

**AMERICA**  
**AND THE HOLOCAUST**

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It was Winston Churchill's judgment, which I share, that the Holocaust was probably the greatest and most terrible crime ever committed in the whole history of the world. The Holocaust was part of a colossal military struggle known as World War II in which 67 million people were killed, where nations were decimated, where democracy's survival was in the balance. In his lunacy to exterminate the Jews of Europe, Hitler and his Nazi followers murdered six million innocent men, women and children for no other reason than they were Jewish. This crime is of such profound proportions that it can never be understood; it must continue to be analyzed from every aspect as to how and why it happened; and its memory must unite all of us so that we can truly say in one voice "never again."

We remember also that nine million non-Jewish civilians were brutally murdered by the Nazis. They were Germans, Poles, Czechs, Serbs, Croats, Ukrainians, Russians, Gypsies. They were political dissidents, labor leaders, Catholic and Protestant clergy, journalists, doctors, lawyers, intellectuals, the mentally and physically disabled, and homosexuals. Most of these victims were killed because of who they were, not for what they did. The Slavs, like the Jews, were a particular target of Hitler's hatred. He described them as Untermensch (sub-human). When the Nazis conquered their countries, the Slavs were terrorized and tortured, their property and land expropriated. Eyewitness accounts abound of examples of unspeakable brutality, such as women and children being herded into locked barns which were then set afire. Many shared the fate of the

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Jews in the extermination camps. Most were hanged, shot, starved or worked to death. Nine million human beings. In addition, the Nazis murdered over 3 million Soviet prisoners of war, approximately 57% of those in Nazi custody. (Of the U.S. and British POWs, less than 4% lost their lives.)

It was only in the 1960s that the name “holocaust” came into general use to describe the Nazi genocide of Europe’s Jews. Since then, much has been written regarding America’s role during those years of persecution and destruction. Accusing the United States not only of abandoning the Jews but of complicity in the Holocaust, David Wyman has written: “The Nazis were the murderers but we—and here he includes the American government, its president and its people, Christians and Jews indiscriminately—were the all too passive accomplices.” This terrible indictment deserves a response. Another area of scholarship has questioned whether knowledge about murder of the Jews was deliberately suppressed by Allied governments? In an outstanding recent contribution to this debate, scholar Richard Breitman argues that if Britain has released the decrypts about the Nazi massacres in the Soviet Union in 1941, it might have alerted Jews earlier to what was happening or about to happen, hopefully enabling more to escape. This is an important argument that deserves continuing concern. Some are critical of American Jews during that period for being “passive observers,” for not wanting to know what was happening in the genocide of Europe’s Jews, for being so absorbed in their effort to be accepted or assimilated in American society that they chose silence rather than public outrage at the Nazi crimes. The corollary question to this line of argument is why did American Jews give their overwhelming support to Franklin Delano Roosevelt if, as his critics allege, he was indifferent to the fate of Europe’s Jews despite his knowledge of what was happening to them? Why did not the United States let the St. Louis, a German ship carrying Jewish refugees to Cuba in 1939, land at an American port when Cuba refused admission? Perhaps the most frequent question in this decade asks why the Allies did not bomb Auschwitz and the railroad tracks leading to Auschwitz? Laced through the debate is the generally unspoken allegation that America’s leaders and Americans generally were uncaring anti-Semites. After all, if the bombing of Auschwitz was not ordered—then those who did not order the bombing must be—what? traitors?

anti-Semitic supporters of Hitler's efforts to kill the Jews? military and civilian leaders without conscience or moral concerns?

As Pieter Geyl, the great Dutch historian once wrote: "History is indeed an argument without end." My effort is not a definitive answer to those criticisms and questions but it does offer a point of view which tries to frame the discussion in the context of the realities of World War II, putting events, values, and attitudes in their time and place.

### **Before the Holocaust, 1933-41**

Five weeks after Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in 1933, Franklin Roosevelt became President of the United States. Roosevelt's loathing of the whole Nazi regime was known the moment he took office. Alone among the leaders of the world, he stood in opposition to Hitler from the very beginning. In a book published in 1937, Winston Churchill—to whom free humanity everywhere must be eternally indebted and without whose courage and strength the defeat of Nazi Germany could never have been achieved—described Hitler's treatment of the Jews, stating that "concentration camps pock-mark the German soil..." and concluding his essay by writing that "the world lives on hopes that the worst is over and that we may live to see Hitler a gentler figure in a happier age..." Roosevelt had no such hopes. He never wavered in his belief that the malignancy of Hitler and his followers had to be destroyed. Thomas Mann, the most famous of the non-Jewish refugees from the Nazis, met with FDR at the White House in 1935 and confided that for the first time he believed the Nazis would be beaten because in Roosevelt he had met someone who truly understood the evil of Adolf Hitler.

To understand those years, we must differentiate between the German Jews who were the immediate and constant subjects of Hitler's persecution and the Jews of central Europe who were the principal victims of the Holocaust. The Jews of Germany numbered about 525,000 in 1933. They were the yeast of Germany's great culture—leaders in literature, music, medicine, science, in its financial and intellectual life. For the most part, they wanted to be thought of as Germans. They

had been a proud part of Germany's army in World War I. Anti-Semitism shadowed their lives but they thought of Germany as their country and were deeply rooted in its existence. "We are either Germans, or without a country," said a leading Jewish writer. They witnessed Hitler's coming to power with disbelief and saw Nazi dominance as a temporary phenomenon. In the face of Nazi persecution, those who left Germany did so reluctantly, many seeking refuge in neighboring countries from which they expected to return to Germany when the Hitler madness subsided. In the early years, many—if not most—believed Hitler and his regime could not survive.

In his autobiography, Rabbi Stephen Wise, one of the most powerful and respected leaders of the American Jewish community during that era, and a personal friend and close advisor of President Roosevelt, tells how in October, 1932, he received a report from a scholar whom he had sent to Germany and who had interviewed 30 leading Jews all of whom with one exception had declared that "Hitler would never come to power." They sent a message to tell "Rabbi Wise that he need not concern himself with Jewish affairs in Germany. If he insists upon dealing with Jewish affairs in Europe, let him occupy himself with Jewish problems in Poland and Romania..." When Rabbi Wise organized a New York rally in March, 1933 to protest Nazi treatment of Jews, he received a message from leading German rabbis urging him to cut out such meetings and in a most insulting way indicating that American Jews were doing this for their own purposes and in the process were destroying the Germany that the German Jews loved. Rabbi Wise never wavered in his belief that the only option for the Jews was to leave Germany. As the Nazi persecution intensified, as the Nuremberg Laws degraded the Jews as nothing before, as Hitler strove to cause their emigration and confiscated Jewish property and wealth, the prospect of escape and exile had to shadow every Jewish family. In 1934, 37,000 Jews fled Germany—but in the relative calm of the next year, 16,000 returned. The good and brave Chief Rabbi of Berlin, Leo Baeck, opposed mass emigration, setting a personal example of not abandoning his community, surviving even the horror of a wartime concentration camp. Every Jewish group affirmed the right of Jews to be German, to live in and love their country; they affirmed the legal right, the moral necessity and religious imperative of not surrendering to the pagan persecutors. As important as any barriers to immigration in western countries was the attitude of not wanting to leave Germany until absolutely necessary. It is crucial

to our understanding of these years to remember that at the time no one inside or outside of Germany anticipated that the Nazi persecution would lead to the Holocaust. As Gerhard Weinberg has cogently written, the actions of the German government were generally understood, both by the victims and the bystanders, as a return to the kinds of persecutions and restrictions imposed on Jews in prior centuries, not as steps on the road toward genocide.

The annexation of Austria, the appeasement of the Nazis represented by the Munich pact, and especially Kristallnacht in November, 1938, changed the situation dramatically. Especially Kristallnacht. The assassination of a German diplomat in Paris by a 17 year old Jewish youth whose father had been among the thousands of Polish Jews expelled from Germany and dumped across the Polish border just weeks before, sparked an orgy of arson and looting by Nazi thugs in almost every town and city. Huge, silent crowds looked on. The police did nothing to contain the violence. Many German Jews for the first time understood the hopelessness of their situation.

The America which elected Franklin Delano Roosevelt its president in 1932 was a deeply troubled country. Twenty five percent of its work force was unemployed—and this at a time when practically every member of that work force was the principal support of a family. The economy was paralyzed, despair hung heavy on the land. Disillusion with Europe after the sacrifices of the First World War encouraged profound isolationist sentiments.

The immigration laws of the United States had been established by legislation in 1921 and 1924 under Presidents Harding and Coolidge and by a Congress that had rejected the League of Nations and defined the new isolationism. The Congress controlled the immigration laws and carefully monitored their implementation. A formula assigned a specific quota to countries based on population origins of Americans resident in the United States in 1890. The law was aimed at eastern Europeans, particularly Russia and Poland which were seen as seedbeds of Bolshevik revolution. Italians were a target and Asians were practically excluded. The total number of immigrants that could be admitted annually was set at 153,774<sup>2</sup>. The two countries with the highest

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<sup>2</sup> For comparison purposes, it may be helpful to note that United States law in FY1998

quotas were Great Britain (65,721) and Germany (25,957). As the Depression took hold, President Hoover tightened regulations by mandating that no immigrant could be admitted who might become a public charge. The Depression also encouraged an unusual coalition of liberal and conservative forces, labor unions and business leaders, who opposed any enlargement of the immigration quotas, an attitude that Congress adamantly supported. The overwhelming majority of Americans agreed with the Congress, opposing the increased admission of immigrants, insisting that refugees be included in the quotas of countries from which they were fleeing. Jewish refugees from Germany, because of the relatively large German quota, had an easier time than anti-Communist refugees from the Soviet Union, not to mention the Chinese who were victims of Japan's aggression, or the Armenians, or the Spanish fleeing a civil war where 500,000 were killed between 1936-39. Spain's annual quota, for example, was 252.

The President and Mrs. Roosevelt were leaders in the effort to help those fleeing Nazi persecution. Eleanor Roosevelt was a founder of the International Rescue Committee in 1933 which brought intellectuals, labor leaders, and political figures escaping Hitler to sanctuary in the United States. President Roosevelt made a public point of inviting many of them to the White House. In 1936, in response to the Nazi confiscation of personal assets as a precondition to Jewish emigration, Roosevelt greatly modified Hoover's ruling regarding financial sponsorship for refugees thereby allowing a substantially greater number of visas to be issued. As a result, the United States accepted twice as many Jewish refugees than did the rest of the world put together. As Professor Weinberg has stated, Roosevelt acted in the face of strong and politically damaging criticism for what was generally considered a pro-Jewish attitude by him personally and by his Administration.

Hitler's policy never wavered in trying to force the Jews to leave Germany. After the Anschluss in Austria, Roosevelt, on March 25, 1938, called for an international conference on the refugee crisis. Austria's 185,000 Jews were now also in jeopardy. The conference met in Evian, France. There was no political advantage for Roosevelt in calling for a conference "to facilitate the

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allowed 75,000 refugee admissions. President Clinton has proposed raising this ceiling to 80,000.

emigration from Germany and Austria of political refugees.” No other major political leader in any country matched his concern and involvement. The Evian Conference tried to open new doors in the western hemisphere. The Dominican Republic, for example, offered sanctuary to 100,000 refugees. The devastating blow at Evian was the message from the Polish and Romanian governments that they expected the same right as the Germans to expel their Jewish populations. There were less than 475,000 Jews left in Germany and Austria at this point—a number manageable in an emigration plan that the 29 participating nations could prepare; but with the possibility of 3.5 million more from eastern Europe, the concern now was that any offer of help would only encourage authoritarian governments to brutalize any unwanted portion of their populations, expecting their criminal acts against their own citizens to force the democracies to give them haven. The German emigration problem was manageable. Forced emigration from eastern Europe was not. The Nazi genocide was in the future—and unimaginable to the Jews and probably at the time unimagined by the Nazis. National attitudes then are not very different than today’s. No country allows any and every refugee to enter without limitations. Quotas are thought even now to deter unscrupulous and impoverished regimes from forcing their unwanted people on other countries.

The Evian Conference failed except to organize the Inter-Governmental Committee (IGC) which was to pressure the Germans to allow Jewish refugees to leave with enough resources to begin their new lives. It led to direct negotiations between Hjalmar Schacht, head of the Reichsbank, and George Rublee, a distinguished Washington lawyer personally designated by FDR. Schacht proposed that 150,000 Jews be allowed to emigrate taking 25% of their assets with them, the rest impounded in a trust fund which would serve as collateral on bonds to be issued by the German state. It was an effort by Schacht to resolve Germany’s foreign exchange crisis. Hitler abruptly ordered the end of the discussions. The negotiations, as all barter negotiations in the years ahead, failed because Hitler would never allow them to succeed.

By the end of 1938, Kristallnacht had happened. Its impact on the Jews of Germany and Austria was overwhelming. Munich was a tragic reality. Truncated Czechoslovakia would last six months before Hitler broke his promise and occupied the rest of the country. The German Jews at

last understood the barbarism of the Nazis—and that Hitler was totally in power. America’s reaction to Kristallnacht was stronger than any of the democracies. Roosevelt recalled his Ambassador from Germany. For the first time since the First World War an American president had summoned home an ambassador to a major power under such circumstances. At his press conference then, Roosevelt said: “I myself can scarcely believe that such things could occur in a 20th century civilization.” He extended the visitors’ visas of 20,000 Germans and Austrians in the United States so they would not have to return. The reaction of Americans in opinion polls showed overwhelming anger and disgust with the Nazis and sympathy for the Jews. Roosevelt remained the target of the hardcore anti-Semites in America. He welcomed them as enemies and in brilliant maneuvering, he isolated them from mainstream America and essentially equated their anti-Semitism with treason and the destruction of both the national interest and national defense. Recognizing the inertia, frequent hostility, and sometime anti-Semitism in the State Department, he entrusted Sumner Welles, the Under-secretary of State and a person totally sympathetic to Jewish needs to be his instrument of action.

Immigration procedures were complicated and sometimes harshly administered. The immigration laws and quotas were jealously guarded by Congress, supported by a strong, broad cross-section of Americans who were against all immigrants, not alone Jews. Of course, there were racists and anti-Semites in the Congress and in the country—there are today—only now, after 65 years of government based on liberal values, they dare not speak their true attitudes. The State Department which jealously guarded its administrative authority in the granting of visas was frequently more concerned with Congressional attitudes and criticisms than in reflecting American decency and generosity in helping people in despair and panic. Roosevelt undoubtedly made a mistake in appointing and continuing in office Breckenridge Long as Assistant Secretary of State. Many allege Long was an anti-Semite. Others argue “that he was in an impossible situation with an insurmountable task.” His presence at State was an assurance to the Congress that the immigration laws would be strictly enforced. On the other hand there were countless Foreign Service officers who did everything possible to help persecuted, innocent people—just as they would today. There was an attitude that there were many sanctuaries available in the world besides the United States, so

the Department, controlled by a career, conservative elite in large part anti-New Deal and anti-FDR, was quite prepared to make Congressional attitudes the guide for their administration of immigration procedures rather than the attitudes of the White House. Congress looked at the turmoil in Germany as a European problem in which it did not want America to be involved. Nevertheless, between 1933 and 1941, 35% of all immigrants to America under quota guidelines were Jewish. After Kristallnacht, Jewish immigrants were more than one-half of all immigrants admitted to the U.S. Of course, there were other countries of refuge—many of them preferred by German Jews who—like everyone else did not foresee the Nazi madness of conquest and extermination—and who wanted to stay in Europe. Public opinion everywhere in the democracies was repelled by the Nazi persecution. Great Britain, for example, after Kristallnacht granted immigration visas essentially without limit. In the first six months of 1939, 91,780 German and Austrian Jews were admitted to England, often as a temporary port en route to the Dominions or other parts of the Empire.

Roosevelt from the beginning saw the larger threat of the Nazis. Hitler wanted to present Germany as the champion of a universal struggle against the Jews and Bolshevism. Roosevelt would not let him. The president understood that he had to explain the vital interest that all Americans had in stopping Hitler in terms of their own security. He pressured the Europeans to respond to Hitler. His speech in 1937 calling for the quarantine of the aggressors was met with political hostility at home and abroad. He was constantly seeking havens for the refugees in other countries knowing that he did not have the power to change the quota system of our own country. His critics refuse to acknowledge limitations on presidential power but clearly the President could not unilaterally command an increase in quotas. In fact, the Democratic Congressional leaders, including Representative Dickstein who chaired the House subcommittee on immigration, warned him that reactionary forces in the Congress might well use any attempt to increase the quotas as an opportunity to reduce them. The *New York Times* of February 27, 1939, reports a speech by Congressman Emmanuel Celler of Brooklyn, an outspoken defender of Jewish interests, where he warned that “it would be dangerous at this time because of public opinion in the South and West to press for the passage in Congress of [Celler’s] bills to give asylum in the United States to refugees and to reallocate for refugees the unused quotas of various countries.” Congressman Celler said he had

been warned by representatives from other parts of the country that if he pressed his proposals, other bills “to cut the quotas in half or to stop all immigration would be introduced and probably passed.” Nor were the Jews the only refugees Congress was determined to bar. The *New York Times* of March 2, 1939, reports a speech by the Reverend Joseph Ostermann, executive director of the Committee for Catholic Refugees from Germany, saying that there were 500,000 actual or potential Catholic refugees whom “Goebbels and Rosenberg in Germany have attempted to identify with communism.”

Seventy two percent of all German Jews had emigrated before further emigration became impossible with the beginning of the war. Eighty three percent of all German Jews under 21 emigrated. There are many reasons why the others did not get out—some were too old to leave, some believed it their religious duty to stay, some were in concentration camps and prisons, some just did not know what to do. Emigrés were plundered of virtually all of their assets, and not until Jews faced the reality of terrorism and imprisonment were many of them prepared to give up their family’s wealth and everything that they had worked for all of their lives.

In his painfully eloquent book, *Bound Upon a Wheel of Fire*, John Dipple writes:

“Yes, there were tight restrictions on entering into the United States and other countries, but were Germany’s Jews really blocked by them before 1938? Most evidence suggests that the Jews could have circumvented these obstacles in greater numbers if they had wanted to escape Germany badly enough, if they had grasped the desperateness of their plight earlier on. But they had not. Despite everything, Germany was still their home. And, despite almost everything they were prepared to stay there...”

It is important to say over and over again, that it was a time and a place when no one foresaw the events that became the Holocaust. Louis de Jong, an eminent Dutch historian and Holocaust

survivor, in his Erasmus lectures at Harvard University in 1989 said:

“[There is] an aspect of the Holocaust which is of cardinal importance and which can never be sufficiently underlined: that the Holocaust, when it took place, was beyond the belief and the comprehension of almost all people living at the time, Jews included. Everyone knew that human history had been scarred by endless cruelties. But that thousands, nay millions, of human beings -- men, women and children, the old and the young, the healthy and the infirm -- would be killed, finished off, mechanically, industrially so to speak, would be exterminated like vermin -- that was a notion so alien to the human mind, an event so gruesome, so new, that the instinctive, indeed the natural, reaction of most people was: it can't be true...”<sup>3</sup>

Given the reality of the Holocaust, all of us in every country—and certainly in America—can only wish that we would have done more, that our immigration barriers had been less, that our Congress had had a broader world view, that every public servant had reflected the attitudes of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt. If anyone had foreseen the Holocaust, perhaps—possibly—maybe—but no one did. Nevertheless, the United States, a nation remote from the world in a way our children can hardly understand -- the United States accepted twice as many Jewish refugees than did the rest of the world put together.

Among the anguishing events we read about is the fate of the ship, the S.S. St. Louis of the Hamburg-America line which left Germany and arrived in Cuba on May 27, 1939, with 936 passengers, 930 of them Jewish refugees. This was three months before the outbreak of the war, and three years before the establishment of the death camps. Other ships had made the same journey, and their passengers disembarked successfully, but on May 5th the Cuban government had issued a decree curtailing the power of the corrupt Director General of immigration to issue landing

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<sup>3</sup>The Netherlands and Nazi Germany, by Louis de Jong, Harvard University Press 1990

certificates. The new regulations requiring \$500 bonds from each approved immigrant had been transmitted to the shipping line but only 22 passengers of the St. Louis had fulfilled the requirements before leaving Hamburg on May 13th. The 22 were allowed to land but intense negotiations with the Cuban government regarding the other passengers -- negotiations in which American Jewish agencies participated -- broke down despite pressure from our government. It was not an unreported event. Tremendous international attention focused on the St. Louis, later made famous as the Voyage of the Damned. Secretary of State Cordell Hull, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr., and others, including Eleanor Roosevelt, worked to avoid the harsh reality of the immigration laws, for example, by attempting to land the passengers as “tourists” in the Virgin Islands. Despite the legal inability of the United States to accept the passengers of the St. Louis as immigrants, our diplomats were significantly helpful in resettling them. None -- not one -- of the passengers of the S.S. St. Louis were returned to Nazi Germany. They were all resettled in democratic countries -- 288 in the United Kingdom, the rest in France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark. I interviewed a survivor of the St. Louis recently, a retired professor of human genetics at the University of Washington in Seattle. His father had arrived in Cuba in early 1939. He described Captain Shroeder of the St. Louis as a compassionate man who ordered decent treatment for his Jewish passengers and who told them that he would run his ship aground off of England to assure their sanctuary rather than return them to Germany if Cuba refused admission. The Motulsky family disembarked in Belgium. After an extraordinary saga all of them eventually reached the United States. Their story gives a very different perspective to the voyage of the St. Louis than that of America’s critics who prepare museum exhibits about it sixty years later.

What were Franklin Roosevelt’s own attitudes toward Hitler and the Jews? Did he reflect the social anti-Semitism that was endemic in the America of that era? Contemporary Jews knew that they had never had a better friend, a more sympathetic leader in the White House. Roosevelt opened the offices of government as never before to Jews. Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Samuel Rosenman, Felix Frankfurter, Benjamin Cohen, David Niles, Anna Rosenberg, Sidney Hillman, and David Dubinsky were among his closest advisors in politics and government. Rabbi Stephen Wise, the pre-eminent spokesman for American Zionism, and his daughter Justine Polier, were personal friends of Franklin

and Eleanor Roosevelt with as much access to the White House as anyone. Rabbi Wise described FDR by saying “No one was more genuinely free from religious prejudice and racial bigotry...” He recalls in March, 1933 how “Roosevelt’s soul rebelled at the Nazi doctrine of superior and inferior races...” and how in March, 1945, days before his death, Roosevelt spoke movingly of his determination to establish “a free and democratic Jewish commonwealth in Palestine.”

### **The Holocaust, 1941 - 1945**

The persecution of the Jews and their emigration from Germany were the prelude to the Holocaust. Nazi policy changed radically after the outbreak of war. The possibility of emigration ended. Germany’s Jews were now prisoners. The Holocaust—the systematic killing of 6 million Jews—took place between 1941-45. The likelihood is that Hitler did not expect Britain and France to go to war over Poland. The Hitler-Stalin pact announced on August 24, 1939, stunned the world. The Soviets had been enemies of Hitler, the rallying point for millions around the world who saw in them the only military force that might confront the Nazis. Suddenly, the Soviets and Germany ended their threats to each other, they divided Poland, Hitler gaining lebensraum and Stalin gaining a buffer zone from the Nazi armies he never trusted. Also in the package were more than 3 million Polish Jews, caught between Nazi brutality and Soviet degradation. Seemingly at peace on his eastern flank occupying Austria, Czechoslovakia and Western Poland, essentially dominant in central Europe through satellite fascist movements, Hitler moved to the west, occupying Norway, Denmark, Belgium, Luxemburg, and the Netherlands -- and again stunning the world by conquering France in a six weeks blitzkrieg. France surrendered in June, 1940. Mussolini’s Italy became Hitler’s active ally. Franco in a Spain prostrated by devastating civil war owed his victory to Hitler’s support. England stood alone. Its new Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, expressed the defiance of Britain and its empire, but Britain facing invasion, desperately in need of arms, shaken by devastating Nazi bombings, looked to America for help and hope. Our debt to the British can never be adequately expressed. It was their “finest hour”—they salvaged the fate of freedom.

In 1939, Roosevelt received a letter from Albert Einstein and understood that new scientific discoveries would allow the development of atomic power, threatening a force that could destroy the

world—or at least win the war for whichever nation first became its master. Roosevelt’s decision to launch the Manhattan Project, giving it whatever resources it needed for success, began the nuclear age. It was as fateful a decision as any President has ever made. Hitler had the same option. German scientists were certainly capable of producing atomic weapons. Hitler had all of the necessary resources but he failed to pursue his option, not comprehending as Roosevelt did that the future of the world was at stake.

As Roosevelt won an unprecedented third term as President, he—better than any American—understood what lay ahead. He had confronted the economic collapse of the United States—but recovery was slow and painful. Now he faced the political collapse of Europe, the military collapse of China—and totalitarian governments in Germany and Japan that threatened America as never before. Nazi Germany, possessed of the most modern, best trained, best equipped military force in recorded history, occupied western and central Europe, confident that Hitler’s dream of conquest would soon include Great Britain, the Soviet Union—and ultimately the United States itself. Roosevelt’s priority was to repeal the Neutrality Act, so that he could provide help to Britain. In 1940—with Europe under Hitler’s boot -- U.S. military strength ranked as 17th in the world -- behind Portugal. We led the world in the production of automobiles but had practically no munitions industry. Whereas Hitler had invaded Belgium and the Netherlands supported by 136 fully equipped divisions, America could barely muster five divisions. Nevertheless, isolationist sentiment remained powerful, fully reflected in the Congress. Three months before Pearl Harbor, in September, 1941, the continuation of the Selective Service program was sustained by a single vote in the House of Representatives. Roosevelt undid the public image that the isolationists had projected of themselves as peace-loving patriots. His persistent attacks on them turned the tide of public opinion. At great political risk in the midst of the presidential campaign, Roosevelt engineered the deal that sent 50 desperately needed overage destroyers to Britain, a deed which helped save its lifeline from the unremitting attacks of German submarines. Hitler called it a belligerent act. It was. Roosevelt proposed Lend Lease—and built a bipartisan coalition to gain its Congressional approval. He announced the Four Freedoms as the goal that would justify the terrible sacrifices that lay ahead. He met with Winston Churchill. They announced the Atlantic Charter, the blueprint for the survival

of democracy, and together they created the partnership that we hail today as the most important alliance of this troubled century. All this—and America was not yet at war. Nor had the genocide of Europe’s Jews yet begun. America’s isolationists continued to believe that the United States was protected from harm by the two vast oceans that separated it from Hitler’s Europe and Japan’s militarism. President Roosevelt believed otherwise. Pearl Harbor would prove Roosevelt’s judgment correct—and give him a united country to mobilize for victory.

Hitler’s conquest of the European continent let loose the full force of his psychopathic obsession about Jews. With the start of the war on September 1, 1939, emigration from Germany was prohibited. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of German Jews escaped across borders into Holland, Belgium, and Switzerland. But by June, 1940, with the fall of France, Europe became a prison for the Jews. Unoccupied France was still an escape route. Despite intense criticism from the political Left, FDR continued to maintain diplomatic relations with Vichy, France—which allowed the escape route to remain open. The International Rescue Committee—a group in which Eleanor Roosevelt remained very supportive—sent a team headed by Varian Fry which helped countless refugees find sanctuary in Spain and Portugal. But the vise was tightening. With the invasion of Russia on June 22, 1941, the lock was put on the most terrible dungeon in history. Special squads of the German SS —the Einsatzgruppen—began the slaughter of 1,500,000 Jews behind the German lines in Russia. The Wansee conference which structured “the final solution” was held in the suburbs of Berlin in January, 1942.

The Jews of central Europe, the Jews from the occupied nations of western Europe, the Jews of the Soviet Union -- the principal victims of the Holocaust -- were not refugees either before or after 1939. They were prisoners in a vast prison from which there was no escape and no possible rescue. They were not subject to Nazi rule or persecution prior to the war and few imagined that they ever would be, let alone that they would be murdered in history’s greatest genocide. Just as German Jews imagined that Hitler and the Nazi rule would pass quickly, Jews outside of Germany did not imagine themselves in mortal danger. Zionism was not a dominant force in their communities. In 1936, in the Jewish community elections in Poland -- the most highly organized

Jewish community in Europe -- the Social Democratic Bund won a sweeping victory on a pledge of □unyielding hostility to Zionism.□ Their leaders wanted Polish Jews to remain in Poland. The policies of the Soviet Union forbid emigration. In the Netherlands -- a country whose Jewish population suffered a greater percentage loss in the extermination camps than any other in western Europe -- not more than 679 individuals, Jews and Gentiles, migrated in any one year before 1940 -- far less than the Dutch quota would have allowed. The assumption was that Hitler would respect Dutch neutrality just as the Kaiser had in the First World War. Once Hitler's armies marched, the Jews of Nazi-occupied Europe no longer had the possibility of being refugees. Individuals could and did attempt escape and through their bravery and the extraordinary courage of those who helped them, they made it to freedom, often at great cost to those left behind. For the overwhelming number, it was now too late. They were prisoners. And only the physical liberation of their prisons -- the extermination camps of central Europe -- could save their lives.

The doors had been closed, not by the United States or its allies, but by Hitler. Jews were now prisoners of a psychopath who was also the absolute dictator of Europe. On January 30, 1942, Hitler, speaking to the Reichstag, said □This war can end in two ways -- either the extermination of the Aryan peoples or the disappearance of Jewry from Europe.□ Since the mid 1920's, Hitler had never voluntarily spoken to a Jew. He allowed himself no contact with them. He was the most determined ideologue of racial superiority and racial conflict who ever led a country -- and Germany in 1940 was the most powerful country on earth. He was more extreme than anyone around him. His central obsession, the life's mission of this deranged, monomaniacal psychopath, was to kill as many Jews as he could. Nothing diminished this mission -- not the defeat of his armies, not the destruction of his country. As Germany lay in ruins, as the demented dictator prepared to end his life in his bunker in Berlin, his Nazi acolytes continued his mission above all else, diverting even urgently needed reinforcements for his retreating armies to complete the assignment of the Final Solution. The extermination camps were the efficient mechanisms of these disciplined lunatics -- but 2 million Jews were murdered before Auschwitz was opened -- and after it was closed in November 1944, hundreds of thousands more were shot, strangled or starved to death.

The prisoners of Hitler could only be saved by the total, unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany -- and that was a task that required four years and the unprecedented mobilization of all of the resources, human and material, of Great Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States.

Some critics of America and President Roosevelt say the news of the annihilation of Europe's Jews was deliberately kept secret so that our people would not know about it -- and if Americans had been aware of the Final Solution, they would have insisted on doing more than what was done. They suggest that anti-Semitism in the State Department -- or elsewhere or everywhere in our government and in our country -- determined that the news of the extermination process be kept secret. The facts are otherwise. President Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, General Eisenhower, General Marshall, the intelligence services of the Allied nations, every Jewish leader, the Jewish communities in America, in Britain, in Palestine, and yes, anyone who had a radio or newspaper in 1942 knew that Jews in colossal numbers were being murdered.<sup>4</sup> They may have received the news with disbelief. There was no precedent for it in human history. But the general information of the genocide was broadly available to anyone who would read or listen. The famous telegram from Gerhart Riegner, a representative of the World Jewish Congress in Switzerland in August, 1942, was not even the first knowledge that a Death Camp later to become known as Auschwitz with its gas chambers and ghastly crematoria had been built -- but Auschwitz, like every extermination camp, was treated as a top secret project by the Nazis. We publicized what we knew but the Nazis tried to keep as much information as possible away from everybody. As Martin Gilbert points out, the details and even the name of Auschwitz were not confirmed until the escape of two prisoners in April, 1944 -- two years after its murderous processes had begun. The names, locations and procedures of the death camps may not have been known -- some not until the end of the war -- but the fact of the genocide and the Nazi determination to carry it out were not in doubt.

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<sup>4</sup> John Keegan, the famed military historian, writes in his book, The Second World War (New York, 1989, p.282): "The removal and transportation of Europe's Jews was a fact known to every inhabitant of the continent between 1942 and 1945."

When Rabbi Wise was given the Riegner telegram, Sumner Welles asked him not to publicize it until its information could be confirmed by sources available to the Czech and Polish governments in exile. There was no video of this original version of "ethnic cleansing" such as we had available to us in Bosnia. There were no enterprising reporters who could photograph the butchery of the Nazis or report the workings of their brutality as we had in Rwanda. Of course, everyone with any sense of decency was incredulous -- and many remained so as fragments of what was happening trickled across Nazi borders carried by brave messengers who frequently were not eyewitnesses but rather reporting what they had heard. The experience of the first World War where atrocities attributed to the Germans turned out to be wrong -- or Allied propaganda -- caused many to wonder whether the incredible reports coming from the continent of Europe would ultimately prove false as well.<sup>5</sup> Tragically, the reports beginning in 1941 were true. Even the men, women and children being loaded into the boxcars taking them to certain death in uncertain places generally described as "locations in eastern Europe" did not know Auschwitz or Dachau or Maidanek by name or purpose.

When Sumner Welles confirmed the truth of the Riegner telegram to Rabbi Wise, the Rabbi wept -- as countless Jews and non-Jews would do in those terrible years when the Nazis were beyond the reach of the armies that would defeat them. Encouraged by Welles to hold a press conference to announce the terrible news, Rabbi Wise did so on November 28, 1942. His announcement of the Nazi plan to annihilate Europe's Jews was widely reported. Rabbi Wise and his colleagues met with the President. They asked the President to warn Hitler and the Germans that they would be held individually responsible for what they were doing to the Jews. Roosevelt agreed immediately. An announcement to that effect in the name of the United Nations was made in the Congress and in Britain's Parliament on December 17, 1942. It was repeated many times

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<sup>5</sup> Adam Hochschild, in his book King Leopold's Ghost (Houghton Mifflin, 1998, page 296) tells of alleged atrocities by the Germans in Belgium during the first World War: "Newspaper stories, cartoons, posters, and patriotic speeches luridly denounced mass rapes of Belgian women by German soldiers. The Germans, it was said, crucified Belgian babies on the doors of houses... the press reported that German soldiers were cutting off the hands and feet of Belgian children... In the end, the mass rape, mutilation, and crucifixion charged turned out to be false..."

throughout the war. The Parliament for the first time in its history stood in silence to mourn what was happening to the Jews, to pray for the strength needed to destroy the Nazi barbarians. In America, the labor unions led the nation in a ten minute period of mourning for the Jews of Europe. Who can possibly argue that there was a conspiracy of silence regarding the fate of Europe's Jews when America's most popular broadcaster, Edward R. Murrow, listened to by millions, on December 13, 1942, reported: "Millions of human beings, most of them Jews, are being gathered up with ruthless efficiency and murdered... It is a picture of mass murder and moral depravity unequalled in the history of the world. It is a horror beyond what imagination can grasp... The Jews are being systematically exterminated throughout all Poland... There are no longer "concentration camps" -- we must speak now only of "extermination camps". Six months earlier, on June 30, 1942, the New York Times had already carried a report from the World Jewish Congress that the Germans had by that date already massacred one million Jews, that the Nazis had established a "vast slaughterhouse for Jews" in Eastern Europe.

American Jewry was not a passive observer of these events, cowering in silence for fear of letting loose waves of anti-Semitism in America. Despite issues that bitterly divided them, primarily relating to Palestine, the Jewish community in America spoke the same words in pleading to do whatever was possible to reach out to Europe's Jews. Plan after plan was produced to rescue the Jews of Europe. Jewish leaders lobbied the Congress. Mass rallies were held across the country with overflow crowds throughout those years, praying, pleading for action to stop the genocide we now know as the Holocaust. The unremitting, remorseless massacre of the Jews -- carefully concealed by top secret arrangements of the Nazi murderers -- continued because no one, no nation, no alliance of nations could do anything meaningful to close down the Death Camps -- except, as Roosevelt said over and over again, by winning the war and destroying the Nazis with absolute determination as soon as possible.

If Roosevelt had followed the national will, Japan would have been our military priority, but understanding the Nazi threat to civilization, he ordered Nazi Germany to be the focus of our efforts. If Roosevelt had listened to General Marshall and his military advisors, he would not have sent the

few tanks we had in 1942 to help General Montgomery win at El Alamein, thereby probably saving Palestine from the same fate as Poland. Roosevelt gave frequent audience to Jewish leaders -- he sent messages to rallies of Jews across the country -- he listened to every plea and proposal for rescue that came to him -- but he knew that the diversion of resources from the unyielding purpose of defeating the Nazi armies might satisfy the desperate anguish felt by so many but that no one would be rescued and the rescuers in all likelihood would themselves be killed.

As Richard Lichtheim, a representative of the World Jewish Congress in Switzerland and a hero in informing the world of the genocide, said in December 1942: "You cannot divert a tiger from devouring his prey by adopting resolutions or sending cables. You have to take your gun and shoot him." Franklin Roosevelt understood that and he mobilized in America an arsenal of such strength that the world would still marvel fifty years later at how the miracle was accomplished.

The only meaningful way to save the intended victims of Hitler's murder machine was to win the war as quickly as possible. Professor Weinberg answers the cynics who question America's policy by suggesting to them that they consider how many more Jews would have survived had the war ended even a week or ten days earlier -- and conversely, how many more would have died had the war lasted an additional week or ten days. Given the determination of the Germans to fight on to the bitter end, and knowing what Roosevelt understood then and what all of us should know now --that Hitler would never let the Jews go, that until his dying day his obsession was their destruction, that the slaughter of the Jews went on into the final moments of the Third Reich, that every day until the final surrender there were thousands of deaths by murder, starvation and disease, we should know with certainty that the number saved by winning the war as quickly as possible was vastly greater than the total number of Jews who could be saved by any rescue efforts proposed by anyone from 1941-45.

Serious proposals for rescue and response were not disregarded. For example, on September 16, 1944, the Hebrew Committee on National Liberation (HCNL) proposed to the State Department that a warning be issued "stating that unless the practice of using poison gas against the Hebrew

people ceases forthwith, retaliation in kind will be immediately ordered against Germany.□ The State Department forwarded the recommendation to the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces (JCS). A detailed senior JCS staff memorandum responded that such a warning would be disastrous, that the Nazis would continue their genocidal program and the proposed retaliation would unleash unrestricted gas warfare resulting in heavy civilian and military losses. The □poison gas□ proposal is worth mentioning here if only for the insight that it gives into the profound schism among Jewish organizations as they responded to the genocide in Europe. Attitudes toward Zionism and the future of Palestine were at the core of the conflict. As Rabbi Wise and Rabbi Silver and Joseph Proskauer spoke for the mainstream Jewish organizations so did Peter Bergson emerge as their enemy. When Bergson announced the creation of HCNL on May 18, 1944, it was immediately denounced in a statement by a coordinated group of major Jewish organizations as a □colossal hoax□ promulgated by □half a dozen adventurers from Palestine with no standing, no credentials, no mandate from anyone unless from the Irgun Zevai Leumi in Palestine, an insignificantly small, pistol-packing group of extremists who are claiming credit for the recent terror outrages.□ HCNL was seen as supported by the Irgun, the extremist underground army which had declared war on the British Mandate in Palestine and regarded Great Britain and Ben Gurion as enemies as well as Nazi Germany. Chaim Weizmann and David Ben Gurion were pioneer Zionists who were prepared to negotiate the creation of a Jewish State. They were sensitive to British responsibilities and Arab rights while believing that the Nazi assault on Europe□s Jews made the need for a Jewish State ever more urgent. The Bergson/Begin/Irgun movement accepted war on the British and the Arabs even in the context of World War II as legitimate means to accomplish the need of a Jewish State. The confrontation of the Zionist organizations during World War II finds dramatic resonance in contemporary discussions of the world□s response to the Holocaust. Much remains to be written on this conflict□s impact on American and British policy.

The proposal to bomb Auschwitz in 1944 has become the symbol for those who argue American indifference and complicity in the Holocaust. Some would have us believe that many American Jewish groups petitioned our government to bomb Auschwitz. In fact, there was considerable Jewish opposition both in the United States and Palestine. The focal center of the

Holocaust Museum's exhibit on bombing Auschwitz is a letter from Leon Kubowitzki, head of the Rescue Department of the World Jewish Congress, in which he forwarded, without endorsement, a request from the Czech State Council (in exile in London) to the War Department in August, 1944 to bomb Auschwitz. Much is made of John McCloy's response to Mr. Kubowitzki explaining the War Department's decision not to undertake such a mission. What is not on display and rarely mentioned is a letter dated July 1, 1944, from the same Leon Kubowitzki to the executive director of the War Refugee Board arguing against bombing Auschwitz because "the first victims would be the Jews" and the Allied air assault would serve as "a welcome pretext for the Germans to assert that their Jewish victims have been massacred not by their killers, but by Allied bombing."

Mainstream Jewish opinion was against the whole idea of bombing Auschwitz. The very thought of the Allied forces deliberately killing Jews -- to open the gates of Auschwitz so the survivors could run where? -- was abhorrent then as it is now. The Rescue Committee of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem voted against even making the bombing request at a meeting with Ben-Gurion presiding. Although only President Roosevelt or General Eisenhower could have ordered the bombing of Auschwitz, there is no record of any kind that indicates that either one was ever asked or even heard of the proposal -- even though Jewish leaders of all persuasions had clear access to them both.

Every study of the military problems related to bombing Auschwitz makes one wonder what its proponents are talking about. U.S. Supreme Court Justice Powell, an ULTRA intelligence officer in World War II, when asked in 1985 about the judgment of Allied military commanders that innocent Jews should not be deliberate victims of American attacks, was incredulous that anyone would even suggest that Allied forces bomb Auschwitz. "I am perfectly confident," he responded, "that General Spaatz would have resisted any proposal that we kill the Jewish inmates in order to temporarily put Auschwitz out of operation. It is not easy to think that a rational person would have made such a recommendation."

We are talking about the summer of 1944. American forces were fully engaged with

Japanese aggression across the total expanse of the Pacific Ocean. In Europe, the invasion of Normandy began on June 6th. Despite the fact that two-thirds of the Nazi armies were on the Russian front, D-Day and an Allied success were by no means assured. The German armies were holding our forces at bay in Italy, causing heavy casualties, making us fight for every road and hill -- just ask Senator Dole or Senator Inouye, both of whom were grievously wounded in battle, what was happening on the Italian front. The Allies were planning the invasion of southern France for August 15th. America and our allies were stretched dangerously across western and southern Europe. The Allied bombing strategy was totally directed toward destroying Nazi fuel supplies, their synthetic oil industries, the oil fields of Romania, and their communication and transport lines wherever possible.

A seemingly more reasonable proposal to bomb the railways to Auschwitz was made to Anthony Eden, the Foreign Minister of Great Britain, on July 6, 1944. Eden, with Churchill's immediate support, requested the RAF to examine the feasibility of doing so. The Secretary of State for Air, Sir Archibald Sinclair, replied several days later: "...I entirely agree that it is our duty to consider every possible plan [to stop the murder of the Jews in Hungary] but I am advised that interrupting the railways is out of our power. It is only by an enormous concentration of bomber forces that we have been able to interrupt communications in Normandy; the distance of Silesia from our bases entirely rules out doing anything of the kind." John McCloy had replied to similar suggestion weeks earlier: "The War Department is of the opinion that the suggested air operation is impracticable for the reason that it could be executed only with the diversion of considerable air support essential to the success of our forces now engaged in decisive operations." Even the severest critics of America's response to the Nazi murder of the Jews acknowledge that successful interruption of railways required close observation of the severed lines and frequent re-bombing since repairs took only a few days. Even bridges, which were costly to hit were often back in operation in three or four days. Post war studies of railway bombing totally vindicated the conclusion of the military authorities. Professor Istvan Deak of Columbia University in a recent article asks: "And if the rail lines had been bombed? The inmates of the cattle cars and those at the departure points would have been allowed to die of thirst, or of the heat, or of the cold, while the

lines were being repaired. □<sup>6</sup>

It is often noted that American bombers were carrying out raids in the summer of 1944 on industrial targets only a few miles away from Auschwitz. The allusion by America's critics is that this shows how easy it would have been to bomb the gas chambers. They do not mention that preparation for the D-Day invasion left only 12% of the US Air Force available for the destruction of German fuel supplies, the primary mission as defined by General Spaatz. They point to the huge blow-ups of reconnaissance photographs at the Holocaust Museum that show not only the Farben synthetic fuel plant -- the target of the raids -- but the outlines of Auschwitz and columns of prisoners. The aerial photographs of Auschwitz on display were not developed until 1978 -- and their details were only readable then because advanced technology, developed by the CIA more than 20 years after the end of World War II, made it possible. All such strategic raids on military-industrial bases proceeded only after months of preparatory intelligence work, entailing the creation of a target folder with specific information about the size, hardness, structure placement, and defenses, of the target and detailed aerial photography. These were costly, dangerous raids against heavily protected, frequently remote targets. The losses in men and planes were tragically heavy. The Allied Air Forces totally lacked the intelligence base necessary to plan and execute a bombing raid against the Auschwitz extermination camp. It would have been a non-military mission. Only Roosevelt or Eisenhower could have ordered it. No one -- no one proposed it to them.

If we had bombed Auschwitz with the inevitable consequence of killing hundreds, perhaps thousands of Jewish prisoners, I have no doubt that those who defame America for inaction would denounce us today for being accomplices in the Nazi genocide. Certainly Hitler and Goebbels would have justified their madness by claiming that the Allies, by their deliberate bombing of Auschwitz, had shown their own disdain for the value of Jewish lives.

The War Refugee Board was created in January, 1944, by President Roosevelt immediately upon presentation of the case for doing so by Henry Morgenthau. There were thousands of refugees

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<sup>6</sup> Horror and Hindsight, by Istvan Deak, The New Republic, February 15, 1999.

stranded on the outer peripheries of Nazi Europe. With the invasion of Italy in 1943, thousands more sought safety in camps in the south. Tito's success in Yugoslavia enabled many to escape from Croat fascism and Serb hatred. But these were refugees who were already saved. These were not escapees from the Death Camps. Under pressure from Roosevelt and Churchill, Spain kept open its frontiers, stating as its policy that "all refugees without exception would be allowed to enter and remain." Probably more than 40,000 refugees, many of them Jewish, found safe sanctuary in Spain. Makeshift transit camps in Spain, Portugal, Italy, and North Africa housed them in abysmal conditions. Those who fought for these refugees to come to America were right to do so. Refugees than as now are generally powerless and voiceless. Governments have to be reminded constantly of their humanitarian responsibilities. But perhaps the allied nations can be forgiven in the midst of a war for survival for not doing more for refugees whose lives had already been saved. Perhaps not. In remembering what we did not do, perhaps we can measure our response to today's tragedies and ask whether we -- now the richest, most powerful nation in history -- have responded adequately to the "ethnic cleansing" of Bosnia, to the genocide in Rwanda, to the Killing Field of Cambodia. We might question the adequacy of our response to the catalogue of horrors visible to all of us in Sierra Leone where thousands of children as young as seven years old are forced to become soldiers, human shields, sex slaves, and instruments of torture and killing -- having already witnessed the slaughter of their parents and the hacking off of the hands and feet of countless innocent civilians.

The most protected of the Jewish populations in central Europe were those of Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania, all nations that were Hitler's allies. Their governments, although decidedly Fascist, protected their indigenous populations as long as possible. Relentless Nazi pressure to deport their Jewish citizens to the extermination camps was resisted with some success until the last year of the war. In an extraordinary book, Beyond Hitler's Grasp<sup>7</sup>, Michael Bar-Zohar describes the actions of King Boris III and the heroic courage of Jewish leaders, Bulgarian politicians, and the Metropolitan Stefan, leader of Bulgaria's church, so that not one Bulgarian Jew was sent to the

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<sup>7</sup> Beyond Hitler's Grasp, by Michael Bar-Zohar, 1998, published by Adam Media Corporation, p. 268. See also The Politics of Genocide, the Holocaust in Hungary, Volumes I and II, by Randolph L. Braham (1981, Columbia University Press)

death camps. The author notes: □The Bulgarian Jews became the only Jewish community in the Nazi sphere of influence whose number increased during World War II.□

Roosevelt□s intervention with the government of Hungary -- which by then understood that Nazi defeat was inevitable, the actions of the War Refugee Board such as retaining the heroic services of Raoul Wallenberg, the bombing of the Budapest area all played roles undoubtedly in the rescue of one-half of the Jewish community in Hungary. President Roosevelt was deeply and personally involved in the effort to save the Jews of Hungary. This is his statement to the nation on March 24, 1944:

□In one of the blackest crimes of all history -- begun by the Nazis in the day of peace and multiplied by them a hundred times in time of war -- the wholesale systematic murder of the Jews of Europe goes on unabated every hour. As a result of the events of the last few days hundreds of thousands of Jews who, while living under persecution, have at least found a haven from death in Hungary and the Balkans, are now threatened with annihilation as Hitler□s forces descend more heavily upon these lands. That these innocent people, who have already survived a decade of Hitler□s fury, should perish on the very eve of triumph over the barbarism which their persecution symbolizes, would be a major tragedy. It is therefore fitting that we should again proclaim our determination that none who participate in these acts of savagery shall go unpunished. The United Nations have made it clear that they will pursue the guilty and deliver them up in order that justice be done. That warning applies not only to the leaders but also to their functionaries and subordinates in Germany and in the satellite countries. All who knowingly take part in the deportation of Jews to their death in Poland or Norwegians and French to their death in Germany are equally guilty with the

executioner. All who share the guilt shall share the punishment.

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

Although one had read about the Final Solution and heard witnesses who had seen the camps and read the accounts of the War Refugee Board of three eyewitnesses to Auschwitz published in November 1944, no one understood what really had happened until they could see it for themselves.

On the day on which Franklin Roosevelt died, April 12, 1945, General Eisenhower visited Ohrdruf Nord, the first concentration camp liberated by the American army. □The things I saw beggar description,□ he wrote General Marshall. According to his biographer, Stephen Ambrose, □Eisenhower had heard ominous rumors about the camps, of course, but never in his worst nightmares had he dreamed they could be so bad.□ He sent immediately for a delegation of Congressional leaders and newspaper editors. He wanted to be sure that Americans would never forget the depths of the Nazi horror. Five months later he dismissed his close friend and brilliant army commander, General George Patton, for using former Nazi officials in his occupation structure and publicly likening □the Nazi thing□ to differences between the Republicans and Democrats. Patton had visited the Ohrdruf camp with Eisenhower and had become physically ill from what he had seen.

Anne O'Hare McCormick, the renowned foreign affairs reporter of the New York Times, wrote in December, 1944, of a visit of a congressional delegation to the war front in Italy. The Congressmen expressed shock at the rigors of the Italian campaign, of its inhuman conditions. They were quoted as saying that this was one of the toughest battles of the war -- and Americans were not being told about it. Miss McCormick wrote: "The stories have been written and have been printed. They have even been overwritten and printed so many times that readers don't see the mud or blood anymore. They don't hear the screams of the shells or the thunder of the rockets. Congress either didn't read the accounts of the war in Italy or they couldn't take in the meaning of what they read. They had to see it. It is not their fault. It is because the thing is indescribable..." How much more true is this insight regarding the Death Camps.

In the last seven months of the War, more than 80,000 Dutch citizens starved to death because the German occupiers of northern Holland wanted to punish the Dutch for insurrection and strikes following the failed assault on Arnhem, the fabled Bridge Too Far. The Allies knew what was happening. Allied armies were everywhere around this occupied segment of the Netherlands; air rescue, or at least the capacity for organizing food drops, was minutes away. Still, 80,000 men, women and children -- for the most part non-Jews -- starved to death and the forces that could have saved them remained intent on their objective of military engagement with the Germans that would lead to victory in the shortest possible time. Perhaps these military decisions were wrong but they were not made because of hatred or bias against the Dutch -- nor, regarding Auschwitz, because of anti-Semitism.

No one of us, including scholars and historians, can review the bestial crimes of Adolf Hitler and his Nazi thugs and all those who carried out their orders to kill innocent men, women, and children without hanging our heads in sorrow. But we must never forget that it was the Nazis who committed this most terrible crime led by a psychopath, Adolf Hitler. America -- this wonderful and generous country -- was a reluctant participant in the world of the 30's. Our parents and grandparents were not fools. It was their courage and strength that made America the leader of the

Free World. We should be so brave and strong -- we should do so well -- in our own time, with our own problems. Had Israel existed in 1939 with the military strength that it has today, the terrible story of the Holocaust might never have happened.

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

Winston Churchill once said that Franklin Roosevelt was the greatest man he had ever known. President Roosevelt's life, he said, "must be regarded as one of the commanding events of human destiny."

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, more than any other American, is entitled to the historical credit for mobilizing and leading the forces that destroyed the Nazi barbarians and so saved western civilization. In the years of his leadership, he gave Jews dignity and self-respect as did no one before in American history. He understood and shared the anguish of the Holocaust as it unfolded.

Franklin Roosevelt was the voice of the people of the United States during the most difficult crises of the century. He led America out of the despair of the Great Depression. He led us to victory in the Great War. Four times he was elected President of the United States. By temperament and talent, by energy and instinct, Franklin Roosevelt came to the presidency, ready for the challenges that confronted him. He was a breath of fresh air in our political life -- so vital, so confident and optimistic, so warm and good humored. He was a man of incomparable personal

courage. At the age of 39, he was stricken with infantile paralysis. He would never walk or stand again unassisted. The pain of his struggle is almost unimaginable - learning to move again, to stand, to rely upon the physical support of others -- never giving into despair, to self-pity, to discouragement. Just twelve years after he was stricken, he was elected President of the United States and took command of a paralyzed nation. He lifted America from its knees and led us to our fateful rendezvous with history. He embraced a desperately troubled world and gave it hope.

He transformed our government into an active instrument of social justice. He made America the arsenal of democracy. He was Commander-in-Chief of the greatest military force in history. He crafted the victorious alliance that won the war. He was the father of the nuclear age. He inspired and guided the blueprint for the world that was to follow. The vision of the United Nations, the commitment to collective security, the determination to end colonialism, the economic plan for a prosperous world with access to resources and trade assured to all nations -- such was the legacy of Franklin Roosevelt and "the greatest generation" which he led to its rendezvous with destiny.