you will understand Censorship is not prepared to be a party to transactions in the nature of ransom payments.” Pehle was forbidden from transmitting or even discussing the cables, which contained messages from Saly Mayer for the Joint’s New York office.³⁹ In Lisbon, Ambassador Norweb, too, was concerned about the contents of the Joint’s messages. Not having been informed about the ARBA negotiations, he cabled first Washington, then Bern to make sure the proper authorities were aware. He “helpfully” conveyed information from the Hungarian *chargé d'affaires* in Lisbon that the Jews were not in

³⁶ Abraham Kalmanowitz, Kalmanowitz thanks Morgenthau, 1944 September 8; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 24, Folder 23, Documents 517-519; USHMM.

³⁷ In reality, Sternbuch was already attempting ransom negotiations, through a former pro-Nazi Swiss businessman, Curt Truempy, and through Jean-Marie Musy, a Swiss politician. McClelland knew of Truempy’s negotiations, but had no idea about his plans or financing. Since Truempy was not coming to him for any assistance, McClelland did not report any of this to the War Refugee Board. McClelland first learned of Musy’s ransom negotiations in late October, but again, there was no need to mention it to the War Refugee Board. There is no indication McClelland saw either negotiation as WRB business.

³⁸ Byron Price, Censorship sends WRB copies of cables, 1944 September 9; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 10, Documents 570-585; USHMM.

³⁹ Byron Price, Censorship rejects distribution, 1944 October 27; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 9, Documents 489; USHMM.

danger in Hungary, and noted his concern that the British and the Russians had not yet been consulted.⁴⁰ The War Refugee Board responded to Norweb's multiple cables of numerous warnings with a one-sentence cable reassuring him that the negotiations were known.⁴¹

Turkey

The attack on the *Mefkure* cast a temporary pall in Istanbul, and added yet another layer of tension to a city still bracing to see whether the Turkey would be bombed in retaliation for joining the Allied war effort the week prior. While the *Mefkure* was under investigation—Chaim Barlas, Saul Meyerov, and Reuben Resnik formed a committee in Istanbul—the War Refugee Board left it to Hirschmann's discretion as to whether the route from Constanța was safe enough to proceed. Their cable, expressing deep regret and praising the difficult work of Hirschmann and Katzki, concluded "[T]he Board will fully support a decision by you after consultation with the Embassy and the private agencies involved. We know that your decision will take into account the relative risk to the refugees if they remain in Bulgaria, Rumania or Hungary as the case may be as contrasted with the risks of sea voyages."⁴² Hirschmann planned to continue and, even before the *Mefkure* and *Bülbiül* passengers arrived in Istanbul, was pushing for the Bulgarian ships *Vita* and *Perin* to sail. For several days, Hirschmann believed a report

⁴⁰ R. Henry Norweb, Cable asking about ransom negotiations, 1944 September 6; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 10, Documents 605-606; USHMM.

⁴¹ Cordell Hull, WRB responds to Norweb, 1944 September 16; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 10, Documents 566-567; USHMM.

⁴² Edward Stettinius, WRB cable to Hirschmann about the *Mefkure*, 1944 August 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 6, Documents 527-529; USHMM.

from British naval intelligence that the *Mefkure* had not been attacked but had merely hit a rock.⁴³ Katzki, however, was able to interview the passengers and the *Mefkure*'s captain, and the investigation team presented their report that it had been a submarine attack.⁴⁴ Hirschmann's opinion—that sea transports should continue—was shared by members of the Operating Committee for Relief Organizations, which was still meeting every Monday afternoon and held a special Thursday evening session to review the issue of rescue boats. The group decided to investigate securing escorts for the ships and that adequate life support was available, but otherwise it was up to the refugees to decide whether they wanted to risk the trip. The Jewish Agency representatives had already cabled their counterparts in Bulgaria and Romania to proceed with arranging subsequent voyages.

The attack on the *Mefkure* received international attention, and on August 22nd the War Refugee Board issued a press release. Though the official investigation into the attack would not be concluded for nearly three more weeks, the Board staff clearly thought the propaganda opportunity was too good to pass up. In the release, Pehle was quoted as saying, "If anyone had any doubts about the German attitude toward refugee rescue operations, or anticipated a lessening in the Nazi program of extermination, he now knows the ugly truth."⁴⁵ Pehle asked the Office of War Information to increase their

⁴³ Ira Hirschmann, Memo about report from British Naval intelligence, 1944 August 11; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 6, Documents 520; USHMM.

⁴⁴ Kâzim Turan, Statement of the Captain, 1944 August 24; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 5, Documents 466-471; USHMM. Herbert Katzki, Memo of conversation with passengers on the *Bülbül*, 1944 August 14; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 6, Documents 508-512; USHMM.

⁴⁵ WRB staff, Press release 13, 1944 August 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 5, Documents 492; USHMM.

psychological warfare campaign and wrote Stettinius to ask for a public statement declaring that the United States intended to put the attackers on trial after the war.⁴⁶

In the meantime, while sea transport could theoretically continue—though no more ships arrived in August or in September—Hirschmann focused on relief in Romania and Bulgaria, rather than rescue. In late July, he had urged Nicholas Balabanoff, the Bulgarian minister in Turkey, to instruct his government to revoke anti-Jewish laws and promised positive press in the United States if Bulgaria did so. Hirschmann followed up with a letter laying out his demands: that America “would not be satisfied until the two scandalous anti-Jewish laws are completely revoked,” and that the government should take steps to rehabilitate the Jewish population.⁴⁷ In response, Bulgaria hoped to earn the goodwill of the United States and the continued absence of Allied bombing raids. Hirschmann suggested to Pehle that the War Refugee Board instruct the Soviet Union to also demand the revocation of the anti-Jewish laws, and privately made a list of other demands he would make on Bulgaria should the first set be successful.⁴⁸

The War Refugee Board—and, more importantly, the State Department—was less enthused about Hirschmann’s display of diplomatic force.⁴⁹ On August 15th, Hirschmann

⁴⁶ The irony, unbeknownst to the War Refugee Board, is that the attack on the *Mefkure* was actually carried out by Soviet submarine Shch-215. After the war, the Soviet captain of the submarine stated that he had intercepted the ship, but the *Mefkure* failed to identify herself and kept sailing. When the Soviets saw what they believed to be armed men on the ship, they attacked. The *Bülbül* was also likewise intercepted but identified herself and was unmolested. Jürgen Rohwer, and Gerhard Hümmelchen. *Chronology of the War at Sea, 1939-1945*. (New York: Arco, 1972), 347.

⁴⁷ A WRB staff member annotated Hirschmann’s first demand with “little dangerous!” Robert Kelley, Hirschmann sends WRB text of message to Bulgarian officials, 1944 August 4; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 9, Folder 1, Documents 21-23; USHMM.

⁴⁸ Ira Hirschmann, Notes on memo to Balabanoff, 1944 August 7; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 8, Folder 4, Documents 663-666; USHMM.

⁴⁹ Ambassador Steinhardt, too, was annoyed by Hirschmann’s displays of power. When he returned to Turkey in mid-September, Steinhardt learned that Hirschmann had been using the Ambassador’s private office in his absence. Laurence Steinhardt, Memo to Mr. Berry, 1944 September 10; Laurence Steinhardt Papers, Box 43, Folder “Correspondence A-C”; LOC.

received a cable which began: "It is assumed that you are aware of the fact that any discussions with Bulgarian or Romanian authorities must be strictly confined to questions of relief of refugees...and must not enter into the field of the domestic affairs of these countries."⁵⁰ In his diary, he called it a "stinging telegram" but was otherwise unconcerned: "I reply with a stinger of my own."⁵¹ Pehle followed up with Hirschmann in a personal letter sent through the pouch, since official cables "leave much unsaid." After thanking him for his work on the *Mefkure*, Pehle tried to soften the blow of the State Department cable by pointing out that "it is not easy to separate the political from purely relief matters," and reminding Hirschmann that the WRB had no authority to enter into any post-war commitments. The message to Bulgaria had been toeing that line.⁵² Hirschmann was unrepentant, and several weeks later reported in his diary, "I get off my telegram on the Bulgarian situation, it is coming to a head and I am winning. They are revoking the anti-Jewish laws. What a victory! I have saved these 45,000 people from within their country, instead of without."⁵³

Things were stabilizing in Istanbul—there was no Nazi attack on the city, Romania was out of the war, and with the Soviet military moving through the Balkans there were no pockets of refugees for Hirschmann to save. He and Katzki rented an office on İstiklal Street in Istanbul and settled in to deal with less-pressing matters. Katzki traveled to Izmir to examine whether the Board should set up an arrival base for small

⁵⁰ Edward Stettinius, Cable to Hirschmann about Bulgaria, 1944 August 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 9, Folder 1, Documents 9-10; USHMM.

⁵¹ Unfortunately, Hirschmann's "stinger" does not seem to have been preserved. Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 August 15; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

⁵² John Pehle, Letter to Hirschmann, 1944 August 18; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 9, Folder 6, Documents 946-949; USHMM.

⁵³ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 August 29; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Handwritten Diaries; FDRL.

boats carrying refugees from Greece; they decided there was no need to do so.⁵⁴ One of Hirschmann's pet projects was a group of German immigrants living in Turkey but threatened with repatriation to Germany now that Turkey had entered the war. Most were not Jewish, but instead intellectual and political opponents of the Nazi regime. Hirschmann argued with Robert Kelley, who was still acting in Steinhardt's absence, that since the group believed themselves to be at risk they should be his responsibility. In a span of four days in his diary, he recounted a meeting a Professor Roth ("and by quick action save him"), a woman named Herta Kroehling ("I induce her to steps, no matter how desperate, to remain"), "a pretty girl" ("They will kill her. I must help"), and a man and wife ("we spirited [them] away and hid for the night").⁵⁵ Hirschmann never reported the situation to the War Refugee Board in Washington, and did not mention it on his 84-page report of his activities, sent to the Board in mid-September. Eventually, the situation dissipated—some people were interned by the Turkish government, some returned to Germany, and some remained free in Turkey. As Hirschmann made no approaches to the Turkish government, it is unlikely he had much of an effect on any of it, though he wrote in his diary that he would encounter people whose lives he saved, and would humbly tell them that it was the American people who saved their lives, not him.

Hirschmann wanted to go somewhere more exciting. In the same diary entry in which he congratulated himself for success in Bulgaria, Hirschmann reported on a meeting with Ambassador Steinhardt, newly returned from the United States:

A good hour's review of work with Ambass. Steinh. He reveals that I have made the

⁵⁴ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable to WRB on Izmir bases, 1944 September 15; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 11, Folder 6, Documents 864; USHMM.

⁵⁵ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 August 10-14; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

best record for the War Ref. Bd, that the issue is now out of politics: that we should slow up. Also that some of my activity with the Enemy has been resented by the State Dept...I sound him out on moving into Rumania. He does not oppose it, but it will require pressure.⁵⁶

A few days later, Hirschmann formally cabled the War Refugee Board to ask permission to go to Romania, accompanied by Charles Passman, the newly-appointed Joint representative in Istanbul. (Passman was replacing Reuben Resnik, whom Hirschmann felt was “some petty small-fry exploiting the JDC”;⁵⁷ Passman, on the other hand, was “just the type of human being I respect.”⁵⁸) Dan Bratiano, a representative of the Romanian Red Cross visiting Istanbul, met with Hirschmann about recent delays in sending refugee ships; he traced the delays to Abraham Zissu. A Revisionist Zionist, Zissu ran the emigration office in Romania and had a long rivalry with the more assimilationist Wilhelm Filderman, who facilitated the Joint’s money (sent by Saly Mayer), to finance the voyages.⁵⁹ Hirschmann planned to investigate the situation, as continued refugee transports may clear space for any Hungarians who may be permitted to cross the border, as well as to examine relief possibilities for Jews in Romania.

Upon receiving Hirschmann’s request, Joseph Friedman of the WRB staff drafted a reply authorizing Hirschmann and Passman to proceed to Romania.⁶⁰ The cable was never sent, and ten days later Friedman had to draft another cable telling Hirschmann he would need to wait, since “broader questions not pertaining to refugee matters are still

⁵⁶ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 August 29; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Handwritten Diaries; FDRL.

⁵⁷ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 October 4; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

⁵⁸ Ira Hirschmann, Letter to Judah Mages, 1944 August 31; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 14, Folder 7, Documents 901-902; USHMM.

⁵⁹ Ira Hirschmann, Memo of conversation with Bratiano, 1944 September 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 8, Folder 3, Documents 351-353; USHMM.

⁶⁰ Joseph Friedman, Draft cable to Hirschmann, 1944 September 8; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 770, Document 251; LOC.

pending clearance....”⁶¹ While he waited for the WRB’s reply, Hirschmann worked on his final report, took many swimming and shopping trips, and ultimately decided to return to the United States. On September 20th, the same day Friedman’s disappointing cable finally arrived, Hirschmann sent a cable to Pehle: “As the policy of the Board...makes it clear that my activities are limited to the rescue of refugees...I am of the opinion that the future opportunities for the rescue of refugees from Hungary through Turkey are so limited as to no longer require or justify my continued presence...”⁶² He requested permission to return to the United States, which was granted in a cable on September 26th formally recalling him. Katzki would remain, as would the two secretaries.

While Hirschmann waited to leave, he traveled to Ankara twice to see Steinhardt, went to the Grand Bazaar to purchase antiques, and had to defend his diplomatic reputation. Joseph Klarman, who had been working as a relief agency representative alongside Jacob Griffel of the Vaad, began collaborating with Eri Jabotinsky of the Emergency Committee. Despite Hirschmann’s efforts to stop him, Klarman, who was a journalist, traveled to Bulgaria and secured an audience with the propaganda minister. Claiming to be working on behalf of the War Refugee Board, Klarman urged the Bulgarian government to release Jewish men from military service so they could emigrate to Palestine—this request was refused—and asked the government to generally

⁶¹ Joseph Friedman, Draft cable to Hirschmann, 1944 September 19; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 772, Document 296; LOC.

⁶² Laurence Steinhardt, Cable to WRB with Hirschmann asking for recall, 1944 September 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 11, Folder 6, Documents 861-863; USHMM.

encourage Jews to leave the country.⁶³ The same week, Klarman wrote an article for the Palestinian newspaper *Hamashkif* besmirching Hirschmann with the rumor that the War Refugee Board representative had dismissed emigration from the Balkans as unnecessary and had advised that Jews should remain in Romania and Bulgaria to wait for equal rights.⁶⁴ Steinhardt reported the situation to the WRB, noting that the “moves by irresponsible Palestinian representatives” were at odds with Board policy, and that Klarman appeared to have immigration to Palestine as his principal objective.⁶⁵ Only a few days before he left Turkey, Hirschmann received a letter from Jabotinsky, excitedly reporting on Klarman’s supposed successes in Bulgaria. It was “the result of a protracted period of spade work, carried out by the Emergency Committee in Turkey...I do not know if this activity can be termed 'saving the Jewish People of Europe'—the Bulgarians and Rumanians claim that, as far as they are concerned the Jewish People has already been saved—but it is certainly a relief activity....”⁶⁶ Jabotinsky asked Hirschmann, in light of Klarman’s success, if the War Refugee Board would authorize the Emergency Committee to reimburse the trip to Bulgaria out of license money sent from the United States. Hirschmann delighted in categorically rejecting the request, though he diplomatically claimed that it was because Klarman went as a journalist and presumably

⁶³ Radio Sofia, Broadcast on Klarman meeting, 1944 September 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 8, Folder 4, Documents 568-569; USHMM.

⁶⁴ Ira Hirschmann, Memo on revisionist press in Palestine, 1944 September 21; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 13, Folder 2, Documents 137; USHMM.

⁶⁵ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable to WRB on Klarman, 1944 September 30; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 8, Folder 6, Documents 1002-1003; USHMM.

⁶⁶ Eri Jabotinsky, Letter to Hirschmann, 1944 September 28; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 13, Folder 6, Documents 777; USHMM.

would be reimbursed by the newspaper.⁶⁷

Hirschmann left Turkey on Wednesday, October 4th, having spent his last few days in Ankara. Early in the morning, a group of embassy staff accompanied him to the airport where he boarded a plane to Adana. Finding no plane to take him further, he stayed overnight and then flew to Lydda, planning to spend a few days in Palestine. While there, he met and toured the area with Judah Magnes, paid his respects to an ailing Henrietta Szold, saw David Ben Gurion (whom Hirschmann felt was “lacking the humility of a truly great man”)⁶⁸ and, on October 7th, saw a previous acquaintance: Joel Brand.⁶⁹ Hirschmann invited Brand to his hotel room, and later dictated a memo of their conversation. Brand had recently arrived in Jerusalem, having been held by the British in solitary confinement, released to a prison camp in September, and finally sent to Palestine after threatening to act as an enemy of the British should he continue to be interned. Brand felt the Allies could still accept his ransom offer; he knew of the ARBA negotiations, but felt that Mayer was too conservative, since ransoming involved more unorthodox methods. Hirschmann remained impressed with Brand, but was unsure whether he could be useful “since he is a marked man.”⁷⁰ After Hirschmann left Palestine, he hopped across northern Africa again—from Cairo to Benghazi to Tripoli to Algiers to Casablanca. In Casablanca, he ran into Leonard Ackermann, who had also been recalled to the United States; military advances meant that there was very little work

⁶⁷ Ira Hirschmann, Letter to Jabotinsky, 1944 October 1; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 48, Folder “Turkey, Volume 5-AF1-10A”; FDRL.

⁶⁸ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 October 6; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

⁶⁹ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 October 7; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 1, Folder Typed Diaries; FDRL.

⁷⁰ Ira Hirschmann, Diary, 1944 October 7; Ira Hirschmann Papers, Box 3, Folder Joel Brand; FDRL.

for a War Refugee Board representative in North Africa or Italy.⁷¹ From Casablanca, Hirschmann took a plane headed for Miami (or Bermuda, Hirschmann was not sure) but got off during a fueling stop at the Azores to catch a plane going to Newfoundland. He finally arrived in North America in the early hours of October 13th.

Hirschmann spoke at a press conference at the Treasury Department on Tuesday, October 17th, but while the questions were largely about his work with the Balkan nations and success with the Bulgarian laws, the resulting press focused on whether or not the slowing of emigration from the Balkans meant that the War Refugee Board's work was done.⁷² The same day, Hirschmann submitted his formal resignation to the Board, concluding it with, "In time of war, as I understand it, killing people seems to be the main job at hand. Through the Board I was privileged to undertake the job of saving people, instead of killing them. I wish to thank you for this broad and unique opportunity in the field of human welfare."⁷³ With that, Ira Hirschmann retired to civilian life. That life—at least in the short term—consisted largely of giving speeches about his experiences and, within a week of his return to the United States, Hirschmann began writing his memoirs about his time in Turkey.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Ackermann did leave behind an ongoing project to bring refugees from Yugoslavia to Italy by air. The refugees were no longer in danger from the Germans, but supplies were scarce. So were planes to evacuate them, due to the military situation. By November, the refugees were grouped together and the military dropped clothing and food for them. On November 22nd, Pehle learned that a new air strip had been completed near the refugees in Yugoslavia and the evacuations would begin soon. John Pehle, Pehle letter to Leavitt about Yugoslav group, 1944 November 25; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 14, Documents 849; USHMM.

⁷² Mrs. A.R. Brown, Transcript of press conference, 1944 October 17; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 13, Folder 3, Documents 320-337; USHMM.

⁷³ Ira Hirschmann, Letter of Resignation, 1944 October 17; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 60, Folder 18; FDRL.

⁷⁴ Hirschmann wrote a number of books and memoirs over the course of the rest of his life. Two in particular relate to his experiences with the War Refugee Board in Turkey: *Life-line to a Promised Land* (1946) and *Caution to the Winds* (1962). Though Hirschmann was prone to narcissism and exaggeration while he was working for the WRB, these tendencies increased as time passed. Hirschmann invented stories about his experiences—the idea that he bribed Cretzianu with American visas, for example—for which there is no contemporary evidence. A story in which Hirschmann was given instructions about Transnistria in January 1944 in one book involves Pehle and in another,

Lisbon

Even though Ira Hirschmann had returned to the United States, Herbert Katzki was still in Istanbul to deal with any War Refugee Board matters that might arise. But in some areas, the progress of the war was such that no War Refugee Board representation was needed. Leonard Ackermann was recalled from Caserta, Italy on October 6, 1944 and returned to the United States a week later, where he took an office in the Treasury Department and completed his final report of activities.

In Lisbon, the liberation of France meant that refugees would no longer be spirited over the Pyrenees into Spain, ending up in Lisbon. It was a blessing, since the truce that James Mann had negotiated in the middle of July had crumbled by the end of August. Joseph Croustillon, whom the World Jewish Congress had designated as their representative to the collaborative rescue group in Spain, refused to be bound by the agreement. The Joint and the Jewish Agency, therefore, considered the agreement null and void. Norweb reported that this was not a problem, since “[i]n view present military situation [I] feel this will not seriously affect rescue program.”⁷⁵

Likewise, the War Refugee Board did not anticipate any future problems that would necessitate a representative based in Lisbon. On August 21st, Pehle wrote a personal letter

Morgenthau. Perhaps the ultimate example of Hirschmann’s willingness to stretch the truth for a good story came in the late 1970s, when Laurence Jarvik interviewed him for the documentary *Who Shall Live and Who Shall Die?* Hirschmann claimed during the interview that in 1932 he had met Hitler who told him about his plan to exterminate the Jews. He repeated most of his claims about his work in Turkey—which was undoubtedly impressive, just not as impressive as Hirschmann would claim—and then stated that on his way back to the United States in October 1944, he was the last person to see Lord Moyne, the British minister in Cairo, alive. He even claimed to have seen Moyne’s assassins waiting outside his office; the assassins somehow recognized Hirschmann and warned him to flee. Hirschmann returned to the United States in mid-October 1944. Moyne was assassinated November 7th.

⁷⁵ R. Henry Norweb, Cable from Lisbon about agreement, 1944 August 24; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 2, Folder 15, Documents 424; USHMM.

to Dexter informing him that James Mann would be appointed War Refugee Board representative in Spain and given charge of operations in the Iberian Peninsula, and that Mann had reported “things of a rather disturbing nature,” particularly regarding Dexter’s relationship with the Joint.⁷⁶ Mann’s appointment was to be made over the objections of Ambassador Hayes. By the next week—which coincided with the liberation of Paris—the situation had changed: Mann was now going to be appointed as the War Refugee Board representative in London, and Dexter was instructed to begin preparations to close the War Refugee Board offices in Lisbon. Over the next several months, Dexter dealt with small issues—obtaining reimbursement from Isaac Weissman for furnishing a children’s home which Dexter had paid out of his WRB fund, trying to obtain exit visas for Spanish Republicans trying to go to Mexico, and transmitting messages between various relief organization workers and their home offices. The War Refugee Board offered to pay for his travel back to the United States, or to London if he preferred to go there. Dexter asked if his services would be needed elsewhere and was informed they would not; his secretary, Eleanor Widen, on the other hand, had been given a job with the American embassy in Lisbon. Of the \$10,000 granted to him by the War Refugee Board for relief and rescue projects, Robert Dexter returned \$8,296.09 to the Board. His expenses consisted of several dinners with relief organization workers and sending 22,604.90 escudos (\$921.15) to the Spanish border for the care of refugees.⁷⁷ The War Refugee Board closed their Lisbon office on December 1st.

⁷⁶ John Pehle, Letter to Dexter, 1944 August 21; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 10, Documents 440; USHMM.

⁷⁷ Robert Dexter, Statement of Accounts, 1944 November 25; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 29, Folder 6, Documents 387-388; USHMM.

Protective papers and visas

Since the territory under Nazi occupation was shrinking and there were few routes refugees could use to physically escape, the War Refugee Board focused on the protection of those still in enemy territory. In March, Pehle had written to Adolf Berle to propose the State Department reissue American visas granted after July 1, 1941 to people unable to leave Europe due to the outbreak of war. Since consulates in southern France did not close until late 1942, there were theoretically many people who had been approved for visas but then caught in Europe. Berle was skeptical of the feasibility of the idea, citing security concerns, but in late July agreed that consular officers would be instructed to reissue American visas to anyone granted a visa after July 1941 who had been in enemy territory, and even expanded the program to include the spouse, parents, and minor children of American citizens, and the spouse and minor children of resident aliens. There were two ways to proceed. First, the State Department would go through their records and attempt to compile lists of those who had previously been granted visas. Second, private citizens could apply with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) on behalf of their close relatives. Both sets of names would be transmitted to the War Refugee Board, who, after compiling master lists, would transmit them every few days to Bern and Stockholm. The embassies there sent the names to the Swiss and Swedish governments, asking for any protection these governments could provide as well as entry visas should anyone on the lists reach the border.

While the War Refugee Board did not openly publicize this program, Lawrence

Lesser traveled to New York City at the end of August for a meeting with representatives of the major relief organizations at Treasury Department offices in midtown Manhattan. Emphasizing that no one should mention this plan to the press—the World Jewish Congress quoted him as saying “I will chop your head off if you do!”—Lesser informed the representatives about the details of the Board’s program.⁷⁸ Those who had already received visas would have them reissued. Those with loved ones in the United States would be received in neutral nations, but would still need to undergo security checks and applications. Still, the United States guaranteed they would be cared for and evacuated to safety. It was a rescue program, and the representatives were cautioned to inform people that the plan did not mean their relatives, if located, would necessarily come to the United States.

Some representatives were skeptical, arguing that the details had not been sufficiently clarified for them to recommend it to their clients, and the American Friends Service Committee feared it may even call attention to refugees and put them at risk.⁷⁹ Still, some organizations must have informed their clients, for beginning on September 21st the INS sent the War Refugee Board the first few letters with the names of people trapped in Europe for whom petitions had been filed. The letters included the names, birthdate, and birthplace of the people in Europe, their relationship with the petitioner, and their last known address. By mid-October, and continuing through May 1945, the

⁷⁸ Kurt Grossman, Memo on Lesser meeting about visas, 1944 August 30, World Jewish Congress New York Office, D-Series (Rescue and Relief), Digital collection, Folder 108-18. USHMM.

⁷⁹ Agnes Gallagher, Memo on WRB meeting in New York, 1944 August 28; American Friends Service Committee Refugee Section, Box 12, Folder “War Refugee Board”; AFSC. Agnes Gallagher, Instructions regarding visa program, 1944 September 4; American Friends Service Committee Refugee Section, Box 12, Folder “War Refugee Board”; AFSC.

INS sent an average of 20 letters a day to the War Refugee Board. Every few days, the information was compiled in lists that were cabled to Stockholm and Bern. There is no anecdotal evidence that the program assisted anyone who would not have been otherwise assisted. The number of people with the “last known address” as “deported to Poland,” “Drancy,” “Theresienstadt,” or “Auschwitz” indicates that many of the petitioners had simply not given up hope.⁸⁰

The Swiss also asked to receive lists of all people who had been granted protective papers in the names of Central and South American governments or Palestine certificates, but who might not have physically received evidence of these papers. Since protection could be purchased or arranged by third parties, some people in enemy territory did not know their names had been submitted, or had no evidence of protection. In mid-July, the War Refugee Board asked McClelland to request Riegner, Sternbuch, and the other relief organization representatives to make up these lists.⁸¹ Though McClelland made minor inquiries, he reported to the WRB a month later that “too extensive an inquiry of this kind is not recommended since it is quite liable to result in the compilation of unlimited lists of persons for whom it will be claimed such documents...were issued in the past.”⁸² The War Refugee Board did not press the issue, but when the Swiss made the request again at the end of August, it could not be ignored. “In order to expedite its representations to Government of Germany, Swiss Legation suggests that lists as complete as possible of bearers of those papers be prepared by governments in whose name identity papers are

⁸⁰ The letters from the INS are found in PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reels 9-13; USHMM.

⁸¹ Cordell Hull, Cable to Bern about protective paper policies, 1944 July 13; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 19, Folder 7, Documents 924-930; USHMM.

⁸² Cordell Hull, Cable to McClelland with WRB response, 1944 August 12; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 7; FDRL.

issued, accompanied with statement that those individuals are recognized as their citizens by these governments.”⁸³ So, instead of approaching relief agencies in Switzerland, the War Refugee Board needed to approach Latin America governments about procuring lists. They did not do so. Instead, the Board instructed McClelland to continue compiling lists based on information from the relief agency representatives in Switzerland. Rather than have the Latin American nations make lists of their own, the War Refugee Board asked each country to transmit a message to the Swiss acknowledging the validity (sight unseen) of the names gathered in Switzerland.⁸⁴ McClelland, meanwhile, was given instructions: he was to reiterate to the Swiss that the United States did not recognize the German right to judge the authenticity of any protective paper—thus, technically rendering the need for the lists moot. Moreover, McClelland was told to argue the difficulties of wartime communications meant that many Latin American countries do not have up-to-date lists of those under their protection, so any lists compiled are to be recognized as incomplete—again, rendering the lists meaningless.⁸⁵ The lists were not only incomplete, McClelland had not even begun to compile them. He did not like the idea at all. In the draft of a cable he never ended up sending to the War Refugee Board, McClelland wrote:

Material thus assembled for submission to Swiss Foreign Office would not only be voluminous and inaccurate but essentially unworkable...and possibly of serious disservice to the protective activities being exercised [sic] by Swiss authorities on behalf of bonafide citizens...By continuing present attitude toward false passports

⁸³ Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern that Swiss have asked for lists, 1944 August 31; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 19, Folder 7, Documents 857-858; USHMM.

⁸⁴ Cordell Hull, Cable to South American countries about protective paper lists, 1944 September 19; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 19, Folder 12, Documents 855-857; USHMM.

⁸⁵ Cordell Hull, Cable to McClelland with update about paper project, 1944 September 14; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 19, Folder 7, Documents 817-825; USHMM.

as a rescue technique means we become increasingly victims of a pure fiction. As a means toward an end it is totally inadequate.⁸⁶

Two weeks after receiving the War Refugee Board's instructions, McClelland finally wrote to the relief agency representatives to ask for lists, with all possible identifying information about the individuals in question, to be transmitted to him as soon as possible.⁸⁷

The Latin American governments still needed to approve the as-yet-non-existent lists, and the Board again reassured them none of refugees were expected to reach their shores.⁸⁸ The request was strictly humanitarian. Several countries responded with approval—Venezuela, Haiti, and El Salvador. Ecuador agreed, and also requested that Switzerland represent her interests in Hungary. The Swiss indicated that this representation was only possible if Ecuador were to claim those with protective papers as authentic nationals. Rather than do so, and rather than deny it and possibly put people at risk, Ecuador decided not to respond.⁸⁹ Peru did not answer, which was no surprise. In August, Pehle had specifically sent a message to Lima condemning Peru's refusal to respond positively to anything the War Refugee Board had proposed: "This Government expected Peruvian authorities to realize that under the circumstances, the 'treatment as

⁸⁶ Roswell McClelland, Draft cable to WRB (never sent), 1944 September 23; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 64, Folder 5; FDRL.

⁸⁷ Roswell McClelland, Letter to Kahany about preparing lists, 1944 September 28; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 64, Folder 5; FDRL.

⁸⁸ Between early August and late October, two representatives of the American Jewish Committee, Morris Waldman and Jacob Landau, toured Mexico, Central America, and South America, meeting with governmental officials about allowing Jews to immigrate. Their trip was facilitated by the War Refugee Board, though they were not sent as official representatives (despite newspaper articles to the contrary). The Mexican government agreed to set up a free port, not unlike Fort Ontario, though this never came to fruition. Otherwise, their trip had no tangible results as far as rescue was concerned. Cordell Hull, Request to South American embassies to support air priority, 1944 July 13; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 25, Documents 797-798; USHMM. George Messersmith, Memo on Waldman/Landau visit in Mexico, 1944 August 3; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 20, Folder 15, Documents 460-467; USHMM.

⁸⁹ Robert McGregor Scotten, Cable from Quito about representation in Hungary, 1944 November 7; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 19, Folder 3, Documents 246-251; USHMM.

Peruvian citizens'...they are unwilling to grant to the persons involved, is merely an opportunity to avoid merciless extermination... Satisfaction is expressed...[that] no other government has taken a stand similar to that of Peru.”⁹⁰

The Bern legation gave the Swiss “two partial and incomplete” lists on October 24th and expressed the hope that the Swiss would approach the Germans regarding the present whereabouts of people listed.⁹¹ The Swiss sent these lists to their Berlin legation on November 10th, though they did notice the American attempt at deception, commenting that “lists prepared by private organizations cannot serve as the basis for establishing right of any person to claim nationality of a Latin American republic until these lists be officially confirmed by interested countries.”⁹² The chances that these lists would be of any help were slim, even if the Swiss were able to deliver them.

On multiple occasions in October and November the Germans had rejected American messages transmitted through the Swiss, from protests of deportations from Slovakia to inquiries about individuals claiming Latin American protection. The Swiss relayed a response that the “German Government contests the right of the U.S. Government to make representations in a matter pertaining to bearers of Latin American documents.”⁹³ At one point, the Swiss questioned if they should even attempt to transmit a message, as they saw “no useful purpose in delivering to German Foreign Office a

⁹⁰ John Pehle, Pehle asks Warren to send attached cable to Lima, 1944 August 18; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 19, Folder 5, Documents 533-535; USHMM.

⁹¹ T.J.Hadraba, Note verbale for the Swiss with lists, 1944 October 24; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 64, Folder 5; FDRL.

⁹² Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern that lists were delivered, 1944 November 18; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 19, Folder 6, Documents 711-712; USHMM.

⁹³ Ibid.

note... acceptance of which without a doubt will be refused.”⁹⁴ The Board ordered Bern to insist the Swiss continue to deliver messages, whether they were accepted or not:

“[T]echnical niceties cannot be allowed to stand in the way of saving human lives.”⁹⁵

Though the lists of people with Latin American protective papers were still in the hands of the Swiss, waiting for presentation, there was little hope the Germans would even accept them.

Jews in Europe holding protective papers for Latin American governments fell into several categories. There were the people who, by luck or money, obtained legitimate papers declaring them to be nationals of one country or another. There was a large black market in forged papers, usually available at exorbitant prices. By 1944, it was increasingly difficult to get protective papers—Latin American consulates were not operating in enemy territory, and, with the exception of Hungary where the need for protection was very real, the danger had already come, damning those without papers and saving—or not—those with. Most people holding protective papers had held them since the early years of the war.

Then there was Haiti, and then there was Mantello. Raúl del Pozo Cano, the long-time Haitian minister to Asunción, Paraguay, was sending Haitian passports to the World Jewish Congress in Switzerland for distribution to families. The World Jewish Congress, which devised the plan in September 1943, had negotiated a price of not less than

⁹⁴ Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern that Germans are refusing messages, 1944 November 16; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 23, Folder 6, Documents 135-138; USHMM.

⁹⁵ Benjamin Akzin, Draft cable to Swiss about German rejection of notes, 1944 November 24; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 23, Folder 6, Documents 116; USHMM.

\$150.00 per passport.⁹⁶ In July, the Office of Censorship, inspecting mail traveling through Puerto Rico, seized three packages carrying 103 passports which covered 223 individuals, “all of whom appear to have Jewish names and seem to be resident in territory under German control.”⁹⁷ The Haitian government in Port-au-Prince, after Censorship alerted them regarding the papers, requested they be destroyed. Though the War Refugee Board protested and requested the passports be released to them for transport to Switzerland through the underground, there is no evidence Censorship agreed to the request, and no evidence the papers ever reached the intended recipients.⁹⁸

In Geneva, George Mandel-Mantello was still actively creating nationality certificates in the name of El Salvador. After the occupation of Hungary, Mantello sent hundreds, possibly thousands of certificates through the underground, and through the auspices of Charles Lutz of the Swiss embassy in Budapest, who aided distribution. Roswell McClelland was nervous about the El Salvador papers, felt they were fraudulent, and tried to discourage the operation. In August, he reported to the Board that “any extensive increase in the amount of false Latin American papers... may immediately endanger the already precarious status of thousands of holders of all such papers.” Any new flood of papers into Hungary would endanger the groups of people who already had them—the Germans were not going to look away if everyone was claiming some type of Latin American protection. In fact, McClelland believed the Mantello certificates harmed

⁹⁶ Arieht Tartakower, Memo to Hilb and Finkelstein, 1943 September 9: World Jewish Congress New York Office, D-Series (Rescue and Relief), Digital collection, Folder 108-16. USHMM.

⁹⁷ Wilson, Cable from Haiti on fraudulent passports, 1944 July 19; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 19, Folder 3, Documents 367-369; USHMM.

⁹⁸ Benjamin Akzin and Paul McCormick, Memo to Pehle about Haitian passports, 1944 August 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 18, Folder 12, Documents 916-918; USHMM.

the bearers of the papers as well: “Some weeks ago, several cases were reported to us from Hungary where the possession of Salvador papers had a precisely opposite effect from that desired causing the arrest at once by Hungarian officials of persons carrying false nationality documents.”⁹⁹ He heard this—that the papers were either ignored or were actively harmful—from multiple people, including Rudolph Kasztner, reporting through Saly Mayer during the ARBA negotiations, and in reports coming through the underground.¹⁰⁰ So McClelland actively tried to discourage any refugee who approached him asking about the efficacy of the El Salvador papers. In November, a Bern legation staff member reported to McClelland that the Red Cross said the certificates were “in fact of considerable assistance to bearers thereof.” The Swiss Foreign Office offered to transmit El Salvador nationality certificates to Budapest through their legation, as long as Mantello provided the original or notarized copies.

Slovakia

Some of the messages the German Foreign Office rejected in October and November included American protests about the situation in Slovakia, particularly the rumored deportation of people holding protective papers. Back in late August, the Slovak underground had risen up against the regime of Jozef Tiso. Nominally independent though allied with Germany, Slovakia had deported about 30,000 Jews in 1942, but Tiso halted the operation in the fall of that year leaving more than 20,000 Jews living in the

⁹⁹ Leland Harrison, Cable from McClelland explaining protective paper problems, 1944 August 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 19, Folder 7, Documents 875-876; USHMM.

¹⁰⁰ Roswell McClelland, Notes on conversation with Saly Mayer, 1944 August 23; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 66, Folder 8; FDRL. Angelus, Report on Slovakia and Hungary, 1944 September 27; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 7; FDRL.

country. The uprising in 1944 was quickly squelched by Einsatzgruppe H, which moved in at the Slovak government's request and began concentrating and deporting Jews again. Information about the uprising—and the German threat against the Jews—reached the United States almost immediately. The World Jewish Congress was alerted the morning after the uprising began by the chief of the Slovakian desk at the Office of War Information, a cartoonist originally from Prague named Adolf Hoffmeister.¹⁰¹ The *New York Times* reported it on the front page the next day.¹⁰² Within a week, Roswell McClelland contacted Gerhard Riegner and Nathan Schwalb for information and to increase aid to the partisans. On September 11th, just two weeks after the uprising began, McClelland's notes from a conversation discussing the ARBA negotiations with Saly Mayer read, "Deportation 18-20,000 Jews in Slovakia; Vatican should intervene; Bring Slovakia into Kasztner 'vertrag' [contract]."¹⁰³

With information about the threat to Jews in Slovakia readily available, the War Refugee Board hoped to be fast enough and proactive enough to deter deportations. Having dealt with a similar situation with Hungary in the spring, the Board tried the same tactics. They encouraged the Swiss, Swedish, and Red Cross to send strong warnings into Slovakia of post-war punishment to all who participated in deportations. They urged the Vatican to intervene, particularly reminding the Pope that Slovakia was a Catholic country and Tiso a Catholic priest. McClelland authorized sending 950,000 Swiss francs into Slovakia for relief and rescue, and the Joint applied for and received a license to send

¹⁰¹ Kurt Grossman, Memo on OWI report on Slovakia, 1944 August 30, World Jewish Congress New York Office, D-Series (Rescue and Relief), Digital collection, Folder 109-3. USHMM.

¹⁰² John MacCormac, "Slovaks in Rising Seize Rail Center", *New York Times*, late city edition, pg. 1.

¹⁰³ Roswell McClelland, Notes on conversation with Mayer, 1944 September 11; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 7; FDRL.

\$178,000 dollars so Saly Mayer could send more.¹⁰⁴ But nothing seemed to help, and they did not have someone on the ground, like Wallenberg in Hungary. The Rabbi of Neutra, who had been sending Isaac Sternbuch cables pleading for money all year, stopped cabling and was rumored to have been arrested. (Later it was rumored he was in hiding.) The Board asked if Wallenberg could find out any information, but the Swedish Foreign Office informed them that Sweden had only one honorary consul in Slovakia with no cipher or pouch communications.

In mid-October, the Board learned that the majority of the Jews of Bratislava had been deported. At the same time, they heard that all those with protective papers had been gathered in one location, a castle in Marianka; the leader of the prisoners was rumored to be a man named Milton Haar, who had been born in New York. The Board protested through the Swiss, tried to have Switzerland (as the protecting power for the United States and most of Latin America) and Spain (Paraguay's protecting power) request information from the Slovaks and Germans about the group, and tried to get the group included in a Red Cross relief program. Nothing worked. The Germans rejected the warnings the United States sent through the Swiss. In November, McClelland reported that the Marianka camp was almost certainly abandoned, with the inhabitants likely deported to Auschwitz. The crisis in Slovakia served as a reminder that the War Refugee Board was largely powerless when the enemy was in total control.

¹⁰⁴ The funds were broke down as follows: 95,000 to Czech resistance for Slovakia by Riegner and McClelland; 50,000 through Hechaluz to Bratislava; 500,000 to Bratislava by Saly Mayer; 305,000 to Neutra by Sternbuch. Leland Harrison, Cable from McClelland reporting on meeting with Sternbuch, 1944 September 21; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 10, Documents 552-553; USHMM.

Italy

The situation was similar in northern Italy. In July, Sir Clifford Heathcote-Smith of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, who had just finished work in Rome selecting refugees to go to Fort Ontario, cabled London. As the Allies pushed the German army into northern Italy, Jews who had been in central Italy were being taken north and interned. Those caught or taken to the north were at risk of deportation to Auschwitz. Smith's idea was to approach the Vatican to send a message to the Germans: Germany should take any refugees being deported from northern Italy to a port city on the North Atlantic. There, the United States and Great Britain would pick them up and take them either back to Italy or to a temporary haven. The United States was dubious it would work and wanted to make it clear that the offer extended to all refugees, not just those deported from Italy.¹⁰⁵ Myron Taylor and Smith spoke with the Pope directly about the idea,¹⁰⁶ though the bureaucracy of dealing with the IGC, British government, Vatican, and military authorities meant that it was mid-August before the Board received an update. As with the Horthy offer, the British (and the Allied military command in Italy) were nervous the approach might be successful and result a crisis in transportation and maintenance needs due to a refugee influx. No one was sure if there would simultaneously be a release of Jews from Hungary and increase in refugees from the Balkans. Echoing many previous cables to the British, the War Refugee Board responded that "[w]e are frankly shocked by the position which the Foreign Office is taking. While

¹⁰⁵ Leland Harrison, Cable from McClelland reporting on meeting with Sternbuch, 1944 July 24; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 21, Folder 8, Documents 803-807; USHMM.

¹⁰⁶ John Winant, Cable to WRB about IGC request to Pope, 1944 August 14; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 14, Folder 15, Documents 493-494; USHMM.

we do not know whether any real possibilities exist of rescuing any Jews...we agree with the statement attributed to the Pope that neither our conscience nor history would forgive us if we failed to make this attempt.”¹⁰⁷

But the British did not need to worry. The Pope made the appeal and Germany did not respond. After the second appeal, Germany informed the papal nuncio in Berlin that the territory in northern Italy was controlled by the Italian Social Republic; as the Vatican did not recognize the Republic, it did not make any further appeals. In the meantime, the OSS planned to get more supplies, and McClelland more money, into the hands of resistance fighters, but the Board was otherwise helpless.

France and the Low Countries

The War Refugee Board already had the experience of fighting on behalf of people bearing protective papers, and ultimately losing because the Nazis were unmoved by pleas. In the spring, more than 200 people had been deported from the Vittel internment camp in France, and despite numerous cables, requests for information, and protests over many months, no one—neither the War Refugee Board, the State Department, the Red Cross, relief agencies, nor any of the neutral governments—had any success in tracking or returning them. But with the liberation of France came the liberation of Vittel and the ability to actually investigate the situation. At the beginning of September, with rumors flying, Ambassador Harrison sent the War Refugee Board a Swiss report with information from the German Foreign Office in response to the Board’s numerous

¹⁰⁷ Cordell Hull, Cable to London about pressing British about Pope, 1944 August 23; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 14, Folder 5, Documents 484-486; USHMM.

requests. It was now clear that the Vittel group was “without a doubt first transferred to Drancy and Compiègne and Mr. Sethe [of the German Foreign Office] is personally convinced that they never left France.”¹⁰⁸ No one put much faith in Mr. Sethe’s conviction, especially since no one could find the group in France. So the protests continued and the months passed without any new information about the fate of Jews deported from Vittel.

The opening of France also meant that relief work there could resume—children and people who survived on false papers were coming out of hiding and finding that no one quite knew what to do with them. The military was moving on, UNRRA was not yet equipped to deal with refugees, and the War Refugee Board was specifically tasked with assisting refugees in enemy territory. Licenses involving funds in France were first reworded and ultimately cancelled altogether in early November when the Treasury department lifted restrictions for commercial transactions in the country. The Œuvre de Secours aux Enfants (OSE) came out into the open and began trying to find homes for all the children, presumably orphans, in their care; as an international organization, OSE was not bound to follow Treasury Department rules. But organizations based in the United States, like the Unitarian Service Committee, were. In late August, Noel Field, the USC representative in Switzerland, snuck over the border into France with the help of the Maquis. He and McClelland had worked together in France and were good friends; McClelland knew Field was going, and both wrote him a letter of introduction should he need it and gave him 10,000 Swiss francs out of his War Refugee Board discretionary

¹⁰⁸ Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern that Swiss say French camps liberated, 1944 September 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 19, Folder 7, Documents 794-795; USHMM.

fund.¹⁰⁹ Field spent time in Haute-Savoie, Savoie, and Isère, visiting mainly with resistance fighters and their families. He reported being overwhelmed by their sacrifice and proposed a long-term Unitarian relief project in southern France for these destitute families and those who had been victimized by the Gestapo. The Unitarian offices expressed regrets, but the funds at his disposal were meant for refugees or displaced persons, not for civilians. Moreover, until the United States finished negotiating with the French government, no funds were to be expended at all.¹¹⁰ Field was devastated, cabling to the Unitarian offices in Boston, “Dollars 20,000 received under cancelled license still unspent....please move heaven earth obtain release. Cannot long stomach refusing aid to starving while holding funds.”¹¹¹

While Field was lamenting his inability to spend funds on projects he found important, McClelland was dealing with a large amount of money in Bern with no projects. With the advocacy of “Labor’s War Relief Program”—an organization made up of the AFL’s Labor League for Human Rights and the CIO’s War Relief Committee—and with the approval of the War Refugee Board, the National War Fund granted money to the Queen Wilhelmina Fund for relief in the Netherlands, the Belgian War Relief Society, and the Friends of Luxembourg. The administrators of all three funds were Antoine Krier and Hubert Clement, both Luxembourg labor leaders living in Switzerland with contacts in the underground of the three countries. The funding was

¹⁰⁹ This was not the first time McClelland gave Field money from the WRB fund; he gave \$10,000 in July for German and Austrian refugees in France. Roswell McClelland, McClelland asks Field for statement of accounts, 1944 September 28; RG-84, Bern legation records, Box 75, Folder “Unitarian Service Committee”; NACP.

¹¹⁰ Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern that Swiss say French camps liberated, 1944 October 4; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 10, Folder 8, Documents 542-543; USHMM.

¹¹¹ Noel Field, Letter from Field to McClelland with text of cable for Dexter, 1944 October 11; RG-84, Bern legation records Box 75, Folder “848”; NACP.

secured in the early summer—\$20,000 for Luxembourg and \$90,000 each for Belgium and the Netherlands—and sent to Switzerland. By September, none of the money had been spent, though \$25,000 more each arrived for the Netherlands and Belgium. The State Department asked McClelland to remind Krier and Clement that the funds for Belgium and Luxembourg had to be spent on operations in enemy territory, not on relief on these now-liberated countries. McClelland was confused, as were Krier and Clement, who had not received instructions and therefore were not attempting to spend any of the money. McClelland asked Allen Dulles to investigate the situation: “Any clear instructions regarding this tangle would be sincerely welcome by all three of us.”¹¹² In October, \$100,000 more each for the Netherlands and Belgium were authorized, but by this time, Krier and Clement had left to go back to Luxembourg. While McClelland obtained approval for them to spend some of their Friends of Luxembourg license money for relief work there, the rest of the money was unused. Finally, on November 4th, a frustrated McClelland cabled the Board: “To my knowledge neither Krier nor Clement have developed any plans for using either Dutch or Belgian funds...I strongly recommend that no (repeat no) further remittances from any of those three organizations should be made to Bern as money is merely accumulating in bank and serving no useful purpose apparent to me.”¹¹³ McClelland eventually transferred \$90,000 to the Belgian labor movement to repay wartime loans used to assist people in hiding, but \$165,000

¹¹² Banque National Suisse, Notice to McClelland that Queen Wilhelmina funds arrived, 1944 September 27; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 69, Folder 12; FDRL.

¹¹³ Leland Harrison, Cable from McClelland requesting no further labor remittances, 1944 November 4; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 10, Folder 1, Documents 114-116; USHMM.

meant for the Netherlands was unused.¹¹⁴

Relief and Rescue operations from Switzerland

McClelland was used to operating on a strict budget, having worked for the American Friends Service Committee for four years. The 1944 budget for the Geneva AFSC office, now headed by McClelland's wife Marjorie, was only \$32,000.¹¹⁵ By the end of October, Roswell McClelland had received a total of \$260,000 in discretionary funds from the War Refugee Board and had spent about \$172,000 of it. Most of the money was provided by the Joint, and more than half was spent on major grants to underground organizations. He gave 300,000 Swiss francs (about \$70,000) to Hechaluz through their representative in Switzerland, Nathan Schwalb. Hechaluz sent the money through neutral diplomatic couriers (using Turkish, Swedish, Swiss, and occasionally Vatican messengers) to Budapest and Bratislava, where the funds were used to enable escape from Hungary into Romania, and into Slovakia prior to the situation deteriorating there. Schwalb estimated that these funds enabled the escape of 2,000 Hungarian Jews to Romania, 250 to Slovakia and 200 to northern Yugoslavia. McClelland also contributed money to support the Central Jewish Office in Bratislava and to the Czech underground to support the partisan liberation of the camps in Nováky and Sered—though he added a caveat when reporting to the Board: "I should estimate it saved the lives of close to 1500

¹¹⁴ The \$165,000 refers to the first remittance of \$90,000, then \$25,000, and \$50,000 of the \$100,000 that had been approved. \$50,000 had yet to be sent to Europe. Edward Stettinius, Cable to Bern about labor license totals, 1944 November 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 10, Folder 1, Documents 109; USHMM.

¹¹⁵ American Friends Service Committee, Summary of activities in Geneva 1944, 1944 November 22; American Friends Service Committee Foreign Service Section, Box 1944, Poland-Switzerland, Folder "Switzerland Administration"; AFSC.

people although it is hard to know how many of them later fell into German hands.” He used his discretionary fund to place newspaper articles announcing and condemning the atrocities, for courier services to enemy territory, to pay *passeurs* to help people cross borders, to pay the Spanish and Communist undergrounds to use their channels for rescue, and sent 200,000 Swiss francs (\$46,000) to help fund the Maquis in southern France.¹¹⁶

McClelland also used some of his discretionary fund to purchase pharmaceutical supplies for people in prison, on the run, or in hiding. The idea of relief packages—keeping people alive until they could be liberated—grew in importance as the months passed and enemy territory fell into Allied hands. The Board had sent the first group of 15,000 relief packages on the *Gripsholm* at the end of August. The packages arrived in Gothenburg, Sweden, in mid-September 1944 and had a rough trip: the boxes were too large and the contents had shifted, meaning almost all the sugar had been lost. Moreover, the tape was not secure enough and needed to be redone, the English-language writing on the outside of the box would make delivery to concentration camps difficult, and the Red Cross recommended different receipt cards. Still, it was better to have these problems with only 15,000 packages, so that they could be corrected before the remaining 285,000 were shipped.

The Red Cross was eagerly awaiting these packages. In the summer, they had repackaged materials from the *Christina*—the beached ship in southern France that had been carrying POW packages—and sent 25,600 newly-packaged parcels to concentration

¹¹⁶ Roswell McClelland, Report on use of discretionary funds, 1944 November 27; Collection: 1945-1954: New York Records of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee - NY 45-54, Sub Collection: Administration - NY 45-54/ 1, File 00193_1063; JDC.

camps, including 3,000 to Dachau. The Red Cross was excited to receive more than 1,500 signed receipt cards from Dachau prisoners; the cards bore between 1-15 signatures each, and the Red Cross was able to both add these new names to lists for future package delivery and inform families that there was evidence their loved ones were still alive.¹¹⁷

The World Jewish Congress was critical of the distribution of these packages, which were mainly sent to camps in Germany, most of which had a majority non-Jewish population.¹¹⁸ They submitted their own list of camps through the WRB which McClelland dutifully passed on to the Red Cross: “This is the old story and then follows (doubtless dictated to them...) a list—largely misspelled and garbled of 'camps' in Poland, with the suggestion that ICRC try to include all or some of these camps in future distributions...I see I shall have to thrash this question out with them once more by wire.”¹¹⁹ McClelland responded to the WRB to inform them that “at least nine-tenths of the sites are quite inaccessible to ICRC (which would not be able to enforce even remotely the minimum necessary control as to allocation and reception of parcels)” and he was not optimistic that it would be possible.¹²⁰

In reality, the Red Cross had very little power; they could make cursory visits to certain camps in Germany and could distribute relief packages in some of them, but they were generally not allowed to visit death camps or camps with a majority Jewish population. The most famous exception was the Red Cross visit to Theresienstadt in June,

¹¹⁷ Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern about package distribution, 1944 September 21; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 24, Folder 11, Documents 919-921; USHMM.

¹¹⁸ A. Leon Kubowitzki, Letter to Pehle with list of camps, 1944 August 9; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 24, Folder 9, Documents 645-647; USHMM.

¹¹⁹ Roswell McClelland, Note to Schwarzenberg about relief packages, 1944 November 22; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 68, Folder 5; FDRL.

¹²⁰ Roswell McClelland, Cable from McClelland that WJC suggestions impractical, 1944 September 9; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 24, Folder 10, Documents 776; USHMM.

but that had been “somewhat misleading,” since the Nazis heavily orchestrated the visit.¹²¹ Sometimes, a camp commandant would allow a visit, but since the Red Cross could not officially report on findings or make requests (so as to keep the visit secret) there was nothing they could do to improve the situation, no force of law or military to compel reform, and a desire to remain neutral if only to retain the ability to send packages and maintain access. At the end of November, Johannes Schwarzenberg of the Red Cross told McClelland an ICRC delegate had been to Auschwitz, but was not allowed to tour camp facilities. There had been no publicity about the visit, as the Red Cross feared the Germans would use it as propaganda.

Even with the limited auspices of the Red Cross, the War Refugee Board was able to get packages to concentration camps and received intelligence about opportunities and needs. In October, Schwarzenberg alerted McClelland that there were 260,000 POW packages in their warehouse meant for French prisoners in North Africa, and suggested that the War Refugee Board might obtain permission to use 40,000 of them for concentration camps. With the blessing of the United States and Great Britain (which was needed since the packages had come through blockade restrictions), the Red Cross was able to distribute them. This was particularly necessary since the *Gripsholm* boxes were being held in Sweden thanks to German military refusal to allow them to travel through German territory to Switzerland.¹²² A few weeks after alerting him to the POW packages, Schwarzenberg shared a report about the Ravensbrück concentration camp with

¹²¹ Roswell McClelland, McClelland cover note and English copy of Rossel report, 1944 October 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 9, Folder 3, Documents 369-389; USHMM.

¹²² Ministry of Economic Warfare, Message that MEW approves use of French POW packages, 1944 October 13; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 68, Folder 5; FDRL.

McClelland. Describing the decrepit living conditions, meager food allotments, and forced labor, the report ended with a plea for medical supplies; there were a number of female physicians imprisoned there who were attempting to care for their comrades.¹²³ Using his discretionary fund, McClelland purchased supplies for 500 packages—antibiotics, vitamins, cleansers, Vaseline, and bandages—and sent them through the Red Cross to Ravensbrück.¹²⁴

Sweden

Two other relief package projects were effected through Sweden. In late August, in the wake of the Polish uprising in Warsaw, those who survived were sent to Pruszków, on the outskirts of the city. More than 240,000 people passed through Pruszków, and the Polish Red Cross was anxious for supplies, approaching the Swedes for help. With confirmation that the Red Cross would supervise distribution, and after coordinating with the Bern legation, the War Refugee Board approved the shipment of food, clothing, soap, and medical supplies from Sweden as well as 250 tons of canned goods from the *Christina*.¹²⁵ The Swedish Red Cross also coordinated a large relief package project with the World Jewish Congress, who wanted to send 100 tons of food into concentration camps. Hillel Storch, the WJC representative in Stockholm, cabled his home office in early September that the Swedish government would allow 20,000 five-kilogram

¹²³ Roswell McClelland, Note to Reagan about pharmaceutical supplies, 1944 November 17; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 68, Folder 5; FDRL.

¹²⁴ International Committee of the Red Cross, Letter to McClelland with pharmaceutical lists, 1944 November 24; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 68, Folder 5; FDRL.

¹²⁵ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm about supplies to Pruszkow, 1944 November 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 24, Folder 11, Documents 795; USHMM. Cordell Hull, Cable to London approving of *Christina* supplies for Pruszkow, 1944 September 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 24, Folder 10, Documents 769-770; USHMM.

packages including canned meat, pea meal, berry jam, dried milk, hard bread, canned fish, and cod liver oil.¹²⁶ By the time the War Refugee Board learned about the project in early October, the matter was already before the FEA and blockade authorities in London. The Board cabled Minister Johnson in Stockholm for his views, not realizing that he had been the one to request approval from London. Paul McCormack drafted a memo for Pehle to send to Stettinius on the issue:

As our cable made its weary way from desk to desk in the Department, the proposal, without reference to the Board, had become a reality, whereas our proposed cable emerged a tired and tardy paper. I am not so much disturbed that the Department and FEA is at the present ready to approve projects of this nature as I am over the fact that there seems to be no desire to clear requests of this nature with the Board...¹²⁷

The memo was never sent, perhaps because Pehle recognized the irony in complaining about decisive action from the State Department. Though the Board did not shepherd this particular program, it was approved. However, the project ran into problems with shipping. The State Department and London had granted permission with the stipulation that the Red Cross would supervise distribution which—as the Board knew—they could not do in Bergen-Belsen, Theresienstadt, or in most of the camps with a majority-Jewish population. The Swedish YMCA claimed to be able to handle this, and the World Jewish Congress pledged to stop the program if there were problems.¹²⁸ The WJC also obtained permission to send 10,000 pounds of clothing to Bergen-Belsen, the first major clothing

¹²⁶ A. Leon Kubowitzki, Kubowitzki asks Pehle to support WJC relief package program, 1944 September 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 24, Folder 11, Documents 844; USHMM.

¹²⁷ John Pehle, Draft memo to Stettinius about Stockholm relief packages, 1944 October 25; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 24, Folder 11, Documents 840-841; USHMM.

¹²⁸ Kurt Grossman, Letter to McCormick with copy of cable from Storch, 1944 October 27; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 24, Folder 11, Documents 807; USHMM.

relief packages sent.

Storch was also involved in ransom negotiations taking place in Sweden in the fall of 1944. At the end of June and beginning of July, three people—a former representative of Ribbentrop named Bruno Kleist; a businessman named Werner Boening; and a mysterious stateless Jewish man, likely an intelligence agent, named Edgar Klaus—had approached Olsen to exchange Jews in Latvia for cash, later changing the request to goods. The negotiations were sporadic, and the Board in Washington had to act as a messenger between Bern and Stockholm (the two legations did not have a secure way to communicate) to confirm that the offer was separate from ARBA. The reports from Stockholm did sound similar to those from Bern: “Threats of reprisals are meaningless to this group and it may be assumed that should any proposals ultimately be forthcoming through Kleist or other intermediaries for the Germans, such proposals will undoubtedly involve totally unacceptable military implications. We are pushing these negotiations as strongly as possible nevertheless, simply to stall for time.”¹²⁹ In mid-October, Kleist was back in Stockholm and met with Count Bernadotte of the Swedish Red Cross, Storch of the World Jewish Congress, Rabbi Ehrenpreis of the Vaad, and an (unnamed in the cables) Austrian representative. Storch reported to the legation that it seemed Kleist was attempting to curry favor with the Allies, though it was clear that the German motivation was now to hold Jews for ransom.¹³⁰ Kleist promised to return to the group with concrete plans, but by the end of November he had not requested another meeting.

¹²⁹ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm that boat transport has stopped, 1944 September 29; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 17, Folder 8, Documents 771-775; USHMM.

¹³⁰ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm about Kleist meeting, 1944 October 14; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 16, Documents 975-977; USHMM.

Iver Olsen had been supervising rescue from Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, but with the progress of the war and the approach of fall, the rescue activities ceased. On September 29th, Johnson sent a message to Washington discussing the difficulties in Lithuania: “These operations have recently become so dangerous and appropriated communication with the other side so erratic that it was decided to stop operations this week. Not a single Jew has been rescued...Operations in Estonia and Latvia were also stopped this week and the boats ordered to be delivered to Olsen here.”¹³¹ Olsen, who financed the rescue using money sent directly by the War Refugee Board rather than money supplied by a relief organization, summarized the results of work in each country. The Estonian rescue group had the fewest difficulties and rescued about 275 people (half of them women and children) at a cost of 110,000 Swedish kroner. They had made attempts to rescue a group of French and Czech Jewish women from Tallinn (Olsen commented they were “probably war whores”) but the women were too fearful to leave. The Latvian group was secretive, and Olsen worried about the type of “refugee” they were bringing in to Sweden; at one point, he heard that pro-Nazis were being transported, and had to threaten the leader of the rescue group. Their work was also more dangerous, and eight of the twenty-four crew members were dead or missing. All told, these operations brought 700 refugees from Latvia, 55% of them women and children, at a cost of 55,000 kroner. The leaders of the group gave Olsen credit for the rescue of 3,500 additional refugees, owing to the opening of communications and escape routes, but Olsen asked the Board not to count these numbers until he learned about the type of

¹³¹ Ibid.

individuals coming. The Lithuanian group not only apparently lost one of their leaders, Algirdas Vokietietis, but also five rescue vessels as well as 250 crew members and refugees. Only 135 refugees were brought to Sweden, half of them women and children, at an expense of 35,000 kroner. As with Latvia, Olsen reported that the failure to rescue Jews was presumably because they were in hiding and hesitant to undertake a dangerous trip when they would be liberated by the Red Army within months.¹³² By spending \$50,000, Olsen estimated that at least 12,000 people were rescued either through the efforts of the groups or the rescue channels that were opened as a result of the War Refugee Board's expenditures in the Baltic states.

On October 17th, the *NY DAG*, a Swedish Communist newspaper, published an article with the translated headline, "Baltic Fascists in Large Numbers to Sweden. The Swedish Authorities and the American legation as Organizers?" The article accused Herschel Johnson of ignoring the fact that an unnamed member of his staff spent 900,000 kronor to increase the emigration of Baltic refugees, particularly pro-Nazi, anti-Communist refugees. The story, which was repeated in various forms for the next two weeks in communist and Nazi papers, called on Johnson to refute the claim directly. Johnson refused, feeling the article was provocative and misleading, and he found no one on his staff who fit that criteria. Though Olsen was certainly the closest to fitting the description, he had only spent 110,000 kronor and his refugees were certainly not screened by political affiliation. Johnson admitted to the Board that the "charge that they were anti-Soviet is probably true, but not on an actively organized political basis. Most of

¹³² Iver Olsen, Final report to the WRB, 1944 November 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 29, Folder 4, Documents 364-391; USHMM.

them apparently found Soviet rule distasteful to them and would prefer to avoid a repetition of the experience.”¹³³

The Vaad Hatzalah also had strong opinions of the type of refugee that should be rescued to Sweden. The Vaad sent weekly cables urging one of their representatives in Stockholm, Wilhelm Wolbe, to rescue rabbis and religious scholars in Lithuania. They also heard rumors that 7,000 Lithuanian Jews were taken for slave labor in East Prussia and wanted the Red Cross to contact the group, provide food, procure protective papers, and negotiate a prisoner exchange. At the end of August, Wolbe reminded the Vaad that communication with Lithuania was impossible and there was no way to rescue this group. Despite Wolbe’s claim, the Vaad asked him again to contact the group and arrange for relief. To effect additional relief in Lithuania, Wolbe was instructed to request the Soviet Union to allow free transit of a delegation familiar with yeshivas and Jewish communal life armed with money to provide to specific rabbis for the rebuilding of their communities.¹³⁴ The Vaad asked the WRB to intervene to rescue five specific rabbis the Nazis had deported from Kovno, and provide them with Swedish protective papers. They were relentless. When the Board did not seem to be acting quickly enough, the Vaad appealed directly to the State Department. By mid-November, their pleas grew even more desperate: “Practically nothing done for the rescue of Lithuanian Jewry. Our committee is deeply perturbed. You are again urged to spare no expense to do everything to try to save everything listed in our cables and the greatest number possible in this group. We must

¹³³ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm about press controversy, 1944 November 27; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 28, Folder 13, Documents 650-660; USHMM.

¹³⁴ Aron Kotler and Abraham Kalmanowitz, Vaad sends text of cable for Wolbe, 1944 September 28; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 20, Folder 6, Documents 239; USHMM. Florence Hodel, License paperwork for NY 654393, 1944 October 9; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 5, Folder 8, Documents 721-722; USHMM.

impress that the greatest Rabbis, religious leaders and scholars are in this group.”¹³⁵

Despite all evidence, the Vaad refused to accept the reality of the situation: the problem was not Wolbe, the War Refugee Board, the State Department, nor the will to act.¹³⁶

Nothing had been done because, in 1944, nothing could be done to save the Jews of Lithuania.

The War Refugee Board’s efforts in Norway and Denmark met with more success. Olsen provided only 7,500 kroner to the “Studenternes Efterretningstjeneste,” an underground Danish student organization, but they were grateful. Their representative, Arne Sejr, was “most happy to have an outlet to the free world”¹³⁷ and had established three separate groups—an active group, a paper group, and a boat group—partly to divide responsibilities and partly so that the Gestapo could not take down the whole organization in one blow. In September and October, they transported 60 refugees to Sweden and brought 20 resistance fighters back to Denmark. But most of their work was in carrying supplies—Allied propaganda to secretly distribute to German soldiers; placards to paste; munitions; and many different Allied newspapers, magazines, and books, which they listed for Olsen and which ranged from Arne Troelsen-Terp’s *From the Front in Denmark*, to Mary O’Hara’s novel *My Friend Flicka*, to *Occupation Humour*

¹³⁵ Cordell Hull, Cable to Bern for Sternbuch from Vaad about Lithuanian rabbis, 1944 November 15; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 70, Folder 4; FDRL.

¹³⁶ Wolbe was not alone in having to deal with the Vaad’s impossible requests; in October, the Vaad cabled Isaac Sternbuch after receiving a report on the situation at Auschwitz. They informed him it was vitally important he establish contacts at Auschwitz and arrange for the release of the prisoners there. Roswell McClelland, Letter to Sternbuch, 1944 October 11; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 70, Folder 4; FDRL.

¹³⁷ Arne Sejr, Danish student group thanks Olsen, 1944 November 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 30, Folder 1, Document 59; USHMM.

*from Norway and Denmark.*¹³⁸

The relief situation in Norway started successfully, but military circumstances interfered and threatened the Norwegian people. The American Relief for Norway group had obtained permission to use money from the National War Fund, along the same lines as the Belgian, Dutch, and Luxembourger labor groups. Unlike those groups, the administrators of the \$400,000 Norway fund, Lars Evensen and Martin Tranmael, were very active in their relief efforts. In late summer, during the long hours of daylight, they focused on providing money for families of resistance fighters and sustaining young men who escaped into the forest to avoid forced labor.¹³⁹ They passed money to the Norwegian Lutheran church for distribution, and assisted more than 1,000 Norwegian refugees to escape into Sweden in September alone. As the months passed, the longer nights facilitated refugee escape but the increasing cold posed a clothing problem. In late November, Minister Johnson had a meeting with the Swedish Foreign Office and learned of a potential crisis in Norway. The Germans were evacuating the northern part of the country, driving refugees south with them and razing everything left behind. At least 250,000 people had been displaced and were now centered near Narvik. The Swiss requested Berlin to allow Red Cross trains to go to the region, take groups to a Red Cross vessel, and bring them to Sweden. Sweden made arrangements to receive 300,000 individuals from Narvik; schools in the north would be shut down to accommodate the refugees. In a second meeting, Johnson learned that the Swedish soup kitchens Sweden

¹³⁸ Arne Sejr, Students Information Service statement of activities, 1944 November 3; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 30, Folder 1, Document 52-58; USHMM.

¹³⁹ Martin Tranmael and Lars Evensen, Report to American Relief for Norway, 1944 August 9; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 53, Folder "Rescue, Norway, Volume 1, Folder 1(2)"; FDRL.

operating in Norway were the only available food source. With the onset of winter, all of Norway was on the verge of starvation.¹⁴⁰

While effective, none of these relief efforts seemed to necessitate the presence of a War Refugee Board representative. Olsen missed his wife and two sons, and was anxious to return to the United States. At the beginning of November, the Board suggested he complete any urgent projects and close the War Refugee Board offices in Stockholm.¹⁴¹

Great Britain

On September 16th, James Mann—newly arrived and designated as the War Refugee Board’s representative in London—confronted an old problem. The British had obtained a copy of license W-2215, issued in late June, which allowed the French Relief Fund to transmit \$150,000 to their representatives, Albert Guigui and Rene Rous. The problem? Guigui and Rous were in London, and the French Relief Fund—another labor organization obtaining money through the National War Fund—had transmitted the first \$75,000 to London. The British refused to release the money to the French representatives. Mann cabled the Board, “MEW laboring under a misunderstanding of license interprets it as an attempt to authorize persons subject to jurisdiction of United Kingdom to undertake transactions contrary to laws and regulations of United Kingdom.”¹⁴² He reported that the embassy would try to explain the matter, but that the

¹⁴⁰ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm on evacuations from Norway, 1944 November 22; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 53, Folder “Norway, Rescue, Volume 1, Folder 1”; FDRL.

¹⁴¹ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm on Olsen’s recall, 1944 November 9; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 17, Folder 10, Document 979-982; USHMM.

¹⁴² James Mann, Cable from London on British license complaints, 1944 September 16; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 6, Document 119-121; USHMM.

WRB should avoid sending relief money through Great Britain.

In early October, a series of proposals from the Special Committee on Relief in London was transmitted to the FEA, the State Department, and the War Refugee Board, with the recommendation that the United States present them to the Combined Chiefs of Staff for approval. Most of the suggestions involved sending clothing through the blockade, but the very last one, number six on page four of the cable, was familiar: “The suggestion is made that licenses involving the placing of funds at disposal of enemy persons in neutral territory should be issued only after consultation between Governments of Great Britain and the United States.”¹⁴³ The cable included a note that the American representatives on the Special Committee had abstained from comment on number six. Ambassador Winant wrote a second cable to explain what had happened at the Committee meeting. The British had come prepared with a memorandum arguing that any money moving through the blockade should be treated the same as goods, and therefore was subject to joint approval. With the end of the war approaching, any currency exchanged in enemy territory could, in the estimation of the British, assist Nazi leaders who may acquire this currency and hide it in neutral nations for post-war use. To assuage the WRB’s fears of license delays, negotiations for joint license approval could take place in Washington between the State Department and the British embassy, with only the questionable cases referred to London. The embassy would be given “wide discretion.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ WRB staff, Draft cable to London responding to WRB, 1944 October 6; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 6, Document 80-81; USHMM.

¹⁴⁴ John Winant, Cable from London on British license complaints, 1944 October 6; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 6, Document 108-109; USHMM.

Unsurprisingly, the Board was not willing to agree to the proposal. Joseph Friedman drafted a stern and somewhat incredulous response:

It is clear that the British Government's view stems from what appears to be a basic disagreement with the action being taken to implement this Government's policy to save the lives of persons in enemy territory in imminent danger of death... The nature of this Government's policy and the kinds of measures it deems essential to carry out that policy have been made clear to the British Government on many occasions... The fundamental question is not one of joint consultation concerning the issuance of licenses but rather whether the British Government is prepared to adopt and follow a refugee rescue policy similar to that of this Government.¹⁴⁵

Sidney Homer of the FEA drafted a more diplomatic response with the same general message: "Joint consultations on the issuances of these licenses, however desirable, would be futile if the representatives of the U.S. and U.K. governments were acting under conflicting basic policy directives but would be highly desirable if the basic policy is parallel."¹⁴⁶ The Board debated, and edited various drafts of a reply, but ultimately erred on the side of blunt rather than diplomatic. They sent Friedman's cable on November 2nd, and by the end of the month had not received a rebuttal.

The Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees

The Board's relationship with the IGC leadership remained strong. In the published report on the Fourth Plenary Session of the IGC, held in August, Sir Herbert Emerson included a section on the War Refugee Board which concluded, "The Director desires to acknowledge the practical cooperation and assistance he is receiving from the War

¹⁴⁵ WRB staff, Draft cable to London responding to WRB, 1944 October 6; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 6, Document 80-81; USHMM.

¹⁴⁶ Sidney Homer, FEA sends draft response to WRB, 1944 October 11; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 1, Folder 6, Document 97-99; USHMM.

Refugee Board, and at the same time to pay a very warm tribute to the energy and success with which it is carrying out its task of helping the oppressed.”¹⁴⁷ John Winant attended the session, as did Josiah DuBois, who had been in London with Morgenthau. The United States had not had an official representative to the IGC since Myron Taylor’s resignation in early June, a fact that Pehle did not learn until the beginning of November.¹⁴⁸ Stettinius investigated and learned that Taylor’s resignation had been accepted by FDR but there had been no publicity at the request of the President, apparently even to those who worked closely with refugee matters. Pehle wrote an official memo to Stettinius expressing concern at the lack of a designated representative. The War Refugee Board also paid the remainder of America’s share of the IGC administrative expenses, totaling 1,998 pounds [\$9,811.93], out of the President’s Emergency Fund. This time the Board was not reimbursed.

Beyond the issue of IGC representation and funding—all of which needed to be solved solely by the United States—there was a personnel problem. By mid-1944, the IGC had representatives overseas; in Italy, it was Sir Clifford Heathcote-Smith, formerly of His Majesty’s embassy in Alexandria, Egypt. Smith was not well-suited for refugee work. Problems first cropped up during the selection of Fort Ontario refugees: Smith had insisted on including men of military age in his group, though Ackermann and the others were under instructions to avoid refugees who might incur negative propaganda. He also unilaterally chose the refugees in Rome, had them fill out a form he made up himself

¹⁴⁷ Martha Biehle, Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees: Report of the Fourth Plenary Session, 1944 August 17; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 21, Folder 3, Document 131-157; USHMM.

¹⁴⁸ Taylor, as FDR’s personal representative to the Vatican, had not attended an IGC meeting in London since the organization was reconstituted after the Bermuda Conference. His absence from the plenary session was unsurprising and Winant, or an embassy employee, had been acting in his place at all the IGC meetings.

rather than the agreed-upon paperwork, and led the refugees to believe they would be allowed to remain in the United States after the war. His proposal to have the Vatican tell the Nazis that the Allies would take the Jews deported from Italy had been far-fetched, but valid and worth the attempt. In September, a private relief agency (context clues suggest it was the Joint) submitted a list of concerns about Smith's work in Italy.

Foremost was his blatant antisemitism; believing himself to be an expert on racial matters due to his extensive experience with the Arab population in Egypt, Smith proposed "to any who talk with him about this problem, a huge ghetto for all Jews in either Europe or America." Smith deliberately and openly promoted British policy though he worked for the IGC, consistently delayed meetings with relief agency representatives, and refused to allow anyone to help him come up with a program of relief.¹⁴⁹ On October 12, Smith gave an interview to the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, stating that Jews in Italy who were hoping to go to Palestine were "victims of propaganda" and suggesting that a Jewish homeland should be established in Madagascar, a "really wonderful place."¹⁵⁰

After the article, Sir Clifford Heathcote-Smith traveled to London and met with James Mann. Smith suggested the IGC look into having all prisoners in enemy territory declared Allied nationals so they would be under the Geneva Convention, a suggestion which the World Jewish Congress was also promoting and which, despite WRB efforts, seemed hopeless. During the meeting, Mann got the impression that Smith had just learned that the Nazis were committing atrocities against the Jews; had never heard of

¹⁴⁹ unknown, List of issues with Sir Clifford Heathcote-Smith, 1944 September 7; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 15, Folder 7, Document 957; USHMM.

¹⁵⁰ Jewish Telegraph Agency, "Jews to Madagascar: The Views of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees," 1944 October 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 15, Folder 7, Document 969; USHMM.

FDR's statement on atrocities; and was unaware that the WRB was involved in psychological warfare. Smith had his own proposition: he would write a pamphlet reviewing all Allied propaganda against the Germans so as to convince any German that the war was lost. Mann joked that the pamphlets, which Smith imagined would be dropped from the air, "would resemble a peace time Sears-Roebuck catalogue and might kill anyone it happened to hit...."¹⁵¹ Pehle wrote Mann to let him know of the additional complaints against Smith—the AFSC had also sent concerns—and asked him to talk to Emerson about the situation. But Emerson and Patrick Malin were surveying relief needs in France, and would not be back until December.

Clifford Heathcote-Smith was a minor headache compared to the potential problem looming in the near future: the fate of immigration to Palestine. The White Paper had technically expired, though the Jewish Agency had been issuing Palestine certificates to all Jews who managed to escape through the Balkans to Istanbul. On October 26th, Stettinius asked London to confirm a rumor the War Refugee Board heard from the Joint: that immigration into Palestine would be restricted to 1,500 people per month for the next six months, for a total of 10,300. The quotas were not merely for those escaping Nazi persecution but included all immigration into Palestine, and there were strict limits as to the number and type of people from each territory: 1,000 from Yemen; 900 from Italy; 200 from Turkey; 5,000 total from Romania and Bulgaria; and 3,200 children of any nationality.¹⁵² The rumors were true.

¹⁵¹ James Mann, Letter from Mann to Pehle, 1944 October 23; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 15, Folder 7, Document 960-968; USHMM.

¹⁵² Edward Stettinius, Cable to London on protective paper distribution, 1944 October 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 28, Folder 3, Document 152-153; USHMM.

Turkey

Herbert Katzki, who was still waiting on permission to travel to Romania, was frantic when he heard the news of the quotas more than two weeks later. For some reason, the War Refugee Board had not alerted him to the coming announcement, and he found out from Jerusalem and, troublingly, from British Passport Control in Istanbul. He had many questions. What of the people in Budapest or Bergen-Belsen who were afforded some minor degree of protection because they held Palestine certificates—were the certificates now cancelled? Did the failure to mention Hungary or Slovakia in the quota list mean that no one was allowed to emigrate from these countries? Did this effectively cancel the agreement with the Turkish government regarding the arrival of ships from Romania and Bulgaria?¹⁵³ While no ships had arrived in August (after the *Mefkure* attack) or in September, the *Salahattin* arrived in late October carrying 547 passengers, including some Hungarian men who had been liberated from forced labor in a mine in Bor, Yugoslavia, and who landed in Istanbul still wearing prisoner uniforms. An additional 283 people arrived by rail in late October and early November. Katzki learned that the new restrictions on immigration were retroactive, so 830 certificates were already designated.¹⁵⁴

In Washington, Joseph Friedman asked J.W. Russell of the British embassy for an explanation. Russell called Nahum Goldmann for more information, and then called

¹⁵³ Jewish Agency for Palestine, Jewish Agency Information Digest of Press and Events, 1944 November 11; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 13, Folder 7, Document 990-991; USHMM.

¹⁵⁴ The spelling of the name of the ship varies; I am using Katzki's spelling. Herbert Katzki, Letter to Pehle, 1944 November 8; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 13, Folder 3, Document 442-449; USHMM.

Friedman back. Explaining that the British plan was to interpret the limitations liberally, Russell told Friedman that the quotas were in place at the insistence of the Zionists, who wanted to fill the quota and force the issue of Palestine immigration.¹⁵⁵ This echoed what the Joint had told Pehle in October, that the restriction "indicates an early decision with regard to the political future of Palestine, possibly in the direction of partition of that country, and that it was taken after a recent interview between Premier Churchill and Weizmann."¹⁵⁶

The news came at a particularly bad time in Istanbul. The same day Katzki sent the telegram alerting the Board to the immigration quotas (about which they were already aware), he sent another telegram about recent problems with the Turkish government. On October 24th, Earl Packer of the embassy in Ankara had met with Kemal Aziz Payman of the Turkish Foreign Office, who informed Packer that Turkey was suspending the transit authorizations for the so-called "children's scheme"—allowing 75 children and 10 adults to enter Turkey every 10 days—due to the improved situation in the Balkans.¹⁵⁷ Katzki requested the arrangement be continued; the day after Packer's meeting, 117 children had arrived and another group was expected soon, all under the "children's scheme."¹⁵⁸ After months of delays, the situation in the Balkans had stabilized and Katzki expected immigration to flow smoothly in the future—that is, as long as the Turkish government

¹⁵⁵ Joseph Friedman, Memo of meeting about Russell, 1944 November 18; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 17, Folder 1, Document 29-30; USHMM.

¹⁵⁶ Edward Stettinius, Cable on London on Palestine certificates, 1944 October 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 28, Folder 3, Document 152-153; USHMM.

¹⁵⁷ Earl Packer, Letter to Katzki on refugee boats, 1944 October 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 15, Folder 1, Document 67-68; USHMM.

¹⁵⁸ This had originally been a larger group, but some children from Transnistria were removed from the train at the border between Romania and Bulgaria, as the Soviet Union considered them Soviet nationals and refused to allow them to emigrate. Laurence Steinhardt, Cable from Ankara on children's group, 1944 October 28; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 11, Folder 6, Document 849-850; USHMM.

did not throw up any barriers.¹⁵⁹ Packer kept Ambassador Steinhardt informed, and when the subject came up at one of his meetings with Turkish officials, Steinhardt claimed to have “immediately expressed pained astonishment and indicated clearly that any attempt to disturb the existing arrangements would prompt me to go straight to the Prime Minister for an explanation as to why the Turkish Government desired to no longer participate in the humanitarian act of helping us to rescue unfortunates.” Steinhardt told Katzki he believed the “children’s scheme” would be able to continue: “I have gained the impression that my violent reaction has punctured these trial balloons.”¹⁶⁰ In Katzki’s cable to Pehle, he explained that the Foreign Office was likely inconvenienced by the arrival of more than 800 refugees (between those arriving by rail and the *Salahattin*) and feared of being drawn into the Arab-Jewish conflict by allowing the passage of immigrants to Palestine. But the threat was momentarily mitigated, at least from the Turkish government. The problem was immediately replaced by the restriction on Palestine certificates, and the fear that the Turkish government would limit transit on those grounds.

The *Salahattin* was not the only boat bringing refugees destined for Palestine. The *Guine*, chartered by the Joint at a cost of 4,000,000 escudos (\$163,000), left Lisbon on October 23rd carrying 38 passengers. At a stop in Cadiz, another 308 boarded the ship, and 85 boarded in Tangier. The *Guine* reached Haifa in early November. By November 6th, between refugees coming from Istanbul and the passengers on the *Guine*, 971 new

¹⁵⁹ Herbert Katzki, Letter to Packer about refugee arrivals, 1944 October 31; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 8, Folder 2, Document 245-257; USHMM.

¹⁶⁰ Laurence Steinhardt, Letter to Katzki, 1944 November 11; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 11, Folder 6, Document 842-843; USHMM.

immigrants arrived in Palestine. Under the new regulations, only 529 more would be able to enter that month. The Joint was also endeavoring to bring a group of children, mainly orphans who had survived in hiding in Christian homes, from France to Palestine.

Although Pehle did not think the problem necessarily concerned the War Refugee Board, as it was “not a life and death matter”—and since part of the Joint’s desire was to make sure the children were not losing their Jewish identities—he still arranged a meeting between Joint representatives and Morgenthau. The Joint wanted Morgenthau to take the matter to the President, which Morgenthau would not do, but “Pehle [would] press continuously to try to find a way to get [the children] out...And he never lets up.” Still, Morgenthau was not optimistic: “After all, we have American troops waiting on the German border for shells which they can't get for lack of shipping. You have to weigh that against thirty-five hundred children who are not in danger of dying.”¹⁶¹ Lt.

Commander Becker of the War Shipping Administration confirmed that shipping was in short supply. The Board could wait until Germany collapsed, when there would be a short window when shipping was available (before American troops began to go home) or wait until the Army released ocean yachts requisitioned from millionaires in the United States, which could be altered to carry 200-300 children. Until then, the Board could not help the Joint with transportation for the children.¹⁶²

At the end of October, Katzki was able to send an update on the Schleifer children.

¹⁶¹ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Transport of Jewish Refugee Children to Palestine meeting transcript, 1944 October 25; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 786, Document 2-8; LOC.

¹⁶² Florence Hodel, Memorandum to the File after discussion with Becker, 1944 November 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 6, Folder 6, Document 232-233; USHMM. Matthew Marks, Memorandum to Joseph Friedman about possibility of getting yacht, 1944 November 3; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 6, Folder 6, Document 231; USHMM.

David and Ida Schleifer had immigrated to the United States prior to the war, but their four teenage children were still in Romania in the care of relatives, and in the spring the Board had decided to use the case as an experiment in seeking and helping individuals. The WRB had arranged for transit visas and Palestine certificates for the children, but did not receive any updates until Margarete Neulander, Ida Schleifer's younger sister, and the two Schleifer boys arrived by rail to Istanbul on October 25th. While they had made it to Turkey, Neulander informed Katzki of the family's tragedy: the Schleifers' two daughters, Judith and Noemi, had perished on the *Mefkure*. Katzki wrote to Pehle, who then had to write to Mrs. Schleifer and tell her the tragic news. Margarete Neulander and her nephews left Istanbul for Palestine to wait for the end of the war and a reunion with their parents in the United States.¹⁶³

Late October and early November was a very busy period for refugee immigration to Palestine. After learning of the new immigration quotas, Katzki worried how the decision would affect refugee ships from Romania and Bulgaria. There was some degree of control, since the ships were organized by the Jewish Agency and funded by the Joint, and presumably would be staggered to prevent exceeding the quota. But there was also the possibility of ships that were chartered separately, through the auspices of the Vaad representatives or of Eri Jabotinsky of the Emergency Committee. Over the course of the fall, Jacob Griffel had contacted Katzki, the Joint, Sternbuch, and the Vaad's home office in New York about securing funds to purchase a ship to bring 10,000 Orthodox Jews from Romania to Palestine. (He later changed his request to funding for the evacuation of

¹⁶³ For a full scholarly article on the Schleifer case (albeit with factual errors), see Alexis P. Rubin. "The Schleifer Children: A Special Holocaust Rescue Case," *American Jewish History* (84.1, 1996), 1-9.

300 from Romania).¹⁶⁴ Jabotinsky had made multiple attempts to arrange for ship transport, including the plan to charter a wooden vessel to rescue Jews from Hungary via the Danube, but none had come to fruition. The two organizations were wild cards, and, based on past experience, Katzki did not expect their representatives to keep him informed of their activities. To be safe, he drafted letters to Griffel and to Jabotinsky explaining the new immigration regulations. To Griffel, the letter explained that in light of the circumstances, Hirschmann's guarantee that Palestine certificates would be available to refugees on a Vaad-chartered vessel was no longer possible.¹⁶⁵ Katzki's letter to Jabotinsky ended, "[W]e wish to advise you not to assume that the American Embassy or the War Refugee Board will be able to make effective whatever projects you might undertake. Will you please be guided accordingly."¹⁶⁶ Within a week, Jabotinsky wrote to Katzki that he was planning to charter a boat to bring 1,500 refugees from Constanța to Istanbul, and had already met with the Turkish Ministry of Transportation about the idea.¹⁶⁷ Jabotinsky was clearly planning to take the risk.

The Bergson Group

In the United States, Peter Bergson, of the Emergency Committee and now the head of the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation, made the opening of immigration into Palestine his primary focus. One of the Hebrew Committee's Congressional allies,

¹⁶⁴ Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern with message from Sternbuch about Romania, 1944 October 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 20, Folder 5, Document 223; USHMM.

¹⁶⁵ Herbert Katzki, Letter to Griffel, 1944 November 17; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 14, Folder 2, Document 122; USHMM.

¹⁶⁶ Herbert Katzki, Letter to Jabotinsky, 1944 November 17; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 13, Folder 6, Document 774; USHMM.

¹⁶⁷ Herbert Katzki, Letter to Pehle about Jabotinsky, 1944 November 25; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 9, Document 890; USHMM.

Senator Elbert Thomas, introduced a Congressional resolution in August to urge Roosevelt and Hull to use their influence to persuade the British to “permit free entry of Hebrews from Hungary into Palestine.”¹⁶⁸ Bergson submitted a list of proposals to Pehle, including the opening of safe havens in Palestine and retaliating against Germany with the use of poison gas.¹⁶⁹ Pehle assured Bergson that havens would be found for all who were able to leave Hungary and referred the issue of poison gas to the War Department; Bergson requested Pehle reconsider and address the Palestine issue directly, but Pehle refused.¹⁷⁰

On October 3rd, the first of a series of exposés about the various iterations of the Bergson group appeared in the *Washington Post*. The article, written by Gloria Lubar and Edward F. van der Veen, bore the title “Bergson Admits \$1,000,000 Fund Raised, Vague on Its Use.” The next day a new article appeared, entitled “Bergson Admits His Committee Has No Right to Collect Funds”; the day after, “New Repudiations Registered Against Bergson’s Committee”; and then “Functions of Various Groups Backed by Bergson Explained.” The lengthy articles criticized the way in which Bergson’s various committees used provocative ads that implied funds were desperately needed for the committee’s work to save Jews. In the first article, the authors claimed that Bergson had admitted relief work was only a small part of his activities, but that the majority of the money raised was used to mobilize public support for rescue. Bergson held a press

¹⁶⁸ “Palestine Refuge Put to Congress,” *The New York Times*, 1944 August 25, pg. 6.

¹⁶⁹ Peter Bergson, Letter to Pehle, 1944 August 14; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 8, Folder 35, Document 459-460; USHMM.

¹⁷⁰ Peter Bergson, Letter to Pehle, 1944 September 16; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 8, Folder 35, Document 456-457; USHMM. John Pehle, Letter to Bergson, 1944 September 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 8, Folder 35, Document 455; USHMM.

conference that afternoon, charging the *Post* with misrepresentation; in announcing the upcoming press conference, Bergson's colleague Samuel Merlin called the paper a "tool of British imperialists and defeatist Zionist leaders."¹⁷¹ Bergson read a prepared statement, but after being questioned, admitted the Hebrew Committee had not obtained the proper permissions to collect funds and was taking no action toward direct relief to "Hebrews." The press conference only encouraged the *Post* reporters. In response to his protestations, the newspaper investigated further, discovering that the self-designated Hebrew Embassy was in a residential area of Washington that was not zoned for business operations. The reporters contacted twenty people whose names were signed to a complaint sent to the *Post* from a "National Jewish Council," which suspiciously shared an address with one of Bergson's committees. Of the twenty people contacted, only two endorsed Bergson's work; the rest had not even seen the *Post*'s stories. The *Post* also found other people, former staff and supporters, who denounced Bergson's tactics and disputed his claims.¹⁷²

Bergson, who had shown himself to be litigious in the past—even claiming to have sued Stephen Wise in rabbinical court for slander, charging him with "undermining confidence in the Emergency Committee" and instigating a "campaign to influence American statesmen...to stop giving support to the rescue movement"—published a twenty-four page pamphlet contesting the claims, entitled "Washington Post a Victim of

¹⁷¹ Gloria Lubar, and Edward van der Veen, "Bergson Admits His Committee Has No Right to Collect Funds," *The Washington Post*, 1944 October 4; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 8, Folder 35, Document 463; USHMM.

¹⁷² Gloria Lubar, and Edward van der Veen, "New Repudiations Registered Against Bergson's Committee," *The Washington Post*, 1944 October 5; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 8, Folder 35, Document 450-451; USHMM.

British and Zionist Intrigues?"¹⁷³ In his pamphlet, written as an open letter to the *Post*'s publisher, Eugene Meyer, Bergson called the articles part of a conspiracy between the British Colonial Office and his organization's nemesis, the Zionist leadership (referring to the Jewish Agency and the World Jewish Congress). "They conducted a vicious and unscrupulous attack. No lies have been too great, no rumor too fantastic, no trick too despicable...during the greatest crisis ever faced by the Hebrew People, Jewish organizations...are wasting nine-tenths of their time and energy in this vicious effort to destroy the only positive and relentless campaign for the rescue of the tormented Hebrews of Europe."¹⁷⁴

The *Post* had already printed a lengthy article on October 8th, "Hebrew Committee Official Replies to Articles in Post", and an editorial on October 13th.¹⁷⁵ The editorial, simply called "Bergson Group," dampened some of the charges and praised the "industrious spadework" of the Emergency Committee, but stood by the criticism against Bergson's posturing as the representative of the Hebrew people and called for a public accounting of the money they had raised. Bergson was unmoved; in his introduction to the pamphlet, he wrote, "Although the tone of the retraction was embarrassed and apologetic, it was far from being gracious and magnanimous. Some insinuations still have not been explicitly and squarely withdrawn, and the Hebrew Committee insists that the *Post* repudiate every one of them; the damage done must be repaired." Bergson ended his

¹⁷³ The Emergency Committee to Save the Jews of Europe, "Rabbi Wise Sued Before Rabbinical Tribune," *The Answer*, page 27, 1944 February 15; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 2, Folder 18, Document 521-539; USHMM.

¹⁷⁴ Peter Bergson, "'Washington Post a Victim of British and Zionist Intrigues?'" 1944 October; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 8, Folder 35, Document 432-445; USHMM.

¹⁷⁵ "Hebrew Committee Official Replies to Articles in Post", *The Washington Post*, 1944 October 8; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 8, Folder 35, Document 446-448; USHMM.

open letter with a threat: “if this letter does not receive your favorable consideration, I shall be compelled to have it given the widest possible circulation, and also to consider taking other steps....”¹⁷⁶ Meyer did not respond. By virtue of writing an open letter and publishing it as a pamphlet, Bergson showed he was planning on circulating it with or without the *Post*’s full apology. His committees were all about publicity, and the *Post* had given him a platform and another opportunity to play the role of the maligned victim of “Zionist intrigue.”

Bergson’s criticisms of the failures of Zionist leadership to do anything to rescue the Jews of Europe—and his frustrations that the War Refugee Board did not accede to his many requests—were in part due to the secrecy surrounding the Board’s activities. It is important to remember that to the public, the Board streamlined licenses, opened Fort Ontario, and (as trumpeted in Ira Hirschmann’s many speeches) had been active in refugee emigration from Turkey. The Board’s other activities—attempting to protect family members of American citizens, the ARBA negotiations, refugee emigration from the Baltic States, Raoul Wallenberg’s work in Hungary among other projects—were secret, known to the Board, to some of the relief organizations, and to the Jewish leadership funding the activities. As Bergson’s organizations were not trusted with information about most of the Board’s work, and their only representative abroad was Jabotinsky in Turkey, they had the impression of the War Refugee Board as an organization with a few successes, but for which most activities had ceased.

¹⁷⁶ Peter Bergson, “Washington Post a Victim of British and Zionist Intrigues?” 1944 October; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 8, Folder 35, Document 432-445; USHMM.

Hungary

Due to the complications of communication with Budapest, the Board received only three reports on Raoul Wallenberg's activities between mid-August and the end of November: two via Iver Olsen, and a letter from Wallenberg himself. The first report, sent from Stockholm on September 22nd, touched upon Wallenberg's finances: he had thus far expended only 3,000 kronor of the 60,000 available to him, as most of his expenditures were covered by the Hungarian Jewish community. (A few weeks earlier, the Board had issued a license for \$100,000 for Wallenberg, but this sum was not included in these calculations.) While he had originally focused on obtaining Swedish protective papers for those in danger—and had managed to grant 5,000 papers from the 9,000 applications received—now that the danger of deportation had passed, he was focused on relief. Wallenberg confirmed that deportations had ceased; there were still concentration camps in the rural districts, but the Jews in Budapest were reasonably safe. He was no longer planning to construct a Swedish-controlled camp since the Jews were fairly well protected; he now wanted to purchase goods and distribute small amounts of money to needy people.¹⁷⁷

The Board made several requests through Wallenberg—to find out information about the situation in Slovakia; to extend assistance to individuals with family members in the United States; and to investigate a ransom scheme involving Leopold Aschner, the managing director of a General Electric subsidiary in Hungary, who was being held at

¹⁷⁷ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm with report from Wallenberg, 1944 September 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 29, Folder 3, Document 290-293; USHMM.

Mauthausen and offered for release in exchange for 1,000,000 Swiss francs.¹⁷⁸ The lag time between question and answer rendered the requests useless; Wallenberg did not respond to any of them. On October 30th, Minister Johnson sent another cable of Wallenberg's activities, based on two reports received by the Swiss, one on October 12th and the other on October 22nd. The reports were vastly different and reflected the dramatic change in the situation in Budapest.

On October 15th, with Soviet forces at the border of Hungary, the Horthy regime was toppled by a Nazi-sponsored coup. Horthy, who had been negotiating an armistice with the Soviet Union, was replaced with Ferenc Szálasi, the leader of the fascist Arrow Cross party. Immediately, the situation for the Jews of Budapest became dangerous again.

Wallenberg's October 12th report had been optimistic; Jews with Swedish papers were exempted from building military fortifications outside the city, but those who were subjected to labor were treated relatively humanely. He had been focused on moving Jews with Swedish protection to homes that were not specifically designated for Jews; working with the Red Cross to open a hospital; purchasing shoes and other needed supplies from Zagreb with the assistance of the Swedish consul there; importing clothing; and sending parcels to Hungarian Jews in Germany. The report on October 22nd reflected the drastic change brought by the Arrow Cross. Wallenberg's Jewish staff had disappeared on October 17th; he had managed to find all but ten of them and brought them to safer areas. While the Hungarian Foreign Minister told Wallenberg that 4,500

¹⁷⁸ Roswell McClelland also spent quite a bit of time investigating the Aschner case. See: RG 84, Bern Records, Box 75, Folder "Aschner"; NACP.

Jews under Swedish protection would be allowed to leave Hungary, the Germans only offered transit visas for 400-500. A few thousand Jews had already been murdered, and it seemed likely any privileges enjoyed by Jews holding protective papers would be stripped away. In transmitting the report to the WRB, Olsen commented that he felt it too dangerous to move any Hungarian Jews through German territory, and suggested the Board send an official letter of recognition to Wallenberg who “is throwing his full energy into his task and doing remarkably well considering enormous difficulties.”¹⁷⁹

The Board took Olsen’s advice and immediately sent a cable to Stockholm. It read, in its entirety: “Please transmit to the Swedish government this Government's sincere appreciation of the humanitarian activities of the Swedish Government and of the courage and ingenuity displayed by Mr. Wallenberg in rendering assistance to the persecuted Jews in Hungary.” On November 14th, Olsen forwarded to Pehle a personal letter through diplomatic pouch that had arrived from Wallenberg, dated October 12th. In the letter, written the same day as one of his reports and before the Arrow Cross takeover, Wallenberg reflected on his three months in Budapest. The tone was that of a man who believed his work largely finished. “When I arrived, the situation of the Jews was very bad...I am quite sure that our activity—and that means in the last instance yours—is responsible for the freeing at this time of the interned Jews. These numbered many hundreds...I think that [the Hungarian Jews] will have every reason to thank you for having initiated and supported the Swedish Jewish action the way you have in such a

¹⁷⁹ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm with report from Wallenberg, 1944 October 30; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 29, Folder 3, Document 297-299; USHMM.

splendid manner."¹⁸⁰

As the situation deteriorated in Hungary, the War Refugee Board took the same actions they had in Slovakia and northern Italy. They asked the Vatican to broadcast an appeal to Hungary, called public attention to the threat against the Jews of Budapest, and challenged the German refusal to accept protests transmitted through the Swiss.¹⁸¹ But for the most part, the War Refugee Board waited. With the Arrow Cross and Nazis in control, there was not much more they could do. By November 1st, the *New York Times* reported that the Red Army was only twenty-four miles from Budapest.¹⁸² The Board assumed the Jews of Budapest would be liberated soon.

Still, the Board seized opportunities as they presented themselves. On October 27th, at 3:30pm, the Swiss Foreign Office, having just received a message from Budapest, called the Bern embassy. An agreement had been reportedly reached between the Hungarian and German governments to release 8,000 Jews from Hungary, with the stipulation that the operation be completed by November 15th.¹⁸³ Though McClelland (and the Swiss) had many questions about the demographic makeup of the refugees and whether they held protective papers, he got to work immediately on the logistics of the refugees' arrival. In his cable to the War Refugee Board, McClelland asked the staff in Washington to investigate ships to evacuate refugees who would hypothetically travel from Switzerland to a port city in France, and from there, to Palestine or North Africa.

¹⁸⁰ Iver Olsen, Letter to Pehle enclosing letter to Wallenberg, 1944 November 14; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 29, Folder 3, Document 297-299; USHMM.

¹⁸¹ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm with report from Wallenberg, 1944 October 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 6, Folder 8, Document 946; USHMM.

¹⁸² "War News Summarized," *The New York Times*, 1944 November 1, pg. 1.

¹⁸³ T.J. Hadraba, Memo to the files about Swiss meeting, 1944 October 27; RG-84, Bern legation records, Box 74, Folder "Jews—Hungary"; NACP.

The Swiss had received 25,000 new refugees in the previous six weeks and were struggling, particularly with the upcoming winter, to provide maintenance for all of them. Evacuating refugees out of Switzerland would help the situation. The demographics of the new Hungarian group were still not clear, and McClelland himself was dubious the group existed at all: “It is difficult to believe that the release of 8,000 Jews was suddenly decided upon in view of the recently intensified anti-Jewish stand...”¹⁸⁴ Pehle sent McClelland’s cable to John McCloy so the military would be aware that refugee transportation may be needed, but November 15th passed and the rumored group did not arrive on the border. On the 15th, McClelland cabled the Board a new report from Budapest: 11,500 Jews were scheduled to arrive on the Swiss border soon, including 7,000 holders of Palestine certificates and 4,500 holders of Swedish protective papers.¹⁸⁵ The OSS heard through one of their contacts that it would be between 8,000 and 13,000.¹⁸⁶ The Board sent cables to Paris and to London to announce the possible arrival of a large group of refugees who would need to be transported through French territory and taken by ship to North Africa.¹⁸⁷ But the end of November came with no large groups arriving from Budapest. As with the Horthy offer in July, decisions in Germany and Hungary prevented the departure of refugees, decisions the WRB was powerless to influence. But within a few days’ time, the Swiss, War Refugee Board, and American military had mobilized to facilitate the arrival and transportation of refugees. If they ever

¹⁸⁴ Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern about possible arrival of Hungarian Jews, 1944 November 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 16, Folder 4, Document 397-399; USHMM.

¹⁸⁵ Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern about possible arrival of Hungarian Jews, 1944 November 15; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 17, Folder 1, Document 21; USHMM.

¹⁸⁶ B2, OSS report on possible arrival of Hungarian Jews, 1944 November 17; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 6; FDRL.

¹⁸⁷ John Pehle and Edward Stettinius, Cable to Paris about approaching French regarding transport, 1944 November 15; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 11, Folder 2, Document 117-118; USHMM.

came, they would be saved.

One of the only reasons the Fedhala camp was still open near Casablanca was to take advantages of these possible opportunities. In July, just a few weeks after the camp received the group of refugees from Spain, the IGC representative in Algiers had suggested the camp be closed and the inhabitants transferred to other UNRRA camps in North Africa; Moses Beckelman, the camp's commander, had agreed. The War Refugee Board and the IGC felt the closure would be premature. In August, in response to Beckelman's reasoning that no additional groups of refugees were expected at the camp, the Board replied, "Beckelman's statement that few newcomers are expected indicates that he is unaware of Horthy offer...all possible havens must be held available for any eventuality that may occur from accepting the Hungarian Government's offer."¹⁸⁸ By mid-September, though, it was evident the imminent release of the Jews of Budapest was not likely, and Beckelman requested the transfer of 432 Sephardic Jews at Fedhala to the Moses Wells camp in Egypt, provided the group was accepted by the Greek government for eventual repatriation.¹⁸⁹ At the end of October, 495 refugees moved east—some of the Sephardic group and about 180 refugees who held Palestine certificates. Although there were now only a few hundred refugees remaining in Fedhala, the camp remained open in case of emergencies. In mid-November, Pehle alerted Paris and London that the camp would be the destination of the Hungarian Jews rumored to be released. The cable ended, "The Government of the United States and the British Government have stated that they

¹⁸⁸ Cordell Hull, Cable to London about Fedhala, 1944 August 31; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 11, Folder 2, Document 130-131; USHMM.

¹⁸⁹ Cordell Hull, Cable to Algiers about transferring Sephardic Jews from Fedhala, 1944 September 14; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 7, Document 390; USHMM.

are opposed to the closing of the Fedhala camp, which still has definite purposes to serve."¹⁹⁰

Post-war Planning

By the fall, much of the War Refugee Board's work was reactive. After the liberation of Paris, there was a sense that the war would be over soon and those in danger would be saved through liberation. The attention of many members of the Board's staff, including John Pehle, shifted to planning for the post-war world. One of the main concerns was post-war justice: ensuring that the trial and punishment for anyone who participated in deportations or other crimes—a major theme of the Board's psychological warfare campaign—would actually come to pass. In August, while Josiah DuBois was in London, he had met with Herbert Pell, the American representative to the War Crimes Commission. Pell explained something very problematic: the concept of "war crimes," as defined by established international law, were limited to crimes perpetrated in war by one country against the citizens of an enemy country. There was no legal precedent to prosecute a country committing crimes against her own citizens, against citizens of countries with which she was allied, or against citizens deemed to be stateless persons. In other words, there was no plan in place, or legal grounds, to try Nazi Germany for crimes against German Jews, or against the Jews of any nation allied with Germany. The War Crimes Commission did not investigate crimes; instead, countries could bring claims of crimes and evidence to the commission. The Commission also did not enforce

¹⁹⁰ John Pehle and Edward Stettinius, Cable to Paris about approaching French regarding transport, 1944 November 15; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 11, Folder 2, Document 117-118; USHMM.

punishments but rather made sure the perpetrator was sent back to his home country. In short, Pell argued (and DuBois agreed) the War Crimes Commission was wholly inadequate in the face of persecutions of this type and scale.¹⁹¹

Immediately after DuBois' return from London, Pehle, who had already directed a member of his staff to investigate the history of war crimes prosecution, sent a memo to Edward Stettinius. "Needless to say, it would be a fearful miscarriage of justice if such war criminals were permitted to escape punishment for their inhuman crimes. Moreover, the failure to implement the numerous threats of punishment would...render it far more difficult to deter similar criminal conduct in the future."¹⁹² Attached to the memo was a list of public pledges (with the full text of these pledges) that had been made announcing post-war punishment for perpetrators, and a draft cable to London instructing Pell to inform the Commission of the clearly-stated policy of the United States. Stettinius responded that the issue was already being considered at the State Department.¹⁹³ In early October, Mann reported to Pehle that Pell still had no instructions on the matter. By the end of the month, Mann repeated that not only had Pell not heard anything,

He calls on me about once each week to see if I have heard anything...He always ends these sessions by expressing some new fear if the message is not forthcoming. He now says such a message should be received by him and published in the newspapers before the election, pointing out that if the Republicans had knowledge of the situation as it exists, they might be able to make quite a stink about it and pick up a few votes—as he puts it, all because some people in the Department of State don't want to do anything for the Jews. I think he may have something

¹⁹¹ Josiah DuBois, Memorandum to the File about meeting with Herbert Pell, 1944 August 17; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 17, Folder 21, Document 984-987; USHMM.

¹⁹² Milton Sargoy, Memo to the File re: Post-War Punishment of Axis War Crimes, 1944 August 24; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 17, Folder 21, Document 972-982; USHMM. John Pehle, Memo to Stettinius about instructions for Pell, 1944 August 28; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 17, Folder 21, Document 962-970; USHMM.

¹⁹³ Edward Stettinius, Memo to Pehle about post-war punishment, 1944 September 4; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 17, Folder 21, Document 958; USHMM.

there.¹⁹⁴

The election of 1944 was another variable in the War Refugee Board's work. The Republican candidate, Thomas Dewey, had issued a statement on October 19th condemning the "gangster terror device" used by the Nazis of threatening to exterminate their victims, and praised the State Department for their public warning of post-war punishment. The Board sent the text of Dewey's statement to their representatives abroad for publication, as it showed would-be perpetrators that the threat of post-war punishment would not cease even if Roosevelt lost the election. But most of the Board's staff were New Deal Democrats, and they, as well as Morgenthau, were hoping for a Roosevelt victory.

Morgenthau had been very concerned with post-war economic planning. After his return from London in August, Morgenthau told Secretary of State Cordell Hull that Roosevelt was planning to partition Germany after the war. Hull, who had never been permitted to see the minutes of the Tehran Conference, did not know this and claimed that he had been told post-war control of Germany was in the hands of the military.¹⁹⁵ At lunch with Stimson and McCloy a few days later, Morgenthau shared his idea to remove industry from Germany and reduce it to an agricultural state. When Stimson observed that an agricultural state could not support a population of 40 million, and that Germans might have to be removed, Morgenthau retorted "Well, that is not nearly as bad as

¹⁹⁴ James Mann, Letter to Pehle, 1944 October 23; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 15, Folder 74, Document 960-968; USHMM.

¹⁹⁵ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Dictated notes on meeting with Hull, 1944 August 18; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 763, Document 202-205; LOC.

sending them to the gas chambers.”¹⁹⁶ That afternoon, Morgenthau assigned the planning to Pehle who “just has a normal amount of work to do; he isn’t overworked...if John would sort of take this and ride herd on this for me and make sure of people here—there must be a lot of people interested.” Morgenthau assigned Pehle to read Emil Ludwig’s book *How to End the German Menace* and asked him to come up with a list of suggestions on how to deal with post-war Germany since Pehle was “looking for new worlds to conquer.”¹⁹⁷ In the fall, Pehle generally became more involved in Treasury Department activities that did not have to do specifically with the War Refugee Board. He participated in the revision of a handbook for the Allied military on how to handle the surrender of Nazi administrators and bureaucrats,¹⁹⁸ assisted with the preparation of materials advocating the Morgenthau plan prior to the Quebec Conference,¹⁹⁹ and worked on Morgenthau’s planned book about post-war Germany, eventually published in 1945 as *Germany is Our Problem*.²⁰⁰

On November 5th, two days before the election, Dewey gave a speech in Chicago in which he blamed the Morgenthau Plan—a summary of which had been leaked in late September—with halting the progress of the war. It “was just what the Nazi propagandists needed...It put fight back into the German Army; it stiffened the will of the German nation to resist. Almost overnight the headlong retreat of the Germans

¹⁹⁶ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Dictated notes on lunch with Stimson and McCloy, 1944 August 23; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 765, Document 14-16; LOC.

¹⁹⁷ The author(s) of *How to End the German Menace* was officially “Five Hollanders.” Henry Morgenthau, Jr., “Army Directives” meeting transcript, 1944 August 23; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 765, Document 39-43; LOC.

¹⁹⁸ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., “Revision of German Surrender Documents” meeting transcript, 1944 September 7; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 770, Document 17-39; LOC.

¹⁹⁹ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., “Material for Quebec Conference” meeting transcript, 1944 September 9; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 771, Document 6-16; LOC.

²⁰⁰ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., “Proposed Book on German De-militarization” meeting transcript, 1944 November 3; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 791, Document 5-27; LOC.

stopped...the blood of our fighting men is paying for this improvised meddling.”²⁰¹ Morgenthau was livid, and wanted Stimson or McCloy—or anybody—to refute the claim. The War Department did not want to get involved, so Ted Gamble, the National Director of the Treasury Department’s War Finance Division, wrote an editorial condemning Dewey’s claims and sent it to a dozen major newspapers.²⁰² It was not the first time one of the Republican candidates had been critical; in October, Governor John Bricker, Dewey’s running mate, had given a speech in Denver during which he criticized the Fort Ontario project. “Instead of pale-faced children and frail women, the group consisted largely of men. They were not laboring men either, but writers, lawyers, artists, and intellectuals generally. I am not saying that this group was ‘cleared with Sidney.’ I do not know.” (The phrase ‘cleared with Sidney’ was a reference to Jewish labor leader Sidney Hillman, and a piece of rhetoric Dewey and Bricker frequently lobbed, though they were criticized for arousing antisemitic prejudices.)²⁰³ In response to Bricker’s assertion, the Board issued a press release pointing out the Ohio governor had signed an appeal to Roosevelt back in May specifically endorsing the establishment of emergency refugee shelters.²⁰⁴ Though it was closer than any of Roosevelt’s previous elections, the President was reelected handily on November 7th, taking 432 electoral votes to Dewey’s 99.

The same day as the election, General Eisenhower issued a warning to the

²⁰¹ Ted Gamble, War Finance Division press release, 1944 November 6; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 792, Document 29-30; LOC.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ “WRB Says Bricker Signed Refugee Appeal and Now Assails the President’s Haven Action,” *New York Times*, 1944 October 25, p. 13.

²⁰⁴ War Refugee Board staff, Press release 16, 1944 October 25; Collection: 1945-1954: New York Records of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee - NY 45-54, Sub Collection: Administration - NY 45-54/ 1, File 00193_1077; JDC.

Germans.²⁰⁵ Though the WRB had forwarded the text of Dewey's warning for publication overseas, the Board had not been active in recruiting political, military, or religious figures for psychological warfare for several months. Isadore Weinstein, who had been the Board's liaison to the OWI, had left the staff in early October, and with given the war's progress, the most important warning would come from the military. On September 28th, Pehle sent a draft for McCloy at the War Department, intending the text to be issued under Eisenhower's signature. The statement called the attention of the German populace to the large numbers of people in forced labor and in concentration camps in their midst:

Without regard to their nationality and whether they are Jewish or otherwise, Germans, these are my orders: You shall disregard any order from whatever source, to molest, or otherwise harm or persecute any of these people. As the Allied armies, already firmly on German soil, advance, I shall expect to find these persons alive and unharmed. Severe penalties will be inflicted upon anyone who is responsible, directly or indirectly, in large measure or in small, for their mistreatment.²⁰⁶

On October 14th, Eisenhower approved the warning but changed "Without regard to their nationality and whether they are Jewish or otherwise" to "Without regard to their nationality or religious faith."²⁰⁷ Roosevelt approved the edited text on October 26th, but the release was held pending clearance by the British.²⁰⁸ The British reported on October 30th that they objected to the phrase "these are my orders: you shall," as they deemed it

²⁰⁵ November 7th, 1944 was a very busy news day. The newspapers also announced the assassination of Lord Moyne in Egypt on November 6th. He had been shot by two members of the Stern Gang, an extreme Zionist organization dedicated to the expulsion of the British from Palestine, unrestricted Jewish immigration to Palestine, and the establishment of a Jewish homeland.

²⁰⁶ War Refugee Board, Draft leaflet for Eisenhower warning, 1944 September 28; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 28, Folder 9, Document 409; USHMM.

²⁰⁷ John McCloy, Memo to FDR with draft of Eisenhower warning, 1944 October 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 28, Folder 9, Document 423-424; USHMM.

²⁰⁸ John Pehle, Memo about Eisenhower approval, 1944 October 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 28, Folder 9, Document 419-420; USHMM.

unnecessarily provocative. Pehle, having waited over a month to issue the statement, wrote in a memo to his files that he agreed only because he did not want the statement held any longer.²⁰⁹

The War Refugee Board staff began to consider the prospect of dissolving—not just because Eisenhower was commanding troops now on German soil, not just because the election was over, and not just because the staff was focused on war crimes trials or on the Germany economy. They were legally required to disband on January 22nd, 1945. Back in June, the Senate had passed the Independent Offices Appropriations Bill with an amendment known as the “Russell amendment” after Georgia Senator Richard Russell, Jr. The law stipulated that all agencies in existence for more than one year needed a Congressional appropriation and could not be funded through the executive branch.²¹⁰ The Board had two choices: it could approach Congress to ask for a formal appropriation or it could dissolve. Originally, the staff planned for the dissolution of the Board. In mid-September, Matthew Marks of the Board’s staff drafted the text of an executive order to dissolve the War Refugee Board. It assigned jurisdiction over Fort Ontario to the War Relocation Authority; tasked the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the War Relocation Authority, and the Department of Justice with repatriating the Fort Ontario refugees; and charged the Red Cross with completing the Board’s relief package plan. Milton Sargoy, another WRB staff member, attended a meeting at the General Accounting Office about the logistics of dissolving, particularly how it would affect the

²⁰⁹ Edward Stettinius, Cable to Mann about expediting British approval, 1944 October 30; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 28, Folder 9, Document 418; USHMM.

²¹⁰ The Russell amendment is still in effect. General Accounting Office. “Principles of Federal Appropriations Law”, (third edition, Volume III, September 2008), part 15.

staff members who had accrued leave. But by the end of October, it was clear the Board still had work to do, and the staff began planning to request a Congressional appropriation. David White, who had become the Board's administrative officer after Assistant Executive Director Ward Stewart left in August to take a commission in the Navy, met with staff members from the Bureau of the Budget, who explained that the request would have to be presented prior to November 14th in order to meet the deadline of January 21, 1945.

On November 20th, John Pehle appeared in front of the House Committee on Appropriations to discuss House Document 70, requesting a \$150,000 appropriation for the War Refugee Board to cover the remainder of fiscal year 1945. The amount of the financial request was decided upon somewhat arbitrarily. Since the WRB still had a healthy administrative budget and operations were largely funded through private relief organizations, the \$150,000 was enough to necessitate an appropriations request and allow the WRB to continue operations, but not enough money—they hoped—to cause a great amount of House Committee debate.²¹¹ Pehle explained the creation of the Board and answered questions about the funding of overseas programs. Most of the Congressmen praised the Board's work, though Pehle did have to address Republican Congressman John Taber, who had many questions about whether the Board was allowing refugees to enter the United States outside of immigration laws.²¹² The Chairman, Democratic Congressman Clarence Cannon, ended the testimony with the

²¹¹ David White, War Refugee Board—Justification, 1944 November 16; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 60, Folder 2; FDRL. Joseph Friedman, Memo of conversation with Congressman Sol Bloom's office, 1944 November 24; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 60, Folder 1; FDRL.

²¹² Tauber represented Cayuga County, NY, which bordered Oswego County, where the Fort Ontario refugees lived.

question, “As a matter of fact, Mr. Pehle, considering the vast field involved and the millions of people affected, this appropriation of \$150,000 is almost in the nature of a token expenditure?” Pehle answered, “We feel that way about it.”²¹³ The War Refugee Board was allowed to survive past January 21, 1945 with a \$150,000 appropriation from Congress.

The ARBA negotiations

Two major activities were at the forefront of the WRB staff’s attention in late November 1944. During his Congressional testimony, Pehle mentioned one of them, the upcoming publication of a report on German atrocities. The other, which he understandably did not divulge, was the ARBA negotiations.

When Saly Mayer had met with the ARBA negotiators on September 27th, he claimed not to have the expertise to select goods for the Nazis, and in doing so bought a bit more time. Over the next several weeks, McClelland worked on the Leopold Aschner ransom case, about which the WRB had also asked Wallenberg. McClelland determined that Aschner, a wealthy Hungarian businessman, was being held at Mauthausen and, despite rumors of his death, was still alive. The ransom negotiations were being conducted through the assistant manager of the Tungfram Budapest offices, a Mr. Walder, and the company’s Zurich representative, Lazar Grod. Grod had been trying to open a line of credit for Aschner’s ransom and contacted the US embassy for advice and assistance. As with other ransom negotiations, McClelland tried to help Grod stall for

²¹³ John Pehle, Transcript of Appropriations Committee testimony, 1944 November 20; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 60, Folder 1; FDRL.

time.²¹⁴ In November, he heard that the ARBA negotiators might also be responsible for the ransoming of Aschner. McClelland was also busy in his personal life. In the midst of the chaos of handling the War Refugee Board's work in Switzerland, McClelland made it back to Geneva just in time to see his wife deliver their second son, Kirk Richard, on October 14th. Two days later, he was back at work in Bern.

Throughout October, as the ARBA ransom negotiations were at a standstill, the Board, the Joint, McClelland, and Mayer prepared in case they resumed. As Mayer would need to have some sort of proof that he had something tangible to offer, the Joint authorized a line of credit for 20,000,000 Swiss francs (approximately \$5,000,000), though the Board reminded McClelland that Mayer could not actually enter into any commitments regarding the money. The Board also informed the British and the Soviet Union about the negotiations, wording the cables in such a way to imply the Board was merely hearing about the negotiations, not involved with them:

The Department has been advised that discussions have recently taken place on the Swiss border between representatives of the Jewish groups in Budapest, accompanied by reputed Gestapo agents, and Swiss citizens representing the Swiss Jewish community in an effort by the latter group to forestall, if at all possible, the continued deportation and extermination particularly of Jews from Hungary and Slovakia.

The Board reassured Moscow and London that no commitments were being made and that as the discussions were reported to American Jewish groups, the Board would keep them informed as well.²¹⁵ At the end of October, Switzerland authorized entry visas for

²¹⁴ Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern about Aschner timeline, 1944 October 14; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 3, Document 125-128; USHMM.

²¹⁵ Cordell Hull, Cable to Moscow about Mayer ransom negotiations, 1944 October 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 10, Document 537; USHMM.

the ARBA negotiators.

The meetings continued on October 29th, November 4th (when Becher joined the negotiations), and November 5th. On November 16th, McClelland sent the Board a lengthy update. Talks were ongoing; even though Kasztner had returned to Budapest and Becher left first to Berlin and then back to Budapest, one of the SS-officers, Kielitz, had remained in Switzerland to keep negotiating with Mayer. Given the change in military situation in the Allies' favor, Mayer had been making more demands. He requested the cessation of all extermination activities (and all actions "not directly related to normally accepted concept of a war effort"); that all Jews holding protective papers be allowed to leave concentration camps; that all individual Jews specified by the Joint be released; the answers to any information requests that might be made about the welfare of certain groups; and supervision by the Red Cross or another neutral party to ensure the terms of the agreement were fulfilled. In exchange, Mayer would place the 20,000,000 francs in an authorized account. At first, Mayer claimed the funds could only be available as a credit, but when Kielitz refused to deal in credit, Mayer stated that the money was blocked until the ARBA negotiators submitted a list of goods which they would purchase with the money. As a stipulation of the agreement, Mayer would arrange for the exportation of goods from Switzerland.

McClelland did not know how to proceed. He explained in his cable that the original goal of gaining time had been attained. Even if the Joint could send actual funds, the United States would refuse to facilitate the export of any goods of value from Switzerland to Germany. It was time to end the charade. "[I]t is my considered opinion

that SM should be instructed by WRB and JDC to discontinue negotiations as tactfully as possible. I personally fear that if bluff is carried too far before being broken off Nazis may effect reprisals on Jews out of anger.”²¹⁶

McClelland left a very important piece of information out of his update to the War Refugee Board. In fact, he did not write anything about it in any of his voluminous notes at the time, nor mention it in his final report to the War Refugee Board summarizing his work in Switzerland. It was not until later in his life—when others, including Kasztner, wrote about the ARBA ransom scheme—that McClelland admitted he met with Kurt Becher and the ARBA negotiators at the Hotel Savoy Baur en Ville in Zurich on Sunday, November 5th. One reason the Nazis were willing to continue dealing with Saly Mayer when no evidence of funds had been forthcoming was that at the Hotel Savoy, Mayer had produced McClelland, a representative of the United States government, who showed a cable signed by Cordell Hull alerting Mayer to the 20,000,000 Swiss francs being placed in an account in his name. A few days later, in a personal letter addressed to “my dear and good friend Ross,” Mayer wrote, “With all happenings in this Arba-Barter Job of the past 6 months I have enough courage left to face all the unknown the future holds in store. You have been very good to me and I do thank you most heartily. There is at least one man who knows that I have left nothing undone to 'produce results' even if unorthodox methods had to be applied.”²¹⁷

Just two days after McClelland sent his update on the ransom negotiations advising the Board he felt they should be terminated, the Board sent a short reply:

²¹⁶ Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern on ransom negotiations, 1944 November 16; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 9, Document 512-516; USHMM.

²¹⁷ Saly Mayer, Letter to McClelland, 1944 November 12; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 71, Folder 8; FDRL.

The transaction outlined in your cable cannot (repeat not) be supported by the Board in any way and further it is the Board's opinion that no (repeat no) funds from any source should be used to carry out such proposal. The Board has carefully considered and recognizes the force of your argument concerning bringing the negotiations to a close. In this connection however the Board is confident you will take into consideration the fact that because of recent military developments each day that can be gained is of increasing importance.²¹⁸

McClelland was given the instruction that he and Mayer should continue, but no suggestions as to how to prolong the ruse. Frustrated, McClelland wrote on his copy of the cable, "Without funds it cannot be continued."²¹⁹ Over the next several days, he contacted Mayer and several other relief organization representatives who had been working on the release of the remaining Jews from the Kasztner train from Bergen-Belsen, to instruct them to cancel any further ransom negotiations. To Nathan Schwalb, McClelland wrote, "I am afraid...that the 'Verhandlung' with Becher et al is doomed to failure since our Government just stated by cable in reply to my latest plea that no funds whatsoever could be used for such a purpose. Saly will therefore not get the 20 million...So all our efforts are of no avail, except that fully three months precious time have been gained, which was after all the maximum one could expect."²²⁰ McClelland felt the ransom negotiations were over.

²¹⁸ Edward Stettinius, Cable to Bern that ransom cannot be paid, 1944 November 18; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 9, Document 509-510; USHMM.

²¹⁹ Roswell McClelland, Notes on cable to Bern, 1944 November 19; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 6; FDRL.

²²⁰ Roswell McClelland, Letter to Nathan Schwalb, 1944 November 23; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 6; FDRL.

The Auschwitz Protocols

In June 1944, Roswell McClelland had received copies of two reports written by escapees from the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. Their names were unknown to him, though he knew that one of the reports was written by two Slovak Jews who had escaped Auschwitz in April after nearly two years of imprisonment, and the other by a non-Jewish Polish major, who had been in Auschwitz for eighteen months before escaping. The reports were extensive, providing information about the conditions of the camp; the dates and demographics of prisoner arrivals; specific names of prisoners and perpetrators; hand-drawn maps; and full descriptions of the process of prisoner arrival, selection, gassing and the burning of the corpses.

McClelland received his copies from Jaromir (Jean) Kopecký, the Czech delegate in Switzerland, though Mantello was also circulating a copy which had minor variations. Immediately, McClelland asked Riegner to condense the lengthy reports into a five-page summary, which was then translated into English. In preparation for sending this information to the War Refugee Board, McClelland did an extensive amount of drafting, editing, re-editing, and research. He checked the math contained in the reports of how many people had been killed at Auschwitz, both by hand and with a calculator.²²¹ On July 6th, McClelland sent a sixteen-page cable (in two parts) to the War Refugee Board with a summary of the information. It was by far the longest cable he ever sent to Washington. At the end of his introduction, McClelland wrote, “For whatever use the WRB considers it most effective, this report is submitted. When the facilities of the mails permit,

²²¹ Roswell McClelland, Drafts of translations of copies of the Auschwitz Protocols, 1944 July-October; KE 80304, Roswell and Marjorie McClelland papers, USHMM.

microfilm copies of the two reports in full will be sent.”²²² In the report of the War Refugee Board’s activities for the week of July 17-22nd, in a section entitled “Reports Describe Conditions in German Concentration Camps,” Pehle wrote that the Board had received “a copy of the widely publicized report prepared by the Czech government-in-exile on Oswieczim [sic] and Birkenau.” That report, a five-page summary of Slovak and Polish escapee testimonies, gave very basic information about Auschwitz and concluded with a list of requests, including Allied warnings, the bombing of crematoria and rail lines, and a public condemnation by the Vatican of the atrocities.²²³ Pehle also noted that “[a]nother report, in sickening detail... was subsequently transmitted to us by Board Representative McClelland” and explained that McClelland’s report was based on the experience of two Slovak Jews and a non-Jewish political internee.²²⁴ The Board took no further action to disseminate McClelland’s lengthy cable or the information contained therein.

On October 12th, McClelland sent the entire text of both reports to the War Refugee Board in Washington via diplomatic pouch. Prior to October, there was no pouch service from Switzerland, and the staff shortage in the code room (which could not be supplemented due to the fact that Switzerland was surrounded by enemy territory) meant that lengthy pieces of secret information were impossible to transmit. McClelland had already transmitted a long summary of the reports and assumed that the Board could take

²²² Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern with summary of Auschwitz reports, 1944 July 6; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 5, Folder 5, Document 824-829; USHMM.

²²³ Rudolph Schoenfeld, Cable from London enclosure from Czech series, 1944 July 5; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 750, Document 184-188; LOC.

²²⁴ John Pehle, Report of the War Refugee Board, Week of July 17-22, 1944 July 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 25, Folder 8, Documents 771-783; USHMM.

whatever action they desired based on his July cable. Still, these reports were the very first message he sent when pouch facilities opened to Switzerland. In his cover letter, McClelland explained how he had received the reports. “While it is of course impossible to directly vouch for their complete authenticity, I have every reason to believe that they are, unfortunately, a true picture of the frightful happenings in these camps.”²²⁵

McClelland added that some of the information in the Slovak report, relating to the arrivals of transports from France in 1942, coincided with deportations he had witnessed as an AFSC representative providing relief in the concentration camps in southern France at that time.²²⁶

In the months between McClelland’s July cable and the transmission of the full text of the reports, McClelland translated both reports from the German versions he had received (the Polish major’s report had already been translated from the original Polish into German when he received it) into English. It was an arduous process with many drafts, and McClelland had a heavy editorial hand, both in clarifying the intended meaning and in changing the language to be more evocative. For example, at the beginning of the Slovak report, McClelland changed the original translation regarding the arrival of prisoners at Auschwitz, from, “With this number in our hand we were then chased to a third barrack where we were supposed to be registered” to, “With this number

²²⁵ Roswell McClelland, Cover letter and copy of “The German Extermination Camps, 1944 October 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 5, Folder 4, Document 309-364; USHMM.

²²⁶ McClelland was clearly haunted by the deportations he witnessed in France, and was the only War Refugee Board representative with personal experience inside concentration camps. The only testimony he ever wrote for public dissemination was not about his work with the War Refugee Board, but about his work with the AFSC in France in 1941-1942. It is entitled “An unpublished chapter in the history of the deportation of foreign Jews from France in 1942” and, though McClelland tried to have his testimony published, was ultimately unsuccessful. It resides only in various archival collections. (See: Roswell McClelland, “An unpublished chapter in the history of the deportation of foreign Jews from France in 1942,” undated; 1987.035, USHMM.)

in hand we were then herded to a third barrack where so-called registration took place.”²²⁷ McClelland deleted one drawing (of a watch tower), added paragraph indentations, and tried to make the reports as clear and powerful as possible. He put a great deal of work into the versions he transmitted to the War Refugee Board.

The Board received the reports on November 1st and immediately began planning to release the text in some way. (From available memos, correspondence, and transcripts, it seems as though the Board staff did not remember that McClelland had transmitted a summary of the same material in July. They seemed to approach this as new information, rather than the text of something for which they had been waiting.) At a meeting in Morgenthau’s office the next morning, Pehle asked about the possibility of having Book-of-the-Month publish the reports, “because this ought to be required reading for the people of the United States. I think it would do an awful lot of good.” Henrietta Klotz, Morgenthau’s secretary, observed that she had already read the text and had not slept the night before as a result. Morgenthau said he would take a look at them.²²⁸ While they awaited his advice, Florence Hodel made a list of ways in which the Board might take advantage of the reports. They considered releasing them publicly; having them published; having them used by the Army as a manual for troops entering Germany; using them to support a proposal to the War Department to bomb the concentration camps; and using them for psychological warfare by dropping copies over enemy

²²⁷ Roswell McClelland, Drafts of translations of copies of the Auschwitz Protocols, 1944 July-October; KE 80304, Roswell and Marjorie McClelland papers, USHMM.

²²⁸ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., “Group” meeting, 1944 November 2; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 790; LOC.

territory in pamphlet form.²²⁹ Pehle also sent a copy to Harry Scherman of the Book-of-the-Month club, just to gauge his interest.

Just two days after receiving the full text of the reports, the Board reconsidered approaching the War Department about bombing the concentration camps. In late June, Pehle had forwarded a request to bomb the rail lines leading to Auschwitz to John McCloy, who had responded that the operation was not feasible at that time. In the middle of July, Pehle had sent a memorandum to Stettinius, enclosing a draft memo for Hull to send to Stimson requesting a thorough exploration of any military action that could be taken to save any potential victims from extermination. Aside from these efforts, the War Refugee Board had tried to stay neutral, though requests about bombing—or some sort of operation to destroy the gas chambers, the crematoria, the rail lines, or the entire camp—continued to reach their desks. But it was not their decision to make. A. Leon Kubowitzki of the World Jewish Congress, by far the most persistent correspondent on the subject, pressed the idea that Russian paratroopers or Polish partisans should destroy the gas chambers at Auschwitz, though Lawrence Lesser cautioned him not to “expect much from the Russians who had written off their war prisoners in German camps.”²³⁰ Most of the discussion, though, took place outside the War Refugee Board. The World Jewish Congress debated with their representatives; other groups, like Histadrut, with theirs; and the Board acted as a channel for some of this correspondence but did not comment on the content of the messages. On September 2nd, after Abraham

²²⁹ Florence Hodel, Memo on possible uses of the Auschwitz reports, 1944 November 2; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 5, Folder 4, Document 380-381; USHMM.

²³⁰ A. Leon Kubowitzki, Memo on meeting with Hodel and Lesser, 1944 July 21, World Jewish Congress New York Office, D-Series (Rescue and Relief), Digital collection, Folder 107-03. USHMM.

Kalmanowitz called him at home, Benjamin Akzin wrote a memo to Pehle suggesting the Board approach the War Department again about the feasibility of bombing the rail lines. Sternbuch had reported that deportations from Budapest had begun again, 12,000 people a day, and the Vaad urged immediate action.²³¹ Akzin noted that the War Department's previous rejection to the proposal "quite likely stems from the habitual reluctance of the military to act upon civilian suggestions. It is submitted, however, that the WRB was created precisely in order to overcome the inertia and—in some cases—the insufficient interest of the old-established agencies..."²³² Kalmanowitz came to Washington and met with Pehle and Morgenthau, but focused his requests on money for paying ransom to German officials rather than on pressing the issue of bombing.²³³ At the end of September, Mann sent a cable to alert the Board that the Polish government-in-exile and relief agency representatives in London were pressing for bombing extermination camps and German barracks, a message that Pehle passed on to McCloy as requested.²³⁴

After receiving the two Auschwitz reports, though, Pehle sent copies to McCloy with a forceful cover letter. After urging McCloy to read them, Pehle wrote

Until now, despite pressure from many sources, I have been hesitant to urge the destruction of these camps by direct, military action. But I am convinced that the point has now been reached where such action is justifiable if it is deemed feasible by competent military authorities. I strongly recommend that the War Department give serious consideration to the possibility of destroying the execution chambers

²³¹ Sternbuch's report turned out to be untrue.

²³² Benjamin Akzin, Memo to Pehle on Kalmanowitz call, 1944 September 2; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 6, Folder 6, Document 694-695; USHMM.

²³³ Abraham Kalmanowitz, Letter to Morgenthau, 1944 September 8; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 24, Folder 23, Document 517-519; USHMM.

²³⁴ John Pehle, Memo to McCloy with message from Mann, 1944 October 3; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 6, Folder 6, Document 691; USHMM.

and crematories in Birkenau through direct bombing action.²³⁵

McCloy responded ten days later, on November 18th, with the detailed findings of the Operations staff. The War Department had concluded that the destruction of the camps would necessitate precision bombing with the use of heavy or medium bombers, or attack by low-flying or dive-bombing aircraft. The target was beyond the range of medium bombers, and it was a dangerous trip for heavy bombers. Strategic air forces were needed elsewhere. The job was simply too dangerous and success too uncertain. McCloy assured Pehle that he also had been pressed strongly by other quarters, but he felt this was a sound military decision based on feasibility.²³⁶

Pehle planned to use the facilities of the War Department in another way. Two days before the War Refugee Board received the Auschwitz reports via pouch, Sgt. Richard Paul of *Yank* magazine called to see if the Board could help him with an atrocity story he was writing for the December 1st issue. Paul, the son of former Treasury official Randolph Paul (who had accompanied Pehle and Morgenthau to the White House in January 1944 to urge FDR to establish the War Refugee Board, and who had since retired from Treasury), wanted a story from an official source. When the reports arrived from Switzerland, Pehle gave Paul copies to take to New York for his article and agreed to be interviewed for the piece. In Paul's draft article, Pehle was quoted as saying, "We on the War Refugee Board have been very sceptical [sic]. We remembered too well the atrocity stories of the last war, many of which apparently were untrue." Paul wrote that the WRB

²³⁵ John Pehle, Memo to McCloy enclosing Auschwitz reports, 1944 November 8; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 5, Folder 4, Document 388-389; USHMM.

²³⁶ John McCloy, Letter to Pehle, 1944 November 18; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 5, Folder 4, Document 386-387; USHMM.

had received cables and reports about the persecutions, overwhelming evidence of what no one wanted to believe. The Board was making the reports public “in firm conviction they should be read and understood by all Americans.”²³⁷

The Board decided that if the *Yank* article was scheduled for the December 1st issue (which meant it would go to press on November 17th), they should plan to release the reports to the press for publication on November 26th. Almost immediately, there were external problems with the plan. The New York offices of *Yank* felt, according to a memo by Virginia Mannon, “our reports were too Semitic and they had asked him to get a story from other sources...I told him...that inasmuch as the whole Nazi extermination program was more than 90 percent Jewish, it was most unlikely that he could get any stories that did not deal principally with Jews.”²³⁸ Sgt. Paul also had difficulties with the Pentagon in clearing the reports for overseas publication. The “consensus...was it ‘a hell of a hot story’ and would have to move through the highest military channels for approval.” On November 16th, Paul called Mannon to tell her that although he had been fighting to use the reports, his editor told him that “because of latent anti-Semitism in the Army, he ought, if possible, to get something with a less Semitic slant.”²³⁹

Though the Auschwitz reports would not be the subject of an article in *Yank*, the Board staff moved ahead with the plan to release them to the press. After deleting some perpetrator and prisoner names, and debating whether to include—but ultimately retaining—stories of violence of Jewish *kapos* against Jewish prisoners, the Board sent

²³⁷ Richard Paul, Draft article for *Yank* magazine, 1944 November 7; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 5, Folder 4, Document 388-399; USHMM.

²³⁸ Virginia Mannon, Memo on *Yank* magazine and release of Auschwitz reports, 1944 November 16; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 5, Folder 4, Document 396-397; USHMM.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

copies of the reports to the press on Saturday, November 18th, under the title “German Extermination Camps—Auschwitz and Birkenau.” The text had a one-page cover note which began, “It is a fact beyond denial that the Germans have deliberately and systematically murdered millions of innocent civilians—Jews and Christians alike—all over Europe.” The note explained the general mission of the Board, informed the reader that these reports had been written independently and received by the Board’s representative in Switzerland, and concluded, “[t]he Board has every reason to believe that these reports present a true picture of the frightful happenings in these camps.”²⁴⁰

After his testimony to the House Appropriations Committee, Pehle sent copies of the reports, which he had mentioned in his testimony, to each of the Congressmen in attendance. Word of the upcoming publication also reached Elmer Davis of the Office of War Information, who had not approved the text for public consumption. On November 22nd, Pehle, Friedman, and Mannon were called to Davis’s office at 2:30 in the afternoon. Davis objected to the release of the reports that, of course, had already been distributed to the press but were not scheduled to be published for another four days. Pehle claimed the failure to clear the release with OWI was unintentional; the Board was not aware that all news releases related to the war effort had to be cleared with Davis’s office. Davis’s staff expressed concern that the information, once released, would receive a bad reaction overseas; one staff member thought the text was “concerned with a multiplicity of ‘mean little things’.” They were also concerned about the idea of condemning war criminals by releasing something with a cover note on “Executive Office of the President” letterhead,

²⁴⁰ WRB staff, “German Extermination Camps,” 1944 November 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 5, Folder 4, Document 413-475; USHMM.

and wondered whether the reports might have been planted by antisemites, since they also mentioned violence by Jewish *kapos*. Virginia Mannon summarized the Board's perspective when she wrote, "The whole meeting was pretty futile, since the release was a fait accompli... The enormity of the crimes which the WRB had perpetrated against the OWI was so great that Mr. Davis admitted there was practically nothing to be done at this late date."²⁴¹

The "German Extermination Camps" publication was certainly not the first report of Nazi atrocities to appear in the press. A reader looking for information could find it, though atrocity stories were usually relegated—due to competition with war news and the fact that they were usually unverified—to the inside pages of the newspaper. After the liberation of the largely-abandoned Majdanek concentration camp in eastern Poland in July, the Soviet Union invited journalists to tour the camp. *Life* magazine published an article entitled "Sunday in Poland" in a September issue, and *PM* a large spread in November which included a "life size" photograph of a child's shoe the reporter had brought home with him, taken from the piles of victims' belongings discovered at the camp. Ambassador Harriman in Moscow told the *New York Times* that the atrocities had not been exaggerated. But the WRB's publication of the Auschwitz-Birkenau testimony marked the first time the United States government released an atrocity report, the first time the news was marked as "entirely credible." As the likelihood of saving large groups of people through rescue diminished, the WRB had turned towards relief projects and the staff turned towards planning for the post-war world. With the memory of the

²⁴¹ Virginia Mannon, Memo on OWI meeting, 1944 November 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 5, Folder 4, Documents 405-406; USHMM.

exaggerated atrocity stories during World War I still fresh, the War Refugee Board was determined that after this war, no one would be able to deny the existence of extermination camps. In many ways, the publication of “German Extermination Camps” was the culmination of WRB activities, announcing to the world in gruesome detail that the stories had been true. This was what the War Refugee Board was fighting against.

**CHAPTER SEVEN: A FEW MORE PRECIOUS DAYS HAVE BEEN GAINED:
NOVEMBER 27, 1944—JANUARY 27, 1945**

The war slogged on. The psychological boost brought by the D-Day landing and the liberation of Paris had worn off, and in the cool, dry winter in Washington, the War Refugee Board staff waited. Their mandate—to formulate plans for relief and rescue for those in enemy territories—restricted their work to an ever-diminishing part of central Europe, the territory between the fronts. With massive rescue projects no longer a viable possibility, these efforts gave way to negotiations, and Saly Mayer managed to revive his ransom meetings. Isaac Sternbuch of the Vaad Hatzalah, too, had ransom ideas. Issues of relief proved complicated; the WRB sent 300,000 packages to Europe for prisoners in concentration camps, but were dependent on the Red Cross distribution and German freight shipping for the food to do any good. Beyond these few projects, the WRB focused on diplomatic pleas; small attempts at protection; psychological warfare; and on the issue of post-war punishment of perpetrators. There were no more big projects or grand plans or even many tangible successes. The number of WRB staff began to dwindle as well. The inevitable Allied victory—however delayed—would bring with it the end of something now being called a genocide. Their activities were all about time—stalling ransom negotiations for time, getting food to camps in time, hoping the war would end soon and the armies would find concentration camps with prisoners still alive.

Atrocity reports

The release of the “German Extermination Camps” report on November 26, 1944, garnered a massive amount of press. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* proclaimed “1,765,000 Jews Killed with Gas at German Camp”, and called the report “the most incredibly shocking story of the war...For 58 horrifying pages of single-spaced, blood-curdling sentences, the report unfolded...By its very detail, the report fairly shouted 'this is the truth!'”¹ Larger newspapers carried original reporting, mostly on the front pages. Nearly seventy others, large and small—the *Denver Post*, the *Wheeling Courier*, the *Texarkana Gazette*, the *Fargo Forum*, the *Boise Idaho Statesman*, the *Grand Rapids Herald*—carried Associated Press or International News Service dispatches.² The articles were all lengthy, describing the horrific details of Auschwitz and the process of prisoner arrival, selection, and gassing. Almost all began by noting that the reports were issued by an official government agency. They put, as the *Washington Times-Herald* reported, “the first American official stamp of truth to the myriad of eye-witness stories of the mass massacres in Poland...”³

In the days that followed, editorials appeared throughout the country—from the *Miami News* to the *Lewiston Gazette* (ME) to the *Oregonian*. The editorials were all strikingly similar. Most began with a reflection on past atrocity reports, namely rumors of

¹ Hugh Morrow, “1,765,000 Jews Killed with Gas at German Camp, in *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 1944 November 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 4, Folder 9, Documents 405-406; USHMM.

² WRB staff, List of newspaper and press coverage, 1944 November 28; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 799, Document 231-236; LOC.

³ Ted Lewis, Nazi 'Death-Factories' Story Told by War Refugee Board", in *Washington Times-Herald*, 1944 November 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 4, Folder 8, Document 337; USHMM.

German brutality during World War I, before emphasizing that the “German Exterminations Camps” report had been verified by the War Refugee Board (specifically, by Hull, Stimson, and Morgenthau). In light of the apparent veracity of the report, the editorial boards demanded post-war justice and punishment for any participant in the atrocities. The *Fall River Herald* in Massachusetts began an editorial entitled “German Culture” with

During war it has been a custom for belligerents to encourage the dissemination among their people of gossipy informal charges of atrocities against the enemy in order to arouse hatred and build a determination to sacrifice in order to advance victory. After the wars, it has been admitted there was much exaggeration. However, in this new type of conflict originated and carried on by Germany, the list of barbarisms, uncivilized acts and horrible cruelties is fully accredited and nothing in all history, even in the Dark Ages has been so inhuman. . . Many Germans must have been infected with stench of the crematories and it is a stench that will remain with the Germans indefinitely. We do not know of anything they can do to remove it.⁴

It is clear from the editorials that the memory of World War I played a major role in public perception of atrocities reported during World War II. The stories of the “rape of Belgium” and the brutality of the German military in 1914—and the memory of hearing after that war that the atrocities had been greatly exaggerated—led many Americans to dismiss World War II reports as similar propaganda.⁵ More than half of the editorials that appeared in the days following the release of the WRB report referred to propaganda from World War I. They all—every one of them—reiterated that these atrocity reports

⁴ *Fall River Herald News*, “German Culture”, 1944 November 27; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 4, Folder 9, Document 378; USHMM.

⁵ In fact, the German military was quite brutal during the 1914 occupation of Belgium and thousands of civilians were killed, hundreds as part of mass executions. In the 1940s though, most Americans likely believed that the World War I atrocities were a complete fabrication. See: John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001.

had been examined and verified by the United States government. As the *Topeka Capital* reported, “[T]his time, apparently beyond the shadow of a doubt, the Germans have been carrying out mass murder and torture in a manner which will shame civilized mankind for generations to come.”⁶

The memory of World War I also played a role in editorial demands for war crimes trials. Congressman Emanuel Celler reminded the *New York World-Telegram* that the list of “war guilty in the last war” dwindled from 900 to 12 prior to any trials.⁷ The United States could not permit that to happen this time, nor could Americans settle for anything less than unconditional surrender. The editorial board of the *Salt Lake City Tribune* wrote “Evidence Now Released Exposing Criminals We Fight,” stating:

It is time to silence the sob-sisters and apologists who are slyly beginning to quietly campaign for a soft peace and a pardon for 'a people led astray by inhuman or insane leaders.' Such pleas are insults to the intelligence of Americans and a betrayal of the men and women in uniforms exposing their lives and risking their reason in an effort to stop these atrocities and exterminate the rabid beasts and reptiles that are causing more suffering and suffering in this age of enlightenment than was ever known in the world before.⁸

An editorial cartoon in the *Minneapolis Star Journal* showed a Nazi holding a sign reading “Soft Peace for Germany” being crushed under the weight of hundreds of bricks labeled “Atrocity Stories.” The cartoon was entitled, “The Weight of Evidence.”⁹

⁶ *Topeka Capital*, “Nazi Brutality”, 1944 November 29; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 4, Folder 9, Document 372; USHMM.

⁷ *New York World-Telegram*, “War Crimes”, 1944 November 30; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 4, Folder 9, Document 365; USHMM.

⁸ *Salt Lake City Tribune*, “Evidence Now Released Exposing Criminals We Fight”, 1944 December 2; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 4, Folder 9, Document 356; USHMM.

⁹ Justus, “The Weight of Evidence” cartoon in *Minneapolis Star-Journal*, 1944 December 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 4, Folder 9, Document 363; USHMM.

The War Refugee Board staff were thrilled with press reaction to the report. Virginia Mannon who, as press liaison, monitored the coverage closely, kept a running list of newspaper and editorial coverage as well as anecdotes, like how Mrs. Actin of Treasury's Disbursement office told Mannon that her priest had talked about the reports in his Sunday sermon. It is clear that Mannon took great delight in writing about the reaction of the Office of War Information and of the War Department. Prior to the public release of the report, Elmer Davis and the Office of War Information staff had held a contentious meeting with the WRB staff, warning of possible negative reaction. Since the press coverage had been so positive, Mannon wrote, "I am almost coming to the modest conclusion that OWI might take a lesson from us on the atrocity stories...Do you think we should heap coals of fire on OWI and offer them copies of the editorials to use overseas, as one of the gentlemen suggested that they might do? Or let them stew in their own juice?" (In the margin next to this note is a handwritten "Yes.")¹⁰ Mannon heard from two OWI sources that the report received excellent coverage in Great Britain, and had been entered into evidence at a war crimes trial in the liberated part of Poland. In another memo, Mannon wrote, "Here is what seems to be a lovely example of Army hindsight. This morning the Army's Information and Education Division telephoned for 4 copies of the atrocity reports, apparently to be sent to their magazines." Since *Yank* magazine had found the report "too Semitic" only a few weeks prior, these requests must have felt like vindication.¹¹

¹⁰ Virginia Mannon, Memos about release of Protocols, 1944 November 27; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 4, Folder 11, Documents 567-572; USHMM.

¹¹ Ibid.

On December 3rd, Gallup released the results of a poll about atrocity stories. A full 76% percent of Americans reported believing that Germans had murdered many people in concentration camps, compared with 12% who did not believe (and 12% who had no opinion). The poll, however, did expose that most still believed the number of victims to be low; 27%, the largest plurality, believed that fewer than 100,000 people had been killed. Only 12% estimated more than 2,000,000 people had been killed. The *Washington Post* headline noted that most people had “underestimated,” particularly in light of the WRB’s report of 1,765,000 at one camp alone, but “regardless of the number involved, the American people are fully prepared to believe atrocities have taken place.”¹²

The same issue of the *Washington Post* included an editorial entitled “Genocide”; this marked the first time that word had been used in the newspaper. Coined by Polish scholar and attorney Raphael Lemkin, ‘genocide’ “signif[ies] a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves.” The WRB report, released a week earlier, made it clear that crimes at Auschwitz were “systematic and purposeful,” deserving of a name greater than “atrocities.” The *Post* editorial argued for the adoption of genocide as a crime under international law, so that perpetrators could be justly punished after the war.¹³

¹² *The Washington Post*, "Gallup Finds Most Believe Atrocity Tales", 1944 December 3; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 4, Folder 8, Documents 331-332; USHMM.

¹³ *The Washington Post*, "Genocide", 1944 December 3; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 4, Folder 8, Document 333; USHMM.

With a large amount of press coverage and public interest, it is not surprising that over the next two months the Board received more than 700 written requests for the full text.¹⁴ University libraries wrote for copies and professors asked for multiple sets to use as teaching tools. The organization “France Forever” asked for 5,000 copies to distribute to their membership.¹⁵ Soldiers wrote for sets to distribute to their companies. Others wrote for more personal reasons, like Hugo Hecht of Cleveland, Ohio, who wanted a copy because “[m]any of my relatives and friends probably died there.”¹⁶ The WRB staff sent copies to each person who made a request and made it clear they encouraged reprinting and distribution. On December 13th, Harry Scherman of the Book-of-the-Month club returned the copy John Pehle had sent him the month prior. The club would not be publishing the report—they had published Jan Karski’s book “which included some similar material”—and though Scherman had asked the War Writers’ Board, the Council for Democracy, and the Society for the Prevention of World War III, no one was interested in taking on the project. Scherman also asked “whether you haven’t already done this job pretty thoroughly.”¹⁷ The WRB did not continue to seek commercial publication for the report.

In terms of press and public reaction, the release of the “German Extermination Camps” report garnered more attention than any other activity of the War Refugee Board—including the creation of the Board itself. The staff saw almost no negative

¹⁴ This statistic is almost certainly low. For the first few weeks after the release of the report, the WRB staff seem to have retained only a sample of the letters requesting copies.

¹⁵ Pierre-Andre Weill, Letter from “France Forever”, 1944 November 27; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 5, Folder 2, Document 133; USHMM.

¹⁶ Hugo Hecht, Hugo Hecht asks for copy of Protocols, 1944 November 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 4, Folder 10, Document 462; USHMM.

¹⁷ Harry Scherman, Letter to Pehle from Scherman 1944 December 13; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 5, Folder 5, Documents 532-533; USHMM.

response—out of hundreds of personal letters, the WRB records contain only two criticisms. M. Carlock of Chicago, IL, wrote to complain that the WRB was “stirring up hatred” with “holier than thou pamphlets.” War was the atrocity, he continued, and “being gassed to death...seems 'mercy killing,'” especially compared to the deaths caused by Allied bombings.¹⁸ The WRB ignored the letter.

They did not ignore the second criticism, by journalist Oswald F. Schuette of Washington, DC, who wrote directly to Secretary of War Henry Stimson, as he was the only one of the three secretaries heading the War Refugee Board who had training as a lawyer. Schuette questioned whether Stimson had actually read the report and examined the results critically, and whether he had personally investigated the anonymous authors himself. After all, the letter concluded, “the value of an anonymous testimony is only so good as the care with which the lawyer, who vouches for its truth, has tested its veracity and integrity.”¹⁹ (Schuette did not offer ideas of how Stimson could actually do so from Washington.) The WRB staff drafted a reply for Stimson’s signature, writing that Schuette’s skepticism understandable considering World War I atrocity rumors, but that these reports had been verified “by trusted and trained officials of the War Refugee Board, both here and overseas, and upon the considered judgment of experts in refugee and related matters in neutral countries.”²⁰ Schuette responded to ask again whether Stimson had read the report prior to its release, claiming to be “sure that you have not

¹⁸ M. Carlock, Letter to WRB, 1944 November 27; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 3, Folder 6, Documents 411-413; USHMM.

¹⁹ Oswald Schuette, Letter to Henry Stimson, 1944 November 28; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 5, Folder 5, Document 522; USHMM.

²⁰ Joseph Friedman, Draft response to Oswald Schuette, 1944 December 2; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 5, Folder 5, Documents 519-520; USHMM.

done this. For if you had, I am confident you would have hesitated to vouch for its truthfulness.”²¹ There is no evidence that Stimson (or the WRB) ever replied to this challenge, though Stimson did send a note to John Pehle that Pehle “must be extraordinarily careful. I have read the report on the atrocities and it is so horrible that it will be sure to invite further inquiry by readers as to the care which we have taken to authenticate it.”²²

Schuette was actually right: Stimson had not read the report prior to its release, and in fact, claimed to have learned about it for the first time in the newspaper. Though the WRB staff had sent a copy of the report to John McCloy in the War Department at the beginning of November, even before they reached the decision to publish it, Stimson had never received one. On Monday morning, November 27th, Stimson called Morgenthau to complain that it had all been done without his knowledge: “I’ll probably be in thorough sympathy with any such announcement. I think it’s important to get it out, but as long as I’m one of the Committee, I think I ought to know about it.”²³ He expressed to Morgenthau that he felt especially strongly since, “you and I are the only two members of the committee.”

²¹ John McCloy, McCloy sends Pehle letter from Schuette, note from Stimson, 1944 December 27; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 5, Folder 5, Documents 538; USHMM.

²² Ibid.

²³ In his phone conversation with Morgenthau, Stimson claimed McCloy had not seen the report either, but had heard about it in reference to the tension with Elmer Davis and OWI. In reality, Pehle had sent McCloy two copies on November 8th, attaching them to his letter about bombing Auschwitz. McCloy responded to the letter, which indicates that he likely received the reports as well. Stimson had the erroneous impression that the War Department had been kept in the dark. Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Transcript of phone conversation with Henry Stimson, 1944 November 27; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 799, Document 19-21; LOC.

New Appointments

Stimson's comment referenced another major news release from the weekend: the resignation of Cordell Hull as Secretary of State. Hull had been ill for most of the year and finally submitted his resignation while hospitalized, after nearly twelve years as Secretary. Edward Stettinius was appointed as the new Secretary of State. Hull's departure led to others: Breckinridge Long, Adolf Berle, and G. Howland Shaw all resigned as well; only Dean Acheson remained of all the Assistant Secretaries. Stettinius appointed new assistant secretaries, and a new Undersecretary of State, Joseph Grew, a career diplomat who had been the American ambassador to Japan prior to Pearl Harbor and had been interned by the Japanese for nearly a year after the attacks.

Like Stettinius, John Pehle accepted vast new responsibilities that week. Ernest Olrich, the director of the Treasury Department's Procurement division, had resigned suddenly. At a morning meeting on November 28th, the day after the publication of the "German Extermination Camps" report, Morgenthau said Pehle was "not interested" in the job. By the afternoon he was the only option. Pehle had administrative experience, having supervised over 1,500 people in Foreign Funds Control, and certainly proven himself to be tough enough to handle a difficult assignment. He would also be responsible for the Surplus Property division. Morgenthau had argued to the President the previous day that Surplus Property—with responsibility for disposing of all government-owned goods, an enormous responsibility with the coming end of the war—should be

removed from Treasury and made a separate consolidated board.²⁴ The plea had failed. Surplus Property would remain in the Treasury Department, and more specifically, with John Pehle. Pehle asked for a day to think about it, particularly in light of his War Refugee Board responsibilities, but it seemed a *fait accompli*. Certain there were enough people in the WRB to run things, Morgenthau wanted to solve this particular problem “in the easiest way for me, and the most uneasy way for John.”²⁵

On November 29th, John Pehle agreed to take over Procurement and Surplus Property. He wanted to stay with the War Refugee Board as well, partly to avoid any public criticism of a resignation and partly because Stimson and Stettinius might have unsatisfactory ideas about his replacement. Morgenthau got the approval of Stettinius, who added the possibility that the State Department might be taking over War Refugee Board duties in the future anyway.²⁶ After his phone call with Stettinius, Morgenthau signed Pehle’s new appointment order. Though clearly hesitant about the new assignment, Pehle demonstrated his readiness to work: within minutes, he jokingly tried to claim the tickets to Morgenthau’s box at the upcoming Army-Navy football game as surplus property.²⁷

Pehle’s new appointment appeared in the press on November 30th and December 1st. The articles were short, mentioned that Pehle would remain with the War Refugee Board, and garnered little notice. No one wrote to the Board to question the move. For

²⁴ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Memo to the President on Surplus Property, 1944 November 27; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 799, Document 100-102; LOC.

²⁵ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Transcript of Surplus Property Disposal meeting, 1944 November 28; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 799, Documents 168-181; LOC.

²⁶ This idea was short-lived. Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Transcript of Surplus Property Disposal meeting transcript, 1944 November 29; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 800, Document 1-11; LOC.

²⁷ Ibid.

Pehle, the announcement was likely overshadowed; on the evening of December 1st, in Omaha, Pehle's parents received word that his younger brother Richard had been killed in France. A member of the 180th Infantry, 45th Infantry Division, Richard Pehle had fought in the battle of Anzio and in the invasion of southern France. He had been reported missing on October 24th, but had now been confirmed dead. He is buried in Épinal, France. Due to his new and vast responsibilities, John Pehle, who named his youngest son after Richard, did not miss a day of work.

War Crimes Commission

In London, the War Crimes Commission was at a standstill. The War Refugee Board's psychological warfare campaigns had been based on the threat of post-war punishment of those perpetrating crimes against Jews and other minorities. These threats were, at least in the fall of 1944, unlikely to be carried out. The internationally accepted definition of war crimes still related only to crimes against citizens of enemy nationals, not against a country's own citizens. Germany's crimes against German Jews held no punishment under international law.²⁸ For months, Herbert Pell, the United States representative to the War Crimes Commission in London, had been frustrated by this. He lamented the situation to Josiah DuBois in August, and frequently visited James Mann's offices, where Mann reported him to be "one of my greatest time killers in London."²⁹ Pell had no instructions from the State Department about what he should advocate, and

²⁸ For a thorough explanation of the debates of what qualified as a war crime, see Arieh Kochavi. *Prelude to Nuremberg: Allied War Crimes Policy and the Question of Punishment*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

²⁹ James Mann, Letter from Mann to Pehle, 1944 October 23; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 15, Folder 74, Documents 960-968; USHMM.

his meetings with Mann were mainly to see whether Mann might have heard anything through the War Refugee Board. On August 28th, the Board staff had written to Stettinius who informed them the matter was under consideration; they inquired five more times over the next three months.³⁰ Pell returned to Washington for consultation in early December, still without instructions, and met with WRB staff. After the meeting, Joseph Friedman called George Warren for an update; Warren had no new information except to say confidentially, "State and War had not been able to find a legal theory to justify the punishment of Germans for killing German Jews."³¹ A few days later, the WRB received another letter from Stettinius that their August memo remained under consideration.³²

Though internal debates about what constituted a war crime had been private, they became public around the time Pell returned to the United States: Peter Bergson's Hebrew Committee of National Liberation took up Pell's cause. Spurred on by the "German Extermination Camps" report, Bergson held a press conference to protest "[a]gainst this cold-blooded and cynical refusal to include the crimes committed against well over a million Hebrews and Hebrews who had held the citizenship of the Axis nations."³³ He demanded a new warning to the Germans, instructions to the War Crimes Commission to expand their definitions, and for a seat for "representatives of the Hebrew people" on the Commission—to be filled, of course, by someone from his Hebrew Committee. Congressman Andrew Somers, a Hebrew Committee supporter, arranged a

³⁰ John Pehle, Memorandum re: Jurisdiction of War Crimes Commission over Murder of Jews, 1944 December 23; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 805, Document 8-27; LOC.

³¹ Joseph Friedman, Memo on war crimes, 1944 December 16; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 17, Folder 21, Documents 886; USHMM.

³² Edward Stettinius, Letter to Pehle on war crimes, 1944 December 14; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 17, Folder 21, Documents 891; USHMM.

³³ Peter Bergson, Hebrew Committee press release, 1944 November 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 4, Folder 9, Documents 398-402; USHMM.

meeting for Bergson with Henry Morgenthau on the issue on December 19th. The positive meeting saw no tangible result: Morgenthau had no jurisdiction over the War Crimes Commission.³⁴ Bergson—and Pell—were forced to wait.

Turkey

During Bergson's meeting with Morgenthau, he also raised the issue of immigration to Palestine through Turkey. In mid-November in Istanbul, Herbert Katzki had warned Eri Jabotinsky, the Emergency Committee's representative there, about new British quotas on emigration: no more than 1,500 emigrants per month would be allowed to enter Palestine, and the British set quotas for emigrants based country of origin. For the six months beginning in October, only 5,000 refugees would be allowed to enter from Bulgaria and Romania. Katzki's warning made it clear that the American embassy would not be able to assist should a refugee boat arrive unannounced in Istanbul. Undeterred, Jabotinsky informed the War Refugee Board representative on November 25th that he had already met with the Turkish Ministry of Transportation about chartering a boat. The boat he had in mind was the *Tari*, the large passenger vessel Ira Hirschmann had spent months negotiating for back in the spring, but which had never sailed because of the lack of German safe conduct permissions. According to Jabotinsky, the Turkish Ministry specifically suggested he charter the *Tari*, provided the American embassy did not plan to use it. This came as unwelcome news to Ambassador Steinhardt and to Katzki, particularly as they had managed to not pay any charter fees for the period the boat had

³⁴ Ansel Luxford, Memo on Morgenthau meeting with Bergson, 1945 January 6; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 8, Folder 35, Documents 421-423; USHMM.

been sitting unused, waiting for safe conduct. With no way to use the boat, they certainly did not want to have to pay for it. Steinhardt wrote to Katzki, "If you see Jabotinsky, I have no objection to your reading him this letter and telling him that should the Turkish authorities now make a claim in connection with the lapsed negotiations, I shall be obliged to deposit the same in his lap and request him to settle the claim thereby making whatever payment might be necessary or talking Turkish official-dom out of presenting a claim which I did once and have no intention of doing a second time by reason of his intermeddling." Clearly on a tirade, Steinhardt added, "You might add that it is just too bad he cannot originate his own ideas and that he should have named a specific vessel, which means nothing to him and which he had never heard of until he arrived here."³⁵

On December 7th, the Emergency Committee in Washington requested a license for \$200,000 so Jabotinsky could charter the *Tari*.³⁶ The WRB staff stalled, requesting more information from the Emergency Committee about the proposed voyage. Though the transport would be from Romania, now liberated territory and therefore not under the jurisdiction of WRB programs, the Board sought Katzki's opinion as well. Katzki responded diplomatically: the transport would be an emigration issue, not a rescue one, and "[w]hether or not the Emergency Committee wishes to engage in this type of activity is a question for it to decide." He did note that Jabotinsky claimed to be motivated by a desire to remove the Jewish Agency from the "monopoly" on emigration, and introduce

³⁵ Laurence Steinhardt, Letter to Katzki about Jabotinsky request, 1944 December 18; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 2, Documents 127-129; USHMM.

³⁶ William Bennet, Letter from Emergency Committee to Pehle, 1944 December 7; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 9, Documents 889; USHMM.

an “element of competition” that the Emergency Committee felt would be “healthy.”³⁷ The War Refugee Board did not have to rule in the matter: the Turkish government ultimately refused the charter. Jabotinsky blamed the refusal on intervention from the British embassy.³⁸

Emigration from Bulgaria and Romania through Turkey to Palestine slowed down. The British cancelled the agreement to provide Palestine certificates for refugees arriving in Istanbul desiring to go to Palestine. They were not refugees anymore, but emigrants, and once embassies could be set up in Bucharest and Sofia, Palestine certificates, consistent with the new quota restrictions, would be issued there. Only two large groups arrived in Istanbul in December and January. The *Toros*, traveling from Constanța with 908 passengers, arrived unexpectedly on December 5th. The last refugee boat to arrive in 1944, the ship’s passengers were also the last to receive Palestine certificates upon arrival as part of the British agreement. The group—which included children repatriated from Transnistria, survivors of forced labor from the Bor mines, and escapees from Hungary—departed for Palestine on December 7th, using nearly two-thirds of the quota of arrivals for that month.

The other group, which arrived in January, had been en route for more than a month. At the end of November, Herbert Katzki learned that more than 600 people, traveling by land from Romania, had been detained by Soviet representatives in the city

³⁷ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable from Bern that Swiss have asked for lists, 1944 December 19; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 9, Documents 880-885; USHMM.

³⁸ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable from Ankara that Jabotinsky boat denied, 1945 January 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 9, Documents 874-875; USHMM.

of Stara Zagora, Bulgaria.³⁹ Though they had exit and transit visas, the Soviets held the group for more than a month, inspecting their papers to determine if any of the emigrants had been born in Soviet territory and thus subject to a new policy of forced repatriation.⁴⁰ On December 21st, Katzki received word that the Soviets finally authorized the departure of the group, but this led to another problem. The British agreement to issue Palestine certificates to refugees arriving in Turkey, which had been in effect when the group left Romania, had since been voided. The Turkish Foreign Office held the group at the border, awaiting instructions from the Jewish Agency and from the British government. Even after an explanation of the situation, the British held firm that the refugees should not be granted Palestine certificates—which meant that Turkey would not grant them entry visas either. Not until Steinhardt made “energetic interventions” did the British, on December 31st, finally relent.⁴¹ The Stara Zagora group, which had spent more than six weeks in transit and been detained twice, finally entered Turkey in January. Katzki felt they would likely be the last group to arrive: “[T]he control which the British are now exercising over immigration to Palestine... will result in the suspension of large group emigration from Romania and Bulgaria through Istanbul such as has been taking place under the simplified procedure of the general agreement.”⁴²

There were few projects left for Katzki in Istanbul. Romania and Bulgaria were now both technically Allied territory, with the Soviet Union exerting control. The Soviets

³⁹ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable from Ankara asking about detention of refugee group in Bulgaria, 1944 November 21; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 11, Folder 6, Documents 835-836; USHMM.

⁴⁰ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable from Ankara about Stara Zagora group, 1944 November 28; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 11, Folder 6, Documents 824-826; USHMM.

⁴¹ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable from Ankara that Stara Zagora group is moving, 1944 December 31; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 11, Folder 5, Documents 782-783; USHMM.

⁴² Laurence Steinhardt, Cable from Ankara about entry of Stara Zagora group, 1945 January 6; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 11, Folder 5, Documents 777-778; USHMM.

finally rejected Katzki's efforts to obtain permission to survey relief needs in Romania on January 1, 1945. In a memo to the WRB files, Florence Hodel wrote that the Soviets claimed they still considered Romania an active military zone; a Jewish representative already served Romania (though the WRB could not, despite repeated efforts, determine who the Soviets had identified as that representative); and they found it undesirable to have more civilians enter the country.⁴³ Though the WRB received many requests from relief organizations for intervention to aid Jews in Romania and Bulgaria, who were struggling to regain civil rights and property, the Board had no jurisdiction there. They were able to assist with licenses to send relief money, and transmitted information about medical supplies, food, and clothing needs in these countries to organizations in the United States who might be in a position to assist, but were unable to act directly.

As relief and rescue projects dwindled, the War Refugee Board asked Katzki on January 19th to consider closing the Turkey offices.⁴⁴ Ambassador Steinhardt, too, planned to leave Turkey, having been appointed as the next American ambassador to Czechoslovakia.

Ransom Negotiations

On December 7th, 1,335 people were released from Bergen-Belsen and transported to the border of Switzerland. The former prisoners constituted the remainder of the Kasztner group, who had been in Bergen-Belsen since July and had seen some of

⁴³ Florence Hodel, Memo about Katzki being refused entry to Romania, 1945 January 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 7, Folder 8, Documents 839; USHMM.

⁴⁴ Edward Stettinius, Cable to Ankara about closing WRB offices in Turkey, 1945 January 19; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 13, Folder 1, Documents 25-26; USHMM.

their companions released to Switzerland in August. Roswell McClelland hoped that the group's release—for which multiple relief organization representatives claimed credit—would encourage Washington to take a more liberal attitude towards ransom negotiations. At the end of November, the War Refugee Board had informed him that Saly Mayer should continue meeting with the Germans, but that no money or goods could be provided as ransom. McClelland, pessimistic that negotiations could be carried on any further without tantalizing the Germans with clearly tangible benefits, had informed all the relief organization representatives who were engaging in ransom negotiations (most of whom were not directly involving the American embassy) that these discussions should be terminated.

Saly Mayer had not ended his negotiations with the Germans, but had continued to meet with SS officers Kettlitz and Krell in Switzerland. Knowing that he would never be able to provide funds or goods to the Nazis, Mayer managed to turn the negotiations towards something much more palatable to the United States. He proposed—in exchange for the cessation of extermination—to supply concentration camps with food, clothing, and medicine to be distributed under Red Cross supervision. In effect, the Nazis would not have to expend any resources to keep Jews alive—though McClelland noted that they had not been expending much anyway—and might claim after the war that they had performed a “humanitarian act” in allowing the supplies to reach the prisoners.⁴⁵

McClelland was “personally skeptical that such a watered down proposal (from SS view point) will hold any great interest for Germans [but] certainly nothing has been lost in

⁴⁵ J. Klahr Huddle, Cable from Bern about ransom negotiations, 1944 December 13; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 9, Documents 495-498; USHMM.

making it and a few more precious days have been gained.”⁴⁶ Though the Board staff “appreciate[d] Mayer’s courage and ingenuity,” there were too many unanswered questions to approve the project.⁴⁷ On December 28th, Saly Mayer wrote a report laying out the arguments for his plan. He started by explaining the history of the negotiations: “[T]here are two Nazi groups in the SS organization, of which one is for the preservation of the still existing Jews, the other for the extermination. It is our interest and intention to support the former against the latter. In order to do so, we have to make an offer.” Having rejected the possibility of providing war materiel, “we have negotiated on the basis of sustaining the Jews in the hands of the Germans and Hungarians...Our plan also has the advantage that it may be defended on ethical grounds, and that it contains nothing which counteracts to the legal basis on which those to whom we have to look to our financial basis have to work.”⁴⁸ The same day, McClelland wrote to the WRB. He had discussed the matter fully with Saly Mayer and with Joseph Schwartz, the Joint’s European director who had recently arrived in Switzerland. The Joint would authorize twenty million Swiss francs (approximately five million dollars) for Mayer, provided the United States would issue the license. There would be plenty of opportunities to delay spending the money. For example, essential consumer goods like clothing and shoes were not available for purchase in large quantities in Switzerland. Moreover, the funds would only be used by the Red Cross and only under the joint signatures of Mayer and McClelland.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Edward Stettinius, Cable to Bern about change in ransom negotiations, 1944 December 19; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 9, Documents 491; USHMM.

⁴⁸ Saly Mayer, Memo with argument for continued ransom negotiations, 1944 December 28; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 9; FDRL.

⁴⁹ J. Klahr Huddle, Cable from McClelland arguing for future ransom negotiations, 1944 December 28; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 9, Documents 482-485; USHMM.

The War Refugee Board finally agreed and, after informing London and the War Department of the plan, arranged for license W-2402 to be issued to the Joint.⁵⁰

McClelland told Mayer he found the license restrictions “pretty binding for us both!” For the first time, Mayer had something tangible with which to negotiate.⁵¹

Saly Mayer was not the only relief agency representative participating in ransom negotiations. Isaac Sternbuch, the representative of the Vaad Hatzalah in Switzerland, had also been trying to rescue Jews through ransom, though he was less inclined to keep Roswell McClelland informed of his plans. On October 19th, Sternbuch had asked McClelland to transmit a cable to the Union of Orthodox Rabbis about the group of prisoners who had been deported from Vittel in the spring. “Musy”, he wrote, planned to go to Berlin to fight for their lives. McClelland later annotated his copy of this cable with “Origin of the whole Musy affair.” “Musy” meant Jean-Marie Musy, a Swiss politician who claimed to have the friendship and trust of Heinrich Himmler. Sternbuch had first enlisted Musy to go to Germany to investigate the fate of the Vittel deportees, particularly as some of the prisoners were family members of Sternbuch’s wife, Recha. For the trip, Sternbuch gave Musy 50,000 Swiss francs, the equivalent of \$12,500.⁵² By the end of November, Musy had returned to Switzerland, promising Sternbuch that although he had been unable to find the Vittel prisoners, prospects were good for

⁵⁰ The War Refugee Board sent a cable to Moscow, instructing the embassy to inform the Soviets, but George Kennan felt passing along such information would be “detrimental” in view of the “extreme suspicion with which the Soviet Government views all financial transactions with Germany conducted through Swiss channels...” George Kennan, Cable from Moscow about Mayer negotiations, 1944 February 17; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 12, Documents 890-891; USHMM.

⁵¹ Roswell McClelland, Letter to Mayer about terms of license, 1945 January 26; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 71, Folder 9; FDRL.

⁵² Isaac Sternbuch, Letter to McClelland on Musy negotiations, 1944 November 29; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 70, Folder 4; FDRL.

wholesale rescue provided ransom funds could become available. As this news came at the same time the War Refugee Board made it clear no money could change hands, McClelland refused to transmit Sternbuch's message updating the Vaad. So, Sternbuch circumvented him, sending a commercial cable to the Vaad explaining that thousands of Jews could be rescued if more money was available. The Vaad quickly assured their representative they would find the money. Sternbuch explained to McClelland that he did not believe the Germans would ever receive any funds—it was likely that Musy wanted to keep the money for himself, since Himmler certainly did not need ransom money.⁵³ Still, between ten and twenty million Swiss francs would be needed for the plan to continue.

In McClelland's opinion, the Musy affair was out of control. Musy promised Sternbuch he would go to Auschwitz to investigate prisoners there; Sternbuch continued to claim he was skeptical Musy could produce results, yet he continued to press the Vaad for more money. Neither Sternbuch nor the Vaad were discreet. In the beginning of January, the World Jewish Congress had complained to the War Refugee Board that the Vaad was openly raising money by claiming that 15,000 Jews could be saved monthly for a payment of \$200,000. Florence Hodel confirmed to them that the Vaad sent money to Switzerland, but that McClelland had so far been unable to approve Sternbuch's program.

⁵⁴ The WRB was not quite sure what that program was, and could not be sure about the accuracy of the scant information McClelland had sent. A member of the Agudas Israel staff visited the State Department to inform them that Sternbuch arranged the rescue of

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Florence Hodel, Memo on meeting with Goldmann and Silberschein, 1945 January 11; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 79, Folder "Negotiations in Switzerland," FDRL.

300,000 Jews at a cost of \$5,000,000. Agudas and the Vaad knew that Sternbuch “may be violating the Trading with the enemy Act in that [his] negotiations involve direct dealing with the Nazis” but claimed they were “absolving themselves by mentioning the plan to Assistant Secretary of State Dunn.”⁵⁵ George Warren felt it clear the groups “had not been frank with the War Refugee Board” and was concerned that the amount in question matched the sum the Joint requested for Saly Mayer’s license. Moreover, the Orthodox groups stated that Mayer had secretly paid a large amount of money to release the Kasztner group from Bergen-Belsen.⁵⁶ War Refugee Board staff did not know what to believe.

American journalists in Switzerland also heard about a ransom plan. Dan Brigham of the *New York Times* contacted the Bern embassy to ask about the negotiations, claiming to hear that Saly Mayer had paid a huge sum for the release of the second Kasztner group and that Musy acted as the intermediary to the Germans. McClelland “tried to disabuse Brigham’s mind of this garbled version.”⁵⁷ On January 19th, the *Boston Globe* reported that Himmler was planning to release 300,000 Jews in exchange for \$5,000,000; Himmler’s plot was meant to gain money and to foster antisemitism when it became clear only Jews were released.⁵⁸ The Board wrote to McClelland to ask about these rumors, and to remind him that according to their information, Sternbuch had about

⁵⁵ Florence Hodel, Memo on meeting with Warren about Musy rumors, 1945 January 4; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 12, Documents 881; USHMM.

⁵⁶ Florence Hodel, Memo on meeting with Warren about Musy rumors, 1945 January 4; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 12, Documents 881; USHMM.

⁵⁷ Ralph Getsinger, Memo about *New York Times* reporter question on ransoming, 1945 January 16; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 10; FDRL.

⁵⁸ Paul Ghali, “Himmler Plans Release of Jews for \$5,000,000” in *Boston Globe*, 1945 January 19.

\$250,000 in the bank, unaccounted for.⁵⁹ At the end of January, no one was quite sure what Sternbuch or Musy would do.

Protective papers

By the winter of 1944, Switzerland had become the center of War Refugee Board relief and rescue projects in Europe. Activities in Turkey were winding down and related more to emigration and to questions of relief in Romania and Bulgaria than to aiding people trapped in Nazi-occupied territories. In Stockholm, Iver Olsen had terminated the rescue boats between Sweden and the Baltic nations in the early fall, and though the War Refugee Board offices were not officially closed, he returned to Washington at the end of November for consultation and to see his family. Robert Dexter had closed the Lisbon offices in November and moved with his wife to London. James Mann, the War Refugee Board's representative in London, dealt largely with diplomatic problems. That left Roswell McClelland as the only War Refugee Board representative who could look across the border into the vast unknown of Nazi territory.

Back in the spring, after the deportation of Jews from Vittel, the War Refugee Board had been alerted to the matter of protective papers. One of the most important tools of rescue in Budapest, the neutral embassies issued letters of protection to Hungarian Jews which prevented many from being marched out of the city for forced labor. Thousands of other Hungarian Jews were sent hundreds of miles on foot towards Austria at the end of November. For many who were able to remain in Budapest, their protective

⁵⁹ Joseph Grew, Cable to Bern asking about Sternbuch plan, 1945 January 25; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 12, Documents 883-884; USHMM.

papers saved them from this fate—and certainly for a percentage of them, too old or sick for labor, the papers saved their lives. The Red Army inched closer to Budapest, and it is clear from undertones in War Refugee Board staff cables and memos that they believed the liberation of the city to be imminent.

George Mandel-Mantello, the first consul of the Salvadoran embassy in Geneva, wanted to send more protective papers into Hungary in November. McClelland had long been dubious that Mantello's papers rendered assistance to anyone and still waited for word from El Salvador confirming their validity. But the Red Cross told him Mantello's documents had been helpful in Budapest, and Red Cross staff even sent some of the letters to Hungary through their channels. With that endorsement, McClelland agreed to speak with the Swiss Foreign Office about the Salvadoran papers. The Foreign Office at first agreed to transmit a list of Hungarian Jews who had been granted Mantello certificates, but when Mantello sent the Swiss more than one hundred photostat copies of letters, they hesitated. The Swiss wanted to see the original certificates, not copies, and would send them to Budapest only if the Salvadoran government either confirmed the citizenship of those listed, or confirmed that all protective papers issued by Mantello were considered valid.⁶⁰ McClelland explained to Mantello that the project would have to wait until the long-awaited instructions arrived from San Salvador. Mantello, however, felt his project too important for diplomatic permissions. He found a member of the Swiss Foreign Office, a Mr. de Tribolet, who had not been informed that his colleagues had rejected these letters. At Mantello's request, de Tribolet sent the photostat copies to

⁶⁰ J. Klahr Huddle, Cable from Bern about Swiss acceptance of El Salvador papers, 1944 December 4; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 19, Folder 6, Documents 701-703; USHMM.

the Swiss embassy in Budapest. Swiss officials in Bern were furious and immediately cabled Budapest to disregard the package.⁶¹ Mantello blamed McClelland for the rejection of the papers. In a letter to one of Mantello's former collaborators, McClelland wrote, "I regret very much that Mr. Mantello and other excitable persons under his influence feel it necessary to claim that I am personally sabotaging their efforts to aid these endangered persons in Hungary. This would be really a very ridiculous action for me to take in view of the job which I am here in Bern to accomplish, namely, to assist as many of these people as possible."⁶²

Meanwhile, the War Refugee Board transmitted its own lists to Budapest through Switzerland and Sweden. In the late summer, Adolf Berle had finally relented and allowed the WRB to collect the names of family members of American citizens and resident aliens who were trapped in occupied Europe. People could send information about their relatives to the Immigration and Naturalization Service which, in turn, would submit the names to the WRB. The Board would then forward lengthy cables of names to Bern and Stockholm, requesting diplomatic protection should any of these people be located. The complicated plan involved a lot of mail and cable traffic, and undoubtedly raised the hopes of thousands of Americans who desperately wanted their relatives to still be alive.⁶³ But in reality, it is unlikely the Board's plan aided anyone.⁶⁴ In Switzerland,

⁶¹ T.J. Hadraba, Memo on meeting with Bisang about Mantello, 1944 December 6; RG-84, Bern legation records, Box 41, Folder 840.1; NACP.

⁶² Roswell McClelland, Letter to Pallai about Mantello certificates, 1944 December 7; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 9; FDRL.

⁶³ In early September 1944, Sgt. Matthew Ungerleider spoke with Lawrence Lesser about his parents, Maurice and Jeannette Ungerleider, who lived in Budapest. He filled out the request paperwork and the INS sent the WRB information about the Ungerleiders for transmission to Stockholm and Bern. On February 14, 1945, the INS sent another letter to the WRB: Sgt. Ungerleider was reported to have been killed in action in Europe and therefore, approval for his parents' visas should be revoked. The WRB drafted a strongly worded protest, but never sent it, instead

the Foreign Office made it clear that the Germans would not allow Swiss protection unless the United States could confirm these people were eligible for prisoner exchanges.

⁶⁵ Even after the War Refugee Board stated this was the case, the Swiss were hesitant to transmit the names to the Hungarian government, preferring instead to keep the lists at the Swiss embassy in Budapest. Instead, if anyone on the list should inquire at the embassy, the Swiss would then protect that person.⁶⁶ At the beginning of December, Minister Johnson reported that the Swedish Foreign Office did not believe the program could benefit anyone, and had not transmitted the lists to their embassies in Berlin or Budapest. Telegraphing lists to Budapest was impractical and courier service had not been possible since October. To send more names would jeopardize ongoing Swedish programs to protect Hungarian Jews.⁶⁷ The Board staff responded by writing that they were “inclined to share your doubts as to the effectiveness of the suggested procedure, but feels that no (repeat no) possibility of saving lives should be overlooked.”⁶⁸ The WRB agreed that no names of Hungarian Jews should be transmitted; Sweden would send the names of non-Hungarians who may be in concentration camps to their embassy in Berlin for transmission to the Germans. Over the course of the program, which ran

simply choosing not to inform Bern and Stockholm of the change. Documents related to the Ungerleider case, 1944 September 15-1945 March 19; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 13, Folder 8, Documents 925-940; USHMM.

⁶⁴ On any given day, the Board received an average of 20 new names from the Immigration and Naturalization Service. By randomly choosing two days and researching the fate of the individuals whose names were transmitted using the International Tracing Service, I was able to determine that the vast majority—nearly all—of these people had already been murdered. Many of them had been dead for years.

⁶⁵ Swiss Foreign Office, Memo to Bern legation about transmitting lists, 1944 December 7; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 71, Folder 4; FDRL.

⁶⁶ J. Klahr Huddle, Cable from Bern about Swiss concern about lists, 1945 January 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 9, Folder 13, Documents 238-239; USHMM.

⁶⁷ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm about transmitting lists, 1945 December 9; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 28, Folder 7, Documents 790-791; USHMM.

⁶⁸ Edward Stettinius, Cable to Stockholm about transmitting lists, 1944 December 16; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 28, Folder 7, Document 792; USHMM.

from September 1944 to May 1945, nearly 3,000 families submitted names of their loved ones and then waited, hoping. Many wrote to the Board separately to see if anything else could be done to help loved ones beyond just submitting their names.⁶⁹ A last chance effort at best, the program was too late and too complicated to be effective.

Prisoner Exchange

All the War Refugee Board's work related to protective papers—gathering and submitting names, convincing South American nations to confirm the validity of papers, asking neutral nations to extend protection to the most people possible—would be for naught if the Germans did not believe the documents to be legitimate. The Red Cross discovered that officials at the Marianka camp in Slovakia had torn up Salvadoran papers prior to deporting the Jews who had claimed protection. The Bern legation protested, but it was too late.⁷⁰ The Swiss Foreign Office reminded the legation that the Germans needed to be convinced that honoring these papers held a tangible benefit to them. The people holding the papers would need to be eligible for participation in a prisoner exchange between the belligerents.

On November 14th, the German embassy in Bern announced that their government would be willing to hold a prisoner exchange before the end of the year. They would send a list of German citizens they desired, and would try to locate the

⁶⁹ The letters from the INS are found in PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reels 9-13; USHMM.

⁷⁰ Edward Stettinius, Cable to Bern asking for protest of destruction of documents, 1945 January 17; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 6, Documents 663-665; USHMM.

people the Allies requested for the exchange.⁷¹ “Category A” prisoners—proven American and Latin American citizens who were held in civilian internment camps in Germany—could potentially constitute the entire group of Allied exchangees.⁷² The State Department requested a delay until January, when an exchange of sick and wounded prisoners of war was scheduled, and because of a contemplated Paraguayan-German exchange.⁷³ In the meantime, the Bern legation submitted a new category of exchange to the Swiss: “Category G” included the immediate family members of resident aliens living in the United States. Now, when the War Refugee Board cabled names asking for protection, the Swiss had official documentation that should these people be located, they were formally eligible for exchange. By December 22nd, the list began to take shape. The Germans identified 641 prisoners in Bergen-Belsen who were confirmed citizens of western hemisphere countries, including 45 Americans, 267 Paraguayans, and 111 Ecuadorans. The Swiss provided a list of 132 prisoners holding “ad hoc” papers who might be considered for exchange as “Category F” (people holding unverified papers).⁷⁴

⁷¹ GMG, Note that Swiss report German willingness for civilian prisoner exchange, 1944 November 16; RG-84, Bern legation records, Box 42, Folder 840.1; NACP.

⁷² Unknown, OSS draft message about prisoner exchange, 1944 November 20; RG-84, Bern legation records, Box 42, Folder 840.1; NACP.

⁷³ The WRB staff discussed two other possible prisoner exchanges at the same time. Jewish labor groups in Switzerland heard rumors that Germans in Romania (now Allied territory) could be exchanged against Hungarian Jews. Herbert Katzki asked the Red Cross to investigate the rumor, and the Board asked McClelland if he had heard anything about it in Switzerland, but nothing materialized. Throughout the fall, the WRB also discussed the possibility of an exchange between Germans in Paraguay and people of (or claiming) Paraguayan nationality in occupied territory. At first, the Swiss refused to discuss the matter (as Spain was the protecting power for Paraguay) but when Spain formally agreed to allow the United States—and therefore Switzerland—to work out the details of the proposed exchange, Switzerland asked to delay the discussion until the German-American exchange was completed. Bern legation, Note verbale to Swiss Foreign Office about prisoner exchange, 1944 November 29; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 64, Folder 6; FDRL. Herbert Katzki, Letter to Beretta about prisoner exchange, 1944 November 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 7, Folder 6, Document 515; USHMM. T.J. Hadraba, Memo of meeting with Swiss about prisoner exchange, 1944 November 22; RG-84, Bern legation records, Box 42, Folder 840.1, NARA, College Park, MD. George Tait, Memo of meeting with Swiss about Paraguay exchange, 1944 November 2; RG-84, Bern legation records, Box 42, Folder 840.1; NACP.

⁷⁴ Swiss Foreign Office, Note verbale on upcoming prisoner exchange, 1944 December 22; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 64, Folder 7; FDRL.

The Swiss legation in Berlin would select 75 of these prisoners to be included on the final list; the remainder of the 875 to be exchanged would be American citizens living freely in Germany and Cuban nationals in Spain.⁷⁵ In the spring, the United States had pledged to Latin American nations that officially confirming these “ad hoc” papers would not result in new Jewish immigration to their shores. To keep this promise, once the entire exchange group reached Allied territory the group of 75 prisoners would be separated and sent to the Philippeville camp in North Africa. The Joint agreed to pay for food, clothing, and other maintenance for this group.⁷⁶ In the exchange, planned for the end of January, the inclusion of the “Category F” prisoners, though more complicated, held strategic importance. There were verified American citizens who were not selected for exchange so that 75 people, holding protective papers that were possibly purchased or forged, could be included. The United States, representing Latin American countries, intentionally made a clear statement that people holding papers of questionable legitimacy could be of tangible value to the Germans. The Board, through this calculated decision, sought to ensure what happened in Marianka would not happen again.

The War Refugee Board and Jewish relief organizations focused attention on the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, as it held the largest group of people with Latin American protective papers. In Bergen-Belsen, people holding Paraguayan passports and Ecuadoran visas were in particular danger, as their papers were slated to expire at the end

⁷⁵ The inclusion of 34 Cuban nationals in Spain was a courtesy to the Cuban government. The United States agreed, provided that 25 additional civilians in occupied territory could be added to the lists, making the final total 875 people (841 from occupied territory and 34 Cubans in Spain). T.J. Hadraba, Message to Swiss Foreign Office about prisoner exchange, 1944 December 28; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 64, Folder 6; FDRL.

⁷⁶ John Pehle, Memo to McCloy about exchange with Bergen-Belsen internees, 1945 January 3; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 16, Folder 3, Documents 179-180; USHMM.

of 1944. While Paraguay sent instructions to Spain authorizing the issuance of new passports, Ecuador reported that renewal would be a violation of existing legislation, which required people holding unused visas to reapply after one year.⁷⁷ The Foreign Office in Quito regretted the impossibility of extending the papers, and the WRB hoped the Germans would not notice the Ecuadoran papers had expired.

Within days of the Kasztner group's arrival, the WRB asked McClelland to survey the refugees to learn more about Bergen-Belsen, particularly if American citizens were still housed there. (The prisoner exchange lists later confirmed there were.) The camp's commandant refused to allow the Red Cross to visit, so McClelland tried to learn about the prisoners through underground intelligence networks and interviews with refugees in Switzerland. Among those to arrive was Joseph Blum, a member of the Vaada rescue committee—like Kasztner and Joel Brand—and a former representative of the Joint in Budapest. Blum told McClelland that United States citizens who had been deported from Slovakia were in Bergen-Belsen.⁷⁸ He had encountered six of the prisoners in one of the camp kitchens, but a camp guard had prevented him from gathering any details.⁷⁹ There was little else to learn; the Hungarian group had been held in a separate area of the camp from others and Blum could not provide any additional information.

At the end of December, the head of the Swiss Federal Police, Heinrich Rothmund, wrote to the Bern legation, having finished investigating the refugees for

⁷⁷ Bern embassy, Note to Swiss Foreign Office about renewing Paraguay papers, 1945 January 4; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 64, Folder 7; FDRL. Robert Scotten, Cable from Quito that Ecuador can't renew passports, 1944 December 23; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 4, Folder 3, Documents 49-51; USHMM.

⁷⁸ Joseph Blum, Letter to McClelland, 1944 December 14; RG-84, Bern legation records, Box 41, Folder 840.1, December; NACP.

⁷⁹ Joseph Blum, Letter to McClelland, 1944 December 26; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 69, Folder 4; FDRL.

security threats though they were still under quarantine. The group, made up mainly of Hungarian Jews with all ages and classes represented, all either physically held Palestine certificates or had been promised that certificates would be available to them. Rothmund hoped McClelland would arrange for the entire Kasztner group—those who arrived in August and in December—to depart as soon as possible.⁸⁰ Since the Swiss had been willing to allow 8,000 Hungarian Jews—whose rumored arrival at the beginning of November had still not occurred—to enter Switzerland, the WRB could not criticize their desire for the Kasztner group to emigrate. The WRB cabled James Mann in London on January 3rd, noting that “[t]his is an excellent opportunity to demonstrate to the Swiss our good faith in promising to find temporary havens for all refugee Jews arriving in Switzerland from Hungary,” and asking Mann to investigate the possibility of sending the group to Palestine.⁸¹ Nearly two weeks later, January 16th, Mann wrote that upon the initial receipt of the cable, he immediately discussed the issue with the British Foreign Office and would send a reply as soon as he heard anything in response.⁸²

Unwilling to wait on the British any longer, the WRB moved forward with other plans. Pehle had kept the War Department informed about the situation and the possible need for assistance in shipping the group to North Africa instead. The Philippeville camp in Algeria, in addition to being the future home of the “ad hoc” protective paper holders slated for the upcoming prisoner exchange, had been kept open for this type of

⁸⁰ Heinrich Rothmund, Rothmund sends McClelland list of Kasztner group, 1944 December 22; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 2; FDRL.

⁸¹ Edward Stettinius, Cable to London about Kasztner group, 1945 January 3; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 16, Folder 4, Documents 345-349; USHMM.

⁸² John Winant, Cable from London that Mann spoke to British, 1945 January 16; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 16, Folder 4, Documents 333; USHMM.

emergency situation.⁸³ McCloy gave Pehle the names of the SHAEF officers in Paris, Lt. Gen. Grasset and Brig. Gen. Spofford, who could arrange transportation for the refugees. But at the end of January, the group had not moved from Switzerland. Though McClelland, the Swiss, and the American military looked forward to the evacuation, it does not seem anyone informed any of the relief organizations, nor any of the members of the Kasztner group, about the plan.

The End of 1944

On December 16th, the *New York Times* reported in daily “War News Summarized” column that the Seventh Army had “ended their fourth month on the Continent by crashing into the Reich at three points.”⁸⁴ The Allied military slowly made progress on the western front, hampered by snow and lack of ammunition; they had been on German soil since the end of October.⁸⁵ But on December 16th, the Germans launched a vicious counteroffensive, which soon became known as the “Battle of the Bulge” because of the shape of the battle lines. The German military created a seventy-mile-wide, fifty-mile-deep bulge into Allied territory, seriously thinning the Allied lines. Their goal was to recapture the port of Antwerp, and in doing so split the Allied ground forces, surround the armies, and perhaps force the West into negotiating a separate peace. It did not work. The attack slowed by the end of December, but it would be another month before the Allies regained the lost territory. Approximately 19,000 Americans were

⁸³ John Pehle, Letter to McCloy about evacuating Kasztner group, 1945 January 16; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 16, Folder 5, Documents 526-527; USHMM.

⁸⁴ War News Summary, *New York Times*, 1944 December 16.

⁸⁵ War News Summary, *New York Times*, 1944 December 1.

killed, 47,500 wounded, and more than 23,000 missing. More Americans died in the Battle of the Bulge than in any other battle during World War II.

On Saturday, December 23rd—the day after Gen. Anthony McAuliffe famously responded to a German request to surrender during the Battle of the Bulge with a telegram reading “Nuts!”—the first public radio station in New York City, WEAF, aired a special program.⁸⁶ A live, nationwide broadcast, “Christmas in Freedom,” sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee, aired between 4:15 and 4:30pm. Dorothy Thompson opened the program, speaking for four minutes from New York, before the live feed switched to Fort Ontario. Joseph Smart, the director of the shelter, welcomed listeners to the celebration, where “men and women of many lands and many faiths are celebrating their first Christmas in America together.” The choir, made entirely of refugees from the shelter, sang “A King is Born to Us,” a Yugoslav carol; and “I Bring You Something New,” which was sung in Czech. Smart concluded by expressing that “The men and women at this Emergency Refugee Center, have asked to thank you all on their behalf for the hospitality and kindness America has shown them, and to wish every one of you a very joyous holiday season.” The choir closed the program with “Silent Night.”⁸⁷

Relief Packages

The War Refugee Board sent 15,002 commercially purchased food packages on the *Gripsholm* at the end of August—the first of 300,000 the Board planned to send. The

⁸⁶ WEAF later became WNBC. It was a nationwide NBC station.

⁸⁷ Transcript, “Christmas in Freedom”, 1944 December 23; American Friends Service Committee Refugee Services 1944, Box 5, Folder “Internees—Fort Ontario”; AFSC.

rest—all 285,000—were packed by the American Red Cross. The Red Cross could not begin work until October 26th due to prior commitments, but when they did, the staff averaged 14,000 packages a day working six days a week. Less than a month later, 224,328 packages were ready. They contained cigarettes, biscuits, cheese, powdered milk, salmon or tuna, margarine, sugar, chocolate bars, dehydrated soup, meat, vitamin C, and a bar of soap.⁸⁸ The Feinberg Kosher Sausage Company of Minneapolis sold canned kosher meat to the WRB—which the company ended up having to drive to Washington to make the shipment deadline.⁸⁹ Approximately one-third of the packages were designated as kosher and marked on the outside with a “K”; the rest had pork meat.⁹⁰ The *Saivo*, carrying 37,388 shipping cartons containing the readied parcels, sailed “with the tide” on December 1st.⁹¹ Though McClelland had requested the ship come to Marseilles, the WRB thought transportation would be too difficult, so these cartons, too, went to Gothenburg, Sweden.

In the meantime, the first 15,002 packages had arrived in Sweden, been repackaged due to damage en route, and were set for distribution. The World Jewish Congress wrote to the Board to "express our deep concern over the probability that the camps specified by the ICRC [International Committee of the Red Cross] are not likely to

⁸⁸ Paul McCormack, Memo to Hodel updating on relief package program, 1944 October 21; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 24, Folder 11, Documents 828-829; USHMM.

⁸⁹ Arnold Feinberg, Feinberg Kosher Sausage Co. asks for letter, 1945 January 23; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 25, Folder 2, Document 172; USHMM.

⁹⁰ Ralph Stoddard, Letter from American Red Cross about finishing packages, 1944 December 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 25, Folder 1, Documents 18-19; USHMM.

⁹¹ Paul McCormack, Memo to the file about relief packages, 1944 November 27; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 25, Folder 1, Document 92; USHMM.

benefit any substantial number of Jews."⁹² Though due to the terms of the agreement with blockade authorities, the 300,000 packages had to be distributed in camps where the Red Cross could guarantee arrival and distribution, the World Jewish Congress staff continued to insist on their own list of largely unreachable camps.⁹³ In a letter explaining the details of the *Saivo* shipment, McClelland listed the requested camps, noting the names were likely small localities in Poland, and that he wished the Red Cross "luck making something out of them." The ICRC already had a list and distribution plans. Concerned that publicizing the camp names on their list would endanger their ability to successfully distribute packages, the Red Cross reminded McClelland to make sure the WRB kept the list confidential. This frustrated the WJC; in London, Leon Kubowitzki told Mann that he was convinced that "the IRC [ICRC] is not sending food to concentration camps in which Jews are kept. He [Kubowitzki] continually stated that he would certainly not say that the IRC was anti-[S]emitic but that he was interested in knowing the camps to which food parcels were being sent."⁹⁴

Package distribution was contentious on both sides of the ocean. The International Red Cross expressed willingness to send test shipments to the camps the World Jewish Congress had requested, at least the ones that could be located and were near the eastern front. However, the ICRC needed to be released from the restriction about supervising the distribution, "as they have not the slightest hope of securing permission for their delegates to visit these camps." McClelland authorized the ICRC to distribute the

⁹² A. Leon Kubowitzki, Letter from World Jewish Congress transmitting lists of camps for packages, 1944 October 24; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 24, Folder 11, Document 823; USHMM.

⁹³ James Mann, Letter from Mann to Pehle with enclosures, 1945 January 13; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 15, Folder 74, Documents 873-912; USHMM.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

Christina and *Gripsholm* packages to camps with large non-Jewish populations, as the prisoners in these camps may have more need for packages. The Red Cross had already recently spent \$100,000 provided by the Joint to send supplies to Jewish prisoners, and the World Jewish Congress, too, planned to send packages exclusively to Jewish inmates.⁹⁵ The WRB staff cabled back to authorize the test shipments and to inform McClelland that they “regretted” this distribution of the *Gripsholm* and *Christina* packages.⁹⁶ The WRB, seemingly misunderstanding McClelland’s instructions to the Red Cross as targeting specifically non-Jewish prisoners at the expense of Jewish internees, wanted him to make sure that the next batch of 224,328 would be “made on an equitable basis motivated solely by need and accessibility.”⁹⁷ McClelland did not understand the criticism over sending the packages to these camps, writing “why?” next to this language on his copy of the cable.⁹⁸ Still, he decided to calm the situation by reporting how many people had been helped by the *Christina* packages, how many receipts had been signed by prisoners and returned, and that commandants did not seem to discriminate between Jewish and non-Jewish prisoners in regards to package distribution. He agreed that the next, larger, WRB batch would be distributed entirely according to need.⁹⁹

McClelland could only report on the distribution of the *Christina* packages. The same day he received the WRB’s cable of regret, the Red Cross informed him that the

⁹⁵ J. Klahr Huddle, Cable from Bern about package distribution, 1944 December 9; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 9, Folder 3, Documents 397-401; USHMM.

⁹⁶ Edward Stettinius, Cable to Bern about package distribution, 1944 December 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 25, Folder 1, Documents 27-29; USHMM.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Roswell McClelland, Handwritten notes on cable received from WRB on package distribution, 1944 September 28; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 68, Folder 5; FDRL.

⁹⁹ J. Klahr Huddle, Cable from Bern defending package distribution, 1944 December 23; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 25, Folder 1, Documents 21-23; USHMM.

Gripsholm parcels had never arrived in the concentration camps. The three freight cars containing the boxes had been held for nearly two months in Warnemünde, Germany, on the Baltic coast. The Red Cross did not know why the packages were held, but their Berlin delegation finally determined that an overall halt in freight shipping had begun in late October. The Germans were using all available rail transport to bring men and supplies to the western front and had no interest in using it to send American-produced parcels to concentration camps. Packages for Allied POW camps were also held up.¹⁰⁰ Not until January 25th did the Red Cross finally report the *Gripsholm* boxes were en route.

By that time, the *Saivo* packages had arrived and were waiting in Sweden. As the WRB, McClelland, and the Red Cross had already agreed, all hoped this much larger distribution would go more smoothly. The kosher packages (39,324 in this batch) would be reserved for Jewish prisoners, and the remaining 185,004 sent to the main German camps where both Jews and non-Jews resided. The remainder of the 300,000 packages, numbering 60,672, sailed on the *Caritas II* towards Toulon, France, at the end of the year. McClelland, worried about delivering the food in a reasonable amount of time, proposed a solution to the distribution problems. On January 22nd, he asked the Board to obtain four or five large trucks, each five to seven tons, which could be lent to the Red Cross for the transportation of the boxes.

Reliable package distribution would be important, not just for the 285,000 yet to arrive in concentration camps, but for the 300,000 additional relief packages the WRB

¹⁰⁰ Roswell McClelland, Handwritten notes on memo of meeting between Hodel and McCormack on packages, 1945 January 8; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 68, Folder 5; FDRL.

wanted to send. At the beginning of November, before the vast majority of the Board's first experiment in relief packages had even been boxed and shipped, the WRB cabled James Mann to see if blockade authorities would consent to an additional 300,000 three-kilogram parcels.¹⁰¹ They intended the initial experiment to be renewable, and though the WRB staff could not prove any of the packages had been successfully delivered (since they had not been), they felt it impractical to delay the request. This time, instead of months of meetings and delays, London granted permission almost immediately. The WRB began to plan. The American Red Cross offered to ship the crates once they were ready, but could not actually pack the individual boxes: They were already responsible for over 1,300,000 parcels per month for Allied prisoners of war.¹⁰² The WRB's 300,000 would all need to be purchased from commercial package companies. President Roosevelt would need to grant permission to use \$1,125,000 out of the unobligated funds designated for Foreign War Relief, which had been allocated to the Treasury Department. With the delays in the first batch of parcels, and with Pehle busy with his duties in Procurement and Surplus Property, the details of the next 300,000 packages were still under discussion at the end of January.

The World Jewish Congress

The World Jewish Congress had not made much progress on their package program either. In September, the War Refugee Board had learned that Hillel Storch, the

¹⁰¹ Edward Stettinius, Cable to London about extending food package program, 1944 November 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 24, Folder 12, Documents 960-961; USHMM.

¹⁰² Basil O'Connor, Letter from American Red Cross that they can't handle future packages, 1944 December 8; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 25, Folder 1, Documents 64-65; USHMM.

World Jewish Congress's representative in Sweden, had proposed sending food parcels from Sweden to prisoners in Bergen-Belsen and Theresienstadt. The plan already had the approval of blockade authorities, the Swedish government, and the Stockholm legation; since the Red Cross could not supervise distribution in either camp, the Swedish YMCA offered to bear responsibility and promised to stop shipping the packages if it did not seem they were arriving.

But Storch and his colleague, Fritz Hollander, needed money to finance the operation. At the end of November, the first 10,000 packages shipped from Sweden; most were addressed to specific prisoners, whose names had been provided to the World Jewish Congress. Storch and Hollander repeatedly requested their offices in New York to cable an initial \$25,000. When nothing came, Hollander gave a personal guarantee, which allowed the first 10,000 to ship.¹⁰³ The WJC staff in New York continued to send more and more names of people who should receive packages, but did not respond to Storch and Hollander's desperate requests for funds. The Joint, hearing of the financial difficulties, offered to step in.¹⁰⁴ They, too, wanted to ship packages from Sweden and could afford to do so in greater quantities, but blockade authorities would not grant a second export license for this work, as the World Jewish Congress theoretically already fulfilled the need. At the end of December, the WJC had still not sent any money to Stockholm, finally admitting that their recent "War Emergency Conference," which had taken place in Atlantic City at the end of November, had depleted their financial

¹⁰³ John Pehle, Pehle sends World Jewish Congress cable from Storch about packages, 1944 December 2; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 25, Folder 1, Document 81; USHMM.

¹⁰⁴ Edward Stettinius, Cable to Lisbon from Leavitt asking Pilpel about funding packages, 1944 December 8; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 25, Folder 1, Documents 71-72; USHMM.

resources.¹⁰⁵ The WJC sent a cable to the South African Jewish War Appeal pleading for money, and World Jewish Congress representatives in London asked James Mann if the WRB could step in to finance the package plan. Mann was non-committal, writing in a letter to Pehle that “the JDC has funds to carry this out if the WJC would turn the license over to them, which the latter will not do...I am given to understand that this program is proceeding much more slowly than it should because of lack of funds on the part of the WJC and reluctance to let the JDC take over.”¹⁰⁶ The Joint did have to provide a guarantee for a second set of 10,000 relief packages, as the WJC still had yet to settle their first debt. Joint representative Laura Margolis, who had been sent to Stockholm to set up a package program and been unable to do so, explained the situation in a memo to James Mann. The Jewish community in Sweden refused to underwrite the program based solely on World Jewish Congress guarantees, so before leaving Stockholm she had appropriated \$108,000 in an account supervised by another Joint representative, just so the program might continue.¹⁰⁷

The World Jewish Congress held a press conference in New York—just two days before Mann wrote his letter about Kubowitzki’s intimation of Red Cross antisemitism and the Joint’s contribution to the Stockholm package program—to accuse the Allied nations of not doing enough to help the Jews of Europe. Appealing to the American people and the United Nations to rescue an estimated 550,000 Jews still in enemy territory, Stephen Wise issued a statement that “hundreds of thousands are doomed unless

¹⁰⁵ James Mann, Letter from Mann to Pehle with enclosures, 1945 January 13; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 15, Folder 74, Documents 873-912; USHMM.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

immediate rescue work is undertaken.” They advocated a number of proposals. Jews could be evacuated from occupied countries if assistance was provided to underground movements. Neutral nations would house the refugees if they could be assured that Allied nations would send food, clothing, and support. The Red Cross should grant Jews the status of “civilian internees”, and supervise the conditions inside concentration camps. Neutral countries should be induced to grant protective papers to Jews, and measures should be taken to aid those in hiding. Ships should be provided to take liberated Jews to Palestine.¹⁰⁸

Anselm Reiss, the London representative of the World Jewish Congress, “charged the United Nations with responsibility for the deaths of ‘ten upon hundreds of thousands’ of Jews because these governments have not already taken such measures.”¹⁰⁹ The statement reeked of irony, in that the World Jewish Congress’s own activities were constantly delayed due to fighting with other relief organizations and poor financial planning. It was also misleading, possibly deliberately so. While the WJC could not be aware of all of the War Refugee Board’s work, they certainly knew many of their proposals were either already being undertaken, or had been attempted and had failed due to Nazi obstructionism. The term “civilian internee” held a legal definition, and the Red Cross was not simply able to declare Jewish prisoners “civilian internees,” as this depended on the Nazi government recognizing the distinction. Supervision of concentration camps depended on the willingness of individual commandants to allow

¹⁰⁸ *The New York Times*, “Jews Request Aid of United Nations”, 1945 January 11; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 23, Folder 5, Document 82; USHMM.

¹⁰⁹ *New York Herald Tribune*, “US Public's Aid Sought for Jews in Nazi Domain”, 1945 January 11; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 23, Folder 5, Document 81; USHMM.

Red Cross visits; most did not. Neutral nations had already received assurances—frequently reiterated—that any refugees who arrived would be maintained by the United States. Through their representatives in Switzerland, the World Jewish Congress clearly knew that the WRB assisted underground movements, and was equally aware of the near-impossibility of escape from occupied territory. Boats were simply not available to take large numbers of liberated Jews to Palestine and the British were not open to receiving unlimited immigration. Nahum Goldmann, one of the founders and leaders of the World Jewish Congress, was intimately aware of the quota restrictions, as he also worked on behalf of the Jewish Agency. The Battle of the Bulge underscored the fact that Allied victory had not yet been achieved. The Executive Order limited the War Refugee Board's activities to those that would not hamper the successful progress of the war and no one questioned, debated, or publicly disputed this restriction at the time. With the World Jewish Congress's demands either impossible or already being addressed, military victory remained the only way to save the "550,000 Jews." The press conference was a disingenuous attempt at publicity.

The Mir Yeshiva

The Vaad Hatzalah staff had also convinced themselves the War Refugee Board did not work hard enough on behalf of their organization's desires. Abraham Kalmanowitz met almost weekly with War Refugee Board staff during December and January, and when he could not meet with them, he sent letters and made phone calls almost every day. The Vaad wanted to provide Sternbuch with financing for his repeated

claims that large numbers of Jews could be saved if enough money were available. The Musy ransom scheme, however, distracted from the Vaad's main focus: a group of about 550 Orthodox rabbis and rabbinical students in Shanghai. The Mir yeshiva had been one of the preeminent Orthodox religious schools in Europe, attracting pupils from around the world. On the outbreak of war in 1939, the yeshiva fled from Mir (in present-day Belarus) to Lithuania. With the German invasion of Soviet territory in 1941, the yeshiva students escaped again, this time on the Trans-Siberian railroad, moving first to Japan and later to Shanghai, where they reestablished the school and sought financial support from the Joint and the Vaad. The outside funds provided to the Mir group meant that they had much better living conditions than other Jewish residents, were able to purchase additional food, and could continue to study rather than work. Kalmanowitz had been one of the deans of the Mir yeshiva and had accompanied his students to Lithuania. In April 1940, he arrived in the United States and joined the Vaad to advocate for the rescue of all Jews in Nazi Europe, but particularly the Orthodox, particularly yeshiva scholars, particularly those from the Mir yeshiva.

In the fall and winter of 1944-1945, Kalmanowitz seemed to talk to everyone and try everything to get the Mir yeshiva students out of Shanghai. He felt conditions were deteriorating in China and with the possibility of ground warfare, the members of the community could be in danger. It was necessary to evacuate them to a neutral nation, preferably Sweden. He asked the WRB and the Vaad representatives in Stockholm to intervene with the Swedish government to extend protection to the Mir group, preferably by declaring them citizens and issuing passports. He wanted Sweden to request Japan

release the group, who could then depart on a Swedish ship that would be sent specifically for them.¹¹⁰ The Vaad would guarantee the cost of the operation and provide maintenance for the rabbis and students once they reached Stockholm, but this did not solve the myriad bureaucratic challenges of finding a ship, sending it halfway around the world during wartime, and negotiating for the release of only small percentage of the Jews of Shanghai. The Orthodox rescue groups also asked Spain, Switzerland, the Polish government-in-exile in London, Ireland, and the Vatican to intervene with Japan. Though the Swedish embassy finally told the Vaad that there was nothing they could do—recognized Swedish citizens were still stuck in Shanghai, so issuing passports would not help, and securing a boat clearly impossible—the Vaad would not accept this answer and continued to press Stockholm.¹¹¹ In Washington, Kalmanowitz suggested the WRB have the State Department instigate a prisoner exchange with Japan in order to evacuate the yeshiva students.¹¹² The morning after a long evening meeting with Vaad staff, Pehle reported to Treasury Department colleagues that, “One of the Rabbis said last night that there is a saying among them that you cannot compare the effect of a request made one hundred times with a request made one hundred and one times.”¹¹³

Their repeated attempts worried the Joint staff, particularly Laura Margolis, who had been interned in 1943 for seven months by the Japanese while working with Jewish refugees in Shanghai. She felt that focus on this one group would be detrimental to the

¹¹⁰ Cordell Hull, Cable from Stockholm for Ehrenpreis about Vaad rabbis, 1944 September 28; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 9, Folder 7, Documents 906-908; USHMM.

¹¹¹ Abraham Kalmanowitz, Letter to Hodel asking her to emphasize importance of Swedish papers, 1945 January 24; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 9, Folder 7, Documents 858-859; USHMM.

¹¹² Abraham Kalmanowitz, Letter from Vaad sending suggestions, 1945 January 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 3, Folder 7, Documents 650-653; USHMM.

¹¹³ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Group meeting transcript, 1945 January 12; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 809, Document 68-102; LOC.

other 20,000 refugees in the area, and that Japan would never consent to the release. She asked the Joint's New York offices to meet with the Vaad to "urge greater reasonableness."¹¹⁴ After being informed of Margolis's concerns, the "greatly disturbed" Vaad asked the Joint for further clarification.¹¹⁵ Margolis cabled in response: "[C]ontinued interference behalf Rabbi Nical [rabbinical] groups regarding their people in Japanese territory will endanger security all refugees. This extremely serious and Vaadhatzala has no right endanger lives 20,000 persons will trying to help their group, especially since evacuation complete impossibility. Bitkers [Joint representative in Shanghai] reports clearly indicated all groups receiving equal treatment."¹¹⁶

In Stockholm, the Vaad representatives informed Margolis that the Japanese ambassador to Sweden had no objection to the release of the Mir group, provided they could find transportation to a neutral country. Traveling through Soviet territory seemed the only possibility. Margolis wrote that "[w]hat Rabbis desperately want to do is save this group because they are Rabbi Nical [rabbinical] teachers and scholars, claiming it is only intellectual group existing capable of carrying on traditions of Judaism. They want to save group as such because it can not carry on its work in Shanghai, not because it is in special peril."¹¹⁷

On January 15th, George Warren informed Rabbi Frankel of the Vaad that even if the Japanese really did agree to release the group, there were only two possibilities of

¹¹⁴ John Pehle, Pehle sends Leavitt message from Pilpel about Vaad, 1944 December 4; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 9, Folder 7, Document 894; USHMM.

¹¹⁵ Edward Stettinius, Cable to Lisbon from Vaad asking Margolis about China, 1944 December 27; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 9, Folder 7, Documents 880-882; USHMM.

¹¹⁶ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm from Margolis explaining problems, 1945 January 9; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 9, Folder 7, Documents 874-875; USHMM.

¹¹⁷ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm from Margolis explaining problems, 1945 January 11; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 9, Folder 7, Documents 871-872; USHMM.

evacuation. First, the Vaad could convince a Spanish or Portuguese ship to sail around Cape Horn, pick up 500 Japanese prisoners in Peru, sail to Japan, exchange the Japanese for the yeshiva students, and complete the circumnavigation by sailing around the Cape of Good Hope for Sweden. Or, the yeshiva group could set out on foot for the Soviet border.¹¹⁸ Neither was likely and both were clearly more risky than remaining in Shanghai. Moreover, the Soviet government detained groups of refugees—like the Stara Zagora group—which might include people born in Soviet territory. If the Mir yeshiva even made it past the border, they quite likely would be forbidden to leave the Soviet Union. Despite the warning, the Vaad wanted to approach the Soviet Union to request permission for the group to enter and travel to Sweden. They submitted a draft cable which—after Board staff deleted a reference to the State Department from the section reading, “our standpoint that the group be considered on exceptional religious status is supported by the Vatican and the U.S. State Department”—the WRB sent to Moscow.¹¹⁹ The State Department formally objected to sending the cable, informed the Vaad in writing of the potential danger that the group would be detained in the Soviet Union, and made it clear that the Orthodox organization sent the cable, not the United States government.¹²⁰

Margolis’s confusion at the desperate attempts to evacuate a group of yeshiva students who reports indicated were not in immediate physical danger—at the expense of

¹¹⁸ George Warren, Memo to Hodel about Clattenburg’s meeting with Frankel about the Shanghai group, 1945 January 15; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 9, Folder 7, Documents 867; USHMM.

¹¹⁹ John Pehle and George Warren, Draft letter to Vaad and cable to Moscow about Shanghai rabbis, 1945 January 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 9, Folder 7, Documents 847-850; USHMM.

¹²⁰ Florence Hodel, Memo to the file about State Department objection to cable to Moscow, 1945 January 25; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 9, Folder 7, Documents 856; USHMM.

energy, money, and time that could be possibly spent on rescue and relief projects for Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe—underscored a fundamental difference between relief agencies. The Joint operated on a “wholesale” basis, providing funds to assist the largest number of people possible.¹²¹ Projects that involved a massive amount of money for a relatively small number of people—like financing rescue boats from Romania to Istanbul—were necessary but not preferred. The American Friends Service Committee, too, felt the tension between relief—where a little money could help many people—and rescue, where a lot of money might only assist a few. Other organizations, like the Unitarian Service Committee and the World Jewish Congress, had types of refugees they preferred to assist: the World Jewish Congress, like the Joint, was established to aid only Jews (though the WJC was much more insistent on that point than the Joint); the Unitarians preferred to aid people of some sort of renown. The Vaad, and the other Orthodox organizations, were the ultimate examples of “retail” aid, and given how divergent their goals were from the Joint’s, it is easy to see the cause of Margolis’s confusion. The Vaad staff wanted to rescue Orthodox Jews, but more importantly, believed themselves to be rescuing Judaism. They felt the intellectual and spiritual life of the Jewish faith, particularly Orthodoxy, to be at risk of annihilation during the war. The Vaad’s efforts to rescue the Mir yeshiva were, at least in part, due to the belief that these students were the best chance at reestablishing an Orthodox world. It was important that the students receive more and better food and be the focus of evacuation efforts because they were a privileged group, more essential than other refugees.

¹²¹ Herbert Katzki, Oral History Interview with Herbert Katzki, 1995 June 2; RG-50.030.0337; USHMM.

Sir Clifford Heathcote-Smith

The War Refugee Board, dedicated to treating all relief agencies as fairly as possible, continued to meet with the Vaad staff despite the complicated nature of their request and with the World Jewish Congress staff despite their public accusations and private difficulties. Pehle had pledged early in the WRB's existence that the staff would give consideration to all suggestions and assist whenever possible with private organization's relief and rescue programs. The Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, however, was an international organization and the United States was a member, even though Myron Taylor's seat had still not been filled on the IGC's executive committee. Sir Clifford Heathcote-Smith, the IGC representative in Italy, continued to espouse views and make suggestions which the WRB felt were embarrassing to the entire group. Smith, with his antisemitic statements and his large-scale but unrealistic plans, impeded the IGC's work. Private agencies hoped he would be removed; the AFSC and the Joint agreed that Joseph Schwartz would try to speak with IGC director Sir Herbert Emerson about Smith, in the hopes that it "will serve the end that we all desire."¹²²

On December 8th, James Mann met with Emerson in London about Sir Clifford Heathcote-Smith. To Mann's dismay, Patrick Malin, the vice-director of the IGC and the man who had hired Smith, also attended the meeting. Mann asked that the conversation be kept confidential, and stated that Smith's temperament and approach made him an

¹²² Marnie Schauffler, Schauffler tells Ackermann that Schwartz will talk to Emerson about Heathcote-Smith, 1944 November 7; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 22, Document 644; USHMM.

ineffective representative. Curt and harsh in dealings with refugees, Smith was an antisemite and had no patience. Emerson and Malin both came to Smith's defense, with Malin arguing that "refugees as a group were sometimes difficult people with whom to deal."¹²³ Both men admitted they had received other complaints of Smith's antisemitism, but neither believed the charges. Emerson admitted that it was true Smith had only recently learned the Germans were committing atrocities against the Jews, and claimed this realization "had unbalanced the man on this question."¹²⁴ Smith's epiphany had led him to promote ideas for psychological warfare—that the Allies should drop thousands of leaflets targeted to German soldiers, SS officers, and to their wives and mothers promising better post-war treatment for those who could prove, by virtue of collecting signatures, that they had assisted Jews—but these ideas, to Mann, were unsophisticated and illogical. (Emerson again attributed this to the profound effect on Smith of recently learning about the atrocities and wanting to do something to stop them.) Smith had also publicly called for the War Refugee Board to call and host a conference of relief organizations, which was embarrassing since Mann had already privately informed him this would not be necessary; Mann could arrange for Smith to meet with any agency he desired. Emerson gave a long speech about Zionism and Zionist pressures, during which he assured Mann that he did not believe Smith had ever called Palestine a "pocket handkerchief" country. Having stated his case, Mann concluded by saying he found Smith "a difficult person with whom to work...I felt that I was probably not alone in this feeling."

¹²³ James Mann, Letter from Mann to Pehle about Heathcote-Smith meeting, 1944 December 9; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 15, Folder 74, Documents 915-920; USHMM.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

After the meeting, Mann wrote to Pehle that he was, “strongly convinced [Smith] is most unfitted for the job he has, or, for that matter, for any job which requires his working with refugees, particularly Jews.” Malin later visited Mann to thank him and advise that Smith would be returning to Italy as the IGC’s representative, but that the progress of the war made this work less important.¹²⁵

Transportation of Jewish children

At the end of the meeting between Mann, Emerson, and Malin, they briefly discussed the Joint’s project to bring Jewish children who had been liberated in France, and who were without parents, to Palestine. The Joint had met with Morgenthau about it; though the project did not fall directly within its jurisdiction, the Board was willing to lend whatever assistance necessary. The project did, however, interest the Intergovernmental Committee. In a memo informing the IGC of the situation, Joseph Schwartz wrote that “shipping was very scarce, and the prospects for finding facilities in the immediate future were not bright.”¹²⁶ He asked the IGC to arrange shipping with the Allied military or with neutral countries, and to finance the trip as part of their projects. Two days after meeting with Mann, Emerson, who had recently returned from a trip to Belgium and France, reported in a memo that many children had been hidden by private families or in religious institutions owing to the efforts of relief agencies. While the Jewish community considered the future of these children, they were currently being well

¹²⁵ James Mann, Letter from Mann to Pehle about Heathcote-Smith meeting, 1944 December 9; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 15, Folder 74, Documents 915-920; USHMM.

¹²⁶ James Mann, Letter from Mann to Pehle, 1944 November 29; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 15, Folder 74, Documents 935-940; USHMM.

cared for.¹²⁷ The IGC felt the emigration project unnecessary at this time.

The Jewish Agency, collaborating with the Joint on the plan, wrote the Swedish legation in Washington about lending a Swedish boat. Even freighters would be fine, “in view of terrible suffering these children have undergone and the desirability of moving them to Palestine as expeditiously as possible.”¹²⁸ After all, as the Jewish Agency’s Bernard Joseph told Joseph Friedman of the WRB, “I am sure that the children could travel on deck for the five or six days’ trip in the Mediterranean. It would only mean providing them with some blankets and making the most elementary arrangements to meet hygienic requirements. After all it is much better to let them suffer inconvenience a few days and get them to Palestine than to have them linger on endlessly in their present unhappy surroundings in Europe.”¹²⁹ Matthew Marks of the Board’s staff held a series of conversations with the Swedish legation in New York about available shipping, but it did not look promising. There were very few ships available, and those that could sail would still need extensive alterations and safe conduct from the Germans since waters were still blockaded.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Herbert Emerson, Memo on refugee children in France, Belgium, Switzerland, 1944 December 11; Holocaust Refugees and the FDR White House (Microfilm Collection, Bethesda, MD: UPA collection from LexisNexis, 2006). LM 0255, Reel 7, Folder 14, Document 705; USHMM.

¹²⁸ Bernard Joseph, Jewish Agency sends copy of cable to Swedish ambassador, 1944 December 13; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 6, Folder 6, Documents 229-230; USHMM.

¹²⁹ Bernard Joseph, Letter to Friedman about using convoy ships for children, 1944 December 18; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 6, Folder 6, Document 228; USHMM.

¹³⁰ Matthew Marks, Memo on trying to obtain ship, 1945 January 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 6, Folder 6, Documents 223-226; USHMM.

Labor Licenses

Nazi-occupied territory—and therefore the jurisdiction of the War Refugee Board—continued to shrink. France, Romania, and Bulgaria, all sites of important WRB rescue and relief projects, were now liberated territory and under the jurisdiction of the Intergovernmental Committee and UNRRA, who were responsible for the care and resettlement of refugees. Licenses issued by the Treasury Department to relief organizations (with the assistance of the WRB) stipulated that the funds needed to be spent on assisting those in enemy territory. Groups wanting to send money to France, for example, now had to go through other channels.

Throughout the summer and fall, labor organizations received licenses for specific countries: the Queen Wilhelmina fund for the Netherlands, the Belgian War Relief fund, Friends of Luxembourg, and the Polish War Relief. Money for the Dutch, Belgian and Luxembourg licenses went to Switzerland, where Roswell McClelland struggled to release the funds. Krier and Clement, the designated agents for the funds, had no instructions from the labor organizations and traveled often, making communication difficult. All of the labor funds had complications. Krier and Clement, natives of Luxembourg, enthusiastically claimed the Luxembourg money, but since they could not come up with a way to spend it in occupied territory, they asked for the license to be amended to allow use of the money in Luxembourg. For two months they waited for a reply, which had not yet arrived by the end of January.¹³¹ The Belgian labor movement had borrowed a large amount of money during the war to assist people in hiding; they

¹³¹ J. Klahr Huddle, Cable from Bern requesting amendment to Luxembourg license, 1945 January 19; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 69, Folder 12; FDRL.

wanted to use the Belgian license money to repay the loan.¹³² McClelland received permission to transfer the money to the Belgian legation in Switzerland, which he did on December 16th. A week later, labor leaders in London, not realizing the funds had already been transferred, complained to Mann. In light of the Battle of the Bulge, they felt the license should be reopened, funds transferred immediately, and more money sent. Soon thereafter, the AFL and CIO began to discuss reopening the project.

The Queen Wilhelmina Fund license was perhaps the most difficult to untangle. McClelland had \$165,000 designated for the Dutch labor organizations, but no instructions on the delivery or use of the funds. At the end of October, he learned that a Dutch Trade Union representative in London named Oldenbroek had negotiated a loan of \$90,000 from the Dutch government.¹³³ To repay the supposed loan, Suzanne LaFollette of the Labor League for Human Rights asked McClelland to transfer \$90,000 to the Dutch legation in Bern and keep the remaining \$75,000 in an account in Switzerland.¹³⁴ McClelland could not confirm that trade unions in the Netherlands had ever received the \$90,000 loan. Seeking more information, the OSS in London asked Oldenbroek to send a report on the money supposedly provided by the Dutch government, but he [Oldenbroek] “was not as specific regarding the arrangements....for the transfer of funds into occupied Holland,” claiming the necessary assurances could only be given by a colleague in the

¹³² Suzanne LaFollette, Letter requesting WRB transfer Belgian money, 1944 November 14; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 10, Folder 2, Documents 221-222; USHMM.

¹³³ Edward Stettinius, Cable to London about reimbursing Dutch, 1944 October 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 10, Folder 2, Documents 183-184; USHMM.

¹³⁴ Edward Stettinius, Cable to Bern about balance of labor remittances, 1944 November 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 10, Folder 1, Document 109; USHMM.

Netherlands.¹³⁵ Mann agreed that Oldenbroek's statements "[did] not appear to be based upon actual knowledge but rather upon circumstances such as fact that Minister gave instructions and reports of a friend that the labor movement in Holland has received a large sum of money."¹³⁶ By January 10th, McClelland impatiently waited to transfer the money, particularly if more would be arriving. The Queen Wilhelmina Fund license had been extended to June 1945, and with the ongoing Battle of the Bulge and the desperately cold winter, any relief money reaching Dutch citizens in occupied territory was vitally important. McClelland scribbled on a memo, "If the success of this Dutch transaction—as well as its continuation—depends on handing funds over to Dutch Minister at Bern perhaps it had better be done as soon as possible. There is however no confirmation that any funds have been made available to trade unionists in Holland although Oldenbroek talks as though this was already under way."¹³⁷ Finally, the Dutch embassy reported they had, in fact, opened a line of credit for \$165,000 in the Netherlands prior to receipt of the labor funds. On January 26th, McClelland finally transferred the entire \$165,000 to the Dutch legation in Bern.

The Polish War Relief fund was also complicated, as there were two Polish governments. The United States and Great Britain preferred the Polish government-in-exile, based in London, while the Soviet Union recognized the Polish Government of National Liberation, based in Lublin. In October, license W-2258, issued for Polish War

¹³⁵ Thomas Wilson, Letters and memos from Oldenbroek in London about Dutch labor licenses, 1944 December 26; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 69, Folder 12; FDRL.

¹³⁶ John Winant, Cable from London about Dutch labor licenses, 1944 December 27; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 10, Folder 1, Documents 84-86; USHMM.

¹³⁷ G.P. Van Arkel, Van Arkel (OSS) sends McClelland note about Dutch labor fund, 1945 January 9; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 69, Folder 12; FDRL.

Relief, sent \$150,000 through London to Poland.¹³⁸ James Mann had concerns, and even requested the WRB consider revoking the Polish license. Warsaw had been liberated, so Polish War Relief could send money through Treasury department channels, and it was questionable how much good the license would be able to do in the rapidly-shrinking occupied territories. Mann warned it “extremely unwise to put funds in the hands of the London Poles, granted that they may be honest and upright gentlemen, for them to send to 'their' underground. By permitting them to send funds into Poland through their channels the possibility exist that such funds might be used for political purposes.”¹³⁹ Days before Mann’s letter arrived, the War Refugee Board staff authorized amending the Polish War Relief license to allow for additional funds to be sent to London.

Wallenberg

On December 6th, the War Refugee Board sent their last communication to Raoul Wallenberg in Budapest. In a letter, rather than a cable, Pehle wrote that the WRB had been kept informed of the difficult and important work Wallenberg had done and had followed his efforts with keen interest. Before he closed the letter with his deep appreciation, Pehle added:

I think that no one who has participated in this great task can escape some feeling of frustration in that, because of circumstances beyond our control, our efforts have not met with complete success. On the other hand, there have been measurable achievements in the face of obstacles which had to be encountered,

¹³⁸ Florence Hodel, License paperwork for W-2258, 1944 October 13; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 15, Folder 42, Documents 518-519; USHMM.

¹³⁹ Foreign Funds Control also had concerns related to Polish War Relief possibly obtaining dollar currency through the Polish government-in-exile. James Mann, Letter from Mann to Pehle about revoking Polish license, 1945 January 19; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 15, Folder 74, Documents 865-866; USHMM.

and it is our conviction that you have made a very great personal contribution to the success which has been realized in these endeavors.¹⁴⁰

Wallenberg likely never received this letter. On December 22nd, the WRB received a report from Wallenberg written two weeks earlier. The situation for Jews in Budapest had deteriorated since his previous report in November. More than 40,000 people were sent on a forced march towards Germany, and 20,000 labor battalion men were sent to the border. Jews had been forced into a ghetto where dysentery broke out. The Swedish houses held 7,000 Jews who were being vaccinated to prevent disease. Through Wallenberg's intervention, the Honvéd Minister commanded that Jews holding foreign documents were exempted from labor service; over 15,000 people were able to return to Budapest. Wallenberg rescued 2,000 people from deportation, but German threats of force curbed those activities.¹⁴¹ By the time the WRB received this information, the Red Army had almost completely surrounded the city. The Spanish diplomatic corps fled, putting the Swedish legation in charge of the nearly 3,000 Jews under Spanish protection.¹⁴² On December 29th, Minister Johnson in Stockholm informed the WRB that the Swedish Foreign Office could no longer communicate with Budapest.¹⁴³ The Red Army made slow progress, neighborhood by neighborhood, and German personnel attempted to escape. The WRB heard no news from Budapest for more than three weeks.

¹⁴⁰ John Pehle, Letters of thanks to Johnson and Wallenberg, 1944 December 6; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 29, Folder 4, Documents 399-400; USHMM.

¹⁴¹ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm with report from Wallenberg, 1944 December 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 5, Folder 4, Documents 537-541; USHMM.

¹⁴² Edward Stettinius, Cable to Stockholm about representing Spanish interests, 1944 December 21; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 5, Folder 4, Documents 534-536; USHMM.

¹⁴³ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm that communications with Budapest legation cut off, 1944 December 29; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 5, Folder 4, Document 533; USHMM.

The first cable they received was reassuring: “Wallenberg is safe and sound in that part of Budapest occupied by Russians.”¹⁴⁴

Rumors

With the war’s progress, much was uncertain. Particularly on the eastern front, where the Red Army moved quickly, liberating territory and threatening the heart of the Reich, the WRB staff could not confirm anything they were hearing. McClelland dispelled a World Jewish Congress rumor that Theresienstadt was being turned into an extermination camp. He had “never heard of it” [the rumor] and asked Riegner, supposedly the original source of the information, who also claimed ignorance of any such change. People had certainly been deported, but there was no evidence of a gas chamber; to be sure, McClelland asked the Red Cross to investigate.¹⁴⁵

Another rumor related to Auschwitz, and on January 13th, the WRB cabled the American legation in Dublin. Apparently, Robert Briscoe of the Irish Department of External Affairs, while investigating the rumor that Auschwitz prisoners would be exterminated prior to the Red Army’s arrival, learned from the Germans that they were planning to evacuate the prisoners westward instead.¹⁴⁶ Ambassador Gray sent a full report on January 16th. At the urging of the World Jewish Congress, Briscoe had, in fact, asked the German government whether they would be liquidating the prisoners of

¹⁴⁴ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm that Wallenberg is safe in Sweden, 1945 January 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 29, Folder 3, Document 307; USHMM.

¹⁴⁵ J. Klahr Huddle, Cable from Bern about Terezin rumors, 1945 January 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 4, Folder 6, Documents 220-221; USHMM.

¹⁴⁶ Joseph Grew, Cable to Dublin about Auschwitz, 1945 January 13; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 5, Folder 5, Documents 556-557; USHMM.

Auschwitz-Birkenau. When he received a negative reply, Briscoe informed Jewish organizations in London, who sent the news to the United States where it reached the WRB.¹⁴⁷ The Board sent cables to Dublin and Bern, asking the American legations to send notice through the neutral governments to the Germans that the evacuation information had been noted; the United States, therefore, expected Jews from Auschwitz and other camps to be kept alive. The WRB urged the message be transmitted quickly in view of the nearness of the Red Army to Auschwitz. Unbeknownst to them, it would be too late to make a difference. The day after Gray sent his report from Dublin, the evacuation of Auschwitz began. More than 57,000 prisoners were marched out of the camps on foot, moving slowly through the snow away from the approaching Red Army.

War Crimes Commission

By the beginning of January, Herbert Pell had been in Washington for over a month and still had not received any instructions to aid his work on the War Crimes Commission. After hearing from Edward Stettinius that the War Refugee Board's August memo was still under consideration, Pehle had responded on December 23rd to urge the new Secretary of State to issue a public statement guaranteeing the post-war punishment of wartime criminals: "In view of the fact that an unfortunate impression has been created that the United Nations have no real intention of punishing those guilty of crimes against stateless persons... a statement would be particularly effective if you were to declare specifically that in the eyes of this Government persons who commit crimes against Axis

¹⁴⁷ David Gray, Cable from Dublin verifying statement about Auschwitz, 1945 January 17; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 5, Folder 5, Document 562; USHMM.

Jews are war criminals.”¹⁴⁸ Stettinius responded on New Year’s Day that he would consider it, but ten days later decided the statement “inadvisable at the present juncture.... I can assure you that no phase of the whole matter is being neglected.”¹⁴⁹ The British Foreign Office shared the State Department’s unwillingness to make decisions regarding war crimes. On January 10th, the same day Stettinius told Pehle about the inadvisability of a statement, Sir Cecil Hurst resigned his position as the British representative to the War Crimes Commission. Stating that the Foreign Office ignored proposals that had been adopted by the entire rest of the commission, Hurst’s requests for information and instruction went unanswered. Just like Pell, Hurst found himself unable to obtain approval to include crimes against a country’s own citizens in the definition of war crimes. After the President issued the Statement on Atrocities in March, Pell had given “a dramatic speech” stating the President had meant what he said about the punishment of war criminals, and proposing that these crimes be moved into the scope of the commission.¹⁵⁰ Nearly ten months had passed, and neither the British Foreign Office nor the State Department had given instructions to their representatives officially supporting the proposal. Mann reported from London, “There is gossip here to the effect that the War Crimes Commission is going to fold up.”¹⁵¹

True to form, Bergson’s Hebrew Committee issued a press release in the wake of Hurst’s resignation, commending him “for acting with the courage of his convictions and

¹⁴⁸ John Pehle, Letter to Stettinius about punishment of war criminals, 1944 December 23; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 17, Folder 20, Documents 867; USHMM.

¹⁴⁹ Edward Stettinius, Letter to Pehle that public statement is not a good idea, 1945 January 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 17, Folder 20, Document 876; USHMM.

¹⁵⁰ John MacCormac, “Britain Ignores War-Crime Plans,” *The New York Times*, 1945 January 11.

¹⁵¹ James Mann, Letter from Mann to Pehle with enclosures, 1945 January 13; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 15, Folder 74, Documents 873-912; USHMM.

resigning.” They singled out Pell, too, in appreciation for his “manifold attempts to remedy the situation.” The Hebrew Committee professed shock at the attitude of Churchill, who had not issued a single statement condemning atrocities, unlike President Roosevelt who had “repeatedly voiced his abhorrence.” They reiterated requests for the punishment of criminals and that a “Hebrew” representative be added to the War Crimes Commission.¹⁵²

Pehle approached Stettinius again on January 22nd. The Secretary of State would be traveling with the President to the upcoming conference in Yalta, and Pehle prepared two draft warnings to the Germans against further exterminations. Should the opportunity arise to discuss the matter at the conference, the drafts could be used. A powerful warning from Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin would both dampen concerns about the War Crimes Commission in the west and might have a positive effect in occupied territory. Stettinius promised to take the drafts with him.

On January 26th, Herbert Pell was removed from his position on the War Crimes Commission. Undersecretary of State Joseph Grew expressed his appreciation for Pell’s work and regretted that since Congress had failed to pass an appropriation for the commission, the work could not continue. The Russell Amendment—the reason Pehle had to appear at a Congressional hearing in November and request a nominal appropriation to keep the War Refugee Board running—had affected the War Crimes Commission, too. The State Department had requested \$30,000 for the Commission, which the House of Representatives rejected. The Senate restored the appropriation, but

¹⁵² Peter Bergson, Hebrew Committee press release about Sir Cecil Hurst, 1945 January 13; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 8, Folder 35, Documents 418-420; USHMM.

the House insisted it be eliminated. The *New York Times* reported that some Congressmen argued "it was not necessary for the War Crimes Commission to function until after the cessation of hostilities in Europe."¹⁵³ Lacking an appropriation, Pell offered to serve for free—he only received a \$4,500 salary—but was told he could not. Lt. Col. Joseph Hodgson, Pell's Deputy Commissioner, who did not need an appropriation to cover his military salary, would replace him. The *London Daily Express* published a statement by Pell:

We had great difficulty in persuading the commission to agree finally that they should take jurisdiction over crimes committed by the Germans against their own nation because of race and religion. That aroused great dissatisfaction among officials who contend that what a country does to its own peoples is its own business. I am certain that President Roosevelt does not think so—I know a great many Americans who do not. Technical students of international law may but that is all.

The *Express* article concluded by predicting more resignations, and possibly the collapse of the entire Commission.¹⁵⁴

William O'Dwyer

At the Treasury Department, post-war planning became more and more of a priority. Pehle's move to Procurement and Surplus Property both fulfilled an immediate need and highlighted the important role those departments would play, as government material purchased for the war needed to be identified, counted, and sold. Pehle sent

¹⁵³ Bertrand Hulem, "Pell Leaves War Crimes Board; He Favored Wider Punishments", *The New York Times*, 1945 January 27.

¹⁵⁴ John Winant, Cable from London with summaries of war crimes articles, 1945 January 28; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 17, Folder 20, Documents 861-864; USHMM.

Morgenthau weekly reports on the War Refugee Board activities, as well as on Surplus Property.¹⁵⁵ They show Pehle to be a very busy man.

Henry Morgenthau continued to promote his plan for removing Germany's industrial capacity after the war, and continued to garner public criticism from various quarters. With reports of the desperate situation on the western front, some journalists and members of Congress accused Morgenthau of single-handedly boosting German morale. On January 10th, Congresswoman Jessie Sumner (R-Illinois) gave a speech to the House criticizing the policy of unconditional surrender. She announced, "Recently we saw German resistance stiffen because of the revelation of the Morgenthau plan. But the American people have not been told that the reason was because it seemed to confirm the devilish Nazi dogma which says that unconditional surrender means the shattering of Germany into Communistic revolutionary chaos with middle-class people being killed or carried off into Russian slavery."¹⁵⁶ Senator Burton Wheeler (D-Montana) claimed "that the statement recently made by Mr. Morgenthau in which he said that we should enslave the German people...has cost the lives of many American boys."¹⁵⁷ Morgenthau still intended to publish a book about his plan, while also dealing with Bretton Woods legislation, Lend-Lease supplies to Russia, a project establishing a joint committee on

¹⁵⁵ For example, on Saturday, January 6th, Pehle reported that Procurement had purchased supplies totaling \$16,577,630.94 that week, including 9,490 tons of newsprint rolls to be used in North Africa and by the Office of War Information. The Surplus Property offices, located throughout the country, negotiated the sale of armored scout cars, electric machine guns, and outdated photographic film, among other things. The military withdrew supplies previously designated as surplus for use in the Battle of the Bulge, including millions of dollars' worth of various kinds of bolts, ammunition boxes, flashlight batteries, and gasoline cans. John Pehle, Summary of Surplus Property and Procurement, 1944 January 6; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 807, Document 316-321; LOC.

¹⁵⁶ T.J. Lynch, Memo to Morgenthau on Jessie Summers speech, 1945 January 10; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 808; LOC.

¹⁵⁷ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Letter to Eugene Meyer, copy of "Aid to Dr. Goebbels" editorial, 1945 January 17; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 810, Document 2-8; LOC.

economic matters, and a short-lived plan to do away with any United States currency above the twenty-dollar bill.¹⁵⁸

At a Treasury Department senior staff meeting on January 12th, Pehle reported that he had heard from three groups in the past week complaining that he spent too much time with Procurement and not enough on the War Refugee Board. Congressman Emanuel Celler had also contacted him, having heard a similar complaint about Pehle. The time had come to find a new director for the War Refugee Board. Pehle and Ansel Luxford wanted Fowler Harper, a lawyer and a professor in his late 40s. Harper had been a member of the Emergency Committee's Washington branch and a former Solicitor of the Department of the Interior. But Morgenthau did not like him, so the brainstorming continued regarding this important decision. As Luxford put it, "We are looking at the War Refugee Board as a cornerstone for a post-war agency in this field. You are not going to find a great many people who are going to follow this thing through."¹⁵⁹

That afternoon, Luxford and Josiah DuBois sent a memo to Morgenthau with a new suggestion: Brigadier General William O'Dwyer. Previously the district attorney of Kings County, New York, O'Dwyer was on leave to serve in the military. O'Dwyer's name had originally been mentioned as a candidate for WRB director prior to Pehle's appointment, and he had recently returned to the United States after serving on the Allied Control Commission in Italy. Pehle thought O'Dwyer "a natural," but the Board would

¹⁵⁸ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Group meeting transcript, 1945 January 8; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 808; LOC.

¹⁵⁹ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Group meeting transcript, 1945 January 12; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 809, Document 68-102; LOC.

have to “act fast” if they wanted to get him.¹⁶⁰ Pehle finally met with him at the Treasury Department at 10:30am on January 17th, and O’Dwyer expressed interest, but was under consideration for several other jobs. He could not commit to the WRB.¹⁶¹ Eight days later, Pehle, not having heard a final decision, called O’Dwyer again. After initially claiming that he could not turn down a job as Inspector General of Wright Field should it be offered to him, O’Dwyer changed his mind. He would go with the War Refugee Board.

That morning, January 25th, Morgenthau, Pehle, O’Dwyer, and O’Dwyer’s assistant, Col. Jerome Ohrbach, met to work out the administrative details. O’Dwyer wanted to be released from the Army to take the job, and wanted Ohrbach to come with him to the WRB. Morgenthau called John McCloy at the War Department, who asked for twenty-four hours to see if it was possible. By the next day, McCloy, Grew (who, though he knew nothing of O’Dwyer or the WRB, approved the appointment in Stettinius’s absence), and Morgenthau had all given official approval to the selection of William O’Dwyer as the next director of the War Refugee Board.

On Saturday, January 27th, just two days after O’Dwyer decided he would take the job, John Pehle resigned. In a letter informing the President, Morgenthau explained that in light of Pell’s removal from the War Crimes Commission, he felt it best that Pehle’s resignation and the appointment of O’Dwyer be announced immediately and

¹⁶⁰ Josiah DuBois and Ansel Luxford, Memo to Morgenthau about O’Dwyer, 1945 January 12; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 809, Document 149; LOC.

¹⁶¹ John Pehle, Memo to Morgenthau about O’Dwyer, 1944 January 17; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 810; LOC.

simultaneously to preclude any rumors or bad publicity.¹⁶² John Pehle cabled Katzki, McClelland, and Olsen (who had just returned to Stockholm) to let them know personally and thank them for all their hard work. To Morgenthau, he wrote a letter which read in its entirety:

I cannot terminate my service as Executive Director of the War Refugee Board without expressing to you personally the satisfaction which I have derived from this task. As I know so well, the War Refugee Board would not have been established without your courage and intense interest. Nor would the War Refugee Board been able to accomplish what it has accomplished without your active daily support, as well as your ideas and inspiration. I think we have all gained a great deal personally from this experience, as well as having accomplished a great deal of good, and I want to thank you on my behalf, as well as on behalf of the many people who have benefited from the Board's activities.¹⁶³

Pehle gave a copy of the letter to Lawrence Lesser, Josiah DuBois, Ansel Luxford, and Florence Hodel. The War Refugee Board staff was dwindling. Albert Abrahamson and Virginia Mannon had left at the end of December. Joseph Friedman left in mid-January. Lawrence Lesser was designated to Procurement to help Pehle. Luxford and DuBois were busy with many other Treasury Department projects, and had never been involved in day-to-day WRB activities. Of the assistant executive directors, only Florence Hodel remained. Even though Pehle kept the same office space, he was gone too. Effective immediately, William O'Dwyer became the Executive Director of the War Refugee Board.

That day, nearly 4,500 miles to the east, the 60th Army of the First Ukrainian Front,

¹⁶² Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Letter to FDR about Pehle resignation, 1945 January 27; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 813, Document 59; LOC.

¹⁶³ John Pehle, Pehle thanks Morgenthau for the WRB, 1945 January 27; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 60, Folder 7; FDRL.

advancing along the bank of the Vistula river, arrived at the town of Oświęcim. They encountered some resistance—231 Soviet troops died trying to take the area that day—but by 3:00pm, the Red Army liberated the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. They found 7,000 prisoners still alive, people who had been left behind when tens of thousands of their fellow prisoners had been marched out more than a week earlier. They also discovered more than 600 corpses, people who had been killed by escaping SS troops or who had died of starvation.¹⁶⁴ On both sides of the ocean, Saturday, January 27, 1945, was an important day.

¹⁶⁴ Andrzej Strzelecki. *The Evacuation, Dismantling, and Liberation of KL Auschwitz*. (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2001), 219-220.

CHAPTER EIGHT: SUCH WAS THE FIGHT: JANUARY 27, 1945—SEPTEMBER 15, 1945

The last months of the war brought uncertainty and chaos. No one knew what the Nazis would do in the final moments. In the United States, relief organizations warned the War Refugee Board of a possible “sadistic orgy of violence,” a frantic massacre of all the prisoners remaining in Nazi hands and an attempted erasure of any evidence of war crimes.¹ Others worried that the Germans, suffering from wartime deprivations and the destruction caused by Allied bombings, would simply abandon the prisoners to starve or freeze to death. In Bern, Roswell McClelland heard that surviving prisoners would be taken into the *reduit* (or national redoubt)—the mountainous area of southern Germany to which the Nazi leadership supposedly planned to retreat; there, the leadership could survive for years, controlling guerilla resistance movements and releasing prisoners in exchange for concessions.² No one knew which rumors, if any, were true. The Allied armies, recovering from the Battle of the Bulge, raced quickly towards Berlin. The Red Army crossed the pre-war German border in the east, sending hundreds of thousands of German citizens fleeing in fear of retribution.

The constantly-changing wartime conditions made it difficult for the War Refugee Board to formulate and implement any plans—reliable intelligence was hard to come by,

¹ Johan Smertenko, Letter from Smertenko to O’Dwyer, 1945 March 31; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 4, Folder 27, Document 935; USHMM.

² Roswell McClelland, Notes on Musy, 1945 February 3; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 79, Folder “Negotiations in Switzerland,” Folder 2; FDRL.

and even accurate information was outdated by the time it reached Washington. The War Refugee Board staff spent these months trying to anticipate future relief needs, while still reacting to potential opportunities. Above all, the question of the post-war world loomed—what would the Allied soldiers find in Germany, and how many prisoners could possibly have survived the years of persecution? The Board, as an emergency agency, would terminate activities upon German surrender. Only then would the true horrors of the Nazi atrocities be revealed, and the true successes or failures of the Board be measured.

William O’Dwyer

William O’Dwyer had a reputation as a man who could get things done. His name, mentioned repeatedly in brainstorming sessions in the early days of the War Refugee Board as a possible first director, gained prominence throughout 1944. O’Dwyer had immigrated from Ireland at age 20 with—according to the lore surrounding him, of which there was a lot—only \$23.35 in his pocket.³ Six years later, in 1916, he was an American citizen and a beat cop, and seven years after that, he graduated from Fordham University’s law school. After years as a lawyer and local judge, O’Dwyer was elected Kings County District Attorney in 1939, where he achieved national attention for “smash[ing] the infamous Murder Inc., the underworld execution squad, whose gunmen

³ In 1986, Paul O’Dwyer published *Beyond the Golden Door*, purportedly an autobiography of his brother compiled from notes and drafts. The War Refugee Board section of the book is quite small, and largely incorrect. For example, Paul O’Dwyer writes about his brother’s involvement in the initial meetings with Vaad about Vittel, which actually occurred in April 1944, seven months before O’Dwyer became the WRB’s executive director.

were responsible for at least 85 slayings.”⁴ By 1942, he had lost two things—most of his accent, and the New York City mayoral race to Fiorello LaGuardia.⁵ O’Dwyer took leave from Kings County to join the military but, over 50 and in the midst of a political career, he was not meant for the front lines. He was assigned to various bureaucratic positions in New York and Washington—inspecting, overseeing, advising. In 1944, having been reelected easily to a second term as District Attorney (in absentia), soon-to-be Brigadier General O’Dwyer was appointed by President Roosevelt to be the American representative to the Allied Control Commission in Italy. He inspected, oversaw, and advised an increase in economic aid to the war-torn country, but Italian recovery quickly became a turf war between London and Washington, and O’Dwyer refused to return. The War Refugee Board, which both got him out of uniform and gave him a prominent wartime appointment, was the perfect solution.

For Morgenthau and the War Refugee Board staff, O’Dwyer’s sudden availability and willingness to be appointed the Board’s new executive director was a relief. John Pehle’s workload as head of Surplus Property and Procurement made it impossible for him to give the necessary time and attention to the Board’s work, particularly as many of the other Treasury staff members were also being pulled away. Morgenthau arranged for O’Dwyer and his assistant, Jerome Orbach, to be released from military work—taken “out of uniform” was the phrase—so he could assume the WRB’s directorship. Within a week, O’Dwyer proved a disappointment.

⁴ "Former Mayor O'Dwyer Dead; Prosecuted Murder, Inc., Gang", *New York Times*, 1961 November 25.

⁵ The race was not close, but it was closer than any of LaGuardia’s previous races. O’Dwyer lost by 132,116 votes, about 17 points. "La Guardia Plurality Officially is 132,116", *New York Times*, 1941 November 26.

On February 2, 1945, John Pehle wrote a long memo to Henry Morgenthau at the Secretary's request, outlining the sequence of events that led to O'Dwyer's appointment. The purpose of the memo was clearly to document the exact ways in which O'Dwyer had manipulated and deceived the Treasury Department staff to get himself out of uniform so he could resume his career in New York. When O'Dwyer had finally agreed to take the position on January 25th, after long delays in responding to Pehle's offer, everything moved quickly and the appointment was announced two days later. Carefully noting that O'Dwyer had cleared the press release as stating that he was "Kings County district attorney on leave," and was being placed on "inactive status" by the War Department (facts which are underlined in Pehle's memo), Pehle described the surprise and confusion when, two days later, O'Dwyer told Florence Hodel he was "desirous of reassuming his position as District Attorney of Kings County on February 1st."⁶ The War Refugee Board could not do very much about it. His appointment as Executive Director—and Pehle's resignation—had already been announced and received mild attention. The press reported on O'Dwyer's return to New York since, "[t]he Refugee Board post can be held by Gen. O'Dwyer without interfering with his prosecutor's duties, it is believed."⁷ On January 30th, three days after his WRB appointment and two days after the rumors appeared in the New York papers, O'Dwyer confirmed over lunch with Morgenthau his intention to hold both positions. At most, the War Refugee Board would have him three or four days a week. Morgenthau quietly retracted a suggestion to Stimson and Stettinius that the

⁶ John Pehle, Memo to Morgenthau on selection of O'Dwyer, 1945 February 3; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 816; LOC.

⁷ "O'Dwyer to Return to Office in Kings", in *The Sun*, 1945 January 29; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 24, Folder 35, Document 989; USHMM.

General—as he continued to be called—should also become the United States representative to the Intergovernmental Committee.⁸ By early February, O’Dwyer’s name already appeared in the press as a potential mayoral candidate for the 1945 election. As Pehle later put it to Morgenthau: “We were both taken in. I was taken in, and you were, too.”⁹

On January 31st, O’Dwyer informed Morgenthau’s secretary, Henrietta Klotz, that he planned to hold a press conference that afternoon: “Obviously, there can be no discussion of the details of the work of the War Refugee Board. The purpose is merely to make the acquaintance of the press.”¹⁰ At 2:30pm, the new Director answered some easy questions about the scope of the Board’s work, speculated about the number of refugees still in enemy territory, and addressed his own political ambitions, denying plans to run for mayor. The *Philadelphia Inquirer*, in an article entitled “O’Dwyer Shocks Capital by Modest Demeanor,” mentioned a “beautiful blonde secretary sitting next to him whispering the customary answers. General O’Dwyer didn’t listen to her.”¹¹

Florence Hodel was nobody’s secretary, and according to the transcript of the press conference she either provided or confirmed the answers to all the difficult questions. In the weeks and months to come, as O’Dwyer traveled and Pehle—who tried to stay involved despite his resignation—was pulled in various directions, no one worked harder or with more dedication than Florence Hodel. She was the only remaining

⁸ John Pehle, Letter to McCloy recalling O’Dwyer’s name, 1945 February 7; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 22, Folder 2, Document 127; USHMM.

⁹ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., “Personnel Meeting” transcript, 1945 March 3; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 825; LOC.

¹⁰ William O’Dwyer, Memo to Henrietta Klotz, 1945 January 31; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 22, Folder 35, Document 947; USHMM.

¹¹ *Philadelphia Inquirer*, “O’Dwyer Shocks Capitol by Modest Demeanor”, 1945 February 2; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 24, Folder 35, Document 977; USHMM.

Assistant Executive Director and the only professional WRB staff member to be there from the beginning to the end. At thirty-seven, Hodel was the oldest of three sisters, and a graduate of Wellesley and Cornell Law. She was married, unhappily, to Christopher J. Wagner, who was stationed in London as part of the American military. She rarely used her married name. After working for Legal Aid in New York in the 1930s, she came to Washington after hearing that the Treasury Department offered good jobs for female lawyers. Beginning in 1939, Hodel worked alongside fellow Cornell alum James Mann in Treasury's General Counsel's office; she was later reassigned to Pehle's staff in Foreign Funds Control and was among the first people Pehle chose for the new WRB. After January 1945, Florence Hodel largely ran the WRB office. She signed letters to the public, forwarded cables to relief organizations, and attended meetings with Morgenthau when O'Dwyer was not in town—and sometimes when he was. At a meeting in mid-February, when Morgenthau expressed his annoyance and confusion at the WRB chain of command—Pehle was still keeping him advised of most Board activities instead of O'Dwyer—Pehle reminded the Secretary that “Miss Hodel is doing a very good job. You can always rely on her for this stuff.” Morgenthau responded, “I am heavily.”¹²

Halfway through O'Dwyer's press conference, one of the reporters noted that Pehle “has been working for months on the idea that the War Crimes Commission put on the agenda war crimes against Axis nationals and that the United States come out with a clear-cut statement for the help that it would give to the War Refugee Board in its work”

¹² Henry Morgenthau, Jr., “Procurement—Personnel—Bretton Woods” transcript, 1945 February 17; *The Morgenthau Diaries*, Volume 820; LOC.

and asked if O'Dwyer would "take up the cudgels."¹³ The General confirmed his intention to do so, but fortunately, that fight had taken a turn in the days since Pehle's resignation. There had been substantial public uproar in the aftermath of Herbert Pell's forced resignation and news of the lack of a Congressional appropriation to support his work on the War Crimes Commission. Walter Winchell, on his January 28th radio program, blasted, "I declare now, in my opinion, the German war criminals may escape punishment, and that our own State Dept is largely at fault." After specifically calling out Stettinius as failing to carry on Hull's purportedly militant stance Winchell called on the American people "to stand by the graves of our murdered soldiers."¹⁴ On January 22nd—unbeknownst to the War Refugee Board staff or to Morgenthau—Stettinius, Stimson, and Attorney General Francis Biddle had submitted a memo to President Roosevelt covering the intended punishment of war criminals. Josiah DuBois, who saw the memo in Samuel Rosenman's office on the afternoon of the 27th, was relieved. There would be a military tribunal; membership in criminal organizations (like the Gestapo) would be the only necessary piece of evidence for a guilty verdict; and the plans laid out in the Moscow Declaration (to repatriate the accused to stand trial in the country where the crime took place) would take precedence. Most importantly, "[t]he conspiracy trial would comprehend the crimes against German nationals, stateless persons, and neutrals." The

¹³ William O'Dwyer, Transcript of press conference, 1945 January 31; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 25, Folder 5, Documents 401-421; USHMM.

¹⁴ Walter Winchell, Transcript of Walter Winchell radio program, 1945 January 28; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 813; LOC.

War Crimes Commission would be dissolved and give way to an American, British, and Soviet working group began building the case.¹⁵

“After persistent heckling by the press,” Undersecretary of State Joseph Grew gave a summary of this new policy on February 2nd; in London, Richard Law confirmed to Parliament that war criminals would be brought to trial and punished.¹⁶ Though few details were announced at the time, the public fervor surrounding Pell and the War Crimes Commission largely dissipated, and the War Refugee Board staff waited to see how the matter would progress. Cautiously optimistic that the State Department’s actions were in sync with the War Refugee Board’s psychological warfare campaign, the WRB staff decided that, in light of Grew’s statement, they would not send an additional cable to Secretary Stettinius, then on his way to Yalta, to press him again to have the Allied governments issue another warning. They had plied him with two sample draft warnings prior to his departure at the end of January, which the Secretary promised to take with him for consideration. The WRB resisted the urge to further press the situation. But when the Yalta Conference concluded several weeks later, the Big Three did not issue a joint warning against committing atrocities. Nevertheless, Stettinius, newly returned from Yalta, announced additional details about the intended prosecution of war crimes, confirming the memo DuBois saw. At the Inter-American Conference in Mexico City at the end of February, the American delegation proposed a resolution to, among other things, “remove the technical objection raised in some quarters to punishing those

¹⁵ Josiah DuBois, Memo to Morgenthau about the War Crimes Commission, 1945 January 29; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 17, Folder 9, Documents 849-854; USHMM.

¹⁶ Joseph Grew, Press release on war crimes, 1945 February 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 17, Folder 20, Documents 839-840; USHMM. *The Washington Post*, “War Crimes”, 1945 February 3; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 17, Folder 20, Document 829; USHMM.

responsible for a government's crimes against its own nationals such as the Nazi regime's atrocities against Jews of German nationality."¹⁷

Though Pell did not return to London, a new American representative did travel to London, but for a different international organization. After nearly a year, President Roosevelt finally filled the position of American representative to the Intergovernmental Committee. After Morgenthau submitted—and withdrew—the name of William O'Dwyer, and after Pehle and Morgenthau discussed proposing Thomas Finletter, who had recently resigned from the Office of Foreign Economic Coordinator, they decided upon Earl Harrison. A lawyer based in Philadelphia and a Roosevelt-supporting Republican, Harrison was the Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. The appointment was announced on March 16th, and Harrison went to London almost immediately to participate in IGC meetings, which focused on relief needs after the war, approving money for administrative and programmatic needs, and reviewing relief work for which the Joint was acting as a liaison.

Turkey

As the War Refugee Board staff in Washington dwindled, Herbert Katzki began closing the Board's offices in Istanbul. Harriet Bixler, the younger of Katzki's secretaries, took a job with the Office of War Information and planned to remain in Turkey, while Virginia Henderson stayed several weeks after Katzki left, just long

¹⁷ *The New York Post*, "US Defines War Criminals to Include Jews' Persecutors", 1945 February 27; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 17, Folder 20, Document 826; USHMM.

enough to make sure everything was finished, before moving back to the United States.¹⁸ Emigration from Romania and Bulgaria was a matter of bureaucracy rather than rescue, and as such no longer involved the War Refugee Board. The consulate in Istanbul assumed custody of all the WRB's property—lamps, telephones, buzzers, a desk fan, and a safe.¹⁹ Katzki dismissed his messenger, George Lazarides, and terminated coal delivery. He left Istanbul on February 19, 1945, Ankara on the 22nd, stopped for a few days in Palestine, got stuck for several more in Cairo, and finally arrived at LaGuardia airport on March 4th. The same day, he boarded a train to Washington and showed up at the Treasury Department on Monday, March 5th. Within a week, he made plans to leave the United States again.

By leaving Istanbul on February 19th, Katzki missed a dramatic episode into which he almost certainly would have been drawn. After the Turkish authorities denied the request for a ship to bring emigrants from Romania, Herbert Katzki heard the Emergency Committee in the United States had approached the Joint to request funds to purchase the *Tari*. Katzki explained to Ambassador Steinhardt he had used the information as an impetus to call Eri Jabotinsky, who “confirms what we suspected he might be up to.” Jabotinsky showed Katzki a commercial cable from Bergson promising to give wide, outraged publicity announcing that the “British have stopped emigration to Palestine from the Balkans.” Bergson told Jabotinsky to remain in Europe to set up

¹⁸ Harriet Bixler, Letter of resignation, 1945 February 9; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 60, Folder 12; FDRL.

¹⁹ Lee Metcalf, Istanbul consulate inventory of WRB property, 1945 February 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 30, Folder 8, Documents 641-642; USHMM.

committees in Bulgaria and Romania, though Jabotinsky told Katzki he anxiously awaited his visa to return home.²⁰

As he had only been in the United States on a visitor's visa, Jabotinsky needed approval from the Interdepartmental Visa Review Committee to return. On January 22nd, Stettinius told Pehle the visa would be denied, after a unanimous vote, as Jabotinsky's "activities in rescue operations, however commendable, did not necessarily constitute evidence that his admission to this country would prove of benefit to the United States." Stettinius wanted to inform Pehle before contacting Mrs. Jabotinsky, who had written multiple letters to the WRB to plead for their intervention on behalf of her husband.²¹ By denying Jabotinsky's visa, the Committee not only separated his family—his mother, wife, and infant daughter were in New York—it gave the Emergency Committee another perceived injustice to protest to the War Refugee Board.²²

On February 19th, the same day Katzki left Istanbul for Ankara, Eri Jabotinsky was arrested in his residence by the Turkish police in Istanbul, held for several days, and deported to Palestine at the request of the British government. He managed to write a document, "My Case," address it to the War Refugee Board, and hand it off to a friend who got it to Virginia Henderson at the embassy. Jabotinsky began by laying out the events surrounding his arrest, before providing a narrative of his work in Turkey that emphasized the War Refugee Board's involvement in securing him visas and travel

²⁰ Herbert Katzki, Letter to Steinhardt, 1945 January 19; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 13, Folder 6, Document 753; USHMM.

²¹ Edward Stettinius, Letter to Pehle about Jabotinsky visa, 1945 January 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 4, Documents 216; USHMM.

²² William Bennet, Memo to O'Dwyer about Jabotinsky's visa, 1945 February 13; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 4, Documents 214-215; USHMM.

arrangements for the trip. He concluded, “In view of all of the above, I submit to the War Refugee Board that it take all necessary steps to secure my return to my family in America.”²³

Even before the War Refugee Board received Jabotinsky’s letter, news of his arrest had hit the press. O’Dwyer did not want to intervene on behalf of the Emergency Committee representative, though Josiah DuBois, always more favorable towards Bergson and his group than anyone else in the Treasury Department, felt the Board had a “certain responsibility” towards Jabotinsky.²⁴ After all, when Jabotinsky left the United States, the State Department had not given any indication that he would not have been allowed to return, and stated they did not issue return visas in advance merely as a matter of policy. Morgenthau held a meeting to review a memo explaining the case and expressed the disbelief that the Board had put itself in such a difficult position: “Because why Pehle and the rest of them should have moved heaven and earth to get this fellow over is beyond me.”²⁵ Rabbi Baruch Korff—who had, over the previous year, worked with the Vaad, the World Jewish Congress, and now the Emergency Committee as somewhat of a professional annoyance—was banging around Washington on Jabotinsky’s behalf.²⁶ John Pehle did not like Baruch Korff at all and made every effort to

²³ Virginia Henderson, Letter to O’Dwyer with enclosure from Jabotinsky, 1945 February 24; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 4, Documents 211-213; USHMM.

²⁴ William O’Dwyer, Memo to DuBois about Jabotinsky, 1945 March 2; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 4, Document 193; USHMM.

²⁵ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., “War Refugee Board” meeting transcript, 1945 March 3; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 825; LOC.

²⁶ In his 1952 memoir, *Flight from Fear*, Korff described himself as one of the Board’s “unofficial consultants.” He wrote about purchasing 2,200 Latin American passports to send into Europe; took credit for the “free port” idea; suggested a psychological warfare campaign of warnings; personally met with John McCloy and convinced him to bomb the rail lines surrounding Auschwitz, the successful completion of which halted deportations [emphasis mine]; and personally bullied Morgenthau into issuing a license for the Musy negotiations. There is no archival evidence that

avoid him, mainly due to the rabbi's aggressive and deceitful tactics.²⁷ Still, Pehle admitted that it appeared "those people in the Visa Division pulled a very dirty deal," and, at Morgenthau's direction, he went to the State Department to ask whether they had allowed Jabotinsky to leave the United States knowing he would be denied the ability to return.²⁸ Though it is doubtful the State Department staff would have admitted to conspiring to get and keep Jabotinsky out, if Pehle did learn anything from the visit he never recorded it. The same day as Morgenthau's meeting, multiple newspapers reported on Emergency Committee claims that Jabotinsky had been in the midst of organizing illegal immigration to Palestine at the rate of 2,500 people per week; his arrest was surely a British move to halt immigration. Two days later, Jabotinsky's deportation was supposedly due to his involvement in Lord Moyne's assassination. With both of these excuses tenuous at best, the British released Jabotinsky in Haifa, but kept him under surveillance. Though Bergson continued to press the State Department and War Refugee Board to arrange for Jabotinsky's visa to the United States, the Board considered the Jabotinsky matter closed.

There was one last matter in Turkey, a project that had stretched for over a year with no success. In March 1945, just as Ambassador Steinhardt had feared, the Turkish government, reminded by Jabotinsky of a possible outstanding debt, placed a claim with the United States government for payment on the *Tari*, a passenger ship that the United

any of these things are true, and plenty of evidence that they are not. Baruch Korff. *Flight From Fear*. (New York: Elmar Publishing, 1953), 41-86.

²⁷ As an example, in the case of Jabotinsky, Korff tried to get a meeting with Morgenthau by having Senator Mead's office call to ask the Secretary to make the appointment. When Morgenthau's assistant pressed Mead's secretary, she admitted that the Senator had not actually made this request; Korff was sitting next to her, pressuring her to call, lie, and get him the appointment. Henry Morgenthau, Jr., "Personnel" meeting transcript, 1945 March 3; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 825; LOC.

²⁸ Ibid.

States reserved but could never purchase due to the lack of safe conduct.²⁹ Turkey asked Steinhardt for 117,500 Turkish pounds (2,500 pounds per day for 47 days, or the equivalent of \$65,300) for the reservation of the *Tari*. In his cable to Washington, Steinhardt took the occasion to blame Jabotinsky one more time, and stated his plan to defer the matter, using the excuse that there was no longer a WRB representative assigned to Turkey. The same day, coincidentally, the Board issued Steinhardt instructions to transfer all the remaining money originally sent to buy the *Tari* to Iver Olsen in Stockholm. A week later, the money was out of Turkey, and there is no evidence the United States ever paid the Turkish government for reserving the ship.³⁰

Prisoner Exchange

Eight hundred and twenty-six civilians, mainly newly-released prisoners from Bergen-Belsen, arrived in Switzerland on January 30, 1945 as part of a German-American prisoner exchange which had been in the works for more than two months.³¹ While the War Refugee Board had fought to have 75 prisoners with “unverified” protective papers included in the exchange—so as to demonstrate the validity of the papers—150 people on these protective papers arrived. They were in sorry shape. Fourteen exchangees had to be removed from the train in Switzerland and hospitalized;

²⁹ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable from Ankara about claim for the *Tari*, 1945 March 15; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 12, Folder 9, Documents 856-857; USHMM.

³⁰ Laurence Steinhardt, Cable from Ankara confirming transfer of money to Stockholm, 1945 March 2; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 17, Folder 10, Document 998; USHMM.

³¹ State Department, Press release about prisoner exchange, 1945 February 5; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 6, Folder 8, Documents 265-291; USHMM.

four more died either en route or within their first day of freedom.³² McClelland made arrangements so Rachel Fuldauer's children would not be sent to Philippeville alone while their mother remained hospitalized in Switzerland³³; other families were separated from their sick loved ones. On February 8th, the *Gripsholm* sailed from Marseilles for the United States carrying sick and wounded soldiers, as well as the "legitimate" exchangees, while 143 people, arbitrarily selected by the Germans from the Bergen-Belsen population to participate in the exchange, were sent to the UNRRA camp in Philippeville, Algeria.³⁴ Though this was the last German-American prisoner exchange of the war, there was another positive outcome to the inclusion of people with ad hoc protective papers in the exchange: some Bergen-Belsen internees on unverified papers were now identified by the Germans as exchangeable, and transferred from the concentration camp to various civilian internment camps. A Swiss inspection of the Liebenau internment camp noted new arrivals from Bergen-Belsen, who could now enjoy hot baths, food packages, a library, and educational courses.³⁵

³² Roswell McClelland, Notes on prisoner exchange, 1945 January 30; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 64, Folder 7; FDRL. J. Klahr Huddle, Cable from Bern about transport of prisoner exchange, 1945 January 30; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 16, Folder 3, Documents 228-229; USHMM.

³³ McClelland also defrayed expenses for the children, who had an uncle in Switzerland caring for them. At the end of June 1945, Mrs. Fuldauer was still in the hospital. J. Klahr Huddle, Cable from Bern about Rachel Fuldauer, 1945 January 30; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 16, Folder 3, Documents 225-226; USHMM. Roswell McClelland, Letter to Saly Mayer, 1945 February 13; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 71, Folder 9; FDRL. T.J. Hadraba, Cable from Bern about Rachel Fuldauer, 1945 June 27; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 64, Folder 9; FDRL.

³⁴ These are the exchangees on ad hoc papers, minus those hospitalized in Switzerland. unknown, List of exchangees sent to Philippeville, 1945 March 2; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 64, Folder 8; FDRL.

³⁵ George Tait, Tait sends McClelland Swiss report of Liebenau visit, 1945 March 23; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 64, Folder 8; FDRL.

The Musy Affair

A week after the exchangees arrived and subsequently left Switzerland, 1,210 prisoners were released from Theresienstadt and showed up on the border. While not exactly a surprise, as the second Kasztner group had been, perhaps only Isaac Sternbuch was confident the new influx of refugees would actually arrive. Jean-Marie Musy had promised various things over the previous months, including the rescue of the Jews who had been deported from Vittel in April, particularly Mrs. Sternbuch's relatives, and the release of thousands of Jews per week in exchange for ransom payments. However, in the three months since Sternbuch told McClelland about Musy's work, nothing had actually happened. On February 3rd, Sternbuch and McClelland met at length, and there was reason to believe something had changed. Recha Sternbuch's two brothers, Jakob and Joseph Rottenberg, had appeared on the Swiss border, having been released from the Laufen internment camp. Sternbuch excitedly reported that this was due to Musy, who had returned from Germany after meeting with Himmler, promising the "first train" of 1,200 would arrive in a few days. McClelland, though he felt the chances "highly doubtful," alerted Rothmund, head of the Swiss Federal Police, on vacation to alert him to the possibility of refugee arrival and verify that the hypothetical group would be allowed to enter, even though the United States had thus far only given assurances for Hungarian Jews.³⁶ A few days later, McClelland met with Musy himself, who claimed to be exhausted from his whirlwind trip to Germany. Musy confirmed Himmler had been receptive to the release of large groups of Jews, but wanted to make sure they would not

³⁶ Roswell McClelland, Notes on Sternbuch-Musy affair, 1945 February 6; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 70, Folder 5; FDRL.

“stir up a propaganda campaign” against Germany upon release. Musy wanted a “‘token’ payment” of five million Swiss francs deposited in a bank account in Switzerland. Later, McClelland cautioned Sternbuch that without more information—like what the money would be used for—it would be difficult to obtain a license from the United States, but Sternbuch “didn’t want to make an issue of the money question for fear of hurting M’s feelings and perhaps jeopardizing the whole program of rescue.”³⁷ It is clear McClelland was torn. In his notes on the meeting, he wrote that it was a very small amount of money, particularly if it meant the lives of thousands of people. On the other hand, Musy was not the most trustworthy person, and there was no proof that anything he said was true. Would the release of Jews be “a gesture at the last moment to obtain better treatment for Germany? (or will it be more specific, blackmail conditions)”? At the bottom of the seventh page of his meeting notes, McClelland wrote that shortly after Musy left, Sternbuch called. The first train had already arrived.³⁸

At 11:45am on Wednesday, February 7th, 1,210 Jews arrived in Switzerland and were taken to St. Gall for a security screening. They were mainly older—only 58 were under the age of 12, and 90% were between 60 and 80 years old. The group was apparently made up of volunteers; though stepping forward was always a dangerous gamble in a concentration camp, this group had gotten lucky.³⁹ Sternbuch,

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Roswell McClelland, Notes on demographics of Theresienstadt convoy, 1945 February 13; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 70, Folder 5; FDRL. In a letter to Ernest Frischer, explaining that he could not extricate individuals from Theresienstadt, McClelland explained what he knew of the group’s release: “The whole negotiations which led up to the release of these people were of a highly fortuitous nature and we here in Switzerland had no control whatsoever over the individuals chosen to come. This was, as is so often the case, a decision taken by the Germans themselves. As the story has been told to me the Commander of the ghetto of Theresienstadt simply asked the internees one Sunday night a few weeks ago who would like to go to Switzerland. At first no one volunteered since a trick was feared; then

understandably, was thrilled. To him, the transport was not only proof that Musy was a valuable collaborator but that his own willingness to take risks and incur bureaucratic ire had proven successful. He had no intention of keeping his triumph secret, and neither did the Vaad Hatzalah in New York. They held a meeting, open to the press, to announce the arrival, rejoice, and weep; the report was in the American newspapers by February 8th, with clear statement that the “release of this group was made possible by the European Executive Council of the Vaad Hatzalah.”⁴⁰ When George Warren asked for a list of the released Jews, the Vaad sent him a copy of a large poster entitled “First List of 1200 Persons...Saved by the Vaad Hahatzala Through the Efforts of its Swiss Committee” that listed all 1,210 names in alphabetical order.⁴¹ Sternbuch touted Musy’s contribution in the Swiss press, which printed articles with titles such as “Merci, M” and “Grâce á M. Musy.”⁴² Desperate to make sure that this transport really was the first of many, Sternbuch stressed to McClelland the importance of a license from the United States. Musy had promised that the money would stay in Switzerland and would never go to the Nazis, but he added one additional condition to continuing his work: Musy, and the

gradually a number of the older people said they would like to go. This movement gathered momentum until the number reached 1,200 at which point the Commander said that would be all. As a matter of fact in Switzerland we had no idea that the Jews released by the efforts of former Federal Councillor Musy, in negotiation with Himmler would come from Theresienstadt. It is my personal opinion that the Nazis chose Theresienstadt since it was comparatively simple to organize a convoy from there in a short space of time. We would personally have preferred [sic] to effect the release of Jews who were in camps where the treatment was far worse, such as Bergen-Belsen or some of the out-and-out concentration camps such as Oranienburg. My job is seeing that such releases in general take place and I cannot concern myself with the cases of certain individuals or groups of individuals, otherwise I should never 'see the forest for the trees.' My efforts go toward bettering the lot of as many persons as possible regardless of location or nationality.” Roswell McClelland, List to Ernest Frischer, 1945 March 1; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 69, Folder 2; FDRL.

⁴⁰ *New York Daily PM*, “1200 Jews Safe in Switzerland”, 1945 February 8; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 12, Document 901; USHMM.

⁴¹ Abraham Kalmanowitz, Vaad sends Warren poster of Musy group, 1945 March 26; RG-59, War Refugee Board records, Box 2, Folder: Vaad Hahatzala; NACP.

⁴² *Tribune de Genève*, “Grace a M. Musy”, 1945 February 8; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 70, Folder 5; FDRL. *Servir*, “Merci, M.”, 1945 February 11; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 70, Folder 5; FDRL.

Nazis, wanted positive press in the United States. During his meeting with Sternbuch on February 11th, McClelland scribbled, “Musy would be very happy if some kind of a press statement (White House, WRB, etc) that it is a very happy state of affairs when Germans relent and let the Jews out, Musy be mentioned as former Bundespraesident.”⁴³

Sternbuch, believing his rescue efforts validated, pressed McClelland on these two issues, both seemingly impossible: a license for four million Swiss francs for an already-publicized scheme that would easily be interpreted as a ransom payment, and positive press for the Nazis within the United States.

The license was clearly more likely. On February 14th, the WRB sent a cable to Bern indicating that the Vaad had requested a license for \$937,000 (the equivalent of four million Swiss francs; Sternbuch had found a lender for one million in Switzerland already). McClelland was asked to indicate whether Musy would agree to receive the money in an account under joint control with McClelland. Even if Musy was amenable to this, McClelland definitely was not. McClelland had already expressed to the Board his belief—shared with Sternbuch—that Musy’s negotiations on behalf of Jews were not the only reason he was going to Germany. One of the Bern legation’s informants corroborated this concern by reporting that Musy “has been charged by Himmler to get in contact with the American government to learn the conditions of peace.”⁴⁴ McClelland thought it an exceedingly bad idea to have his name linked with Musy’s in such a way, particularly in connection with such a large sum of money. On February 17th, McClelland sent a cable to the Board suggesting the money could go into a joint account between

⁴³ Roswell McClelland, Notes on Musy, 1945 February 11; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 70, Folder 5; FDRL.

⁴⁴ Dale Maher, Notes on Musy, 1945 February 10; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 70, Folder 5; FDRL.

himself and Sternbuch, but expressed concern that the Swiss would not allow any currency conversion, particularly as McClelland was already on a joint account for twenty million Swiss francs with Saly Mayer. That account might have provided something to show Musy, but, as McClelland explained, “Sternbuch, rather than ask Mayer for funds, would rather die in his tracks.” Though more than a week had passed, only the Theresienstadt convoy had yet arrived, and Musy implied this was the fault of the United States. He “intended to return to Germany on Feb. 16th to pursue negotiations, but refused to leave because Berlin (with which he claims to have been in communication) reported there has been no favorable comment in American press and no comment at all about laudable humanitarianism of Nazis in releasing Jews.” Sternbuch protested to McClelland that absence of favorable press comment in the US “may jeopardize the future success of the whole rescue program.”⁴⁵

In the United States, the Vaad asked Morgenthau to support the payment of ransom:

[O]ur Committee in Switzerland has rescued from the concentration camps hundreds of Jews and brought them to safety, by discreet use of funds. It has been the consistent policy of our Government to permit us to make funds available at all times for this purpose...All we ask is for the continued policy on the part of the Government now when it has become possible and most urgent to implement on a larger scale the policy of rescue...⁴⁶

It had decidedly not been a “consistent policy of the United States government” to allow the Vaad to make ransom payments. On February 21st, when members of the Vaad staff

⁴⁵ Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern about Sternbuch/Musy negotiations, 1945 February 17; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 70, Folder 5; FDRL.

⁴⁶ Vaad Hahatzala, Letter to Morgenthau, 1945 February 19; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 13, Document 951; USHMM.

met with O'Dwyer and Hodel, the General informed them that he would not recommend the issuance of Sternbuch's license, even though the Vaad complained that a second transport was already ready and near the Swiss border, awaiting the deposit in Musy's account. (This turned out to be incorrect.) Moreover, O'Dwyer was disturbed that the Vaad continued to communicate with Sternbuch through non-US channels (they had been using the Polish government-in-exile's diplomatic pouch to avoid State Department scrutiny of their communications) and insisted this practice cease.⁴⁷ Regarding the license, the Vaad, just as stubborn as their Swiss representative, refused to take 'no' as an answer. They reluctantly agreed to O'Dwyer's offer: a joint account in the names of McClelland and Sternbuch, with payments only permissible with signatures from both men.⁴⁸ Sternbuch disliked the plan, as he feared it would raise Musy's suspicions, but it was the only method agreeable to the War Refugee Board.

Even though he agreed with O'Dwyer's offer, Henry Morgenthau worried about the license. While the license was still waiting for clearance in the State Department, Morgenthau, at a meeting with Pehle and Hodel—O'Dwyer was in New York—ordered it to be held. He had learned the *Chicago Tribune* was working on a story: as he broadly summarized, it would be "Henry Morgenthau, the Jew, is dealing with Himmler to bring out Jews, and Jews only."⁴⁹ Thanks to the Vaad's excitement, newspapermen had contacted George Warren at the State Department about the negotiations, and the *New*

⁴⁷ Florence Hodel, Memo to the file about Musy license, 1945 February 21; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 13, Document 957; USHMM.

⁴⁸ Abraham Kalmanowitz, Memo to O'Dwyer accepting terms, 1945 February 21; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 13, Document 959; USHMM.

⁴⁹ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., "War Refugee Board" meeting transcripts, 1945 February 27; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 13, Documents 973-996; USHMM.

York Post had called the Joint, which had agreed, reluctantly, to put up the money if the Vaad could secure a license. Morgenthau was angry and worried. “[I]f the thing goes wrong—and not only the future treatment of Jews in Europe is at stake but whole question of anti-Semitism in this country, and I think that the people who are largely to blame are these Orthodox Jews that have gone ahead and not told us. They haven't the money and then they go ahead and want the money.”⁵⁰ Morgenthau called a meeting of the War Refugee Board secretaries—himself, Stimson, and Grew, standing in for Stettinius who was in Mexico City. Just in case the news broke, all of the departments needed to be informed and take the same position. At 3:15pm on February 28th, the secretaries, Hodel, Pehle, and O’Dwyer met in Stimson’s office at the Pentagon. Everything went according to Morgenthau’s plan. Stimson and Grew both agreed to issue the license, so long as it was clear that no portion of the money could ever be used to pay a ransom. O’Dwyer later noted that the rabbis would “growl”, but “if anybody is misled, it is the rabbis misleading the staff of the WRB and instead of it being the other way around, they were to be misleading us, and they led us to believe this was not for ransom.”⁵¹ The Vaad got their license, but it was under the Board’s terms.

O’Dwyer laid out the details of the license in a letter to the Vaad sent immediately after the Board meeting. Explicitly stating “[i]t was the further unanimous decision of the Board that under no circumstances could this money be used for the payment of ransom”, the letter explained that “legitimate expenses” involved in the release of the detainees—meaning maintenance and transportation costs—would be favorably considered in

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., “War Refugee Board” meeting transcript, 1945 February 28; *The Morgenthau Diaries*, Volume 823; LOC.

Washington.⁵² License W-2426 was issued the next day. Two weeks later, four representatives of the Vaad—Rabbis Korff, Kalmanowitz, and Kotler, and Irving Bunim—secured a meeting with Morgenthau to protest the license restrictions. Morgenthau, speaking frankly, explained the primacy of winning the war, the time and dedication devoted to War Refugee Board matters, and the conviction that no ransom payment could be allowed. Bunim, speaking for his group, argued “the lives involved were so important that humanitarian considerations should prevail in this case and that the saving of more lives might well be forestalled by the restrictions imposed upon the remittance in question.”⁵³ Morgenthau agreed to rescind the requirement that Sternbuch and McClelland needed to consult the Washington office prior to spending any of the money.⁵⁴ Even with the compromise, Korff accosted O’Dwyer on the street the next day, and marched his group into James Dunn’s office at the State Department to ask for additional help. Morgenthau’s secretary, Henrietta Klotz, admitted she was no longer answering Korff’s calls.⁵⁵ The Board alerted McClelland that he would no longer need approval from Washington to use money from the account, but they were unwilling to accede to any other demands.

In Switzerland, Sternbuch was upset about other things. Saly Mayer, he felt, was sabotaging Musy’s efforts; this, he believed, was why no other transports had arrived.

⁵² William O’Dwyer, Letter to Vaad about Musy license, 1945 February 21; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 28, Folder 1, Documents 13-14; USHMM.

⁵³ Florence Hodel, Memo about meeting with Vaad staff, 1945 March 13; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 28, Folder 2, Documents 41-42; USHMM.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., “War Refugee Board” meeting transcript, 1945 March 14; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 828; LOC.

McClelland clearly thought this ridiculous, jokingly calling Mayer, “you saboteur!”⁵⁶ On March 2nd, Sternbuch claimed a train would have arrived if not for the Mayer-Becher affair; on the 5th he sent a strongly-worded letter charging Nathan Schwalb and Saly Mayer of deliberately obstructing his efforts, though he could provide little evidence for the accusation.⁵⁷ (McClelland believed there was conflict on the Nazi side—between Schellenberg, working with Musy, and Becher, working with Mayer—with both sides currying favor with Himmler.) Sternbuch went so far as to alert the Vaad in New York—likely using the Polish diplomatic pouch—so they could send a protest to the Joint’s leadership. McClelland was forced to address the accusation as “grossly and flagrantly incorrect...purposely interfering with Musy's activity in behalf of rescuing Jewish deportees is the furthest thing from Mr. Mayer's mind. Saly Mayer has already been the first to applaud the success of other groups and has never displayed Musy's tendency to 'monopolize' such rescue activities.”⁵⁸

The ARBA negotiations

Since the end of January, when the WRB granted a license for twenty million Swiss francs to be held in Switzerland for Saly Mayer’s ransom negotiations with the Nazis, the discussions had almost completely stalled. Through masterful negotiation, Mayer had turned the talks towards purchasing food and material goods for prisoners in

⁵⁶ Roswell McClelland, Letter to Saly Mayer, 1945 February 28; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 71, Folder 9; FDRL.

⁵⁷ Roswell McClelland, Notes on meeting with Sternbuch, 1945 March 2; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 70, Folder 6; FDRL; Isaac Sternbuch, Letter to McClelland, 1945 March 5; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 70, Folder 6; FDRL.

⁵⁸ Frankly, if the Joint had wanted to sabotage the Musy negotiations, they could have merely refused to put up the license money for the negotiations to continue. Roswell McClelland, Letter to O’Dwyer, 1945 April 6; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 9, Documents 434-436; USHMM.

concentration camps—effectively offering to supply the Red Cross with enough funds to take over the care of those interned by the Nazis. By March 14th, Mayer considered the whole business finished, and assumed McClelland concurred. Since the Red Cross was already negotiating with the Nazis to allow more relief workers and increased aid, it made sense to allow these talks to continue rather than to carry on a negotiation between individuals.⁵⁹

Swiss refugee evacuation

Both the Mayer-Becher and the Sternbuch-Musy negotiations had resulted in the successful liberation of prisoners from concentration camps—a total of 2,873 to be exact. At the end of December 1944, the Swiss government had asked McClelland to take steps to evacuate the Kasztner groups—the two groups of Hungarian Jews who had arrived from Bergen-Belsen in August and in December. The approaching end of the war brought an influx of tens of thousands of additional refugees into Switzerland; any who could be removed should go. In the aftermath of the Horthy offer in July 1944, the War Refugee Board had promised to find alternate temporary havens for any Hungarian Jews who would be released to an initial refuge in Switzerland as an incentive for the Swiss to allow more refugees to enter. In keeping with that agreement, the Board made plans with the military to move the refugees to the UNRRA camp in Philippeville, Algeria. McClelland, whether deliberately or not, managed to keep the planned movement of the refugees a secret from the relief agencies—and the refugees themselves—until the

⁵⁹ Marcus Wyler, Letter to McClelland, 1945 March 14; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 71, Folder 9; FDRL.

beginning of February. Though the Kasztner group were almost all Zionists and wanted to go to Palestine—some even had Palestine certificates already—the British government insisted that a security check was needed, and could only be performed outside of Switzerland and before arrival in Palestine. It was best to find a temporary place where the refugees could wait, and UNRRA had held Philippeville open for just such a need. Within a day of the Musy group's arrival from Theresienstadt, the Swiss police asked if they could also be included in the evacuation plans.⁶⁰ The demographics of the Musy group made the plans for this group a little more complicated: many of the refugees were older and it would be harder to evacuate them, and there was a large contingency of Dutch citizens that the Netherlands was anxious to claim and support.

But the general plan was for evacuation—at least until the idea became public. It started out civilly. The Kasztner group, mainly living in Caux and Montreux, asked the United States to pressure the British to recognize their Palestine certificates so they could proceed directly instead of being routed through North Africa.⁶¹ It was a bad sign that McClelland had to explain the situation at length to Joseph Schwartz, as the Joint was generally the easiest relief agency with which to work. But even they needed reassurance that this was a request of the Swiss and not an idea of the War Refugee Board—and that it was the British who insisted that Palestine-bound refugees wait elsewhere for a security check.⁶²

⁶⁰ J. Klahr Huddle, Cable from Bern on arrival of Theresienstadt transport, 1945 February 8; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 45, Folder 2, Documents 154-159; USHMM.

⁶¹ Roswell McClelland, Letter to Banyai, 1945 February 10; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 10; FDRL.

⁶² Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern to Joseph Schwartz, 1945 February 15; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 2; FDRL; Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern to Joseph Schwartz, 1945 February 17; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 71, Folder 9; FDRL.

The plan to move the refugees to Philippeville turned out to be, in practice, much like the plans a year earlier to evacuate refugees from Spain to Fedhala. Dealing with UNRRA, the French, the British, the military, and the refugees themselves was a bureaucratic nightmare and McClelland, as War Refugee Board representative, was perceived to be in charge of the whole operation. In reality, nearly every aspect of the evacuation was out of his control. He could not grant the refugees permission to enter Palestine—despite receiving a barrage of letters, protests, petitions, complaints, and angry refugees in his office. The refugees stressed the number of important members of their group and the youth who had been training for Palestine. After the hell they had all been through, they protested, why was McClelland causing them further suffering?⁶³ Nothing he said or wrote could pacify the group; it was out of his hands. The British steadfastly defended their position by cabling, “This arrangement [the way the group members received Palestine certificates] was designed simply and solely to save from persecution as many Jews as possible... Consequently not much regard for the 'absorptive capacity' of Palestine was held in giving these assurances.”⁶⁴

It did not help that the details of the evacuation changed constantly. Military transport depended on answers from the Swiss government, and by the time McClelland finally got that information, the Allied armies were moving so rapidly that guaranteeing military transportation for the evacuation proved difficult. The Swiss were anxious for the refugees to leave—with Rothmund writing on February 24th and March 7th to remind

⁶³ Hillel Danzig, Letter to McClelland, 1945 March 7; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 2; FDRL; Josef Fischer, Cables about issuing Palestine visas, 1945 March 5; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 2; FDRL.

⁶⁴ John Winant, Cable from London about refugees in Switzerland, 1945 February 23; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 16, Folder 4, Documents 301-304; USHMM.

McClelland of American assurances—and many of the refugees were determined to stay until the British allowed them entry to Palestine.⁶⁵ McClelland just wanted the evacuation to commence, confiding to the British embassy in Bern, "I wish the military authorities in the Mediterranean area could get transportation organized so we could cut the whole matter short."⁶⁶

On March 12th, Major Spofford informed McClelland that evacuation could not take place before mid-April. The long delay resulted in more protests from the refugees—which now included, understandably, protests about the lack of definite transit information—as well as the involvement of new voices. Herbert Emerson wrote from London that the IGC suggested “a thorough investigation of the wishes of the Jewish refugees from Bergen-Belsen and Theresienstadt who may wish to be repatriated.”⁶⁷ It seemed logical to him that refugees wishing to remain in Europe be allowed to stay in Switzerland until the end of the war, while the refugees desiring to go to Palestine be evacuated. The Dutch government had already arranged with the Swiss for Dutch citizens in the Musy group to be exempt from evacuation until they could be repatriated to the Netherlands. The Hungarian newspaper in New York, *Egyleti Élet*, published an open letter to the War Refugee Board on the front page, expressing their “stunning shock and a most painful amazement” upon learning the refugees would be evacuated, adding, “we wonder if it would be possible for your Honorable Board to suspend and alter its decision

⁶⁵ Heinrich Rothmund, Letter to McClelland, 1945 February 24; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 2; FDRL. (450224RMCB65F2D20-21); Heinrich Rothmund, Letter to McClelland, 1945 March 7; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 2; FDRL.

⁶⁶ Roswell McClelland, Letter to MacKillop, 1945 March 8; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 2; FDRL.

⁶⁷ John Winant, Cable from London with message from Emerson, 1945 March 14; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 16, Folder 4, Documents 290-293; USHMM.

so as to comply with the yearnings of these refugees.”⁶⁸ By the beginning of April, the evacuation date was pushed again to the end of the month. The “Caux Committee” of refugees protested loudly—most complaining that they could not go directly to Palestine while others that they did not want to be forced to go to Palestine. McClelland had to demand that Jean Kopecky, a representative of the Czech government, stop spreading rumors among the refugees that the Philippeville region was ravaged by pestilence.⁶⁹ McClelland was forced to investigate the matter and received assurances from UNRRA staff that conditions were fine in North Africa. Kopecky did not apologize, instead expressing his gladness to hear that conditions were not what he had heard, and asked that the Czech refugees be exempted from the evacuation.⁷⁰ Letters poured in from various refugee agencies and individuals asking for specific exemptions. Repeatedly, McClelland explained that all of this was up to the Swiss—or, in the case of Palestine, the British. Josef Fischer, one of the leaders of the Kasztner refugee group, argued that it was illegal to remove them against their will.⁷¹ McClelland, clearly exhausted, responded that he was “personally very sorry that a solution to your problem which you find acceptable cannot be found. For me the matter remains the relatively simple one that the Swiss authorities do not seem desirous of keeping your people here and are accordingly availing themselves of previously given American and British guarantees to remove you from Swiss territory.”⁷² Saly Mayer received a “hysterical” letter from the refugee group with

⁶⁸ *Egyleti Élet*, “We Appeal to the War Refugee Board not to Transfer Refugees to Africa”, 1945 March 15; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 15, Folder 73, Documents 783-784; USHMM.

⁶⁹ Roswell McClelland, Letter to Kopecky, 1945 April 11; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 2; FDRL.

⁷⁰ Jean Kopecky, Letter to McClelland, 1945 April 13; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 2; FDRL.

⁷¹ Josef Fischer, Letter to McClelland forwarding copy of letter to von Steiger, 1945 April 12; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 2; FDRL.

⁷² Roswell McClelland, Letter to Fischer, 1945 April 17; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 3; FDRL.

“SOS” printed across the entirety of every page.⁷³

By the third week of April, the first convoy had a date—May 2nd—and completed arrangements, down to the detail that the Swiss would provide the refugees with a hot meal prior to departure.⁷⁴ Several days later, the Allied military announced the group would go to southern Italy instead of North Africa, to the UNRRA camp in Santa Maria di Bagni. Only days before the first convoy was to leave, the departure was delayed again. The French had not completed their security screening and would not allow the refugees to transit through their country. On May 1st, the new departure date was set for May 8th or 9th; on May 5th it was revised to the 15th. The Yugoslav legation in Bern asked for exemption for Yugoslav citizens; Nathan Schwalb requested a group of teenagers preparing for Palestine be exempted as well. On May 11th, departure was set for the 25th. By the 25th, it had moved to June 6th. Heinrich Rothmund—who as head of the Swiss Federal Police had constantly reminded McClelland of American promises to evacuate refugees—took a job with the Intergovernmental Committee, and in his new role immediately proposed delaying the evacuation until more details were known about the refugees’ destination. McClelland pointed out that the IGC had a representative in Rome who could provide this information and that Rothmund was "implying in a manner that is not particularly complimentary to me that proper efforts in this direction have not been

⁷³ Hermann Desider, Letter to Saly Mayer, 1945 April 18; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 3; FDRL.

⁷⁴ Roswell McClelland, Letter to Youngdahl (UNRRA), 1945 April 19; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 2; FDRL.

made."⁷⁵ Hundreds of the refugees signed petitions protesting the destination of Italy as well.⁷⁶

On May 28th, the Allied military announced the date of the first convoy was set for June 3rd, 5pm. Since the Swiss did not have an available train until the next day, McClelland insisted it be June 4th at 1pm. Responding to a particularly vehement protest from the refugees, McClelland finally unloaded his frustrations:

Your reiterated feeling that the American authorities...are purposely doing this in order to humiliate and mistreat you has no basis whatever in fact. It can only be imputed to your extraordinary and abnormal state of mind. You protest now against being removed from Switzerland, but I do not imagine that you would have protested against being removed from Bergen-Belsen; and as a matter of fact your removal from Bergen-Belsen to Switzerland was based on the certainly not harsh condition that you also be removed from Switzerland. There are two forms of discrimination: favorable and unfavorable. You now feel that you are the object of unfavorable discrimination. By the same token would you not also be willing to admit that you were the objects of favorable discrimination when rescue efforts were centered upon your group to the exclusion of a great many other fellow sufferers in similar camps in Germany?...I find your repeated protests—and I am not alone in this—singularly selfish, since you are in no way authorized to speak for the totality of the Jewish people who are to be evacuated, not even for all of those from Bergen-Belsen. And are you not forgetting your fellow-sufferers from Theresienstadt whose future is far less promising than yours? You at least know where you want to go; they do not in the main even have that comfort.⁷⁷

Two days later, the Swiss government cancelled the first convoy, as the Kasztner group threatened physical resistance at any attempt to remove them from Switzerland.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Roswell McClelland, Letter to Rothmund, 1945 May 26; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 4; FDRL.

⁷⁶ Hermann Desider, Protest letter and petition, 1945 May 27; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 4; FDRL.

⁷⁷ The emphasis is McClelland's. Roswell McClelland, Letter to Hermann Desider, 1945 May 29; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 4; FDRL.

⁷⁸ Roswell McClelland, Letter to Keeney (UNRRA), 1945 June 1; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 4; FDRL.

Food Packages

Planning the departure of the Bergen-Belsen and Theresienstadt refugees took up much of Roswell McClelland's time in the spring of 1945. He also spent quite a bit of effort on the War Refugee Board's final major project—keeping concentration camp prisoners alive long enough to be liberated. In the summer of 1944, the War Refugee Board had received the funding and arranged for the packing and shipment of 300,000 food packages—totaling almost two million pounds of food. The majority of the packages had arrived in Gothenburg, Sweden, with the final 60,672 shipped on the *Caritas II* to Marseilles at the end of the year. Transportation from the port to the actual internees in concentration camps was the final hurdle. At the beginning of January, after discovering that the Germans stopped the railcars carrying 15,000 of the Board's packages as part of an overall supply shutdown, Roswell McClelland wrote to the Board to suggest he be permitted to procure trucks. Four or five large trucks on loan to the Red Cross would permit fast, flexible distribution of packages with a greater degree of control than using German transport.⁷⁹ The War Refugee Board was inclined to agree with McClelland, and drafted a cable granting him permission to find the trucks. The War Department, however, balked at the plan. McClelland's idea would be a “precedent which would have an adverse effect on the distribution of prisoner of war packages. This Government has taken the firm view that the Germans should provide transportation for the distribution of these packages.”⁸⁰

⁷⁹ J. Klahr Huddle, Cable from Bern about securing trucks, 1945 January 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 25, Folder 2, Documents 174-176; USHMM.

⁸⁰ Florence Hodel, Memo to the file about War Department objections, 1945 February 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 46, Folder 2, Document 194; USHMM.

Even though the packages were, for the most part, yet to be distributed, the War Refugee Board planned to pack and ship 300,000 more and had obtained permission from the blockade authorities. While the American Red Cross could not do the packing, they would handle the shipping. On January 19th, Pehle sent a letter to the President, requesting the sum of \$1,125,000 from the \$85,000,000 in unallocated funds that Congress had made available to the Treasury's Procurement office as part of a Foreign War Relief fund.⁸¹ At the end of the month, Roosevelt granted this permission, so Florence Hodel and Paul McCormack, two of the only WRB staff members left, got to work on the new batch.⁸² These packages were to hold biscuits; tins of cheese, powdered whole milk, margarine, salmon or tuna, and canned meat; bars of chocolate and soap; and packages of cigarettes, multi-vitamins, and sugar cubes. This time, half the parcels would be kosher. Due to wartime regulations, McCormack had to send five pages of instructions to the Treasury Procurement officer, providing details down to the size of the cracker (whole wheat, square, in packages 4" x 2³/₄" x 2³/₄").⁸³ The Board obtained ration coupons and filled out forms to avoid having to pay tax on the cigarettes (which they later decided to eliminate from the boxes), but by the end of March, was still awaiting bids from three commercial package companies. They had also obtained permission from blockade authorities to ship a third set of 300,000 parcels if they finished this one.⁸⁴

The War Department's disapproval of Roswell McClelland's request to obtain

⁸¹ John Pehle, Letter to President Roosevelt about food packages, 1945 January 19; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 25, Folder 2, Documents 180-181; USHMM.

⁸² Franklin Roosevelt, Memo approving food packages, 1945 January 31; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 25, Folder 2, Document 150; USHMM.

⁸³ Florence Hodel, Memo to Mack about food package requirements, 1945 January 31; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 25, Folder 2, Documents 143-148; USHMM.

⁸⁴ Joseph Grew, Cable to London about expanding package program, 1945 March 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 25, Folder 4, Documents 399-400; USHMM.

trucks for the Red Cross left the War Refugee Board in a difficult position.

Transportation in Germany was becoming increasingly difficult due to wartime conditions. In mid-February, the Allied Air Forces launched Operation Clarion, an offensive designed to “deny the enemy the use of the rail system and to limit alternative movement by highway to the night hours. When the enemy has been forced to move...he has to move by road thus exposing himself to high daytime losses.”⁸⁵ By demanding that the Germans provide transportation for the War Refugee Board packages (and Red Cross POW packages), the War Department was only ensuring that the cartons would never arrive. Paul McCormack and Benjamin Akzin wrote a memo in response to the War Department’s objections, explaining that since the United States had no leverage to force Germany to transport the packages, the entire program was being placed in jeopardy.⁸⁶ On February 20th, O’Dwyer called a meeting with Morgenthau, Stimson, and Grew, and outlined the problem of providing relief inside Germany. Information reaching the Board staff indicated that while the Germans had abandoned wholesale extermination, prisoners were now threatened with death by starvation, exposure, and neglect. O’Dwyer proposed that he himself go to Switzerland to negotiate with the Red Cross and with the Swiss government to purchase food, medicine, and relief supplies; provide the Red Cross with trucks and gasoline to transport the goods; and negotiate so the empty trucks could bring released prisoners to safety in Switzerland. Though hesitant to commit American relief stocks currently in Switzerland to the program, the secretaries, including Stimson,

⁸⁵ Allied Air Forces, “Effect of Allied Bombings of German Transportation System”, 1945 February 27; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 823; LOC.

⁸⁶ Paul McCormack and Benjamin Akzin, Memo urging procurement of trucks, 1945 February 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 17, Folder 2, Documents 190-191; USHMM.

approved, and John McCloy was designated to obtain approval for trucks to distribute the War Refugee Board packages.⁸⁷

Trucks were exceedingly difficult to find. In Switzerland, the Red Cross grew desperate to secure trucks, gasoline, and tires, three things of incredible value in a country that had been surrounded by war for nearly six years. Carl Burckhardt, president of the International Red Cross, wrote to Ambassador Harrison in Bern that transportation was the decisive question to prevent the starvation of prisoners: "We are often expected to do miracles. That is of course impossible; but by exerting every nerve and applying all our will, we can do something—provided certain indispensable means for the execution of our task be furnished us."⁸⁸ In meetings with McClelland, Red Cross representatives stressed the need to send packages to the Hamburg and Munich areas—the sites of the Neuengamme and Dachau concentration camps—where they believed prisoners being moved from various camps were being collected. Again, they reminded him, "invaluable aid could be rendered to at least some thousands if a few trucks were available."⁸⁹ While O'Dwyer made plans for his trip, McClelland was instructed to explore the availability of transportation and relief supplies within Switzerland, with American guarantees that anything the Swiss lent would be replaced after the war.⁹⁰ In a letter to the Red Cross explaining the Board's plans, McClelland wrote he was "happy the War Refugee Board is really 'up on its feet'" and anticipated "full cooperation from them, particularly in the all-

⁸⁷ William O'Dwyer, Minutes of the Fifth War Refugee Board meeting, 1945 February 28; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 823; LOC.

⁸⁸ Carl Burckhardt, Letter to Leland Harrison, 1945 February 19; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 68, Folder 6; FDRL.

⁸⁹ Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern on distribution of packages, 1945 February 24; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 23, Folder 5, Documents 49-50; USHMM.

⁹⁰ Joseph Grew, Cable to Bern with information from O'Dwyer, 1945 February 23; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 17, Folder 2, Documents 163-167; USHMM.

important truck question.” He was concerned, however, that the Board had specifically noted that packages be designated for unassimilated prisoners deemed by the Nazis to be unfit—with the idea being that those who were unable to work were the most in need. Asking the Red Cross whether it would even be possible to limit distribution in this way, McClelland mused, “It will boil down to the old question of the lesser of two evils: keep people alive with small amounts of food which certainly will not directly benefit the Germans but at the same time keep people alive who are contributing slightly to the German war effort. I would vote for keeping them alive.”⁹¹

On March 7th, O’Dwyer gave a frustrated update to Morgenthau. “We have untold numbers of people dying over there. There isn’t any way in the world that I can get a pound of that food in to these people. The Army won’t release gasoline and the Swiss government won’t release gasoline. We have all the money in the world to buy trucks but we can’t get trucks, and if we get trucks, we can’t get gasoline because the Army won’t release it.” He had decided to cancel his own trip, since “[t]his is the place where arrangements have to be made,” but planned to send Hodel and Katzki—who had been back in the office from Turkey for two days—to Switzerland in his stead. At Morgenthau’s urging, O’Dwyer agreed to keep Hodel in Washington, since she was needed to run the War Refugee Board. The next day, after Morgenthau put in calls to the War Department, and after O’Dwyer and Hodel made a trip to the Pentagon, John McCloy sent a cable to General Eisenhower asking the military to provide ten five-ton trucks and between 1,500-2,000 gallons of gas weekly for the use of the International Red

⁹¹ Roswell McClelland, Letters to Red Cross, 1945 February 28; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 68, Folder 6; FDRL.

Cross. War Refugee Board staff would proceed to Allied headquarters in Paris to work out the details.⁹²

McClelland, struck with a two-week bout of influenza that took him out of commission for the first half of March, tried to keep track of package distribution. The Red Cross still had some trucks, but they were being used to transport POW packages as well; four convoys of 25 trucks crossed into Germany on March 7th. McClelland heard that the American Red Cross was sending trucks and tires by ship from the United States to France; he annotated that note with “Lucky people.”⁹³ Detailed tracking was almost impossible—Red Cross convoys were diverted and delivered packages in alternate locations, or the Red Cross headquarters in Geneva would lose track of the convoy for weeks. Some War Refugee Board packages, rather than being distributed in concentration camps, were handed out to prisoners on forced marches, discovered on the sides of roads. Still, the bottleneck was slowly breaking, but not fast enough. On March 16th, railcars containing 10,800 WRB packages left for Ravensbrück; the next day 9,600 were sent to Neuengamme. Approximately 1,170 were sent to Theresienstadt on March 23rd, and 4,900 more left for Jews doing forced labor near Vienna.⁹⁴ McClelland reported that six twelve-ton trucks had been rented. Finally recovering from his illness, he cabled on March 23rd that he would be going to Paris within the week to meet with military

⁹² John McCloy, Cable to Eisenhower, 1945 March 8; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 17, Folder 2, Documents 140-141; USHMM. Florence Hodel, Memo to the file about trucks and gasoline, 1945 March 9; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 17, Folder 2, Document 134; USHMM.

⁹³ Roswell McClelland, Notes about package transport, 1945 March 9; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 68, Folder 7; FDRL.

⁹⁴ Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern about distribution of packages, 1945 March 24; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 17, Folder 3, Document 260-262; USHMM.

representatives.⁹⁵ Transportation and gasoline were the only way to guarantee that all the War Refugee Board packages would reach their intended recipients, and the only hope for prisoners who could be brought to Switzerland on the empty trucks. Herbert Katzki, arriving from the United States, and James Mann, traveling from London, beat him to Paris.

Before he left Bern, McClelland sent a cable to the War Refugee Board about the negotiations between the Red Cross and the Nazis. In December 1944, Max Huber had resigned the presidency of the International Red Cross and was replaced by Carl J. Burckhardt. Burckhardt and McClelland had a good relationship, and when Burckhardt confided in February that he had been appointed Swiss minister to France and would need to resign from the Red Cross, McClelland suggested he request the appointment be deferred so he could continue his valuable relief work for the few imperative months left in the war. Burckhardt agreed, but the Swiss press heard of the appointment. In mid-March 1944, still in his Red Cross role, Carl Burckhardt traveled to Berlin to meet with SS- Obergruppenführer Ernst Kaltenbrunner. As a result of these negotiations, Burckhardt secured permission for Red Cross representatives to be stationed in the larger concentration camps to oversee the distribution of relief supplies. They would not be permitted to return to Switzerland until the end of the war. All camps could receive supplies by truck, provided the distribution was discreet, as German civilians were suffering from food shortages. The evacuation of prisoners might be possible, but only women, children, the elderly, and the sick. At the end of his cable to the Board,

⁹⁵ Roswell McClelland, Cable from Bern that McClelland is going to Paris, 1945 March 23; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 17, Folder 3, Document 268; USHMM.

McClelland stressed that the War Refugee Board could contribute by obtaining as many trucks and tires as possible—and by evacuating the Kasztner and Musy groups from Switzerland.⁹⁶

The three War Refugee Board representatives—Katzki, Mann, and McClelland—gathered in Paris on March 27th, 1945. It was the first time McClelland met anyone else who worked for the War Refugee Board. He was also able to speak with his boss for the first time, as the representatives made several phone calls to O’Dwyer in Washington during the week of negotiations. After several meetings with Brigadier General Morris Gilland—during which the men “made every argument available to us”—the WRB had obtained a promise of 2,000 gallons of gasoline per week, including oil and grease, and 30 truck tires.⁹⁷ They could only obtain six army trucks, but Mann informed O’Dwyer on the phone that he thought they could use some French trucks which the Red Cross had recently received. After almost a week of meetings in Paris, McClelland returned to Switzerland to arrange for the tires, which were being delivered to the French-Swiss border. In his last phone call to O’Dwyer, McClelland confided, “I hope we can keep it up, especially at this critical moment, because this is sort of the last lap now. I hope that the Army really finishes it off for us, because that's the only final solution, but if we can get in behind there and save a few of these people, why that's what we are really interested in doing now.”⁹⁸ The military delivered 30 truck tires to the border station at

⁹⁶ Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern about Burckhardt meeting, 1945 March 22; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 17, Folder 3, Documents 275-277; USHMM.

⁹⁷ James Mann, Letter to Hodel, 1945 April 9; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 17, Folder 4, Documents 403-410; USHMM.

⁹⁸ William O’Dwyer, Transcript of phone conversation, 1945 March 29; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 17, Folder 4, Documents 229-236; USHMM.

Pontarlier on Monday, April 2nd. Despite McClelland's instructions, the French refused to let the tires cross without customs paperwork, and Mann and Katzki, still in Paris, had to intervene. But the Red Cross naturally welcomed the trucks, gasoline, and tires, and McClelland was able to cable Paris that five trucks would leave for Germany that Saturday, and ten more the week after, "though geographic area still accessible is rapidly shrinking."⁹⁹

In light of the desperate need for package distribution, McClelland approved Isaac Sternbuch's request to use 500,000 Swiss francs (out of his \$937,000 license money for the Musy negotiations) to purchase food for Red Cross distribution. Earlier in the year, McClelland had assisted Sternbuch in purchasing flour in Switzerland to make matzah to send to concentration camps for the Passover holidays; the matzah was sent on Red Cross convoys into Germany. Using some of the Musy license money donated by the Joint, Sternbuch bought condensed milk, cheese, and canned fish intended for prisoners in Theresienstadt. McClelland also arranged to allow the World Jewish Congress to distribute the 39,324 kosher War Refugee Board packages that had arrived in Gothenburg.¹⁰⁰ The World Jewish Congress had struggled to find the money to send relief packages from Stockholm, though they had received permission from the Swedish government to do so. The WJC promised to distribute the WRB's packages to inmates in Bergen-Belsen and Theresienstadt. Unfortunately, this did not go smoothly. On April 9th, Hillel Storch of the WJC cabled from Stockholm. The Red Cross had dispatched 18,000

⁹⁹ Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern to Paris about customs issues, 1945 April 4; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 68, Folder 9; FDRL.

¹⁰⁰ J.E. Schwarzenberg, Letter to McClelland about transferring kosher packages, 1945 March 16; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 68, Folder 7; FDRL.

of the kosher parcels but, since the Congress wanted to keep 20,000 in Stockholm as a reserve of kosher food to distribute to rabbinical groups after the liberation of the camps, Storch wanted the War Refugee Board to give him 30,000 more packages for immediate distribution. McClelland annotated this cable with, "They have a lot of nerve!" and asked Gerhard Riegner to remind Storch that the packages remained the property of the Board and the World Jewish Congress acted only as a distributing agent.¹⁰¹ All packages needed to be sent into Germany immediately.

In the United States, the War Refugee Board staff worked on increasing the number of food packages available to the Red Cross for distribution in camps. O'Dwyer negotiated with the War Department to purchase 206,000 POW packages from their stocks in Switzerland. It was not an easy negotiation. O'Dwyer originally offered to buy 900,000 of the Department's 7,000,000, but the War Department claimed only 2,000,000 belonged to the United States and O'Dwyer was asking for too many. They finally agreed to sell 206,000 parcels, with the stipulation urged by the American Red Cross that all of them be repackaged in Switzerland prior to distribution. There could be no markings designating the packages as former Red Cross POW shipments. The Board would need to purchase and pack the food in new boxes, and maintain security on the old, unused, Red Cross boxes until they could be destroyed so that the insignia could not be repurposed in any illegitimate way.¹⁰² The Board also made progress on the second batch of 300,000 food parcels, finally entering into an agreement with the Prince Company—the same company which had prepared some of the first 15,000 War Refugee Board packages back

¹⁰¹ Roswell McClelland, Letter to Riegner, 1945 April 13; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 71, Folder 3; FDRL.

¹⁰² Harrison Gerhardt, Letter to McCloy about selling POW packages, 1945 March 30; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 25, Folder 10, Documents 987-988; USHMM.

in September—to ready them. On April 5th, President Roosevelt informed O’Dwyer that due to the “time element” he did not feel it necessary to authorize a third set of food packages; the war would be over soon and adequate aid would be available through the military and through UNRRA.¹⁰³ The Board did not see Roosevelt’s decision as a disappointment, and, the next day, also formally canceled their agreement with the Prince Company for the second set of parcels.¹⁰⁴ With the new group of 206,000 packages already in Europe, packing and paying for 300,000 more—when there was little hope they would arrive before the end of the war—seemed a waste of any further effort.

On April 6th, O’Dwyer called Roswell McClelland in Switzerland to inform him of the POW packages and to ask him about the prospects of unpacking and repacking the boxes. The news arrived at a good time, as the Red Cross thought the 60,000 WRB packages in Switzerland would probably be distributed within the next two weeks.¹⁰⁵ McClelland was also investigating how many of the Gothenburg packages had been sent into Germany via the port at Lübeck. When he asked the International Red Cross about facilities for repackaging the POW boxes, they were not as concerned as the American Red Cross had been, and wrote that in light of the desperate need, perhaps just blacking out the insignia would suffice, so as to speed the distribution.¹⁰⁶ The War Department and American Red Cross insisted on the repackaging, since “the Germans would then be encouraged to take prisoner of war packages destined for American and Allied prisoners

¹⁰³ Franklin Roosevelt, Letter to O’Dwyer, 1945 April 5; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 25, Folder 5, Document 478; USHMM.

¹⁰⁴ William O’Dwyer, Letter to Pehle for help asking Prince Co. contract, 1945 April 6; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 25, Folder 5, Document 468; USHMM.

¹⁰⁵ Florence Hodel, Memo to the file about conversation with McClelland, 1945 April 6; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 17, Folder 3, Documents 199-200; USHMM.

¹⁰⁶ Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern about repackaging POW packages, 1945 April 6; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 25, Folder 10, Document 981; USHMM.

of war, black out the symbols and labels and distribute the packages to German civilians.”¹⁰⁷ The War Department also insisted on official payment before the boxes could be turned over to McClelland. The packages themselves would cost \$762,200. The reboxing, the Board learned, would cost at least one Swiss franc per parcel and could be accomplished at a maximum rate of 2,000-3,000 parcels per day.¹⁰⁸ On April 20th, after the War Refugee Board filled out the forms and mailed the check, the American Red Cross instructed their representatives to transfer the packages to McClelland.¹⁰⁹ Three days later, the International Red Cross informed McClelland that war conditions were forcing them to cease any convoys into Germany.¹¹⁰

Stockholm

Much to his dismay, Iver Olsen returned to Stockholm in the middle of January, and despite his efforts to resign from his post as the War Refugee Board representative, O’Dwyer, with Pehle’s agreement, had asked him to remain.¹¹¹ For the most part, refugee matters had quieted in Sweden. The planned-for influx of Norwegian refugees turned out to be only about 15,000. The Lithuanian, Latvia, and Estonia rescue efforts had been over for months—though Olsen did receive the happy news that Lithuanian resistance leader Algirdas Vokietaitis, rumored to have been executed, was actually still alive in a

¹⁰⁷ Florence Hodel, Memo to the file about POW packages, 1945 April 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 25, Folder 10, Documents 961-962; USHMM.

¹⁰⁸ Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern about repackaging POW packages, 1945 April 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 25, Folder 10, Documents 964-965; USHMM.

¹⁰⁹ Basil O’Connor, Letter to O’Dwyer that packages authorized, 1945 April 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 25, Folder 10, Document 942; USHMM.

¹¹⁰ Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern about difficult package situation, 1945 April 25; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 17, Folder 4, Documents 345-347; USHMM.

¹¹¹ Joseph Grew, Cable to Stockholm requesting Olsen remain WRB representative, 1945 February 2; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 10, Documents 489-490; USHMM.

concentration camp. Olsen sent 2,000 kronor from his confidential money to a fund for his relief.¹¹²

The Vaad Hatzalah's repeated efforts to secure the release and transportation of the Mir yeshiva rabbis and students from Shanghai to Sweden continued, though they made no progress. After asking Florence Hodel to secure Swedish citizenship for the rabbis, the Vaad made more suggestions, equally impossible—for the rabbis to be released in an exchange against Japanese nationals in the western hemisphere, or for the Japanese to bring the yeshiva students out by boat, which would then meet a neutral boat that would take them to Sweden.¹¹³ At the end of March, Joseph Grew cabled Stockholm that since 1942, the matter of the Mir yeshiva “has been brought forcibly to the attention of the Department,” and asked the legation to investigate the Vaad's claims of Swedish support for their plans.¹¹⁴ On April 10th, Johnson sent a reply to the War Refugee Board, explaining all the practical reasons the yeshiva could not be evacuated. He concluded, “It is the belief of the Legation that the problem of moving the rabbinical group from Shanghai has been examined into thoroughly and that it is a technical impossibility at present. For this reason we believe that nothing can be gained through additional efforts in that direction which would merely retrace the identical steps which have already been taken.”¹¹⁵ Three days later, Abraham Kalmanowitz asked Hodel to transmit a message to

¹¹² Iver Olsen, Receipt for donation to Vokietaitis fund, 1945 March 17; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 30, Folder 1, Document 46; USHMM.

¹¹³ Abraham Kalmanowitz, Letter to Hodel about Mir group, 1945 January 31; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 9, Folder 7, Documents 827-828; USHMM; Benjamin Akzin, Draft cable to Stockholm, 1945 February 2; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 9, Folder 7, Documents 824-285; USHMM.

¹¹⁴ Joseph Grew, Cable to Stockholm about Mir group, 1945 March 27; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 9, Folder 7, Documents 815-817; USHMM.

¹¹⁵ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm about Mir group, 1945 April 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 9, Folder 7, Documents 813-814; USHMM.

the Vaad's representative in Stockholm, Wilhelm Wolbe, suggesting he look into purchasing a ship to transport the rabbis; Kalmanowitz attached his personal copy of the paraphrase of Johnson's cable to the request.¹¹⁶ He must have disagreed with Johnson's assessment. The Vaad did not give up on "rescuing" the yeshiva, but the Board was never able to help them achieve their goal.

The American Relief for Norway, the only relief agency actively sending and receiving information and funds through Olsen, was achieving quite a bit in the spring of 1945. Their representatives, Martin Tranmæl and Lars Evensen, sent food, clothing, medicine, and other relief goods into Norway to support families of those deported, people still in hiding, and people escaping into Sweden. They provided detailed monthly summaries, down the exact number and type of items purchased each month.¹¹⁷ In the United States, the American Relief for Norway was assisted by Labor's War Relief (the relief organization of the AFL and CIO) and received their allotted money from the National War Fund. In January 1945, the \$100,000 they had in the bank was not nearly enough; Olsen confirmed that the group needed at least \$50,000 monthly to carry on their valuable work. He donated \$50,000 of his confidential funds when they fell short, and eventually the labor groups in the United States arranged to transfer \$100,000 from the Polish War Relief coffers, as that money could not be sent into Poland.¹¹⁸ Beyond the Vokietaitis donation, the money for American Relief for Norway, and a few small

¹¹⁶ Abraham Kalmanowitz, Letter to Hodel asking that cable be sent to Wolbe, 1945 April 13; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 9, Folder 7, Documents 810-812; USHMM.

¹¹⁷ Martin Tranmael, Letter to Olsen with March 1945 report, 1945 April 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 18, Folder 7, Documents 598-601; USHMM.

¹¹⁸ James Brunot, Letter from War Relief Control Board urging continuance of Norway program, 1945 March 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 18, Folder 4, Documents 275-276; USHMM.

remittances to the Norwegian Church in Sweden for food packages and to sponsor home front activities, Olsen only used his confidential funds once more—to make a donation to the new Raoul Wallenberg Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief.

On January 20th, the Stockholm legation informed the WRB that reports from Budapest indicated Raoul Wallenberg was “safe and sound in that part of Budapest occupied by Russians.”¹¹⁹ The Board did not hear anything else for several months, which was unsurprising considering the Swedish legation staff in Budapest were still stuck in Hungary. On March 7th, Minister Herschel Johnson sent the WRB the text of a Swedish newspaper article interviewing a Hungarian Jew who paid tribute to Wallenberg’s heroism.¹²⁰ It was not for another month, until April 4th, that the War Refugee Board realized he was missing. From Stockholm, Olsen reported that Wallenberg had disappeared, and unconfirmed radio reports indicated he had been murdered.¹²¹ The State Department cabled Moscow to support a Swedish request to investigate Wallenberg’s fate, adding that “[t]he War Refugee Board had special interest in Wallenberg’s mission to Hungary because of his outstanding work protecting Jews and other victims of enemy oppression during the enemy occupation of Hungary.”¹²² O’Dwyer wrote a letter to Stettinius explaining the Board’s personal interest in the

¹¹⁹ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm about Wallenberg, 1945 January 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 29, Folder 3, Document 307; USHMM.

¹²⁰ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm with text of article about Wallenberg, 1945 March 7; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 29, Folder 3, Documents 308-309; USHMM.

¹²¹ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm about Wallenberg’s disappearance, 1945 April 4; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 29, Folder 3, Document 334; USHMM.

¹²² Edward Stettinius, Cable to Moscow supporting Swedish inquiry, 1945 April 9; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 29, Folder 3, Documents 336-337; USHMM.

case.¹²³ When the legation staff finally arrived in Sweden from Budapest, Wallenberg's absence was noted, and articles appeared in the Swedish and American press honoring his bravery and crediting him with saving 20,000 people in Hungary. The War Refugee Board does not seem to have ever received any information from Moscow.

Negotiations with Germans

The chaos of the final months of the war brought, as chaos always does, rumors and confusion. With the end of the war imminent and the defeat of Germany certain, any negotiation between the two sides saw both parties testing leverage. The spring of 1945 contained a spate of negotiations between German representatives and individuals in neutral countries. Most did not involve the War Refugee Board directly, but the Board staff received reports about them, and were interested in any project that might achieve results.¹²⁴

On March 7th, Iver Olsen sent a long cable from Stockholm informing the WRB he had heard a rumor the Germans were about to offer the liberation of all the Jews remaining in concentration camps, except for those doing forced labor for the German war effort. The offer was meant to be "evidence" the Nazis had not perpetrated atrocities themselves but had borne witness to crimes committed by citizens of the countries they occupied. Olsen had heard this information from Dr. Felix Kersten, a German masseur

¹²³ William O'Dwyer, Letter to Stettinius, 1945 April 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 7, Folder 4, Documents 481-482; USHMM.

¹²⁴ The WRB also heard rumors that the Dutch government was planning to pay a ransom of 1,500,000 Swiss francs in exchange for 1,500 Dutch Jews. As this seems to be the extent of their knowledge, it is not being included here. Donald Calder, Copy of MEW letter to Dutch government, 1945 March 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 20, Folder 10, Documents 671-672; USHMM.

and friend of Himmler; from Fritz Hesse, a member of the German Foreign Office newly arrived in Stockholm; and from Dr. Klaus, a Stockholm representative of Bruno Kleist, whom Olsen had met the previous summer regarding ransom issues. A few days later, Olsen met with Hesse for two hours, “on the prearranged understanding that the discussion was entirely a personal exchange of views on humanitarian problems.” Listing his humanitarian bona fides, Hesse claimed to have pressed for moderate treatment of POWs—warning Olsen that others in the Reich were disposed to exterminate them—to have argued against persecution of minorities, and to have opposed the Blitz. Hesse, stating that it was well-known in Germany that Olsen could be approached, pointed out that Allied bombings were causing widespread destruction and civilian deaths throughout Germany. At least 65% of the civilian population was homeless. He proposed to “humanize the war,” and if the Allies would refrain from targeting the civilian population, the Germans would permit all Jews to leave Germany; after Olsen inquired about the inclusion of Allied POWs, Hesse agreed to consider a massive prisoner exchange for them. After Hesse made his offer, he “made bitter comments about the Russians,” saying that the “British and Americans have very little time left to realize their fatal mistake in setting Russia up as ruler of Europe.” Regarding the Morgenthau Plan, he commented, “at least Allies supplied touch of comedy to these discussions and referred to proposals of dismantling German industry and delivering plant equipment as reparations. After all, Hesse added, “even a German child knew there no longer was any German industry.” In his cable, Olsen expressed his belief the entire discussion might have been “initiated for purposes of compromising us with Russians,” particularly as he himself had

been the topic of Communist criticism due to newspaper coverage of the Balkan rescue efforts.¹²⁵

The War Refugee Board did not get involved in other negotiations directly, but received reports from Europe as the WRB representatives heard rumors, or as relief agency representatives reported to their home offices. Lev Zelmanovits of the World Jewish Congress's London offices reported to New York that Jews might be released in exchange for clothing and blankets for bombed-out German civilians, and suggested they use the clothing supplies donated for the benefit of Bergen-Belsen internees. He also reported that Count Bernadotte, representing the Swedish Red Cross, had negotiated for Danish and Norwegian Jews to be placed in special camps under the protection of the Red Cross, and that a similar request should be made for all Jews.¹²⁶

On April 7th, Roswell McClelland met with Isaac Sternbuch and Jean-Marie Musy, as Musy had just arrived from Germany after negotiating with Himmler and Schellenberg.¹²⁷ Though Hitler had railed at his subordinates after learning of the liberation of various categories of prisoners in the press, Himmler was still willing to negotiate. He would give orders to keep feeding and not evacuate prisoners, and to surrender the camps intact to the Allied military. In exchange, he asked for assurances that there would be no "Negro occupation troops" in Germany and that the camp guards would be treated as soldiers and POWs, rather than be shot on the spot. After McClelland assured Musy that the American military did not have a practice of shooting guards

¹²⁵ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm about Olsen meeting with Hesse, 1945 March 12; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 827; LOC.

¹²⁶ John Winant, Cable from London with Zelmanovits report, 1945 March 28; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 16, Documents 938-940; USHMM.

¹²⁷ Musy liked Schellenberg and tried to convince McClelland that the United States should hire him after the war.

immediately, Musy said he would send a message to Schellenberg that “the ‘Americans’ informed him there would be little likelihood SS guards would be shot.”¹²⁸ McClelland asked for details about the size, demographics, and location of concentration camps, and suggested that SS guards wear uniforms and not offer resistance. Musy claimed to need an official answer to the entire proposal immediately. After reporting to the WRB, McClelland was instructed not to participate in any discussions regarding these sorts of proposals; instead, he tried to delay Musy, kept asking for information about the location of the camps, and waited for them to be liberated.¹²⁹

At the end of March, Felix Kersten, Himmler’s friend and masseur, reported to Hillel Storch that he had discussed World Jewish Congress demands with Himmler. Himmler had been interested in the Allied press surrounding the arrival of the Kasztner and Musy groups, and was open to the idea of moving Jews to camps under Red Cross administration, having supposedly already summoned camp commandants and instructed them to improve conditions for Jews. Himmler apparently offered to meet with a Jewish emissary from Stockholm, but Olsen warned the WRB staff that Storch should not be the man to go.¹³⁰ In the final days of the war, Norbert Masur of the local Swedish offices of the World Jewish Congress (Mosaika Församlingen) went to Berlin instead, accompanied by Kersten. After his return to Stockholm, Masur reported he had met with Himmler in

¹²⁸ In reality, some American soldiers did shoot German guards after liberation, notably in Dachau. See Jürgen Zarusky, “‘That is Not the American Way of Fighting’: The Shooting of Captured SS-Men during the Liberation of Dachau.” In *Dachau and the Nazi Terror: 1933 - 1945*. Wolfgang Benz, ed. Dachau: Verlag Dachauer Hefte, 2004.

¹²⁹ Roswell McClelland, Notes on conversation with Musy, 1945 April 10; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 70, Folder 6; FDRL.

¹³⁰ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm about Kersten, 1945 March 29; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 16, Documents 942-948; USHMM. Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm with documents about Kersten-Himmler discussions, 1945 April 3; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 16, Documents 917-928; USHMM. Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm with message from Storch, 1945 April 3; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 16, Documents 932-934; USHMM.

the early morning hours of April 21st, after the Reichsführer-SS returned from Hitler's birthday party in Berlin. Himmler "appeared in top form" and began by criticizing "the extent to which Allies had propagandized German atrocities," particularly crimes in Bergen-Belsen and Buchenwald (which had been liberated) as the camps had been "left intact to the Allies at his own command and that all he was getting in return was Allied horror stories." Masur requested all camps be left intact and under humane care until liberation, and when possible, prisoners should be evacuated to neutral areas. Himmler agreed to release 50 Norwegian prisoners; 1,000 Jewish women from Ravensbrück who would be taken to Sweden; grant Red Cross access to camps; provide lists of Dutch Jews in Theresienstadt (though there was no hope of evacuating them). Himmler also promised that no Jews would be shot; and "gave only a half promise" that Jews would not be moved from camp to camp. While in Germany, Masur saw Berlin, which was "frightfully ruined and dead" and witnessed columns of prisoners marching from the Oranienburg concentration camp.¹³¹

The Drottningholm

At the end of February, Helen Cohen, newly released from the Ravensbrück concentration camp as part of a Turkish-German prisoner exchange, arrived in Sweden. She brought with her news that quickly made its way to the offices of the Stockholm United Press and of the OWI. New York mayor Fiorello LaGuardia's sister, Gemma

¹³¹ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm with report of Masur trip, 1945 April 26; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 16, Documents 899-903; USHMM.

Glueck, was alive and imprisoned in Ravensbrück.¹³² LaGuardia, on hearing the news but unsure of any details, immediately wrote to the State Department to ask for some sort of intervention on her behalf.¹³³ Both Olsen and McClelland were asked to assist in any way possible—though McClelland was not informed of the woman’s connection to LaGuardia and was unsure why the WRB, knowing intervention for individuals was impossible, was asking him to help. On March 20th, the Stockholm legation sent the text of a letter from Mrs. Cohen to LaGuardia; she had been friends with Gemma Glueck in Ravensbrück and wanted the mayor to know that his sister was badly in need of food and vitamins.¹³⁴ The War Refugee Board was not able to do anything to assist individuals other than transmit their names to Stockholm and Bern, and try to get food packages to them. Both of those things were done for Mrs. Glueck, but the Board decided not to approach any of the Germans in Stockholm—Kleist or Kersten—to ask for specific intervention, fearing that this would result in retaliation instead.

Though no real measures could be taken to aid Mrs. Glueck in Ravensbrück, the War Refugee Board staff did have to intervene to aid Mrs. Cohen and other exchangees, who had departed for Turkey on the *Drottningholm*. Lev Zelmanovits of the World Jewish Congress sent a message to his colleagues in New York; he had visited the 137 Jewish exchangees released from concentration camps. They held no nationality documents, and many of them held very tenuous claims—if any—to Turkish citizenship.

¹³² For more on Gluck’s experiences, see: Rochelle G. Saidel, and Gemma La Guardia Gluck. *Fiorello’s Sister: Gemma La Guardia Gluck’s Story*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2007.

¹³³ Fiorello LaGuardia, Letter to Stettinius, 1945 March 11; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 7, Document 376; USHMM.

¹³⁴ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm with text of letter from Helen Cohen, 1945 March 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 27, Folder 7, Documents 360-363; USHMM.

It would be very dangerous for anyone still in concentration camps claiming Allied citizenship if Ankara to refused them entry. Zelmanovits' concerns were validated when Earl Packer of the American embassy in Ankara discovered that the exchangees had boarded the *Drottningholm* without the knowledge of the Turkish government. Under Turkish law, they would not be permitted to land or stay, even though the Turkish government "was reminded of the unfortunate effect Turkish refusal would have on public opinion in the United States."¹³⁵ The exchangees might be permitted to land with removal guarantees from the British and Americans, and the Jewish Agency quickly set to work arranging Palestine certificates for the group. The *Drottningholm* arrived in Istanbul's harbor on April 10th. As with the passengers of the *Struma* in 1942 and the *Milka* in 1944, the Jewish passengers on the *Drottningholm* were not permitted to land. They were taken off the ship and placed on another boat in the harbor, with the Turkish government claiming that they were "technically" admitted to Turkey, with the new boat serving as a temporary hotel.¹³⁶ The British finally decided that they would not take extraordinary measures to expedite Palestine visas and the group could wait to enter under quota. They were finally allowed to go ashore, and with the financial support of the Joint, awaited permission to go to Palestine. They were still in Istanbul in June.

Liberation

On the afternoon of April 9th, 1945, twenty-six-year-old Barry Ziff, along with his

¹³⁵ Earl Packer, Cable from Ankara about urging Turkey regarding *Drottningholm*, 1945 April 4; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 11, Folder 5, Documents 738-739; USHMM.

¹³⁶ Earl Packer, Cable from Ankara about *Drottningholm* refugees, 1945 April 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 11, Folder 5, Document 722; USHMM.

unit, the 550th Field Artillery, received word that there was a concentration camp in the woods about ten miles from where they were stationed. His letter to his parents that evening begins the way most letters of this sort do, with “It’s rather hard to describe something like that because you really have to see it to believe it. I know that I’ll never forget it.” Ziff described a large camp with 15,000 prisoners, all civilians, from all over Europe. In the entrance to the camp, 30 prisoners were on the ground, shot through the head and lying “in grotesque postures the way people do when they die suddenly.” A shed contained 45 to 50 stacked bodies, corpses of people who had starved to death: “Their hip-bones stuck out four inches on either side of their stomachs, and none could have weighed more than sixty pounds. They didn’t take up much more room than a dozen sacks of potatoes would have.” Ziff saw a pit with stacks of burned bodies in the woods a mile from the camp, “with arms and legs sticking out of the ground where they didn’t do such a good job of burying.” “The whole thing,” he wrote, “was gruesome beyond words and while I had heard and read about concentration camps, this one left me cold...I know that the people back in the States have no idea what’s happening over here and maybe if you would care to have this letter printed in the newspapers it would do some good, I don’t know.”¹³⁷ Ziff, along with tens of thousands of other Allied soldiers, participated in or witnessed the aftermath of the liberation of concentration camps in Germany, the vast majority of which were liberated in the four weeks between April 9th and May 9th, 1945. They would see in person what the War Refugee Board staff in Washington would not.

Three days after Ziff witnessed the newly liberated Ohrdruf concentration camp,

¹³⁷ Barry Ziff, Letter to parents, 1945 April 9; 1992.133.2, Barry Ziff collection, USHMM.

Generals Eisenhower, Montgomery, and Patton toured the camp. The visit led Eisenhower to urge all officers in the proximity of a concentration camp to allow their men to tour the camp to become eyewitnesses to the horrific atrocities perpetrated by the Third Reich.

Franklin Roosevelt

The same day Eisenhower toured Ohrdruf, President Franklin Roosevelt suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and died in Warm Springs, Georgia. After twelve years as President and more than three years of war, Roosevelt died while his country was on the cusp of a victory he had worked so hard to achieve. To those who knew him best, his health had been a serious concern for months. He suffered from congestive heart failure, memory loss, and his hands shook ceaselessly. But to the public, his death was a shock. Tributes and condolences poured in—from the Musy refugees in Switzerland; from Count Bernadotte in Sweden; from relief agency representatives; and from thousands of citizens, some of whom wrote to Morgenthau personally, knowing he and the President had been close friends. The news shook Morgenthau to his core. On his way back from Florida, where his wife, Elinor, was in an army hospital recovering from a heart attack, Morgenthau had dined with the President in Warm Springs the night before his death. In his notes on their discussion, recorded after dinner, Morgenthau wrote that Roosevelt “had aged terrifically and looked very haggard. His hands shook so that he started to

knock the glasses over and I had to hold each glass as he poured out the cocktail.”¹³⁸ To the press, Morgenthau issued a statement that read, in part, “He more than any one person is responsible, in my opinion, for the successful conduct of this terrible war against the aggressor nations. I am confident that history will recognize in him a great force for democracy and human rights. I have lost my best friend.”¹³⁹ Paul McCormack took his six-year-old daughter Irene to the roof of the Treasury building to watch the President’s funeral procession.

The Final Days of the War

The War Refugee Board’s records do not include many details about the liberation of concentration camps, even in private correspondence. The Board simply did not have much information. When McClelland cabled asking whether certain camps had been liberated, the Board suggested he contact Allied headquarters in Paris. The military were the ones liberating the camps, and once the prisoners were freed, they were no longer under the purview of the War Refugee Board. But the news of the horrors soldiers encountered in the camps—the stories, reprinted letters, radio broadcasts, photographs, and film footage—was widespread, and provided public evidence of what the Board had been fighting against. James Mann, closing the WRB’s London offices in preparation for his transfer to the Treasury Department offices in Switzerland, told Florence Hodel he had obtained pictures of concentration camps from the OWI, adding, “You may care to

¹³⁸ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Diary entry on dinner with President Roosevelt, 1945 April 11; The Morgenthau Presidential Diaries, Reel 2; FDRL.

¹³⁹ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Message for the press of Roosevelt’s death; 1945 April 12; The Morgenthau Presidential Diaries, Reel 2; FDRL.

get these pictures and see the indescribable brutality of the Germans.”¹⁴⁰ It is likely she had already seen them.

On April 24th, the United States, Great Britain, Soviet Union, and France issued one final joint warning against any further atrocities. While the War Refugee Board had not authored the statement, Hodel and O’Dwyer knew about it in advance. More than a month earlier, on March 20th, Hodel had attended a meeting at the Pentagon regarding the statement, which at that point included text indicating that any German who assists prisoners would be given special consideration and possibly favorable treatment after the war. The meeting must have been a very frustrating experience. Pentagon officials argued that “the whole program on war criminals was stupid and unrealistic,” and that mentions of Jews were specifically excluded from the text, as “Jews are in a position to get a great deal of help from people on the scene and that a statement asking for humanitarian treatment for them would serve no useful purpose at all.” Hodel, along with George Warren, insisted the text include the phrase “persons detained by reasons of race, religion, or political belief,” since the military representatives at the meeting already mandated the word “Jew” could not be used at all.¹⁴¹ The final version of the text deleted any reference to assisting prisoners and was a straightforward warning that any persons “guilty of maltreating or allowing any Allied prisoner of war, internees, or deported citizens to be maltreated, whether in battle zone, on lines of communication, in a camp, hospital, prison, or elsewhere, will be ruthlessly pursued and brought to punishment.”

¹⁴⁰ James Mann, Letter to Hodel, 1945 May 10; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 15, Folder 74, Documents 790-791; USHMM.

¹⁴¹ Florence Hodel, Memo to the file on meeting at Pentagon, 1945 March 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 4, Folder 27, Documents 899-900; USHMM.

The word “Jew” does not appear in the text. The warning was printed and Allied airplanes dropped thousands of leaflets from the skies over the remaining pieces of Nazi Germany.¹⁴²

The War Refugee Board had very little to do with the United Nations Conference in San Francisco, which opened on April 25, 1945, though they did hear from many representatives of Jewish organizations, including the World Jewish Congress and Hebrew Committee for National Liberation, who wanted representation at the conference and for immigration into Palestine to be a key issue of discussion.

As German territory shrank, camps were liberated, and peace was seemingly at hand, the War Refugee Board offices fell quiet. Remaining projects—the POW packages, the Bergen-Belsen and Theresienstadt refugees fighting evacuation from Switzerland, and final ransom offers—were all taking place overseas. Still, some bureaucratic ruts were hard to escape. Until the end of April, the Board staff continued to send the Bern legation the names of prisoners rumored to be in Bergen-Belsen so the Swiss might be able to extend protection, even after they knew the camp had been liberated. It was not until the middle of May that the WRB told the INS to stop sending the names of family members for the visa program.

In Washington, the professional staff of the Board consisted only of O’Dwyer, Hodel, McCormack, and David White, who handled the Board’s administration. At the end of March, McCormack, White, and the remaining secretaries and assistants moved from the main Treasury building to the fifth floor of the Sloane building, three blocks

¹⁴² *New York Daily PM*, “Big Three Warns Germany Against Maltreatment of POWs”, 1945 April 24; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 4, Folder 27, Document 916; USHMM.

away. William O'Dwyer, whose entrance into the New York mayoral race had been rumored since he reassumed his position as district attorney on February 1st, was in the New York papers almost every day. He refused to announce his candidacy, but after a few weeks of rumors, stopped openly denying it too. He spent more time in Washington on War Refugee Board matters than he had originally anticipated, but he was still there no more than three or four days a week. At the beginning of April, he agreed to give two speeches on behalf of the United Jewish Appeal in California on May 1st and 2nd.

Originally planning to fly, O'Dwyer decided at the last minute to take the intercontinental train, which would add several days to the trip, and insisted Hodel go with him. She had no problem traveling to California, but was unsure about the lengthy train trip. She would be out of the office for nine business days, all because O'Dwyer "wants to rest and work this thing out with me." Morgenthau had to intervene, "It's the craziest thing I have ever heard of. He's childish. Unless Pehle overrules me, and he has that privilege, you go by air." In a Treasury Department staff meeting a half-hour earlier, Morgenthau had ordered Pehle to go on vacation between May 1st and 15th, since "[y]ou never had a chance to recover from your brother and everything. You have had a bad time. You have done a swell job, so get a little rest, a little sunshine, and come back."¹⁴³ Pehle had not taken time off even after his younger brother had died in combat in France in October. So Pehle could not have stepped in, and if O'Dwyer and Hodel were also going to be out of the office for an extended period of time in May, Morgenthau would have had to deal with any problems that arose. "But suppose something breaks, what do I do? I'm carrying the

¹⁴³ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., "Group" meeting transcript, 1945 April 21; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 839; LOC.

ball. I have enough to do.”¹⁴⁴

O’Dwyer took the train, and Hodel flew. He delivered speeches in Los Angeles and in Hollywood, both very well received, and their trip seemed a remarkable success. While in Los Angeles, Hodel had professional portraits taken of herself and delivered a successful speech to a women’s group. She returned to Washington and O’Dwyer began a month-long vacation at his brother’s ranch.

By the time Hodel returned from California, the war in Europe was over. In a letter to his sons, both in the military, Henry Morgenthau described reaction to V-E Day within the Treasury Department offices: “V-E Day has come and gone, and it is hard to realize it here in Washington. When the announcement finally came, everybody took it very quietly here. Nobody left their desks, and there was no celebration in the streets at night. It really was quite an amazing performance. The people here in Washington seem to realize what a big task we have ahead of us in the Pacific.”¹⁴⁵

The War Refugee Board, as an emergency agency authorized to work only in enemy-occupied areas, would soon be over, too. On May 12th, Hodel called George Warren to inform the State Department that the War Refugee Board was planning to wind up activities as soon as possible after July 1, 1945. There were a few outstanding projects—getting the *Drottningholm* passengers to land, removing the refugee groups from Switzerland, and transferring responsibility for the Fort Ontario Emergency Refugee Shelter to another agency. But these just needed to be finished and final reports and accounting written and submitted before an executive order could terminate the

¹⁴⁴ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., “War Refugee Board” meeting transcript, 1945 April 21; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 839; LOC.

¹⁴⁵ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Letter to sons, 1945 May 10; KE 96059, Morgenthau family papers; USHMM.

agency.¹⁴⁶

A New War Refugee Board

After Florence Hodel called the State Department, she made a nearly identical call to Harrison Gerhardt at the War Department, letting him know there would likely be one more War Refugee Board meeting so the secretaries could officially vote to disband the agency. In the meantime, she would be seeking a small extension to their Congressional appropriation.¹⁴⁷ Morgenthau was out of the office giving a speech in Buffalo, NY, to open the Seventh War Bond drive, and his staff took the opportunity to discuss the future of the War Refugee Board amongst themselves. In a memo, Hodel wrote, “After I had cleared our proposed budget action with Mr. Gaston, Mr. Warren, and Colonel Gearhardt, Mr. Luxford called me to his office. He advised me that he was disturbed over the rumor that he had heard that the Board was planning to wind up its operations.” Hodel pointed out their Executive Order was clear that the Board was an emergency agency only authorized to work in wartime. Luxford understood this, but “felt very strongly that a separate government agency was necessary to handle the problems of the displaced persons in Europe and other oppressed people.” Josiah DuBois also heard the rumor the War Refugee Board was making plans to dissolve; “he did not agree with the plans and [said] that he would certainly do everything in his power to ‘knife’ them.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ George Warren, Memo of phone conversation with Florence Hodel, 1945 May 12; RG-59, War Refugee Board records, Box 1, Folder: War Refugee Board 1945; NACP.

¹⁴⁷ Harrison Gerhardt, Phone conversation with Florence Hodel, 1945 May 12; RG-107, Entry 180, Box 44, Folder: War Refugee Board, NACP.

¹⁴⁸ Florence Hodel, Memo to the file about discussion with Treasury Department staff, 1945 May 12; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 60, Folder 2; FDRL.

On May 15th, Morgenthau hosted a meeting in his office to discuss the idea of revising the War Refugee Board's mandate so the agency could continue. Luxford and DuBois argued strongly that "one of the greatest achievements of the War Refugee Board was to lift the problem of what to do with the refugees in Europe out of the realm of clerks over in the State Department into a Cabinet level where you could force decisions, where you could get some action on important problems... We weren't interested in doing this job and then folding our hands and quitting." Herbert Gaston added that the liberated prisoners were still war refugees, after all. Pehle was silent through the discussion until Morgenthau bade him to offer an opinion. The War Refugee Board's former director, as he was with almost every decision and debate, was very even-handed. The Board's work, he argued, was clear. "[O]ur job was rescuing human lives while the war was going on, and we always cut our pattern to that end." But Pehle agreed that there would be problems with the displaced persons, and what his colleagues were arguing was that a separate committee should be made so the problem did not revert to the State Department, where he thought it probably belonged. "The thing everybody is fearful of and with good reason is that the State Department isn't going to do anything." The biggest issues, they agreed, would be repatriation and the question of Palestine. At the end of the meeting, the group agreed that Hodel would go forward with her Budget request from Congress, but that they would continue to consider carrying on in some format. As with most of his meetings, Morgenthau had the last word: "I don't want this thing wound up until I have more time to look at it. Once this thing is killed, you can

never reconsecrate it.”¹⁴⁹

The group met again the next day. O’Dwyer, still in California, had submitted his resignation. This was the second time he had done so. He had tried to resign back in March when the mayoral candidacy rumors were swirling, but Roosevelt asked him to stay on a month-to-month basis.¹⁵⁰ This time, though, with the War Refugee Board’s work winding up—or, if it was going to continue, in need of a fully-committed director—Morgenthau was more willing to accept it. The others agreed, and nominated Pehle to assume the role of Acting Director, which he happily accepted.

The other topic of conversation was Fort Ontario. The fate of the refugees was still uncertain; some Yugoslav refugees had been voluntarily repatriated to Europe, but the vast majority, especially those with family in the United States, wanted to remain. Secretary of the Interior Ickes proposed a plan to at least allow the refugees more time outside the camp, but Francis Biddle, the Attorney General, shot down any proposal that was not in strict keeping with the assurances made to Congress and to the public when the refugee camp was first established.¹⁵¹ Congressman Samuel Dickstein (D-New York) was initiating a Congressional investigation of the camp, not to investigate mismanagement, but to look for a fair solution to the problem. If the Department of the Interior was willing to assume responsibility for the camp, the War Refugee Board would transfer it gratefully.¹⁵² Everyone was in a good mood.

¹⁴⁹ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., “War Refugee Board” meeting transcript, 1945 May 15; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 847; LOC.

¹⁵⁰ Florence Hodel, Memo on meeting with Morgenthau, 1945 March 23; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 831; LOC.

¹⁵¹ Florence Hodel, Memo to Morgenthau about meeting with Biddle, 1945 March 19; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 829; LOC.

¹⁵² Henry Morgenthau, Jr., “War Refugee Board” meeting transcript, 1945 May 16; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 847; LOC.

Reality set in by May 21st, and Morgenthau grilled his staff about what the proposed Board would actually do. DuBois “assumed everyone knew more or less what they would do... This agency would act as the U.S. sparkplug in the whole problem of resettlement of those displaced persons who don’t have homes to go to... primarily it would be the Jewish group. Now, you say, there’s an international organization to handle that. I say there was one to do it before, and they didn’t do it until we got a U.S. organization to do it.” Morgenthau, having had a long weekend to consider the matter, decided that even though he believed there should be a Cabinet committee, he was done. He could make a report to President Truman and give him some suggestions, but none of them would involve his continued membership on the War Refugee Board—or whatever this new board would turn out to be.¹⁵³

Two days later, at Morgenthau’s request, his staff gave him a memo summarizing the mandate and structure of the War Refugee Board and recommending “the establishment of a Cabinet Committee to deal specifically with the problem of the permanently displaced and non-repatriable groups in Europe and to handle the relations of this Government with the Inter-governmental Committee on Refugees and the UNRRA. Such a Committee might consist of the Secretaries of State, Interior, and Commerce.”¹⁵⁴ Morgenthau gave the memo to Truman at a morning meeting; Truman read it and promised to consider it.¹⁵⁵ On June 2nd, the President sent a response: “Dear Henry: I have been thinking about your suggestion of May twenty-third about the

¹⁵³ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., “War Refugee Board” meeting transcript, 1945 May 21; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 848; LOC.

¹⁵⁴ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Memo to the President, 1945 May 23; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 848; LOC.

¹⁵⁵ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Dictation of summary of meeting with Truman; 1945 May 23; The Morgenthau Presidential Diaries, Reel 2; FDRL.

Refugee program and I have about made up my mind not to appoint any committee.”¹⁵⁶

With that, the War Refugee Board continued plans to dissolve. Since Hodel could handle the details, O’Dwyer agreed to remain as nominal executive director instead of Pehle, since the Board would be officially terminated long before the mayoral election.

Winding up

The Board’s Congressional appropriation was set to expire on June 30th, and they would lose access to the remaining funds from the \$150,000 appropriation they were granted for the fiscal year of 1945. As O’Dwyer spent almost all his time in New York, it was up to Florence Hodel to appear before the House Appropriations Committee to ask for the use of \$16,000 to wind up WRB operations. The Board still had a balance of \$64,674 and sought to return all but the requested funds. Though the amount was small and approval should have been straightforward, Hodel had to answer questions about the Board’s work. Congressman Taber, who had also expressed his disapproval to Pehle when he had appeared before the Committee in November, told Hodel, "I never have been able to understand what you had to do," thought that UNRRA had charge of all refugees, and did not understand why the Board still needed a staff of eleven (mostly messengers and secretarial staff). Hodel explained that the War Crimes Commission had borrowed a great deal of the Board’s files. Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson had been appointed by Truman on May 2nd to be the American Chief of Counsel in the preparation of war crimes tribunals. Since the Board had been actively collecting

¹⁵⁶ Harry Truman, Letter to Morgenthau, 1945 June 6; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 851; LOC.

information on atrocities, his staff had been borrowing the Board's files, just as the secretaries were trying to put them all in place for final transfer to the National Archives.¹⁵⁷ As the Treasury Department staff had predicted, the Congressmen also asked about Fort Ontario. Hodel explained that the Board's overall responsibility for the camp was going to be transferred to the Department of the Interior. Two days after her testimony, President Truman signed the Fort Ontario transfer authorization.¹⁵⁸ Hodel finally received approval for the \$16,000 to be used for any expenses incurred in the dissolution of the War Refugee Board.¹⁵⁹

Earl Harrison

A week after receiving word from President Truman that he would not appoint a Cabinet committee to carry on or replace the War Refugee Board, Morgenthau made a series of calls to the State Department and War Department. He had had dinner with a number of influential Jewish friends, many of whom alerted him to rumors of a deplorable situation in displaced persons camps in Europe.¹⁶⁰ As he explained to Joseph Grew, "They say they are being treated just as badly as they were before we defeated Germany."¹⁶¹ Morgenthau thought Earl Harrison, as the American representative on the Intergovernmental Committee, should go to Europe and make a survey of the camps.

¹⁵⁷ M.C. Bernays, Message about using WRB files for War Crimes investigations, 1945 June 2; RG-226, Entry 146, Box 39, Folder: War Refugee Board, NACP.

¹⁵⁸ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Memo to the President, 1945 June 6; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 852; LOC.

¹⁵⁹ Florence Hodel, Transcript of testimony to House Appropriations Committee, 1945 June 4; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 60, Folder 2; FDRL.

¹⁶⁰ It seems the idea either originated with, or at least was led by, Meyer Weisgal of the Jewish Agency. Meyer Weisgal, Letter to Morgenthau, 1945 June 14; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 855; LOC.

¹⁶¹ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Transcript of phone conversation with Grew, 1945 June 11; The Morgenthau Diaries, Volume 845; LOC.

Both Departments were supportive of the idea, and the next day George Warren and Earl Harrison came to the Treasury Department to meet with Pehle. Harrison was eager to go and welcomed the suggestion that Roswell McClelland might come from Bern to accompany him on the trip.¹⁶² Everything happened very quickly—Warren acquired passports and visas, Grew sent a memo informing the President—and Harrison left on June 27th. In Bern, Roswell McClelland apologetically explained that he could not accompany Harrison on the tour. With the Board's permission, he had just returned from a trip to Germany and Austria himself, where he had toured the Mauthausen concentration camp, and was looking forward to finishing his work, resigning from the War Refugee Board, and taking a vacation with his family. McClelland suggested Herbert Katzki instead. In mid-April, Katzki, after leaving the negotiations with the military in Paris, had moved to Switzerland to assist McClelland. McClelland remained in the Bern office (still commuting from Geneva every week) while Katzki was permanently in Geneva. Katzki, as a former Joint representative, would be an excellent alternate choice for the Harrison trip.

Morgenthau resigns

At the beginning of July, Henry Morgenthau had an awkward meeting with President Truman, who was planning his trip to the Potsdam Conference. There had been a lot of Cabinet resignations and appointments in the previous weeks. Secretary of Labor Francis Perkins, Secretary of Agriculture Claude Wickard, and Attorney General Francis

¹⁶² Florence Hodel, Memo on meeting with Earl Harrison, 1945 June 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 8, Folder 53, Document 827; USHMM.

Biddle all resigned on May 23rd. On June 27th, it was Edward Stettinius's turn, and Truman announced that James Byrnes would be his replacement. Morgenthau had heard rumors since Roosevelt's death that he would be replaced, despite Truman's reassurances, and in light of the Cabinet turnover and his own financial policy projects—particularly Bretton Woods and the Morgenthau Plan—he wanted a public show of support from the President. Morgenthau asked Truman to state that he would remain Secretary of the Treasury until the end of the war. When Truman hesitated and would not make that promise, Morgenthau submitted his resignation. At the request of the President, he agreed to remain until after the Potsdam Conference—which raised questions of presidential succession, since Morgenthau would be next in line for the Presidency if something happened to Truman on the trip. But as the conference drew closer and it became obvious that Fred Vinson would be Truman's choice as the next Treasury Secretary, Morgenthau saw no need to delay the inevitable. His resignation already accepted, he asked Truman to put Vinson's name to Congress for a confirmation hearing. Morgenthau's resignation took effect on Monday, July 23rd, 1945. He was very upbeat about the change and kept a commitment that afternoon to appear at a luncheon for the New York State Finance Commission, who were "all very pleasant" even though he was out. He told them that he "felt as though the shackles had been knocked off my hands and my wrists and I began to feel that I was once more a free man."¹⁶³

¹⁶³ Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Letter to sons, 1945 July 26; KE 96059, Morgenthau family papers; USHMM.

Food Packages

With the War Refugee Board dissolving, there was still the question of the 206,000 POW packages that O'Dwyer had purchased in the middle of April. They had never been repackaged—the American Red Cross's insistence that they be completely reboxed had not ended when the war did, as they felt the food could be put on the black market, which would ruin the Red Cross's reputation.¹⁶⁴ In early June, O'Dwyer arranged to resell the cartons to UNRRA, who were in desperate need of food supplies already in Europe. UNRRA was willing to pay the full amount of \$762,200, which they felt was too high but understood that the Board was not a free agent to negotiate a price that reflected current, cheaper, rates.¹⁶⁵ For several weeks in the summer, no one could even find the packages, as they were mixed in with other sets, and no one was sure whether they were in Switzerland or Gothenburg. They were finally discovered in Gothenburg and UNRRA took possession of them, though the final receipts to close out the purchase did not arrive until 1946.

With the POW packages no longer a concern and the dust settling at the end of the war, Roswell McClelland was able to investigate the distribution of the Board's 300,000 packages. Despite all Red Cross transportation difficulties, and even the temporary shutdown of transit at the end of the war, nearly all of them had been delivered. The first 15,000—the ones that had gotten stuck in the German rail shutdown—were delivered to concentration camps in Germany, though the Red Cross never specified which ones. The

¹⁶⁴ William O'Dwyer, Letter to UNRRA regarding POW package requirements, 1945 June 12; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 825, Folder 10, Document 917; USHMM.

¹⁶⁵ David Weintraub, UNRRA confirms purchase price of POW packages, 1945 August 30; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 25, Folder 10, Document 929; USHMM.

legation in Stockholm supplied information about the distribution of the 224,000 Gothenburg packages, almost all of which were delivered in March. A total of 39,324 kosher packages were transferred to the World Jewish Congress and targeted for Jewish internees, mainly in Bergen-Belsen and Theresienstadt. As for the non-kosher packages, 21,600 went to Neuengamme; 13,200 were delivered to POWs to compensate for POW packages given to Norwegian civilians; 9,600 went to Ravensbrück; and 140,376 were listed as being given to civilian internees, though it is unclear whether this is a reference to civilian internment camps or to prisoners in unknown concentration camps.¹⁶⁶

McClelland had more details for the 60,571 packages originally delivered to Toulon and distributed out of Switzerland: they were delivered to a host of camps, forced labor locations, and former camps—Mauthausen, Landsberg, Uffing, Theresienstadt, Salzburg, Linz, Augsburg, and Lustenau. Though many of the packages were not delivered until after the war was over, McClelland listed the exact figures and dates for each location. Nearly 5,000 were sent for relief in northern Italy, and 5,550 were given to refugees in transit through St. Margrethen.¹⁶⁷ While the difficult circumstances had rendered many distribution details uncertain, it is clear that tens of thousands of WRB food packages were delivered to concentration camps in the final days prior to and just after liberation.

Final Projects

In Switzerland, Roswell McClelland worked to finish his final report. He would

¹⁶⁶ Herschel Johnson, Cable from Stockholm about package distribution, 1945 June 8; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 25, Folder 6, Documents 548-549; USHMM.

¹⁶⁷ Roswell McClelland, Cable from Bern on package distribution, 1945 June 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 25, Folder 6, Documents 543-546; USHMM.

take off the month of August before starting his new job with the Foreign Auxiliary Service at the American legation in Bern. Marjorie McClelland planned to work for the American Friends Service Committee in Geneva until they could find a replacement or decide what to do with the office. Having accidentally stumbled into relief work five years earlier, the McClellands were looking forward to more stability and to a job better-suited to Roswell's training. His final report, submitted on July 31st, 1945, was by far the longest, most complicated, and most detailed report submitted. Olsen's was seven pages; McClelland's was sixty-one. In it, he described all his confidential expenditures, payments he could not have shared with the Board during the war even in coded cables. He began his tome with a quotation from an Italian critic and philosopher, Giuseppe Borgese, who wrote in 1942 that, "[t]he explanation of our defeats is that we have not yet begun to fight." Once the War Refugee Board started to fight, they began to help people.

McClelland described activities, country by country. In France, the Board supported the creation of thousands of false identity cards and helped the OSE protect Jewish children from deportation, including smuggling children over the border to Switzerland. The tragic events in Hungary "will fill a volume," so McClelland summarized the deportations before describing the negotiations, relief money, and agreements that undoubtedly kept tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews alive and brought some of them to Switzerland. Slovakia was a failure; diplomatic action was difficult because the United States never recognized the Tiso government, the Swiss only had a consulate, and there was no Red Cross representative. Slovakia had been a demonstration "of the inadequacy of the weapons which we could bring to bear in comparison to those

normally available to the Germans." In northern Italy, the War Refugee Board had made financial grants to partisan groups, supported a courier service, and aided clandestine relief work. Success was limited in Germany, but McClelland funded intelligence work to discover the location, demographics, and details of various concentration camps, including whether the commandant or guards were easily bribed. In the late spring of 1945, he purchased small trinkets in Switzerland—watches and razors, for example—which were secreted across the border into Germany to pay off Germans hiding Jews in their homes. McClelland then summarized the issue of food parcels, noting that, "The principal (and formalistic) obstacle in the way of a normal flow of relief to these detainees lay in the terms of the Geneva Prisoner-of-War Convention." The Germans never saw the Geneva Convention as applying to Jews or non-Allied citizens, so it was not until late in 1943 that food packages were able to get to those groups at all. The Board's efforts to provide transportation in the final weeks of the war were extremely valuable. McClelland used his report to respond to a letter from O'Dwyer praising his work in Switzerland: "Our effort [on] behalf of the victims of Nazi persecution was a collective more than an individual one. I did my best to contribute to this larger endeavor in which all of us, both in the United States and abroad, shared."¹⁶⁸

Though Roswell McClelland submitted his final report on July 31, 1945 and took a well-deserved vacation with his family, there was one final loose end to tie up in Switzerland: the Bergen-Belsen and Theresienstadt refugees were still awaiting some sort of resolution, be it Palestine or repatriation. In early June, just days before the first

¹⁶⁸ Roswell McClelland, Final report, 1945 August 2; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 15, Folder 8, Document 860-921; USHMM.

convoy was finally set to leave after multiple delays, the Swiss government canceled the trip when the group threatened physical resistance to any attempt to take them anywhere other than Palestine. The cancellation had been sudden—Katzki was already in France awaiting the arrival of the convoy, and was sending McClelland cables to remind him that he needed verification the refugees had been inoculated and that they could not bring any “censorable” material with them in their baggage. The movement of the second planned convoy was held in abeyance.

The refugees fell into four categories: 350 Czech Jews who could remain in Switzerland pending repatriation; 350 Dutch Jews awaiting transit for the Netherlands; 1,150 Jews of various nationalities who wished to go to Palestine; and 750 Jews of various nationalities who had no ultimate destination. Since the Palestine group was refusing to leave, only the final 750 people were to be considered for Italy. Some of them were desperate to go, and begged McClelland “to manage our planned transfer into an Italian UNRRA camp at your earliest convenience.”¹⁶⁹ He had certainly been trying to do this. With the delays, the military requested the evacuation wait until mid-July, when overland rail transport between Switzerland and Italy would be once again available.¹⁷⁰ In the meantime, arrangements were made for the group planning to go to Palestine. The British were still insistent that a security screening was necessary before the refugees could leave Europe, but this could be done in Naples if the group would go to Italy for a few weeks. Once in Italy, they would be nearer to a port where a ship could take them to Palestine than they would be in land-locked Switzerland. Still, plans were being made to

¹⁶⁹ Caux committee, Letter to McClelland, 1945 June 15; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 4; FDRL.

¹⁷⁰ SHAEF, Cable from Allied headquarters about delaying transport, 1945 June 20; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 1; FDRL.

take the 750 non-repatriable, non-Palestine group to the UNRRA camp at Santa Maria di Bagni first. Until, that is, July 17th, when the Swiss formally cancelled that convoy, stating that the numbers of refugees being moved had dwindled so much—between exempting the elderly, children, the sick, and those who had decided to repatriate, or go to Palestine—that it was no longer a pressing issue.¹⁷¹

On August 20th, 706 refugees departed Switzerland at 8:00am. They traveled on a Swiss train overland via Domodossola and Novara, switching to an Allied train to Taranto, arriving around August 28th. This group, made up of the same people who had promised to physically resist—and who had sent angry letters to McClelland and to anyone who would listen protesting their evacuation—were the only ones to actually be evacuated to Italy. They waited there for several weeks, were subjected to a security screening, and arrived in Palestine as part of the September quota.¹⁷²

The Harrison Report

Earl Harrison spent most of July 1945 touring the sites of former concentration camps, some of which had morphed into makeshift displaced persons camps. He was shocked at what he found. Accompanied for part of his trip by Herbert Katzki, Joseph Schwartz, and Patrick Malin, Harrison sent cables along the way listing the immediate needs of displaced persons in Germany and Austria. The cables were so dire that Secretary of the Treasury Fred Vinson forwarded summaries to Joseph Grew so the State

¹⁷¹ Jezler, Letter from Swiss Federal Police about canceling transport, 1945 July 16; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 65, Folder 5; FDRL.

¹⁷² Leland Harrison, Cable from Bern about refugee transport, 1945 August 20; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 16, Folder 4, Document 258-259; USHMM.

Department could begin intervening immediately. Harrison urged separate camps for Jewish survivors; that the military show greater willingness to inconvenience the German civilian population in order to care for the refugees; and that UNRRA take over management of the camps immediately.¹⁷³ Hodel sent copies of the cables, and Vinson's summary, to Henry Morgenthau in New York.¹⁷⁴

Harrison drafted a report at the American embassy in London. Addressed to President Truman, Harrison's report reiterated the findings he had cabled. Many Jewish displaced persons were still living under guard in former camps with no communication with the outside world; some still only had their concentration camp uniform to wear, while others, due to lack of clothing, had to wear Nazi uniforms. There had been no effort towards repatriation, no way to seek out the fate or location of loved ones, and a worrying food and housing situation, particularly in light of the approaching winter. Jews needed to be moved to specifically Jewish camps, as their condition was worse than the others; the "plain truth" is that the Nazis recognized this group as separate, and the Allied occupying forces should too. "[I]n the days immediately ahead, the Jews in Germany and Austria should have the first claim upon the conscience of the people of the United States and Great Britain and the military and other personnel who represent them in work being done in Germany and Austria." Displaced persons should be assisted with repatriation if desired, though many wished to go to Palestine and some to the United States or other destinations. The question of Palestine needed to be answered; "[I]t is nothing short of

¹⁷³ Fred Vinson, Vinson sends Grew copies of cables from Harrison, 1945 August 1; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 8, Folder 53, Document 783-784; USHMM.

¹⁷⁴ Florence Hodel, Letter to Morgenthau with enclosures, 1945 August 2; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 8, Folder 53, Document 781; USHMM.

calamitous to contemplate that the gates of Palestine should soon be closed.” The situation was serious: “As matters now stand, we appear to be treating the Jews as the Nazis treated them except that we do not exterminate them.”¹⁷⁵ Harrison’s report was released to the press on September 30, 1945.

O’Dwyer Issues the Board’s Final Report

Before Harrison’s report was made public, the War Refugee Board released a final summary of their activities. On September 14th, 1945, President Truman signed Executive Order 9614, which took effect the next day, formally dissolving the War Refugee Board. In a press release, the White House stated that “the War Refugee Board...had succeeded in saving the lives of hundreds of thousands of innocent victims of Nazi oppression...the tremendous effort which went into the saving of these lives will have been in vain unless steps are taken for the immediate rehabilitation of these survivors of Nazi savagery, as well as for a humane, international solution to the problem of their ultimate resettlement.”¹⁷⁶

Six days after the War Refugee Board dissolved, the Board’s final summary report was released to the press. Though it was issued under O’Dwyer’s signature, the report was likely authored by Florence Hodel—as the only Board staff member working full-time in September 1945 and the only one who had been there since the creation of the Board. The report summarized the Board’s functions, personnel, and activities. It was a

¹⁷⁵ Earl Harrison, Report of Earl Harrison, 1945 August 4; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 8, Folder 53, Document 739-758; USHMM.

¹⁷⁶ M.C. Latta, White House sends copy of Executive Order and press release, 1945 September 14; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 25, Folder 7, Document 752-753; USHMM.

fairly accurate summary of the Board's activities—it perhaps overly praised the Vatican for assisting the WRB, but was rightfully critical of British obstructionism regarding many Board projects. It included the difficulties of package transportation, provided some details about the Board's finances, and described a few of McClelland's clandestine rescue efforts. Much of the press response, though, was about Palestine. The final section of the summary report, entitled "The Remaining Problem," included information about Harrison's investigation and the problem of displaced persons. It also issued a clarion call: "I am of the firm conviction, based on my experience with the War Refugee Board, the deep personal concern of large elements of our population and the ideals of the American people, that the United States government, as a matter of national policy, should initiate aggressive action at once of a United Nations solution of the international humanitarian problem."¹⁷⁷ The headlines of articles about the Board's report were split between "War Refugee Board Saved Thousands" and "O'Dwyer Urges US Action to Open Palestine."

With that, the War Refugee Board staff went their separate ways, forever connected by their experiences fighting a different war than most of the country. To a person, their last letters or last cables back to Washington expressed how privileged and honored they felt to have had the opportunity and means to try to save lives. Roswell McClelland, in his final report, concluded his narrative in a way that could serve as a summary of the War Refugee Board itself:

Such was the fight on one of the War Refugee Board's fronts, with its sorties and

¹⁷⁷ William O'Dwyer, Final summary report, 1945 September 15; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 25, Folder 4, Documents 275-351; USHMM.

skirmishes, its trenches stormed and its ground gained—and lost—in the uneven struggle to succour [sic] and to save some of the victims of the Nazi assault on human decency. Its successes were slight in relation to the frightful casualties sustained; yet it is sincerely felt that its accomplishments constitute a victory, small in comparison to that far greater one carried by force of arms, but which nevertheless adds a measure of particularly precious strength to our cause.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ Roswell McClelland, Final report, 1945 August 2; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 15, Folder 8, Documents 860-921; USHMM.

AFTERWORD

History is a continuum, and therefore any narrative bounded within a date range, like this one, will miss the ends of certain stories that might interest a reader. Though all of the War Refugee Board staff, all of the relief organization representatives, and certainly all of the surviving refugees had post war lives, a few episodes are worth mentioning in particular.

Fort Ontario

On January 17, 1946, a bus left the Fort Ontario Emergency Refugee shelter for a half-day drive to Niagara Falls, taking a group of the long-suffering refugees over the border to Canada. The group had been in Oswego for a year and a half, and the question of their eventual fate—whether they would be forcibly repatriated to Europe or allowed to remain in the United States—had loomed large the entire time. At the end of the war, some had chosen to voluntarily return to Europe, either to rebuild their homeland, search for surviving family, or out of the frustration over the continued uncertainty of being allowed to remain in America. On May 19, 1945, the shelter's director, Joseph Smart, had resigned from the government to establish the "Friends of Fort Ontario Guest Refugees, Inc.," with the goal of lobbying for the refugees to be allowed to stay. A Congressional committee called by Samuel Dickstein went to the camp, interviewed

residents, and left. Rumors flew for months. After a year in the shelter, one resident drew a cartoon for the camp newspaper, depicting the refugees arriving in the United States cheering at the sight of the Statue of Liberty, and the refugees a year later, behind barbed wire trying to see the statue through a telescope. A Department of the Interior committee went to the camp, interviewed residents, and left.

Finally, on December 22, 1945, President Truman announced that residents who would like to enter the United States as legal immigrants would be allowed to do so under the 1946 quota. The shelter residents held “an extremely gay New Year’s celebration” and early in the new year, a flurry of activities began: sugar ration cards issued, selective service forms filled out, fingerprints taken (with the shelter’s Boy Scout troop assisting the border officers), photographs for visa paperwork, interviews, and other assorted preparations. The refugees held several goodbye parties, dancing the “Holky Polky (which they had learned from British troops in Italy) with War Relocation Authority staff, immigration officials, and private relief agency workers. One of the last events at the shelter was a clothing drive, and the residents donated used clothing for displaced persons in Europe. When it came time to leave, the refugees gathered at 4:00am, had doughnuts and coffee, and made sure their paperwork checklist was complete before boarding the buses. On this day, and over the next few weeks in 1946, the refugees left in groups, were driven to the Canadian border in Niagara Falls, crossed the bridge, turned around, and entered as new American immigrants.¹

¹ Edward Marks. *Token Shipment: the Story of America's War Refugee Shelter*. Washington, D. C.: U. S. Govt. print. off, 1946.

The Morgenthau Diaries

Over the course of his eleven years in the Treasury Department, Henry Morgenthau Jr. assembled over 800 volumes. While they are called the “Morgenthau Diaries,” the books are full of cables, reports, meetings and phone transcripts, drafts, and memos. Morgenthau knew their value to historians, and to the memory of the Roosevelt administration, and took them with him when he resigned in July 1945. In 1947, Morgenthau published a series of articles in *Collier’s* magazine, written with his byline and with the aid of Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. The final article, number VI, was published in the November 1, 1947 issue and entitled “Refugee Run-Around.” For the first time, the 1943 dispute between the State Department and Treasury Department was aired in a public forum as Morgenthau, in remarkable detail, described the frustrations over licenses, the discovery of cables 354 and 482, and the eventual creation of the War Refugee Board. Though he expressed his belief that Hull and Welles had no knowledge of the State Department obstructions, he specifically and publicly named Breckinridge Long as one of the chief conspirators.² There seems to be no evidence that Long ever responded. Prior to the publication of any articles, the rumor that Morgenthau had these “diaries” and was working on a series for *Collier’s* reached the White House. President Truman had his new Secretary of the Treasury, John Snyder, demand the diaries be returned as government property. Morgenthau claimed he only had copies of memos and

² Henry Morgenthau, Jr, “The Morgenthau Diaries Part VI: The Refugee Run-Around.” *Collier’s Weekly*, 1 November 1947, pp. 22-23, 62-63.

that the transcripts were his personal property.³ He never returned them to Truman, but later donated them to the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library in Hyde Park, NY, where they remain.

The Palestine Committee

On June 11, 1946, almost a year to the day after President Harry Truman informed Henry Morgenthau he did not wish to extend the life of the War Refugee Board to cover the problems of displaced persons and resettlement, the President appointed a committee. Made up of the Secretary of War, Secretary of State, and Secretary of the Treasury, the new Cabinet Committee on Palestine was “authorized to negotiate with the British Government and with other foreign Governments and to maintain contact with private organizations relative to the various matters arising out of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry.”⁴ The inspiration was obvious.

The Hebrew Committee of National Liberation

In August 1947, the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation opened an office of the “Palestine government-in-exile” in Paris. Informing the press that the Irgun (with whom their organization was connected) did not recognize any control by the British government or the Zionists over Palestine, they announced that British military installations everywhere in the world were open targets in the war between Palestinian

³ Sidney Shallett, “Return ‘Diary’ to Treasury, Snyder Asks Morgenthau,” *New York Times*, 1947 January 28.

⁴ *New York Times*, “Cabinet Unit to Study Palestine: Truman Picks Byrnes, Snyder, Patterson—US to Discuss Troops to Aid Jews’ Entry,” 1946 June 12.

Jews and the British.⁵ Peter Bergson was arrested in June 1948, after the declaration of the state of Israel, for participation in illegal weapons smuggling on the ship *Altalena*. He went on a hunger strike before being released in August. The Hebrew Committee of National Liberation dissolved in October, claiming to have achieved its stated goal of an independent Israel.

Rudolph (Reszö) Kasztner:

In 1954, an elderly amateur journalist named Malchiel Grunwald self-published a pamphlet accusing Rudolph Kasztner of collaborating with the Nazis by not informing the Hungarian Jews of Budapest of their planned deportation to Auschwitz. Since the Jews supposedly did not know of Auschwitz or the gas chambers, there was no panic and Kasztner could include his own family, friends, and important citizens on the June 1944 transport. Moreover, Grunwald claimed, Kasztner had given positive testimony on behalf of Kurt Becher during the Nuremburg trials; due to this testimony, Becher had only appeared at Nuremburg as a witness and was never tried for any Holocaust-related crimes. Kasztner, who had immigrated to Palestine after the war and was a civil servant in the Israeli Department of Commerce, sued Grunwald for libel. The case ended up in the Israeli court system, which eventually found Grunwald innocent; in the pronouncement, Judge Benjamin Halevi noted that Kasztner had “sold his soul to the devil.” A year after the trial, in 1957, Kasztner was assassinated outside his home by members of a right-wing extremist group. The Israeli Supreme Court reversed the

⁵ *Boston Globe*, “Palestine Jews Plan Government in-Exile in Paris”, 1947 August 20.

majority of the decision in 1958, convicting Grunwald on three of the four counts and mandating he pay a fine. The memory of Kasztner is still highly controversial today. He is seen by some as a rescuer and by others as a Nazi collaborator.

Raoul Wallenberg

There have been many investigations into the disappearance of Raoul Wallenberg, particularly when archives opened after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. The exact details of his arrest, imprisonment, and death are still unknown, though most scholars agree he likely died in Soviet prison in the late 1940s.

John Pehle

At the beginning of May 1946, John Pehle resigned from the Treasury Department and entered private practice. For most of the rest of his career, he worked in the law firm of Pehle, Lesser, Mann, Riemer, and Luxford, specializing in international commercial law. Of the partners, only Karl Riemer had not been intimately involved in the War Refugee Board. At various points, the firm worked on cases for the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and on at least one case against a man accused of being a Yugoslav war criminal.⁶ They also defended Vincent Price during the “The \$64,000 Challenge” quiz show scandals.⁷ According to Lesser’s son, George, the men rarely discussed their War Refugee Board memories. In 1975, John Pehle was invited to speak at a Hillel Holocaust conference at McGill University in Montreal. The speech is

⁶ “Branko Karadzole, Consul General of the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia, and Robert W. Ware, United States Marshal, Appellants, v. Andrija Artukovic, Appellee,” United States Ninth Circuit Court, 1957 June 24.

⁷ Victoria Price. *Vincent Price: A Daughter’s Biography*. Unknown: Open House Publishing, 2014.

one of the first Pehle ever gave about his experiences as director of the War Refugee Board and, after several contentious oral history interviews in the late 1970s and early 1980s, he rarely spoke in public again. The McGill speech is particularly interesting as it occurred before the current historiography of American response to the Holocaust took hold in the public sphere. Pehle spoke about what he wanted to talk about, without any questions of why he did not discuss antisemitism in the State Department, the bombing of Auschwitz, or any of the other standard questions with which he would soon be dogged for the rest of his life.

Pehle began his speech by arguing that the years between 1933-1943, when the “United States Government did nothing of significance to assist in the rescue of Jews being persecuted” was due to the lack of authenticated information and then, when the atrocities were authenticated, to inability to believe them. The excuse given by the State Department for the directive not to forward atrocity information to the United States was that if “horrible recitals of persecutions...were published the war effort would be impeded. Looking back it seems to me that the very opposite was true. The fact that the United States was fighting Hitler’s annihilation policy helped to unite the country and gave moral purpose to the war. Contrast the divisiveness over the war in Vietnam.” He cautioned those at the conference to refrain from condemning people who had opposed publicizing atrocity stories and recounted how reporters and the OWI were initially skeptical of the Auschwitz Protocols since the details were inconsistent. “I tell you of this incident...to illustrate how difficult it is to be wise in dealing with such unbelievable acts. But there is no substitute for putting the facts on the record. When the public is informed,

I believe it will act with humanity and concern.” Pehle cited the new Freedom of Information Act as evidence of his optimism. He shared stories about the support the Board received from State Department staff, about the issue of protective papers, and about bringing refugees to Fort Ontario, which Pehle cited as a difficult accomplishment. He compared the group that was brought from Italy to New York to Hungarian refugees fleeing the revolution in 1956, the hundreds of thousands of Cuban refugees from the 1960s, and refugees from Vietnam, concluding that “I hope all this means that mankind is improving.” At the end of his speech, Pehle reflected on the lessons of the War Refugee Board:

The teaching, as I see it, is that prejudice must be fought wherever it is observed...In combatting prejudice, in striving to right wrongs imposed by racial bias, the facts must not be allowed to be kept from public view. A great American jurist, Justice Louis Dembitz Brandeis, gave us all an important guidepost when he wrote: Publicity is justly commended as a remedy for social and industrial disease. Sunlight is said to be the best disinfectant and electric light the most efficient policeman.”⁸

⁸ John Pehle, Speech to McGill University, 1975 October 22; Lesser family papers, private collection.

CONCLUSION

The War Refugee Board was—and remains—the only time in American history that an independent, non-military government agency was created in wartime and tasked with saving the lives of private citizens persecuted by the enemy. The refugees were not Americans; the vast majority never wanted to become Americans; and many in America did not want them to come, either. The United States government was only interested in the lives of these refugees because there were American citizens concerned about them, and because it was the right thing to do. The War Refugee Board had no secondary, cynical plotline, they were not maneuvering diplomatically for overseas prestige or power, nor were they seeking of political favor or influence over a minority group. People were in danger, lives were at stake, and the United States government, for all its flaws, delays, and bureaucracy, finally tried to step in to help in an unprecedented way.

The establishment of the War Refugee Board came far too late to have any impact on the lives or deaths of the vast majority of the Jews in Europe. This was understood, and commented upon, at the time. As early as 1944, journalists called the War Refugee Board's work "too little and too late" before the details of the work were even released to the public.¹ This phrase—though sometimes used more as a criticism of American response overall rather than a specific reference to the WRB—became inextricably bound

¹ Murray Frank, "WRB—Success or Failure?" *The National Jewish Monthly*, 1944 November, 88-89.

up in the WRB's legacy. Almost reflexively, historians writing about American response to the Holocaust dismiss the WRB as being too little and too late. It is an easy way to minimize the WRB's creation and work as an afterthought in a long narrative of American indifference. Reducing the Board's work to "little and late" ignores the import of the mere existence of the agency, not to mention their rescue efforts in Europe, however minor they were in comparison to the determination of the Nazis to murder Jews.

Within the context of what was possible at the time, I categorically reject the notion that the Board's work was "too little." The archival evidence demonstrates that every idea proposed to them, so long as it was feasible, was explored. The WRB existed for the last sixteen months of the war and for four months after. With the benefit of hindsight, access to far more information than the Board staff, and many more years with which to ponder these issues, I have not been able to come up with a feasible way the WRB could have been more effective. Without exploring counterfactuals (the abolition of the White Paper, for instance), the War Refugee Board staff did all they could within the realm of possibility and the reach of their knowledge.

The War Refugee Board is also frequently dismissed as being "too late"—too late to save lives, too late to do any good, too late to matter in the story of American response to the Holocaust. Those who argue that the WRB was "too late," need to reckon with the likely reality of an hypothetical agency established years earlier. Had the Board been established in 1942, it would have been another alphabet soup agency within the control of the State Department and without popular support for relief action—not unlike the

President's Advisory Committee on Political Refugees, which is rightfully nearly forgotten now. It would have had little leverage with the neutral nations in Europe, and even if the same dedicated staff had been involved, probably could have accomplished very little. As information about atrocities began to flow out of Europe, those in government who were interested in quieting agitators seeking for an official response could have pointed to the establishment of this new agency within the State Department as evidence of governmental interest. It was the convergence of popular—and therefore Congressional—support led by the Bergson group, and the battle between the State Department and the Treasury Department over licenses that led to the War Refugee Board. The particular circumstances of the winter of 1943-1944 meant that Morgenthau and his staff could successfully argue the importance of a radical change. The War Refugee Board had teeth because it was established outside of the State Department and in 1944. Any agency established earlier would have likely been much weaker.

The War Refugee Board took the tools of bureaucracy—the same tools that caused red tape, delays, obstructions, and complications—and harnessed them towards rescue. The Executive Order establishing the War Refugee Board codified American policy as supporting the relief and rescue of Jews and other persecuted minorities; the international dissemination of this policy indicated to governments that people and agencies working on relief matters had the implied support of the United States. The appointment of War Refugee Board representatives in neutral nations gave relief organization representatives in those countries a liaison through whom suggestions, petitions, and protests could be quickly channeled to the upper echelons of government.

The War Refugee Board representatives could coordinate the efforts of private organizations, providing institutional and bureaucratic support and streamlining financial transactions to achieve mutually desired success. The Board's rules and restrictions were not always popular—indeed, the Vaad struggled with the WRB's refusal to allow ransom payments for example, and the World Jewish Congress questioned the Board's priorities—but these policies kept all relief work focused in one direction and ensured continued support from the host neutral nation. Too often “bureaucracy” is seen only as a hindrance—which it certainly can be, as State Department actions in 1943 shows—but the War Refugee Board stands as an example of how bureaucratic means and methods aimed in the right direction could achieve results.

The simplistic idea that the United States did nothing to “stop” the Holocaust or to “rescue” Jews is pervasive in popular culture, and is an implication in many scholarly books as well. It is untrue. While there are serious questions to discuss and debates to have over the actions that could have been taken in the 1930s and early years of the war, particularly in regards to immigration, the creation of the War Refugee Board—a purely American government program—in January 1944 fundamentally improved the possibilities for relief and rescue in Europe. It is difficult to divorce the impact of the War Refugee Board's work from the impact of Allied military victories, but the fact remains that far more attention and dedication was paid to humanitarian efforts during 1944-1945 than at any other part of the war.

The American responses to Nazi genocide—and there were many, not just one—are not a clear, black and white issue, and should not be dismissed as a stain on American

history. The Nazis and their collaborators murdered the Jews and other groups, not the United States, despite the implied or stated conclusions of some historians. The Holocaust did not occur because the United States was silent; rather, the Holocaust happened because the Nazis wanted to kill Jews, and had more access, control, and will over and against them than the Allied nations had to protect them. The success of War Refugee Board in preventing or mitigating atrocities, or in providing relief and means of rescue for potential victims, is up for debate. But the War Refugee Board existed, and the staff worked ceaselessly to save lives during the final months of the Holocaust. In the realm of the moral and practical, that matters. It did in 1944 and 1945, and it does now.

APPENDIX A: THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE “RESCUED” BY THE WAR REFUGEE BOARD

Determining the exact number—or even an estimate—of people “rescued” or “saved” by the War Refugee Board is impossible. I have not attempted to do so—and will not do so—in this text. The Board supported the work of numerous private relief organizations, placed a great emphasis on psychological warfare, and initiated projects designed to aid as many people as possible. None of these goals are conducive to formulating accurate statistics of “rescue.” In *Abandonment of the Jews*, David Wyman claimed that the War Refugee Board “managed to help save approximately 200,000 Jews and more than 20,000 non-Jews,” and this number—200,000—has been used by other historians in almost every description of the War Refugee Board, most without the caveats of “to help” or “approximately” which Wyman used in 1984. The accepted knowledge is that the WRB saved 200,000 lives. It is a vast overestimation to an incredibly flawed question.

In the War Refugee Board’s final report, the author (likely Florence Hodel) attempted to summarize the agency’s impact:

The accomplishments of the Board cannot be evaluated in terms of exact statistics, but it is clear, however, that hundreds of thousands of persons as well as the tens of thousands who were rescued through activities organized by the Board, continued to live and resist as a result of its vigorous and unremitting efforts, until

the might of the Allied armies finally saved them and the millions of others who survived the Nazi holocaust."¹

The report claimed that the War Refugee Board, through their activities, rescued “tens of thousands” and sustained “hundreds of thousands” who continued to live and resist until liberation. The text never provides a definition of what the Board meant by “rescue” and indeed, this lack of definition is one of the fundamental problems in determining statistics.²

The War Refugee Board staff did not publicly attempt to count the number of those “saved” in their final summary documents and, behind the scenes, only produced one report on the matter. In February 1945, Paul McCormack sent William O’Dwyer, newly appointed as the Board’s executive director, a memo entitled “Number of Persons Rescued Since the Establishment of the War Refugee Board.” Here are his statistics:

Romania to Turkey: 6,527
Bulgaria to Turkey: 448
To North Africa (Fedhala): 906
To North Africa (Philippeville): 400
To Middle East: 45,000
To Palestine: 10,000
Italy to the United States (Fort Ontario): 985
Within Yugoslavia: 4,840
To Switzerland: 9,172 (plus several thousand in early 1944)
Hungary to Romania: 2,000
Occupied to liberated Slovakia: 250
Greece via Turkey to Middle East: 250
Transnistria to Romania: 48,000
Spain to Portugal: 1,532
France to Spain: 2,638

¹ WRB staff, “History of the War Refugee Board,” Volume 1, 1945; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 27, Folder 17, Document 575; USHMM.

² For those interested in an examination of the concept and use of the word “rescue” in the context of the Holocaust, I suggest Dan Michman’s chapter, “Elucidation of the Concept of ‘Rescue During the Holocaust’” in Dan Michman. *Holocaust Historiography: A Jewish Perspective: Conceptualizations, Terminology, Approaches, and Fundamental Issues*. (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), 179-204.

Norway, Finland, Baltic areas to Sweden: 4,770
Yugoslavia to Italy: 11,229
Protective Documents in Hungary: 14,000
Latin American passport recognition: 1,000
Spanish Sephardic Recognition: 555
Portuguese Sephardic Recognition: 400
Restoration of Turkish citizenship to certain Jews: 700
Exchange (actual or lot improved): 1,000
United States visas: 4,350

Total: 126,604³

McCormack's list could be interpreted as "persons rescued" in general over the previous year, or he could have been implying that these were people rescued as a result of WRB work. Some of the items on the list resulted from War Refugee Board efforts—"Italy to the United States (Fort Ontario)" for example. Others, such as "bringing Yugoslav refugees to the Middle East (Egypt)", a reference to the UNRRA-established refugee camps in Egypt, were certainly not. McCormack's statistics—and Hodel's later summary—fail to describe what the WRB meant by "rescue," but, based on the list, the WRB staff considered themselves to have "rescued" any persons affected in a positive way by the War Refugee Board's activities, whether or not these activities ultimately led to their escape or saved their lives.

Though he also does not give a definition of "rescue" or "save," David Wyman proclaimed in *The Abandonment of the Jews* that the WRB helped to save 200,000 Jews and more than 20,000 non-Jews. In a footnote, Wyman broke down his estimate as follows:⁴

³ Paul McCormack, "Number of Persons Rescued Since the Establishment of the War Refugee Board, 1945 February 19; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 25, Folder 5, Document 392-395; USHMM.

⁴ David Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), xiv and pg 405, fn 129.

Evacuated from Axis territory: 15,000 Jews and 20,000 non-Jews
Protected by WRB-financed underground and Latin American passports: 10,000
(and probably thousands more)
Transnistria: 48,000
Budapest: 120,000
Evacuation via Turkey: 4,000-5,000
Evacuation via Spain: 1,000
Evacuation from Finland: 150
Evacuation to Switzerland: 4,250
Evacuation to Switzerland by negotiations: 2,896
Hungary to Romania: 2,000
Hungary to Yugoslavia: some

Total: 208,296 Jews (plus “some”); 20,000 non-Jews

Accepting Wyman’s number of approximately 200,000 means crediting the War Refugee Board with the rescue of the Jews of Transnistria and of the lives of the surviving Jews of Budapest. Yet the War Refugee Board’s claim for “credit” in the case of Transnistria results from a meeting between Ira Hirschmann and Romanian Foreign Minister Alexandru Cretzianu in which Hirschmann demanded the release of the Transnistrian Jews and Cretzianu supposedly cabled his government, which immediately complied. While the WRB clearly believed that the liberation resulted from Hirschmann’s actions, some of the Jews had already been allowed to leave Transnistria, and the Red Army was at the border of the territory. It is likely that the timing of the release of the Transnistrian Jews was a coincidence. Crediting the WRB with the survival of the Jews of Budapest involves accepting the success of the Board’s psychological warfare campaign targeted at Hungary. Undoubtedly the campaign made a difference, but using the word “rescue” or “save” in the context of the Hungarian Jews in Budapest would be inappropriate,

considering the many dangers this group continued to face until liberation. Those two statistics alone constitute nearly 85% of the Jews Wyman claims the War Refugee Board “managed to help save.”

Despite Wyman’s attempt, it is impossible to accurately quantify the number of people “saved” by the War Refugee Board, using any definition of the term. The nature of the question is fundamentally flawed.

First, the world of the Holocaust is populated with death. Two-thirds of the Jews of Europe in 1933 were dead in 1945. They were murdered individually, even if they were surrounded by others. They were starved, shot, beaten, beheaded, dissected, tortured, and gassed. Each victim died an individual death, and each victim only died once: Gassed at Auschwitz, shot in Babi Yar, decapitated at Stadelheim, starved in Łódź.

In contrast, any Holocaust survivor will list all the times he or she was saved, sometimes proactively, but many times by accident. Some received visas or safe conduct passes at the last minute, others found a kind neighbor who hid them, still others were able to prove themselves useful in the eyes of the Germans or their collaborators. Even beyond these singular acts are thousands of small acts—every time a safe conduct pass was acknowledged, a nosy villager purposely ignored a strange new visitor, or a laborer managed to satisfy the capricious whim of a German guard, the person was saved again. Many small acts of “rescue” were needed to save one person. To presume that “being saved” is a singular act is to ignore the complicated nature of the Holocaust.

The WRB aided people through many small acts, from funding the printing and distribution of false identity papers given to people in hiding to sending food packages

into concentration camps. Can we credit the Board for saving their lives in these situations? One could argue that many of these lives were already “saved.” One could argue that the 982 refugees from southern Italy who came to the United States and were interned in the Emergency Refugee Shelter established at Fort Ontario were already “saved” by dint of being in Allied-occupied southern Italy in 1944. But what if the war had taken a turn, and the Axis powers reoccupied Italy, deporting the Jewish refugees who had managed to flee there? In this counterfactual, the War Refugee Board would have “saved” these 982 (and indeed, McCormack’s list includes this group). Being “saved” is not a singular act; it happened every day, in big and little ways, and is sometimes only evident in retrospect.

Likewise, a person could be saved and still be murdered in the Holocaust. In the fall of 1944, a group of Slovak Jews holding Latin American protective papers saw their papers torn up prior to the group’s deportation. Does this mean the WRB’s intervention with Latin American countries to recognize those papers did not work? The passengers on the *Mefkure* who were killed when the ship was attacked in August 1944 could be placed on a list of those who perished as a result of WRB work. So too could any emaciated prisoner in a newly-liberated camp who fatally gorged themselves on a WRB package. Should these tragedies be taken into account in an examination of the Board’s successes and failures?

So much of the WRB’s work was intangible. The Board was usually at least twice removed from any work in enemy territory, as license money was transmitted through private relief agencies to workers in the underground. Do their successes, so far

from Washington, count as WRB successes? Perhaps most difficult to quantify was the WRB's work in psychological warfare. Leaflets or radio broadcasts warning would-be war criminals of post-war punishment were widely disseminated, and reports from enemy territory noted their impact. There is no way to quantify how many people survived because of the Board's psychological warfare campaign. The campaign was certainly a factor in Horthy's decision to spare the Jews of Budapest from deportation—does this mean that the WRB can claim credit for the surviving Jews, as David Wyman argues? Does the prevention of atrocities mean that people were saved from an act that never happened?

Due to the nature of WRB work and the difficulty of assigning “credit” for the “rescue” of any Holocaust survivor, it is impossible to arrive at an accurate statistic—or even an estimate—of the number of people “saved” by the WRB. The value of the War Refugee Board is in the sheer existence and the actions of the Board, and not in any quantifiable results. But there were clearly people who were alive in 1945 thanks to the efforts of the War Refugee Board. We just do not know who they were. Chaos theory has the idea of the butterfly effect; that a butterfly flapping its wings can cause a tsunami across the sea—or the butterfly can be completely inconsequential. So the answer is that the War Refugee Board saved no lives, and it saved the world entire.

APPENDIX B: THE FUNDING OF THE WAR REFUGEE BOARD

Was the WRB “Underfunded”?

The War Refugee Board was established in January 1944 and granted \$1,000,000 from the President’s Emergency Fund, largely meant for administrative costs. The decision to provide bureaucratic assistance to private relief agencies, rather than directly fund the majority of relief projects, was criticized in 1944, and is still criticized by historians today who call the Board “underfunded” as a result. In reality, this decision was the only practical way the War Refugee Board would have been able to make a difference.

In terms of funding, the WRB staff had three choices: they could have sought a Congressional appropriation for relief projects; they could have embarked upon a fundraising campaign; or they could have focused on providing administrative support to private agencies already working in the field. A Congressional appropriation would have been difficult to obtain, as evidenced by the two occasions in which War Refugee Board staff appeared before the House Appropriations Committee. In November 1944, John Pehle appeared before the Committee, requesting a nominal \$150,000, which was meant only to fulfill the requirements of the Russell Amendment necessitating a Congressional appropriation for presidentially-created organizations. One Congressman asked him if

the WRB's work was valuable; another complained that it seemed to be quite a lot of money; while a third questioned if the Red Cross would not be doing this sort of work if the Board had not come into existence. In June 1945 when Florence Hodel appeared before the Committee to request the use of \$16,000 out of the nearly \$65,000 left over from the November appropriation, she was also grilled, even though the Board already technically had this money and the war was already over. Without the WRB's consent, the House Committee added language to the \$16,000 appropriation, designating it for use only for expenses needed to close the Board's offices. Seeking a Congressional appropriation in January 1944 would have been a long, painful, and possibly futile process. The WRB staff were not sure that they were legally able to launch a fundraising campaign. Part of the WRB's mandate was to not impede the progress of the war, and creating a campaign to compete with the War Bonds drives and the National War Fund campaigns (not to mention the fundraising efforts of non-National War Fund groups like the United Jewish Appeal) was a questionable venture, as well as a time-consuming one.

With a Congressional appropriation impractical and a fundraising campaign illogical, the Board was left with the only choice: to get to work immediately assisting private relief organizations who already had the money and/or rescue networks necessary to assist people in need. The organizations making up the United Jewish Appeal were pleased there would be no competing fundraisers, but expressed that they would be completely satisfied should the government take over paying for rescue work.¹

¹ They also offered to start a \$50,000,000 fundraiser, provided the WRB announce that the Board would be funded almost exclusively through the auspices of the UJA. Instead, the WRB agreed to issue a statement that rescue and relief plans would be largely funded by established private organizations. Moses Leavitt, Minutes of meeting with

The charge that the WRB was “underfunded” seems merely to be a criticism of this funding structure. Indeed, there were many people who hoped, in 1944, that the United States government would bear the brunt of relief work directly. This was never the purpose of the War Refugee Board, nor was it funded to perform this role. For the work they performed, the Board staff was never underfunded.

Official Appropriations²

As with any government agency, particularly one operating in wartime, deciphering the intricacies of the War Refugee Board’s budget is difficult. In January 1944, it appeared to be fairly straightforward: the Board was granted \$1,000,000 from the President’s Emergency Fund, with the idea that this money would largely be used for administrative purposes—though the WRB was authorized to use \$500,000 as confidential funds with less-stringent government accounting. Within a week, though, it was already complicated.

At the end of January 1944, the State Department requested \$5,000,000 to cover the United States’ portion of the Intergovernmental Committee’s administrative and operations budget. Pehle protested, not having been previously informed about the request, and in the ensuing weeks, cables from London made it clear that at least part of the appropriation—51,998 pounds (\$209,811.93) were needed immediately. The Board

WRB staff, 1944 February 10; Collection: 1945-1954: New York Records of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee - NY 45-54, Sub Collection: Administration - NY 45-54/ 1, File 00193_1264; JDC.

² The War Refugee Board’s budget papers are largely clustered in the War Refugee Board Papers, Box 60, Folder 3, FDRL. The last monthly accounting report is from July 1945. Though the WRB was in existence until September 15, 1945, any funds expended in the final six weeks would be minor. The amounts listed here are approximate, though full accounting data exists for the confidential funds and those sums are thought to be exact.

finally agreed to transfer this money from their budget to cover the emergency. In May, President Roosevelt signed an order to transfer \$2,000,000 to the War Refugee Board. They were reimbursed \$200,000 for the IGC transfer, and the rest of the \$1,800,000 was held in abeyance for the IGC. A \$3,000,000 allocation from the President's Emergency Fund remained on the WRB's accounting books, but in reality, the staff only had access to the original \$1,000,000 (less the \$9,811.93, and a later grant to the IGC of \$8,061.92, neither of which were reimbursed).

In November 1944, John Pehle appeared before the House Appropriations Committee to request \$150,000 for the War Refugee Board's 1945 expenses. They did not need the money. The day before Pehle's testimony, the Board's administrative manager, David White, noted the WRB had a balance of \$630,983.26. This represented the money left over from the President's Emergency Fund, an early \$100,000 donation from HIAS, and \$1,374.21 that had been donated by private citizens.³ But as per the terms of the Russell Amendment, the WRB needed a Congressional appropriation or they would have to close by January 22, 1945. The Board returned their unallocated funds to the President's Emergency Fund and received a \$150,000 allocation to allow them to remain in operation into 1945.

In June 1945, with the end of the fiscal year approaching, Florence Hodel had to appear before the House Committee. She noted that the WRB still had \$64,674 of the November appropriation. They planned to return \$48,674, but requested permission to retain \$16,000 to cover any needed expenses. Though the war had been over for month,

³ David White, Reconciliation of Ledgers, 1944 November 19; War Refugee Board Papers, Box 60, Folder 3; FDRL.

there were still some loose ends to tie up with various projects, as well as expenses having to do with closing the offices. This permission as ultimately granted.

Administrative Funds

The Board's administrative expenditures were fairly straightforward. By far, most of the money was allocated to staff salaries, both for the War Refugee Board staff and for reimbursing the State and Treasury Departments for the salaries of staff on loan to the Board.⁴ Ira Hirschmann was paid a per diem, while Leonard Ackermann and Iver Olsen were on the Treasury Department's payroll.⁵ James Mann's salary was with the State Department until he was moved over to Treasury in January 1945. Robert Dexter, Herbert Katzki, and Roswell McClelland were paid by the State Department, which was reimbursed by the WRB. William O'Dwyer does not seem to have taken a salary from the War Refugee Board, and the massive staff reductions by January 1945 result in far lower expenditures in 1945.

WRB Administrative Expenses, January 1944-September 1945⁶

Salaries: \$278,381.62⁷

Travel: \$5,777.98

Communications: \$24,580.10

Printing: \$6.81

⁴ Though staff salaries and salary reimbursements are separate line items on the WRB's budget, I have combined them here.

⁵ Though the WRB's budget sheets do not specify, it is likely the WRB only reimbursed partial salaries—if any at all—for Ackermann and Olsen, as both carried on with their Treasury Department duties. The Treasury Department already received reimbursement for Olsen's salary from the OSS.

⁶ The amounts listed here are based on my calculations using the WRB's surviving budget reports. The last report is from July 1945, so the figures are correct to that date. Expenses beyond this date would have been minimal.

⁷ This figure includes the salaries for staff specifically working for the WRB (\$114,137.62) and reimbursement for the salaries and expenses of staff on loan to the WRB (\$164,244.00).

Other: \$2,600,262.17⁸

Intergovernmental Committee transfer: \$2,017,873.86⁹

Confidential Funds: \$581,315.88

Various small services: \$1,072.43

Supplies: \$1,529.92

Equipment: \$1,373.54

Confidential Funds

“Confidential funds” comprised \$500,000, half of the appropriation from the President’s Emergency Fund. The WRB also received a total of \$101,374.21 in donations, which they transferred into their confidential funds account at the end of October. This sum included a \$100,000 donation from HIAS and \$1,374.21 from private citizens.¹⁰ The first private donation came from Arthur Werner, a survivor of Buchenwald living in Ohio. Of the total amount available, \$581,315.88, was allocated, while \$20,058.31 was not, automatically reverting to the President’s Emergency Fund. Of the total allocation, more than half—\$296,477.48—was unused and returned. With the exception of Hirschmann and Ackermann, each War Refugee Board representative received \$10,000.00 soon after his appointment. Though the WRB staff were assured

⁸ The War Refugee Board’s records do not include a budget report documenting the WRB’s full history, though monthly reports were prepared. In the Board’s budgets, this is line item 07, described as “Other” funds. For the War Refugee Board, this meant miscellaneous small purchases, the Intergovernmental committee remittances, salary reimbursements, and confidential funds. In 1944, the total was \$2,723,979.64. (This sum includes the total confidential amount remitted to Dexter, even though some reimbursement funds had already arrived.) For 1945, the total was \$40,526.53, for a total of \$2,764,506.17. Subtracting the reimbursement salaries (which for the sake of clarity I placed under “Salaries”), one finds a total of \$2,600,262.17.

⁹ In February 1944, the WRB sent \$209,811.93 to the IGC. In May, the WRB received \$2,000,000 from the President’s Emergency Fund, of which \$1,800,000 was put in reserve for the IGC. By November 1944, however, the IGC requested the second half of the American obligation for administrative expenses, totaling \$8,061.92, which the WRB remitted from their own funds.

¹⁰ The War Refugee Board also received \$300,000 from the Bay Cities Bikur Cholim in April 1945; by this time their account for private donations was closed, and this sum does not show up in the WRB’s account records and thus is not included here.

that they did not have to keep precise accounting of confidential funds, the purpose of the remittance is generally understood from extant cables and memos.

Table of Confidential Funds

Date	Name	Purpose	Allocated (Returned)
03/08/1944	Secretary of the Treasury	Purchase of gold sovereigns for Hirschmann's potential use	\$16,479.40 (\$13,395.27)
04/08/1944	Robert Kelley, Attaché in Ankara/Iver Olsen	Purchase of the <i>Tari</i> (\$148,500.00 balance sent to Stockholm for general rescue and relief)	\$160,000.00 (\$22,524.26)
04/18/1944	Robert Dexter	Rescue and relief	\$10,000.00 (\$8,296.09)
04/18/1944	Treasurer of the US	Cable costs, misc. fund transfers	\$6.63
04/24/1944	Roswell McClelland	Rescue and Relief	\$10,000.00
04/26/1944	Ira Hirschmann	Per diem total	\$2,580.32
05/02/1944	Treasurer of the US	Cable costs, misc. fund transfers	\$2.97
06/01/1944	Iver Olsen	Rescue and Relief	\$10,000.00
06/08/1944	Ward Stewart	Various checks issued for staff travel, misc. expenses	\$3,052.76
06/12/1944	Goodyear Tire	Reimbursement for funds provided to Olsen in Sweden for Baltic rescue	\$50,000.00
08/21/1944	James Mann	Rescue and Relief	\$7,500.00
08/22/1944	David White	Fund as WRB certifying officer	\$1,000.00
08/28/1944	Ward Stewart	Various checks issued for staff travel, misc. expenses	\$1,559.19
08/30/1944	James Mann	Rescue and Relief	\$2,500.00 (\$29.01)

09/11/1944	Joint	Reimbursement for food packages	\$26,475.00
09/13/1944	US Commercial Company	Reimbursement of port dues for transport to Fedhala	\$203.88
09/27/1944	Irving Sherman	Reimbursement for Turkish lira left with Hirschmann	\$1,799.56 (\$666.95)
10/13/1944	Joseph Rodrigo, OSS	Reimbursement for aiding five Hungarian and two Polish families to escape to Constanța	\$650.00
10/20/1944	Ira Hirschmann	Per diem total	\$2,503.11
11/16/1944	Roswell McClelland	Rescue and Relief	\$100,000.00 (\$76,585.90)
12/04/1944	Treasurer of the US	Cable costs, misc. fund transfers	\$3.06
12/27/1944	Roswell McClelland	Rescue and Relief	\$175,000 (\$175,000)

Donations

Beyond the donations from HIAS and from individuals, there were several larger donations. These do not show up on the Board's account sheets, nor were formal licenses ever granted for the use of the money. Some supported specific projects, while others were to be spent at the discretion of the recipient. As an example, the Joint sent \$100,000 to Iver Olsen for Raoul Wallenberg's use in Hungary; Olsen ultimately transmitted \$50,000 and returned the rest to the Joint. The Joint also sent \$250,000 to Roswell McClelland to support his rescue efforts, while making it clear that McClelland was not to know the true origin of the money. In a memo to Lawrence Lesser, Pehle explained,

“The JDC would like it kept quite confidential that they are furnishing funds for such purposes.”¹¹ McClelland had enough money for his rescue and relief work from the Joint’s remittances that he ultimately returned almost all the confidential funds the WRB sent him from their coffers in late 1944. It is unfortunate that the War Refugee Board did not repay the Joint for their important donations. Prominent lawyer Morris Ernst offered Pehle use of \$100,000 to support rescue projects outside of any government accounting. He sent Pehle a personal check for \$50,000 to provide funds for the Yugoslav Refugee Committee. WRB staff in Italy handed over the money, though they never issued a license or otherwise accounted for the sum in any formal paperwork. The Refugee Committee appears to have never learned the true origin of the funds, and the War Refugee Board received a breakdown of the funding for food, clothing, and medical supplies purchased with Ernst’s money.¹² At Pehle’s request, Ernst also paid Ira Hirschmann \$1,500 per month during his second trip to Turkey, a salary which is entirely absent from any WRB accounting or paperwork.

Closing WRB Accounts

After the War Refugee Board was formally dissolved on September 15, 1945, the job of closing the Board’s account fell to the staff of Foreign Funds Control. Michael Hoffman (who had worked with Ackermann in North Africa) took over the WRB’s correspondence, while Frank Gatchell (who had assisted with the WRB’s administrative

¹¹ John Pehle, Memo to Lesser about Joint money, 1944 June 6; PWRB. Microfilm LM0306, Reel 26, Folder 15, Documents 876-877; USHMM.

¹² B. Poljanic, Breakdown of use of funds, 1944 August 27; PWRB. Microfilm LM0305, Reel 1, Folder 1, Documents 36-37; USHMM.

needs during the summer of 1945) and James Dent prepared the final accounting reports.

John Pehle authorized formally closing the WRB's confidential funds on April 29, 1946.

Available funds

President's Emergency Fund: \$3,000,000.00

Donations: \$101,374.21

Congressional Appropriation: \$150,000.00

Foreign War Relief for food packages: \$783,750.00

Total Funds Available: \$4,035,124.21

Funds Expended

Non-confidential funds: \$2,330,596.26

Confidential funds: \$284,838.40

Foreign War Relief for food packages: \$783,750.00

Total Funds Expended: \$3,399,184.66

Funds Returned:

Non-confidential funds: \$339,462.07

Confidential funds: \$296,477.48

Total funds Returned: \$635,939.55

APPENDIX C: TABLE OF LICENSES GRANTED BY THE WAR REFUGEE BOARD

The Trading with the Enemy Act mandated that any private organization or individual wishing to send money into enemy territory needed to obtain a license from Treasury's Foreign Funds Control department. The licenses were approved by Treasury and State Department staff, and provided the terms and conditions of the remittance. The War Refugee Board streamlined the license process for relief organizations, granting these permissions within a matter of days, whereas prior to the Board's creation, it could take months. Some licenses—those issued to relief organizations which the WRB did not trust and those intended to be part of ransom negotiations—were heavily restricted, but most were straightforward.

This table of licenses is derived from WRB weekly reports and license paperwork found in the papers of the War Refugee Board. The narrative history of the WRB indicated they had approved about \$20,000,000 in relief licenses, with over \$15,000,000 licensed to the Joint. That does not match the sums below. Either the WRB's records are incomplete, or the total included WRB assistance with monetary transfers that were not technically licensed (ie. Joint remittances to liberated France, for instance, which did not need a formal license after November 1944).

Table of Licenses for Private Relief Organizations

Date Issued	License¹	Organization	Location	Purpose	Licensed
1944 January 3	W-2106	Joint	Switzerland	Rescue and relief in Romania and France; later Slovakia and Hungary	\$1,578,000
1944 January 19	W-2115	World Jewish Congress	Switzerland	Rescue and relief in Romania and France	\$200,000
1944 January 22	W-2117	Union of Orthodox Rabbis	Switzerland	Escape from Poland to Hungary	\$700,000
1944 February 8	W-2126	Jewish Labor Committee	Switzerland	Rescue and relief ²	\$50,000
1944 February 16	W-2138	International Rescue and Relief Committee	Switzerland	Rescue and relief	\$150,000
1944 February 16	W-2137	Self-Help	Switzerland	Rescue and relief	\$40,000
1944 March 3	W-2149	Unitarian Service Committee	Switzerland	Medical work in camps in France	\$60,000

¹ The license number indicated whether the sum was designated for use in enemy-occupied territory. The licenses beginning with “W” included funds where the money might be spent in enemy territory. The NY and PH funds (referencing the New York or Philadelphia banks managing the financial transfers), on the other hand, included funds to be spent in neutral and Allied territories. These designations were not rigid, and the NY/PH funds were subject to the same restrictions as “W” funds, should the representative decide to remit the money into enemy territory.

² Generic “Rescue and relief” licenses gave representatives the flexibility to use the money where they saw a need, rather than tie the money to work in a specific area or targeted for a specified demographic.

1944 March 8	W-2150	American Christian Committee for Refugees	Switzerland	Relief and evacuations in France	\$149,500
1944 March 14	W-2155	Joint	Spain	Evacuation from France and Spain	\$150,000
1944 March 14	W-2154	Joint	Portugal	Purchasing food for packages	\$25,000
1944 March 24	W-2153	American Relief for Czechoslovaki a	Great Britain	Relief and evacuation in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and France	\$350,000
1944 March 29	W-2166	Vaad Hatzalah	Turkey	Rescue work in Hungary and Balkan countries	\$25,000
1944 March 30	W-2152	American Relief for Norway	Sweden	Relief and evacuation in Norway	\$400,000
1944 March 31	W-2167	Unitarian Service Committee	Portugal	Medical work for camps in France	No limit
1944 April 12	W-2177	Jewish Labor Committee	Portugal	Rescue in France	\$10,000
1944 May 1	NY 624166	World Jewish Congress, on behalf of Italian Jewish community, Sao Paulo	Switzerland	Relief for Italian Jewish community in Switzerland	\$4,000
1944 May 2	NY 624875	Ministry of Finance, Republic of Poland	Switzerland	Funds provided to Vaad for relief in Shanghai	\$30,100

1944 May 13	NY 626339	World Jewish Congress	Portugal	Evacuations from France	\$50,000
1944 May 18	PH 14037	American Friends Service Committee	Sweden	General relief, funding of office	\$1,600
1944 June 7	NY 631855	Vaad Hatzalah	Sweden	Rescue work in Baltic	\$10,000
1944 June 8	W-2208	Joint	Turkey	Rescue and relief in Balkans	No limit
1944 June 10	PH 14150	American Friends Service Committee	Portugal	Food purchases for relief work	\$25,000
1944 June 10	PH 14156	American Friends Service Committee	Switzerland	Food purchases for relief work	\$25,000
1944 June 22	W-2215	French Relief Fund	Great Britain	Rescue and relief for French in occupied territory	\$150,000
1944 June 22	NY 634794	Joint	Switzerland	Relief in Shanghai	\$180,000
1944 June 26	NY 635401	Joint	Sweden	Relief to refugees in Sweden	\$5,000
1944 June 26	NY 635400	National Mission of Presbyterian Churches	Sweden	Rescue and Relief	\$5,000
1944 June 28	NY 635883	Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People	Turkey	Rescue and Relief	\$5,000

1944 June 29	NY 633571	International Rescue and Relief Committee	Turkey	Rescue and Relief	\$30,000
1944 June 30	W-2231	Belgian War Relief	Switzerland	Rescue and relief for Belgians in occupied territory	\$115,000
1944 June 30	W-2232	Friends of Luxembourg	Switzerland	Rescue and relief for Luxembourgers in occupied territory	\$45,000
1944 June 30	W-2229	Queen Wilhelmina Fund	Switzerland	Rescue and relief for Dutch in occupied territory	\$215,000
1944 July 15	NY 639127	National Mission of Presbyterian Churches	Sweden	Rescue and Relief	\$10,000
1944 July 30	NY 639820	Joint	Turkey	Transportation from Turkey to Palestine	\$50,000
1944 August 8	NY 643226	Joint	Italy	Relief in southern Italy	\$30,000
1944 August 10	W-2258	Polish War Relief	Great Britain	Rescue and relief in occupied territory	\$400,000
1944 August 10	NY 643666	International Relief and Rescue Committee	Switzerland	Relief for Spanish refugees in southern France	\$30,000
1944 August 24	W-2275	Poale Zion	Switzerland	Rescue and relief	\$18,000
1944 August 24	W-2276	Poale Zion	Palestine	Rescue and relief	\$33,000

1944 August 26	NY 646571	Joint	Italy	Relief in Italy	\$250,000
1944 August 26	NY 646936	Vaad Hatzalah	Switzerland	Relief in Shanghai	\$20,000
1944 September 1	NY 647643	Vaad Hatzalah	Tangier	Purchase and shipping of food packages	\$5,000
1944 September 11	NY 649137	Joint	Jerusalem	Reimbursement to Jewish Agency for evacuation costs	\$481,453
1944 September 22	NY 651531	Polish embassy, London	Switzerland	Funds provided to Vaad for relief in Shanghai	\$6,000
1944 September 22	NY 651533	Joint	Jerusalem	Reimbursement to Jewish Agency for evacuation costs	\$159,900
1944 October 9	NY 654393	Vaad Hatzalah	Moscow	Relief for rabbinical scholars	\$5,200
1944 October 17	NY 655482	Polish embassy, London	Switzerland	Funds provided to Vaad for relief in Shanghai	\$25,000
1944 November 1	NY 658720	Joint	Switzerland	Relief and rescue	\$500,000
1944 November 8	NY 660311	Polish embassy, London	Switzerland	Funds provided to Vaad for relief in Shanghai	\$10,000
1944 November 14	NY 660905	Joint	Switzerland	Relief in Shanghai	\$435,000
1944 November	NY 663074	Poale Zion	France	Relief in France	\$6,000

27					
1944 December 15	NY 667342	Joint	Switzerland	Relief and rescue	\$400,000
1944 December 19	NY 667892	Polish embassy, London	Switzerland	Funds provided to Vaad for relief in Shanghai	\$13,000
1944 December 26	NY 669799	Joint	Switzerland	Purchase of food supplies	\$100,000
1945 January 1	NY 670349	Joint	Switzerland	Relief and rescue	\$900,000
1945 January 6	NY 671244	Vaad Hatzalah	Tangier	Purchase and shipping of food packages	\$6,000
1945 January 17	NY 673252	Polish embassy, London	Switzerland	Funds provided to Vaad for relief in Shanghai	\$20,000
1945 January 20	NY 676939	Joint	Italy	Funds for Yugoslav Red Cross	\$1,000
1945 January 24	W-2402	Joint	Switzerland	Account held for ARBA negotiations	\$5,000,000 ³
1945 February 3	NY 676817	Joint	Switzerland	Relief and rescue	\$800,000
1945 February 8	NY 678642	Joint	Italy	Relief in Albania	\$10,000

³ The \$5,000,000 was remitted back the Joint after the war. This license is not included in the final total.

1945 February 27	NY 682342	Joint	Switzerland	Relief and rescue	\$900,000
1945 March 10	W-2426	Vaad Hatzalah (using loan from Joint)	Switzerland	Account held for Musy negotiations	\$937,000 ⁴
1945 March 16	NY 685766	Vaad Hatzalah	Tangier	Purchase and shipping of food packages	\$5,000
1945 March 29	NY 689485	Joint	Jerusalem	Reimbursing lira transmissions from refugees	\$120,000
1945 April 10	NY 691475	Joint	Stockholm	Relief packages to Shanghai (test shipment)	\$1,000
1945 April 28	NY 694922	Joint	Switzerland	Relief and rescue	\$700,000

Total funds authorized by the WRB, including ARBA and Musy licenses: \$17,170,753

Total funds authorized by the WRB, excluding ARBA and Musy licenses: \$11,350,878⁵

Breakdown by organization, exclusive of ARBA and Musy licenses:⁶

American Christian Committee: \$149,500

American Friends Service Committee: \$51,600

American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee: \$7,776,353 (at least)

American Relief for Czechoslovakia: \$350,000

American Relief for Norway: \$400,000⁷

⁴ Musy never received these funds. Instead, Isaac Sternbuch used approximately \$125,000 from this fund to purchase food and provide the Red Cross with shipping funds. He also arranged to receive 100,000 Swiss francs (approx. \$23,300), returning approximately \$792,500 to the Joint. The \$148,300 spent is included in the final total, though the returned funds are excluded.

⁵ This breakdown does include the \$148,300 from the Musy license which Sternbuch used.

⁶ This breakdown is exclusive of the entirety of the ARBA and Musy licenses; the \$148,300 that Sternbuch actually used is not included

Belgian War Relief: \$115,000
Emergency Committee: \$5,000
French Relief Funds: \$150,000
Friends of Luxembourg: \$45,000
International Relief and Rescue Committee: \$210,000
Jewish Labor Committee: \$60,000
National Mission of Presbyterian Churches: \$15,000
Poale Zion: \$57,000
Polish War Relief: \$400,000
Queen Wilhelmina Fund: \$215,000
Self-Help: \$40,000
Union of Orthodox Rabbis/Vaad Hatzalah/Polish embassy funds for Vaad: \$880,300
Unitarian Service Committee: \$60,000 (at least)
World Jewish Congress: \$254,000

⁷ It is difficult to determine the exact amount authorized for American Relief for Norway. This organization, like the other nationalist labor groups, obtained funds from the National War Fund, with the approval of the War Relief Control Board and the War Refugee Board. The projects in Norway lasted well into the spring of 1945 and when their remittance ran out, the WRB and WRCB granted permission for American Relief for Norway to use some of the unused remittance for Polish War Relief. In addition, Iver Olsen lent funds to the relief workers in Stockholm. However, the \$400,000 estimation is a reasonable guess.

APPENDIX D: BIOGRAPHIES

As there are many names mentioned in this text; this information is provided as a reference. I have included additional details for War Refugee Board staff members, relief organization representatives, and other major figures for whom there may not be easily-accessible biographical information elsewhere or for whom more information may be desired. These details have been verified by multiple sources whenever possible.

Disclaimer: Some historians studying the War Refugee Board have emphasized that many of the Board staff were not Jewish. I have only included information related to an individual's religious upbringing and practice if he/she ever cited religious motivation for activities or if it is otherwise obvious in some way (employment background, family information, etc). I feel that indicating religious background and preference is not only difficult to determine (beyond simply Jewish/non-Jewish) and can change over time, but that emphasizing this detail constitutes an argument that religion was a determining factor in one's actions. In the case of the War Refugee Board staff, I feel the evidence indicates the staff were liberal and privileged humanitarian efforts, and that this was a far more compelling motivation than individual religious preference.

Albert “Jim” Abrahamson: Assistant Executive Director of the WRB

(b. November 4, 1905 in Portland, ME; d. February 24, 1988, Falmouth, ME)

Abrahamson’s parents, Lazarus and Rose Abrahamson were Polish immigrants; the family was Jewish and observant. He graduated from Bowdoin College (1926) and earned a masters in economics from Columbia University (1928). Abrahamson, an economist, joined the faculty of Bowdoin College in 1928. Though a lifelong Republican, he served on the President's Committee on Price Policy, 1934-1935; as Works Progress Administration (WPA) administrator for Maine, 1935-1937; as executive director of the Jewish Occupational Council in New York, 1939-1940; and as executive director of the National Refugee Service in New York, 1941-1943. In April 1943, he enlisted as a private in the United States Army and joined the OSS. He was honorably discharged in February 1944 to assume his role with the War Refugee Board. After leaving the WRB in December 1944, he remained in Washington and was briefly appointed an assistant to Secretary of Labor Lewis Schwellenbach. He returned to Bowdoin in 1946, eventually becoming the George Lincoln Skofield, Jr. professor of economics and the dean of faculty. He never married. A reading and study area is named for him at Bowdoin’s Hawthorne-Longfellow Library. His papers are held at Bowdoin College.

Dean Acheson: Assistant Secretary of State, 1941-1945

Leonard C. Ackermann: WRB representative in Italy and North Africa

(b. January 25, 1906, New York City; d. January 3, 1968, Washington, DC)

Leonard Ackermann graduated from Columbia Law School and went to work for the Securities and Exchange Commission in 1938. He was transferred to the Treasury Department in 1942 and was sent to North Africa to oversee Treasury Department operations. Friendly with the WRB staff, he was appointed as Board representative, first for North Africa, later for the entire Mediterranean area, encompassing Italy. He returned to the United States in the fall of 1944. After resigning from the Treasury Department in 1947, he went into private practice with the firm Wenschel, Schulman, and Manning. In his later years, he married Jacoba Stolk Ackermann, and pursued his creative passions of photography and sculpting. The couple had no children.

Benjamin Akzin: Special Assistant to the WRB

(b. May 6, 1904, Riga, Latvia; d. 1985, Jerusalem)

Benjamin Akzin received his doctorate in political science at the University of Vienna (1926), law degree from the University of Paris (1929) and a doctorate in jurisprudence from Harvard (1933). After lecturing at various universities in Paris from 1929-1932, Akzin moved to the United States, and became an American citizen in May 1940. Very

involved in Revisionist Zionism, Akzin served as a lobbyist throughout the 1930s and early 1940s for the New Zionist Organization of America and the American Zionist Emergency Council—a fact which he did not list when submitting his CV to the WRB. After graduating from Harvard, he worked as a Rockefeller fellow, at Harvard's Bureau of International Research, as a professor at Portia University and the City College of New York, and as a foreign affairs specialist at the Library of Congress before joining the War Refugee Board. After the war, Akzin worked for the Zionist Emergency Committee before moving to Israel in 1949. In 1950, he founded the political science department at Hebrew University, and was later the first rector of the University of Haifa. In 1967, Akzin was awarded the Israel Prize for Jurisprudence. His papers are held at the Zionist Archives, New York, and at the Jabotinsky Institute, Metzudat Ze'ev, Tel Aviv.

Paul Baerwald: one of the founders of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee

Nicolas Balabanoff: Bulgarian Foreign Minister, stationed in Turkey

Congressman Joseph Baldwin (R-New York): sponsor of the “Rescue Resolution”

Michel Banyai: representative of the Swiss Committee of Assistance for the Jews of Hungary

Chaim Barlas: representative of the Jewish Agency, stationed in Turkey

Kurt Becher: SS-Untersturmführer, participated in ransom negotiations

Moses Beckelman: director of the Fedhala camp, representative of the Intergovernmental Committee

Peter Bergson (Hillel Kook): Bergson group leader, head of the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People/Hebrew Committee of National Liberation and several other groups

(b. July 24, 1915, Lithuania; d. August 18, 2001, Tel Aviv, Israel)

Peter Bergson was born Hillel Kook, and was the nephew of prominent Ashkenazi chief rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook. In 1925, he moved with his family to Palestine and became involved in the Revisionist Zionist movement and later in their military wing, the IZL (Irgun Zvai Leumi). In 1938-1939, he traveled to Poland to organize mass immigration to Palestine. After the outbreak of war, he moved to the United States to organize IZL

activities. He first organized the Committee for a Jewish Army, arguing for a separate Jewish army fighting as part of the Allied military. In early 1943, he formed the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People, and in July 1944, the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation. His organization purchased a mansion on Massachusetts Avenue in Washington and established a “Hebrew” embassy. Bergson argued the distinction between Jews and “Hebrews”—those with no other cultural and national loyalty other than to the Jewish people and to Palestine. He argued that his organization should speak for the persecuted Jews of Europe (as “Hebrews”) and for the Jews of Palestine. He also formed the American League for a Free Palestine. He left the United States after the war and was elected to the first Israeli Knesset as a member of the Herut party. He returned to the United States from 1951-1968, and then to Israel from 1968 until his death, working mainly on the stock market while remaining politically active. In 1950, he married Betty Bergson; the couple had two daughters. In 1975, after Betty’s death, Bergson remarried Nili Haskell. His papers are held at Ben-Gurion University.

Dr. Adolf Berle: Assistant Secretary of State, 1938-1944

Folke Bernadotte, Count of Wisborg: Swedish diplomat

Burton Berry: consular general to United States consulate, Istanbul

Mary Harriet Bixler: secretary to WRB staff in Turkey

Floyd Black: former president, American College of Sofia, specialist on Bulgaria, living in Turkey

Myron Black: War Shipping Administration representative

David Blickenstaff: head of the Organization of American Relief Agencies in Madrid

(b. May 20, 1915, California; d. October 31, 2012, California)

The son of Lynn A. and Mary Brubaker Blickenstaff, David Blickenstaff spent part of his childhood in India before graduating from Manchester University (Indiana, USA) in 1937. He joined the Brethren Service Committee and went overseas in 1939 to work with refugees from the Spanish Civil War. In 1941, he married Janine Ybargoyen, a Uruguayan citizen and the daughter of a fellow relief worker. The couple moved to France in 1941 to work with the American Friends Service Committee, and back to

Madrid in 1942. In January 1943, Ambassador Carlton Hayes appointed Blickenstaff as the head of the Office of Representation in Spain of American Relief Organizations; he remained in that position, facilitating financial and programmatic cooperation between agencies, for the rest of the war. After the war, Blickenstaff worked for the United Nations and lived all over the world. He married Adrienne Blickenstaff and retired to California, where he had very little interest discussing his wartime experiences, which seemed to have a profound effect on him.

Congressman Sol Bloom (D-New York): Chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee, US representative to the Bermuda Conference

Joseph Blum: member of the Vaada, Joint representative in Budapest, arrived in Switzerland with the Kasztner group

Eugene Bogdanffy: Hungarian citizen in the United States, had idea to rescue Jews in Hungary

Joel Brand: member of the Vaada in Budapest, participated in ransom negotiations

George Brandt: State Department assistant to Breckinridge Long

Dorothy Brown (Mrs. LaRue Brown): proposed WRB representative in London

Charles Bruggmann: Minister of Switzerland to the United States

James Brunot: director of the War Relief Control Board

McGeorge Bundy: War Department advisor to Henry Stimson

Carl Burckhardt, president of the International Red Cross (1945)

Sir Ronald Campbell: British diplomat, Ambassador to Portugal

Congressman Emanuel Celler (D-New York): critic of the State Department

Benjamin Cohen: advisor to President Roosevelt

Oscar Cox: general counsel for Treasury Department, Lend-Lease officer, drafted first proposal for relief agency that became the WRB

Dr. Alexandru Cretzianu: Romanian Foreign Minister, stationed in Turkey

Leo Crowley: Foreign Economic Administrator

Paul Culbertson: Assistant Chief of European Affairs, State Department

Elmer Davis: director of the Office of War Information (OWI)

Robert C. Dexter: WRB representative in Lisbon

(b. October 1, 1887, Nova Scotia; d. October 11, 1955, Belmont, MA)

Robert Dexter received his BA (1912) and MA (1917) at Brown University, and his PhD in Sociology from Clark University in 1923. In 1914, he married Elizabeth Anthony Dexter (a descendant of Susan B. Anthony) who also earned a PhD from Clark University in 1923, hers in American history. The couple had two children. Robert and Elizabeth both taught at Skidmore College, and in 1927 Robert left to work for the American Unitarian Association. When the Unitarian Service Committee was created in 1940, Dexter became Executive Director. The couple moved to Lisbon, where they remained until late 1944. At some point, Robert Dexter became an OSS agent, though any intelligence work was apparently minor. In late 1944, after his work with the War Refugee Board ended, the Dexters had a disagreement with Charles Joy in the United States over the direction and control of the Unitarian Service Committee. They resigned the committee and moved briefly to London. In 1945, back in the United States, Dexter went to work for the Church Peace Union. His papers are held at Brown University.

Dr. Harold Dodds: US representative to the Bermuda Conference

Josiah E. DuBois, Jr.: General Counsel of the WRB

(b. October 21, 1912, Camden, NJ; d. August 1, 1983, Pitman, NJ)

Josiah DuBois was a prodigy, the oldest child of a large family in Woodbury, NJ. He graduated valedictorian of Woodbury High School at age 14, with a bachelor's degree from the University of Pennsylvania at age 18 and, in 1934, at age 21, with a law degree. He married Dorothy Clement DuBois; the couple had two children. DuBois joined the Treasury Department in 1936 but resigned in 1940 to return to New Jersey to form a law practice with his younger brother, Herbert. He returned to Treasury upon the outbreak of war and joined the General Counsel's office. DuBois's four younger brothers all fought

in Europe; in early 1943, brother Louis was shot down and interned in the Stalag Luft III POW camp for the remainder of the war. In 1944 DuBois was appointed an Assistant to the Secretary, accompanying Morgenthau on a trip to London in August 1944, working mainly with reparations and post-war economic planning. He helped ghostwrite Morgenthau's 1945 book *Germany is Our Problem*. In 1946, he resigned from the Treasury Department and became the chief prosecutor of the IG Farben Trial in Nuremberg, Germany. He wrote about the trial in his book *The Devil's Chemists* (published as *Generals in Grey Suits* in England) in 1952. DuBois returned to private practice in New Jersey for the rest of his career. A collection of his papers are held at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Elbridge Durbrow: Assistant Chief of the Eastern European Affairs Division, State Department

Steve Early: press secretary to President Roosevelt

Carl Ebert: conductor, friend of Ira Hirschmann in Turkey

Rabbi Nathan Ehrenpreis: representative of the Vaad Hatzalah in Sweden

Howard Elting, Jr.: vice-consul officer in American consulate, Geneva, Switzerland

Sir Herbert Emerson: Director of the Intergovernmental Committee

Dr. Herbert Feis: economic advisor to the State Department

Noel Field: representative of the Unitarian Service Committee, stationed in Switzerland

Dingle M. Foot: British Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Economic Warfare

Felix Frankfurter: Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, 1939-1962

Joseph B. Friedman: Assistant Executive Director of the WRB

(b. June 30, 1911, Caldwell, OH; d. January 21, 1993, Gaithersburg, MD)

Joseph Friedman was the son of Joseph Henry Friedman, a German-speaking immigrant from Austro-Hungary who opened the Friedman Brothers Clothing company after his

immigration to the United States. Joseph B. Friedman graduated from Wooster College in 1932 and Ohio State University law school in 1935. He joined the Treasury Department's General Counsel's office that same year. He married Elizabeth Friedman ca. 1936; the couple had two children. In 1942, Friedman went to Ecuador to help set up a national bank. He returned soon before the establishment of the War Refugee Board. From 1945-1948 he was the Chief Counsel in the Office of International Finance. He later went into private practice with James Mann, in the firm of Lucas, Selden, Friedman, and Mann. He retired in 1985.

Herbert Gaston: Treasury Department advisor, Morgenthau's alternate on the War Refugee Board

Senator Guy Gillette (D-Iowa): sponsor of the "Rescue Resolution," supporter of Bergson group activities

Nahum Goldmann: chairman of the executive board of the World Jewish Congress

Samuel Grafton: syndicated newspaper columnist of "I'd Rather Be Right"

Joseph Grew: Undersecretary of State, 1944-1945

Jacob Griffel: representative of the Vaad Hatzalah and Agudas Israel, stationed in Turkey

Laszlo Hamori: aide to Roswell McClelland

Milton Handler: aide to Oscar Cox

Ambassador William Averell Harriman: US Ambassador to the Soviet Union

Earl Harrison: Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service; American representative to the Intergovernmental Committee, author of the *Harrison Report*

Leland Harrison: US Ambassador to Switzerland

(b. April 25, 1883, New York; d. June 6, 1951, Washington DC)

Leland Harrison was a career foreign service officer. He served as US minister to Sweden, 1927-1929; to Uruguay, 1929-1930; to Romania, 1935-1937; and to

Switzerland, 1937-1947. His papers are held at the Library of Congress Manuscript Division.

Carlton J. H. Hayes: United States ambassador to Spain, 1942-1945

William Hayter: First Secretary of the British embassy in Washington

Sir Clifford Heathcote-Smith: representative of the Intergovernmental Committee

Dannie N. Heineman: Belgian-American businessman, manager of Sofina conglomerate

Virginia Henderson: secretary to WRB staff in Turkey

Ira Hirschmann: WRB representative in Turkey

(b. July 7, 1901, Baltimore, MD; d. October 9, 1989, New York)

Ira Hirschmann grew up in Baltimore, MD. He attended Johns Hopkins University for two years before moving to New York City. He built a career in marketing, working at prominent department stores such as Lord and Taylor, Saks Fifth Avenue, and Bloomingdales, where he became a vice president. In 1933, he worked for Fiorello LaGuardia's first mayoral campaign; Hirschmann remained a friend and supporter of the mayor. He was also a lifelong supporter of classical music who sponsored various music societies, founded the New Friends of Music, and promoted the idea of musical performances on the radio. In 1937, he married trained pianist Hortense Monath; the couple had no children. He attended the Evian Conference as an observer. In 1943, he planned a trip to Turkey to survey rescue opportunities, first as a representative of the Emergency Committee and later as an independent observer before being appointed by the War Refugee Board. After returning to the United States, he worked in radio and television broadcasting. In the late 1940s, he toured Europe as an inspector of UNRRA camps. He wrote a number of books, including two about his experiences in Turkey: *Life-line to a Promised Land* (1946) and *Caution to the Wind* (1962). His papers are held at the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Presidential Library.

Florence Hodel: Assistant Executive Director of the WRB

(b. September 12, 1907, Brooklyn, NY; d. April 27, 1991, MD)

Florence Hodel grew up in Millburn, NJ, the oldest of three daughters of Jacob and Amelia Hodel. She graduated from Wellesley (1928) and Cornell Law School (1931), where she was on the editorial staff of the Cornell Law Quarterly. She worked for Legal

Aid in New York before moving to Washington, DC in 1939 to join the Treasury Department. In the mid-1930s, she married Christopher Wagner; the marriage was unhappy and they were separated prior to the war, during which Christopher served in England. They divorced shortly after the war, and Florence never remarried. The couple did not have children. After the war, Hodel joined the staff of the International Monetary Fund and traveled frequently as part of her work. She and her sister Ethel (who was also unmarried and worked in government finance) both retired early to move to Talbot County, MD, to care for their elderly mother. Her papers are held at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Michael Hoffman: head of Treasury Department offices in North Africa

Admiral Miklós Horthy: Regent of Hungary (March-October 1944)

Max Huber: president of the International Red Cross

Cordell Hull: Secretary of State, 1933-1944

(b. October 21, 1871, TN; d. July 23, 1955, Washington, DC)

Cordell Hull graduated from the Cumberland School of Law in 1891. He was elected to his first political office in 1892, serving in the Tennessee House of Representatives from 1893-1897. During the Spanish-American War, he served as a captain of the Fourth Tennessee Voluntary Infantry as a captain. He served eleven terms in the United States House of Representatives (1907-1921, 1923-1931) where he focused most of his attention on tariff and tax legislation, authoring the 1913 and 1916 federal income tax legislation. In 1917, he married Rose Whitney, who came from an Austrian-Jewish family. The couple had no children. In 1933, Hull was appointed Secretary of State and served in this position until his retirement for health reasons in 1944. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1945 for his work to establish the United Nations. His papers are held at the Library of Congress Manuscript Division and at the Cordell Hull Museum in Byrdstown, TN.

Joseph C. Hyman: director of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee

Eri Jabotinsky: representative of the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People, stationed in Turkey

Senator Edwin Johnson (D-Colorado): supporter of Bergson group committees

Ambassador Herschel V. Johnson: United States Minister to Sweden

Rev. Charles Joy: director of the Unitarian Service Committee

Captain Charles Kades: personal aide to Henry Morgenthau

Rabbi Abraham Kalmanowitz: head of the Mir yeshiva, representative of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis

Jan Karski: Polish officer and resistance fighter

Louis Kastner: representative of the Vaad Hatzalah and Agudas Israel, stationed in Turkey

Reszö Kasztner: representative of the Vaada in Budapest, participated in ransom negotiations

Herbert Katzki: WRB representative in Turkey

(b. October 4, 1907, Elizabeth, NJ; d. August 3, 1997, New York)

Herbert Katzki moved with his family to New York City in 1917 after the death of his father. He got a degree in finance from New York University and went to work for a mercantile firm and then with the Manufacturer's Trust company bank (now M&T). In 1936, he went to work for the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. He went overseas in 1939 to head the Joint's Paris office. He closed the office and fled after the German invasion of France, opened the office in Bordeaux, and then eventually moved the Joint's European headquarters to Lisbon. He remained in Lisbon until late 1943, when he joined the army. His military service was as War Refugee Board representative in Turkey, and was later assigned to Switzerland. After his return to the United States, he was released from military service and returned to the Joint. He served in the American zone working as a Joint representative tasked to UNRRA. In 1950, he married Kate Schiffmann, a former German refugee who had left Berlin for the United States in 1934. The couple did not have children. Katzki worked for the Joint until his death in 1997. His papers are held at the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archives in New York.

Robert Kelley: consul officer, American embassy in Ankara, Turkey

Dr. Felix Kersten: Heinrich Himmler's personal masseur

Alexander Kirk: United States Ambassador to Egypt (1941-1944), United States Ambassador to Italy (1944-1946)

Joseph Klarman: collaborator with Vaad Hatzalah and Agudas Israel representatives in Turkey

Henrietta Klotz: personal secretary to Henry Morgenthau, Jr.

Jaromir (Jean) Kopecky: representative of the Czech government-in-exile, stationed in Switzerland

Rabbi Baruch Korff: advisor to Vaad Hatzalah, Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People

Captain Lewis Korn: assisted with selection of Fort Ontario refugees

Arieh Leon Kubowitzki: head of Rescue Department, World Jewish Congress

(b. November 2, 1896, Kuršėna, Lithuania; d. May 16, 1966, Jerusalem)

A. Leon Kubowitzki was born in Lithuania, but moved to Belgium when he was ten years old. He was active in Zionist politics and earned a PhD in philology and a law degree. He was one of the founders of the World Jewish Congress. When Belgium was invaded, he escaped with his family through France to the United States, where he headed the Rescue Department of the World Jewish Congress. Between 1945-1948 he was the General Secretary of the WJC. He moved to Israel in 1948, changed his name to Aryeh Leon Kobovy, and became a diplomat, serving in eastern Europe and in South America. In 1959, he became the chairman of Yad Vashem, a position he held until his death.

Fiorello LaGuardia: mayor of New York City

Anne Laughlin: War Refugee Board aide

Richard Law: member of Parliament, British representative to the Bermuda Conference

Moses Leavitt: Executive Vice-Chairman of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee

(b. August 6, 1894, New York; d. June 21, 1965, Geneva, Switzerland)

Moses Leavitt graduated from Cornell University in 1916 with a degree in chemical engineering. In 1929, he went to work for the Joint, eventually becoming the executive director in 1947. As part of his work for the Joint, he served on multiple boards and organizations assisting refugees. He died in Switzerland after suffering a stroke at a conference about Jewish material claims against Germany. His papers are held at the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archives in New York.

Herbert Lehman: director of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (UNRRA)

Lawrence Lesser: Assistant Executive Director of the WRB

(b. February 16, 1907, New York; d. June 20, 1979 in Baltimore, MD)

Lawrence Lesser grew up in a family with connections in politics and in Jewish philanthropy. His father was the head of an organization to elect Theodore Roosevelt during his Bull Moose campaign, and his aunt was the head of the women's division of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) during World War II. Lesser, who was raised Jewish but was not religious himself, graduated from Yale University in 1928 and Harvard Law school in 1931, where he was an editor of the Harvard Law Review. He was an assistant to the Seabury Commission, investigating financial scandals in New York politics, before becoming an Assistant District Attorney in New York City. In 1937, he went to work for the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). In 1939, he married Frances Doolittle, who had graduated from Yale Law School (where she was friends with the Pehles); she served as a lawyer in the State and Treasury Departments. The couple had two children. Lesser moved from the SEC to the Treasury Department's General Counsel's office before being assigned to the War Refugee Board. When Pehle was reassigned to Procurement, Lesser went with him and was transferred to the Commerce Department in the summer of 1945 and, briefly, to the Internal Revenue Service. He left soon afterward and went into private practice, first with John Pehle in the firm Pehle and Lesser, and later, when the firm expanded, with fellow WRB alums in the firm Pehle, Lesser, Mann, Riemer and Luxford.

Richard Lichtheim: representative of the Jewish Agency in Switzerland

Breckinridge Long: Assistant Secretary of State, 1941-1944

(b. May 16, 1881, St. Louis, MO; d. September 16, 1958, Laurel, MD)

Breckinridge Long graduated from Princeton University in 1904, studied at the Washington University School of Law, and got a masters degree from Princeton in 1909. He practiced law in Missouri until 1917, when, having supported Woodrow Wilson's

reelection, he was appointed as Third Assistant Secretary in the State Department. He resigned to run for United States Senate in 1920 and, when he lost the election; he ran again in 1922 and also lost. Between 1933-1936, he served as United States Ambassador to Italy. He returned to private life until the outbreak of war, when he was appointed again to the State Department, and was named an Assistant Secretary of State in January 1940. After his resignation in November 1944, he retired and spent time with his stable of racehorses and as director of Laurel Park Racecourse until his death. His papers are available at the Library of Congress Manuscript Division.

Donald Lowrie: representative of the YMCA, stationed in Switzerland

Senator Scott Lucas, D-Illinois: US representative to the Bermuda Conference

Ansel Luxford: Treasury Department lawyer

Patrick Murphy Malin: vice-director of the Intergovernmental Committee

George Mandel-Mantello: first secretary to the Salvadoran consulate, Geneva, Switzerland.

James Mann: Assistant Executive Director of WRB, WRB representative in London

(b. November 23, 1913, Edmonton, KY; d. May 25, 1985, Washington, DC)

James Mann graduated from Centre College (KY) in 1935 and from Cornell Law School, where he was an editor of the Cornell Law Review, in 1938. Upon graduation, he joined the Treasury Department where he worked as an attorney, including working for John Pehle in Foreign Funds Control. During the war he was reassigned to the State Department in Argentina, but was recalled to work for the War Refugee Board. After the war, he continued to work with WRB alumni, joining the law firm of Pehle and Lesser (and successive firms) and later became a partner in the firm of Lucas, Friedman and Mann. He and his wife, Margaret Blackwell Mann, whom he married after the war, had two daughters.

Virginia Mannon: War Refugee Board aide specializing in press relations

Laura Margolis: representative of the Joint, stationed in London, Sweden, and France

Matthew Marks: WRB aide

Saly Mayer: Joint representative in Switzerland

(b. 1882, Switzerland; d. 1950, Switzerland)

Prior to World War II, Mayer owned a successful knitwear and lace factory in Switzerland. He was Orthodox and the head of the Jewish community in Switzerland. During World War II, he was appointed the Swiss representative to the Joint, a position which quickly became the most important Joint position in Europe. His papers are held at the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in New York.

Roswell McClelland: WRB representative in Switzerland

(b. January 25, 1914, California; d. May 6, 1995, Springdale, AR)

Roswell McClelland was educated at various boarding schools, including in England and Switzerland; in the early 1930s, he spent time in Italy and Germany, where he witnessed Hitler give a speech. He graduated from Duke University in 1936 and earned a masters degree from Columbia in 1940. In 1938, he married Marjorie Miles. Though he was not a Quaker, Marjorie was, and they befriended staff of the American Friends Service Committee. Roswell received a fellowship to study in Switzerland; when the outbreak of war made that impossible, the couple agreed to go overseas as aid workers. They expanded the operations of the AFSC office in Rome, which they ran from 1940-1941, then moved to the AFSC offices in southern France. During their year in Marseilles, among other activities, Roswell worked with relief for the Les Milles concentration camp, and Marjorie worked with the selection of children for the U.S. Committee for the Care of European Children (USCOM) children's transport to the United States in the summer of 1942. In the late summer of 1942, the couple moved to Geneva and headed the AFSC offices in Switzerland. After the war, Roswell became a United States Foreign Service officer. The McClellands had four children, and the family remained in Switzerland until 1949, when they moved to Washington, DC. During his Foreign Service career, McClelland served in Madrid (1953-1957), West Africa (covering Gambia, Senegal, Mauritania; 1960-1962), Southern Rhodesia (1965), Athens (1967-1970), and was the United States Ambassador to Niger (1970-1973). Roswell McClelland's office papers are located at the Franklin Roosevelt Presidential Library, and the McClellands' personal papers are held at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

John J. McCloy: Assistant Secretary of War

(b. March 31, 1895, Philadelphia, PA; d. March 11, 1989, Stamford, CT)

John McCloy graduated from Amherst College in 1916. He enrolled in Harvard Law school but left to join the Allied Expeditionary Forces, where he commanded an artillery

battalion during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. After returning to the United States, he graduated from law school in 1921. He worked in a private law firm in New York City until 1940, when he became an assistant to Secretary of War Henry Stimson. In April 1941, he became Assistant Secretary of War. From March 1947 to July 1949 he served as the president of the World Bank, and in September 1949 became the first U.S. High Commissioner for Germany, a position he held until 1952. He was the chairman of Chase Manhattan Bank (1953-1960) and chairman of the Ford Foundation (1958-1965). He served on the Warren Commission investigating the assassination of John F. Kennedy. He was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1963. John McCloy's papers are held at Amherst College.

Paul J. McCormack: Special Assistant to the WRB

(b. March 8, 1912, NJ; d. 1979, Sparks, NV)

Paul McCormack was born in New Jersey, but his family moved to Detroit, Michigan, when he was young. He graduated from Assumption College in Windsor, Ontario, with a honors degree in philosophy in 1933. Returning to Michigan, Paul took a job with the American Red Cross working with flood relief. There, Paul, who was a practicing Catholic, met and married Ernestine Traubman, also a Red Cross aid worker, who was Jewish but not religious. The couple had one daughter. They moved to Washington in 1942-1943. After meeting with the WRB as a representative of the Red Cross, McCormack joined the Board staff in March 1944. He resigned in July 1945 to take a job with UNRRA. He was stationed in the American zone in Germany for the next several years, working with various relief organizations, including UNRRA, and in 1948 was named Chief of the Repatriation and Resettlement Office in Heidelberg, Operations Branch, Civil Affairs Division of European Command. After returning to the United States, McCormack took a job with the National Conference of Christians and Jews. He divorced and remarried, and retired to Nevada shortly before his death in 1979.

James Grover McDonald: former League of Nations High Commission on Refugees, President's Advisory Committee on Political Refugees

Bernard D. Meltzer: State Department economic advisor

Numan Menemencioglu: Turkish Foreign Minister

Henry Morgenthau, Jr.: Secretary of the Treasury, 1934-1945

(b. May 11, 1891, New York; d. February 6, 1967, Poughkeepsie, NY)

Henry Morgenthau, Jr. was raised in a secular German Jewish family. His father, Henry Morgenthau, Sr., was appointed Wilson's ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, 1913-1916, and Henry Jr. visited his father in Istanbul. Though Henry attended Cornell University, he did not graduate but instead bought a large farm in Dutchess County, NY, near the home of Franklin Roosevelt. The two men became friends. In 1916, Henry met and married Elinor Fatman; the couple had three children. Henry intended to make a living as a farmer, and also published the *American Agriculturalist* magazine. When Roosevelt was elected governor, Henry was appointed to an agricultural advisory committee. In 1934, on the death of Roosevelt's Secretary of the Treasury, Morgenthau was appointed to the position. After his resignation in July 1945, Morgenthau became more heavily involved in Jewish affairs. He became General Chairman of the United Jewish Appeal and was a financial advisor to the newly-created state of Israel. "Tal Shahar," an agricultural community near Jerusalem, was named in his honor. Morgenthau's professional papers are held at the Franklin Roosevelt Presidential Library and his personal papers at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and at the Museum of Jewish Heritage, New York.

Robert D. Murphy: Roosevelt political advisor in French North Africa, Allied-occupied Italy

Jean-Marie Musy: Swiss politician, participated in ransom negotiations

R. Henry Norweb: United States Ambassador to Portugal

William O'Dwyer: Executive Director of the War Refugee Board, January-September 1945

(b. July 11, 1890, County Mayo, Ireland; d. November 24, 1964, New York City)
William O'Dwyer immigrated to the United States in 1910 after studying for the priesthood and realizing it was not for him. He became a police officer in New York City, attending law school at night. He graduated from Columbia Law School in 1923, first going into private practice and then taking an appointment as a local judge. In 1939, he was elected District Attorney for Kings County (Bronx) where he became famous for prosecuting the Murder, Inc. mob. After losing the 1941 mayoral election to Fiorello LaGuardia, he joined the military. In 1944, he was promoted to Brigadier General and appointed to be the American representative to the Allied Control Commission in Italy. He left the military when he was appointed to the War Refugee Board and, during his tenure, entered the New York City mayoral race. In November 1945 he was elected mayor of New York. After his wife passed away in 1946, he remarried a former fashion

model 26 years his junior. Soon after his reelection in 1950, he resigned prior to a police corruption scandal and was appointed, by Truman, United States ambassador to Mexico. After a Congressional investigation (in which he was not found to have profited from the scandal), he resigned as ambassador but remained in private law practice in Mexico until 1960. His papers are held at the New York City Municipal Archives.

Iver Christian Olsen: WRB representative in Sweden

(b. 1904, Oslo, Norway; d. November 4, 1960, Washington, DC)

Iver Olsen was born in Oslo, Norway, and immigrated to the United States with his mother, a single parent, when he was ten or eleven years old. He attended Boston University and the Georgetown School of Public Service. In the late 1920s he met and married Mildred Schwab Olsen, a secretary to Congressman George Norris of Nebraska; the couple had two sons. He joined the Treasury Department, working for John Pehle in Foreign Funds and as an aide to Harry Dexter White. In late 1943, he went to Stockholm to act as the financial attaché to the embassy; he was also an OSS agent monitoring Sweden-German commercial and financial transactions. He was appointed to the War Refugee Board and served until the spring of 1945 when he was reposted to Belgium. After the war, he served in Thailand and Turkey before returning to the United States and taking a position as an economic advisor with the International Cooperation Administration.

Randolph Paul: Treasury Department general counsel

Kemal Aziz Payman: Deputy Director General of the Turkish Foreign Ministry

Drew Pearson: journalist, author of “Washington Merry-Go-Round” column

John Pehle: Executive Director of the War Refugee Board, January 1944-January 1945

(b. February 4, 1909, Minneapolis, MN; d. March 24, 1999, Bethesda, MD)

John Pehle was born in Minnesota to Otto and Agnes Flodquist Pehle. Otto was a German immigrant who came to the United States in 1895; Agnes was the daughter of Swedish immigrants. The Pehles had four children; John, the second child, was their oldest son. He graduated from Creighton University in 1930 and from Yale Law School with his LLB in 1933 and JDS in 1935. At Yale, he met and married Francha Elster, an art student; the couple had two sons. He joined the Treasury Department's General Counsel's office after graduation and was appointed an Assistant to the Secretary and head of Foreign Funds Control in September 1940. During Pehle's tenure as director of

the War Refugee Board, his younger brother, Richard, was killed in combat in France. In late November 1944, Pehle was given responsibility for the Surplus Property and Procurement Divisions; the increased workload led to his resignation from the War Refugee Board in January 1945. In late spring 1945, the Procurement division was transferred to the Commerce Department and Surplus Property received a new director, so Pehle became an assistant to Morgenthau and to his successor, Fred Vinson, before resigning from the Treasury Department in 1946. He entered private law practice for the rest of his career, working with his former War Refugee Board colleagues and later, with other private firms.

Herbert Pell: American representative to the War Crimes Commission

Robert Pell: Myron Taylor's alternate on the Intergovernmental Committee

Rabbi Maurice Perlzweig: World Jewish Congress representative

Clarence Pickett: Executive Secretary of the American Friends Service Committee

Byron Price: Director of the Office of Censorship

Joseph M. Proskauer: President of the American Jewish Committee

G. Hayden Raynor: State Department assistant to Edward Stettinius

Daniel J. Reagan: commercial attaché, American embassy in Bern

Robert Borden Reams: European Division, State Department

Reuben Resnik: Joint representative, stationed in Switzerland

William I. Riegelman: State Department aide

(b. June 27, 1913, d. August 10, 1984, White Plains, NY)

William Riegelman was the son of Charles and Lillian Riegelman; Charles, an estate lawyer, was very involved in Jewish affairs, serving as president of the National Refugee Service during the war, while Lillian was Henry Morgenthau, Jr.'s first cousin. William graduated from Dartmouth in 1935 and Columbia Law School in 1940. Beginning in January 1942, he worked for the Ambulance Field Service in North Africa (some records state he may have had a heart condition that prevented him from serving in the military);

in late 1943 he returned to the United States and became Breckinridge Long's assistant. After the war, he joined the firm of Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson in New York City and later in life, became very involved in Jewish philanthropy, particularly the Jewish Home and Hospital for the Aged in New York.

Gerhart Riegner: World Jewish Congress representative in Geneva

(b. September 12, 1911, Berlin, Germany; d. December 3, 2001, Geneva, Switzerland)
Gerhart Riegner earned a law degree in Germany. In the mid-1930s, he immigrated to France and Switzerland, earning his doctorate in law. In Switzerland he met Nahum Goldman, one of the founders of the World Jewish Congress, who appointed him the WJC's representative in Switzerland. Riegner was secretary-general of the World Jewish Congress between 1965-1983. Riegner's personal library is located at the Wiener Library in London.

Owen Roberts: Associate Justice, United States Supreme Court, 1930-1945; US representative to the Bermuda Conference

Congressman Will Rogers, Jr. (D-California): sponsor of "Rescue Resolution" and supporter of Bergson group activities

Jacob Rosenheim: founder of Agudas Israel

Judge Samuel Irving Rosenman: advisor to President Roosevelt

Heinrich Rothmund, representative of the Swiss Federal Police, representative of the Intergovernmental Committee (June 1945-)

James J. Saxon: Treasury Department representative in North Africa, temporary War Refugee Board representative in North Africa and Italy

Nathan Schwalb: representative of Hechaluz, stationed in Geneva, Switzerland

Joseph Schwartz: Director of European Operations for the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee

(b. 1899, Ukraine; d. January 1, 1975, New York, NY)

Joseph Schwartz was born in Ukraine and immigrated to the United States in 1907. He studied at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary and worked as a rabbi in New York before earning a PhD at Yale University in Oriental Studies. After teaching for

several years, Schwartz became a social worker for the Brooklyn Jewish Federation and joined the staff of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in 1939. Under the direction of the Joint's European Director, Morris Troper, Schwartz was stationed in Paris alongside Herbert Katzki. With the German invasion of France in June 1940, the Joint's offices moved to Lisbon and Schwartz replaced Troper as European Director. After the war, Schwartz moved the Joint's offices back to Paris and organized JDC workers in displaced persons camps. In 1950, he returned to the United States to become the head of United Jewish Appeal, and from 1955-1970 served as Executive Vice President of the State of Israel Bonds organization. His papers are located at the American Jewish Joint Distribution Archives in New York.

Johannes E. Schwarzenberg: representative of the International Red Cross

Samuel Sequerra: representative of the Joint in Spain

G. Howland Shaw: Assistant Secretary of State, 1941-1944

Moshe Shertok: representative of the Jewish Agency

Zeev Shind: representative of the Jewish Agency

Samuel Sydney Silverman: British representative of the World Jewish Congress

Gilbert Simond: representative of the International Red Cross, stationed in Istanbul

Paul C. Squire: consular officer, US consulate, Geneva, Switzerland

Laurence Adolph Steinhardt: United States ambassador to Turkey

(b. October 6, 1892, New York, NY; d. March 28, 1950, Ramsayville, Ontario, Canada) Laurence Steinhardt graduated from Columbia University Law School in 1915 and served in the Quartermaster troops in World War I. After returning to the United States, he became active in Zionist organizations and worked for Franklin Roosevelt's 1932 presidential campaign. After Roosevelt won, Steinhardt was appointed ambassador to Sweden (1933-1937); Peru (1937-1939); the Soviet Union (1939-1941); Turkey (1941-1945); and Czechoslovakia (1945-1948). President Truman appointed Steinhardt ambassador to Canada in 1948; he served until his death in a plane crash in 1950. Laurence Steinhardt's papers are located at the Library of Congress.

Isaac Sternbuch: representative of the Vaad Hatzalah and Orthodox organizations in Switzerland

Ward Stewart: Assistant Executive Director of the WRB, January-August 1944

(b. January 29, 1913, Des Moines, IA; d. July 23, 1983, Washington, DC)

Ward Stewart (born Rodney Ward Stewart) was raised in Des Moines, Iowa. An accomplished flautist and tennis player, Stewart competed in both. He graduated from Carleton College in 1933 and received his master's degree from the University of Chicago in 1934. He earned a PhD in public administration from Harvard in 1938, writing his dissertation on the personnel administration of the Tennessee Valley Authority. He joined the Treasury Department's Department of Foreign Funds Control in November 1941 and in 1942 became a Deputy Director. During the war, he led a project to compile a census of foreign-owned property in the United States and American-owned property abroad. He worked at the Treasury Department until 1944, when he resigned to join the Navy as a lieutenant. After the war, he earned his law degree from George Washington University and served as Deputy Chief of Public Administration in Bogota, Colombia. He continued his government service for the rest of his career, working mainly in departments and agencies having to do with education. He had two sons and one daughter.

Edward Stettinius, Jr.: Undersecretary of State, September 1943-November 1944; Secretary of State November 1944-June 1945

(b. October 22, 1900, Chicago, IL; d. October 31, 1949, Greenwich, CT)

Edward Stettinius ("Stett" to his friends) was born into a wealthy family and grew up on Staten Island. He attended the University of Virginia, but did not graduate. Through family connections, he got a job with General Motors and by 1931, he was a vice-president in charge of public and industrial relations. In 1934, he joined US Steel and became chairman in 1938, succeeding Myron Taylor. He became chairman of the War Resources Board in 1939 and the administrator of Lend-Lease in 1941. In 1943, he was appointed Undersecretary of State and succeeded Cordell Hull as Secretary of State in 1944. After resigning from the State Department in June 1945, he became the first United States Ambassador to the United Nations. Edward Stettinius's papers are located at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville.

Henry Lewis Stimson: Secretary of War

(b. September 21, 1867, New York, NY; d. October 20, 1950, Huntington, NY)

Henry Stimson graduated from Yale University in 1888 and Harvard Law School in 1890. He ran for governor of New York in 1910 and lost. President Taft appointed

Stimson as Secretary of War in 1911; he served until 1913. He served as Governor-General of the Philippines (1927-1929) and Secretary of State (1929-1933); President of the New York City Bar Association (1937-1939); and Secretary of War (1940-1945). His papers are held at Yale University.

Hillel Storch: representative of the World Jewish Congress, stationed in Sweden

Myron C. Taylor: Roosevelt's personal representative to the Vatican, American representative to the Intergovernmental Committee, 1939-1943

Howard K. Travers: Visa Division, State Department

Rabbi Michael Tress: President of Agudas Israel

Grace Tully: President Roosevelt's secretary

Frederick Vinson: Secretary of the Treasury, 1945-1946

Algirdas Vokietaitis: Lithuanian resistance leader

Raoul Wallenberg: Swedish diplomatic attache in Budapest, sent at request of and under instructions from the WRB

George Warren: State Department advisor and specialist on refugee issues

Isadore "Peter" Weinstein: WRB aide specializing in psychological warfare

Isaac Weissman: representative of the World Jewish Congress in Lisbon

Chaim Weizmann: President of the World Zionist Organization

Sumner Welles: Undersecretary of State, 1937-1943

David White: in charge of WRB administration

Harry Dexter White: senior Treasury Department advisor

John Gilbert Winant: United States ambassador to Great Britain

Lord Earl Winterton: British representative to the Intergovernmental Committee

James Waterman Wise: son of Stephen Wise, official with the World Jewish Congress

Rabbi Stephen Wise: President of the World Jewish Congress

Rabbi Wilhelm Wolbe: representative of the Vaad Hatzalah in Sweden

David Zagher: “special agent” for the War Refugee Board

Lev Zelmanovits: representative of the World Jewish Congress in London

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(Relief and Rescue Department)
RG-68.045M, The World Jewish Congress Geneva Office records
RG-89.001, Selected records from the National Archives of Ireland

The Wiener Library, London, UK
The Gerhard Riegner library

Private collections

Lesser family papers
Olsen family papers

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

Oral history interview with George Warren, conducted by Richard McKinzie, 10 November 1972; Truman Presidential Library, Independence, MO.

Oral history interview with Josiah DuBois, conducted by Richard McKinzie, 29 June 1973; Truman Presidential Library, Independence, MO.

Oral history interview with Bernard Bernstein, conducted by Richard McKinzie, 23 July 1975; Truman Presidential Library, Independence, MO.

Oral history interview with James Mann, conducted by Laurence Jarvik, 15 September 1978. As found in KE 96059, the Morgenthau family papers, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC.

Oral history interview with John Pehle, conducted by Laurence Jarvik, 16 October 1978; As found in KE 96059, the Morgenthau family papers, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC.

Oral history interview with Josiah DuBois, conducted by Laurence Jarvik, 23 October 1978; As found in KE 96059, the Morgenthau family papers, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC.

Oral history interview with Roswell McClelland, conducted by Claude Lanzmann, winter 1978; RG-60.5047, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC.

Oral history interview with John Pehle, conducted by Claude Lanzmann, 1978-1981; RG-60.5021, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC.

Oral history interview with Ira Hirschmann, conducted by Laurence Jarvik, 20 January 1979; As found in KE 96059, the Morgenthau family papers, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC.

Oral history interview with John Pehle, conducted by Henry Morgenthau III; As found in KE 96059, the Morgenthau family papers, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC.

Oral history interview with Josiah DuBois, conducted by Henry Morgenthau III; As found in KE 96059, the Morgenthau family papers, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC.

Oral history interview with Henrietta Klotz, conducted by Henry Morgenthau III; As found in KE 96059, the Morgenthau family papers, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC.

Oral history interview with Gerhard Riegner, conducted by Richard Breitman, 1991 April 28; 1992 May 11; RG-50.030*0189, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC.

Oral history interview with Herbert Katzki, conducted by Randy Goldman, 1995 June 2; RG-50.030*0337, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC.

Oral history interview with John Pehle, conducted by Abby Gilbert, 1997 August 19; Treasury Department Historical Association.

Oral history interview with Dino Brugioni, conducted by Ina Navazalskis (with my assistance), 2014 November 13; RG-50.030*0771, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC.

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