

World Response

The events of Kristallnacht were publicized throughout the world and the international community was aware of Hitler's actions against Jews from the very beginning. For various reasons, including their own economic recovery and antisemitism, most countries were not particularly concerned. The indifference of the world made it very difficult for the refugees to find a safe haven from the increasingly dangerous German Reich.

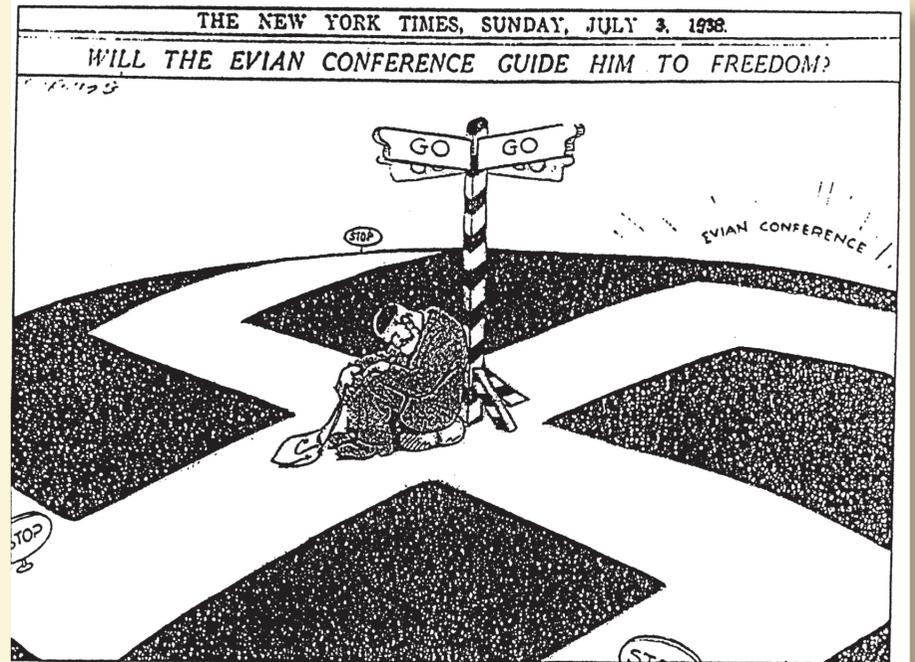
Prior to Kristallnacht

The Evian Conference, conceived by President Roosevelt and attended by delegates from 32 countries, was held in Evian, France in July of 1938. The goal of this conference was to develop a solution to the refugee problem resulting from the persecution of Jews in the German Reich.

However, since no real pressure was put on any country to change their current quota systems, the result was an expression of sympathy and excuses as to why each country could not take in the refugees.

In fact, the United States failed to fill its own quota for German immigration. The State Department, under the direction of Assistant Secretary of State Breckenridge Long, gave instructions to U.S. embassies in Europe "to put every obstacle in the way of Jewish immigration."

The reluctance of the rest of the world to assist Jews provided justification to Hitler and the Nazis that no one would interfere with their plans.



British cartoon reprinted in the New York Times, July 3, 1938.

After Kristallnacht

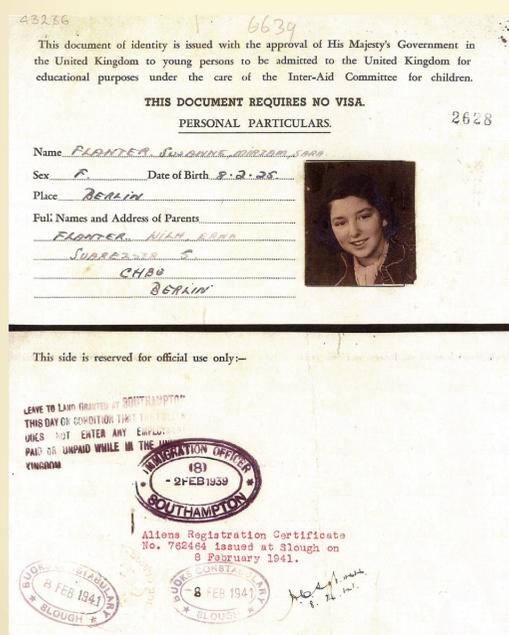
In May of 1939, the M.S. St. Louis, a luxury liner carrying more than 900 Jews departed Germany for Cuba. The refugees on board possessed landing permits for Cuba. However, upon arrival in Havana Harbor, the Cuban government denied the passengers entry. Pleas to the Cuban, and later, the United States government, went unanswered and the St. Louis was forced to return to Europe. Passengers were given a safe haven in Britain, France, Holland and Belgium. However, it was not long before France, Holland, and Belgium were occupied by the Nazis and many became subject to the horror of the Nazi's Final Solution.

Between December 1938 and May 1940, Great Britain accepted 10,000 German, Austrian and Czech children in an emergency effort known as "the Kindertransport." The children traveled by train and boat to relative safety. All that was needed was a "document of identity," which was given with the approval of the British authorities in Germany. Many of the children saved through the Kindertransport would never see their parents again.

A similar action, called the Wagner-Rogers Bill, was presented to the U.S. Congress in 1939. This bill, which would admit 20,000 Jewish children to the United States, was met with fierce resistance and eventually pulled from consideration.



Picture Postcard of the St. Louis. Hamburg, Germany, circa 1939. USHMM, courtesy of Julie Klein, photo by Max Reid



Kindertransport passport of Susanne Kenton, granting her safe passage from Germany to Great Britain. HMSWFL, Courtesy of Susanne Kenton.

