

## Morgenthau, Henry, Jr.

(1891-1967), American statesman and Secretary of the Treasury during World War II. In that post, Morgenthau was the most important Jew in the government of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and he used his influence to try to mobilize the American government to rescue Jewish refugees in Europe.

Morgenthau was brought into Roosevelt's cabinet as Secretary of the Treasury in 1934. In his department's dealings with the new Nazi government in Germany, Morgenthau began to sense early on just how dangerous Adolf Hitler really was, and he consistently pushed for a strong, prepared American armed forces---just in case.

In July 1938 President Roosevelt convened an international meeting, the Evian Conference, to deal with the refugee problem in Europe. The only result of the conference, which was quite ineffective, was the creation of the President's Advisory Committee on Political Refugees. Roosevelt requested that Morgenthau head up the new committee, but Morgenthau refused.

By mid-1942 the United States government had confirmed the news that the Germans were exterminating European Jews en masse. Morgenthau was quite moved by the information, and he supported Roosevelt's idea to resettle Jews outside of Europe. In late 1943 he managed to convince the State Department to allow the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee to send funds to Europe to help rescue Jews in France and Romania. However, by early 1944 Morgenthau became very critical of the State Department's unwillingness to initiate or even participate in rescue activities. In January one of Morgenthau's assistants handed him a report which documented the State Department's active subversion of rescue activities and refusal to absorb refugees into the United States. Morgenthau toned down the report a bit, and then presented it to Roosevelt. To a large degree, owing to the possibility of imminent scandal and Morgenthau's urgent demands, Roosevelt quickly created the War Refugee Board, a government agency dedicated to rescuing and assisting World War II victims.

After the war Morgenthau left his post in the government and dedicated himself to Jewish causes until his death in 1967.

