

HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL

THE AMERICAN JEWISH JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE, INC.
Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee

A special meeting of the Executive Committee was held on Thursday, June 8th, 1939 at 4 P.M. at the office of the Committee, 100 East 42nd Street, New York City.

There were present the following officers and members of the Executive Committee:

Messrs. David M. Bressler
Harry Fischel
Mrs. H.B.L. Goldstein
Harold K. Guinzburg
Joseph C. Hyman
Henry Ittleson
Alfred Jaretzki, Jr.

Dr. Bernhard Kahn
Sam A. Lewisohn
Miss Evelyn M. Morrissey
Dr. Joseph A. Rosen
James N. Rosenberg
Lewis L. Strauss
Edward M. M. Warburg

Present by invitation:

Members of the Board of Directors and
Standing Committees --

Messrs. Abner Bregman
Isidor Coons
Mrs. Pauline Baerwald Falk

Miss Carolin A. Flexner
(repr. Gov. Lehman)
Mrs. David M. Levy
Charles J. Liebman

Members of the Staff --

Miss F. R. Adlerstein
Mr. N. C. Belth
Mrs. H. K. Buchman

Mr. Herbert Katzki
Mr. Robert Pilpel

Messages of regret were received from a number of the members, the list thereof being on file at this office.

THE AMERICAN JEWISH JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE, INC.
Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee

A special meeting of the Executive Committee was held on Thursday, June 8th, 1939 at 4 P.M. at the office of the Committee, 100 East 42nd Street, New York City.

There were present the following officers and members of the Executive Committee:

Messrs. David M. Bressler
Harry Fischel
Mrs. H.B.L. Goldstein
Harold K. Guinzburg
Joseph C. Hyman
Henry Ittleson
Alfred Jaretzki, Jr.

Dr. Bernhard Kahn
Sam A. Lewisohn
Miss Evelyn M. Morrissey
Dr. Joseph A. Rosen
James N. Rosenberg
Lewis L. Strauss
Edward M. M. Warburg

Present by invitation:

Members of the Board of Directors and
Standing Committees --

Messrs. Abner Bregman
Isidor Coons
Mrs. Pauline Baerwald Falk

Miss Carolin A. Flexner
(repr. Gov. Lehman)
Mrs. David M. Levy
Charles J. Liebman

Members of the Staff --

Miss F. R. Adlerstein
Mr. N. C. Belth
Mrs. H. K. Buchman

Mr. Herbert Katzki
Mr. Robert Pilpel

Messages of regret were received from a number of the members, the list thereof being on file at this office.

S.S. St. Louis Refugees

The major part of the afternoon's discussion was devoted to the further consideration of the St. Louis emergency. The Chairman expressed his sincere appreciation for the devoted efforts of the subcommittee, consisting of Messrs. Alfred Jaretzki, Jr., Chairman, David M. Bressler, I. Edwin Goldwasser and Joseph C. Hyman, who had struggled with this problem day and night for more than two weeks. He invited Mr. Jaretzki to make a brief statement in order to bring the record up to date.

Mr. Jaretzki outlined the developments since the last meeting of the Executive Committee on Monday, June 8th. He recalled that, following the authority granted the subcommittee by the Executive Committee, to put up the full amount of \$500 per person for each refugee on board the St. Louis, the Orduna and the Flandre, the subcommittee had communicated with Mr. Berenson and had apprised him of this decision. Mr. Berenson stated that an appointment had been arranged for him the following morning, Tuesday, to wait on the Cuban President. At that time he was quite hopeful that negotiations would be brought to a successful conclusion. During the entire day, Mr. Berenson failed to receive audience from the President and at noon, the Secretary of State announced that the deadline had been passed without the conditions stipulated by the President having been met, and that, therefore, the matter was now closed.

Following receipt of this astonishing word from Mr. Berenson, the subcommittee placed itself in touch with important personalities in our government, as it had also done previously, and with various other organizations and persons with whom in fact prior discussions had been had on this matter since its inception. On Tuesday night, the subcommittee communicated with the President of the Chase National Bank in New York; by eleven o'clock Wednesday morning it had arranged to have the full amount in cash available to the Havana Branch of the Chase Bank. The Manager of the Havana Branch of the Chase Bank was requested, despite the previous announcement issued by the government, to secure an appointment with the President in order to enter a further plea in behalf of the St. Louis passengers. The J. D. C. likewise, in order to place on record its position in this matter, addressed to the President of Cuba on June 7th, the following message:

"TO THE HONORABLE THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA
HAVANA

"YESTERDAY AFTERNOON WHEN WE WERE UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS AS TO DETAILS OF THE POSSIBLE ADMISSION INTO CUBA OF THE REFUGEES ON THE STEAMER ST. LOUIS WERE PROCEEDING IN HAVANA WITH YOUR GOVERNMENT WE RECEIVED INFORMATION THAT YOUR GOVERNMENT CONSIDERED THOSE NEGOTIATIONS LAPSED stop WE RESPECTFULLY HASTEN TO ASSURE YOU THAT APPRECIATING YOUR DESIRE TO REACH PROMPTLY A JUST AND HUMANE SOLUTION OF THIS DIFFICULT PROBLEM WE HAVE SPARED NO EFFORT HERE TO PROVIDE THE NECESSARY FUNDS TO COMPLY WITH THE GOVERNMENTS CONDITIONS stop THIS HAS TODAY BEEN COMPLETED AND WE HAVE AUTHORIZED CHASE NATIONAL BANK HAVANA MAKE FOLLOWING PROPOSAL TO YOU ON OUR BEHALF stop WILL PROVIDE FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS DEPOSIT EACH REFUGEE ON BOARD SS ST. LOUIS TO PERMIT ENTRY INTO CUBA UNDER APPROPRIATE CUBAN REGULATIONS ALSO LIKE AMOUNT IN RESPECT EACH REFUGEE SS FLANDRE AND SS ORDUNA SHOULD THEY ALSO BE PERMITTED ENTRY CUBA stop CHASE BANK HAS RECEIVED FUNDS FROM US AVAILABLE FOR SUCH PURPOSE stop IN ADDITION THIS COMMITTEE GUARANTEES THAT NONE OF THESE REFUGEES WILL BECOME PUBLIC CHARGE TO CUBAN GOVERNMENT stop CONFIDENT THAT WHILE ST. LOUIS SAID TO BE ON WAY BACK TO GERMANY IT IS NOT TOO LATE TO RADIO TO HER TO RETURN TO HAVANA stop THIS WE BEG YOU TO DO stop RESPECTFULLY REQUEST YOUR EXCELLENCY TO GIVE THE FOREGOING YOUR IMMEDIATE AND FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION

"AMERICAN JEWISH JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE
"BY JAMES N. ROSENBERG CHAIRMAN"

A reply had just been received in Spanish, the translation of which appears herein:

"JUNE 8th 1939

"I REPLY TO YOUR CABLE IN REFERENCE TO THE REFUGEES ON BOARD THE SS ST. LOUIS YOU KNOW DEAR MR ROSENBERG THAT CUBA HAS CONTRIBUTED IN RELATION TO ITS RESOURCES AND POPULATION WITH MORE ELEMENTS THAN ANY OTHER NATION AND HAS GIVEN HOSPITALITY TO PERSECUTED PEOPLE NEVERTHELESS IT IS COMPLETELY IMPOSSIBLE TO ACCEDE TO THE IMMIGRATION ENTRANCE ON NATIONAL TERRITORY OF THE BOAT SUBJECT ST LOUIS IS COMPLETELY ENDED BY THE GOVERNMENT LAMENTABLE FOR ME IN NEGATIVE SENSE TO REITERATE IMPOSSIBLE TO PERMIT COMING TO CUBA I WISH I COULD BRING IT ABOUT MY SINCERE WISHES

LAREDO BRU"

With this message, Mr. Jaretzki stated he believed that the matter was closed so far as Cuba was concerned. He was of the opinion that the basic difficulty had been not the question of indemnity bonds, or cash deposits, or effecting arrangements satisfactory to the Cuban authorities, or that each step of the transaction could be fully and satisfactorily met. He was convinced that the Cuban gov-

ernment had never seriously intended to admit the refugees. He was fortified in this view by the opinions of important Cubans and of American personalities close to the situation, officially and otherwise. At the same time, Mr. Jaretzki pointed out how difficult it would be to make the full story public in all of the intimate details. Obviously, this could not be done without jeopardizing the 6,000 - 7,000 German refugees now in Havana. Moreover, it was our understanding that some 2,000, and perhaps a larger number, are in special danger because they had been permitted by the Immigration Commissioner to enter Cuba on the basis of the very type of landing certificates which were rejected in the case of the St. Louis passengers.

In response to an inquiry, Mr. Hyman, who had been in touch with this problem day and night, and had received innumerable delegations, telephone calls, messages, communications and suggestions, reported more fully on some of these matters. The Hamburg-American Line had been telephoning him continuously. The present position of the boat was about 750 miles east of New York headed toward Europe. Every effort was being made to keep up the morale of the passengers, who were naturally in the deepest despair.

Certain proposals had been made for landing some groups of passengers from the SS Flandre in one or another of the Central American countries, but each proposal had proven to be impractical. In one instance, that of San Domingo, a payment of \$500 per person would be required, not as a returnable bond but as an outright landing fee. What was especially disagreeable was that the Dominican Republic imposed this fee only on immigrants of Jewish extraction. Inquiries concerning the suitability of settling in Santo Domingo also disclosed some unfavorable information. It was the consensus of opinion of the Executive Committee, taking into account all of these factors and others which cannot be reported fully in the written minutes, that the Joint Distribution Committee should not consent to any procedure where a special indemnity for admission was required of Jews only.

Reverting to the St. Louis, Mr. Hyman stated that every effort would now be made and that all pressure would be brought to bear to land these passengers in some European port before the boat returned to Germany. Mr. Jaretzki, Mr. Rosenberg and he had spoken to Mr. Baerwald in London. The situation had been fully and forcefully placed before Mr. Baerwald, who had been urged to communicate as quickly as possible with important British and French Jews, as well as with other influential personalities in the several governments that might admit these people. Every possibility of getting them into a British or French camp must be considered. Mr. Baerwald was deeply moved by this situation. He realized the difficulties we had undergone. However, he did not minimize the difficulties of securing admission for these people into European countries, in view of the deep feeling of the leading personalities in all of these governments, that the German government should not be permitted to dump refugees in this way or to exploit such a situation as a precedent. Word was being expected from Mr. Baerwald momentarily.

Mr. Rosenberg felt that, in addition to the efforts now being made by Mr. Baerwald and Mr. Harold Linder in London, and the activities initiated by Mr. Morris C. Troper, our European Chairman in Paris, a cablegram should be sent to Sir Herbert Emerson, League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; to Lord Winterton, Chairman of the Intergovernmental Refugee Committee; to Norman H. Davis, Chairman of the American Red Cross; and to Max Huber, Chairman of the International Red Cross in Geneva. The J.D.C. must leave no stone unturned in attempting to aid the St. Louis passengers.

There was some question as to sending and publicizing such messages at this time. It might, in the opinion of Mr. Bressler, cause the governments which

were at this very moment being approached by Mr. Baerwald, Mr. Linder, Mr. Troper and their associates, to divest themselves of any responsibility and to turn the solution of the problem over to the intergovernmental bodies. He felt, and this opinion Mr. Jaretzki shared, that the question should be submitted to Mr. Baerwald.

At this point, a transatlantic telephone call came through from Mr. Baerwald and the meeting adjourned to give Mr. Hyman opportunity to talk to him. Mr. Hyman returned to the meeting and said that Mr. Baerwald felt that a message such as Mr. Rosenberg proposed would be inopportune, in view of the proposals discussed with Sir Herbert Emerson. Mr. Baerwald indicated that he was sparing no effort in London to induce the proper organizations to act, and he promised to keep the officers in New York informed of developments.

There was considerable opposition to the admission of any of the refugees in England. However, it was suggested that if these people had to be landed in Germany, Sir Herbert Emerson would personally proceed to Germany to supervise the examination of these passengers by British Consular officers so that those who might as soon as possible be admitted to England would be promptly sent out and so that those who remained would be accorded humane treatment. Mr. Hyman promised to keep the Committee advised promptly of word from England.

In the meantime, Mr. Rosenberg and Mr. Linder were in touch by transatlantic telephone with Mr. Troper, who was exerting virtually superhuman efforts in addressing himself to the most influential persons in France, Belgium and Holland, as well as in England, to plead for the admission of these refugees and to assure them that the Joint Distribution Committee would post all the necessary guarantees for the maintenance of these people.

Mr. Rosenberg raised the important question as to how the general public might be advised of the present status of the refugees. After discussion, it was unanimously resolved that Messrs. Alfred Jaretzki, Jr., Joseph C. Hyman, David M. Bressler, Harold K. Guinzburg, Edward M. M. Warburg and James N. Rosenberg be appointed as a subcommittee to be entrusted fully with the responsibility for any public statements. The committee was also requested to consider the drafting of a public statement to be sent out to friends and co-workers of the J. D. C. throughout the country.

The meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

J. C. Hyman
Secretary