

Let
MY PEOPLE IN

By
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Address by Dr. Joseph Tenenbaum, President of the American Federation for Polish Jews and Honorary Chairman of the National Co-ordinating Committee for the Admission of 100,000 Homeless Jews into the United States, at Mass Meeting of Co-ordinating Committee, Sunday, January 5, at Manhattan Center, New York.

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On May 8, 1945, Germany surrendered. Today on January 5, 1947, fully 18 months after liberation, the Jewish victims are still in enemy territory, more desperate than ever, more betrayed in their innermost hopes than they ever were by their former enemies.

On the eve of this 1947 New Year of peace, President Truman declared the end of the state of war, "effective 12 o'clock noon, December 31, 1946." To the DP's in Germany this must have sounded like a cruel jest. For them, as for the Jews in Palestine and to the Jewish people everywhere, the war which started with the inauguration of the Hitler regime in 1933, is rounding up its thirteenth year and is about to start the fourteenth consecutive year on the path of extermination. There is no peace for the Jew and no prospect of peace. Through it all there is not even an effort made to hide the shameful betrayal of the most harassed human beings in the world. Through it all the Jew-hunt is going on unabatedly, and with it there is mounting despair and distress of a people whose patience is at the breaking point.

Nazism Perpetuated

This is even made crasser by contrast. For while their Jewish victims suffer neglect and humiliation, their German murderers are being literally showered with attention and generosity. The former enemies of Germany seem to be engaged in keen competition to outbid each other for its favors. The sudden "amnestification" of the million or so "minor" Nazis is a choice bit of diplomatic perversity. At the same time the State Department is contemplating wholesale admission to the United States

of German "scientists," a brand of Nazi brain fanatics who shocked the world by their sadistic cruelty and scientific deviltry. The entire occupation force has gone haywire on a German love feast while at the same time showing their hearty contempt for the German-marooned DP's and refugees.

Nor does it end at that. The United States and Britain, who so niggardly count pennies when it comes to DP's and refugees, have embarked on a vast scheme of reconstruction of German industries at a cost to us and to the British estimated to reach a \$2,952,000,000 outlay up to the year 1950. No wonder German arrogance is mounting steadily. There are today probably more Nazis than in the heyday of Hitlerism. They show their contempt to the refugees, boycott them and attack them. An acute observer who made inquiries on a recent trip in Germany reported that at least one-third of the German people think that the Germans were justified in their treatment of the Jews. They, these unregenerate criminals, go so far as to dare make formal representation to the occupation authorities to remove the Jews from their communities. What happened to the cherished denazification programs of the occupation forces was that not many Germans were denazified but many "denazifiers" became Nazis instead. Of all the postwar follies the denazification humbug is the most ludicrous. History is a severe taskmaster. There will be bitter retribution, and a terrible price to pay for this folly of all follies. Meanwhile the Jews, as always, are the first to pay. They have not stopped paying.

The Dungeons of Democracy

Paraphrasing the title of a book by Christopher Burney, we are confronted with a situation as crass in its realism as it is sordid in its moral implications. In these *Dungeons of Democracy* are confined 250,000 Jews, who by miracle or sheer animal cunning saved themselves from the Nazi crematoriums. There are altogether some 500,000 Jewish refugees and DP's left. These remnants are hunted by fear of a cruel past

and animated by the hope of a new future. Their hegira has not terminated but, between despair and hope, they were willing to endure a short interval in the dungeons of democracy. But time passed and hopes were dimmed. Their lives have become unendurable, their morale undermined by neglect, persecution, starvation—the latter especially in the British zone—crowding and incarceration in hostile surroundings.

From the original mass of millions of displaced persons of all nationalities under UNRRA care, some 6,000,000 were repatriated from Germany up to May 31, 1946; over 700,000 from Austria, and nearly 100,000 from Italy. Up to the latter part of last year nearly 90 per cent of all non-Jewish displaced persons had been repatriated. But of the Jewish DP's only a negligible fraction found their way home, and instead of diminishing the number of Jewish DP's grew in leaps and bounds, especially in the months following the Kielce pogrom.

From July through September the number of the Jewish DP's in the United States Zone of Occupation doubled. In the month of August, 30,821 Jews, an average of 1,000 daily, came through Austria on their way to the camps in Germany—13,807 in half the month of September—and even now an average of about 150-250 daily infiltrate into the U. S. Zone of Occupation.

These men and women on the move form the cadre of the "uninvited guests," principally in Germany, Austria and Italy. They are as ever, the hunted people; now no longer in danger of their lives but in mortal danger of losing morale, hope and self-control, and in the end there lurks the terrifying mirage of a second wave of assault and slaughter by the Germans on any future relaxation of Allied control. This is a real, not a fanciful danger. The German sacrificial pyre is still burning though the flames are artificially shuttered from the human view.

No one can contemplate with equanimity the prospect of life in the dungeons of democracy. The concentration camps must be speedily

emptied of the Jewish DP's. Give freedom to those chained titans of suffering and inhuman torture before they give way to despair! They are the most pitiful yet the most valuable human beings on earth. Let not one Jew spend another winter on the accursed German soil!

Resettlement vs. Repatriation

The Jewish DP's are a specific group which must be segregated from other groups. The indiscriminate designation of DP's is meaningless when applied to the Jews.

Jewish displaced persons form the core of a specific problem. For one, they are not individual sufferers from Nazism but group victims. No other people on earth had quite the same experience of systematic death and destruction as the Jews. Then too, unlike other populations, the Jewish victims are *a priori* non-repatriable. They cannot return to their homes. For the most part they are not only "stateless," but homeless. This is not only because of psychological reasons but, among others, because of an invincible complex of morgue ague, and also because of a real danger of assassination, the Kielce pogrom being a classic example. Caught between the millstone of irreparability and the grindstone of unsettlement, the only escape for the Jewish DP's lies in complete resettlement.

Resettlement must be undertaken without delay if these people are to be saved from physical decay and moral disintegration. This was recognized soon after UNRRA took over supervision of the camps. Various investigators sent by this government have all confirmed the inescapable conclusion that unlike non-Jews who are, almost all, repatriable, Jews are absolutely irrepariable, and new homes must be opened for them in new countries of refuge. This solution, while recognized by all as the only possible one, is today not nearer realization than the day Hitler Germany lay down its arms. The reason is both ill-will of men towards men and loose thinking by those who ought to know.

It took some time before the non-Jewish world realized the extent

of the tragedy so well characterized by Earl G. Harrison, who gave vent to his moral indignation at what he saw in Germany by stating that we appear to be treating them (the Jews) as the Nazis treated them, except that we do not exterminate them. This was followed by similar reports which prompted President Truman in October, 1945, to demand admission of 100,000 Jewish DP's to Palestine. This statement was fortified by the unanimous recommendation of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry in April 1946 to authorize the immediate admission of 100,000 Jews. Still more recently the President reiterated his conviction that the doors of Palestine must be opened immediately to receive them. So far, all this has remained a pious wish due to stubborn refusal of the British-Arab syndicate of sinister powers bent on preventing Jewish immigration into the Holy Land at all cost.

The great majority of Jewish DP's want to go to Palestine. So great is this desire that, braving death and disaster on leaky boats and incarceration or deportation when discovered, they left in masses for the shores of Palestine. Between January 18, 1946 and October 31, 1946, fully 18,711 Jewish refugees were apprehended by the British authorities on their way to Palestine. The Holy Land is the Land, the only land that can solve the problem of homelessness of the Jewish people. The gates of Palestine must be pried open at all events and by all means. There will be no peace for the Jews unless there will be a Jewish Palestine.

However, while Palestine is the only country in the world which can once and for all remove the curse of homelessness of the Jewish people, the plight of the Jewish DP's as individuals is so urgently pressing that other countries must be opened to receive the flood of stranded, shipwrecked human beings if catastrophe is to be averted. As Ira A. Hirschmann so well said in his book *Life Line to a Promised Land*: "But the world focus on Palestine's rescue efforts is out of all proportion to that country's size and its ability to care for the displaced peoples, compared with the resources of the great nations which profess

profound concern with the fate of those people in distress. Palestine has been a harbor in the storm. But the United States of America, Canada, the South American countries, Australia, New Zealand and Sweden. . . . They can well afford to open their doors to these homeless people instead of permitting the unsettled issue of Palestine to be used as a distraction from shirking their own humane responsibility."

Inhuman Immigration Laws

Even in this respect the Jewish issue is specific and unlike that of any other group or people. All immigration is selective nowadays, but only in the Jewish case it is exclusive—if not in the letter, yet in the spirit and administration of the laws of the countries concerned. Most undeveloped countries clamor for people. There is no difficulty in the quick absorption of 200,000 Polish soldiers of the Anders Army. But the few hundred thousand Jews cannot find a friendly nation to absorb them within their frontiers. Canada invited 4,000 Jewish soldiers for settlement, but when some 400 Jewish soldiers of the Anders Corps applied they were excluded by the Anders staff, even before the matter came up before the Canadian immigration authorities. Only 347 Jews came to Canada in 1945, of a total of 22,722 immigrants. Australia, whose government has large scale immigration projects, is closed to the Jews. Britishers are favored and then comes a scale of national selectivity with the Jews at the lowest rung of the ladder. The same is true of South-American and no less in South-African countries. Indeed we may spare ourselves further details since all of them without exception are *judofob* (exclusive of Jews) in the extreme, with or without blushing hypocrisy.

And the great United States? Since 1924 the United States immigration laws here operated on a system of quotas which permit the entry of 153,774 immigrants per year. In 1942 only 11,000 immigrants came from Europe. Indirectly, the American quota restrictions, operating in practice as a wall of discrimination against the admission of

Jews from East-European countries, are as much responsible for the death of hundreds of thousands of Jews under Nazi occupation as the Hitler crematoria. Had these Jews found refuge in this country on an equitable basis with the western peoples, many of these men whose ashes now lay heaped in the infamous Nazi destruction camps in Poland would be alive and working for America.

It is certainly not the economic reason that acts as a deterrent to liberalization of the immigration quota. Frances Perkins, in her book *The Roosevelt I Knew*, quotes the former President as having said, "You know, population never made a country unprosperous. We may have to think of our immigration policy in those terms some day." This was in reference to a visit of Jane Addams, of Hull House. Referring to the depression and the glut of wheat which was ruining the farmers, Miss Addams said in her gentle voice, "I figured it out the other day, Mr. President. It is just about what a million immigrants a year would have eaten."

President Truman, like President Roosevelt, is anxious to bring about a lowering of the evil immigration bars. On December 22, 1945 he announced a program to allow 39,000 displaced persons annually to this country within the limit provided in the immigration laws. Of this number, up to October 31, 1946, only 4,767 persons were admitted. At this moment there are at Bremerhaven, 2,100 persons, including 117 orphan children, in crowded embarkation centers waiting under appalling conditions for shipment. Altogether, the total of Jewish refugees and displaced persons who immigrated to the United States from May 1945 through September 1946 was 5,118.

The United States must give the cue. This country must open its doors to these unfortunate people. The admission of 100,000 Jews would open the gates in other countries as well. The world is looking to America for guidance. Failure to do it will have disastrous repercussions elsewhere, even in Palestine. This is a fundamental issue that should not be lost sight of or lost in the shuffle of theories and idiosyncrasies. Un-

fortunately, our own Jewish leadership is blind to these implications. The following letter, addressed by us to a leading Jewish organization in this country, in answer to an appeal of its own to its constituent organizations to dissociate themselves from the movement seeking to focus attention in the specific Jewish immigration problem, will show how far apart opinions can be on such a clear-cut issue.

A Letter With a Point of View

"In a statement addressed to the affiliated organizations, which was reproduced in the Jewish press, a plea is made to the organizations to endorse the Citizens Committee for the Homeless, which, of course, every organization, I am sure, will follow. In the same statement the organizations working for the admission of Jews into this country, and *implicite*, the Coordinating Committee, is being taken to task for its exclusive Jewish program. According to the statement published in the Day, a campaign exclusively for Jews is considered harmful, has few chances for success and is interfering with other activities for the homeless. 'Such a campaign is also harmful in principle because it represents discriminating limitation based on religion, almost like the White Paper for Palestine.'

"It is my firm belief that unity is a great asset and I have always tried to act accordingly. I shall endeavor also in the future to find a way of cooperation. However, I cannot avoid a certain feeling that a tragic mistake was made in the very approach to this important question. The problem of the Jewish DP's is not a religious one but a problem *sui generis* which does not apply to any other groups or nations. To group them together with the non-Jewish elements among whom are thousands and thousands of Polish fascists, Ukrainian bandits under the infamous General Vlassov, White Russian hordes, Letts and Balts, some of whom participated in the murder and torment of the Jews no less than the Nazi henchmen, is a mistake.

"Unfortunately, we do not have to plead for these elements. Canada

has admitted 4,000 of the Anders' fascists but has no place for any Jewish immigration. So too Brazil, Argentina and other South American countries. So too Australia. While all these countries are open to quislings and fascists, they are hermetically closed to Jews. In the case of Argentina, the Vatican in Rome will be the clearing center for all immigration into that country. Furthermore, all the non-Jewish DP's have a homeland to go back to and the reason they stay out is not so much their love of liberty but because few of them have a clear conscience and a great many of them have still the blood of their victims on their hands. The Jews have no homeland to go back to, and should they try, the fascist underground, the villagers and the anti-Semitic populace of the cities will deal with them *a la Kielce*.

"Now, as to the practicability of a primarily Jewish approach. The whole world knows the problem of the Jewish DP's, their pain and despair, and knows also the betrayal by the powers of their sacred obligations to them. President Truman apparently is quite conscious of this distinction. The CIO and AFL mentioned Jews by name in their resolutions. So did Mr. Pauley's report and last, but not least, the appeal of the Committee for Protection of Foreign Born to President Truman, signed by seventy prominent Americans, including Eleanor Roosevelt, Bishop McConnell and Bishop Seligman, 'for the immediate entry of 100,000 Jewish displaced persons into the United States,' which hardly needs any interpretation.

"I deplore the tendency of our leadership to avoid putting the stress where it belongs, on the *Jewish* tragedy. This tendency has had tragic results during the Nazi occupation and there is little justification for it at this time. If anyone thinks that pleading for the admission of 800,000 to 1,000,000 displaced persons will have a better chance in Congress than asking for 100,000 Jews of whose terrible plight no man is unaware, then, indeed, I fail to understand such reasoning. Under those circumstances I find it inexcusable to hide under such general formulas covering up the real thing, the solemn obligation of this country to help the

Jews who have been so shockingly betrayed by all the powers. If America will not open the doors for 100,000 Jews, it will surely not do so for 1,000,000 refugees of all races and descriptions, with all the diplomatic entanglements that such action would entail.

"I am a Zionist. The American Federation for Polish Jews at its last Convention voted for a Jewish state in Palestine. I believe firmly that there will be no end to Jewish homelessness except in Palestine. Therefore, I and my associates will not cease pleading—and fighting, if necessary—for free and untrammelled immigration of Jews to the Holy Land. This comes first, but no one can deny that the admission of 100,000 Jews into Palestine, even if all barriers were removed immediately, would not solve all the problems of the Jewish DP's. America must take the lead if any other country outside Palestine is to be compelled to admit Jewish refugees. As a Zionist I also know that the admission by Congress of 100,000 Jews will have a much greater influence on the British and even the Arabs than all the diplomatic repeaters that we may expect from now on."

The DP's cannot wait and their plight comes first. It is the duty of every true American to do all in his power to end this terrible injustice, and no Jew can shirk his duty or hide under an alibi. Our slogan and our appeal:

Close the doors of the deadly concentration camps and open the doors of Palestine and all free countries to receive them! America must do its share!

*"Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*

(Inscription on the Statue of
Liberty—by Emma Lazarus)

Copy of petition addressed to the President of the United States, circulated under the sponsorship of the National Co-ordinating Committee for the Admission of 100,000 Homeless Jews into the United States.

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

Dear Mr. President:

We address ourselves to you in behalf of the hundreds of thousands of displaced and homeless Jews in Europe — who, more than a year after the victory of the democratic forces over the Nazi armies, still fill the concentration camps of Germany, Austria and Italy.

We greet your efforts to open the doors of Palestine for 100,000 displaced Jews. This cannot wait. In addition to Palestine, other countries must do their share.

AMERICA MUST TAKE THE LEAD!

We, the undersigned citizens of the United States, appeal to you, Mr. President, to initiate legislation for the admittance of a minimum of 100,000 of these homeless Jews to the United States by the use of the unfilled immigration quotas.

The United States has gloried in the tradition of a haven for the oppressed. The achievements of those who have found refuge on our shores have contributed to America's greatness and prosperity. In providing a haven for these Jewish displaced persons, the American people will serve a great humanitarian and moral cause, as well as add to the progress of our country, as these displaced persons will make proud and productive citizens.

We urge you to use all your powers with the Congress to obtain legislation for the admittance of 100,000 Jews, thereby setting an example for the rest of the world.

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