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Conference, 1969.



The American Jewish Committee
165 East 56th Street
New York, N.Y. 10022
PLaza 1-4000

Date 10/10/69

TO: Marc Tanenbaum

FROM: Jerry Goodman

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FO-Eur
October 1, 1969

MEMORANDUM

To: Foreign Affairs Department
From: A. S. Karlikow
Subj: United Hias Conference

Several subjects of interest to us were discussed at the two-day conference in Geneva, in which participated, also, a representative of the Israel government, of the Joint Distribution Committee and of the World Jewish Congress.

Nearly 25,500 Jews immigrated to Israel, the geographical breakdown being the following: (in the first 8 months of 1969)

| | |
|----------------|-------|
| Eastern Europe | 4,448 |
| Western Europe | 5,200 |
| Asia | 4,526 |
| Africa | 4,498 |
| North America | 4,200 |
| Latin America | 1,835 |
| Australia | 750 |

Noteworthy in these figures are the rise both from North America and Western Europe. In both these areas the jump in movement since the June 1967 war has been a sharp one. In Western Europe, the largest single increment, naturally enough, comes from France. In the course of 1968, 4000 Jews from France emigrated to Israel definitively or on a trial basis. The number for 1969 is expected to be well over 5000, one percent of the French Jewish population.

United Hias, in the first six months of this year moved 2429 persons, of whom 1599 came from Europe (almost exclusively Eastern Europe); 730 from Afro-Asian lands; and 100 from Cuba. The bulk of this emigration went to the U.S., 1276, with not quite 400 to Canada and with

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just under one hundred each to Australia and Latin America; plus 580 Hias helped to resettle in European countries.

Poland

The greatest single source of discussion at the conference was the movement from Poland, both because of its magnitude and because the nature of Polish emigration at this time poses certain delicate and difficult problems for all Jewish agencies, particularly when they have to decide which persons should be eligible to receive their assistance.

The facts about the background and scope of Jewish movement, dramatically and effectively presented by Mr. Kohane, of the AJDC, are already known to you. The situation since the critical September 1st date is, also, largely summarized already by Zach Shuster in his memorandum of September 15.

Briefly to review the picture as it came out at the United Hias meeting, from the variety of agencies there:

The September 1st cutoff date has made no practical difference. The Polish authorities are not only allowing people to come out who registered before September 1st, but also are continuing to issue pre-visas. The best estimate as to why they established the September 1st date at all is simply that they wanted to frighten as many as possible of the Jews who remain in the country, so that they would decide to leave. Jewish movement at the present time is primarily to Vienna, but also to other countries such as Sweden and Denmark. The Jewish organizations estimate that the total which will have left Poland for one destination or another will have been approximately 1000 for September; and they expect this rate to continue monthly until the 5-6000 persons registered for emigration will have left. They further estimate that 80% or more of the arrivals will be coming to the Jewish agencies in Vienna for assistance.

Increasingly, the desired destination of the Jew who are coming out of Poland is not Israel, but other countries; and the estimate is that 5-600 persons will be going to Hias every month, after they arrive, to ask help in emigration to countries other than Israel. Since there are already more than 1000 Poles (not to mention other Eastern Europeans) in the Vienna pipeline, one can see that the burden upon Jewish welfare organizations will be heavier than ever in the next year, since the processing of persons to countries other than Israel takes many months and they must be supported while awaiting emigration. JDC costs for this program are now over one million dollars per year; and may rapidly rise to two millions.

The number of pre-visas issued by the Polish government in July was about 1800, about 700 in August, and in September, thus after the deadline, approximately 200.

One can assume fairly safely, therefore, that those Jews who wanted to, or felt compelled to, leave Poland, have by now registered; and that new registrations will diminish to the merest trickle even without further Polish government action.

One phenomenon that has escaped general notice in the emigration of Jews from Eastern Europe is the -- once again -- remarkable attitude taken by the Danish government. The Danish government decided some time ago to open its doors to any Jewish refugee from Eastern Europe who would care to come to that country. These refugees, moreover, are given all assistance and rights by the Danish government. In over a year, the Danes issued 2400 visas to Jews from Eastern Europe; and thus far approximately 300 Poles and 300 Czechs have migrated there, increasing the Jewish population by about 10%. This liberal Danish attitude, moreover, makes it possible to provide a haven for those Jews who either because of their deeply involved Communist past or because of various physical and health disabilities cannot find refuge in other lands.

The Swedish government representatives in Warsaw have followed a completely liberal policy of granting visas to any Jew who applies there. Once the refugee goes to Vienna or Rome he can still acquire a Swedish visa, but the process there is somewhat more selective.

Norway too is fairly liberal in giving asylum to those Eastern European refugee Jews who reach that country, as some have.

The problem of which persons coming from Poland shall be eligible for Jewish relief is one of some difficulty. Increasingly, a number of the emigrants from Poland are people who, in that country, had no connection with Jewish life whatsoever, have intermarried, may have children brought up in the non-Jewish faith or as active non-believers, etc. These are people who for the most part were compelled to leave Poland thanks to a government policy intent upon making the country "Judenrein," a Poland where, there is evidence, government officials in the Ministry of Interior section concerned with Jewish affairs apparently are using blood-criteria, seeking out Jewish grandfathers and grandmothers as the Nazis did, so as to label someone Jewish and put pressure on him to go. In addition, a handful of persons who are altogether non-Jewish have been able to profit from the registration scheme for Jews in Poland, and come out at the expense of Jewish organizations.

Two things should be noted with regard to this problem. First, the Jewish organizations are responsible to the Austrian (and Italian) governments that the refugees coming out under the Polish scheme shall not become a charge to these countries of transit. Secondly, it is a fact of life -- and all refugees in Vienna know it -- that the proteges of the Jewish organizations receive much better treatment in Vienna than do other refugees: the others must live in a refugee camp maintained by the Austrian authorities, in an overcrowded barracks situation; whereas Jews are put in small hotels and pensions, and also get some financial aid that the others do not. It is clear that an eligibility line, therefore, has to be drawn

somewhere, for else there would be a great general tendency to try to get in on Jewish aid.

The criteria adopted by agreement between the JDC and the United Hias earlier this year is that if one of the two heads of the family is Jewish, then all members of the family are eligible for Jewish welfare and emigration assistance, even though some family members may be practicing Christians. While this is certainly a liberal criterion yet -- given the conditions in Poland during the past two decades -- there come out an increasing number of cases which do not meet the criterion but where Jewish workers on the spot feel that aid should be given. The question arises, furthermore, as to whether there is any claim to Jewish assistance by those persons who never considered themselves Jews yet were chased out of Poland as Jews.

The Jewish Agency regulations are based on the law of the State of Israel, that is religious Jewish law; if a man considers himself Jewish they are ready to take the family, though the members may not be Jewish; if the husband is not Jewish but the wife is Jewish, by Jewish law -- that is, she has a Jewish mother -- the Agency will also take the family. In one sense, however, the Jewish law requirements are superseded in practice: anybody who comes out with the visa granted by the Dutch in Poland on behalf of Israel will in practice be taken to Israel by the Jewish Agency, so as not to give the Austrian authorities any reason to complain that Israel is not honoring its agreement.

If the above seems a little complicated, it gives but a small idea of the much more involved human and personal and legal inter-relations with which the Jewish organizations in Vienna now must cope insofar as Polish emigration presently is concerned.

Other Eastern European Countries

The number of Jews presently coming out of Czechoslovakia is about one a day. As you know, the bulk of those who wanted to or had to leave, came out over a year ago.

The movement from Rumania, which increased during the past few months, was essentially due to the fact that the Rumanian government -- confidentially -- honored finally its agreement to let out some of the Jews who were in jail in Rumania and their family members. Whereas the Rumanian government provided a list of such prisoners of well over 2000, only about 900 of these prisoners have thus far been able to emigrate. These were the people put in prison for so-called economic crimes many years ago. Russian emigration continues on the scale indicated in the memorandum of September 2nd by Zachariah Shuster.

Moslem Countries

-There was a description at the United Hias conference of the situation of Jews in Moslem countries, and movement, or lack of it, from these lands; but this only reviewed what we already know, except for this one point, mentioned at the Hias meeting and also the subject of discussion between the representatives of the High Commissioner for Refugees and Jewish organizations recently.

As you know, the families of former Jewish prisoners already released have been permitted to leave Egypt, although in September, 1968, the Egyptian government stopped other Jews in Egypt from emigrating. There presently are in Egypt about 80 persons eligible to move as relatives of former prisoners, but who are not coming. Why this is so is not clear; and indeed seems to be due more to the hesitancy to depart of these eligibles than to Egyptian government barriers. This is not certain, however, and the representative of the High Commissioner will be undertaking interviews with these people to try and determine what is holding up their departure.

