December 18th, 1941.

Dear Governor Lehman:

With the entrance of the United States into the war, I feel it my duty as President of the American ORT Federation to state the policy of our organization under these new conditions.

I am sure I do not have to say that the American ORT Federation will send no funds to any enemy country or to any country occupied or dominated by the forces with which America is at war.

ORT, with its over sixty years experience in the field of constructive aid, has developed local leadership in every country where it works, always able and ready to meet any emergencies, and I am convinced that these institutions will continue to function under this native leadership. ORT is the expression of the will and determination of the Jews to survive in the face of all their oppressor does to exterminate them. The ORT reports from Warsaw ghettos and from the economic ghettos of Nazi Europe pour in evidence upon evidence that the Jews of Europe have not given up and will not give up their fight. We must be ready on the day the conflict ends to demonstrate that we have not given them up.

Since the rise of Hitlerism, ORT has been accompanying the Jews wherever they have gone. Today, there are ORT schools, workshops and farming projects in the countries of all our democratic allies, in the British Commonwealth, England, Canada and Australia, and in South America.

In those countries, ORT must continue the task, already so well begun, of not only rehabilitating the refugee but enabling him to stop being a burden to the communities which have given him asylum by training him in skills that he can contribute to our common defense. The ORT Leeds School in England, its work on government orders, its graduates, German, Czech and Austrian refugees, who are today standing at their machines in the war industries of England, are convincing proof that this can be accomplished.
In South America, the Latin American ORT Federation, which has been in existence for many years, has already undertaken a large program of reconstruction and rehabilitation for the refugees and for local Jewry. The Argentina School, opened in the Spring, is serving as a model for the other South American countries. The ORT Committees in those lands, in order to establish and equip training institutions for which there is such need, must have increased financial aid from us.

Today, when the United States and its Allies are pouring all their resources into insuring the victory of democracy, the enduring importance of ORT's tasks is underlined by its immediate necessity. Throughout the British Commonwealth and Latin America, ORT must redouble its efforts to see to it that no refugee remains a burden on his community and that each is given the skills through which he can contribute to the defense of the cause in which he and all of us have our lives at stake.

The structure and resources of the American ORT Federation are being strengthened not only to meet these present and immediate increased obligations in the Allied Countries and this hemisphere but also to insure the fact that we will be ready without delay when the war ends to fulfill our obligations in Europe and to meet the tremendous needs of immediate reconstruction.

In this time of stress, I am writing this letter to you, as a leader in your community who has helped raise and allocate funds for ORT, to pledge the continuance of our common efforts to provide constructive aid towards this end.

I will continue as before to keep you fully informed on the progress of our work and our needs, secure in the conviction that you are keenly aware of our common responsibilities in this world struggle against barbarism.

Sincerely yours,

George Backer,
President,
American ORT Federation.

GB/ff