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## **Locking Out the Immigrant**

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America of the 1800s was the most unique society in the history of man. People could engage in virtually any economic enterprise without permission of their public officials. People could become as wealthy as they want, and there was nothing the government could do about it. They could dispose of their money in any way they saw fit. And they could travel anywhere they desired without a passport or other evidence of governmental consent. This is what it once meant to be an American. This is what it once meant to be free.

But perhaps the most unique aspect of American society of the 1800s was that reflected by the Statue of Liberty: free immigration. For this was a society in which the citizenry prohibited their public officials from interfering with the right of people everywhere to come to the United States to live and work.

What was the result of this unusual society — a society without income taxation, welfare, social security, licensing, passports, subsidies, economic regulations, and immigration restrictions? The result was the most economically prosperous nation in the history of man! And this despite the fact that thousands of penniless immigrants, many of whom could not speak English, were flooding American shores every day.

But prosperity for the poor was not the real significance of our ancestors' policy of freedom of immigration. The true significance is a much more profound one. For the first time in history, oppressed and persecuted people everywhere had hope — hope that if they were able to escape the tyranny under which they suffered, there was a place which would accept them. America was a beacon — a beacon of liberty which shone through the darkness of oppression, persecution, and tyranny throughout the world — a beacon which lit the hearts of millions who knew that if they could just escape, there was a nation, albeit faraway, to which they could flee.

But no longer — and not for many decades. While the Statue of Liberty is a nice place for tourists to visit, it now stands as a sad reminder of the rejection and abandonment by 20th-century Americans of the principles of liberty on which our nation was founded. And while the welfare-state, planned-economy way of life most clearly evidences this rejection and abandonment, the consequences, while bad, have not been as evil and horrible as those resulting from the abandonment of the principles of free immigration.

We must never forget that citizens are responsible for wrongdoing by their own government — even when they consciously choose to ignore it. The best-known example in recent times of conscious disregard of wrongdoing by one's own government involved the German people in the 1930s — when Hitler embarked on his policy of extermination of the Jews. Most Americans believe that under same or similar circumstances, the people of this nation would act differently. Unfortunately, they are wrong. Because what Americans have never been taught in their public schools is that the American government, as well as other Western governments (including Britain, Canada, and most of Latin America), through their control of immigration, sealed all

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avenues of Jewish escape from the Holocaust.

The sordid facts and details are set forth in two books: *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy* by Arthur D. Morse, first published in 1967, and *The Holocaust Conspiracy: An International Policy of Genocide* by William R. Perl, published in 1989. Morse was executive producer of "CBS Reports" and the winner of numerous broadcasting awards. Perl served as a Lt. Colonel in the U.S. Army Intelligence Service, worked in the Prosecution Branch of the War Crimes trials, and later taught at George Washington University.

An American cannot read these two books without total revulsion at the reaction of his own government to Hitler's policies against the Jews. Both authors detail the methods by which American politicians and bureaucrats, while maintaining an appearance of great humanitarianism, used immigration policies to prevent Germany's Jews from escaping to the United States. Morse writes:

"In 1938 the Nazis burned every synagogue in the nation, shattered the windows of every Jewish establishment, hauled twenty-five thousand innocent people to concentration camps, and forced the Jews to pay 1,000,000,000 marks for the damage.

"Five days later, at a White House press conference, a reporter asked the President "Would you recommend a relaxation of our immigration restrictions so that the Jewish refugees could be received in this country?"

'This is not in contemplation," replied the President. "We have the quota system.'

"The United States not only insisted upon its immigration law throughout the Nazi era, but administered it with severity and callousness. In spite of unprecedented circumstances, the law was constricted so that even its narrow quotas were not met. The lamp remained lifted beside the golden door, but the flame had been extinguished and the door was padlocked."

## And Perl writes:

"Anti-Semitism ... was certainly a part of the anti-immigration mood of the country, but it was not the sole cause. This was 1938, the U.S. was still on the fringes of the 1929 depression and fear that newcomers would take away jobs needed from those already in the country was genuine. The fact that newcomers mean also increased consumption, that many of them, as they actually did, created new jobs rather than occupy existing ones was not considered....

"President Roosevelt was first of all a politician, and a shrewd and ruthless one at that. He was not going to imperil his fragile coalition for moral or humanitarian reasons. He was not ready to put it to a test over an issue that he knew, was loaded with emotion among supporters as well as opponents and which was in summary not popular at all. He was at that time preparing to run for an unprecedented third term of the presidency, and any rocking of the boat was out of the question.... Yet, it was necessary to keep up the image of a great liberal and humanitarian." One of the most dramatic and tragic examples of the U.S. government's immigration policy against the Jews was evidenced by what has become known as "the voyage of the damned." Just

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before war broke out in Europe, a German cruise ship loaded with almost 1,000 Jewish refugees left Germany and headed to Cuba — where friends and relatives of the passengers waited for their loved ones. When the ship arrived, the Cuban government refused to permit the Jews to disembark. When the ship began moving close to American waters, the United States Coast Guard closely followed to make certain that no Jew jumped ship and infiltrated America.

Since no other nations were willing to accept the refugees, the ship headed back to Germany where certain death awaited its passengers. At the last minute, England and some of the European nations reluctantly agreed to accept the refugees. Unfortunately, many of those who went to Europe were later killed under the Nazi occupation.

It is easy for present-day Americans to say, "We would never let that happen again." Yet, we continue to permit our public officials to control immigration. And the results of this control point only in the direction of future catastrophe.

The U.S. government rightly criticizes the Soviet Union for not letting Jews emigrate... but then is horrified at the prospect of having to let Soviet Jews enter the United States. And it rightly criticizes Vietnam for its oppressive society ... but then is horrified at the prospect of having to let too many Vietnamese "boat people" enter the United States.

And on the southern border of the United States, good and honorable people of the Republic of Mexico have been incarcerated, year after year, in American concentration centers for committing the heinous "crime" of trying to sustain and improve their lives through labor. I personally have been inside these concentration centers and visited with these victims of 20th-century political tyranny, and I shall never forget the looks on their faces — looks which asked "Why are you doing this to us?"

Free immigration is nothing to fear. As free-market economists have shown for years (i.e., Julian L. Simon's 1989 book, *The Economic Consequences of Immigration*), immigration is actually an economic boon to a society. Of course, fears of huge burdens associated with welfare, public schooling, and other aspects of the welfare state are a legitimate concern. But we should not use the welfare state as an excuse for rejecting free immigration; instead, we should use freedom as a reason for ending both the welfare state and immigration controls — and for ending the real and potential evils associated with them.

As walls separating people are crumbling all over the world, it is time for us to tear down our walls. It is time for us to recapture the spirit of liberty which guided our American ancestors and to lead the world to the highest reaches of freedom ever known by man. It is time for us to let the world know that its beacon of liberty is once again lighted for its poor, its tired, its huddled masses yearning to breathe free!