

2008

h-diplo

H-Diplo Article REVIEWS

<http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/reviews/>

No. 204

Published on 3 December 2008

H-Diplo Article Review Managing Editor: Diane N. Labrosse

H-Diplo Article Review General Editor and Web Editor: George Fujii

Melissa Jane Taylor. "Diplomats in Turmoil: Creating a Middle Ground in Post-Anschluss Austria". *Diplomatic History* 32, No. 5 (Nov. 2008): 811-39.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/reviews/PDF/Weinberg-Taylor.pdf>

Reviewed by **Gerhard L. Weinberg**, University of North Carolina Emeritus

This article offers an examination of the way John C. Wiley, United States Consul General in Vienna in 1938, tried with some success to create a procedure for handling applications for visas to the United States by desperate Jews fleeing the Nazis that neither applied the immigration laws most restrictively nor broke those laws in practice. Since the existing laws allowed considerable discretion to foreign service officers in interpreting the "likely to become a public charge" and other restrictions, and since there was no clear directive on how applicants should be treated personally, Wiley worked hard to establish a middle ground between the most rigid procedures on the one hand and any clear breach of the laws on the other. Furthermore, he insisted that the staff of the consulate general treat applicants in a dignified and humane manner; and when there were simply not enough staff members to handle the avalanche of work, he hired additional workers at his own expense.

The author effectively makes three points in this piece. In the first place, Taylor shows how the procedures instituted by Wiley enabled substantial numbers of Jews to escape from annexed Austria, utilizing in substantial part the quota allocation for Austria and Germany that had been combined after the annexation of the former by the latter. Secondly, she demonstrates that although Wiley himself was soon transferred out of Vienna, the basic elements of the procedures Wiley had established continued to be followed under his successors in spite of their alterations in the technical work of the consulate general. In the third place she illustrates with several quite dramatic examples the somewhat unusual ways in which applicants for visas attempted to obtain prompt, and hopefully favorable, attention to their requests for visas.

The article is based on full familiarity with the relevant literature and quite substantial material from unpublished sources, not only the State Department's relevant files but also

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private papers in numerous depositories. The existing literature on escapes from Nazi persecution has focused, not surprisingly, on the enormous difficulties imposed on those Jews trying to flee from Nazi persecution to the United States by the quota system of the 1924 immigration law on the one hand, and, on the other hand, on rescuers in the diplomatic and consular services of several countries who knowingly disregarded their countries' regulations and laws to rescue Jews. Here we can see still another avenue of rescue, what Taylor calls a middle ground, in which the foreign service officer utilizes whatever leeway the law allows to help as many flee as careful stretching of the restrictions appears to make possible. In the process at least some individuals escape, the law is upheld, and the diplomat's career is not endangered. This is a way of looking at the actual daily practice of consular officials in the 1933-41 period that deserves further exploration. This article makes a good start and suggests a way to pursue the issue.

Professor **Gerhard L. Weinberg** is the William Rand Kenan Jr. Professor Emeritus of History at the University of North Carolina. His books include the two-volume history *The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany*, which was published in 1970 and 1980 and republished in 1994. He also is the author of the World War II history, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (1994); and *Visions of Victory: The Hopes of Eight World War II Leaders* (2005).

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