

DOCUMENT 2A

The Evian Conference

Between 1933 and 1941, the Nazis aimed to make Germany Judenrein (cleansed of Jews) by making life so difficult for them that they would be forced to leave the country. By 1938, about 150,000 German Jews, one in four, had already fled the country. After Germany annexed Austria in March 1938, however, an additional 185,000 Jews were brought under Nazi rule. Many Jews were unable to find countries willing to take them in.

Many German and Austrian Jews tried to go to the United States but could not obtain the papers (visas) needed to enter. Even though news of the violent pogroms of November 1938 was widely reported, Americans remained reluctant to welcome Jewish refugees. In the midst of the Great Depression, many Americans believed that refugees would compete with them for jobs and overburden social programs set up to assist the needy.

Congress had set immigration quotas in 1924 that limited the number of immigrants and discriminated against groups considered racially and ethnically undesirable. These quotas remained in place even after President Roosevelt, responding to mounting political pressure, called for an international conference to address the refugee problem.

In the summer of 1938, delegates from thirty-two countries met at the French resort of Evian. Roosevelt chose not to send a high-level official, such as the Secretary of State, to Evian; instead, Myron C. Taylor, a businessman and close friend of Roosevelt's, represented the U.S. at the conference. During the nine-day meeting, delegate after delegate rose to express sympathy for the refugees. But most countries, including the United States and Britain, offered excuses for not letting in more refugees.

Responding to Evian, the German government was able to state with great pleasure how astounding it was that foreign countries criticized Germany for their treatment of the Jews, but none of them wanted to open the doors to them when "the opportunity offer(ed)."

Even efforts by some Americans to rescue children failed: the Wagner-Rogers bill, an effort to admit 20,000 endangered Jewish refugee children, was not supported by the Senate in 1939 and 1940. Widespread racial prejudices among Americans—including anti-Semitic attitudes held by the U.S. State Department officials—played a part in the failure to admit more refugees.

Milton Meltzer, *Never to Forget: The Jews of the Holocaust* (New York: Harper Collins, 1976), 26–27. Reprinted by permission.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the purpose of the Evian Conference?
2. What was the outcome of the conference?
3. How did the reaction of world nations encourage the implementation of Nazi policy?

DOCUMENT 2B

Cartoon: "Will the Evian Conference Guide Him to Freedom?"



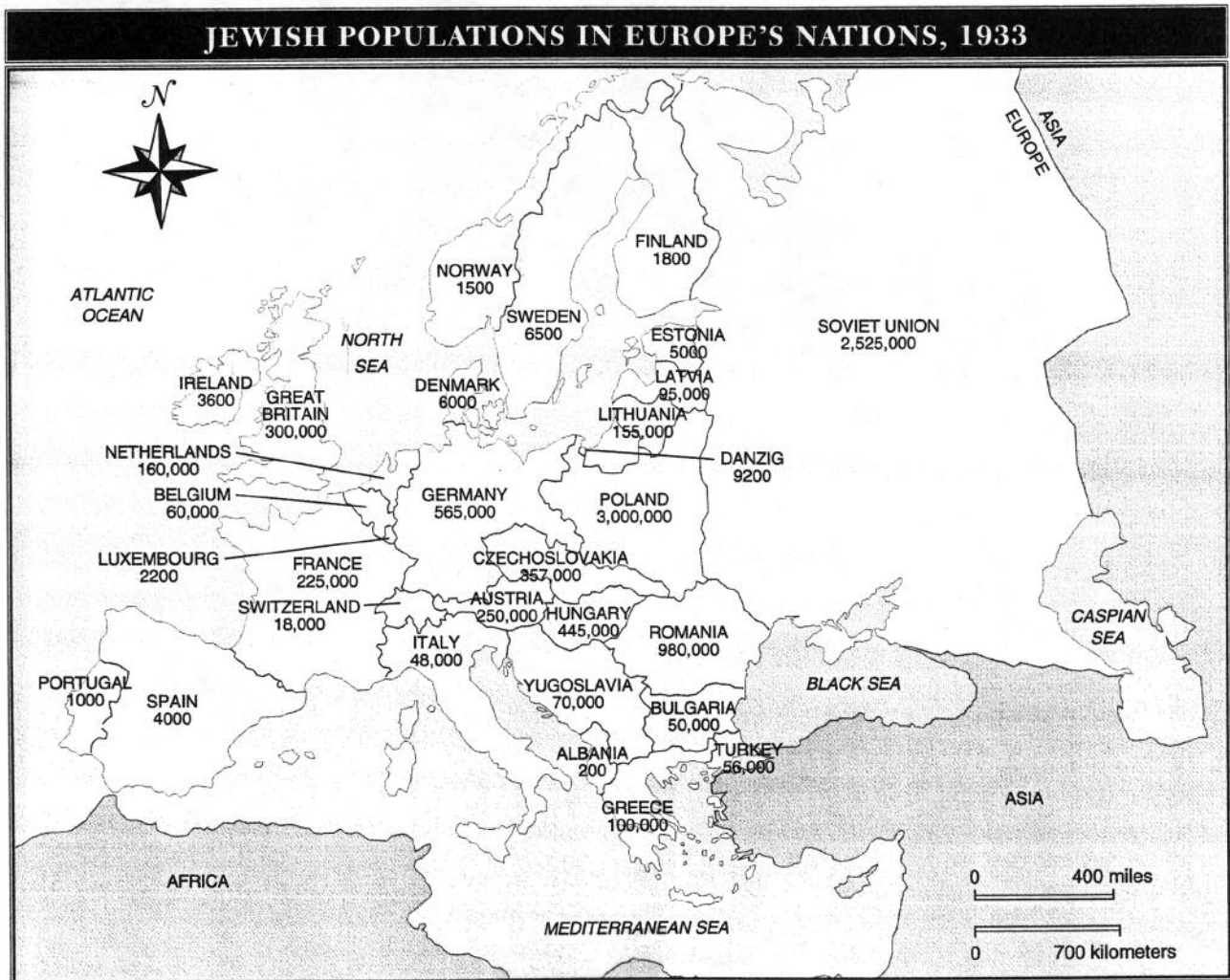
"Will the Evian Conference Guide Him to Freedom?" *New York Times*, July 3, 1938.

QUESTIONS

1. How does the cartoonist depict the results of the Evian Conference?
2. Do you think that the cartoonist supports the outcome of the Evian Conference? Give evidence.

DOCUMENT 3A

Map: The Jewish Population in Europe



David J. Hogan and David Aretha, eds. *The Holocaust Chronicle: A History in Words and Pictures* (Lincolnwood, IL: Publications International, 2000), 69. Reprinted by permission.

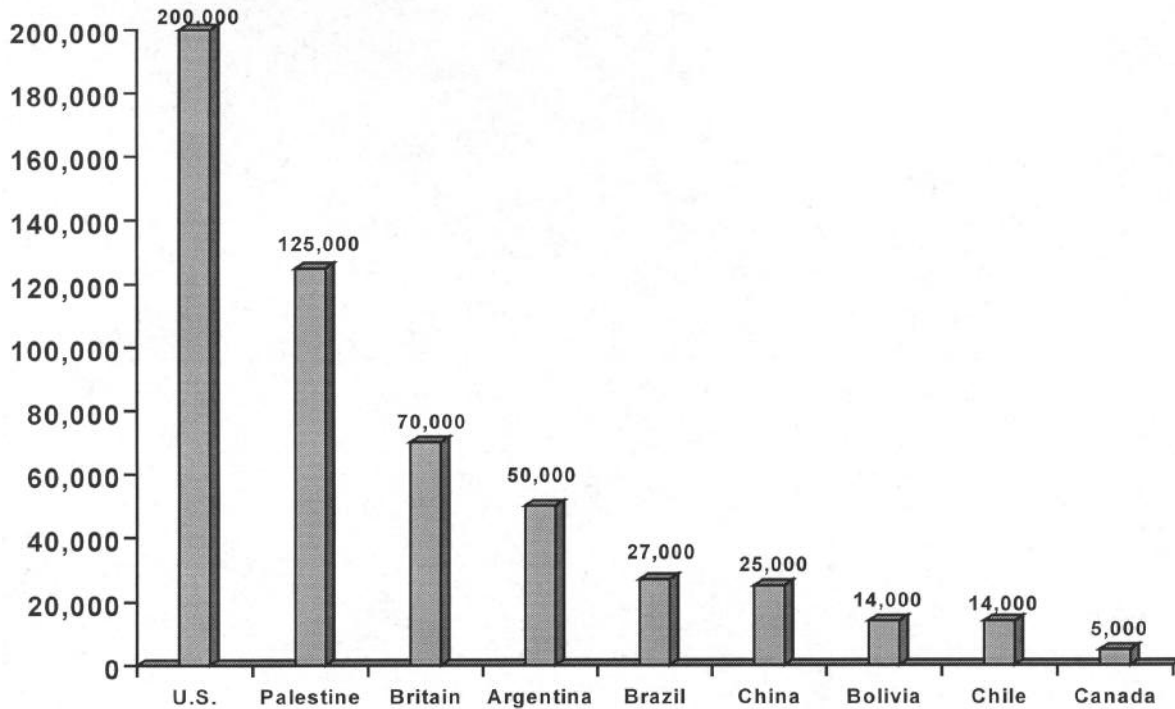
QUESTIONS

1. Examine the map. Make note of the different number of Jews living in the various countries in Europe.
2. Which countries were inhabited by large numbers of Jews and which were home to far fewer Jews?

DOCUMENT 3B

Graph: National Response to Jewish Refugees

National Responses to Jewish Refugees 1933 - 1945



Harold Troper, *None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe 1933–1948* (New York: Random House, 1982), 42 .

QUESTION

1. Which country admitted the largest number of refugees and which one admitted the fewest? Why?
2. What was the total number of refugees accepted into foreign countries between 1933–1945?
3. What conclusions can you draw by comparing the Jewish population in Europe in 1933 with the information in the graph?

DOCUMENT 4

The Voyage of the *St. Louis*

Refused Entry

One effort to get out of Germany was made by German Jews who were able to secure passage to Cuba on the S.S. *St. Louis*. On May 13, 1939, a total of 937 Jews departed Hamburg on this luxury liner. All had visas, permits that assured them the right to land. But when they arrived, Cuba refused them entry. When they then attempted to reach the shores of the United States, the ship was forced out of U.S. territorial waters by the Coast Guard, on orders of the U.S. government. Jane Keibel was a child on that voyage.

Jane Keibel Remembers the S.S. *St. Louis* Voyage

We had our visas to America for quite a while, because my father had two brothers who lived here. But my immigration number was very high. And after Kristallnacht, my father decided he could not wait in Europe for that number to come up. So he had to explore different ways of getting out of Germany.

One of them was Shanghai, China, and he was not looking forward to that, so he opted for Cuba. And he bought visas for my family, my sister, myself, and my parents. And if I remember correctly, they were \$1,500 apiece.

And after he got the visas, the entry visas to Cuba, he purchased places on the ship. And the

ship that had room was the *St. Louis*. And that left on May 13, 1939. My father spent all his money on this, we went first class. And my sister and I shared our cabin with a distant relative, a lady who was supposed to chaperone us.

We boarded the ship on May 13, 1939. It was a German ship and it sailed out of Hamburg in the afternoon. It took about 10 days to reach Havana. And when we got to Havana, we weren't supposed to land at the port, but we had to stay out in international waters. And the excuse was that the Cuban authorities had to come and inspect passports and visas.

And they came on board, and they inspected, and they left, and we still couldn't land. We were told after a couple of days that the reason we couldn't land was the Cuban government wanted more money. And the passengers on the ship, of course, had no money—all we were allowed to take out of Germany was 10 dollars.

So Jewish organizations got involved and tried to raise money, mostly out of America. But whatever money they raised was not enough for Cuba.

And from the ship we appealed to Mr. Roosevelt, who was the American President then, and the children sent a telegram to Mrs. Roosevelt, but nothing became available. They did not want to let us in.

The orders were from the shipping company

DOCUMENT 4 (Continued)

The Voyage of the *St. Louis*

to come back to Europe, to Germany. So we went up the coast, we saw Miami, and we went up as far as New York, and nothing happened,

so we sailed to Europe...Just before we reached the English Channel, four countries said they would take a quarter of the passengers. And we

On June 6, 1939, the *St. Louis* returned to Europe. Only last-minute decisions by Great Britain, Holland, France, and Belgium prevented the refugees from returning to certain incarceration in Nazi concentration camps. Still, many of those who remained on the continent ended up in the camps.

William Shulman, *Voices and Visions: A Collection of Primary Sources* (Woodbridge, CT: Blackbirch Press, 1998), 28–29. Reprinted by permission.

QUESTIONS

1. Why did Jane Keibel's family decide to leave Germany?
2. What obstacles did they face once they made the decision?
3. Why might some Jews have chosen to stay in Germany?
4. The *St. Louis* was not the only ship carrying refugees to be turned away from the United States in the late 1930s. What do such incidents suggest about America's "universe of obligation"?

DOCUMENT 5

Danish Rescue Boat



Among the Nazi-occupied countries, only Denmark rescued its Jews. Most Danes regarded Jews as full members of their community and the Danish government resisted Nazi pressure to persecute them. From 1940 to the spring of 1943, the Nazis refrained from harming Denmark's Jews.

On September 28, 1943, George Ferdinand Duckwitz, a German diplomat, informed one of his contacts about the S.S. plans to deport the Danish Jews. Three days later, German police began making arrests. Heeding these warnings, the Danes launched a nationwide effort to smuggle Jews by boat to Sweden, a neutral country.

Jews were hidden in homes, hospitals, and churches of coastal towns. Danish police refused

to cooperate in arrests. Jewish and non-Jewish Danes raised the equivalent of \$600,000 to pay for passage to Sweden. In October, 7220 Danish Jews were brought to safety. The Danes thus proved that widespread support of Jews and resistance to Nazi police policies could prevent deportation.

Nevertheless, almost 500 Danish Jews were deported to the Theresienstadt ghetto, among them elderly and disabled Jews and some too poor to afford the boat trip to Sweden. Yet even of these Jews, all but 51 survived the Holocaust.

The clandestine rescue of Danish Jews was undertaken at great personal risk. This boat and several others like it were used by one of the earliest rescue operations, organized by a group of

DOCUMENT 5 (Continued)

Danish Rescue Boat

Danes code-named the “Helsingør Sewing Club.” The escape route they provided, named the “Kiaer Line” after Erling Kiaer, founder of the “Helsingør Sewing Club,” enabled several hun-

dred Jews to escape across a narrow strait to the Swedish coast. On each trip, the boat carried 12–14 Jewish refugees. Kiaer himself was betrayed and arrested in May 1944.

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For educational purposes only. Courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Photograph by Arnold Kramer.

QUESTIONS

1. Describe how the Danes helped the Jews.
2. How and why was the reaction of the Danes different from that of people of other countries?
3. How did geography contribute to the success of the Danish rescue?

DOCUMENT 6

Response of the Catholic and Protestant Churches

The head of the Catholic Church at the time of the Nazi rise to power was Pope Pius XI. Although he stated that the myths of “race” and “blood” were contrary to Christian teaching (in a Papal Encyclical, March 1937), he neither mentioned nor criticized anti-Semitism. His successor, Pius XII (Cardinal Pacelli) was a Germanophile who maintained his strict neutrality throughout the course of World War II. Although, as early as 1942, the Vatican received detailed information on the murder of Jews in concentration camps, the Pope confined his public statements to broad expressions of sympathy for the victims of injustice and to calls for a more humane conduct of the war.

Despite the lack of response by Pope Pius XII, several papal nuncios played an important role in rescue efforts, particularly the nuncios in Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Turkey. It is not clear to what, if any, extent they operated upon instructions from the Vatican. In Germany, the Catholic Church did not oppose the Nazis’ anti-Semitic campaign. Church records were supplied to state authorities which assisted in the detection of people of Jewish origin, and efforts to aid the persecuted were confined to Catholic non-Aryans. While Catholic clergymen protested the Nazi euthanasia program, few, with the exception of Bernhard Lichtenberg, spoke out against the murder of the Jews.

In Western Europe, Catholic clergy spoke out publicly against the persecution of the Jews and actively helped in the rescue of Jews. In Eastern Europe, however, the Catholic clergy was generally more reluctant to help. Dr. Jozef Tiso, the head of state of Slovakia and a Catholic priest, actively cooperated with the Germans as did many other Catholic priests.

The response of Protestants and Eastern Orthodox churches complied with the anti-Jewish legislation and even excluded Christians of Jewish origin from membership. Pastor Martin Niemöller’s Confessing Church defended the rights of Christians of Jewish origin within the church, but did not publicly protest their persecution, nor did it condemn the measures taken against the Jews, with the exception of a memorandum sent to Hitler in May 1936.

In occupied Europe, the position of the Protestant churches varied. In several countries (Denmark, France, the Netherlands, and Norway) local churches and/or leading clergymen issued public protests when the Nazis began deporting Jews. In other countries (Bulgaria, Greece, and Yugoslavia), some Orthodox church leaders intervened on behalf of the Jews and took steps which, in certain cases, led to the rescue of many Jews.

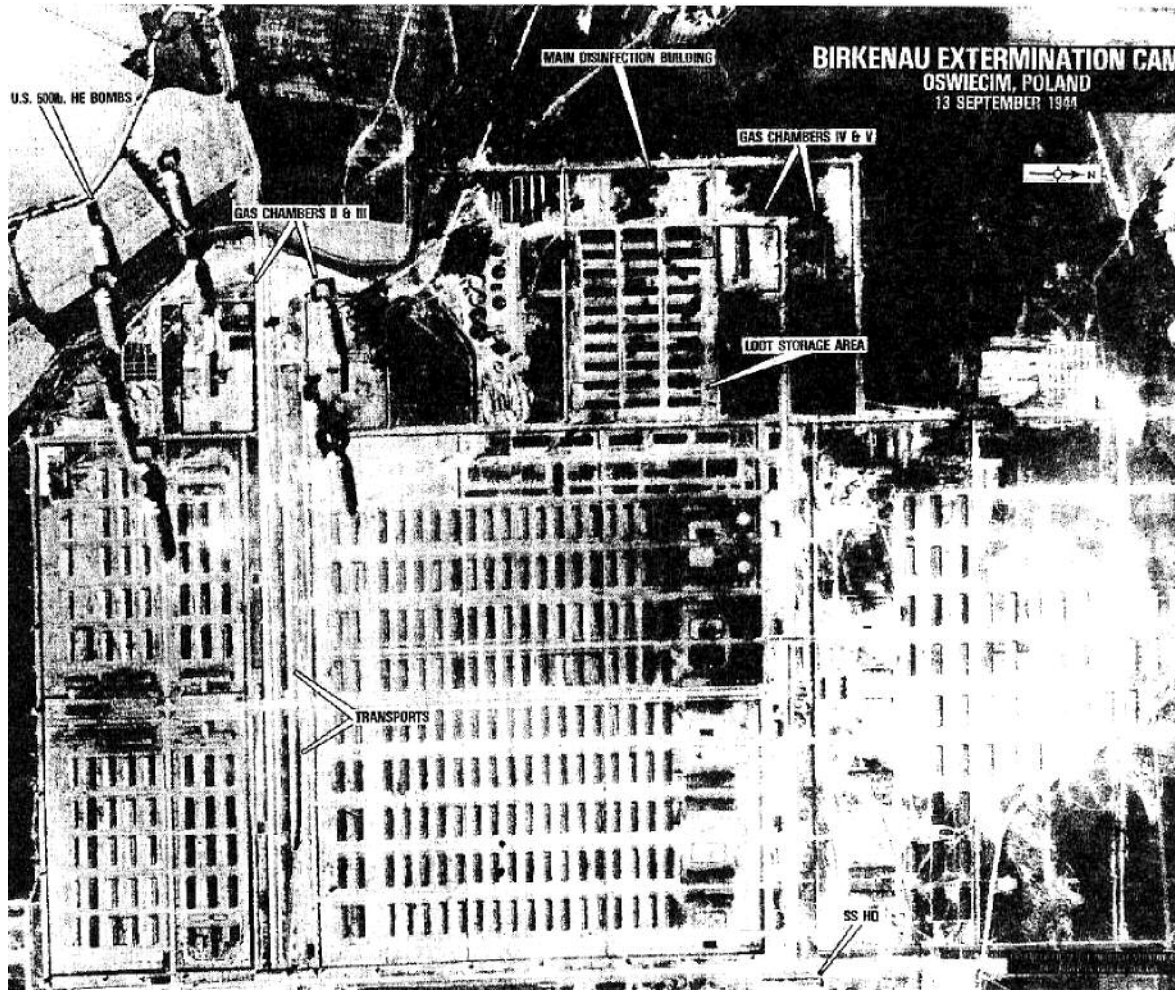
Simon Wiesenthal Center, Museum of Tolerance, Multimedia Learning Center Online.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the attitude of the churches vis-à-vis the persecution of the Jews?
2. Did the Pope ever speak out against the Nazis?

DOCUMENT 7A

Photo: Birkenau



US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Photo Archive.

DOCUMENT 7B

Why Wasn't Auschwitz Bombed?

During the spring and summer of 1944, hundreds of Hungarian Jews were deported to Auschwitz/Birkenau. As many as ten thousand people a day were killed in its gas chambers. Jewish leaders in Budapest and Slovakia, American Jewish organizations, and the U.S. government's War Refugee Board all urged the Allies to intervene. Their requests, though made independently, called for the same action. Auschwitz must be bombed. At the very least, the railway lines leading to the death camp must be knocked out.

These repeated requests were denied. The Americans gave several reasons: Auschwitz was not within the range of Allied bombers, military resources could not be diverted from the war effort, bombing Auschwitz might provoke even more vindictive German action.

In fact, as early as 1944, the United States Air Force had the capability to strike Auschwitz at will. The rail lines from Hungary were also well within range. On July 7, 1944, American bombers flew over the railway lines to Auschwitz. On August 20, 127 Flying Fortresses, with an escort of 100 Mustang fighter craft, dropped 1,336 five-hundred pound bombs on a factory less than five miles east of Auschwitz. The death camp remained untouched.

In August, Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy wrote to Leon Kubowitzki of the World Jewish Congress, noting that the War Refugee Board has asked if it was possible to bomb Auschwitz:

After a study, it became apparent that such an operation could be executed only by the diversion of considerable air support...now engaged in decisive operations elsewhere and would...be of such doubtful efficacy that it would not warrant the use of our resources. There has been considerable opinion to the effect that such an effort, even if practicable, might provoke even more vindictive action by the Germans.

McCloy was less than candid: there had been no study on bombing Auschwitz. Instead, the War Department had decided in January that army units would not be "employed for the purpose of rescuing victims of enemy oppression" unless a rescue opportunity arose in the course of the routine military operations. In February, an internal U.S. War Department memo stated: "We must constantly bear in mind that the most effective relief which can be given the victims of enemy persecution is to insure the speedy defeat of the Axis."

The defeat of the Axis came fifteen months later, too late for those murdered in 1944 and 1945. Bombing Auschwitz could have significantly slowed the killing process and saved innumerable lives. By 1944, American government officials were fully informed about the operations of the killing center. As for McCloy's stated fear of provoking Nazi retaliation, how much more vindictive could the Nazis have become?

DOCUMENT 7B (Continued)

Why Wasn't Auschwitz Bombed?

Elie Wiesel, an Auschwitz survivor, recalls the hope of an Allied attack:

Then we began to hear the airplanes. Almost at once the barracks began to shake. "They're bombing Buna," someone shouted. [Buna was the German synthetic rubber factory at Auschwitz III that relied on slave labor.] I thought of my father. But I was glad all the

same. To see the whole works go up in fire—what revenge!... We were not afraid. And yet, if a bomb had fallen on the blocks it alone would have claimed hundreds of victims on the spot. But we were no longer afraid of death; at any rate not of that death. Every bomb that exploded filled us with joy and gave us new confidence in life.

Michael Berenbaum, *The World Must Know* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1993), 144-45. Reprinted by permission.

QUESTIONS

1. What reasons did the Americans give for not bombing Auschwitz?
2. Do you agree with the decision not to bomb Auschwitz? Explain.