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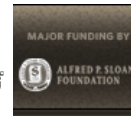
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Reference
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U.S. State Department receives information from Switzerland regarding the Nazi plan to murder the Jews of Europe.

AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

MEC

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (SC)

FROM

Bern

Dated August 11, 1942

Rec'd 2:35 p.m.

Secretary of State,

Washington

3697, August 11, 3 p.m.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

Gerhardt M. Riegner Secretary World Jewish Congress Geneva called on Vice Consul Elting Geneva Saturday eighth greatly agitated and requested following quoted message be transmitted for information American and other Allied Governments and be notified in Department's discretion to Dr Stephen Wise New York City:

"Informer reported to have close connections with highest German authorities who has previously generally reliable reports says that in Fuehrer's [sic] headquarters plan under consideration to exterminate at one blow this fall three and half to four millions Jews following deportation from countries occupied, controlled by Germany and concentration in east. Method execution undecided but prussic acid has been considered. Information transmitted with reservation as exactitude cannot be ascertained."

Confidential Legation

CONFIDENTIAL Legation note: Legation has no information which would tend to confirm this report which is however forwarded in accordance with Riegner's wishes. In conversation with Elting Riegner drew attention to recently reported Jewish deportations eastward from occupied France, protectorate and probably elsewhere. The report has earmarks of war rumor inspired by fear and what is commonly understood to be the actually miserable condition of those refugees who face destination as result

condition of these refugees who face decimation as result physical maltreatment persecution and scarcely endurable privations malnutrition and disease.

HARRISON

AMERICAN CONSULATE
Geneva, Switzerland, August 10, 1942

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

Subject: Transmitting Memorandum of Conversation with Secretary of Jewish Congress, Geneva, concerning Report that Germans are Considering Wholesale Extermination of Jews.

THE HONORABLE SECRETARY OF STATE,
WASHINGTON.

Sir:

At the suggestion of the Legation at Bern, I have the honor to enclose a copy of a memorandum in the above entitled matter.

I desire to reiterate my belief in the utter seriousness of my informant.

Respectfully yours,

Howard Elting, Jr.
American Vice Consul

Enclosure:
Copy of memorandum, as stated.

MEMORANDUM

Subject: Conversation with Mr. Gerhart M. RIEGNER,
Secretary of World Jewish Congress

This morning Mr. Gerhart M. RIEGNER, Secretary of the World Jewish Congress in Geneva, called in great agitation. He stated that he had just received a report from a German business man of considerable prominence, who is said to have excellent political and military connections in Germany and from whom reliable and important political information has been obtained on two previous occasions, to the effect that there has been and is being considered in Hitler's headquarters a plan to exterminate all Jews from Germany and German controlled areas in Europe after they have been concentrated in the east (presumably Poland). The number involved is said to be between three-and-a-half and four millions and the object is to permanently settle the Jewish question in Europe. The mass execution if decided upon would allegedly take place this fall.

Riegner stated that according to his informant the use of prussic acid was mentioned as a means of accomplishing the executions. When I mentioned that this report seemed fantastic to me, Riegner said that it struck him in the same way but that from the fact that mass deportation had been taking place since July 16 as confirmed by reports received by him from Paris, Holland, Berlin, Vienna, and Prague it was always conceivable that such a diabolical plan was actually being considered by Hitler as a corollary.

According to Riegner, 14,000 Jews have already been deported from occupied France and 10,000 more are to be handed over from occupied France in the course of the next few days. Similarly from German sources 56,000 Jews have already been deported from the Protectorate together with unspecified numbers from Germany and other occupied countries.

Riegner said this report was so serious and alarming that he felt it his duty to make the following requests: (1) that the American and other Allied Governments be informed with regard thereto at once; (2) that they be asked to try by every means to obtain confirmation or denial; (3) that Dr. Stephen Wise, the president of his organization, be informed of the report.

I told Riegner that the information would be passed on to the Legation at once but that I was not in a position to inform him as to what action, if any, the Legation might take. He hoped that he might be informed in due course that the information had been transmitted to Washington.

For what it is worth, my personal opinion is that Riegner is a serious and balanced individual and that he would never have come to the Consulate with the above report if he had not had confidence in his informant's reliability and if he did not seriously consider that the report might well contain an element of truth. Again it is my opinion that the report should be passed on to the Department for what it is worth.

There is attached a draft of a telegram prepared by Riegner giving in his own words a telegraphic summary of his statements to me.

Howard Elting, Jr.
American Vice Consul

American Consulate
Geneva, Switzerland

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