Morgenthau Diary, Vol. 694: "Acquiescence" Memo, Personal Report to the President, and related Documents, Jan. 13-16, 1944

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Jan 13, 1944

REPORT TO THE SECRETARY ON THE ACQUIESCENCE OF THIS GOVERNMENT IN THE MURDER OF THE JEWS.

One of the greatest crimes in history, the slaughter of the Jewish people in Europe, is continuing unabated.

This Government has for a long time maintained that its policy is to work out programs to save those Jews of Europe who could be saved.

I am convinced on the basis of the information which is available to me that certain officials in our State Department, which is charged with carrying out this policy, have been guilty not only of gross procrastination and wilful failure to act, but even of wilful attempts to prevent action from being taken to rescue Jews from Hitler.

I fully recognize the graveness of this statement and I make it only after having most carefully weighed the shocking facts which have come to my attention during the last several months.

Unless remedial steps of a drastic nature are taken, and taken immediately, I am certain that no effective action will be taken by this Government to prevent the complete extermination of the Jews in German controlled Europe, and that this Government will have to share for all time responsibility for this extermination.

The tragic history of this Government's handling of this matter reveals that certain State Department officials are guilty of the following:

(1) They have not only failed to use the Governmental machinery at their disposal to rescue Jews from Hitler, but have even gone so far as to use this Government machinery to prevent the rescue of these Jews.

(2) They have not only failed to cooperate with private organizations in the efforts of these organizations to work out individual programs of their own, but have taken steps designed to prevent these programs from being put into effect.

(3) They not only have failed to facilitate the obtaining of information concerning Hitler's plans to exterminate the Jews of Europe but in their official capacity have gone so far as to surreptitiously attempt to stop the obtaining of information concerning the murder of the Jewish population of Europe.

(4) They have tried to cover up their guilt by:

(a) concealment and misrepresentation;

(b) the giving of false and misleading explanations for their failures to act and their attempts to prevent action; and

(c) the issuance of false and misleading statements concerning the "action" which they have taken to date.

Although only part of the facts relating to the activities of the State Department in this field are available to us, sufficient facts have come to my attention from various sources during the last several months to fully support the conclusions at which I have arrived.

(1) State Department officials have not only failed to use the Governmental machinery at their disposal to rescue the Jews from Hitler, but have even gone so far as to use this Governmental machinery to prevent the rescue of these Jews.

The public record, let alone the facts which have not as yet been made public, reveals the gross procrastination and wilful failure to act of those officials actively representing this Government in this field.

(a) A long time has passed since it became clear that Hitler was determined to carry out a policy of exterminating the Jews in Europe.

(b) Over a year has elapsed since this Government and other members of the United Nations publicly acknowledged and denounced this policy of extermination; and since the President gave assurances that the United States would make every effort together with the United Nations to save those who could be saved.

(c) Despite the fact that time is most precious in this matter, State Department officials have been kicking the matter around for over a year without producing results; giving all sorts of excuses for delays upon delays; advancing no specific proposals designed to rescue Jews, at the same time proposing that the whole refugee problem be "explored" by this Government and Intergovernmental Committees. While the State Department has been thus "exploring" the whole refugee problem, without distinguishing between those who are in imminent danger of death and those who are not, hundreds of thousands of Jews have been allowed to perish.

As early as August 1942 a message from the Secretary of the World Jewish Congress in Switzerland (Riegner), transmitted through the British Foreign Office, reported that Hitler had under consideration a plan to exterminate all Jews in German controlled Europe. By November 1942 sufficient evidence had been received, including substantial documentary evidence transmitted through our Legation in Switzerland, to confirm that Hitler had actually adopted and was carrying out his plan to exterminate the Jews. Sumner Welles accordingly authorized the Jewish organizations to make the facts public.

Thereupon, the Jewish organizations took the necessary steps to bring the shocking facts to the attention of the public through mass meetings, etc., and to elicit public support for governmental action. On December 17, 1942, a joint statement of the United States and the European members of the United Nations was issued calling attention to and denouncing the fact that Hitler was carrying into effect his oft-repeated intention to exterminate the Jewish people in Europe.

Since the time when this Government knew that the Jews were being murdered, our State Department has failed to take any positive steps reasonably calculated to save any of these people. Although State has used the devices of setting up inter-governmental organizations to survey the whole refugee problem, and calling conferences such as the Bermuda Conference to explore the whole refugee problem, making it appear that positive action could be expected, in fact nothing has been accomplished.

Before the outcome of the Bermuda Conference, which was held in April 1943, was made public, Senator Langer prophetically stated in an address in the Senate on October 6, 1943:

"As yet we have had no report from the Bermuda Refugee Conference. With the best good will in the world and with all latitude that could and should be accorded to diplomatic negotiations in time of war, I may be permitted to voice the bitter suspicion that the absence of a report indicates only one thing -- the lack of action.

"Probably in all 5703 years, Jews have hardly had a time as tragic and hopeless as the one which they are undergoing now. One of the most tragic factors about the situation is that while singled out for suffering and martyrdom by their enemies, they seem to have been forgotten by the nations which claim to fight for the cause of humanity. We should remember the Jewish slaughterhouse of Europe and ask what is being done -- and I emphasize the word 'done' -- to get some of these suffering human beings out of the slaughter while yet alive.

"* * * Perhaps it would be necessary to introduce a formal resolution or to ask the Secretary of State to report to an appropriate congressional committee on the steps being taken in this connection. Normally it would have been the job of the Government to show itself alert to this tragedy; but when a government neglects a duty it is the job of the legislature in a democracy to remind it of that duty. * * * It is not important who voices a call for action, and it is not important what procedure is being used in order to get action. It is important that action be undertaken."

Similar fears were voiced by Representatives Celler, Dickstein, and Klein. Senator Wagner and Representative Sadowski also issued calls for action.

The widespread fears concerning the failure of the Bermuda Conference were fully confirmed when Breckinridge Long finally revealed some of the things that had happened at that Conference in his statement before the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House on November 26, 1943.

After Long's "disclosure" Representative Celler stated in the House on December 20, 1943:

"He discloses some of the things that happened at the so-called Bermuda Conference. He thought he was telling us something heretofore unknown and secret. What happened at the Bermuda Conference could not be kept executive. All the recommendations and findings of the Bermuda Conference were made known to the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees in existence since the Evian Conference on Refugees in 1938 and which has been functioning all this time in London. How much has that committee accomplished in the years of its being. It will be remembered that the Intergovernmental Committee functions through an executive committee composed of six countries, the United States, the United Kingdoms, the Netherlands, France, Brazil, and Argentina. True, no report of the Bermuda Conference was made public. But a strangely ironical fact will be noted in the presence of Argentina on this most trusted of committees, Argentina that provoked the official reprimand of President Roosevelt by its banning of the Jewish Press, and within whose borders Nazi propagandists and falangists now enjoy a Roman holiday. I contend that by the very nature of its composition the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees cannot function successfully as the instrumentality to rescue the Jewish people of Europe. The benefits to be drived from the Bermuda Conference like those of the previous Evian Conference can fit into a tiny capsule."

One of the best summaries of the whole situation is contained in one sentence of a report submitted on December 20, 1943, by the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate, recommending the passage ~~of a~~ Resolution (S.R. 203) favoring the appointment of a commission to formulate plans to save the Jews of Europe from extinction by Nazi Germany. The Committee stated:

"We have talked; we have sympathized; we have expressed our horror; the time to act is long past due."

The Senate Resolution had been introduced by Senator Guy M. Gillette in behalf of himself and eleven colleagues, Senators Taft, Thomas, Radcliffe, Murray, Johnson, Guffey, Ferguson, Clark, Van Nuys, Downey, and Ellender.

The House Resolutions (H.R.'s 350 and 352), identical with the Senate Resolution, were introduced by Representatives Baldwin and Rogers.

The most glaring example of the use of the machinery of this Government to actually prevent the rescue of Jews is the administrative restrictions which have been placed upon the granting of visas to the United States. In the note which the State Department sent to the British on February 25, 1943 it was stated:

"Since the entry of the United States into the war there have been no new restrictions placed by the Government of the United States upon the number of aliens of any nationality permitted to proceed to this country under existing laws, except for the more intensive examination of aliens required for security reasons." (Underscoring supplied)

The exception "for security reasons" mentioned in this note is the joker. Under the pretext of security reasons so many difficulties have been placed in the way of refugees obtaining visas that it is no wonder that the admission of refugees to this country does not come anywhere near the quota, despite Long's statement designed to create the impression to the contrary. The following administrative restrictions which have been applied to the issuance of visas since the beginning of the war are typical.

(a) Many applications for visas have been denied on the grounds that the applicants have close relatives in Axis controlled Europe. The theory of this is that the enemy would be able to put pressure on the applicant as a result of the fact that the enemy has the power of life or death over his immediate family.

(b) Another restriction greatly increases the red tape and delay involved in getting the visa and requires among other things two affidavits of support and sponsorship to be furnished with each application for a visa. To each affidavit of support and sponsorship there must be attached two letters of reference from two reputable American citizens.

If anyone were to attempt to work out a set of restrictions specifically designed to prevent Jewish refugees from entering this country it is difficult to conceive of how more effective restrictions could have been imposed than have already been imposed on grounds of "security".

It is obvious of course that these restrictions are not essential for security reasons. Thus refugees upon arriving in this country could be placed in internment camps similar to those used for the Japanese on the West Coast and released only after a satisfactory investigation. Furthermore, even if we took these refugees and treated them as prisoners of war it would be better than letting them die.

Representative Dickstein stated in the House on December 15:

"If we consider the fact that the average admission would then be at the rate of less than 58,000 per year, it is clear that the organs of our Government have not done their duty. The existing quotas call for the admission of more than 150,000 every year, so that if the quotas themselves had been filled there would have been a total of one-half million and not 580,000 during the period mentioned.

"But that is not the whole story. There was no effort of any kind made to save from death many of the refugees who could have been saved during the time that transportation lines were available and there was no obstacle to their admission to the United States. But the obstructive policy of our organs of Government, particularly the State Department, which saw fit to hedge itself about with rules and regulations, instead of lifting rules and regulations, brought about a condition so that not even the existing immigration quotas are filled."

Representative Celler stated in the House on June 30:

"Mr. Speaker, nations have declared war on Germany, and their high-ranking officials have issued pious protestations against the

Nazi massacre of Jewish victims, but not one of those countries thus far has said they would be willing to accept these refugees either permanently or as visitors, or any of the minority peoples trying to escape the Hitler prison and slaughterhouse.

"Goebbels says: 'The United Nations won't take any Jews. We don't want them. Let's kill them.' And so he and Hitler are making Europe Judentun.

"Without any change in our immigration statutes we could receive a reasonable number of those who are fortunate enough to escape the Nazi hellhole, receive them as visitors, the immigration quotas notwithstanding. They could be placed in camps or cantonments and held there in such havens until after the war. Private charitable agencies would be willing to pay the entire cost thereof. They would be no expense to the Government whatsoever. These agencies would even pay for transportation by ships to and from this country.

"We house and maintain Nazi prisoners, many of them undoubtedly responsible for Nazi atrocities. We should do no less for the victims of the rage of the Huns."

Again, on December 20, he stated:

"According to Earl G. Harrison, Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, not since 1862 have there been fewer aliens entering the country.

"Frankly, Breckinridge Long, in my humble opinion, is least sympathetic to refugees in all the State Department. I attribute to him the tragic bottleneck in the granting of visas.

"The Interdepartmental Review Committees which review the applications for visas are composed of one official, respectively, from each of the following Departments: War, Navy, F.B.I., State, and Immigration. That committee has been glacierlike in its slowness and coldbloodedness. It take months and months to grant the visas and then it usually applies to a corpse.

"I brought this difficulty to the attention of the President. He asked Long to investigate at once. No, there has been no change in conditions. The gruesome bottleneck still exists."

(2) State Department officials have not only failed to cooperate with private organizations in the efforts of these organizations to work out individual programs of their own, but have take steps designed to prevent these programs from being put into effect.

The best evidence in support of this charge are the facts relating to the proposal of the World Jewish Congress to evacuate thousands of Jews from Rumania and France. The highlights relating to the efforts of State Department officials to prevent this proposal from being put into effect are the following:

(a) On March 13, 1943, a cable was received from the World Jewish Congress representative in London stating that information reaching London indicated the possibility of rescuing Jews provided funds were put at the disposal of the World Jewish Congress representation in Switzerland.

(b) On April 10, 1943, Sumner Welles cabled our Legation in Bern and requested them to get in touch with the World Jewish Congress representative in Switzerland, whom Welles had been informed was in possession of important information regarding the situation of the Jews.

(c) On April 20, 1943, a cable was received from Bern relating to the proposed financial arrangements in connection with the evacuation of the Jews from Rumania and France.

(d) On May 25, 1943, State Department cabled for a clarification of these proposed financial arrangements. This matter was not called to the attention of the Treasury Department at this time.

(e) This whole question of financing the evacuation of the Jews from Rumania and France was first called to the attention of the Treasury Department on June 25, 1943.

(f) A conference was held with the State Department relating to this matter on July 15, 1943.

(g) One day after this conference, on July 16, 1943, the Treasury Department advised the State Department that it was prepared to issue a license in this matter.

(h) The license was not issued until December 18, 1943.

During this five months period between the time that the Treasury stated that it was prepared to issue a license and the time when the license was actually issued delays and objections of all sorts were forthcoming from officials in the State Department, our Legation in Bern, and finally the British. The real significance of these delays and objections was brought home to the State Department in letters which you sent to Secretary Hull on November 24, 1943, and December 17, 1943, which completely devastated the "excuses" which State Department officials had been advancing. On December 18 you made an appointment to discuss the matter with Secretary Hull on December 20. And then an amazing but understandable thing happened. On December 18, the day after you sent your letter and the day on which you requested an appointment with Secretary Hull, the State Department sent a telegram to the British Foreign Office expressing astonishment with the British point of view and stating that the Department was unable to agree with that point of view (in simple terms, the British point of view referred to by the State Department is that they are apparently prepared to accept the possible -- even probable -- death of thousands of Jews in enemy territory because of "the difficulties of disposing of any considerable number of Jews should they be rescued"). On the same day, the State Department issued a license notwithstanding the fact that the objections of our Legation in Bern were still outstanding and that British disapproval had already been expressed. State Department officials were in such a hurry to issue this license that they not only did not ask the Treasury to draft the license (which would have been the normal procedure) but they drafted the license themselves and issued it without even consulting the Treasury as to its terms. Informal discussions with certain State Department officials have confirmed what is obvious from the above mentioned facts.

Breckinridge Long knew that his position was so indefensible that he was unwilling to even try to defend it at your pending conference with Secretary Hull on December 20. Accordingly, he took such action as he felt was necessary to "cover up" his previous position in this matter. It is, of course, clear that if we had not made the record against the State Department followed by your request to see Secretary Hull, the action which the State Department officials took on December 18 would either never have been taken at all or would have been delayed so long that any benefits which it might have had would have been lost.

(3) State Department officials not only have failed to facilitate the obtaining of information concerning Hitler's plans to exterminate the Jews of Europe but in their official capacity have gone so far as to surreptitiously attempt to stop the obtaining of information concerning the murder of the Jewish population in Europe.

The evidence supporting this conclusion is so shocking and so tragic that it is difficult to believe.

The facts are as follows:

(a) Summer Welles as Acting Secretary of State requests confirmation of Hitler's plan to exterminate the Jews. Having already received various reports on the plight of the Jews, on October 5, 1942 Summer Welles as Acting Secretary of State sent a cable (2314) for the personal attention of Minister Harrison in Bern stating that leaders of the Jewish Congress had received reports from their representatives in Geneva and London to the effect that many thousands of Jews in Eastern Europe were being slaughtered pursuant to a policy embarked upon by the German Government for the complete extermination of the Jews in Europe. Welles added that he was trying to obtain further information from the Vatican but that other than this he was unable to secure confirmation of these stories. He stated that Rabbi Wise believed that information was available to his representatives in Switzerland but that they were in all likelihood fearful of dispatching any such reports through open cables or mail. He then stated that Riegner and Lichtheim were being requested by Wise to call upon Minister Harrison; and Welles requested Minister Harrison to advise him by telegram of all the evidence and facts which he might secure as a result of conferences with Riegner and Lichtheim.

(b) State Department receives confirmation and shocking evidence that the extermination was being rapidly and effectively carried out. Pursuant to Welles' cable of October 5 Minister Harrison forwarded documents from Riegner confirming the fact of extermination of the Jews (in November 1942), and in a cable of January 21, 1943 (482) relayed a message from Riegner and Lichtheim which Harrison stated was for the information of the Under Secretary of State (and was to be transmitted to Rabbi Stephen Wise if the Under Secretary should so determine). This message described a horrible situation concerning the plight of Jews in Europe. It reported mass

executions of Jews in Poland; according to one source 6,000 Jews were being killed daily; the Jews were required before execution to strip themselves of all their clothing which was then sent to Germany; the remaining Jews in Poland were confined to ghettos, etc.; in Germany deportations were continuing; many Jews were in hiding and there had been many cases of suicide; Jews were being deprived of rationed foodstuffs; no Jews would be left in Prague or Berlin by the end of March, etc.; and in Rumania 130,000 Jews were deported to Transnistria; about 60,000 had already died and the remaining 70,000 were starving; living conditions were indescribable; Jews were deprived of all their money, foodstuffs and possessions; they were housed in deserted cellars, and occasionally twenty to thirty people slept on the floor of one unheated room; disease was prevalent, particularly fever; urgent assistance was needed.

(c) Sumner Welles furnishes this information to the Jewish organizations. Sumner Welles furnished the documents received in November to the Jewish organizations in the United States and authorized them to make the facts public. On February 9, 1943 Welles forwarded the horrible message contained in cable 482 of January 21 to Rabbi Stephen Wise. In his letter of February 9 Welles stated that he was pleased to be of assistance in this matter

Immediately upon the receipt of this message, the Jewish organizations arranged for a public mass meeting in Madison Square Garden in a further effort to obtain effective action.

(d) Certain State Department officials surreptitiously attempt to stop this Government from obtaining further information from the very source from which the above evidence was received. On February 10, the day after Welles forwarded the message contained in cable 482 of January 21 to Rabbi Wise, and in direct response to this cable, a most highly significant cable was dispatched. This cable, 354 of February 10, read as follows:

"Your 482, January 21

"In the future we would suggest that you do not accept reports submitted to you to be transmitted to private persons in the United States unless such action is advisable because of extraordinary circumstances. Such private messages circumvent neutral countries' censorship and it is felt that by sending them

we risk the possibility that steps would necessarily be taken by the neutral countries to curtail or forbid our means of communication for confidential official matter.

Hull (SW)"

Although this cable on its face is most innocent and innocuous, when read together with the previous cables I am forced to conclude it is nothing less than an attempted suppression of information requested by this Government concerning the murder of Jews by Hitler.

Although this cable was signed for Hull by "SW" (Summer Welles) it is significant that there is not a word in the cable that would even suggest to the person signing it that it was designed to countermand the Department's specific requests for information on Hitler's plans to exterminate the Jews. The cable appeared to be a normal routine message which a busy official would sign without question.

I have been informed that the initialled file copy of the cable bears the initials of Atherton and Dunn as well as of Durbrow and Hickerson.

(e) Thereafter Summer Welles again requested our Legation on April 10, 1943 (cable 877) for information, apparently not realizing that in cable 354 (to which he did not refer) Harrison had been instructed to cease forwarding reports of this character. Harrison replied on April 20 (cable 2460) and indicated that he was in a most confused state of mind as a result of the conflicting instructions he had received. Among other things he stated: "May I suggest that messages of this character should not (repeat not) be subjected to the restriction imposed by your 354, February 10, and that I be permitted to transmit messages from R more particularly in view of the helpful information which they may frequently contain?"

The fact that cable 354 is not the innocent and routine cable that it appears to be on its face is further highlighted by the efforts of State Department officials to prevent this Department from obtaining the cable and learning its true significance.

The facts relating to this attempted concealment are as follows:

(i) Several men in our Department had requested State Department officials for a copy of the cable of February 10 (354). We had been advised that it was a Department communication; a strictly political communication, which had nothing to do with economic matters; that it had only had a very limited distribution within the Department, the only ones having anything to do with it being the European Division, the Political Adviser and Sumner Welles; and that a copy could not be furnished to the Treasury.

(ii) At the conference in Secretary Hull's office on December 20 in the presence of Breckinridge Long you asked Secretary Hull for a copy of cable 354, which you were told would be furnished to you.

(iii) By note to you of December 20, Breckinridge Long enclosed a paraphrase of cable 354. This paraphrase of cable 354 specifically omitted any reference to cable 482 of January 21 -- thus destroying the only tangible clue to the true meaning of the message.

(iv) You would never have learned the true meaning of cable 354 had it not been for the fact that one of the men in my office whom I had asked to obtain all the facts on this matter for me had previously called one of the men in another Division of the State Department and requested permission to see the cable. In view of the Treasury interest in this matter this State Department representative obtained cable 354 and the cable of January 21 to which it referred and showed these cables to my man.

(4) The State Department officials have tried to cover up their guilt by:

(a) concealment and misrepresentation

In addition to concealing the true facts from and misrepresenting these facts to the public, State Department officials have even attempted concealment and misrepresentation within the Government. The most striking example of this is

the above mentioned action taken by State Department officials to prevent this Department from obtaining a copy of cable 354 of February 10 (which stopped the obtaining of information concerning the murder of Jews); and the fact that after you had requested a copy of this cable, State Department officials forwarded the cable to us with its most significant part omitted, thus destroying the whole meaning of the cable.

(b) the giving of false and misleading explanations for their failures to act and their attempts to prevent action.

The outstanding explanation of a false and misleading nature which the State Department officials have given for their failures to work out programs to rescue Jews, and their attempts to prevent action, are the following:

(i) The nice sounding but vicious theory that the whole refugee problem must be explored and consideration given to working out programs for the relief of all refugees -- thus failing to distinguish between those refugees whose lives are in imminent danger and those whose lives are not in imminent danger.

(ii) The argument that various proposals cannot be acted upon promptly by this Government but must be submitted to the Executive Committee of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees. This Committee has taken no effective action to actually evacuate refugees from enemy territory and it is at least open to doubt whether it has the necessary authority to deal with the matter.

(iii) The argument that the extreme restrictions which the State Department has placed on the granting of visas to refugees is necessary for "security reasons." The falsity of this argument has already been dealt with in this memorandum.

The false and misleading explanations, which the State Department officials gave for delaying for over six months the program of the World Jewish Congress for the evacuation of thousands of Jews from Rumania and France, are dealt with in your letter to Secretary Hull of December 17, 1943.

A striking example is the argument of the State Department officials that the proposed financial arrangements might benefit the enemy. It is of course not surprising that the same State Department officials who usually argue that economic warfare considerations are not important should in this particular case attempt to rely on economic warfare considerations to kill the proposed program.

In this particular case, the State Department officials attempted to argue that the relief plan might benefit the enemy by facilitating the acquisition of funds by the enemy. In addition to the fact that this contention had no merit whatsoever by virtue of the conditions under which the local funds were to be acquired, it is significant that this consideration had not been regarded as controlling in the past by the State Department officials, even where no such conditions had been imposed.

Thus, in cases involving the purchase, by branches of United States concerns in Switzerland, of substantial amounts of material in enemy territory, State Department officials have argued that in view of the generous credit supplied by the Swiss to the Germans "transactions of this type cannot be regarded as actually increasing the enemy's purchasing power in Switzerland which is already believed to beat a maximum". It is only when these State Department officials really desire to prevent a transaction that they advance economic warfare considerations as a bar.

(c) the issuance of false and misleading statements concerning the "action" which they have taken to date.

It is unnecessary to go beyond Long's testimony to find many examples of misstatements. His general pious remarks concerning what this Government has done for the Jews of Europe; his statement concerning the powers and functions of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees; his reference to the "screening process" set up to insure wartime security, etc., have already been publicly criticized as misrepresentations.

A statement which is typical of the way Long twists facts is his remarks concerning the plan of a Jewish agency to send money to Switzerland to be used through the International Red Cross to buy food to take care of Jews in parts of Czechoslovakia and Poland. Long indicates that the Jewish agency requested that

the money be sent through the instrumentality of the Intergovernmental Committee. I am informed that the Jewish agency wished to send the money immediately to the International Red Cross and it was Long who took the position that the matter would have to go through the Intergovernmental Committee, thereby delaying the matter indefinitely. Long speaks of an application having been filed with the Treasury to send some of this money and that the State Department was supporting this application to the Treasury. The facts are that no application has ever been filed with the Treasury and the State Department has at no time indicated to the Treasury that it would support any such application.

The most patent instance of a false and misleading statement is that part of Breckinridge Long's testimony before the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House (November 26, 1943) relating to the admittance of refugees into this country. Thus, he stated:

"* * * We have taken into this country since the beginning of the Hitler regime and the persecution of the Jews, until today, approximately 580,000 refugees. The whole thing has been under the quota, during the period of 10 years -- all under the quota -- except the generous gesture we made with visitors' and transit visas during an awful period."

Congressman Emanuel Celler in commenting upon Long's statement in the House on December 20, 1943, stated:

"* * * In the first place these 580,000 refugees were in the main ordinary quota immigrants coming in from all countries. The majority were not Jews. His statement drips with sympathy for the persecuted Jews, but the tears he sheds are crocodile. I would like to ask him how many Jews were admitted during the last 3 years in comparison with the number seeking entrance to preserve life and dignity. * * * One gets the impression from Long's statement that the United States has gone out of its way to help refugees fleeing death at the hands of the Nazis. I deny this. On the contrary, the State Department has turned its back on the time-honored principle of granting havens to refugees. The tempest-tossed get little comfort from men like Breckinridge Long. * * * Long says

that the door to the oppressed is open but that it 'has been carefully screened.' What he should have said is 'barlocked and bolted.' By the act of 1924, we are permitted to admit approximately 150,000 immigrants each year. During the last fiscal year only 23,725 came as immigrants. Of these only 4,705 were Jews fleeing Nazi persecution.

* * *

"If men of the temperament and philosophy of Long continue in control of immigration administration, we may as well take down that plaque from the Statue of Liberty and black out the 'lamp beside the golden door.'"

January 16, 1944

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY'S FILES:

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

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

During the conference the following points were brought out:

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

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

(2) The President referred to the possibility of getting people over the Spanish and Swiss borders.

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

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

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

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

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

JWPehle

January 20, 1944

Memorandum for the Files:

The attached memorandum was signed by the Secretary and taken by him to the President for possible use in the Sunday conference.

The President preferred that the facts be summarized to him orally, which was done, and the President handed the memo back to the Secretary. The President did not read through the memorandum.

J. W. Pehle

1/16/44 -

SECRET

PERSONAL REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT

One of the greatest crimes in history, the slaughter of the Jewish people in Europe, is continuing unabated.

This Government has for a long time maintained that its policy is to work out programs to save those Jews and other persecuted minorities of Europe who could be saved.

You are probably not as familiar as I with the utter failure of certain officials in our State Department, who are charged with actually carrying out this policy, to take any effective action to prevent the extermination of the Jews in German-controlled Europe.

The public record, let alone the facts which have not yet been made public, reveals the gross procrastination of these officials. It is well known that since the time when it became clear that Hitler was determined to carry out a policy of exterminating the Jews in Europe, the State Department officials have failed to take any positive steps reasonably calculated to save any of these people. Although they have used devices such as setting up intergovernmental organizations to survey the whole refugee problem, and calling conferences such as the Bermuda Conference to explore the whole refugee problem, making it appear that positive action could be expected, in fact nothing has been accomplished.

The best summary of the whole situation is contained in one sentence of a report submitted on December 20, 1943, by the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate, recommending the passage of a Resolution (S.R. 203), favoring the appointment of a commission to formulate plans to save the Jews of Europe from extinction by Nazi Germany. The Resolution had been introduced by Senator Guy M. Gillette in behalf of himself and eleven colleagues, Senators Taft, Thomas, Radcliffe, Murray, Johnson, Guffey, Ferguson, Clark, Van Nuys, Downey and Ellender. The Committee stated:

"We have talked; we have sympathized; we have expressed our horror; the time to act is long past due."

Whether one views this failure as being deliberate on the part of those officials handling the matter, or merely due to their incompetence, is not too important from my point of view. However, there is a growing number of responsible people and organizations today who have ceased to view our failure as the product of simple incompetence on the part of those officials in the State Department charged with handling this problem. They see plain Anti-Semitism motivating the actions of these State Department officials and, rightly or wrongly, it will require little more in the way of proof for this suspicion to explode into a nasty scandal.

In this perspective, I ask you to weigh the implications of the following two cases which have recently come to my attention and which have not as yet become known to the public.

I.

WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS PROPOSAL TO EVACUATE THOUSANDS OF JEWS FROM RUMANIA AND FRANCE

On March 13, 1943, the World Jewish Congress representative in London sent a cable to their offices here. This cable stated that information reaching London indicated it was possible to rescue Jews provided funds were put at the disposal of the World Jewish Congress representation in Switzerland.

On April 10, 1943, Sumner Welles cabled our Legation in Bern and requested them to get in touch with the World Jewish Congress representative in Switzerland, who Welles had been informed was in possession of important information regarding the situation of the Jews.

On April 20, 1943, the State Department received a cable from Bern relating to the proposed financial arrangements in connection with the evacuation of the Jews from Rumania and France.

On May 25, 1943, State Department cabled for a clarification of these proposed financial arrangements. This matter was not called to the attention of the Treasury Department at this time although the Treasury has the responsibility for licensing all such financial transactions.

This whole question of financing the evacuation of the Jews from Rumania and France was first called to the attention of the Treasury Department on June 25, 1943.

A conference was held with the State Department relating to this matter on July 15, 1943.

One day after this conference, on July 16, 1943, the Treasury Department advised the State Department that it was prepared to issue a license in this matter.

It was not until December 18, 1943, after having interposed objections for five months, that the State Department, precipitously and under circumstances revealing the fictitious character of their objections, instructed Harrison to issue the necessary license.

During this five months period between the time that the Treasury stated that it was prepared to issue a license and the time when the license was actually issued delays and objections of all sorts were forthcoming from officials in the State Department, our Legation in Bern, and finally the British. The real significance of these delays and objections was brought home to the State Department in letters which I sent to Secretary Hull on November 23, 1943, and December 17, 1943, which completely devastated the excuses which State Department officials had been advancing.

On December 18 I made an appointment to discuss the matter with Secretary Hull on December 20. And then an amazing but understandable thing happened. On the very day I made my appointment the State Department issued a license notwithstanding the fact that the objections of our Legation in Bern were still outstanding and that the British had indicated their disapproval for political reasons.

State Department officials were in such a hurry to issue this license that they not only did not ask the Treasury to draft the license (which would have been the normal procedure) but they drafted the license themselves and issued it without even consulting the Treasury as to its terms. Informal discussions with certain State Department officials have confirmed what is obvious from the above-mentioned facts.

This wasn't all that my letter and appointment precipitated. I had told Secretary Hull that I wished to discuss the British objections -- in simple terms, the British were apparently prepared to accept the probable death of thousands of Jews in enemy territory because of "the difficulties of disposing of any considerable number of Jews should they be rescued". Accordingly, on that day of "action" for our State Department, December 18, they sent a telegram to the British Foreign Office expressing astonishment at the British point of view and stating that the Department was unable to agree with that point of view.

Breckinridge Long, who is in charge of such matters in the State Department, knew that his position was so indefensible that he was unwilling even to try to defend it at my pending conference with Secretary Hull on December 20. Accordingly, he took such action as he felt was necessary to cover up his previous position in this matter. It is, of course, clear that if we had not made the record against the State Department followed by my request to see Secretary Hull, the action which the State Department officials took on December 18 would either never have been taken at all or would have been delayed so long that any benefits which it might have had would have been lost.

II

SUPPRESSION OF FACTS REGARDING HITLER'S EXTERMINATION OF JEWS IN EUROPE

The facts are as follows:

Sumner Welles as Acting Secretary of State requests confirmation of Hitler's plan to exterminate the Jews. Having already received various reports on the plight of the

Jews, on October 5, 1942 Sumner Welles as Acting Secretary of State sent a cable (2314) for the personal attention of Minister Harrison in Bern stating that leaders of the Jewish Congress had received reports from their representatives in Geneva and London to the effect that many thousands of Jews in Eastern Europe were being slaughtered pursuant to a policy embarked upon by the German Government for the complete extermination of the Jews in Europe. Welles added that he was trying to obtain further information from the Vatican but that other than this he was unable to secure confirmation of these stories. He stated that Rabbi Wise believed that information was available to his representatives in Switzerland but that they were in all liklihood fearful of dispatching any such reports through open cables or mail. He then stated that World Jewish Congress officials in Switzerland, Riegner and Lichtheim, were being requested by Wise to call upon Minister Harrison; and Welles requested Minister Harrison to advise him by telegram of all the evidence and facts which he might secure as a result of conferences with Riegner and Lichtheim.

State Department receives confirmation that the extermination was being rapidly carried out. Pursuant to Welles' cable of October 5 Minister Harrison forwarded documents from Riegner confirming the fact of extermination of the Jews (in November 1942), and in a cable of January 21, 1943 (482) relayed a message from Riegner and Lichtheim which Harrison stated was for the information of the Under Secretary of State (and was to be transmitted to Rabbi Stephen Wise if the Under Secretary should so determine). This message described a horrible situation concerning the plight of Jews in Europe. It reported mass executions of Jews in Poland; the Jews were required before execution to strip themselves of all their clothing which was then sent to Germany; in Germany deportations were continuing; many Jews were being deprived of rationed foodstuffs; no Jews would be left in Prague or Berlin by the end of March, etc.; and in Rumania 130,000 Jews were deported to Transnistria; about 60,000 had already died and the remaining 70,000 were starving; living conditions were indescribable; Jews were deprived of all their money, foodstuffs and possessions; they were housed in deserted cellars, and occasionally twenty to

thirty people slept on the floor of one unheated room; disease was prevalent, particularly fever; urgent assistance was needed.

Summer Welles furnishes this information to the Jewish organizations. Summer Welles furnished the documents received in November to the Jewish organizations in the United States and authorized them to make the facts public. On February 9, 1943 Welles forwarded the messages contained in cable 482 of January 21 to Rabbi Stephen Wise.

The receipt of this message intensified the pressure on the State Department to take some action.

Certain State Department officials attempt to stop this Government from obtaining further information from the very source from which the above evidence was received. On February 10, the day after Welles forwarded the message contained in cable 482 of January 21 to Rabbi Wise, and in direct response to this cable, a most highly significant cable was dispatched to Minister Harrison. This cable, 354 of February 10, read as follows:

"Your 482, January 21

"In the future we would suggest that you do not accept reports submitted to you to be transmitted to private persons in the United States unless such action is advisable because of extraordinary circumstances. Such private messages circumvent neutral countries' censorship and it is felt that by sending them we risk the possibility that steps would necessarily be taken by the neutral countries to curtail or forbid our means of communication for confidential official matter.

Hull (SW)"

The cable was signed for Hull by "SW" (Summer Welles). But it is significant that there is not a word in it that

would even suggest to the person signing that it was designed to countermand the Department's specific requests for information on Hitler's plans to exterminate the Jews. The cable has the appearance of being a normal routine message which a busy official would sign without question. On its face it is most innocent and innocuous, yet when read together with the previous cables is it anything less than an attempted suppression of information requested by this Government concerning the murder of Jews by Hitler?

It is also significant that the message which provoked the ban on further communications of this character was not addressed to private persons at all but was addressed to Under Secretary Welles at his own request and the information contained therein was only to be transmitted to the World Jewish Congress if Welles deemed it advisable.

Thereafter on April 10, 1943, Summer Welles again requested our Legation for information (cable 877). Apparently he did not realize that in cable 354 (to which he did not refer) Harrison had been instructed to cease forwarding reports of this character. Harrison replied on April 20 (cable 2460) and indicated that he was in a most confused state of mind as a result of the conflicting instructions he had received. Among other things he stated:

> "May I suggest that messages of this character should not (repeat not) be subjected to the restriction imposed by your 354, February 10, and that I be permitted to transmit messages from R more particularly in view of the helpful information which they may frequently contain?"

The fact that cable 354 is not the innocent and routine cable that it appears to be on its face is further highlighted by the efforts of State Department officials to prevent this Department from obtaining the cable and learning its true significance.

The facts relating to this attempted concealment are as follows:

(i) Several men in our Department had requested State Department officials for a copy of the cable of February 10 (354). We had been advised that it was a Department communication; a strictly political communication, which had nothing to do with economic matters; that it had only had a very limited distribution within the Department, the only ones having anything to do with it being the European Division, the Political Adviser and Summer Welles; and that a copy could not be furnished to the Treasury.

(ii) At the conference in Secretary Hull's office on December 20 in the presence of Breckinridge Long I asked Secretary Hull for a copy of cable 354, which I was told would be furnished to me.

(iii) By note to me of December 20, Breckinridge Long enclosed a paraphrase of cable 354. This paraphrase of cable 354 specifically omitted any reference to cable 482 of January 21 -- thus destroying the only tangible clue to the true meaning of the message.

(iv) I would never have learned the true meaning of cable 354 had it not been for chance. I had asked one of the men in my Department to obtain all the facts on this matter. He had previously called one of the men in another Division of the State Department and requested permission to see the relevant cables. In view of the Treasury interest in this matter, this State Department representative obtained cable 354 and the cable of January 21 to which it referred and showed these cables to my representative.

The facts I have detailed in this report, Mr. President, came to the Treasury's attention as a part of our routine investigation of the licensing of the financial phases of the proposal of the World Jewish Congress for the evacuation of Jews from France and Rumania. The facts may thus be said to have come to light through accident. How many others of the same character are buried in State Department files is a matter I would have no way of knowing. Judging from the almost complete failure of the State Department to achieve any results, the strong suspicion must be that they are not

few.

This much is certain, however. The matter of rescuing the Jews from extermination is a trust too great to remain in the hands of men who are indifferent, callous, and perhaps even hostile. The task is filled with difficulties. Only a fervent will to accomplish, backed by persistent and untiring effort can succeed where time is so precious.

Henry Morgenthau.

Jan. 16, 1944.