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THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

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May 15, 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Jews in Poland

As you know, Poland is in the throes of an anti-Semitic campaign masquerading under the guise of anti-Zionism. The reasons for this campaign are, in large part, related to internal Polish political problems and the struggle for power within the Communist Party. But the fact still remains that many Jews are suffering persecution and that Jewish opinion outside Poland--and particularly in the United States--has been aroused.

We have followed a cautious course thus far. About a week ago, we asked John Gronouski if he thought it would pay for him to make a private approach to the Polish Government, telling them that we would be prepared to accept any Polish Jews who might wish to emigrate to the United States. John replied that he feared any such approach might jeopardize Polish willingness to let some Jews emigrate to Israel. (Many of these people plan to come out through Western Europe, where they will apply for visas to the United States rather than proceeding on to Israel.)

Our only substantive action to date is a mild statement Bob McCloskey issued last month (copy attached at Tab A). We have tried to avoid any strong public position, since this might well lead the Polish Government to take even more repressive measures against the Jews.

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E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.6

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By CG, NARA Date 7-28-99

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The Department is coming under ever greater pressure from Jewish organizations here to take stronger action. I have already been called on by several prominent Rabbis; John Gronouski and I are now scheduled (May 23) to see representatives of the Conference of Presidents of Major American-Jewish Organizations. The line I have taken thus far--and the line I will continue to take--is that the U.S. Government wants to do everything possible to protect Polish Jews, but if we get too tough we may do them serious harm.

Frankly, I doubt that we can hold this position much longer. Right though I think our stand is, it simply will not wash with the vast majority of the American Jewish Community. Too many American Jews are extremely sensitive to our Government's failure to lower immigration barriers during the Nazi period. They see our silence now as a repetition of our stand during the 30's and 40's.

I think the time has come to take another step, and to involve the President. I therefore propose that you:

- authorize the Attorney General to be prepared to invoke the parole provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act to admit additional refugees (as we have done in the case of the Cuban refugees) when the visa "numbers" run out;
- authorize me to tell the Jewish leaders who will see me on the 23d that you have decided to set aside all numerical limitations on the immigration of Polish Jews to the U.S.

There are more than enough visa "numbers" available now to accommodate any Polish Jews who may want to come here. But, under the provisions of the new Act, these

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immigrant visas will no longer be freely available to Poles after June 30, 1968. We may well need this parole authority to handle emigrating refugees after that date. (The total number of Jews in Poland is about 20,000; I doubt that more than 3-5,000 would come here under any circumstances.)

If you authorize these two steps we will be able to:

- be prepared to grant the necessary visas--
subject to the normal security check--to any
Jews who may be able to get out of Poland;
- demonstrate Presidential interest in the
plight of Poland's Jews.

We are making the necessary fiscal arrangements to have funds available to permit our European posts to handle any increased flow of refugees.

* * *

We may want to take another close look at the situation in a month or so. If things get worse in Poland we might decide to come back to you with some further recommendations. We could consider, for example, a public Presidential statement listing the steps we have already taken, declaring our willingness to admit all refugees from religious persecution in Poland, and restating in the clearest possible terms our national abhorrence of anti-Semitism. Before we think of any public steps, however, I want to be sure that we have exhausted all private channel possibilities; also, we will wish to consider carefully the impact of a public statement on those Jews remaining in Poland.

I have shown a draft of this memorandum to Ramsey Clark, who supports my recommendation.

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Recommendations

That you authorize the Attorney General to be prepared to invoke the parole provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act to admit refugees from religious persecution in Poland.

Approve _____

Disapprove _____

That you authorize me to tell the representatives of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations that you have set aside all numerical limitations to immigration of Polish Jews to the United States.

Approve _____

Disapprove _____

Nicholas deB. Katzenbach
Nicholas deB. Katzenbach

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