

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)

Relief organization established in 1917 by the Quakers, also known as the Society of Friends, as a forum for doing service to humanity in a moral fashion. The Quakers make up one of the smallest religious groups in the United States.

During the first years after Adolf Hitler rose to power, the Quakers were afraid to jeopardize their reputation in Germany, so they did relatively little to help refugees escaping the Nazis. However, after the *Kristallnacht* pogrom of 1938, the AFSC opened a Refugee Division, which provided services for European refugees who immigrated to the US. The AFSC concentrated on Americanizing the new arrivals and adjusting them to their new country.

The Foreign Service Section of the AFSC did even more than the Refugee Division. Cooperating with Jewish relief agencies, in 1939 the organization sent a delegation to Germany to check on the situation of Jews and Christians and provide relief if necessary. They mainly assisted Christian refugees, but they also helped Jews. Among other activities, they fed and saved children in France, assisted Jews who had reached Portugal, and organized the activities of relief agencies in Spain.

In 1947 the AFSC won the Nobel Peace Prize for helping refugees during and after World War II.