

ROOSEVELT SUGGESTS AFRICA FOR JEWISH SETTLEMENT



President Roosevelt approached Mussolini in December, 1938 to settle Jews in Abyssinia.



Mussolini came to believe that only the United States, Brazil, or Russia could accommodate a large influx of Jewish refugees.

[Excerpt of the U.S. State Dept.'s correspondence with Premier Mussolini on December, 7, 1938.]

“In searching the areas which would appear to lend themselves to resettlement, president Roosevelt has been particularly struck with the appropriateness of the plateau, a small portion of which lies in the southwestern section of Ethiopia, and the greater portion in areas lying to the south of Ethiopia. It has occurred to him that the chief of Italian Government may believe that adequately financed colonization of refugee families in this area would be in accord with plans which the Italian Government may have formulated for the development and economic reconstruction of Ethiopia.”

[See the page 24 for the complete letter.]

After the Evian Conference in May, 1938, desperate to find a solution to the refugee problem, President Roosevelt wrote to a number of world leaders asking them to open their colonies to “foreign” immigration (he did not mention Jews specifically). Among these leaders was Benito Mussolini. Roosevelt and Mussolini exchanged ideas for a Jewish state, which Mussolini supported, except in the Middle East. Roosevelt suggested the southern Ethiopian highlands, an Italian colony, be made available. Mussolini noted that the area had a hostile native population. Instead, he recounted that he had previously suggested opening northern Ethiopia to immigration, where 40,000 Falasha Jews already lived. But that suggestion was not well received by Jewish representatives. Mussolini informed Roosevelt that a better option was the vast spaces of the United States, Russia, or Brazil. These lands had the capacity to create a Jewish state with tens of thousands of new settlers. Roosevelt did not respond.

Not surprisingly, after Italy’s defeat in East Africa in 1941, the Roosevelt Administration proposed to Zionists that parts of Abyssinia and Kenya be their new homeland and Jerusalem be made into a “Vatican City.”