

## Allied Complicity in the Holocaust

It has been known for some time that President Franklin D. Roosevelt was suspicious of Jews and uncritically **believed** anti-Semitic myths of astonishing (to present-day eyes) crudeness. This may have contributed to his behaviour before and during the Holocaust, when the United States **participated enthusiastically** in the seamless international effort to prevent most of the Jews of Europe from escaping.

His successor, President Truman, has been regarded as a saner and better man in this regard, because he put pressure on the British to treat Holocaust survivors less harshly, and because he was the first to recognise the State of Israel. Yet despite the fact that he seems genuinely to have sympathised with the Holocaust survivors, some recently-discovered **diary entries** suggest that as far as personal anti-Semitism goes, he was the equal of Roosevelt, if not worse:

On July 21, 1947, Truman wrote about a conversation he had with Henry Morgenthau, the former treasury secretary under President Franklin D. Roosevelt and a Jew.

"Had ten minutes conversation with Henry Morgenthau about Jewish ship in Palistine [sic]," Truman wrote. "Told him I would talk to Gen[eral] Marshall about it."

"He'd no business, whatever to call me. The Jews have no sense of proportion nor do they have any judgement on world affairs."

In the same entry Truman goes on to say, "The Jews, I find are very, very selfish. They care not how many Estonians, Latvians, Finns, Poles, Yugoslavs or Greeks get murdered or mistreated as D[isplaced] P[ersons] as long as the Jews get special treatment.

(As if there are such things as 'unselfish' groups of genocide victims. As if the wartime representatives of those European nations had campaigned against the Holocaust with the same enthusiasm with which they pursued their own agendas and grievances – or, indeed, as if they had spoken out against the Holocaust at all. And as if, to a person with a true "sense of proportion [and] judgement", the treatment of non-Jewish Estonians, Latvians, Finns, Poles, Yugoslavs or Greeks during the war should have

seemed similar to what happened to the Jews.)

Truman's stereotype of the selfish Jew incapable of subtlety, his re-interpretation of commonplace events in sinister terms when Jews are involved, and the impression of visceral spite only imperfectly held in check by reason and morality, are all ancient **themes of anti-Semitism**. So is the technique of the Big Lie:

Yet when they have power, physical, financial or political neither Hitler nor Stalin has anything on them for cruelty or mistreatment to the under dog.

Note that Truman wrote this at a time when Israel was still a dream, when most European Jews were still imprisoned in internment camps, and when many had just been murdered *after* the Holocaust by Europeans who were themselves victims of the Nazis.

Allied complicity in the Holocaust is a difficult and painful issue to contemplate, even today. That is not only because it involves coming to terms with a history of wrongdoing by earlier generations of our own society, but also because that wrongdoing, important though it is, is only a small part of a bigger picture. As with the era of **slavery** in the US, no account of American or British complicity in the Holocaust can be complete without a full acknowledgement that their culpability was of an entirely different order from that of the European collaborators, let alone from that of the murderers themselves and of the society and culture that authorised the murders. To make reasonable judgements in these matters, we need to remember the context. With Western civilisation fearing, and then fighting, for its own survival, it was a different age. The idea of the Holocaust, of genocide and crimes against humanity, had yet to come into focus as central concepts in political morality. One indication of this is that American Jews did not, at the time, judge Roosevelt harshly, and continued to support him overwhelmingly just as they had throughout his term of office. Yes, the British and Americans did not care to rescue the Jews; they even thought that the Germans had a point in hating them. They treated the survivors shamefully – *but it would not have occurred to them to kill them*. Such an idea would have occasioned revulsion much deeper than that of having nouveau-riche Jews trying to join the Country Club or children with skullcaps being top of the class. With the Germans it was the other way round, and that is the measure of the difference.

Nevertheless, the issue of Allied complicity in the Holocaust does have to be addressed and understood, because the remnants of the implicitly anti-Semitic ideas and attitudes that caused it are still a living part of present-day Western culture. They are still doing harm. They are all the harder to address because of the overlay of self-deception, denial and double-talk that 'political correctness' has forced on this and other issues.

Fri, 07/11/2003 - 16:42 | [digg](#) | [del.icio.us](#) | [permalink](#)

**Different age?**

"With Western civilisation fearing, and then fighting, for its own survival, it was a different age."

Doing the same thing now. The more things change, the more they stay the same?

by a reader on Sat, 07/12/2003 - 20:08 | [reply](#)

## Learn More About Truman Before Making Judgments

If you go back to Harry Truman's personal history, allegations of anti-Semitism are awfully difficult to sustain.

It's entirely possible for his diary entry to be a normal sort of exasperation rather than hate. Morgenthau almost certainly was WAY out of the chain of command when he called. I'm quite sure the overall approach re: Israel was not diplomatically polished (hard, when you have no diplomats), and that its focus did not include the "big picture" Truman had to deal with at the time. To someone facing Truman's burdens and in his position, this would be exasperating.

Looks like an issue out of nothing to me.

Joe Katzman

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by a reader on Mon, 07/14/2003 - 12:39 | [reply](#)

## Truman and Morgenthau

Truman was being pestered by Morgenthau and other Jewish pressure group representatives about Palestine at the time, and it would only get more intensive and annoying the more things heated up over the partition. I'm not at all surprised that he blew off steam in the privacy of his own diary. Also keep in mind that Morgenthau was not exactly the most temperate of men - he was the author of the Morgenthau plan that would have left Germany a permanent agricultural colony, and from all accounts played heavily to Roosevelt's anti-German bigotry, which was, if anything, even more monumental than Roosevelt's WASPish anti-Semitism.

Finally, there's the rest of the passage:

"Put an underdog on top and it makes no difference whether his name is Russian, Jewish, Negro, Management, Labor, Mormon, Baptist he goes haywire. I've found very, very few who remember their past condition when prosperity comes."

That is, in fact, the opposite of particularist prejudice - he was classifying Jewish behavior as part of a general human trait that he deplored.

In the end, Truman did recognize Israel. He also desegregated the

Army in spite of his personal racism. I respect men who don't let their personal prejudices (whatever they might be) dictate their actions.

Saw Bamford on CNN yesterday, going on again about the USS Liberty. Now *\*that\** is an anti-Semite.

by a reader on Mon, 07/14/2003 - 12:49 | [reply](#)

## **Twin Ruler**

The whole "holocaust" narrative is getting rather bizaire: now, they are saying that the Poles and the Russians were even more antiSemitic than the Germans.

by a reader on Tue, 09/02/2003 - 12:34 | [reply](#)