



Franklin D. Roosevelt
Presidential Library and Museum

CURRICULUM GUIDE

Investigating the Holocaust *Nuremberg: Its Lesson for Today*

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SECTION III

Blueprint for World Domination

This section consists of four film segments and three documents related to the Nazi's plans for world domination.

Film Segment 5

War – Germany Invades Poland (Running Time 4:03)

After Czechoslovakia, Hitler once again claimed no further territorial ambitions in Europe. His public statements formed part of a disinformation campaign to justify invading Poland. England and France pledged full support for the republic. Undaunted, Germany invaded on September 1, 1939. England and France then declared war on Germany.

Film Segment 6

Blitzkrieg – The Conquest of Europe (Running Time 4:32)

With Poland defeated, Hitler pledged to honor the neutrality of noncombatants. His promises were nothing more than disinformation. In April 1940, he struck Denmark and Norway. A month later, Germany invaded the Low Countries and France. Allied defenses crumbled. By the end of June, Hitler dominated much of Europe.

Film Segment 7

The Axis Pact – Blueprint for World Domination (Running Time 4:23)

With Europe subjugated, Hitler sought world domination. Together with Japan and Italy, Germany formed the Axis Pact. Italy would control the Mediterranean. Japan would control Asia. Hitler claimed everything else. With the stage set, Germany invaded the Soviet Union. Japan attacked the United States. The entire world was truly at war.

Film Segment 8

Total War – The Breadth of Nazi Cruelty (Running Time 5:08)

Conquest alone did not satisfy the Nazis. They treated their enemies with contempt and cruelty. Military traditions and established conventions of war were discarded in favor of brutality against combatants and civilian populations. These violent excesses formed the bases for counts 3 and 4 at the Nuremberg trial.

Blueprint for World Domination

Vocabulary

Blitzkrieg – a swift and intense military campaign designed to bring surprise and quick, decisive victory.

Danzig Issue – an area sometimes called the Polish Corridor ensuring Poland access to the Baltic Sea and separating East Prussia from the rest of Germany. This was a situation causing a great deal of embitterment for the Germans following the First World War.

Disinformation – false information deliberately, and often covertly, spread with the intent to mislead, especially propaganda issued by a government organization to a rival power or the media.

Infamous – having a reputation of the worst kind: notoriously evil, shameful, detestable, or bad.

Inviolability – prohibiting violation, secure from destruction, violence, infringement, or desecration.

Low Countries – a region of Western Europe bordering on the North Sea and comprising modern Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands.

Luftwaffe – the German air force during the Nazi era.

Mediation – an intervention in a dispute in order to resolve a conflict between parties, similar to arbitration.

Neutrality – not helping or supporting either side in a conflict, or disagreement, impartial.

Non-combatants – civilians or others not engaged, or prepared to engage, in armed conflict.

Rhineland – area of Germany loosely defining the area west of the Rhine River, chiefly its middle section.

Schweinhund – a German word that means “Pig Dog.” The term is extremely offensive to Germans.

Subjugated – to bring under control or domination by force, or threat of force, especially by conquest.

Superfluous – exceeding what is sufficient or necessary, extra, not needed, obsolete, or wasteful.

Wehrmacht – the armed forces of Nazi Germany from 1935 to 1945. It consisted of three parts *Heer* (army), the *Kriegsmarine* (navy) and the *Luftwaffe* (air force).

Blueprint for World Domination

Questions

Essential Questions for Blueprint for World Domination

- 1) Why were outside calls for peace – from the Pope and President Roosevelt – so ineffective?
- 2) What might have happened if Russia had refused to enter into the nonaggression pact with Germany?
- 3) How might things in Central Europe have played out if England and France had not pledged to defend Poland?
- 4) Why was Hitler seemingly unconcerned about England and France pledging to defend Poland?
- 5) Why did people believe Hitler would keep his word when he repeatedly pledged not to invade other countries, but went ahead and did so anyway?
- 6) What were Russia and Germany each hoping to gain from signing a mutual non-aggression pact?
- 7) How did the technique of *Blitzkrieg* differ from the way wars had been waged in the past?
- 8) What made Germany, Italy, and Japan think that they could rule the world?
- 9) Why did the Axis Powers attack the USSR and the USA and bring them into the war?

Documents

Document III-A: Rabbi Wise's letter and the Second Inaugural Address

Rabbi Stephen Wise was an important and influential advocate for Jewish causes during Franklin Roosevelt's presidency. Wise sought – often unsuccessfully – to unify various Jewish organizations and movements in the United States, and his international network of contacts sent him information about the worsening crisis facing Jews in Europe. In January 1937, just days before FDR's Second Inauguration, Wise received information that the Polish government had declared three million Polish Jews to be "superfluous." Wise wrote this letter to the President urging him to use his inaugural address to assure the public that no one in America would be considered superfluous. As can be seen from Roosevelt's reply letter and this page from his Second Inaugural Address reading copy, FDR took Wise's advice. He used Wise's suggested language almost word-for-word in the most recognizable passage of the speech.

Document III-B: Eleanor Roosevelt's Letter in Aid of Fritz Becker

Because of her well-known sympathies, Eleanor Roosevelt received many requests to assist refugees seeking visas to come to the United States. A Dutchess County neighbor, Mr. Hardy Steeholm, contacted Mrs. Roosevelt and asked her to aid a German Jewish refugee in Yugoslavia named Fritz Becker. In this July 26, 1939, letter, Mrs. Roosevelt's secretary forwarded Becker's information to Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles and asked his assistance in securing a visa for the young man. Welles wrote to Mrs. Roosevelt on August 1, 1939 – one month before the beginning of World War II – and advised her that Becker's visa application would not "be reached for final consideration for a protracted period of time." Welles returned to Mrs. Roosevelt the photograph of Fritz Becker that she had provided him. Fritz Becker's fate is not known.

Blueprint for World Domination

Document III-C: *Letter to Myron Taylor on the Rublee Plan to aid Refugees*

By early 1939, Nazi anti-Jewish laws had led to the confiscation of most Jewish assets and made it almost impossible for any applicant to meet the strict American visa requirements that refugees have sufficient financial resources to support themselves. Resettlement efforts by the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees also ground to a halt as German officials refused to negotiate for the orderly emigration of German Jews. The Committee's director, George Rublee, proposed the establishment of a private foundation that could accept donations from Jewish organizations outside Germany to cover resettlement costs. President Roosevelt hoped this plan would encourage other countries to open their doors to more Jewish refugees, since the costs would be covered by the foundation. In this letter to Myron Taylor, the American representative on the Intergovernmental Committee, the President instructs Taylor to throw his support behind the Rublee Plan. But the outbreak of war on September 1, 1939, put an end to any possibility of a negotiated resettlement of German Jews.

Document Based Questions

Document III-A – *Rabbi Wise's letter and the Second Inaugural address*

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Document Based Questions

- 1) What does the word “superfluous” mean?
- 2) What does the Polish Minister of Affairs mean when he says, “three million Jews are superfluous and must emigrate”?
- 3) What is Rabbi Wise asking President Roosevelt to do?
- 4) Why is he asking the President to do this?
- 5) By adding this sentence to his speech, what is FDR implying for the Jewish community in the United States?
- 6) Why is the inclusion of this one sentence so important and meaningful?

Document III-A Extension Questions

- 1) The Polish Minister of Affairs says, “three million Jews are superfluous and must emigrate.” What do you suppose will happen if they don't?
- 2) Why would Rabbi Wise want the president to include this in his inaugural address?

Blueprint for World Domination

- 3) It seems clear that Rabbi Wise wants FDR to be on record as saying that the United States would not consider Jews in this country to be “superfluous,” as the Polish Prime Minister had done. If that is so, why is the sentence that the Rabbi suggests written so broadly?
- 4) What impact do you suppose Rabbi Wise is hoping the president’s inclusion of the sentence will have?

Document III-B – *Eleanor Roosevelt’s Letter in Aid of Fritz Becker*

Because of her well-known sympathies, Eleanor Roosevelt received many requests to assist refugees seeking visas to come to the United States. A Dutchess County neighbor, Mr. Hardy Steeholm, contacted Mrs. Roosevelt and asked her to aid a German Jewish refugee in Yugoslavia named Fritz Becker. In this July 26, 1939, letter, Mrs. Roosevelt’s secretary forwarded Becker’s information to Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles and asked his assistance in securing a visa for the young man. Welles wrote to Mrs. Roosevelt on August 1, 1939 – one month before the beginning of World War II – and advised her that Becker’s visa application would not “be reached for final consideration for a protracted period of time.” Welles returned to Mrs. Roosevelt the photograph of Fritz Becker that she had provided him. Fritz Becker’s fate is not known.

Document Based Questions

- 1) Why does Mrs. Roosevelt turn to Sumner Welles for help with this matter?
- 2) Why wouldn’t she just ask her husband, the President, to address the matter?
- 3) How does Under Secretary of State Welles respond to Mrs. Roosevelt’s request?
- 4) What reasons does the Under Secretary give Mrs. Roosevelt for not being able to help?
- 5) Do the reasons given to Mrs. Roosevelt for not being able to assist her seem reasonable to you?
- 6) What does it say about the process of immigration in this country at that time when even the First Lady of the United States could not help?

Document III-B Extension Questions

- 1) What do you suppose would make someone a “preference” vs a “non-preference” immigrant?
- 2) Was it fair for Mrs. Roosevelt to make this request given that so many others were waiting to get in as well?
- 3) Why do you suppose there is such a backlog of people trying to get in?
- 4) Which do you think is the biggest impediment causing the immigration crisis, the strict adherence to the quotas, the sheer number of people looking to get in, prejudice within the system, or some other factor?

Blueprint for World Domination

Document III-C – *Letter to Myron Taylor on the Rublee Plan to aid Refugees*

By early 1939, Nazi anti-Jewish laws had led to the confiscation of most Jewish assets and made it almost impossible for any applicant to meet the strict American visa requirements that refugees have sufficient financial resources to support themselves. Resettlement efforts by the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees also ground to a halt as German officials refused to negotiate for the orderly emigration of German Jews. The Committee's director, George Rublee, proposed the establishment of a private foundation that could accept donations from Jewish organizations outside Germany to cover resettlement costs. President Roosevelt hoped this plan would encourage other countries to open their doors to more Jewish refugees, since the costs would be covered by the foundation. In this letter to Myron Taylor, the American representative on the Intergovernmental Committee, the President instructs Taylor to throw his support behind the Rublee Plan. But the outbreak of war on September 1, 1939, put an end to any possibility of a negotiated resettlement of German Jews.

Document Based Questions

- 1) Why is President Roosevelt suggesting an international committee to help with the problem of political refugees?
- 2) What countries does FDR single out as helping in the effort to solve the refugee issue?
- 3) What are the conditions the refugees are seeking to escape?
- 4) Why is FDR asking Mr. Taylor to represent the US government on the committee?
- 5) What nation does FDR think will be selected to lead the committee? What makes him think that?

Document III-C Extension Questions

- 1) Is FDR suggesting an international committee because he thinks the resources of many nations are needed, or is he suggesting it as a way to deflect responsibility and accountability for the United States?
- 2) Which do you think is the biggest impediment causing the immigration crisis, the strict adherence to the quotas, the sheer number of people looking to get in, prejudice within the system, or some other factor?
- 3) How serious do you think FDR is about finding a solution or rendering effective aid?
- 4) What event occurs in early September, 1939, that derails the idea of the international committee?

Blueprint for World Domination

Video Questions

- 1) How did the Axis Powers plan to divide and rule the world once they had won the war?
- 2) Why was the new warfare technique of *Blitzkrieg* so effective?
- 3) Hitler was worried that a mediator might step in and try to broker a peace agreement – why would he be opposed to that?
- 4) Who stepped in and offered to mediate?
- 5) How effective were the offers of mediation?
- 6) The Nazis generally preferred to invade without a formal declaration of war. Why might that be the case?
- 7) Why was the targeting of civilian populations and cities of no consideration to the Nazis?
- 8) The Nazis believed in, and conducted “Total War” – what exactly did this mean?
- 9) How did Hitler justify the new brutality of the kind of warfare he was waging?
- 10) Hitler had a policy of assuring a country that they were safe and then later viciously attacking them. Why didn’t anyone seem to catch on to that? If they did, what options did they have?
- 11) About how long did it take the Nazis to establish control over most of Europe?
- 12) What were the two countries that Hitler saw as the biggest threat to his plan for world domination?
- 13) How did Hitler try to eliminate the threat from the United States and the Soviet Union?
- 14) What does it say about human nature that three countries could get together and think that they could take over the world?