Memorandum to the Joint Distribution Committee in the matter of the Polish refugees being evacuated from Kobe, Japan to Shanghai, China.

Distress cables have been received from the Jewcom Kobe that about 800 Polish refugees, temporarily in Kobe, Japan, are being evacuated to Shanghai. Amongst this group are 450 Rabbis and students refugees from devastated Poland and Lithuania. The Jewcom of Kobe which supervised the relief of this entire group in Japan imprisons, that to best handle the newly created situation, the problem be referred to the East Jewcom of Shanghai.

We feel and hope the situation is a temporary one since efforts are being made, with some measure of success, to secure visas for America, Palestine, Australia and Canada for the entire group.

To throw these refugees in the existing homes for German refugees and under the supervision of the local committee will physically and morally undermine these refugees. Because of religious, communal and language motives, these refugees, mostly Rabbis, Yeshiva students and religious persons, cannot sociologically be established with the others. These refugees need especial consideration and assistance in the matter of procuration of visas, and the local committee cannot do this since none of its members handles this phase of the problem. The Polish Lithuanian East-Jewcom can also be in personal and close contact with the Polish Embassy whose cooperation is necessary to ameliorate the problem of the Polish refugees.

The prominent lay leaders, recent arrivals from China, Mr. Zupakewicz of the Poalei Zion, Mr. Warszawski of the Mishori, Mr. Ponevewski of the Jewcom Kobe Committee and Mr. Newman of the Agudas Israel support the views expressed in this memorandum and are ready to personally vouch for and corroborate these statements.

Our appeal to the Joint is to seriously consider the problem, the Joint which for the past several years, has tried so desperately to help these refugees in a self-respecting manner, should not be instrumental now in the moral breakdown of these already sorely persecuted refugees.

The undersigned, officers of representative American Jewish organizations, which highly respect and commend the humanitarian work of the Joint, and who have long been interested in the problems of these refugees, respectfully requests the Joint to treat the problem of these refugees separately because of the special phases involved, that it recognize as the relief and political agency for these refugees, the Polish-Lithuanian Committee called East-Jewcom under Rabbi Ashkenazi and Mr. Topaz and that the relief given enable them to exist physically and to retain their self-respect.

The Joint Distribution Committee's consideration of this problem will in no way change the status of the refugees already in Shanghai, but will on the other hand, show a willingness by the Joint to treat this special problem in a just and humanitarian manner.

Union of Orthodox Rabbis of United States and Canada

Robbi L. Belzer

National Council of Young Israel

Israel Tapiro

Union of Orthodox Congregation of the U.S.

Leo S. Hirschfeld
Subsequent to the preparation of this memorandum, word was received that the incoming refugees have the choice of either entering the China City in Shanghai where they would come under the control of the Japanese government, or in the French concession where the Polish East Jewcom functions. To place them under Japanese control entails registration and a later danger of internment. While the danger is existent for those already under Japanese control, it is most inadvisable to throw these 900 additional Polish refugees under such control. Their safety and well-being will be better assured in the French concession and aided by the East Jewcom Committee.