

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

AIR MAIL

Bern, January 24, 1945

Dear Mr. Pehle

I am pleased to enclose for the Board's information a translation of a report on the work camp for Jewish women at Weisskirchen bei Kratzau, Sudetengau, recently referred to in the Legation's telegram No. 416 of January 20, 1945.

This report was written by two women, Anna Sussmann and Margot Ségal, who escaped from Weisskirchen at the end of November 1944 having been previously transferred there from Auschwitz on October 31, 1944. These two women were originally deported from Drancy (the ill-famed deportation center for Jews outside Paris) by the Germans on July 31, 1944 and sent directly to Auschwitz where they remained, as stated above, until the end of October when they were sent as labor to this small "camp" not far from Breslau.

I forward this particular report because I have every reason to believe that it is symptomatic of the change in the general Nazi policy toward Jewish deportees namely, to use them for labor rather than to exterminate them. Both these women are intelligent and alert and told a particularly straight and convincing story. Too, their information is of comparative recent date (they reached Switzerland toward December 10th, 1944), and confined to exactly what they actually saw and experienced. There are so many reports circulating that are 60 % speculation and compilation based on the almost inexhaustible fund of rumor and hearsay that goes the rounds of the camps in Germany that one has to be especially careful in culling out the facts from the fiction.

Strangely enough the picture these women painted of Auschwitz was much less precise than that of the work camp of Weisskirchen. In the camp in Upper Silesia they apparently had very little chance to observe what was going on in general being confined the whole time to their barrack block and even to the barrack itself whenever transports arrived or left or there was any unusual movement in the camp. They did, however, have the opportunity of talking to women who arrived in Auschwitz with convoys en route from Poland (Warsaw, Lodz, Radom, etc.) to Germany proper. There appears even to have been a certain movement of internees from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz and then on into Germany as labor, since they met and spoke to women from the Protectorate ghetto.

Otherwise their story is the depressing and tragic one of humiliation, poor food, illness and suffering characteristic of the Nazi concentration camp system.

In the course of the next week or ten days I expect to receive a written report from them on their stay at Auschwitz and will sort out for the Board any factual information that might be of value to the future of our work.

Very sincerely yours,

Roswell D. McClelland, Special Assistant to the American Minister.

Enclosures: 2 copies of Weisskirchen report.

John W. Pehle, Esquire, Executive Director, War refugee Board, Washington 25, D. C.