

AMERICAN JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE

Statement for

The Evian Intergovernmental Conference for Refugees

July, 1938

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AMERICAN JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE ON REFUGEES

Evian, July, 1938.

Introductory

THE AMERICAN JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE is profoundly grateful to those who initiated and are taking part in the Intergovernmental Conference at Evian for Refugees from Germany, including Austria. Founded in 1914, immediately following the outbreak of the world war, our organisation has ever since been engaged in the service of the distressed and persecuted. Its energies and the very considerable funds contributed to it, have during this period of 24 years been devoted to many programs of assistance all over the world in frequent collaboration with other important bodies, Christian and Jewish, and a substantial part of its resources have been given toward amelioration of the plight of non-Jewish as well as Jewish sufferers. During the past 5 years, in addition to its efforts on behalf of many needy Jewish Communities, our organisation has collaborated closely with all other outstanding bodies engaged in work for the Jews of Germany.

While there follows a brief review of this work as well as a statement of certain proposals, it is also to be noted that by virtue of our close collaboration with almost all the other private organisations, we are to be associated in a general sense with the suggestions contained in the memoranda of these other bodies. Thus, although we did not sign the memorandum submitted to the Conference by the Council for German Jewry and certain other organisations, we do not dissociate ourselves from this memorandum.

Since its inception, the J.D.C. (as our organisation is usually designated), has expended for its multifarious activities in Europe and overseas a total of over \$90,000,000. Except during the years of the world war and its aftermath of revolutions and widespread continued violence, when large scale relief work was essential, the activities of the organisation have been mainly directed toward a social and economic adaptation of the Jewish masses of Central and Eastern Europe to the new political, geographic and economic conditions confronting these millions of Jews. Our aim and hope has been to help these people to become a socially and economically useful part of the population of these countries. We therefore express the earnest hope that the Governments assembled here at this Conference will endeavor by their influence to discourage any discrimination by law or otherwise against the Jewish population in any of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, or any forced emigration of this population.

In 1933, when the National Socialist Party came to power in Germany, the European headquarters of the J.D.C. were in Berlin, and this enabled the organisation to take immediate steps toward the organisation of the Jewish Communities of Germany, so as to cope with their sudden tragedy. Immediately a vast and centralized program was set in motion, comprising emigration services, training for emigration, cultural and educational work, and the provision of necessary relief to the destitute. Since then the special English organisations on behalf of German Jewry - first the Central British Fund and then the

Council for German Jewry - came into being and we have worked in continuous close contact with these bodies, as well as with the Jewish Colonisation Association and many other organisations in this field of endeavour.

Economic aid, emigration, training and re-training, welfare and general education - in fact all the needs confronting German Jewry - were the same problems upon which the J.D.C. had been working for many years. In the situation created by the National Socialist regime, however, special stress was laid upon emigration and the preparation for it, by training and re-training.

Emigration

The greater part of our contributions for German Jewry in the last 5 years, has gone into emigration assistance and preparation for emigration. About 40,000 persons have been assisted to emigrate, of whom 16,000 went to Palestine and about 24,000 to overseas countries. Ten thousand additional persons emigrated from the refugee countries. At the same time about 75,000 German Jews have emigrated without any assistance from the organisations, and about 16,000 have been repatriated. With the steadily increasing pauperization of the German Jews and with the appalling new conditions facing the Jews of Austria, a much larger proportion of the emigrants will in the future need assistance.

Training and Re-training

About 40 training centers have been established in Germany and about 24 such centers have been established in countries neighbouring Germany, with the consent of their Governments. In these various institutions over 18,000 persons have since 1933 received preparation for a new means of livelihood, generally some form of agricultural pursuit or artisanship.

Education

A system of Jewish schools was rapidly created to provide education for the thousands of Jewish children prevented from attending the German schools. A special 9th school year was added for training in crafts and tuition in foreign languages.

Economic Aid

For assisting Jews deprived of their businesses and occupations, credit institutions have been established, which give loans without interest, or at low rates to enable them to tide over their time of acute distress.

Welfare Work

By subventions to the social and welfare institutions, they have been enabled to maintain their standards, and when necessary, to enlarge their activities.

Altogether the Central German Jewish body has since 1933 expended about 13,000,000 Marks for the work above described. Of this, the J.D.C. contributed \$2,153,000, or virtually half the total.

It is to be noted also that the contributions of the Jewish Communities of

Germany and the means which the emigrants and trainees themselves furnished, would bring the total expenses on behalf of these services to 35,000,000 or 40,000,000 Marks. Unfortunately for the future of this so greatly needed work, the growing impoverishment of German Jewry and the relative existing poverty of Austrian Jewry will make it impossible to find similar amounts through these private sources in the coming years, and the non-German organisations, especially the J.D.C., will be called upon for heavily increased contributions.

Capital Transfers by Emigrants

Closely bound up with this financial problem is the question of transfer from Germany. A special arrangement has been made, whereby the parents or other relatives of young people studying at schools, universities and training centers outside of Germany, are permitted to pay Mark amounts in Germany, while the equivalent in foreign countries is paid by outside Jewish organisations to the students. Since 1935, when this so-called additional clearing system was established, about 15,000 transmissions of this kind have been made to an amount of almost \$600,000.

These totally insufficient facilities encourage the belief that the German Government may be willing to cooperate in the furtherance of Jewish emigration by permitting the emigrants to take out a really useful proportion of their capital. We hope that the Conference will initiate negotiations in this direction.

Refugees in European Countries

The J.D.C. has devoted special attention to aid for the refugees in the various European countries outside of Germany. At the outset of the flight from Germany, the Jewish Communities of these countries collected local funds and maintained the refugees as long as they were able. Such funds, however, were soon exhausted or proved insufficient for the needs. The J.D.C. therefore now supports almost all the refugee committees, except the committees in England with which we are in close collaboration, but which do not need our financial help.

Estimates of the number of refugees in the European countries range from 35,000 to 50,000. Unfortunately a large proportion of these refugees must be somehow permanently supported. We have done everything possible in conjunction with the local committees to enable these refugees to adapt themselves to the economic possibilities of their country of refuge. In most such countries, however, a great number of refugees have no permanent residence permits and no permits to work in industry or as artisans, or to establish themselves in business.

Absorption of the Refugees in the European Countries of Refuge

We endorse the recommendations and proposals of the Liaison Committee to the League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Coming from Germany, of which we are a member organisation. In addition, we wish to stress the following: Where refugees do not receive regular permanent residence permits and are not permitted to earn their living, the Jewish Communities and the private organisations are forced to expend huge sums for mere relief purposes without any constructive results, and these funds are thus lost for the essential task of emigrating Jews from Germany. Thus in France we have

had to spend for such purposes since 1933, \$425,000 (over Frs. 12,000,000), in Holland \$395,000, in Czechoslovakia \$55,000, and in all the European countries together, over \$1,500,000. Of these funds, a part has been used for training, re-training, the placing of academic and professional people and other forms of constructive economic adaptation, but a large part has been spent to maintain refugees in forced idleness often for a number of years. The Jewish organisations would certainly be able to raise larger sums from their contributors and thus to give increased substantial funds for the permanent establishment of these refugees, if they could be assured that the necessary conditions for such establishment were being put into effect. We therefore express the earnest hope that the Conference will use its influence in this direction upon the Governments here represented.

Emigration from Refugee Countries

It is obvious that many of those in the European countries of refuge are anxious to emigrate overseas, either because they have found it impossible to establish themselves in such countries, or because it was always their intention to go overseas when possible. Since 1933 over 8,500 refugees have been aided to emigrate from European countries to overseas countries, of whom 4,425 went to Palestine. In addition, 5,000 have moved from one European country to another, either because of expulsion, or because of better possibilities elsewhere, and about 3,800 have been repatriated to their country of origin. For these various forms of emigration which has been conducted by the Hicem organisation, the J.D.C. contributed almost \$400,000.

Temporary Asylum for New Refugees

We are grateful to those countries which have so far admitted refugees, and especially for the facilities that have been granted by them to enable young people to receive various forms of education and training. We can assure the various Governments who have extended such possibilities, that we wish to do everything within our power to find emigration opportunities for these students and trainees.

We urge the Conference to use its influence to the end that provisional asylum rights be given to those whose life and liberty are in danger, unless they find a temporary haven in some European country. While we propose that refugees who are at present in the countries of Europe should be enabled to be absorbed in these countries, we realize that this cannot be made possible for all newcomers and we, along with the other organisations, are willing to give the broadest possible guaranty that we would find eventual emigration outlets for those newcomers needing a temporary refuge to protect their lives and their freedom.

Group Settlement

The J.D.C. and other affiliated or cooperating organisations, such as the Agrojoint and the Refugee Economic Corporation of New York, are in close contact with and have great interest in agricultural and group settlement projects. Besides being interested in Palestine, which is offering opportunities for large settlements, they are constantly exploring other possibilities in the light of their past experiences in settlement work, especially in Russia. Yet such projects cannot be of more than secondary help in the present situation. In view of their great costliness, they cannot be suddenly made

available for large masses, and can never take the place of free individual emigration. We are not in agreement, therefore, with some exaggerated statements and publicity claiming that the refugee problem can be solved by one massive Jewish settlement in some empty country. Nevertheless, starting on a small scale and gradually growing, such settlements can be a very valuable addition to general individual emigration.

Austria

The already most difficult refugee problem was intensely aggravated by the annexation of Austria to Germany in March, 1938. Although time has been too short and political conditions too disorderly for the work to have been organized and planned as in Germany, the first steps toward such organization have been taken since then by the J.D.C. in cooperation with other Jewish bodies. The terrible sudden pressure against Jews in Austria and the appalling need amongst them made relief work a necessity. Twelve thousand people are being fed daily in soup kitchens hastily set up with the help of our organization. Funds have also been provided for the inception of training and emigration work. Within this short period, the J.D.C. has given over \$80,000 to Austria, mostly to Vienna, where 93% of the 175,000 Austrian Jews are resident.

Since the annexation, from 5,000 to 6,000 refugees have managed to leave Austria, many of them for overseas, others to increase the number of refugees in European countries. The 3,500 Burgenland Jews have met an especially tragic fate. We warmly appreciate the friendliness of Yugoslavia in giving temporary shelter to 43 of these Burgenland Jews who were driven over her borders without any means and without any identity papers. Sixty-two other Burgenland Jews, driven out in the same way, are being kept on a Greek barge on the Hungarian side of the Danube. We are also most grateful to the Belgian Government, which upon the guaranty of our and other Jewish organizations, has given temporary shelter to 300 Austrian Jewish refugees, who had been brought illegally, against their own will, helpless and destitute over its border. As above stated, we appeal to the Conference that this magnanimous Belgian example be followed by other Countries.

To afford a brief summary statement of our work, we attach a table of our financial expenditures since 1933 on behalf of German and Austrian Jewry. As this statement indicates, we have in this period expended \$4,600,000 of which \$2,200,000 was for aid inside Germany and emigration from Germany, \$1,500,000 for assistance in the European refugee countries, and \$900,000 in the countries of overseas immigration.

We wish to reiterate our gratitude to the Nations here assembled. We tender the wholehearted and complete cooperation of our organization. We express the hope that with the united effort and collaboration of men of good will of all faiths and creeds, and with the helpful interest of the Governments here represented, this Conference will achieve success in solving the problems before it.

Jonah B. Wise
Vice-Chairman
American Jewish Joint Distribution
Committee, New York.

AMERICAN JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF ITS EXPENDITURES ON BEHALF OF

GERMAN AND AUSTRIAN REFUGEES

1933 - July 1938

1. Activities for all work inside Germany and for emigration from Germany.....	\$ 2,200,000	\$ 2,200,000
2. Activities European countries outside Germany:		
Austria.....	\$ 83,000	
Belgium.....	\$ 43,000	
Czechoslovakia.....	\$ 55,000	
Denmark.....	\$ 4,000	
Danzig.....	\$ 15,000	
England.....	\$ 4,300	
Esthonia.....	\$ 2,000	
France.....	\$ 425,000	
Holland.....	\$ 385,000	
Italy.....	\$ 25,000	
Latvia.....	\$ 100	
Lithuania.....	\$ 400	
Poland.....	\$ 49,000	
Portugal.....	\$ 2,300	
Roumania.....	\$ 375	
Russia.....	\$ 15,000	
Saar.....	\$ 2,000	
Spain.....	\$ 7,000	
Switzerland.....	\$ 21,000	
Yugoslavia.....	\$ 5,000	
	\$ 1,143,475	\$ 1,143,475
3. Hicem emigration.....	\$ 385,000	\$ 385,000
4. Palestine.....	\$ 76,000	\$ 76,000
5. Argentina.....	\$ 21,000	
Brazil.....	\$ 75,000	
Uruguay.....	\$ 1,000	
	\$ 97,000	\$ 97,000
6. Various South American countries.....	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000
7. Activities in U.S.A.....	\$ 736,000	\$ 736,000
8. Various unclassified.....	\$ 97,000	\$ 97,000
Grand total.....		\$ 4,784,475

The herein mentioned total expenditures somewhat exceed the figure mentioned in the memorandum due to several additional expenditures made since.