

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:03,460

2

00:00:03,460 --> 00:00:06,040

Washington Pehle
(film slating) six.

3

00:00:06,040 --> 00:00:08,840

Did the war refugee
board try to--

4

00:00:08,840 --> 00:00:12,650

(film instructions)

5

00:00:12,650 --> 00:00:15,620

Washington Pehle (film slating)

6

00:00:15,620 --> 00:00:22,700

Did the war refugee board try to
engage the Vatican and the pope

7

00:00:22,700 --> 00:00:27,320

more actively as they did
before in the [BOTH TALKING]..

8

00:00:27,320 --> 00:00:36,530

My recollection is that we did
try to get the pope to issue

9

00:00:36,530 --> 00:00:41,660

warnings, but that
we never were very

10

00:00:41,660 --> 00:00:46,650

successful in getting any
strong action in this regard.

11

00:00:46,650 --> 00:00:47,150

Yes.

12

00:00:47,150 --> 00:00:49,980

How did you try to get it?

13

00:00:49,980 --> 00:00:53,810

I think we had a meeting with
the apostolic delegate here,

14

00:00:53,810 --> 00:00:59,533

and we also tried through
the unofficial representative

15

00:00:59,533 --> 00:01:00,950

which the United
States government

16

00:01:00,950 --> 00:01:03,200

had in Rome at one point.

17

00:01:03,200 --> 00:01:05,060

[? Kettmann. ?]

18

00:01:05,060 --> 00:01:07,130

[? Kettmann, ?] Yes.

19

00:01:07,130 --> 00:01:09,240

But we never got
much encouragement.

20

00:01:09,240 --> 00:01:09,740

Yes.

21

00:01:09,740 --> 00:01:12,440

22

00:01:12,440 --> 00:01:19,250

But what kind of statement
did they deliver, if any?

23

00:01:19,250 --> 00:01:21,020

I can't recall,
except that I didn't

24

00:01:21,020 --> 00:01:22,680

think it was very effective.

25

00:01:22,680 --> 00:01:23,180

Yes.

26

00:01:23,180 --> 00:01:26,210

27

00:01:26,210 --> 00:01:30,920

And [INAUDIBLE] has
a question, which

28

00:01:30,920 --> 00:01:36,920

is connected with what
you have said already,

29

00:01:36,920 --> 00:01:44,840

that if a great number of
Jews would have been rescued,

30

00:01:44,840 --> 00:01:48,860

it would have been very
difficult to take them

31

00:01:48,860 --> 00:01:52,730

and to give them an asylum.

32

00:01:52,730 --> 00:01:56,630

You know the famous
quotation of Lord [? Moen ?]

33

00:01:56,630 --> 00:01:59,435

about the Hungarian Jews.

34

00:01:59,435 --> 00:02:03,740

He says a Brand
mission when he met

35

00:02:03,740 --> 00:02:13,160

Brand and Brand said we don't
discuss now whether it was real

36

00:02:13,160 --> 00:02:13,790
or not.

37
00:02:13,790 --> 00:02:17,150
Because as you say,
we cannot know.

38
00:02:17,150 --> 00:02:20,630
But Brand said to
Lord [? Moen, ?] I

39
00:02:20,630 --> 00:02:24,710
can free from the Nazi
grip one million Jews.

40
00:02:24,710 --> 00:02:27,410
We can save one million Jews.

41
00:02:27,410 --> 00:02:29,180
And Lord [? Moen ?]
said, what shall

42
00:02:29,180 --> 00:02:32,030
I do with one million Jews?

43
00:02:32,030 --> 00:02:35,810
Which was a cynical answer,
but a political one,

44
00:02:35,810 --> 00:02:39,560
because it poses a problem,
as a matter of fact.

45
00:02:39,560 --> 00:02:43,250
And I sense that there
was a similar problem here

46
00:02:43,250 --> 00:02:47,630
with the resettlement area
where to put them, if there

47
00:02:47,630 --> 00:02:49,550
would have been any rescue.

48
00:02:49,550 --> 00:02:53,840
Basically, the War Refugee
Board took the attitude

49
00:02:53,840 --> 00:02:58,220
that we would worry about that
when and if we could get people

50
00:02:58,220 --> 00:03:00,290
out, but that our
concentration was going

51
00:03:00,290 --> 00:03:03,170
to be on getting people out.

52
00:03:03,170 --> 00:03:06,560
We did talk to various
Latin American countries

53
00:03:06,560 --> 00:03:10,370
about their willingness
to accept refugees.

54
00:03:10,370 --> 00:03:12,290
But the weakness
of our position was

55
00:03:12,290 --> 00:03:15,620
that the United States
wasn't taking in any refugees

56
00:03:15,620 --> 00:03:17,520
to speak of.

57
00:03:17,520 --> 00:03:25,220
And so we pressed for at least
a token entry into the United

58
00:03:25,220 --> 00:03:30,650
States without visas, without
compliance with the immigration

59

00:03:30,650 --> 00:03:34,040
laws, of a token number.

60

00:03:34,040 --> 00:03:36,770
And we did bring in
several hundred people

61

00:03:36,770 --> 00:03:41,480
into an abandoned army
camp at Oswego, New York.

62

00:03:41,480 --> 00:03:45,830
This was with considerable
difficulty, and a lot of people

63

00:03:45,830 --> 00:03:46,850
didn't like it.

64

00:03:46,850 --> 00:03:48,650
Why?

65

00:03:48,650 --> 00:03:50,480
Well, the labor
unions weren't too

66

00:03:50,480 --> 00:03:54,830
happy about the additional
people coming into the United

67

00:03:54,830 --> 00:03:56,390
States to take jobs.

68

00:03:56,390 --> 00:03:58,280
How many was it?

69

00:03:58,280 --> 00:04:02,600
Oh, this was just a token
amount of several hundred.

70

00:04:02,600 --> 00:04:06,510
Other people, for
their own reasons,

71
00:04:06,510 --> 00:04:10,280
didn't want the immigration
laws broken down.

72
00:04:10,280 --> 00:04:14,330
But we did it, and
ultimately, those people

73
00:04:14,330 --> 00:04:17,570
were admitted to the United
States and residents.

74
00:04:17,570 --> 00:04:21,019
But they came from where?

75
00:04:21,019 --> 00:04:21,725
From Europe.

76
00:04:21,725 --> 00:04:24,840

77
00:04:24,840 --> 00:04:31,130
But I mean, were the people
who were actually saved,

78
00:04:31,130 --> 00:04:34,554
rescued by this proposal.

79
00:04:34,554 --> 00:04:38,820
Or were they already saved?

80
00:04:38,820 --> 00:04:40,990
They were already, they
were already saved.

81
00:04:40,990 --> 00:04:41,977
But [INAUDIBLE].

82
00:04:41,977 --> 00:04:42,810
[INTERPOSING VOICES]

83

00:04:42,810 --> 00:04:43,680

No.

84

00:04:43,680 --> 00:04:47,790

But it was important, we felt,
and I feel, for the United

85

00:04:47,790 --> 00:04:50,160

States to show
that it, too, would

86

00:04:50,160 --> 00:04:54,570

take in people above the
ordinary immigration amounts.

87

00:04:54,570 --> 00:04:56,490

And that's why we did it.

88

00:04:56,490 --> 00:05:00,120

This was what was
called the free port.

89

00:05:00,120 --> 00:05:01,410

Yes.

90

00:05:01,410 --> 00:05:06,720

Someone invented the theory,
which makes a lot of sense,

91

00:05:06,720 --> 00:05:12,750

that if we can have a free port
for goods, in which you brought

92

00:05:12,750 --> 00:05:15,150

goods into the United States,
but they weren't regarded

93

00:05:15,150 --> 00:05:18,073

as being in the United
States, and therefore,

94

00:05:18,073 --> 00:05:19,740

they didn't have to
pay a duty, and they

95
00:05:19,740 --> 00:05:23,340
could remain in the free
port, that that could

96
00:05:23,340 --> 00:05:26,190
be applied to refugees, too.

97
00:05:26,190 --> 00:05:28,860
Yes, actually, I see that these
people, as a matter of fact,

98
00:05:28,860 --> 00:05:31,050
came from North Africa.

99
00:05:31,050 --> 00:05:31,800
That could be.

100
00:05:31,800 --> 00:05:32,490
That could be.

101
00:05:32,490 --> 00:05:34,120
Originally, they
came from Europe,

102
00:05:34,120 --> 00:05:35,930
cause they were already
in North Africa.

103
00:05:35,930 --> 00:05:36,840
Right, yes.

104
00:05:36,840 --> 00:05:40,950
But they found that the
climate of New York State

105
00:05:40,950 --> 00:05:41,590
was very cold.

106
00:05:41,590 --> 00:05:44,650

Oh, no, it's a very cold,
unpleasant place to be.

107
00:05:44,650 --> 00:05:45,150
Yes.

108
00:05:45,150 --> 00:05:49,520

109
00:05:49,520 --> 00:05:58,130
(film logistics - cutting)

110
00:05:58,130 --> 00:06:00,730
Washington Pehle (film slating)

111
00:06:00,730 --> 00:06:03,190
What do you think of
this argument, which

112
00:06:03,190 --> 00:06:06,880
I find myself rather
strong, which was brought up

113
00:06:06,880 --> 00:06:11,390
by the advocates of rescue?

114
00:06:11,390 --> 00:06:17,200
They said that there
were in United States

115
00:06:17,200 --> 00:06:21,160
150,000 German
prisoner of war which

116
00:06:21,160 --> 00:06:23,920
had been shipped from Britain.

117
00:06:23,920 --> 00:06:26,290
And they say, and
this was said already

118
00:06:26,290 --> 00:06:32,440

at the Bermuda Conference
by the only Jewish observer,

119
00:06:32,440 --> 00:06:35,350
George Becker from the Joint.

120
00:06:35,350 --> 00:06:37,795
During the discussions,
he said that place,

121
00:06:37,795 --> 00:06:42,730
if there would be much
more prisoners of war

122
00:06:42,730 --> 00:06:46,330
that you wouldn't find
places to keep them,

123
00:06:46,330 --> 00:06:49,630
at least for the
duration of the war.

124
00:06:49,630 --> 00:06:55,570
And how is it possible that you
cannot decide that you would

125
00:06:55,570 --> 00:06:58,405
accept Jewish refugees?

126
00:06:58,405 --> 00:07:01,150

127
00:07:01,150 --> 00:07:03,940
Well, I think that that goes
back to what we've already

128
00:07:03,940 --> 00:07:06,260
been discussing.

129
00:07:06,260 --> 00:07:10,000
The prisoners of war that
were brought in from England

130

00:07:10,000 --> 00:07:16,710
were brought in to alleviate the
problem that the British had,

131

00:07:16,710 --> 00:07:23,020
were fighting, and were
having a very difficult time.

132

00:07:23,020 --> 00:07:25,613
This was directly connected
with the war effort.

133

00:07:25,613 --> 00:07:27,280
The war department
just brought them in.

134

00:07:27,280 --> 00:07:28,390
No one questioned this.

135

00:07:28,390 --> 00:07:30,970

136

00:07:30,970 --> 00:07:33,710
People had different
feelings about refugees

137

00:07:33,710 --> 00:07:35,980
than they had about
prisoners of war,

138

00:07:35,980 --> 00:07:41,080
however ironical that now seems.

139

00:07:41,080 --> 00:07:42,040
Yes.

140

00:07:42,040 --> 00:07:44,290
There were another question.

141

00:07:44,290 --> 00:07:50,140
What was at the time your
feeling towards the Jews?

142
00:07:50,140 --> 00:07:56,000
I mean towards, there were
many Jewish organizations,

143
00:07:56,000 --> 00:07:57,700
which were rather not united.

144
00:07:57,700 --> 00:07:58,900
No.

145
00:07:58,900 --> 00:08:01,300
And fighting among themselves.

146
00:08:01,300 --> 00:08:04,330
And what did you think of this?

147
00:08:04,330 --> 00:08:07,250

148
00:08:07,250 --> 00:08:10,180
Well, to the extent
that it meant

149
00:08:10,180 --> 00:08:14,200
we get conflicting
advice from them,

150
00:08:14,200 --> 00:08:16,390
it was a little disconcerting.

151
00:08:16,390 --> 00:08:18,850
On the whole, though,
we found that working

152
00:08:18,850 --> 00:08:23,020
with the JDC, the Joint
Distribution Committee,

153
00:08:23,020 --> 00:08:24,200
worked out very well.

154

00:08:24,200 --> 00:08:26,410

They were professional.

155

00:08:26,410 --> 00:08:28,570

They were less emotional.

156

00:08:28,570 --> 00:08:33,470

They weren't interested
in Zionism, in particular.

157

00:08:33,470 --> 00:08:34,150

They were not?

158

00:08:34,150 --> 00:08:34,780

No.

159

00:08:34,780 --> 00:08:38,110

They were just interested
in rescuing people.

160

00:08:38,110 --> 00:08:38,950

They had money.

161

00:08:38,950 --> 00:08:40,870

They had experienced
people, and they

162

00:08:40,870 --> 00:08:44,770

were, they fitted into
our operations very well.

163

00:08:44,770 --> 00:08:47,560

What do you think, what did
you think of the Zionists

164

00:08:47,560 --> 00:08:49,570

at the time?

165

00:08:49,570 --> 00:08:54,160

We didn't have any particular
feeling about Zionism.

166

00:08:54,160 --> 00:08:55,045

Yes.

167

00:08:55,045 --> 00:08:57,130

Not the fact that the--

168

00:08:57,130 --> 00:09:01,930

The fact that there was no open place for Jews to go obviously

169

00:09:01,930 --> 00:09:04,670

complicated the whole situation a great deal.

170

00:09:04,670 --> 00:09:05,320

Yes.

171

00:09:05,320 --> 00:09:07,270

But you know that the Zionists were

172

00:09:07,270 --> 00:09:10,180

advocating mostly Palestine.

173

00:09:10,180 --> 00:09:10,975

Oh, yeah.

174

00:09:10,975 --> 00:09:18,120

This was a-- but there are people who reproached them

175

00:09:18,120 --> 00:09:26,790

that they say, you said Jews couldn't be saved in Palestine.

176

00:09:26,790 --> 00:09:31,910

They were not so much interested in the saving.

177

00:09:31,910 --> 00:09:33,180

I never felt that way.

178

00:09:33,180 --> 00:09:34,310

[INAUDIBLE]

179

00:09:34,310 --> 00:09:41,110

180

00:09:41,110 --> 00:09:43,865

(film logistics - cutting)

181

00:09:43,865 --> 00:10:06,620

182

00:10:06,620 --> 00:10:07,120

What?

183

00:10:07,120 --> 00:10:08,920

No, I just look at you.

184

00:10:08,920 --> 00:10:17,579

185

00:10:17,579 --> 00:10:18,287

[SPEAKING FRENCH]

186

00:10:18,287 --> 00:10:18,787

Oui.

187

00:10:18,787 --> 00:10:38,500

188

00:10:38,500 --> 00:11:09,364

[SPEAKING FRENCH]

189

00:11:09,364 --> 00:11:12,855

Washington Pehle (film slating)

190

00:11:12,855 --> 00:11:17,570

But you had a lot of dealings
with very religious Jews,

191

00:11:17,570 --> 00:11:20,850
with the rabbis,
with the orthodox.

192
00:11:20,850 --> 00:11:21,350
Yes.

193
00:11:21,350 --> 00:11:24,110
This was a revelation
to me, because I'd never

194
00:11:24,110 --> 00:11:26,540
been exposed to this before.

195
00:11:26,540 --> 00:11:29,570
I remember particularly
Rabbi Kalmanowitz,

196
00:11:29,570 --> 00:11:35,990
who made very many visits to
my office, always unannounced.

197
00:11:35,990 --> 00:11:37,890
He was the head of
the Vaad Hatzala.

198
00:11:37,890 --> 00:11:38,390
Yeah.

199
00:11:38,390 --> 00:11:40,550
It was a religious organization.

200
00:11:40,550 --> 00:11:47,300
And he was a very emotional
man with a long beard.

201
00:11:47,300 --> 00:11:52,880
And he would come to my office
and pull his beard and cry.

202
00:11:52,880 --> 00:11:53,590
He cried?

203

00:11:53,590 --> 00:11:55,130

Cried, oh, yes.

204

00:11:55,130 --> 00:11:57,630

This was very hard to take.

205

00:11:57,630 --> 00:12:01,040

And he used to pester
Secretary Morgenthau

206

00:12:01,040 --> 00:12:04,310

and wait in his office,
in the outer office

207

00:12:04,310 --> 00:12:06,050

to see the secretary.

208

00:12:06,050 --> 00:12:08,870

And he pressed very hard.

209

00:12:08,870 --> 00:12:11,330

He had a particular
interest, as I recall,

210

00:12:11,330 --> 00:12:16,280

in a group of orthodox rabbis
who had escaped from Poland,

211

00:12:16,280 --> 00:12:20,480

crossed China, crossed
Russia and into China

212

00:12:20,480 --> 00:12:22,100

and were in Shanghai.

213

00:12:22,100 --> 00:12:24,320

And he wanted them brought
to the United States

214

00:12:24,320 --> 00:12:27,440

and perpetuate orthodoxy.

215

00:12:27,440 --> 00:12:31,700

And we had other things that
we felt were more pressing,

216

00:12:31,700 --> 00:12:33,120

but he didn't understand that.

217

00:12:33,120 --> 00:12:33,620

He didn't?

218

00:12:33,620 --> 00:12:34,600

No.

219

00:12:34,600 --> 00:12:36,740

And why did he cry?

220

00:12:36,740 --> 00:12:40,460

He cried because nothing
was being accomplished,

221

00:12:40,460 --> 00:12:44,450

and he felt his
world was crumbling.

222

00:12:44,450 --> 00:12:46,010

That's my explanation.

223

00:12:46,010 --> 00:12:47,720

And did he meet Morgenthau too?

224

00:12:47,720 --> 00:12:49,520

Oh yeah, sure.

225

00:12:49,520 --> 00:12:54,420

But largely, he dealt with me.

226

00:12:54,420 --> 00:12:55,280

Yes.

227

00:12:55,280 --> 00:12:59,990

But I mean, these people

were extremely active, no?

228

00:12:59,990 --> 00:13:00,740

Oh, yes.

229

00:13:00,740 --> 00:13:04,670

Yes, they pressed very hard for anything that could be done,

230

00:13:04,670 --> 00:13:07,100

and they had a lot of ideas about what might be done,

231

00:13:07,100 --> 00:13:09,320

some of them unreal.

232

00:13:09,320 --> 00:13:13,230

But we dealt with them as best we could.

233

00:13:13,230 --> 00:13:16,190

What kind of ideas?

234

00:13:16,190 --> 00:13:22,520

Well, they wanted to send money through Switzerland

235

00:13:22,520 --> 00:13:27,140

to rescue individual people that were named in a cable,

236

00:13:27,140 --> 00:13:29,820

and so much for rescuing this family,

237

00:13:29,820 --> 00:13:32,090

and so much for rescuing this family.

238

00:13:32,090 --> 00:13:35,190

And we said no, you couldn't do that.

239

00:13:35,190 --> 00:13:36,350

Why?

240

00:13:36,350 --> 00:13:38,690

Because we thought
that the rescue ought

241

00:13:38,690 --> 00:13:45,020

to be done, in general, by
whoever was available to be

242

00:13:45,020 --> 00:13:50,120

rescued, not by how much money
could be sent for each one.

243

00:13:50,120 --> 00:13:51,440

Yes.

244

00:13:51,440 --> 00:13:53,390

But you know, it's
very interesting,

245

00:13:53,390 --> 00:13:57,920

because this was
a way of thinking

246

00:13:57,920 --> 00:13:59,270

they wanted to rescue--

247

00:13:59,270 --> 00:14:00,770

Rabbis.

248

00:14:00,770 --> 00:14:04,160

And their, yes, rabbis and their
families, particularly, yes.

249

00:14:04,160 --> 00:14:06,980

250

00:14:06,980 --> 00:14:09,840

This was really
their main concern,

251
00:14:09,840 --> 00:14:13,850
that they didn't want to
rescue anybody who [INAUDIBLE]??

252
00:14:13,850 --> 00:14:17,330
Now you're asking me
to read their minds.

253
00:14:17,330 --> 00:14:19,670
I can tell you that
largely, their emphasis

254
00:14:19,670 --> 00:14:21,815
seemed to be on rescuing
rabbis and their families.

255
00:14:21,815 --> 00:14:25,010

256
00:14:25,010 --> 00:14:29,750
And that statement may
be even unfair to them.

257
00:14:29,750 --> 00:14:33,360
But they did they did have
a real interest in this.

258
00:14:33,360 --> 00:14:37,550
And why do you say that
they were unreal ideas?

259
00:14:37,550 --> 00:14:40,520
Well, it's like
the idea that was

260
00:14:40,520 --> 00:14:54,167
put to the war department
in which it was proposed--

261
00:14:54,167 --> 00:14:55,750
this was by the World
Jewish Congress.

262
00:14:55,750 --> 00:14:57,280
But they were not religious.

263
00:14:57,280 --> 00:15:01,150
No, well, I'm not aiming
this at the religious.

264
00:15:01,150 --> 00:15:05,450
I'm talking about some
unreal suggestions.

265
00:15:05,450 --> 00:15:07,240
One of them was that
the Soviet government

266
00:15:07,240 --> 00:15:11,590
be approached with a request
that it should dispatch groups

267
00:15:11,590 --> 00:15:16,630
of paratroopers to seize the
buildings at the crematoria

268
00:15:16,630 --> 00:15:19,480
to annihilate the
squads of murderers

269
00:15:19,480 --> 00:15:22,038
and to free the
unfortunate inmates,

270
00:15:22,038 --> 00:15:23,830
and that the Polish
government be requested

271
00:15:23,830 --> 00:15:26,290
to instruct the Polish
Underground attack

272
00:15:26,290 --> 00:15:28,660
these and similar
camps to destroy

273
00:15:28,660 --> 00:15:29,990
the instruments of death.

274
00:15:29,990 --> 00:15:33,280
But why do you say
that it is unreal?

275
00:15:33,280 --> 00:15:35,650
Well, in the first place,
the Soviet government

276
00:15:35,650 --> 00:15:40,600
was not involved
in rescuing Jews.

277
00:15:40,600 --> 00:15:44,020
It was involved primarily
in defending their Homeland,

278
00:15:44,020 --> 00:15:46,180
and there were
millions of Russians

279
00:15:46,180 --> 00:15:48,130
being killed by the Germans.

280
00:15:48,130 --> 00:15:50,380
And there was never
any interest they

281
00:15:50,380 --> 00:15:54,790
had in the activities of the
War Refugee Board for quite

282
00:15:54,790 --> 00:15:56,690
understandable reasons.

283
00:15:56,690 --> 00:15:58,405
They were absolutely
uninterested

284

00:15:58,405 --> 00:15:59,420
in the war refugees.

285
00:15:59,420 --> 00:16:00,070
That's right.

286
00:16:00,070 --> 00:16:01,870
You had no
communications with them?

287
00:16:01,870 --> 00:16:05,050
Not that I-- as I recall,
Ambassador Harriman

288
00:16:05,050 --> 00:16:09,190
told me not to bother to take
this up with the Russians,

289
00:16:09,190 --> 00:16:11,020
because they were
completely preoccupied

290
00:16:11,020 --> 00:16:13,330
by their own problems.

291
00:16:13,330 --> 00:16:15,520
Similarly, the Polish
Underground, I don't think

292
00:16:15,520 --> 00:16:20,200
was just effective
in doing the things

293
00:16:20,200 --> 00:16:22,360
that the Polish
Underground would normally

294
00:16:22,360 --> 00:16:28,120
try to do, and ask them to
attack these camps was out

295
00:16:28,120 --> 00:16:29,544
of the question.

296

00:16:29,544 --> 00:16:31,030

[INAUDIBLE]

297

00:16:31,030 --> 00:16:34,379

Not the concern of
the Polish in Dachau.

298

00:16:34,379 --> 00:16:42,370

299

00:16:42,370 --> 00:16:44,520

Wait a minute.

300

00:16:44,520 --> 00:25:04,000