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**Henry Morgenthau:
The Evolution of an American Activist**

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Maggie Laurel Yancey
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DEDICATION

For my Mom and Dad, who taught me that everyone is equally important
in the eyes of God, and for my grandfathers, Robert Vincent Caldwell and Thomas Bragg
Yancey, Jr., who fought bravely in World War II.

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ABSTRACT

Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, Jr. was a central figure in the FDR administration in more than just fiscal matters. Morgenthau also worked from the 1930's onward in several arenas to aid the Jewish victims of the Nazi Holocaust. My research updates and revises the existing historiography by revealing this activism was the logical culmination of years of interest in the fates of Jewish refugees. Furthermore, this activism was affected by several factors beyond Morgenthau's own control. The administrative style of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, relationships between Morgenthau and other members of the cabinet, and influential undercurrents within the cabinet all limited Morgenthau's options for rescue and helped determine the outcomes of his actions on behalf of refugees. While Morgenthau has often been a neglected character in the history books, this thesis places him at the center. In doing so, I argue that his involvement both came earlier than most historians assert, and was influenced by factors that have not been previously analyzed as they apply to Morgenthau's particular historical situation.

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General Introduction

Henry Morgenthau, Jr. had a difficult job in a difficult time, and for many people that would have been enough, but he was also a man with a mission. Part I of this thesis will demonstrate Morgenthau's progression of ideas and the logical sequence of events that propelled Morgenthau from simply being Roosevelt's friend in the Treasury toward becoming a champion of the Jewish people. Additionally, Part II dares to ask why these events unfolded as they did, and explores possible answers to that question, such as the administrative style of FDR and interpersonal dynamics within the cabinet. While Morgenthau has often been a very neglected character in the history books, only mentioned alongside economic details or the War Refugee Board, this thesis places him at the center. Shown as they evolved through time, Morgenthau's actions and words demonstrated his original confidence that the government would care for refugees, his subsequent loss of faith in that system, and his eventual personal activism, culminating in his work with the United Jewish Appeal and the creation of the State of Israel. These actions and outcomes were not random—they were subtly and overtly directed and limited by powerful institutional cultures and interpersonal forces within the FDR administration.

During World War II, Morgenthau made every effort to aid and relieve the Jews of Europe, using his position as President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Secretary of the Treasury to raise awareness and generate results. Most significantly, he is credited with the 1944 creation of the War Refugee Board that saved 250,000 human lives. Postwar,

Morgenthau worked for the creation of the State of Israel, continuing his personal activism on behalf of the surviving European Jewish remnant. In the area of finance, Morgenthau was responsible for the postwar economic world order centered on the World Bank and International Monetary Fund that dominated through the 1960's and is still influential today. Despite his achievements, he is often a secondary character in the history books, again, mentioned only briefly alongside the creation of the War Refugee Board or within the minutiae of economics and finance. This thesis gives Morgenthau the time and consideration his unique historical situation merits; it will illuminate his continual work on behalf of the Jewish refugees who were victims of the Nazis' Holocaust.

BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

It is helpful to outline Morgenthau's life with a brief biographical sketch before proceeding further. Henry Morgenthau, Jr. was born on May 11, 1891, in New York City. His grandfather had emigrated from Germany and had become a successful diplomat, culminating his career with an ambassadorship to Turkey. Young Henry attended private schools, including Cornell University; he did not graduate, but left school early, turning to his dairy and fruit farm in Dutchess County, New York. Morgenthau's farm was fifteen miles from Franklin D. Roosevelt's home in Hyde Park, and it was there that the two began the friendship that would endure throughout their lives. During this time, Morgenthau became quite the agriculturalist; his heart was in

farming and he was even the publisher of *The American Agriculturalist* from 1922 until 1933. He also became an established member of Roosevelt's political entourage, and served under him when FDR became Governor of New York. He would rise to national prominence in FDR's presidential administration.

The U.S. Treasury's biography of Morgenthau perfectly encapsulates his early political career in the 1930's. After "Having served as head of the Farm Credit administration in 1933, Henry Morgenthau was appointed Secretary of the Treasury by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1934," and "As Roosevelt's Secretary, Morgenthau was instrumental in setting up the Works Progress Administration and the Public Works of Art Project in the 1930's." During World War II, Morgenthau initiated the system of marketing War Bonds that raised forty-nine million dollars during the war, and also administered Lend-Lease. On a fundamental level, Morgenthau was the man most responsible for making sure that the checks of the most powerful country in the world didn't bounce during the largest war in world history to date. As Secretary of the Treasury, Morgenthau helped to create the economic world order that still exists today when he established the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. In addition to fulfilling his immense responsibilities in the arena of U.S. and world finance, Morgenthau also found time to facilitate the organized Jewish community's rescue efforts for refugees from his position in the treasury. While he had been a donor to the United

Jewish appeal since the 1930's, after the war Morgenthau actively devoted his life to philanthropy, working with the organization for the creation of the State of Israel.¹

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

Morgenthau's story is indeed significant and one might expect to find it fully documented and explored within the existing historiography. For, historians and other scholars have devoted enormous efforts to documenting and analyzing the events and implications of the Holocaust, from the smallest details to large-scale structural analysis. During this critical period of world history, Henry Morgenthau, Jr. was the highest-ranking Jewish official in the government of the most powerful country in the world, and he made significant contributions of time, effort, and money to save the victims of Nazi genocide. However, in a historical field that is thoroughly saturated with monographs, edited volumes, documentary collections, and articles covering everything from central events to tangential minutiae, there is a comparative dearth of information about Morgenthau. The vast majority of the existing historiography relegates him to snippets or footnotes, and even the most generous monographs rarely devote more than a few paragraphs. This thesis will present a more complete picture of Morgenthau's interest

¹ For more biographical information on Morgenthau, see Morgenthau, Henry III, *Mostly Morgenthau's: A Family History*, (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1991); Blum, John Morton, *From The Morgenthau Diaries*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959-67); quote from the U.S. Treasury's brief biographical sketch, located on the world wide web at <http://www.treas.gov/education/history/sereatries/hmorgenthaujr.shtml> ; for a useful and concise summary see Webster, Merriam Co., "Henry Morgenthau, Jr." in *Webster's American Biographies*.

and involvement in the refugee issue, and will give him the historical consideration his considerable actions merit.

While much of Holocaust and World War II historiography alluded to above relegates Morgenthau to the fringes, Yehuda Bauer's *American Jewry and the Holocaust* is especially negligent. Bauer mentions Morgenthau on only three pages and neglects even to tell readers that Morgenthau is Jewish. This follows the prevailing judgment of many scholars focusing on the organized Jewish community; many are convicted that Morgenthau somehow was not "Jewish enough." Perhaps this is why so many scholars slight him. In Bauer's work, there is one sentence about Morgenthau's raising awareness of Jews in Algiers in 1942, and he is mentioned on 2 pages in the chapter on the Joint Distribution Committee and the War Refugee Board. Bauer snubs Morgenthau and gives his staff *sole* credit for the creation of the War Refugee Board. Bauer does this by arguing they prepared "a dossier on the attitude of the State department ... and a reluctant Morgenthau was slowly convinced that drastic measures were needed." Bauer (along with other notable scholars) ignores substantial documentary evidence of Morgenthau's early involvement in the refugee issue. My research reveals that Morgenthau was not reluctant to act; on the contrary, he entered the fray as soon as he became fully aware of the State Department's failure to do the job assigned to it.²

In contrast to Bauer is Saul Friedman's *A History of the Holocaust*. Despite the book's broad scope, Friedman mentions Morgenthau on several pages, noting Morgenthau is an influential Jewish leader who helped create the War Refugee Board.

²Quote from Bauer, Yehuda, *American Jewry and the Holocaust: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee 1939-1945*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981), p. 401.

Ironically, Friedman's overarching synthesis spares more time for Morgenthau than Bauer's study of the organized American (mostly northeastern) Jewish Community. Because of the expansive scope of Friedman's work, there is a great deal of pertinent detail that it obviously cannot cover.³

The Politics of Rescue, by Henry Feingold, devotes more attention to Morgenthau. Feingold highlights Morgenthau's personal agency in making FDR aware of problems in the State Department. Feingold notes that "not until...Morgenthau...was activated in the rescue effort was a countervailing source of information made available to [FDR] from within the administration." However, like Friedman and Bauer, Feingold argues that Morgenthau's involvement came late; Feingold says that even as late as 1942 Morgenthau was only "beginning to show interest in the refugee program." Again, what makes this statement possible is that Feingold does not utilize the documents that show Morgenthau's involvement from the 1930's.⁴

In 1987, Richard Breitman and Alan Kraut published the seminal work *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry, 1933-1945*. They provide a clear and concise description of Morgenthau's involvement with the Reigner Plan to save Romanian Jews. Breitman and Kraut, in contrast to Bauer's snub, see Morgenthau as influential in the events leading up to the creation of the War Refugee Board. Once or twice, the authors hint at earlier involvement, but they do not fully explore the issue.⁵

³ Friedman, Saul, *A History of the Holocaust*, (Mitchell Valentine and Company, 2004).

⁴ Quotes from Feingold, Henry, *The Politics of Rescue: The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust, 1938-1945*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970), p. 145, 170.

⁵ Breitman, Richard, and Kraut, Alan, *Refugee Policy and European Jewry*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

In addition to the general studies of Holocaust history that mention Morgenthau at a few crucial moments, there is some literature devoted solely to studying him. Of these volumes, the definitive work is the august John Morton Blum's three-part series, *From the Morgenthau Diaries*. Blum draws from roughly six hundred volumes of documents Morgenthau took with him after leaving office—the "Morgenthau Diaries" themselves. While Blum's work is comprehensive, it is not exhaustive. His coverage of Morgenthau's work to aid refugees appears in twenty pages in Volume Three. Like that of many other historians, it focuses almost exclusively on the events leading up to the creation of the War Refugee Board, and some of its subsequent action.⁶

Another book that devotes substantial attention Morgenthau is *The Conquerors*, by Michael Beschloss. Beschloss analyzes the relationship between President Roosevelt and Morgenthau, portraying Morgenthau as a key player in the administration who usually has an axe to grind. While he sees Morgenthau as an important figure in the administration, Beschloss takes a critical view of Morgenthau. For example, his discussion of the Morgenthau Plan for Postwar Germany is condemning; Morgenthau had hoped to rid the country of all weapons and factories and revert Germany to a purely agricultural state. More troubling, like Blum, Beschloss presents Morgenthau's refugee work as occurring reluctantly, coming late in the war and only at the insistence of John Pehle.⁷

⁶ For more detail on Blum's coverage of the refugee issue see Blum, John Morton, *From the Morgenthau Diaries: Years of War, 1941-1945*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967), pp. 207-227.

⁷ Beschloss, Michael, *The Conquerors: Roosevelt, Truman, and the Destruction of Hitler's Germany, 1941-1945*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002).

In addition to the work of such notable historians, several members of the Morgenthau family have contributed to the dialogue through memoirs and other works. For example, Henry Morgenthau, Sr., Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire during the First World War, wrote several volumes about his own life and work, including *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* and *I Was Sent to Athens*. Foreshadowing his son's work, Morgenthau Sr. documents his efforts to help the victims of the Armenian Genocide. In 1947, Henry Morgenthau Jr. published his six-part "Morgenthau Diaries" in *Collier's* magazine with preeminent historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. acting as a ghostwriter. Additionally, Morgenthau, Jr. wrote *Germany is Our Problem*, a rather badly received book detailing his now-infamous "Morgenthau Plan" for the reconstruction (or, in this case deconstruction) of Germany. Moving forward into the next generation, Henry Morgenthau III added *Mostly Morgenthaus* to the literature, and it is this book that delves most deeply into his father's refugee work. Since he is writing a family history, Morgenthau III devotes much of his time to offering unique insights into his father's personality. He presents a richly detailed portrait of his father as a man and public official. Interestingly, he provides a complicated psychological profile of his father as someone who was deeply concerned for refugees, but did not want to appear "too Jewish" or extreme in his efforts. However, beyond the valuable personal insights and gripping family history it offers, *Mostly Morgenthaus* generally follows the trajectory established by professional historians, for example, by maintaining that Morgenthau's involvement in the issue came late.⁸

⁸ Morgenthau, Henry, *I Was Sent to Athens*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran, and Company,

Complementing and informing this historiography is a great deal of literature that is primarily concerned with understanding the failure of the free world to rescue the Jews (and often assigning blame). This is a hotly contested terrain, and one of the central arguments in this field surrounds the question of how much the U.S. government actually knew about the Holocaust while it was happening. This issue persistently resists categorical certainty, but it is clear that the U.S. government to some extent repressed information and often failed to act on that information they had. However, some major strains of thought amounting to a rough consensus are worth considering.

One of the primary proponents of American guilt is Arthur D. Morse, whose book *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy* argues exactly what the title implies. Morse harshly condemns the U.S. government for its failure to act on what he argues was full knowledge of the Holocaust while it was happening. Morse partially blames Roosevelt, and absolutely implicates the State Department. However, he praises Morgenthau for his role in highlighting State Department obstructions to the rescue effort.⁹

David Wyman's enormous work on the Holocaust is meticulously documented and richly detailed, but it also assigns a great deal of blame. It is almost as though Wyman would argue that people like FDR and Churchill were accomplices to Nazi

inc., 1929); Morgenthau, Henry, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1918); Morgenthau Jr., Henry, *Germany is our problem*, (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1945); Morgenthau, Henry III, *Mostly Morgenthau: A Family History* (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1991); Morgenthau, Henry Jr., "Morgenthau Diaries," in *Collier's* magazine, 1947.

⁹ Morse, Arthur D., *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy*, (New York: Random House, 1968).

atrocities, simply because they did not possess the omnipotence that would have been required to stop it any earlier than they did.¹⁰

Richard Breitman's *Official Secrets: What the Nazis Planned, What the British and Americans Knew* is more nuanced. Breitman addresses the American difficulty in believing what news did reach their ears; this reluctance was partly fueled by botched reports of atrocities in World War I. He includes several invaluable pages highlighting Morgenthau's response to learning the extent of Nazi atrocity and State Department inaction surrounding the issue of Romanian Jews. Breitman noted:

He [Morgenthau] had encouraged Roosevelt to pursue refugee initiatives in 1938-39, but he had not done much since the war began...[and] in 1943, Morgenthau had already begun to take an interest in rescue and relief procedures, then his subordinates accelerated his progress.

Otherwise, Breitman generally agrees with the prevailing views in the historiography. However, he does not assign Morgenthau enough credit in the intervening years.¹¹

In *Auschwitz and the Allies*, Martin Gilbert deals with Morgenthau almost exclusively in the context of the War Refugee Board. While he gives Morgenthau a great deal of credit for its creation, he also points out that it was politically expedient for FDR to create the Board, both to placate Congress and secure the Jewish vote. Gilbert further highlights several other plans that were considered for rescue, such as bombing

¹⁰ See Wyman, David, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945*; Wyman, David *A Race Against Death: Peter Bergsen, America, and the Holocaust*, (New York: New Press, W.W. Norton, 2002); Wyman, David *America and the Holocaust*.

¹¹ Quote from Breitman Richard, *Official Secrets: What the Nazis Planned, What the British and Americans Knew*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), p. 198.

Auschwitz. Gilbert argues that the Allies failed to do all that they could have because of a failure of imagination, coordination, initiative, and at times sympathy.¹²

To summarize, the common historiographical focus on Morgenthau's role in the creation of the War Refugee Board leaves the impression that this was the beginning of his activism. Such a focus implies that he was previously less aware of the plight of European Jews, or at least less active in supporting them. While the historiography discussed is very valuable, it presents an incomplete picture; this leaves open the challenge of analyzing Morgenthau's actual involvement, his significant role in the refugee crisis. Part one of thesis will begin to fill in the gaps in the historiography, demonstrating that Morgenthau had been concerned and involved from very early. Part Two will continue this idea and further it by asking why events unfolded as they did, and taking a look at some of the administrative, structural, and relational factors that bore a profound influence on the situation in its entirety.

¹² Gilbert, Martin, *Auschwitz and the Allies: A Devastating Account of How the Allies Responded to the News of Hitler's Mass Murder*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1981).

Part One:
The Path to Activism

Part One:

The Path To Activism

Just a few days after *Kristallnacht* (November 9-10, 1938) Henry Morgenthau, Jr. called his friend Franklin D. Roosevelt to bend his ear about refugees and to offer constructive ideas for rescue. Obviously, FDR was determined to help the would-be victims of Nazi atrocity; as Frank Ninkovich argues in *The Wilsonian Century*, *Kristallnacht* convinced FDR that liberalism, appeasement, and diplomacy alone were not going to work in the long run, and Roosevelt was determined both to educate the American public and to prevent Nazi conquest of the world. Obviously, FDR was involved; in fact, “involved” might possibly be the understatement of the century. However, Morgenthau is another story. Historians often argue that Morgenthau did not enter into the refugee issue until very late, and they make little effort to analyze why. Often, they simply assert that he was previously uninterested in the fates of refugees. It is true that Morgenthau appears to be less active on the refugee front during the period from 1941-1942, especially immediately after Pearl Harbor. Perhaps this was because the government had already begun to prepare for the anticipated war. Roosevelt had requested \$1.3 billion for defense in May of 1940, and in June of 1940 he ordered the War Department to give Britain \$43 million in military stocks. By January of 1941, Morgenthau had begun drafting Lend-Lease legislation. There was a great deal to prepare and launch: military financing, defense contracts, economic sanctions on Japan, increased aid to allies, and stimulating wartime production, just to name a few monumental tasks. Indeed, the Second World War was really beginning in earnest for

America, and the whole government was caught up in a magnificent flurry of activity to mobilize the country. Given Morgenthau's involvement in the refugee issue prior to Pearl Harbor and his reentry into the fray after a short period, it is unlikely that he was unconcerned during 1941. The Secretary of the Treasury was clearly a very busy man. He was doing his job, and I argue that during the early war years he hoped and assumed that since Roosevelt had placed the State Department in charge of refugee affairs, State would do its job. Morgenthau continued to work with State on the refugee issue where there were overlaps in jurisdiction, but Morgenthau was by necessity consumed with financing the war effort. However, in late 1943, when Morgenthau finally became fully aware of the State Department's failures, he would take matters into his own hands and help effect significant changes.¹³

THE STRUCTURE OF EVENTS

At the beginning of U.S. involvement in the refugee issue in the 1930's, Morgenthau was quite optimistic. Like the rest of the country, he watched the escalating

¹³ See Ninkovich, Frank, *The Wilsonian Century: U.S. Foreign Policy Since 1900*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 122-123; For a typical example of prevailing historiography on Morgenthau's late entry see Feingold, Henry, *Bearing Witness: How America and Its Jews Responded to the Holocaust*, (Syracuse, NY.: Syracuse University Press 1995), 175,251; For an example of Morgenthau's early involvement see Morgenthau, Henry Jr., *The Morgenthau Diaries: Depression and the New Deal 1933-1939*, (Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, NY: University Publications of America, 1995), text-fiche, v. 151, pp. 32-34; see Davis, Kenneth, *FDR: The War President*, 92-93 for Lend-Lease's beginnings; For Morgenthau's reaction to State Department incompetence see Breitman, *Official Secrets*, p. 198; For the flurry of planning surrounding Pearl Harbor, see Utley, Jonathan, *Going to War With Japan*, and Davis, Kenneth, *FDR: The War President*, 19, 275,

crisis in Europe with apprehension, and for Morgenthau, along with many others, *Kristallnacht* was a crucial moment; it was an undeniable call to action. In the first of many proposed solutions for refugees, Morgenthau agreed with Dr. Isaiah Bowman, President of Johns Hopkins University and government advisor on refugees, that refugee colonies should be established in Central America. In fact, Morgenthau encouraged Roosevelt to create such a colony. His tone when discussing these issues in 1938 is very positive, but it gradually darkens.¹⁴

Morgenthau's early attitude is discernible in the documents detailing the unsuccessful attempt to rescue the refugees on the SS Saint Louis in 1939. After *Kristallnacht*, many German Jews felt the pressing need for emigration, and many of these refugees had obtained papers that would allow them to emigrate to Cuba. However, once they reached its shores, the Cuban government denied their entry; it wanted five hundred dollars per refugee, and the Joint Distribution Committee had only planned for one fifth of what was needed. They acquired the money, but it was a few hours after the Cuban President's arbitrary deadline for its arrival. Tragically, it was a deadline he had not made them aware of. The U.S. government could have saved the passengers onboard, but the State Department proved to be unwilling to accomplish the finagling of immigration law that would have been required to do so. Indeed, it was a hopelessly complicated issue, plagued with unclear lines of responsibility and oppressively restrictive immigration law. However, the State Department denied visas to these

¹⁴ For Morgenthau's early optimism see Morgenthau, *Depression and the New Deal*, v. 152, p. 70.

refugees despite considerable efforts from the organized Jewish community—and support from the government and the fact that rescuing people would have been possible with a little creative wrangling around existing law. When this became apparent, it must have planted seeds of doubt in Morgenthau’s mind about State’s willingness to help.¹⁵

However, Morgenthau knew that not everyone in State was opposed to refugees. Another person who was interested in their welfare was Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles, a dapper, blue-blooded graduate of Groton and Harvard. Welles was a key figure in the Roosevelt administration, as he had been the primary architect of the Good Neighbor Policy and had drafted the Atlantic Charter. Regarding refugees, in 1938, Welles had eagerly worked with Morgenthau and Bowman on the attempt to create a refugee colony in Latin America. Significantly, Welles had also tried to relax immigration laws in 1938, but opposition from his own department largely curtailed his efforts. In fact, the Evian Conference was partly his idea; in March, Welles went to Roosevelt and recommended that he “get out front and attempt to guide” on the refugee issue. The conference quickly came together. Despite Evian’s failure to change conditions significantly, FDR and Welles had at least started the ball rolling to create the governmental machinery that could help Holocaust refugees. It is significant that later on Welles would be the person who finally gave full disclosure about the Holocaust to Rabbi Wise and other members of the organized Jewish community, going over the head of

¹⁵ For more on the S.S. Saint Louis see Morse, Arthur, *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy*, (Woodstock and New York: The Overlook Press, 1998), 270-288; Thomas, Gordon, and Max Morgan Witts, *Voyage of the Damned*, (New York: Stein and Day, 1974); see also <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/stlouis.html>

Breckinridge Long and his staff. However, that is not to imply that Welles was a model of perfection himself. Despite the fact that Welles was sympathetic to their desperate situation, he to some extent feared a large influx of refugees because they mostly fell into the category of “enemy alien” immigrants, because they were coming from hostile countries. Indeed, the American government and general population harbored Xenophobia and a fairly pervasive fear of Nazi subterfuge. It was arguably a very real threat, and Welles, like FDR, was not immune to the threat of the Fifth Column. However, Welles, again like FDR, had a deeply rooted humanitarian impulse to help the European refugees who suffered and died under Hitler.¹⁶

Whereas Welles empathized with would-be Holocaust victims, Breckinridge Long, the man who was actually in charge of refugee affairs, stood out in cold contrast. His documented anti-Semitism lent him a condemnable detachment from the issue; instead of doing the job that FDR had given him, Long would purposefully squander the

¹⁶ Sumner Welles and refugee colony idea, see Welles, Benjamin, *Sumner Welles: FDR's Global Strategist*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 220; Quote “Get out front and attempt to guide” from Bier, Robert, *Roosevelt and the Holocaust: A Rooseveltian Examines the Times*, (Fort Lee, NJ: Barricade, 2006), 110; for Welles’ Zionism see Welles, Benjamin, *Sumner Welles*, Chapter 20, where the author goes into great detail about Welles’ personal concern for refugees dating to as early as three years before Pearl Harbor—Welles worked hard to find solutions for refugees before many other people in the government were aware of the pressing nature of the problem. Indeed, Welles became a Zionist midway through World War II and worked for the creation of the State of Israel; For more on Welles sharing with Rabbi Wise, see Wise, Stephen, *The Challenging Years: The Autobiography of Stephen Wise*, (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1949); For more on Welles and immigration law see The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers. “Sumner Welles.” *Teaching Eleanor Roosevelt*, ed. by Allida Black, June Hopkins, et al. (Hyde Park, New York: Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site, 2003). <http://www.nps.gov/archive/elro/glossary/welles-sumner.htm> [Accessed April 28, 2007]; For more on Spies, Saboteurs, Xenophobia, and Fifth-column hysteria as relating to Jewish refugees from the Nazi Holocaust see Rosen, Robert, *Saving the Jews: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Holocaust*, (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 2006), Chapter 10, entitled “Spies, Saboteurs, and Traitors are the Actors in this New Tragedy,” 185-204.

opportunity to help even those few who could be saved. On June 26, Long sent out a memorandum detailing his insidious plan to cut off immigration. Long wrote, “We can delay and effectively stop for a temporary period of indefinite length the number of immigrants to the United States. We could do this by simply advising our consuls to put every obstacle in the way and to require additional evidence and to resort to various administrative devices which would postpone and postpone the granting of the visas.” Heavily cloaked in the rhetoric of fear of spies and sabotage, his policies were implemented. It is clear that despite all evidence to the contrary, Long considered himself to be a holy defender of America; he styled himself as a guardian of the gates, “keeping the faith” and protecting the country. He was unconcerned that his actions might violate both treaty laws and the humanity of the American government. During 1940, U.S. consuls abroad were universally advised to withhold visas even from those who qualified for them under the ridiculously strenuous new requirements; the slightest shadow of a doubt about anything was cause for refusal. Only a negligible number of people slipped through the tight net Long had cast; with requirements like a character reference from the Gestapo, who could possibly succeed?¹⁷

In 1941, the State Department, and especially Breckinridge Long, further tightened immigration laws. After 1942, as the United States Government became more aware of the extent and horrific nature of Nazi oppression and murder, Morgenthau increased his efforts. In 1943, Morgenthau grew increasingly disenchanted where he had

¹⁷ Breckinridge Long quote from *Memo from Assistant Secretary of State Breckinridge Long, to State Department officials*, dated June 26, 1940, outlining effective ways to stop the granting of U.S. Visas, retrieved from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/holocaust/filmmore/reference/primary/barmemo.html>

once been confident in the ability of government agencies to work together to help the innocent victims of the Nazis. Cordell Hull, who had tried to be helpful in the beginning, was now suffering from chronic tuberculosis to the extent that he was coughing blood into his handkerchief. That coupled with his diabetes was apparently enough to render him completely unaware that Breckinridge Long, the very man in charge of refugee affairs, was sabotaging their rescue.¹⁸

Again, in denying entry to refugees, Long claimed to be protecting the country from the ominous threat of infiltration by Nazi spies. It was a gripping fear, and Long wrote in June of 1940 that “It is very apparent that the Germans are using visitor’s visas to send agents and documents through the United States,” and it must be said that Long was not alone in it. Indeed, there was a pervasive atmosphere of paranoia in the State Department dating back to the 1930’s that will be explored in Part Two. However, Long presented a particularly disturbing case, for his fear of refugees was at least partially motivated by his rabid anti-Semitism, not to mention his nativist, Xenophobic tendencies. In fact, Long’s own *War Diary* betrayed his prejudicial views and actions quite clearly. The examples are numerous; for example, Long’s language when discussing refugees was dispassionate and condescending. At one point he actually went so far as to label the American public’s concern for British refugee children “an enormous psychosis.” Consequently, he proved unwilling to help even when it was possible to do so. In September of 1940, Long worried that allowing a boatload of Jewish refugees from

¹⁸ See Morgenthau, *Depression and the New Deal*, v. 116, p. 269; For information on Cordell Hull’s health see Beschloss, Michael, *The Conquerors: Roosevelt, Truman, and the Destruction of Hitler’s Germany, 1941-1945*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002), 18, 187;

Lisbon to land on U.S. soil “would be a violation of the spirit of the law if not the letter.” Long further announced that he “would not be party to it,” and although he cloaked his bigotry with concern for immigration law and fearful rhetoric about spies, it seems as though Long believed that the real tragedy would be allowing more Jews to enter America. Upon reading his *War Diary*, it is clear that the Holocaust was irrelevant to Long; at the very least, death camps and the widespread human suffering they mass-produced were beneath his radar. In January of 1941, Long recorded an issue over the quota system in his diary; he found nothing wrong with requiring emigrant Jews to furnish a record of good character from the Gestapo. Perhaps Long failed to comprehend the Nazis’ poisonous ideology, limitless persecution, and mass murder; it is perhaps more likely that his anti-Semitism rendered him blithely unconcerned with the fates of their chosen victims. However, it would be unfair to equate Long in particular with the State Department in general. He was a huge part of the problem, but he did not represent its totality. Hull, for one, was fairly ignorant of Long’s behavior. He was often out of the Cabinet loop and it is evident from Cordell Hull’s statements in his *Memoirs* that despite all evidence against them Hull continued to believe the best of his subordinates (including Long) until the end of his life.¹⁹

¹⁹ “It is very apparent” quote from Long, Breckinridge, *The War Diary of Breckinridge Long*, 114; “An enormous psychosis” quote from Long, Breckinridge, *The War Diary of Breckinridge Long*, 118; “Would be a violation” quote from Long, Breckinridge, *The War Diary of Breckinridge Long*, 128; for more on these Jewish refugees and Long’s attitude see Long 130; “Would not be party to it” quote from Long, Breckinridge, *The War Diary of Breckinridge Long*, 131; Requiring character statements from the Gestapo, from Long, Breckinridge, *The War Diary of Breckinridge Long*, 173; For Long’s anti-Semitism see Long, Breckinridge, *The War Diary of Breckinridge Long*, 109-110; ; historical consensus on Long’s anti-Semitism represented in Friedman, Saul. S., *A History of the Holocaust*, (London: Valentine Mitchell, 2004) 347. For more on Long’s anti-Semitism

Even at a glance, it is clear that Morgenthau faced incredibly numerous obstacles to saving the Jews. His optimism about rescue and his faith in the system diminished rapidly as he realized that key State Department officials were purposefully negligent, and governmental rescue efforts were largely failing. John Pehle, Assistant to the Secretary, and Randolph Paul, General Counsel for the Treasury, were instrumental in effecting this change in Morgenthau's consciousness. As the evidence mounted, it became patently obvious that internal issues made the State Department unreliable.²⁰

In 1943, during an attempt to save Romanian Jews, Morgenthau realized that the burden of rescue was on his own shoulders. Subsequently, he and his staff rose to the occasion. A few key members of his staff, Pehle, Paul, and Josiah DuBois (another Assistant to the Secretary), drafted the *Report to the Secretary on the Acquiescence of This Government in the Murder of the Jews* for Morgenthau to take to President Roosevelt. Because of Roosevelt's willingness to break with tradition and forge new pathways in the Presidency, a remarkable thing occurred. A few days later on January 22, 1944, Roosevelt issued Executive Order Number 9417, creating the War Refugee Board. What some have termed Roosevelt's rather "imperial" presidency in fact had created precedents within the administration for Roosevelt to do this; the President often acted by Executive Order. After its creation, Secretary of State Cordell Hull, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr., and Secretary of War Henry Stimson worked

see Breitman, Richard and Kraut, Alan M, *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry, 1933 – 1945*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 1987), 145.

²⁰ For information regarding State's indifference see Friedman, Saul S, *No Haven for the Oppressed: United States Policy Toward Jewish Refugees, 1938-1945*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973), 208-209; see also Morse, Arthur, *While Six Million Died*.

together on the War Refugee Board to accomplish the goal of saving the Jews of Europe.²¹

Postwar, Morgenthau continued along the path he had chosen back in 1938; he would aid the refugees. Afterward, instead of dreaming of a refugee colony in Costa Rica, Morgenthau worked for the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. This was no great departure from his past; Zionism had been a recurring topic in Morgenthau's correspondence for many years. Since the 1930's, Morgenthau had also been a contributor to the Joint Distribution Committee, which provided immeasurable aid to refugees and saved many would-be victims of the Holocaust. He had worked closely with numerous private Jewish aid organizations during the war, and his postwar work for the United Jewish Appeal appeared a very logical step. Morgenthau quickly transitioned from working with the government to working with the United Jewish Appeal, becoming general chairman in 1946 and spearheading several enormous fundraising campaigns that garnered millions of dollars for their cause. UJA officials later said that the success of the fundraising campaign had depended on Morgenthau's involvement. In this way, Morgenthau was instrumental in the creation of the State of Israel.²²

²¹ For information on the ordeal of Romanian Jews see Hilberg, Raul, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, (3rd Ed. New York: Holmes and Meier, 2003), 1205-1207; For Morgenthau's reaction to the Romanian Jewish issue, see Friedman, *No Haven for the Oppressed*, 209; For primary source documentation on the issue see Morgenthau, Henry Jr., *The Morgenthau Diaries: World War II and postwar planning, 1943-1945*, (Hodges Library, Knoxville, TN; Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 1997), Text Fiche, v.293, p. 30-31.

²² For Morgenthau on Zionism and with Jewish aid organizations see *ibid*, v. 688, p. 15, 31; *ibid*: v.862, p. 195; *ibid*, v. 592, pp.14-15; *ibid*, v. 433, p. 159; for more see Morgenthau, Henry III, *Mostly Morgenthau: A Family History*, (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1991), 410-412; On Morgenthau's being crucial to the UJA fundraising see Feldestein, Ariel. *Ben-Gurion, Zionism*,

The primary sources represented here demonstrate Henry Morgenthau, Jr.'s evolution of thought and action in reference to refugees and Jewish victims of the Holocaust. The documents discussed are representative of many more like them, but they are featured because they demonstrate Morgenthau's history in a clear and concise way. They are drawn largely from the Morgenthau Diaries on microfilm, the Cordell Hull and Henry Stimson papers on Microfilm, and the Morgenthau Papers housed in the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library. Here, Part I progresses chronologically, beginning with 1938 and culminating in the late 1940's. Part Two will delve into the relationships that influenced and affected this chronology. As Morgenthau's personal trajectory often reflects key events and milestones of a larger significance, relevant historical material is presented simultaneously within the documentary chronology.

It is important to note that Henry Morgenthau, Jr. left reams of documents behind him during his tenure of office as Franklin D. Roosevelt's Secretary of the Treasury. Boxes upon boxes, thousands upon thousands of pages await the researcher who would explore Morgenthau's career. This may seem daunting, but fortunately, Secretary Morgenthau saved everything; he was impressively organized and he had a magnificent secretary to help him. While there really is a seemingly endless array of possibilities for research, this essay focuses on the particular moments represented in documents that crystallize Morgenthau's outlook, capture turning points, or witness him taking a stand.

MORGENTHAU AND THE REFUGEES: TELLING THE STORY

When did this stance on refugees first appear in the documents? In other words, how soon after the refugee crisis became apparent did Morgenthau become involved, in one way or another, with the issue? The documents in his diary demonstrate that Morgenthau was from the late 1930's onward growing increasingly concerned for refugees and taking significant steps toward a solution.

The crisis arose when on January 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany. Less than 2 months later, Hitler imprisoned 4800 of his political opponents at Dachau. In April, the Nazis boycotted Jewish-owned shops in Germany and by September they outlawed Jewish landownership. In 1935, the Nuremberg laws stripped Jews of citizenship; afterward, oppression increased almost daily. By the time of the 1938 *Anschluss*, or annexation of Austria, conditions were such that U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt began pressuring for an international conference on refugees. Following the March 12, 1938 *Anschluss*, within two weeks the United States Government stepped into the ring.²³

On March 23, Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles sent Secretary Morgenthau a warm letter including a packet of information about what the government was doing. From this letter, Morgenthau learned that Welles was working to consolidate the German and Austrian immigration quotas so that refugees from Austria would be able to enter the

²³ Timeline of U.S. involvement and Holocaust events from Bier, Robert L., *Roosevelt and the Holocaust: A Rooseveltian Examines the Policies and Remembers the Times*, (Fort Lee, NJ: Barricade, 2006), xvii-xxi.

country along with their German counterparts. Welles also enclosed copies of two of the urgent telegrams Secretary of State Cordell Hull sent on the 22nd to all of the American republics and the United States' European allies requesting an intergovernmental committee on refugees. Hull's telegram to the American Embassy in Argentina opened with an appeal to tradition:

This Government, in the light of its tradition of welcoming refugees from other countries who have suffered because of their political beliefs, is giving thought to how it may assist individuals in Germany and Austria who today find themselves faced by a tragic situation.

Hull further instructed the Ambassador to involve the Argentine government. Significantly, Hull's telegram to the British Embassy addressed "the urgency of the problem with which the world is faced and the necessity of speedy, cooperative effort, under governmental supervision, if widespread human suffering is to be averted."²⁴

The tones of the letter, Welles' memoranda, and Hull's telegrams are very positive, even optimistic. From Morgenthau's position in the Treasury, it must have seemed that the government was making a strong effort. Indeed, many people within the government were doing so. At first, Morgenthau did not recognize the relational undertow that was dragging refugee issues into a bureaucratic abyss of inactivity.

Morgenthau and his government compatriots were not the only people who had faith in rescue action. In fact, the country at large was still optimistic about rescue in 1938. Irving Lehman, Associate Judge on the New York Court of Appeals, and a

²⁴ Quote from Morgenthau, *Depression and New Deal*, v. 116, pp. 264-275.

member of the prominent Lehman family involved in both New York politics and the organized Jewish community, provides one such example. Lehman sent a gushing and adulatory letter to President Roosevelt on March 28, congratulating him on his efforts. In that letter, Lehman told the President, “I feel that last week you have done much not only to rouse the conscience of humanity but to restore sanity to a world gone mad...As an American and as a Jew I want to say ‘Thank you!’” Clearly, Morgenthau was not alone.²⁵

By July of 1938, these plans had come to fruition in the form of the Evian conference on refugees. Organized largely at the insistence of President Roosevelt and the U.S. Government, Evian created the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees. In truth, Evian failed to concretely help suffering people, as 30 of the 32 countries involved did not enact any change to current immigration laws, despite, for example, the efforts of Sumner Welles to effect a U.S. policy change. Notwithstanding its inadequacy, the Evian Conference did demonstrate an initiative of sorts and a genuine desire to help. Whatever the true nature of the conference, for the time being it kept up appearances. For the time being, Morgenthau was willing to let the State Department do its job.²⁶

Indicating the mood of the country, optimism persisted in the press until the events of *Kristallnacht*. Usually regarded as the beginning of the Holocaust, on this

²⁵ Quote from Letter, Irving Lehman to President Roosevelt, 28 March 1938. President’s Official File, Folder 3186. Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

²⁶ For more on Evian see Adler Rudel, S., *The Evian Conference on the Refugee Question*, in Leon Baeck Institute Yearbook, XII, 1968, pp. 235-273, located vertical file FDRL; Mann, Peggy, *Prelude to the Holocaust at Evian in 1948 the World Turned its Back on Europe’s Jews*, Washington Post, Sunday, April 16, 1978, pp. B1-B4, located Vertical File in FDRL.

“Night of Broken Glass” Nazis burned Jewish synagogues and businesses and terrorized Jewish citizens, killing 91 and deporting 8000 to concentration camps. *Kristallnacht* spurred Morgenthau to action. On November 16, 1938, he called his friend Franklin Roosevelt on the telephone to discuss his ideas. A selection from Morgenthau’s diary on that date speaks for itself:

I [Morgenthau] said, “ I have got the first concrete suggestion to make for the Jewish refugees.” He [FDR] said, “Well, for heaven’s sake, what is it?” I said, “Constantin Maguire has sent me a letter suggesting that we make a settlement with Great Britain and France on their war debts for British Guinea and French Guinea, and then somehow or other raise enough money to buy off Holland for Dutch Guinea.”

After more discussion Morgenthau continued,

The thing to do is for us to get some geographer that Mr. Bowman can recommend and look over all of the colonies belonging to France and England wherever they are and see which of those could take a population and I want to say here that in discussing this with Mrs. Morgenthau *I think it is most important that whatever is done is opened up to all refugees irrespective of religion; that it should not be just for the Jews ...* [With] the temper of the people today we can make this a political refuge for all creeds. I think the public is ready. My motto is, “Nothing ventured, nothing gained.” The point is the President has this. Nobody is helping

him. I am at least doing the spade work. The thing to do is have it ready before Congress comes. [Emphasis my own]

It is significant that Morgenthau was *personally* taking the initiative in the interest of the fates of *all* refugees, not just those of Jewish descent. This appears to have been a largely humanitarian urge recognizing the plurality inherent to the issue, rather than an expression of ethnic solidarity, as some historians (and Cordell Hull) would assert.²⁷

However, the august John Morton Blum includes excerpts from the document quoted above, but views the document and its significance very differently. Blum concludes that “Morgenthau ... worried about the European Jews,” and uses the document to emphasize Morgenthau’s failure to come up with a plan that worked. Perhaps it is more significant that Morgenthau, Secretary of the Treasury, attempted to delve into the issue at all. Significantly, Blum omits Morgenthau’s stated concern for human beings regardless of ethnicity; while “refugees” often functioned as a linguistic euphemism for “Jewish refugees,” Morgenthau’s own words on the subject must be considered. The fact that he spelled it out so clearly, “*I think it is most important that whatever is done is opened up to all refugees irrespective of religion; that it should not be just for the Jews*” would indicate he was aware of the prevailing sentiment and was in fact challenging it. However, following Blum’s trajectory, the historical consensus became that Morgenthau was one angry Jew, only out to save *his* people. The historical

²⁷ For American reactions to *Kristallnacht* see Lipstadt, Deborah, *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust 1933-1945*, (New York: The Free Press, 1986), 53; General information on *Kristallnacht* in Gilbert, Martin, *Kristallnacht: Prelude to Destruction*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2006), 15; quote is a selection from the Morgenthau Diaries, Nov. 16, 1938.

literature surrounding the Morgenthau Plan for reconstructing (or rather deconstructing) postwar Germany latched onto the idea of Morgenthau as an angry (and often vengeful) Jew. Perhaps it is time for a new exploration of the archives and a rethinking of Morgenthau.²⁸

Historiographical musings aside, the aforementioned conversation between Morgenthau and FDR was the beginning of a series of discussions about the possibility of establishing refugee colonies somewhere in the Southern world. Throughout the process, Morgenthau remained active in the governmental and private discourse on helping the people whom the Nazis made refugees. Only a few days after speaking with Roosevelt, Morgenthau invited Dr. Isaiah Bowman to visit his home and discuss the issue. An expert on the subject, Bowman was both President of Johns Hopkins University and a renowned geographer of Latin America. They concluded that a Costa Rican colony would be the best option. A week later, The Ezekiel Plan for refugees showed up in the Morgenthau Diaries, furthering the idea of a refugee colony. With Morgenthau doing serious legwork and planning, the issue demonstrated his early desire to help; this was a perfect example of Morgenthau's early activism for the suffering people of Europe. Eventually, the hope for a Jewish homeland in Palestine would mirror the earlier idea for a colony.²⁹

By December, word had gotten out that Morgenthau was a strong supporter of the refugees, and people were sending him desperate pleas for rescue. A December 15 letter

²⁸ Quote from Blum, *From the Morgenthau Diaries, Years of War 1941-1945*, 207-208.

²⁹ For Bowman letters, see Morgenthau, *Depression and New Deal*, v. 151, pp. 32-34; Ezekiel Plan in Morgenthau, *Depression and New Deal*, v. 152, pp. 70-75.

to Morgenthau from Walter Hes, one man out of the many trapped in the Rheinland, typified the plight of refugees. Hes begged Morgenthau,

On account of what happened to the churches in Germany, our people of the Jewish faith have no right of existence. Out of pure personal interest in my fellow men, I am writing to you as the last hope, most respected Mr. Secretary, because I dare believe that you would help two people who are without any means, and cannot afford their necessary immigration...I have in my possession an affidavit for the U.S.A., but must wait for a high admission number. You know, of course, how necessary it is for us to immigrate...I am convinced that you in your high station have a good deal of influence, but I also know that you try to understand the problems of the lower classes, and it may be possible for you to get such an appointment for me.

Morgenthau forwarded this letter and many more like it to the President, raising Roosevelt's awareness of the situation. Unfortunately, there was another much larger problem in play. Although it was unknown at the time, several crucially important U.S. consuls were sabotaging the admission of refugees with ridiculously stringent and unequally applied regulations. For the time being, Morgenthau was unaware that while he was working to help the Nazis' victims, key State Department officials at home and abroad were doing exactly the opposite. Breckinridge Long, the man in charge of refugee affairs, allowed his anti-Semitism to get in the way of his obligation to help refugees. Several U.S. consular officials abroad were increasing obstacles to emigration, and the

combination of the two proved deadly for many. That hidden secret would come to light later.³⁰

In June of 1939, refugees were once again at the forefront of Morgenthau's mind. On June 5, 1939, Morgenthau telephoned Secretary of State Cordell Hull regarding the plight of the passengers of the Hamburg American Line's *SS St. Louis*. Morgenthau told Hull, "Some of my good friends in New York have called me up about this terrible tragedy on this boat the *St. Louis* with those 900 refugees on it," and pressed Hull for action. Morgenthau dealt in his area of expertise – money – and promoted the cause of the Jewish relief organizations who were attempting to finance the rescue. Hull insisted that the matter lay between the refugees and the Cuban government, but Morgenthau persisted. He phoned Hull several times, and independently sent the Coast Guard to follow the boat, tracking its location so that rescuers could save the refugees the very moment it were "legally" possible. Tragically, despite the sincere efforts of many people within the organized Jewish community and the U.S. government, all safe ports refused entry to the *S.S. St. Louis*. Bureaucratic shuffling, strict regulations, and miscommunications between the Cuban government and private relief organizations in regards to money condemned these nine hundred people to return to Europe, where the

³⁰ Quote from Letter, Walter Hes to Henry Morgenthau, 15 December 1938. Henry Morgenthau Papers, Box 130: Immigration Cases – Referred to Presidential Advisory Committee on Political Refugees. Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York; For more on Breckinridge Long's anti-Semitism and halting of immigration, see Long, Breckinridge, *The War Diary of Breckinridge Long*; for more on U.S. consuls and officials sabotaging rescue, see Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue*, 17.

Nazis murdered a large percentage of them. Unfortunately, this was not the last time that this type of thing happened.³¹

The administrative style of FDR allowed for overlapping jurisdictions, which at that time had proved a blessing and not a curse; Morgenthau had been able to assert himself into the S.S. Saint Louis issue in a strong way. However, Morgenthau was not the man responsible for refugees, and as the crisis in Europe escalated, Morgenthau devoted less time to the issue. Again, as Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau was necessarily consumed with the monumental task of financing a world war. However, there is strong evidence that he maintained concern for refugees throughout this time and did what time and existing legislation allowed. In just one example, during August of 1941 the Treasury Department worked to facilitate the American Committee to Save Refugees' distribution of food packages through the Portuguese Red Cross.³²

In addition to facilitating concrete aid, Morgenthau remained attuned to the refugees' need for a new home outside of Europe. As other options for rescue (such as a Latin American colony) appeared less feasible, Morgenthau's attention turned to Palestine. The issues of refugee rescue and powerful Zionism are often linked, especially in the work of Jewish organizations like the Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs.

³¹ For quote and information on Morgenthau and the St. Louis, see Morgenthau, Henry Jr., *The Morgenthau Diaries: Prelude to War and War, 1940-1942*, microfilm, (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 1996); see: Telephone Conversation, Henry Morgenthau and Cordell Hull, June 5, 1939. Morgenthau Diaries, Box 52, vol. 194, p.79, Morgenthau Diaries, Papers of Henry Morgenthau, Jr. Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, NY.; For statistics on the S.S. St. Louis, see Friedman, Saul. S, *A History of the Holocaust*, (London: Valentine Mitchell, 2004), 88-89.

³² Treasury work with American Committee to Save refugees in Morgenthau, Henry, Jr., *Prelude to War and War*, v. 433, pp. 156-159.

The State and Treasury departments were aware of a growing Zionism from the beginning, and this strand of aid increasingly influences Morgenthau through time.³³

The British Balfour Declaration of 1917 had been a “declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations,” but the British White Paper of 1939 limited Jewish immigration to Palestine to 75,000 over the next five years. Although this was a relatively small number, Zionist organizations continued to hope for and work toward the goal of rescue and eventual evacuation to Palestine. Importantly, Morgenthau was in contact with several of these organizations, and they pleaded their case whenever possible. On September 3, Emmanuel Neumann from the Emergency Committee for Zionist affairs sent Morgenthau and Sumner Welles memoranda expressing a “hope that no further steps would be taken toward implementing the White Paper,” and a desire to keep Palestine open to Jewish and refugee immigration. Welles, too, was working to resolve the issue.³⁴

In December 1941, the United States officially entered the war, and financing the war effort made increasing demands on Morgenthau’s time and energy. There was an “unprecedented expansion of the nation’s budget during World War II,” and Morgenthau was at the helm. Furthermore, refugee affairs had always technically been the domain of

³³ For link between Zionism and Jewish aid see Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust*, p. 32, 66; also see Lookstein, Haskel, *Were We Our Brothers' Keepers? The Public Response of American Jews to the Holocaust, 1938 – 1944*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 168, 175.

³⁴ For background on the White Paper and Balfour Declaration see Yale Law School Avalon Project, 2007, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/balfour.htm>; see also the Yale Law School Avalon Project, a collection of important foreign policy documents meticulously compiled by a very large team of Yale lawyers, dated 2007, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/brwh1939.htm>; for Morgenthau’s correspondence, see Morgenthau, *Prelude to War and War*, v. 437, pp. 353-355.

the State Department, and due to the increasing demands of the war, Morgenthau no longer had the luxury of intervening. It seems that Morgenthau had every reason to believe that the State Department would take care of the matter. Undersecretary Sumner Welles had already demonstrated a desire to help refugees, and had worked toward their rescue. At this point, State's shortcomings simply had not come to light, and Morgenthau must not have felt justified to intrude onto their turf.³⁵

Despite his narrowing focus on the economic aspects of warfare, Morgenthau was by no means indifferent to refugees; in fact, he recognized that their situation was growing more dire. In an October 13, 1943 meeting of Morgenthau's Treasury staff, one moment the group was discussing procurement; in another moment the conversation turned to refugees. The State Department had finally appointed Secretary Hull a personal assistant in charge of the refugees; Morgenthau thought this was three years too late. During the meeting he grew increasingly agitated and finally burst out with a strong statement. "God help the refugees," Morgenthau exclaimed, "I think it is outrageous."³⁶

Palestine also remained in Morgenthau's consciousness during this time. In one example, in December of 1942, Morgenthau telephoned Governor Herbert Lehman to let him know "...at the suggestion of Sam Rosenman [Justice of the New York Supreme Court and advisor to President Roosevelt], I'm having a few people together at my house for supper to discuss Palestine...and what we should advise the President [to do]." It follows that even during his relatively less active period, Morgenthau was probably

³⁵ Quote from Merriam Webster Co., *Webster's American Biographies*, page 738.

³⁶ Quote, Morgenthau, *Prelude to War and War*, v. 450, p. 166

moving toward his eventual activism that would climax with his work with the United Jewish Appeal.³⁷

In 1943, the campaign to save the victims of the Nazi regime was becoming increasingly more crucial, as the “Final Solution” – the euphemistically termed mass murder of over 6 million of Europe’s citizens – had been in place since at least the spring of 1942. The first unconfirmed reports of mass murder appeared in Thomas Mann’s December 1941 and January 1942 BBC radio broadcasts. By June of 1942, the BBC had released a detailed report of genocide in Poland, documenting “the physical extermination of the Jewish population on Polish soil.” Dr. Gerhard Reigner, the agent of the World Jewish Congress in Switzerland, tried to alert the U.S., but the State Department originally concealed the information. Through the efforts of Reigner and Rabbi Stephen Wise, among others, with the aid of the sympathetic Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles, it came to light. In September of 1942, “Undersecretary Welles finally cut the Gordian knot of official bureaucracy and silence.” Beyond these facts, there is a great deal of historical literature devoted to exploring exactly the extent of what the government knew and when, but historical consensus holds that by 1943 Jewish relief organizations and several government officials had clearly documented and publicized the fact of genocide.³⁸

³⁷ Quote, Morgenthau, *Prelude to War and War*, v. 592, p. 15.

³⁸ Quote “The Physical Extermination” from Penkower, Monty Noam, *The Jews Were Expendable*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 99; for more see Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue*: 168-175; Also see Browning, Christopher, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942*, (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004), 374-377, 397-398, 433.

Undeniable, absolutely certain news of mass murder changed the climate of refugee affairs. Now that all plausible deniability was removed, many people faced the cruel facts and subsequently oriented themselves toward more action. For one, Morgenthau responded to the gruesome and urgent information by reasserting himself into the refugee policy issue, this time with increasing force and activism. The Wednesday, July 21, edition of *The New York Sun* evidences Morgenthau's growing role with a story headlined "Allies Urged to Save Jews: Morgenthau Asks for Plan to Stop Slaughter." The story alerted readers, "Mr. Morgenthau said that every effort must be made to stop the slaughter," continuing, "He added that along with other freedom-loving Americans, he was deeply interested in seeing that every possible step is taken to stop this needless slaughter." Significantly, Morgenthau was also quoted to have said, "As we all know, if anything is to be done, it must be done quickly. For the corrupt leaders of Fascism must recognize fully that the day of reckoning is not far off." Soon, the issue of the rescue of the Romanian Jews would force Breckinridge Long, a corrupt leader in the U.S. State Department, to face his own day of reckoning.³⁹

Romania had a long history of anti-Semitism, but these Romanian Jews faced enormous atrocity under the rule of the Iron Guard and its premier, General Ion Antonescu, after the Nazis' hostile takeover in 1941. This was widely reported after 1941, especially in 1942 and 1943. Istvan Deak's *Essays on Hitler's Europe* details the Romanian Holocaust, demonstrating how The Iron Guard sought to "purify Romania" of

Quote "Undersecretary Sumner Welles finally cut" from Penkower, *The Jews Were Expendable*, 72.

³⁹ Quotes, Morgenthau, *World War II and Postwar Planning*, v. 688, p. 47.

its Jewish countrymen. Deak quotes the reaction of one Italian war correspondent, Curzio Malaparte, to some of the events of 1941.

Hordes of Jews pursued by soldiers and maddened civilians armed with knives and crowbars fled along the streets...Squads of soldiers hurled hand grenades...into the cellars where many people had vainly sought safety ... Where the slaughter had been heaviest, the feet slipped in blood.

Ultimately, between 200,000 and 300,000 Romanian Jews died in the Holocaust, and by mid-1943, their suffering and death had become a crucial issue that could not be ignored.⁴⁰

The suffering of Romanian Jews came to light during 1943. Up until this point, Morgenthau had trusted the State Department to do its job and save people. Before Romania brought everything to a head, an exchange of frank letters between Secretaries Morgenthau and Hull evidences Morgenthau's lingering faith. The American Jewish Congress had come up with a plan for rescuing the Jews of Romania, and the Treasury department was facilitating it, using blocked accounts to promise repayment to backers in Axis countries; this method kept the money from "aiding the enemy" during the war, but still allowed for the relief of suffering people. On August 5, Morgenthau wrote to Cordell Hull:

Dear Cordell, The President has asked me to ... reply to ... the American Jewish Congress, relating to the proposal of the World Jewish Congress

⁴⁰ Historical background and statistics on the Romanian Holocaust from Deak, Istvan, *Essays on Hitler's Europe*, (Lincoln and London: Nebraska University Press, 2001), 129-136; Quote from Deak, 134; See also Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 1205 and 1321.

and the American Jewish Congress for the evacuation of thousands of Jewish refugees from Rumania. Randolph Paul, who acts for me on all matters relating to foreign funds control, tells me that your department was informally advised ... that the Treasury was prepared to take the necessary action to implement this proposal.⁴¹

Hull wrote back two days later,

I would say that the Treasury itself is entirely free to act on this matter and to grant the necessary licenses if it should so decide. In the latter event the State Department would be pleased to send the appropriate notifications through State Department channels ... Any view that this would make funds available to the enemy is not correct; the funds would remain blocked in Switzerland until the end of the war.⁴²

The plan seemed straightforward to Treasury, and apparently to Cordell Hull. Their frankly unguarded language and easy exchange testified to this fact; both letters were only a few paragraphs. The tone of each was open, cordial, and even positive—Morgenthau addresses his memo not to “Mr. Secretary,” “Secretary Hull,” or “The State Department,” but to “Dear Cordell.” In an era bound and defined by the mandates of Emily Post, the use of a social rather than professional heading indicated ease, familiarity, and trust. Put simply, Morgenthau asked Hull about it, and Hull told him to proceed with the plan. Under normal circumstances, this would have been an open and shut case, but in FDR’s brave new world of modern bureaucratic infighting, it was far

⁴¹ Morgenthau Diaries Reel 23 Volume 688, page 11.

⁴² Morgenthau Diaries Reel 23 Volume 688, page 10.

from over. The desperately critical rescue operation faced protracted and bitter procrastination from State Department bureaucrats. After they learned of the plan, and Treasury's willingness to facilitate it, sadly, "The State Department's own records show that its personnel spent the next several weeks searching for defects in the proposal and looking for reasons that the funds should not be sent." State and Treasury territory was overlapping here, and the results were disastrous. Unfortunately, State won the first few rounds of fighting.⁴³

A few weeks after the exchange of letters between Hull and Morgenthau, Peter Bergson, the chairman of the Zionist relief organization Emergency Conference to Save the Jews of Europe, sent Secretary Henry Morgenthau a passionately pleading letter. Bergson pointed out that the State Department had that very week created a commission to save European art, while ignoring the 4 million human beings scheduled for murder. Bergson lamented, "weeks pass and many more thousands of innocent Jews in Europe uselessly lose their lives and, practically nothing is being done." Bergson ended his letter with an urgent plea to Morgenthau, "with the hope that you will undertake to urge your colleagues to proceed with the creation of the necessary machinery—a specific governmental agency—to save the remaining Jews of Europe."⁴⁴

⁴³ See Post, Emily, *Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage*, 1922. This book was quite a touchstone of the era, and was reprinted 89 times before Post's death in 1960. There was an Emily Post Institute, an Emily Post syndicated column, and even Emily Post's decorating; she is representative of an era concerned with manners and form; it is in this context that the correspondence of Hull and Morgenthau must be considered. Quote "The State Department's own records" from Wyman, David *Showdown in Washington: State, Treasury, and Congress*, (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1990), v. Wyman's collection of documents highlights the deadly and contentious nature of the interdepartmental refugee turf war.

⁴⁴ Quote, Morgenthau, *World War II and Postwar Planning*, v. 688, p. 35.

On September 3, Morgenthau sent Bergson a reassuring reply. He told Bergson, “Rest assured that I am already doing everything in my power, consistent with my position in the government, to facilitate the rescue of these oppressed people.” Granted, Bergson had exaggerated the government’s inaction; facilitating the work of private relief organizations and pursuing the available options was no small task. But Bergson had highlighted the grievous situation in the State Department – their refugee divisions were accomplishing nothing, or worse.⁴⁵

Romania brought these issues to a head. In September, Herbert Lehman, the former Governor of New York who now worked in refugee affairs for the State Department and later for the UN, alerted Morgenthau of State’s failure to send the American legation in Bern Morgenthau’s cables authorizing the action of the World Jewish Congress for relief of the Romanian and French Jews. Morgenthau looked into the matter, and finally found fault with State. He saw that the State department had been dragging its heels, and was determined to find out why and put a stop to it. Part Two will further examine the bureaucratic undercurrents that led to this situation, but at any rate, what happened was clearly quite problematic. In fact, the situation started to look very intentional, and Morgenthau was finally, in his own words, “outraged!”⁴⁶

On November 2, 1943, General Counsel for the Treasury Randolph Paul sent Morgenthau a memo to update him on the situation. There is more confusion and

⁴⁵ Quote, Morgenthau, *World War II and Postwar Planning*, v. 688, p. 32

⁴⁶ Quote, Morgenthau, *World War II and Postwar Planning*, v. 688, pp. 79-82. For more, see Penkower, *The Jews Were Expendable*, chapters 3-4. For more on the events leading up to the creation of the War Refugee Board see also Feingold, Henry. Webster’s *American Biographies* section on Henry Morgenthau, Jr. also outlines this briefly.

intrigue concerning licenses to the World Jewish Congress; this time, Morgenthau learned that Assistant Secretary of State Breckinridge Long had unnecessarily delayed the process by consulting the British, after Assistant Secretary of the Treasury John Pehle assured him this was unnecessary. Long was aware delays like this were very costly in terms of human life, for the Romanian situation was deteriorating rapidly. The Treasury was aware as well, and Paul's memo for Secretary Morgenthau reflects his growing suspicion of the State Department. It also foreshadows a change in Morgenthau's dealings with State.⁴⁷

On November 23, Pehle spelled out the general fears of Morgenthau and the Treasury in a group meeting to discuss Romanian Jewish evacuation. Pehle said, "There are two phases of this matter; one is the thing that deals with this narrow case; the other one is the question of how you feel on the broader issue." He continued, "The broader issue is, at what point is the whole question of whether the State Department is going to facilitate evacuation of refugees and all the things that are tied in with that – at what point is that going to be brought out in the open." Morgenthau replied, "You ask me how far is the moon from here." The moon turned out to be closer than he expected.⁴⁸

The meeting further brought out that the problem was someone in the State Department, and the facts pointed toward Breckinridge Long or someone in his office. Morgenthau fully supported his staff, led by John Pehle and Randolph Paul, as they

⁴⁷ Memo in Morgenthau, *World War II and Postwar Planning*, v. 688, pp. 85-86; see also Morgenthau, Henry III, *Mostly Morgenthau*.

⁴⁸ Quotes, Morgenthau, *World War II and Postwar Planning*, v. 688, pp. 111-118.

decided to go after the culprit. However, Morgenthau realized it would be a difficult task. As he said, they were

Up against a successive generation of people like those in the State Department who don't like to do this kind of thing, and it is only by my being Secretary of the Treasury and being vitally interested in these things, with the help of you people having first made up your mind...that I can do it. I am all for you, not that I am a cynic or discouraged. I mean, I will do everything I can, and we will get it done. But don't think you are going to be able to nail anybody in the State Department to the cross.

For the time being, Morgenthau's solution was to write a letter to Cordell Hull, and leave it up to him to "get angry at his own people." It is clear that Morgenthau's faith in the system was diminishing, and while he retained his regard for Hull, Morgenthau no longer trusted the State Department in the face of mounting evidence of their failures.⁴⁹

Less than 2 months later, Pehle and Paul had found their culprit in the State Department; in fact, they uncovered several. John Pehle, Randolph Paul, and Josiah DuBois prepared an 18 page report for Secretary Morgenthau, dated January 13, 1944. Provocatively titled *Report to the Secretary on the Acquiescence of This Government in the Murder of the Jews*, it detailed the criminally negligent failure of the State Department on the refugee question. The report was masterfully written, the result of a deep investigation of all available information. One invaluable source was Breckinridge Long's self-incriminating testimony before Congress, at which he vacillated *ad nauseum*,

⁴⁹ Quote from Morgenthau, *World War II and Postwar Planning*, v. 688, p. 116.

contradicted himself throughout, and even lied outright. For example, Long used some creative math when testifying about the numbers of refugees allowed into the country; he inflated the numbers where in reality even the small legal quota had not been filled. “The most flagrant was his claim that the United States had taken in 580,000 Jewish refugees since Hitler came to power. People familiar with the situation knew that not over 250,000 refugees had come and many of them were not Jews.”⁵⁰

In sum, the State Department was guilty “not only of gross procrastination and willful failure to act, but even of willful attempts to prevent action from being taken to rescue Jews from Hitler.” The U.S. government had known about the Nazis’ policy of genocide for over a year, but the State department had delayed and procrastinated and refused to act. Tragically, the report said, “While the State Department has been thus ‘exploring’ the whole refugee problem...hundreds of thousands of Jews have been allowed to perish.”⁵¹

Breckinridge Long, now known to be anti-Semitic, emerges as the main culprit. The very man in the U.S. government who was most responsible for the lives of the refugees had been purposefully sabotaging their rescue. Upon receipt of the report, Morgenthau took matters into his own hands. With firm resolve, Morgenthau gave the report to his dear friend President Roosevelt, who shortly thereafter issued Executive Order # 9417 creating the War Refugee Board that would save over 250,000 lives.

⁵⁰ For more see the *Report to the Secretary*; see Wyman *Showdown in Congress* for more on Long’s testimony; the book contains copies of several primary documents detailing its errors; Quote from Wyman, *Showdown in Congress*, viii.

⁵¹ Quote from *Report to the Secretary on the Acquisition of this Government in the Murder of the Jews*. January 13, 1944, Morgenthau Diaries, v. 293, p.212-229, Morgenthau Diaries, Papers of Henry Morgenthau, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

Morgenthau risked a personal friendship to go over the State Department's head to the President, and his faith in FDR was not misplaced. The Chief Executive solved the problem and set in motion the machinery that would save many lives because Henry Morgenthau and his staff, Pehle, Paul, and DuBois, had taken the initiative in the U.S. government to start the process of saving these people. Secretary Morgenthau, Secretary Hull, and Secretary of War Stimson were on the Board, with its committees drawn from their staffs. Pehle went on to become the board's executive director. Despite inadequate government funding, the WRB worked tirelessly until the end of the war. However, it would not be the end of Morgenthau's activism on behalf of the remaining Jews of Europe; he would take on a new challenge after the Allied victory.⁵²

On April 12, 1945, President Roosevelt suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and passed from this life. Harry S. Truman became the new President, and he had his own postwar plans for the Treasury. Despite his excellent record, Truman did not want Morgenthau, although he kept him on staff while away at the Potsdam conference. Late in July, Morgenthau grew tired of rumblings that Truman might fire him and he subsequently resigned from office.⁵³

This may have been the end of Morgenthau's political career, but it was not to be the end of Morgenthau's activism on behalf of Jewish refugees. July 7, 1945, the week prior to Morgenthau's resignation, Felix Frankfurter sent Morgenthau a letter, enclosing

⁵² Background on War Refugee Board, see Executive Order 9417, Establishing a War Refugee Board. Dated February 22, 1944, War Refugee Board, Box 36, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York; for more information on the WRB see Friedman, *A History of the Holocaust*, 354-355.

⁵³ For background on Morgenthau's resignation see Beschloss, *The Conquerors*, 247-250.

an extract from a speech made by Lord Balfour in 1920, following the Balfour Declaration; it dealt with the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Clearly, Morgenthau had been aware of and concerned with the hopes of Zionists for many years (and his Orthodox Jewish Secretary had made sure that Morgenthau got to know several prominent Zionists) but the letter indicates that it was on his mind near his resignation, and foreshadows events to come.⁵⁴

The week of Morgenthau's resignation was a turning point for Morgenthau. In the midst of a routine meeting on July 13, 1945, while Morgenthau is discussing his economic plans that would crystallize in the Bretton Woods legislation (and shape the future international economy), he made a most interesting statement. Morgenthau was allowed, as the Secretary of the Treasury, to make a report to Congress at any time, and he wanted to make one before he left. Jokingly, a colleague referred to it as his political will, but Morgenthau challenged, "This isn't my political will; this is my political coming-out party."⁵⁵

While he is technically discussing money matters, Morgenthau's choice of words and the timing of this utterance – the week of his resignation as Secretary of the Treasury, preceding his monumental work with the United Jewish Appeal – lends a more symbolic meaning to this conversational snippet. It also gives a clue as to Morgenthau's mindset at the time. Free from bureaucratic constraints and presented with the luxury of free time, Morgenthau really was "coming-out." Unencumbered by the war and politics and

⁵⁴ Morgenthau's Secretary, Klotz, setting Morgenthau up to get to know Zionists is from Penkower.

⁵⁵ Quote from Morgenthau, *World War II and Postwar Planning*, v. 863, pp. 192-204

Cabinet bureaucracy, he was finally able to be the unapologetic, fiercely determined activist he had been becoming for years.

Since the 1930's, Morgenthau had been a financial contributor to the United Jewish appeal. During the war, he used government machinery to facilitate the UJA and other organizations in their private rescue efforts. Morgenthau had worked tirelessly to save refugees and Holocaust victims. He had worked closely with Zionist organizations and was sympathetic to their hopes. It was a logical transition for Morgenthau to move into working for the United Jewish Appeal postwar, to move "from the lands of death to the land of hope – to Palestine."⁵⁶

Indeed, there was a great deal of work to be done. The end of the war did not mean the end of suffering, or the end of aid work. In many ways, it was another beginning. For, the remaining Jews of Europe were predominantly living in displaced persons camps, and many or most were on the brink of death from starvation or illness. It was a monumental task just to return so many people to good health, but there was also the matter of where they would eventually end up. Most people had no homes or family to return to, and Europe was still an inhospitable place for its surviving Jews. According to its own reports, the Displaced Persons and Welfare Section of the Military Government in the American sector of Berlin registered 17,980 new displaced persons from July 1945 to January 1946. Over 5000 were stateless persons and concentration camp internees; all but 220 of these were turned out of the camp during the same six

⁵⁶ Quote from Address by Henry, Morgenthau, Jr. Before Campaign Rally, United Jewish Appeal, Boston, Massachusetts, 13 October 1946, Henry Morgenthau, Jr. papers, Box 404, Speeches, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

month reporting period. The public health report from the following six months period noted that during the winter “the incidence of lousiness...[and] typhoid...increased, and from available epidemiological data well over 50% of these cases were among refugees.” The task of returning refugees to normal lives was monumental, indeed.⁵⁷

Morgenthau summed up the problem in 1946, “For the remaining Jews of Europe ... victory has not yet brought the fruits of peace. For them, the ancient story of trial and tribulation has not ended yet.” For many people, including Morgenthau, Palestine provided the best possible solution.⁵⁸

Morgenthau was in the perfect position to help make that dream a reality. As the Secretary of the Treasury he had honed the skills needed to manage monumental sums of money. Consequently, he must have felt that spearheading and masterminding the fundraising campaign for the United Jewish Appeal was a logical use of his expertise. The United Jewish Appeal agreed. On February 20, 1946, at the beginning of what would be a long career with the organization, Henry Montor wrote Morgenthau,

We are all familiar with the great service you rendered to the welfare of the oppressed and suffering Jews overseas during the war years and prior thereto, and we are grateful for the opportunity of paying our respects to you at this meeting and, at

⁵⁷ Statistics on DP camps from U.S. Government, *Reports of the Military Government For Germany, U.S. Zone 1945-1953, Reel 6, Miscellaneous Reports*, p. 113; quote on public health and refugees from *Reports of the Military Government for Germany* p. 91;

⁵⁸ “For the Remaining Jews of Europe” quote from Morgenthau, Address to the United Jewish Appeal at Boston.

the same time, of being further encouraged by your stimulation.⁵⁹

After resigning from his office, Morgenthau became increasingly more involved with the United Jewish Appeal, and it turned out to be quite a partnership. As evidence, the UJA met and exceeded enormous fundraising goals with Morgenthau at the helm. From 1947- 1950, Morgenthau served as the organization's chairman and helped raise \$465 million dollars to bring about the State of Israel. The way he saw it, the UJA was not "dealing...in dollars, but in human lives." He urged people to think about how many lives they could save when they made their contributions to the UJA. Judging by these standards, Morgenthau's fundraising may have helped even more people than did the War Refugee Board.⁶⁰

In the years following, Morgenthau worked tirelessly for the United Jewish Appeal, and he accomplished a monumental fundraising goal; his dream of a Jewish homeland finally came to fruition. Later, Morgenthau recalled his first trip to the newly created Nation of Israel as one of the most important moments of his life. Over the years, Morgenthau had steadily transformed from Roosevelt's money man to a champion of the Jewish people. His evolution to activism was finally complete.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Quote from Letter, Isidor Coons and Henry Montor to Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Henry Morgenthau Papers, Box 400, Speeches, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

⁶⁰ Quote from Speech, Henry Morgenthau to United Jewish Appeal – Newark, NJ Group, New York City, March 27, 1946. Speeches. Papers of Henry Morgenthau, Jr. Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, NY.

⁶¹ Morgenthau's eventual Zionism, in Beschloss, *The Conquerors*, 251-252; Morgenthau's reflections on Israel, Morgenthau III, *Mostly Morgenthau*.

CONCLUSION TO PART ONE

This path to activism was certainly fraught with obstacles. While Morgenthau was clearly concerned and involved since the late 1930's, he was unable to accomplish much on their behalf until several years later. Even after Morgenthau lost faith in the ability of the State Department to do its job, he faced more obstacles. Part Two will take a closer look at the patterns of relationships that defined and limited Morgenthau's path and his options.

Part Two:

Examining Relationships and Daring to Ask Why

Part Two:

Examining Relationships and Daring to Ask Why

The events discussed in Part One require further exploration. Why did these events unfold as they did? Beyond the anti-Semitism of Breckinridge Long, what created the reluctance in the State Department? Furthermore, why were relationships within the Cabinet so strained? A deeper analysis reveals that Morgenthau was fighting hidden dynamics of power stemming from Roosevelt's administrative style and the interplay of different personalities and forces within the Cabinet. The competitive administrative style of FDR, the ingrained institutional cultures inside the cabinet, the State Department's obsessive fear of communists, and the inevitable intergenerational tension between men of the nineteenth century and twentieth centuries all proved of critical importance. Each of these factors had a profound influence in restraining Morgenthau's options, shaping his path of action, and ultimately determining the outcomes of events.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE STYLE OF FDR

There is an impressive canon of scholarly work on the administrative style of FDR. Political scientists and psychological professionals, not to mention several respected historians, have analyzed FDR's administrative style from multiple angles. Some of these works dealing with personality, institutional structure, and power politics are particularly relevant for the attempt to understand the challenges facing Morgenthau.

Historians have left the opportunity open to examine the implications of FDR's administrative style in the Morgenthau case. Surprisingly, no one has yet closed the gap between these fields by synthesizing the troubling facts of Morgenthau's particular situation and the insightful literature exploring FDR's administrative style. This thesis will attempt to bridge the distance and encourage a new understanding of Morgenthau's particular historical situation; here, applying fresh insights provides a useful and revealing perspective.

First, let us briefly outline the historiography so that the insights it offers may be applied. Echoing sentiments that Secretary of War Henry Stimson eloquently voiced to his diary over sixty years ago, currently there is a rough scholarly consensus among many historians and political scientists that FDR's administrative style was incredibly inefficient at times, and his organization "famously chaotic."⁶² Although his organization was small in comparison with the Executive Branch as it exists today, it was quite large for the times, and FDR put a lot of effort into expanding it, and people had mixed reviews about the results even at the time. While Stimson felt that the chaos and inefficiency was simply because FDR happened to be incredibly disorganized, the modern historiographical agreement is that FDR actually benefited from purposefully creating and manipulating this disorganization. It appears that "chaos" was his style; it is often

⁶² Greenstein, Fred I., *The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style from FDR to Clinton*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 22, as quoted in Herspring, Dale R., *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, (Kansas City: The University Press of Kansas, 2005), 23.

argued that while FDR may have created a bureaucratic monster, it served himself, his country, and the free world very well.⁶³

Henry Stimson wrote on this topic often and well. A few days after FDR's untimely death in 1945 Stimson wrote,

In this retrospect the importance of his leadership and the strong sides of his character loom up into their rightful proportions. He has never been a good administrator and the consequence of this has made service under him as a Cabinet officer difficult and often harassing ... but his vision over the broad reaches ... has always been quick and clear and guided by a very strong faith in the future of our country and of freedom, democracy, and humanitarianism throughout the world.⁶⁴

It is the juxtaposition of good and bad elements that make this subject so interesting.

There were certainly problems with FDR's administrative style, but the President still managed to achieve a victory in the greatest war the world had ever seen.

For the purpose of exploring the Morgenthau effort, it is necessary to cover some highlights of some relevant books from the field of administrative history. The existence of a general consensus in the field allows for a careful discussion of a few books that have helped inspire a fresh look at Secretary Morgenthau.

One journalist and political scientist, Matthew Kerbel, encapsulates why studying executive administrative style is important. Kerbel argues, "If one views the White

⁶³ See Greenstein, Fred I. *Presidential Power*, see Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*, see Schlesinger, Arthur M. *The Age of Roosevelt*, vol. 2, *The Coming of the New Deal*, 528.

⁶⁴ Quote from Henry Lewis Stimson Papers (HLSP), reel 9, volume 51, page 37.

House bureaucracy as an extension of the president, the importance of management style to executive organization is great.”⁶⁵ This is especially true in an administration as driven by the personality of its executive as that of FDR. The force of his personality combines with his monumental impact on the modern presidency, making FDR a central figure in most volumes on the subject.

One of the first of these volumes was Richard E. Neustadt’s seminal 1960 study *Presidential Power*. Neustadt broke ground in the field and after five reprintings it remains one of the key volumes in the historiography of presidential power. As his title suggests, Neustadt analyzed the multifaceted power of the chief executive. He argued that presidential power is the power to persuade. In his analysis, Neustadt viewed presidential weaknesses as critical windows into each President’s pursuit and maintenance of power. In each Presidency, “strength or weakness ... turns on [the President’s] personal capacity to influence the conduct of the men who make up the government.” While drawing examples of weakness from the Eisenhower and Truman years, Neustadt wove “wistful glances” at the presidency of FDR throughout his analysis. For Neustadt, the glory days of FDR endure as the shining zenith of presidential power or, as he put it, the power to persuade.⁶⁶

It follows that Roosevelt’s brand of persuasion centered around personal influence; Neustadt quoted Roosevelt when discussing this issue.

⁶⁵ Kerbel, Matthew Robert, *Beyond Persuasion: Organizational Efficiency and Presidential Power*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), 82.

⁶⁶ Quotes from Neustadt, Richard E., *Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership from FDR to Carter*, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1980), 4.

The Treasury is so large and far flung and ingrained in its practices that I find it almost impossible to get the action and results I want – even with Henry [Morgenthau] there. But the Treasury is not to be compared with the State Department. You should go through the experience of trying to get any changes in the thinking, policy, and action of the career diplomats and then you'd know what a real problem was.⁶⁷

While Neustadt used this particular quote to consider FDR, it invites insight into Morgenthau's situation because it provides a window on both Roosevelt's mind and cabinet culture. FDR had to control an often difficult bureaucracy, but the Treasury and State departments were particularly perplexing for him. They were particularly unruly and difficult to manage. Even Roosevelt, with his arguably unparalleled leadership prowess, was unable to completely get his way. Imagine the difficulties Morgenthau, lacking Roosevelt's personal force and official power, faced in trying to circumvent or change State Department policy!

In the updated 1990 edition, Neustadt quoted Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. on FDR's method of creating overlapping jurisdictions to maintain personal control over events. Neustadt, quoting Schlesinger, wrote:

His favorite technique was to keep grants of authority incomplete, jurisdictions uncertain, charters overlapping. The result of this competitive theory of administration was often confusion and exasperation on the operating level; but no other method could so reliably insure that in

⁶⁷ Quote from Neustadt *Presidential Power*, 33.

a large bureaucracy filled with ambitious men eager for power the decisions, and the power to make them, would remain with the President.⁶⁸

A few pages later, Neustadt explained his view with another Schlesinger quote.

Situations had to be permitted to develop, too crystallize, to clarify; the competing forces had to vindicate themselves in the actual pull and tug of conflict; public opinion had to face the question, consider it, and pronounce upon it. Only then, at the long, frazzled end, would the president's institutions consolidate and precipitate a result.⁶⁹

Eminent political scientist Fred I. Greenstein has written a number of volumes on Presidential leadership, the most recent of which is *The Presidential Difference* that came onto the scene in 2004. Greenstein's work functions in the political science field much as Neustadt's does for history. This volume recapitulates several themes found in his other books. Greenstein echoed Neustadt when he writes that the FDR administration marked the beginning of what is now called "the modern presidency" and that resulting from the "New Deal, World War II, and [FDR's] entrepreneurial leadership...there was a vast expansion of the scope and influence of the federal government."⁷⁰ Greenstein went on to describe that starting with FDR presidents took increasingly more policy initiative, "Drawing on their sweeping administrative powers in an era of activist government and

⁶⁸ Neustadt, *Presidential Power*, 1990 page 132, as quoting Schlesinger.

⁶⁹ Neustadt, *Presidential Power*, 1990, page 133, as quoting Schlesinger.

⁷⁰ Greenstein, Fred I., *The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style from FDR to George W. Bush*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 3.

global leadership.”⁷¹ Greenstein credited FDR with ushering in the era of activist government; ironically, before Morgenthau’s situation came to his attention Roosevelt’s system effectively thwarted the activism of the most determined activist in the cabinet.

However, when Morgenthau finally went to him, Roosevelt created the War Refugee Board that saved many. It is a complex issue indeed; for the chaotic elements of the administrative style created problems that allowed Breckinridge Long to get away with murder, but the decisive way that FDR used his political authority allowed him to remedy the problem in the end.

While the sweeping, general scope of his analysis precludes mentioning Morgenthau, Greenstein highlights a theme that is very important for Morgenthau’s particular situation: competition. Greenstein quotes the august historian Arthur Schlesinger as “arguing that FDR adhered to a ‘competitive theory of administration,’ geared to keeping decision making in his hands and maximizing his information.”⁷² Greenstein upholds Schlesinger’s view that Roosevelt’s leadership style required “The competing forces ... to vindicate themselves in the actual pull and tug of conflict.”⁷³ Greenstein lacks Schlesinger’s certainty, but agrees with him nonetheless:

Whether Roosevelt *consciously* held such a conception is uncertain. His elusiveness and his practice of playing aides off against one another

⁷¹ Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference*, 3.

⁷² From Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference*, 18, as quoting Schlesinger, *The Coming of the New Deal*, 522-523.

⁷³ Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference*, 18.

undoubtedly did enhance his influence and information, but at a cost. His practices made for needless rivalries and poor morale.⁷⁴

This competition figures prominently into the analysis of this thesis, because of the strained atmosphere that competition combined with incalculably high stakes inevitably created.

Perhaps because of the fact that Schlesinger, Neustadt, and Greenstein so excellently analyzed FDR's leadership style, others have often shied away from doing so. Greenstein points out that with a few notable exceptions, much of the historiography of presidential accomplishments is more policy-centered than personality-driven. FDR may be a special case, because his force of personality was so strong, and he accomplished so much; his biographers have done a good job of analyzing him in this context. At any rate, Greenstein is absolutely correct in turning the focus to the means rather than merely on the ends. Indeed, the two are inextricably interdependent, as Part Two of this thesis will demonstrate in the case of the activism of Treasury Secretary Morgenthau.

Decreasing in scale, instead of observing the administration as a whole Herspring analyzes FDR's leadership style in relating to the Pentagon. While it does not always parallel the experience of the cabinet, this specific case study provides useful insights nonetheless. Herspring writes,

Unlike his successors, Franklin Roosevelt relied far more on personal relationships than on highly structured organizations in order to govern ...

⁷⁴ Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference*, 18.

the structure may have been chaotic, but there was a certain logic to the President's style of governance.⁷⁵

The logic of FDR's style was undeniable. It is certainly true that governing via personal relationships centralized power around the chief executive and allowed him to accomplish amazing things. Moving away from Herspring, however, the experience of Henry Morgenthau clearly demonstrates the fatal flaw. FDR's need for personal control over situations (and the way that control consequently fostered interdepartmental conflicts) almost always worked for the advantage of all involved. However, it occasionally undermined the ability of different groups within the administration to work effectively together without FDR's version of "divine intervention." To provide an example from Herspring's work on the military, Herspring noted,

Rivalry between the Army and Navy was a serious problem that inevitably affected civil-military relations. On the one hand, such competition permitted the president to divide and conquer when dealing with the two services ... while on the other it degraded the ability of the U.S. military to fight a war effectively.⁷⁶

While Herspring was referring to FDR's relations with the military, the same held true for the cabinet.

Completing the circle, Neustadt's student Matthew J. Dickinson took his ideas and ran with them. In Dickinson's *Bitter Harvest*, he analyzes the efficacy of FDR's

⁷⁵ Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency: Civil-Military Relations from FDR to George Bush*, (Kansas City: Kansas University Press: 2005), 23.

⁷⁶ Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, 25-26.

administrative style and calls for its application to the modern presidency. Dickinson argues that applying FDR's style would help modern presidents to govern an increasingly large bureaucracy more effectively. He demonstrates that the modern presidents face circumstances no more trying than those that FDR masterfully navigated. Dickinson's is a very provocative book, for it highlights the intentional nature of FDR's administrative style, and judges it as very highly effective. Significantly, while some believe that FDR succeeded in winning the war *in spite* of his administrative style, Dickinson argues that it was *because* of it that FDR was so successful. To make this argument, Dickinson focuses on FDR's refusal to delegate responsibility and his style of "competitive adhocracy" that pitted bureaucrats against each other and fostered conflict. Dickinson demonstrates that this unlikely strategy allowed FDR to maintain his personal control of a diverse and sprawling governmental organization that was crucial to assuring that organization functioned at its very best.⁷⁷

"Competitive adhocracy" is a tricky concept, indeed. It is by nature precarious, rife with tensions, threatening to boil over. Because of this, it is all the more remarkable; competition created conflicts that only Roosevelt could resolve, and he resolved them beautifully. Roosevelt stood at the center, creating order out of chaos, organizing and administering everything with his personal touch and ensuring that the decisions that were eventually made were the best ones in line with his vision of the future. One feature of this "competitive adhocracy" that allowed him to do exactly that involved overlapping jurisdictions. While Dickinson argues that this was a good way to maintain FDR's

⁷⁷ Dickinson, Matthew J., *Bitter Harvest: FDR, Presidential Power, and the Growth of the Presidential Branch*, (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1997).

position as supreme referee, that may not always have been the case. The more important the issue seemed to all parties involved, the more quickly it reached FDR and was properly resolved. In cases of grand strategy and perceivably large issues this was particularly effective. Competition allowed FDR to maintain control and make the difficult decisions for which history praises him. But perhaps competition allowed issues that some of the players involved felt were relatively “less important” to slip through the cracks. Overlapping jurisdiction combined with a competitive spirit could have kept some issues that were deemed relatively less important (or that simply did not initially appear large enough to merit the President’s intervention) volleying back and forth from bureaucrat to bureaucrat, locked in an irresolvable squabble about who was really in charge. Often, nothing happened; the paper stacked higher.

Where there was great conflict, as in the situation of Morgenthau’s rescue efforts for refugees, someone had to bring the issues to Roosevelt’s attention to achieve any positive resolution. An issue like refugees, because it was beneath many people’s notice, could slip through his fingers. FDR only had time to intervene so often; and for a long time the structure that so often succeeded allowed Breckinridge Long to sit happily in his office and effectively ensure the death of many.

Psychologist David P. Barash, one of the early contributors to the growth of sociobiology, wrote a recent monograph on Game Theory and competition, titled *The Survival Game: How Game Theory Explains the Biology of Cooperation and Competition*. Barash’s book sheds a great deal of light on Morgenthau’s situation. At one point, Barash discussed political rivalry in the context of game theory. He wrote, “Like

two contestants in a particularly grueling tug-of-war, each side may long to ease up, but fears that the other will take advantage, so both sides end up holding tight, straining mightily ... and often getting nowhere. Not uncommonly, the two players come out somewhat behind.” In the Treasury Department’s tug-of-war with State, they certainly came out behind on the refugee issue. State had more authority, and frustrated their attempts. The competition took on an unhealthy angle that was not mutually beneficial or cooperative (as FDR had intended), but why? In this instance, perhaps life functioned like baseball. Barash put forward an example about Game Theory and baseball statistics that easily lends itself to analogy here. Prolonged competition among the same group of baseball players led to a leveling off of batting averages, as good pitchers and good hitters adjusted to each other. They were able to maintain a nice equilibrium, unless the rules were changed.

This system, in which offensive and defensive players gradually develop an equilibrium of mutual best responses to each other tends to break down whenever the rules are changed. In such cases, the balance was typically shaken for a time, during which offensive and defensive players experimented with different ways of doing things. Some did unusually well, others were exceptionally inept. Eventually, a new equilibrium was typically established, with each not only doing the best he could but—

crucial for Game Theory perspective—the best he could against the other.⁷⁸

Here, life imitated baseball. Indeed, the baseball explanation is merely one way of wrapping one's mind around the messy, complicated reality that simple, old-fashioned, "healthy" competition becomes when that reality is viewed through the lens of evolutionary biology. Indeed, World War II had changed the rules. The shifting daily nature of reality in a World War created an atmosphere of constant change; if the evolutionary biologists are correct (and I believe that they are), competition in such a situation would be off-kilter. It might have unanticipated, oddly skewed results. In the refugee rescue game, Morgenthau was pitted directly against Breckinridge Long. Long was a magnificent defensive player, fiercely determined, clearly committed his own foul "cause," and he had the advantage of time and energy. Long was supposed to devote his entire work to the refugee issue, whereas there was only a small overlap with Morgenthau's job. Morgenthau, as the Secretary of the Treasury, had other desperately crucial issues to deal with. Ideally, in ordinary time the system would have worked perfectly: Long could have reigned Morgenthau in if he violated too many immigration laws, and Morgenthau could have forced Long to behave like a proper humanitarian. But that did not happen; instead FDR's competitive administrative style and typical jurisdictional overlaps that usually worked so well simply didn't this time. Under another executive, the process of getting the President's attention might not have progressed so

⁷⁸ Quotes from Barash, David P., *The Survival Game: How Game Theory Explains the Biology of Cooperation and Competition*, (New York: Times Books, Henry Holt and Company, 2003); political rivalry quote from page 5, baseball statistics quote from page 24.

slowly, because the competition that bought FDR time and allowed him to have the final say would have been less of an issue. Greenstein, Neustadt, and Schlesinger have demonstrated that FDR fostered competition as a means of maintaining personal power over events. That was his style. But it was method, not madness. Another executive would not have established the precedent for Executive Order 9417 that was needed to right the situation quickly once it did come to his attention. It was clearly a complicated issue, characterized by contingency, obviously in defiance of any simplistic and comforting historical judgment.

But what does all of this mean for the story of Morgenthau? Applying these fresh perspectives from political science, history, and psychology to Morgenthau's situation illuminates the background, provides important context, and helps explain Morgenthau's ability to accomplish his goal of rescue. In some ways, because it was necessary for him to maintain Presidential control at such a crucial moment for the world, FDR created a bureaucratic monster that Morgenthau and others had to reckon with. Stimson expressed his frustration thus: "I told [FDR] frankly over the telephone that it was a bad administration and asked him what a Cabinet was for and what Departments were for ... but I have small hope of reforming him. The fault is Rooseveltian and deeply ingrained." Whether or not it truly was a fault was debatable; however, the fact remains that certain elements of FDR's administrative style were frustrating for some in the Cabinet to deal with.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries, Reel 8, Vol. 42, p. 1.

It is important to note that most historians and most of his contemporaries credited FDR with saving the free world from the totalitarian Nazis. This author is absolutely among his admirers. To say that his system generally functioned effectively would be an extreme understatement. Any criticism of a man who accomplished so much on behalf of humanity must be undertaken with the greatest care; it speaks volumes that even the reporters of his time agreed never to portray him in an unflattering light. However, no human being is entirely perfect, and FDR could not have foreseen every implication of his administrative presidency's competitive, "divide and conquer" style.

For Morgenthau's rescue attempts, the implications of Roosevelt's administrative style were varied and diverse. For one, when Morgenthau finally discussed the issues of late 1943 with Roosevelt, the President intervened and righted things. A lesser president might have been afraid to go against the entrenched bureaucracy; a lesser president would not have the precedents for unilateral power that would have allowed him to do so. Clearly, it was FDR's force of personality and stature that, in the end, allowed the War Refugee Board to be created. Looking back at the events discussed in Part One, that much is quite clear.

But perhaps it was also that very same administrative style, the very nature of "competitive adhococracy," that allowed FDR's intervention to come so late in the game. Morgenthau had to be absolutely certain that he was right before proceeding to the highest authority; and the State Department had been very difficult to nail down. State had effectively prevented Morgenthau from working effectively even from within his position in the Treasury; they kept him from maneuvering the money raised by the

organized Jewish community to help refugees. Because it wasn't just a money issue, the overlap of the jurisdictions had allowed State to thwart Morgenthau. And, it was, after all, the fact that press reports and direct reports from Jewish organizations and refugees themselves did not add up with the State Department's story that finally drove Morgenthau to go to FDR. It was not the problems they had created for him. Overlapping jurisdiction hurt refugees; Treasury's keen attention to reports from outside sources alerted Morgenthau and his staff of the problem. They in turn alerted Roosevelt, who stepped in immediately and saved the day.⁸⁰

Historian Michael Beschloss summed the problem thusly, "The President believed his methods let him squeeze the best out of strong-willed, independent people. The problem was that in the meantime, they could often do serious damage." Beschloss continued, "It should not have required a Morgenthau to blow the whistle on disgraceful State Department efforts to stop the rescue of Jewish Refugees." Granted, Breckinridge Long, was something of a special case. He actually asserted in his diary on October 3, 1940, that he was doing FDR's will. While this was flagrantly untrue, Long was able to get away with his nefarious deeds for a very long time. Perhaps it is helpful to use one of the President's own metaphors to explain. FDR likened himself to a quarterback who had to direct the plays from the field during his 100 Days Legislation; when examining the situation of rescuing Holocaust victims, a football metaphor is appropriate as well.

⁸⁰ See Greenstein for "competitive adhocracy;" See *Executive Order 9417* for the creation off the War Refugee Board; see the *Report to the Secretary on the Acquisition of This Government to the Murder of the Jews*; see also Morgenthau Diaries on money from the organized Jewish community, American Society of Friends, and others; see Blum, *From the Morgenthau Diaries* for creation of the WRB also.

Only, this time, it seems that FDR had unintentionally created an institutional culture where at least a handful of lesser quarterbacks were too self-aggrandizing, too competitive, and too suspicious pass the ball to their open receivers in other departments. Overlapping jurisdictions created territoriality on issues that otherwise might possibly have been solved through mutual cooperation.⁸¹

The example of Morgenthau's relationship with the State Department during the attempted rescue of Romanian Jews in 1943 perfectly exemplifies this point. Neustadt observed in his general study that Roosevelt superintended the actions of his staff (and by extension his cabinet), and arranged his administration so that people "knew what their jobs were but they could not do it without watching, checking, jostling one another." And jostle they did.⁸²

As Part I demonstrates, the governmental response to the ordeal of the Romanian Jews is well documented. The historiography surrounding the creation of the War Refugee Board highlights this infamous example of bureaucratic incompetence. Again, Morgenthau was trying to help the Romanian Jews; he was working within the parameters of his job to facilitate the organized Jewish community's monetary efforts. During the ordeal, Morgenthau wrote Peter Bergsen, "Rest assured that I am already doing everything in my power, consistent with my position in the government, to facilitate the rescue of these oppressed people." The key phrase here was "everything in

⁸¹ Quote from Beschloss, *the Conquerors*, page 28; for reference from the Long Diary where he says Roosevelt backed his policy on visas, see *The War Diary of Breckinridge Long*, Oct. 3, 1940 entry.

⁸² Superintending his staff from Neustadt, *Presidential Power*, 197; quote "checking, jostling" from Neustadt, *Presidential Power*, 196.

my power *consistent with my position in the government.*” Morgenthau was working; but historians know that Morgenthau and his compatriots in the Treasury Department faced determined opposition from several State Department officials with their heels dug in as trenchantly as collared bulldogs. This is no great revelation; until Morgenthau persuaded FDR to intervene, Breckinridge Long was in charge of refugee affairs; he pushed forward his bigoted policies and his staff of paper-pushers were beneath him apparently doing his bidding without much question.⁸³

The State Department was “losing” memos, “forgetting” to send cables, and basically blocking rescue attempts on several fronts. However, there were also a great number of intelligent, solid, capable officials in the State Department. Providing two excellent if vastly divergent examples, Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Undersecretary Sumner Welles were both courageous men of no small character. However, because of the undercurrents in the Cabinet, even these two men were “not always on speaking terms;”⁸⁴ a fact which will be explored further in the next section. At any rate, Hull was at least sympathetic to refugees. As evidence, in 1934 when it became apparent that the Nazis were blocking emigration, Hull removed the police certificate requirement Long had instituted that had become a barrier to U.S. entry (police meant Gestapo in this context).⁸⁵ In another example, during September of 1943 former New York Governor Herbert Lehman, in refugee affairs for the State Department and

⁸³ Quote from Morgenthau, *World War II and Postwar Planning*, v. 688, p. 32; for more sources on the Romanian Jewish example and the creation of the War Refugee Board, see Hilberg.

⁸⁴ Stimson quote on Hull and Welles from HLSD, Reel 8, Vol. 41, p. 68.

⁸⁵ For more on Hull’s waiving the police certificate requirement see Friedman, *A History of the Holocaust*, 23.

later for the UN, did his part. Lehman alerted Morgenthau of State's failure to send Morgenthau's cables, which authorized the action of the World Jewish Congress for relief of the Romanian and French Jews, to the American legation in Bern.

Clearly, there were more than a few good men in the Department of State. However, if this is so, why did those who were trenchantly opposed to rescue efforts succeed for so long? Hiding Anti-Semitism behind security concerns certainly helped, but one tentative answer lies in FDR's administrative style. Perhaps Breckinridge Long was not the only bureaucratic monster in the situation—it would seem that competitive adhocracy and overlapping jurisdiction earned at least a small share in the blame. As Dickinson argues, FDR's method of preserving near divine authority over events—maintaining the proverbial “last say”—was certainly politically expedient in many cases. However, even Dickinson admits the scholarly consensus is that FDR's competitive administrative style could be “enormously inefficient” at times. Stimson goes so far as to label it an entirely “haphazard administration.”⁸⁶ To follow Neustadt's analysis, it is clear that FDR retained enormous presidential power this way, and his large part in saving the free world exempts him from a great deal of criticism. But no man, no system is perfect, and in this case, nurtured competition and overlapped jurisdictions exacted a high cost that Romanian refugees had to pay in blood.⁸⁷

A SUSPICIOUS REDDISH AURA

⁸⁶ Stimson quote from Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries, Reel 8, Vol. 43, p. 68.

⁸⁷ For more on Franklin Delano Roosevelt's “enormously inefficient” style of “competitive adhocracy” see Dickinson, *Bitter Harvest*, 205, 197.

The fact that it was difficult for people to work together harmoniously against a backdrop of fierce competition for the administrative affections of such a charismatic leader as FDR exacerbated other issues. Psychologist Alfie Kohn's *No Contest: The Case Against Competition* perfectly encapsulates the problem. Kohn wrote the following about organizational structures that have been set up to encourage competition; "Most striking of all is the impact of this arrangement on human relationship: a structural incentive to see other people lose cannot help but drive a wedge between us and invite hostility."⁸⁸ In certain instances, like the Morgenthau situation, this fierce competition mingled with the perpetual stress of administering a world war and produced a climate that allowed bureaucratic manipulation at its worst; in such an environment, staffers from different departments were set up to be suspicious of each other. Cultivated suspicion could only have encouraged the State Department, with their long history of paranoia. State feared the Nazis, the Communists, the Radicals, the liberals, the press, and the Jews. The State Department also feared the Cabinet, Roosevelt, and in the end, even each other. To demonstrate how deeply this suspicion ran and how widely its net was cast, in November of 1942, Henry Stimson wrote the following about a conversation with Secretary of State Cordell Hull. During one of his "usual diatribes,"⁸⁹

[Hull] breathed his customary fire and brimstone against the "starry-eyed" members of the President's entourage whom he described as young

⁸⁸ Quote, "Most striking of all" from Kohn, Alfie, *No Contest: The Case Against Competition*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1986).

⁸⁹ Stimson refers to Hull's "usual diatribes" several times; it seems to be his modus operandi, especially toward the end of the administration as his health declines.

communists whose efforts would result in ... a complete swing back to reactionary-ism such as the Harding regime after the last war. Hull asserted that this was actually taking place and even at the present day chances would be against us ...⁹⁰

Probably in Hull's eyes, Morgenthau was one of these "starry-eyed young communists." A long-time member of Roosevelt's entourage since his time as Governor of New York, Morgenthau was the President's neighbor in Hyde Park as well as his close friend.⁹¹ In fact, Morgenthau's relative inexperience with fiscal matters—he had begun his career in Agriculture, and that was where his heart remained—and his close relationship with FDR could have led to Morgenthau's having been considered something of a hanger-on. Stimson, for one, thought Morgenthau was quite under-qualified to be Secretary of the Treasury.⁹² In all fairness, Morgenthau was no economist; in his heart he actually preferred farming. And, as Secretary of the Treasury, Morgenthau was the architect and administrator of many a New Deal financial policy that seemed to reek of Communism in the noses of many traditionalists of the older generation. Many people like Hull and Stimson, the old school, traditional statesmen of an earlier and arguably simpler era, saw the entire New Deal shrouded in a suspicious Red aura. This carved a difficult terrain that made walking the bureaucratic path exceedingly treacherous.

Other historians have touched upon the State Department and Cordell Hull's hostility to Morgenthau toward the end of the war and the culmination of Morgenthau's

⁹⁰ Quote from HLSD, Reel 8, Vol. 41, p. 48.

⁹¹ For more on the friendship between FDR and Morgenthau see Morgenthau, *Mostly Morgenthau*, and Blum, *Roosevelt and Morgenthau*.

⁹² This theme will be further explored later in the analysis.

activism for refugees. However, these historians have mostly fallen into two categories: those who assume that Morgenthau deserved the hostility he received, and those who argue that he fell victim to the State Department's culture of anti-Semitism. However, the documentary evidence points toward a third explanation for State's apparent hostility toward Morgenthau's refugee relief efforts: the culture of fear and the suspicious reddish aura.

In just one example, the State Department was obsessed in its ongoing pursuit of any hint of communism, compiling lists and documents full of people with a suspicious red aura about them. In fact, even ordinary liberals were tarred by their liberalism; in their collective mind, the State Department associated "starry eyed" liberals (and probably "starry-eyed" departments⁹³) with communists. It may be argued they were surrounded by a suspicious aura of pink that the State Department found almost as abhorrent. Later in this essay Morgenthau is revealed to have been a prime target for State's hostility on this front. He was certainly a target for Breckinridge Long's hostility; Long wrote in his diary on December 29, 1942, "My reputation, in some radical circles, was challenged by adverse publicity – some of it as nasty as it was undeserved ... The attacks had their origin in Communistic and Jewish radical circles." Long was quick to assign blame, and he stereotypically connected radicals, communists, and people of

⁹³ Quote from Henry Lewis Stimson Diary, Reel 8, Vol. 41, p. 48; see also Vol. 41, p. 45-46.; Quotes from Henry Lewis Stimson Diary, Reel 8, Vol. 41, p. 45-46; this is a sharp linguistic jab with a very negative connotation; it is rather akin to a modern conservative condescendingly labeling someone a "bleeding-heart liberal" today.

Jewish faith. However, he was not the only one; in fact, that attitude was quite common in the State Department.⁹⁴

Beyond this, Morgenthau and the entire concept of European refugee relief was associated with people and organizations the State Department perceived to be radicals, communists, and malcontents who had been “systematically attacking” the State Department since 1936. This must have at the very least contributed to State’s distaste for Morgenthau and his efforts. In short, the petrified State Department found itself attacked in a nightmare of Orwellian proportion; and perhaps they were not so far off in their assessment. For one, Harry Dexter White, Morgenthau’s Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, was outed as a spy during the McCarthy era; he was found to have been communicating with Russian agents, a fact which caused Morgenthau great distress in the early 1950’s.⁹⁵ Certainly, the State Department perceived an enemy at the gates—they were convinced that refugee admission would provide enormous opportunities for Nazi spies and communist revolutionaries.⁹⁶ In fact, late in 1943 after the rescue of Romanian

⁹⁴ Quote “My reputation...” from Wyman, David, *Showdown in Washington*.

⁹⁵ Beschloss, *The Conquerors*, 150-154; apparently White’s Monetary Policy Division at the Treasury was in fact full of communists—for more on this and the Harry Dexter White case, see R. Bruce Craig’s *Treasonable Doubt: The Harry Dexter White Spy Case*.

⁹⁶ The fear of Nazi spies infiltrating refugee groups was almost ubiquitous, appearing in numerous documents and guiding policy; Cordell Hull later asserted the fact in his *Memoirs* on page 1539-40: “We ... found that the Nazi authorities were sending out intelligence agents in the guise of refugees ... naturally the more extreme sympathizers in this country, especially among the Jews, and some in high positions such as Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau, found grievous fault with the State department and especially with every official handling the refugee problem. It was but natural that, in their anguish over the projected extermination of their race in Europe, they should feel that even the strenuous efforts we were making were inadequate;” the following quote from The Cordell Hull Papers, Reel 55, Vol. 403, document *Campaign Against the Department of State*, page 11 provides another excellent example: “Efforts to gain admission into the United States of European ‘refugees’ bordering on a racket in which these Americans

Jews brought everything to a head, Breckinridge Long attempted to defend himself before Congress on those very grounds; but Congress was not convinced. Cordell Hull later insisted in his memoirs that Nazi infiltration of refugee immigration had posed a serious threat. Historian Saul Friedman defended Hull in his *History of the Holocaust* by explaining that, “Some officials like Hull ... were honorable men who believed the only way to stop the atrocities was winning the war.”⁹⁷

However even in the context of war this was nothing new; since the 1930’s the State Department had prophesied doom with powerful rhetoric. The rhetoric had only evolved to say the Nazi spies could contribute to Allied defeat while the Marxist revolutionaries hoped to destroy Democracy, and by extension, the American way.⁹⁸

In an equally terrifying specter, the enemy was also within the gates in the form of refugee organizations infested with people the State Department knew to be strong communist sympathizers at the very least. In the eyes of the State Department, these pestilential Communists (many of them Jewish!) were systematically waging war against Freedom and Democracy and the American Way. It is in the midst of this State Department culture of life-and-death ideology and hyperbolic rhetoric that Morgenthau was faced with the problem of how to aid refugees—many or most of them Jewish. An obsessive, gripping fear dominated State Department cognition where “Communists and Radicals” were concerned. Could anyone really be trusted—especially a Jew in

have tried to force the Department to nullify existing immigration laws to permit entry of radicals, ex-communists and other elements specifically barred from admission.”

⁹⁷ Long’s testimony taken from *Report to the Secretary*; Quote from Friedman, *A History of the Holocaust*, 347.

⁹⁸ For more on Long’s testimony, see “Report to the Secretary,” Book 293, Reel 201, pp. 212-220, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

communication with refugee relief groups infested with the dreaded Communist scourge? This was not an empirical proposition, but an underlying issue; a pattern of thought and symbol permeating relations between the Democratic Self and the Communist Other. When considered as a part of the structural confines within which they all operated, this contextual fear helps to explain why State thwarted Morgenthau at every opportunity.

Again, one major contributing factor to this fear was the persistent and documented attacks on the State Department. Whether real or perceived, these attacks stretched back into the 1930's. Because of such attacks on its policies and officials, the State Department had been hotly and passionately defensive about the refugee issue for years by the time Morgenthau's transition from interested participant to ardent activist was complete. Breckinridge Long wrote in his diary on December 29, 1942, obviously regarding his success in barring the gates while innocent people died, "I have done my duty to my country during the year. I have worked hard – very hard – and I have kept the faith [although] my reputation, in some radical circles, was challenged by adverse publicity – some of it as nasty as it was undeserved ... [and] the attacks had their origin in Communistic and Jewish radical circles." Significantly, Morgenthau's suspicion was rising during this period Long felt attacked by Communists and Jews. Long was not alone in his fear, and as time progressed, the State Department grew increasingly more defensive and paranoid. By the time Pehle and Paul issued their *Report to the Secretary*

on the Acquisition of This Government on the Murder of the Jews, State was at the end of its figurative rope.⁹⁹

But what brought them there? Among other factors, the press contributed in no small part to State's obsession with being attacked. Certainly, it was true that the FDR Administration enjoyed a complex and tense relationship with the press. But, while many wings of the FDR administration faced criticism from the press, State's relationship with that institution of freedom was particularly strained. For example, Washington Post journalist Drew Pearson's column provides something of a divining rod; it is mentioned multiple times in the Stimson, Morgenthau, and Hull Diaries. Out of these, Hull has the most trouble.¹⁰⁰

In one fiery memo from September 1942, the unspecified author appears angry that "Drew Pearson said in his column in the Washington Post about 10 days ago, 'Secretary of State Cordell Hull has long been anti-Russian ... [and] Mr. Hull...actually would like to see Russia bled white.'"¹⁰¹ Afterward, "Hull denounced these statements as monstrous and diabolical falsehoods."¹⁰² Referring to the same incident, on September 16, 1942, the Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for the Division of

⁹⁹ See Cordell Hull microfilm, folder 403, titled *Attacks on the Department of State* for a complete review of documents detailing this; the file is quite long, containing numerous memoranda and other documents written by different authors on the same subject. While the authors are clearly different – linguistic patterns vary from document to document – the connections between Communists, radicals, Jews (and even liberals), and refugees are apparent in the documents. Quote from the Breckinridge Long's Diary, entry dated December 29, 1942, appearing as reproduced in Wyman, *Showdown in Congress*, 344.

¹⁰⁰ For more on Pearson, see Klurfield, Herman, *Behind the Lines: The World of Drew Pearson*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1968); also Pilat, Oliver, *Drew Pearson, An Unauthorized Biography*, (New York: Harper's Magazine Press, 1973).

¹⁰¹ Cordell Hull Papers, Reel 55, Vol. 403, page non-numbered.

¹⁰² Cordell Hull Papers, Reel 55, Vol. 403, page non-numbered.

Defense Materials writes about Pearson. Referring to Pearson's allegations about the State Department and synthetic rubber, he says "There is not the slightest truth in Mr. Pearson's statement with reference to the State Department."¹⁰³ On another occasion in 1943, Henry Stimson recorded in his diary that Cordell Hull himself was petty and unnecessarily upset about press jabs at the State Department. Stimson asserted that Hull was "very abnormally insensitive."¹⁰⁴

In May of '44, Stimson discussed Pearson in his diary in the context of the Morgenthau Plan for Postwar Germany, Morgenthau's extremely punitive plan to deindustrialize Germany and render it forever impotent. Stimson wrote,

Mr. Hull called me up evidently being very much worried over the newspaper leaks in respect to the division in the Cabinet on the treatment of Germany ... Drew Pearson started it with a story last week which evidently came from Treasury sources—at least it made attacks on Hull and myself which no friend of ours would have made.

While Pearson clearly annoyed Stimson, his statement was free of the venom driving the State Department's outrage. In fact, Stimson blamed Treasury sources alongside Pearson, which will be important later. It is not insignificant that while Pearson generally berated the other departments, his column usually supported Morgenthau.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Quote "There is not the slightest truth" from Cordell Hull Papers, Reel 55, Vol. 403, page 77.

¹⁰⁴ "Very abnormally insensitive" Quote from HLSD, Reel 8, Vol. 44, page 3; Stimson also repeatedly characterizes Hull as extremely "anxious" in general; "Anxious" HLSD Reel 8, Vol. 41, p 126.

¹⁰⁵ See Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries, Reel 9, Vol. 47, p. 210-215.

For Stimson, Pearson was a bullying gossip. As a bothersome member of the “long-haired”¹⁰⁶ press, he was just another gnat to be swatted. But for Hull, Pearson just may have been the Devil himself. Moreover, Hull’s Devil was flanked by a demonic army of newspapers and reporters—while Pearson provides just one salient example, the problem of the press was persistent, and the State Department felt the strain most severely. Deborah Lipstadt’s *Beyond Belief*, Laurel Leff’s *Buried by the Times*, and Susan Tift’s and Alex Jones’ *The Trust* demonstrate the inadequate press response to the Holocaust. But while the press response was one of overwhelming disbelief (and even a stifling urge), any published news on any page was still far ahead of the State Department’s categorical denial.

The situation is encapsulated in the following passage from a 1942 State Department memo that begins,

Since Hitler’s accession to power in Germany in 1933 and especially since the beginning of the Spanish Civil War in July 1936 the Department of State has been subjected to increasingly bitter attacks in the press originating with communist and radical groups in the United States. ... Alleged failures ... [included] ... failure to take sides in the Spanish Civil War and ... not permitting all “refugees” to come to the United States.¹⁰⁷

Notice, the “communists and radicals” appear together once again; these groups nearly always appear together in the document and others like it. To the State Department, it

¹⁰⁶ See Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries, Reel 8, Vol. 41, page 108.

¹⁰⁷ Cordell Hull Papers, reel 55, folder 403, *Campaign Against the Department of State*.

looked like they were all clearly in cahoots; Jews showed up later in the document.¹⁰⁸

Predictably, paralleling Breckinridge Long's diary the same year, others in the paranoid State Department revealed that all of the people they thought to be the "bad guys" were connected.

Beyond the opening of the document quoted above, in the first ten pages of this particular memo, there are eleven references to Hitler, the Axis, and Germany; in contrast, there is absolutely no reference to the Holocaust. It is clear that the focus is not on the suffering victims, but on any distant political threat their presence might possibly pose. While it is true that in 1942 government officials still debated the existence of Hitler's actual genocide, by that time concentration camps and pervasive persecution were already undeniably documented in the press and through refugee reports. Yet, there is no mention of what created the flood of refugees whom the so-called "communists and radicals" sought to admit. The focus is entirely on the political and ideological leanings of the would-be rescuers; the document speaks for itself. In contrast to two mentions of refugees, three of Hitler, two of Axis governments, and six of Germany, there are fifty-seven references to communists, radicals, Marxists, revolutionaries. This "so-called liberal and intellectual fringe of Marxist revolutionaries" terrified the State Department with their refugee rescue efforts (note, the word "refugee" was in quotations in the memo, as if the plight of victims were merely imagined). Unfortunately, this attitude persisted and prevailed in State Department dealings with refugee issues until 1944.

¹⁰⁸ The lists of enemies of the State Department are full of traditionally Jewish surnames; a clear pattern is emerging from the documents; see Cordell Hull Papers reel 55, vol. 403, file titled *Attacks Upon the Department of State*.

For example, in a series of reports issued from 1942 to 1944, the State Department continues to be alarmed by the efforts of “liberals, progressives, and ... communists” to undermine their immigration policy. There was such a consuming and deterministic fear that virtually anyone involved in refugee relief was presumed communist; relief organizations were automatically suspect. In *Campaign Against the Department of State*, the author, an unnamed State Department official, admits, “True, many distinguished liberals occasionally were attracted to these groups by misrepresentation,” but they were obviously misled by the hardened communists¹⁰⁹. It also appears that their mere association taints them, as we will explore later. Despite enormous evidence to the contrary, the State Department remained convinced refugee relief organizations and the individuals involved with them were attempting to sneak communists and radicals into the U.S.A. under the guise of refugees. This compounded with State’s persistent fear that the Nazis would send spies into the U.S. through channels established for the relief of refugees. While this particular fear sprang more from State’s deterministic fear than from reality (almost without exception, Axis spies never posed as refugees), that did not make it any less potent. To summarize, in the 1942 document titled *Adverse Record of Certain Signers of Telegram on Some Visa Cases*, the Department summarized its position.

The visa procedures and practices of the Department of State have been predicated upon the assumption that the enemies of our form of

¹⁰⁹ Hull Diaries, reel 55, folder 403; page 9 of State Department document titled *Campaign Against the Department of State*.

Government would be likely to attempt from time to time the infiltration of their subversive agents into the United States.¹¹⁰

Any attack on these restrictive visa procedures was perceived as an attack not just on the law or the State Department, but also on the very fabric of American democracy. After all, State went to great lengths to paint refugee relief organizations and associated individuals as communists, and communists and radicals were always appeared to be attacking the American Way.

It is likely that State found Morgenthau guilty by association with refugee relief groups, and the more persistent he was—the more activist he became—the more threatening and sinister his actions and motives appeared to the already oversensitive State Department. This helps explain why they thwarted him at every turn. He was situated in their consciousness with people like Rabbi Wise—Morgenthau Sr.'s old and dear friend—who was quite notorious in the State Department himself because of his staunch support of refugees, and whose son was on several lists of suspected communists, enemies and attackers of the State Department. These associations diminished Morgenthau's likelihood of accomplishing significant changes in refugee policy, and explain why it was necessary for the Treasury to resort to an appeal to the President. While Morgenthau was operating from within the cabinet and should have been seen as legitimate and friendly, State's perceptions were already too warped to be objective about the refugee issue. In a document dated October 23, 1942, State asserted its belief that all the organizations attacking the State Department (mostly refugee relief organizations

¹¹⁰ Hull Diaries, reel 55, folder 403, page 60.

already “proved” rife with communist radicals), were revealed to be thoroughly interconnected. The language in the document’s opening paragraph is quite strong.

[We are] concerned with certain organizations of so-called American liberals and intellectuals who have been attacking officers of the State Department for several years. By a system of interlocking directorates, all these mushroom organizations will be found to be connected...[and]...in spite of the professed opposition to Communists by these organizations, their smear campaigns are practically identical with those of the communists as are their targets.¹¹¹

The following report takes the tone of an Orwellian nightmare: “they” are coming! “They” are set out to destroy “us;” they are already here. While “It [was] conceded that since September 1939 the majority of these persons [had] actively opposed and still oppose[d] the American Communist Party”¹¹² for its association with then Axis-Allied Russia, State could not believe the proverbial leopard capable of “changing its spots.” No, “*They still desire the abolition of the capitalist system and in its stead a modified form of Bolshevism,*” [emphasis added].¹¹³

It follows that Morgenthau’s association with the organized Jewish community and its relief efforts, and his communication with other relief organizations may have combined to make him a prime target for suspicion even before Treasury staff began investigating the State Department failure to help refugees.

¹¹¹ Hull Diaries, reel 55, folder 403, *Groups Attacking the Department of State*, page 1.

¹¹² Hull Diaries, reel 55, folder 403, *Groups Attacking the Department of State*, page 2.

¹¹³ Hull Diaries, reel 55, folder 403, *Groups Attacking the Department of State*, page 2.

There is little evidence that Cordell Hull or State Department officials explicitly expected Morgenthau himself to purposefully sneak communists disguised as Holocaust victims under their noses. That sounds like a somewhat ludicrous proposition. The reality is much more subtle: there was a pervasive organizational culture of fear and suspicion at work in the State Department, and its reach extended even to the Secretary of the Treasury. Not only does this theme weave through the numerous documents in the Hull Diaries, even several years later, Hull feels it is important enough to justify in his memoirs.¹¹⁴ Significantly, it was this culture of fear that initially crippled Morgenthau's efforts to save Holocaust victims. The perceived threat of Nazis and communists infiltrating the ranks of "legitimate" refugees made the State Department oversensitive to Morgenthau's efforts, and his Jewish background predisposed them to suspect he was overly influenced by identification with the victims. In fact, according to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, this is what made Morgenthau feel justified in functioning as a "second Secretary of State."¹¹⁵

The relationship between Morgenthau and Cordell Hull is particularly interesting when examined in its larger context, including that of the State Department's bizarre relationship with the refugee relief community. As argued in the chapter covering Morgenthau's unlikely path to activism, Hull was not entirely responsible for the bureaucratic shuffling and messes made in the State Department. His undersecretaries often acted without his consent or even his knowledge, despite Hull's assertion to the

¹¹⁴ Hull, Cordell, *Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, p. 1539.

¹¹⁵ Hull, Cordell, *Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, p. 1539.

contrary in his memoirs.¹¹⁶ In a January 12, 1944 meeting discussing refugee evacuation, Morgenthau encapsulated the problem. Morgenthau told Pehle and Harry White about Hull's relationship with the people in charge of refugees, saying, "Long came in, then in came Reigelman, then three other people in the State Department came in. I turned to Mr. Hull and said, 'Would you mind introducing me to these people, because I am sorry, I don't know who they are.'" After explaining that the men in question were Travers, who was in charge of the Visa Division, and Reams, who was political adviser on refugees, Morgenthau dropped the bomb, "And these two people – Hull say[s], '*I don't even know who they are.*' And there was complete disorder. Breckinridge Long was ashen color; his hands shook. I never saw the man so thoroughly scared." Morgenthau went on, "And Hull just didn't seem – one time I said, 'You know, when you go through this record for the last year and a half, it is one of the most shocking, upsetting matters I have ever come into contact with.'" Morgenthau finished by summing up the situation, "Here are these people handling this thing for him, and he doesn't even know them by sight. It is just unbelievable."¹¹⁷

Furthermore, Hull actually admitted to Stimson in 1945 that he had been unable to control his undersecretaries and they "had been responsible for the row over Argentina" while he was in the hospital for seven months.¹¹⁸ The astute Stimson noticed this, and encapsulated the problem in his diary one day, talking about what was

¹¹⁶ Hull asserts his supervision of the State Department in his *Memoirs*, 207.

¹¹⁷ Quotes beginning with "Would you mind introducing me" from *Morgenthau Diaries*, dated January 12, 1944; presented here as reproduced in Wyman, *Showdown in Congress*, 202; italics on Hull quote my own, for the purpose of emphasis.

¹¹⁸ Hull quote from Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries, Reel 9, Vol. 51, page 152.

In my opinion a very serious problem ... but to my utter surprise when I opened it up with Hull I found that he hadn't given it any consideration at all. He did not even know that he had written such a letter asking my views on the question. He had signed the letter, he said, just as he signed hundreds of others and had left all the work of framing up this question to his underlings. In other words, the most important kind of foreign policy is being virtually put in a position where the question is settled by the underlings of our State Department instead of receiving first the ideas and views of the President and his cabinet and his Secretary of State.¹¹⁹

This was indeed a serious problem. However, the extenuating circumstances of his persevering at the job through his extreme illness, and Hull's staunch faith in his undersecretaries, combined to make him more bystander than perpetrator, some things, to quote Stimson, simply "slipped through his hands."¹²⁰

VALUES IN TRANSITION: THE RELATIONAL ASPECT

Before Hull came to see Morgenthau as a refugee advocate and *de facto* assailant of the fortress that was the State Department, they worked together with as much harmony as was to be expected of two such vastly different men. Even when they were friendly, Hull and Morgenthau never quite seemed to "speak the same language," because

¹¹⁹ Stimson quote from Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries, Vol. XLII, page 145.

¹²⁰ "Slipped through his hands" quote from Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries Reel 9, Vol. 48, p. 136.

they were, essentially, from two different worlds. In fact, their struggles may be seen as symptomatic of a larger pattern of values in transition.

FDR's New Deal was indeed a great departure from the past, and his New Dealers were no less so. The old and the new clashed often on this frontier of two centuries, where men formed in completely different eras tried to work together and understand each other. It was a borderland of ideas, and pairs of competing dualisms—youth and age, idealism and experience, innovation and tradition—all created tension in the FDR administration that needs to be explored. While intergenerational struggles obviously stretch backwards for millennia, those experienced in the FDR administration were arguably a more radical departure than many that had gone before them. The struggles within the FDR administration were more than those between young men and their fathers' peers; they were epic struggles between disparate worlds. These men were enmeshed in a violent ideological confrontation between the fading nineteenth century and rising twentieth. They all felt the tension inherent in the sweeping, rapid changes that World War I and World War II engendered; for many, the wars and the Holocaust would come to represent the failure of the Enlightenment Progress that the older generation cherished. Inevitably, people do not operate in a vacuum; they operate from within the vast worlds inside their heads. These inner worlds spill unstoppable into the outer one, the actual day-to-day progress of events, and this particular intergenerational tension became a treacherous undertow that Morgenthau and his colleagues had to swim in. This intergenerational tension between men of the ebbing Victorian 19th century and oncoming modern 20th century colored Morgenthau's relationships within the Cabinet

and influenced the course of events as much as FDR's administrative style or the State Department's paranoid complex about Communism.

Before proceeding into such dangerous theoretical territory (where, in the words of the old maps, there be dragons) the specific nature of some of the relationships involved must be examined. The relationships between Morgenthau, Hull, and Stimson provide the best examples of the intergenerational struggle that colored relations within the Cabinet.

Clues into their relationship are found in Hull's *Memoirs*, where he writes about Morgenthau's attacking the State Department:

Naturally the more extreme sympathizers [with the Jewish refugees] in this country, especially among the Jews, and some in high positions such as Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau, found grievous fault with the State Department and especially with every official handling the refugee problem. It was but natural that, in their anguish over the projected extermination of their race in Europe, they should feel that even the strenuous efforts we were making were inadequate.¹²¹

It is obvious that even at this late date Hull is either still ignorant or is purposefully sanitizing for history. However, his initial ignorance, documented in the previous chapter, indicates the former.

Within the Roosevelt administration, there was already a great deal of conflict and competition owing simply to FDR's administrative style. Several historians have

¹²¹ Hull, Cordell, *Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, p. 1539-49.

discussed this in several contexts, and that historiography has already been explored in this thesis. However, it is helpful at this point to revisit these issues and allow the key players to speak for themselves.

Henry Stimson's diary sheds a great deal of light on the administrative style of FDR, and Stimson's insights are readily applicable to the Morgenthau situation. Stimson found FDR's leadership style to be highly disorganized in general; this and other factors made the climate in the cabinet quite tense at times. However, a close analysis of Stimson's own relationship with Morgenthau reveals that it went sour not because of any lingering issues in the Cabinet, the administrative style of FDR, or even because of the Morgenthau Plan, as some argue.

Although these were certainly contributing factors, they were certainly not *the* contributing factor. Something else was at work. These same elements were present in Stimson's relationship with Hull, but did not affect it negatively. Conversely, the Stimson-Morgenthau relationship went downhill as Morgenthau's differences from his older peers become more visibly salient. The more active he became in the refugee issue, the more he stepped out of his traditional Treasury boundaries. Personally, he moved further from the staid, responsible, old school way of doing things. The crucial moment was one seemingly insignificant incident that was actually quite pivotal: Morgenthau told Stimson a "little white lie" about the Morgenthau Plan for postwar Germany that seems to have been the proverbial "last straw" for Stimson. After this point, Stimson had little or nothing good to say about Morgenthau. Stimson wrote in his diary on Tuesday, March 29, 1945, "at a luncheon with me in the White House [Morgenthau] spoke of this

paper as something that had been put over on him in Quebec and which he had never fathered. I had a copy of it in my pocket, fished it out, and showed his initials at the bottom of it. Then he said he had made a great mistake and has admitted that with great frankness since. Then, for a little while, Morgenthau was in the doghouse and the State Department resumed its proper functions.” It is *very* significant that in the same diary entry Stimson actually blamed FDR’s administrative style and Hull’s illness for allowing the Morgenthau Plan to be bandied about; conversely, he did *not* blame Morgenthau for spawning the idea to begin with. Stimson wrote, “Never has anything which I have witnessed in the last four years shown such instance of the bad effect of our chaotic administration and its utter failure to treat matters in a well organized way.” He continued, “Hull, although essentially on my side, was too indecisive and ill to take much of any position.” Stimson talked about Morgenthau next, recording how someone in the Treasury had leaked the plan to the press where “It was at once torn to pieces by public opinion and the President hastily retreated from his position.” Stimson doesn’t seem to mind that so much; and he certainly doesn’t blame Morgenthau. Stimson had noted in previous months that Morgenthau was justifiably angry, but he did not judge him harshly for it. If anything, Stimson wrote it off as an overly passionate lapse by someone who really did not have the economic training to understand the consequences. It seems that Morgenthau’s relative youth and inexperience got him off the hook. It was the lie that Stimson honed in on, and it was the lie that made him angry. In the end, perhaps it was the lie that spoiled their rapport, as well.¹²²

¹²² Quotes from Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries, Reel 9, Volume 50, Pages 206-210.

In the months that followed, Stimson's references to Morgenthau in his diary grew exponentially more negative, disdainful, and dismissive. They were a sharp contrast to the pleasantly professional entries Stimson made about Morgenthau before the lie, even after he had found out about the Morgenthau Plan! By May 8th, Stimson wrote scathingly of Morgenthau's interrupting his lunchtime rest "troubled because the Coordinating Committee is not carrying out his 'scorched earth' policy quite as hard as he wants it carried." May 9th, Stimson noted, "We have run into the stubborn opposition of Morgenthau who is afraid that the least little bit of the 'scorched earth' policy towards Germany will be relaxed. I foresee hideous results from his influence in the future." By July, Stimson referred to Morgenthau with an openly disgusted tone and poked fun at him, something he had not done before. Stimson related a conversation with a colleague from the State Department where, "Henry Morgenthau was on the prowl and was going to turn up in Germany 'just on the chance that he might be needed.'" Stimson wrote, "Apparently he has done this on his own. Byrnes and I laughed over it together." Stimson painted quite a word picture of Morgenthau: "Stubborn," and "troubled" because he didn't get his policy "quite as hard as he wants it" conjures up an image of a recalcitrant child. Morgenthau's finally being "on the prowl" is a typically feminine, feline image. Perhaps Morgenthau's lie and unrestrained passion for vengeance on Germany combined to feminize him in Stimson's mind. In Stimson's mind, perhaps the already younger, less experienced New-Dealer had effectively severed all symbolic ties with the version of masculinity that Stimson cherished. This was in fact part of a larger

pattern of events; it was simply the proverbial last straw that finally irreparably smashed Stimson's image of Morgenthau.¹²³

The souring of the relationship between Stimson and Morgenthau perfectly illustrates the tensions between FDR's comparatively youthful New-Dealers and older, more experienced statesmen like Hull and Stimson. This was a battle not over politics, or for FDR's favor, but an inevitable struggle between youth and age, idealism and experience, past and future. At its most essential level, theirs was a conflict between nineteenth and twentieth-century men in what was rapidly becoming a postmodern world, and this, too, would complicate Morgenthau's attempts at rescue.

Who were the men involved, and what made them so different from one another? Hull and Stimson were both veterans of the Spanish American War and Stimson attained the rank of Colonel fighting in France in World War I; Morgenthau was seven years old during the Spanish American War and spent World War I working for the Farm Administration. Hull won the Nobel Peace Prize; Morgenthau came up with an infamously Carthaginian "peace" plan for the postwar deconstruction of Germany. Hull grew up in a log cabin in Reconstruction era Tennessee and went on to become "The Father of the United Nations." Stimson left his privileged life in New England to experience the last of the American frontier mapping a part of Montana and living with American Indians. He spent several years in the Philippines and Nicaragua. Morgenthau grew up in a brownstone in twentieth-century Manhattan, spent time with his father,

¹²³ Quotes from, in order, Tuesday, May 8, 1945, Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries, Reel 9, Vol. 51, page 108; Wednesday, May 9, 1945, Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries, Reel 9, Vol. 51, page 110; Wednesday, July 4, 1945, Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries, Reel 9, Vol. 51, page 14;

Ambassador Morgenthau, in Turkey.¹²⁴ In 1913, Morgenthau became a farmer in Dutchess County, New York, where he began fortuitous friendship with his neighbor FDR that propelled him into, first agricultural bureaucracy, and finally, the Treasury. His scope of experience was considerably different from that of Hull and Stimson. This was no ordinary generation gap.

That is not to say that Morgenthau was better or worse than the other two. He was neither; he was merely different. For men of Morgenthau's generation, there were no majestic American mountain ranges yet unmapped; there was no more frontier to experience. Morgenthau, like Stimson and Hull, was inevitably a product of his own times. The question remains, how did these differences manifest themselves in the day-to-day experience of Cabinet life? The Old School and the New Guard, solid tradition and *ad hoc* innovation, experience and idealism, the 19th and 20th centuries—all of these elements clashed in varied and subtle ways every single day.

At the most basic level was age. Stimson was born in New York in 1867. Hull was born in Tennessee in 1871. Morgenthau was born in New York in 1891. From the get-go, these men were different. Hull was born into rural Southern poverty. Stimson was born into a New York just a few years removed from the infamous Civil War Draft Riots, into an era captured by Louisa May Alcott. Morgenthau was born in the New York of Edith Wharton and Henry James. There was really no comparison.

In one passage that seems to crystallize his outlook and sense of masculinity, Stimson spoke simply and stirringly about his experience on the frontier. He mapped the

¹²⁴ For more on young Henry's experience in Turkey, see *Mostly Morgenthau's* page 175.

part of Montana that would become Glacier National Park. He hunted and climbed with the Blackfoot People and came to know their ways. Stimson himself believed that his “contact with the simple rough men of the wilderness, both red and white,” whom he clearly admired, played a great role in shaping him. This was the man who would have to deal with the petty bureaucratic messes in FDR’s Cabinet. Stimson wrote in his memoirs,

Looking back, I find it hard to exaggerate the effect of these [wilderness] experiences on my later life. That effect, physical, mental, and moral, was great. Not only is self confidence gained by such a life, but ethical principles tend to become simpler by the impact of the wilderness and by contact with the men who live in it. Moral problems are divested of the confusion and complications which civilization throws around them. Selfishness cannot be easily concealed, and the importance of courage, truthfulness, and frankness is increased. To a certain extent, the effect is similar to the code of honor learned by the soldier in the field.¹²⁵

Stimson’s value system was hopelessly at odds with that of the Roosevelt administration. Competitive adhocism, Roosevelt’s maintenance of near-divine control, and the dirty bureaucratic squabbles that characterized the administration—these were distasteful to Stimson, and arguably to many men of his persuasion and generation. Stimson’s distaste for the atmosphere of Roosevelt’s administration and his disapproval of some of its younger officials were merely symptomatic of the inevitable conflict between two such disparate worlds.

¹²⁵ Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, xvi.

In the early years of their work together, Stimson and Morgenthau got along splendidly. Morgenthau had warmly welcomed him into FDR's administration when he joined the Cabinet ranks, and Stimson liked him for it and considered him a personal friend. Stimson had probably needed a friend; he was in a uniquely challenging position as a Republican from an old Republican family entering a powerful office in the administration of a liberal Democrat. At any rate, most of their correspondence was characterized by cordiality and professionalism; certainly Morgenthau's entries about Stimson were unremarkably professional. However, it is not insignificant that Morgenthau seems to have amused Stimson quite a bit. In one example from the November of 1942, Stimson talked about the developments with Vichy France that had created "much excitement in the starry-eyed circles" of "ardent young gentlemen" in the Cabinet, including Morgenthau. At Felix Frankfurter's birthday party, Stimson took it upon himself to diffuse their worries over Vichy, including the task of calming "poor Henry" down. "Finally," Stimson said, "After grunts and groans we got Morgenthau into line and I think I sent them home reconciled." Stimson assigned himself the role of kindly, understanding father figure and dealt with his traumatized bureaucratic children accordingly. Clearly, Morgenthau and the other "ardent young gentlemen" must have held at least some notion of deference to their perception of his greater age, experience, and wisdom, because *they let him do it*.¹²⁶

Two weeks later, on November 29th, Stimson again took the edge off of a "delicate situation" with Henry Morgenthau, this time involving the appointment of a

¹²⁶ Quotes from Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries on microfilm, Reel 8, Vol. 41, p. 45-46.

Treasury Advisor to England. Morgenthau had chosen someone that the War Department did not entirely approve of. However, Stimson “naturally [didn’t] want to offend him for not only is he the representative of the Treasury but he has always been a good friend of mine.” Stimson pondered the issue, but was still troubled three days later when Morgenthau called him as he had not been able to make a decision that, presumably, would suit everyone. Morgenthau wanted Stimson to hurry up the process. The next day, Stimson wrote in his diary that he was “sorry to say I had an unpleasant talk with Henry,” who had “wanted to put in one of his own young men.” Stimson, by contrast, wanted to put in “an outstanding financier economist who would be recognized as such and would be able to meet the British on even terms.” Stimson had a frank talk (in line with Stimson’s self-styled frontier values of directness and honesty) with Morgenthau and told him he was going to pick the experienced man. However, Stimson said Morgenthau was “jealous” of the Wall Street types and was consequently “crabbed” about it. Seen through Stimson’s eyes, Morgenthau’s action looks quite childish. It appears that perhaps the invisible forces of youth and idealism versus age and experience had struck again.¹²⁷

It is important to note at this juncture that word Stimson’s word choices were not accidental. In an era dominated by Emily Post, ladies and gentlemen wrote letters and were judged by the handwriting with which they were written. For people from a world of text messages, email, and word processors that allow for ready deletion, it is easy to miss the importance of this concept. Morgenthau’s meeting minutes demonstrated the

¹²⁷ Quotes from Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries on microfilm, Reel 8, Vol. 45, pp. 68-69, 81-84.

preoccupation with linguistic subtlety as well. In an eight-man meeting of the Fiscal and Monetary Advisory Board, Morgenthau, Hopkins, and others argued over the construction of a simple memo to the President. The word “such” was discussed at length, with four different people chiming in to argue over shades of meaning. No one was shocked; clearly, sometimes it took a village to draft a memo, because preoccupation with linguistic perfection was a characteristic of the era in which these men lived. As a student at Andover in the 1880’s, which Stimson said played a great role in forming him, he would have learned the power of his pen and the significance of a well turned phrase. When Stimson used words like “ardent young gentlemen” and labeled behavior “childish,” it is likely that he meant it.¹²⁸

That said, as Morgenthau became more activist in nature and rebelled against his prescribed role in the Cabinet (albeit a rebellion sanctified by FDR’s bizarre administrative style) his relationship with Stimson grew more complicated. Despite the complications, Stimson still liked and respected Morgenthau. As Morgenthau learned more and more the extent of the Holocaust and advocated more and more drastic measures in the form of the Morgenthau Plan, Stimson worried about him. Stimson condemned Germany just as Morgenthau did; he thought “it represent[ed] the ruin of a most powerful and efficient nation which ha[d] wrecked itself by its own failure in morals and [was] now suffering the terrific penance that goes with terrific cruelty.” However, Stimson wholeheartedly disagreed with Morgenthau’s draconian plan; he thought it was “childish folly.” Yet, for a long time Morgenthau remained a “good

¹²⁸ For a full transcript of the “it takes a village memo” meeting, see Morgenthau Diaries Reel 42, Vol. 152, p.164-180.

friend,” according to Stimson. Eventually, Morgenthau completely disappointed him, and it was the intergenerational tensions and competing values between the old and new that soured the relationship. Again, it was the “little white lie” that Morgenthau told Stimson that changed things. It must have seemed inconsequential for Morgenthau, but was perhaps pivotal for Stimson. It was a question of competing values, and the new must have seemed a glaring contrast to ethical sensibility Stimson credited the frontier with giving him. Likewise, the older paradigm must have seemed outdated and inconsequential to Morgenthau, or he probably would not have breached it.¹²⁹

Stimson has to be understood in the context of his own explicitly stated beliefs about the mentalité of his morality and masculinity. Again, Stimson claimed to be foundationally influenced by the “ethical principles ... of the wilderness ... [where] moral problems are divested of the confusion and complications which civilization throws around them. Selfishness cannot be easily concealed, and the importance of courage, truthfulness, and frankness is increased.” To such a person, the complications and contradictions of a more modern, twentieth-century sensibility may indeed have appeared to be petty jealousies, and childish vindictiveness. That is certainly not to say that Morgenthau was either childish or petty, only to say that these were vastly different men. Stimson was indisputably Morgenthau’s superior in age and experience, and Morgenthau must have known it. Conflict was inevitable, and it came. During one week in May 1944, Stimson recorded two small incidents where he perceives Morgenthau to behave jealously and to shirk responsibility. After this, their relationship rested rather

¹²⁹ “Childish folly” quote from Hodgson, Godfrey, *The Colonel: The life and Wars of Henry Stimson, 1867-1950*, page 18.

precariously on a slippery slope where their competing worldviews threatened the balance.¹³⁰

On August 26, Stimson noticed in Morgenthau “a very bitter atmosphere of personal resentment against the entire German people without regard to individual guilt,” that worried him. A week later, Stimson attributed it to the fact that “Morgenthau is, not unnaturally, very bitter as he is not thoroughly trained in history or even economics.” Significantly, Stimson blamed Morgenthau’s lack of experience, not his ethnicity. They talked it over with “temperateness,” and Stimson was satisfied.¹³¹

A month later, “it became very evident that Morgenthau had been rooting around behind the scenes and had greased the way for his own views by conference with the President and others.” A nasty picture, Stimson was thoroughly disenchanted with Morgenthau. He registered his complaint against the Morgenthau Plan in his diary, saying, “I feel I need to leave a record for history that the entire government of this Administration had not run amuck at this vital period.” In the months that followed, Stimson’s writings about Morgenthau grew increasingly more stern. By September, the Morgenthau Plan had created such a disturbance in the government, and in Stimson’s own mind, that he recorded: it was a “diatribe,” it was “biased” and finally, Stimson was

¹³⁰ Wilderness quote footnote; “jealousy” Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries on microfilm, R9, Vol. 47, page 53; “responsibility” Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries on microfilm, R9, vol. 47, page 67.

¹³¹ “resentment” quote from Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries on microfilm, reel 9, Vol. 48, page 30; “ignorance of history” “temperance” quotes from HS reel 9, Vol. 48, page 33.

“horrified with the Carthaginian attitude of the Treasury. It is Semitism gone wild for vengeance.”¹³²

Historians often quote this phrase; Michael Beschloss’ *The Conquerors* and Jeffrey K. Olick’s *In the House of the Hangman: the Agonies of German Defeat* just to name a few. For example, Beschloss sees this as anti-Semitic rhetoric, but perhaps it was something else. It is obviously offensive and inflammatory, yes, but it may leave a somewhat misleading impression of Stimson if the negative is all that readers get to see. My reading of the documents, while far from exhaustive, has not revealed him to have been particularly racist; Stimson had in fact spoken fairly sensitively, for a man of his generation and socioeconomic status, about race relations in North Africa. More significantly, he had only the highest praise and an obvious admiration for the Blackfoot People of Montana. Stimson also seemed to have had a similarly high opinion of women; after he pinned on her Distinguished Service Medal, Stimson told Mrs. Oveta Culp Hobby, Director of the Women’s Army Corps, he said “The only trouble was that there weren’t more of her.” Stimson was born in 1867, yes, but these are certainly not the sentiments of a Victorian racist. It is likely that an actual bigot born in 1867 would have left a much darker evidentiary trail, perhaps more akin to that of Breckinridge Long.¹³³

Only nine days previously to recording his now-infamous remark, Stimson wrote

¹³² “greased” quote from Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries on microfilm, reel 9, Vol. 48, page 35; “record for history” quote from Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries on microfilm, reel 9, Vol. 48, page 36; “Diatribes” Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries on microfilm, reel 9, Vol. 48, page 57; “Semitism gone wild for vengeance” quote from HS reel 9, Vol. 48, p. 82.

¹³³ Olick, Jeffrey K, *In the House of the Hangman: The Agonies of German Defeat*; for more on Native Americans see the Stimson quote from his *On Active Service in Peace and War*; for more on race relations in North Africa see Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries on microfilm, Sunday, Sept. 27, 1942, page 120; For more on Oveta Culp see Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries on microfilm, Reel 9, Vol. 50, p. 22.

in his diary of a conversation he had with Felix Frankfurter on the matter of the Morgenthau Plan. Stimson seemed to want to make it clear that he was judging Morgenthau on the basis of his overemotional disregard for the rule of law; in its proper context, Stimson's complaint does not appear rooted in Morgenthau's ethnicity. Stimson

Asked [Frankfurter] to come to dinner for a conference so that I might enlist him in this battle. Frankfurter was very helpful as I knew he would be. Although a Jew like Morgenthau, he approached this subject with perfect detachment and great helpfulness. I went over the whole matter from the beginning with him, reading him Morgenthau's views on the subject of the Ruhr and also on the subject of the trial of the Nazis, at both of which he snorted with astonishment and disdain. He was very helpful in regard to the trials because he had sat in the Supreme court on the opinion that they had rendered in the saboteurs' case and was very familiar with the subject of the 'common law of war offenses;' He fully backed up my views and those of my fellows in the Army that we must give these men the substance of a fair trial and that they cannot be railroaded to their death without trial.

Two weeks later, Stimson discussed the matter with President Roosevelt, telling him it was the outrageous language of Morgenthau's Plan which had most alarmed him. Stimson recalled the conversation,

In the course of the talk I told him of my personal friendship for Henry Morgenthau who had been so kind to me when I first came into the

Cabinet and that I had shuddered when he took the leadership in such a campaign against Germany, knowing how a man of his race would be misrepresented for so doing.¹³⁴

Perhaps Stimson's now infamous comment was simply a frustrated outburst at a man in whom he had lost faith; Stimson may have merely been judging Morgenthau for his "failure" to maintain Stimson's own view of masculinity. Stimson obviously had perceived in Morgenthau several instances of uncontrolled emotion, departures from deified Tradition, "petty jealousies," and the like. It appears that Stimson was judging Morgenthau for being a man of a different generation and masculine ideal than himself. Frankfurter, on the other hand, while he was also younger, was from the Old World. Furthermore, he had much more in common with Stimson; born in Vienna, he had become Stimson's assistant in 1906; both men were dignified attorneys of the ancient persuasion.

At any rate, Anti-Semitism does not seem to have been the problem. The issue at stake was more likely Stimson's personal beliefs about the manhood of Morgenthau's generation. Morgenthau and men like him seemed to Stimson not just younger, but softer, more emotional, less traditional, and less restrained. Whether Stimson's beliefs about Morgenthau were or were not grounded is irrelevant; they were true for Stimson and they influenced how Stimson dealt with Morgenthau and, consequently, how effectively Morgenthau could accomplish his goals when working with Stimson.

¹³⁴ While we now know that Jewish faith in no way constitutes a race, Stimson was speaking in 1944. In 1944 this was a ubiquitously held assumption, and in no way indicates any Anti-Semitism on Stimson's part.

Perhaps Morgenthau's plan had served to highlight the differences between the two men and their competing world views; their generationally influenced understanding of how the world works and who they should be as men in it.

Like many people, Stimson had often demonstrated a preference for the mores of those whose mores closely paralleled his own. In December of 1943, Stimson was pondering the North African Campaign. Stimson had been dealing presumably with junior members of the department on the issue and felt it was "high time" to talk "with General Stanley Embick, who is the head of our elder statesmen in military matters." Stimson's words positively glowed as he warmly described:

Embick was an old classmate of mine in the General Staff College in the old days of the last war. He is a fine old fellow but he belongs to the classical school and McCloy has suspicions of him for that reason. I on the contrary feel that it is very important to find the sound foundations for what we do even with the new machinery and the new methods, and I always find myself refreshed as to vision and outlook by a talk with him.¹³⁵

Stimson clearly felt the past was a sound foundation; he valued that which was reliably hardened by experience and time. As a generality of Stimson's outlook, this sentiment also extended to agencies; recall Stimson's appropriation of Hull's label "Starry-eyed departments," where, presumably, there lurked starry-eyed young communists-by-association. In February of 1943, Stimson complained about the civilian

¹³⁵ Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries on microfilm, page reel 8, vol. XLI, page 89.

agencies represented at a meeting on civilian policy in occupied territories. Morgenthau's young friend Harry White (25 years younger than Stimson) was representing the Treasury. Stimson complained "that the several civilian agencies concerned are approaching the problem from the 'idealistic' viewpoint of improving conditions throughout the world rather than from a realistic viewpoint."¹³⁶ The idea that idealism was inherently unrealistic was characteristic of Stimson's occasionally antiquarian, uppercrust outlook. And, while the Morgenthau Plan cannot be said to have suffered from positive idealism in any form, it was suffering from an inherently "unrealistic" submission to raw emotion; the connection is that both unrestrained idealism and emotion are incompatible with Stimson's rather Victorian manhood.

Clearly they affected Morgenthau's working relationship with Stimson, but how did the clash of dated ideals between men of different generations affect Morgenthau's relationship with Cordell Hull? The tension between Hull and Morgenthau looks on the surface to be the result of an inflated turf war, but a deeper analysis reveals that it is plagued by the same intergenerational tensions between Morgenthau and Stimson. The ebbing 19th century ideas and oncoming 20th century world seemed locked in a battle for the Cabinet.

Generally, Stimson and the War Department minded their own business—and they certainly had enough to manage on their own—and let Hull manage foreign policy and Morgenthau manage finance. Morgenthau, however, was notorious for invading the turf of the State Department, and Cordell Hull. This made Hull furious; yet Hull and the

¹³⁶ Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries on microfilm, Reel 8, Vol. XLII, pp. 41-42.

State Department did the very same thing to Stimson on a regular basis! Partly, FDR's tendency toward departure from tradition was a contributing factor. In one example from February of 1943, Stimson attempted to correct what he believed was FDR's error in assigning the general administration of civilian affairs in North Africa to the State Department. Stimson wrote, "He [FDR] has done this in disregard of the talk I had with him over the telephone in which I pointed out the historical precedents of our government which in past wars has invariably used the War Department as that agency." Note, it was the violation of historical precedent which assumed primacy in Stimson's complaint. The fact that "The State Department of course has never been an administrative department. It has no machinery for that purpose," arguably a more serious obstacle to effective administration, came only as an afterthought. At any rate, State was able to encroach upon War Department territory partly because of FDR's unapologetic departure from historical precedent; this is *ad hoc* innovation at work affronting the deified Tradition. Yet, Stimson still claimed to "have no hard feeling against the State Department of course, particularly not against Hull," because the State Department was notoriously bad at administration. The State Department's foreign staff "consist[ed] of ambassadors and ministers and consular agencies, none of which do anything except write and talk."¹³⁷

¹³⁷ Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, 360; Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries Reel 8, Vol. VXLII, page 38; Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries Reel 8, Vol. VXLII, page 38; Mark Stoler's *Allies and Adversaries* covers the Civil-Military relationship in detail; Stoler takes the view that Hull was difficult to work with partly because his feelings were hurt by FDR's exclusion of him from key events; for example, Hull never received the minutes of the Casablanca conference even after he asked for them. This was clearly a complicated relationship; Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries on microfilm, Reel 8, Vol. XLIII Page 93; Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries on microfilm, Reel 8, Vol. XLIII Page 94.

Stimson definitely felt that FDR had given the State Department too much power. However, the State Department was also taking over territory assigned to it by neither statute nor tradition. Stimson was incredibly disturbed by this new “departure from traditions of our American government in respect to military matters which have been fundamental since the origin of our government,” and he told Hull so. Stimson constantly looked backward to tradition for guidance. Hull had “violated” it, and Stimson was seriously concerned. Yet, his relationship with Hull remained constant. Stimson seemed to respect Hull, despite his perception of Hull’s “anxiety,” “peevishness,” “weekly diatribes,” and administrative violation of tradition. Why?¹³⁸

To further complicate the situation, there was also the matter of Hull’s illness. Stimson noted in his diary that Hull had grown quite cantankerous by the end of FDR’s third administration. However, Stimson was patient with Hull. One afternoon at the end of a particularly trying week, Stimson described Hull as “finishing up his usual weekly diatribe on his troubles, amusingly serious as to what the ‘cherubs’ were trying to do to him.” Stimson was amused; he seemed to understand Hull, for they were “of an age.” While their youthful experience was different, they had experience and generation in common. Plus, Hull was a self-made man, a concept that was very important to notions

¹³⁸ Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries on microfilm, vol. XLII, page 4, page 38; Quote from Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries on microfilm, Reel 9, Vol. 48, page 13; for more on State’s encroaching on War and Navy turf see HLSD Reel 9, Vol. 48, pages 11-12, 14-15, 140-141; see also Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries on microfilm, reel 8 Vol. XLIII pages 90-93; Reel 8, Vol., 41 pages 70-71; Reel 9, Vol. 48, page 135; For more on “peevishness” “anxiety” and “datribes” see Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries on microfilm, reel 8, Vol. XLIII, page 30-31; reel 8, Vol. XLI page 30; Reel 8, Vol. XLII page 53; HLSD Reel 8, Vol. 44, page 102; Reel 8, Vol. 41, page 126; Reel 8 Vol. 41 pages 174, 162; For more on conceptualizations of manhood in this context see Bederman, Gail, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

of masculinity for men of Hull and Stimson's generation. Also, there were a few more extenuating circumstances.¹³⁹

Very significantly, Hull had grown increasingly sicker as his tuberculosis and diabetes worsened. Like many people of his generation, he also had chronic dental problems. In 1943, on the plane to Russia to negotiate with Stalin, Hull's tuberculosis was affecting him so much that he was actually coughing bright red blood into his handkerchief. This was a very sick man on a very important mission that took a great deal of grit; but Hull persevered and succeeded in winning Stalin's trust because he believed the fate of the free world might be at stake. Hull reportedly told Stalin "The responsibility for whether the world crashes to pieces or is saved will be laid at your doors." Despite his illness and the fact that FDR consistently excluded him in favor of Sumner Welles, a great deal of weight fell onto Hull's shoulders.¹⁴⁰

It bears consideration that two of the most common symptoms of chronic tuberculosis are extreme fatigue and pain with breathing; chronic pain is known to take a heavy toll on a person's body, mind, and spirit. His chronic illness (and presumably also his chronic pain) had to lower Hull's tolerance for the mundane annoyances of bureaucratic life. It must also have made Henry Morgenthau's incursions onto his turf all

¹³⁹ Concept of the self-made man in Gilded Age masculinity, see Berger, Martin A., *Man Made: Thomas Eakins and the Construction of Gilded Age Manhood*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Hilkey, Judy, *Character is Capital: Success Manuals and Manhood in Gilded Age America*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.).

¹⁴⁰ Quote from Stimson's account of a conversation with Hull about the Russia trip, see HLSD Reel 8, Vol. 45, page 55-56; See Beschloss for more on the complicated relationship between FDR and Hull.

the more intolerable, and the fresh New Dealer all the more difficult for a statesman of Hull's generation to put up with.¹⁴¹

In the midst of Hull's illness, with his undersecretaries running amuck, Morgenthau began acting, as Hull recorded for posterity in his *Memoirs*,

As if he were clothed in authority to project himself into the field of foreign affairs and inaugurate efforts to shape the course of foreign policy ... despite the fact that he was not at all fully or accurately informed on a number of questions of foreign policy with which he undertook to interfere ... Emotionally upset by Hitler's rise and his persecution of the Jews, he often sought to induce the President to anticipate the State Department or act contrary to our better judgment.

Hull was understandably upset. However, Hull may not have been in a position to accurately judge the situation himself. He was nearly an invalid, he was often out of touch, and some of his underlings were acting diabolically. However, upon close analysis, it was not the interference that so upset Hull—after all, overlapping jurisdictions were characteristic of the administration, and Hull spent some of his own time snagging Stimson's turf.¹⁴² More significantly, Hull took issue with Morgenthau's interference as an “emotional” issue. To Hull, Morgenthau appeared “emotionally upset by Hitler's rise.” For a man of Hull's generation, strong emotions were best exhibited by women

¹⁴¹ For more information on the symptoms of tuberculosis see <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/tuberculosis/DS00372/DSECTION=2>

¹⁴² See Gilbert, *Allies and Adversaries*, for a more detailed account of Civil-Military problems; because the focus here is on personal relationships and Stimson wrote repeatedly in his diary that Hull encroached on his governmental provenance, Stimson's position is accepted because it was the perception of reality that affected his behavior and the dynamic in the cabinet.

and children, not grown men; they were *certainly* inappropriate for the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States. Emotions were not to be trusted; *reason* was to be trusted, and Morgenthau's refugee efforts seemed most *unreasonable* to Hull, who remained convinced that the only way to help refugees was to win the war. Therefore, to Hull, it may not have seemed entirely necessary to take precious time facilitating Morgenthau's rescue efforts while there were more pressing, *reasonable* issues at hand.¹⁴³

Stimson worried about Morgenthau's level of emotional involvement in the refugee issue as well. But, it was not only Morgenthau who seemed not to measure up to the old ideal. Welles too, was young. He was also homosexual. He was a bit of a dandy, a "Dapper Dan," to use the terminology of the day. He was even a favorite of the detested Drew Pearson! What could be further from the old assumptions of a restrained, dignified political masculinity, shored up by age and tradition and experience? Hull couldn't stand Welles most of the time. Stimson summed up the situation, "Hull and Welles are not always on speaking terms ... [and it puts me] in a devil of a position." However, Morgenthau liked Welles a great deal. The Jewish New-Dealer and the gay global strategist both embodied a very real "changing of the guard." They were the face of the future, and what a remarkable departure it must have appeared to Stimson and Hull! The old was on its way out, and the new was already firmly established. Tradition was giving way to liberal innovation that frightened the traditionalists. One particular headline after Hull's resignation symbolized the spirit of the times. After Hull stepped down in 1944, despite his notoriously difficult relationship with the press, the papers

¹⁴³ Quote "as if he were clothed with authority" from Hull, *Memoirs*, page 207-8.

almost universally praised him; he had become an American institution. The headlines hailed Hull: “Best Negotiator since Franklin,” “The Father of the United Nations,” “Cordell Hull, Sound and Solid,” and “Simple American Sincerity was Creed of Secretary Hull.” But in December of 1944, came the headline that probably cut deeply into the heart of cabinet divisions. One editorial in *Life* magazine was headlined: *MR. HULL: HIS CAREER WAS IN A GREAT AMERICAN TRADITION, BUT A GREATER ONE IS NEEDED NOW*. Of course Morgenthau and Welles had annoyed Hull; in a sense, they were rendering him obsolete. The world was rapidly changing, and the success of men like Morgenthau meant that men Hull—and his world—despite all of his magnificent accomplishments and experience, might be slipping into the annals of the past.¹⁴⁴

CONCLUSION TO PART TWO

What did all of this mean for Morgenthau’s activist dreams for European refugees? It mattered a great deal. Morgenthau was not simply another link in the bureaucratic chain, working on an ordinary policy in an ordinary time. Both Morgenthau and activist refugee work represented a radical departure from accepted traditions that many people simply were unprepared to accept. The world was changing, and there was a battle raging over what the future of the Cabinet would look like. The casualties were

¹⁴⁴ For more characterization of Welles see Gellman, Irwin F., *Secret Affairs: Franklin Roosevelt, Cordell Hull, and Sumner Welles*, ix-xii; Hull and Welles quote from Stimson Reel 8, Vol. 41, p. 68; Headlines from *The Washington Post*, Dec. 3, 1944; *The Washington Star*, Dec. 3, 1944; *The Albany Herald*, November 16, 1945 (this after he won the Nobel Peace Prize)

usually confined to hurt feelings, devalued traditions, and stacks of paper. Unfortunately, there were human casualties as well. Every piece of red tape, every “lost” telegram, every effort that simply was not made had a human cost. There were certainly great obstacles, both tangible and ephemeral. The red tape could be cut with effort, but the immovable obstacles in the minds of the men around him were the most difficult to overcome.

There were worlds beneath the surface. First, FDR’s administrative style of competitive adhocism and overlapping jurisdictions created a nightmare of competition and suspicion that made any positive action difficult to achieve without a great deal of bureaucratic squabbling. On the next level, institutional cultures within the cabinet were a strong undertow that flowed against Morgenthau’s efforts—the State Department’s paranoid fear of Communism and radicals and nearly everything else was quite a force to be reckoned with. Finally, interpersonal dynamics further complicated Morgenthau’s rescue efforts, as intergenerational tensions changed the way he was perceived and by extension what his options became.

The Talmud says, “We do not see the world as it is, we see the world as we are.” For Morgenthau and activism on behalf of refugees from the Holocaust, this certainly was true. Henry Stimson, Cordell Hull, and State Department Bureaucrats saw Morgenthau not as he was, but as they were, and this had profound implications.

General Conclusion

Certainly, Henry Morgenthau had a difficult job in a difficult time, but he worked at it with a dogged determination. He was far from perfect, and he was certainly an unlikely activist; in his heart, Morgenthau was a quiet man who probably would have preferred to remain in the background managing the money. Initially, Morgenthau was consumed with financing the war, but he had been actively interested in finding solutions for refugees from the very beginning. As he gradually realized that the State Department was shirking its duty and failing the people who most desperately needed its help, his conscience projected him forward, and Morgenthau broke with tradition, stepped into the fray, got his hands dirty, and helped.

The historians have often relegated Morgenthau to the sidelines, and only discussed him in reference to the Treasury and economics, the Creation of the War Refugee Board, or the Morgenthau Plan. To do so is to lose a great deal of historical complexity surrounding the complicated evolution of one American activist whose path was characterized by contingency. It did not have to happen as it did, but Morgenthau's story unfolded in a way that illuminated a great deal about the institutional world in which he operated.

There were certainly obstacles along his path. Resistance from the State Department, the Administrative style of FDR, and the intergenerational tension between competing value systems all complicated the matter. Indeed, the worlds of expectations and assumptions within each of us limit and define more than we care to admit. But,

despite all this, Morgenthau was determined to help refugees from the Holocaust.

Because he knew that human lives were at stake, he pressed on, and helped save many people from the Holocaust. His activism came earlier than many historians have supposed, and was also contingent upon a great deal of factors inside the cabinet and inside the minds of the actors involved. Morgenthau certainly deserves more attention from historians as his story concerned much more than historical minutiae. In its largest context, Morgenthau's activism on behalf of European refugees substantiates the hope that one person, however unfit he or she may appear to others, can accomplish a great deal and ultimately impact the course of history.

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Vita

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