A VENTURE INTO INTERNATIONALISM: ROOSEVELT AND THE REFUGEE CRISIS OF 1938

THESIS

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Prompted by international ramifications of Jewish migration from Nazi Germany, President Franklin D. Roosevelt called a world conference on refugees in March 1938. The conference, held at Evian, France, in July, established the Intergovernmental Committee on Political Refugees. The committee, led by American diplomats, sought relaxation of Germany's discriminatory practices against Jews and tried, without success, to resettle German Jews abroad. World War II ended the committee's efforts to achieve systematic immigration from Germany.

The American, British, and German diplomatic papers contain the most thorough chronicle of American involvement in the refugee crisis. Memoirs and presidential public papers provide insight into Roosevelt's motivations for calling the conference. Although efforts to rescue German Jews failed, the refugee crisis introduced Americans to intervention in Europe.

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CHAPTER I

THE REFUGEE CRISIS, 1933-1938

In 1938, Germany's anti-Semitic policies produced a refugee crisis of worldwide proportions and caused President Franklin Roosevelt to commit the United States to international cooperation for a solution. Between 1933 and 1938, geographic distance and restrictive immigration laws protected America from the German Jewish exodus, and European nations bore most of the economic burden of increased refugee populations. Jewish organizations in the United States and abroad provided funds for relief and relocation, while the League of Nations assisted on legal and political ramifications of refugee migration. Until 1938, the refugee flood remained under control, and most German Jews were absorbed into new countries. The annexation of Austria changed the scope of the problem beyond the ability of the League, private groups, or individual governments to contain it. Extension of discriminatory legislation to Austria produced greater numbers of refugees and indicated that the refugee problem could become permanent. The reaction of the nations of refuge was immediate. In 1938, the border nations, Latin America, and Palestine refused to accept more German Jewish immigrants. In addition to severe

restrictionism, the Jewish emigrants in 1938 were harder to resettle. After years of economic discrimination, Jews remaining in Germany were destitute or too old to be good candidates for resettlement; yet thousands were forced out of Germany with no place to go. The new crisis necessitated international cooperation, and Roosevelt, hoping to achieve systematic immigration, called for an intergovernmental conference on refugees.

The destruction of German Jewry began in 1933 when Adolf Hitler assumed absolute power. Hitler became chancellor on 30 January 1933 in a coalition government of Germany's right-wing political parties. He scheduled new elections on 5 March, hoping that a majority vote for the Nazi party would free him from the coalition. The Reichstag fire on 27 February enabled Hitler to demand emergency power. He ended civil liberties of speech and press but failed to silence his opponents. When the next election gave the Nazis only 44 per cent of the vote, Hitler continued the coalition government. With the Reichstag scheduled to reopen in March, Hitler proposed an Enabling Act giving him the right to enforce emergency measures without the consent of the legislature. To ensure success he waged a campaign of terror against the left and conciliation with the right. Socialists and communists suffered arson, mass arests, and physical violence from Hitler's storm troopers. When the Reichstag began work on 23 March, all communist members and

twenty-six socialists were absent, and the Enabling Act passed. On 14 July 1933, Hitler proclaimed that the Nazis were the only legal political organization in Germany.[1] Elimination of Jews from German society began immediately.

Three days after his assumption of power, Hitler assaulted Jewish businesses. In collaboration with his propaganda minister, Josef Goebbels, Hitler arranged a boycott of Jewish stores beginning 1 April. He used the boycott to protest anti-German news stories in the foreign press. German Jewish groups were told to warn their coreligionists abroad to stop anti-German propaganda or suffer more violence. On 1 April, storm troopers stood guard outside Jewish stores to warn customers away. The boycott lasted three days, and Goebbels pronounced it effective in halting anti-German coverage abroad. Actually the disruption hurt Germany's economy, and further action against Jewish businesses had to be postponed.[2] Although the economic boycott proved premature, elimination of Jews from German professions was successfully completed in less than a year.

Between April and October 1933, German Jews lost their positions in the press, arts, professions, educational

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[1]Lucy S. Dawidowicz, The War Against the Jews, 1933-1945 (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1975), pp. 48-52.

[2]Ibid., pp. 52-54.

institutions, and government service. Hitler began legal discrimination on 7 April with passage of the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service under which Jews and other Nazi enemies lost their government jobs. Then Jews were forbidden to become lawyers, and those already in practice were forced to stop. Civil justices lost their appointments, and laws barred Jews from jury duty. In addition, Hitler removed Jewish doctors from insurance boards and extended the restriction to dentists in June. On 25 April, new legislation restricted Jewish school attendance. The law established a quota system to reduce the Jewish student population to 5 per cent of the total, and professors and notaries lost their jobs in May. Besides erosion of their economic livelihood, Jews in this period witnessed the potential threat of deportation. Immigrants who had earned citizenship under the Weimar Republic, mostly Eastern European Jews, had their citizenship revoked on 14 July. They became an alien population without the protection of German nationality. In September, the Nazi party formed the Reich Chamber of Culture which barred Jews from the performing arts and the fine arts. On October 1933, newspapers fell under party scrutiny and banned Jewish journalists.[3] Before the onslaught of the discriminatory legislation, approximately 70 per cent of German

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[3] Ibid., pp. 58-60.

Jews earned their living in business or the professions, while only 8.8 per cent performed manual labor.[4] Consequently, the laws passed in 1933 meant economic doom for many Jews and sparked the first refugee exodus.

Despite German persecution, Jewish migration after 1933 remained relatively small until the passage of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935. Between 1933 and 1936, only eighty thousand Jews chose to leave Germany, and few tried to settle outside of Europe. Many believed that the severe measures would be replaced by limited discrimination, but the Nuremberg Laws ushered in a new phase of refugee flight. Under these laws, German Jews lost their citizenship, and intermarriage between Jews and Aryans was forbidden. Now no Jew in Germany was legally entitled to any protection from the state. After 1935, those who had already left Germany tried to establish permanent residence in Europe, and the new laws caused Jews from Great Britain, America, and Palestine to begin efforts to get more Jews out of Germany. The refugee flood became constant, and Jewish immigration from Germany rose to 140,000 by the beginning of 1938.[5]

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[4]Bruno Blau, "The Jewish Population of Germany, 1939-1945," Jewish Social Studies 12(1950):168-169.

[5]Kurt R. Grossman and Arieh Tartakower, The Jewish Refugee(New York: Institute of Jewish Affairs of the American Jewish Congress and World Jewish Congress, 1944), pp. 28-30.

Nations bordering Germany bore the brunt of Germany's anti-Semitic policies and suffered economically from the refugee burden. After May 1934, German immigration laws forced Jews with assets of 50,000 reichsmarks or an annual income of 20,000 reichsmarks to pay a "flight tax" equalling 25 per cent of their assets.[6] Arriving with depleted resources and facing severe unemployment and economic hardship from the depression, refugees crowded into neighboring European nations. As early as June 1933, Dutch, French, and Belgian delegates petitioned the International Labour Office and the League of Nations to help resettle German immigrants. The delegates feared that refugees would compete with their countries' own citizens for jobs.[7] Coupled with the economic burden of large refugee populations, border countries endured blatant violations of their immigration laws. The Germans encouraged refugees to enter border territories illegally, and Gestapo agents rounded up Jews and herded them across the borders.[8]

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[6] Ibid., p. 34.

[7] John Hope Simpson, The Refugee Problem: Report of a Survey (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), pp. 86-87. This volume is an expanded edition of a survey conducted in conjunction with the Royal Institute for International Affairs and prepared for use by members of the League of Nations and delegates to the Evian conference. Simpson, The Refugee Problem, p. v.

[8] Henry L. Feingold, The Politics of Rescue: The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust, 1938-1945 (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1970), p. 5; Grossman and Tartakower, The Jewish Refugee, p. 289.

French proximity to Germany prevented effective regulation of refugees, and France became the largest receiving nation in Europe. Following the First World War, France suffered a shortage of laborers and therefore encouraged immigration initially. The French gave refuge to 54,000 German Jews, and by 1939, France registered an alien population of 3 million.[9] When the annexation of Austria threatened to produce greater numbers of refugees, France had exhausted its ability to assimilate them. Early in 1938, new restrictive measures prohibited refugee entry unless overseas resettlement was guaranteed.[10]

Great Britain escaped the refugee influx of other European nations. Because of its geographic isolation, Great Britain effectively regulated immigration and registered a refugee population of only 4500 in early 1938.[11] The British mandate, Palestine, was another matter. Approximately ninety thousand German refugees entered Palestine legally and illegally between 1933 and 1939. Whereas most of the world suffered depression during the decade, Palestine remained in a growth period providing refugees with good economic opportunities and assimilation without economic hardship for Palestinians. Nevertheless,

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[9]Grossman and Tartakower, The Jewish Refugee, pp. 132-133.

[10]Simpson, The Refugee Problem, pp. 321-322.

[11]Grossman and Tartakower, The Jewish Refugee, pp. 217-218.

the increased Jewish population provoked violent Arab protests, and Britain began a policy of restriction between 1936 and 1939. A new immigration policy, announced in May 1939, restricted Jewish immigration to a total of 25,000 over a five-year period. After that, further Jewish immigration depended upon Arab approval.[12] Consequently, when the refugee crisis reached a critical stage in 1938, large-scale resettlement of German Jews in Palestine was impossible.

Latin American nations received significant numbers of German refugees until restrictions went into effect there in 1937. Argentina and Brazil accepted most of the immigrants because both nations had some industrial development. The rest of Latin America, primarily agrarian, wanted only farmers and discouraged immigrants from professional or merchant classes, thereby excluding most German Jews. Brazil admitted about eight thousand German refugees by the end of 1937, and Argentina claimed to have received two-thirds of the number that entered the United States. In 1937, Brazilian policy changed to require each immigrant family to place $12,500 in a Brazilian bank before being admitted.[13] The remaining republics enacted similar restrictions, and, by 1938, immigration to Latin America virtually ended. With

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[12] Ibid., pp. 52-54, 59-62.

[13] Ibid., pp. 314-316.

the exception of Chile which admitted around two thousand Jews between 1933 and 1936, immigration to Colombia, Paraguay, Ecuador, Peru, and Uruguay numbered only a few hundred each.[14]

With the protection of strict laws and geographic isolation, the United States admitted few Jews in the 1930s. Immigration acts passed in 1924 and 1927 formed the cornerstone of American policy during the depression. These acts limited European immigration to around one hundred fifty thousand per year. The law allotted quotas to individual nations based on the total number of people originally from each nation living in the United States in 1920.[15]

In response to the depression, administrative procedures under Presidents Herbert Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt deliberately reduced immigration beyond the restriction provided by the quota system. Immigration law barred admission if an immigrant appeared unable to support himself. In practice, this category became known as "likely to become a public charge" or the "LPC" clause. In September 1930, the Department of State, under Hoover's instructions, told American consulates to use the "LPC" clause to restrict immigration. Before the depression, the clause was not invoked if an immigrant had enough money to get to the United

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[14]Simpson, The Refugee Problem, p. 484.

[15]Robert A. Divine, American Immigration Policy, 1924-1952 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), p. 17.

States and intended to get a job. This new and harsh interpretation of the law successfully halted European migration. In October, immigrants filled only 22 per cent of the quota and in November only 15 per cent. Roosevelt followed Hoover's policy until he ordered relaxation of the restriction in 1937 when 78 per cent more Germans came to the United States than had entered in 1936.[16] Between 1933 and June 1939, 73,322 Germans immigrated to the United States whereas the quota allowed admission of 183,112 Germans during those years. The German quota was not filled until 1938.[17]

There were several reasons for American restrictionism in the 1930s, despite liberal opposition to further reductions in immigration. Economic depression and severe unemployment sharpened nativist and isolationist attitudes which favored restriction. Although congressional restrictionists never became strong enough to enact further reductions in the quotas, they successfully defeated all attempts to increase immigration.[18] Martin Dies, representative from Texas, led the fight for reduction. Blaming immigrants for the depression, he tried to lower the quotas by 60 per cent in 1934 and 1935. The House never heard the Dies proposals because Roosevelt opposed reduction of the quotas

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[16]David S. Wyman, Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis, 1938-1941 (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1968), pp. 3-5.

[17]Grossman and Tartakower, The Jewish Refugee, pp. 87-88.

[18]Wyman, Paper Walls, pp. 3, 9.

and because a strong chairman, Samuel Dickstein, on the House Immigration Committee led the opposition to Dies. In 1936, Robert Reynolds, senator from North Carolina, took over leadership of the restrictionists and also tried unsuccessfully to halt immigration.[19] In a speech heard on the National Broadcasting Company two months before Austria's annexation, Reynolds argued that immigrants took jobs away from American citizens. He claimed that 4 million aliens had jobs at the height of the depression and sent income to relatives abroad when some 15 million Americans were out of work. He wanted stronger restriction to protect the economy and society from foreign, political corruption.[20]

The quota and the "LPC" clause remained formidable obstacles to refugee immigration. Although the German quota was second only to that allotted Great Britain, refugees in 1938 faced a wait of four to six years for admission. Since birthplace determined an immigrant's category, Jews originally from border nations who obtained and lost their German citizenship waited longer. Poland, Rumania, and Yugoslavia had longer lists than Germany, and the wait for admission from Hungary was twenty-five years.[21]

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[19]Divine, American Immigration Policy, p. 86.

[20]U.S., Congress, House, Congressional Record, 75th Cong., 3rd sess., 1938, Appendix, pp. 165-166.

[21]Read Lewis and Marian Schibsby, "Status of the Refugee under American Immigration Laws," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 203(1939):76.

Roosevelt and congressional liberals felt little pressure from American Jews to increase immigration. By 1932, most Jews were comfortable with restriction. Because of severe unemployment, American Jews supported use of the "LPC" clause as the major restrictive tool of the 1930s. Nevertheless, the physical and legal abuse of German Jews after 1933 convinced many American Jews that immigration offered the only salvation for their coreligionists. Jews in the United States advocated some relaxation of procedures to increase immigration, but they did not support changing the quota system. After 1933, German refugees received some consideration from American consulates, and admission rose from 2,372 in 1933 to 4,137 in 1934 and 4,837 in 1935. These results satisfied American Jews, and they remained content to have the existing quotas retained. Several factors caused American Jewish reticence on immigration. The depression decreased relief funds among Jewish organizations, and many groups believed that they could not handle more immigrants. Like other Americans, Jews faced unemployment and sometimes economic discrimination. Jewish refugees would have competed with American Jews for work, especially in large Jewish communities like New York where refugees tended to live. Since most Americans opposed increased immigration, American Jews feared to support it openly.

They believed that large numbers of refugees could produce increased anti-Semitism for which American Jews would suffer.[22]

Anti-Semitism exerted significant influence on American attitudes toward immigration. The popularity of Reverend Charles E. Coughlin indicated that large numbers of Americans absorbed some anti-Semitism. In 1938, forty-seven radio stations carried his talks and reached over 3 million Americans. His weekly paper had a circulation of 1 million. He remained the most influential anti-Semite in the United States and brought Catholics into a predominantly Protestant movement. His Protestant counterpart in the 1930s, Gerald B. Winrod, published a monthly periodical and, until 1937, a monthly newspaper. In 1935, the newspaper had a circulation of about fifty thousand, while the periodical reached approximately one hundred thousand in 1937. In addition, Winrod issued some ninety-five thousand anti-Semitic publications between 1932 and 1936. Pro-German groups, notably the Silver Shirts and the German American Bund, contributed to anti-Semitism during the decade. Formed in 1933, the Bund gained five thousand members in its first year of operation. By 1937, it had an estimated twenty thousand members, 40 per cent in New York. Where the Bund

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[22]David Brody, "American Jewry, the Refugees, and Immigration Restriction(1932-1942)," Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society 45(1956):219-225, 236.

attracted German immigrants and German aliens, the Silver Shirts contained mostly native Americans. With many members on the west coast, the Silver Shirts recorded their largest membership as fifteen thousand in 1934. Two weekly publications averaged twenty-five thousand subscribers.[23] Anti-Semitism reached enough Americans to make American Jews uneasy. Between March 1938 and April 1940, the American Jewish Committee took five public polls in which three-fifths of respondents continued to think that Jews had undesirable characteristics. Between 1934 and 1942, one-third to one-half of Americans polled thought that Jews had too much economic power in the United States, and, in 1940, between 17 and 20 per cent of respondents believed that Jews posed the most serious threat to American society.[24] Public opinion caused American Jews to subdue their protests of German persecution, but Jews from the United States provided most of the money for refugee aid.

Between 1933 and 1938, Jewish organizations provided for refugee relief and orderly resettlement. They found temporary refuge for Jews in border countries, located resettlement sites abroad, and funded resettlement and relief.[25] The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee made the

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[23]Donald S. Strong, Organized Anti-Semitism in America: the Rise of Group Prejudice during the Decade, 1930-1940 (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Public Affairs, 1941), pp. 40, 49, 30-31, 57-59, 63, 72-73.

[24]Wyman, Paper Walls, p. 22.

[25]Simpson, The Refugee Problem, p. 63.

greatest contribution to refugee aid. Beginning as soon as Hitler gained power, the committee collected $1,350,000 in 1933 and early 1934. The committee's aid extended to fifty nations, provided relief in the refugees' native countries and money to begin new lives in countries of resettlement. Between 1914 and 1939, the committee used $100 million for relief with $11 million of the total spent for refugees. The refugee crisis absorbed a large percentage of their funds. In 1939, the committee spent $9 million or 10 per cent of previous expenditures, and more than one-half of the refugee funds or over $5 million was spent in 1939.[26] The group subsidized major Jewish relief groups operating throughout the world, and these groups provided for destitute Jews in Germany and for refugee immigration.

Under the auspices of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, the Central Bureau for the Settlement of German Jews began bringing refugees to Palestine in 1933. By 1939, the Jewish Agency spent more than 1 million pounds on resettlement. The Bureau used most of that amount to establish farm colonies for refugees. The remaining funds brought German Jewish children to Palestine and provided vocational re-training. Palestinian Jews also arranged the only successful transfer of refugee money from Germany. The Jewish Agency, Jewish National Council of Palestine, the

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[26]Grossman and Tartakower, The Jewish Refugee, pp. 448-449.

Anglo-Palestine Bank, and others established the Haavarah agreement with Germany which operated from 1933 to 1939. The system allowed German Jews to transfer their assets to Palestine, usually in the form of German goods. Since the plan benefited Germany's economy, the Reich granted Palestinian immigrants some concessions on the transfer of assets. The Haavarah arranged the exchange of 139 million reichsmarks, and Jews using the system got three to five times more for their assets than immigrants to other countries who were forced to use regular exchange rates. While some Jews attacked the system for helping Germany increase exports, most supported the plan as the only way to transfer refugee assets.[27]

Great Britain collaborated with American Jews on relief provisions for refugees. The British Council for German Jewry was established in 1936 in cooperation with the Joint Distribution Committee to coordinate immigration of one hundred thousand German Jews over a four-year period. The plan failed because of the continual increase in the number of refugees and the lack of German cooperation. The Council used its resources to aid immigration to Palestine and Latin America, provide relief in Germany, and eventually aid refugees in Great Britain. The Council and the Joint Distribution Committee subsidized the Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland, the organization of German Jews for

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[27] Ibid., pp. 441-444.

refugee aid. The Reichsvertretung arranged refugee transportation and founded the Central School of Emigration in 1936 for vocational retraining. Members published monthly information on resettlement opportunities in other countries and updates of German legislation, especially controls on the transfer of capital. Most of the budget paid for immigration. In 1938, the group spent 2 million reichsmarks out of a total budget of 5 million on resettlement. An additional 1.5 million reichsmarks went for vocational education.[28]

One of the most significant contributions to resettlement was the effort of German Jews to retrain themselves as immigrants. Jews in Germany were not well prepared for mass migration when Hitler assumed power. A declining Jewish population made two-fifths of the Jews in Germany economically dependent upon the German Jewish wage earners. Few Jews earned a living by manual labor, and economic discrimination eroded their ability to provide for their dependents. When German Jews recognized that their economic future was over, they began to prepare sixty thousand Jewish youth between fourteen and twenty-five for immigration to underdeveloped countries of Latin America as well as industrialized societies like the United States.[29] Priority

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[28] Ibid., pp. 445-446, 453-454.

[29] Rudolph Stahl, "Vocational Retraining of Jews in Nazi Germany, 1933-1938," Jewish Social Studies 1(1939):169-174. Stahl headed a large center for vocational education in Frankfurt-am-Main.

retraining went to professional men barred from work under the discriminatory legislation. In 1938, one-third of the vocational students were adults being retrained. By 1937, thirty farm schools operated in Germany for education in landscaping and agriculture. One school in Gross-Bresen sent 81 families, 535 people, as agricultural settlers to Argentina.[30] In addition to farming, Jews concentrated on preparing skilled craftsmen for work. They established shops where one craftsman could teach twenty students in blacksmithing and carpentry or as electricians and mechanics. By 1937, 16 shops taught between 100 and 200 students each. Using hospitals, children's homes, and old-age homes, Jews set up thirty centers to teach cooking, cleaning, and sewing for women. Boarding houses for vocational students also provided practical training.[31]

Because of the oppression and restrictions in Germany, border nations housed retraining centers. With money from the Council for German Jewry plus contributions from German Jews, Belgium, Denmark, Holland, Italy, Sweden, and Czechoslovakia had retraining sites and taught one-seventh of German Jewish vocational students in 1937. In addition to retraining, students received instruction in the language and culture of their new country, although too often new restrictive laws forced them to seek admission elsewhere.

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[30] Ibid., pp. 180-181.

[31] Ibid., pp. 181-183.

Until 1938, vocational education provided a valuable service for emigrating Jews. From 1933 to 1938, approximately thirty-five thousand Jews between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five left Germany, and eighteen thousand of them received retraining. As of 1938, about nineteen thousand Jews under the age of eighteen remained in Germany. Between 25 and 30 per cent of them continued in the program. Most Jews from productive age groups emigrated before Austria's annexation, and vocational education declined during the years that it was most needed. Too few teachers remained to continue the program.[32]

Compared to their organization and negotiation of resettlement, funding became a relatively minor contribution of the Jewish agencies. Separate agencies helped refugees apply for visas and meet both immigration restrictions and the emigration laws of their native countries. Private groups transferred refugee money and arranged passage to new nations. The most important organization was Hicem, a conglomerate of the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigration Aid Society, the Jewish Colonization Association, and Emigdirect. Hicem began work in 1933 and helped 5,425 German Jews leave Germany. Hicem also established subordinate agencies in the border countries to stop refugee migration from one nation to the next. By July 1936, Hicem transported over fourteen

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[32] Ibid., pp. 183, 188, 191, 193.

thousand refugees to new homes at a cost of $600,000. By 1940, expenditures totalled almost $1 million, and forty thousand refugees had received aid. In Germany, the Hilfsverein der Juden in Deutschland provided emigrants with money, information on resettlement opportunities, visas, and transport. After passage of the Nuremberg Laws, anywhere from 400 to 500 emigrants sought help from Hilfsverein each month. In 1937, the number rose to 100 per day and reached 500 per day in 1938. Hilfsverein helped thirteen thousand Jews emigrate in 1937 and thirty thousand in 1938. Agencies in the border nations provided temporary relief and resettlement and arranged permission for extended stays for refugees until immigration became possible.[33] Jewish groups performed these tasks with little intergovernmental assistance until the Austrian annexation produced a crisis beyond their capabilities.

Before Roosevelt intervened in 1938, international cooperation on refugees was provided solely by the League of Nations. The League began refugee aid immediately after World War I, although the League covenant did not prescribe a refugee body. Agencies developed as the need arose. The League gained its initial refugee experience with Russians fleeing the Soviet Union, and all League activity on behalf

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[33]Grossman and Tartakower, The Jewish Refugee, pp. 455-458, 460, 466.

of refugees evolved from it. The League refused to fund relief and insisted that refugee aid remain a temporary function. Nonetheless, the League achieved impressive results in the postwar refugee situation. By 1923, twenty thousand Russians were resettled in forty-five countries. Over a seven-year period, the League relocated six hundred fifty thousand Greeks using money loaned to Greece by other countries, and between 1926 and 1933, the League completed settlement of one hundred twenty-five thousand refugees from Bulgaria. By 1929, the League believed that the refugee problem would end over the next ten years and reduced its refugee agencies to one, the Nansen International Office for Refugees, scheduled to disband on 31 December 1938.[34] When the German refugee crisis began in 1933, the League clung to its traditional approach and failed to counter coercive immigration.

At the September 1933 meeting of the League Assembly, the Netherlands appealed for international aid to refugees. Germany opposed League intervention, and German resistance hampered League activities on behalf of refugees.[35] The League established the High Commissioner for Refugees (Jewish and Other) Coming from Germany in 1933, but the

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[34]Louis W. Holborn, "The League of Nations and the Refugee Problem," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 203(1939):124-127, 131.

[35]Ibid., p. 130.

agency reflected weaknesses in the League's refugee policy as well as fear of German opposition. The commission remained an autonomous body removed from the authority of the League, and all funds for refugees came from private organizations. An American, James G. McDonald, became High Commissioner.[36] Like the Nansen Office, the High Commissioner's office was scheduled to end on 31 December 1938. Because of the conditions umder which the commission operated, League aid to German refugees remained ineffective. The League agencies' primary function was to provide legal identification for stateless refugees. The League had little support for its work and remained hobbled by its inability to negotiate with Germany. Despite its refugee experience, the League failed to alleviate the German refugee problem and refused to seek a permanent solution.[37]

McDonald protested League inaction and predicted international chaos if a solution to the German refugee problem was not found. In December 1935 following passage of the Nuremberg Laws, McDonald resigned as High Commissioner. He asked League members to re-examine their efforts to solve the crisis because the new legislation meant more refugees than the League had foreseen. He believed that hundreds of

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[36]Simpson, The Refugee Problem, p. 87; Holborn, "The League of Nations and the Refugee Problem," p. 133.

[37]Holborn, "The League of Nations and the Refugee Problem," pp. 134-135.

thousands would be forced to leave Germany, and he argued that providing relief would not suffice. He counselled that German oppression had to be stopped and demanded League intervention but not through a separate agency. He credited the refugees' self-help and the private groups with successfully handling the present problem but warned that those organizations were already hard pressed for funds. McDonald argued that international cooperation against German oppression was necessary to stop the refugee flood for the sake of humanitarianism and because German policy caused international tensions and violated the rights of other nations.[38] The League failed to act upon his recommendations, and the refugee crisis grew beyond the competence of any private or international agency in 1938.

When Hitler annexed Austria in March 1938, the scope of the refugee problem increased drastically. The discriminatory legislation which produced thousands of refugees from Germany now extended to one hundred eighty thousand Jews in Austria. The disruption of Jewish life in Austria reached frightful proportions as techniques evolved over several years in Germany were instituted immediately against Austrian Jews. After the annexation, Jewish suicides in Austria climbed to 170 per day during March. In April, the Germans began deportations, dropping Jews across the borders of

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[38]League of Nations, Official Journal, 17(1936):160-163.

neighboring countries.[39] Forced across territories without proper papers and without regard for immigration laws, many Jews experienced continuous deportations and shuffled back and forth between Germany and its neighbors. All attempts at systematic immigration had been abandoned, and one hundred forty thousand Jews fled German terrorism in 1938 alone whereas one hundred forty thousand was the total exodus between 1933 and 1937.[40] Between three thousand and four thousand Austrian Jews entered Switzerland after the annexation, and Britain's refugee population rose from forty-five hundred at the end of 1937 to eleven thousand by November 1938.[41] After the annexation, American consulates in Germany received between one thousand and fifteen hundred requests each day for visas.[42]

As refugees from Germany increased in 1938, resettlement proved more difficult. Approximately one-fifth of Germany's remaining Jewish population was over sixty-five years of age, and more than one hundred thousand were between thirty-one and sixty-five. They made poor candidates for immigration. Severe unemployment characterized the entire Jewish community. Jews who had three or four Jewish

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[39] Wyman, Paper Walls, pp. 29-30.

[40] Grossman and Tartakower, The Jewish Refugee, pp. 30-31.

[41] Ibid., pp. 218, 288.

[42] New York Times, 29 March 1938, p. 13.

grandparents suffered the worst discrimination; only 15.6 per cent of that category remained employed by 1939.[43] Austrian Jews were more destitute than Jews in Germany. Many were postwar refugees without secure jobs before German oppression. Austrian Jews quickly instituted vocational education to improve their potential as immigrants; the program retrained twenty-four thousand Jews in the two years following annexation. Retraining failed to alter stiff restrictionism, and Austrians resorted to illegal immigration rather than face deportation.[44]

As a result of the threatening proportions of the new refugee phase, former nations of refuge immediately closed their territories. Poland refused entrance to former Polish Jews from Austria, and Holland refused to accept any more refugees. In May 1938, France denied asylum to refugees unless they could immigrate abroad.[45] Argentina passed a new law in 1938 requiring consuls to send visa applications to an immigration board in Argentina thereby instituting restrictionism. Colombia refused entry to ten thousand immigrants, although one-half had relatives or sponsors waiting for them.[46]

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[43]Blau, "The Jewish Population of Germany," pp. 165, 168.

[44]Grossman and Tartakower, The Jewish Refugee, p. 36.

[45]Simpson, The Refugee Problem, pp. 59, 321-322.

[46]Grossman and Tartakower, The Jewish Refugee, pp. 316-317.

The Austrian annexation spotlighted the growing refugee crisis and increased its exposure in the United States. In the April edition of Foreign Affairs, Dorothy Thompson published an article on refugees that attracted attention among American officials and the general public.[47] She predicted mass migration of refugees following the expansion of German persecution. In a world of economic depression, she feared nativist outbursts and political instability from the burden of refugee care. She contended that diplomacy and international cooperation was the answer to the crisis and called for an international agency, capable of negotiating with Germany, to coordinate refugee aid.[48]

Roosevelt recognized that the refugee problem had entered its most critical stage in 1938. On 23 March, he asked the State Department, apparently on his own initiative, to invite thirty-two nations to attend a conference on refugees. He attributed his actions to the new dimensions of the crisis. Private groups could no longer handle the numbers of refugees, and he believed that the continual increase in immigrants would tax Europe's ability to assimilate them. He wanted international cooperation at the conference to devise a coherent immigration plan. Roosevelt maintained that

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[47]Feingold, Politics of Rescue, p. 23.

[48]Dorothy Thompson, "Refugees: A World Problem," Foreign Affairs 16(1938):375-380.

his action was consistent with the historical American ideal of asylum for the oppressed.[49]

On 26 March, the State Department issued the invitations. The dispatches emphasized that no nation would be forced to take more refugees than present laws allowed; this provision insured protection of the American quota system. Private groups and not participating nations would continue to provide funds for refugee work.[50] The invitations carefully avoided antagonizing supporters of restriction in the United States and abroad, but concern over the quotas surfaced immediately.

At a press conference on 25 March, Roosevelt denied that the proposed conference threatened American immigration laws. The press asked him repeatedly if the quotas would be increased to make the conference worthwhile. Roosevelt assured the newsmen that the quotas would remain intact, although, he added, the German and Austrian quotas might be combined. The reporters wondered if American aid could contribute anything more to the work already being done. With many quotas full, they believed that the United States was incapable of admitting all the people wishing to leave Germany. Roosevelt

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[49]Samuel I. Rosenman, ed., The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt with a Special Introduction and Explanatory Notes by President Roosevelt, 13 vols. (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1938-1950), 7:169-170.

[50]U.S., Department of State, Press Releases, 26 March 1938, p. 411 (hereafter cited as Press Releases).

insisted that American collaboration with Europe would help immigration.[51]

Roosevelt considered the new refugee phase as an emergency situation. By unifying existing refugee aid, he expected to increase resettlement and achieve a permanent, long-range solution. He appointed Myron C. Taylor as the American delegate and expected Taylor to chair the conference. He believed that American leadership and cooperation would bring results, and he hoped to alleviate public concern over the crisis.[52]

Beginning in early 1938, Roosevelt's administration received pressure from Thompson and liberal Congressmen to assume leadership in the refugee problem. After Austria's annexation, pressure on Washington threatened to grow stronger. Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles supported the conference as a means of stealing the initiative from the liberals and diverting pressure.[53] Welles warned the German ambassador to expect increased anti-German sentiment among

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[51]Complete Presidential Press Conferences of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 25 vols. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), 11:248-249.

[52]Roosevelt to Taylor, 26 April 1938, Myron C. Taylor, "Confidential Memorandum Regarding Refugees, 1938-1947," 30 July 1947, Myron C. Taylor Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

[53]Wyman, Paper Walls, p. 44.

Americans if Germany extended oppression of Jews to Austria.[54] One liberal faction, American Jews, evinced little desire to join the lobbyists. Jews remained intensely loyal to the New Deal and appeared unlikely to break with Roosevelt's domestic policies over the issue of refugees.[55] While the liberals posed a potential threat to his policies, he risked the certain anger of the restrictionists.

Congressional restrictionists attacked Roosevelt's proposal five days after he announced it. Thomas A. Jenkins, representative from Ohio, accused Roosevelt of embroiling Americans in European problems to the detriment of American economic stability. He protested Roosevelt's failure to consider public or congressional opinion before taking action, and he declared that the policy of restrictionism had been negated by the conference even if the quotas remained secure. He believed that European nations intended to exact cooperation from the United States and warned Americans against international involvement.[56]

The conference allowed Washington some influence in European affairs, but Roosevelt appeared unlikely to gain

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[54]Welles to Roosevelt, Memorandum, 16 March 1938, President's Secretary File, Departmental Correspondence, State Department, Sumner Welles, Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

[55]Feingold, Politics of Rescue, p. 8.

[56]U.S., Congress, House, Congressional Record, 75th Cong., 3rd sess., 1938, pp. 4227-4229.

much political favor with his proposal. He knew that he had given his opponents an opening for attack when he called for a conference during a period of strong restrictionism and isolationism. Following immediately after Austrian annexation, the proposal did suggest American concern over German aggression and marked a significant step toward internationalism. In addition, the conference provided a showcase of the dangers of Nazi Germany.[57] In the 1930s, the State Department tried to guide American reaction to the tensions in Europe and steer the public toward recognition of America's importance in world affairs. Officials hoped to impress upon the public the potential threat of Germany; yet it was necessary to maintain caution or risk reinforcing isolationism.[58] Considering American attitudes toward Jews and immigration, the refugee crisis remained a risky issue in domestic policy and diplomacy.

Besides political and diplomatic considerations, Roosevelt was personally concerned over the plight of the refugees, and the conference provided a way to increase America's response. German acts against Jews repulsed Roosevelt, and diplomats and refugees in the United States provided him with firsthand accounts of the persecution. Convinced that the practices were officially sanctioned by

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[57]Feingold, Politics of Rescue, pp. 22-24.

[58]Cordell Hull, The Memoirs of Cordell Hull, 2 vols. (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1948), 1:575.

the Nazi party, he feared that the Jews' position in Germany would continue to deteriorate.[59] The immigration laws were irrevocable, but executive action escaped the restrictionist bloc in Congress and lent American power to a solution to the refugee crisis of 1938.

The seriousness of the refugee crisis in 1938 prompted American intervention. League attempts to alleviate the problems of German Jewish immigration proved inadequate, and the League intended for its refugee agencies to close their operations by the end of 1938. Although Jewish organizations handled relief and resettlement for earlier refugees, their resources were insufficient to handle the numbers produced by the annexation of Austria. Nations that had given asylum to German Jews instituted restrictionism to stem the potential flood from Austria. Nonetheless, Germany continued deportations which contributed to European instability. Mass migration of German Jews threatened to overwhelm the relief efforts of individual nations forced to contend with Germany's coercive policies. International cooperation provided the only means to achieve systematic immigration. Concerned over the political consequences of German policy and the suffering of the refugees, Roosevelt assumed leadership in the search for a solution and committed the United States to diplomatic intervention abroad.

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[59]Frances Perkins, The Roosevelt I Knew (1946; reprint ed., New York, Harper and Row, 1964), pp. 347-348.

CHAPTER II

THE EVIAN CONFERENCE

Roosevelt's call for a refugee conference elicited international approval for his humanitarian gesture but produced few significant results. In the months preceding the conference, Roosevelt encountered more domestic opposition to American involvement in the issue as the refugee situation in Europe deteriorated. Germany and Austria introduced new repressive measures, and Rumania threatened expulsion of its Jews. As the refugee flood grew, Washington pushed resettlement as the major purpose of the conference, but early replies to Roosevelt's invitation indicated that few countries were willing to receive more immigrants. European nations, fearful that creation of a new refugee organization would encourage immigration from Germany, favored continuation of League dominance over the refugee problem. At the conference, Washington maintained that a refugee agency separate from the League could negotiate with the Reich for a systematic immigration plan. The possibility of negotiating with Germany, particularly for more funds for immigrants, convinced the delegates to create a new refugee organization. Despite American pressure for resettlement offers, the

delegates evaded commitments to resettlement until negotiations with Germany could produce more funds, and the establishment of a new refugee agency remained the only achievement of the conference.

While Jewish groups responded enthusiastically to Roosevelt's suggestion, other groups in America and abroad urged restriction. Three days after Roosevelt's announcement, the Federal Council of Churches of Christ and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee promised support for refugee aid. Cyrus Adler, president of the American Jewish Committee, sent a telegram of approval to Hull, and Stephen Wise, president of the American Jewish Congress, promised joint Jewish and Christian implementation of any program proposed by the conference. Hull received telegrams of approval from the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and B'nai B'rith which had members in thirty nations. William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor, publicly favored Roosevelt's proposal but warned that any attempt to relax immigration quotas faced opposition from organized labor. He believed that admittance of larger numbers of immigrants would undermine unemployed Americans trying to find work.[1]

Sparked by unemployment, opposition to increased immigration extended beyond the United States. When Chile

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[1]New York Times, 26 March 1938, pp. 4-5.

accepted the American invitation, professional associations of engineers, architects, and doctors protested. With an abundance of professional men already in Chile, the leaders saw refugees as undesirable competition. The depression had forced many Chileans into jobs unrelated to their training. Consequently, the associations urged Chile to refuse admission to refugees in professional occupations.[2] Dr. William J. Carrington, president of the Medical Society of New Jersey, echoed this caution. Speaking at the sixty-eighth annual convention of the New Jersey Pharmaceutical Association, he asked that the United States discourage refugee immigration from overcrowded professions.[3]

Although Roosevelt clearly explained that the quota system would be protected, restrictionists in Congress continued to fear increased immigration. On 30 March, the New York Times reported that Daniel A. Reed, Republican representative from New York, predicted that more refugees would result from the conference. He asked Hull to inform the House of the increased number that Americans could expect. He wanted assurances that the quota would remain intact, and he doubted that the administration could prevent refugees from hurting the economy and increasing unemployment.[4]

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[2] Ibid., 29 March 1938, p. 5.

[3] Ibid., 23 June 1938, p. 13.

[4] Ibid., 30 March 1938, p. 8.

Restrictionists voiced more displeasure when appropriation of funds for the conference came before Congress. The committee gave Myron Taylor $10,000 or one-fifth of the sum appropriated for the conference, but members attempted to disparage the purpose of the meeting and Taylor's appointment. Karl Stefan, representative from Nebraska, declared that Roosevelt's real intention was to provide Taylor with a job. He thought that the State Department should handle the refugee problem and considered an international conference unnecessary. In addition, Stefan predicted that the American effort would fail. The League had not maintained international cooperation, and he opposed establishment of an American substitute for the League. He supported Reed's allegation that refugees would descend upon the United States, and he saw the conference as the worst threat to America that Roosevelt had ever proposed. Colleagues from diverse geographical districts supported him. Fred L. Crawford from Michigan, John Taber from New York, and Malcolm C. Tarver from Georgia agreed with Stefan. Only one member, Clifton A. Woodrum of Virginia, defended Taylor as a respected member of a worthy commission. Taylor was the former chairman of United States Steel, and Woodrum doubted that Taylor needed employment, particularly since the appointment hardly constituted a permanent job.[5]

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[5]U.S., Congress, House, Congressional Record, 75th Cong., 3rd sess., 1938, pp. 8560-8562.

Roosevelt tried to assuage restrictionist fears. He asked eight leaders of private organizations to meet at the White House on 13 April 1938. He wanted to coordinate private efforts with the goals of the international conference, and Roosevelt hoped this move would demonstrate that private groups bore most of the responsibility for immigration. Trying to downplay the Jewish character of the refugee problem, Roosevelt invited mostly non-Jews to the meeting. Joseph Chamberlain, chairman of the National Coordinating Committee, attended. Roosevelt also invited Samuel Calvert, National Council of Churches of Christ; Archbishop Joseph Rummel, chairman, Committee for Catholic Refugees from Germany; Louis Kennedy, president, National Council for Catholic Men; Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Secretary of the Treasury; Bernard Baruch, presidential advisor; and James G. McDonald. In later sessions, the committee also included Rabbi Stephen Wise.[6] These men established the President's Advisory Committee on Political Refugees. Many, like McDonald, had extensive experience in refugee work.

Meeting only in a private capacity, the committee began preliminary discussions at the White House. The men exchanged ideas on means of accomplishing mass immigration and coordinating private work with the new body.[7] They listened

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[6]Feingold, Politics of Rescue, p. 25-26.

[7]New York Times, 14 April 1938, p. 16.

as Roosevelt repeated the purposes of the conference and reviewed tentative proposals for an agenda prepared by Sumner Welles. The committee's major tasks became finding relocation sites for refugees and coordinating private financing of immigration. At the conference, Taylor included the committee as part of American efforts to solve the refugee crisis, but the group remained largely ineffective, working mostly with the State Department reviewing visa applications.[8]

Roosevelt took additional action to augment America's contribution to refugee immigration. In April, Roosevelt approved admittance of 27,370 immigrants per year from Germany by combining the German and Austrian quotas. As a result, vital spaces under the Austrian quota were saved, and Roosevelt promised that the quota would be fully issued. Since it had been underissued during the 1930s, this action meant a significant gain for refugee immigration.[9]

Two months before the conference, the League extended its efforts to aid refugees. On 14 May 1938, the League reorganized its refugee machinery. The two agencies in operation, the Nansen Office and the office of the High Commissioner for Refugees Coming from Germany, were scheduled to disband at the end of the year, but many League members

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[8]Feingold, Politics of Rescue, pp. 25-26.

[9]Wyman, Paper Walls, pp. 43-44.

with refugees in their territory petitioned the League to continue its refugee work. In May, the League proposed that both agencies be superseded by one new office headed by a High Commissioner for Refugees under the protection of the League. The High Commissioner's duties included supervision of ratification of the conventions of 28 October 1933 and 10 February 1938 and unification of all aid going to refugees. While the League still refused to grant funds for immigration, the new organization had League support.[10]

The League recognized Roosevelt's request for an international conference on refugees and stressed that its reorganization was not designed to negate the purpose of a new refugee organization. In fact, the League predicted that successful completion of refugee immigration was in sight. Of one hundred fifty thousand German refugees, the League estimated that one hundred twenty thousand had found permanent homes. The League recommended that the High Commissioner maintain constant communication with receiving nations and suggested that he participate in the conference.[11]

While the League expected alleviation of the refugee problem, Germany's reaction to Roosevelt's idea spotlighted the impediments to a solution. By continuously eroding the ability of German Jews to earn a living, Germany threatened

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[10] League of Nations, Official Journal, 19(1938):365-367.

[11] Ibid.

to increase emigration from both Germany and Austria, while denying culpability for international ramifications. In a speech breadcast from Koenigsberg, Adolf Hitler argued that Germany reserved the right to handle its own internal problems. If other nations sympathized with the German émigrés, let those countries, Hitler said, help in resettlement. He offered luxury liners to transport German Jews to any country that would take them.[12]

Despite Hitler's promise, new Nazi policies increased the destitution of German Jews which made other nations unwilling to receive them. Hermann Goering, as commissar for the Four-Year Plan, told all Jews, German and foreign, to report assets over 5,000 marks by 30 June. Goering assumed control of these funds for use in Germany. At the same time, the Gestapo newspapers predicted increased forcible emigration, and they counselled Jews to leave as quickly as possible or face deportation. Economic discrimination increased refugee migration and made relief for desititue Jews in Germany harder to provide. Over 21 per cent of the Jewish population needed sustenance from Jewish charity groups during the previous winter, but additional policies eliminated Jewish organizations from classification as public corporations. Instead, Germany increased taxes on the charitable

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[12] New York Times, 27 March 1938, p. 25.

groups, and fewer funds became available for relief.[13] Although the new measures were designed to force Jews to leave, impoverished refugees had fewer chances to obtain permanent resettlement abroad.

Similar programs were introduced in Austria. The Vienna edition of the Nazi newspaper Voelkischer Beobachter proclaimed that Jews would be out of Vienna by 1942. By that time, Austrians intended to deprive Jews of a livelihood and force Jewish businesses to close. Austria designed a plan of economic strangulation by eliminating the professional classes, firing Jewish workers, and confiscating businesses. The newspaper also warned Jews that their only chance lay in emigration, but the Austrian government stripped Jewish emigrants of the means to leave.[14] Besides having to pay a 25 per cent flight tax, Jewish refugees forfeited their other assets. Austrian officials placed these assets in a blocked account. While this account was supposedly under control of the emigrant, the money could be spent only in Austria or used to pay debts accumulated in Austria.[15]

Germany and Austria threatened to produce a constant flow of destitute refugees without adequate provisions for

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[13] Ibid., 28 April 1938, p. 1.

[14] Ibid., 27 April 1938, p. 11.

[15] Ibid., 10 May 1938, p. 12.

resettlement or funds for immigration. Roosevelt hoped to solve both problems through cooperation at the international conference and establishment of a new refugee agency. Yet there was little chance for success, for, even before the conference began, German hostility to an orderly immigration plan was evident.

Growing fear of German power retarded a solution to the crisis. Germany apparently dictated some of the European responses to Roosevelt's proposal. The United States asked Switzerland to host the conference because that nation was a convenient location. Although Switzerland agreed to attend, it refused to provide the site. The Swiss thought it unwise to host a conference discussing German policies.[16]

Germany's proximity also influenced Italy's decision to refuse Roosevelt's invitation. Galeozzo Ciano, Italian minister for foreign affairs, told American ambassador William Phillips that Italy could not accept undesirable people exiled from Germany. Ciano believed that Germany opposed formation of the committee, and he feared German reprisals if Italy cooperated.[17] Germany made no offer to cooperate with the nations at the conference, and Hull decided not to extend an invitation to the Reich. He

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[16] Ibid., 15 April 1938, p. 15.

[17] U.S., Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers, 1938, 5 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1955), 1:741 (hereafter cited as Foreign Relations).

believed that a strong showing of international cooperation could be achieved if the delegates did not engage in divisive attempts to negotiate with Germany. He wanted to approach Germany en masse after the conference was over.[18]

Hull invited only those nations that could accept refugees from Germany and Austria. Luxemburg pressed the United States for an invitation because Luxemburg's geographical location resulted in a serious refugee overflow within its territory. Although Luxemburg asked that its refugee problem be considered at the conference, Hull refused to widen the scope of the conference beyond German and Austrian refugees and denied Luxemburg an invitation.[19]

In April, Rumania threatened to force Hull to change his policy. The foreign minister wanted Rumanian refugees included under the jurisdiction of the new committee. He told Welles that Rumania hoped to evict enough Jews each year to equal the Jewish birth rate. With new citizenship tests nearing completion, the foreign minister warned that Rumania might deport those that did not qualify for citizenship. Welles recognized that the conference could cause a new wave of repressive policies in Germany's neighbors. Consequently, he warned Rumania that the United States would withdraw support for refugee aid if other

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[18]Feingold, Politics of Rescue, p. 27.

[19]Foreign Relations, 1938, 1:750-751.

countries took advantage of it. Welles insisted that only German and Austrian refugees would be considered at the conference.[20]

The United States forestalled the spread of the refugee crisis, but pressure for a broad settlement increased. Attention focused on Palestine as a solution. Meeting in Chicago on 24 April, the United Palestine Appeal proposed the relocation in Palestine of one hundred thousand Jewish refugees per year for five years. Eight hundred Jewish leaders attending the meeting adopted a resolution asking Roosevelt and Hull to include Palestine on the agenda for the conference. Since Palestine had already settled many Jewish refugees, the Jewish leaders concluded that it remained the only place willing to admit large numbers of Jews.[21] Despite the Chicago appeal, the United States did not want the Palestine question raised at the conference because Britain refused to attend if that issue was on the agenda.[22] Washington did not reveal the British position but clearly Roosevelt and Hull were willing for Britain to retain full control over Palestinian immigration.[23]

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[20] Ibid., pp. 742-743.

[21] New York Times, 25 April 1938, p. 3.

[22] Feingold, Politics of Rescue, p. 26.

[23] New York Times, 8 April 1938, p. 10.

With Palestine omitted as a relocation site, the United States looked to Latin America to open its territory. The Western Hemisphere contained a large amount of land suitable for settlement, and Washington hoped that those nations below the Rio Grande would augment the United States' contribution. Although American diplomats pressured Latin America to increase immigration, the Latin Americans were wary of Washington's motives and challenged the assumption that their nations would provide the sites.[24] Colombia and Nicaragua agreed to cooperate within the dictates of present immigration laws. Argentina and Costa Rica stressed that they needed to protect their domestic economies, and Chile warned the United States that severe restriction of European immigration had become necessary. Reminding Washington that German and Austrian refugees had already been admitted, Panama wanted to uphold existing restrictions. Venezuela preferred settlers from agricultural backgrounds and ethnic groups similar to the present population but predicted that few refugees would be admitted.[25] Cuba agreed to attend out of respect for Roosevelt's humanitarianism, and Ecuador emphasized that

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[24]Feingold, Politics of Rescue, p. 31.

[25]U.S., Department of State, Press Releases, 2 April 1938, pp. 428-432(hereafter cited as Press Releases).

economic conditions would influence any decision on refugees.[26]

Although the preliminary reports were discouraging, the United States continued to press for a concrete commitment to refugee immigration. In June, the State Department prepared the agenda for the upcoming conference and proposed resettlement as the solution to the refugee crisis. The United States expected each nation to come prepared to tell the committee the number of refugees that it could accept and to reveal any previously undisclosed immigration policies. The agenda included a provision promising that all such information would be kept secret. The proposal emphasized the American desire for establishment of a permanent refugee body to seek a solution to the problem over an extended period of time.[27] Thirty-two nations, including twenty Latin American countries, agreed to meet at Evian-les-Baines, France, on 6 July 1938. Neill Malcolm, League High Commissioner for Refugees, also agreed to attend.

The continued American insistence on resettlement resulted in meetings between Britain, France, and the United States before the conference started. The French delegate to Evian, Henry Berenger, met with Taylor on

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[26] Press Releases, 16 April 1938, pp. 481-482.

[27] Foreign Relations, 1938, 1:748-749.

27 June. He insisted that the conference be shielded from widespread coverage by the press. He wanted reassurance that the confidentiality of each nation's reports would be respected and that the countries would be protected from public pressure. Berenger suggested that they meet with the British delegate so that France and Britain could discuss American expectations. While he promised that France would do as much as possible for the United States, Berenger wanted Taylor to understand France's reluctance to accept more refugees. He hoped that the majority of conference business could be conducted in private sessions with a resolution announced to the public at the end.[28] While Taylor was agreeable to having the public sessions reserved for general addresses by the delegates, these preliminary talks failed to resolve important differences between the three nations.

Representing the host country, Berenger opened the conference with an expression of hope that the Americas would extend the work already accomplished by the League and its European members. He reminded the delegates of Roosevelt's promise not to encroach upon League activities, and, to emphasize his point, he welcomed J. Avenol, Secretary-General of the League, John Winant, director of

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[28] Ibid., pp. 750-751.

the International Labour Office, and High Commissioner Malcolm.[29]

Taylor followed Berenger and clarified the American position on each of the issues before the conference. First he reviewed for the delegates the refugee crisis of 1938. He declared that some nations were forcing large-scale immigration without adequate provisions for resettlement. Coupled with widespread unemployment and large native populations, the refugee increase demanded international planning for a sweeping, permanent solution. He attributed the conference to Roosevelt's awareness of the dangers of the problem and its potential spread. He argued that when nations inflicted their populations on others, international hostility grew and threatened peace. He likened the situation to the chaos produced by a sudden excess of products dumped on world markets. When large groups of people were involved, racial and religious repercussions erupted everywhere.[30]

Because of these conditions, the United States wanted a permanent body to resettle potential German and Austrian refugees in addition to those already established in

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[29]"Proceedings of the Intergovernmental Committee, Evian, July 6th to 15th, 1938: Verbatim Record of the Plenary Meetings of the Committee, Resolutions and Reports," National Archives, Record Group 43, pp. 11-12 (hereafter cited as "Evian Proceedings").

[30]Ibid., pp. 12-13.

temporary homes. Taylor repeated the request that each nation declare the number of refugees that could be accepted, the territory available for settlement, and undisclosed restrictive policies. While he reiterated that no quotas would be violated, he emphasized the recent change in American immigration policy which allowed annual admission of 27,370 immigrants from Germany and Austria. He reminded the delegates that Roosevelt established the President's Advisory Committee and sent James McDonald to Evian to explain its role in seeking a solution to the crisis. Taylor noted that some delegates preferred the League to retain sole jurisdiction over refugee immigration, but he assured the members that Washington fully intended for the new committee to complement League work. As an indication of American intentions, Taylor invited Malcolm to participate in the deliberations.[31]

Earl Winterton, the delegate from Great Britain, outlined proposals substantially different from the desires of the United States. British power in Europe and dominance in the League posed a threat to the success of Washington's goals; Winterton's counterproposals had the support of the European delegates to the conference. He opposed establishment of a new agency and the American

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[31] Ibid.

emphasis on potential refugees and led the European nations in refusing to accept resettlement of more refugees.[32]

Winterton feared that a new committee would encourage oppressive policies against minorities in other countries. Furthermore, he believed that the conference should first resettle the refugees crowding into Europe. He added that immigration could not proceed until Germany recognized its obligations. Receiving nations expected Germany to provide funds for refugees before they provided homes. While Britain was concerned about the plight of the refugees, Winterton explained that the problem did not directly affect his country. Britain's heavy population and complete industrialization provided only temporary refuge and allowed few refugees to be assimilated. Winterton promised that Britain would examine resettlement sites in the colonies but warned that they suffered from identical problems. In addition, location, climate, and social conditions adversely affected resettlement, and the numbers of refugees accepted in British territory would remain slight. For these reasons, Winterton refused to offer a numerical commitment to refugee resettlement. Instead, he suggested that the delegates disclose the number of refugees within their

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[32] Ibid., pp. 14-15.

territories that they could absorb. After that, Britain might consider the problem of potential refugees.[33]

The European delegates approved Winterton's suggestions. Although Taylor emphasized the generosity of the American contribution, the United States had nothing more to offer for resettlement. The nations bordering Germany could not afford a heavier refugee burden, and all delegates knew that there would be no increase in American immigration. As a result, many became wary of the American proposals, fearing that Taylor would urge them to take more refugees to protect the United States.[34] The European nations quickly demonstrated that no more refugees would be admitted.

Berenger claimed that France had taken more refugees in proportion to its population than any other nation. France maintained two hundred thousand refugees in a population of forty million. Berenger emphasized that France cooperated with both the Nansen Office and the High Commissioner, and the French intended to cooperate with the new committee but refused to accept more refugees. Belgium also refused to commit itself to another international obligation since Belgium was already a signatory to both League conventions. With 11,680 refugees inside

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Feingold, Politics of Rescue, pp. 30-31.

its border, Belgium denied ability to take more. The delegate from the Netherlands stated that his country faced unemployment averaging four hundred thousand, and Dutch citizens were being encouraged to emigrate. With 25,000 refugees already, more would be accepted only as homes were guaranteed for those now in the Netherlands. Denmark also complained that its own citizens had to leave. As a border country and a signatory to the League conventions, Denmark had taken large numbers of German refugees. Switzerland described similar problems. As a result of the annexation of Austria, approximately four thousand refugees had crossed the Swiss border before 1 April 1938. With neighboring borders closed, the Swiss needed to enforce restrictions.[35]

If Winterton left any doubt about the unavailability of British territory, delegates from the dominions did not. Although some German refugees had been admitted, Australia desired predominantly British immigrants because the government wanted to discourage diversity and hostility among its citizens. Only skilled laborers or refugees that would not compete with Australian citizens were acceptable. Canada had a policy against mass admission. Refugees entered on an individual basis. Canada usually accepted only farmers or close relatives of Canadian

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[35]"Evian Proceedings," pp. 15-16, 18-19, 22, 30-31, 37.

citizens, and, due to the economic depression, Canada refused to change policies. New Zealand, also fearing adverse affects on its economy, followed the same policy of admitting only individuals and refused to allow refugee agencies to make applications.[36]

After the negative reports from European delegates, the Latin American response became increasingly important. While Washington believed that the American quota system allowed a large number of refugees to be admitted, it still expected Latin America to help provide a sizable resettlement area in the Western Hemisphere. Unfortunately, some Latin American nations had many Germans within their territories and feared German power. Good trade relations existed between Germany and Latin America, and those nations refused to jeopardize it by angering Germany. Besides, some countries had serious social divisions without accepting a Jewish professional class. Consequently, most delegates refused to accept a plan for resettlement in Latin America.[37]

Like most Latin American countries, Venezuela limited immigration to agricultural workers and agreed to accept only small numbers of those. The Venezuelan delegate pleaded that larger numbers would undermine social

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[36] Ibid., pp. 19-20, 25.

[37] Feingold, Politics of Rescue, pp. 30-32.

stability and create ethnic hostility. Peru believed that mass immigration from Germany would clash with a predominantly Spanish and Catholic culture. Since Peru had only developing industry, skilled laborers threatened to create unemployment. Mexico, undergoing social and economic changes from the revolution, was engaged in large-scale land distribution to better conditions for Mexican citizens. Consequently, Mexico agreed to cooperate only after its own needs were met.[38]

Unemployment caused Latin America to fear that German refugees could not be absorbed. Because of the world depression, Brazil restricted immigration. According to studies by the International Labour Office, Brazil measured less than 2 per cent of the world's population but had over six per cent of the emigrants. Most came from Eastern Europe and Asia, and Brazil believed that they would not be assimilated. Although Brazil had established a quota system in 1934, a new law of 1938 allowed transfer of unused quotas to countries with quotas fully issued. Nonetheless, 30 per cent of the spaces continued to be reserved for farmers. Argentina also refused to allow immigration to undermine the domestic economy. The Argentine delegate claimed that his country had accepted 32 Jewish refugees for every 42 admitted to the United States and 270 for

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[38]"Evian Proceedings," pp. 29-31.

every 100 accepted by all the South American countries together. While Argentina agreed to report periodically on occupational openings, the delegates rejected the proposal to make a definitive commitment to immigration.[39]

The Chilean delegate charged that the refugee crisis was tied to international trade. Developing nations could not accept large numbers of workers unless international demands for their products increased. Consequently, other countries shared the responsibility of consuming excess products made by refugee laborers. L. R. Thebaud, the delegate from Haiti, told the conference that his government was too worried over the depression to aid immigration. He blamed Haiti's trouble on strangulation of exports by trade barriers, and he insisted that only refugees with means of support could be accepted. The rest of the Latin American nations restricted immigration to agricultural workers, although the Dominican Republic and Ecuador made some allowances for teachers and scientists.[40] Unfortunately for American hopes of resettlement, few German Jewish refugees qualified for admission under Latin American restrictions.

No nation mentioned Palestine as a solution to resettlement. Chaim Weizmann, former president of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, concluded that there was a tacit agreement

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[39] Ibid., pp. 17-18, 21.

[40] Ibid., pp. 27-28, 32, 36, 38.

among all delegates to avoid the issue. Since Palestine had absorbed large numbers of Jewish refugees, Britain feared worsening Arab-Jewish tensions if Palestine became the answer. Many representatives, including those from Jewish groups, believed that Palestine had too little territory.[41] Nonetheless, no territory was offered as a suitable resettlement site.

The only reference to Palestine came from Winterton at the end of the conference. Winterton believed that he owed the delegates an explanation of British policy. He denied that the crisis could be solved by unlimited immigration into Palestine, and he supported the supposition that Palestine was too small. Winterton believed that Britain had a good record on Jewish immigration into Palestine, since forty thousand German Jews had been admitted. Winterton promised the delegates that Britain was reviewing the situation in Palestine and that immigration restriction was a temporary condition until peace was restored. Winterton told the delegates not to expect changes very soon. He warned the members that Britain considered Palestine a British issue not under the jurisdiction of the conference, but he attempted to offer a substitute for Palestine. According to Winterton, Britain was prepared to consider East Africa for settlement, and

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[41]Chaim Weizmann, "Palestine's Role in the Solution of the Jewish Problem," Foreign Affairs 20(1942):326.

private groups were now working on some immigration into Kenya. Winterton refused to discuss the details but added that only small numbers would be accepted.[42] With Palestine officially barred, resettlement looked hopeless. Certainly cooperation from Germany, especially on provision of funds, was a necessary condition to offers of territory, but the failure of American diplomats to procure new areas of settlement hurt their demand for a separate agency.

Lack of resettlement sites became part of an argument to subordinate the new committee to the League. High Commissioner Malcolm received an opportunity to address the conference. He explained that he had undertaken resettlement tasks in 1936 when the League allowed him to negotiate with other nations for immigration territory and refugee employment. He told the delegates that he quickly realized that resettlement for large numbers of refugees was impossible, and he ruled it out as a solution. Judging from the delegates' speeches, Malcolm concluded that nothing had changed. He declared that neither the League nor the private organizations could succeed in large-scale resettlement. Due to severe unemployment and economic depression, Malcolm recommended continuing gradual immigration. Otherwise, he predicted that outbreaks of anti-Semitism would result. From his experience, he concluded that countries wanted to

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[42] "Evian Proceedings," p. 42.

avoid commitments to mass immigration and concentrate on individual applicants who could find jobs. Whether Jewish refugees or not, competition from refugees caused hostility in receiving nations. He believed that the new committee could serve most effectively by aiding the private groups along with the High Commissioner. He asked that the new agency provide funds for the private groups working on immigration, but his suggestion that concerned governments lend money for refugee work appeared impossible after the delegates disclosed their national economic situations. Malcolm believed that American support would greatly enhance the power of the new group. He hoped this influence could persuade Germany to make more funds available for refugees; then consideration could be given to large-scale resettlement.[43] The European delegates agreed with his predictions of failure. Resettlement of potential refugees appeared superfluous in view of immediate refugee problems.

Winterton led opposition to establishment of a separate committee. Great Britain favored any move toward internationalism made by Washington, but Britain thought that the new committee might hurt British diplomacy. Prominent in British thinking was the recent need of additional troops to prevent violence in Palestine caused by Jewish immigration. The new committee might encourage resettlement in Palestine

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[43] Ibid., pp. 32-34.

and cause the British trouble. London preferred the League to retain jurisdiction of the refugee question because Britain had sufficient influence in the League to protect British interests.[44] Consequently, Winterton argued that the new proposal copied work already being done. He reminded the delegates that similar duties had been assigned to the High Commissioner by the League on 14 May 1938.[45]

The other European and Commonwealth delegates supported Winterton's position. Switzerland argued that the League needed complete authority over refugees because European countries were the most seriously affected, and the League had established agencies at work in Europe. Berenger echoed the desire to prevent duplication of League activities, and the Canadian delegate agreed. While Norway believed an agency with American support would persuade Germany to release refugee funds, Norway also opposed an organization infringing on League jurisdiction.[46]

The convention elected Taylor chairman on 7 July 1938, probably out of deference for Roosevelt's initiative in calling the conference, and his election strengthened the American position.[47] Taylor reminded the delegates that

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[44]Feingold, Politics of Rescue, p. 29.

[45]"Evian Proceedings," p. 15.

[46]Ibid., pp. 16-17, 20-21, 38.

[47]Ibid., p. 23.

the League could not negotiate directly with Germany. Since an agency removed from the League could, Taylor argued that the new committee would be more effective. He pointed to Malcolm's participation in the conference as evidence that the United States would not interfere with League activities.[48] His assurances convinced the delegates that Washington did not intend to encroach upon League authority, and the committee's ability to negotiate with Germany persuaded delegates, previously supporting Winterton, to back the United States.[49] The representatives also agreed to submit confidential reports on their immigration laws and resettlement opportunities to a subcommittee. They established another subcommittee to hear representatives from private organizations at the conference.[50]

Taylor accomplished the major American objective, although he conceded some points to the British. In a resolution adopted 14 July 1938, the delegates created the Intergovernmental Committee on Political Refugees. They requested that Germany cooperate by providing refugees with money for immigration. Under the resolution, jurisdiction of the committee included both potential refugees from Germany and Austria and those already living in

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[48]Feingold, Politics of Rescue. pp. 29-30.

[49]"Evian Proceedings," p. 39.

[50]Ibid., p. 24.

temporary locations. The delegates agreed to continue submitting confidential reports to the committee on the numbers of refugees their countries could accept, and the resolution stipulated that no country would be asked to provide money for resettlement. The permanent body included one chairman and four vice chairmen to be designated by the members. A director, appointed by and subordinate to the committee, would negotiate with Germany on resettlement and handle correspondence with members on relocation sites. The delegates postponed indefinitely a decision on cooperation with the League and provided for the first meeting to be held in London on 3 August 1938.[51]

Once the United States became the sponsor of the new refugee committee, the other nations expected American diplomats to bear most of the responsibility for finding a solution. Berenger heralded the Evian conference as America's first step toward international assistance, and the Colombian delegate implied that Roosevelt used the conference to push Americans away from isolationism.[52] While the delegates urged Taylor to pressure Germany into easing oppressive policies, Colombia emphasized that member nations were not required to negotiate with Germany on

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[51] Ibid., pp. 54-55.

[52] Ibid., pp. 16, 25, 45.

German domestic policy. Their only commitment remained a commitment of sympathy for the refugees.[53]

The resettlement subcommittee report failed to relieve the pressure on the American delegation. The subcommittee reiterated that economic conditions prevented mass immigration, especially since refugees left Germany destitute. While existing laws allowed a significant number of refugee applications to be reviewed, only farmers or some laborers could secure admission. Most nations agreed to consider some resettlement in their territories if the private organizations or refugee agencies produced a workable plan.[54]

The second subcommittee report indicated that the private groups had little money to finance resettlement. Thirty-nine organizations sent representatives including the Society of Friends, the World Jewish Congress, the Jewish Agency for Palestine, and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. The shortage of funds among the charitable groups made their cooperation on immigration dependent upon German allowances for the transfer of refugee assets. Their only suggestion for resettlement remained increased immigration into Palestine, already rejected by the British.[55]

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[53] Ibid., pp. 39-40.

[54] Ibid., p. 51.

[55] Ibid., pp. 49-50.

On 15 July, the conference adjourned. In Taylor's closing address, he acknowledged that nations could not be expected to receive refugees without capital, but he emphasized that progress had been made by establishing a means to negotiate the issue.[56] Nonetheless, the Americans had little reason to believe that Germany would release refugee money. On 8 July, the British ambassador in Berlin asked the Foreign Ministry if Germany would cooperate with a new committee by allowing refugees to leave with their capital. The American ambassador, Hugh Wilson, also asked for cooperation. Germany refused to cooperate or consider a transfer of refugee funds. Furthermore, Germany argued that other nations had no right to interfere in an internal matter.[57]

The Evian conference failed to achieve international cooperation on refugee resettlement. Despite American pressure on the delegates, no territory was made available for large-scale resettlement. Latin American members refused to relax restrictive immigration policies, and European delegates remained more concerned about resettlement of refugees within their territories than resettlement of potential refugees from Germany. The conference

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[56] Ibid., pp. 41-42.

[57] U.S., Department of State, Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, ser. D, 13 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1953), 5:894-895 (hereafter cited as German Foreign Documents).

demonstrated that the success of Washington's resettlement effort depended upon increased funds for immigration, and procurement of those funds became the major task of the new committee. Taylor pledged the committee to negotiations with Germany on the transfer of refugee assets, and the delegates indicated that Washington bore primary responsibility for establishing the discussions. German hostility to cooperation with the committee increased the burden on American diplomats. Washington needed funds for immigrants in order to bargain with receiving nations for resettlement, but release of Jewish assets by the Reich remained doubtful.

CHAPTER III

REFUGEES AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

Between July and October 1938, the United States provided the sole impetus for discussions with Germany on behalf of refugees, despite opposition from France, Great Britain, and Latin America. America's desire for negotiations complicated the domestic security of other nations and the maintenance of peace in Europe. The first official committee meeting revealed Latin America's hostility to resettlement. Despite State Department pressure on the republics, Latin America continued to evade Washington's hope that these nations would accept large-scale immigration, and they threatened to withdraw from the committee altogether. While American diplomats concentrated on keeping the committee intact, provision of relocation sites took second priority, and failure to secure immigration overseas frightened European committee members which had large refugee populations. The nations surrounding Germany switched their allegiance to the League of Nations, and the committee almost became defunct by August. Led by Britain, European countries wanted the same priority given to resettlement of refugees within their territory as that given to potential refugees from

Germany. Washington's assurance that both cases would receive equal treatment maintained the committee as an entity separate from the League but brought it no closer to negotiations. Britain, engaged in diplomacy with Germany over German takeover of the Sudetenland, blocked Washington's drive for discussions on refugees. Britain did not want its position on the committee to jeopardize the recent policy of appeasement and attempted to delay negotiations on refugees indefinitely. Washington believed that the refugee problem undermined peace in Europe, and President Franklin Roosevelt appealed directly to the British prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, in October to instigate discussions on refugees with Adolf Hitler. Although Chamberlain refused, the British Foreign Office agreed to support an official request by the committee for negotiations. Three months after the Evian resolutions, the committee, under the leadership of American diplomats, made its initial overture to the German government.

The committee held its first meeting on 3 August 1938 in London where the tension between Washington and Latin America over the refugee issue surfaced with the election of officers. Myron C. Taylor opened the meeting and called for resettlement offers which Washington hoped Latin America would provide. Taylor estimated that over six hundred thousand Germans needed resettlement and suggested that the

committee seek cooperation from Germany to insure a systematic exodus of refugees and transfer of refugee capital.[1] An American, George Rublee, became director of the committee and assumed responsibility for conducting negotiations with Germany. Britain retained an important role on the committee with the election of Earl Winterton, British delegate to the Evian conference, as chairman. The officers included four vice chairmen with Taylor as the representative of the United States and Henry Berenger, delegate to Evian, serving for France.[2] The United States wanted Helio Lobo, Brazilian delegate at Evian, to accept a position as vice chairman. American diplomats believed that Lobo's acceptance would help insure cooperation from Latin America since Brazil had been an early leader in the admission of refugees. Brazil opposed Washington's suggestion and tried to appoint the Brazilian commercial attaché in London as its delegate. Britain and France objected to the low rank of Brazil's choice, especially in comparison with the stature of the other vice chairmen. Brazil finally accepted the position but refused to name a delegate. The State Department promised to use its influence to gain Brazil's cooperation on the committee. Cordell Hull instructed the American

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[1] Rosenman, ed., Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 7:171-172.

[2] New York Times, 3 August 1938, p. 13.

minister in Rio de Janeiro to stress the importance of the committee's efforts and the interest of the United States in seeking a solution to the refugee problem. He tried without success to persuade Brazil to appoint an appropriate delegate.[3] In London, Taylor continued to pressure Latin America. He urged the republics to relax restrictions on immigration and suggested that cooperation on resettlement might persuade Britain and the United States to accept one-half of all potential immigrants.[4]

Brazil's truculence was not the only disappointment, for five of the original thirty-two members failed to appoint delegates to the meeting. Many of the twenty-seven participants were members of the diplomatic corps stationed in London. Most had not attended the Evian conference, and few held the rank of Winterton and Rublee.[5] The single achievement of the session remained the selection of executive officers, although the delegates discussed, in general, economic ramifications of negotiations with Germany. All expected Germany to demand financial compensation, either in cash or by trade favoritism, in exchange for cooperation and transfer of refugee capital. They agreed that allowing increased exports from Germany provided one possibility, but

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[3] Foreign Relations, 1938, 1:758.

[4] New York Times, 3 August 1938, p. 13.

[5] Feingold, Politics of Rescue, p. 37.

they could not decide on the specific inducements to offer Germany.[6] The election of officers, however, provided the committee with a means of formulating policy. Rublee, Winterton, and the vice chairmen decided procedure for the committee; Rublee was responsible for negotiations on resettlement with receiving nations in addition to negotiations with Germany. Any final plans would be submitted to all thirty-two members.[7]

Following adjournment of the London meeting, the executive officers tentatively agreed that the British, French, and American ambassadors in Germany should request negotiations from the German Foreign Ministry, but Winterton and Berenger wanted Washington's assurances that Latin America would cooperate on resettlement and that international trade would be protected from German manipulation. To avoid a mass confrontation between the ambassadors and Germany, Taylor agreed that Hugh Wilson, the American ambassador, would make the initial approach. Winterton and Berenger promised that their ambassadors would support him and express their governments' interests in a solution to the refugee problem, but both professed little faith in a successful outcome to negotiations. Berenger feared that

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[6] New York Times, 4 August 1938, p. 9.

[7] Myron C. Taylor, "Confidential Memorandum Regarding Refugees, 1938-1947," 30 July 1947, Myron C. Taylor Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

Germany would use the talks to increase immigration and German exports without providing financial compensation to receiving nations. He wanted the State Department to oppose any attempt by Germany to send manufactured goods with refugees as the German contribution to cooperation. Winterton and Berenger thought that Rublee should concentrate on Latin America and get resettlement sites before going to Germany. They believed that the American republics were deliberately enacting restrictions to protect themselves and doubted that Latin America would make a commitment on resettlement until the committee pressed them for a specific offer.[8]

Taylor recognized that resettlement posed the greatest obstacle to Latin American and European cooperation, and he pressed unsuccessfully for an increased commitment from the United States. He cabled Hull on 12 August that the committee had to provide Rublee with a resettlement plan and told Hull that the United States would have to take the lead. Taylor estimated that the United States would have to admit a large part of sixty thousand refugees per year, especially since Roosevelt had sponsored the new committee. Taylor found the American immigration laws inadequate for the crisis because they included no provision for forcible immigration, and he wanted Congress to amend the act to give

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[8]Foreign Relations, 1938, 1:759-760.

refugees first priority on admission. Taylor told Hull that he realized America carried a large part of the burden already, but he needed an American commitment at least to a five-year immigration plan. He asked Hull for a proposal before meeting with Rublee, Winterton and the other vice chairmen on 23 August to finish planning the approach to Germany.[9] Hull quickly informed Taylor that no change in the immigration laws could be expected. Restrictionists in Congress still fought relaxation, and Roosevelt had promised that any immigration plan would adhere to existing laws. Therefore, Hull instructed Taylor to stress that the United States took 27,370 Germans per year under the quota and would continue to do so. Over a five-year period, America could be expected to accept over one hundred thousand immigrants from Germany and play a significant role in alleviating the refugee problem.[10] Hull reaffirmed the position held by the United States at the Evian conference and could offer nothing more to reassure Britain and France that resettlement for potential refugees would be available.

Transfer of refugee capital proved as serious an obstacle to immigration as the lack of resettlement sites, and Washington agreed with Berenger that equal trade among nations had to be maintained. Taylor wanted the Reich to

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[9] Ibid., pp. 761-763.

[10] Ibid., p. 768.

release a small amount of foreign exchange which would enable refugees to begin resettlement. He suggested the Haavarah exchange with Palestine as a method of transfer and believed that the committee could devise a similar operation using the Bank of International Settlements.[11] Hull instructed Taylor and Rublee to prevent any extreme or unacceptable designs by Germany, for Hull expected that Germany would seek increased exports in the negotiations. Hull did not oppose using exports for the exchange of refugee assets but wanted equal trade rights preserved. Therefore, he declared the Haavarah arrangement totally unacceptable to the United States. While the trade concessions granted to Germany by Palestine were insignificant, Hull thought that the huge numbers of refugees coupled with equally large amounts of capital would upset the balance of international trade. Hull's diplomacy rested on equal trade agreements, and he refused to allow the refugee problem to become a weapon against his policy. In addition to American interests, he maintained that the United States would not permit restrictive or unfair trade practices between nations. To satisfy the United States, Germany would have to provide other compensation for refugees besides manufactured goods. Hull suggested that Germany establish a fund from which immigrants could seek transfer of their capital at a later date. Although he realized that refugees

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[11] Ibid., pp. 765-766.

would have to trust Germany to make the payments, Hull argued that this arrangement provided some collateral against resettlement expenses and loans from private groups. He doubted that Germany would allow refugees to leave with foreign currency because Germany had been unable to secure a favorable volume of foreign exchange, and he instructed Rublee to suggest his alternative if no other plan worked. He encouraged Rublee to seek relaxation of emigration taxes especially regarding the "flight tax." Hull recognized that the financial arrangements were crucial to the success of the committee but warned that Germany would not be allowed to use American involvement or encouragement of the committee to further German ends. He would negotiate an exchange by exports if refugees removed goods that would benefit resettlement but opposed concessions to Germany on the international market. Hull warned Rublee that any arrangement had to be considered in terms of American interests in international trade, and he instructed Rublee to maintain caution in consideration of any agreement.[12]

Rublee arrived in London on 15 August prepared to present the American suggestions to the executive officers. He conferred with Taylor, Wilson, and Joseph Kennedy, American ambassador to Great Britain. Wilson agreed to request that the German foreign minister invite Rublee to

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[12] Ibid., pp. 774-776, 788-790.

Berlin for discussions on immigration. Rublee intended to confine the talks to general questions and to postpone negotiations over a detailed plan because Wilson counselled that Germany might demand specific offers of resettlement. The Americans hoped to establish negotiations and then stall for time to coordinate resettlement with the receiving nations. In return, they wanted a general proposal from Germany for the provision of funds to refugees to present to the committee. Rublee and Taylor hoped that America's commitment to resettlement would encourage other countries to make offers. If that happened, they could present Germany with an immigration plan. To preserve the negotiations, Rublee intended to emphasize the general nature of the discussions so that the press would not suggest that a solution appeared imminent.[13] While the committee recognized that German persecution remained the cause of the refugee crisis, the members feared intimations of censure from the committee or press. They never considered using committee pressure on Germany to halt oppression because they feared that Germany might increase persecution. They concluded that increased funds for refugees and, subsequently, greater opportunities for immigration offered the best chance for success.[14]

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[13] Ibid., pp. 776-777.

[14] Rosenman, ed., Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 7:172.

Washington's policies failed to satisfy the other committee members, and American diplomats encountered additional delays in negotiations. The meeting scheduled for 23 August had to be postponed because Brazil refused to send a delegate and Berenger did not show up. France remained disturbed over the committee's emphasis on potential refugees instead of resettlement of refugees already in Europe, particularly since France had the most serious refugee problem.[15] In addition, it appeared increasingly unlikely that Latin America would receive the immigrants crowding into Europe. American pressure on Brazil apparently had failed, and other Latin American nations remained equally hostile to resettlement. Argentina informed Rublee that Argentine immigration laws would be changed as of 1 October. Although Argentina had issued six hundred visas to German refugees, immigrants would not be admitted after 1 October. The new policy meant that special passage had to be arranged to get the refugees to Argentina in time. Rublee requested exemption for all visas given before 1 September, and warned Washington that it was crucial for the committee to succeed with Argentina. Consequently, the American ambassador in Argentina, under instructions from Hull, urged admittance of the six hundred refugees. The State Department agreed that if these refugees became victims of greater restrictions, the committee would

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[15] Foreign Relations, 1938, 1:769-770.

be seriously jeopardized before any negotiations could take place. Argentina agreed only to review individual applications in accordance with Argentine domestic needs. The Argentine foreign minister maintained that the new laws were necessary for protection and that Argentina had more Jews for its population than any other country. The foreign minister countered American pressure by asking why the United States had not doubled its German quota as the refugee problem expanded. The American ambassador reiterated that Roosevelt had promised to protect existing laws for the United States and other nations. The foreign minister insisted that only farmers were needed in Argentina whereas the expected refugees were mostly artists. In late September Argentina agreed to a compromise. Refugees with visas could come to Argentina provided that they left Germany before 1 October.[16]

Chile provided another blow to Washington's hope of resettlement in Latin America. Replying to a request that Chile pay a proportionate share of Rublee's expenses, Chile's consul general told Rublee that Chile's cooperation extended only to the Evian conference. Chile refused to accept responsibility for the work of the committee. The committee merely introduced proposals for the members' consideration, and Chile had consistently opposed the committee

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[16] Ibid., pp. 784, 786, 791.

in favor of the League. Therefore, Chile felt unable to comply with the request. As in the case of Argentina, Rublee warned the State Department that Chile's defection would undermine the functions of the committee, especially if withdrawal occurred before any negotiations could be established. Added to Brazil's hostility to the committee, Rublee believed that Chile's action would influence other nations to back out. He urged Hull to use American influence to stop Chile and suggested that Washington emphasize that it had no intention of using Latin America as a disposal site for risky immigrants. Instead, Rublee wanted Chile to understand that the committee knew refugees needed agricultural retraining before admission. Hull instructed the American ambassador in Chile to persuade Chile to remain, and, by 17 September, Chile agreed to consider agricultural immigrants suitable for assimilation.[17] Among the Latin American republics, only the Dominican Republic made a resettlement offer to Rublee. The Dominican Republic offered to accept between fifty thousand and one hundred thousand refugees. After Britain and the United States investigated the offer to see if the country could comply, Hull informed Rublee that large-scale resettlement appeared unlikely. While the country needed workers, the Dominican Republic also wanted farm laborers and not the professional or

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[17] Ibid., pp. 787-788.

commercial professions prevalent among German refugees. Hull cautioned Rublee not to count on the offer because it appeared to be a symbolic act without substance.[18] While American diplomacy maintained a semblance of Latin American cooperation, Washington failed to extract resettlement commitments from its southern neighbors. As a result, European committee members became wary of the committee's efforts, and worsening conditions in Europe did little to alleviate their fears.

Coinciding with increased restrictionism in Latin America, nations that had previously provided temporary asylum for German refugees began deportations. On 20 August, Finland deported sixty illegal German refugees, including women and children; Finland declared that such actions were necessary due to its limited capacity to absorb immigrants.[19] On 25 August, Switzerland deported refugees found in Swiss territory without visas. The Swiss also detained six hundred refugees at Basel under police guard and prohibited their right to work. The policies reflected the constant increase in illegal immigration by Austrian refugees, and Switzerland called upon the League and the committee to provide resettlement.[20] While Europe suffered

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[18] Ibid., pp. 764-765, 773-774.

[19] New York Times, 21 August 1938, p. 30.

[20] Ibid., 25 August 1938, p. 8.

from the growth of German refugee populations, American diplomats faced the spread of anti-Semitic policies into eastern Europe. Poland advised the State Department late in August that "acute anti-Semiticism" might appear in Poland, Rumania, and Hungary. Unless the committee agreed to resettle eastern European Jews as well as German refugees, other nations might force their Jewish populations into exile and compel the committee's cooperation. The American ambassador in Poland wrote Hull that the economic decline of eastern European Jews justified their inclusion in resettlement schemes. Hull replied that the committee would not acquiesce in practices of violence or expulsion against minorities in eastern Europe which would force responsibility for unwanted groups upon other nations. While Washington knew that the problem extended beyond Germany, Hull reiterated that American involvement was a response to the emergency created by Austria's annexation and added that a solution to international Jewish immigration appeared unlikely in view of the difficulties arising from resettlement of German refugees.[21] Washington stopped Poland from taking advantage of American diplomacy on behalf of refugees, but the danger of the committee's focus on potential refugees prompted Britain and France to revive the question of League jurisdiction postponed at the Evian conference.

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[21] Foreign Relations, 1938, 1:778-780, 783.

Lack of resettlement opportunities brought Washington into direct confrontation with European nations. The League sought relief of Europe's immediate needs by working for resettlement of refugees in transit countries, while the United States proposed bringing more refugees out of Germany into countries that were already overburdened.[22] On 12 August, Taylor told Hull that Britain agreed to cooperate with the committee only because it had the advantage of negotiating with Germany, but Britain demanded that the League participate in all discussions with receiving nations and relief groups. Britain intended to continue the High Commissioner's office without any loss of power or prestige, and Taylor feared that Britain would take over the committee if it failed to establish negotiations with Germany.[23] The State Department disagreed entirely with Britain's position. Hull replied that American sponsorship of the committee became necessary because the League failed to alleviate the refugee crisis. Furthermore, he doubted the League's effectiveness since it could not negotiate with Germany and since it refused to consider more than temporary solutions. Hull believed the committee's negotiations with resettlement nations were as significant as the negotiations with Germany.

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[22]Feingold, Politics of Rescue, p. 38.

[23]Foreign Relations, 1938, 1:763-764.

He declared Britain's attempt to separate the functions unnecessarily obstinate since resettlement of persons in Germany was ultimately resettlement of refugees. Hull suggested that the League continue to provide legal identification for refugees and aid long-term resettlement schemes. Rublee replied that European nations wanted Washington's assurances that refugees in Europe would be resettled on an equal basis with refugees in Germany, or the United States would lose European cooperation. Most members considered the committee's function as the establishment of negotiations and resettlement of German citizens directly between Germany and nations abroad without benefit of transit through Europe. France, Belgium, and the Netherlands refused to provide temporary refuge for immigrants leaving Germany under any plan that the committee negotiated. These nations considered refugees within their territory as the first priority and agreed to the committee only in the hope of preventing the illegal entry of more. Rublee believed that he could maintain their cooperation if Washington promised not to slight their problem in favor of potential refugees, and the League was ready to cooperate with the committee on negotiations with receiving nations if refugees in Europe and potential refugees from Germany received equal opportunities for resettlement. Although Hull insisted that the outcome of the German negotiations in no way affected the committee's value, he agreed that the

committee should devote equal effort to the relocation of refugees in Europe and potential refugees in Germany. Hull promised cooperation with the League on both aspects of resettlement.[24]

The officers of the committee met on 31 August, but the continuing problem of Brazil threatened to disrupt the recent agreements between Washington and the European members. A Brazilian delegate again failed to appear, and Brazil informed the committee that it would not participate. Winterton and Berenger pressed Taylor and Rublee to demand that Brazil cooperate or resign from the executive position. The Americans hoped to prevent Brazil's withdrawal and the subsequent harm to the committee's prestige. Taylor and Rublee convinced the committee to postpone a decision until a meeting with the Brazilian ambassador in London could be set up to hear Brazil's objections. In the meantime, the officers agreed to proceed with the negotiations. Winterton and Berenger promised to recommend to their governments that the French and British ambassadors in Berlin support Wilson's request to Germany for negotiations, but Taylor and Rublee acquiesced in their colleagues' request that the approach to Germany wait for an appropriate moment.[25]

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[24] Ibid., pp. 769-774.

[25] Ibid., pp. 780-782.

This concession reflected Europe's preoccupation with the crisis over Czechoslovakia which pre-empted the refugee problem in British diplomacy.

After the annexation of Austria, Hitler wanted to take the Sudetenland, part of Czechoslovakia after World War I. Czechoslovakian opposition drew France and Russia into the struggle as Czechoslovakia's allies, and France, Germany, and Czechoslovakia began military maneuvers in September 1938. The outbreak of hostilities appeared likely. Chamberlain travelled to Germany twice in September to negotiate with Hitler who intended to take the Sudetenland in October despite Czechoslovakian mobilization. Under British and French pressure, Czechoslovakia agreed to relinquish the Sudetenland, and war was temporarily averted.

The crisis in September produced a series of problems for Washington and the committee. On 16 August, Taylor reported to Hull that Czechoslovakia wanted to join the committee as other nations bordering Germany had done. The British refused to allow it on the grounds that Czechoslovakia could not be considered a nation of permanent resettlement. Furthermore, Britain pointed out that Czechoslovakian involvement would be politically unwise since negotiations with Germany had begun over the Sudetenland.[26] For the committee, German occupation of the Sudetenland meant

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[26] Ibid., p. 767

another extension of the refugee problem. Some twenty thousand Jews, both Czechoslovakian and German, left Czechoslovakia for Poland, England, Norway, and Sweden.[27] In addition, the diplomatic crisis delayed the committee's work for resettlement and provoked another conflict between Washington and London.

The State Department thought that refugees should be included in British negotiations with Germany, while Britain wanted no official action by the committee to disrupt its tenuous agreements with Hitler. On 20 September, Rublee suggested to Winterton that Chamberlain introduce the committee's proposals to Hitler. While Rublee understood that more serious problems had to be dealt with first, the American officers believed that Chamberlain could expedite the negotiations. Winterton replied that the British Foreign Office now believed that an unofficial approach to Germany should be made. He wanted to send Rublee's assistant, Robert Pell, to Berlin to assess the opportunity for discussions and smooth the way for Rublee. Rublee deduced that the suggestion to send Pell was a deliberate evasion of direct negotiations with Germany. He maintained that the opportunity appeared excellent for talks and insisted that he, as director, should go to Berlin. Winterton answered that his government believed that Germany would refuse

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[27]Tartakower and Grossman, The Jewish Refugee, p. 37.

negotiations unless Rublee presented both resettlement sites and a plan of financial compensation. Consequently, Britain insisted that an unofficial trip by Pell, without committee involvement, remained the best approach, and Winterton denied that Chamberlain could discuss refugees with Hitler.[28]

The change in British policy toward the committee remained until Roosevelt made a personal appeal to Chamberlain. On 5 October, Roosevelt sent a letter to the British prime minister asking that refugees be included in Chamberlain's diplomacy with Hitler. Roosevelt told Chamberlain that he supported Britain's attempt to maintain peace in Europe, but Roosevelt argued that the refugee problem remained one of the obstacles to international order. Since Chamberlain had direct contact with Hitler, Roosevelt wanted him to discuss the issue. He reminded Chamberlain that the committee had carefully refrained from castigating Germany's policy and instead was attempting to achieve a workable solution for all concerned. Roosevelt believed that Germany could not refuse such a reasonable request to cooperate. If Chamberlain would bring these points to Hitler's attention, Roosevelt thought that Rublee could begin successful negotiations. Chamberlain refused to intervene on the

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[28] Foreign Relations, 1938, 1:790-794, 797.

question, but he did promise that the British ambassador in Germany would request negotiations.[29]

The United States seized the opportunity and pressed for action. Sumner Welles told Roosevelt that a definitive request for talks should be made immediately. Welles contacted Rublee by telephone on 10 October and told him to wait for the American and British ambassadors to make the approach. Rublee insisted that they delay no longer and warned that the British Foreign Office still opposed the negotiations. Welles promised that the State Department would increase its pressure on Britain to cooperate.[30]

Rublee remained pessimistic about Britain's intentions and insisted that he needed an answer from Germany to present to the committee. On 12 October, Rublee cabled Washington that Roosevelt's appeal had little affect on British policy. The Foreign Office continued to believe that the committee's work was damaging appeasement and therefore wanted to delay Rublee's trip to Berlin. Britain encouraged Rublee to concentrate on resettlement abroad, but Rublee explained that his talks with the resettlement nations indicated that no commitments would be forthcoming until Germany promised some relief for refugees. No one would accept destitute immigrants. France was waiting to see what

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[29]Rosenman, ed., Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 7:172-173.

[30]Foreign Relations, 1938, 1:795-796.

Britain would do, and Britain had informed Rublee that neither its colonies nor territories would be available for large-scale resettlement. Rublee intended to press Winterton for an offer but doubted that Winterton would make a satisfactory commitment. Consequently, Rublee counselled that the negotiations with Germany should begin immediately in order to give him something to show other resettlement nations. He told Washington that he had received no indications that Germany would refuse to cooperate. The only opposition to discussions had come from Britain, and Rublee doubted that Britain knew Germany's position on the question. If Germany did refuse, another course could be pursued, but the absence of any approach to Germany hurt the committee's position.[31]

Three days after receiving Rublee's analysis, Hull instructed Wilson to request negotiations from the German Foreign Office. Hull wanted Wilson to remind Germany that the committee had sparked no sensationalism or criticism, although Germany's policies provoked ill will among many nations. Since the committee sought a rational answer to the problem, Washington considered cooperation a legitimate request. While Rublee could give Germany some indication of resettlement opportunities, a German offer of aid on the

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[31] Ibid., pp. 796-798.

financial aspects would help convince other nations to take more immigrants. Hull informed Wilson that the British ambassador had agreed to support him.[32]

On 18 October the United States and Great Britain submitted formal requests for negotiations with Germany. Wilson contacted Ernst von Weizsaecker, state secretary, because the German foreign minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, was away from Berlin. Following Hull's instructions, Wilson told Weizsaecker that Germany had disturbed other nations with the policy of forcible emigration. Therefore, Wilson believed that German cooperation on an immigration plan would solve the refugee crisis and improve Germany's international image. Weizsaecker replied that he could not give Wilson an official answer, but Weizsaecker personally opposed negotiations. If the talks failed, Weizsaecker feared that Germany would receive the blame, and he stressed that, according to reports received in Germany, there seemed little hope of resettlement from the committee's efforts. Wilson interjected that cooperation on the transfer of refugee assets would improve the offers of resettlement, and he added that Germany could easily receive blame if Nazi leaders failed to accept responsibility for their policies and the effects on other nations.[33] In addition,

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[32] Ibid., pp. 799-800.

[33] Ibid., pp. 800-801.

Wilson cited American acceptance of over twenty-seven thousand German immigrants each year as proof that America, at least, was not reluctant to accept refugees.[34] The British ambassador echoed Wilson's request in an audience with Weizsaecker on the same day. Weizsaecker repeated his opposition to the proposal because failure in the negotiations would open the way for criticism of Germany. He added that the committee wanted the talks only to prove that it had value since the committee's attempts at resettlement remained unsuccessful. Nonetheless, Weizsaecker promised both ambassadors that their requests would be presented to the Foreign Ministry.[35]

In the three months following formation of the committee, a request for negotiations from Germany remained the agency's only accomplishment, for divisions among member nations prevented significant progress. Latin America remained fearful that Washington intended to force refugees into their territory. While Washington was able to retain Latin American membership on the committee, no Latin American republic offered territory for resettlement. Most countries wanted to see what provisions Germany would make for refugees before offering commitments to relocation, but European problems blocked negotiations for economic

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[34] German Foreign Documents, ser. D, 5:901.

[35] Ibid., pp. 900-901.

compensation. European nations had greater problems than refugees as France, Germany, and Czechoslovakia mobilized during the Sudeten crisis, and Europe shifted diplomatic efforts to appeasement. Caught between the political upheavals which signaled approaching war in Europe and the restrictionist policies of the Western Hemisphere, American diplomats struggled to maintain an agency capable of negotiations with Germany for a solution to forcible immigration that would be beneficial to all nations. By October 1938, American diplomacy, supplemented by the personal intervention of Roosevelt, established Anglo-American cooperation on refugees but faced the doubtful cooperation of German leaders. Germany remained anxious to protect its international image from increased exposure to the Reich's policy on Jews.

CHAPTER IV

REFUGEES AND NAZI PARTY POLITICS

In November 1938, the Nazi party, encouraged by Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels, introduced widespread, organized violence against Jews left in Germany, and the international outcry against the terrorism led to the first contact between Germany and the refugee committee. The German Foreign Ministry continued to oppose direct negotiations with George Rublee despite Anglo-American diplomatic pressure, but moderates within the Nazi hierarchy leaned toward cooperation on immigration in order to improve Germany's international image. After the terrorism erupted in November, the United States and Great Britain increased their efforts on behalf of refugees. President Roosevelt recalled the American ambassador from Germany, and he sent Myron Taylor to London to prepare for a full meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees. Great Britain promised resettlement within its colonies, and the United States planned to provide financial aid for resettlement. Although the Anglo-American efforts failed to procure an invitation for Rublee to visit Berlin, international concern convinced Adolf Hitler to attempt cooperation with the committee. He gave Hjalmar Schacht, president of the Reichsbank, permission to meet Rublee in

London. Schacht acted under the direction of Hermann Goering and without the full knowledge or approval of the Foreign Ministry. The influence of less radical German leaders temporarily prevailed in Germany due to the unexpected reaction of world opinion to the violence in November. Through this split in the Nazi party, Rublee gained his first opportunity to discuss the refugee crisis with a representative of the German government.

In October and early November 1938, the German Foreign Ministry evaded repeated requests for negotiations by British, French, and American diplomats. Shortly after the initial inquiry had been made, Hugh Wilson returned to the Foreign Ministry for a meeting with Ernst Weizsaecker and reiterated Washington's desire for German cooperation on Jewish immigration. Weizsaecker replied that the finance and economics departments had not yet submitted an opinion on the desirability of negotiations with Rublee, but Joachim von Ribbentrop remained opposed. Weizsaecker refused to predict when Wilson might expect a final decision.[1] The counselor of the French embassy made an approach on 24 October and expressed his country's immediate concern over the large numbers of Jews fleeing Germany into France. Emphasizing the economic burden imposed on the French by the refugee population, the ambassador communicated his

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[1] Foreign Relations, 1938, 1:814.

government's desire for a solution to the problem. He received the same reply that had been given to the American diplomat. The German Foreign Ministry doubted that negotiations would produce significant results and feared that other nations would gain an opportunity to criticize Germany for the lack of funds available to emigrants.[2] The British chargé d'affairs arrived on 7 November and pressed Weizsaecker for an answer to Britain's earlier request. Weizsaecker replied that the question was being considered by several departments concerned with emigrants and that a decision could not be hurried.[3] The German state secretary knew that the foreign minister had refused direct negotiations with the committee. When Weizsaecker sent transcripts of his conversation with Wilson to Ribbentrop, Ribbentrop replied that he would not receive Rublee in Berlin.[4]

When joint diplomatic pressure proved unsuccessful, London sought an alternative method of persuading Germany to reach a decision. Following Weizsaecker's unenthusiastic response to the offer of negotiations, Britain predicted that Germany would ultimately refuse cooperation. The British asked Washington if they should try to embarass

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[2] German Foreign Documents, ser. D, 5:902-903.

[3] Ibid., p. 903.

[4] Ibid., p. 902, footnote 1.

Germany by convening a full meeting of the committee and publicizing Germany's response to the requests. London counselled that the exposure would injure Germany's international relations and might, therefore, provoke a decision. Cordell Hull rejected Britain's proposal and told Wilson to assure Germany that no extreme publicity would be given to the possibility of negotiations. Hull thought that the British were wrong and hoped that Germany might be persuaded to meet with Rublee.[5]

On 2 November, the State Department had received its first indications that some Nazi leaders disagreed with Ribbentrop's refusal to negotiate. Wilson reported a secret conversation with a prominent Berlin financier who told Wilson that Walter Funk, German minister of national economy, and Hermann Goering wanted the negotiations with Rublee to succeed. Both men apparently believed that cooperation on the refugee issue would ease international hostility to German policies.[6] Funk, in particular, thought his government's Jewish policy constituted the major problem in German foreign relations. Beginning in July, Funk advocated a new approach to end violence and provide financial means for refugee emigration. Schacht and others concerned with German growth knew the advantages of a new

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[5] Foreign Relations, 1938, 1:801-802.

[6] Ibid., p. 814.

policy and agreed with this approach.[7] On 7 July 1938, Schacht had written to Wilhelm Frick, minister of interior, concerning attempts to force Jews out of Germany's business community. Schacht warned that Germany would suffer a loss in exports and foreign currency if Jewish firms with international markets were closed. He also predicted that world opinion would turn against Germany if Jewish property was confiscated, and international hostility toward the Reich might further erode Germany's ability to trade abroad. Schacht advised that Jews be allowed as long as a decade to liquidate their assets possibly through cooperation with other governments or international Jewish agencies.[8] The views of Schacht, Goering, and Funk differed considerably from the Foreign Ministry's contention that negotiations would excite international repudiation of Germany's policies toward Jews.

On 3 November, Rublee reported that the decision for negotiations depended upon the possibility of improving Germany's economic position through increased emigration. Rublee had heard that German economic experts were preparing a plan for discussions with the committee and would submit their proposal to Goering. Goering would make the

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[7]Hugh R. Wilson, Jr., A Career Diplomat: The Third Chapter: The Third Reich(New York: Vantage Press, 1960), pp. 42-44.

[8]German Foreign Documents, ser. D, 5:912, footnote 3.

decision and then approach Ribbentrop. Wilson wrote Hull that the financial aspects of the problem were still under review by the Foreign Ministry. Germany could not allow Jews to trade their capital for foreign currency, yet officials realized that removal of manufactured articles presented problems for international trade. Weizsaecker could not give a final answer to Washington's request for a meeting with Rublee.[9]

The question of German cooperation remained unresolved when the son of a deported Jew shot Ernst vom Rath, third secretary of the German embassy in Paris, on 7 November 1938. The murder caused two days of violence and terrorism against Jews in Germany. Known as the "Crystal Night," synagogues, stores, and homes were burned and destroyed. International opinion expressed outrage, and Chamberlain's appeasement policy appeared defeated.[10] The British ambassador in Germany reported that the Reich used vom Rath's death to launch an attack on Jews. Many suffered physical violence, and he believed some Jews had been murdered. The ambassador watched firemen refuse to fight fires in Jewish stores while protecting Aryan property from spreading flames. According to his report, police did not try to stop the attackers. He believed that many Jews had been arrested and sent to

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[9]Foreign Relations, 1938, 1:815-816.

[10]Feingold, Politics of Rescue, pp. 40-41.

detention camps while others fled into the streets or countryside around Berlin. The ambassador warned that vom Rath's death and the subsequent reaction might delay or end the possibility of negotiations with Rublee while worsening the position of Jews still in Germany.[11] No one could be certain what position Germany would take now on cooperation with other nations.

Wilson surmised that vom Rath's murder would produce either German cooperation with the committee or a rejection of outside interference in Germany's Jewish policy. In a cable to Hull on 11 November, Wilson wrote that the incident might cause greater discrimination against German Jews and treatment of Jewish emigration as a domestic issue even if that prevented increased emigration. On the other hand, if Nazi leaders tried harder to eliminate Jews from German society, some officials might consider the committee useful for their purposes. In any case, the question of negotiations had been postponed again. Under the present circumstances, Germany was unwilling to discuss the Jewish problem, and Wilson doubted that the Foreign Ministry would reach a decision any time soon. While he continued to

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[11] E.L. Woodward and Rohan Butler, eds., Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939, 3rd ser., 10 vols. (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1949-1961), 3:275-277 (hereafter cited as British Foreign Documents).

emphasize the benefits of cooperation, the Foreign Ministry favored retention of sole control over Jewish policies.[12]

Rublee cabled Hull on 14 November that the recent violence in Germany had put the committee in a precarious position. Coupled with the committee's unsuccessful efforts to obtain resettlement, the introduction of terrorism hurt the committee's prestige, and he thought immediate action was necessary. He wanted to call an executive meeting to demonstrate the committee's concern about the situation in Germany. A meeting would also provide opportunity for Rublee to assess the members' opinions on resettlement, financial solutions, and negotiations with Germany. In addition, Rublee recounted the strong British reaction to the Crystal Night, and he reported that many British officials were beginning to see Germany's Jewish policies as a barrier to appeasement.[13] Hull approved an executive meeting scheduled for 28 or 29 November and wanted invitations extended to Brazil and Argentina. The secretary of state hoped that British hostility to the recent developments in Germany would provide the impetus for Britain to open its empire to resettlement. He suggested that Rublee consider an open address to all committee members to request

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[12] Foreign Relations, 1938, 1:819-820.

[13] Ibid., pp. 820-822.

resettlement, and Hull promised that London and Washington would support him. Hull added that Washington was ready to exert all its influence in Latin America to insure cooperation.[14]

The United States had prepared its own diplomatic display of concern over events in Germany. On 14 November, Hull ordered Wilson's return to the United States and instructed him to inform the German Foreign Ministry that the State Department wanted Wilson to report personally to Washington.[15] Roosevelt did not intend to break diplomatic relations with Germany, but he wanted to keep Wilson in the United States long enough to impress Germany with American displeasure. Sumner Welles told the British ambassador in Washington that Germany had to attempt cooperation before Wilson would return. Welles believed that a step toward negotiating with the committee on refugees might suffice.[16] In response to Washington's action, Germany recalled its ambassador in the United States and announced that he would report on the strange behavior of Roosevelt and other leading Americans toward German domestic policy.[17]

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[14] Ibid., pp. 825-827.

[15] Foreign Relations, 1938, 2:398.

[16] British Foreign Documents, 3rd ser., 3:279.

[17] Foreign Relations, 1938, 2:401-402.

The terrorism of November caused the State Department to reverse its earlier position against disclosure of Germany's response to negotiation offers and increase public pressure on the Reich. On 18 November, Hull recommended to Rublee that a full meeting of the committee be called for the first week in December. In the meantime, Hull would urge Latin American members to commit their countries to admission of a specific percentage of German refugees and to disclose their commitments at the meeting. At a press conference held on the same day, Hull announced that Taylor would return to London at Roosevelt's request to consult with the committee. The secretary of state revealed that so far Berlin had not accepted offers for negotiations. Emphasizing the recent violence in Germany, Hull wanted other nations to realize that collective action was urgently needed.[18] Britain approved Washington's recommendation, and a full committee meeting was scheduled for 12-13 December 1938. Britain added the provision that no publicity would be given to the full meeting until France, the Netherlands, and the Latin American representatives had agreed to come.[19]

The violence in Germany also caused London to produce a resettlement offer on 17 November. Rublee cabled the State Department that Earl Winterton had proposed

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[18] Ibid., pp. 832-833.

[19] Ibid., pp. 833-834, 836.

British Guiana as a relocation site if funds for refugee immigration were available. The British also urged Washington to make a similar commitment to accept refugees. Winterton argued that commitments by Britain and the United States should be followed by joint diplomatic pressure on Latin America. Winterton intended to broadcast a speech to the United States, and he promised to use the opportunity to issue a public appeal to Latin America. In addition, Britain had requested its colonial governments to submit reports on resettlement opportunities within their territories. Rublee and Winterton thought that British efforts might encourage other nations to offer relocation sites, and Winterton hoped that Washington would influence Latin America to cooperate.[20]

The State Department moved quickly to obtain Latin America's assistance. On 22 November, Hull sent instructions to all American diplomats stationed in Latin America to present Washington's request for a full meeting of the committee. Hull asked the diplomats to emphasize that Roosevelt was sending Taylor to London as America's delegate, and Washington wanted Latin American representatives to attend also. Hull was certain that Britain and other nations would be ready by December to make specific offers of resettlement. Washington was prepared to declare

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[20] Ibid., pp. 827-829.

the number of refugees that would be admitted to the United States, and the State Department wanted Latin American republics to present their contributions.[21] In addition to Washington's appeal to Latin America, Roosevelt, in a personal letter, urged Benito Mussolini to support refugee negotiations. The president applauded Mussolini's cooperation in settling the Munich crisis and suggested that a similar effort would be helpful on the refugee question. Roosevelt contended that collective action was necessary to achieve refugee immigration and prevent further deterioration of international relations. Roosevelt proposed an area known as the Plateau, which included the southwestern part of Ethiopia, as a good place for resettlement. If Mussolini liked the idea, Roosevelt suggested that Mussolini present the plan as his own. The president promised Washington's support in convincing other nations with territory in the Plateau to agree. Roosevelt realized that German cooperation was essential, and he suggested that refugees buy goods in Germany prior to immigration as one solution to the financial problem. If Mussolini approved his suggestions, Roosevelt encouraged the Italian leader to persuade Germany to cooperate. In addition to his plea for resettlement, the events of November led Roosevelt to consider asking Congress to finance part of the resettlement cost if a workable plan was achieved.[22]

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[21] Ibid., pp. 836-838.

[22] Ibid., pp. 858-859.

The renewed interest expressed by Britain and the United States in Germany's Jewish policies caused consternation among the moderates of the Nazi heirarchy. The international outcry against the Crystal Night temporarily discredited radical party members and increased the influence of less reactionary officials. The destruction of property dismayed moderate factions because the party could have appropriated Jewish stores. Instead, the destruction hurt Germany economically.[23] When Ribbentrop cautioned Hitler that the excesses had caused ill will at home and abroad, Hitler promised to return to less violent discrimination.[24] On 12 November, Goebbels announced the first legal reprisals against German Jews for the murder of vom Rath. The Reich fined Jews 1 milliard marks or 84 million pounds, and Goebbels promised that by 1 January 1939 no Jews would remain within Germany's economic system. In addition, the Jews were ordered to pay all damages on their property.[25] Goering modified Goebbel's directives at a meeting of ministers from several branches of German government. He promised greater elimination of Jews from business, confiscation of Jewish property, and the use of Jews for forced labor only if these provisions did not endanger German exports. Goering

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[23]Feingold, Politics of Rescue, p. 43.

[24]Joachim von Ribbentrop, The Ribbentrop Memoirs, trans. Oliver Watson(London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1954), p. 176.

[25]British Foreign Documents, 3rd ser., 3:276.

added that there would be no more spontaneous measures by party members against Jews and that Jewish emigration would be expedited by all possible means.[26]

After Goering endorsed increased Jewish emigration, the State Department learned that Germany was planning negotiations with the refugee committee. On 15 November, Wilson reported that Ribbentrop had suddenly broached the possibility of an informal meeting between a German representative and Rublee if the meeting was held away from Germany. Ribbentrop had decided that negotiations might benefit Germany if expedition of Jewish emigration was the result. Nonetheless, Ribbentrop maintained that Germany could not engage in official talks with an agency not recognized by the German government, especially regarding a question of German domestic policy.[27] Although Hull wanted direct negotiations between Rublee and the German government, he ordered Wilson to encourage any attempt at cooperation. If Ribbentrop wanted a meeting away from Germany, Hull believed that the committee should take advantage of the opportunity.[28] On 22 November, the American chargé in Germany, Prentiss Gilbert, cabled Washington that Schacht also wanted an informal meeting with Rublee to discuss the refugee issue.

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[26] German Foreign Documents, ser. D, 5:904.

[27] Foreign Relations, 1938, 1:824; British Foreign Documents, 3rd ser., 3:278.

[28] Foreign Relations, 1938, 1:840-841.

According to information received from the British embassy, Schacht had indicated in September that a meeting between Rublee and Germany in a neutral country was possible. Schacht wanted informal discussions first to determine the worth of further negotiations. Gilbert recounted Britain's belief that the opportunity was still available, and he conjectured that Ribbentrop's proposal was part of the same plan.[29] Three days later, Rublee wrote Hull that a British informant had reported that Schacht was coming to London in two weeks, with Hitler's approval, to meet the committee. In addition, the British Foreign Office heard from the German embassy that a representative would be sent to London.[30] When Hull asked Gilbert to confirm the reports from the British embassy in Berlin, Gilbert could add little information on Germany's intentions. The British chargé repeated only that Schacht thought negotiations possible. He told Gilbert that there had been a misunderstanding, for he only knew that Germany was presently reviewing the possibility of a meeting outside Germany. Due to interparty politics within the Reich, London believed it would be unwise to press the issue for fear of jeopardizing the committee's efforts. The chargé agreed to seek an audience with Schacht and promised to inform Gilbert of further developments.[31]

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[29] Ibid., pp. 839-840.

[30] Ibid., p. 844.

[31] Ibid., p. 844-845.

A battle had erupted between the German Foreign Ministry and other branches of government over control of the refugee issue. Ribbentrop found out that several ministers were planning to contact the refugee committee without consulting his office, and he feared losing control of the refugee question.[32] On 14 November, Hans Fischbeock, the Austrian minister of economics, labor, and finance, visited the Foreign Ministry. Following Goering's decision to promote emigration, Fischboeck discussed refugee negotiations with the German ministers of economics and finance and a representative from the interior department. All approved cooperation with Rublee and thought that negotiations could produce significant results. Fischboeck informed the Foreign Ministry of the ministers' decision to approach Rublee through Otto Niemeyer, a member of the Bank of England, and propose an increase in German exports as the means to fund refugee immigration.[33] Ribbentrop quickly adopted the plan and presented it as a proposal of the Foreign Ministry. Ribbentrop instructed his deputies to have the German ambassador in London contact a German journalist who was a friend of Robert Pell. The journalist would be Germany's liaison with the committee.[34] Until

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[32]Feingold, Politics of Rescue, p. 46.

[33]German Foreign Documents, ser. D, 5:905-906.

[34]Ibid., p. 906, footnote 2.

Ribbentrop completed the arrangements, the German Foreign Ministry evaded Washington's request for a decision on negotiations.

Gilbert returned to the Foreign Ministry on 28 November and asked if the meeting with Rublee had been scheduled. Since Ribbentrop was preparing for an upcoming conference in Paris with French Foreign Minister Georges Bonnet, Gilbert spoke with Ernst Woermann, director of the political department in the Foreign Ministry. Woermann told Gilbert that a meeting with the committee was still under review, but the Foreign Ministry preferred that Robert Pell be the committee's representative rather than Rublee. The Foreign Ministry believed that a trip by Pell would excite less publicity than a visit by Rublee. Gilbert emphasized that the talks were too important to substitute Pell for Rublee. He remarked that Taylor would be leaving America soon to attend the full committee meeting and added that a decision to negotiate would prevent the committee's disclosure of Germany's lack of cooperation. Woermann promised to give Gilbert an answer in a week but cautioned that exposure of the proposed discussion would end the possibility of negotiations.[35] The Foreign Ministry had already arranged the approach to Pell. The German intermediary met Fischboeck in Vienna, and Fischboeck agreed to be in Brussels, Belgium

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[35]Foreign Relations, 1938, 1:842-843; German Foreign Documents, ser. D, 5:906-907.

by 7 December to meet Pell. The intermediary returned to London to inform Pell that an unofficial German emissary was prepared to discuss the refugee problem. On 30 November, the German ambassador in Britain cabled the Foreign Ministry that Pell had agreed to the plan, and the ambassador added his hope that the negotiations would improve Germany's international relations, especially with London.[36] On 6 December, Gilbert and Woermann set 10 December as the date of the meeting between Pell and an individual that Woermann refused to identify. Woermann would not sanction the meeting as an official conference despite Gilbert's attempts to force the issue, but Woermann did allow that the meeting had been approved by the government and could be considered Germany's reply to Wilson's request for negotiations.[37] The State Department saw the Brussels meeting as the first indication of progress on the refugee question, although the German Foreign Ministry had successfully evaded direct negotiations. Welles sent Pell instructions not to engage in discussions with the emissary but to relay Germany's offer to the committee, and Welles assured Rublee that Washington would maintain strict silence on the meeting.[38]

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[36] German Foreign Documents, ser. D, 5:907-908.

[37] Foreign Relations, 1938, 1:856.

[38] Ibid., p. 846.

In view of the pending negotiations with Germany, the executive officers of the refugee committee, meeting on 2 December, postponed a full meeting of the members until January. Henry Berenger astounded the officers when he revealed that Bonnet would discuss the refugee problem with Ribbentrop in Paris. The French foreign minister intended to ask that refugees be allowed one-fifth of their capital for immigration purposes.[39] Disturbed by Berenger's revelation Rublee tried to prevent unilateral negotiations on the financial problem by Bonnet. He asked Berenger to persuade the French foreign minister to keep the talks general, for he feared that Bonnet's effort would jeopardize the committee's attempts at negotiations.[40]

Rublee's fears appeared well-founded, for, on 7 December, the German Foreign Ministry informed Gilbert that the Brussels meeting was postponed because the German representative had suddenly become ill.[41] There were no further explanations of the development when reports of Ribbentrop's talks with Bonnet cast doubt on the success of re-establishing negotiations. Bonnet broached the question of refugees at the instigation of Neville Chamberlain. At a meeting between Chamberlain and French President Edouard Daladier in France

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[39] Ibid., pp. 850-852.

[40] Ibid., p. 863.

[41] Ibid., p. 857.

on 24 November, Chamberlain asked French cooperation in persuading Germany to allow Jews funds for emigration, and he wanted Bonnet to discuss the problem with Ribbentrop when the German foreign minister came to Paris.[42] Bonnet approached the issue in a private conversation with Ribbentrop on 7 December. While Ribbentrop refused to discuss the refugee question officially, he agreed to give a private opinion. According to Ribbentrop, all Jews in Germany were evil and had grown rich off the German people, but other nations refused to understand Germany's problems with Jews. Bonnet replied that German Jewish immigration had become a problem for other nations, too. Ribbentrop agreed and revealed that Hitler had conceded lately that it was now an international problem. Bonnet asked Ribbentrop to allow refugees to exchange their assets for foreign currency, but Ribbentrop denied that Germany could afford to do that.[43] Ribbentrop gave the impression that he expressed Germany's official position on Jewish immigration, and Bonnet gave Ribbentrop an opportunity to claim that Jewish property belonged to the Reich.[44] Rublee wrote Hull on 7 December

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[42] British Foreign Documents, 3rd ser., 3:296. The German Foreign Ministry believed that Roosevelt had pressured Chamberlain into the proposal and doubted that Roosevelt would stop until the refugee problem was settled. German Foreign Documents, ser. D, 5:910.

[43] Foreign Relations, 1938, 1:871-873.

[44] Feingold, Politics of Rescue, p. 47.

that the French had forced Ribbentrop to take a stand before Pell had a chance to meet the German representative. He believed that the discussions in Paris had caused postponement of the Brussels meeting.[45]

Neither the State Department nor the committee knew that Schacht had deliberately scuttled the meeting between Pell and Fischboeck. He arranged Fischboeck's illness to allow time for independent and direct contact with Rublee without the supervision and caution of the Foreign Ministry.[46] Schacht believed that party action against Jews caused economic harm and provoked international hostility toward Germany. After the Crystal Night, he asked Hitler to grant Jews protection and provision for an adequate livelihood in Germany or allow them to emigrate. Hitler, also disturbed over world reaction to the terrorism, agreed that Schacht should formulate plans whereby Jews would have money for immigration and hopefully greater opportunities for resettlement. When Schacht asked if he could contact the committee in London, Hitler gave his permission.[47] Goering was Schacht's cohort in the scheme. On 9 December, Goering informed a group of German gauleiters that he might soon engage in negotiations with Jews. Goering told them that

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[45] Foreign Relations, 1938, 1:860.

[46] German Foreign Documents, ser. D, 5:911, footnote 5.

[47] Hjalmar H.G. Schacht, Confessions of the "Old Wizard:" The Autobiography of Hjalmar Horace Greeley Schacht, trans. Diana Pyke (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1956), pp. 315-316, 351-352.

the Jewish situation was no longer an internal matter but had become an international problem. Because of the recent decline in German exports, Goering favored increased emigration for economic reasons, and he realized that emigrants needed provisions for resettlement. While Goering knew that German policy prohibited adherence to international agreements, he believed that arrangements with individual nations could be reached through Rublee's committee, and, consequently, he favored a visit by Rublee to Berlin.[48] Schacht and Goering planned the trip to London. By 12 December, the Foreign Ministry knew that Schacht intended to discuss the exchange of Jewish assets during his visit to London, but Schacht did not give Ribbentrop a detailed account of his plans. Ribbentrop realized that Schacht was acting on Hitler's express order with approval and guidance from Goering, and he knew that Goering wanted the talks for economic reasons and wanted them removed from the context of foreign policy or domestic politics. Therefore, Schacht acted without the full knowledge of the Foreign Ministry and without being subject to its control. He had the governor of the Bank of England, Montagu Norman, invite him to London for an unofficial visit to discuss the refugee question.[49] The British Foreign Office then scheduled a meeting between Rublee and Schacht

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[48] Foreign Relations, 1938, 1:864-865.

[49] German Foreign Documents, ser. D, 5:911-913.

for 15 December. Schacht informed the British that he was not allowed to enter into discussions with the committee. He could only present a proposal which would be given to Rublee, but Rublee would be able to make his first contact with a representative of the German government.[50]

Approximately two months after Washington's first request for negotiations, Rublee prepared for his initial encounter with Germany over the Jewish refugee issue. The excessive violence of Nazi members against German Jews in November 1938 enabled moderate officials to persuade Hitler to attempt cooperation. Anglo-American diplomatic pressure played a significant role in establishing contact, for the moderates gained the offensive because of international displeasure over the Crystal Night. While the Foreign Ministry tried to prevent increased exposure of Germany's Jewish policies, the terrorist acts of the Nazi party threatened Germany's international relations more than potential criticism from negotiations. Ribbentrop lost control over the refugee issue, and Schacht proceeded to London independently of the Foreign Ministry. Under Goering's and Schacht's tutelage, the Reich sought economic advantage through cooperation with the committee to increase Jewish

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[50]Foreign Relations, 1938, 1:871.

emigration. Through divisions within the Nazi party, Rublee received an opportunity to negotiate, but settlement of the refugee issue depended upon the price Germany requested for the release of German Jews.

CHAPTER V

NEGOTIATIONS WITH GERMANY

Between December 1938 and February 1939, George Rublee met several times with German representatives in London and Berlin, but the German proposals for Jewish emigration remained unacceptable to the United States. Germany insisted upon expropriation of at least one-fourth of Jewish assets in Germany, and the final offer would use refugee migration to increase German exports. Washington refused to condone confiscation of Jewish property and remained disturbed over Germany's drive for economic advantage through release of the Jews. After Hjalmar Schacht presented his proposal in London, the State Department, acting upon Myron Taylor's recommendation, began withdrawal from active participation in the committee. Taylor claimed that the United States had accomplished all its goals for solving the refugee crisis. Negotiations with Berlin ended in February 1939 when Germany presented its final emigration plan. The Reich insisted upon unilateral implementation of the plan, and Washington gained an opportunity to retreat from primary responsibility for settling the refugee problem. The committee continued its efforts to relocate European refugees, but the outbreak of war in 1939 ended systematic resettlement. American sponsorship of the committee involved

Washington in negotiations with the major European powers during the year that preceded war and lent American prestige to amelioration of one source of international conflict. Limited by American isolationism and restrictive immigration laws, Roosevelt directed America's response to the refugee problem through executive action. The refugee crisis enabled Roosevelt to exert some influence over the events of 1938 and 1939 albeit through an issue that became increasingly less important as war approached. Despite the efforts of American and German diplomats, Germany's policy toward Jews continued to undermine stability in Europe and contributed to further deterioration of diplomatic relations between Germany and the United States.

Schacht met Rublee, Earl Winterton, and Sir Frederick Leith-Ross, a British economic advisor, in Winterton's office on 15 December 1938. While Schacht refused to comment on Germany's treatment of Jews, he admitted that Jews had no economic future in Germany. The Reich wanted the Jews removed from Germany, and Schacht feared that violence against them would increase. Consequently, he urged that his emigration plan be accepted and speedily implemented. Schacht estimated that there were six hundred thousand Jews in Germany. Two hundred thousand of them were too old to emigrate. Of those remaining, one hundred fifty thousand were workers. Under Schacht's plan, the workers would emigrate over a three-year period, and their families could

follow later. Resettlement sites remained the responsibility of the committee. Estimating Jewish assets in Germany to be six billion marks, Schacht intended to put one-fourth of the total into a trust fund which would serve as collateral for a loan raised by an international Jewish organization. From the loan, each Jewish emigrant would receive a sum in foreign currency equal to ten thousand marks. Germany intended to pay back the loan using profits from increased exports, while German manufacturers were paid from the trust fund. Schacht calculated that the plan required a loan equal to 500 million marks per year for three years. Implementation depended upon two basic conditions. Germany refused to relinquish any foreign currency and agreed to the transfer of Jewish assets only if German exports increased. According to Schacht, international trade would absorb the increases in German exports which would prevent the full financial burden from falling on Britain and the United States. He emphasized to the committee that his proposal represented the best offer that German leaders would approve. Rublee conceded that the plan appeared negotiable, but he wanted further discussions in Berlin. Schacht agreed and promised that there would be no more violence against Jews while the plan was in operation. In addition, he guaranteed the safety of the two hundred thousand left behind. Leith-Ross spotted the economic problems in Schacht's plan. As long as exports rose significantly, Leith-Ross preferred that Germany

guarantee the interest on the loan apart from a set increase in profits. Schacht replied that the specific method of exchange remained negotiable as long as increased exports became an essential part of the plan. Winterton wanted assurances that negotiations would continue and that the committee would not experience repeated delays as before. Schacht promised to arrange a meeting in Berlin whenever Rublee was ready to discuss the proposal. Rublee agreed to meet Schacht in Berlin after the committee consulted the British and American governments regarding Germany's offer.[1]

Germany's economic demands proved unacceptable to the committee's executive members. On 20 December, France, Great Britain, and the Netherlands sent economic experts to meet with Rublee. The advisors objected to expropriation of Jewish assets and the implication that German cooperation depended upon increased purchases of German manufactured goods. To satisfy the economists, Germany needed to guarantee repayment of the loan in foreign exchange. In addition, the group doubted that private individuals could raise the sum required to implement the plan. Therefore, the committee concluded that the economic provisions of Schacht's proposal could not be met.[2]

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[1] British Foreign Documents, 3rd ser., 3:675-677.

[2] Ibid., p. 677.

Although the State Department denounced the economic aspects of Schacht's plan, Washington wanted Rublee to proceed with negotiations. Sumner Welles called the proposal a ransom demand by the Reich for release of the Jews. If the committee acquiesced in the demand for increased exports, Jewish emigration became a weapon for Germany to use against other nations in international trade, while Germany escaped all of the burdens imposed by refugee immigration. The plan offered no realistic collateral for an international loan because the lenders had no access to Jewish assets. Welles also feared that Washington might encourage expropriation if the scheme was accepted; the plan provided no guarantees that emigrants would retain rights to their property. Consequently, the State Department refused to accept Schacht's emigration plan, but Welles cautioned Rublee against handing Schacht an outright rejection. Instead, he sent Rublee a counter-proposal to present to Schacht in Berlin. Welles suggested that the committee establish and administer a fund to finance resettlement, using donations and loans to acquire the necessary capital. Under this plan, the committee would grant loans to emigrants in any currency, and each emigrant could repay his loan after resettlement. Considering the large numbers of emigrants that would buy German goods for resettlement, Welles believed that the plan included

significant gains for Germany. The counterproposal required no transfer of foreign exchange from the Reich, but Jews retained title to their property. In addition, the plan separated emigration from increased purchase of German goods through international markets.[3]

After the executive committee received the State Department's critical assessment of the Schacht plan, Taylor recommended that Washington retreat from its dominant position on the refugee committee. Taylor concluded that the United States had accomplished all its pronounced goals for a solution to the refugee crisis. Washington had sponsored an international refugee conference which had established a permanent agency to seek orderly immigration of German Jews. Schacht's proposal marked the beginning of negotiations with Berlin to procure German cooperation. Under American influence, Great Britain increased its efforts to help Jewish refugees and now admitted almost as many immigrants as the United States. In addition, Britain had persuaded Australia to take three thousand German immigrants per year for the next three years. Considering how much had been accomplished by America's initiative, Taylor believed that Washington should shift more of the burden of the refugee problem to Britain. With its colonial territories, Britain had more land for resettlement than

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[3]Foreign Relations, 1938, 1:876-880.

any other power. In addition, Taylor wanted Sir Herbert Emerson, League High Commissioner for Refugees, to become director; Rublee wanted to resign after completing his Berlin assignment. Whether an immigration plan with Germany was accepted or rejected, Taylor believed that the committee needed to chart a new course, and the executive board scheduled a full meeting for late January following Rublee's talks with Schacht.[4] Taylor thought that the time had come to free the United States from a potentially difficult diplomatic entanglement.[5] Washington accepted Taylor's recommendations. Roosevelt discarded his plans to have Congress fund part of resettlement, and Welles approved Emerson's appointment as director.[6] The cautious attitude of American diplomats reflected their awareness of the odds against a satisfactory outcome of the refugee negotiations.

Dissension within the Nazi party threatened the success of Rublee's negotiations with Schacht. Schacht's plan made Joachim von Ribbentrop angry, especially when coverage of the London meeting appeared in the Swiss press. Ribbentrop believed that Jewish emigration remained a diplomatic matter, and Schacht's trip negated the Foreign Ministry's careful evasion of a German commitment to cooperation on emigration.

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[4] Ibid., pp. 881-884.

[5] Feingold, Politics of Rescue, pp. 60-61.

[6] Foreign Relations, 1933, 1:885-886.

The Foreign Ministry wanted a delineation of authority over the emigration issue and asked Schacht if he had special orders to continue the negotiations. Schacht replied that he had acted under instructions from Hermann Goering and Adolf Hitler. He refused to discuss his plans until he reported to Hitler, although he promised to confer with Ribbentrop after the interview.[7]

Schacht received Hitler's permission to proceed with negotiations, and he issued an invitation to Rublee to come to Berlin. Armed with Hitler's approval of his plan, Schacht arrived at the Foreign Ministry on 13 January 1939. He defended his actions and told the foreign minister that his plan posed no threat to Germany. Ribbentrop conceded that negotiations might increase emigration of Jews, but he wanted some influence over the proceedings. Schacht agreed to allow a Foreign Ministry representative to participate in the discussions with Rublee.[8]

Before the negotiations took place, Ribbentrop sent all German diplomatic missions new and harsher guidelines on German Jewish policy which contravened Washington's plan to modify the Reich's treatment of its Jewish minority. According to Ribbentrop's bulletin, Germany intended to confiscate Jewish assets. Since Jews had amassed their

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[7] German Foreign Documents, ser. D, 5:912-913.

[8] Ibid., p. 920.

wealth from Germans, Germany professed a right to regain possession. The Foreign Ministry contended that other nations were manipulating the refugee issue in order to pry as much currency from Germany as possible and force the Reich to finance Jewish immigration. According to Ribbentrop, the world cared about Jewish capital not Jewish refugees. Despite international intervention on the Jews' behalf, Ribbentrop intended to use Jewish emigrants as political and economic weapons against European nations. He reasoned that forcible emigration caused native anger in receiving nations and sparked greater anti-Semitism abroad, a goal of German foreign policy. If Jewish emigrants inflicted hardship on other populations, Ribbentrop expected other countries to sympathize with Germany's policies thereby improving the Reich's international relations.[9] Considering Germany's desire to profit from Jewish emigration, it appeared impossible for Washington to protect the rights of Jewish property holders or prevent their ill treatment.

Unaware of Ribbentrop's economic plans for the Jews, Rublee proceeded to Berlin. After several discussions with Schacht, Germany abruptly ended the negotiations. Rublee had met with Schacht three times, and they had planned to draft the final German offer on 20 January. On that morning, the Germans informed Rublee that Schacht had been removed as

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[9] Ibid., pp. 926-933.

president of the Reichsbank. Furthermore, Rublee was denied any contact with the former president. Through his earlier conversations with Schacht, Rublee had detected an increasingly harsh attitude within the Reich on emigration, but he received no explanation for Schacht's dismissal.[10]

Prentiss Gilbert immediately went to the Foreign Ministry and asked if Germany intended to continue the negotiations. He told Ernst Woermann that Rublee had to leave on the following evening to attend an executive meeting of the committee on 23 January when the members had intended to review the German proposal. Since the arrangements had been made much earlier, the meeting would be difficult to postpone. Consequently, Rublee needed to know at once if negotiations would continue. Woermann promised that Rublee would be contacted. On the following day, Rublee received an invitation to meet Goering at his home. When Rublee arrived, he met Helmut Wohlthat, an official from the Ministry of Economics, whom Goering had designated as Schacht's replacement in the negotiations. Goering reiterated his personal desire for agreement on emigration, especially if cooperation improved

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[10] U.S., Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers, 1939, 5 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1956), 2:71 (hereafter cited as Foreign Relations). Schacht believed that he had been dismissed because of his criticism of the Crystal Night, overheard by Nazi party members, and because of his disagreement with Hitler over inflationary expenditures for arms. Schacht, Confessions of "The Old Wizard," pp. 358-359.

Germany's foreign relations. Goering wanted to ease the tension between the United States and Germany in particular, and he showed great concern over deterioration of relations between the two countries. Goering believed the main conflict between Washington and Berlin was the Jewish question.[11]

On 3 February 1939, Wohlthat presented Rublee with Germany's final offer. Most of the emigration procedures in the Wohlthat plan followed Schacht's original proposal. The one hundred fifty thousand Jewish workers would emigrate first. Under the Wohlthat plan, Germany retained the use of one-fourth of Jewish assets to establish a trust fund, but the proposal allowed emigrants to use the fund to buy resettlement goods and pay transportation costs on German ships. The trust fund would be supervised by two Germans and a foreign representative of international reputation. With this revision, the Reich eliminated its demand for an international loan. The plan called for an external agency to direct expenditures from the fund and work with German officials on any problems with emigration, but Germany reserved the right to approve or reject cooperation on emigration from international agencies. Although Wohlthat modified the more objectionable components of Schacht's plan, the proposal contained additional provisions that made international cooperation more difficult.

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[11] Foreign Relations, 1939, 2:72-73.

Germany agreed to implement its plan only when other nations produced specific relocation sites and agreed to observe Germany's dictates on procedure. While Wohlthat promised that imprisonment of Jews would end when emigration began, he refused to guarantee the safety of the two hundred thousand that were too old to emigrate. In addition, receiving nations had to agree to accept both refugees and the goods taken out of Germany, and the plan did not promise that additonal Jewish assets would be transferred.[12] Under the Wohlthat plan, the committee could advise on resettlement, but Germany intended to proceed unilaterally with implementation.[13] Germany's decision not to seek committee approval of its emigration plan made it easier for the United States to avoid an outright rejection of the Wohlthat proposal.

Despite improvement in the economic features of Germany's proposal, the United States found cooperation with the plan impossible. American immigration law disavowed priority treatment for any class of immigrants, including German Jewish laborers. According to Hull, Germany's decision to delay emigration until resettlement sites were available and Berlin's decision to proceed unilaterally gave Germany control over the immigration

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[12] Ibid., pp. 77-81.

[13] Ibid., p. 83.

policies of other nations. Hull believed that the Reich might alter its commitment by claiming that other nations violated German procedures. The trust fund also remained a serious problem. The United States could not agree to a fund established from Jewish assets, Hull maintained, because agreement implied acquiescence in the policy of confiscation.[14]

Hull sent Rublee explicit instructions concerning the committee's response to the offer. He wanted the German plan acknowledged as a basis for discussions on the refugee situation, but he cautioned Rublee not to promise active participation in the plan's implementation. Hull realized that he was drawing a fine distinction, but he wanted the committee to avoid both refusal and approval of the plan. He thought that the committee should continue, without German cooperation, to work for resettlement. Both parties would act alone. If the committee became involved with the purchasing agency, Hull warned Taylor and Rublee to avoid all implications of acceptance of Germany's program, and Hull refused to allow an American to serve as a trustee for administering the trust fund.[15] The hostility aroused by Schacht's plan undermined acceptance of the Wohlthat proposal. Schacht's economic demands made the United States

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[14] Ibid., pp. 84-87.

[15] Ibid.

wary of German motives and colored its judgment of the Wohlthat plan. Although the new proposal omitted the need for increased German exports through international markets, the United States believed that Germany still sought economic advantage.[16] Hull had not objected to increasing German exports by providing Jews with goods for resettlement, but he had wanted German cooperation on the transfer of refugee assets. Germany not only refused to guarantee exchange of Jewish capital but also included the policy of confiscation. Nevertheless, the conclusion of negotiations provided Washington with achievement of all its goals. While American diplomats doubted that Germany's proposal would be sucessful, the plan allowed Washington to escape its increasingly untenable role in the search for refugee resettlement.[17]

As its response to the Wohlthat plan, the refugee committee adopted the State Department's policy. At a full meeting of the members on 14 February 1939, the committee accepted the American recommendation that the German plan be acknowledged without collaboration on implementation. The committee passed a resolution which took note of Germany's intention to arrange a trust fund and the provision to establish an external agency.[18] Robert Pell delivered a message

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[16]Wyman, Paper Walls, p. 54.

[17]Feingold, Politics of Rescue, p. 68.

[18]Rosenman, Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 7:174-175.

to Wohlthat from Rublee in which Rublee assured the German advisor that the committee would continue to seek resettlement opportunities for German refugees.[19] The committee accepted Germany's offer as a basis for continued efforts, but the German Foreign Ministry received no questions or requests for details concerning implementation.[20] Taylor immediately began to establish a purchasing agency to assist emigration from Germany, and the committee continued its negotiations on resettlement with receiving nations. By August 1939, Taylor had established a separate body to advise Germany on resettlement.[21] The outbreak of World War II ended the possibility of large-scale resettlement or systematic evacuation of German Jews.

Refugee resettlement through international cooperation had been improbable since February when Germany presented its emigration plan. Without German cooperation on the transfer of refugee capital, Latin America would not accept large numbers of German Jews for resettlement; yet implementation

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[19] German Foreign Documents, ser. D, 5:939, footnote 2.

[20] Ibid., p. 939.

[21] Myron C. Taylor, "Confidential Memorandum Regarding Refugees, 1938-1947," 30 July 1947, Myron C. Taylor Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York. During the war, the committee continued its efforts to relocate refugees from Europe and remained in existence until 1947 when it was superseded by the International Refugee Organization. Wyman, Papers Walls, p. 62.

of Germany's plan depended upon definite offers of relocation sites. American diplomats had been unable to change the policies in either hemisphere. Nonetheless, the refugee crisis gave Roosevelt an opportunity to cooperate with other nations on an international crisis, and, during a period of strong isolationism, the conference marked voluntary entry of the United States into the problems of Europe.

The Evian conference followed an aborted attempt by Roosevelt to host an international peace conference in January 1938. Roosevelt hoped that Washington could sponsor international agreements on foreign relations, land and sea warfare, neutral rights, and equal rights to raw materials.[22] Hull, concerned over public response to American involvement abroad, asked Roosevelt to get guarantees of support from Britain and France before acting on the idea. When Britain began its appeasement policy in December 1937, Roosevelt, hoping to support British peace efforts, decided to implement his idea. On 11 January 1938, Roosevelt secretly sent an outline of his plan to Neville Chamberlain who dismissed the president's suggestion. Chamberlain believed that American isolationism was too powerful to permit American aid to Europe, and he wanted to prevent any disruptions of his diplomacy with Germany. Following

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[22]William Langer and S. Everett Gleason, The Challenge to Isolation, 1937-1940(New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1952), pp. 19-20.

Chamberlain's rejection, Roosevelt discarded the plan.[23] British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden considered Chamberlain's action a major blunder in British efforts to keep peace. He had hoped for a long time to convince Washington to intervene in European affairs. While Chamberlain doubted that Roosevelt's plan would succeed, Eden believed that a display of American interest was success enough. If Roosevelt had been encouraged, Eden thought that more help might have followed.[24] Two months after Roosevelt's exchange with Chamberlain, the annexation of Austria turned the refugee problem into an international crisis, and Roosevelt received a second opportunity to summon a world conference.

By March 1938, public concern over the refugee issue prompted Welles and Hull to ask Roosevelt to assume leadership of the refugee crisis. Hoping to prevent a public outcry for increased immigration, Welles suggested that Roosevelt call an international refugee conference. Roosevelt's motivations for accepting the suggestion remain unclear.[25] Henry Morgenthau believed America's traditional policy of asylum for the persecuted influenced the president. Whatever the reason, at a cabinet meeting on 18 March,

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[23] Ibid., pp. 23-28.

[24] Anthony Eden, The Eden Memoirs: Facing the Dictators (London: Cassell and Co., 1962), pp. 554-556.

[25] Wyman, Paper Walls, p. 44.

Roosevelt suggested that the United States offer refuge to German Jews.[26] A few days later, Roosevelt issued the invitations to the Evian conference. On this occasion, he did not seek prior cooperation from European powers. The refugee crisis carried less political risk for Roosevelt than American involvement in a world peace conference, for the plight of the refugees created sympathy among Americans as long as Roosevelt did not attempt to increase immigration. Although he encountered protests from restrictionists, the refugee crisis enabled him to introduce Americans to international cooperation on an essentially European problem and lend American prestige to the maintenance of European stability.

Roosevelt's inclination toward executive action was consistent with administrative policy on immigration in the 1930s. Although Congress monopolized immigration policy until the depression, Herbert Hoover and Roosevelt dominated the immigration issue from 1930 to 1940. Hoover instituted restrictive immigration measures with the "LPC" clause, and Roosevelt, through executive directives, sponsored the Evian conference and combined the German and Austrian quotas. During the 1930s, the diplomatic significance of American immigration policy increased. While Congress saw immigration restriction as necessary for domestic security, both

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[26]Henry Morgenthau, Jr., "The Morgenthau Diaries: The Refugee Run-Around," Collier's, 1 November 1947, p. 22.

presidents believed that immigration fell within the context of foreign policy. Concern over immigration's impact on foreign relations and consideration of world policy influenced both executives to manipulate American immigration laws.[27] In particular, the international proportions of the Jewish refugee crisis prompted Roosevelt to pull American immigration away from the narrow confines of domestic policy.

The Jewish refugee crisis remained a peripheral issue among the international diplomatic crises that occurred in 1938, and European powers concentrated their diplomatic efforts on the preservation of peace. Although Roosevelt maintained that amelioration of the refugee problem was vital to the peace of Europe, American diplomats received little cooperation in their sponsorship of a collective effort to solve the problem. American diplomatic pressure in Europe and in Latin America failed to produce a workable solution to resettlement. By February 1939, Washington decided to retreat from its short venture into internationalism.

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[27]Divine, American Immigration Policy, pp. 107-109.

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