

= Madagascar Plan =

The Madagascar Plan was a proposal by the Nazi German government to relocate the Jewish population of Europe to the island of Madagascar . Franz Rademacher , head of the Jewish Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the German government , proposed the idea in June 1940 , shortly before the Fall of France . The proposal called for the handing over of control of Madagascar , then a French colony , to Germany as part of the French surrender terms .

The idea of deporting Polish Jews to Madagascar was investigated by the Polish government in 1937 , but the task force sent to evaluate the island 's potential determined that only 5 @, @ 000 to 7 @, @ 000 families could be accommodated , or even as few as 500 families by some estimates . As efforts by the Nazis to encourage emigration of the Jewish population of Germany before World War II were only partially successful , the idea of deporting Jews to Madagascar was revived by the Nazi government in 1940 .

Rademacher recommended on 3 June 1940 that Madagascar should be made available as a destination for the Jews of Europe . With Adolf Hitler 's approval , Adolf Eichmann released a memorandum on 15 August 1940 calling for the resettlement of a million Jews per year for four years , with the island governed as a police state under the SS . They assumed that many Jews would succumb to its harsh conditions should the plan be implemented . The plan was not viable due to the British naval blockade . It was postponed after the Axis lost the Battle of Britain in September 1940 , and was permanently shelved in 1942 with the commencement of the Final Solution , towards which it had functioned as an important psychological step .

= = Origins = =

In the late 1800s and early 1900s there were a number of resettlement plans for European Jews that were precursors to the Madagascar Plan . Paul de Lagarde , an Orientalist scholar , first suggested evacuating the European Jews to Madagascar in his 1878 work *Deutsche Schriften* (" German Writings ") . Members of the Zionist movement in 1904 ? 1905 seriously debated the British Uganda Programme , by which Russian Jews , who were in immediate danger from ongoing pogroms , would be settled in what today is Kenya . The plan was later rejected as unworkable by the Zionist Congress . Adherents of territorialism split off from the main Zionist movement and continued to search for a location where Jews might settle and create a state , or at least an autonomous area . The idea of Jewish resettlement in Madagascar was promoted by British antisemites Henry Hamilton Beamish , Arnold Leese , and others . With the cooperation of the French , the Polish government commissioned a task force in 1937 to examine the possibility of deporting Polish Jews to the island . The head of the commission , Mieczysław Lepecki , felt the island could accommodate 5 @, @ 000 to 7 @, @ 000 families , but Jewish members of the group estimated that only 500 or even fewer families could safely be accommodated .

= = In Nazi Germany = =

Racism and antisemitism were basic tenets of the Nazi Party and the Nazi government . Discrimination and violent attacks against Jews began immediately after the seizure of power in 1933 . Violence and economic pressure were used by the Nazis to encourage Jews to voluntarily leave the country . By 1939 , around 250 @, @ 000 of Germany 's 437 @, @ 000 Jews had emigrated to the United States , Argentina , the United Kingdom , Palestine , and other countries .

The Nazi leadership seized on the idea of deporting the remaining German Jews overseas . Barren , unproductive lands were viewed as appropriate destinations as this would prevent the deportees from flourishing in their new location . In his May 1940 memorandum to Hitler , *Concerning the Treatment of the Alien Population in the East* , Reichsführer @-@ SS Heinrich Himmler declared that he hoped to see " the term ' Jew ' [...] completely eliminated through the massive immigration of all Jews to Africa or some other colony " .

= = = Planning begins = = =

Initial discussions began to take place in 1938 among Nazi ideologues such as Julius Streicher , Hermann Göring , Alfred Rosenberg , and Joachim von Ribbentrop , . Ten per cent of Jews under German jurisdiction by that date were Polish nationals . Józef Lipski , the Polish ambassador to Germany , expressed his country 's reluctance to take them back , and the Polish government decreed that Polish passport holders would not be permitted to return except under specific conditions . When Ribbentrop raised the matter with French foreign minister Georges Bonnet in December of that year , Bonnet expressed French reluctance to receive more German Jews and inquired if measures could be taken to prevent their arrival . France itself was contemplating how to deport some 10 @, @ 000 Jews and considered whether Madagascar might be an appropriate destination . Planning for German deportations to Madagascar formally began in 1940 . Franz Rademacher , recently appointed head of the Jewish Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs , forwarded on 3 June to his superior , the diplomat Martin Luther , a memorandum on the fate of the Jews . " The desirable solution is : all Jews out of Europe , " said Rademacher . He briefly considered Palestine as a destination , but deemed it unsuitable , as he considered it undesirable that a strong Jewish state should be created in the Middle East . As well , Palestine was at the time under British control . Rademacher recommended that the French colony of Madagascar should be made available as a destination for the Jews of Europe as one of the terms of the surrender of France , which the Germans had invaded on 10 May 1940 . The resettled Jews , noted Rademacher , could be used as hostages to ensure " future good behaviour of their racial comrades in America " . The plan was developed by Referat D III of the Abteilung Deutschland .

Luther broached the subject with Foreign Minister Ribbentrop , who was simultaneously developing a similar scheme . By 18 June , Hitler and Ribbentrop spoke of the Plan with Italian leader Benito Mussolini as a possibility that could be pursued after the defeat of France . Once he learned of the plan , SS @- @ Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich , chief of the Reich Main Security Office (RSHA) , insisted that Ribbentrop relinquish any future responsibility for the Plan to that office . As Heydrich had been appointed by Göring in January 1939 to oversee Jewish evacuation from German @- @ occupied territory , the Jewish question was hence under his purview . Adolf Eichmann , head of the RSHA Sub @- @ Department IV @- @ B4 , which dealt with Jewish affairs and evacuation , soon became involved . On 15 August , he released a memorandum titled Reichssicherheitshauptamt : Madagaskar Projekt (Reich Main Security Office : Madagascar Project) , calling for the resettlement of a million Jews per year for four years and abandoning the idea of retaining any Jews in Europe . The RSHA , he emphasized , would control all aspects of the program . While Rademacher called for the colony to be under German control but self @- @ governing under Jewish administration , Eichmann made it plain that he intended for the SS to control and oversee every aspect of life on the island , which they would govern as a police state .

Most Nazi bureaux , including the Foreign Office , the Security Police , and the Generalgouvernement pinned their hopes on the plan as the last chance to " solve the Jewish problem " through emigration . In particular , Hans Frank , governor of the General Government (the occupied portion of Poland) , viewed the forced resettlement to Madagascar as being preferable to the heretofore piecemeal efforts at deportation into Poland . As of 10 July , deportations into Poland were cancelled and construction of the Warsaw ghetto was halted , since it appeared to be unnecessary .

= = = Planning continues = = =

Rademacher envisioned the founding of a European bank that would ultimately liquidate all European Jewish assets to pay for the plan . This bank would then play an intermediary role between Madagascar and the rest of the world , as Jews would not be allowed to interact financially with outsiders . Göring 's office of the Four Year Plan would oversee the administration of the plan 's economics .

Additionally , Rademacher foresaw roles for other government agencies . Ribbentrop 's Foreign

Affairs Ministry would negotiate terms with the French for the handover of Madagascar to Germany . It would also play a part in crafting other treaties to deal with Europe 's Jews . Its Information Department , along with Joseph Goebbels and his Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda , would control the flow of information at home and abroad . Viktor Brack , a division chief in the Chancellery of the Führer , would oversee transportation . The SS would undertake the expulsion of the Jews from Europe and govern the island as a police state . The Nazis expected that after the invasion of the United Kingdom in Operation Sea Lion that they would commandeer the British merchant fleet to transport the Jews to Madagascar . Many deportees were expected to perish in the harsh conditions or die at the hands of the SS .

= = = Plan abandoned = = =

With the failure to defeat the Royal Air Force in the Battle of Britain , the proposed invasion of the UK was postponed indefinitely on 17 September 1940 . This meant the British merchant fleet would not be at Germany 's disposal for use in evacuations , and planning for the Madagascar proposal stalled . In late August 1940 , Rademacher entreated Ribbentrop to hold a meeting at his ministry to begin drawing up a panel of experts to consolidate the plan . Ribbentrop never responded . Likewise , Eichmann 's memorandum languished with Heydrich , who never approved it . Establishment of ghettos in Warsaw and other cities in Poland resumed in August 1940 . Hitler continued to mention the plan until February 1942 , when the idea was permanently shelved . British Empire forces took the island from Vichy France in the Battle of Madagascar in November 1942 and control was transferred to the Free French .

At the end of 1940 , Hitler asked Himmler to draft a new plan for the elimination of the Jews of Europe , and Himmler passed along the task to Heydrich . His draft proposed the deportation of the Jews to the Soviet Union via Poland . The later Generalplan Ost (General Plan for the East) , prepared by Professor Konrad Meyer and others , called for deporting the entire population of occupied Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union to Siberia , either for use as slave labour or to be murdered after the Soviet defeat . After the Axis failure in the Battle of Moscow and the entry of the United States into the war in December 1941 , Hitler resolved that the Jews of Europe were to be exterminated immediately rather than after the war , which now had no end in sight . Since transporting masses of people into a combat zone would be impossible , Heydrich decided that the Jews would be killed in extermination camps set up in occupied areas of Poland . The total number of Jews murdered during the resulting Holocaust is estimated at 5 @.@ 5 to 6 million people .

= = = Explanatory notes = = =