

## Evian Conference

Conference convened by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to deal with the Jewish refugee problem. It was held in Evian, France, from July 6--15, 1938.

After Germany annexed Austria in March 1938, Roosevelt called for an international conference to promote the emigration of Austrian and German Jewish refugees and create an international organization whose purpose would be to deal with the general refugee problem. The president invited delegates from 32 countries, including the United States, Great Britain, France, Canada, six small European democratic nations, the Latin American nations, Australia, and New Zealand. When he proposed the conference, Roosevelt made it clear that no country would be forced to change its immigration quotas, but would instead be asked to volunteer changes.

During the conference, it became painfully obvious that no country was willing to volunteer anything. The British delegate claimed that Britain was already fully populated and suffering from unemployment, so it could take in no refugees. His only offer consisted of British territories in East Africa, which could take in small numbers of refugees. The French delegate declared that France had reached "the extreme point of saturation as regards admission of refugees." Myron C. Taylor, the American delegate, allowed that the United States would make the previously unfilled quota for Germans and Austrians available to these new refugees. Other countries claimed the Depression as their excuse for not accepting refugees. Only the Dominican Republic, a tiny country in the West Indies, volunteered to take in refugees—in exchange for huge amounts of money.

The one thing accomplished at the conference was the establishment of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (ICR). Its goals were to help safe haven candidate countries develop opportunities for refugee settlement, and to try and convince Germany to allow organized emigration. However, ICR member countries did not give the organization either the funding or authority it needed to make a real difference. Thus, whatever good the Evian Conference set out to do was buried in the sand—and the world's

democracies had made it extremely clear that they were not willing to help European Jewry.