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Never Despair: Sixty Years in the Service of the Jewish People and of Human Rights

Gerhart Riegner

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Never Despair: Sixty Years in the Service of the Jewish People and of Human Rights Gerhart Riegner In August 1942 a thirty-year-old counsel in the Geneva office of the World Jewish Congress sent a cable to Rabbi Stephen Wise in New York with the following message: RECEIVED ALARMING REPORT THAT IN FUHRERS HEADQUARTERS PLAN DISCUSSED AND UNDER CONSIDERATION ALL JEWS IN COUNTRIES OCCUPIED OR CONTROLLED GERMANY NUMBER 3-1/2 TO 4 MILLION SHOULD AFTER DEPORTATION AND CONCENTRATION IN EAST AT ONE BLOW EXTERMINATED TO RESOLVE ONCE FOR ALL JEWISH QUESTION IN EUROPE. Sent by Gerhart Riegner, this first recorded notice of the "Final Solution" came to be known as the Riegner Telegram. It was perhaps the most famous and tragic moment in Riegner's career, but there were many other important and fascinating episodes in his life of service, told now in *Never Despair*, Riegner's impressive memoir. He recounts his youth in a cultivated, middle-class Jewish family in Germany, and as a young lawyer in Leipzig who fled to Switzerland after Hitler's rise to power in 1933. He worked all his life for the World Jewish Congress and was involved in its most important undertakings: rescue programs and diplomacy in response to the Holocaust; the struggle for broad-scale human rights at the League of Nations and later at the United Nations; relations with Christian churches; advocacy in behalf of North African Jewry; German reparations; and work with international student organizations. In *Never Despair* he recounts his efforts behind the scenes and offers a firsthand estimate of many of the leading international figures of the past century. This is an essential book for students of the Holocaust and of the Jewish role in world affairs from World War II to the end of the century. With 8 pages of black-and-white photographs.

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