

The Bermuda Conference:
The Use of Refugees for Public Relations

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Leading up to and during the Second World War, the governments of the United States and the United Kingdom reacted similarly to the way Jews were being treated by Nazi Germany. As knowledge of persecution, and then murder, spread from Europe, many Jewish communities and non-Jewish organizations in both the United States and the United Kingdom joined together to question the lack of action from their respective governments. In 1943, the United States and the United Kingdom met to try and appease the Jewish communities and non-Jewish organizations within their own countries by having a conference in Bermuda to discuss what they, as nation-states, could do to help Jewish refugees escape Nazi-controlled Europe. The conference took place from April 19 through April 28, 1943 on the small island colony of Bermuda. While this public relations exercise appeared to be a valiant and sincere effort, the event was, in fact, a simple diplomatic mission that affected very few and did little to help the situation as a whole.

For a conference that had the potential to actively help the dire situation in Europe, it is a mystery why so little has been written on the subject. Literature on the Holocaust and the Second World War have been extensive and exhaustive. But there is little attention paid to the Bermuda Conference. In Deborah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt's *Holocaust: A History* mention of the Bermuda Conference is condensed into two paragraphs. This source states that "delegated to the Bermuda Conference came armed with a horrible knowledge – and yet did nothing."¹ While generally this statement is correct, the intricacies involved in the conference itself were much more complicated and far more elaborate. In other literatures, such as *Rescue Attempts during the Holocaust: Proceedings of the Second Vad Hashem International Historical Conference – 1974*, the

¹ Deborah Dwork and Robert van Pelt, *Holocaust: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002), 324.

Bermuda Conference is not mentioned as a real attempt to help refugees, but instead it is seen as a false stepping stone toward what the end result of Nazi extermination of over six million Jews². Even very large publications do not even deal with the Bermuda Conference. In Martin Gilbert's *The Holocaust: A History of the Jews of Europe During the Second World War*, there is not one single mention in the 828 pages.³

Some of the more comprehensive writings on the Bermuda Conference appear in books like *No Haven for the Oppressed: United States Policy Toward Jewish Refugees, 1938-1945* by Saul S. Friedman. These books focus more narrowly on United States Policy relating to Jewish refugees rather than the Holocaust or the Second World War generally.⁴ This focus allows for a more government-orientated approach, which must deal with the Bermuda Conference since it was such a large part of American diplomacy during 1943. The only extensive writing I could find specifically in reference to the Bermuda Conference was an article written by Monty N. Penkower. In "The Bermuda Conference and Its Aftermath: An Allied Quest for "Refuge" During the Holocaust," the author argues that the reason both the United States and the United Kingdom partook in the Bermuda Conference was to avoid any blame that could have been placed on them for what was happening to Jews in Europe.⁵ But beyond using the Bermuda Conference as a diplomatic tool, it is important to see the Bermuda Conference in the larger context of the Second World War and the specific domestic situations in the United States and in the

² *Rescue Attempts during the Holocaust: Proceedings of the Second Yad Vashem International Historical Conference* (Jerusalem: Ahva Cooperative Press, April 8-11 1974).

³ Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: A History of the Jews of Europe during the Second World War* (New York: Henry Hold Company, 1985).

⁴ Saul S. Friedman, *No Haven for the Oppressed: United States Policy Toward Jewish Refugees, 1938-1945* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973).

⁵ Monty N. Penkower, "The Bermuda Conference and Its Aftermath: An Allied Quest for "Refuge" during the Holocaust," *Prologue: the Journal of the National Archives* 13, no. 3 (1981): 145-173.

United Kingdom. As democracies, both felt the need to address the public outcry that was beginning to make their governments look uncaring and heartless.

To understand the way that the Bermuda Conference came about in 1943 and why it was such an important opportunity for the governments in the United States and in the United Kingdom, one must look back to the mid 1930's. The complex nature of Nazi persecution and the public's opinion pushed the United States and the United Kingdom into having a conference. Overt Nazi oppression of German Jews began as early as 1935 when the Nuremberg race laws and a series of other legislation legalized discrimination of Jews. Some of these new measures included employment regulation, marriage restrictions, extramarital intercourse restrictions and even not allowing Jews to display the swastika flag,⁶ while others restricted where one could reside or one's right to own a business. These race laws became the legal foundation by which the Nazi government discriminated against German Jews. In 1938, the first signs of public outrage against these attempts to persecute German Jews can be found in the form of newspaper articles. Many of these newspaper articles were written in response to *Kristallnacht*, an events from November 1938. Nazi secret police, in the tradition of a pogrom, vandalized and ruined shops, property and other belongings of Jewish families around Germany and Austria. In addition, almost 200 Jews were killed and members of the police arrested 40,000, most of who were then deported to Poland.⁷ In 1938, *The Times* in London reported that individuals were giving large amounts of money to "refugee victims of religious, racial and political persecution."⁸ In this instance, Lord Baldwin, a prominent

⁶ Donald D. Wall, *Nazi Germany & World War II* (St. Paul, MN: West, 1997), 108.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁸ "(e)150,944 For The Refugees: Total For The Day Again Higher, Ex-Soldiers' Gift," *The Times*, December 19, 1938, 12.

royal family member, called for donations to help these individuals and a large outpouring of support followed. Included in many of these gifts were letters expressing sadness for the individuals being persecuted, and appeals to others to help in whatever way they could. Among those who gave to the cause were refugees themselves, others being persecuted, and even soldiers giving thanks to “German Jewish soldiers who gave their lives for the protection of their ‘Vaterland’.”⁹ It is clear that it was more than Jewish groups who were interested in helping aid Jews in Nazi-controlled Germany and Austria.

Before *Kristallnacht* and the war began, the Evian Conference took place in 1938 in an effort to discuss the options to help refugees from Nazi-controlled areas. The Evian Conference had 32 nation-state participants including the United States and the United Kingdom. The agenda had two main focuses. The first was to find some kind of solution to the refugee problem that had already developed by 1938 as Jews began to flee Germany and Austria. The second was to establish an international organization that would deal specifically with the refugee problem at hand.¹⁰ As can be imagined, this kind of pressure made some nations wary of what could be asked of them in order to attend the conference. Beforehand, though, it was made clear that anyone participating in the conference would not be required in any way to help the situation, instead any and all action would be voluntary.¹¹ This conference set a precedent that continued on through the 1943 Bermuda Conference by not referring to Jewish refugees specifically and making empty decisions that would, for the most part, affect very few. One thing that did

⁹ “(e)150,944 For The Refugees: Total For The Day Again Higher, Ex-Soldiers’ Gift,” *The Times*, December 19, 1938, 12.

¹⁰ Abraham J. Edelheit and Hershel Edelheit, *History of the Holocaust: A Handbook and Dictionary*, (San Francisco: Westview, 1994), 129.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 129.

come out of this conference was a failed public relations campaign surrounding the event. The proceedings were open and public, unlike the later Bermuda Conference. It was due to the conference's public nature that when it had concluded and little had happened, the public all over the world was aware of its shortcomings. The only real outcome of the Evian Conference was the creation of the Intergovernmental Committee (IGC) on Refugees, which was based in London. Yet, the IGC had very little power and even fewer resources.¹² Overall, the conference had little lasting effect other than the creation of this powerless committee.

The immigration policies of both the United States and the United Kingdom were very strict and straightforward during the war years. The United States had implemented a very narrow immigration policy based on quotas in 1924 known as the National Origins Act. This act restricted the number of immigrants allowed into the United States based on their country of origin. These quotas favored Northern European immigrants much heavier than any other region in the world. It is evident that over 86% of the immigrants following the 1924 act were from Northern European nations.¹³ Even with these quotas in place, it is estimated that from 1933-1941 the United States granted over one million fewer visas to immigrants than was allowed by the quotas established in 1924. The British actually increased their immigration quotas slightly into the United Kingdom itself, as Palestine became a larger issue for their overall strategic interests in the Middle East. As Arabs became more upset with more and more Jews immigrating there, the British allowed fewer and fewer to go to Palestine legally.

¹² *Ibid.*, 129.

¹³ *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (Washington, D.C. Government Printing Office, 1929), 100.

Throughout the depression and into the war years, the United States and the United Kingdom experienced a huge wave of anti-Semitism. Both government officials and the public felt as though many of the economic problems of the Great Depression had some connection to Jews within their own countries. For this reason, both governments were very wary of loosening their immigration policies since the backlash had the potential to be devastating. With these factors, simple immigration was no longer a viable option for either government to consider.¹⁴

Public opinion is something that is generally hard to judge since this opinion is inconsistent and based on so many different factors. For this specific project, I used *The New York Times* and *The Times* of London since they are both widely circulated and considered the leading papers in their respective countries. Since *The New York Times* editorial policy tended to be slightly more liberal and *The Times* editorial policy tended to be slightly more conservative, they serve also as ideological contrasts in some measure.¹⁵

In *The Times* during 1938, numerous Letters to the Editor were written suggesting ways for the British to help persecuted Jews in Europe. One popular opinion was to allow them to immigrate to South America “where they would find themselves under the sympathetic eye of the United States.”¹⁶ To back up this point, the author pointed out that “backed by the wealth of the Jewish communities in North America and in other countries, including our own, and with help from others, there is no reason why men and women of their race should not achieve success with hands willing to work and keen

¹⁴ Edelheit and Edelheit, 126-138.

¹⁵ In addition, *The New York Times* and *The Times* have excellent online, searchable archives that make this kind of research more accessible since Pacific University does not have access to other specific papers dating back to 1943.

¹⁶ Sydney King-Farlow, “Vacant Lands for Settlers: An Urgent Problem, Prospects In South America,” *The Times*, December 13, 1938, 17.

brains, and the field open for the establishment of manufacturing industries is a wide one.”¹⁷ Other suggestions proposed that Britain “hand over a Colony, or even more than one, for the formation of a Jewish state in the full international sense.”¹⁸ One colony that was suggested was British Guiana, on the northern coast of South America.¹⁹

Direct appeals to government institutions were another way groups in the United Kingdom reacted to the refugees coming from Nazi-controlled Europe. One of the first examples of this type of appeal to help European Jews took place in November 1938 following *Kristallnacht* when “general support (was) given to proposals that larger opportunities should be given in the Empire and Palestine for the permanent settlement of refugees.”²⁰ This piece went on to ask the British government to help in any way possible to secure the property of Jewish refugees who were fleeing from German controlled areas and to provide relief to “victims of persecution.”²¹ Since there was a proposal for British Palestine to accept Jewish refugee children, a number of news articles appeared that showed that the matter was of serious public concern and should be approved by the British Government. On November 24, 1938, an American Rabbi wrote, “Every responsible Jewish leader... is grateful to the British Government for its interest in the problem and for the steps that it hopes to take. But the need is urgent. In these nightmare days the horror of the position of the German and Austrian Jews grows hourly worse. While we wait, they die.”²² This editorial was published after it was suggested that 100,000 Jews could be moved to Palestine. The news story itself went on to say “One

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁸ R. Wingate, “Absorption Of The Jews: A Sovereign State,” *The Times*, November 24, 1938, 10.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁰ “Helping Jewish Refugees: British Board’s Gratitude, Cooperation Offered,” *The Times*, November 21, 1938, 18.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

²² “American Rabbi’s Appeal: Entry Of 100,000 Jews To Palestine,” *The Times*, November 24, 1938, 9.

word from the British Government and practically the whole of the younger generation of German Jewry could be saved.”²³ As 1938 came to an end, the public outcry to support those who were being persecuted in Germany was isolated mostly to the European continent. The distance between those suffering and those trying to help was relatively small, but as World War II began, the intensity of persecution by Nazi Germany turned more radical and other parts of the world began to take notice.

On September 1, 1939, German tanks and troops entered Poland and the war in Europe began.²⁴ A wide range of groups began to take action to help the Jewish population in addition to other refugee groups in Europe beginning in 1939. Charity groups that became very active during that year included politically active religious organizations such as the Zionist Organization of America and the Jewish Welfare Society while others were supported by a variety of non-religious groups such as the Polish Relief Fund and the Lord Baldwin Fund for Refugees. Interestingly, among those who contributed to these funds included the King and Queen of England. They were the first to give to the Polish Relief Fund when it was established “at a meeting held at the Polish Embassy in London on October 19 (1939), when an Empire-wide appeal was decided upon for the purpose of raising funds for the relief of distress among Polish war victims.”²⁵ Since non-Jewish individuals were becoming more and more involved in the aid of refugees, particularly Jewish refugees from Europe, the work of these groups was discussed regularly in the press and with an intensity intended to arouse others to give to this worthy cause.

²³ “American Rabbi’s Appeal: Entry Of 100,000 Jews To Palestine,” *The Times*, November 24, 1938, 9.

²⁴ Wall, 113.

²⁵ “Polish War Victims: The King and Queen Subscribe To Relief Fund,” *The Times*, November 4, 1939, 9.

In both the United States and the United Kingdom, one way charity groups raised money to benefit Jewish refugees was through concert and entertainment events. In January 1939, collections were taken for refugee funds “by the whole of the British entertainment industry, including theatres, cinemas, variety houses, and circuses”²⁶ around London. Importantly it was “to help victims of persecution regardless of their nationality or creed, and emphasized that the refugees include thousands of Christians as well as Jews.”²⁷ Later in 1939, a concert was arranged in order to raise money for “The Women’s Appeal Committee for the Relief of German and Austrian Jewish Refugee Women and Children.”²⁸ This fundraiser included a performance by the London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Henry J. Wood.

Letters to the Editor from *The Times* during 1939 focused on the domestic situation created by Jewish refugees in the United Kingdom. Robert P. Skinner wrote one opinion that seems particularly odd in August of 1939. He suggested that “supposed we said to Germany: This is your problem. It is not ours. You have set out to do an inhuman thing, which is revolting to our sense of justice. We refuse to come to your aid. You cannot expel 850,000 Germans except by sending them to us, and we refuse to accept any of them, except if you provide for them. No longer can you count upon the charitable impulses of other people to relieve you of your own obligations.”²⁹ Although it is not stated explicitly, this kind of commentary has very clear anti-Semitic undertones. Interestingly, it should be noted that eventually the Nazis did stop pushing refugees out of areas under their control as their plan of systematic extermination began. While this

²⁶ “Refugee Fund: The Entertainment World, Help of Audiences And Proprietors”, *The Times*, January 16, 1939, 9.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁸ “Advertisement,” *The Times* March 29, 1939, 14.

²⁹ Robert P. Skinner, “Jewish Refugees: The German Obligation,” *The Times*, August 1, 1939, 17.

Skinner suggestion was not taken seriously in the upper levels of government, some other situations concerning the way refugees should be treated domestically were taken in to consideration.

One letter even gave the example of a poet who escaped from Germany in 1933 and as of 1939 had been living in London taking no money or work from the British Government or people. In fact, “at the outbreak of hostilities he offered his services as stretcher-bearer, and was refused, whereupon he declared his readiness to serve this country in any capacity, even in his Majesty’s forces.”³⁰ Although not specifically stated, judging from what was published in newspapers during 1939, the general public in both England and the United States began not only to take notice of what was happening to Jews in Germany and Poland but they also began to take action in order to help in any way they could.

Similarly, in the United States, fund-raising events took place in order to raise awareness and funds for refugees in Europe. On June 26, 1940, a concert and symposium was put together to raise money for “the Association of Jewish Refugees and Immigrants from Poland.”³¹ At this specific event, musicians from Poland who had fled persecution performed and others spoke to bring public awareness to this issue. In an even more impressive showing, in November 1940, 20,000 individuals packed Madison Square Garden for an evening of entertainment called “Night of Stars.”³² Money raised from this event was “divided among the appeal’s subsidiaries, the Joint Distribution Committee,

³⁰ Anne Fremantle, “An Alien’s Tribunal: The German Non-Jewish Refugee,” *The Times*, October 28, 1939, 4.

³¹ “Concert for Refugee Aid,” *The New York Times*, June 16, 1940, 11.

³² “Jewish Fund Aided by ‘Night of Stars’,” *The New York Times*, November 26, 1940, 21.

the United Palestine Appeal and the National Refugee Service.”³³ Focusing on overall aid, Samuel A. Goldsmith, the director of the Jewish Charities of Chicago said that the thirty-three cities that had already spent \$550,000 in 1939 were to spend almost \$1 million on more aid for Jewish refugees.³⁴ This kind of publicity in *The New York Times* made anyone who would read it aware that there were private philanthropic organizations determined to help Jewish refugees.

Direct appeals to the government also became more common in the United States during 1940. When, in 1940, a group of Jewish refugees were not allowed to leave Bulgaria, Jewish communities in the United States did whatever they could to try and help these 500 individuals. *The New York Times* noted that, “in an effort to arouse public opinion over the plight of 500 Jewish refugees, detained on the Danube at Ruse, Bulgaria, the American Friends of Jewish Palestine... yesterday made public a letter in which they called on members of Congress to urge the State Department to make representations to the Rumanian Government to allow them ‘to pass unmolested on their journey’.”³⁵ As United States participation in the Second World War drew closer, these kinds of human-interest stories became more common in *The New York Times*. Though many of the groups trying to help Jews in Europe were Jewish themselves, their stories were consumed by the reading public at large.

During 1941, there was less information written specifically about aiding Jewish communities or refugees. It could be speculated that since the United States was growing close to their entrance into the war, that less and less attention was paid to helping those already effected by the conflict. Smaller fund-raising events took place especially in New

³³ *Ibid.*, 21.

³⁴ “Says 33 Cities Aid Jewish Refugees,” *The New York Times*, May 24, 1940, 8.

³⁵ “Asks Aid For Refugees,” *The New York Times*, September 29, 1940, 28.

York City to give more funding to charities set up to help Jewish refugees in Europe. For example, a Mother and Daughter Tea held in May of 1941 drew 1,200 women and all proceeds went “to aid Jewish refugees in Palestine.”³⁶ The kind of news that involved Jewish refugees during 1941 was mostly concerned with their deportation by Nazi officials to Eastern Europe. The *New York Times* reported that during the latest deportation in February of 1941, “the amounts of clothing and money the Jews were permitted to take with them were reduced to a minimum. Before leaving Vienna, it is learned they were permitted to change their money into Polish *zlotys*. Their dwellings, it is understood, have been locked and sealed, their possessions confiscated.”³⁷ But as 1941 closed, the United States was officially involved in the war, and it was becoming more and more clear that the Nazi policy toward Jews was moving toward starvation, torture and murder.

The year of 1942 brought new challenges to both the United States and the United Kingdom. By December 1942, Allied powers became aware that the Nazis were on a mission to exterminate, rather than expel or concentrate the Jews of Europe. Reports of smokestacks being built and train loads of people into places like Auschwitz became widespread in high levels of government in both the United States and the United Kingdom. As this knowledge trickled down into the public, charities became more and more fervent in their activities. Not only were these funds intended to help those in Europe, some wished to help those Jewish refugees who had recently come to the United States.³⁸ By mid 1942, it was estimated by *The New York Times* that “since the outbreak of the war Jews in America have provided overseas relief assistance for 3,000,000

³⁶ “1,200 Women Attend Hadassah Meeting,” *The New York Times*, May 14, 1941, 24.

³⁷ “Nazi Deportation of Jews Resumes,” *The New York Times*, February 20, 1941, 8.

³⁸ “Aided 3,600 Refugees,” *The New York Times*, July 20, 1942, 4.

persons through the Joint Distribution Committee.”³⁹ Other news items showed how these specific organizations were actually helping refugees coming to the United States. By showing how much a specific organization had accomplished, it demonstrated how much donating and helping these causes actually affected Jewish refugees. The Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society “revealed that it has answered 209,430 inquiries concerning immigration problems, arrangements of steamship transportation for persons abroad holding visas, drawing up affidavits, naturalization matters and the problems of persons who were technically ‘enemy aliens’.”⁴⁰ Using this kind of information one can tell that not only were there groups looking to aid both Jewish and non-Jewish refugees from Europe but this appeal was very public. Both writers and editors in the most influential newspapers of the United States and the United Kingdom felt it was newsworthy to publish these kinds of events and information so that the public was aware of what was going on to help refugees in a domestic and international manner.

With this emphasis on the plight of Jewish refugees and the efforts to help them, there was an emergent public opinion, which encouraged this type of action to continue. In *The Times*, numerous editorials specifically discussed what should be done to help Jewish refugees escape from the Nazi terror. These editorials had two basic themes. The first debated the issue of allowing Jewish immigration to Palestine and many of these stressed the dilemma of allowing thousands of Jews to live in an overwhelmingly Muslim location. Thus, many articles suggested alternative places where Jewish immigrants could live a peaceful and free life.

³⁹ “Jews in America Aid 3,000,000 Overseas,” *The New York Times*, September 2, 1942, 20.

⁴⁰ “Aided 3,600 Refugees,” *The New York Times*, July 20, 1942, 4.

The second type of editorial focused on and condemned the lack of response by the United Kingdom and the United States to the brutal Nazi policies regarding Jews. More plainly said “in February of this year Hitler announced that ‘the Jew will be exterminated,’ and in July Himmler, speaking for his master added the words, ‘Jews are to die in torture.’”⁴¹ In the same articles, a critical stance is taken regarding the manner in which allied powers had condemned Hitler’s acts by referring to state efforts as “pitifully tame.”⁴² Specifically, articles claimed that the United Kingdom was doing less than what was necessary to help Jews. In Europe, this was the kind of indication to the government that the public was not willing to let government inaction go unnoticed. Although the opinions about how to handle the situation varied, there was a growing consensus that something more substantial than had previously been happening needed to occur and that it was the government’s job to do it.

There was a renewed emphasis in 1942 when a variety of Jewish organizations assigned specific blame to both American and British governments for allowing disastrous things to happen to Jews across Europe. For example, when 760 Jewish refugees died aboard a ship which was sunk in 1942, “Chaim Weizmann, president of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, laid upon the British Government today responsibility.”⁴³ Another, more famous example, was the voyage of the *St. Louis*. Originating in Europe, this ship was filled with mostly German Jewish refugees bound for the United States and Cuba. But after repeated attempts neither nation accepted any of the refugees and the ship was sent back to Europe.⁴⁴ Jewish organizations and groups began to recognize and

⁴¹ Neill Malcom, “Aid For The Jews,” *The Times*, December 22, 1942, 5.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴³ “Voice Protest in London,” *The New York Times*, March 9, 1942, 12.

⁴⁴ “Topics of the Times: Refugee Ship,” *New York Times*, June 8, 1939.

emphasize that the governments of the United States and the United Kingdom knew what was happening to Jews under Nazi control, and that they were obviously not doing anything about it stirred up others to push for government action.

As 1943 began, the governments of the United States and Great Britain knew that they needed to do something in order to quell public outcry. It was in the first few weeks of this year that acknowledgement of the Nazi extermination policy was included in personal correspondence between government officials. On January 20, 1943 a document was transmitted between London and Washington D.C. discussing the need for some kind of agreement between the two nation-states that could address the issues surrounding Jewish refugees. Specifically, they hoped "an understanding could be reached between His Majesty's Government and the United States Government in regard to such a cooperative offer, the way would be open for approaching the other Governments of the United Nations, for example the Latin American countries, the British Dominions or even neutrals to ascertain what they could be prepared to contribute towards the solution of the most immediate problem."⁴⁵ In addition, "This would have to be done with the minimum of publicity over details, and for this reason His Majesty's Government be inclined to deprecate any kind of formal international meeting; but some kind of private conference of Allied representatives would appear to be the most expeditious and practical procedure."⁴⁶ It was clear that both governments recognized the need for a public display of their willingness to help European refugees, yet they desired to maintain a "private conference." This document went on to say, "and if its main result was to elicit full statements of what the various Governments were doing and any difficulties in the way of

⁴⁵ Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, "The British Embassy to the Department of State: Aide-Memoire: Refugees From Nazi Occupied Territory," (Washington DC: GPO, 1963): 136.

⁴⁶ Foreign Relations, 136-137.

their doing more, this in itself would be of great value."⁴⁷ Based on these statements, it is clear that both governments saw a need for some kind of meeting to show that they were actively doing something to help Jews in Europe. But importantly, this meeting would need to take place in a closed setting in order to prevent the kind of public relations mishap that had occurred following the Evian Conference.

Before the two nations even discussed where this meeting would take place, some ground rules were laid out in order to assure both parties of what was expected. One idea that was agreed upon early was that "the refugee problem cannot be treated as though it were a wholly Jewish problem which could be handled by Jewish agencies or by machinery only adapted for assisting Jews . . . There is also the distinct danger of stimulating anti-Semitism in areas where an excessive number of foreign Jews are introduced."⁴⁸ The feeling that specifically referring to the refugee problem as a Jewish one would be problematic was real since in both the United States and the United Kingdom, anti-Semitism was common among the public and in the government itself. In the United States, President Roosevelt appointed Breckinridge Long in 1940 as the assistant secretary of state for special problems.⁴⁹ In this position he was in charge of the Visa Section in the United States, and restricted immigration from Europe during World War II so much that the 150,000 quotas were never even met.⁵⁰ He had clear anti-Semitic and xenophobic tendencies that are well documented, and his participation, among others, in the discussion surrounding these events meant that officials had to be careful to refer to the refugees in a general matter, without implying race or religion.

⁴⁷ Foreign Relations, 136-137.

⁴⁸ Foreign Relations, 134.

⁴⁹ John A Garrary and Mark C Carnes, *American National Biography*, vol. 13, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 865.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 865.

A month later, the person assigned to this issue in the United Kingdom wrote to the Secretary of State in the United States confirming the United Kingdom's wish to have a conference on the subject of refugees because "...public opinion in Great Britain has been rising to such a degree that the British Government can no longer remain dead to it."⁵¹ This again shows how aware the United Kingdom was of the importance of public opinion within their respective nations. In addition to a need for some kind of meeting, this document also discussed how at this point, it was "revealed the extent of Germany's policy of extermination."⁵² There were three different actions that the British government felt the United States needed to take in order to start something constructive.

(1) That the United States Government should associate themselves with His Majesty's Government in convening in London a meeting of the Allied Governments to examine the problem and its possible solutions. (2) That both governments should agree on a number of special visas for refugees, and with this contribution invite similar assistance from countries with the necessary territorial facilities. (3) That the United States Government should associate themselves with His Majesty's Government in promoting an international guarantee to the various neutral governments now, with increasing difficulty and apprehension, receiving refugees, that they would not be left alone to carry this burden at the end of the war.⁵³

It is in this same appeal that the first mention of a location for refugees is mentioned in an official document. The island of Madagascar off the Southeastern coast of Africa had previously been thought of as a good place for "oppressed Jews,"⁵⁴ an idea even promoted by the Nazis themselves. Immediately though, this suggestion was scrapped because "the area did not seem climatically well suited, and that it was planned to send other refugee groups there, if possible, and that transport presented outstanding

⁵¹ Foreign Relations, 138.

⁵² Foreign Relations, 138.

⁵³ Foreign Relations, 139.

⁵⁴ Foreign Relations, 140.

difficulties.”⁵⁵ These initial communications between the United States and the United Kingdom did little to actually initiate something that could help refugees in Europe. Most of the contact discussed what each nation-state had done up until that point to help refugees coming from Europe, both believing that the other could and ought to do more.

As February turned into March, plans for delegations from the United States and the United Kingdom to meet became more concrete. Originally it was suggested that Ottawa would be a good meeting place for both delegations.⁵⁶ But in the end, the place they chose to meet was the island colony of Bermuda. It was suggested that this should be the meeting place because it would be more difficult for reporters and the public to comment upon, witness, or be a part of the discussions due to its remote location. Both nations sent delegations there to begin meeting on April 19, 1943. The leader of the delegation from the United States was Dr. Harold Dodds, who was the President of Princeton at the time. Others on the American delegation were the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, a House Representative and other individuals who were considered diplomatic assets for this kind of meeting.⁵⁷ As suggested in earlier communications, the media access to this event was limited to five reporters specifically chosen from five separate international news outlets.⁵⁸ These included Reuters, the Associated Press, the United Press, the Overseas News Agency, and the International News Service.⁵⁹ Because the conference was taking place on an isolated island, it made it easy for both governments to control what kind of information was released to the public in their own nations and abroad.

⁵⁵ Foreign Relations, 140.

⁵⁶ Foreign Relations, 144.

⁵⁷ Foreign Relations, 151.

⁵⁸ Foreign Relations, 151.

⁵⁹ Foreign Relations, 151.

On the agenda were a variety of issues including shipping concerns, relocation areas, and specific situations such as that of Spain and Portugal where immediate help was needed. It was the hope of both nations that a conclusion could be reached that would appease Jewish communities both globally and domestically and hopefully help a whole people escape the wrath of Nazi Germany. But in an effort to turn public opinion around, this conference only invigorated those who felt the allied powers were not doing enough to help Jews and other persecuted peoples of Europe. As the Bermuda Conference began, this event unfolded before the delegates, but the public was kept at a distance in the name of diplomatic process.

From the beginning, as was the case during the Evian Conference, both delegations thought it was wise to make one thing very clear: during the conference, there was to be no specific reference to the refugees as Jewish. Even before the conference was set up, this kind of advice was being traded between the United States and the United Kingdom. This kind of rationale in favor of not referring to Jews specifically was widespread and, for the most part, maintained during the Bermuda Conference.

During the preparation for the Bermuda Conference, one interesting item of conversation that surfaced was related to Germany. At the onset of the war, the Germans had flooded other nations with mostly Jewish refugees. After 1942, this kind of policy of expulsion was abolished and a policy of “extermination” adopted. Interestingly, the British felt as though this might be only temporary as the threat of flooding allied nation-states with refugees would present a larger problem: “there is a possibility that the Germans or their satellites may change over from the policy of extermination to one of extrusion, and aim as they did before the war at embarrassing other countries by flooding

them with alien immigrants.”⁶⁰ Although it is true that pushing refugees out to other countries would pose a problem, the British government seems to suggest that the policy of extermination was less embarrassing, and thus less problematic, to them and other nation-states because then there would be no confusion over the legality and morality of the action. It is hard to fathom the fact that although thousands were being killed daily, the British were more concerned that refugees might upset their own delicate domestic situation and international reputation.

Some of the initial issues brought up at the Bermuda Conference itself revolved around what the two attending nations, the United States and the United Kingdom, were going to demand from the other in order to reach some kind of accord. From day one, April 19, 1943, there was considerable speculation from both sides as to what would be demanded. The first of these was brought up between The Consul General in Bermuda, William Beck, and the Secretary of State in Washington, Cordell Hull. Hull wrote, "From preliminary conversations with Mr. Law it is apparent that the British will demand changes in the structure of the Intergovernmental Committee before they agree to its use in connection with refugee problems."⁶¹ This committee had been set up following the Evian Conference in 1938 in order to streamline any kind of aid that was available to help refugees from Europe. Since its origins, it had accomplished very little, and, to the British, this was seen as something that must change in order to actively help the appearance of progress in Bermuda during 1943. The reformation of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees was discussed beginning on April 21. Though everyone agreed that it had been largely ineffective it was decided that since the

⁶⁰ Foreign Relations, 134.

⁶¹ Foreign Relations, 153.

committee was set up to do exactly what the conference was looking to implement, there was no need to start a new committee, although it would be necessary to reform it.⁶²

On the second day of discussions, the rationale for the conference were officially agreed upon: “the main purpose of the conference was twofold: (a) To consider the plight of those unfortunate persons still within the jurisdiction of Nazi authority and subject to their terrors, and (b) those who have escaped or might escape from territory under their authority but still remaining subject to the danger of being overtaken by Germany and subjected again to persecution.”⁶³ The conference’s purpose, though, was not announced publicly. Instead, the primary thing that interested both Jewish and non-Jewish groups in both the United States and Great Britain were what the five news organizations that were in Bermuda were allowed to publish. *The New York Times* had only nine articles printed immediately before and during the conference that discussed what was happening in Bermuda. Of these articles, the first few dealt specifically with the fact that there was such a limited press presence at the conference. For example, on April 14, *The New York Times* published an article that mentioned that the conference “aroused immediate protests among newspaper men that the short notice and the difficulty of obtaining transportation to the island in effect would make this a secret conference.”⁶⁴ In addition to newspapers being upset they could not attend the conference, the same article suggested that, “The members of Congress should have the opportunity of getting their information first hand.”⁶⁵ This opinion expressed in well-read newspapers of the United States made it clear that government intention to keep the press out was effective, though

⁶² Foreign Relations, 156-157.

⁶³ Foreign Relations, 153-154.

⁶⁴ “Martin Demands ‘Open’ Conference,” *The New York Times*, April 14, 1943, 17.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

it was met with an outcry. An editorial points out that “to transfer the Refugee Conference from Ottawa, where it could have been covered easily, to Bermuda, where the newspaper coverage of it will be attended with difficulty”⁶⁶ was clearly a ploy to reduce access to the press on a subject, which the American public had a right to be informed.

The sheer quantity of items discussed at the Bermuda Conference is astounding. Numerous ideas about how to help refugees in Europe were discussed throughout the conference. As noted by William Beck to the Secretary of State back in Washington D.C., "This morning session was devoted to a general discussion of some of the more radical proposals made by interested organizations. These specifically included the proposal for negotiations with Germany for the release of the Jewish population, the proposal for the exchange of German nationals for Jews and the proposal to lift the blockade for the persecuted people of Europe. It was agreed that these subjects were both impossible and outside the scope of the Conference.”⁶⁷ The conference also addressed some of the logistical items that had been getting in the way of helping more refugees. Originally, it was thought that the United Nations could contribute by helping to transport refugees on ships under their control. But, "the shipping question was then considered in complete agreement as the fact that there is at present no possibilities of releasing or diverting any United Nation shipping for the transportation of refugees. The question of the possible charter or use of neutral shipping particularly Portuguese and Spanish was

⁶⁶ “There are Many sides to Tribulations of OWI,” *The New York Times*, April 18, 1943, E3.

⁶⁷ Foreign Relations, 155.

explored."⁶⁸ So although this could have been an option, it is clear that any divergence from the war effort would not be tolerated.

One item that was discussed at length was Spain's role in aiding refugees fleeing Europe. Up until this point, Spain had been especially helpful in being a point of exit from Nazi-controlled Europe for refugees. Since it had been so successful, many in both the American and British delegation believed that it could be a valid option to help further the situation in Europe. First, the delegations agreed that "these refugees should be evacuated in order to increase the possibility of refuge for others."⁶⁹ So, in order to help more individuals, the thought was to get those refugees already amassed in Spain moved out, so others could take their place.

The next question was where these refugees should go. Early in the conference, "The British Delegation then proposed the use of the concentration camps in North Africa for at least transit use. It was suggested that the British and Americans could administer these camps. This was opposed by the American delegation on the grounds that North Africa was a field of present and possible future military operations."⁷⁰ Based on both proximity and allies, setting up camps in Northern Africa did seem like a logical place to move refugees in order to get them out of Europe, however. But, "there was also the belief that public opinion within the United States would not consent to the establishment of concentration camps in an area under control of American arms."⁷¹ This kind of opinion is odd though. At this same moment, the United States was setting up and policing concentration camps filled with Japanese Americans in the Western United

⁶⁸ Foreign Relations, 155.

⁶⁹ Foreign Relations, 157.

⁷⁰ Foreign Relations, 157.

⁷¹ Foreign Relations, 158.

States. So, then it seems as though American unwillingness to be a part of these camps in Northern Africa was not based on an unwillingness to have such camps, but instead it could have been based on trying to stay out of Jewish issues all together in order to quell anti-Semitism domestically. It should be noted that in addition to anti-Semitic worries there were few organizations that were present in the United States that were actively trying to help Japanese-Americans being interned while on the other hand, Jewish organizations were not only present but active in their cause. Instead, the United States stated that "They would prefer that a recommendation be made for the investigation of Angola as a place of refuge."⁷² The American delegation was not willing to commit to any further military resources to Europe since the American military was already being used in multiple areas during that time. But, the proximity of Northern Africa, as was originally suggested, to Europe was seen as a rational choice since after the war ended mass migration would occur as refugees returned to their homes.

The British were firm in this type of action though. During the conference, the British delegation commented "that Spain is the only effective channel of escape remaining in Western Europe for refugees of all nationalities. It is of supreme importance that this channel not be blocked, as the consequences would be: (1) that the admission of further refugees would be prevented by the Spanish Government. (2) The Allies would be deprived of useful personnel. (3) Public opinion throughout the world would come to the conclusion that the Allies were not making any serious endeavor to deal with the refugee problem."⁷³ With their concern being focused on public opinion it shows again how this was the concern of both the United States and the United Kingdom.

⁷² Foreign Relations, 158.

⁷³ Foreign Relations, 158.

But the plan to involve Spain in helping a large group of refugees in Europe was seen as both feasible and desirable to the British. At the end of the Bermuda Conference, the delegations allowed limited information to be published regarding the outcome. One item that was mentioned was that the two nations had “reached a tentative compromise on a plan to relocate European refugees temporarily in French North Africa, the Cyrenaica portion of Libya and the Diredawa region of Ethiopia.”⁷⁴ Although there was little else included as far as specifics were concerned, both delegations saw this as a preferable alternative to allowing a large number of refugees to come to the United Kingdom or the United States. But as far as the public was concerned, this item was published as though both governments were actually considering hosting refugees themselves.

After the conference ended, there were a variety of responses in newspapers in both the United States and in Great Britain. *The New York Times* coverage immediately following the conference was very opinionated. On April 28, it was reported that the union president of the CIO, Philip Murray, “had charged that the conference was being held behind closed doors, with the result that his organization could not present its sentiments of horror over the mass murder of Jews in Axis-dominated Europe.”⁷⁵ Beyond being upset with the way the conference was structured, he also noted that the conference was “‘a mere diplomatic nicety’ that might be as ‘futile’ as the Evian Conference.”⁷⁶ By merely comparing Bermuda to the Evian Conference, it automatically brought back the memories of inaction, excuses and the failed attempt to anticipate and manage public opinion. The United States government immediately answered to this complaint saying

⁷⁴ “Compromise seen on Refugee Help,” *The New York Times*, April 27, 1943, 3.

⁷⁵ “Welles Defends Refugee Parleys,” *The New York Times*, April 28, 1943, 6.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

that any organization had an opportunity to bring up their issues at the Conference.⁷⁷ As more details emerged from the Bermuda conference though, comments regarding it became more common.

On April 29, *The New York Times* reported that one outcome of the conference was the establishment of a stronger Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees. To do this, “the executive committee will be broadened, and paid administrators will be employed.”⁷⁸ In addition to the reformation of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, this article also mentioned how the President of the International Rescue and Relief Committee had called the Bermuda Conference “a ‘shame’ and a ‘disgrace’.”⁷⁹ Even more shocking was a quotation printed in a different article on April 29. The president of the Synagogue Council called the conference “not only a failure, but a mockery.”⁸⁰ This same gentleman, Rabbi Israel Goldstein, continued by accusing that “The job of the Bermuda conference apparently was not to rescue victims of Nazi terror, but to rescue our State Department and the British Foreign Office from possible embarrassment.”⁸¹ Directly stating this as a reason for the conference is unique but from what has been shown, it seems as though Rabbi Goldstein was aware of the importance public opinion played in both governments. So it is clear that beyond simply repeating what took place at the Bermuda Conference, opinions about the rationale for the conference itself were also being discussed at length in *The New York Times*. Beyond articles citing governmental sources from the conference, no positive article or quotation appeared in *The New York Times* immediately following the conference.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁷⁸ “Enlarged Group Planned,” *The New York Times*, April 29, 1943, 9.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁸⁰ “No Title,” *The New York Times*, April 29, 1943, 9.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

A similar situation occurred in London regarding coverage of the Bermuda Conference in *The Times*. In fact, *The Times* covered this conference even less than *The New York Times* had. There were a total of seven articles published between January of 1943 and the end of May 1943 relating to the conference. One of the first was written on April 20 as the conference began. This article simply stated what was occurring during the opening sessions and what the delegates hoped to do while in Bermuda. There were a variety of issues emphasized by the article. The first dealt with the fact that the Nazi regime had “resulted in a calculated policy of oppression and extermination, the effects of which extend far beyond the territories actually under its ruthless heel.”⁸² By showing how brutal the Nazis were, the delegation hoped to instill public support in their efforts in Bermuda.

The second item that was emphasized was the inability of these two nations to do anything without the support of other nations. Specifically, it was said “one thing is certain, and that is that the problem is too great for solution by the two governments here represented.”⁸³ This brings up the obvious question of why the United States and the United Kingdom were the only two-nation states allowed at the conference when clearly neither could do anything substantive alone. Looking at the Evian Conference though, it is clear that this broader strategy had not worked in the past. The third and final item highlighted in the April 20 article discussed the need for victory by Allied nations because without it “everything would be lost and that the persecution of the peoples of Europe would be intensified a thousand fold.”⁸⁴ Not only did the delegation indicate how

⁸² “Help For the Refugees: Allies’ Difficult Task,” *The Times*, April 20, 1943, 3

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

suffering would increase but they also continued to promote the idea of liberation through victory.

The second article written on April 20 in reference to the Bermuda Conference was an editorial that specifically stated, “The United States has naturally been able to do more than the United Kingdom owing to its later entry into the war.”⁸⁵ This kind of attitude in the United Kingdom toward the United States is similar to the way delegates of the United Kingdom expressed their feelings at the Bermuda Conference. It was felt that due to the late entry into the war and a larger geographic area, the United States was better equipped to handle refugees entering their country than the United Kingdom was.

Following the opening speeches of the conference, there was one editorial that took aim at what was happening there. A committee member of the National Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror speculated that “there will be a mounting wave of indignation in Britain which may surprise those who have failed to appreciate how deeply the public conscience is stirred, and how determined our people are upon action.”⁸⁶ It is important to note that even groups involved in this issue were aware of how much the public wanted the government to take action. Later, toward the end of the conference, was the next time an article appeared in *The Times* relating to Bermuda. From a reporter present in Bermuda, *The Times* published an article that defended the conference and expressed the feelings of the British delegation that were in Bermuda at the time. A leader of an organization in the United States had criticized the conference for not allowing groups to attend and take part in the discussions. The leader of the delegation from the United Kingdom, “Mr. Welles, in his reply, issued today, denies that the

⁸⁵ “The Bermuda Meeting,” *The Times*, April 20, 1943, 5.

⁸⁶ “The Bermuda Speeches,” *The Times*, April 22, 1943, 5.

Bermuda conference is being held behind doors.”⁸⁷ It continued then to defend the actions of both the Evian Conference and the Bermuda Conference by reporting, “He also states that military conditions only have prevented relief on a large scale from being developed under the Evian recommendations.”⁸⁸ This kind of attitude toward the Evian Conference and the Bermuda Conference shows that both governments knew that in the end no real resolution could be made and that the only thing that could be done was to try and save themselves from critical public opinion within their own nation-states and internationally.

At the close of the conference, a report similar to that in *The New York Times* was published in London that gave a summary of the conference. It was vague and offered very few specific details regarding what the Bermuda Conference accomplished. The only specifics mentioned was that the discussions “should lead to the substantial relief of a large number of refugees,”⁸⁹ and that “the delegates also agreed on recommendations as to the form of inter-governmental organization which they thought best fitted to handle the problem in the future.”⁹⁰ In addition to the sparse coverage, *The Times* was not able to produce any kind of report that delved into the specifics of what was going on at the Bermuda Conference.

It seems obvious that neither *The New York Times* nor *The Times* covered the conference in a way that was appropriate for the circumstances, particularly given the manner in which they had published articles demanding that something be done. These reports were what most of the public at large read, thus allowing the conference go

⁸⁷ “Mr. Welles and Bermuda Conference: Reply to Criticism,” *The Times*, April 28, 1943, 3.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸⁹ “Refugee Problem: Close of Bermuda Conference,” *The Times*, April 30, 1943, 3.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

unnoticed by most individuals in both the United States and the United Kingdom. This kind of limited coverage was exactly what the delegations of both governments had hoped for. Additionally, they hoped that this poor coverage would lead to less controversy and less attention after the conference ended. Little were they aware that this attitude would lead to further resentment and embarrassment for both governments.

Following the Bermuda Conference, both *The New York Times* and *The Times* periodically had articles in reference to the conference. One of the most memorable and interesting moments occurred immediately following the conference when the group, “Committee for a Jewish Army of Stateless and Palestinian Jews” publish a full page advertisement in *The New York Times* saying “Bermuda was a mockery, a cruel jest.”⁹¹ This advertisement goes on to express all of the ways the United States had hindered helping the “5,000,000 Jews in the Nazi Death-Trap.”⁹² In addition to a careful explanation of the situation for Jews in Europe, this advertisement lists over two-dozen Members of Congress or Members of Parliament, over a dozen governors and other leaders in both the United States and the United Kingdom who endorsed the statement that was printed. The main focus of the article was to show how Palestine could be a place for more Jewish refugees. This kind of initiative by a group that was not sponsored by either the American or British governments shows that, although the Bermuda Conference had ended without much public awareness, the lack of action was going to matter to the public in both nation-states.

For the six months following the conference, there were a variety of other newspaper articles in both *The New York Times* and *The Times* but all were opinions of

⁹¹ “Display ad 17 – No Title,” *The New York Times*, May 4, 1943, 17.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 17.

dissatisfaction with the conference in one way or another. The really interesting information during this time comes from the diplomatic papers of the United States and the United Kingdom. Immediately following the conference, it was decided that it was important to have “multilateral agreements with the Soviet Government.”⁹³ Since they were an important ally on this issue, it was felt that agreement with them was important before proceeding with any kind of official statement or action. It was repeated often that nothing should be published until the Soviet government had agreed to be a part of the statement.

In August it was decided that the Inter-Governmental Committee of Refugees should meet in order to reestablish what its new objectives and resources would be. This meeting included many other European nations than the Bermuda Conference had had. Instead the committee met and decided that not only would the cost be shared equally, but also they would be careful not to “establish formal and regular relationship with any particular organization or group of organizations.”⁹⁴ Although the committee recognized that “it may sometimes be convenient and economical for the Committee to arrange for the maintenance of refugees through voluntary organizations rather than direct, and to subsidize them where necessary.”⁹⁵ So the governments involved in the committee were willing to take the money from the organizations but not necessarily be connected to them. The only reason for this kind of relationship would be to allow for the appearance that these governments were not involved with any organization that’s aim was to help Jews. This shows, again, how intense the threat of anti-Semitic views was to the government, not only of the United States, but across Europe as well.

⁹³ Foreign Relations, 175.

⁹⁴ Foreign Relations, 210.

⁹⁵ Foreign Relations, 209.

In September of 1943, it was clear to many that little was being done to actually help those in Europe who were threatened by the Nazis. In fact a newspaper article came out on September 3 stated, “the democracies have as yet failed to institute sustained and vigorous action to rescue those who may yet be saved.”⁹⁶ These kinds of articles directed toward governments were simply an extension of the appeals that groups had made before the Bermuda Conference occurred. Although these kinds of appeals did hurt the government’s case in convincing the public that they were actively doing something to help refugees in Europe, it was more important for them to get the Soviet Government to agree to a statement before allowing the plans from Bermuda to be made public or to begin to be put into effect, as limited as they were. In fact, even up until October 20, 1943, the British and Americans were still waiting and hoping for a Soviet resolution because they felt “It would be unfortunate if the declaration has to be issued with the Soviet Government omitted but it is our feeling, as also, I think, [that] of the Intergovernmental Committee, that the Allied declaration should be issued as soon as possible and that at the very least the other Governments whom it is proposed to ask to join in it should not be kept in ignorance in the absence of any expression of views on the part of the Soviet Government.”⁹⁷ This kind of feeling was so strong that it was not until the end of 1943 that the Soviet Union finally accepted membership into the Intergovernmental Committee of Refugees and the United States and Great Britain could finally give some more detailed explanations of the Bermuda Conference since so many other nations had gotten behind their policies.

⁹⁶ “Immediate Rescue of Jews is Urged,” *The New York Times*, September 3, 1943, 13.

⁹⁷ Foreign Relations, 215.

The Bermuda Conference can be seen as an instance when public opinion actively shaped the way diplomatic relations occurred. The conference did not occur because the United States and the United Kingdom felt as though they could stop the horrifying situation in Nazi-controlled Europe. Obviously there was a desire to help but in the middle of a costly war, the possibility was slim and officials knew it. Instead, the Bermuda Conference occurred because public opinion had questioned their lack of action and demanded that something should happen. So both countries attended the conference to show the appearance of doing something to help rather than actually helping. Before this time, most conferences were held behind closed doors and only with the interest of wealthy elite in mind. But as the public became more aware and more invested in what was going on in the world, a shift occurred that forever changed diplomatic processes. After this time, conflicts like the Vietnam War and even the war in Iraq today have made governments very sensitive to public opinion regarding the progress of war. Today the United States has done its best to manage and manipulate the information citizens receive from the media in order to build support for policies and to divert criticism.

For all the time, effort and planning that went into the Bermuda Conference both the United States and the United Kingdom failed miserably in their goals. They had wished for a conference to be held that would allow for the citizens of their own nations to see that these governments were doing something to help refugees in Europe. Twenty years after the conference, one of the British diplomats states, “We said the results of the conference were confidential, but in fact there were no results that I can recall.”⁹⁸ Not only did this conference fail to help many refugees, since its plans were mismanaged and delayed on numerous occasions, but it failed to fool anyone into thinking that the United

⁹⁸ Deborah Dwork and Robert van Pelt, 324.

States or the United Kingdom were even interested in helping refugees from Europe at all.

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