

Martin Schwarzschild

144 WEST 86 STREET
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10024

February 5, 1974

Dr. Norman Lamm
131 West 86 Street
New York, N. Y. 10024

Dear Rabbi,

You are aware of the fact that for approximately four months, together with a few other people of the original West Side Committee to help the Russian immigrants, I have been devoting more than full time to seeking positions, counseling, helping locate apartments, sending children to schools and in other ways attempting to assist these people and their children to integrate as quickly as possible - to the community, the city, and our American way of life. Without your constant help and morale boosting this would not have been possible.

I have hinted to you that cooperation from NYANA is nearly non-existent - they appreciate the fact that we have obtained some four or five dozen jobs for various people - but they in no way ease or smooth our paths by cooperation.

The attached was written prior to today. This afternoon, I was told that a Mr. Marvin Schrank at HIAS made the statement that the "west side group is doing more harm than good for Russian immigrants".

Under the circumstances, I recommend that the group cease from helping these people. Not one of us desires to be party to "doing harm" to these people. I personally, will turn my efforts to what I hope will be more productive and worthwhile ends.

I would like to see, if you have the opportunity, to suggest to the proper influential people, what the attitude of the professionals at NYANA and HIAS is.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Schwarzschild", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Martin Schwarzschild

144 WEST 86 STREET

NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10024

Queries for your meeting with NYANA's officers or lay people.

1. Why doesn't every breadwinner get English immediately upon arrival?

When this question was raised, the response at the meeting on January 24 was that some of these people do not have the ability to take the course at the school NYANA is using. It would seem to me that this is a) not so, and b) NYANA could find a school where they could learn.

2. NYANA will not give me a list of people in the hotels. I am aware of the reason behind this policy, agree with it 1000%, but have found that all rules have exceptions. It would make my task much easier if I knew where to look for people rather than to have to snoop around the hotel or ask other Russians.

3. Why does it take from three to eight weeks for a person to obtain an appointment in the vocational department?

4. Which method is used to direct people to apartments? Is this up to the caseworker? One becomes involved in the school problem, access to transportation, the fears of the Russians etc.

5. How much general leeway does the caseworker have? Who sets the policy?

6. NYC City Social Workers must visit their "clients", at least once in their homes. NYANA does not. Why?

7. Is NYANA aware of the fact that their people do not understand these immigrants? That these people are unique? Their dealings with officials, interviews, fears, hangups are different from any other wave of immigrants which has come. NYANA seems to be highly organized - assistants, associates, helpers and all kind of fancy titles, but in my observation of the practice, it doesn't seem to work in any organized fashion. Why?

8. Why isn't there some kind of direction given these people when it comes to purchasing furniture, what a lease is, how to open a checking account, medicaid, proper neighborhood hospitals, in addition to using a phone, subway, etc. They ought to write a simple manual in English-Russian for them.

It appears to me that NYANA, as all bureaucratic organizations, is entrenched, living on successes of the past with a divergent groups of immigrants, all different from these people. They are afraid that divulging any information may lead to an abuse of power on our part. Saber is poder! Perhaps, in view of the groundswell of dissatisfaction with NYANA that has come to all our attention within the past few weeks, a radical change at NYANA is necessary, in their thinking, program and attitude of their employees.

P.S. Many of the above can be cited chapter and verse. Out of respect to the Russians, I will not do so, for it will be taken out on them, and this we cannot afford to let happen. The Russians view of the West Side Group, e.g. our combined Jewish communities is great. Let's leave it that way. I could have told lot's more individual stories, this is enough it seems to me to get them a moving.