

Prep. by Gen. Adcock

8 October 1945

Dear Mr. President:



This is my full report on matters pertaining to the care and welfare of the Jewish victims of Nazi persecution within the United States Zone of Germany. It deals with conditions reported by Mr. Earl G. Harrison, U. S. Representative on the Inter-Governmental Committee on Refugees, which was forwarded to me under cover of your letter of 31 August 1945.

Since Mr. Harrison's visit in July many changes have taken place with respect to the condition of Jewish and other displaced persons. Except for temporarily crowded conditions, the result of shifts between established centers and an influx of persons into centers as winter approaches, housing is on a reasonable basis. Nevertheless, efforts to improve their condition continue unabated. Subordinate commanders are under orders to requisition German houses, grounds, and other facilities without hesitation for this purpose.

The housing problem must be seen in full perspective. This winter the villages and towns in the U. S. Zone of Germany will be required to house more than twice their normal population. One million and a half German air raid refugees who were evacuated into Southwestern Germany, together with some 600,000 Germans, Volksdeutsche and Sudetens who fled from Poland, New Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia before the advancing Red Armies have created a condition of congestion in the U. S. Zone which forces the most careful conservation of housing space. At this moment the U. S. Zone is under orders to absorb 152,000 more Germans from Austria. Added to this influx of population, there is the loss of housing in bombed-out cities, averaging well over 50 percent; the necessity for billeting large numbers of our troops; and the accommodation required for prisoners of war. The resulting housing shortage is not merely acute, but desperate. Notwithstanding this situation, in my recent inspections and those made by my staff of Jewish centers, although crowded conditions were found,

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in nearly every instance more than the 30 square feet per person of floor space required for our soldiers was available.

Displaced persons have absolute preference over Germans for housing, but the requirements of the distribution of supplies, the provision of medical care, and the need for welfare activities make it desirable that displaced persons be sufficiently concentrated so that these services may be performed efficiently by the limited supervisory personnel and transport at our disposal. Thus, considerable use has been made of large installations such as brick barracks, apartment blocks and other public buildings in preference to scattered individual billets.

Special centers have been established for Jewish displaced persons. In the latter part of June, the Armies were directed to collect into special assembly centers displaced persons who did not wish to or who could not be repatriated. On 25 July 1945, Dr. Rabbi Israel Golstein, President of the United Jewish Appeal, recommended that non-repatriable Jews be separated from other stateless people, and placed in exclusively Jewish centers. As a result, the American Joint Distribution Committee was called upon to supervise the establishment of these centers. This policy was reiterated and expanded on 22 August. Special Jewish centers were established for "those Jews who are without nationality or those not Soviet citizens who do not desire to return to their country of origin".

At the time of Mr. Harrison's report there were perhaps 1,000 Jews still in their former concentration camps. These were too sick to be moved at that time. No Jewish or other displaced persons have been housed in these places longer than was absolutely necessary for medical quarantine and recovery from acute illness. It has always been our practice, not just our policy, to remove these victims with the utmost speed from concentration camps.

The assertion that our military guards are now substituting for SS troops is definitely misleading. One reason for limiting the numbers permitted to leave our assembly centers was depredation and banditry by displaced persons themselves. Despite all precautions, more than 2,000 of them died from drinking methylated alcohol and other types of poisonous liquor. Many others died by violence or were injured while circulating outside our assembly centers. Perhaps then we were over-zealous in our surveillance. However, my present policy is expressed in a letter to subordinate commanders wherein I said:

Necessary guarding should be done by displaced persons themselves on the volunteer system and without arms. Military supervisors may be employed, but will not be used as sentries except in emergency. Everything should be done to encourage displaced persons to understand that they have been freed from tyranny, and that the supervision exercised over them is merely that necessary for their own protection and well-being, and to facilitate essential maintenance.

I feel that we have problems of shelter and surveillance in hand. Of equal importance is the provision of sufficient and appetizing food. In the past, a 2,000-calorie minimum diet was prescribed for all displaced persons in approved centers. Our field inspections have shown that in many places this scale was consistently exceeded, but there have also been sporadic instances where it was not met. Three or four thousand persons of the persecuted categories, including German Jews, in the American Zone have returned to their home communities. Many are there making a genuine effort to re-establish themselves. Until recently, there has been no clear-cut system of assuring adequate food for this group, although in most cases they have been given double rations.

I have recently raised the daily caloric food value per person for ordinary displaced persons in approved centers to 2,300, and for racial, religious and political persecutees to a minimum of 2,500. Feeding standards have also been prescribed and sufficient Red Cross food parcels and imported Civil Affairs/Military Government foodstuffs are on hand to supplement indigenous supplies and meet requisitions to maintain these standards. We are now issuing a directive that those Jews and other persecuted persons who choose and are able to return to their communities will receive a minimum ration of 2,500 calories per day, as well as clothing and shoes, the same as those in centers.

Clothing and shoes are available in adequate amounts and of suitable types. Uniformly excellent medical attention is available to all Jewish people in our centers where they have generally adequate sanitary facilities. UNRRA and AJDC staffs, which are administering an increasing number of our centers, are becoming efficient, and are making it possible for these people to enjoy spiritually uplifting religious programs as well as schooling for children.

It is freely admitted that there is need for improvement. The schools need more books; leisure-time and welfare activities must be

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further developed; paid employment outside the centers needs to be fostered; additional quantities of furniture, bedding and fuel must be obtained. We have made progress in re-uniting families, but postal communications between displaced persons and their relatives and friends cannot yet be inaugurated; roads and walks must be improved in anticipation of continuing wet weather. We are conscious of these problems, we are working on them, and we have expert advice of UNRRA, of Jewish Agencies, and of our Chaplains.

In certain instances we have fallen below standard, but I should like to point out that a whole army has been faced with the intricate problems of readjusting from combat to mass repatriation, and then to the present static phase with its unique welfare problems. Anticipating this phase, I have fostered since before D-Day the development of UNRRA so that persons of professional competence in that organization might take over greater responsibilities, and release our combat men and officers from this most difficult work.

You can expect our continued activity to meet the needs of persecuted people. Perfection never will be attained, Mr. President, but real and honest efforts are being made to provide suitable living conditions for these persecuted people until they can be permanently resettled in other areas.

Mr. Harrison's report gives little regard to the problems faced, the real success attained in saving the lives of thousands of Jewish and other concentration camp victims and repatriating those who could and wished to be repatriated, and the progress made in two months to bring these unfortunates who remained under our jurisdiction from the depths of physical degeneration to a condition of health and essential comfort. I have personally been witness to the expressed gratitude of many of these people for these things.



Respectfully,

The Hon. Harry S. Truman  
The President of the United States  
The White House, Washington, D. C.