

REINGOLD

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A: Okay.

Q: The question about American Jewry is a very difficult one.

It's simply this: How was it that American Jewry, with the richest infra-structure of any ethnic group in the United States, emerging from the depression faster than any group in the United States, with the chairmen of the three major committees in Congress associated with rescue, Salomon Blum, Samuel Diskstein and Emanuel Celler, all headed by Jews, and in addition having close positions to that wonderful inner circle that Roosevelt kept about himself, how was it that with such political positions, American Jewry was not appreciably able to move the Roosevelt administration on the rescue issue. It's a fascinating question.

A: It is.

2 av. A: And the question is whether there is not a kind of messianic sympathy about even mentioning the idea that there was even such a thing as American Jewry, as an American Jewish community in the 1930's. A figment of a messianic Jewish imagination. As a matter of fact, there were many Jewish communities in the United States. And when the crisis was approaching, they literally came apart. The golden bridges that bound them together simply did not hold. Today the issues which seem to divide them seem unbelievably unreal. The first one of course of course was how to approach the Nazi menace, and even, if there were such a thing as a Nazi menace. And those old

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P.R. Uptown ~~familial~~ fractions, headed by the American Jewish Committee, remembered the Germany of Beethoven, the Germany of Shiller, thought that power....

Q: Excuse me, you mean that these people belonging to the American Jewish Committee were originated....

A: ..originally German, although their...their power and their presence had been dissipated over the years. There were not that many German Jews involved any more. Many downtown, many eastern Jews, or the sons and daughters of the eastern Jews were now in positions of power.

Q: Excuse me, you make a difference between the Uptown and the Downtown Jews?

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6 P. A: Well, I use that division, classification. It's an old classification. It goes back to the beginning of the century, when the Jews, the original German Jewish migration, moved to the west side. They were then called Uptown Jews, and it refers to Jews of the reformed persuasion, (Because American Jewry was not only divided politically and culturally, but also religiously) who were of German background and thought they were established economically, ~~xxx~~ than the more recent arrivals, although the differences were beginning to shrink by the 1930's, it was beginning to grow much....Now, the east Jews of course, were...had traditionally been stirred by loud and emotional displays. As early as 1905 is wondering whether ~~xxx~~ unseemly displays of protest to the administration really work. We call it ~~antadlanut~~. They believed in quiet diplomacy, they believed that power would ultimately be with Hitler, and that the ~~xxx~~ crisis was a temporary one that had to do was hang on.

Q: But this was the old traditional Jewish way...

A: Oh yes. The traditional...

Q: The pleading...

A: Right. Now, the issue ~~was~~ I say were first on whether there was a menace. And then of course on more concrete things: the possibility of mounting a boycott against Hitler. And the issue was also political. Many of the Uptown Jews were not as... as entranced by Roosevelt as were the sons and daughters of Eastern Jews which had a much more universalistic approach and had been since the beginning of the century drunk with the idea of democracy and with the welfare state, the idea that government had a role to play in helping the poor. It was a philosophy their parents believed in and they, of course, bought it wholesale.

Q: You say 'drunk'?

A: Drunk with the idea of democracy, yes. I say drunk because Jews are the only ethnic community in the United States that had intra-group elections - two between 1910 and 1920 and one in the 1930's - to see who should rule the community, who should govern, as if there was a possibility in the voluntaristic setting that we had of governing American Jewry, as if one could order a Jew to his Jewishness. Of course this was highly impossible. I say 'drunk', because they really bought the idea that democracy would work, so much so that between 1903 and 1921 the Jews actually formed a Kehila, reminiscent of the old Kahal, to govern themselves. This was a group that was coming to terms with America in a far different terms than other ethnic groups. Now, the question of course is whether we can assign such a group responsibilities, as

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Meir Kahane does, as Elie Wiesel often does, whether this group actually failed. And I would suggest to you, that a very close look at the documents indicates that perhaps Nachum Goldmann is right, perhaps we were not quite ready to accept the mantle of leadership, that had been for centuries in Europe, it came to us so persipously, so suddenly. Perhaps our leadership was not so very intelligent. Perhaps it lacked stature. But those who talk of conscious betrayal I think are being unjust, Perhaps unintelligence, perhaps even lack of will. But betrayal - never. As a matter of fact, one could safely say that every single one of the techniques used later by the civil rights movement to move the United government in a certain direction was initially conceived by Jews during the 1930's. From theatre techniques, from mass protests. The problem was, of course, that the Roosevelt administration was not attuned to a problem central to our own camp. And that leads us to the second question and that is: are we assigning American Jewry in the 1930's a responsibility for action which their power did not match, are we tilting with windmills. And the reason why I say that is an important question is because the assumption behind the idea that American Jewry did not do enough, is based on one of the basic facets of Jewish political culture in Europe. And that culture is this, the assumption is this: that there exists in the world a spirit of civilized goodness that is ready to intercede for Jews, if Jews mobilize it. And what happened is that we failed to arouse that spirit of civilization. Now, we looked for it in the Oval Office, one looks for it in the Vatican, one looks for it in London, But how Jews

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came to the notion that between Kishinev and Auschwitz there was such a spirit that mobilized for them, is a strange phenomenon. And yet, if one reads that famous letter...

Q: You mean the pogroms?

A: The pogrom of Kishinev, yes. If one reads the...the cable by Louis Marshall to the Pope in 1915 asking him, please to intercede to stop the deportations against Jews in Poland and receiving very...no answer or an indifferent answer, one could understand that in 1942, when we asked the same thing, there would be no answer. There was no spirit of civilization.

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Q: Go. Go.

A: Let me give you an example of what I mean by that illusion of a civilized spirit. In 1943 a message was sent to Shmuel Zygelboim in London, that he ought to do everything, including starving himself to death with other Jewish leaders, to arouse the consciousness of the world. What a bitter irony. Zygelboim had already given up the idea that there existed such an anima in London. But the people sitting right on top of Treblinka are still talking about the consciousness of the world. It was such a difficult thing, such an all pervading, to root it out. And it has a long history in Judaism from the national minorities rights clauses at the treaty of Versailles, the idea that Judaism can be protected even in Poland, by legal clauses.

and that was a very hard thing to get away with. It is the assumption on which the indictment against American Jews rests, that there existed such a spirit in the Oval Office, Roosevelt, and that we failed to rouse it. And I really seriously wonder if we are not misreading the New Deal history. Now let us get to another point then on the illusion of centrality, another illusion in Jewish political culture. And that illusion is that the Jewish question, and that Jews in general are more important than they really are. It is an illusion shed by the anti-Semitic imagination, which imagines that Jews have power behind the scenes and conspire to rule the world. Now, of course one could answer very simply, that a people who is really powerful does not lose one out of three of its members in a catastrophe like the Holocaust, which is the surest evidence that this is an illusion. But paradoxically enough, Jews, perhaps because of their own weakness, would love to believe that because they own the New York Times or the own CBS, (which they don't really do), that they really have such power. It was in fact the reason why the whole question of priorities was so bad. It was a weak and vulnerable people that was destroyed in Auschwitz, not a people who had power anywhere in the world. And the fact is that they were powerless. And we define that powerlessness by saying: the surest meaning in the international was a lack of options, the inability to have alternatives about what to do, not only in Europe, but in America as well.

Q: Yes You mean that this weakness and this powerlessness...

Q: In America....

Q: ...existed in American Jews <sup>1936</sup>

A: Precisely. And one could really see it from several points of view. In 1936, when Roosevelt entered his second New Deal, most ethnic groups lessened their loyalty to him. The Second New Deal was a more radical one, and by that time some people had had their fill. The Jews on the other hand, together with black Americans, actually increased their proportion of the votes. By 1940 Jews were giving over 90% of their vote to the New Deal. A...

Q: The Second New Deal.

A: To the Second New Deal. A new political party had to be created - the American Labour Party - so that Jewish socialist<sup>born</sup> could give their votes to a high episcopalian without compromising their principles. It was a fascinating display. But that really means the following: that so strong was the Jewish love affair with Roosevelt (because of his domestic policy, not his foreign policy), that Jewish leaders, like Stephen Wise and others, could not threaten Roosevelt, with a ... the loss of the Jewish vote, if he did not do their bidding on the rescue issue. As a matter of fact, it was quite the reverse. The archives are full of letters of Jewish leaders, asking Roosevelt's secretary to please send a letter confirming him or supporting him for a position in a Jewish organization. So strong was that bond that...that tied to Roosevelt that it could not be removed, and in a sense then Jewish leaders were dependent on the less certain rewards for loyalty. They had, in other words, a very very limited political leverage

at the New Deal, not because the issue was a minor one for the Roosevelt administration, one which had a very low priority, but because the Jews had in fact a disproportioned amount of political leverage, but not enough to really change major policy. Now one might argue and I...I have argued this many times that in comparison to other American groups the Jews did very well in the 1930's. One thinks b...for example of the German Americans in 1916. The German Americans in 1916 were the largest single ethnic group in the United States. They had none of the problems that American Jewry had. They were not fragmented, they were coherent, they had a voice and they were instrumental in delivering the election of 1916 to Wilson who ran on the platform, 'he kept us out of war'. German Americans wanted America out of the war, they did not want America to declare war against the fatherland. But a month after Wilson was inaugurated in March of 1917, he was compelled nevertheless to declare war. What happened to German Americans? Well, Sauerkraut became liberty cabbage, hamburgers became Salisbury steaks. German was dropped from the curriculum and for a while it was very uncomfortable to be a German American in the United States. The German Americans did not succeed in changing a major American policy. The Poles did not succeed in preventing the crime of Crimea. And the Irish Americans, the most political astewed group in the United States, the one that had captured the local political machines, the one that had shown that one could be unified through a religious hierarchy - the Catholic Church - had only one interest



between 1880 and 1910, it was called twisting the ~~lion~~ lion tail - preventing a rapprochement between England and the United States, and yet, they were not able to do so. That rapprochement did take place. Compared to other ethnic groups, in other words, other ~~infinite~~ groups, American Jewry did not do at all badly. And that is a far better comparison than one that I could think of.

Q: Were they...were they afraid in the 30's of a wave of anti-Semitism in the United States?

A: Yes, and of course that is another factor in...in...in the question of Jewish political power. The depression with the economic dislocation had of course released enormously new waves of anti-Semitism, which perhaps frightened American Jewry more than it should have. Our studies of the German American Bund today indicate that it was not as powerful as we thought.

Q: The German American Bund was the German Jew...no...

A: The German American...

Q: ...the German American...

A: Right. Fritz Kuhn. Now we have new work on that by Sunder Diamond, and he indicates that the entire membership of the German American Bund may have been only 9,000 with perhaps another few thousand hangers on. We had over...and...We had overestimated it. Of course there is always Father Coughlin and others. The point was that the anti-Semitism was able to make a great deal of noise by themselves and were able to do something else that we had not taken into consideration. They were able to link themselves to legitimate isolationism and amplify their political voice in that way. And that link

is borne out by Charles Lindbergh, who is an American folk hero. Charles Lindbergh in September 1941 made a speech in Des Moines, Iowa in which he warns America that Jews and Anglophiles are... are planning to get America into a war. It is an anti-Semitic message amalgamated with the isolationistic message, and therefore legitimized. It was that....

Q: And given strength.

A: That linkage that really made the anti-Semitic force very strong. And of course beyond the anti-Semitism there was an entire amalgamation of forces: One could say of anti-Semitism, restrictionism (that was the refusal to take immigrants into the United States), isolationism - this kind of a spectrum, while a liberal immigration policy and early recognition of Nazis and ultimately interventionism existed on the other side. And Roosevelt delicately tried to <sup>balance</sup> ~~dance~~ between 1938 and 1940 his steps between one and the other. In the case of the Jews he happened to be, he needed to be much more of the...the fox than the lion. And most...Perhaps the bitterest irony of all is that in the restrictionism of the New Deal, in the anti refugee policy what we find is that it is a classical example of democracy at work. There seems to be very little question that the consensus in America, even as late as 1941, perhaps as late as 1944 was that refugees, whether they were children or adults, simply had no place in America while one third of the nation was ill-housed, ill-clothed and ill-fed. And if Roosevelt ever forgot it, there was always the Senator Ray... Reynolds from North Carolina who could cite the President's own winning phrases to remind him that there was need at home

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and who needs refugees. And the other paradox is of course that in 1938 from all that we know, the American Jewish Community itself was more American than Jewish, it too was afraid of influx in Jewish refugees during the depression. It feared that as American compatriots. They had gone beyond that according to Samuel Dickstein, to have proposed that America lift its Paper Wall, as one authority called it, one historian - David Wyman, would have probably resulted in a boomerang with much more restrictive legislation.

Q: What do you mean exactly?

A: The series of bureaucratic and administrative measures that were implemented by the State Department, especially by Breckinridge Long, usually through the...through a...a weakness in the immigration law which gave the consul at the scene the last right to say who'd get a visa, the use of those devices, the use of screening devices, the use of a security psychosis to stop refugees from coming here, By 1940 it was more difficult to get a visa to enter the United States, which was not at war, than Great Britain that was at war.

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A: Let me get back a moment to this question of... of the refugee visa policy. I said before that it is a classical case of democracy at work. The American people simply didn't want more refugees here, and for Roosevelt to have thwarted that will involved a political risk which he was not willing to take, and therefore he developed what I have called a policy

of gestures. For example the ~~was~~ combination of the Austrian and German quota in mid 1938 after the Anschluss, which involved a recognition of the Anschluss, but supposedly saved the Austrian quota. It may very well be that the Evian Conference itself....

Q: Can you elaborate more on this because it....

A: Well, one of the things that....

Q: ...they didn't do it.

A: Yes, the recognition, I think in June of 1938, the combination of the Austrian and German quotas in a sense unofficially extended the recognition to the Anschluss, to Hitler's annexation of Austria, but Roosevelt did it, supposedly because <sup>if</sup> he had not, the Austrian quota would have been lost, and this was tallied in the press as one of the things that Roosevelt did to help the Jews and the refugees. Another thing was the extension of visitor's visas, visas of people who were here for six months were allowed to stay here in 1938. The most classic example of this politics of gestures may have been the Evian conference itself. We.... The reason why the invitation was extended is still a mystery to us, we don't really know what went on in Roosevelt's mind. But a careful reading of the invitation shows they carefully worded it ~~was~~ was. It states that the American government has no intention of raising its quota system, or allowing immigrants to enter outside of it. It doesn't expect anyone else to do that either. How should the conference then hope to succeed, no one knows, except perhaps if Roosevelt had had the idea that Latin America would welcome them in mind. Of course Latin America had the same reservations as the United States did. On the

question....

Q: You...you mean that this was a policy of make believe?

A: Of make believe, right. A policy perhaps designed to <sup>an</sup> seduce the Jewish voting public, Roosevelt was something, <sup>doing</sup> then Roosevelt in fact was doing very little. It wasn't until much later of course that the Jews discovered that he was doing very little. Now the way that was done, outside of the politics of gestures was the enormous gap between what Roosevelt was saying, and what was actually happening on the administrative level. When men like Breckinridge Long and the middle echelon people of the State Department, who actually had control....

Q: Breckinridge Long had a very powerful position inside the State Department.

A: He...He controlled the various, the <sup>agencies that</sup> were in fact the rescue program of America, if we can call it that. Now, on that level....

Q: The assistant of Long was Robert Borden Rea....

A: Right.

Q: He was one of the assistants.

A: There were of course many others. There was a whole series of them who...who...of course every Jewish mother knew that the an...the State Department was not something...that the foreign service was not something that you prepare a Jewish son for. Dentistry - yes, perhaps even a doctor or a lawyer, but not a career in the State Department, because the State Department had a subtle anti-Semitism. W <sup>Dodd</sup> had actually pointed out that that was so, and Roosevelt himself did not trust the State Department and used it very often

as a ploy, so that researchers today still must go to the National Archives to examine what the State Department did, actually repeating the same trip that Jewish rescue advocates made during the war, because we can not get to Roosevelt directly. Now the use of a visa policy was very interesting. And now let me read you a quote, a statement by Breckinridge Long in a memorandum to James Dunn, written on June 26, 1940.

Q: Who is James Dunn?

A: James Dunn was a fellow official of the State Department, another undersecretary, ... and in which he describes exactly the policy he intends to follow. He says: "we can delay and effectively stop for a temporary period of indefinite length the number of immigrants into the United States. We could do this by simply advising our consuls to put every obstacle in the way and to resort to various administrative devices, which would postpone and postpone and postpone." That is exactly what the State Department did. And it did so by the security gambit, by using the idea that the Germans have infiltrated spies into the refugee stream, (although why they would want to be there, nobody knows) It was a very unsafe stream) but nevertheless that was done. A whole series of articles appeared in the press about German agents, and Roosevelt himself in a fire-side chat talked talked about fifth columns and Trojan horses, giving vent to the security psychosis, so that by 1940 the security screening process in the United States was far more stringent than Great Britain which was at war. That prevented refugees from coming. And the other thing of course was the action of the consuls. Now, by 1938 Jew after periods of respite when they

did not believe what was happening, Jews in Germany finally understood that they had to get out. And long and chaotic lines formed in front of consulates and the wonderful....

Q: After the Kristallnacht.

A: After the Crystal Night, right....wonderful stories are told about...something we call gallows humour, humour ~~about~~ that is more bitter than funny, about the Polish Jew, the Ostjude, in Stuttgart, who finally gets the message and wants a visa for America. He comes to the consulate (he is 78 years old, bent, walking with a cane), opens the glass doors, makes his way painfully up to the desk and addresses the American consul: I'd like a visa. And the American consul says: where are you from? - I' from Poland. He goes to his desks and looks up the list. - Poland. Come back in 8 years. (which of course in a sense was a death sentence for him). The Jew accepts the message and makes his way painfully back to the glass doors in front of the consulate. And just before he gets to them he gets an idea, his head straightens up and he makes his way back as painfully to the consul's desk and ~~he~~ tells him: when I come back in 8 years, shall I come back in the morning or in the afternoon? That was the bitter story of...of how Jews were accepted by consuls in...in 1939. Now I want ~~you~~ <sup>to</sup> just a moment tell...address myself to this whole question of Jewish power and how things changed. Of course a weak people loves to believe its powerfull. The Jews were the ones who created an all powerful God. It took a weak people to conceive such a notion. We would win in heaven what we can never win on earth. And the question of how things changed is fascinating.

Q: Today, you mean?

A: Today. I think in a sense things are...do look better because one of the facts is that making for Jewish weakness in the 1930's has in fact given way, and that is the question of unity. We...the Holocaust itself has given Jews a bitter lesson in the price of disunity, and that is something that we have experienced. / Today only 15½% of American Jewry is foreign born. We have been processed through America, through its schools, through its army and we are more American than ever before, perhaps less Jewish as well. And then, of course the other factor is that Israel, and Israelism and I don't say Zionism has finally given Jews who are no longer able to accept fully a religious modelity, a modern secular, perhaps a civil religion in which they can believe. So at least on the issue of Israel, of which all political committees have notice, there is a lot of unity and less division than ever before. Of course the price of this is also the question of survival - more strongly today than ever before, because as we become more secularized and more americanized the whole question of recognizing a common Jewish interest becomes problematic. But I think that at least one of the problems has lessened, and that is the problem of fragmentation and disunity and incoherence, although one can still see in itself. We had....

Q: Could we say - excuse me - could we say that there was something let's say in the 1940's, something as a Jewish lobby today in America?



A: In the 1940's? There were Jewish leaders who had access to the Oval Office. Roosevelt was very close to Brandeis, for example, he called him old Isiah. And of course Stephen Wise, who made a political error by supporting Smith in 1928, much to Roosevelt's chagrin, and did not get back into Roosevelt's good graces until 1934 as one of Roosevelt's advisors passed from the scene. But he had been accused of being upsecricious. And it wasn't until Silver came along with a love for Taft, for Senator Taft of Ohio, that the idea that Roosevelt was not doing enough and that the Jewish vote and Jewish loyalty and Jewish resources and Jews as packagers and merchandisers of American politics, that these kinds of leverages could be moved, that the whole question of Jewish political power came up. I think that in the overall situation one must say that if one measures power by the number of actions it opens up for a community, American Jewry was fairly powerless, and is no much more powerful today. One of the problems perhaps with the entire Middle East problem in American Jewry is that it made people assign American Jewry a role which it is not able to fulfill because it does not have the power and that is rather a strange thing to happen, because we have a lesson of what happened...The last Jewry that assigned us, American Jewry, a responsibility which it did not have the power to fulfill, paid for it with its lives in a sense. That is German Jewry.

Q: Yes.

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A: I want to say a word about philanthropy as a...as one of the important and crucial blocks in a more effective response

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by American Jewry...

Q: Philanthropy?

A: Philanthropy, of the idea of giving money. You know, philanthropy is the idea that private organizations should finance and fund the new heavens of the refugees comes up again and again as late as the Bermuda conference. We find in the instructions of Blackingridge Long that he is saying, remember that we can not pay for this, it must be paid by private agencies. Philanthropy has a special meaning for American Jewry, because it is the way American Jewry very often came to terms with its Judaism - by giving. A role, by the way, assigned to them first by the Zionists. American Jewry was viewed as a great service station in which one could fill up with money and hopefully with people eventually. We say that the currency of American Jewish history is currency, is money. And yet, during the 1930's, in the hull of depression, American Jewish philanthropy was badly strapped and could not really handle the enormous problem that the refugees posed. Not only wasn't it fully organized until 1938 when the United Palestine Appeal...

Q: The end.

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A: Well, eventually what happened was of course, it was soon apparent that Jews were locked in to an age old tradition of solving problems by throwing money at it. And by 1938 it became apparent that the refugee problem was so enormous that the private funding could not solve the problem.

Q: The old way...

A: The old way would not work and yet the Roosevelt administration

and others, even the British Guiana proposal for example, the which Britain had preferred...proposed as a for the White Paper, was to be funded by Jewish money.

Q: Yes. What is interesting is that all the attempts, all the political attempts of the states, whether it was American or British, in order to help the Jews, all of them said: we will not pay ourselves, the Jews have to pay.

A: Right.

Q: Exactly as the Jews had to pay for their own deportations.

A: It's almost as if we...it's almost as if one can hear the Roosevelt administration and the British government resonating the same line that is coming from Berlin. The image that Jews have a great deal of money. And it really comes out when Roosevelt calls Morgenthau into his office to say get me a list of the 1000 richest Jews in the United States. I am going to build a new United States of Africa. And the Jews will pay for it. Both sides fell so easily into the idea that there was in fact a great Jewish wealth that could be the Jewish problem.

Q: It was...it was...It was the same pattern....

A: The same pattern, right.

Q: That pattern was followed.

A: The same...the same imagination, the same images of the rich wealthy Jews, that can solve the problem with its money.

Q: And it was the same pattern too, I think, in another way. Because Hitler said I don't want the Jews. The Allied said: we don't want them too. They have to be resettled.

A: Yes.

Q: Elsewhere.

A: Yes, and the resettlement problem is really a of  
that. But we come more closely to the idea of...of the centra  
lity of money in this. You see, one of the fascinating things  
is that never far beneath the Nazi cosmology, that...whose  
centrality was the Jewish question, was a well homed commerci  
al instinct as well, the idea of Jewish money. And that gives the  
Holocaust a kind of ghastly symmetry. Because it begins with  
an offer to ransom the Jews of Germany and ends with an offer  
to ransom the Jews of Hungary. And throughout we find a privat  
offer to...to...to ransom individual families. Now, that rans  
om proposal, the first one, was very interesting because it posed  
a problem, an agonizing problem for the Jews of the world, whic  
has to this day not been resolved and leads to the most prob  
lematic factors in the whole discussion of the Holocaust. In  
the early months of 1933, when to Roosevelt's champion, George  
H. Rublee, who was his old friend from , succeeded against  
all predictions in establishing contact with the Germans, with  
Schacht, and out of those...

Q: Schacht was...

A: Hjalmar Schacht was finance minister and president of the  
Reichsbank, and his assistant Helmuth Wohlfart. It is true  
that Schacht was then allowed to go by Hitler on January 1,  
1933, and the negotiations were taken up by Goering.

Q: What was...what was the exact matter of the negotiation?

A: The question of how can German Jewry be gotten out of Germany.  
The question of penniless refugees, of how much wealth could  
be gotten out. Out of these three months of negotiations which  
took place in Berlin and London, came the so called statement

of agreement, a peculiar thing...a...a non recognized agency agent negotiating with a sovereignty about a group of Germany own citizens, it's Jewish citizens. Now the plan is very complex, it is based on the Haavarah agreement that was made with the Zionist Agency in 1935, the Jews were forced salesmen for German capital goods and that way would be able to bring out some of their money in form of goods, and of course the German economy would profit by the sale of capital machinery.

Q: This was the Haavarah agreement?

A: Yes, and that was of course the key to the Schacht proposal too when Roosevelt heard the Schacht proposal, and heard the mention of Jews, by the way, he was very chagrined and rather peeved that his friend Schacht had mentioned the unmentionable. He had mentioned what the Germans always talk about and what the Roosevelt administration never talked about: Jews.

Q: He had mentioned the word...

A: He mentioned the word: Jews. The 'political refugees' ~~word~~ had been applied and no one ever mentioned Jews. In fact one could go through all the documents and very rarely see the mention of the word Jews. While the Germans were concealing what....talking only about Jews, and converting Roosevelt himself to the Jewish faith, the Roosevelt administration was reconverting the Jews to a bland category called refugees and so one could say that the Jewish question was ground to dust between...between a new terminology which hid the question from public view, both sides.

Q: When when the extermination...

A: Even when...right. Of course the key word there is again the word resettlement which is used in the west as a solution to the Jewish problem, and is used in Berlin as a solution to the Jewish problem. In a sense both really mean the same thing: taking away some despised minority in an equatorial rain forest in the West, and in Germany of course, for the Nazis, a processed killing operation in specially designed death camps, using the most interesting managing and productive techniques and even men handling it. But the problem that finally came out, the release of German Jewry by outside Jews, who would in a sense ransom, that was a proposition used by Dorothy Parker,

Q: No, but excuse me...excuse me, we must make the things clear. Schacht exactly came with what proposal?

A: Well, the proposal is complex. The...the money of the German Jews would be put into a trust fund and their property, and bonds would be based on it which would then be bought by outside Jews. Now the point is that in the Germans...in the Nazi fantasy there was an outside Jewry that existed and was organized and had a presence on the money markets of the world, that could in fact buy out

Q: An international Jewry.

A: An international Jewry, which is of course what their fantasy was about Jews. And they would buy out the German Jews by buying these bonds and by buying the capital machinery. In that way Germany would solve its exchange problem which would go to finance the Goering Four Year Plan, to rearm Germany, and

and the Jews would have their Jews. The discussion that took place in London was bitter and agonizing, because it really encompassed a question of whether the Jews, the Jewish leadership should cooperated in the destruction of a particular spreaded community in Germany. Should ~~their~~ they cooperate in their own...their own destruction? They did not yet know about the Final Solution. It is a question that comes up more fully after the war. In other words, the whole question of whether the German...whether Jewish really cooperated, really took place, took part in its own destruction was really raised as early as 1939 over the question of ransoming German Jewry. And we were non-plused. Let me read you a quote from...

Q: And were the Jewish leaders, lets say the Jewish American leaders, were they aware of this terrible problem which....

A: Yes. I want to read you that quote from...from Tennebaum...

Q: Who was he?

A: Tennebaum was head of the Boycott committee, who was very much opposed to the problem. In just a quote from this book:

"In founding this note Tennebaum...Tennebaum, who later became a scholar of the Holocaust, urged wise not to support the ransom proposal, less such quote procedures make the Jewish victims agents of the Nazi government" which was precisely of course what the historiography of the post war period is about, on this whole question of sheep to the slaughter. Did we cooperate. And the question comes up even before: in a sense Jews were almost compelled and forced into this kind of problem which is a part of the Holocaust which is not

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fully understood: that part of the question of powerlessness is being compelled to do these kind of things and anything you touch in a sense turns.

Q: One...one can find the same ransom pattern all along the ex... the story of the extermination.

A: Yes. Well, do you cooperate with your own ...with your own terrorists? Do you pay ransom for kidnapping? Should we have saved the German Jews?

Q: Well, this reel was really very good.

BOBINE 422

Ny Feingold 151

A: Now aside from the question of a Jewish leadership being faced with the proposition of having literally to remake Judaism to fit the Nazi image of it in order to rescue the German Jews, there was another question: the escalation of the problem. Because Jews lived in an anti-Semitic world. In the wings stood the government of Poland, the government of Rumania, and the government of Hungary, carefully watching whether the Germans would get away with it, whether Jews could indeed be sold to enrich the coffers, the treasuries of these countries. And that was an important consideration, which made the people negotiating in London decide to follow through with only a token of the agreement, much to the dismay of the German negotiators. And of course the entire proposition was interrupted by the outbreak of the war. There is one last question that we ought to then address: Was it possible? Could we have done it? And I think...a fair minded historian would say that the whole Schacht proposal ransom which is



required a stable world and was supposed to take place over three to five years was nonsense to begin with. There was no such possibility in the world. It was just another scheme to get Jewish money from outside Jews. And if one had to make a judgement on the position of Jewish leadership in that point, one would not say that it betrayed but they probably judged very carefully and were correct in not cooperating with the proposal. Of course the question of Evian is a crucially important one. We don't know...we know the conference in a sense was foredoomed, there was no serious proposal, although fascinatingly enough a proposal comes from Trojillo to settle Jews in the Dominican Republic. It's one of the most comical stories of the Holocaust, because while the Germans are kicking Jews out of Germany and Austria and ultimately Czechoslovakia because they have bad blood, Jewish blood, a bacilli which will ruin the folk, Trojillo welcomes Jews to the Dominican Republic, not because he loves Jews, but because he thinks that white blood will improve the racial stock of the Dominican Republic, which is plagued by blackness.

Q: Even if this white blood is Jewish.

A: Even if it's Jewish. > you see no matter....In a sense, Jews cannot win. They have...the question of blood makes the whole thing a circle. They have the wrong blood for Germany, the right blood for the Dominican Republic. And of course Myron Taylor may have been absolutely right, all the Jews really wanted was to live in a world that gave them no quarter. They lived the classic paranoic nightmare. They lived in a world that wanted to murder them and gave

then no haven. Sort of they...

Q: Do you think that if...let's say at the Evian conference real openings for rescuing the Jewish German Jewry (because at the time the only question was the German Jewry)...

A: Yes?

Q: Do you think that the history could have changed, that the things could have taken another turn?

A: That is a very important question, and of course we have a great deal of difference about it. I believe that had Evian worked, had the gates been opened, they....if even a possibility of imagining that the whole decision to mass-murder the Jews might not have been taken. I am not saying that the Germans killed the Jews in a fit of absent mindedness. It was a deliberate and dramatic decision. But I am saying that the failure in the initial phase, in the refugee phase of the Germans...the Germans learned. We have a passage from Goebbels' diary in 1940 in which he actually states that he believes underneath it all that the allies are glad that they are finally getting rid of the Jewish riff-raff. The signals were to Germany: the silence of the Pope, the inability of Roosevelt to act, the lack of courage of the international Red Cross and all the witnessing nations and agencies, that no one really cared. That they could get away with it under the cloud, under the cover of war. And of course when that war broke out, it could. So that the failure in the initial phase is....created the momentum which carried to the killing phase. I think that some historians agree with me that it was a ~~very~~ misfaith that we failed. In that sense the indictment against the witnessing nations is all the more terrible and horrendous,

because had a haven been offered, even a resettlement haven, the story might have been entirely different, although we don't know that for certain. But the Evian conference of 1938 did open up the question of resettlement and it became for Roosevelt, who was a great geography, a wonderful stamp collector and who fancied himself a nation builder, became the solution. There was something seductive about tucking away an unpopular minority in some tropical rain forest where it could bother no one. The Jews...

Q: He liked the migrations...

A: Yes...

Q: ...the movements of population.

A: ...and even suggested in October 1939 in a meeting of the executive of the Intergovernmental Committee on Political Refugees, that they should think in terms of ten million. This was October, a month after the war had broken out, France and England were thinking whether they would survive and he was telling them to think of the refugees, and of course they were thinking of no such thing. Roosevelt imagined that some place in Africa there could be built a...a United States of Africa, which originically recap...recapitulated the American experience even to the extent of having it under British sovereignty. He thought in these large terms, visionary, in no way tied to the fact of the case that the Jews were in fact an ancient ~~knitting~~ an ~~Asian~~ population with a good, perhaps as high as 60% of the population over the age of 40. Certainly not a pioneering population, and those who could pioneer had already been lightened off by the Fourth Aliyah, by the Zionist movement so that it was very very difficult. And he hired and

according to some there may have been as many as sixty  
hundred sixty six different resettlement proposals made  
during this conflict, with Isiah Bowman who was introduced  
to him by this one close Jewish friend, Henry Morgenthau,  
the only Jew that would be accepted by Roosevelt's mother.

Q: He was a geograph, Isiah Bowman?

A: He was a geographer from John Hopkins University, who had  
by the way almost no confidence at all <sup>that</sup> the idea of mass  
resettlement could work. But Roosevelt scurried the earth:

California, the Orinocco Plateau in Venezuela,  
every African republic, Mindanao, the British Guiana. In  
a sense the key word became resettlement, and that word  
really requires a closer scrutinizing. Resettlement became  
the single code word of the Final Solution. In West...

Q: It is the word used by the...

A: And it really meant the same thing. Because one could not  
resettle a people against its will. Where mass resettlement  
did work, as in Israel, as perhaps in Birobidjan or perhaps  
in the Crimea after World War I, or even in the Baron  
Roth...Baron Hirsch settlements in Argentina, it had to  
be in tendum with an idealism, a voluntary work, other-  
wise it was simply a movement of people, like so many  
cattle. What was done to the Greeks by the Turks and the  
Turks by the Greeks after World War I, it was in itself  
a form of cultural genocide. In other words resettlement  
could not have worked. And yet, one wonders. And this  
is one of the great arguments: Was it possible in 1943,  
for example, and is Bengson right, to get the Jews out  
anywhere, it matter. ~~Thiss~~ The Zionists, of course did

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not really....

Q. To coup...

A. Further ....further resettlement...

Q. To coup.

NY Feingold 152

A. Of course there is no question <sup>that</sup> ~~at~~ Roosevelt and his fantasy about resettlement posed a special kind of problem to the Zionists. I think the rough estimate of how much it costs to resettle each Jew was a bout 2,400 pounds in Israel. The Zionists, perhaps in an uni..illogically, heavy way could not of course abandon Zionism and the idea of Zionism. They could not conceive an idea of a Zion without Zionism, or Zionism without Zion. The 1930's because of the Rescue drama, the pressure, really generated a whole new group of an ancient enemy that the Zionist thought they had gotten rid of by 1906 - the so called territorialists. And of course the idea of resettlement was really a territorial idea.

Q: This means to resettle the people...

A. Not...

Q: ...where ever it could be.

A. Right. not in Palestine. And the Zionists were very much afraid of that idea. And when Stephen Wise heard of the idea of making the former German colony of Tanganyika, in Kenya, a haven for Jews, he said no ( in 1939), that he would never want the Jews under German again.

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Because in 1939 there was an idea which the ~~British~~ British had, of perhaps giving Tanganyika back to Hitler as a , as part of the appeasement policy. By 1941 of course he was singing a different tune. He would have accepted something other than Palestine. But for them the idea of abandoning it, was very very strange, was very difficult to accept. They...they thought it the only way they knew - they thought that if the White Paper had been pressed upon the Jewish people by British political fiat....

Q: The White Paper was...

A: a move...a British policy in May 1939 of restricting land sale and immigration to Palestine, taken right at the peak of the ~~crisis~~ crisis. I think that ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ it was Ben Curion who said in 1943, just to show you the dilemma it put the Zionists in, that they would...they would fight the White Paper as if there was no Nazism...

BOBINE 423

N. Feingold 153

A: The question of resettlement of course did pose a enormous problem for the Zionists. It meant that resources that would ordinarily be focused on the Yishuv, would have to go to the question of rescue...

Q: Yishuv means the Jewish Community in Palenstine.

A: in Palestine. Now for the Zionists, the Yishuv was the surest way of rescuing Jews. It seemed a logical answer to the problem. If only England had not curtailed immigra-

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tion and land sale. And they had believe, in a sense were compelled to, that if the White Paper was pressed on to them by a political act, then it had to be undone, and at that time, in '43, we find Ben Gurion saying: we will fight the White Paper as if there was no Nazi Germany, and Nazi Germany - as if there was no White Paper. A terrible duality, a terrible problem of what to do. And yet, re-settlement which gave...disinterred the whole territorialist question. We find Wise saying in November of....23, 1938 after Kristallnacht, we find him saying about Tanganyka, a former German colony, "I would rather have my fellow Jews die in Germany, than live somehow, anyhow in the lands which bear the imprints of yesterday's occupation of Germany, in lands which may tomorrow be yielded back to Germany." That was another grandious, and I am sure that had Wis...Had Wise heard it in 1943, he would not have made that statement. What to do? It may very well be that the charge or the indictment of the Zionists that the they were heavy and that in the Biltmore conference and subsequently in the American Jewish Conference that was organized in 1943...

Q: In order to do something..

A: to do something....

Q: ...rescue the people...

A: they had in fact already written off the Jews and were thinking exclusively in terms of a...a national homeland after the war.

Q: of the future.

A: of the future, right. And that...that...that may be so.

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AND YET, one has to match that with the prognosis, with  
the possibilities of whether resettlement could have worked.  
I don't think that the question of the Zionist stand on  
mass resettlement really is an important one. It is a  
hypothetical question. The fact is that there were no  
mass havens for Jews being offered which could have been  
used, and that ~~xx~~ in order for mass rescue to have worked,  
we would have had to have mass resettlement, infiltrated....  
infiltration of individual Jews into existing societies  
and a more liberal immigration policy in both Latin America  
and the United States. Now, the issue comes up in 1943 with  
the so called Bergson Group. A group of Israelis in America  
represen...representing the right wing...  
v...Palestine Jew.  
Palestinians at that time, right....who do the unthinkable  
as far as the Zionists conc...are concerned, and therefore  
create a tremendous conflict. They separate the homeland  
issue from the rescue issue, and in fact give priority to  
the rescue issue. For Zionists, the two were on a continuum,  
rescue was possible if Palestine could be open. The Revi-  
sionists argue that we cannot open up Palestine at the time,  
therefore we ought to get out the Jews by any means. Did  
the Zionists in a sense make an error? Were they too heavy  
handed, were they too locked in to their own ideological  
proclivities in this case? That question will be argued  
for years to come. But whether or not it could have worked  
in the end really depends on whether such havens could have  
been materialized in 1943. And my...The truth is that no

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matter what position...decision the Zionist would have taken....

Q: It is not only the question of the haven, the question of the people to put in, as a matter of fact.

A: Yes. Could the Jews have pioneered? Could this have worked?

Myron Taylor says in 1949: what the Jews really want is to be given their peace and live peacefully in settled societies. They do not really want to pioneer, except in Palestine. And I think that Taylor...

Q: They want...they want to settle inside...

A: In settled societies, right.

Q: And they don't want to be resettled. This is completely true.

A: That's very important. There is another question that I think was a...was a key road block in the rescue situation. And that was a question of war aims and war priorities. If we look back in 1938: the Jews could not be ~~very~~ welcome to the United States because of things that we already mentioned: the restrictive legislation, anti-Semitism, the effects of the depression and so forth. After the war, that....that rational changed. The Jews cannot now be rescued because the fastest way to rescue Jews is through victory. When Weiz...when Wise pointed out...

Q: You mean after the war broke out.

A: Yes. The fastest way to rescue Jews in other words, is through victory, and nothing can be done to interfere with that victory including the rescue of the Jews. Now when Wise points out that this is so - the Jews will all be dead by the end of the war - there is no answer from

Washington. And yet, to have challenged that idea that somehow the Jews de...required a special strategy, a change in the priorities of war, to make it in fact what Hitler had called it a war to...to destroy the Jews, that could not have been done, the changing of the war aims.

Not a single one of the conferences that we have which discussed war aims and war strategies, from Argentia which produced the Atlantic Charter to Tehran and to Yalta, ever discussed the idea that Jews....that rescue of the Jews should become a war aim. As a matter of fact, Stalin and Roosevelt were very careful not to make the war against the Nazis a war to save the Jews. Perhaps they knew instinctively that that would have interfered with the mobilization ~~of~~ plans. For the Russians it became their great patriotic war and for the Americans it became the great crusade, not talking about Jews. To...The interesting thing is that only for the Jews is World War II the war against the Jews. Even today, the textbooks do not give the kind of priority or follow the same priority about the Holocaust that were actually followed during the war.

And this brings up the question to whose history does the Holocaust belong, and why didn't Roosevelt and Churchill and Stalin understand that...that what was going up in the chimneys of Auschwitz was a little bit of their world, that it was only symbolically Jews. And that the lack of confidence and the lack of moral in the Western World today may be somewhere...have been lost somewhere in Auschwitz. After all, what was happening? The things that

the western world produced to enhance life, production, technology, managerial techniques, were reversed to produce some many units of death per day. What else can be said but that Auschwitz is the modern world and its problems in microcosm. What are we...Are we becoming Muselman in a sense? really mean bureaucratized standing room only kind of world that we live in? Is that happening today? But you know, leaders don't work on abstract philosophy, they work on a day to day reality. Roosevelt worked on the political reality: could he accept the refugees and the answer was: no. The question was could they survive until...until Stalingrad of February 1943, which marks the changing of the war, they were worried about their survival. They did not have that kind of...of depth to imagine it, and if they came back today, they would not understand why Auschwitz has suddenly become the....Auschwitz, not and not the beaches of Normandy and not the death march, but Auschwitz may in fact become the symbol of World War II. They did not....

Q: For who? For who?

A: Well, right now perhaps for the Jews, but I think ultimately if we see that the totalitarian microcosm that it really was it may very well be that more and more people will realize what happened in Auschwitz happened to everybody, that here is a different order of event and that our lives can never be the same again. And now, that may be a wishful thinking on my part, but there is reason to believe it. Of course there are other theories about it too. It may

in fact have been an unimportant event that happened to an unimportant and vulnerable people. That's another way of looking at it. I...I personally don't think so, and that's why I object to the so called obscene analogy. Auschwitz is not Hiroshima, although one could argue that the...the components were the same. Anonymous dying by fire, use of technology, a race factor also present at Hiroshima, But Auschwitz is different. Auschwitz is different partly because it happened to a people that was different and were in a sense murdered for their difference. That's...that's the key point. So that when we constantly bring up the Armenians and today the Cambodians. Those are all interesting atrocities and I do not take away the agony of them, but Auschwitz is something...something that has hurrendous particularity. The question of the strategy, of...victory to save the Jews really put men like Stephen Wise in a bind. Let me read you something that Stephen Wise said at the introduction speech in the American Jewish Conference in 1943, to show you how he was bound by this question of...of war aims. "We are Americans he says, first last and all the time. Everything else that we are and have, deepens and richens and strengthens, if that can be, our Americanism. As Americans ~~are~~ first and sternest task in common with all other citizens of our beloved country, ~~with~~ and with all the citizens of the united Nations, is to win the anti-Fascist war unless the war be won or else is lost. Now what had to be...happened for Jewish rescue is that a special case had to be made for Jews. Whe Nazi war machine was treating Jews specially, and to have said we want something special would have meant to derail that thing. For Jewish

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leaders to argue this, would in a sense have placed their  
loyalty in jeopardy and that in the whole of  
loyalty in American Jewry.

BOBINE 424

NY Feingold 154

A: There is no question that the Strauss...that Wise is a  
tragic figure.

Q: Stephen Wise, you mean?

A: Yes. Stephen Wise. Because he is in a sense locked in by  
his Americanism. That quote 'We are Americans first' really  
tells the entire tragedy. To have intruded into the American  
war aims, the additional and exceptional aim of saving  
Jews would of course...I could have possibly been inter-  
preted as a...a kind of halfway way from a rapid victory and  
would have disinterested the whole question of loyalty. That  
question was for Jews. It is another point too that  
one ought to make about Zionists and Zionism. In a sense  
the fact that the Holocaust proved the Zionists so...so  
terribly right, it was...a thing that Zionism could feed  
on, had they not predicated that the diaspora was untenable  
for Jewry. And the figures were of course told in the in-  
crease in the membership of Hadassah and the general Zionist  
organization in the United States, from virtually nothing in  
the first decades of the 20th century, when after all eastern  
Jews had voted with their feet to come to America and not  
to Palestine to 1938 when the Zionist movement contained  
well over a 100,000 members and had in fact become the

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center of gravity of American political life. And it had not become so because of the compelling nature of Zionist ideology about which American Jewry understood very little in any case, it had become so because the special idea, the idea of a Jewish refuge and Jewish sovereignty and Jewish power had a compelling logic of its own. Paradoxically Hitler proved, and that was a fantastic link with them too,...so that the Zionists in a sense were caught by two kinds of things, One....

They had themselves their own raison d'etat, as a matter of fact.

A. Precisely. They did not have to come to terms with what really happened. Well, I think, that problem will really never be resolved: what Zionists should have done and the question of territorialism and havens, or whether the Bergson Group which had suggested a separation of the two was right, will have to be resolved at some future time. I would rather like to turn to the whole question of what happened when the news of Final Solution was finally uncovered, after the State Department's attempt to conceal it, and what the State Department then did about it. And that really occurred the early months of 1943, when a...a protests and public knowledge of the...of the Holocaust. And what was happening in eastern Europe finally hit both British and American Jewry. It was Anthony Eden who came to Washington at that time and said that we must do something. The United States was originally in favour of having such a conference in Ottawa.

and finally the idea of a conference was suggested to be held on Bermuda. An interesting choice, because Bermuda, an isle on the Caribbean, was not accessible to the press and could be controlled. The conference was held and of course it goes down in my book as the mockery of the Bermuda Conference. The irony is of course that precisely while the conference was being held the Warsaw ghetto uprising is occurring...

Q: The very day.

A: ...The very day. Now, the conference is an amazing conference from two points of view. In that the American delegation is...is ordered by Breckinridge Long, in a serious,...in an agenda what they can do, to virtually do nothing. And it was this...this idea that nothing could be suggested. For example, the suggestion that a prisoner of war exchange for Jewish men in German camps be exchanged, or that the classification of certain Jewish inmates in concentration camps be changed to prisoner of war - a suggestion made by the World Jewish Congress - even earlier - was not accepted. Instead we find amazing little things happening. There is a great fear for example that...among the British, the British Representative Law, that suppose the Germans did follow through and did release a certain number of Jews, what do we do with these surplus people. Quote: If Hitler accepted a proposal to release perhaps millions of unwanted persons, we might find ourselves in a very difficult position. What to do with surplus people? Reams then interposed as to say: There was no doubt what-

ever that the Department of State would oppose negotiations with Germany. This was after all a total war, and one does not negotiate with the enemy. And Breckinridge Long went even further. When it came to the question of sending packages, food packages to the camps, he argued that to do so would be to mitigate, to help the German war effort, whose responsibility it was after all to feed those people in the camps, and he was opposed to that. There were other problems as well. Ships coming back from Europe were supposedly coming back empty, and at one point the representative of the Jews, Mr. Backer, suggested that these empty ships could bring back Jews to the United States. But the American instructions were very very clear. If and when prisoners were released, they should be resettled as close to the former homes as possible.

Q: Prisoners, you mean refugees?

A: Refugees or inmates of camps. They should be settled as close to their former places as possible.

Q: Which means nothing.

A: Which meant of course nothing. Precisely. At the same time - and the most fascinating part of course was that the instructions to the American delegation insisted on continuing to use the name 'political refugee'. The instructions are very clear. No one is to use the term 'Jews' the problem was a problemxxx not of race, or group or ethnic group or something like that, it was not a problem of Jews, it was a problem of refugees. The whole of political refugees.

A: The conference was held only because there was a Jewish

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pressure from both parts of the American Jewry and British Jewry in order to do something.

A: Right. And yet they would not....And that by the way continued well into April 1944 when finally the immigration laws were circumvented, a ....a step what was considered impossible in 1939, and a proposal to create temporary havens is accepted. Robert Murphy, the American...Roosevelt agent to North Africa, is instructed by the State Department to seek refugees, that were in fact already saved, and he is told to get quote a good mix, meaning of course, not too many Jews.

A: Pardon. Je voudrai un bon coup.

NY Feingold 155

A: Just thinking back on the Bermuda conference today is an agony. How could it have been in the heart of 1943 when the death mills are grinding, that two nations, the United States and Britain, get together, fully conscious of the fact that they are giving a sop to the Jewish public opinion that had just discovered that a processed mass murder operation of their co-religionists is occurring in Europe. It is just fantastic and ~~amazing~~ the juxtaposition of the Warsaw ghetto uprising with the Bermuda Conference makes it all the more dramatic. And yet, that is precisely what happened. A deliberate attempt to virtually do nothing, a continuation of the politics of gestures. So that one can say that if the Evian Conference was a part of Roosevelt's policy of gestures, the Bermuda Conference is an extension of

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that and the addition of a cruel mockery, which it was actually called at the time by the Jewish press. The instructions to the American delegation literally said: we will do nothing. Every suggestion....And the British aide memoire said the same thing. Let me read you some quotes from it: first of all, there was a continual.... Q: The coup.

W. Feingold 156

A: The Evian Conference was a part or an extension of Roosevelt's politics of gestures, then the Bermuda conference was an extension, an even further extension of that and including as well a new element, a cruel mockery of....of what was happening in Europe. The invitation, the agenda, given to the American delegation and the British aide memoire to the British delegation to Bermuda, both are very clear in what they wanted. They wanted nothing. And to do that, they had to limit what the conference could do and by very very interesting it exactly that. They in effect are...confronted not the question of what was happening in Hitler's death camps, but to rescue those Jews that already found a precarious haven in such places as North Africa and Spain, not really addressing the problem entirely. They were...

Q: The Jews which...who were already saved.

A: Already saved. They were very much afraid of making the war a war to save the Jews. Listen to Breckinridge Long, making certain in his diary that that would not happen. It that we are fighting this war on

Feingold 43

account and at the instigation of our Jewish citizens! And that of course must not happen. It must not be made a war to save the Jews. And the British saying to their people: it cannot be treated as though it were a wholly Jewish problem. The old euphemism that this was a refugee problem and had nothing to do with race war with Jews was continued in Bermuda, and it was to be continued until 1944...

Q: But why, why...if they didn't want to do anything, why did the conference take place?

A: Probably as a sop to an arouse of public opinion. It was done at the suggestion of the British

BODINE 425

NY Feingold 157

Q: If both the British and American delegations were instructed to do nothing at the Bermuda conference, why did the conference take place?

A: That is the interesting paradox faced by the...by both governments. An aroused public opinion required a response, and that by the way in itself is an interesting point.

Because it indicates that if a public opinion had been aroused in the democracies, perhaps more might have been done. No leadership would act without such an opinion. And here you have an example where it was. And yet, at the same time the problem was to do something, to do nothing while appearing to do something. And that was done by very interesting rules: by simply instructing the delegations to confine the problem so that it would not

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even be focusing on the Jewish problem. Listen to the British aide-memoire on that point: "It cannot be treated as though it were solely a Jewish problem" - that is, the points that will be handled at Bermuda - "...giving preference to one group or race would raise enormous criticism". Or the American delegation receiving instructions from Breckinridge Long: "If we handle the Jewish problem exclusively, it might be to the Nazi fascist propaganda" quote, unquote. Or Long talking about the possibility of bringing up the Jewish question exclusively again: quote "People might think that we are fighting this war on account and at the instigation of our Jewish citizens", and that was one thing that...  
Q: Unbelievable.  
A: ...that had to be avoided. So that when we come along to it, we...we get every single point rejected by...by the Bermuda delegation: packages to food camps would relieve Hitler of the burden of feeding the inmates, as if they weren't being killed; the possibility of exchanging Jews as prisoners of war could not be discussed; even the question of entering perhaps into negotiations with Berlin...  
Q: On this question.  
A: ...on this question, could not be handled. Listen to Gordon Reams, the...part of the American delegation, talking about that...and if I could just find it here.... He is saying: on the question of rescue through victory, which was the only point that the American delegation could handle with some confidence, it would quote "not

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only be foolish, it would be criminal" to negotiate with the Nazis. And this was a point kept throughout. So one by one every possible point of rescuing those people who needed rescue, instead of those who have found a precarious haven in refugee camps in Spain and North Africa, was discounted, and finally the Bermuda Conference came to the one conclusion that Breckinridge Long wanted to come to: that is to disinter the Intergovernmental Committee on Political Refugees, which was originally created at Evian and which had done nothing except to clutter the rescue effort, and was in itself a reflection of the lack of will to rescue - to disinter that, to once again start the movement. So shameful was the... was the performance of both Britain and the United States at Bermuda, that the... the conferees ~~wisely~~ wisely and practically decided not to issue a press release, and that perhaps was a mistake, because it was this very neglect that alerted the Jewish public opinion that something awful, something horrendous had happened at Bermuda, that is that nothing had happened at Bermuda in the midst of the slaughter. And it was from this point on that an alert Jewish opinion finally brings enough public pressure to get a Congressional hearing on the whole question of refu... rescue. In November Breckinridge Long is called in executive session to that Congressional Committee which is holding hearings on the possibility of creating a commission on rescue. And Long, suffering from nervous tension perhaps, or

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suffering from other things, vastly exaggerates the number of Jews admitted to the United States. Every delegation, by the way, is always citing almost as a what the United States has done for refugees. And he exaggerates the figure. The figure is... is publicised in the Jewish press and Long is finally recognized, as many as others that were already recognized, as being the man who single handedly has fed Roosevelt ~~the~~ certain information and has single handedly taken upon himself to stop the entrance of Jews into the United States. His... His fingers are removed, his hand is removed from the rescue levers and in late December Henry Morgenthau is activated as a result of his too.... of monitoring the... the...

Q: Yes, this leads to the creation of the War R<sup>e</sup>fugee....

A: ...of the War R<sup>e</sup>fugee Board.

Q: But I think that in Bermuda too they were... what is extraordinary, when one goes in the... in the details, in the... how cynical they... they were. Because when they imagined that Hitler can change his policy, they are scared to death.

A: Yes. For example, on this question of what would happen if Hitler... if the Germans would actually agree to extrusion. And this is in the British aide-memoire again. "There is a possibility that the Germans or their satellites may change over from a policy of extermination to one of extrusion (of sending out the refugees), if that should happen....

Q: This means not to kill everybody.

A: Not to kill them... not to actually comply with what we

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want - the rescue of the Jews. If Hitler...and this is a quote: "If Hitler accepted a proposal to release a million of unwanted persons, we might find ourselves in a very difficult position." What would we do with the Jews. ...a problem that was continually to plague both the British and the United States. What would we do?. In a sense one might almost say that the Germans in their Final Solution were solving a problem for the Western world as well, for the Allied World. Every Jew killed in a death camp in the east meant one less Jew required a haven in the west. An interesting tendum. The conclusion to resurrect the IGC of course is the completion of that mockery, and... of IGC is the International...

A: The Intergovernmental Committee...

Q: Intergovernmental Committee.

A: That was Breckinridge Long's idea, stated in the original instructions to the American delegation.

A: Yes. But what is extraordinary, the times they spent in discussing how to get some people coming from North Africa, people...

A: Finally....

Q: ...which have already been saved.

A: Ultimately that's what they came up with. The idea which... of perhaps temporary havens, which...which was finally suggested by a columnist of the New York Post, Samule Grafton, who used the argument: if oranges or carrots can be temporarily put up in Americanspiers awaiting transshipment without a visa, why couldn't people have done the same thing. Roosevelt found the argument so

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Q: Compelling that he used it ultimately to become more the lion than the fox, and to circumvent the rules and to build that refugee camp at Oswego at which 989...  
A: Oswego, where is it?  
Q: In New York State.  
A: In the State of New York.  
Q: Right, which is very cold, many of the refugees did not like it, coming from Italy and from North Africa. And 983 refugees, a good mix - Roosevelt demanded from his agent Robert Murphy in North Africa, lest...lest we think that only Jews were in the refugee stream - and that finally marked another great victory, a victory that unfortunately came while...when the overwhelming portion of American...of European Jews was already in ashes, In April of 19...actually in July of 1944 we finally did circumvent the immigration laws, which in 1939 were considered . That could not be. So things had changed, but they changed much too slowly, and as Stephen Wise had pointed out, by the time...if we comply with the rescue through victory gambit, strategy, they will be no Jews left to enjoy that victory.  
Q: And do you think that the creation of the War Refugee Board after...at the beginning of 1944 changed basically the things?  
A: Well, I would say that in the final tally we would have to say that at least the Jews of Budapest, who were saved that less than half of Hungarian Jewry that was saved, owes its life in some degree to the War Refugee Board.



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Because at that time the...the separate components of the...of the rescue efforts, of all the witnessing nations, of all neutral agents were brought together: Raul Wallenberg was brought to Budapest, the delegations of the Embassies were...the staffs were increased, and money was filtered into underground in Hungary, and....So that at least these Jews were saved. But even here, the problem was...was a difficult one. It came too late, as Leon Rubowitzki of the...the rescue agent of the World Jewish Congress said, too little. And too late.

Q: Yes.

A: We could have had the Refugee Board in 1943 or 1942, it would have made all the difference in the world.

Q: This is...this was not the case. And.....Now, say what you want to say about Auschwitz.

A: I'll try. I just want to say a word about bombing. I don't think we can get it all in here. Bombing has become a...a central point in the...in the contemporary dialogue on the Holocaust. Wherever one goes, in the magazines and in Holocaust conferences, everyone is talking about the bombing. Of course it is understandable, because bombing is a simple and ~~easy~~ clean way to have saved the Jews in the absence of physical control of the slaughter. Interdiction from the air might have saved the Jews, and it has a compelling logic. And yet, a jaundiced observer might look at it with a different point of view. There is something seductive about the...the conclusion that the bombing of Auschwitz could have saved the Jews. No doubt though

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A: Bombing is so fascinating a question because it encompasses  
 one small idea all of the problems of the witness. It  
 simply required a very minor change in war priorities and  
 strategies to bomb Auschwitz. And what has been argued is,  
 that by the spring of 1944, when the 15th A r Force in  
 Italy could already bomb, why wasn't that done? And of  
 course the...the memorandum that came back from both the  
 American and British Joint Staff was that it would in fact  
 interfere with the winning of the war, it was of doubtful  
 efficacy. It has been argued that if the airplanes were  
 bombing so close to Auschwitz already, at five miles east  
 of Auschwitz, to the Buna synthetic oil works, why could  
 they not have bombed the rail line and the death machine  
 itself. It's an interesting question, And of course, Ausch-  
 witz was not the only death camp, and the Germans had a  
 very fast way of...of fixing rail lines, and...In the  
 spring of 1944 was rather late in time to consider such  
 a question. And the interesting qu....The more interesting  
 question is that the new theories do not really come to  
 grips with the other part of the reason given by our  
 commanders for not bombing Auschwitz, which was the fear  
 of the escalation of terror. And indeed the Germans could  
 have escalated terror. They had thought of Auschwitz, they  
 could think of lynching american crews or...or bringing  
 p.o.w.'s to the bomb -sites, and so forth. The more intere-  
 sting question is why didn't the Jewish rescue advocates

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pick up the theme suggested by the governments in exile in ~~November~~ December of 1943 for retaliatory bombing. The bombing of Au. of Hamburg in July 1943 in retaliation of Auschwitz might have lifted that curtain of silence that made the question of getting Auschwitz believed so difficult. It is even reasonable to suppose that perhaps more rational Nazis in hierarchy might have come to conclusion that Auschwitz was not worth the bones of a single German city. At least the question would have been opened up. And yet we find that in March of 1943 the rescue advocates in their in their twelve point program at the Madison Square Garden rally did not take up the question of retaliatory bombing, which might have been a much more attractive way...

It is not even a question of retaliatory bombings, the bombings took place. It was enough to say, we bomb because of the Jews.

Right. And the Germans, as a matter of fact, Goebbels had already made that link and had prepared a counter atrocity campaign in case the Allies use that argument. And yet, it was never used, and therefore the credibility problem, the problem of getting believed of what was really happening never really broke out to the public. And without such a discussion, the question of rescue and stopping the slaughter became much more difficult. And here is one of the keys to the...the whole problem of why rescue had dismal showing. Not only the absence of will, but the absence of mind in many cases. And the mind not only of men like Roosevelt, but the mind of

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...of our own rescue advocates. We simply did not think about it. Kubowitzki himself was opposed to the bombing of Auschwitz, because he thought that Jewish inmates should not be the first to suffer from Allied bombing.

Q: I know, I know the argument, but what is worse than to die in gas chambers?

A: Yes. What greater... of course the question of doubtful efficacy...for the Jews it meant...what greater atrocity, what greater cruelty than Auschwitz could have happened to the Jews, I am hard pressed to say. But of course the decision makers were not Jewish and did not think in those terms. The priorities were priorities and the truth in the matter was that Jews did not have power to change them. The Jewish question was a minor question in World War II and only for the Jews was it a major question.

Q: Yes.

A: And we will see, years from now, whether it remains that way.

You are not supposed to talk. coup.

NY Feingold 159

plan quiet.

NY Feingold 160

A: The growing popularity of the bombing question is really very understandable. Because it contains in one simple act the possibility of saving Jews. It is almost a question that comes out about . Here was a way, and we did not use it. And yet, if one really thinks about it, one wonders if it is true. One is reminded

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of the Einsatzgruppen, for example, that operated behind the German lines after June 1941, killed at a much faster rate and without the technology of an Auschwitz. One is reminded how quickly the German railroad repaired rail lines, and one is reminded that Auschwitz was not the only death camp. And yet, it goes without saying that bombing a rail line and bombing Auschwitz would in fact have saved many Jews, in the sense that at least the Germans or the Nazis might have known that the Allies proposed it. And yet, it came so dreadfully late in the war that one wonders if it really made a difference. It was suggested...

Q. Excuse me if I cut you, I have to object about what you said. First of all, in 1944 Auschwitz was the only death camp. Treblinka didn't exist, Belzec didn't exist, Sobibor didn't exist. There was Chelmo, yes, which was reactivated....

A. There was...

Q. ...at this time.

A. ...massive dying in other camps, perhaps not an organized death operation,...

Q. It was not the same pattern.

A. Well, do you have the figures which balance the amount of dying through typhus and...in the end of 1944 in Ravensbrück as compared to the used up to November in Auschwitz? I would dare say that probably there were more deaths outside of Auschwitz, outside of the organized process than there was within it. But that's really a minor point. Auschwitz as a symbol of course is very

...is very important. It would have saved a great number of Hungarian Jewry. My point is not that...that the bombing would not have done some good. I think it would have done some good. My point is simply this: that at the end of the war, and we learn this from Albert Speer and from the evaluations of the bombing by John Kenneth Galbraith, that the whole saturation of bombing campaign, which began in 1943, did not really prevent the German war economy from being mobilized, and it was mobilized, by the way at a very late date, only in 1944. What I am saying is that when the governments in exile suggested to the British that the question ought to be retaliatory bombing, not necessarily for Jews, that...that might have had a really greater effect, and was really a much simpler thing to do. Meanwhile the saturation bombing of German citizens in 1943 has almost no meaning. We know today from the diaries of Goebbels and from the instructions of Himmler, that they in their minds had already associated the bombing of German cities with the Jewish plot, as they were willing to do that. That was part of their imagination. And Goebbels had already prepared a counter atrocity campaign in case such a line was made. Now, if the bombing of Hamburg or the bombing of Schweinfurth in the spring of 1943 was announced as a retaliatory act, it might have opened up the whole question of Auschwitz and raised that curtain of silence...

Q: why was it not done so, this is the question.

A: Well, why didn't the twelve point program, rescue program of March 1943 not do this. It is an interesting question.

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why we did not....Maybe the Jews or rescue advocates were not really accustomed to military strategy. It required such a minor change. It didn't even require a change in military strategy and military priorities to make such announcements. A simple question of psychology of war. And yet it was not done. And as I suggest it is a failure of mind as well as a failure of...  
Q: Because this was specifically asked by the Jews of Warsaw in September October....

A: The reason why it wasn't done, , was in the second part of McCloy's note, That bombing would have created an even greater terror, a greater escalation of terror than already existed. Now for Jews, of course,, what greater escalation of terror existed we don't know. But it was a very real fear of getting involved in this kind of ....this kind of who can do more. And it simply did not....And the second part of McCloy's note, which Wyden does not deal with, actually states the reason. And that was the reason given in 1942 for not announcing that the bombing of German cities was a retaliation. It would have been against war policy, It would have made the war, World War II, the great patriotic war, a war to save the Jews. And that is precisely what could not be done.

Q: Yes, Okay. It means one was not supposed to kill Germans in order to kill...to save Jews.

A: Right. That's really where the failure came in.

Q: You see, this is the real point.

A: And that's the...I am not saying that bombing of Auschwitz was a...would not have saved Jews. I think it would have

saved Jews and should have been done, but I think there was an even easier way to do it, and that is to pick up the whole theme of bombing of...of...of saturation bombing earlier, which as it stands now, the Germans are beginning to say is an atrocity. Dresden is becoming the equivalent of Auschwitz. And Dresden really does not make sense without looking at it in terms of Auschwitz. That is also a part of the obscenology. Why it was not picked up in Madison Square Gardens, it is very difficult to say, except that the Jews were not military people and did not think in those terms. Food packages to camps - yes. Exchange of prisoners - yes. Bombing? Interesting enough when Horthy did finally stop the deportation in July, he did so after a raid on Budapest on June 3rd, which shows that at least in the satellites which were particularly sensitive to , it could have worked. It was not the bombing of Auschwitz that stopped Hor...the deportations from Hungary, it is the bombing of Budapest, the rail-lines from Budapest. And that is an important point.

Q: Right. Anyhow, there is a lot of noise which is made today...about this.

A: Of course, one can be bright from hind-sight. But at that time we didn't think of it. I'd say a failure not only of will not a crisis of will, a failure of will, but also a failure of mind....just didn't understand the Nazi mentality. I mean, there are those wonderful, wonderful documents which indicate that...that the Hungarians are worried...the Hungarian Americans will be tortured if they torture the Jews. That's the way they are thinking. And



of course we are not thinking with...anything of that kind. We are taking Hungarian Americans and putting them on the radio to short wave broadcast to Budapest to say, don't let the gendarmerie cooperate in the deportation of the Jews. As if that mattered. Instead of saying to them, if you touch the Jews, you will be punished after the war, and remember, we have lots of Hungarians. The language that failure....a dif...a...what . He called it culture baring thinking. Just could not get beyond that. I think

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