

MS-763, Box 72, Folder 1 Transcription

Horwitz, Louis Charles. [sound cartridge]. 1957.

CHARLIE: [00:00] It seems that the Jews were a little too pleased at the time when the large government seemed to succeed in its job to throw the communists out -- the Stalinists out. And this is coming back to plague them. And I think that, as with everybody else, the new government is putting under screws, and they're cleaning up as much as they can. Now, the relationship between the Jewish community and the SSE --

Q: Before you go on with that, the net result of what you're describing to me, the change in the personnel of the top layer of command in the Jewish community, you started to say, might indicate that the program of [01:00] relief in transit would be affected in some way or other. Were you about to go on to describe that at this point? All right.

CHARLIE: We have to wait and see just exactly who the people will be with whom we will have to deal. It's a question of confidence in the relationship, in the turning over considerable sums of money to these people. I personally, based on my lengthy experience with the Hungarian government and others in the welfare program, have every

hope that regardless of who the people may be, it will continue to be possible to do an effective relief job.

Q: This relief job reaches how many people at the present time? And what form of relief gets to them, briefly?

CHARLIE: [02:00] Well, the relief job, which is carried out through the union of Jewish community reaches some 11,000 people, most of them people over the age of 60 and 65, through soup kitchens, through parcel service, food parcel service, through medical services, clothing, and other services of a similar nature. Over and above that, of course, we have another relief program which is not carried on through the union of Jewish community, and which is continuing as before -- there has been no interference with that -- and which reaches another probably 25,000 people in the country now.

Q: Now, that's as far as Hungary is concerned. Have you anything to say about the [03:00] internal program, the relief and transit program, if it exists at all in the other two countries? In Poland and in Romania?

CHARLIE: In Poland, we have been carrying on a relief program involving a rather limited number of people, until the repatriates came into the picture. Since the repatriates appeared, you know perhaps that something like 7,000 Jewish

repatriates appeared in Poland, of whom, according to best information available, some three to four thousand have left the country for Israel. We didn't have to address ourselves to this problem immediately, but as of recent, we have had a number of requests, that is the SSE had, and the world Jewish congress had, and other Jewish groups had requests from the religious community of Poland, the community which is headed by [04:00] the two men Dr. [Liebel?] and engineer Frankel, to provide help with their programs, which address themselves to the problems of the repatriates. The repatriates who have been left behind, who have been stopped from leaving the country, are being resettled by the Polish government in lower Silesia. They are being given apartments that were left vacant by Polish Jews who left for Israel. Other than that, they get a per capita grant of 500 zlotys, and with that they are supposed to integrate themselves, go look for jobs, and generally be independent.

Q: What does 500 zlotys amount to?

CHARLIE: 500 zlotys, according to the, what you would call free market rate of exchange, would be five dollars.

Q: [05:00] Well now, you have what I would call a caseload of repatriates to worry about, which at the moment doesn't

appear to be large. But if the repatriation is to resume in large numbers again from Russia, and if they do not leave for Israel, might it be assumed that your responsibility for that group of people would grow larger and larger once you take on the initial responsibility for caring for any of them, through the SSE that is. And now you have two or three thousand, supposing you had twenty thousand. Would you be able to or would you be willing to take care of that number?

CHARLIE: Let me first say that the repatriation of Jews from Russia to Poland has practically come to a stop. Because Jews are no longer permitted to leave the country after repatriation, [06:00] they don't care to come to Poland, but they sit it out in Russia. As long as they aren't in Siberia, exactly in Siberia. As long as they are in places like Latvia and Lithuania -- former Latvia and Lithuania etc. -- they have a roof over their head, they may have a livelihood, and they refuse to go through with the repatriation, which is optional as you know, not wanting to face what they know these repatriates are facing who are unable to leave Poland for Israel. There's a school of thought to which I also subscribe, that this repatriation movement of Jews to Poland may be restarted if it becomes

known that somebody like ourselves actually provides for the needs of the repatriates once they have [07:00] returned to Poland. And we are now finding ourselves in difficulties with this program. The religious community has just written a letter to the SSE explaining that based on "advice" -- in quotation marks -- which means, of course, advice from the authorities, it is not desirable that the SSE should give assistance to individual repatriates. We have been given this assistance by sending PKO parcels to them based on names and addresses which were supplied us by the Israelis. The religious community advises the SSE that it is not looked upon favorably by the government nor by it that this relief program should continue. They say that it may lead to a demoralization of the people. [08:00] It may make them dependent upon outside assistance, and it may make them unwilling to adjust to the reality of their situation. And for all of these reasons, they suggest that if the SSE wishes to give assistance to Polish repatriates, it should channel its assistance through the religious community for a more constructive program.

Q: Have you answered that letter yet? Or haven't you made up your mind what you're going to do about it?

CHARLIE: Well let me first explain what they mean by constructive program. They want go get us away entirely from giving assistance -- welfare assistance -- to individuals. What they want is lump sums with which they can finance, for example, retraining activities. They say that the people have to [09:00] adjust themselves to working conditions in Poland, that they have to open schools and retraining centers for them, and they need money for that purpose. They also say that they would like to provide, for example, summer vacations for the children of the repatriates, and they want to carry on some large-scale program for that purpose. Now, we have answered that letter by saying that we are perfectly willing to sit down and talk to them about what would be a reasonable program, but in order for us to be able to do so, it would be necessary and, from our point of view, desirable, that a person like Dr. [Hieman?] would be invited to come to Warsaw to have conversations with these people right on the spot. We haven't said that we wouldn't do one thing, or that we would want to do another thing. We've left it entirely open for discussion with them. [10:00] In the meantime, we are continuing nevertheless to send these parcels to the repatriates, because we believe that it is

absolutely essential that they should have a means of livelihood. The 500 zlotys, as I explained to you, which at the open market rate of exchange are worth about five dollars, are of course a drop in the bucket. They don't do anything for these people. And these people are unable to find jobs. That is one of the reasons why Polish Jews are leaving the country, because they can no longer find employment as needed. And the repatriates, of course, are at a disadvantage. Also, they are being sent to places which are unrelated to opportunities for employment. We feel that they must be assisted. We are assisting them. We feel that it is not undesirable to defy the attitude of the government and of the religious committee. [11:00] We feel that we put ourselves in the better bargaining position if we show them that despite their warnings to the contrary, we find ways and means of getting at these people, getting relief and assistance to these people, and we feel that if, as, and when Dr. Hieman will be invited to come, and we honestly believe that he will be invited to come, we have a better position to work out a relief program which is more adequate than they are now planning to have it. And we also, of course, hope, as I said before, that by giving this much encouragement to the repatriates already in

Poland, we may stimulate every new movement of Jews from Russia into Poland. Why do we do this? We do it because we are convinced that at some point in the foreseeable future, the Polish government [12:00] will have to permit continued emigration even of repatriates to Israel, and we want to place Jews now in Russia in a position where they can take advantage of these opportunities once they arrive.

Q: Very good, logical position. And I would call it very good planning for the future. It reminds me of the time ten years ago when, before you could get Jews into then-Palestine, you first had to get them into the DP camps in Germany. So now it's a question, you've got to get them out of Russia, into Poland, in the hopes that someday they will again be able to get out of Poland to Israel. All right, Charlie, look that was very good. That gives up a kind of a general recapitulation of Eastern Europe. I want to ask Herb [Katsky?] about North Africa and some field trips he's made recently. Before we give the microphone over to him, do you have anything else you want to add?

CHARLIE: [13:00] I don't think I've said anything about Romania and Czechoslovakia.

Q: No, that's right.

CHARLIE: I think you would want to know that there is just nothing coming out of Romania at the present time, and that we have been definitely told by Rosen that the government has vetoed any introduction of relief supplies into Romania by the SSE. They have told them to so advise everybody on this trip to central Europe, and he has done so. There is nothing doing, as far as that is concerned. We are also having difficulties now to send medical supplies into Romania. We have had any number of parcels with medicines urgently needed by sick people in Romania returned by the postal authorities. We are trying now to find out what is happening, why this is being done, and to find the way to get them in despite the difficulties. We have done -- [14:00] had to do this time and again, and we have always found a way. This may be purely bureaucracy, or it may be something deeper. It may be, again, a closing off of relief supplies of any kind to the Jews of Romania, pending some new developments which are being prepared by the authorities and the exact nature of which we don't know. As far as Czechoslovakia is concerned, we also have very definite news that it is not agreeable to the Czech government to have the SSE undertake a program similar -- in Czechoslovakia -- similar to what is being done in

Hungary. So they have made up their minds about the SSE, probably based on their own investigations, which would indicate that the JDC had something to do with it, and the JDC is still persona non grata in those countries.

Q: And I would probably add that the attitude of those two countries is due [15:00] to the orthodoxy of their communist position, which is really saying the same thing. They are the most orthodox communist countries, Romania and Czechoslovakia, and therefore anything having to do with the west, such as the JDC, is the most taboo to them.

CHARLIE: Now, as far as Russia is concerned, there has been an ever-increasing need for supplies to be sent in there by various groups, including, for example, Lubavitcher, including the Association of Baltic Jews in the United Kingdom. The demands made upon us for relief supplies to be sent into Russia is an ever-growing one. And what we are unable to do in one area in other words, for example in Czechoslovakia, is doubly and triply made up by increased demands made upon us from other areas such as, for example, Russia.

Q: OK [16:00] [Brucher?] is that it? Thanks very much, Charlie. Herb Katsky says that he's got a full report on North Africa, Morocco, Tangiers, Algiers, Tunisia, down at

a staff meeting on June the 6th, and it's being typed up now, and we should have it within ten days in the office, and so there's no point in his repeating the stuff into the machine at this point. We'll take the verbatim notes from his report last month. But he's got one footnote to add about immigration from Iran, and that was not included in the last staff notes. It will be in the next set of staff notes, but we might as well get that thing on the record now.

KATSKY: So far as immigration from Iran to Israel is concerned, the Jewish agency in Teheran has [17:00] 10,000 people registered in Iran, most anxious to go to Israel as soon as they can. The larger proportion of these 10,000 people have been medically examined, and they have passed the social criteria for admission to the country. There are no difficulties for getting passports or exit permits or anything else for these people to get out of the country. The big difficulty is one of transportation. The Sachmut sends one plane a month to Iran, which carries, if the thing is fully loaded, about 80 or 85 people, and that's the only limiting factor on people moving from Iran to Israel at the present time. This results in the movement of about 900 a year, which would be twelve times eighty,

instead of the 10,000 getting out. They're most anxious to go. They tell me that the letters which are coming back from Israel to Iran at the present time [18:00] are most optimistic, and are encouraging family members to come down to Israel as soon as they can get there. The people are steamed up, and they're anxious to go. The position is such that individuals who have been selected several years ago and who are ready to go are becoming sick and tired of waiting in the towns from which they were selected -- or in which they are selected, and they're taking off on their own, coming up to Teheran hoping that in that way, by being personally and physically present in Teheran some means will be found to get them to Israel more quickly. In my view, it would be extremely helpful not only from the point of view of a people who want to go to Israel, but also from the point of view of Teheran -- of Iran itself if this proportion of Jewish people could be assisted to move to Israel at the earliest possible moment. [19:00] Perhaps while you're in Israel you can ask about it and find out why.

Q: What you're suggesting is that here are people who are ready, willing to go, who have no technical obstacles in way, who are good human material, and the rate at which

they're being taken is pathetically small. You say in a joke that somebody in authority ought to be asked why more Iranians aren't being taken than just one planeload a month. I don't want to ask the question because I know the kind of an answer that I'll get. They'll say, "Get more money, we'll take more Iranians."

KATSKY: That's your problem. You're supposed to get a campaign and I'm giving you 10,000 customers. Well, from the point of view of the huge AA campaign, I'm not at all sure that it's a question of funds alone which is holding these people back in Iran. I think that Iran, which politically [20:00] for the moment for the Jews is quiet, was put somewhere lower down on the list of priorities than some other countries from which the Jewish people had to be moved more rapidly. But if it is true -- and it appears to be true -- that there's going to be an abatement in the rate of immigration from the eastern European countries, and it would appear also that the rate of movement from the North African countries also is abated for the time being, then it would seem that this moveable group of 10,000 which can be gotten out reasonably quickly ought to move higher up, then, on the list of priorities as a source of people who would be able to go to Israel and go there promptly.

Q: This is a fair point to be made, and I know you will ask people in authority about it, as shall I. Let me thank both you guys for putting the time in on this thing, and -- what? What did she say?

CHARLIE: Herb I wanted to tell you it was a pleasure, a privilege to have visited you.

KATSKY: Your unseen radio audience will hate you from now on, Charlie. Good night, gentlemen.

[break in audio]

Q: To see to it that the immigration continues so that, as far as Poland is concerned, the indications all are in a positive direction, at least on a present level. As far as Hungary is concerned, there are 2,000 people who have received passports and who are waiting to go, and those 2,000 will be brought out as time and conditions permit, and they should be coming out fairly quickly. As far as Romania is concerned, it seems to be quite small, almost negligible at the moment, but again, the developments [22:00] in Russia might turn out to be of such a nature as to make us slightly optimistic about future possibilities in Romania. Not only the developments in Russia, but the removal of certain people in Romania herself, including some Jews, might make the opportunities greater for

immigration arrangements in the future. That's as far as eastern Europe is concerned. As far as Egypt is concerned, it seems to be running its course, and by the end of the year probably there will be almost no one left, which is another way of saying that those who want to come out and come to Israel will already have been brought out. As far as North Africa is concerned, negotiations are going on -- or, more properly, are being [23:00] begun again in order to have what [Tour?] in Paris calls an "assisted individual emigration." The policy of the Moroccans is still the same; they're against mass emigration. They're still theoretically in favor of individual emigration. The argument now is that individual emigration has to have an assist from somebody. The fact in Morocco is that without somebody to pressure for the processing of passports, the government simply doesn't issue them. When the people apply for them themselves, the red tape and the reluctance are such as to indicate that they aren't going to be given in large numbers. As a matter of fact, the figure I have is that 35 individual passports were given last month, where people applied for them without any help.

M1: [24:00] Like this? Well, the big thing to remember about Morocco -- I don't think that we want to come out with this

now, but the time may come when we may have to come out with it -- is that there is no country outside the Iron Curtain countries where you have an Iron Curtain policy on emigration such as you have in Morocco at the present time in regard to Jews. I think that this is a point to remember because it's a point that may have to be made big use of at a certain point of time, if there's no other way.

Q: All right. And therefore, that leads us to a question of what the prognosis looks like. Apparently, talking in the broadest terms and obviously with plenty of latitude for mistakes one way or the other, [25:00] it might be fair to say that for next year, or perhaps even at an annual rate which would begin at the end of this year, there might be as many as 3,000 or perhaps 3,500 a month from Eastern Europe -- talking about Poland, Hungary, and Romania all together. With fluctuations -- Poland may go down, Romania may go up, but present calculations, with everything in a state of flux, seem to lead to the conclusion that one might estimate 3,500 a month from Eastern Europe. As far as Egypt is concerned, going over into 1958, one should say that perhaps 500 a month would be the maximum -- it might be lower than that -- which would represent a final cleaning up of the Egyptian situation. Now as far as North

Africa is concerned, which means mainly [26:00] Morocco, it's been running at the rate presently of 1,000 or perhaps 1,200 a month. It could be stepped up beyond that, and therefore to talk about any figure for next year is really premature at the moment because it depends on the way the present negotiations come out, It depends on what the rate in Europe turns out to be for next year. There are two other areas which must come in for consideration at this time, although we haven't paid any attention to them up to now. They are presumed problems which can't go on indefinitely without somebody paying some attention to them. One is Turkey, where economic conditions are such that the Jews, together with the middle class in general, and also because of the anti-foreign spirit in Turkey, find themselves very badly squeezed and [27:00] really nothing at all has been done either to help or to encourage them. The Jewish population of Turkey at the moment is -- the present population of Turkey is 50,000, and over the past half-dozen years or so, there have been as many as 25 or 30 thousand who have worked their way here, which means that they have many connections or relatives and families, and it's reasonable to assume that if some encouragement were given to this population, a fairly large number would turn

to Israel if they became the subjects -- or the objects of attention. The second problem area to which no attention has been paid is Iran. And there again, we can listen back to what Katsky had to say about that. [Shraguy's?] figures are somewhat larger. [Shraguy?] says there are as many as 40,000 people who are under immediate conditions of duress [28:00] to be moved. The [sahakol?] of the whole business is that when you take Eastern Europe at a figure of 3500 downward, or you take North Africa at a figure of 1500 upward, and you add in the pressing demands from two new places, Turkey and Iran, you can very well reach a figure of six to seven thousand a month, which might turn out to be the median figure for 1958. Six to seven thousand a month would be anywhere between 70 and 80 thousand a year. This isn't the dramatic hundred thousand a year that we talked about in 1957, but it certainly represents a very substantial chunk, larger obviously than any of the middle years of '51 -- or '52, 3, 4. Big enough, still, to be very respectable, [29:00] and containing a very large element of Eastern European immigration, which is the thing that I was concerned about.

M1: Yeah. I wanted to say my other two comments. First of all about the size of the monthly immigration figures. We're

being very realistic about that here -- we have to be, because it's not simply a question of bringing people to Israel, it's also a question of settling them properly economically once they are here. And therefore, our policy has to be that we must give overall priority of number to the escape immigration that's moving in and moving out of its countries of origin against a possible deadline that may fall down any minute. That's why obviously, in relation to Eastern Europe, the attitude will continue to be what it has been this year; namely, that whoever can come out [30:00] will come in. So if we -- we are simply there trying to ask ourselves how many we can expect to come out under prevailing political conditions. And we reach a figure that's like 3,500 a month from Eastern Europe. Now obviously if there is going to be a change in the condition in Romania, which affects a quarter million Jews, which will enable Aliyah to begin from there, that too would be included in the country of priority. Now, if we were to be aiming at high immigration figures, as we really ought to be, then there would be no difficult in 1958 in bringing in 100,000 Jews. Because there are enough candidates -- more than enough, and more than enough possibilities of movement from Turkey, Iran, and North Africa, to make up the slack.

100,000 a year means 8,500 a month. [31:00] It's quite feasible for us to bring out 5,000 Jews from countries other than Eastern Europe and bring them to Israel, so that we could adopt a policy of that kind. Financial realities stand in the way of it. And also because although there are these scores of thousands of candidates throughout the year in these countries, we can't regard them as an escape Aliyah in the immediate sense as you regard the Eastern European Aliyah as an escape Aliyah. In relationship to that Aliyah, therefore, the non-Eastern European, we can in all good conscience afford to take the position that if we don't see where the resources are coming from to absorb these people concurrently with their arrival in this country, then we ought to stretch it out a bit. The reason for adopting that attitude, which seems on the surface [32:00] to be callous, is this: now experience has shown that the most conceivable thing you can do if you want to encourage an immigration movement or answer an immigration need is not to be able to absorb it properly. If, in other words, we have an Aliyah of 5,000 a month from non-Eastern European sources, always assuming that there is no blowout which converts these people from potential refugees into immediate refugees who have to be saved come what may, that

if we bring them in, and we bring them into [Mahad Barak?], we bring them into [Parolin?] and all the rest of it, and we put the country in a position where it's not able to provide them with a minimum of employment as soon as they arrive in the country, it won't take many months before these people will be writing [33:00] back to their relatives, telling them to wait. It was precisely the ship-to-village system of absorption that we developed with the [HRA's?] help during the slack period of the immigration from 1952 to 1955 that made it possible afterwards to increase the figures. Because there's always a pressure on a Jew to leave Morocco, but in addition to the pressure on him to lead Morocco, there's got to be an attraction for him to come to Israel. Unless, of course, the physical and economic pressure on him in Morocco is so terribly great that he doesn't care what happens to him as long as he gets out of there. Now I think it has to be understood that that is not the situation in Morocco at this time. There is a pressure, there is a desire to leave, but the pressure has not reached a point where a Jew will leave come what may and no matter what [34:00] the circumstances are in the countries to which he comes. I'll say that on the business of the size of the immigration. That brings me to the next

comment, and in talking about this business of how we explain this whole position to people in America. I think that the cardinal thing is for us to realize that Eastern Europe is in a state of constant flux. I think that there will be 50 different interpretations of the latest changes -- political changes -- in the Soviet Union. I think that the only certainty about those changes is that they did take place. In other words, this is not the static, inflexible, monolithic system that we have been accustomed to assume for 30 years or more to exist in the Soviet Union. We are not dealing with an inflexible [35:00] state of affairs in Eastern Europe. We are dealing with a highly fluctuating situation. In that kind of a situation, there is a chance of saving Jews. We saw that in 1957, in relation to Poland and Hungary. We may see it in 1958 in relation to Romania. We may even see it in relation to the Soviet Union. A few months ago, if you talked about a possibility of mass Aliyah from Russia, you were regarded as crazy. In the light of the changes that have taken place in the Soviet Union, this thought is no longer crazy. Apparently anything can happen there at this time. Our major theme therefore I think has got to be that we've got to keep our eyes firmly fixed on Eastern Europe. See what

goes on there, to be able to see some opportunity as soon as it arises. I don't think that it can be kind to the Jewish people [36:00] in America or in our parts of the free world, who are psychologically conditioned to the opportunities that develop with the Polish Aliyah. And I don't think that we've made as much of it as we could. We have done a first rate job of absorbing the people in Israel, but we haven't done anything like the job that we should have done in terms of even prepare --



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