

Historical records from the Republic of China

Complete records of the discussions of the Nationalist Government in Chongqing regarding plans to allow Jews fleeing from Europe to settle in China, from the China Second National Archives

Following the 1938 annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany, a new wave of anti-Semitic activity erupted, causing European Jews to flee from their countries. In March of 1939, the Chongqing government accepted Sun Ke's proposal to allow Jewish refugees to stay in the Southwest border region of China. Due to a lack of funds, the plan was never completely carried out, but from this proposal, we can perceive the Chinese people's deep-felt sympathy for and desire to assist the Jewish people at that time.

The China Second National Archives has prepared this volume of records, showing the course of discussions regarding this plan.

1. Official Letter from the National Defense Supreme Council for the Civil Service Department of the Nationalist Government (March 7th 1939)

National Defense Supreme Council Official Letter
Sent on March 7, 28th year of the Republic of China

At the first standing conference of this council, council member Sun Ke proposed designating an area in the Southwest border region as a settlement for Jews who are wearied and have no home to go. We have drawn up a detailed statement of its justifications and a four-point plan of implementation. We request that the congress vote on this proposal. If it passes, it should be delivered to the Executive Yuan for discussion, so that procedures for its implementation can be investigated.

At the time of discussion of this proposal, every committee member is making arrangements for its widespread dissemination. The Executive Yuan should handle this bill; it should consider carefully how to word statements regarding its justifications when drafting. The corresponding record and copy of Mr. Sun Ke's proposal have been delivered together. After inspection, please forward these to Mr. Chen Mi and the Executive Yuan to handle. Thank you.

Respectfully, Nationalist Government Civil Service Department

Attached manuscript of the original proposal:

Legislative Yuan President Mr. Sun Ke drafted a proposal to allocate a part of the Southwest border region as a settlement area for Jews who are wearied and have no home to go. We respectfully await a joint decision on whether or not this is feasible.

Justification:

The world population of Jews totals around 16 million, with the largest population in America, at approximately 4 million, the second largest population in Poland and Soviet Russian, at approximately 3 million each, and the rest scattered around various regions of the world. The Jewish people have suffered the profound pain of the loss of their country. With no home, they have been forced to wander from place to place for over 2600 years, facing oppression wherever they go. With the recent rise of fascism in Europe, the Jewish people have suffered even more merciless abuse, receiving the worst treatment in Germany. Following Hitler's annexation of Austria, and the massacre of Austrian Jews, the situation has further worsened. Recently, with the murder of a German Diplomat in France by a Jew used as pretext, wide-scale anti-Semitic activity in Germany has begun, done with a level of cruelty never seen before. England and America have expressed outrage over this. England wishes to establish a permanent home for the Jews in Palestine, which has been met by intense opposition by the local Arab population. Troubles related to this have continued up until the present. America has expressed strong anger and resentment towards Hitler due to his heavy-handed oppression of the Jews. Because of this, there has been a surge in activities to assist the Jews, reports of which become the headlines on American newspapers. Recently, Shanghai is to announce a plan to limit the number of people allowed into the city, due to its inability to deal with the large influx of Jewish refugees. This proposal to allow Jews to live in the Southwest border region has the following justifications:

- I. With regards to our national policy, following the principles and wishes of our late Prime Minister, we should unite with and assist disadvantaged and powerless nations.
- II. With regard to policy towards England, by assisting the Jewish people, we can increase the sympathy that the people of England have towards us. Furthermore, English foreign policy towards the Far East is determined by the Far East's major businessmen and bankers. The initial obstruction and recent realization of English economic assistance was in each case controlled by the major businessmen and bankers. Furthermore, a large percentage of major businessmen and bankers are Jewish. Therefore, the implementation of this policy can lead to an improvement in the English attitude towards China.
- III. With regard to policy towards America, American activities to assist the Jews have been at the center of attention for people in every part of the world and this has had a considerable influence on the efforts to assist the Chinese people. After the implementation of this policy, not

only will we make a favorable impression on the American people, but we will also shift their attention towards us. This additional publicity will have enormous benefits.

IV. With regard to the future path of the building of our nation, the Jewish people have a large supply of financial resources and talent. If we are able to foster goodwill with them, they can become our greatest ally and source of assistance.

Plans:

- I. At the Southwest region near the international border, we will designate an area of land that Jews may reside in.
- II. The central government will create an organizing committee composed of officials from both the central and regional governments; they are responsible for making arrangements regarding construction and management of this region.
- III. The above mentioned committee is responsible for recruiting Jewish leaders of prestige, in China and abroad, to join with us in carrying out this project.
- IV. Another thing to consider is the establishment of a registry for unemployed Jewish technical specialists. We must, to the greatest extent possible, find employment for expert talents, who can then assist us with construction projects away from the front lines.

Proposal submitted by Sun Ke,
President of Legislative Yuan

On February 17, 1939

2. Manuscript of the Nationalist Government Instructions for the Executive Branch (March 3, 1939)

Instructions for the Executive Yuan

According to the civil service department's petition: At the first standing conference of the Supreme Council of National Defense, March 7, 28th year of the Republic of China, council member Sun Ke proposed designating a part of the Southwest border region as a settlement for Jews along with other suggestions. After inspection, please forward these to Mr. Chen Mi and the Executive Yuan to handle. Attached is a copy of the original proposal. It should be examined and deliberated on. The suggestions attached to the original proposal should also be examined. We request that your governmental body acts in accordance with these instructions.

We have sent the complete investigation attached to the original proposal (there is also a duplicate for filing).

Republic of China, March 10, year 28

3. Kong Xiang Xi Petition to the Nationalist Government Draft (April 22, 1939)

Presented respectfully to the esteemed government May 10, 28th year of the Republic of China, Chongqing confidential order 16, forwarded to the Supreme Council of National Defense regarding the plan to allocate land for the settlement of Jews, The recommendations endorsed by the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Defense Ministry, Finance Ministry, and Transportation Ministry were sent to the section chief of government affairs in this government body, Jiang Ting Fu, for careful study. This summary of the request was drawn up and delivered to the 410th meeting of this government body for deliberation. They decided that the proposal had passed investigation and should be sent to the Supreme Council of National Defense. Apart from the resolution which has been delivered for investigation and deliberation, and the recommendations of each ministry delivered for reference and separate response, a copy of the original petition is attached for examination and deliberation. We respectfully present this petition to the Nationalist Government.

A transcript containing a summary of the petition, along with a list of each department's suggestions, is attached.

Summary

Jews that have a nationality possess the rights of and duties to their own countries. If they desire to come to China, they must meet the requirement of their country. Regarding their immigration procedure and living situation after immigration, current treaties and conventions should be followed. If they desire special consideration and they are obstructed by treaties, government policies, or economic or other hardships, this will cause problems for our domestic government, diplomacy, and other government functions. Therefore, no special procedures will be needed for Jews that have a nationality.

Jews that are stateless have special circumstances. Our national character highly values human sympathy. In addition, our former prime minister often told us that all humans are comrades, so we ought to aid one another to the greatest extent possible. However, the Jewish issue is complex. Though we wish to express our amicable feelings towards them, misunderstandings can easily arise. As far as domestic and international circumstances allow for, the following is our second 3-part plan for assisting the Jewish people:

I. Relocation assistance

Regarding Jews that the League of Nations, emergency relief organizations, or major international charities believe are decent and upstanding and are confirmed as stateless, our embassies and consulates stationed abroad may grant these people special passports which authorize them to enter our borders. We will present application forms to them declaring the following conditions for entry into China: 1. After entering our borders, they must abide by our laws and accept the restrictions set by our courts. 2. After entering our borders, they must not engage in any political or ideological activity, or criticize Sun Yan Sen's three principles of the people. If they disobey these rules, they will be deported.

II. Residence after immigration

After stateless Jews enter our borders, they will be temporarily stationed at an international treaty port, and should not move inland. If they wish to obtain Chinese citizenship, procedures will be conducted according to domestic laws. After receiving Chinese citizenship, they will enjoy equal rights and must not be discriminated against on the basis of race or religion.

III. Job placement assistance for Jews

Presently, Stateless Jews are facing many hardships and so must be given assistance in job placement. Our nation is still in the process of development and so requires a large number every kind of technical specialist: scientists, engineers, doctors, mechanics etc...

The government is responsible for investigating the scope of our needs for specialists and creating a detailed list clearly indicating which personnel are required and the wages that they will be paid. The Foreign Affairs Ministry will then forward the list to our consulates and embassies, which can then assist in hiring. We also request that the League of Nations assists in recruitment.

If suitable candidates are found and they can either pay their own travel expenses, or receive financial assistance from the League of Nations or international charity for travel expenses, after the relevant consulate or embassy receives permission from the relevant domestic government body, the candidates may sign employment contracts.

The National Government is not responsible for finding employment for other Jews that enter our country without signing an employment contract. However, the National Government can direct the provincial governments to hold registration for the unemployed and present job opportunities to them and to the extent that is feasible, present job opportunities to them.

If the above methods are approved, the government will issue orders to representatives at the League of Nations. We will issue an official notification to the League of Nations and at the same time, the Chongqing Government will issue a statement. The statement should be worded using this document as the basis.

I. Recommendations of the Ministry of the Interior

I. The Southwest border region demarked for Jewish residence should not be near commercial ports located along international transit routes.

If many foreigners are allowed to live along these routes, inevitably, national secrets related to international affairs and national defense will eventually be leaked. In case adequate precautions aren't taken, this could lead to an unforeseen incident. However, we should also take into consideration treaty regulations regarding foreign residents (Limitations of Foreign Residents at International Treaty Ports). Also, in order to avoid religious conflict, large trading ports are most suitable for foreigners. In light of the above two view points, the most appropriate areas for Jewish refugees are the English controlled treaty ports near the border with Burma, at Tengyue and Tengchong in Yunnan province.

II. Government permission for construction of lodging in residence area

Jewish people that are stateless, who do not receive the right to a trial, and are completely in compliance with our laws, are not bound by our laws regarding the land ownership rights of foreigners. They can receive special permission from the Nationalist Government to construct lodging, but should continue with naturalization procedures. Is it acceptable for them to either live in the refugee area or in a comparatively developed part of the southwest border region.

III. Regarding parts of the Southwest border region allocated for Jewish residence near commercial ports located along international transit routes

If it is possible to avoid the problems outlined in item I, then is it acceptable to place the Southwest border region designated for Jewish residence near commercial ports located along international transit routes. However, we must place emphasis on reinforcing national defense capabilities and determining our precise diplomatic situation. In addition, we must strengthen security bodies, especially the police force and must boost the powers of essential government officials. We can designate Hekou port in Yunnan province, bordering Vietnam, for dealing with matters pertaining to law.

IV. Supervision of the living area

The supervision of this area should be strengthened, with the police force serving as the backbone. It can be set up using the management of Mount Lu, Mount Gongji, and the three districts of Hankou City as models of organizational structure.

II. Recommendations of the Foreign Affairs Ministry

I. The problem of nationality

Regarding Jews that come to China, the legal status is different for Jews possessing foreign citizenship and stateless Jews. Also, their situations regarding consular jurisdiction in China are different. For these reasons, managing stateless Jews is easy, while managing Jews possessing foreign nationality is difficult. Because of this, admittance to the living area should be limited to stateless Jews only.

II. The Problem of consular jurisdiction

Regarding Jews that possess consular jurisdiction rights, if Italian Jews either move to the designated living area or move inland, they will not be subjected to our laws and court jurisdiction, so it would be highly inadvisable to allow large numbers of them into the country. Germany does not possess consular jurisdiction rights; however, if German Jews move inland, Germany can use diplomatic protection as a way of meddling with internal affairs.

III. The problem of residing inland

Foreigners residing in China are limited to living in international treaty ports. Foreigners without consular jurisdiction rights, for example, citizens of the Soviet Union or Germany, do not have legal permission to moving inland and live with the native population. If Jews from one of these countries move inland, their country will inevitably make demands on the basis of treaty conventions.

IV. The living area problem

The Jewish people are hardworking and capable of overcoming adversity, and are also good at managing businesses. If the living area is excessively large, it may be easy to manage in the beginning, however, over time, there may be a call for regional autonomy. This will be difficult to control. Furthermore, if this area is near an international treaty port or international transit route, it will be easy for the Jews to attract international support for autonomy, which will be detrimental to China.

V. The problem of international propaganda

Enemies of China and fascist nations all have accused China of being communist. If at this time we take in large number of Jews, our enemies will inevitably use this for anti-Chinese propaganda purposes, because fascists often speak of Jews being connected to communism.

Recently the German Ambassador Secretary Kape has become aware of this proposal. Although he has stated that he is not currently able to express Germany's objections, there is a large amount of animosity between Germany and the Jews, so we must pay special attention to this situation,

as there is already ample evidence that Germany is following the proposal closely.

The colonial powers of England and France will also not be pleased to hear that we are assisting down-trodden ethnic groups, so it would be inadvisable to further broadcast our plans to them.

If the proposal will be implemented during the scheduled time, according to the points described above, the following principle should be paid careful attention:

- I. Stateless Jews should be granted residence in specially designated areas; these areas should be small in size. They should not be too concentrated, and they should be far away from commercial ports and international transit routes.
- II. Jews possessing foreign citizenship should be restricted to international treaty ports
- III. When disseminating information regarding this plan to the international community, statements should be worded to emphasize humanitarian aid and emergency relief.

III. Recommendations of the Defense Ministry

- I. We recommend against stateless Jews being given permission to reside in China. Permission should not be granted for residence in a specially designated area but rather, importance should be attached to the sovereignty of our territory.
- II. If designating an area for Jewish residence is absolutely necessary, the area must be in a place where we can exercise sufficient authority, and should not be near an international border (If Mengzi county, containing the Yunnan-Vietnam railway, is selected, we can provide reference material for choosing the best location)
- III. To facilitate easy implementation of this plan, Consulates stationed in foreign countries can handle explaining procedures to incoming refugees because their staffs are well versed in this kind of process. Another possibility is for relief organizations together with guest houses in our international treaty ports to assist in this process.

IV. Recommendations of the Finance ministry

- I. Determining a suitable region of land for cultivation

If the above mentioned Jews originally were farmers or are knowledgeable about agriculture or forestry, then land should be selected near interior transit routes to be given to them for cultivation. China previously has not allowed not-yet naturalized foreigners the right to possess land for cultivation, so if their living area is near international transit routes, this would inevitably lead to abuse.

II. Flexible immigration procedures

Presently, large numbers of Jews are being forced to flee their homelands in panic. In addition, countries such as Germany and Austria are currently not authorized to handle emigration procedures for Jews. These people not possessing passports must be handled according to flexible procedures. A plan should be drawn up by the Foreign Affairs Ministry, so that this can be handled in accordance with the law.

III. Tax free transport of goods when entering the country

Regarding ordinary Jews that are permitted to enter the country, apart from prohibited goods and large quantities of merchandise that should still be taxed, goods used in daily life and other small assorted items should not be liable to taxation when carried into the country. This is done as a show of goodwill.

V. Recommendations of the Transportation Ministry

Jewish people have been born and raised in countries with high quality facilities, so it is unclear if they can accept the living conditions in the interior of China. We can first send staff to Shanghai and consult the Jewish organizations there for their opinions. Regarding the problem of location of and facilities within the designated living area, these matters should be further discussed before proceeding forward.

4. Official Letter from the Civil Service Department of the Nationalist Government for the National Defense Supreme Council Office of the Secretary (May 2, 1939)

Official Letter

Chongqing confidential file #126

To the recipient: Respected office of the secretary, April 30, 28th year of the Republic of China, National Government official letter #1050. For the purpose of carrying out Mr. Sun Ke's proposal to allow Jews to reside at the Southeast border region in compliance with the procedures passed by the Executive Yuan, Please forward the proposal to Mr. Chen Mi for thorough investigation and deliberation. In accordance with the decision of the standing conference of the Supreme Council of National Defense and after being review by Mr. Chen Mi, the proposal has passed the vote. Officially notifying the League of Nations is not necessary. After

inspecting the record and transcript of the resolution, it should be passed on to Mr. Chen Mi in accordance with procedures. The plan has been ratified. In accordance with this, Mr. Chen has already given the Nationalist government secret instructions in accordance with the procedures of the Executive Yuan.

Respectfully presented to the National Defense Supreme Council office of the Secretary

(Stamped by the) Civil Service Department of the Nationalist Government

5. Kong Xiang Xi Petition to the Nationalist Government (May 3rd, 1939)

Presented respectfully to the esteemed government May, 28th year of the Republic of China, Chongqing, confidential file #49. Because the 3 resolutions to assist the Jews have passed the approval of the Supreme Council of National Defense at the 5th general assembly, In accordance with this, the orders are accepted. Apart from the handling of the separate instructions given to the Ministry of the Interior, Foreign Affairs Ministry, Defense Ministry, Finance Ministry, Commerce Ministry, Education Ministry, and Transportation Ministry, and the handling of the secret instructions given to the province-level and city-level governments, the state of affairs regarding the carrying out of these instructions should be reported back for investigation and auditing.

Respectfully presented to the Nationalist Government

(Stamped by) Kong Xiang Xi, President of Executive Yuan