

The Long Road Home:

How Should We Help People Still Suffering Because of World War II?

A Historic Decisions Issue Guide Set in September 1952

About This Historic Decisions Issue Guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide a framework for a deliberation about what to do about people who were still without housing and work in September 1952, seven years after the end of World War II. It is written from the perspective of people living at that time and contains the information that was available to them at that time.

The decision at the core of this guide is one that confronted the American people in the 1950s. What course of action would you have supported at that time? How would you have discussed the issue with your fellow citizens? By revisiting the problems and choices that faced the nation at an earlier time, participants will gain greater insight into both the past and the present, and further develop the civic skills necessary for making well-reasoned judgments.

You can learn about what actually happened with regard to these WWII refugees, and about later developments in immigration and refugee policy at the end of the guide. A glossary of terms appears at the end of the issue guide.

Deliberation

Deliberation is necessary when people must make a sound judgment about what to do about a public problem. Even when a final decision about how to act has not yet been made, deliberation can help participants work toward a better understanding of a problem and how it might be solved. During a deliberation, participants explore a problem and weigh options for addressing it. It is not a debate that an individual or group should seek to “win.” It is not even necessary that we come to full agreement. It is about thinking through choices as a group in search of common grounds for action.

This guide outlines three options for addressing the problem, each rooted in something we value, such as safety, freedom, or fairness. It provides strategic facts associated with each option and suggests the benefits and drawbacks of possible solutions. We engage in deliberation by:

- getting beyond the initial positions we hold to our deeper motivations—that is, the things we most care about.
- carefully weighing the views of others and recognizing the impact various options would have on what others consider valuable.
- working through the conflicting emotions that arise when various options conflict with what we—and others—value.

It is important to remember that, as a group, we are dealing with broader underlying concerns that are not defined by party affiliation and that your work here is to dig down to the things that define us as human beings and Americans rather than as liberals and conservatives.

One Effective Way to Hold an Historic Decisions Deliberative Forum

Although there is no one “right” way to hold a deliberative forum, a common and effective method is to follow these steps:

- 1) Introduce the historic decision to be deliberated and describe ongoing issues related to it.
- 2) Ask people to describe how issues related to the historic decision still affect them today. Or, ask people to talk about how issues related to the historic decision have played out in their community. Consider some of the “personal stake” questions below.
- 3) Consider each option one at a time. Allow equal time for each.
- 4) Review the deliberation as a group, identifying any areas of common ground as well as issues that must still be worked through. Allow enough time for this.

Personal Stake Questions

Are you concerned about the plight of refugees today? Why or why not? How might things be different for refugees today than they were after World War II?

Have you, your family, or anyone you know ever had to move because of a natural disaster or for political or economic reasons? If so, what do you have in common with those forced to move by World War II?

How would members of your family who were alive in 1952 have felt about allowing more refugees into the United States? How is your own opinion about the topic similar or different?

Ground Rules

Before the deliberation begins, it is important for participants to review guidelines for their discussion:

- Focus on the options.
- All options should be considered fairly.
- No one or two individuals should dominate.
- Maintain an open and respectful atmosphere.
- Everyone is encouraged to participate.
- Listen to each other.

The Long Road Home: How Should We Help People Still Suffering Because of World War II?

“UN REFUGEE OFFICIAL CITES NEED FOR ACTION”

“...For nearly seven years the ‘hardcore’ of the mass of displaced persons has been confined to the camps in Germany and Austria, living on a minimal standard and waiting from month to month for some permanent improvement in their situation.”

Headline and quotation from the *New York Times*, July 8th, 1952

It is September 1952. Despite the influx of American aid provided through the **Marshall Plan** and the humanitarian efforts of churches and civic organizations, the war-ravaged economies of many countries are still unable to provide for an estimated one to five million people. While the United States has entered an era of post-war prosperity, hundreds of thousands of refugees, often referred to as **displaced persons**, are still living in camps in Europe. There are fears that Western Europe could descend back into chaos if these problems are

not solved.

The **Cold War** is in full swing. This conflict between the U.S. and the Russian-led **Soviet Union** (USSR) started after the end of World War II when relations between the **Communist** Soviet Union and capitalist western countries broke down. The USSR made East Germany, Poland, and the other Eastern European countries it captured from Germany into client states. Many people in these countries seek to escape Communist rule because they want more freedom. The United States and its allies are also at war with Communists in Korea. Many fear that the USSR might take advantage of the discontent of the homeless and jobless in Western Europe.

Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl was published in English translation, earlier this year, and has become a best seller. This story of a Jewish girl in Amsterdam who hid with her family when the **Nazis** took control, and who later died in a concentration camp, has refocused attention on what was suffered by Jews and other groups targeted for elimination by the Nazis.

Two “**Displaced Persons Acts**,” one in 1948 and a second in 1950, have brought more than 400,000 **refugees** to the United States. The 1950 Act has recently expired without renewal.

In March, President **Harry S. Truman** proposed the Emergency Migration Program. Truman intended to give more refugees the chance to come to the United States. But Congress did not enact the program. Many Americans are concerned that the character of the country might be changed by a large number of **immigrants**, even if they are refugees.

Some Americans are afraid that Communist spies and subversives might be among the refugees and that they might work to spread Communism in the United States. In June, Congress passed the **McCarran-Walter Act** over President Truman's veto. This law extended the restrictive **immigration quotas** based on national origin that have been in place since the early 1920s. This makes it difficult for war refugees to come to the United States.

The United States is a compassionate nation. But many Americans ask how we can exercise compassion without compromising the prosperity, traditions, and security of our country.

Background

World War II created more refugees than any previous event in human history. At the war's end in 1945 there were at least seven million refugees in Western Europe and about the same number in Soviet-controlled areas. There were many millions more in Asia.

The refugees include those who survived German concentration and extermination camps. They also include those who fled to avoid persecution or violence, or whose homes were destroyed. In the war's aftermath, still more became displaced as ethnic Germans were expelled from counties the Nazis had occupied. Others began fleeing Soviet-controlled areas because of their fear of Communism.



A displaced persons camp in Hamburg, Germany (1945)

Source: British Imperial War Museum. Public Domain.

“Displaced persons camps” were a short-term solution to the refugee problem in Western Europe. Approximately 800 camps eventually became home to about seven million refugees. Some camps, like Bergen-Belsen, were set up next to the sites of concentration camps to house survivors.

“There still remain, in the Western Zones of Germany and Austria and in Italy, close to a million survivors who are unwilling by reason of political opinion and fear of persecution to return to the areas where they once had homes...It is unthinkable that they should be left indefinitely in camps in Europe. We cannot turn them out in Germany into the community of the very people who persecuted them.”

Harry S. Truman, Message to Congress, July 7th, 1947

For example, in 1946 returning Jewish refugees were attacked in the city of Kielce, Poland, and 42 were killed.

This year, 1952, the majority of displaced persons camps will be closed. There is much uncertainty about what will become of those who still inhabit them. Progress has been made in reducing the population of the camps, but millions more, living outside the camps, are barely surviving because there are no jobs, despite the significant economic recovery made possible by 13 billion dollars of aid offered through the Marshall Plan and a number of private charities.

No one knows what effects closing the camps will have on the fragile political and economic situation in Germany, Austria, and Italy. In addition, Marshall Plan aid has ended. No one knows if recovery can be sustained without this aid.

U.S. Immigration and Refugee Policy

Although the United States has had periods of heavy immigration, the restrictive immigration policies now in place make it difficult for refugees to be admitted to the United States. Between 1900 and 1910, immigrants streamed into the United States at a rate close to or above a million a year. Although Asian immigration had been limited since the **Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882**, there were few restrictions on European immigration or citizenship.

in 1903, Emma Lazarus' poem "The New Colossus" was mounted on the Statue of Liberty. Although the poem was written decades earlier, it was appropriate to the era of heavy immigration. But a powerful reaction against the influx of new

Long-term solutions to the refugee crisis have been hard to find. After the war, millions passed through the camps and returned home. But in 1947 there were still a million people living in the camps. For many there were no homes to return to. Entire villages had been wiped off the map.

Many survivors of Nazi brutality could not contemplate returning to a life in Germany. In some places, there is still so much anti-Semitism that it is unsafe for Jewish refugees to return.

"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

Emma Lazarus, "The New Colossus," 1883

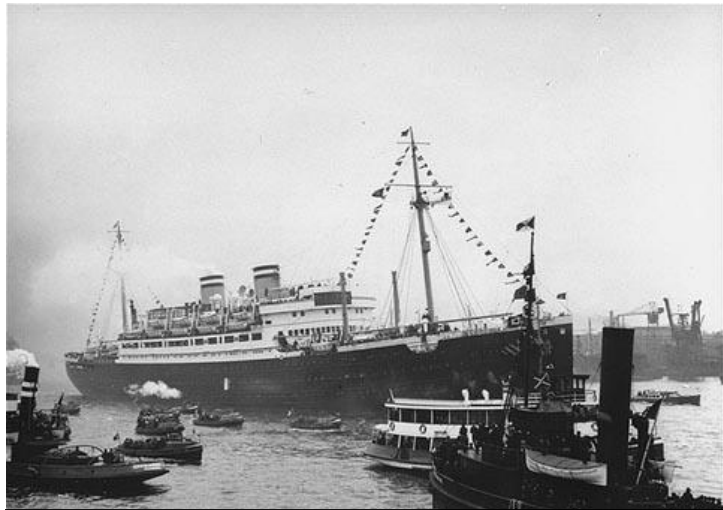
immigrants soon set in. Between 1917 and 1924 a series of increasingly strict limitations on immigration were imposed. These culminated in the **Johnson-Reed Act of 1924**.

This Act finalized a system of immigration quotas based on national origin. These quotas were completely phased in by 1927. By 1931, the combined effect of the quotas and the **Great Depression** had driven the number of new immigrants below 100,000 per year. And immigration continued to fall. In 1933, there were only slightly more than 23,000 new arrivals.

Popular opposition to a return to the immigration levels seen at the turn of the century was not changed by the horrors that unfolded in Europe. Restrictive immigration quotas remained unchanged as Jews began to seek refuge from Nazi oppression in the mid-thirties.

A 1938 *Fortune Magazine* poll asked, "What is your attitude toward allowing German, Austrian, and other political refugees to come to the US?" 67.4 percent of those surveyed agreed with the statement "With conditions as they are, we should try to keep them out."

In July of 1938, President Franklin Roosevelt convened an international conference in Evian, France, on the plight of Jewish refugees. But of the 32 countries in attendance, only one, the Dominican Republic, allowed more Jewish refugees to immigrate. Year after year, US quotas were quickly exhausted. Many Jewish refugees were either denied permission to immigrate or were turned away upon reaching the United States.



The *St Louis* (1939)

Approximately nine hundred Jewish refugees aboard this German transatlantic liner were denied entry to the U.S. in 1939 and sent back to Europe

Source: USHMM. Public Domain.

Gallup Poll, January 14th, 1946

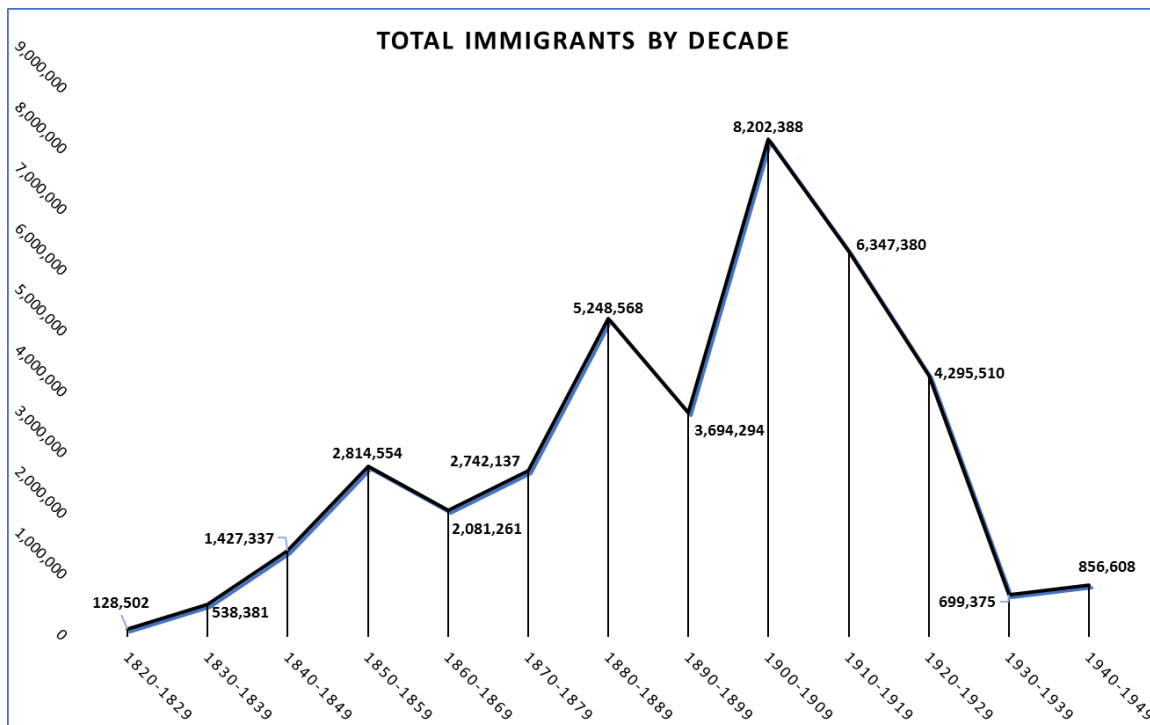
“Should we permit more persons from Europe to come to this country each year than we did before the war, should we keep the number about the same, or should we reduce the number?”

Responses: More—5%, Same—32%, Fewer—37%, None at all—14%, No Opinion—12%.

Even the war has not altered the strong sentiment against making changes to the quota system. A Gallup poll taken in 1946 found that only 5% of those surveyed favored admitting more European immigrants, including refugees, than had been admitted before the war.

Although the war has spurred the economy forward, the Great Depression has not been forgotten. Many Americans want to ensure

there are jobs for those who helped win the war. They are unsure of how many refugees the country could support economically. In the 1930s it was feared that German spies might be among those who were apparently fleeing Nazism. Now in 1952, some view refugees from Eastern Europe as possible Soviet agents.



Source: Based on chart from Scholastic.com; data from Department of Homeland Security.

Seven years after the war, millions of people are still without permanent homes and employment in Western Europe. It is in the long-term interest of the United States to ensure that the political and economic recovery of Europe is not thwarted by the persistent problem of displaced and impoverished populations. But America has already sacrificed much to win a war that barely reached its shores. Any course of action taken to stabilize Europe must be weighed against the further cost to our country.

A Framework for Deliberation

This issue guide asks how we can best address the needs of the people who are still displaced seven years after the end of World War II. It presents three different options for deliberation, each rooted in a widely-held value, and each presenting a different way of looking at the problem. No one option represents the “correct approach.” Each includes drawbacks and trade-offs that we will have to face if we are to make progress on the issue.

Option 1: Express compassion through charity abroad

Those who continue to suffer from the aftereffects of the war deserve our compassion. Although some small number of displaced persons might find new homes in other countries, the best way to express that compassion is by helping them to rebuild their homes, and lives in their native countries. They should not have to leave their homes because of war or political strife. Helping war survivors start new lives in their own countries will increase stability in Europe and thus make the world more stable for everyone.

Option 2: Set an example for the world by welcoming refugees

The United States has become a symbol of hope and a beacon of freedom to the world. Today, millions who have suffered under the brutal Third Reich or who are fleeing the expanding tyranny of Communism dream of enjoying that freedom, as well as contributing to the prosperity, of the United States. What message would it send to the millions living under the yoke of Communism, for example, if refugees seeking freedom are turned away? We need to show we are serious about the cause of freedom by opening our gates to those who seek it.

Option 3: Help refugees in ways that preserve the unique fabric of American life

The unique character of our people and our institutions made it possible for America to emerge victorious from two world wars and become the world’s leading economic and military power. We must preserve this winning combination. While a limited number of refugees can benefit the country, a large influx of newcomers unfamiliar with the norms of American life will be disruptive. Some refugees might actively work to subvert American political institutions and provide intelligence to our enemies. We must admit refugees to this country only in ways that are consistent with maintaining our security and prosperity.

OPTION ONE: Express Compassion through Charity Abroad



Marshall Plan logo used on aid shipments to Europe between 1948 and 1952.

Source: U.S. Government - Extracted and converted from PDF version of the *USAID Graphic Standards Manual*. Public Domain.

Why is it of vital interest to the United States to address the plight of displaced persons in Europe? An Army newsreel, filmed soon after the war ended in 1945, made the case: “If we don’t help these people now, then the chaos will continue indefinitely, and the seeds of a Third World War will take root.” As the newsreel shows an infant being attended to by a nurse in a displaced persons camp, the narrator continues, “In another 20 years, we don’t want a child like this in uniform, for if he is, it will probably mean that our own children will be in uniform too.”

The newsreel’s final image is of a baby sleeping peacefully in a large cot, cover with a blanket with the letters “U.S.” on it. The narrator concludes, “To guarantee the peace and the democratic future of every child in the world—that’s why this . . . baby is today under an army woolen blanket marked U.S.”

The displaced persons who continue to suffer from the aftereffects of the war are fellow human beings and deserve our compassion. Although a small number of those whose lives were shattered by the war might find

new homes in other countries—some perhaps in the United States—the solution for the vast majority of them will be to rebuild their lives in their native countries, and we should help them do this.

Helping displaced persons rebuild their lives in Europe has been the focus of a U.S. program called the Marshall Plan. The aim of the Marshall Plan was to rebuild the productive capacity of all the European nations willing to receive aid from the U.S. The Marshall Plan did not focus on distributing food and other relief supplies so much as providing what was needed for Europeans to begin once more to produce their own food and industrial goods. The aid helped Europeans to help themselves and it benefited US interest as well; it helped to re-establish a stable Europe; it paid US producers of the tractors, generators, cranes, livestock feed, and other goods sent to Europe; and it helped to establish lasting trade relationships between businesses in the United States and reviving European economies.

According to this option, the core idea of the Marshall Plan is correct—that the best way to help displaced persons is to use our wealth to help them make new lives for themselves in their native countries. This can be the work of government aid programs such as the Marshall Plan, but, on a smaller scale, it is also the work of private charities and of individuals who contribute

their time and money to aid the European recovery. Charities that have provided significant aid to displaced persons include the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, American Friends Service Committee, British Friends Relief Service, the Lutheran World Federation, Catholic Charities, several national Red Cross organizations, the Polish American Congress, and the Ukrainian American Relief Committee.

What Can We Do?

Urge Congress to maintain a high level of foreign aid to war-torn countries:

Between 1948 and 1952, the Marshall Plan provided over 13 billion dollars in aid to rebuild economies. The terms of that program have now expired, but the United States must continue to provide aid to promote economic development until stability has been achieved.



A Mother's Day Celebration at a UNRRA Displaced Persons Camp (1946)

Source: Deutsche Fotothek of the Saxon State Library / State and University Library Dresden.
Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Germany license.

Give to charities that support the resettlement of European Jews in Israel. Since its founding in 1948, Israel has welcomed new Jewish immigrants from all over world, but especially those who have survived Nazi atrocities. But many European Jews who would like to move to Israel do not have the means to make the journey. Private charities, especially Jewish faith-based organizations like the Jewish Agency for Israel, can help them do so. These charities need donations from all Americans if they are to realize their goals.

Charities should continue to support displaced persons in Europe. Charities such as the Red Cross and the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee continue to provide food and shelter to displaced persons in Europe and need the continuing support of individuals in the US.

The United Nations Refugee Agency should take the lead in refugee relief and resettlement. The refugee situation is an international problem, and international organizations should take the lead in solving it. The United Nations Refugee Agency has been created for exactly this purpose. The United States should do its part to support this and other international efforts, but need not become further involved.

The United States should support judicial and political programs that will make refugees feel that it is safe to return home. The extensive denazification efforts and democratic education programs the Allies agreed to carry out at the Potsdam Conference in 1945 should be continued. Nazi sympathizers must be removed from positions of authority and prosecuted as appropriate. These efforts will only be complete when no trace of Nazi sympathy remains at any level of government, in any political party, or in any public expression of sentiment.

Possible Trade-Offs

Merely continuing to provide food and shelter to displaced persons does not help them find permanent homes and jobs.

The type of aid provided by the Marshall Plan costs US taxpayers money, and where it is successful in its aim, it helps to create and strengthen European economic competition with US businesses.

Continuing to expand the population of Israel will exacerbate tensions in the region between newcomers and long-time residents.

Denazification necessarily involves the curtailment of the rights of free speech and free assembly. Continued denazification can create a backlash and engender further animosity toward the United States and its allies.

Questions for Deliberation

What would you personally be willing to do to help displaced persons in Europe?

America has already spent more than 13 billion dollars on foreign aid to Western Europe and seen production surpass pre-war levels in some places. Have we done enough?

Are the Marshall Plan and programs like it a form of economic imperialism, pressuring Europeans to build their economies around US-produced materials and ways of doing things?

Is it wise to give potential economic competitors in countries that were formerly enemies of the US a boost?

OPTION TWO: Set an Example for the World by Welcoming Refugees



Dutch refugee child reaching safety (1945)

Source: British Imperial War Museum. Public Domain.

On September 11th, 1951 a passenger train was driven across the border between Communist Czechoslovakia and West Germany. The engineer, Jaroslav Konvalinka, and a stationmaster named Karel Truksa were in on the escape plan. The train was able to make it through the border station of Asch because Truksa had thrown a connection switch the previous day that allowed the train to speed into West Germany on a section of unused track.

Thirty-three people on the train, including the railway workers who planned the escape, refused to return to Czechoslovakia, and sought asylum in Western democratic countries. In response to the escape, Czech authorities retaliated against the friends and relatives who were left behind and strengthened border security.

This story is just one example of the risks that many took to gain freedom during and after the war. Millions who suffered under the brutal Third Reich, or who are fleeing the expanding tyranny of Communism, dream of

moving to the United States and enjoying the freedom and contributing to the prosperity of this great nation.

In the years since the war ended, the United States has emerged as a symbol of freedom and democracy. We have promoted the idea that all people willing to live by democratic principles can enjoy the sort of life that Americans do. But this message, which is so vital to winning the struggle against Communism, is undermined by policies that keep out refugees seeking to enter our country. The current system of strict quotas, arduous screening, and required sponsorship that refugees face is unacceptable.

This option argues that the United States must live up to its principles by welcoming as many freedom-seeking refugees as possible, treating them with the respect they deserve, and giving them the support they need to start new lives. The United States needs to show it is serious about the cause of freedom by opening its gates to those who seek it.

What Can We Do?

Support charities that provide sponsorship and aid to arriving refugees. Under current policy, refugees can only obtain American citizenship after being sponsored by a current citizen or organization with an affidavit guaranteeing that they will not require welfare assistance from the government. One of the best ways that churches, businesses, and community groups can welcome refugees is to sponsor them. In addition to sponsorship, giving small grants to refugees and organizations who aid them will make it more likely that refugees will quickly become productive members of American society. Even modest generosity will demonstrate the American commitment to freedom and democracy at home and abroad.

Civic organizations should build sympathy for refugees through public education. Many Americans do not understand the reasons that refugees seek to start a new life in the United States and have misconceptions about their habits and cultures. Public education can help overcome ignorance and misunderstanding and make the American people more welcoming of refugees. Media campaigns, exchange programs, and grants to fund journalism, museum exhibitions, and academic research on refugees can all be part of these educational efforts.

Use the Voice of America to tell the world the stories of people who have escaped tyranny and found a new life in the United States. In addition to giving refuge to those fleeing Communist oppression, the United States should let the world know how much superior American democracy is to Communist tyranny by broadcasting their stories on the Voice of America, a global government-sponsored radio network. This could help counteract the spread of Communist ideas in other countries.

Congress should substantially increase immigration quotas for refugees. Legislation is necessary to allow the United States to do its part in stabilizing Europe by welcoming survivors of the war. The remaining survivors of Nazi brutality are especially deserving of a chance for a fresh start in the United States. The United States also needs to demonstrate its commitment to freedom by welcoming all refugees who are genuinely seeking to escape Communist tyranny. An increased number of such refugees should be welcomed for as long as Communist oppression continues.

Possible Trade-Offs

Sponsoring a single refugee or refugee family is a good thing, but welcoming large numbers of refugees may overburden the capacity of towns, cities, and states.

Aid to refugees might cause resentment among poor US citizens who need more economic support for themselves and among those who think we should focus on our own problems first.

If it becomes widely known that new arrivals receive cash assistance, some will become the target of scams.

A public education campaign could spur a counter-campaign from groups opposed to refugees.

Some of these refugees might be spies or subversives.

Questions for Deliberation

How might a large influx of refugees influence your life on a day-to-day basis?

Can the United States welcome enough refugees to make a difference in Europe?

Is it important for the United States to be seen as a country that promotes freedom by welcoming refugees? Does this perception truly serve American interests in the struggle against Communism.

OPTION THREE: Help Refugees in Ways that Preserve the Unique Fabric of American Life



Unemployed men outside a Chicago soup kitchen during the Great Depression (1931)

Source: U.S. Government – National Archives and Records Administration. Public Domain.

The Great Depression was a period of economic collapse in the United States and around the world that began unexpectedly in 1929 with the crash of the Wall Street stock market. At the height of the depression more than 20% of US workers were unemployed. Banks and businesses failed across the country and people were forced to stand in bread lines to get food.

The Great Depression is now in the past, but it is a memory that those who lived through it will not soon forget. Although the United States is now in a period of economic prosperity, there is no telling when another

depression or some other catastrophe may strike.

When it does, we need to be sure that there are still enough good jobs for the Americans who worked and fought so hard to win the last war and for those who are now serving their country in the war against Communism in Korea. Even the strong economy of the United States struggled to find employment for the millions of veterans who returned from World War II, and houses could barely be built fast enough for the new families they started when they got home. Those now serving in Korea face a similar predicament.

If we decide to allow more refugees to come to the United States, we must do so in ways that preserve the unique fabric of American life. The source of strength that has made it possible for America to emerge victorious from two world wars and become the leading economic and military power in the world is the unique character of its people and its political institutions. We must preserve this winning combination. While a limited number of refugees can benefit the country, a large influx of newcomers unfamiliar with the norms of American life would be disruptive.

A tide of new refugees could well include some intending to subvert American political institutions and provide intelligence to our enemies. Many Americans are afraid of Russian

spies. Last year, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were convicted of giving the Soviet Union top-secret information about the atomic bomb. With the help of this information, the USSR learned to build atomic weapons. A nuclear war between the USSR and the United States is now a serious possibility. We must be careful to do everything possible to ensure that we admit only those refugees that understand our democratic values.

What Can We Do?

Voice Support for the McCarran-Walter Act. The McCarran-Walter Act is a carefully-crafted law designed to maintain immigration at manageable levels and maintain the continuity of the American population. While refugees are free to apply for permission to come to the United States under this law, the Displaced Persons Acts have done enough to alleviate the situation in Europe.

Report subversive activities. Whether they are refugees or native-born Americans, Communist subversives are out to undermine the political institutions of the United States. If you hear anyone promoting Communist ideas or distributing Communist literature you should do your duty and report them to the Subversive Activities Control Board.

Civic organizations should provide education to help refugees integrate into American life. Civic organizations can work to provide education to immigrants to help them gain proficiency in the English language, as well as to understand and get the most out of American education, government, and culture.

Congress should pass legislation that gives priority to refugees with skills needed by the US economy. We should give priority to those refugees who have skills that are in short supply in our country. Low-skilled refugees compete directly with low-skilled US workers and might drive down hourly wages. But refugees with specialized skills for which there is more demand than supply will benefit US businesses without creating a downward pressure on wages.

Rigorously screen refugees:. Those refugees who seek admission should be rigorously vetted and screened. While the majority of refugees cherish a genuine desire to become Americans, some may harbor allegiances that would undermine the interests and institutions of the United States. US immigration policy must rigorously ensure the loyalty of the immigrant community.

Possible Trade-Offs

The quotas of the McCarran-Walter Act will not allow the United States to do its part and absorb enough refugees to stabilize nations devastated by the war. This will anger some allies who count on the US to be a leader.

The quotas of the McCarran-Walter Act make it more difficult to help Western Europe return to prosperity, which may well lead to further Communist takeovers.

Americanization programs will cause some immigrants to feel ashamed of their origins and reduce their own unique contributions to American culture.

Placing too much priority on particular skills will deprive the US of new citizens whose great potential is as yet unrealized.

Rigorous screening will be taken by some to imply an attitude of hostility to all immigrants and refugees living in the United States, and make it more likely that they would undermine American interests.

Questions for Deliberation

Is it realistic to expect immigrants to become quickly integrated into American life?

Will failure to live up to our commitment to freedom by opening our country to those who seek it diminish our international standing?

How rigorously should refugees be screened?

How many refugees can the US accommodate without creating a burden for those who are already citizens?

| Options Summary | | |
|---|---|---|
| Option 1: Express Compassion through Charity Abroad | | |
| | <i>Examples of What Might Be Done</i> | <i>Trade-offs and Counter-Points to Consider</i> |
| Individuals | Urge Congress to maintain a high level of foreign aid to help Europe rebuild to the point of self-sufficiency. | If economic recovery programs are successful in their aim, they will strengthen the ability of European companies to compete with US businesses. |
| | Give to charities that support the resettlement of European Jews in Israel. | Continuing to expand the population of Israel might exacerbate tensions in the region. |
| Organizations | Charities should continue to support displaced persons in Europe. | Merely continuing to provide food and shelter to displaced persons does not help them find permanent homes and jobs. |
| | The United Nations Refugee Agency should take the lead in refugee relief and resettlement. | Because of mistrust, United Nations involvement in refugee relief and resettlement might cause such programs to be viewed unfavorably in some places. |
| Government | The United States should support judicial and political denazification that will make refugees feel that it is safe to return home | Denazification programs necessarily involves the curtailment of the rights of free speech and free assembly. |
| Option 2: Set an Example for the World by Welcoming Refugees | | |
| | <i>Examples of What Might Be Done</i> | <i>Trade-offs and Counter-Points to Consider</i> |
| Individuals | Support charities that provide sponsorship and aid to arriving refugees. | If it becomes widely known that new arrivals receive cash assistance, they might become the target of scams. |
| | Civic organizations should build sympathy for refugees through public education. | A public education campaign might spur a counter-campaign from groups opposed to refugees. |
| Government | Use the Voice of America to tell the world the stories of people who have escaped tyranny and found a new life in the United States. | Such stories might encourage false hopes for freedom or encourage more demand for immigration than the United States can meet. |
| | Congress should substantially increase immigration quotas for refugees still suffering from the effects of the war. | Spies and subversive might pose as refugees to gain access to the Unites States. |

| Option 3: Help Refugees in Ways that Preserve the Unique Fabric of American Life | | |
|---|---|--|
| | <i>Examples of What Might Be Done</i> | <i>Trade-offs and Counter-Points to Consider</i> |
| Individuals | Voice support for the McCarran-Walter Act. | The tight quotas of the McCarran-Walter Act make it more difficult to help Western Europe return to prosperity, which could lead to further Communist takeovers. |
| | Report subversive activities. | Overzealous reporting could create an atmosphere of mistrust and paranoia. |
| Organizations | Civic organizations should provide education to help refugees integrate into American life. | Americanization programs might cause us to lose some unique contributions immigrants make to American culture. |
| Government | Congress should pass legislation that gives priority to refugees with skills needed by the US economy. | Placing too much priority on particular skills might deprive the US of new citizens whose great potential is as yet unrealized. |
| | Rigorously screen refugees. | Rigorous screening might be taken to imply an attitude of hostility to all immigrants and refugees living in the United States |

STOP

On the following page you will find a brief description of what happened concerning refugee relief in 1953 and beyond. *Do not read* it until you have completed the deliberation.

What Happened?

On August 7th of 1953, President Eisenhower signed the **Refugee Relief Act**. (Note: The legislation discussed in this section is not included in the glossary.) The Act provided 214,000 additional visas for both “refugees,” who were displaced persons still residing in Western Europe, and “escapees” from Communist countries. In his signing statement, Eisenhower wrote, “This action demonstrates again America's traditional concern for the homeless, the persecuted and the less fortunate of other lands. It is a dramatic contrast to the tragic events taking place in East Germany and in other captive nations.”

It was at first very difficult for the intended number of refugees to take advantage of the Refugee Relief Act because of rigorous security screening and the difficulty of finding and verifying sponsors. By June of 1955, only 21,000 visas, less than 10% of those allowed, had been issued. The pace improved after administrative changes were made. By the end of 1955, 72,000 refugees had been admitted, and by the end of the program in 1956, the number had risen to more than 190,000.

In October of 1956, a student demonstration in Budapest, Hungary turned into a full-scale uprising against the Soviet-controlled government. After Soviet troops moved in to crush the revolution, more than 200,000 Hungarians fled to Austria and Yugoslavia, creating a new refugee crisis. Because the terms of the Refugee Relief Act had expired at the end of 1956, Congress passed the **Refugee-Escapee Act** on September 11 of 1957, which allowed more refugee-escapee visas to be issued, mainly for the benefit of the new Hungarian refugees.

The United States continued to respond to refugee crises on a case by case basis through special acts of Congress until President Carter signed the **Refugee Act of 1980** on March 17th of that year. This Act aligned the United States’ definition of a refugee with that of the United Nations and created a permanent mechanism for the admission of up to 50,000 refugees per year to the United States.

Overall, the immigration policy of the United States has become less restrictive since the 1950s. A significant step toward a less restrictive immigration policy was taken when President Johnson signed the **Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965** also known as the **Hart-Celler Act**, on October 3rd of that year. Although this act maintained low national origin quotas, it created sweeping exemptions for those who are family members of US citizens, and for those with a high degree of education or professional skill. It represented a significant liberalization of immigration policy.

The **Immigration Act of 1990** further liberalized immigration policy. Although a series of more recent acts have provided for stricter enforcement of immigration rules and border control, the percentage of legal immigrants in the US population (more than 13%) is now approaching what it was at its highest point (14.8% in 1890).

Glossary

Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882: This Act of Congress suspended the immigration of any new Chinese laborers to the United States. This act was repealed in 1945, replacing complete restriction with a quota of 105 per year.

Cold War: The Cold War was a global struggle between the United States and its NATO allies and the Communist Soviet Union and its allies. The Cold War began in 1947 when President Truman pledged to aid any nation threatened by Soviet expansionism and lasted at least until Eastern European countries that had been under Soviet dominance since the end of WWII successfully overthrew their Communist governments in 1989.

Communism: A political philosophy rooted in the thought of Karl Marx which held that the workers in industrial societies should own the means of production and share fairly in the wealth that they produce. A political system based on Communist ideas was instituted in the Soviet Union after the Russian Revolution of 1917. In practice, the political system established in the Soviet Union was characterized by centralized economic planning, coercive state control, and ambitions for global dominance.

Displaced Persons: The official term for those people who have lost their homes or have been dislocated by war or political oppression. The term “displaced persons” is synonymous with the term “refugees.” There were some seven million displaced persons in the areas of Europe controlled by the US and its allies at the end of World War II.

Displaced Persons Acts: The Displaced Persons Act of 1948 and the Displaced Persons Act of 1950 were acts of Congress, signed into law by President Truman, that temporarily raised immigration quotas to allow more European refugees from World War II to immigrate to the United States.

Great Depression: The Great Depression, was a worldwide economic slump that began in the United States with the stock market crash on October 24th, 1929. It was characterized by declining production, bank and business failures, high unemployment, and deflation. President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal programs attempted to address the problems of the Great Depression, but it was not until the economic boost brought about by the mass production of war materials for WWII that the depression truly ended.

Immigrant: An immigrant is any person of foreign birth who seeks to enter a country for any reason. The term “immigrant” must be distinguished from the term “refugee,” which is a person seeking refuge from war or other threatening circumstances. Many immigrants are not refugees.

Immigration Quotas: An immigration quota is a numeric limit on the number of immigrants that may enter a country. Quota limits are often set on a yearly basis, and have also been

specific as to national origin, with different limits applying to immigrants from different countries.

Johnson-Reed Act of 1924: This Act imposed strict quotas on immigration to the United States, based on national origin. It initially set the quota for each nation at “2 per centum of the number of foreign-born individuals of such nationality resident in continental United States as determined by the United States census of 1890” with the minimum quota being 100. From 1927 onward, it specified that the quota for any nation would, “be a number which bears the same ratio to 150,000 as the number of inhabitants in continental United States in 1920 having that national origin.” Canada, Mexico, Cuba and other Caribbean, and Central American countries were exempted from the quota system.

Marshall Plan: The Marshall Plan was the common name for the program officially designated as the European Recovery Program, which sent \$13 billion dollars’ worth of aid to Europe between 1948 and 1952. It was called the Marshall Plan after Secretary of State George Marshall who championed the program. The aim of the program was to provide the materials and assistance needed to rebuild the productive capacity of European countries so that they could become self-sufficient. Eastern European countries under the dominance of the Soviet Union were forbidden from accepting US aid under the Marshall Plan because the Soviets saw that program as a form of US economic imperialism.

McCarran-Walter Act: This restrictive immigration law was enacted over President Truman’s veto on June 27th of 1952. It reaffirmed the national origins quota system of the **Johnson-Reed Act of 1924** and created new grounds for denying entry to the US.

Nazism: Nazism is the common name for National Socialism, the German party and political philosophy which reigned supreme in the Third Reich, the German state established by Adolf Hitler. It was rooted in the belief that the Aryan race was superior to all others, and extreme anti-Semitic policies that called for the extermination of Jews in Germany and all the countries under German control.

Refugee: A refugee is a person seeking refuge from war, political persecution, or other threatening circumstances. Many refugees seek to immigrate to new countries where they hope to find safety, but the majority of immigrants are not refugees under normal circumstances.

Soviet Union: The common English name for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The Soviet Union was a highly centralized but officially federal state composed of multiple Soviet republics that had its origin in the Russian Revolution of October 1917. It was a one-party state under the control of the Communist Party, which also exerted dominance over Communist countries in Eastern Europe. The USSR was peacefully dissolved in 1991.

Truman, Harry S. (U.S. President): Harry S. Truman became the 34th Vice-President of the United States in 1945 and assumed the office of President in April of that year after the death

of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. He was reelected to the presidency in 1948. Truman made the decision to drop the atomic bomb on Japan and presided over the end of World War II in both Europe and Asia. He saw the beginning of the Cold War and promulgated the Truman Doctrine, which promised American assistance to any country that sought to resist Soviet expansion. He consistently promoted policies that favored the admission of more refugees to the United States.

Further Reading

Bon Tempo, Carl J. *Americans at the Gate: The United States and Refugees During the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

Shephard, Ben. *The Long Road Home: The Aftermath of the Second World War* (New York : Alfred A. Knopf, 2011).

Wyman, Mark. *DPs: Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945-1951* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989).

Timeline of Events Related to U.S. Refugee Policy

- 1907** Immigration to the United States reached a new high for the third year in a row. But a powerful reaction against immigration gains momentum as President Theodore Roosevelt signed the **Immigration Act of 1907** which expanded the exclusion of Chinese and other immigrant groups first instituted in **the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882**. He also negotiated the **Gentlemen's Agreement** with Japan. This informal agreement mutually limited movement of citizens between the two countries to "students, travelers, business men, and the like."
- 1917** The United States enters WWI on April 6th. Congress passes the **Immigration Act of 1917** which imposes a literacy test on immigrants and creates the "Asiatic Barred Zone" virtually prohibiting immigration from Asia.
- 1918** Immigration falls to its lowest point since the civil war: **110,618**.
- November 11th**--An armistice with Germany is signed, effectively **ending World War I**.
- 1924** Congress passes the **Johnson-Reed Act of 1924**, the culmination of many years of increasingly restrictive immigration policy. It initially set the quota for each nation at "2 per centum of the number of foreign-born individuals of such nationality resident in continental United States as determined by the United States census of 1890" with the minimum quota being 100. From 1927 onward, it specified that the quota for any nation would, "be a number which bears the same ratio to 150,000 as the number of inhabitants in continental United States in 1920 having that national origin." Canada, Mexico, Cuba, and other Caribbean and Central American counties were exempted from the quota system.
- 1931** The new quotas combined with the Great Depression drive **immigration below 100,000** for the first time since 1844.
- 1933** Immigration drops to **23,068**, its lowest level it has been since 1831.
- 1934** **August 2nd**--**Adolph Hitler** is formally named Führer und Reichskanzler of the German state.
- 1935** The **Nuremberg Laws** disenfranchise German Jews, creating a wave of refugees.
- 1938** **March 12th**--**Germany annexes Austria**, which leads to increased Jewish emigration.
- July 6th-15th**--President Franklin Roosevelt convenes a **conference in Evian**, France to which 32 nations are invited. Of those, only one, the Dominican Republic, agrees to admit additional refugees. The US sticks to its quotas.

1939 May-June—Over **900 Jewish refugees** traveling aboard the German transatlantic liner *St. Louis* seeking asylum in the US are **denied entry to the United States**.

September 3rd--**Britain and France declare war on Germany** after it invades Poland, beginning **World War II**.

1941 December 7th--Japan attacks **Pearl Harbor**, Hawaii. The U.S. declares war the next day.

1942 February 19th—President Roosevelt issues Executive Order 9066, which orders **the internment of Japanese Americans**.

June 7th—American forces win the **battle of Midway**, the first significant US victory in the Pacific.

1943 September 3rd—The **Allies land in Axis Italy**, after defeating Axis troops in North Africa.

November 9th--The **United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA)** is established in Washington DC through an agreement between 44 nations on November 9th. It would eventually administer **800 camps** that housed over **seven million displaced persons**.

1944 June 6th—**D-Day**. The US and its Allies land in France and open a new front in Europe.

July 1944-- Advancing Soviet and American troops begin to discover Nazi concentration and extermination camps.

1945 April 12th—President Franklin **Roosevelt dies**; Harry Truman assumes the presidency.

May 8th—**Victory in Europe (“VE”) Day**: Germany surrenders unconditionally to Allied forces.

August 6th and 9th—**Atomic bombs are dropped** on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan.

September 9th—**Victory in Japan (“VJ”) Day**: Japan signs formal surrender documents, ending the war.

October 24th—The **United Nations comes into existence** as an international organization when the 50 nations that had informally been known as “the United Nations” sign its charter.

1947 January 6th—In his State of the Union address, **President Truman calls on Congress to take action to allow more displaced person to be admitted to the United States**: “...insofar as admitting displaced persons is concerned, I do not feel that the United States has done its part. **Only about 5,000 of them have entered this country since May 1946.**”

1948 The Berlin Blockade—In the first major confrontation of the **Cold War**, the Soviets issue an order cutting off access to West Berlin beginning in March. The U.S. responds with an airlift to fly supplies to West Berlin.

April 3rd—President Truman signs the Foreign Assistance Act of 1948, enacting the **European Recovery Program (the Marshall Plan)** into law. This program would send \$13 billion dollars in aid to Europe between 1948 and 1951.

June 25th--President Truman signs the **Displaced Persons Act**—This Act allowed 200,000 displaced persons to enter the United States over the following two years, a major step at a time when total immigration to the United States had not surpassed 100,000 since 1930.

1950 February 9th—**Senator Joseph McCarthy** claims to have a list of known Communists in the State Department in a speech given in Wheeling, West Virginia. This begins the **era of McCarthyism** in which many Americans are falsely accused of being Communist subversives.

June 16th—An **amended version of the Displaced Person Act** is signed into law. The new law extends admissions of displaced persons to June 30, 1951, providing for more than 400,000 additional visas to be issued.

July—The United States becomes engaged in **military combat in Korea**, supporting South Korea against Communist North Korea.

1951 June 30th—the **Amended Displaced Persons Act expires**.

1952 June 16th—First English language publication of ***Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl***.

June 27th-- **The Immigration and Nationality Act** becomes law after both House and Senate overrule President Truman's veto. The bill reinstates the restrictive immigration quotas of the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act with few changes.

June--Marshall Plan aid ends.

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