Federal Police and Justice Department, Department of Police Bern, 7 September 1938

Very Important and Strictly Confidential Circular To the Swiss Border Police Checkpoints Re: Strict control over entry of immigrants. Attention: Police chiefs of the cantons and Swiss embassies and consulates in Europe.

Overview of the Present Situation

On March 28 of this year, the Federal government decided to reintroduce the requirement of a visa for holders of Austrian passports. The purpose of this measure is to be able to control the entry of emigrants from Austria to Switzerland. The decision of the German government to issue German passports to all former Austrian citizens renders this measure increasingly useless. At the same time, the new decisions against Jews in Germany itself cause fears of renewed immigration pressure on Switzerland. A short while ago, the Italian government declared that foreign Jews who came to Italy after 1919 would have to leave the country within six months. France has finally joined most countries in closing its borders to German immigrants. It also wishes to rid itself of some of the immigrants who have already entered. We have to expect that numerous immigrants and refugees will appear at our borders, and they will not only be German but also Czech, Hungarian, Rumanian, Polish and other Jews. Several thousand immigrants from Germany (including Austria) are already in Switzerland. Over 2,000 of them have no means of support and have to be taken care of until they will be able to be moved to other countries. This will take some time and until that time, an increase in the number of immigrants in Switzerland has to be absolutely prevented. Discussions are presently taking place in Germany in order to find a settlement which will enable us to control emigrants from all over Germany.
before they appear at our border. At the moment, there is still some restraint in issuing passports to immigrants who wish to go to Switzerland. Until a solution is found, we have to demand that the border police make all efforts, and we give them the following instructions, which are to be implemented along the entire Swiss border.

Instructions

All owners of Austrian passports who cannot show an entry visa to Switzerland are to be turned back upon their arrival. Those who manage to cross the border between checkpoints are also to be sent back to the country from which they came to Switzerland immediately upon their seizure. Immigrants holding a German passport are also to be turned back. It can often be difficult for the border policeman to distinguish whether a holder of a German passport is an immigrant or not. Special attention has to be given to this issue. It is to be established particularly if the passport was issued after 15 August 1938. If so, those who are Jews or probable Jews are to be turned back. (one can assume, for example, that the holder is a Jew if the passport is valid for only one year or for a short period). The passports are to be marked with “turned back” and a stamp of the border point that is to be crossed out. In cases of doubt, the police department can be consulted by telephone (Tel. Bern 61 401 or 61 492). In all cases that are being turned back, a report is to be made to the Swiss foreigners' police. We urgently need this information for our negotiations with Germany. Czech and Hungarian Immigrants often get to Switzerland not from their original countries, where they are no longer safe, but from other countries, especially from Germany or Italy. Once they are in Switzerland, it is almost always difficult to get rid of them. If they are immigrants to Switzerland, they are to be turned back by the border police. We have to insist that these instructions be followed to the letter as much as possible. We call attention to the instruction that travelers reaching the border are to be checked carefully, including those who are in cars or buses, even if they are part of a company.
trip or an organized group. We also wish to repeat that no exceptions may be granted at the border without the approval of the Police Department.

The Chief of the Police Department Rothmund

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