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Federal Council of Churches, 1942-1943.

From: Federal Council of Churches
297 Fourth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

STATEMENT ON ANTI-SEMITISM
(Adopted by the Federal Council of Churches in Biennial Session
December 11, 1942)

The reports which are reaching us concerning the incredible cruelties toward the Jews in Nazi-occupied countries, particularly Poland, stir the Christian people of America to the deepest sympathy and indignation. It is impossible to avoid a conclusion that something like a policy of deliberate extermination of the Jews in Europe is being carried out. The violence and inhumanity which Nazi leaders have publicly avowed toward all Jews are apparently now coming to a climax in a virtual massacre. We are resolved to do our full part in establishing conditions in which such treatment of the Jews shall end.

The feelings of the Jewish community throughout the world have recently been expressed in a period of mourning, fasting and prayer. We associate ourselves with our Jewish fellow-citizens in their hour of tragic sorrow, and unite our prayers with theirs.

We confess our own ineffectiveness in combating the influences which beget Anti-Semitism in our own country, and urge our constituencies to intensify their efforts in behalf of friendly relations with the Jews.

We urge that all plans for reconstruction in Europe shall include measures designed to secure full justice for the Jews and a safe and respected place for them in western civilization. For those who, after the war, will have to emigrate from the war-ridden lands of Europe, immigration opportunities should be created in this and other lands.

We recommend that the officers of the Federal Council transmit this action to the Jewish leaders in person.

Apart from general association with the spirit of the United Nations' Declaration, the Federal Council should be called upon to urge that the practical measures promised in that Declaration should be taken without further delay in order to give substance to the intention.

These practical measures in their immediate sense are threefold:

1. The appointment of a commission which should begin immediately to assemble the facts concerning the crimes against the Jews and other civilian populations, to which should be attached a Jewish advisory body.

(The State Department, in addition to the legations of Czechs, Norwegians and Poles, are in favor of such a Jewish advisory body.) The intention of the Commission is to bring the guilty before the bar of justice before the end of the war.

2. To maintain a continuous program to the Axis countries by way of constant warning of strict accountability for the crimes committed against the Jews and other civilian populations, and by way of incentive to revolt against these crimes and to deter them.

3. The undertaking by the United Nations, possibly in cooperation with neutral countries, of the work of saving those who can still be saved. This has a twofold aspect: (a) The opening of doors of asylum for them and (b) feeding.

ASYLUM

Insofar as asylum is concerned, there are a number of possibilities:

1. Making it possible for those who can escape to reach such neutral countries without barrier, such as Sweden, Turkey, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland. It being understood that once they reach these countries that arrangements should be made for their maintenance by the United Nations for the duration, on the understanding that the United Nations would undertake to arrange to return these refugees either to their own country at the end of the war or to other lands of settlement.

2. The opening of the doors of Allied countries, such as Great Britain and the United States.

3. The opening of the doors of Palestine.

The most important problem relates not to these small ~~mx~~ numbers who can manage to escape to neutral countries, but to a fairly comprehensible number whose exit might possibly be arranged through negotiations with the Axis powers. This relates specifically to the Jews in the Balkan areas, who conceivably would be permitted to leave their country and for whom the easiest port of entry is Palestine.

Also, there is the Jewish community of Denmark, which is as yet a quasi-independent country, but where the conditions are deteriorating so rapidly that Danish Jews are in imminent fear of suffering the same fate as Jews in other lands. For these Jews, England is a possible port of entry. In a special category is the question of children. It is known that children, especially in France, have thus far not been deported, and it would seem likely that appropriate negotiations might bring about the possibilities of exit. 5,000 visas are available for their admission to the United States, and 9,000 visas are available for their admission to Palestine.

In addition thereto, Switzerland has offered to take a larger number of children, provided food is made available to them.

An investigation is in the process of being conducted as to the possibility of bringing about the release of virtually all the Jewish children in Europe. A proclamation by the United Nations of their willingness to accept and maintain these children, if released, is of the utmost importance.

FEEDING

The feeding of the starving Jewish population in Nazi Europe seems to be a means of saving their lives. In the most recent extermination program proclaimed by Hitler, one of the most important factors was the fact that in this way even the limited food consumed by the Jews could be

released for Nazi consumption. It is a known fact that apart from this, the extermination program of the Nazis has been carried out through the slow death process known as starvation.

Precedents exist for the dispatch of food to populations even in the enemy sector. A notable example is that of Greece. The State Department itself confirms that in the case of Greece all the food reached its destination and none of it fell into enemy hands. As a result of the Americans' even limited feeding of Greece, there has been an appreciable drop in the mortality rate of the Greeks.

It is known now that the International Red Cross is negotiating with the German Red Cross for the delivery of food to the starving populations of Nazi occupied countries. It is important that American support should be given to these negotiations, with a view to making available American food to the starving Jewish populations in Nazi Europe.

It should be noted that while the original deadline of Hitler to complete his extermination program was December 31, 1942, it should not be considered that the threat has ended because the deadline has passed. On January 1, 1943, Hitler and the official Nazi radio, in a series of new broadcasts, began the year with the assurance to the Jews that the extermination program would be completed at the earliest possible moment through additional ~~and~~ methods.

1. GENERAL STATEMENT: The conscience of mankind has been roused by the terrifying documents telling of the systematic and scientific murder of masses of Jewish men, women and children by the Nazis. Statements of protest and retribution are not enough. A remnant of Jewish youth can still be saved if we act promptly.

2. REQUIRED ACTION: The following prompt action would make concrete the promise of the United Nations as enunciated in their recent statement. The salvation of 8200 children for whom the Palestine Government has granted immigration visas can only bring salvation to innocently suffering child victims if the following steps are brought about:

a) Pressure, perhaps through the International Red Cross, to affect the removal of as many Jewish children as possible from Nazi-dominated lands, to neutral countries.

b) Negotiations with neutral countries to secure permission for shelter for large groups of Jewish children temporarily within their boundaries, until they can be moved to permanent homes.

c) For those groups which must pass through neutral countries, negotiations to facilitate such quick transit by all means possible.

3. CONCRETE EXAMPLES OF GROUPS TO WHOM SUCH ACTION COULD BRING IMMEDIATE SALVATION.

*Children Now Stranded in Iran:

1. Gathered together in Teheran, Iran is a mass of some 14,000 Polish refugees, among whom are many Jews and some 1000 Jewish children who have been wandering from place to place. Some of them from Poland via Siberia for three long years. The Palestine Government aware of their plight, has issued certificates of entry into Palestine for them. The Youth Aliyah movement, which has to date rescued some 8200 Jewish child victims of Hitler and settled and educated them in Palestine, is prepared to rehabilitate them with the financial assistance of the Polish Government in exile. Iraq has refused to permit them to travel through its terrain

despite many official and unofficial pleas. If further pressure will not change the attitude of the Iraq Government, immediate alternative plans have to be worked out to affect transfer and salvation for this specific group for whom definite possibility of rescue is at hand.

*These children are now reported on their way to Palestine via India.

2. Children from Balkan Countries:

There are other groups of children for whom concrete action could also be taken at once. These comprise bands of Rumanian, Hungarian, and Bulgarian Jewish children for whom certificates are also available for entry into Palestine. Their rescue is being held up mostly for official technical reasons - the difficulty of securing exit permits, and transit visas from those countries through which they must pass to reach the Holy Land.



January 12, 1943

Dr. Stephen S. Wise
American Jewish Congress
330 West 42nd St.
New York City

Dear Dr. Wise:

You will no doubt be interested in knowing what transpired at the conference arranged by the Synagogue Council of America, with the Federal Council of Churches at the instance of the latter.

The conference was held Wednesday afternoon, January 6th, at the office of the Federal Council of Churches, 297 Fourth Ave.

There were present:

- a) for the Federal Council of Churches - Right Rev. Henry St. George Tucker, President of the Federal Council of Churches, Dr. George A. Buttrick and Bishop Ivan Lee Holt, former Presidents, Dr. F. Ernest Johnson, Executive Secretary, Department of Research and Education of the Federal Council, Dr. Samuel Cavert, General Secretary, and Dr. Roswell P. Barnes, Associate General Secretary of the Federal Council and several others.
- b) for the Synagogue Council - Dr. Israel Goldstein, Rabbi James G. Heller, President of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, Rabbi Joseph Lookstein, President of the Rabbinical Council, Rabbi Robert Gordis, Vice-President of the Rabbinical Assembly, Dr. Samuel Nirenstein, President, Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, Mr. Louis J. Moss, President of United Synagogue of America, Mr. Frederick Greenman, Vice-President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

Bishop Tucker, who presided, greeted the Jewish representatives. Dr. Cavert read the resolution, a copy of which is enclosed, which had been recently adopted at the biennial session of the Federal Council of Churches held in Cleveland. We explained that Dr. Silver had spoken to him in Cleveland urging that something be put in about Palestine, but there was a divided opinion among the resolutions' committee resulting in the omission of any special reference to Palestine.

Dr. Cavert stated the purpose of this conference was to convey the resolution to Jewish leaders, as provided for in the resolution itself, and to receive from the Jewish group whatever suggestions they may have touching practical steps which might be taken to implement the resolution. He said that it was felt that the first conference should be held within the Jewish religious leadership and that the Federal Council might, if it felt it was necessary, seek a conference subsequently with the Jewish lay leadership.

Dr. Wise

January 12, 1943

Rabbi Goldstein, in responding, expressed appreciation on behalf of the Jewish group, for the spirit of brotherliness which prompted the Federal Council resolution and proceeded to outline practical measures which might be taken. He stated that the suggestions were such as would be approved by Jewish secular bodies as well. The expression of appreciation as well as the suggestions for a program of action were reiterated and further amplified by the other Jewish representatives present, among whom Rabbi Heller and Mr. Greenman took the most active part. These are contained in the enclosed summary.

On the subject of Palestine, Dr. Cavert sounded a caution, stating that it seemed to be a controversial subject among Jews themselves. To that Rabbi Goldstein responded that while the political status of Palestine was a subject of controversy, the importance of Palestine, as a haven of refuge uniquely prepared to absorb a large Jewish immigration, was not the subject of controversy, and that the Institute of American Judaism, held recently in Cincinnati, which represented the Reform Rabbinate and laity, made such favorable references to Palestine in unmistakable language. This observation was effectively corroborated by Mr. Greenman who said he represented a non-Zionist body.

In the course of the discussion, in which the Christian group participated, it was their own view that Christian public opinion is not conversant with the horrible facts of the story and ought to be familiarized with these facts. Requests were made for copies of the memorandum presented to the President by the United Jewish delegation.

Dr. Buttrick dwelt on the need of giving attention to the undercover Anti-Semitism here in our own country, which may become a serious menace after the war. It was advisable to deal with this question at a subsequent time.

Sincerely yours,

DR. ISRAEL GOLDSTEIN
President

January 12, 1943

Dr. Samuel McCrea Cavert
Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America
297 Fourth Avenue
New York City

My dear Dr. Cavert:

I am enclosing a summary of the proposals made by our group at the conference with you and your colleagues last Wednesday. May I repeat what we stated orally, that we were deeply touched by your solicitude.

Needless to say, we look forward most eagerly to whatever steps your group may find it proper and feasible to undertake, and shall be grateful if you will keep us apprised. There is reason to believe that discussions on these matters are going ~~on~~ on now in high quarters, so that your intercession would be the more effective if made as soon as possible.

Sincerely yours,

DR. ISRAEL GOLDSTEIN

P. S. You may find Rabbi Bernstein's article in "The Nation" of January 9th of interest. I am also enclosing two memoranda which have come to me from interested Jewish groups, dealing more fully with some of the matters covered by the summary, and one news item. Under separate cover, you will receive shortly some copies of the memoranda presented by the united Jewish delegation to the President.

the relief would be administered on a non-sectarian basis.

The Federal Council of Churches can use its moral influence toward this end, with the State Department and the International Red Cross.

2. Evacuation of children and possibly adults from Nazi lands.

Even the bare possibility that Germany itself may be persuaded to release numbers of Jewish children ought to be explored. Toward that end the intercession of neutral countries and of the International Red Cross might be of some avail. It is not unlikely that requests to Germany from Sweden, Turkey, Switzerland, Spain and Portugal, may not go altogether unheeded.

The likelihood of the evacuation of children and possibly adults is greater in the case of such countries as Rumania, Hungary and Bulgaria which still have a fragment of self-government. There is reason to believe that such possibilities in these countries exist. There are also at present in France, thousands of children who just before the German occupation were about to receive immigration opportunities to Canada and the United States. In order that these possibilities may be realized, it is necessary that neutral countries such as those above mentioned be willing to do two things:

a) offer temporary refuge to the evacuees.

b) facilitate the transit of those who have visas for permanent destinations. There are at present 8500 certificates for children and several thousand for adults to go to Palestine, as well as thousands of certificates for children to come to the United States.

The Federal Council of Churches can use its moral influence with some of these neutral countries, especially those where the Protestant Faith is predominant. Likewise the good office of the International Red Cross need to be enlisted.

3. Permanent Settlement opportunities for refugees and evacuees.

- a) United States) England, being the closest to the continents of Europe, would be the most accessible at
- b) Canada) the present time. Nevertheless, Canada and the United States should make the offer of
- c) England) asylum in larger measure than heretofore.

The Federal Council of Churches can use its moral influence first, with our own government, and secondly with Canada, and with England, where its contacts are excellent, especially with the clergy.

c) Palestine.

Palestine is a chapter in itself because of the special part it has played as chief refuge and home for the refugees since 1933. Because of the character of the Jewish community in Palestine and because of the nature of its agricultural cooperatives making possible the absorption of large numbers without straining the social economy, Palestine presents the most hopeful opportunities for the permanent settlement of refugees and evacuees, both children and adults. Hadassah, which in its Youth Aliyah program, has developed an outstandingly effective administration of this problem, the United Palestine Appeal, and to an extent, the Joint Distribution Committee, are cooperating now and would be ready to cooperate in larger measure, in dealing with increased possibilities.

Two difficulties, however, need to be overcome. First, is the unreadiness of neutral countries to facilitate transit. For example, Turkey permits transit for only fifty children at one time. Second, is the unreadiness of England, the Mandatory over Palestine, to sanction the immigration of large numbers of children and adults, -witness the tragedies of the S. S. Patria and the S. S. Struma. Even under the restrictive White Paper policy, larger Jewish immigration into Palestine can be allowed, provided the numbers are chargeable against the total for which the White Paper provides. Economically the immigrants would be very useful for the

United Nations war effort in Palestine today, where there is a shortage of manpower in agriculture and industry.

The Federal Council of Churches can use its moral influence toward this end, both with the United States government which is becoming increasingly interested in the Near East, and with British circles.

4. Efforts to Curb Nazi Program of Extermination of Jews.

In the belief that no effort should be spared, however remote its chance of success may be, to curb the Nazi program of extermination, it is suggested that the announced policy of the United Nations to hold the guilty to account, be implemented without delay by the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry. It is suggested that such a commission invite the cooperation of a Jewish Advisory Body.

Toward this end the Federal Council of Churches can help by sending a delegation of its representatives to the State Department and if possible to the President. Such a delegation would convey the solicitude of Protestant America for the plight of the Jewish people, and would at the same time propose any of the above mentioned suggestions which it might deem appropriate.

Similarly the Federal Council might seek a conference with Ambassador Winant who is here now, in order to convey the above, to him and through him, to the United Nations whose seat is in London.

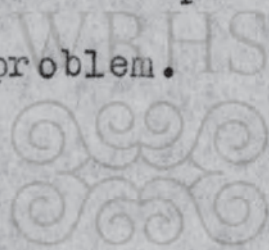
5. Consultation with Herbert Lehman to urge that his organization do whatever may be possible, in connection with any of the above proposals, which may fall within the scope of his organization.

6. Educating Protestant public opinion to an appreciation of the Jewish tragedy and of available measures of alleviation.

The facts themselves are not as widely known as they should be; and even where the reports have been read they are not accepted as

reliable, being regarded by many as "atrocious stories." Therefore the recent memorandum submitted to the President by the leading American Jewish organizations and having the authentication of the State Department, needs to be brought to the attention of the Protestant clergy and congregations throughout the land. This the Federal Council of Churches can do, accompanying the statement of the facts with a statement of its resolutions adopted in Cleveland amplified by a summary of its program in implementation of those resolutions.

A special Sunday set aside in Protestant Churches for the discussion of this theme, and special prayers on that occasion, would enlighten the Protestant constituency on the facts of the tragedy as well as on possible means of alleviating it, would secure the attention of the local press, and would indicate to government circles that there is a substantial public opinion backing such steps as it might contemplate taking toward the alleviation of the problem.



WOULD HAVE PALESTINE ADMIT ~~40~~ 40,000 IN NEXT 15 MONTHS

London, January 9 (Palcor) -- "Even under the White Paper, another 40,000 Jews can be admitted into Palestine during the next fifteen months," it was pointed out by the New Statesman yesterday in a leading article dealing with Great Britain's duty to take action to rescue the Jews.

The article says, among other things, that apart from the immediate rescue of the Jews, the war is in vain unless the Jews, after a victory is won, can go back to security in any land on any continent. With regard to immediate action, the New Statesman thinks that the best way to get the Jews out of Europe is, with German consent, through the negotiations of some neutral country. The editor thinks, however, that such negotiations would fail, and suggests that Great Britain undertake to bear or share the cost of rescuing the Jews in Cyppus, Palestine, North Africa, the Isle of Man and Canada.

The article suggests further that many Jews can be brought to Palestine. "However," it observes, "the doors of the Jewish National Home are locked. Without wishing to discuss Zionism," it emphasizes that "even under the White Paper another 40,000 Jews can be admitted into Palestine during the next fifteen months."