



Franklin D. Roosevelt  
Presidential Library and Museum

## CURRICULUM GUIDE

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### Investigating the Holocaust

*Nuremberg: Its Lesson for Today*

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Morgenthau  
Holocaust  
Collections  
Project

SCHULBERG  
PRODUCTIONS



## Using the Material in this Guide

This is curriculum material for teaching about the Holocaust and Nazi aggression during WWII. Developed by the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library & Museum, the guide uses historical materials drawn from the Library's archives, and a recently remastered documentary first produced in 1946, *Nuremberg: Its Lesson for Today*. The guide consists of six sections, each focused on a particular aspect of the Holocaust and Nazi aggression. The sections can be used with your students individually or collectively.

The purpose of this guide is to introduce students to the Holocaust through primary sources so that they may better understand the forces and factors that led to this horrendous period in world history and still lurk in the world today. Only by learning the lessons of the Holocaust can we hope to prevent these dark forces and factors from rising up once more.

### Section I

#### Nuremberg: The Trial and the Film

The 1946 documentary *Nurnberg* is an important and compelling film created to document and chronicle the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis leading up to, and during, the Second World War. These atrocities later came to be recognized as *genocide* and *crimes against humanity*.

The documentary film features original footage shot at the International Military Tribunal at the Palace of Justice in Nuremberg, Germany. Produced in 1946-1947 by Stuart Schulberg under the supervision of Pare Lorentz for the U.S. War Department, *Nurnberg* presented original footage used by the prosecution as evidence to demonstrate aggression, atrocities, and war crimes committed by the Nazis. The film was released in Germany in 1948, but because of its potentially controversial content, it was not shown in the United States. These new video segments come from a meticulously restored version titled, *Nuremberg: Its Lesson for Today*, by filmmaker Sandra Schulberg, daughter of original producer Stuart Schulberg.

*Nurnberg* helped establish an irrefutable record of the actions of the Nazis that forever stands as a warning to all humanity to be on guard that they never be permitted to occur again. In addition, it demonstrates a return to the "rule of law" by affording those accused of the crimes access to counsel and a fair trial before sentencing – a courtesy the Nazis failed to afford to their victims.

**Introductory Film Segment: *Nuremberg: Its Lesson for Today***  
(Running Time 1:57)

**Conclusion Film Segment 14: *Justice Served – The Trial Concludes***  
(Running Time 5:26)



# Using the Material in this Guide

## Section II The Lead Up

Among the key catalysts of the Second World War are the erroneous claims put forth in a book by Adolph Hitler in 1925. The book's title, *Mein Kampf*, translates in English to *My Struggle*, and asserts, arrogantly and incorrectly, German purity and superiority over other races in Europe. It would first be used as the basis for the rise to power of Hitler and the Third Reich, and later as the blueprint for the Nazis' quest for world domination. The plan, perpetrated through fraud, deceit, intimidation, coercion, and violence, called for a withdrawal from a series of important treaties and agreements, thus allowing Germany to rearm itself. Next, the Nazis required compulsory military service to assert domination over young Germans and to create a powerful military force to carry forth their plans.

Section I, The Lead Up is examined in segments 1-4.

Film Segment 1: *Mein Kampf* (Running Time 4:19)

Film Segment 2: *The Reichstag Fire – Hitler Consolidates Power* (Running Time 4:18)

Film Segment 3: *Lebensraum – Nazi Germany Annexes Austria* (Running Time 4:56)

Film Segment 4: *Czechoslovakia – German Aggression Continues* (Running Time 3:53)

Key documents:

- Document II-A – *Flyleaf FDR's Copy of Mein Kampf.jpg*
- Document II-B – *FDR's March 25, 1938, Press Conference.pdf*
- Document II-C – *Letter to Myron Taylor on the Evian Conference.pdf*
- Document II-D – *Klein Letter.pdf*
- Document II-E – *President Roosevelt's response to the Klein Letter.jpg*

## Section III Blueprint for World Domination

In 1936, Hitler decided he would test the resolve of the European powers by taking back the Rhineland while giving false reassurances that this was all he was interested in acquiring. When Britain and France failed to resist, the Nazis felt emboldened and set their sights on Czechoslovakia and Austria, claiming that their control was necessary for German security. Next, the Nazis signed a non-aggression pact with Russia to buy time and assure that Russia stayed out of the war while the Germans marched into Poland. Finally, awakening to Hitler's thirst for power, and honoring their commitment to defend Poland, England and France entered the war. In quick succession, Norway, Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg soon fell to the Nazis as well. With a plan to divide up the world into spheres of influence, Hitler signed the Axis Pact, joining forces with Italy and Japan.





## Using the Material in this Guide

Section III, *Blueprint for World Domination* is examined in segments 5-7.

Film Segment 5: *War – Germany Invades Poland* (Running Time 4:03)

Film Segment 6: *Blitzkrieg – The Conquest of Europe* (Running Time 4:31)

Film Segment 7: *The Axis Pact – Blueprint for World Domination* (Running Time 4:22)

Key documents:

- **Document III-A** – *Rabbi Wise’s letter and the Second Inaugural Address.pdf*
- **Document III-B** – *Eleanor Roosevelt’s Letter in Aid of Fritz Becker.pdf*
- **Document III-C** – *Letter to Myron Taylor on the Rublee Plan to aid Refugees.pdf*

### Section IV Crimes Against Humanity

The Nazis employed a “win at all costs and show no mercy” approach to war. It is difficult to grasp the extent to which Nazi Party policies and behavior led to extreme violence and the complete dehumanization of entire populations. An approach of isolating and dehumanizing Jews in Germany and its occupied territories fostered growing mob violence that laid the groundwork for mass murder. Concentration and death camps were created to punish those deemed politically dangerous or racially, physically, or behaviorally inferior. In the final arguments of the indictments in the Nuremberg trial, prosecutors charge that all defendants committed crimes against humanity, pursuing policies of murder, slavery, and plunder against civilian populations. Though the Jewish population of Europe was their primary target, aged, sick, and mentally ill Europeans were also targeted and murdered.

Section IV, *Nazis’ crimes against humanity* are examined in segments 8-13.

Film Segment 8: *Total War – The Breadth of Nazi Cruelty* (Running Time 5:08)

Film Segment 9: *Nazi Occupation – A Policy of Mass Murder* (Running Time 3:34)

Film Segment 10: *Nazi Evil in Action* (Running Time 2:50)

Film Segment 11: *Nazi Exploitation, Enslavement, and Murder of Civilians*  
(Running Time 3:17)

Film Segment 12: *Nazi Anti-Semitism – When Hatred Forges Policy* (Running Time 3:54)

Film Segment 13: *The Nazi Final Solution – Annihilation of the Jews of Europe*  
(Running Time 2:52)

Key documents:

- **Document IV-A** – *Rabbi Stephen Wise’s Letter to FDR and Pages from His Memo on Nazi Atrocities, December 2-8, 1942.pdf*

# Using the Material in this Guide

## Section V

### The Roosevelt Administration: Action and Inaction

America's response to the Holocaust has become the subject of intense historical interest in recent decades. Historians debate why FDR and other American decision makers did not do more to admit Jewish refugees and undertake policies – including bombing rail lines to Auschwitz or Auschwitz itself – that might have saved lives. What did the President do to end the suffering? Could he have done more? If so, why didn't he?

**Roosevelt's response to the Holocaust can be traced through the examination of key documents.**

- **Document V-A** – *Letter, FDR to New York Governor Herbert Lehman, November 13, 1935.pdf*
- **Document V-B** – *Memorandum for Missy LeHand from Stephen Early, November 13, 1936.jpg*
- **Document V-C** – *Draft Statement by the President, November 15, 1938.jpg*
- **Document V-D** – *Telegram from "A Fed Up American Gentile," November 17, 1938.jpg*
- **Document V-E** – *State Department Memorandum of Conversation Regarding the SS St. Louis June 8, 1939.pdf*
- **Document V-F** – *Charts of German American Bund Activities 1939.pdf*
- **Document V-G** – *Albert Einstein's Letter to Eleanor Roosevelt, July 26, 1941.jpg*
- **Document V-H** – *Memo from the Secretary of State and Statement by the President, October 24-25, 1941.pdf*
- **Document V-I** – *Memo from the Secretary of State and Statement by the President, October 24-25, 1941.pdf*
- **Document V-J** – *Memorandum for the Secretary's Files, January 16, 1944.pdf*
- **Document V-K** – *Statement by the President Regarding Atrocities of War, March 24, 1944.pdf*
- **Document V-L** – *Letter, Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy to John W. Pehle, July 4, 1944.pdf*

## Section VI

### Essential Questions, Themes, and Concepts Surrounding the Holocaust

The Holocaust was the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and murder of roughly six million European Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. Many others were targeted based on their perceived "racial inferiority" or on political, ideological and behavioral grounds. Though the total number of victims is staggering, it is important to remember that it represents individual people: mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, children, friends, and neighbors. The Holocaust did not have to happen. The Holocaust was perpetrated on purpose, in the middle of the 20th Century, in Germany, a nation with a rich cultural history. The Holocaust was not an accident; it was the result of decisions and indecision, actions and inaction, and of the attitudes of individuals, groups, organizations, and nations.

Certain essential questions are raised by examining the themes and concepts surrounding the Holocaust:



## Using the Material in this Guide

1. *Action vs Inaction* – What actions and inactions allowed the Holocaust to occur?
2. *Anti-Semitism* – How did Hitler use anti-semitism as a tool in his rise to power?
3. *Bearing Witness* – What role do those who bore witness to the Holocaust play in our understanding its importance to us today?
4. *Bullying* – How were the Nazis so easily able to bully their way to power?
5. *Conspiracy* – How was the concept of conspiracy used by the Nazis to perpetrate their crimes?
6. *Courage* – How did victims of the Holocaust demonstrate their courage to resist and survive?
7. *Critical Thinking* – What methods did the Nazis use to discourage critical thinking?
8. *Culpability* – Who might be considered culpable in allowing the Holocaust to occur?
9. *Division* – How did the Nazis use division as a political tool?
10. *Empathy* – How might empathy have prevented the Holocaust?
11. *Genocide* – Why did the Nazis choose genocide as a means of advancing their beliefs?
12. *Hate Speech* – How did the Nazis use hate speech to desensitize and normalize their actions and behavior?
13. *Intolerance* – What role did intolerance play in the Holocaust?
14. *Justice* – Why was/is it so important to seek justice for the victims of the Holocaust?
15. *Peer Pressure* – What role did peer pressure play in the Holocaust?
16. *Prejudice* – In what ways did the actions of the Nazis go beyond the limits of ordinary prejudice?
17. *Resiliency* – How do survivors of the Holocaust evidence their resilience?
18. *Resistance* – In what ways was resistance shown to the Nazis?
19. *Propaganda* – What role did propaganda play in bringing about the Holocaust?
20. *Responsibility* – Who is responsible for the Holocaust?
21. *Right and Wrong* – How did so many people fail to point out right from wrong during the Holocaust?
22. *Scapegoating* – How did the Nazis use scapegoating to justify their actions?
23. *Slippery Slope* – What were the “slippery slopes” that lead to the Holocaust?
24. *Speaking Truth to Power* – Why did so many people fail to speak truth to power during the Holocaust? What happened to those that did?
25. *Words Matter* – How did the Nazis use words/language to perpetrate the Holocaust?



# SECTION I

## Nuremburg: The Trial and the Film

### The Trial: Prosecuting the Nazi Atrocities for History

*"The wrongs which we seek to condemn and punish have been so calculated, so malignant, and so devastating, that civilization cannot tolerate their being ignored, because it cannot survive their being repeated."*

Excerpt from the opening statement  
Justice Robert Jackson, American Representative  
International Military Tribunal  
Nuremburg, Germany 1946

In the fall of 1946, while much of the world lay in ruin – the result of six long years of world war – representatives of the victorious nations met in a city located deep in the heart of the defeated enemy's territory. Their task was to seek justice for those who had perished by laying before the world the depth and depravity of the Nazi regime. Justice Jackson said that 3,000 people could have been put on trial, but there were only 12 trials with about 24 defendants in each case. The idea was not to try the petty crimes of little people, but to try the top power brokers, the people who were at the heart of creating the atmosphere and conditions that allowed it all to happen.

The Nuremburg trials were unique for many reasons:

- a) it was civilization itself bringing the charges against these defendants for *crimes against humanity, crimes against peace, war crimes, and conspiracy,*
- b) it established the concept that individuals could be personally held accountable; that "national sovereignty" was not an acceptable defense,
- c) the evidence presented was the Nazis' own papers, books, letters, words, and films that they, themselves had created and preserved,
- d) for the first time motion picture film was being used as evidence in an international tribunal.

Justice Jackson summed up the immensity of the trial by saying,

*"The privilege of opening the first trial in history for crimes against the peace of the world imposes a grave responsibility... What makes this inquest significant is that these prisoners represent sinister influences that will lurk in the world long after their bodies have returned to dust ... Civilization can afford no compromise with the social forces which would gain renewed strength if we deal ambiguously or indecisively with the men in whom those forces now precariously survive."*

# Nuremburg: The Trial and the Film

## The Film: Documenting the Nazi Atrocities for History

The film *Nurnberg* documents the trial of some of the highest ranking members of Hitler's Third Reich. It was created from more than 50 hours of footage filmed over the course of the year-long trial. The evidence against the nearly two dozen defendants was introduced in the form of books, papers, letters, orders, and speeches. Among the most damning evidence were films the Nazis themselves had created.

At the time, the idea of using film as evidence in a trial was new. Unlike other forms of evidence, film by itself was considered lacking important identifying elements such as – where and when it was shot, and for what purpose it was shot. But because these moving images were clearly made by the Nazi government for both propaganda and record-keeping purposes, they proved very effective to demonstrate the Nazis' intent, means, and documentation of the murder of millions of innocent men, women, and children.

Like every film, *Nurnberg* is a “construct,” the result of many individual decisions that had to be made by a group of people. Therefore, it reflects (either consciously or unconsciously) their individual and collective biases.

The 1946 film was intended to serve two purposes:

- 1) to create an indisputable record of criminal atrocities using the criminals' own records – papers, books, letters, words and films – as evidence of the evils of Hitler and the Nazi regime,
- 2) to explain to European audiences, and the world, the actions and events that thrust Europe into such a ghastly war so soon after the First World War.

While the film could have been presented in a number of ways, the manner selected was to use the four counts of the indictments:

- 1) crimes against humanity,
- 2) crimes against the peace,
- 3) war crimes,
- 4) conspiracy,

as the narrative to tell of the horrifying events.

Completed in 1946, *Nurnberg* was shown widely in Germany and Europe to audiences who wanted to know, and to try to understand, how Europe had been thrust into such a horrific war while the memories of the First World War were still so fresh. Viewing the film was not required, but it was encouraged. (A similarly themed film about the Nazi atrocities, *Death Mill*, came out in 1946. Germans were required to have their ration books stamped proving that they had seen it in order to get their rations).



# Nuremburg: The Trial and the Film

For those that did view *Nurnberg*, comments fell into five broad categories:

- 1) Some could not believe what had happened and thought it was made up propaganda or in today's words "Fake News."
- 2) Some felt they now finally knew what really happened.
- 3) Some felt, "Well, that is all behind us now, we must focus on the future not the past."
- 4) Some felt it was too early to see it, they were not ready to accept it yet.
- 5) Some felt, "How can they be judging us after all the numerous crimes the Soviets had committed?"

Whatever their individual views, collectively people struggled to understand what had happened and why. And *Nurnberg* struggled to provide them some answers.

The film was not shown in US theaters after the war. As the ash and dust of the Second World War was still settling, the United States government began shifting its focus toward the Cold War with Russia. The US government suppressed the film because of the onset of the Cold War. Our former allies (the Soviets) suddenly became our new enemies. Recognizing that the American public's support for post war Germany was vital to blocking Russian expansion and aggression, *Nurnberg* was pulled from release and rarely seen again.

Most Americans at the time actually knew very little of what had gone on during the war. Information in those days was disseminated by newspapers, radio and newsreels. Drips and drabs of information about the crimes of the Nazis were known, but only when all the dark pieces were connected and brought into light did the full repugnant picture appear. Returning once again to the words of Justice Jackson,

*"We must never forget that the record on which we judge these defendants today is the record on which history will judge us tomorrow...."*

Information, knowledge and understanding of the past, are the keys to safeguarding a better future.

## Vocabulary

**Conspiracy** – an agreement to do an unlawful or wrongful act or an act that becomes unlawful as a result of the secret agreement.

**Construct** – an ideal whose existence must be created and established by decisions made by the mind as opposed to a real object that is readily observable.

**Crimes Against Humanity** – a category of crimes against international law which includes the most egregious violations of human dignity, especially against civilian populations.

**Crimes Against the Peace** – namely, planning, preparation, initiation, or waging of a war of aggression, or a war in violation of international treaties, agreements or assurances, or participation in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment of crimes against the peace.

# Nuremburg: The Trial and the Film

**Evidence** – encompasses the rules and legal principles that govern the establishment of proof of facts in a legal proceeding.

**Justice** – the quality of being fair and reasonable in treatment before the law.

**Primary Source** – information or material such as diaries, letters, reports, photographs, memos, newspaper articles and so on that provides direct knowledge or first-hand accounts of events, practices or circumstances surrounding an event.

**Secondary Source** – a document or record such as a text book or book describing an event, practice, or circumstance that is created with information originally created, discovered, or presented by someone else, somewhere else.

**Tribunal** – a group or institution with the authority to judge, adjudicate or determine claims or disputes.

**War Crimes** – the idea that individuals can be held accountable for crimes such as genocide or maltreatment of prisoners committed during, or in connection with, war.

## Films

### **Nuremberg: Its Lesson for Today (Running time 1:57)**

“Investigating the Holocaust” is a series of short videos derived from *Nuremberg: Its Lesson for Today*, a powerful, feature-length documentary restoring and reprising the 1946 Stuart Schulberg/Pare Lorentz production titled, *Nurnberg*. These videos feature original film footage used as evidence by the International Military Tribunal at the Palace of Justice in Nuremberg, Germany – the most famous courtroom drama in modern times, and the first to make extensive use of film as evidence.

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### **Justice Served – The Trial Concludes (Running time 5:26)**

The Nuremberg trial set precedent, holding leaders accountable for acts of war and genocide. The victorious Allies need not have afforded due process to their enemies, but they recognized that individual accountability was inseparable from peace. The trial remains a testament to the rule of law and the power of international cooperation, laying the foundation for the ultimate establishment of the International Criminal Court.

## Questions

### *Essential Questions*

- 1) Why was it important that the Nazi leaders be put on trial?
- 2) Why was it important to make a “record” of the trial?
- 3) How did using “film images” and the concept of “conspiracy” impact the administration of justice?
- 4) Why was the film banned in the United States?
- 5) Was justice served at Nuremberg?

# Nuremberg: The Trial and the Film

## *Short Answer Questions*

- 1) Why were the Nazis tried in Nuremberg?
- 2) From what nations were the members of the tribunal selected?
- 3) Who represented America at the tribunal?
- 4) Why was it just these particular men who were put on trial when there were so many Nazis who were involved?

## *Primary Source Questions*

- 1) What forms of evidence were introduced at the trial?
- 2) Who were the four Tribunal members?
- 3) What countries were the Tribunal members from?
- 4) Where did the prosecutors get the evidence that was produced at the trial?
- 5) What made the evidence so compelling?



# SECTION II

## The Lead Up

This section consists of four film segments and five documents related to the Nazis rise to power.

### Film Segment 1

#### **Mein Kampf (Running Time 4:19)**

Adolf Hitler's 1925 manifesto, *Mein Kampf*, or *My Struggle*, evidences the origins of Nazi Party ideology and ultimately the Holocaust. In his writings, Hitler spouted anti-Semitic and militaristic rhetoric forming the basis for his vision of Germany. The idea of German superiority, the master race, justified the enslavement and extermination of those deemed inferior. Hitler himself embodied these ideas, and the *Führerprinzip*, or Führer principle, recognized his absolute power.

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### Film Segment 2

#### **The Reichstag Fire – Hitler Consolidates Power (Running Time 4:18)**

On February 27th, 1933, the Reichstag, or German parliament building, burned. The Nazi Party blamed the fire on a Communist plot, though Nazi Party members may have played a role in the arson. Hitler used it as a pretext for imprisoning political opponents and abolishing citizen rights, such as freedom of the press and speech. Further emboldened by the blaze, the Nazis accelerated rearmament plans and expansion of the armed forces, part of Hitler's broader effort to rebuild German military might.

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### Film Segment 3

#### **Lebensraum – Nazi Germany Annexes Austria (Running Time 4:56)**

The Nazis used the nationalist concept of *Lebensraum*, or living space, to justify German expansion in Europe. Hitler's goals included uniting ethnic Germans in Central Europe and providing new territories for colonization and exploitation, especially in Eastern Europe. Hitler first set his sights on neighboring Austria. Through coercion and force, he bullied the Austrian government into submission. In March 1938, Germany invaded Austria to complete the *Anschluss*, or joining, of the two nations. Austria ceased to exist as an independent country.

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### Film Segment 4

#### **Czechoslovakia – German Aggression Continues (Running Time 3:53)**

Hitler next turned to Czechoslovakia. Having approved a campaign to subjugate the nation through disinformation and violence, Hitler prepared for war. England and France, however, had no appetite for a European conflict. They agreed to Germany's territorial demands in September 1938. Further emboldened, Hitler set his sights on Poland.

# The Lead Up

## Vocabulary

**Anschluss** – means union, is used especially in reference to the forcible uniting of Germany and Austria in 1938.

**Anti-Semitic** – feeling or showing hostility toward or discrimination against Jews as a cultural, racial, or ethnic group.

**Appeasement** –to give into demands or requests, the state of being satisfied.

**Compulsory Military Service** – sometimes referred to as a draft, mandatory enrollment for service in a country's armed forces.

**Conspiracy** – an agreement to do an unlawful or wrongful act or an act that becomes unlawful as a result of the secret agreement.

**Coup** – officially referred to as a *Coup d'etat*, a sudden illegal, often violent taking of power, especially by part of an army or military organization.

**Crimes Against Humanity** – a category of crimes against international law which includes the most egregious violations of human dignity, especially against civilian populations.

**Crimes Against the Peace** – namely, planning, preparation, initiation, or waging of a war of aggression, or a war in violation of international treaties, agreements or assurances, or participation in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment of crimes against the peace.

**Expurgated** – to cleanse of something morally harmful, offensive, or erroneous.

**Führerprinzip** – Hitler's organization and leadership style where ultimate authority rested with Hitler and extended downward. At each level, the superior was to give the orders and the subordinate was to follow them to the letter.

**Kristallnacht** – German meaning Crystal Night, also called Night of the Broken Glass, November 9-10, 1938, when German Nazis attacked Jewish people and property. The term refers to litter of broken glass left on the streets after the attacks.

**Lebensraum** – territory believed especially by Nazis to be necessary for national existence or economic self-sufficiency.

**Manifest Destiny** – an ostensibly benevolent or necessary policy of imperialistic expansion. Closely associated with the American mid-19th century expansion to the Pacific ocean.

**Master Race** – a group of people held to be racially preeminent and hence fitted to rule or enslave other peoples.

**Mein Kampf** – German phrase meaning “my struggle” it was a political manifesto written by Adolph Hitler in the early 1920s. It became the bible of the Nazi movement in Germany's Third Reich.

**Misinformation** – incorrect or misleading information often for the purposes of tricking or misleading others.

# The Lead Up

**Plebiscite** – a vote by the people of an entire country or district to decide some major issue such as a choice of a ruler or government, option for independence or annexation by another power, or question of national policy.

**Pretext** – a made up or pretend reason for doing something so as to hide the true reason.

**Propaganda** – spreading of ideas, information, or rumor or misinformation for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause, or a person.

**Rhineland** – an area lying in Western Germany along both banks of the middle Rhine River east of Germany's border with France, Luxembourg, Belgium, and the Netherlands.

**Subjugate** – to bring under control and governance as a subject usually by force or threat of force.

**War Crimes** – the idea that individuals can be held accountable for crimes such as genocide or maltreatment of prisoners committed during, or in connection with, war.

## Questions

### *Essential Questions for the Lead Up*

- 1) What right does anyone have to declare one race “superior” to another?
- 2) Why did the people of Germany accept the concept of *Führerprinzip*, and not question, Hitler's fraudulent, deceitful, intimidating, and coercive actions in his climb to power?
- 3) Why weren't the institutional organizations that would traditionally act as a check against such extremism able to prevent Hitler's rise?
- 4) Hitler called war “noble and necessary.” Is war ever noble and necessary?
- 5) How might events in Central Europe have turned out differently if England and France had not given in to Hitler in 1938?
- 6) What factors need to be taken into consideration when deciding whether to give in to aggression?
- 7) Can/should laws like the one regarding the immigration quotas be suspended in the face of national or international crisis?

## Documents

### **Document II-A – Flyleaf FDR's Copy of *Mein Kampf***

In 1933, FDR received an English translation of Hitler's treatise, *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*) published by Houghton Mifflin. The editor stripped out much of Hitler's anti-Semitic rantings and kept chapters on Nazi ideas of a restored German militaristic economy and society. The edited version outraged the American Jewish community. Roosevelt, who spoke and read German, was also appalled by the book.



# The Lead Up

## Document II-B – FDR’s March 25, 1938 Press Conference

On March 12, 1938, German troops marched into neighboring Austria, bringing more than 200,000 Jewish Austrians under Nazi control. Because a bill to increase immigration quotas could not pass congress, FDR took executive action. He combined Austria’s immigration quota with Germany’s thus increasing the number of Germans who could be considered for U.S. visas.

## Document II-C – Letter to Myron Taylor on the Evian Conference

Following the German *Anschluss* with Austria, FDR proposed an international conference to facilitate and finance “political refugee” emigration to other countries. In this letter, Roosevelt appoints Myron C. Taylor, a moderate Republican businessman, to represent the United States at the July, 1938, Evian Conference. At the conference, Taylor announced that the U.S. would admit its full German/Austrian quota of 27,370 per year over the next five years – a number far lower than the 300,000 applicants on waiting lists for U.S. visas. The conference also established a new Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees to negotiate with Germany on refugee matters. Ultimately, though, the Evian Conference was a failure because no country – including the United States – was willing to take in the large numbers of European Jews seeking safe haven.

## Documents II-D and II-E – Presidents Roosevelt’s response to the Klein Letter

The events of *Kristallnacht* were widely reported in the press. But public opinion on admitting additional refugees into the United States remained divided. Mail came into the White House both calling for action and demanding restraint in dealing with Germany and the Jewish crisis. This divide in public opinion placed enormous constraints on FDR’s ability to steer Congress towards more liberal immigration policies. Shortly after *Kristallnacht*, Ernest L. Klein from Chicago wrote this letter to the President urging him “to take such steps as may be deemed advisable to curb this madness.” FDR responded a few days later and advised Klein of efforts by the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees to negotiate with Germany for the orderly emigration of “the unfortunate victims” to other countries.

## Document Based Questions

### Document II-A – Flyleaf FDR’s Copy of *Mein Kampf*

In 1933, FDR received an English translation of Hitler’s treatise, *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*) published by Houghton Mifflin. The editor stripped out much of Hitler’s anti-Semitic rantings and kept chapters on Nazi ideas of a restored German militaristic economy and society. The edited version outraged the American Jewish community. Roosevelt who spoke and read German, was also appalled by the book.

### Document Based Questions

- 1) When does it appear that FDR read this version of the book?
- 2) How do you suppose FDR knew that there was a more severe version printed earlier?
- 3) What is the tone expressed in FDR’s reaction to the English language edition of *Mein Kampf*?
- 4) What does FDR’s note suggest about his understanding of the differences between Hitler’s public and non-public intentions?

# The Lead Up

## *Document II-A Extension Questions*

- 1) Why do you suppose the publisher choose to edit out the sections about Hitler's anti-Semitic views? Is this a form of censorship?
- 2) What is the significance of FDR's early read and understanding about Hitler's intentions?
- 3) If Roosevelt understood as early as 1933 that Hitler was so opposed to the Jews, why did it take him so long to take more definitive action?

## **Document II-B – FDR's March 25, 1938 Press Conference**

On March 12, 1938, German troops marched into neighboring Austria, bringing more than 200,000 Jewish Austrians under Nazi control. Because a bill to increase immigration quotas could not pass congress, FDR took executive action. He combined Austria's immigration quota with Germany's thus increasing the number of Germans who could be considered for U.S. visas.

## *Document Based Questions*

- 1) Why do you suppose FDR is so quick to point out that the group of political refugees also contains, "a great number of Christian, too, a very large number"?
- 2) How does the President respond when asked if legislation would be required to raise the number of refugees?
- 3) How does FDR suggest that the annexation of Austria to Germany affects the number of refugees that can be accepted from the combined area?
- 4) What historic precedents does FDR use as justification for allowing the refugees into the United States?
- 5) FDR refers to "private money" being used to make it possible for the refugees to enter the host countries. What does he mean by private money? How/why would using private money make a difference?

## *Document II-B Extension Questions*

- 1) Why are people from around the world drawn to the United States?
- 2) Why do governments set quotas on the number of people coming in from various countries?
- 3) Should religion play a role in who is and who isn't allowed to enter the country?
- 4) How have American views toward refugees and immigrants changed over the years?
- 5) How does the current situation along our southern boarder compare to the events President Roosevelt is addressing in his press conference?
- 6) How would you have responded to the reporters' questions if they had been asked of you?

## The Lead Up

### Document II-C – *Letter to Myron Taylor on the Evian Conference*

Following the German *Anschluss* with Austria, FDR proposed an international conference to facilitate and finance “political refugee” emigration to other countries. In this letter, Roosevelt appoints Myron C. Taylor, a moderate Republican businessman, to represent the United States at the July, 1938, Evian Conference. At the conference, Taylor announced that the U.S. would admit its full German/Austrian quota of 27,370 per year over the next five years – a number far lower than the 300,000 applicants on waiting lists for U.S. visas. The conference also established a new Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees to negotiate with Germany on refugee matters. Ultimately, though, the Evian Conference was a failure because no country – including the United States – was willing to take in the large numbers of European Jews seeking safe haven.

#### Document Based Questions

- 1) What action is President Roosevelt proposing in his letter?
- 2) What “persecution” are the “so many thousands” of individuals “suffering”?
- 3) What are the “two countries” FDR is talking about?
- 4) In paragraph three, FDR lays out the problem as he sees it. In your own words, describe the problem more simply.
- 5) Why do you suppose FDR is “hoping” that private organizations and individuals will take the lead on “extending effective assistance”?
- 6) FDR proposes setting up an American and international committee to coordinate the works of the private organizations and individuals. Why do you suppose he is not asking the government to take a more active role?
- 7) What makes FDR think the other countries will accept American leadership in this endeavor?

#### Document II-C Extension Questions

- 1) Is FDR doing enough by setting up this committee, or should he be doing more?
- 2) If you believe he could be doing more, what would you suggest he do?
- 3) What factors, forces or actors do you suppose are keeping him from doing more?
- 4) What difference does it make whether the money is “private” or not?

### Document II-D – *Klein Letter*

The events of *Kristallnacht* were widely reported in the press. But public opinion on admitting additional refugees into the United States remained divided. Mail came into the White House both calling for action and demanding restraint in dealing with Germany and the Jewish crisis. This divide in public opinion placed enormous constraints on FDR’s ability to steer Congress towards more liberal immigration policies. Shortly after *Kristallnacht*, Ernest L. Klein from Chicago wrote this letter to the President urging him “to take such steps as may be deemed advisable to curb this madness.” FDR responded a few days later and advised Klein of efforts by the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees to negotiate with Germany for the orderly emigration of “the unfortunate victims” to other countries.



# The Lead Up

## Document Based Questions

- 1) Why do you suppose Mr. Klein lists his work with the Work Progress Administration and his associations with James W. Gerard, Col. Edward M. House, and Louis McHenry Howe?
- 2) Where does Mr. Klein say he is getting his information regarding matters in Germany?
- 3) What reasons does Mr. Klein give as the German reason for the “extermination of human beings”?
- 4) What precedents for presidential action does Mr. Klein cite in his letter?
- 5) What uniquely American symbols and events does Mr. Klein suggest the “oppressed and persecuted people see” as signs for hope or action?
- 6) How does Mr. Klein describe “the cause” for which he is advocating the President to take action?

## Document II-D Extension Questions

- 1) Who were James W. Gerard, Col. Edward M. House, and Louis McHenry Howe?
- 2) What were conditions like in the medieval age that Mr. Klein refers to?
- 3) Mr. Klein mentions the “American Spirit.” What does he mean by that?
- 4) Explain what democratic principles and ideals you think Mr. Klein is talking about.
- 5) Mr. Klein says he is mindful of his “responsibilities, obligations, and privileges” as an American. What are our responsibilities, obligations and privileges as Americans?
- 6) Do the American symbols Mr. Klein cites as signs for hope still ring true today?

## Document II-E – President Roosevelt’s response to the Klein Letter

The events of *Kristallnacht* were widely reported in the press. But public opinion on admitting additional refugees into the United States remained divided. Mail came into the White House both calling for action and demanding restraint in dealing with Germany and the Jewish crisis. This divide in public opinion placed enormous constraints on FDR’s ability to steer Congress towards more liberal immigration policies. Shortly after *Kristallnacht*, Ernest L. Klein from Chicago wrote this letter to the President urging him “to take such steps as may be deemed advisable to curb this madness.” FDR responded a few days later and advised Klein of efforts by the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees to negotiate with Germany for the orderly emigration of “the unfortunate victims” to other countries.

## Document Based Questions

- 1) What does President Roosevelt say he is doing to “ameliorate” the suffering Mr. Klein is describing?

## The Lead Up

- 2) When Roosevelt says, "...emigration and to develop opportunities for permanent settlement in other countries," why do you suppose he stops short of offering the United States as one of those countries?
- 3) If Roosevelt is so actively supportive of this committee, would it make more sense to have it based in Washington as opposed to London?

### Document II-E Extension Questions

- 1) President Roosevelt says the "technical difficulties" involved in solving the problem "are very great." What do you suppose some of these difficulties might be?
- 2) Give some examples in the world today where there are humanitarian problems.
  - a) Where are they?
  - b) What caused them?
  - c) What are governments doing about them?
  - d) Who are these governments?
  - e) What "technical difficulties" need to be overcome to render help and assistance?

### Video Questions

- 1) When war occurs, how do we determine the difference between a death that is a "crime" and a death that results from the nature of war?
- 2) Why did the people of 1920s/1930s Germany allow themselves to accept/go along with what the Nazis were doing?
- 3) How was Hitler able to use the Reichstag fire to his political advantage?
- 4) How was Hitler able to use the fire as a pretext to solidify power?
- 5) What motive would the Communists have for starting the fire?
- 6) What motives would the Nazis have for starting the fire?
- 7) What role did *Lebensraum* play in the rise of the Nazis?
- 8) How was *Lebensraum* used to justify the Nazi territorial expansion?
- 9) What is the difference between *Lebensraum* and manifest destiny?
- 10) Why was the "absorption" of Czechoslovakia so critical to Hitler's plans for conquest?
- 11) Why did Hitler feel he needed to create an "incident" requiring German military intervention?

# SECTION III

## Blueprint for World Domination

This section consists of four film segments and three documents related to the Nazi's plans for world domination.

### Film Segment 5

#### **War – Germany Invades Poland (Running Time 4:03)**

After Czechoslovakia, Hitler once again claimed no further territorial ambitions in Europe. His public statements formed part of a disinformation campaign to justify invading Poland. England and France pledged full support for the republic. Undaunted, Germany invaded on September 1, 1939. England and France then declared war on Germany.

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### Film Segment 6

#### **Blitzkrieg – The Conquest of Europe (Running Time 4:32)**

With Poland defeated, Hitler pledged to honor the neutrality of noncombatants. His promises were nothing more than disinformation. In April 1940, he struck Denmark and Norway. A month later, Germany invaded the Low Countries and France. Allied defenses crumbled. By the end of June, Hitler dominated much of Europe.

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### Film Segment 7

#### **The Axis Pact – Blueprint for World Domination (Running Time 4:23)**

With Europe subjugated, Hitler sought world domination. Together with Japan and Italy, Germany formed the Axis Pact. Italy would control the Mediterranean. Japan would control Asia. Hitler claimed everything else. With the stage set, Germany invaded the Soviet Union. Japan attacked the United States. The entire world was truly at war.

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### Film Segment 8

#### **Total War – The Breadth of Nazi Cruelty (Running Time 5:08)**

Conquest alone did not satisfy the Nazis. They treated their enemies with contempt and cruelty. Military traditions and established conventions of war were discarded in favor of brutality against combatants and civilian populations. These violent excesses formed the bases for counts 3 and 4 at the Nuremberg trial.

# Blueprint for World Domination

## Vocabulary

**Blitzkrieg** – a swift and intense military campaign designed to bring surprise and quick, decisive victory.

**Danzig Issue** – an area sometimes called the Polish Corridor ensuring Poland access to the Baltic Sea and separating East Prussia from the rest of Germany. This was a situation causing a great deal of embitterment for the Germans following the First World War.

**Disinformation** – false information deliberately, and often covertly, spread with the intent to mislead, especially propaganda issued by a government organization to a rival power or the media.

**Infamous** – having a reputation of the worst kind: notoriously evil, shameful, detestable, or bad.

**Inviolability** – prohibiting violation, secure from destruction, violence, infringement, or desecration.

**Low Countries** – a region of Western Europe bordering on the North Sea and comprising modern Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands.

**Luftwaffe** – the German air force during the Nazi era.

**Mediation** – an intervention in a dispute in order to resolve a conflict between parties, similar to arbitration.

**Neutrality** – not helping or supporting either side in a conflict, or disagreement, impartial.

**Non-combatants** – civilians or others not engaged, or prepared to engage, in armed conflict.

**Rhineland** – area of Germany loosely defining the area west of the Rhine River, chiefly its middle section.

**Schweinhund** – a German word that means “Pig Dog.” The term is extremely offensive to Germans.

**Subjugated** – to bring under control or domination by force, or threat of force, especially by conquest.

**Superfluous** – exceeding what is sufficient or necessary, extra, not needed, obsolete, or wasteful.

**Wehrmacht** – the armed forces of Nazi Germany from 1935 to 1945. It consisted of three parts *Heer* (army), the *Kriegsmarine* (navy) and the *Luftwaffe* (air force).



# Blueprint for World Domination

## Questions

### *Essential Questions for Blueprint for World Domination*

- 1) Why were outside calls for peace – from the Pope and President Roosevelt – so ineffective?
- 2) What might have happened if Russia had refused to enter into the nonaggression pact with Germany?
- 3) How might things in Central Europe have played out if England and France had not pledged to defend Poland?
- 4) Why was Hitler seemingly unconcerned about England and France pledging to defend Poland?
- 5) Why did people believe Hitler would keep his word when he repeatedly pledged not to invade other countries, but went ahead and did so anyway?
- 6) What were Russia and Germany each hoping to gain from signing a mutual non-aggression pact?
- 7) How did the technique of *Blitzkrieg* differ from the way wars had been waged in the past?
- 8) What made Germany, Italy, and Japan think that they could rule the world?
- 9) Why did the Axis Powers attack the USSR and the USA and bring them into the war?

## Documents

### **Document III-A: Rabbi Wise's letter and the Second Inaugural Address**

Rabbi Stephen Wise was an important and influential advocate for Jewish causes during Franklin Roosevelt's presidency. Wise sought – often unsuccessfully – to unify various Jewish organizations and movements in the United States, and his international network of contacts sent him information about the worsening crisis facing Jews in Europe. In January 1937, just days before FDR's Second Inauguration, Wise received information that the Polish government had declared three million Polish Jews to be "superfluous." Wise wrote this letter to the President urging him to use his inaugural address to assure the public that no one in America would be considered superfluous. As can be seen from Roosevelt's reply letter and this page from his Second Inaugural Address reading copy, FDR took Wise's advice. He used Wise's suggested language almost word-for-word in the most recognizable passage of the speech.

### **Document III-B: Eleanor Roosevelt's Letter in Aid of Fritz Becker**

Because of her well-known sympathies, Eleanor Roosevelt received many requests to assist refugees seeking visas to come to the United States. A Dutchess County neighbor, Mr. Hardy Steeholm, contacted Mrs. Roosevelt and asked her to aid a German Jewish refugee in Yugoslavia named Fritz Becker. In this July 26, 1939, letter, Mrs. Roosevelt's secretary forwarded Becker's information to Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles and asked his assistance in securing a visa for the young man. Welles wrote to Mrs. Roosevelt on August 1, 1939 – one month before the beginning of World War II – and advised her that Becker's visa application would not "be reached for final consideration for a protracted period of time." Welles returned to Mrs. Roosevelt the photograph of Fritz Becker that she had provided him. Fritz Becker's fate is not known.

# Blueprint for World Domination

## Document III-C: *Letter to Myron Taylor on the Rublee Plan to aid Refugees*

By early 1939, Nazi anti-Jewish laws had led to the confiscation of most Jewish assets and made it almost impossible for any applicant to meet the strict American visa requirements that refugees have sufficient financial resources to support themselves. Resettlement efforts by the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees also ground to a halt as German officials refused to negotiate for the orderly emigration of German Jews. The Committee's director, George Rublee, proposed the establishment of a private foundation that could accept donations from Jewish organizations outside Germany to cover resettlement costs. President Roosevelt hoped this plan would encourage other countries to open their doors to more Jewish refugees, since the costs would be covered by the foundation. In this letter to Myron Taylor, the American representative on the Intergovernmental Committee, the President instructs Taylor to throw his support behind the Rublee Plan. But the outbreak of war on September 1, 1939, put an end to any possibility of a negotiated resettlement of German Jews.

## Document Based Questions

### Document III-A – *Rabbi Wise's letter and the Second Inaugural address*

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### Document Based Questions

- 1) What does the word “superfluous” mean?
- 2) What does the Polish Minister of Affairs mean when he says, “three million Jews are superfluous and must emigrate”?
- 3) What is Rabbi Wise asking President Roosevelt to do?
- 4) Why is he asking the President to do this?
- 5) By adding this sentence to his speech, what is FDR implying for the Jewish community in the United States?
- 6) Why is the inclusion of this one sentence so important and meaningful?

### Document III-A Extension Questions

- 1) The Polish Minister of Affairs says, “three million Jews are superfluous and must emigrate.” What do you suppose will happen if they don't?
- 2) Why would Rabbi Wise want the president to include this in his inaugural address?

## Blueprint for World Domination

- 3) It seems clear that Rabbi Wise wants FDR to be on record as saying that the United States would not consider Jews in this country to be “superfluous,” as the Polish Prime Minister had done. If that is so, why is the sentence that the Rabbi suggests written so broadly?
- 4) What impact do you suppose Rabbi Wise is hoping the president’s inclusion of the sentence will have?

### **Document III-B – Eleanor Roosevelt’s Letter in Aid of Fritz Becker**

Because of her well-known sympathies, Eleanor Roosevelt received many requests to assist refugees seeking visas to come to the United States. A Dutchess County neighbor, Mr. Hardy Steeholm, contacted Mrs. Roosevelt and asked her to aid a German Jewish refugee in Yugoslavia named Fritz Becker. In this July 26, 1939, letter, Mrs. Roosevelt’s secretary forwarded Becker’s information to Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles and asked his assistance in securing a visa for the young man. Welles wrote to Mrs. Roosevelt on August 1, 1939 – one month before the beginning of World War II – and advised her that Becker’s visa application would not “be reached for final consideration for a protracted period of time.” Welles returned to Mrs. Roosevelt the photograph of Fritz Becker that she had provided him. Fritz Becker’s fate is not known.

#### *Document Based Questions*

- 1) Why does Mrs. Roosevelt turn to Sumner Welles for help with this matter?
- 2) Why wouldn’t she just ask her husband, the President, to address the matter?
- 3) How does Under Secretary of State Welles respond to Mrs. Roosevelt’s request?
- 4) What reasons does the Under Secretary give Mrs. Roosevelt for not being able to help?
- 5) Do the reasons given to Mrs. Roosevelt for not being able to assist her seem reasonable to you?
- 6) What does it say about the process of immigration in this country at that time when even the First Lady of the United States could not help?

#### *Document III-B Extension Questions*

- 1) What do you suppose would make someone a “preference” vs a “non-preference” immigrant?
- 2) Was it fair for Mrs. Roosevelt to make this request given that so many others were waiting to get in as well?
- 3) Why do you suppose there is such a backlog of people trying to get in?
- 4) Which do you think is the biggest impediment causing the immigration crisis, the strict adherence to the quotas, the sheer number of people looking to get in, prejudice within the system, or some other factor?

# Blueprint for World Domination

## **Document III-C – Letter to Myron Taylor on the Rublee Plan to aid Refugees**

By early 1939, Nazi anti-Jewish laws had led to the confiscation of most Jewish assets and made it almost impossible for any applicant to meet the strict American visa requirements that refugees have sufficient financial resources to support themselves. Resettlement efforts by the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees also ground to a halt as German officials refused to negotiate for the orderly emigration of German Jews. The Committee's director, George Rublee, proposed the establishment of a private foundation that could accept donations from Jewish organizations outside Germany to cover resettlement costs. President Roosevelt hoped this plan would encourage other countries to open their doors to more Jewish refugees, since the costs would be covered by the foundation. In this letter to Myron Taylor, the American representative on the Intergovernmental Committee, the President instructs Taylor to throw his support behind the Rublee Plan. But the outbreak of war on September 1, 1939, put an end to any possibility of a negotiated resettlement of German Jews.

### *Document Based Questions*

- 1) Why is President Roosevelt suggesting an international committee to help with the problem of political refugees?
- 2) What countries does FDR single out as helping in the effort to solve the refugee issue?
- 3) What are the conditions the refugees are seeking to escape?
- 4) Why is FDR asking Mr. Taylor to represent the US government on the committee?
- 5) What nation does FDR think will be selected to lead the committee? What makes him think that?

### *Document III-C Extension Questions*

- 1) Is FDR suggesting an international committee because he thinks the resources of many nations are needed, or is he suggesting it as a way to deflect responsibility and accountability for the United States?
- 2) Which do you think is the biggest impediment causing the immigration crisis, the strict adherence to the quotas, the sheer number of people looking to get in, prejudice within the system, or some other factor?
- 3) How serious do you think FDR is about finding a solution or rendering effective aid?
- 4) What event occurs in early September, 1939, that derails the idea of the international committee?



# Blueprint for World Domination

## Video Questions

- 1) How did the Axis Powers plan to divide and rule the world once they had won the war?
- 2) Why was the new warfare technique of *Blitzkrieg* so effective?
- 3) Hitler was worried that a mediator might step in and try to broker a peace agreement – why would he be opposed to that?
- 4) Who stepped in and offered to mediate?
- 5) How effective were the offers of mediation?
- 6) The Nazis generally preferred to invade without a formal declaration of war. Why might that be the case?
- 7) Why was the targeting of civilian populations and cities of no consideration to the Nazis?
- 8) The Nazis believed in, and conducted “Total War” – what exactly did this mean?
- 9) How did Hitler justify the new brutality of the kind of warfare he was waging?
- 10) Hitler had a policy of assuring a country that they were safe and then later viciously attacking them. Why didn’t anyone seem to catch on to that? If they did, what options did they have?
- 11) About how long did it take the Nazis to establish control over most of Europe?
- 12) What were the two countries that Hitler saw as the biggest threat to his plan for world domination?
- 13) How did Hitler try to eliminate the threat from the United States and the Soviet Union?
- 14) What does it say about human nature that three countries could get together and think that they could take over the world?

# SECTION IV

## Crimes Against Humanity

### WARNING

*This section contains film segments depicting graphic images of death, violence, brutality and destruction. The documents presented in this section describe equally graphic descriptions of mass killings, cruelty, human suffering, and inhuman experimentation carried out on Jews by the Nazis.*

**Teacher discretion in using this material with their students is advised.**

**T**he Nazis employed a “win at all costs and show no mercy” approach to war. It is difficult to grasp the extent to which Nazi policies and behavior led to extreme violence and the complete dehumanization of entire populations. An approach of isolating and dehumanizing Jews in Germany and its occupied territories fostered growing mob violence that laid the groundwork for mass murder. Concentration and death camps were created to punish those deemed politically dangerous or racially, physically, or behaviorally inferior. Closing the final charges of the indictment in the Nuremberg trial, prosecutors charge that all defendants committed crimes against humanity, pursuing policies of murder, slavery, and plunder against civilian populations. Aged, sick, and mentally ill people were also targeted and murdered.

### **Film Segment 9 Nazi Occupation – A Policy of Mass Murder (Running Time 3:34)**

Defendants in the Nuremberg trials were charged with directing mass murder throughout territories occupied by Nazi Germany. Evidence presented by prosecutors showed the process by which Nazi leaders systematically murdered or enslaved populations, in one case razing a village to the ground as an example to other occupied peoples.

### **Film Segment 10 Nazi Evil in Action (Running Time 2:50)**

The Nazis used concentration and death camps to punish those deemed politically dangerous or racially, physically, or behaviorally inferior. At the Nuremberg trial, former Auschwitz camp commandant, Rudolf Höss, described the brutality and criminality, which led to the deaths of one million people there, mostly Jews, from starvation, illness, or outright murder.

### **Film Segment 11 Nazi Exploitation, Enslavement, and Murder of Civilians (Running Time 3:17)**

Closing the final charges of the indictment in the Nuremberg trial, prosecutors charge that all defendants committed crimes against humanity, pursuing policies of murder, slavery, and plunder against civilian populations. The aged, sick, and mentally ill were also murdered.

# Crimes Against Humanity

## Film Segment 12

### Nazi Anti-Semitism – When Hatred Forges Policy (Running Time 3:45)

As the number and ferocity of wartime atrocities increased, Nazi crimes against humanity peaked in their campaign to destroy Europe's Jewish population. An approach of isolating and dehumanizing Jews in Germany and its occupied territories fostered growing mob violence that laid the groundwork for mass murder.

## Film Segment 13

### The Nazi Final Solution - Annihilation of the Jews of Europe (Running Time 2:52)

It is difficult to grasp the extent to which Nazi Party policies and behavior led to extreme violence and the complete dehumanization of entire populations. Nuremberg trial testimony details the Nazi's approach to designating Jews to slave labor or the death chambers, and the repugnant practice of extracting wealth from the doomed to support the Nazi regime.

## Vocabulary

**Aryan** – term used in Nazi Germany to refer to non-Jewish and non-Roma (Gypsy) Caucasians. Northern Europeans with especially “Nordic” features such as blonde hair and blue eyes were considered by so-called race scientists to be the most superior of Aryans, members of a “Master Race.”

**Auschwitz** – the largest Nazi concentration camp complex, located 37 miles west of Krakow, Poland. The Auschwitz main camp (Auschwitz I) was established in 1940. In 1942, a killing center was established at Auschwitz-Birkenau (Auschwitz II). In 1941, Auschwitz-Monowitz (Auschwitz III) was established as a forced-labor camp. More than 100 subcamps and labor detachments were administratively connected to Auschwitz III.

**Birkenau** – Nazi camp also known as Auschwitz II, Birkenau contained systematic mass killing operations. It also housed thousands of concentration camp prisoners deployed at forced labor.

**Crematorium** – a facility containing a furnace for reducing dead bodies to ashes by burning.

**Fascism** – a political movement that exalts the collective nation, and often race, above the individual and that advocates: a centralized totalitarian state headed by a charismatic leader, expansion of the nation, preferably by military force; and forcible suppression and sometimes physical annihilation of opponents real and perceived.

**Final Solution** – name of Nazi plan to annihilate European Jews.

**Gestapo** – the German Secret State Police, which was under SS control. It was responsible for investigating political crimes and opposition activities.

**Ghetto** – a confined area of a city in which members of a minority are compelled to live.

**Killing Centers, Concentration Camps, Death Camps** – Nazis established killing centers for efficient mass murder. Unlike concentration camps, which served primarily as detention and labor centers, killing centers (also referred to as “extermination camps” or “death camps”) were almost exclusively “death factories.” German SS and police murdered nearly 2.7 million Jews in the killing centers either by asphyxiation with poison gas or by shooting.

# Crimes Against Humanity

**Protective Detention (*Schutzhaft*)** – an instrument of detention that permitted secret state police detectives to take persons suspected of pursuing activities hostile to state interests into custody without warrant or judicial review of any kind. Protective custody most often meant indefinite internment in a concentration camp.

**Resettlement** – a Nazi euphemism for deportation and murder.

**Yellow Star** – a badge featuring the Star of David (a symbol of Judaism) used by the Nazi regime during the Holocaust as a method of visibly identifying Jews.

## Questions

### *Essential Questions for Crimes Against Humanity*

- 1) Why did the Holocaust occur?
- 2) How can such a thing be prevented from ever happening again?
- 3) What actions and inactions allowed the Holocaust to occur?
- 4) How did Hitler use anti-Semitism as a tool to advance the power of the Nazi party?
- 5) What role do those who bore witness to the Holocaust play in our understanding its importance today?
- 6) How were the Nazis so easily able to bully their way to power?
- 7) How did the Nazis use conspiracy to perpetrate their crimes?
- 8) How did the victims of the Holocaust demonstrate their courage to resist and survive?
- 9) What methods did the Nazis use to discourage critical thinking?
- 10) Who is culpable for allowing the Holocaust to occur?
- 11) How did the Nazis use division as a political tool?
- 12) How did the Nazis use hate speech to “desensitize” and “normalize” their actions and behaviors?
- 13) Why was/is it so important to seek justice for the victims of the Holocaust?
- 14) Who was/is responsible for the Holocaust?

### *Extension Questions*

- 1) How could such evil take such a hold on so many for so long?
- 2) How did “dehumanizing” the Jews make destroying them easier for the Nazis and their collaborators?
- 3) How does a doctrine of “total war” justify the massacre of civilian populations?
- 4) What must we do that this never happens again?



## Crimes Against Humanity

- 5) The Holocaust did not happen overnight, it occurred through a series of carefully planned actions that created a “slippery slope” from which there was no return. Why did so many people miss, or ignore, the signs of what was to come?
- 6) Is humanity capable of curbing inhumanity?
- 7) How were the Nazis able to so successfully and systematically close the avenues of resistance and escape for the Jews?
- 8) How did hate speech, intolerance, scapegoating, anti-Semitism, conspiracy, division, prejudice, peer pressure, propaganda, and hate each play a role bringing about the Holocaust?

### Documents

#### **Document IV-A: Rabbi Stephen Wise’s Letter to FDR and Pages from His Memo on Nazi Atrocities, December 2-8, 1942**

At the infamous Wannsee Conference held in January 1942, a group of Nazi bureaucrats met to organize “a final solution” to Europe’s so-called Jewish problem. As the plan for systematic, mechanized killing was implemented in the following months, news reports began to publicize the scope of Nazi atrocities against Jews. Rabbi Stephen Wise and other Jewish leaders collected detailed reports from their sources abroad. In this December 2, 1942, letter, Wise requests a meeting with Roosevelt to convey his group’s findings. At an Oval Office meeting on December 8, they presented FDR with a memo summarizing their information. Select pages of the memo are also provided here. Wise appealed to Roosevelt to bring attention to the horror and to do what he could to stop it. FDR was sympathetic, but noncommittal. He confirmed that Wise’s report was consistent with information he had received from other sources. But he maintained that the Allies were fighting for the rights of all people, and could not elevate one group over another. (Official File 76c: Church Matters-Jewish, 1942).

#### **Document IV-B: Report by the Office of Strategic Services on Germany’s Extermination of the Jews, March 17, 1943**

Throughout the war, President Roosevelt received information about the Nazi death machine from a variety of sources, including the State Department, Treasury Department, his own personal network of informants, private relief and Jewish organizations, and the Office of Strategic Services (the predecessor of the CIA). This OSS report describing a further escalation of Nazi violence against Jews was received in the White House Map Room on March 17, 1943. (Map Room Papers; MR 203(12); Sec. 1; OSS Numbered Bulletins, March-May 1943; Box 72).

#### **Document IV-C: Selected Pages of the Vrba-Wetzler Report on Auschwitz-Birkenau April-October 1944**

On April 7, 1944, two Slovakian Jewish prisoners at Auschwitz made a daring escape from the death camp. Having heard German guards talk about the imminent arrival of Hungarian Jews, Rudolf Vrba and Alfred Wetzler sought to warn the world of the gas chambers and crematoria at the Auschwitz-Birkenau complex in an effort to halt the Hungarian deportations. Upon reaching safety, the two men dictated a detailed report about the camp, including how it functioned, an estimated number of deaths, and drawings of the grounds and gas chambers. The Vrba-Wetzler report was typed up by the Slovakian Jewish Council, but summaries of the report did not begin reaching outside Jewish organizations and Allied governments until June. A full copy of the report – selected pages of which are seen here – did not arrive at the

## Crimes Against Humanity

War Refugee Board until October 1944. The report prompted Board Director John Pehle to appeal once again to the War Department to bomb the rail lines and the camp. But, once again, Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy rejected the proposal, arguing that Allied bombers would have to fly unescorted over thousands of miles of enemy territory and that the mission would divert resources from military targets. By this time, hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Jews had died at Auschwitz. (War Refugee Board Records; General Correspondence; German Extermination Camps; Box 7).

### Document Based Questions

#### **Document IV-A: Rabbi Stephen Wise's Letter to FDR and Pages from His Memo on Nazi Atrocities, December 2-8, 1942**

At the infamous Wannsee Conference held in January 1942, a group of Nazi bureaucrats met to organize "a final solution" to Europe's so-called Jewish problem. As the plan for systematic, mechanized killing was implemented in the following months, news reports began to publicize the scope of Nazi atrocities against Jews. Rabbi Stephen Wise and other Jewish leaders collected detailed reports from their sources abroad. In this December 2, 1942, letter, Wise requests a meeting with Roosevelt to convey his group's findings. At an Oval Office meeting on December 8, they presented FDR with a memo summarizing their information. Selected pages of the memo are also provided here. Wise appealed to Roosevelt to bring attention to the horror and to do what he could to stop it. FDR was sympathetic, but noncommittal. He confirmed that Wise's report was consistent with information he had received from other sources. But he maintained that the Allies were fighting for the rights of all people, and could not elevate one group over another. (Official File 76c: Church Matters-Jewish, 1942).

#### *Document Based Questions*

- 1) According to the report "Blue Print for Extermination," how many Jews had been killed in Nazi Europe up to that point?
- 2) How was the extermination of the Jews in Nazi Germany being brought about?
- 3) Who does the report blame for the policy of exterminating the Jews of Europe?
- 4) What evidence is given as confirmation of the existence of the extermination program?
- 5) From what sources does the evidence presented come?
- 6) What does the ratio of the number of ration cards printed to the number of Jews in the occupied territory say about the German commitment to feed the Jews?
- 7) How does the report say the Germans responded to the British (R.A.F. Royal Air Force) bombing of the German city of Cologne?
- 8) What message was the German response meant to send? For whom was it intended?
- 9) How were the Germans reducing the population in the ghettos in Poland?
- 10) What is the economic reasoning used by Herman Backe, Secretary of State for Economics, for the exportation and extermination of the Jews of Eastern Europe?

## Crimes Against Humanity

- 11) What “double purpose” does the movement of Jews from Western and Central Europe to Eastern Europe serve?
- 12) How was “death by deportation” accomplished?
- 13) What other “scientific methods” were employed by the Nazis to exterminate the Jews?

### *Document IV-A Extension Question*

- 1) How widespread was the reach of the Nazi’s brutality? Ask your students to locate and highlight each of the countries listed in the report.

### **Document IV-B: Report by the Office of Strategic Services on Germany’s Extermination of the Jews, March 17, 1943**

Throughout the war, President Roosevelt received information about the Nazi death machine from a variety of sources, including the State Department, Treasury Department, his own personal network of informants, private relief and Jewish organizations, and the Office of Strategic Services (the predecessor of the CIA). This OSS report describing a further escalation of Nazi violence against Jews was received in the White House Map Room on March 17, 1943. (Map Room Papers; MR 203(12); Sec. 1; OSS Numbered Bulletins, March-May 1943; Box 72).

### *Document Based Questions*

- 1) What is the source of this document?
- 2) What is the source of the information contained in this document?
- 3) According to this report, what is the new Nazi policy regarding the killing of Jews?
- 4) In what way does this new policy differ from the previous policy?
- 5) According to the report, what was the goal the Nazis were trying to achieve?
- 6) What is the number of Jewish victims who have suffered from the new policy?
- 7) What does the report suggest will happen to “the methods” being employed in Berlin?

### *Document IV-B Extension Questions*

- 1) Why do you suppose the Nazis have decided to pursue this new policy at this time and place?
- 2) What possible justification could there be for shooting someone “on the spot” just because of who they are, where they come from, or what they believed?

### **Document IV-C: Selected Pages of the Vrba-Wetzler Report on Auschwitz-Birkenau April-October 1944**

On April 7, 1944, two Slovakian Jewish prisoners at Auschwitz made a daring escape from the death camp. Having heard German guards talk about the imminent arrival of Hungarian Jews, Rudolf Vrba and Alfred Wetzler sought to warn the world of the gas chambers and crematoria at the Auschwitz-Birkenau complex in an effort to halt the Hungarian deportations. Upon reaching safety, the two men dictated a detailed report about the camp, including how it functioned, an

## Crimes Against Humanity

estimated number of deaths, and drawings of the grounds and gas chambers. The Vrba-Wetzler report was typed up by the Slovakian Jewish Council, but summaries of the report did not begin reaching outside Jewish organizations and Allied governments until June. A full copy of the report – select pages of which are seen here – did not arrive at the War Refugee Board until October 1944. The report prompted Board Director John Pehle to appeal once again to the War Department to bomb the rail lines and the camp. But, once again, Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy rejected the proposal, arguing that Allied bombers would have to fly unescorted over thousands of miles of enemy territory and that the mission would divert resources from military targets. By this time, hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Jews had died at Auschwitz. (War Refugee Board Records; General Correspondence; German Extermination Camps; Box 7).

### *Document based Questions*

- 1) How long were the two escaped prisoners held at the Auschwitz concentration camp?
- 2) What makes the information these men are providing so valuable?
- 3) How do we know this information is accurate and reliable?
- 4) Describe the “registration” process the prisoners were subjected to when they arrived at the camp.
- 5) How did many of the men react to the tattooing of the identification numbers?
- 6) What does “protective custody” really mean?
- 7) About how many men were being held at the camp?
- 8) Describe the colored triangle identification system.
- 9) How were the Jewish prisoners’ triangles different from the other prisoners?
- 10) How were the prisoners forced to spend their time at the camp?
- 11) Describe the “living quarters” the prisoners were assigned to live in.
- 12) What security measures were employed to prevent the prisoners at the camp from escaping?
- 13) What method did the Nazis use to kill the Jewish prisoners?
- 14) How were the bodies of the murdered prisoners disposed of?
- 15) About how many prisoners does the report indicate were killed at the camp each day?
- 16) Describe what happened when the crematorium was inaugurated in March 1943. What was the Nazis officials’ reaction to what they saw that day?
- 17) How many Jews were murdered at Birkenau between April 1942 and April 1944?

### *Document IV-C Extension Activity*

Silently reflect on the information presented in the report. Then journal about your feelings.



# Crimes Against Humanity

## Video Questions

- 1) Who were the main targets of the Nazi movement?
- 2) What did the Nazis do to the Czechoslovakian village of Lidice after the assassination of the German SS officer Reinhard Heydrich? What message were they trying to send?
- 3) In addition to the outright murder being carried out in the camps, what other factors contributed to the high number of inmate deaths?
- 4) About how many Soviet prisoners of war (POWs) died in the camp?
- 5) What kinds of medical experiments were carried out on the prisoners in the camps?
- 6) What was the Nazi attitude regarding the use of slave labor?
- 7) What would happen when a prison laborer was no longer able to work?
- 8) What was the Nazi attitude regarding plunder of the areas they had conquered?
- 9) Who were the so-called “useless eaters”? How were they treated? Why?
- 10) What policy was employed in an effort to keep Nazi blood free of Jewish ‘contamination’ and influence?
- 11) What did the Nazis decide to do with the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943?
- 12) How were those who resisted the Nazis dealt with?
- 13) What was the Nazi policy regarding warning shots when it came to escaping prisoners?
- 14) How were prisoners of war (POWs) treated by the Nazis?
- 15) How were the civilian populations under Nazi control treated?
- 16) When war occurs, how do we determine the difference between a death that is a “crime” and a death that is part of the nature of war?
- 17) Why did the people of 1920s – 1930s Germany allow themselves to accept/go along with what the Nazis were doing?

## SECTION V

# The Roosevelt Administration: Actions and Inaction

America's response to the Holocaust has become the subject of intense historical interest in recent decades. Historians debate why FDR and other American decisionmakers did not do more to admit Jewish refugees and undertake policies – including bombing rail lines to Auschwitz or Auschwitz itself – that might have saved lives.

Questions, such as those listed below, will likely be debated for decades to come.

- 1) What did the Roosevelt Administration do to end the suffering of Jews during World War II?
- 2) Could/should it have done more?
- 3) If so, why didn't it?
- 4) Why didn't it take action sooner?

Some scholars have criticized President Roosevelt for his approach to refugee issues prior to and during World War II, and he is even accused of having pursued misguided policies and of being indifferent to the Holocaust.

Others insist that such assessments fail to account adequately for the American public's pre-war isolationism and anti-Semitism; strict immigration and quota laws that enjoyed wide public and Congressional support; and military practicalities that – for much of the war – limited the Allies' ability, some charge, to reach Jews trapped deep behind enemy lines.

### **What was the Roosevelt Administration's overall response to the Holocaust?**

Roosevelt believed that the surest way to stop the killing of innocent civilians was to defeat Hitler's Germany as quickly, and decisively, as possible. After Pearl Harbor, American anger was overwhelmingly directed at Japan. Yet Roosevelt knew that Germany posed the greater immediate danger. Germany was putting intense pressure on Britain and the Soviet Union, and FDR could not risk their falling under Hitler's control.

*"It is of the utmost importance that we appreciate that defeat of Japan does not defeat Germany and that American concertation against Japan this year or in 1943 increases the chance of complete German domination of Europe and Africa."*

– President Roosevelt to General George Marshall  
and Admiral Ernest King, July 14, 1942



# The Roosevelt Administration: Actions and Inaction

## Considering the Critiques of the Roosevelt Approach

Some believe that FDR's "win the war" approach did not address the possibility that significant numbers of Jews could have been rescued in the meantime. Others believed that the President was limited in what he could do by a number of factors that were largely out of his control.

1) Ask your students to read, research, and respond to the claims made by the historians below.

### Perspective One:

*"Authenticated information that the Nazis were systematically exterminating European Jewry was made public in the United States in November 1942. President Roosevelt did nothing about the mass murder for fourteen months, then moved only because he was confronted with political pressures he could not avoid... Franklin Roosevelt's indifference to so momentous an historical event as the systematic annihilation of European Jewry emerges as the worst failure of his presidency."*

David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945*

### Perspective Two:

*"America's disregard for what was happening inside Nazi Germany was caused by more than unthinking prejudice. The easiest, most charitable explanation lay in America's preoccupation with itself. Adolf Hitler's appointment as chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933, virtually coincided with Franklin Roosevelt's swearing in as the thirty-second president of the United States, and the chaos that confronted Roosevelt as he took office dwarfed consideration of what was occurring elsewhere in the world. America was paralyzed financially: nearly thirteen million people – one-fourth of the labor force – were unemployed; national income was half what it had been in 1928; every bank in the country had closed its doors; and the republic was at or near the nadir of the gravest economic depression in its history. With good reason, many thoughtful citizens believed that revolution was at hand. Americans were understandably obsessed with the woes that afflicted themselves and their families... In the face of preoccupation with questions like these, it was little wonder if the average American was largely unaware, initially at least, of the terrifying brutality that had been unleashed in Germany... Compounding the political problems fueled by unemployment and depression were two other factors: flagrant anti-Semitism and a nativism no less virulent than the anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant forces... of the 1840s and 50s. What this meant to the beleaguered Jews in Germany was that the leader of the world's most powerful democracy – the man they counted on to offer them support and relief – was in a very touchy position [with] many of this country's political conservatives, who were the last people likely to do much to assist the Jews."*

Richard M. Ketchum, *The Borrowed Years, 1938-1941: American on the Way to War*  
(Random House, 1989) 108-110

### Perspective Three:

*"Roosevelt knew that no exercise of personal charm could bring a change to the immigration law and no Administration attempt to do so was ever hinted at. Instead the Administration directed its attention to liberalizing the implementation of the law, especially the visa procedure... Roosevelt ordered the State Department to extend to the refugees crowding the understaffed consulates "the most humane treatment possible under the law." Despite such exhortations the visa procedure caused much anguish within the Jewish community and much strife within the Administration... Complaints regarding the visa procedure continued to flow into the White House and it soon became apparent that the Administration's good*

# The Roosevelt Administration: Actions and Inaction

*intentions remained largely rhetorical. They were being thwarted by the recalcitrance of the consular officials who legally held the final responsibility for determining whether visa applicants qualified. By late 1938 and early 1939, the reaction pattern of the Administration seemed clear. It was carefully attempting to pick its way between two forces at minimal political risk. On the one hand there existed strong restrictionist sentiment generated by the Depression, and on the other a particularly loyal Jewish community allied with other liberal elements which was urging that the tradition of asylum for the persecuted of Europe be at least nominally maintained...Generally Roosevelt was content to let the State Department handle the refugee matter. He preferred to remain above the battle although he might occasionally make an inquiry or a suggestion. Such a procedure, Roosevelt had discovered in other areas, offered certain advantages, especially if the issue proved nettlesome. It allowed the agency involved to absorb much of the pressure and ire that might otherwise be directed at the White House."*

Henry L. Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue: The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust, 1938-1945* (Rutgers University Press, 1970) 16-18

*Extension Questions: Which of the perspectives above seems to be the most plausible?*

- 1) Are the perspectives being "fair" in their assessment of the Roosevelt Administration?
- 2) How have the views concerning the Roosevelt Administration's actions and inactions changed over time?
- 3) After reviewing the documents in this section, Ask your students to write their own short paragraph outlining your views on the Roosevelt Administration's response to the Holocaust.
- 4) Ask students to share, and defend, their particular perspective. Remind them that this has been a widely debated topic in academic circles for decades past and will be for decades to come.

## Selected documents relating to the Roosevelt Administration's response to the Holocaust

**Document V-A:** *Letter, FDR to New York Governor Herbert Lehman, November 13, 1935*

Throughout the 1930s, President Roosevelt was kept informed of the growing refugee crisis in Europe by political leaders with ties to the American Jewish community, including New York Governor Herbert Lehman. Through these contacts, Roosevelt also learned that the strict immigration quotas in place at the time were not being fully or fairly administered by his own State Department. In this November 13, 1935 letter, the President advises Lehman of the results of his own examination of the visa issue, the legal limitations imposed by the Immigration Act of 1924, and his instruction to the State Department that German Jews applying for visas were to be given "the most generous and favorable treatment possible under the laws of this country." (President's Official File 133: Immigration, 1933-35, Box 1).

**Document V-B:** *Memorandum for Missy LeHand from Stephen Early, November 13, 1936*

Because of the country's isolationism and the immigration laws in place in the mid-1930s, President Roosevelt often felt constrained in taking a more proactive stance with regard to European refugees. In this November 13, 1936, memorandum for the President's private secretary Missy LeHand, Press Secretary Stephen Early recommends that the President resist the



# The Roosevelt Administration: Actions and Inaction

temptation to issue a requested appeal on behalf of persecuted Christians in Germany. Such an appeal, in the opinion of Early and the State Department, would be an inappropriate expression of the President's preference for one group of refugees over others. The President indicates his acceptance of Early's recommendation at the bottom of the memo. (President's Official File 133: Immigration, 1936-1941, Box 1).

**Document V-C:** *Draft Statement by the President, November 15, 1938*

When the reports of the Nazi violence were confirmed, the President drafted this statement expressing his outrage at *Kristallnacht* and recalling the American ambassador to Germany. The changes and additions are in the President's own hand, and the final message was approved by Secretary of State Cordell Hull who placed his initials in the lower right hand corner. The President read the statement at his press conference held on November 15, 1938. (President's Secretary's Files; Diplomatic Correspondence; Germany, 1933-1938, Box 31).

**Document V-D:** *Telegram from "A Fed Up American Gentile," November 17, 1938*

FDR's executive actions and public statements on behalf of German Jews after *Kristallnacht* also resulted in hateful and extreme anti-Semitic mail being sent to the White House. In this telegram, a self-declared but anonymous "Fed Up American Gentile" from New Jersey threatened FDR with revolution or impeachment for being the puppet of "International Jew War Mongers" and "Washington Jewish Minorities." The White House did not respond to this message. (Official File 76c: Church Matters-Jewish, 1938).

**Document V-E:** *State Department Memorandum of Conversation Regarding the SS St. Louis June 8, 1939*

On May 13, 1939 – three months before World War II – the SS St. Louis, a ship carrying 937 German Jews fleeing Nazi persecution, sailed from Hamburg for Cuba. Other ships had made the same journey, and their refugee passengers had disembarked in Havana. But the Cuban government, responding to corruption and anti-Semitic political pressure, ordered the enforcement of new visa requirements when the St. Louis arrived. Twenty-two passengers who met the new requirements were allowed to land. The remaining passengers were forced to remain on board the ship. Negotiations with the Cuban government led by the American Joint Distribution Committee – a private Jewish organization – broke down, despite pressure from the U.S. government, as can be seen in this Memorandum of Conversation written by the U.S. Ambassador to Cuba, J. Butler Wright. Tremendous public attention focused on the St. Louis. The ship's passengers even cabled the White House, but the matter was referred to the State Department. America's immigration laws did not permit their entry into the United States since they did not have U.S. visas. American diplomats were able to help resettle the refugees in Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Denmark. But many later fell into Nazi hands during the war. Contrary to popular belief, there was no specific or official order by FDR refusing entry of the St. Louis refugees. (Sumner Welles Papers; Office Correspondence; File: Wright, J. Butler, April-June 1939; Box).

**Document V-F:** *Charts of German American Bund Activities 1939*

As the world crisis worsened, isolationist and non-interventionist organizations increasingly challenged any efforts by FDR to aid threatened democracies abroad and prepare the nation for possible war. Their isolationist rhetoric was often mixed with racial prejudice and a suspicion of foreigners. One of the most ominous of these organizations was the German American Bund, a domestic pro-Nazi group that preached fascism and anti-Semitism and had chapters across the

# The Roosevelt Administration: Actions and Inaction

country. The Roosevelt Administration was concerned about the potentially contagious influence of the Bund and similar organizations on public opinion. It kept close watch over their activities, as can be seen in this series of charts provided to FDR by the State Department. (President's Secretary's Files; Departmental Files; State Department-German American Bund; Box 7).

**Document V-G:** *Albert Einstein's Letter to Eleanor Roosevelt, July 26, 1941*

Eleanor Roosevelt's efforts to aid Europe's refugees continued into the war years. She was seen by many as a trusted advocate who could bring their views to President Roosevelt's attention. In July 1941, acclaimed physicist and German-Jewish immigrant Albert Einstein wrote this letter to Mrs. Roosevelt urging her to tell the President about the State Department's rigid application of immigration rules and regulations. A "wall of bureaucratic measures" erected by the State Department, Einstein asserts, made it all but impossible to aid the victims of Nazi brutality. At the bottom of the letter in Eleanor Roosevelt's handwriting are two notes. One says simply "FDR" and is an instruction to her secretary to send Einstein's letter to the President. The second notation is Mrs. Roosevelt's reply to Einstein which was later typed into a letter: "Tell Mr. Einstein I will bring his letter at once to the President." Although Einstein's letter was given to FDR, there is no evidence that the President responded to him or took any action based upon it. (President's Personal File 7177: Albert Einstein).

**Document V-H:** *Memo from the Secretary of State and Statement by the President, October 24-25, 1941*

In the fall of 1941, news of Nazi atrocities against Jews in occupied Europe filled America's newspapers. Reports filtered out of Jews dying in Polish ghettos, of executions of Jews in Germany, Poland and Russia, and of mass deportations. These reports constituted a first glimpse of what was developing into a systematic campaign by the Nazis to rid Europe of its Jewish populations. On October 24, Secretary of State Cordell Hull sent this memo to FDR proposing that he issue a statement in coordination with the British and other Allied governments denouncing the Nazi atrocities. Roosevelt's handwritten note at the bottom orders that the statement be released at 12:00 noon the next day, "unless previously announced in London." The statement carefully avoids identifying victims as Jewish, but makes it clear that such actions against innocent civilians "will one day bring fearful retribution." (Official File 198: Germany, 1941-1943).

**Document V-I:** *Eleanor Roosevelt's Draft "My Day" Column, October 25, 1941*

Although FDR felt politically constrained in the fall of 1941 from clearly identifying victims of Nazi brutality as Jewish, Eleanor Roosevelt felt no such limitations. In this draft of her "My Day" column which appeared in newspapers on October 25, she publicly grapples with the difficult subject of mass deportations of Jews from Germany to Poland and Russia and tries to make the horrors in Europe more relatable to her readers. Admitting that the deportation experience was difficult for Americans to imagine, Mrs. Roosevelt writes, "It would be a kind of leave-taking which could savor somewhat of death. In all partings with people whom we love, there is in a minor way that sense of temporary loss which presages the horrible finality of separation which comes over one at the time of death." (Eleanor Roosevelt Papers; Speech and Article File: My Day Drafts; Box 1432).

**Document V-J:** *Memorandum for the Secretary's Files, January 16, 1944*

A seminal moment in the Roosevelt Administration's response to the Holocaust was a January 16, 1944, meeting at the White House involving the President, Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Treasury's general counsel Randolph Paul, and Morgenthau's assistant John W. Pehle. At this meeting, Secretary Morgenthau presented to the President a lengthy and blunt "Personal Report" on what Morgenthau and other Treasury officials



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believed to be the State Department's acquiescence in Germany's mass murder of Jews. The startling evidence presented to the President of the State Department's incompetence, delay, and even obstruction of a variety of rescue efforts convinced him of the need to establish an independent commission to coordinate rescue and relief efforts. This contemporaneous memorandum was written by John Pehle, who attended the meeting and who would become the first Director of the War Refugee Board, which FDR established by executive order several days later. (Diaries of Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Book 694, Pages 190-192).

**Document V-K:** *Statement by the President Regarding Atrocities of War, March 24, 1944*

As the number and ferocity of wartime atrocities increased, President Roosevelt believed it necessary to issue another, more forceful statement condemning Nazi and Japanese brutalities, and specifically mentioning the mass murder of European Jews. In the statement, Roosevelt made it clear that Allied victory was inevitable and that all those responsible for these horrific crimes against humanity would be brought to justice. The statement was issued on March 24, 1944. In order to insure its penetration into German-controlled territories, it was printed in many languages and dropped as leaflets, and the British Broadcasting Company relayed the statement in many languages to enemy and occupied countries. This particular draft of the statement was filed in the White House files on April 3, 1944. (President's Personal File 1-F: Press Releases-Drafts, 1944, Box 18).

**Document V-L:** *Letter, Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy to John W. Pehle, July 4, 1944*

One of the most controversial aspects of the Roosevelt Administration's reaction to the Holocaust is the decision not to bomb rail lines used to transport prisoners to Auschwitz. As early as March 1943, requests for bombing of Hitler's instruments of death had reached various government officials from Jewish sources both at home and abroad. The Administration was reluctant to take such action, though, because of the danger of the raids also killing the prisoners they were meant to save as well as of the practicality of diverting military resources that were needed elsewhere to defeat Germany. In 1944, War Refugee Board Director John W. Pehle made several direct appeals to the War Department for the bombing of various camps and rail lines. This July 4, 1944, letter from Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy to Pehle – written one month after the D-Day invasion of Northwest Europe – states the military's position with regard to such suggestions, and reflects Roosevelt's belief that the surest way to end the killing was to defeat Nazi Germany as quickly as possible. (War Refugee Board Records; Projects and Documents File; Measures Directed Toward Halting Persecutions; Hungary No. 5, Box 42).

# The Roosevelt Administration: Actions and Inaction

## Document Based Questions

**Document V-A:** *Letter, FDR to New York Governor Herbert Lehman, November 13, 1935*

Throughout the 1930s, President Roosevelt was kept informed of the growing refugee crisis in Europe by political leaders with ties to the American Jewish community, including New York Governor Herbert Lehman. Through these contacts, Roosevelt also learned that the strict immigration quotas in place at the time were not being fully or fairly administered by his own State Department. In this November 13, 1935, letter, the President advises Lehman of the results of his own examination of the visa issue, the legal limitations imposed by the Immigration Act of 1924, and his instruction to the State Department that German Jews applying for visas were to be given “the most generous and favorable treatment possible under the laws of this country.” (President’s Official File 133: Immigration, 1933-35, Box 1).

### Document Based Questions

- 1) In paragraph two FDR says, “I have brought your letter to the particular attention of the Department of State...” why does he indicate he has sent it to them for action?
- 2) What indication does FDR give that he has confidence that the State Department will competently address the concerns?
- 3) In paragraph three FDR explains that the State Department is somewhat limited in what they can do. What does he say is limiting them?
- 4) In paragraph four FDR admits that he is now aware that the quotas have been being under-issued. For how long has this been going on? Why would FDR not have found out about this sooner?
- 5) In paragraph six FDR says that Jews seeking to escape Germany should be given “the most generous and favorable treatment possible under the laws of this country.” Given that FDR makes no pledge to review, or loosen, the laws regarding immigration, how helpful do you think this pledge actually was?

### Document V-A Extension Questions

- 1) On the one hand, FDR seems to be defending the State Department as being confined by the existing laws while making no pledge to loosen them, and on the other hand, he is instructing the State Department to be “most generous” in waiving some legal requirements and granting visas to German Jews. To what extent do these cancel each other out?
- 2) In the final three paragraphs, FDR lays out remedies and procedures for how the problem will be addressed. Ultimately how effective were they?

**Document V-B:** *Memorandum for Missy LeHand from Stephen Early, November 13, 1936*

Because of the country’s isolationism and the immigration laws in place in the mid-1930s, President Roosevelt often felt constrained in taking a more proactive stance with regard to European refugees. In this November 13, 1936, memorandum for the President’s private secretary Missy LeHand, Press Secretary Stephen Early recommends that the President resist the temptation to issue a requested appeal on behalf of persecuted Christians in Germany. Such an



# The Roosevelt Administration: Actions and Inaction

appeal, in the opinion of Early and the State Department, would be an inappropriate expression of the President's preference for one group of refugees over others. The President indicates his acceptance of Early's recommendation at the bottom of the memo. (President's Official File 133: Immigration, 1936-1941, Box 1).

## *Document Based Questions*

- 1) What is this memorandum asking President Roosevelt to do?
- 2) How does the State Department suggest the request be addressed?
- 3) What is the reason the State Department is giving for suggesting that Mr. Pickett's request be denied?
- 4) Exactly one year to the day before this request was received, President Roosevelt gave his approval for German Jewish refugees to be given "the most generous and favorable treatment possible under the laws of this country." (See Document One, Letter, FDR to New York Governor Herbert Lehman, November 13, 1935) Is refusing to honor the request of Reverend Dr. Fosdick a double standard?
- 5) Why do you think that Mr. Early recommends the situation be explained by phone rather than by letter?

## *Document V-B Extension Questions*

- 1) FDR accepts Mr. Early's recommendation without question or comment. Why do you suppose this is the case?
- 2) Compare and contrast the November 13, 1935, letter from Governor Lehman with the November 13, 1936, memo from Stephen Early. Why were the two requests handled in exactly opposite ways?

## **Document V-C:** *Draft Statement by the President, November 15, 1938*

On the night of November 9-10, 1938, the Nazi Party escalated its organized persecution of German and Austrian Jews in what has become known as Kristallnacht, or the Night of the Broken Glass. In the course of just a few hours, 815 shops, 171 homes, and 76 synagogues were destroyed; an additional 191 synagogues were set on fire; 36 Jews were murdered, another 36 seriously injured, and some 20,000 were arrested and sent to concentration camps.

When the reports of the Nazi violence were confirmed, the President drafted this statement expressing his outrage at Kristallnacht and recalling the American ambassador to Germany. The changes and additions are in the President's own hand, and the final message was approved by Secretary of State Cordell Hull who placed his initials in the lower right hand corner. The President read the statement at his press conference held on November 15, 1938. (President's Secretary's Files; Diplomatic Correspondence; Germany, 1933-1938, Box 31).

# The Roosevelt Administration: Actions and Inaction

## Document Based Questions

- 1) How does President Roosevelt describe the nation's response to the news coming out of Germany?
- 2) FDR adds the phrase, "in every part of the nation." to mirror the phrase, "from any part of the world" which he uses earlier in the sentence, how does this make the statement more meaningful and effective?
- 3) What action does FDR direct the State Department to take regarding the American Ambassador in Berlin?
- 4) What is FDR expecting from the Ambassador upon his return to Washington?
- 5) Why would FDR add the hand-written sentence on the bottom of the draft?

## Document V-C Extension Questions

- 1) What does FDR's written sentence, "I myself could scarcely believe that such things could occur in a twentieth century civilization." tell you about his view of the situation in Germany? Why might he feel this way?
- 2) Why do you suppose the news of the events surrounding *Kristallnacht* were so shocking to FDR?
- 3) What advice would you give to President Roosevelt regarding his statement?

## Document V-D: Telegram from "A Fed Up American Gentile," November 17, 1938

FDR's executive actions and public statements on behalf of German Jews after *Kristallnacht* also resulted in hateful and extreme anti-Semitic mail being sent to the White House. In this telegram, a self-declared but anonymous "Fed Up American Gentile" from New Jersey threatened FDR with revolution or impeachment for being the puppet of "International Jew War Mongers" and "Washington Jewish Minorities." The White House did not respond to this message. (Official File 76c: Church Matters-Jewish, 1938)

## Document Based Questions

- 1) What is the tone of this telegram?
- 2) Why does the author of the telegram suggest that the views and opinions of "genuine American Gentiles...millions of them...are completely unheard...?"
- 3) To whom does "anonymous" say the country is being given away to?
- 4) What does "anonymous" predict may happen if Roosevelt does not change course regarding "Washington, Jewish, minorities?"
- 5) List and describe the various examples of hate speech used in this telegram.
- 6) What Jewish stereotypes does "anonymous" use in this telegram?

# The Roosevelt Administration: Actions and Inaction

## Document V-D Extension Questions

- 1) Why do you suppose the White House chose not to respond to this telegram?
- 2) If you had been asked to draft a response, what would you have said to counter the claims of “anonymous?”
- 3) Why do you suppose the author of the telegram wanted to stay anonymous?
- 4) Why do you suppose anonymous is feeling “fed up”?
- 5) Compare and contrast modern day examples of hate speech to that used in the telegram. It what ways have things changed? In what ways have they stayed the same?
- 6) Is this telegram covered under the protections of the First Amendment’s freedom of speech? Should it be?

**Document V-E:** *State Department Memorandum of Conversation Regarding the SS St. Louis June 8, 1939*  
 On May 13, 1939 – three months before World War II – the SS St. Louis, a ship carrying 937 German Jews fleeing Nazi persecution, sailed from Hamburg for Cuba. Other ships had made the same journey, and their refugee passengers had disembarked in Havana. But the Cuban government, responding to corruption and anti-Semitic political pressure, ordered the enforcement of new visa requirements when the St. Louis arrived. Twenty-two passengers who met the new requirements were allowed to land. The remaining passengers were forced to remain on board the ship. Negotiations with the Cuban government led by the American Joint Distribution Committee – a private Jewish organization – broke down, despite pressure from the U.S. government, as can be seen in this Memorandum of Conversation written by the U.S. Ambassador to Cuba, J. Butler Wright. Tremendous public attention focused on the St. Louis. The ship’s passengers even cabled the White House, but the matter was referred to the State Department. America’s immigration laws did not permit their entry into the United States since they did not have U.S. visas. American diplomats were able to help resettle the refugees in Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Denmark. But many later fell into Nazi hands during the war. Contrary to popular belief, there was no specific or official order by FDR refusing entry of the St. Louis refugees. (Sumner Welles Papers; Office Correspondence; File: Wright, J. Butler, April-June 1939; Box).

## Document Based Questions

- 1) Ambassador Wright points out at least twice that he is acting “informally and based on humanitarian considerations alone.” What does that mean? Why is it so important?
- 2) What reason does the president of Cuba give to Ambassador Wright for refusing to talk about the SS *St. Louis*?
- 3) How does the Cuban president respond when Ambassador Wright says he is “speaking purely through our humanitarian interest”?
- 4) What is the provision that most of the passengers on the SS *St. Louis* failed to secure and that then led to them being refused entry into Cuba?



# The Roosevelt Administration: Actions and Inaction

## *Document V-E Extension Questions*

- 1) Who do you suppose gave Ambassador Wright, “specific instructions not to intervene” in Cuba’s immigration matters?
- 2) What right does the United States – or any other country – have in questioning the terms which another country has set for who is, and who is not allowed entry into their country?
- 3) If the Cuban Government made the new monetary regulations known, and twenty-two passengers on board the SS *St. Louis* had complied and were allowed entry, where rests the responsibility for those who failed to comply and were sent back?

## **Documents V-F:** *Charts of German American Bund Activities 1939*

As the world crisis worsened, isolationist and non-interventionist organizations increasingly challenged any efforts by FDR to aid threatened democracies abroad and prepare the nation for possible war. Their isolationist rhetoric was often mixed with racial prejudice and a suspicion of foreigners. One of the most ominous of these organizations was the German American Bund, a domestic pro-Nazi group that preached fascism and anti-Semitism and had chapters across the country. The Roosevelt Administration was concerned about the potentially contagious influence of the Bund and similar organizations on public opinion. It kept close watch over their activities, as can be seen in this series of charts provided to FDR by the State Department. (President’s Secretary’s Files; Departmental Files; State Department-German American Bund; Box 73)

## *Document Based Questions*

- 1) According to the German American Bund, who is responsible for the quote that describes the symbolism of the Nazi flag?
- 2) According to the quote, what are four key beliefs symbolized in the flag of the Nazi Party? What is the belief that underpins everything else?
- 3) Describe how these beliefs are at odds with American values such as equal protection under the law and freedom of religion.
- 4) How many members does the American Bund appear to have?
- 5) According to the quote on the membership chart, how many potential members are there in the United States? Who is that quote from?
- 6) In what area of the United States is the bulk of the membership located?

## *Documents V-F Extension Questions*

- 1) Why might some people in the United States be drawn to this way of thinking?
- 2) Who is being targeted with this propaganda?
- 3) Who are the “Aryans?”
- 4) Why do you suppose the greatest portion of the German American Bund’s membership comes from the “Eastern Department?”



# The Roosevelt Administration: Actions and Inaction

**Document V-G:** *Albert Einstein's Letter to Eleanor Roosevelt, July 26, 1941*

Eleanor Roosevelt's efforts to aid Europe's refugees continued into the war years. She was seen by many as a trusted advocate who could bring their views to President Roosevelt's attention. In July 1941, acclaimed physicist and German-Jewish immigrant Albert Einstein wrote this letter to Mrs. Roosevelt urging her to tell the President about the State Department's rigid application of immigration rules and regulations. A "wall of bureaucratic measures" erected by the State Department, Einstein asserts, made it all but impossible to aid the victims of Nazi brutality. At the bottom of the letter in Eleanor Roosevelt's handwriting are two notes. One says simply "FDR" and is an instruction to her secretary to send Einstein's letter to the President. The second notation is Mrs. Roosevelt's reply to Einstein which was later typed into a letter: "Tell Mr. Einstein I will bring his letter at once to the President." Although Einstein's letter was given to FDR, there is no evidence that the President responded to him or took any action based upon it. (President's Personal File 7177: Albert Einstein).

## *Document Based Questions*

- 1) Why does Professor Einstein feel he can write to Mrs. Roosevelt concerning this matter?
- 2) What do you suppose Professor Einstein means when he uses the term, "wall of bureaucratic measures"?
- 3) Professor Einstein says that the bureaucratic measures are "alleged" to be necessary to protect America against subversive, dangerous elements. What does his choice of the word alleged suggest about his belief that the measures are actually needed?
- 4) What is Professor Einstein asking Mrs. Roosevelt to do?
- 5) What is Mrs. Roosevelt's response to the professor's request?

## *Document V-G Extension Questions*

- 1) Professor Einstein says Mrs. Roosevelt "always stand[s] for the right and humaneness even when it is hard." What are some examples from the life of Mrs. Roosevelt that demonstrate this?
- 2) Who is Hamilton Fish Armstrong?
- 3) Professor Einstein refers to a "wall of bureaucratic measures" in his 1941 letter to Mrs. Roosevelt. Today, some talk of building an actual wall to keep people from coming to the United States. Are these actions consistent with the message of America as stated on, and symbolized by, the Statue of Liberty?

**Document V-H:** *Memo from the Secretary of State and Statement by the President, October 24-25, 1941*

In the fall of 1941, news of Nazi atrocities against Jews in occupied Europe filled America's newspapers. Reports filtered out of Jews dying in Polish ghettos, of executions of Jews in Germany, Poland, and Russia, and of mass deportations. These reports constituted a first glimpse of what was developing into a systematic campaign by the Nazis to rid Europe of its Jewish populations. On October 24, Secretary of State Cordell Hull sent this memo to FDR proposing that he issue a statement in coordination with the British and other Allied governments denouncing the Nazi atrocities. Roosevelt's handwritten note at the bottom orders that the statement be released at

# The Roosevelt Administration: Actions and Inaction

12:00 noon the next day, “unless previously announced in London.” The statement carefully avoids identifying victims as Jewish, but makes it clear that such actions against innocent civilians “will one day bring fearful retribution.” (Official File 198: Germany, 1941-1943).

## *Document Based Questions*

- 1) What is meant by the term “while practical effects of such a declaration may be slight...”?
- 2) Why do you suppose the declaration was seen as necessary even if it may not have an immediate “practical” effect?
- 3) What is the basic principle of justice that FDR describes in the first paragraph?
- 4) Why do you suppose that FDR says that in their hearts the Nazis know they cannot win?
- 5) Why do you suppose FDR avoided pointing out that it was primarily Jews who were being executed? What do you think might have happened if he did?

## *Document V-H Extension Questions*

- 1) Read and reflect on the statement the President approved and then write 3-4 sentences describing your thoughts and emotions.
- 2) What does FDR mean when he says, “Frightfulness can never bring peace to Europe. It only sows the seeds of hatred which will one day bring fearful retribution”?
- 3) How was the truth of FDR’s statement, quoted in question two above, borne out from the end of the First World War?

## **Document V-I:** *Eleanor Roosevelt’s Draft “My Day” Column, October 25, 1941*

Although FDR felt politically constrained in the fall of 1941 from clearly identifying victims of Nazi brutality as Jewish, Eleanor Roosevelt felt no such limitations. In this draft of her “My Day” column which appeared in newspapers on October 25, she publicly grapples with the difficult subject of mass deportations of Jews from Germany to Poland and Russia and tries to make the horrors in Europe more relatable to her readers. Admitting that the deportation experience was difficult for Americans to imagine, Eleanor writes, “It would be a kind of leave-taking which could savor somewhat of death. In all partings with people whom we love, there is in a minor way that sense of temporary loss which presages the horrible finality of separation which comes over one at the time of death.” (Eleanor Roosevelt Papers; Speech and Article File: My Day Drafts; Box 1432).

## *Document Based Questions*

- 1) What does Mrs. Roosevelt have to say about the role of young people regarding the war?
- 2) What does Mrs. Roosevelt have to say about the role of women, especially British women, regarding the war?
- 3) Why do you suppose Mrs. Roosevelt makes clear that the people who are suffering are Jewish?



# The Roosevelt Administration: Actions and Inaction

- 4) Mrs. Roosevelt expresses an odd hope when she says, “one can only hope that at a certain point feelings become numb and suffering ceases to be acute.” Is this really something to hope for or does becoming numb to suffering extinguish hope?
- 5) Mrs. Roosevelt compares the experience of being told to leave your home with death. Is this a reasonable comparison?

## *Document V-I Extension Questions*

- 1) Mrs. Roosevelt describes a situation where Jews are “being suddenly told that within an hour you must leave your home never to return again.” How does this compare with what the United States did with Japanese Americans on the West Coast in early 1941?

## **Document V-J: Memorandum for the Secretary's Files, January 16, 1944**

A seminal moment in the Roosevelt Administration's response to the Holocaust was a January 16, 1944, meeting at the White House involving the President, Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Treasury's general counsel Randolph Paul, and Morgenthau's assistant John W. Pehle. At this meeting, Secretary Morgenthau presented to the President a lengthy and blunt “Personal Report” on what Morgenthau and other Treasury officials believed to be the State Department's acquiescence in Germany's mass murder of Jews. The startling evidence presented to the President of the State Department's incompetence, delay, and even obstruction of a variety of rescue efforts convinced him of the need to establish an independent commission to coordinate rescue and relief efforts. This contemporaneous memorandum was written by John Pehle, who attended the meeting and who would become the first Director of the War Refugee Board, which FDR established by executive order several days later. (Diaries of Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Book 694, Pages 190-192).

## *Document Based Questions*

- 1) How did the problem with the State Department's unwillingness to help Jewish Refugees become known in the Treasury Department?
- 2) What documents were used as evidence to convince President Roosevelt that the State Department was not doing what it was supposed to do regarding Jewish Refugees?
- 3) What example is given to FDR to suggest that effective action could be taken regarding helping Jews escape?
- 4) How did FDR respond to the suggestion that Breckinridge Long was being uncooperative in helping the Jewish Refugees?
- 5) What argument did FDR use as a possible explanation for Long's reluctance to assist the Jews?
- 6) How was Roosevelt's argument that many Jews who were allowed to enter the United States in the past turned out to be “bad” and problematic refuted? What was the actual number used?
- 7) What other example is given of Breckinridge Long's poor performance at the State Department?

# The Roosevelt Administration: Actions and Inaction

- 8) Why do you suppose such a pointed meeting concerning this issue had not been held sooner?
- 9) What action did FDR take once he was convinced of the problem with the actions of the State Department?

## *Document V-J Extension Questions*

- 1) Why did it take so long for this matter to reach the President? If the meeting had occurred without the information regarding spending from the Treasury Department, how do you suppose President Roosevelt would have responded?
- 2) What does this situation say about information and communication in, and around, the White House during the Roosevelt Administration? How does it compare with other administrations?
- 3) In 2018 and 2019 reports that officials within the government were secretly working against the President's agenda surfaced; how do these compare to the situation in the Roosevelt White House and Administration?

## **Document V-K:** *Statement by the President Regarding Atrocities of War, March 24, 1944*

As the number and ferocity of wartime atrocities increased, President Roosevelt believed it necessary to issue another, more forceful statement condemning Nazi and Japanese brutalities, and specifically mentioning the mass murder of European Jews. In the statement, Roosevelt made it clear that Allied victory was inevitable and that all those responsible for these horrific crimes against humanity would be brought to justice. The statement was issued on March 24, 1944. In order to insure its penetration into German-controlled territories, it was printed in many languages and dropped as leaflets, and the British Broadcasting Company relayed the statement in many languages to enemy and occupied countries. This particular draft of the statement was filed in the White House files on April 3, 1944. (President's Personal File 1-F: Press Releases-Drafts, 1944, Box 18).

## *Document Based Questions*

- 1) The statement uses the term "United Nations" instead of the term "Allied Forces." Why is this significant?
- 2) What are the principles outlined in the statement for which the United Nations are fighting?
- 3) To whom do you suppose this message is intended?
- 4) What crimes or conditions are listed and described as being perpetrated by the Axis powers?
- 5) What specific act against the Jews of Europe does the statement call out for the record?
- 6) What do you suppose the "United Nations" are trying to accomplish by putting the world on notice that the acts being perpetrated by the Nazis and the Japanese will be punished?



# The Roosevelt Administration: Actions and Inaction

## *Document V-K Extension Questions*

- 1) Why does this very strong statement come so late in the war?
- 2) How well does this statement align with the goals of the Nuremberg Trials?
- 3) How well does the lesson that individuals will be held accountable for crimes perpetrated during war seem to have taken hold in today's world?
- 4) When does Roosevelt first begin to think of the Allies as the "United Nations"?

## **Document V-L:** *Letter, Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy to John W. Pehle, July 4, 1944*

One of the most controversial aspects of the Roosevelt Administration's reaction to the Holocaust is the decision not to bomb rail lines used to transport prisoners to Auschwitz. As early as March 1943, requests for bombing of Hitler's instruments of death had reached various government officials from Jewish sources both at home and abroad. The Administration was reluctant to take such action, though, because of the danger of the raids also killing the prisoners they were meant to save as well as of the practicality of diverting military resources that were needed elsewhere to defeat Germany. In 1944, War Refugee Board Director John W. Pehle made several direct appeals to the War Department for the bombing of various camps and rail lines. This July 4, 1944, letter from Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy to Pehle – written one month after the D-Day invasion of Northwest Europe – states the military's position with regard to such suggestions, and reflects Roosevelt's belief that the surest way to end the killing was to defeat Nazi Germany as quickly as possible. (War Refugee Board Records; Projects and Documents File; Measures Directed Toward Halting Persecutions; Hungary No. 5, Box 42).

## *Document Based Questions*

- 1) How was the deportation of the Jewish population from Hungary to Poland confirmed?
- 2) How were the Jewish deportees treated in the weeks and months leading up to their deportation?
- 3) What were conditions like for the deportees during the actual transportation?
- 4) What fate awaited the deportees at the end of their forced journey?
- 5) How many Jews were being deported according to this particular report?

## *Documents V-L Extension Questions*

- 1) Mr. Pehle says in a parenthetical phrase on page two, "This is submitted by me as a proposal of these agencies and I can venture no opinion on its utility." Given the vast numbers being deported; the conditions under which it is happening; the known fate that awaits at the end of their deportation journey; and the certainty of the information, shouldn't some form of disruption of this operation have been attempted?
- 2) Clearly the Hungarians, working under Nazi orders, were intent on moving and destroying the Jewish population under their control. Given this fact would bombing the rail lines have really prevented them on carrying on with their gruesome task?


# The Roosevelt Administration: Actions and Inaction

## What Actions did Roosevelt Take Leading Up To The War?

Below is a brief timeline of actions taken by the Roosevelt Administration in the lead up to the Second World War. While official policy was that the United States was neutral in the escalating conflict in Europe, FDR's actions clearly show he understood the threat the Nazis posed to the world.

September 11, 1939	President Roosevelt begins a secret correspondence with England's Winston Churchill.
November 4, 1939	America's Neutrality Acts are loosened to permit "cash and carry" sales of US weapons to warring nations.
September 2, 1940	FDR completes a deal to give 50 old destroyers to Britain in exchange for leases to British Bases in the Atlantic.
September 16, 1940	FDR signs the Selective Service Act – creating America's first peacetime draft.
September 26, 1940	The United States bans the sale of iron, steel, and gasoline to Japan, Germany's ally.
December 29, 1940	FDR announces that the United States will be the world's "arsenal of democracy."
January 6, 1941	FDR proposes the Lend-Lease bill to Congress. It is passed in March.
January 24, 1941	Secret American – British military staff talks begin in Washington.
May 27, 1941	Citing the growing Axis threat in Europe, FDR declares an "unlimited national emergency."
June 14, 1941	German and Italian assets in the United States are frozen.
July 9, 1941	FDR directs the military to create the "Victory Program" a comprehensive plan of the resources needed to defeat our potential enemies.
September 11, 1941	In response to a Nazi attack on the America destroyer USS Greer, FDR announces that the US would no longer wait for German submarines to fire first – the press labels it a "shoot on site" policy.
December 8, 1941	In response to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States declares war on Japan, Germany's ally.
January 1, 1942	The United States and 25 other nations sign the United Nations declaration pledging to fight and defeat the Nazis.

## The Roosevelt Administration: Actions and Inaction

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- December 17, 1942      The United States and ten Allied nations issue a solemn public declaration condemning Nazi Germany's "bestial policy of cold-blooded extermination of the Jews."
- January 22, 1944      Roosevelt established the War Refugee Board to coordinate efforts to rescue those who might be saved.
- April 12, 1945      Franklin Roosevelt dies of a stroke in Warm Springs, Georgia.



## SECTION VI

# Essential Questions Surrounding Holocaust Themes and Concepts

**T**he Holocaust was the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and murder of an estimated six million European Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. Many others were targeted based on their perceived “racial inferiority” or on political, ideological and behavioral grounds.

Though the total number of victims is staggering, it is important to remember that it represents individual people: mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, sons, daughters, children, the elderly, friends, and neighbors.

The Holocaust did not happen by accident; it was planned and perpetrated by Adolf Hitler and his Nazi followers, in the middle of the 20th Century, in Germany – a nation with rich cultural heritage. The Holocaust was the result of the decisions and indecision, actions and inactions, and of the attitudes and beliefs of individuals, groups, organizations, and nations.

Below is a list of important themes and concepts that present themselves while studying the Holocaust. Each raises some essential questions worthy of consideration and understanding when learning about how the Holocaust came to be, considering its importance to history, and realizing its importance to each of us today.

### Essential Questions surrounding Holocaust Themes and Concepts

Share these themes and concepts with your students. The questions presented in bold speak directly to that theme or concept’s role in the Holocaust. The questions in italics are scaffolding questions that speak to the themes and concepts more broadly.

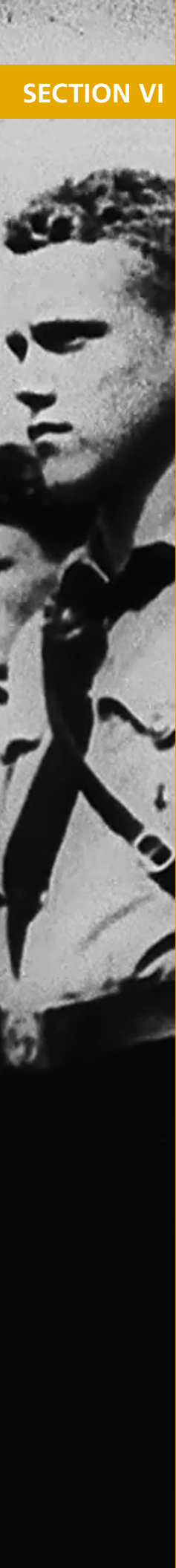
These can be used with your students by asking them to consider: how and why the questions were important to the world in the 1930s and 1940s, and how and why they are important to us today.

Their responses can be shared through open discussion in class, structured as a debate, considered as a consensus-seeking deliberation exercise, assigned as a homework written response or presented as a research paper.

# Essential Questions Surrounding Holocaust Themes and Concepts

- 1. Action vs Inaction – What actions and inactions allowed the Holocaust to occur?**
  - a) *What is the difference between action and inaction?*
  - b) *What factors might move someone from inaction to action?*
  - c) *Is failing to prevent something (inaction) the same as allowing it to happen (action)?*
  - d) *Just how much needs to be done in order for action to have been considered “taken?”*
  
- 2. Anti-Semitism – How did Hitler use anti-Semitism as a tool to advance the power of the Nazis party?**
  - a) *What is anti-Semitism?*
  - b) *What does it stem from?*
  - c) *The Holocaust is history’s most extreme example of anti-Semitism – when and where can we find other examples in history?*
  - d) *When and where can we find examples of anti-Semitism today?*
  
- 3. Bearing Witness – What role do those who bore witness to the Holocaust play in our understanding the importance of the Holocaust to us today?**
  - a) *What does it mean to bear witness?*
  - b) *Why is bearing witness to historic events so important?*
  - c) *What happens when those who remember are gone?*
  
- 4. Bullying – How were the Nazis so easily able to bully their way to power?**
  - a) *Why do people bully each other?*
  - b) *What forms can bullying take?*
  - c) *What harm can bullying cause?*
  - d) *How can bullying be prevented or stopped?*
  
- 5. Conspiracy – How was the concept of conspiracy used by the Nazis to perpetrate their crimes?**
  - a) *What is a conspiracy?*
  - b) *How does a conspiracy differ from a plan?*
  - c) *What conditions are necessary for a conspiracy to develop or take place?*
  - d) *If you are aware of a conspiracy and do nothing to stop it, to what extent are you culpable when it takes place?*

## Essential Questions Surrounding Holocaust Themes and Concepts

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- 6. Courage – How did victims of the Holocaust demonstrate their courage to resist and survive?**
    - a) *What is courage?*
    - b) *Why are some people more courageous than others?*
    - c) *Give some examples of “big acts of courage” and “little acts of courage.”*
  
  - 7. Critical Thinking – What methods did the Nazis use to discourage critical thinking?**
    - a) *What is critical thinking?*
    - b) *What specific skills and conditions are required for critical thinking to occur?*
    - c) *Why is critical thinking so important?*
    - d) *How does critical thinking differ from ordinary thinking?*
  
  - 8. Culpability – Who might be considered culpable in allowing the Holocaust to occur?**
    - a) *What does it mean to be culpable?*
    - b) *What makes some people culpable and others not culpable?*
    - c) *Can culpability be considered as occurring in a matter of degrees?*
  
  - 9. Division – How did the Nazis use division as a political tool?**
    - a) *What causes division?*
    - b) *At what point do ordinary differences become dangerous divisions?*
    - c) *What does it take to overcome division?*
  
  - 10. Empathy – How might empathy have prevented the Holocaust?**
    - a) *What is empathy?*
    - b) *How does empathy differ from sympathy?*
    - c) *How can we develop and demonstrate empathy for others?*
  
  - 11. Genocide – Why did the Nazis choose genocide as a means of advancing their beliefs?**
    - a) *What is genocide?*
    - b) *What factors/excuses have been used to “justify” genocide?*
    - c) *Where else has genocide been used as a tool to oppress and eliminate others?*



## Essential Questions Surrounding Holocaust Themes and Concepts

**12. Hate Speech – How did the Nazis use hate speech to desensitize and “normalize” their actions and behavior?**

- a) *What is hate speech?*
- b) *How does hate speech differ from free speech?*
- c) *At what point does direct and pointed speech cross the line to become hate speech?*
- d) *In what ways does hate speech harm?*

**13. Intolerance – What role did intolerance play in the Holocaust?**

- a) *What does it mean to be intolerant?*
- b) *What is “social intolerance?”*
- c) *What is “cultural intolerance?”*
- d) *What is the difference between “tolerance” and “acceptance?”*
- e) *How can intolerance be overcome?*

**14. Justice – Why was/is it so important to seek justice for the victims of the Holocaust?**

- a) *What is justice?*
- b) *What is injustice?*
- c) *Why is justice important?*
- d) *Is it ever too late for justice?*

**15. Peer Pressure – What role did peer pressure play in the Holocaust?**

- a) *What is peer pressure?*
- b) *What are the causes of peer pressure?*
- c) *What are the results of peer pressure?*
- d) *How does peer pressure affect the way you behave?*

**16. Prejudice – In what ways did the actions of the Nazis go beyond the limits of ordinary prejudice?**

- a) *What is prejudice?*
- b) *What are the causes of prejudice?*
- c) *What forms can prejudice take?*
- d) *How do we overcome prejudice?*

# Essential Questions Surrounding Holocaust Themes and Concepts

## 17. Resilience – How do survivors of the Holocaust evidence their resilience?

- a) *What is resilience?*
- b) *Why is resilience so important?*
- c) *How can we help build or develop resiliency?*

## 18. Resistance – In what ways was resistance shown to the Nazis?

- a) *What is resistance?*
- b) *What does resistance mean to you?*
- c) *How do we determine when it is necessary to resist?*
- d) *What forms can resistance take?*

## 19. Propaganda – What role did propaganda play in bringing about the Holocaust?

- a) *What is propaganda?*
- b) *How does propaganda differ from news, “fake news” and advertising?*
- c) *What is propaganda designed to do?*

## 20. Responsibility – Who is responsible for the Holocaust?

- a) *What does it mean to be responsible?*
- b) *Why is it important that people be held responsible and accountable for their actions?*
- c) *Why is it important to accept responsibility?*

## 21. Right and Wrong – How did so many people fail to point out right from wrong during the Holocaust?

- a) *How do we define what is “right” and what is “wrong”?*
- b) *Who gets to determine what is “right” and what is “wrong”?*
- c) *What is morality?*
- d) *Can morality be conditional?*

## Essential Questions Surrounding Holocaust Themes and Concepts

### 22. Scapegoating – How did the Nazis use scapegoating to justify their actions?

- a) *What is scapegoating?*
- b) *What function does scapegoating serve?*
- c) *What forms does/can scapegoating take?*
- d) *In what ways does scapegoating harm?*

### 23. Slippery Slope – What were the “slippery slopes” that brought about the Holocaust?

- a) *How do we know when we are in a situation where a series of actions or events has become a slippery slope?*
- b) *How can we free ourselves from the consequences once we are on a slippery slope?*

### 24. Speaking Truth to Power – Why did so many people fail to speak truth to power during the Holocaust? What happened to those that did?

- a) *What does it mean to speak truth to power?*
- b) *Why is it important to speak truth to power?*
- c) *How do we know what “truth” is?*
- d) *Who gets to decide what is “truth” is?*

### 25. Words Matter – How did the Nazis use words/language to perpetrate the Holocaust?

- a) *Why do words matter?*
- b) *What power do words have?*
- c) *Under what conditions should words, and how they are used, be regulated?*
- d) *Who should decide what words are acceptable and what words are not?*