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War Refugee Board, 1944.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

FROM: Henry Montor

MINUTE OF A MEETING ON THE SUBJECT OF THE WAR REFUGEE BOARD

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1944

I met with Miss Florence Hodel, aide to Mr. John W. Pehle, acting Executive Director of the War Refugee Board, at the Treasury Building, Washington, D. C. During part of this visit, which lasted from 4:00 to 5:30 P.M., Mr. Friedman of the Treasury Department staff was also present.

This interview had been arranged through Mr. Morgenthau's office as an off-the-record opportunity to learn what the War Refugee Board contemplated.

Everything that was said was purely exploratory in character and had no official status in terms of commitments or expressions. Miss Hodel advised me that \$1,000,000 had been made available to the War Refugee Board from Government funds in order to set up a small operating organization. It was intended that the staff of the War Refugee Board should consist of a small group serving as expeditors and not as a functioning organization. As an instance of what the Board might undertake, she cited the problem of 5,000 children who might be removed from France to Switzerland with the assistance of the Joint Distribution Committee. What would be involved in this situation would be the pledge of the British and American Governments for maintenance and post-war evacuation of the children. The War Refugee Board might undertake to approach the American Government to give such a pledge. It would be the responsibility of the private agencies to provide actual maintenance.

The War Refugee Board plans to use the existing private agencies and not to create competitive machinery of its own. At one point, Mr. Friedman stated that Mr. Pehle planned to call in the private agencies and ask them to submit plans that they would like to see effectuated by the War Refugee Board and by themselves. During a discussion of which agencies might be invited into such a conference, Mr. Friedman stated that Mr. Pehle not only hopes for but expects unity among Jewish groups and a minimum of interference in the execution of the War Refugee Board's job.

During a discussion of the problem of fund-raising, it was stated that the Board felt that it would have to take an impartial attitude as between the various private agencies. Inevitably, however, the long-established functioning agencies will be able, because of their experience and facilities, to submit acceptable plans.

Insofar as shipping facilities are concerned, the War Refugee Board would make contact with various Government agencies to see if shipping were available. Then the private agencies would be told of the availability of the shipping and asked to charter it.

Extensive discussion was given by Mr. Montor to the \$32,000,000 goal of the United Jewish Appeal for 1944. As an indication of what might be accomplished, Mr. Montor thought that it might even be possible for the United Jewish Appeal to set up a \$50,000,000 campaign, if it could be described as the exclusive channel for the War Refugee Board's directives and activities in the event that private funds alone were to be used rather than Government funds.

Throughout the discussion, Miss Hodel emphasized that the Board does not expect to use large Government funds, but to function through the facilities and the resources of private agencies.

Mr. Montor submitted three basic questions which he felt Mr. Pehle and the War Refugee Board would have to deal with:

- (1) Will the Board ask for private contributions?
- (2) Will it utilize Government funds for its operations?
- (3) Does the Board plan to use existing facilities of private agencies or to create new organizational machinery, or permit the creation of new private agencies?



CONFIDENTIAL

MINUTE OF A MEETING WITH JOHN W. PEHLE, ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OF THE WAR REFUGEE BOARD AT THE TREASURY BUILDING, WASHINGTON, D.C.
FEBRUARY 10, 1944 from 10:00 to 11:40 A.M.

PRESENT: John W. Pehle
Mr. Stewart
Miss Florence Hodel
Mr. Lesser
Joseph Du Bois
(all the foregoing being members of the staff of the
War Refugee Board and normally connected with the
Treasury Department)

Moses A. Leavitt
Henry Montor

The meeting had been arranged at the suggestion of Mr. Pehle, following an exploratory conversation which had been held by Henry Montor with Miss Hodel, Mr. Pehle's assistant, on Friday, February 4th. The latter meeting was arranged to obtain preliminary information for the guidance of the three National Chairmen of the United Jewish Appeal who, after a meeting between them on February 1st, had sent a telegram to Messrs. Hull, Stimson and Morgenthau, as members of the War Refugee Board, asking for an appointment to discuss the relationship between the United Jewish Appeal and the War Refugee Board. Mr. Montor's discussion with Miss Hodel is described in a Minute covering the meeting on February 4th.

On Monday, February 7th, during attendance at the U.J.A. Luncheon arranged in connection with the Assembly of the Council of Federations and Welfare Funds, Mr. Leavitt stated that he had received a telephone call from Washington, suggesting that he and Mr. Montor come to Washington on Wednesday for a preliminary discussion with Mr. Pehle. Mr. Leavitt telephoned to Rabbi Jonah B. Wise who had received a telephone call on February 2nd from Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau, Jr. who had suggested that the proposed meeting between the members of the War Refugee Board and the Chairmen of the United Jewish Appeal should be postponed until after an Executive Director of the Board had been named. The announcement of Mr. Pehle's appointment to the post was made on Friday, February 4th, in Washington. It was suggested to Rabbi Wise by Mr. Leavitt that he inquire of Secretary Morgenthau when a meeting could be arranged with the National Chairmen of the United Jewish Appeal. He was informed that Mr. Morgenthau had left the city. It was subsequently agreed between all concerned that it would be desirable for Messrs. Leavitt and Montor to meet informally with Mr. Pehle and to determine what the attitude of the Board is toward the problem of fund-raising in relation to the United Jewish Appeal.

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At the opening of the meeting, Mr. Leavitt suggested that since the problem was one of fund-raising at the moment, Mr. Montor should start the discussion. Mr. Montor reviewed the impressions resulting from the announcement of the War Refugee Board insofar as the use of funds is concerned. One of the sentences had said that the Board was prepared to receive the contributions and services of private organizations and agencies. Subsequently, newspaper stories had appeared to the effect that the Board had received \$100,000 from the Hias and also a check for \$10 from a refugee. Was it the intention of the Board to conduct a public campaign for funds? Would it place itself in the position to accept whatever contributions were made available? Did it recognize that this might create chaos in the field of fund-raising, since an individual might conceivably send a \$50 check directly to the War Refugee Board when, if he were solicited as part of his own Jewish community's campaign, that same person might give anywhere from \$100 to \$1,000? Moreover, if the Board permitted the impression to remain that it would receive any and all contributions, it was quite possible that the established fund-raising media through which the U.J.A. raises its funds might decide, either for pseudo-patriotic or other reasons, to remit funds directly to the War Refugee Board instead of through the U.J.A. Insofar as fund-raising agencies are concerned, a development such as this might be quite likely: a Jewish organization would go to the War Refugee Board, pledge, let us say, \$1,000,000 toward the Board's purposes and then turn around to the Jewish communities' welfare funds and say that a pledge of \$1,000,000 had been made to the Board and it was incumbent upon the Jewish community to honor this solemn pledge by furnishing the particular agency with the necessary funds.

Mr. Montor stressed that his concern with the problem was to achieve clarification. It was quite possible that the War Refugee Board intended to use government resources in which event private agencies would not be concerned with the problem. He was not interested in protecting the so-called vested interests of the U.J.A., since the U.J.A. was not created merely for the sake of raising funds, but in order to serve certain Jewish purposes. If the War Refugee Board, with resources obtained from governmental sources, could further these ends more effectively, there was no reason why it should not be encouraged to do so.

During the subsequent discussion, every phase of the relationship between the War Refugee Board and private fund-raising and functional agencies was thoroughly discussed.

Mr. Pehle made it clear at the outset and reiterated frequently that the War Refugee Board will not depend upon government funds to carry on its work. On the contrary, it conceives of its function solely in the light of a solvent for the difficulties which private agencies might otherwise have in carrying out their program. The War Refugee Board was an emergency board. Its duration was limited. It would exist only until Germany gave up. Its task might be ended in five or six months. Therefore, no purpose would be served in setting up a governmental machinery when facilities and programs were already in the possession of existing private organizations which had been carrying on a good job and which perhaps could do even more with the stimulation and cooperation of the War Refugee Board. Under these circumstances, therefore, it would be harmful rather than helpful for the War Refugee Board to depend upon government resources as the foundation for its acts. It was quite possible that under certain circumstances facilities of other agencies of the government might be utilized, but the bulk of the resources would have to come from private agencies.

At one point Mr. Montor inquired whether the War Refugee Board intended to use governmental facilities, if not money. In answer to Mr. Pehle's inquiry as to what was meant, Mr. Montor mentioned the subject of shipping. To this Mr. Pehle replied that generally what the Board would do would be to utilize the facilities of government to determine where and how neutral shipping facilities were available and then turn the matter over to private agencies so that they could charter the ships.

A considerable amount of time was given to the subject of the manner in which the U.J.A. and other agencies raise their funds from the American Jewish community. It was pointed out that the U.J.A. has a goal in 1944 of \$32,000,000. Conceivably, if the agencies of the U.J.A. and the U.J.A. itself could say that they had been entrusted with certain tasks by the War Refugee Board, the U.J.A. might even raise its quota. This subject was purely in the realm of speculation, but perhaps even a quota of \$50,000,000 might be established. There was no assurance that such an amount could be raised, but it seemed clear that if the War Refugee Board would indicate clearly to the country that it is depending upon resources of the U.J.A. for the bulk of its activity, the response of the country would be more generous than without that assurance. If, therefore, Mr. Montor pointed out, the Refugee Board was definitely depending upon private agencies, it might wish to encourage the fund-raising work of the U.J.A. so that more resources would be available to serve its basic purposes.

Mr. Pehle raised the question as to how much had been spent in the past year for the type of emergency purposes which animated the formation of the War Refugee Board. These purposes include help to Jews in occupied countries, assistance to Jews to escape from occupied countries; aid to Jews in transit from such occupied countries to temporary or permanent places of refuge, and also assistance to Jews in temporary places of refuge to enable the particular countries to accept additional refugees. Mr. Leavitt estimated the amount at about \$8,000,000. Mr. Montor felt that the figure would be closer to between \$10,000,000 and \$12,000,000, involving not only the J.D.C., but the U.P.A. and associated agencies. In response to Mr. Pehle's question as to how much of this expenditure had come from U.J.A. resources, Mr. Leavitt estimated the figure as between 90 and 95 percent.

In answering the question, Mr. Montor emphasized that a great part of the expenditures of the Jewish Agency were clearly related to the purposes of the War Refugee Board. Mr. Pehle observed that the Board was not founded to "maintain" Jews in Palestine, but had functions of a more emergency character. Mr. Leavitt hastened to observe that it was hard to draw the line between what are regarded as permanent and temporary activities designed to assist refugees.

At this point, Mr. Lesser interjected that Palestine was in a position to accept additional refugees at this time because of the general nature of the Palestine development program.

During the discussion of the wisdom of having the War Refugee Board give public emphasis to its relationship to the U.J.A. and its agencies, Mr. Pehle indicated that it was very difficult to differentiate publicly between one private agency and another. The Board would have to assume a position of neutral impartiality.

And then followed a discussion of the relative importance of the U.J.A. as compared with the several other minor agencies which are in the field of relief and rescue as related to refugees. During this discussion reference was made to such bodies as the Hias, Ort, World Jewish Congress and Vaad Hahatzalah.

Mr. Pehle stressed that it would undoubtedly be the wish of the War Refugee Board to deal with agencies long established in the field and experienced in the type of activities which the Board would wish to stimulate. The lack of experience and resources on the part of other agencies would demonstrate themselves.

The question arose whether the President's War Relief Control Board would be able to halt the launching of new ad hoc bodies. Some discussion was given to the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe. It was intimated that possibly the Emergency Committee which has been insisting that the War Refugee Board is the result of its pressure, would launch a public campaign and appeal to the public for funds which would be transmitted to the Board. What would be the attitude of the Board to such a campaign when agencies already exist in the field? Mr. Pehle remarked that the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe regarded itself as being a general American body appealing to Christians, as well as Jews. It might take the position that its appeal for funds was directed not at the Jewish community but at the community at large and, therefore, did not represent a duplication.

There followed a discussion of what might be expected from the general community. Mr. Montor referred to the experience of the last eleven years, particularly in small towns when Jewish campaigns had appealed to Christians. Moreover, campaigns had been conducted by Christian refugee bodies. The response to say the least was not impressive. It was not likely that the experience would be any better at this time. The truth of the matter would be that if the Emergency Committee launched such a campaign, even though it was directed at the community at large, very likely at least 90% of its response would come from the same Jews to whom local welfare funds appeal on behalf of the U.J.A.

Mr. Pehle did not know whether the experience cited by Mr. Montor applied to the Emergency Committee. His inference was that the Committee represented a very energetic group which might accomplish a great deal. He suggested during the discussion of the Emergency Committee that even though he realized the other bodies might not relish the thought, it would be desirable for them to meet with the Emergency Committee to arrive at an amicable understanding on the question. He did not know whether the Emergency Committee intended to raise funds for War Refugee Board purposes but he thought the Committee's forces might be brought into the picture. He had not had any discussion with them. Mr. Leavitt asked why Mr. Pehle did not call in the Emergency Committee and have a frank talk with them indicating that the Board intended to use established agencies and that it did not wish to see the creation of any new fund-raising media.

Mr. Leavitt raised the question as to whether the President's War Relief Control Board might take action on the ground (a) that a campaign was being launched in a field where agencies already exist and (b) that their rate of collection expense was too high. Very obviously, a campaign conducted

through advertisements and one that did not have the experienced and continuous machinery of the U.J.A. would involve a very high cost. Mr. Pehle indicated that it was probable that the War Refugee Board might wish to call upon the President's War Relief Control Board to invoke such powers as it possessed in regard to fund-raising agencies.

Mr. Pehle inquired whether it would be possible for the agencies in the United Jewish Appeal to pledge a certain amount for the use of the War Refugee Board. This did not mean that the agencies would have to turn any of their funds over to the War Refugee Board, but that they would indicate to the Board that a certain part of their funds would be used for purposes of the Board and in consultation with the Board. He recognized, of course, that the agencies of the U.J.A. had certain basic budgets which had to be met. Would it be possible to say to the Board that a certain percentage of the total income would be available for War Refugee Board purposes or might it be indicated to the Board that if the U.J.A. raised in excess of a certain sum, this amount would be at the disposal of the Board, or rather that these funds would be spent in consultation with the Board?

Mr. Leavitt described the manner in which the U.J.A. funds are distributed. He pointed out that in 1944 there is an initial distribution of \$15,000,000, providing \$1,000,000 to the National Refugee Service, \$8,640,000 to the Joint Distribution Committee, and \$5,360,000 to the United Palestine Appeal. All above \$15,000,000 will be distributed by an Allotment Committee. There can be no forecasting in advance how the Allotment Committee will act.

At this point, Mr. Montor said that it might be possible for the Jewish Agency to assume certain responsibilities if it could have an idea in advance just what the War Refugee Board proposed. As an illustration, he cited a prediction by a Jewish Agency immigration official (Eliahu Dobkin) that during the first six months of 1944, 7500 Jews could enter Palestine. Merely for illustrative purposes, Mr. Montor observed that the War Refugee Board might indicate that it could facilitate the entry of an additional 7,500 Jews into Palestine. Under these circumstances, the Jewish Agency conceivably might revise certain portions of its budget to give preference to the absorption of these refugees. He could not, of course, make any commitments for the Jewish Agency, but he was merely citing the possibility to indicate that there is a close relationship between what the War Refugee Board will do and what the Jewish Agency can be expected to do in assisting the financing of such a program.

Mr. Pehle indicated that it would not be possible for the Board to state what it might be able to do. It was a situation which depended on many factors and predictions could not be made. The Board would do what it could as the opportunity arose.

Mr. Du Bois inquired whether it wasn't true that actually what Messrs. Leavitt and Montor wanted was a public statement to be issued by the Board which would say that because of their experiences and fund-raising capacity the agencies of the United Jewish Appeal would be used by the Board as major channels for its activity.

Mr. Pehle suggested that a statement might be drawn up by Messrs. Leavitt and Montor which could be submitted to the Board for consideration. It should be a statement which would keep in mind what the Board might be able

to say and not necessarily everything that the U.J.A. wanted it to say. He was not sure at all that the Board would want to issue any kind of statement, but it would be desirable to have a draft available.

Mr. Montor inquired whether such a statement would be a general one issued to the public or one addressed to the National Chairmen of the U.J.A. He thought it possible that such a statement might come out of a conference between the Chairmen of the U.J.A. and the members of the War Refugee Board.

Mr. Pehle felt that there were three things that might be included in such a statement: (1) a reference to the fact that the War Refugee Board intended to function through private agencies and through the use of private resources; (2) that the War Refugee Board was acting in cooperation with the President's War Relief Control Board and did not wish to see the creation of any new ad hoc bodies to function in the field already being served adequately from the fund-raising point of view; (3) that contributors would be urged to use the established agencies in the fund-raising field to achieve maximum effectiveness for their gifts. The Board will not solicit funds for its purposes.

The question arose as to a meeting between the National Chairmen of the U.J.A. and the members of the War Refugee Board. Mr. Pehle seemed to feel that such a meeting was unlikely. Reference was made to the fact that Mr. Hull was leaving for a vacation in Florida. Moreover, the members of the War Refugee Board could not be expected to concern themselves with the day-to-day tasks. Undoubtedly, the members of the Board were relying on Mr. Pehle's judgment.

Mr. Pehle indicated that he would be prepared to meet with the National Chairmen of the U.J.A. As soon as a statement had been drafted and submitted by the U.J.A., a meeting with the Chairmen could be arranged in a matter of a few days. He emphasized again that it was possible that the Board might decide that it did not want to issue any kind of statement.

Toward the close of the discussion, Mr. Montor emphasized that the U.J.A. was not so much concerned about competition from other agencies in the fund-raising field. It was concerned rather with the maximum returns for the purposes of the War Refugee Board. If every agency in the field made it appear that it had a license from the Board to go out to the community to raise funds, there would be such confusion and competition that the total would not be greater, but the net income would be smaller. On the other hand, if the U.J.A. were given the opportunity to emphasize its close and major relationship to the purposes of the War Refugee Board, it would be able to obtain from the American Jewish community the larger funds warranted by the emergency purposes of the Board.

The meeting concluded with the understanding that the U.J.A. would submit a statement that might be satisfactory for issuance by the Board.

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