

Sunday, August 6, 1944

JTA

Daily News Bulletin

PUBLISHED BY THE JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY

106 EAST 41st STREET, NEW YORK 17, N. Y.

918 JEWISH REFUGEES REACH THE UNITED STATES FOR SETTLEMENT AT OSWEGO "FREE PORT"

NEW YORK, Aug. 4. (JTA) -- After several years of living under Nazi and Fascist terror, approximately 1000 European refugees, 918 of whom are Jews, landed today in the United States and were transported to the Emergency Refugee Shelter at Fort Ontario, near Oswego, N. Y., which was established as a "free port" on orders of President Roosevelt. They will remain there for the duration of the war.

The arrivals include citizens of fourteen countries and many stateless persons. The largest group is made up of more than 300 Jews from Yugoslavia who had been in Axis concentration camps in Italy. Others crossed from France into Italy to escape deportation by the Germans to extermination camps in occupied Poland.

The refugees arrived on an Army transport which they boarded after medical inspection at a camp near Naples, in the liberated part of Italy. Six nurses and ten enlisted men of the Medical Corps accompanied them.

Jewish Organizations Meet Arrivals; Camp Will Have Synagogue

Representatives of Jewish refugee relief organizations met the arrivals together with representatives of the War Relocation Authority which will administer the Fort Ontario camp. The Jewish Welfare Board, it is understood, has arranged for the establishment of a synagogue in the camp and for the delivery there of a Sefer Torah and Jewish ritual articles.

The youngest resident of Fort Ontario will be an infant who was born just before his mother embarked in Italy. The age of the oldest is not known at present writing, but the majority of the refugees are above military age. Included in the transport were 435 men, 367 women, 152 children under fourteen years of age, and 12 infants less than one year old.

No interviews with the refugees were permitted at the port area. By arrangements with Army officials in charge of the train movement to Fort Ontario, press representatives were permitted late in the evening to talk to the refugees at the point of entrainment. Reporters will also be permitted to interview them at Fort Ontario at the time the train arrives there, as well as in their living quarters.

No Visitors Permitted for Three Weeks; No Mail Censorship

The War Relocation Authority announced that no persons will be permitted to visit Fort Ontario for a period of three weeks, except representatives of the press and cooperating agencies. Relatives in the United States will be permitted to write letters as frequently as they wish. Mail will not be censored.

The camp authorities have not yet determined whether or not to permit private agencies to supply teaching or other facilities of the character not made available by the government. As a matter of policy WRA has decided that it will not provide

civil service teachers for English instruction. Classroom facilities however, will be made available to those in the group who may wish English instruction, elementary school, or adult education.

The National Refugee Service has loaned three members of its professional staff as counselors at the camp. The NRS is making available an initial supply of foreign language newspapers and periodicals.

Welcoming Ceremony Will Be Held at Fort on Sunday

The refugees will be officially welcomed to the United States at ceremonies at Fort Ontario on Sunday when Dillon C. Meyer, director of the War Relocation Authority, will read greetings from Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes. Other speakers will include Joseph H. Smart of the WRA, who will direct the shelter.

Upon the arrival of the refugees, John W. Pehle, executive director of the War Refugee Board, which has been instrumental in saving many of Europe's persecuted Jews, also issued a statement welcoming the newcomers.

"The arrival of almost 1000 refugees from Italy today demonstrates this nation's willingness to participate in an international program to find havens for the survivors of Nazi persecution," Pehle said. "In accordance with the terms laid down by President Roosevelt, they will be housed and cared for at Fort Ontario, under adequate security precautions until the war is over and they can return to their homes.

"The sanctuary America offers this small group is but one aspect of the War Refugee Board's program to rescue and protect the persecuted peoples of Europe. The refugees who landed today are safe and they are welcome."

MEMORIAL SERVICES FOR GESTAPO VICTIMS HELD IN GREAT SYNAGOGUE OF ROME

ROME, Aug. 4. (JTA) -- Memorial services were held in the Great Synagogue here last night for the 320 Roman citizens who were executed by the Germans in the Fosse Ardeatine catacombs in reprisal for a bombing which killed 32 Germans. Many government officials attended the services, which were conducted by Chief Rabbi Anton I. Zellic.

It is known that at least 39, and possibly more, of the hostages were Jewish. Their bodies are being exhumed at present and there is evidence that many were buried while still alive. The condition of the bodies makes identification virtually impossible.

VICHY "EXPERT" ON JEWISH QUESTION SERIOUSLY WOUNDED BY FRENCH PATRIOTS

ZURICH, Aug. 4. (JTA) -- George Montandon, described by the German Trans-ocean agency as "a leading French expert on the Jewish question," has been shot and seriously wounded by French patriots, it was reported here today.

Montandon, who is on the staff of the Vichy Commissariat for Jewish Affairs, and on the faculty of the "Research Institute on the Jewish Question," was shot in his Paris home by three men who broke into the apartment. His wife was killed during the fracas.

civil service teachers for English instruction. Classroom facilities however, will be made available to those in the group who may wish English instruction, elementary school, or adult education.

The National Refugee Service has loaned three members of its professional staff as counselors at the camp. The NRS is making available an initial supply of foreign language newspapers and periodicals.

Welcoming Ceremony Will Be Held at Fort on Sunday

The refugees will be officially welcomed to the United States at ceremonies at Fort Ontario on Sunday when Dillon C. Meyer, director of the War Relocation Authority, will read greetings from Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes. Other speakers will include Joseph H. Smart of the WRA, who will direct the shelter.

Upon the arrival of the refugees, John W. Pehle, executive director of the War Refugee Board, which has been instrumental in saving many of Europe's persecuted Jews, also issued a statement welcoming the newcomers.

"The arrival of almost 1000 refugees from Italy today demonstrates this nation's willingness to participate in an international program to find havens for the survivors of Nazi persecution," Pehle said. "In accordance with the terms laid down by President Roosevelt, they will be housed and cared for at Fort Ontario, under adequate security precautions until the war is over and they can return to their homes.

"The sanctuary America offers this small group is but one aspect of the War Refugee Board's program to rescue and protect the persecuted peoples of Europe. The refugees who landed today are safe and they are welcome."

MEMORIAL SERVICES FOR GESTAPO VICTIMS HELD IN GREAT SYNAGOGUE OF ROME

ROME, Aug. 4. (JTA) -- Memorial services were held in the Great Synagogue here last night for the 320 Roman citizens who were executed by the Germans in the Posse Ardentine catacombs in reprisal for a bombing which killed 32 Germans. Many government officials attended the services, which were conducted by Chief Rabbi Anton I. Zolli.

It is known that at least 39, and possibly more, of the hostages were Jewish. Their bodies are being exhumed at present and there is evidence that many were buried while still alive. The condition of the bodies makes identification virtually impossible.

VICHY "EXPERT" ON JEWISH QUESTION SERIOUSLY WOUNDED BY FRENCH PATRIOTS

ZURICH, Aug. 4. (JTA) -- George Montandon, described by the German Trans-ocean agency as "a leading French expert on the Jewish question," has been shot and seriously wounded by French patriots, it was reported here today.

Montandon, who is on the staff of the Vichy Commissariat for Jewish Affairs, and on the faculty of the "Research Institute on the Jewish Question," was shot in his Paris home by three men who broke into the apartment. His wife was killed during the fracas.

ROME GOVERNMENT PREPARES NEW DECREES FOR RESTORATION OF CONFISCATED JEWISH PROPERTY

ROME, Aug. 4. (JTA) -- A series of decrees providing for restoration of property confiscated by the Fascists on racial and political grounds and indemnities for the victims of fascist discriminations is being prepared by the Italian Government for promulgation at the earliest possible date, it was learned today.

A special commission is working in the Ministry of Justice with the advice and cooperation of Allied Military Government experts on a comprehensive, detailed law covering all aspects of this highly complicated problem. It is considered likely that the first of the decrees may be issued in about six weeks, but the complete legislation may have to await promulgation until the entire country is liberated.

Under a decree of January 20, 1944, full civil and political rights were restored to Jews and others deprived of them on racial and political grounds. The same decree annulled all fascist discriminatory measures and cancelled fascist revocation of citizenships carried out on those grounds. A previous decree by the Badoglio Government had ordered reinstatement of all those ousted from public and quasi-public posts because of race or politics. Ministers of the Bonomi Cabinet have issued a series of orders reinstating many Jews who formerly held higher posts. A number in lower bracket jobs have not yet been reinstated, however, because ministries are still operating only on a partial basis.

Generally, as far as civil and political rights go, all discriminations against Jews have been removed in liberated territory. The Government seems genuinely anxious to do its utmost to repair the wrongs of the fascist regime. The property restoration question, however, is one of the thorniest and most complex. Actually when the Government was still in the south a decree was prepared and signed by the King but never promulgated because further liberation of territory revealed a situation entirely unforeseen when the measure was drafted. The issue then was more one of principle than reality since Jews resident in Italy south of Rome hardly numbered more than 2,000. It became a more active issue with the liberation of Rome and will become a more important problem as the liberated area extends to the northern cities, where the bulk of Italian Jews resided.

The measures now being worked out provide, first, for restoration of real property to the former owners, and, second, compensation for other property confiscated by the Fascists under discriminatory legislation. Parenthetically, it should be noted that when Rome was liberated it was found that Mussolini had decreed an order empowering prefects and local fascist authorities to strip Jews even of personal clothing. A third aspect is reinstatement of pensions cut off under the fascist anti-Jewish laws and adjustment of back salaries of ousted Jewish civil servants. Finally there is the question of compensating those who acquired formerly Jewish property honestly and in good faith. This involves a large percentage of the present owners of former Jewish property.

As an interim measure to aid Jews temporarily, Lt. Col. Charles A. Polotti, regional Allied commissioner, has appointed a commission to investigate property confiscations and to record Jewish claims. In practice, this commission has succeeded in securing possession for several hundred Jewish families of their former homes and apartments in Rome. The list of claims will be turned over by the commission to the Italian Government when it assumes authority in the Rome area on August 15.

One aspect of the problem which is concerning drafters of the decrees is the protection of the rights of those racial and political refugees who left Italy, some of whom were deprived of Italian citizenship while others acquired other nationality. The government is anxious to give them full opportunity to file claims and obtain return of their property and whatever compensation they would be entitled to if they had remained here.

HUNGARIAN JEWS LURED TO DEATH WITH PROMISE OF EXCHANGE FOR GERMAN CIVILIANS

LONDON, Aug. 4. (JTA) -- Hungarian Jews, unaware of the fate which awaits them, are still being lured to extermination camps in the Nazi-held part of Poland under various pretexts, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency was informed here today by an emissary of the Polish underground movement who left occupied Poland only a week ago.

"Despite the impression that the Hungarian Government is trying to spread abroad, that the mass-deportations of Jews from Hungary have been suspended, train-loads of Hungarian Jews continued to arrive at the Oswiecim extermination camp in Poland every day during the week before I left," the underground envoy stated.

"The Jews are told that they are being exchanged for German civilians, or that they are being taken to Switzerland, or that they are being transported for internment on some island between Britain and Germany for the duration of the war, after which they will have the choice of either returning to Hungary or emigrating to other countries. Some of the Jews are even transported in sleeping cars in order to convince the victims that they are on their way to safety. But all the trains end up at the Oswiecim camp."

In view of the approach of the Russian armies, the mass-killing of the Jews at Oswiecim is being expedited, the Polish representative said. The Gestapo has reduced the execution time in the gas chambers from thirty minutes to ten. Most of the victims are only stupefied and some of them are thrown into heaps still conscious and pushed into crematoria while still alive.

Fearful of revolts, the Germans have scattered machine-guns throughout the camp area, which are manned 24 hours a day. There have been attempts to escape from the camp, but they were unsuccessful and all the fugitives were killed.

100 British Nationals Among Jews Gassed at Oswiecim

Among those executed recently were 100 English Jews who had been interned in Hungary since the outbreak of the war. Many of them were well known in British and Hungarian financial circles. They were separated from the other deportees and were led to the execution chambers by the camp commandant. Before being asphyxiated they were stripped naked and beaten by Elite Guards. All their valuables including gold and platinum fillings from their teeth were appropriated by the commandant and his aide.

Early last month a contingent of 300 Jewish women and girls from Hungary arrived at Palow, near Cracow. Some of them were given uniforms and sent elsewhere for an undisclosed purpose, the Polish informant said.

Women in Hungary, Lying on Steps of Church, Beg Priests to Save Jews

BERNE, Aug. 4. (JTA) -- The deportation of Jews from Hungary is still continuing on an unprecedented scale despite Regent Nicholas Horthy's recent promise to the Red Cross that no more Jews would be deported, it was reliably learned here today. Letters reaching Switzerland from Hungary written during the last days of July support this report, adding that the moving of Jews by Hungarian officials is now being accomplished at night.

A Budapest report also tells of a group of women lying flat on the steps of a church and urging the priests to intervene and save the Jews "in order to distract God's wrath from the unhappy Hungarian people." The belief that God will wreak vengeance on Hungary unless the religious persecution is stopped is a common one among the Hungarian people.