July 26th, 1946.

During the early part of July the number of Polish Jews travelling through Czechoslovakia to UNRRA camps in Germany and Austria increased over what it had been in June. The numbers of persons coming through Czechoslovakia in June - 7,500 - were also a great increase on those who came through during the month of May. The rush of Polish Jews to seek security across the border into Czechoslovakia has been precipitated by the Kielce pogrom and many other acts of terror which occurred in various parts of Poland where Jews reside. The statement issued by Cardinal Hlond has served to increase the feeling of insecurity and terror on the part of the Jews, since the statement did not blame the pogromists for their activities but rather placed the responsibility on Jews active in the Polish Government. Polish Jews with whom we have been in contact feel conscious of the implication of the statement by Hlond and fear very much its effects in Poland.

Until the present there has been a de facto arrangement whereby representatives of the Ministries of Social Welfare and Labour, Foreign Affairs and Interior have been operating in a makeshift arrangement with representatives of the AJDC in feeding and transporting these Polish Jewish refugees to Bratislava and Slovakia and then on to Austria. The AJDC has supplemented the Government feeding program at the entry point at Nachod. Other large groups of refugees come through at Brumov, 30 kilometres from Nachod, where the camp where the people arrive is operated by the local Community, with reimbursement by the AJDC, and with none of the mentioned Ministerial representatives participating save through a purely local arrangement worked out by the AJDC with railway officials to move the people to Bratislava. At Moravska-Ostrava, which during the first 15 days of July saw 267 people come in from Poland and since then an average of 35 - 45 persons daily, the local Jewish Community, with AJDC funds, takes care of all the needs of the people, i.e., food, lodging, transportation.

All the Polish transients who are sent on to Austria travel through Bratislava, where they are housed at a hotel operated by the Department of Repatriation of the Ministry of Social Welfare and Labour, and which has been partly outfitted by the AJDC. All the persons eat at the kosher kitchen at Bratislava which we subvention. This kitchen receives basic rations from the Department of Repatriation and in addition 26 crowns per person per day from AJDC in order to purchase additional food.

All of the mentioned arrangements have been taking place in a de facto manner without even quasi-legal machinery having been set up. As a result, Government officials have already from January 5th to date spent 21,000,000 Crowns on food on this problem, without any clear cut decision as to who ultimately is responsible. This was spent on the verbal assurance of Mr. Rees, Repatriation Officer of the UNRRA Mission to Czechoslovakia, that special allocation from UNRRA Washington over and above supplies Czechoslovakia now receives, would be made for these transients who are regarded by UNRRA as unsuccessful repatriants.
During the week July 7th - July 14th, Miss Gibbons, UNRRA Deputy Director General for Europe, arrived in Czechoslovakia, and at meetings with some minor Government officials, informed them that they had either misunderstood or been misinformed by Mr. Rees with regard to UNRRA acceptance of responsibility in supplying these additional funds and food products necessary to feed and to transport the unexpectedly large number of refugees. It is reported that Miss Gibbons stated that the budget for Czechoslovakia had been set and that no additional funds could be made available.

The immediate result of this statement by Miss Gibbons was great anxiety and confusion amongst the lower echelons of Governmental employees who had been carrying out the program of aid to Polish transients without authorization from their chiefs, the heads of the various ministries. On being advised of this we immediately conferred with Mr. Masaryk (non-party), Minister of Foreign Affairs, who also involved in this conference Vice-Minister Clementis (Communist). Mr. Masaryk assured us that everything would be done to keep the Czechoslovak border open and that he personally would pay tribute to the various officials who had been assisting this important work at the Government meeting on July 16th and inform them that Czechoslovakia must remain a haven of refuge for these Jews fleeing from terror. If Czechoslovakia was to close its borders he, Minister Masaryk, would resign. Minister Clementis also agreed that everything would be done to keep the border open when he has assured that the people would not remain longer in Czechoslovakia than the time necessary to transport them out of the country.

Following this meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, a meeting was held with Dr. Schwartz in Vienna on July 14th on his way from Budapest to Paris, where a decision was taken to have AJDC, New York contact UNRRA Washington regarding this problem, as well as a decision taken by Dr. Schwartz to make available a special additional allocation of $20,000 for the outfitting of transient centers in Czechoslovakia.

On July 19th the following copy of a cable from New York to Paris was received from Dr. Schwartz:

THIRTEENTH YOUR FIVEFORTY LAGUARDIA LEFT YESTERDAY DUE CAIRO JULY FIFTEENTH ATHENS EIGHTEENTH HOME TWENTIETH BELGRADE TWENTYFIRST PARIS THIRTIETH GENExE AUGUST FOURTH FOR UNRRA COUNCIL MEETING STOP DISCUSSED CONTENTS YOUR CABLE WITH UNRRA WASHINGTON WHO ADVISED UNDERSTANDING WITH CZECHOSLOVAKIA PROVIDING THAT CZECHOSLOVAKIA WILL GIVE NECESSARY ASSISTANCE TO POSTWAR REFUGEES COMING UNDER UNRRA CARE SUCH AS PRESENT INFILTRATES STOP CZECHOSLOVAKIA HAS RIGHT REQUEST ADDITIONAL SUPPLIES BASIS THESE EXTRAORDINARY EXPENDITURES WITH PRESCRIPTION CZECHOSLOVAKIAN UNRRA MUST BE WITHIN CZECHOSLOVAKIAN BUDGET BUT REQUESTS FOR ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE WILL BE CONSIDERED STOP UNRRA CABLING LONDON THAT NO CHANGE IN UNDERSTANDING SO FAR AS KNOWN HERE NO REQUEST HAS BEEN RECEIVED CZECHOSLOVAKIA FOR ADDITIONAL ALLOTMENT STOP PLEASE KEEP US ADVISED IN ORDER TO FOLLOW UP WITH UNRRA WASHINGTON.

A 1½ hour conference was held with Mr. Alexejev, Chief of the UNRRA Mission to Czechoslovakia and Mrs. Gates, Welfare Officer of UNRRA in Czechoslovakia. Mr. Levy Becker of the Paris office, Mr. Max Spitz of the South African Jewish War Appeal and I attended as AJDC representative. Despite the language difficulty and the necessary use of an interpreter, we found it possible to interpret to Mr. Alexejev our analysis of the situation to date and our deep desire that he, representing UNRRA, would use all his persuasive powers, both with his superiors at UNRRA at

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London and Washington as well as with Czech Government officials, to the end that funds and food would continue to be provided for the Polish Jews transient through Czechoslovakia. He expressed his sympathy with the need and his desire to do all possible. He had already cabled London on a number of occasions for a direct concrete answer to his question as to whether UNRRA would provide the Czechoslovak Government with the extra allocations for this purpose. Despite the fact that an answer had not yet been received, he was prepared to negotiate immediately with Czechoslovak Government officials to ask them to continue their cooperative participation in providing food and transport. He also expressed the hope that AJDC would continue to do its utmost in providing staff at the focal points and supplementary food wherever needed.

On July 23rd a 3 hour conference was held with Prof. Mejedly, Minister of Social Welfare and Labour (Communist), which was attended by Captain Green, of the Repatriation Department of the Ministry, Dr. Satava, Counsel to the Ministry and Dr. Jiri Fisher of the Ministry. Mr. Max Spits of the South African Jewish War Appeal accompanied me to this Conference.

The total overall problem was discussed. The Minister had not been aware of the full implications of the problem. He tried to reach by telephone the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of the Interior and the Prime Minister in order that the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare be definitely charged to take over the organization and operation of services to facilitate rapid transit through Czechoslovakia of the Polish Jewish refugees. Minister Mejedly stated that he was quite willing for his Ministry to take over this responsibility. In view of the fact that the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister (Communist) were in conference in Moscow and the Minister of Interior was on vacation, Prof. Mejedly agreed that status quo arrangements be continued until a conference will be held and a decision arrived at by the mentioned Governmental officials. This means that the de facto arrangements existing today, i.e., installations at Machod, Bratislava and Dlouhetin, Prague would continue to serve the Polish refugees and transportation by Czech railroads would continue to be available.

On July 24th a conference was held with Dr. Satava, Counsel to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Captain Green of the Repatriation Department, and Mr. Bianner, Secretary to the Repatriation Department in which we were requested to make available 50,000 Crowns to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Repatriation Department, for the repair of a reception center in Machod in which will be the Repatriation office and the office of the AJDC, the center to be administered by the Repatriation Office while the staff is to be provided by the AJDC. The agreement was made on a temporary basis following the decision by Minister Mejedly that all arrangements be continued in status quo until a decision is made by the Czechoslovak Government.

These officials were very much concerned over the fact that they had to date received only verbal assurance from UNRRA and on this basis had made available food and transport without having had specific instructions from their top officials. They asked for our help in working out a definite understanding with UNRRA to which we agreed.

Last evening, while Mr. Lavy Becker was looking over the situation at Machod, I had dinner at the house of Dr. Toman, Vice Minister of the Interior, and later in the evening met with him and Dr. Seman, another official of the
Ministry of the Interior. Mr. Toman expressed his great concern over the fact that fascist Ukrainians and other undesirables were sneaking through Czechoslovakia posing as Polish Jewish refugees. We discussed security arrangements and the use of our staff to buttress the efforts of the Ministry of the Interior in checking the refugees coming through.

Dr. Toman then proposed that I confer with the Polish Ambassador to Czechoslovakia and see if we could not get the Polish Government to legalize the exit of these people. The situation was discussed fully with Dr. Toman, with proper emphasis on the terror situation in Poland. Dr. Toman agreed that it might be premature to take this matter up with the Polish Ambassador, and that he and I might discuss at a later date whether AJDC should deal with the Polish Ambassador regarding this or whether it should be handled directly by the Czechoslovak Government.

I was then asked for an assurance that the people coming into Czechoslovakia would continue to be moved out quickly. We discussed a plan to direct some of the refugees from Polish border points through Prague to American Zone Germany border line, so that they could from there be routed directly to UNRRA camps in Germany. This plan was sympathetically accepted by the Ministry of Interior officials. They proposed also that arrangements be made for some of the Polish Jews to work in Czechoslovakia for a few weeks, as there was a critical labor shortage due to the deportation of Germans, and that the refugees would be paid prevailing wage rates. It was agreed that this would be considered after definite arrangements were made regarding the care of these transients.

Another matter discussed was the return to the AJDC. of 115,000 Crowns, which was the penalty fixed for emigration visas on a group of Polish refugees for illegally crossing into Czechoslovakia. Dr. Toman agreed to return this sum within the next few days.

Finally I was asked to submit in writing an overall plan with responsibilities affixed for the movement of Polish Jewish refugees through Czechoslovakia.

On July 25th a meeting was held with representatives of the Ministry of Interior, Foreign Affairs, and Social Welfare and Labour. This meeting agreed to put into operation Minister Mejedy's decision to maintain the present de facto arrangement for movement of Polish Jewish refugees through Czechoslovakia. On their end it was agreed that immediate steps would be taken to establish at least quasi legal machinery to deal with the problem.

The Officials decided that it was necessary to get clear understanding from UNRRA regarding its supplementary allocation for coping with this situation and a bill of 21,000,000 Crowns is to be submitted to UNRRA for food advanced from January 5th to the present in order that a definite decision be given by UNRRA. I was asked for our help in these negotiations with UNRRA. Further, I was asked to make proposals in writing as to what the AJDC. would do if UNRRA refused to make this allocation in order that the Government would know the extent of its obligations. I pointed out that this was premature, that we could not assume at this stage that UNRRA would refuse. Quite the contrary, we should assume that UNRRA will carry out its obligations in this matter. Furthermore, full cooperation of the AJDC. in helping the Czechoslovak Government to get this allocation was promised.

Finally, it was agreed that the rendering of service to transient Polish Jews would at no time be terminated without further consultations with the AJDC. This may be important at that moment when any of the agencies involved will wish change the present arrangements.