

The Foundation and the War

0700
War
(General)

Final Statement
to October 9, 1939

The Munich crisis in September, 1938, was a dress rehearsal for war not only on the part of Europe but also on the part of the Rockefeller Foundation. The emergency powers given to the Paris office at that time proved sufficient for the actions which were subsequently taken. Three cables sent in September, 1938, covered: 1) safety of staff, 2) preservation of records, and 3) safety of fellows. They were as follows:

September 15, 1938

"While not unduly alarmed about European situation we think during present unsettled conditions officers should use discretion regarding field trips. We wish to emphasize that in case of real danger the safety of personnel is of paramount importance. Paris office is authorized to take any steps necessary to that end."

September 27, 1938

"Your personal letter September 20th. Agree with general recommendations. Suggest September financial report be sent soon as possible and thereafter copies of all vouchers by each mail. In event serious emergency Paris office is authorized to take any necessary steps without advance approval New York. Would it not be well to start shipping obsolete but important records to New York now?"

September 28, 1938

"Wish you to keep as close touch as possible with Foundation fellows in Europe. Instruct them that in case of possible danger they are free in their own discretion and at Foundation expense to return home or to proceed to safe place in Europe. Alternative places of study can doubtless be arranged by Paris office in some cases. Nothing in this message prevents Paris officers from giving advice or instructions when necessary for safety of fellow."

With Hitler's seizure of Czechoslovakia, the European situation again became tense. On March 21, 1939, SMG wrote RBF reporting on personnel in Europe and the plans which he was making in the event of a serious emergency. He stated that there were fifty-eight Foundation fellows in Europe, of whom

thirty-nine were foreigners and nineteen Europeans. Thirty-two of these fellows were in Great Britain, the remainder was scattered with two in Germany. SMG was thinking of obtaining space in Normandie or Brittany to which the office could be moved. The essential accounts and files had been sorted out. Arrangements were being made for trucks. Additional French currency was being secured.

When Italy invaded Albania early in April, 1939, there were six staff members and others connected with our Albanian work, including two women, at Tirana. All of them have now been evacuated; it was found impossible to continue work under the military dictatorship which Italy imposed on Albania.

On April 21, 1939, SMG wrote that he had concluded arrangements to rent a furnished house with thirteen rooms at La Baule in Brittany. The address is Villa Ker Aimable, Avenue Baguenaud, La Baule, Loire Inferieure. Under date of April 21, 1939, RBF cabled SMG as follows:

"Your letter April 14th. September authorizations stand. Paris office is authorized in its discretion to take any steps at any time to insure safety of our personnel and families. In cases where return of family to America seems advisable Foundation will pay transportation and additional expenses necessitated by division of family."

On May 3, 1939, RBF also cabled:

"Warren letter April 25th. All authorizations include all staff wherever stationed in Europe. Transfer of families to America would seem only way to assure complete safety and should be arranged when requested. In case of families in danger zones where escape in case of war would be difficult Paris office is authorized to arrange transfer of families when requested either to locations in Europe believed to be safer or to America. In either case Foundation will pay transportation and additional expenses necessitated by division of family. If any steps for safety of staff or families not already specifically authorized seem desirable Paris office is authorized to take such steps and Foundation will reimburse staff for additional expense involved."

The only family to take advantage of this opportunity was Mrs. Kittredge and her son, who returned to America on May 19th.

On May 24, 1939, TBA wrote SMG stating the basis for reimbursement for separated Foundation families.

During the last week in August, 1939, the decision was made to evacuate staff members and their families as well as account books and other records to La Baule. Two trucks were purchased, gasoline was secured and stored both in Paris and in Alencon, which is half way to La Baule. The staff was given the choice of remaining in Paris or going to La Baule. The following officers, with families, went to La Baule: SMG, AJW, GWB, DPO'B, HMM, TBK. With them were six members of the staff, including Germaine Lefebvre, who was appointed Acting Comptroller. A staff of four was left at the Paris office with Makinsky, a Russian, secretary of the MS Division, in charge. Three other members of the staff are in Paris and on call if needed. Thirteen other members of the staff have been sent home and specifically instructed not to come to the office. Gas masks had been secured for those at La Baule as well as those in Paris. Letort and Blandin have been mobilized by the French and J. S. Neel by the English government.

The following families have returned from Paris: Mrs. Miller and children, Mrs. Warren and child, Mrs. Bakeman and children. Miss Crowell at last reports was at her farm at Santa Margherita in Italy, and presumably will remain there for the duration.

The outbreak of hostilities found IHD staff, with families in many cases, stationed in Italy, Portugal, Rumania, Turkey and Egypt. Dr. and Mrs. Hackett returned from Italy and will go to Cairo. Rumanian staff has been advised to evacuate. At last reports, Mrs. Schwentker and children had left Jassy and were en route to America. Mrs. Janney and children are in England. When war began, there were four persons from the New York office in Europe: DHS was in Holland, SHW in Norway. Both have now returned. Miss Barbara Rodman, secretary in the Information Service, was on the Athenia when it was torpedoed. Miss Rodman has returned.

HvW, apparently undisturbed, continued his vacation in Paris, and has also now returned.

Travel has been resumed in Europe. Officers from La Baule have visited Paris, London and possibly Geneva. Paris, London and La Baule have been provided with full reports of outstanding European projects, and each director has sent instructions to these three points. As soon as sufficient information is on hand, it is probable that European staff will be completely evacuated and operations will be resumed from New York.

The Foundation's international fellowship program was cancelled, and the following cable was sent to SMG on September 5, 1939:

"All new appointments and sailings of fellows already appointed Europe to America or America to Europe cancelled for time being. No European country exempted. American fellows in Europe and European fellows in America urged to return native lands but final decision in their discretion."

Further decisions regarding the demobilization of fellowship program were contained in a letter from TBA to SMG dated September 7, 1939:

"Certain European fellows, recently arrived, have not yet started their fellowships. Most of them wish to return at once. In such cases we will pay each an expense allowance of \$7.00 per day until they sail, charging this to 'travel.' We will allow them to select any boat or return by any reasonable route. The choice must be theirs. It is believed that sailings can be obtained for such fellows within a few days. Before sailing we will give them a lump sum in cash representing an advance payment of two months stipend and dependency allowance, if any. This payment, not obligatory since the fellow has voluntarily resigned his fellowship, is given in order that he may have a short period for readjustment upon his return. In most cases, of course, he had relinquished his post to take our fellowship. At all events, this final payment is considered a complete discharge of our obligations.

"In the case of European fellows who have nearly completed their fellowships, it seems reasonable for them to remain until the end of their terms if the time is short. However, if they elect to sail before the termination of their fellowship, they will be paid the balance of stipend and dependency allowance due them up to a total of not more than two months.

"As our American fellows return from Europe, we will endeavor to arrange courses of study for them in America. At all events, there seems no need to give them the two months advance we are paying to Europeans. It may be possible to arrange fellowship study in their native lands for some returned Europeans. That, however, must await future developments."

TBA

October 9, 1939