

BERMUDA CONFERENCE



ECHOES & REFLECTIONS

TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST. INSPIRING THE CLASSROOM.

By the end of 1942, reports revealed that the Nazis intended to exterminate European Jewry. Both in the United States and Britain, Jewish and non-Jewish groups demanded that their governments take a stand against the atrocities. The two governments then planned a conference to address public opinion. They chose inaccessible Bermuda as the conference's venue in order to control the number of reporters and representatives of non-governmental organizations attending. Members of the Joint Distribution Committee and the World Jewish Congress were not permitted to attend. The conference was convened on April 19, 1943. Its declared goal was to deal with the issue of wartime refugees.

The organizers severely limited the issues that could be discussed. They insisted on downplaying the persecution of the Jews and the "Final Solution," and presented the issue of refugees only in its more universal aspects. Furthermore, the Americans refused to consider changing their strict immigration quotas to let in more Jewish refugees, while the British refused to consider Palestine as a safe haven for Jewish refugees. They would not even discuss sending food packages to concentration camp prisoners. The Americans also betrayed their lack of seriousness by not sending a high-ranking delegation with the authority to make decisions.

At the conference itself, the attendees spent much time talking about renewing the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (ICR), which had been created at the 1938 Evian Conference for the purpose of negotiating with the Germans about refugees. However, the point was moot because, as negotiating with the Nazis was no longer an option, no one was willing to fund the committee. No other solution suggested was deemed acceptable by the two governments, either. Thus, nothing was accomplished, and the Bermuda Conference did not save one Jew.



ABOUT THE PHOTO

Delegates to the refugee conference in Bermuda.

Left to right: George Hall, British delegate; Dr. Harold W. Dodds, Chairman of the US group; Richard K. Law, British Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs; Rep. Sol Bloom, New York; Osbert Peake, British Undersecretary for the Home Office.

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