

FDR AND THE HOLOCAUST

Whether Franklin Roosevelt should have or could have done more to rescue European Jews and to stop Hitler's killing machine is a question that will likely be debated by historians for decades to come.

Some scholars have criticized President Roosevelt for his approach to refugee issues prior to and during World War II, and he is even accused of having pursued misguided policies and of being indifferent to the Holocaust.

Others insist that such assessments fail to account adequately for the American public's pre-war isolationism and anti-Semitism, strict immigration and quota laws that enjoyed wide public and Congressional support, and military practicalities that—for much of the war—limited the Allies' ability to reach Jews trapped deep behind enemy lines.

In 1942, as details of Hitler's Final Solution reached the Allies, it was difficult for the public and many government officials to grasp the extent and significance of the Nazis' systematic, mechanized killing. In a December 13, 1942 radio broadcast listened to by millions, popular newsman Edward R. Murrow described "a horror beyond what imagination can grasp . . . there are no longer 'concentration camps'—we must speak now only of 'extermination camps.'"

On December 17, 1942, the United States joined ten other Allied governments in issuing a solemn public declaration condemning Nazi Germany's "bestial policy of cold-blooded extermination" of the Jews. The American Congress and the British Parliament stood in silence on that date to mourn what was happening to the Jews and pray for the strength needed to defeat the Nazis.

Roosevelt believed that the surest way to stop the killing of innocent civilians was to defeat Hitler's Germany as quickly and decisively as possible. Critics say that FDR's "win the war" approach did not address the possibility that significant numbers of Jews could be rescued.

In January 1944, after learning from Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, Jr. that the State Department was obstructing rescue efforts, Roosevelt established the War Refugee Board to coordinate governmental and private efforts to rescue those who might still be saved. The Board is credited with saving at least 200,000 Jews. Critics argue that if FDR had acted earlier, and more boldly, even more lives could have been saved.

The documents contained in this selection are from the collections of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum and are intended to reflect the many sides of this issue.

"I feel that more might have been done but I am also aware that there were many factors in the rescue situation which were simply beyond the Roosevelt Administration's control. Not the least of these was Berlin's determination to liquidate the Jews and the great difficulty of assigning to a modern nation-state a humanitarian mission to rescue a foreign minority for which it had no legal responsibility. It is a moral and humanitarian response we seek from the Roosevelt Administration. Such responses are rare in history and practically nonexistent during wartime."

Henry L. Feingold

The Politics of Rescue: The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust, 1938-1945
(New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1970).

“Authenticated information that the Nazis were systematically exterminating European Jewry was made public in the United States in November 1942. President Roosevelt did nothing about the mass murder for fourteen months, then moved only because he was confronted with political pressures he could not avoid and because his administration stood on the brink of a nasty scandal over its rescue policies. . . . Franklin Roosevelt’s indifference to so momentous an historical event as the systematic annihilation of European Jewry emerges as the worst failure of his presidency.”

David S. Wyman

The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945
(New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).

“How ironic that our greatest president of this century—the man Hitler hated most, the leader constantly derided by the anti-Semites, vilified by Goebbels as a ‘mentally ill cripple’ and as ‘that Jew Rosenfeld,’ violently attacked by the isolationist press—how ironic that he should be faulted for being indifferent to the genocide. For all of us, the shadow of doubt that enough was not done will always remain, even if there was little more that could have been done. But it is the killers who bear the responsibility for their deeds. To say that ‘we are all guilty’ allows the truly guilty to avoid that responsibility. We must remember for all the days of our lives that it was Hitler who imagined the Holocaust and the Nazis who carried it out. We were not their accomplices. We destroyed them.”

Amb. William J. vanden Heuvel

Keynote Address, Fifth Annual Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Distinguished Lecture, held October 17, 1996, at Roosevelt University, Chicago, Illinois.

“With almost sixty years of hindsight, Roosevelt’s silence [about the plight of European Jews] seems a strange lapse in the record of a President who normally spoke to Americans on grave world issues with courage, candor and foresight. That lapse is underscored by Roosevelt’s lateness in pushing his officials to save Jewish refugees and his reluctance to seriously entertain whether bombing Auschwitz might save some of Hitler’s intended victims without postponing victory in Europe.”

Michael Beschloss

The Conquerors: Roosevelt, Truman and the Destruction of Hitler’s Germany, 1941-45
(New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002).

Document #1:

Letter, FDR to New York Governor Herbert Lehman, November 13, 1935:

Throughout the 1930s, President Roosevelt was kept informed of the growing refugee crisis in Europe by political leaders with ties to the American Jewish community, including New York Governor Herbert Lehman. Through these contacts, Roosevelt also learned that the strict immigration quotas in place at the time were not being fully or fairly administered by his own State Department. In this November 13, 1935 letter, the President advises Lehman of the results of his own examination of the visa issue, the legal limitations imposed by the Immigration Act of 1924, and his instruction to the State Department that German Jews applying for visas were to be given "the most generous and favorable treatment possible under the laws of this country." (President's Official File 133: Immigration, 1933-35, Box 1).

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November 13, 1935.

My dear Governor Lehman:

I have your letter of November 1, 1935, with its enclosed letter of October 10, 1935, from Professor James G. McDonald, ~~x~~High Commissioner for Refugees (Jewish and Other) coming from Germany, to Mr. Felix M. Warburg ~~x~~ with reference to the question of the immigration of German Jews into the United States.

x20
x198
x198-A

I have brought your letter to the particular attention of the Department of State in view of the responsibility placed by law upon its consular officers abroad for the issuance or refusal of immigration visas. In connection with my reference of this important matter to the competent officers of the Department of State, I am informed that the situation as regards the points you have raised is briefly as follows.

x20 mixed
x76-6

With regard to your request that the quota for German Jews be increased from 2,500 to 5,000 per annum, there is no immigration quota fixed for persons in the class described, nor has there been any arbitrary limitation set upon the number of visas to be issued to natives of Germany other than the maximum quota fixed by law, which is 25,957. Consular

officers

The Honorable
The Governor of New York,
Albany.

x91
x1993

officers must issue immigration visas, within quota limitations, to all quota applicants who qualify under the law to receive such visas. They cannot of course issue visas to applicants who are found to be inadmissible under the public charge clause or any other restrictive limitation set by existing law.

I am informed that nearly all immigration quotas have been considerably under-issued during the past four years. Although the German quota comprises only 16.9 per cent of the total of all quotas, immigration visas issued under it now represent 26.9 of the visas issued under all quotas. While estimates on this point vary somewhat, it is understood that a very large majority of immigration visas under the German quota are issued to Jewish applicants. Since there is also a considerable number of aliens chargeable, because of their birthplace, to the Polish and other quotas who have lived in Germany and who immigrate into the United States, it is reasonable to take the number of immigration visas issued to natives of Germany as approximating numerically the total of the classes to which your letter refers.

The following figures, showing the issuance of immigration visas to natives of Germany are therefore of particular interest in relation to your inquiry.

<u>Fiscal year</u> <u>(ending June 30)</u>	<u>Immigration visas issued</u> <u>(exclusive of students</u> <u>and returning residents</u> <u>of the United States)</u>
1932	2,571
1933	1,798
1934	4,715
1935	5,117

As

As regards your wish that it be made certain that our consular representatives show sympathetic interest in permitting immigration of German Jews into this country, the Department of State has issued instructions to its consular officers, which are now in effect, that persons who are obliged to leave the country of their regular residence, and who seek to escape from the conditions in that country by coming to the United States, should receive, on the part of American consular officers, the most considerate attention and the most generous and favorable treatment possible under the laws of this country.

In addition to the above, consular officers have been instructed that in cases where it is found that an immigration visa applicant cannot obtain a supporting document normally required by the Immigration Act of 1924 without the peculiar delay and embarrassment that might attend a request of a political or religious refugee, the requirement of such document may be waived on the basis of its being not "available".

Furthermore, the principal consular officers stationed at Berlin, Hamburg and Stuttgart, which are the only three consular offices in Germany which now issue immigration visas, have all visited the Department of State during recent months and the problems in which you are interested have been discussed verbally and sympathetically with them at the time of their visits. The recently appointed Consul General at Berlin, Mr. Douglas Jenkins, who is the supervising consular officer for Germany, spent a number of days at the Department before

proceeding

proceeding to his new post, and these matters were discussed particularly with him.

I note that you have made the request to which I have referred above on the condition that these prospective immigrants "fulfill the immigration requirements in every particular". I believe that the Department of State and its consular officers abroad have had no other desire than to carry out the immigration duties placed upon them by the Immigration Act of 1924 in a considerate and humane manner, consistent with a faithful discharge of their responsibilities under the law. I understand that the percentage of immigration visa refusals in Germany has recently been considerably below the average for all countries.

I appreciate your action in bringing these matters to my attention and I can assure you that it is my earnest desire that all consideration and justice shall continue to be shown to the type of immigrants in whom you are interested.

Very sincerely yours,

VD:JFS:es

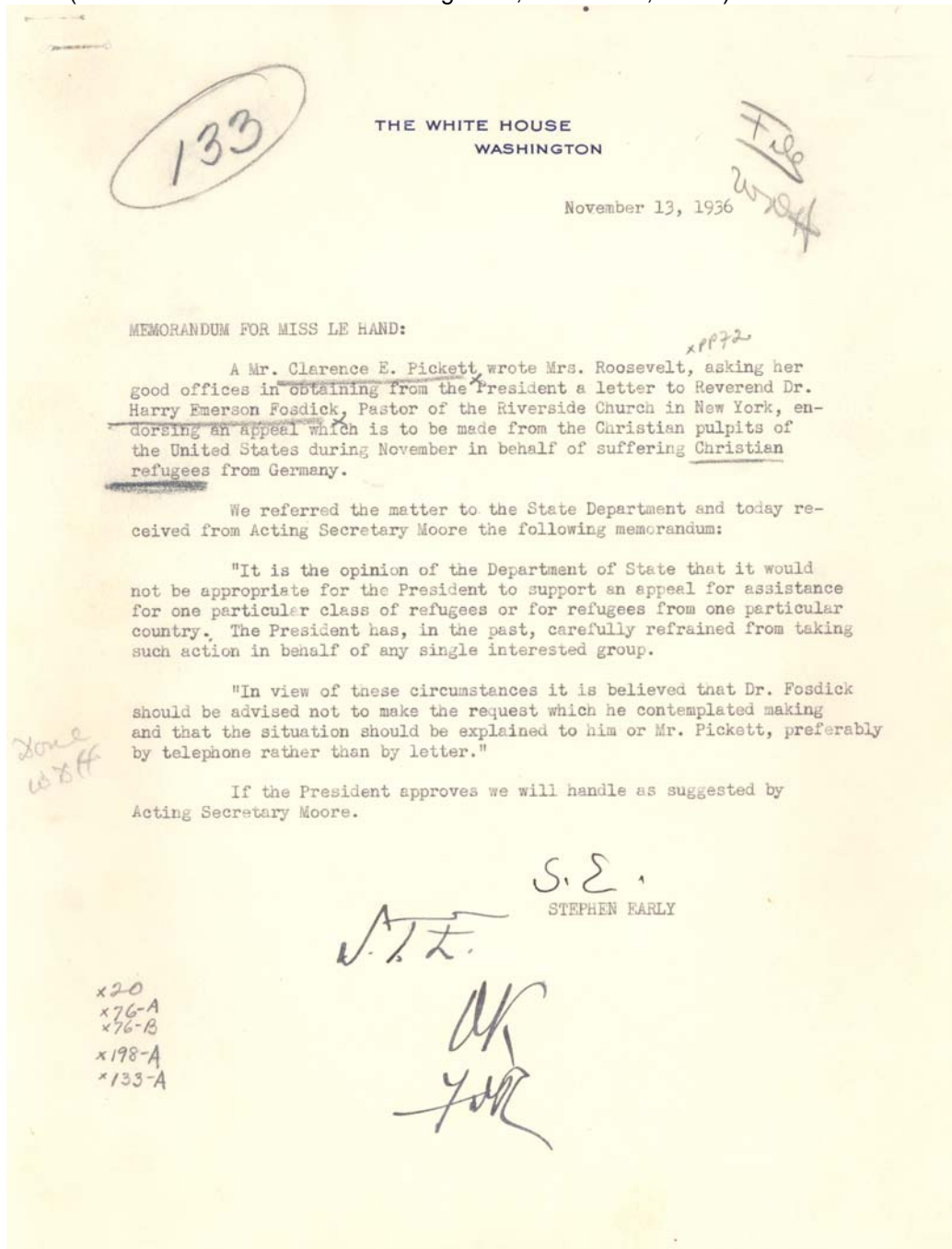
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Document #2:

Memorandum for Miss LeHand from Stephen Early, November 13, 1936:

Because of the country's isolationism and the immigration laws in place in the mid-1930s, President Roosevelt often felt constrained in taking a more proactive stance with regard to European refugees. In this November 13, 1936 memorandum for the President's private secretary Missy LeHand, Press Secretary Stephen Early recommends that the President resist the temptation to issue a requested appeal on behalf of persecuted Christians in Germany. Such an appeal, in the opinion of Early and the State Department, would be an inappropriate expression of the President's preference for one group of refugees over others. The President indicates his acceptance of Early's recommendation at the bottom of the memo. (President's Official File 133: Immigration, 1936-1941, Box 1).



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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

November 13, 1936

File
WJH

MEMORANDUM FOR MISS LE HAND:

A Mr. Clarence E. Pickett, wrote Mrs. Roosevelt, asking her good offices in obtaining from the President a letter to Reverend Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, Pastor of the Riverside Church in New York, endorsing an appeal which is to be made from the Christian pulpits of the United States during November in behalf of suffering Christian refugees from Germany.

We referred the matter to the State Department and today received from Acting Secretary Moore the following memorandum:

"It is the opinion of the Department of State that it would not be appropriate for the President to support an appeal for assistance for one particular class of refugees or for refugees from one particular country. The President has, in the past, carefully refrained from taking such action in behalf of any single interested group.

"In view of these circumstances it is believed that Dr. Fosdick should be advised not to make the request which he contemplated making and that the situation should be explained to him or Mr. Pickett, preferably by telephone rather than by letter."

Done
WJH

If the President approves we will handle as suggested by Acting Secretary Moore.

S. E.
STEPHEN EARLY

M.F.

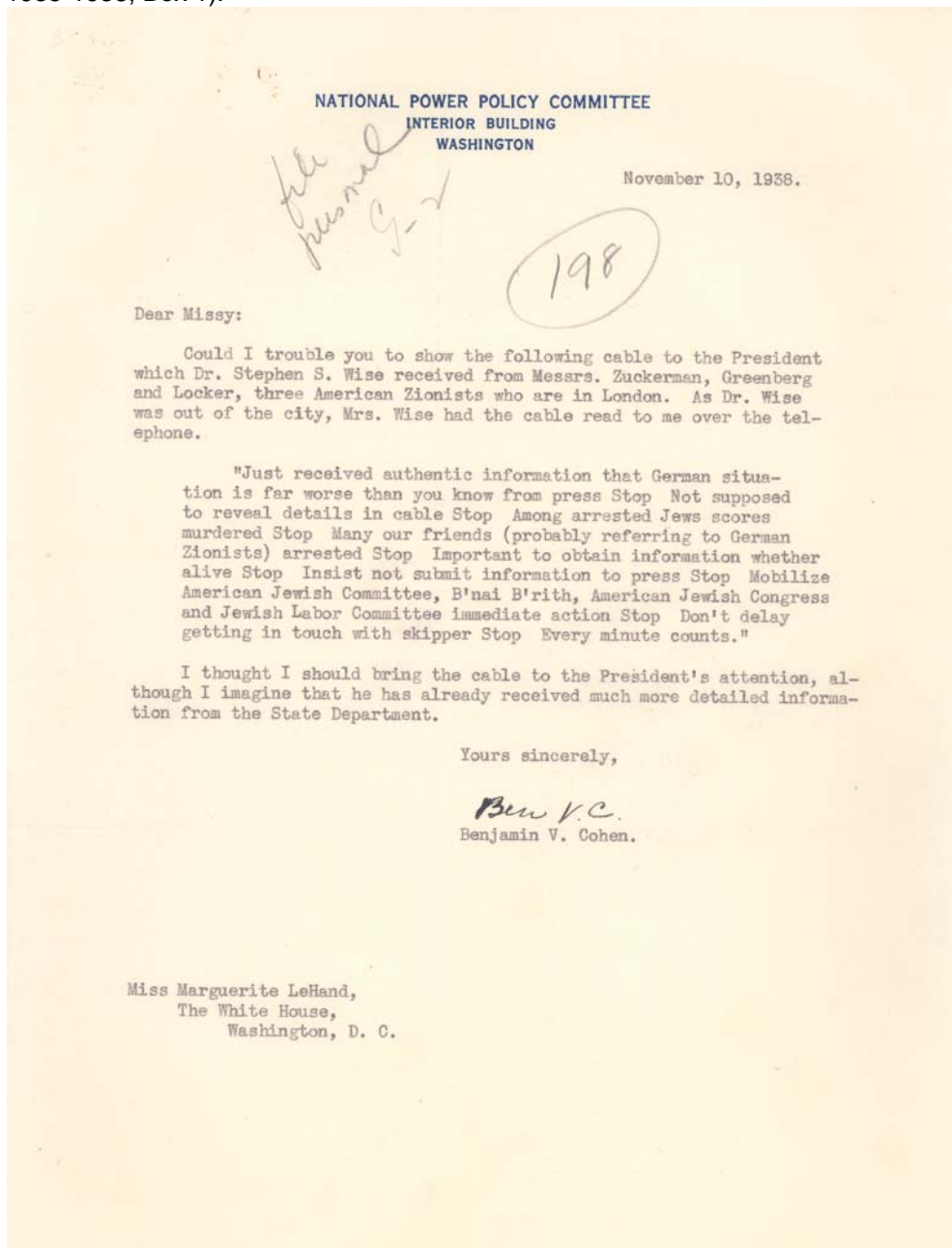
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J.M.

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- x76-A
- x76-B
- x198-A
- x133-A

**Documents #3 and #4:
KRISTALLNACHT:**

On the night of November 9-10, 1938, the Nazi Party escalated its organized persecution of German and Austrian Jews in what has become known as *Kristallnacht*, or the Night of the Broken Glass. In the course of just a few hours, 815 shops, 171 homes, and 76 synagogues were destroyed; an additional 191 synagogues were set on fire; 36 Jews were murdered, another 36 seriously injured, and some 20,000 were arrested and sent to concentration camps.

Document #3: Letter, Benjamin V. Cohen to Missy LeHand, November 10, 1938: In this letter to the President's private secretary Missy LeHand, longtime FDR adviser Benjamin V. Cohen relays an urgent message from Rabbi Stephen Wise, a prominent leader of the American Jewish community, about the first hand reports he is receiving about the events of *Kristallnacht*. (President's Official File 198: Germany, 1935-1938, Box 1).



Document #4: Draft Statement by the President, November 15, 1938: When the reports of the Nazi violence were confirmed, the President drafted this statement expressing his outrage at *Kristallnacht* and recalling the American ambassador to Germany. The changes and additions are in the President's own hand, and the final message was approved by Secretary of State Cordell Hull who placed his initials in the lower right hand corner. The President read the statement at his press conference held on November 15, 1938. (President's Secretary's Files; Diplomatic Correspondence; Germany, 1933-1938, Box 31).

Suggested statement for the President to make
at press conference November 15,
1938

The news of the past few days from Germany
has ^{shockingly} shocked public opinion in the United States.
Such news from any part of the world would in-
evitably produce a similar ^{profound} reaction among ~~the~~
American people. ^{surely part of the nation.} With a view to gaining a first-
hand picture of the situation in Germany I asked
the Secretary of State to ~~order~~ our Ambassador
in Berlin ^{to return at once} ~~to come home~~ for report and consultation.

I myself could scarcely believe
that such things could occur in
a twentieth century civilization.

C.H.

Document #5:

State Department Memorandum of Conversation written by the United States Ambassador to Cuba J. Butler Wright concerning his meetings in Havana with the Cuban president and secretary of state about the SS *St. Louis*, June 8, 1939:

Prior to the outbreak of World War II, many Jews fled to Cuba. On May 13, 1939—three months before the start of World War II—the SS *St. Louis*, a ship carrying 937 German Jews attempting to flee Nazi persecution, sailed from Hamburg en route to Cuba. Other ships had made the same journey and their refugee passengers had disembarked in Havana successfully. But on May 5, the Cuban government, responding to corruption and anti-Semitic pressures, curtailed the power of its immigration officials to issue landing certificates and ordered new visa procedures. The regulations had been transmitted to the Hamburg-Amerika Line, which owned the *St. Louis*, but only 22 of its passengers had fulfilled the new requirements before the ship left Hamburg. These 22 were allowed to land in Cuba. Negotiations with the Cuban government led by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee regarding the remaining passengers broke down, despite pressure from the U.S. government. Tremendous public attention focused on the *St. Louis*. The ship's passengers even cabled the White House for assistance, but the matter was referred to the State Department. America's harsh immigration laws did not permit the entry of the refugees into the United States, but American diplomats were able to help resettle the refugees in the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Denmark. Many later fell victim to Hitler's Final Solution. Contrary to popular belief, there was no specific or official order by President Roosevelt refusing entry of the *St. Louis* refugees. (Sumner Welles Papers; Office Correspondence; File: Wright, J. Butler, April-June 1939; Box 57).

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: June 8, 1939.

SUBJECT: Refugees. Cuban attitude toward Refugee ships and

PARTICIPANTS: Ambassador Wright
Miss Clarkson

COPIES TO:

o p o 1-1403

MR. WRIGHT: Anticipating that Mr. Welles will be very much occupied today, I am going to give you a message to give to him:

I had previously impressed upon the Cuban Secretary of State that I had specific instructions not to intervene in this matter, therefore all of my observations were informal and based upon humanitarian considerations alone.

Yesterday at 7:30 P.M. I saw both the President and the Secretary of State. I broached the subject first to the latter and recalled to his attention the attitude which I had assumed, which he said he recollected perfectly and appreciated. I then explained my present request that he might receive the representative of the Chase Bank. He said he would; and that he would communicate with the President.

At eight o'clock in the same gathering, the President sent for me and I represented to him what I had been instructed to say. I repeated to him the reference to the position which I had assumed, which I made it clear I understood the President understood and appreciated the position taken by the Government of the United States in this matter. I then told him what the Chase Bank wanted to communicate to him. He said specifically: "Does this refer to the SS ST. LOUIS?" I said: "I understand that it does." He then said: "The ST. LOUIS matter is to be considered a closed incident in view of the fact that the provisions of the law that \$500 per person be deposited was not met. I gave notice through the press and the Secretary of the Treasury that the time limit expired on the 6th." He said: "Does the Chase Bank wish to confer on the matter of other ships." If so, I shall be very glad to discuss the matter with Mr. Finley." I then again called to mind the fact that I was speaking purely through our humanitarian interest. and he responded by saying that he had always been mindful of the situation from the humanitarian angle and that if the records were examined, it would be found that Cuba had been more generous than any other country in the matter of accepting refugees. He will see the representative of the Chase Bank as much before twelve as possible.

The FLANDERS is back in the harbor from Vera Cruz and has 100 refugees on board. The Bank did not have instructions last night, but have received instructions this morning, that the money set up is applicable to the FLANDERS. They now have some one at

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the Immigration office and on the ship.

Document #6:

Report by the Office of Strategic Services on Germany's Extermination of the Jews, March 17, 1943:

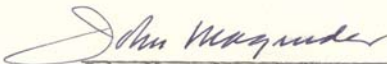
Throughout the war, President Roosevelt received information about the Nazi death machine from a variety of sources, including the State Department, Treasury Department, his own personal network of informants led by John Franklin Carter, private relief and Jewish organizations, and the Office of Strategic Services (the predecessor of the CIA). This report by the OSS regarding a further escalation of Nazi violence against Jews was received in the White House Map Room on March 17, 1943. (Map Room Papers; MR 203(12); Sec. 1; OSS Numbered Bulletins, March-May 1943, Box 72).

~~SECRET~~
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES
WASHINGTON, D. C.

March 17, 1943

TO: Chester Hammond, White House Map Room
FROM: John Magruder, Brig. Gen.
SUBJECT: Reports received in Office of Strategic Services, No. 3.

Submitted herewith are some additional items received from our secret sources abroad.


John Magruder, Brig. Gen.
Deputy Director, OSS.,
Intelligence Service

DECLASSIFIED

By Authority of _____

CIA 006687

By SR Date MAR 3 1975

Germany: Extermination of Jews

From a Berlin source which our agent considers reliable, we have the following report on changes in the Nazi Jewish policy:

The new Nazi policy is to kill Jews on the spot rather than to deport them to Poland for extermination there. High officers of the SS reportedly have decided that Berlin shall be liberated of all Jews by mid-March. Accordingly, 15,000 Berlin Jews were arrested between January 26 and March 2. All closed trucks were requisitioned; several hundred children died; several hundred adults were shot. Extension of these methods to other parts of Germany in the near future is expected.

(OSS Official Dispatch, #1597, Bern, March 10, 1943)

SECRET

DECLASSIFIED

By Authority of _____

CIA 006687

By SR Date MAR 3 1975

Document #7:
Memorandum for the Secretary's Files, January 16, 1944:

A seminal moment in the Roosevelt Administration's response to the Holocaust was a January 16, 1944 meeting at the White House involving the President, Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Treasury's general counsel Randolph Paul, and Morgenthau's assistant John W. Pehle. At this meeting, Secretary Morgenthau presented to the President a lengthy and blunt "Personal Report" on what Morgenthau and other Treasury officials believed to be the State Department's acquiescence in Germany's mass murder of Jews. The startling evidence presented to the President of the State Department's incompetence, delay, and even obstruction of a variety of rescue efforts convinced him of the need to establish an independent commission to coordinate rescue and relief efforts. This contemporaneous memorandum was written by John Pehle, who attended the meeting and who would become the first Director of the War Refugee Board, which FDR established by executive order several days later. (Diaries of Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Book 694, Pages 190-192).

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January 16, 1944

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY'S FILES:

There was a meeting at the White House today at 12:45 attended by the President, Secretary Morgenthau, Mr. Paul, and Mr. Pehle. Secretary Morgenthau had requested the appointment to discuss the problem of saving the remaining Jews in Europe.

The conference lasted about twenty minutes. Secretary Morgenthau advised the President that he was deeply disturbed about the failure of the State Department to take any effective action to save the remaining Jews in Europe. He explained that the Treasury Department, in connection with the operation of the Foreign Funds Control, had uncovered evidence indicating that not only were the people in the State Department inefficient in dealing with this problem, but that they were actually taking action to prevent the rescue of the Jews. The Secretary then asked John Pehle to explain to the President the facts which the Treasury had uncovered. The President listened attentively and seemed to grasp the significance of the various points. He also glanced at the proposed Executive Order and suggested that perhaps the Secretary of War should be on the Board. The President inquired as to why Mr. Crowley was put on the Board and did not seem satisfied that there was any reason to put Mr. Crowley on the Board. The President asked whether Mr. Stettinius had been consulted and referred to the fact that Stettinius had recently reorganized the State Department and that nowhere in the organization chart was there any indication that any particular division was charged with this problem. The Secretary indicated that we had been dealing with Mr. Hull on the general matter and had hesitated to put Stettinius instead of Hull on the Board. Nevertheless, the President indicated that he would like to have the matter taken up with Mr. Stettinius and indicated that he thought Stettinius would be sympathetic. He said he would also like to have Judge Rosenman brought into the picture. The Secretary said he had already talked to Judge Rosenman about the matter.

During the conference the following points were brought out:

- (1) The Secretary said he was convinced that effective action could be taken and referred to the results that his father, Henry Morgenthau, Sr., had obtained when he was Ambassador to Turkey in getting the Armenians out of Turkey and saving their lives. The President said he agreed that some effective action could be taken and referred particularly to the movement of Jews through Rumania into Bulgaria

- 2 -

and out through Turkey. He said he thought such channels were wide open at the present time, but that they would not be open if Turkey entered the war.

- (2) The President referred to the possibility of getting people over the Spanish and Swiss borders.
- (3) The President seemed disinclined to believe that Long wanted to stop effective action from being taken, but said that Long had been somewhat soured on the problem when Rabbi Wise got Long to approve a long list of people being brought into this country many of whom turned out to be bad people. Secretary Morgenthau reminded the President that at a Cabinet meeting Biddle had indicated that only three Jews of those entering the United States during the war had turned out to be undesirable. The President said that he had been advised that the figure was considerably larger. In any event he felt that Long was inclined to be soured on the situation.

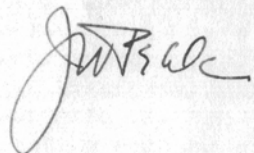
Following the meeting with the President and while still at the White House, Secretary Morgenthau called Mr. Stettinius and Judge Rosenman and arranged a meeting at the Secretary's home at 5:30.

The 5:30 meeting was attended by the Secretary, Mr. Stettinius, Judge Rosenman, Mr. Paul, and Mr. Pehle. The Secretary told Mr. Stettinius in plain words that he was convinced that people in the State Department, particularly Breckinridge Long, were deliberately obstructing the execution of any plan to save the Jews and that forthright immediate action was necessary if this Government was not going to be placed in the same position as Hitler and share the responsibility for exterminating all the Jews of Europe. At the Secretary's request Pehle then explained in detail the facts that had been uncovered by the Treasury. Stettinius seemed shocked by these facts although he said he was not surprised about Breckinridge Long since Long had fallen down just as badly and in an equally shocking way in the handling of the exchange of prisoners. Stettinius was very frank in his views on Long's failures and pointed out that in the reorganization of the State Department

January 22, 1941

which he had worked out the only remaining function assigned to Breckinridge Long is "Congressional relations". Stettinius said that in the new reorganization Berle's responsibilities had been very much limited, but included in the area of operations under Berle's control was the Special War Problems Division, which handles the problem of the rescue of the Jews, and the Visa Division. Stettinius said he recognized that this problem could not be handled effectively by Berle and that there were grounds for believing that Berle might be even worse than Long. At this point the proposed Executive Order was discussed. Stettinius read it over and when asked for his views said: "I think it's wonderful." He then said that the Secretary of War should be on the Committee instead of Mr. Crowley who was already having considerable difficulty running FEA. This was agreed to particularly in light of the President's similar reaction. It was decided that the Executive Order should be amended accordingly, as should the memorandum to Harold Smith and the memorandum to Cordell Hull and the amended documents delivered to Judge Rosenman by 9:15 the following morning.

The Secretary suggested that the Executive Director of the Board should be John Pehle and Judge Rosenman and Mr. Stettinius indicated agreement.



recommending the passage of a Resolution (S.R. 208) favoring the appointment of a commission to formulate plans to save the Jews of Europe from extinction by Nazi Germany. The Resolution had been introduced by Senator Guy B. Gallardo in behalf of himself and eleven colleagues, Senators Taft, Thomas, Macauliffe, Murray, Johnson, Guffey, Ferguson, Clark, Van Nuys, Horney and Alexander. The Committee stated:

Document #8:

Statement by the President Regarding Atrocities of War, March 24, 1944:

As the number and ferocity of wartime atrocities increased, President Roosevelt believed it necessary to issue another, more forceful statement condemning Nazi and Japanese brutalities, and specifically mentioning the mass murder of European Jews. In the statement, Roosevelt made it clear that Allied victory was inevitable and that all those responsible for these horrific crimes against humanity would be brought to justice. The statement was issued on March 24, 1944. In order to insure its penetration into German-controlled territories, it was printed in many languages and dropped as leaflets, and the British Broadcasting Company relayed the statement in many languages to enemy and occupied countries. This particular draft of the statement was filed in the White House files on April 3, 1944. (President's Personal File 1-F: Press Releases-Drafts, 1944, Box 18).

P.P.F. 1-F

file 4-3-44

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

The United Nations are fighting to make a world in which international tyranny and aggression can not exist; a world based upon freedom, equality, and justice; a world in which all persons regardless of race, color or creed may live in peace, honor and dignity.

In the meantime, in most of Europe and in parts of Asia the systematic torture and murder of innocent civilians -- men, women and children -- by the Nazis and the Japanese continue unabated. In areas subjugated by the aggressors, innocent Poles, Czechs, Norwegians, Dutch, Danes, French, Greeks, Russians, Chinese, Filipinos -- and many others -- are being starved or frozen to death, or murdered in cold blood in a campaign of savagery.

The slaughters of Warsaw, Lidice, Kharkov and Nanking -- the brutal torture and murder by the Japanese, not only of civilians but of our own gallant American soldiers and fliers -- these are startling examples of what goes on day by day, year in and year out, wherever the Nazis and the Japs are in military control -- free to follow their barbaric purpose.

And one of the blackest crimes in all history -- begun by the Nazis in the days of peace, and multiplied by them a hundred fold in time of war -- the wholesale systematic murder of the Jews of Europe -- goes on unabated every hour.

It is, therefore, fitting that we should again proclaim our determination that none who participate in any of these acts of savagery shall go unpunished. The United Nations have made it clear that they will pursue the guilty and deliver them up in order that justice be done.

That warning applies not only to the leaders but also to their functionaries and subordinates in Germany and in the satellite countries. All who knowingly take part in the deportation of Jews to their death in Poland, or Norwegians and French to their death in Germany, are equally guilty with the executioner. All who share the guilt shall share the punishment.

Hitler is committing these crimes against humanity in the name of the German people. I ask every German and every man everywhere under Nazi domination to show the world by his actions that in his heart he does not share these insane criminal designs. Let him hide these pursued victims, help them to

get over the borders, and do what he can to save them from the Nazi hangman. I ask him also to keep watch, and to record the evidence that will one day be used to convict the guilty.

In the meantime, and until the victory that is now assured is won, the United States will persevere in its efforts to rescue the victims of brutality of the Nazis and the Japs. In so far as the necessities of military operations permit, this Government will use all means at its command to aid the escape of all intended victims of the Nazi and Japanese executioner -- regardless of race or religion or color. We call upon the free peoples of Europe and Asia temporarily to open their frontiers to all victims of oppression. We shall find havens of refuge for them, and we shall find the means for their maintenance and support until the tyrant is driven from their homelands and they may return. *Insert A*

In the name of justice and humanity let all freedom loving people rally to this righteous undertaking.

INSERT A

The War Refugee Board recently established by me will implement this policy with every possible resource.

Document #9:

Letter, Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy to John W. Pehle, July 4, 1944:

One of the most controversial aspects of the Roosevelt Administration's reaction to the Holocaust is the decision not to bomb rail lines used to transport prisoners to Auschwitz. As early as March 1943, requests for bombing of Hitler's instruments of death had reached various government officials from Jewish sources both at home and abroad. The Administration was reluctant to take such action, though, because of the danger of the raids also killing the prisoners they were meant to save as well as of the practicality of diverting military resources that were needed elsewhere to defeat Germany. In 1944, War Refugee Board Director John W. Pehle made several direct appeals to the War Department for the bombing of various camps and rail lines. This July 4, 1944 letter from Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy to Pehle—written one month after the D-Day invasion of Northwest Europe—states the military's position with regard to such suggestions, and reflects Roosevelt's belief that the surest way to end the killing was to defeat Nazi Germany as quickly as possible. (War Refugee Board Records; Projects and Documents File; Measures Directed Toward Halting Persecutions; Hungary No. 5, Box 42).

WAR DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D. C.

4 July 1944

*Noted
JW*

Mr. John W. Pehle
Executive Director
War Refugee Board
Treasury Department
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. Pehle:

I refer to your letter of June 29, inclosing a cable from your representative in Bern, Switzerland, proposing that certain sections of railway lines between Hungary and Poland be bombed to interrupt the transportation of Jews from Hungary.

The War Department is of the opinion that the suggested air operation is impracticable. It could be executed only by the diversion of considerable air support essential to the success of our forces now engaged in decisive operations and would in any case be of such very doubtful efficacy that it would not amount to a practical project.

The War Department fully appreciates the humanitarian motives which prompted the suggested operation but for the reasons stated above the operation suggested does not appear justified.

Sincerely,

J. McCloy

John J. McCloy



Document #10:

Letter, Herbert Luft to John W. Pehle, Executive Director of the War Refugee Board, August 19, 1944; Letter, John W. Pehle to Herbert Luft, September 29, 1944.

When Roosevelt created the War Refugee Board by Executive Order 9417 on January 22, 1944, the President declared it to be the policy of the United States Government "to take all measures within its power to rescue the victims of enemy oppression who are in imminent danger and otherwise to afford such victims all possible relief and assistance consistent with the successful prosecution of the war." The Order further instructed the Departments of State, War, and Treasury to execute all requests and facilitate all measures the Board might take in furtherance of its mission. This exchange of letters between Mr. Herbert Luft of Los Angeles and War Refugee Board Executive Director John W. Pehle reflects the type of personal appeals that were made to the Board as well as the Board's massive efforts to help Jews suffering in enemy territory. (War Refugee Board Records; Requests for Specific Aid; File: Luft, Herbert; Box 28).

111 South Manhattan Place
Apartment 105
Los Angeles 4, Calif.

August 19, 1944

Executive Office of the President
War Refugee Board
Washington 25, D. C.

Attention: Mr. J. W. Pehle,
Executive Director

Dear Mr. Pehle:-

Re: 486 - 4-22-1944

I just read in a newspaper an announcement of the State Department in regard to the Hungarian Jews and I am happy to learn that the Governments of this country and Great Britain will take care of the Hungarian Jewry as far as they can be transported to Neutral- or United Nations territory. It is my desire to contribute to this aim and wish you would inform me if individuals can give Affidavits of Support for those Refugees to ease their situation or to help them in any other way possible.

At this occasion, I wish to bring to your attention that during recent years thousands of older Jewish men and women (most of them over 70 years of age), from Germany, Austria and Poland, were deported to the town of Theresienstadt-Czechoslovakia (Bohemia), among them my own parents. I would like to know if there is a way to send the few who are still alive (most of them already have died in Theresienstadt) through the facilities of the Red Cross to neutral territory, and if it is possible to contribute food, clothes or money to those who are without these necessities.

Thanking you again for the fine work of the War Refugee Board and trusting to hear from you soon, I remain,

Respectfully yours,
Herbert Luft
HERBERT LUFT

VIA AIR MAIL

SEP 29 1944

Dear Mr. Luft:

Since my recent letter to you, the War Refugee Board, in collaboration with the Department of State, has developed a special program calculated to benefit certain categories of persons in enemy territory. These include, among others, the parents of United States citizens.

While no assurances can be given as to the success of the plan, I suggest that, if you are an American citizen you promptly file with the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Department of Justice, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, a petition to establish your parents as persons entitled to preference quota immigration visas as the parents of a United States citizen. Your petition should be accompanied by a letter stating that it is being filed at the suggestion of the War Refugee Board. The necessary form is enclosed for your convenience.

If you are not an American citizen, it is regretted that there is no specific action the Board can take with regard to your parents beyond its general efforts in behalf of victims of Nazi persecution. Please be assured, however, that the Board is doing and will continue to do everything in its power to rescue and protect these people.

Very truly yours,

(Signed) J. W. Pehle

J. W. Pehle
Executive Director

Mr. Herbert Luft
111 South Manhattan Place
Apartment 105
Los Angeles 4, California

Enclosure

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L.S.K.
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