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STUDIES OF MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT

Lecture Series

Subject: *General and Technical Aspects of Jewish Migrations—
Post-War Problems of HIAS and HICEM*



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GENERAL AND TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF JEWISH MIGRATIONS--
POST-WAR PROBLEMS OF HIAS AND HICEM

This Address was given by Solomon Dingol, Vice-President of HIAS, on May 18, 1944, during the Training Course for Social Workers on Migration Problems under the auspices of the New School for Social Research offered by the Hebrew Immigrant Aid-Society (HIAS) and the Hias-Ica-Emigration Association (HICEM).

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Henry Field

CONFIDENTIAL

HIAS AND HIAS-ICA IN THE POST-WAR WORLD

In order to plan effectively for the post-War world, one must contemplate on the kind of a world we are going to have after the War, not only as to its physical shape but also to its moral atmosphere.

One may well inquire, for instance, as to the fate of the Atlantic Charter in the post-War world. Will it continue to be the guiding principle of United Nations policy or, having served its purpose as a means of cementing the United Nations in war, may it safely be discarded in peace, returning to pre-War national animosities and international combines, perhaps preparing the ground for World War III? There is enough evidence abroad for both postulates.

Men of good will among all nations strive to perpetuate in peace the principles for which we are fighting this War and seek to preserve the same unity which is helping us to win the War.

On the other hand, there are not a few selfish men, whom I would call men of ill will, in contrast to the men of good will, who already scheme and plot for a return to pre-War monopolies, international cartels and national isolation. They are active in setting men against men and nation against nation, employing the same methods and tactics which led to the disintegration of European

democracy and to the rise of fascism in Europe.

It is truly being said that World War II is not a War of Governments and armies only, that it is a peoples' War, a War of entire populations.

The number of civilians directly and indirectly hurt in this War far exceeds the number of casualties on the battlefields. There are millions of civilians uprooted from their homes and deported into slavery.

There are tens of thousands maimed by bombs and crippled by torture in concentration camps. We do not know as yet the countless numbers who have lost their lives in gas chambers and in the concentration camps.

Only the dead will remain silent. All the others will return to their homes after the liberation and will present their claims for a place in the post-War world. There will be enough energy released to build for the future a brave new world and to engulf the old world in new turmoils. It will be a force for good and for evil. To what purpose will the nations of the world make use of this force?

It is indeed a grave danger if, lacking plan and foresight, the end of the military conflict may yet see the beginning of a social and political turmoil the like of which we have never known.

Gloomy as it is, the picture presents a challenge to

every forward-looking social worker who is ready to take part in the reconstruction of the post-War world--a world which may present special problems which doubtless affect his or her activities.

It is to be assumed that the military powers will not relinquish their hold on the liberated countries until the civilian authorities will be in a position to take over and maintain order. Social workers will have to carry on their work in most European countries and for quite some time under the control of the military authorities. What policies will the military pursue toward social service agencies? Will they be welcomed as friends who bring succor and help to the civilian population, or would they be looked upon as intruders?

As to the civil authorities, some of the Governments-in-exile will return to their countries in the wake of the military; jealous of their regained power and not too sure yet of their authority, they may consider the mere presence of foreign social service agencies as a reflection on their own ability to cope with the social problems of their countries. Some of them may even harbor a suspicion that behind the cloak of philanthropy are hidden political designs of a foreign nation.

Jewish social workers may be confronted with additional problems, specifically Jewish. They may vary from country to

country, perhaps from city to city, depending upon the attitude of local authorities toward social workers in general and upon the relationships between the Jewish and the non-Jewish population.

With the return of millions of prisoners and slave laborers from Germany, all of them indoctrinated for several years with the worst Nazi teachings, one dreads to think what poison they may carry with them when they will return to their own country.

Winifred N. Hadsel has the following to say in her Report¹ to the American Foreign Policy Association:

"The return of persecuted peoples to their old homes in lands shattered and devastated by the Nazis will not be an automatic process set in motion by the cessation of hostilities in Europe..... Psychological and economic obstacles against the Jews may remain. Nazi ideology may have left its effect in some countries. Nazi theories and practices of anti-Semitism will continue to be an important factor after Hitler is gone."

In the light of the foregoing and in the face of all these obstacles what is the position to be taken by

1. "Can Europe's Refugees Find New Homes?" by Winifred N. Hadsel, American Foreign Policy Association, August 1, 1943.

American Jewish Social Service Agencies in general and HIAS and HIAS-ICA in particular in the post-War world?

Speaking for HIAS and for HIAS-ICA I can safely say that we shall not sit idle waiting for the clouds of uncertainty to pass and for the road to be cleared for us. If I am to express the faith, thoughts and sentiments of our forward-looking members, I can say that we consider the present situation as a challenge and an opportunity. We are preparing for all emergencies with which we may be confronted at the conclusion of hostilities--or maybe even sooner.

In this War, and in the presence of the greatest Jewish tragedy known in history, there can be no strict line of demarcation between relief and service. Every service given to the Jewish sufferers is relief and every relief is a service.

The Jewish Agency for Palestine, for example was never engaged in any activities outside of Palestine; now that Agency has its representatives in many countries doing rescue work. The JDC is now doing work which it never did before the War. The same applies to HIAS and HIAS-ICA.

I, for one, would like to see HIAS and HIAS-ICA assume in the liberated countries the rôle of an ambulance.

What is the function of an ambulance? First, it is to

respond to every emergency. The physician who goes with the ambulance may not always be of the best; he may not be able to perform the necessary operation on the spot and bring about a cure. But he is sure to render First Aid, make the patient comfortable and carry him to the institution where better provision can be made for his health and welfare.

In case this sounds too allegorical, let me make my meaning clear by citing a concrete case. Let us assume that the United Nations have liberated a country from the enemy. The Jews who were haunted and scared for their lives during the years of Nazi Occupation would be hiding in the forests and would be afraid to come out in the open. A HIAS man is the best person to locate them, to bring them that message of deliverance, take them to that relief station, soup kitchen, house of refuge which may have been already provided for them by the UNRRA or JDC, perhaps miles away.

For the Jews who will come out of concentration camps and from places of hiding will have shattered nerves, will be broken in body and spirit, Jews who will have for years been separated from their families and in constant fear of death.

Some of the liberated Jews will be found so broken in spirit as to constitute a menace to themselves; at first

they will need the approach of the old European Jewish service type rather than of the modern social service. HIAS and HIAS-ICA are best equipped to deal with these problems in their first stages. You may recall that before HIAS became the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society, it was for years the simple Hachnosath Orchim; we have traveled a great deal since those days, but at heart we are still the good old Hachnosath Orchim, the "homemakers for the homeless."

The HIAS representative, perhaps together with a JDC worker, would be the first to enter concentration camps and ghettos, bring the first kosher food and the symbol of Jewish aid. The HIAS worker would make it tolerable for some Jews to remain in concentration camps a few days longer whenever necessary, without resentment and without fear, knowing that Jewish social service workers are in the meantime busy preparing for them food and shelter, because calamities worse than concentration camps may befall our people when camps will be emptied and thousands of Jews will be on the loose without first having proper accommodations provided for them. It may result in clashes with the local populations and tend to make post-War coöperation much harder.

Spinning further the allegorical comparison of HIAS to an ambulance and the other social services to a hospital, I

would assign the major part of hospital work to those agencies, public and private, which would provide a net of barracks and relief stations, food centers and kitchens for the hungry and needy, comprising the large majority of liberated Jews.

These relief stations and shelters would in a short time become the nucleus of rehabilitation activities for all the Jewish social service agencies, like the JDC, HIAS-ICA, ORT, OSE, etc., all working together in full coöperation, each fulfilling specific functions without overlapping or duplicating each other's activities.

In these centers, the function of the HIAS and the HIAS-ICA would be limited to the gathering of information from each individual as to family status, United States relatives, missing members of the family, etc., transmitting these data to HIAS Offices in the United States and to HIAS-ICA Offices in Europe.

Locating people, uniting families is a tradition with HIAS. We did this work at the end of World War I and we are doing it now.

HIAS is well equipped to make immediate contacts with relatives in the U.S. and many other countries. Through the HIAS Immigrant Bank and through our food package service we may be instrumental in making money and food flow to individual Jews abroad, thus reducing the burden of

public relief which will be tremendous. Perhaps not all of you know that within a few weeks HIAS located 30,000 families after World War I, while between the two World Wars, the HIAS Immigrant Bank transmitted over \$40,000,000 from American Jews to their relatives abroad. These activities of HIAS and HIAS-ICA should be considered as First Aid to the Jews in Europe after this War.

Emigration and service to immigrants which were the major activities of HIAS and HIAS-ICA in the past will, of course, continue to be so in the future.

What are the prospects of Jewish emigration after the War? What route will Jewish post-War immigration take?

As to Jewish emigration trends from Europe after the War, it is still too early to make predictions.

Some believe that few Jews will want to remain in Europe any length of time. This opinion prevails mostly among Zionists, who consider the transfer of most European Jews to Palestine as the only solution to the Jewish problem. Others maintain that the defeat of Nazism will also bring about the downfall of anti-Semitism everywhere, and the need for reconstruction of the devastated countries will provide the Jews with ample opportunities for rehabilitation.

While there is some validity to both points of view, one must not lose sight of the fact that wholesale Jewish

emigration from Europe is neither economically possible nor politically desirable. The transfer of millions of Jews from Europe would require an expenditure of billions of dollars, with no such capital in view; also that a Jewish exodus from any European country, because of anti-Semitic forces in other countries, such as the Union of British Fascists in England or the Croix de Feu in France, would redouble their efforts to put the Jews of the democratic countries on the run.

It would, therefore, be poor policy for the Jews of any country to give up their birthrights. Jewish emigration must be a matter of choice for the Jews themselves, and not of compulsion by others.

Migration within Europe must, therefore, precede any major emigration to countries outside of Europe. The condition of dispersed and displaced Jewish populations of Europe and their repatriation must engage our first attention. It will require all the wisdom and ingenuity of Jewish social service to direct Jewish migration into constructive channels.

The young must be encouraged to study; adults must be trained to work; professional men to be returned to their callings.

The fortunes of war may place into the hands of

Governments, land which formerly belonged to individuals. For the good of the people, public authorities should be persuaded to allocate some of the land to Jews who have lost homes and fortunes which cannot be retrieved after the War.

Some opportunities for colonization may present themselves in South American countries as well as in Europe.

Here again, HIAS and HIAS-ICA with more than sixty years' experience in emigration and colonization work are best fitted to look for such opportunities which may play a major part in the rehabilitation of European Jewry after the War. With Government assistance and proper coördination of activities among Jewish social service agencies a change in Jewish economic life may evolve in Europe, which will shift pre-War Jewish occupations to more productive spheres.

It should be realized, however, that since the advent of Hitler, hundreds of thousands of Jews have emigrated from Europe to other countries as refugees, leaving part of their families behind them.

At the conclusion of the War they will no doubt endeavor to join them.

Some of the refugees may return to their former homes. Perhaps those of France, Belgium, Holland and Czechoslovakia

will feel a greater urge to return. Even some refugees from Germany may return home, if and when Germany will become a democratic country. However, the vast majority of refugees who made their home here during the last decade have merged their fate and future with America, and they will do their utmost to have the surviving members of their families in Europe join them here.

Palestine will have a major claim for European emigration. About 500,000 Jews who are there already have prepared places for their relatives to follow them. The upsurge of Jewish sentiment which was buried and nurtured in the ghettos and concentration camps, will help to quicken Jewish emigration to Palestine after the War.

How soon will emigration from Europe begin to flow? If the immigration records of World War I can serve as an indication, we must assume that there will be an interval of at least two to three years before emigration will be resumed on a large scale. In 1914, the first year of World War I, Jewish immigration to the U.S. exceeded 130,000. During the four years of the War it declined to a low of 3,672 (in 1918). Although World War I ended in 1918, Jewish immigration to the U. S. in 1919 did not exceed 3,055, climbed to 14,292 in 1920 and reached its pre-War 100,000 mark only in 1921.

It may now take even longer for Jewish immigration to come to its pre-War volume, because the Jewish population of Europe after the War will be considerably reduced and many of the survivors will be so weakened by the ravages of war and persecution, that they will lack the spirit and the courage to embark upon the road to a new life in a new country.

We must be mindful of all these facts.

SUMMARY

HIAS and HIAS-ICA will make their major contribution to the relief and rehabilitation of Jews in the post-War world by joining forces with other organizations in the following tasks:

1. Registration of refugees in concentration camps, relief stations and community houses, as well as through local committees created wherever Jews will be congregated.
2. Opening the channels of inter-family relief in the form of money and food packages through the HIAS Immigrant Bank.
3. Migration aid, including identification and legalization of migrants.
4. Emigration aid through its established committees in the U.S., Latin American countries, Europe and Palestine.