

RABBI NORMAN LAMM
THE JEWISH CENTER
181 WEST 86TH STREET
NEW YORK, N. Y. 10024
SCRUPTON 4-3511

June 25, 1975

Ms. Desgun
New York Association for
New Americans
200 Park Avenue South
New York, New York 10003

Dear Ms. Desgun:

I am writing to you concerning two apparently unrelated matters.

The first one is the question I discussed with you over the telephone: the use of the Ethical Culture people as volunteers in the Russian Jewry effort. As I mentioned to you, I have very serious qualms about involving Ethical Culture in this area.

I thought seriously about what you told me, namely, that they would be involved only in the physical aspects of preparing kits, etc., but that they would not be used in orientation of the Russians. Nevertheless, my experience has proven that such boundary lines are easily crossed, and that before long they will be involved in personal contact with the immigrants.

I should like to state quite clearly that I find such a prospect appalling. The Ethical Culture people are, in the main, renegades from the Jewish community. Exposing Russian Jewish immigrants, who have no knowledge of such groups, to Ethical Culture, would be only a shade less horrendous than introducing them to groups such as missionaries or "Jews for Jesus," etc. I would therefore most strongly implore you and urge you to thank the Ethical Culture people for their offer to be of assistance, and inform them that this is exclusively a Jewish effort.

The second problem concerns the treatment of Jewish volunteers. I was just informed that on the night of Monday June 23rd, Mr. Martin Schwarzschild was at Hotel Collingswood as part of his on-going visits to new immigrants in order to assist them. The purpose for this particular visit was to help them fill out forms for sending their children to Camp Hatikvah, arrangements which were made originally by Mr. Schwarzschild and his colleagues. The manager of the hotel thereupon informed him that NYANA had instructed him not to allow any visitors to speak with the Russians, and Mr. Schwarzschild was ousted from the hotel. I am sure you will agree that this was a shocking and scandalous deed.

What is even more astounding to me is the juxtaposition of these two items. Is one to conclude from all this that non-Jewish volunteers are welcome to help NYANA in integrating Russian Jews, but Jewish volunteers are to be discouraged?

I urge you to spare no effort in correcting both situations. Please be kind enough to let me know what NYANA is planning with regard to these matters.

Sincerely yours,

RABBI NORMAN LAMM

NL:gf

CC: Mrs. Udell