

AMERICANS

AND THE HOLOCAUST

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEES

A CASE STUDY ON THE WAGNER-ROGERS BILL

TIMELINE, 1918–1939

1918: The Impact of World War I



Source: Imperial War Museum

More than four million Americans served in the war. Afterward, the United States demilitarized and reaffirmed neutrality and isolation.

1929: Stock Market Crash



Gangster Al Capone opened this soup kitchen for the hungry and homeless in Chicago during the Great Depression. November 16, 1930. **Source:** National Archives and Records Administration

The stock market crashed and a serious economic depression began worldwide. At the height of the Great Depression, one quarter of the American workforce was unemployed.

1933: Franklin D. Roosevelt and Adolf Hitler Came to Power



President Roosevelt delivers his first inaugural address in Washington, DC, on March 4, 1933.

Source: Library of Congress



Adolf Hitler greets members of the SA, or Nazi Storm Troopers, in Nuremberg, Germany, after being appointed as chancellor in January 1933.

Source: Yad Vashem

1933: At Least 24 African Americans Were Lynched



This flag hung from the offices of the NAACP in New York City from the early 1900s through 1938 every time a lynching was reported. **Source:** Library of Congress

At least 24 African Americans were lynched in the United States in 1933. Throughout the 1930s, African Americans were subjected to government-sanctioned segregation, social ostracism, and racially motivated violence.

1937–1938 Recession



A migrant family walks down a road, pulling its belongings in carts and wagons, in Pittsburg County, Oklahoma, in June 1938. **Source:** Library of Congress

A new recession, which lasted from May 1937 until June 1938, was America's third major economic downturn in 20 years.

Real GDP dropped 10 percent and unemployment hit 20 percent.

March 11–13, 1938: Anschluss



Austrian Nazis and local residents look on as Jews are forced to get on their hands and knees and scrub the pavement. March 1938–April 1938. **Source:** National Archives and Records Administration

German troops occupied Austria and incorporated it into the German Reich, an event known as the *Anschluss*. Nazi sympathizers attacked Jewish people and destroyed their property throughout the spring, summer, and autumn of 1938.

July 6–15, 1938: Evian Conference



US delegate Myron Taylor addresses the International Conference on Refugees at Evian-les-Bains, France, on July 6, 1938. **Source:** National Archives and Records Administration

Responding to political pressure, President Roosevelt called for an international conference to facilitate the emigration of refugees from the German Reich. Delegates from 32 countries attended. Most countries, including the United States, refused to admit more refugees.

November 9–10, 1938: Kristallnacht



Germans pass by the broken shop window of a Jewish-owned business that was destroyed during Kristallnacht. November 10, 1938. **Source:** National Archives and Records Administration

Nazi Party members and sympathizers burned synagogues, looted Jewish homes and businesses, killed at least 91 Jews, and arrested approximately 30,000 Jewish men, imprisoning them in concentration camps. Many German and Austrian Jews applied to emigrate out of German-occupied territory.

November 15, 1938: President Roosevelt Extended Visas for Refugees in the US

Roosevelt to Aid Refugees Here; 12,000 to Stay After Visas Expire

***Permits to Be Extended Six Months—Hull
Stresses Need of Finding Homes for Many
Thousands—Taylor to Go to London***

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

WASHINGTON, Nov. 15.—President Roosevelt has taken steps to insure that between 12,000 and 15,000 political refugees from Germany who are now in this country as visitors shall not be forced to return to their own country at the expiration of their visas, he said today.

He announced that he had instructed Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins yesterday to extend their visitors' permits for a period of six months, which the law permits her to do, and for other like periods so long as necessary.

President Roosevelt pointed out that the visitors he has in mind are not all Jews, by any means. All shades of liberal political thought and many religions are represented, he said.

At the same time Secretary of State Cordell Hull announced that the President had asked Myron Taylor, the United States representative on the Intergovernmental Committee on Political Refugees, to return to London and meet with the committee because of the increasing urgency of the refugee problem. Mr. Taylor will sail on Nov. 26. Mr. Hull also said that George Rublee, director of the In-

tergovernmental Committee, was awaiting an opportunity to discuss the problems involved with the German authorities.

"The developments of the last few days in Germany," Secretary Hull said in a statement, "have redoubled the urgency of finding new homes for hundreds of thousands of persons. This government is already granting admission to these unfortunates to the full extent permitted by law.

"I am confident that these latest developments have brought home to those in authority in many other governments a vivid realization of the need for finding a solution of this problem, which can only be solved by all governments actively participating in the search for its solution.

"The Director of the Intergovernmental Committee, Mr. George Rublee, has for some time been prepared to go to Berlin in an attempt to work out with the competent authorities of the German Government practical measures for the solution of the problems involved.

"Although the German Government was advised some weeks ago by the diplomatic representatives in

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In the aftermath of Kristallnacht, President Roosevelt extended visas to allow refugees to stay in the United States for up to six months.

Source: *New York Times*, November 19, 1938

February 9, 1939: Wager-Rogers Bill Introduced

76TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. J. RES. 64

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 9, 1939

Mr. WAGNER introduced the following joint resolution; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Immigration

JOINT RESOLUTION

To authorize the admission into the United States of a limited number of German refugee children.

Whereas there is now in progress a world-wide effort to facilitate the emigration from Germany of men, women, and children of every race and creed suffering from conditions which compel them to seek refuge in other lands; and

Whereas the most pitiful and helpless sufferers are children of tender years; and

Whereas the admission into the United States of a limited number of these children can be accomplished without any danger of their becoming public charges, or dislocating American industry or displacing American labor; and

Whereas such action by the United States would constitute the most immediate and practical contribution by our liberty-loving people to the cause of human freedom, to which we

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are inseverably bound by our institutions, our history, and our profoundest sentiments: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives*
2 *of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*
3 That not more than ten thousand immigration visas may be
4 issued during each of the calendar years 1939 and 1940,
5 in addition to those authorized by existing law and not
6 withstanding any provisions of law regarding priorities or
7 preferences, for the admission into the United States of
8 children fourteen years of age or under, who reside, or at
9 any time since January 1, 1933, have resided, in any ter-
10 ritory now incorporated in Germany, and who are other-
11 wise eligible: *Provided,* That satisfactory assurances are
12 given that such children will be supported and properly
13 cared for through the voluntary action of responsible citi-
14 zens or responsible private organizations of the United States
15 and consequently will not become public charges.

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