

January 16, 1944

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY'S FILES:

There was a meeting at the White House today at 12:45 attended by the President, Secretary Morgenthau, Mr. Paul, and Mr. Pehle. Secretary Morgenthau had requested the appointment to discuss the problem of saving the remaining Jews in Europe.

The conference lasted about twenty minutes. Secretary Morgenthau advised the President that he was deeply disturbed about the failure of the State Department to take any effective action to save the remaining Jews in Europe. He explained that the Treasury Department, in connection with the operation of the Foreign Funds Control, had uncovered evidence indicating that not only were the people in the State Department inefficient in dealing with this problem, but that they were actually taking action to prevent the rescue of the Jews. The Secretary then asked John Pehle to explain to the President the facts which the Treasury had uncovered. The President listened attentively and seemed to grasp the significance of the various points. He also glanced at the proposed Executive Order and suggested that perhaps the Secretary of War should be on the Board. The President inquired as to why Mr. Crowley was put on the Board and did not seem satisfied that there was any reason to put Mr. Crowley on the Board. The President asked whether Mr. Stettinius had been consulted and referred to the fact that Stettinius had recently reorganized the State Department and that nowhere in the organization chart was there any indication that any particular division was charged with this problem. The Secretary indicated that we had been dealing with Mr. Hull on the general matter and had hesitated to put Stettinius instead of Hull on the Board. Nevertheless, the President indicated that he would like to have the matter taken up with Mr. Stettinius and indicated that he thought Stettinius would be sympathetic. He said he would also like to have Judge Rosenman brought into the picture. The Secretary said he had already talked to Judge Rosenman about the matter.

During the conference the following points were brought out:

- (1) The Secretary said he was convinced that effective action could be taken and referred to the results that his father, Henry Morgenthau, Sr., had obtained when he was Ambassador to Turkey in getting the Armenians out of Turkey and saving their lives. The President said he agreed that some effective action could be taken and referred particularly to the movement of Jews through Rumania into Bulgaria.



and out through Turkey. He said he thought such channels were wide open at the present time, but that they would not be open if Turkey entered the war.

- (2) The President referred to the possibility of getting people over the Spanish and Swiss borders.
- (3) The President seemed disinclined to believe that Long wanted to stop effective action from being taken, but said that Long had been somewhat soured on the problem when Rabbi Wise got Long to approve a long list of people being brought into this country many of whom turned out to be bad people. Secretary Morgenthau reminded the President that at a Cabinet meeting Biddle had indicated that only three Jews of those entering the United States during the war had turned out to be undesirable. The President said that he had been advised that the figure was considerably larger. In any event he felt that Long was inclined to be soured on the situation.

Following the meeting with the President and while still at the White House, Secretary Morgenthau called Mr. Stettinius and Judge Rosenman and arranged a meeting at the Secretary's home at 5:30.

The 5:30 meeting was attended by the Secretary, Mr. Stettinius, Judge Rosenman, Mr. Paul, and Mr. Pehle. The Secretary told Mr. Stettinius in plain words that he was convinced that people in the State Department, particularly Breckinridge Long, were deliberately obstructing the execution of any plan to save the Jews and that forthright immediate action was necessary if this Government was not going to be placed in the same position as Hitler and share the responsibility for exterminating all the Jews of Europe. At the Secretary's request Pehle then explained in detail the facts that had been uncovered by the Treasury. Stettinius seemed shocked by these facts although he said he was not surprised about Breckinridge Long since Long had fallen down just as badly and in an equally shocking way in the handling of the exchange of prisoners. Stettinius was very frank in his views on Long's failures and pointed out that in the reorganization of the State Department



which he had worked out the only remaining function assigned to Breckinridge Long is "Congressional relations". Stettinius said that in the new reorganization Berle's responsibilities had been very much limited, but included in the area of operations under Berle's control was the Special War Problems Division, which handles the problem of the rescue of the Jews, and the Visa Division. Stettinius said he recognized that this problem could not be handled effectively by Berle and that there were grounds for believing that Berle might be even worse than Long. At this point the proposed Executive Order was discussed. Stettinius read it over and when asked for his views said: "I think it's wonderful." He then said that the Secretary of War should be on the Committee instead of Mr. Crowley who was already having considerable difficulty running FEA. This was agreed to particularly in light of the President's similar reaction. It was decided that the Executive Order should be amended accordingly, as should the memorandum to Harold Smith and the memorandum to Cordell Hull and the amended documents delivered to Judge Rosenman by 9:15 the following morning.

The Secretary suggested that the Executive Director of the Board should be John Penle and Judge Rosenman and Mr. Stettinius indicated agreement.

*John Penle*