

**Varian Fry:
Compromise Against Isolationism
and Persevering Amid Conflict**

Joshua Elkin
Junior Division
Historical Paper

Paper Length: 2463 words

Introduction

In 1940, as French troops were surrendering to the German military, millions of refugees found themselves helpless in Nazi-influenced France. Designated as political opponents by the Third Reich, these refugees were at high risk of arrest, placement in concentration camps, or even death.¹ Many of these refugees were cultural icons, who had previously made significant contributions in the fields of art, literature, and science. Despite the imminent threat, the American government remained apathetic and refused to offer support for these intellectuals. The United States abstained from European affairs and made rescuing refugees a low priority. Whereas most Americans supported or accepted these views, one man refused to be swayed by the status quo. Varian Fry, with the assistance of the First Lady, persuaded President Franklin Roosevelt to compromise American policy by granting visas for two-hundred endangered intellectuals. This compromise, however, set the precedent for conflict between Fry and the French and American governments. Despite the opposition, Fry courageously persisted and saved thousands of refugees.

Historical Context

On September 3, 1939, England declared war against Germany. Two days previous, any hopes of appeasement were destroyed through the Nazi occupation of Poland, prompting England into war.² France followed soon after, embracing a defensive position in Western Europe.³ The declaration of war, however, did little to dissuade Germany, under the rule of Chancellor Adolf

¹ Darryl Lyman, "Varian Fry: Assignment: Rescue," in *Holocaust Rescuers: Ten Stories of Courage*, (Berkeley Heights, NJ: Enslow, 1999), 26

² Webb Miller, "England Declares War: France Expected to Enter Fight at Noon." *The Sunday Messenger* (Athens, Ohio), September 3, 1939. Accessed January 23, 2018.

³ Dr. Gary Sheffield, "History - World Wars: The Fall of France," BBC, last modified March 30, 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/fall_france_01.shtml.

Hitler. By June 22, 1940, less than a year after declaring war, the French government signed an armistice to officially surrender.⁴ The armistice split France into two zones: a northern zone occupied by Germany, and a southern zone heavily influenced by Nazi morals. The unoccupied zone was known as Vichy France, as its capital was a spa town called Vichy.⁵

Shortly after the armistice, millions of political opponents of Hitler (i.e. Jews, gypsies, communists), sought asylum in Vichy France. Although unoccupied France was swayed by fascist ideology, many believed it was the last safe haven remaining in Europe; this common misconception proved to be risky.⁶ In the armistice, a clause in Article 19 stated, "The French Government is obliged to surrender upon demand all Germans named by the German Government in France."⁷ Though directly impacting only German anti-fascists, the clause put anybody on Hitler's wanted list in danger.⁸ These endangered anti-fascists included prominent cultural icons, such as artist Marc Chagall, writer Lion Feuchtwanger, and Nobel Prize winner Otto Meyerhof. These intellectuals received no mercy from Hitler, putting their lives and legacies were in danger.⁹

⁴ "Franco-German Armistice: June 25, 1940," The Avalon Project, Yale Law School last modified 2008, accessed January 4, 2018, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/frgearm.asp#art19>.

⁵ "Vichy France," Britannica School, last modified February 6, 2009, accessed October 14, 2017, <https://school.eb.com/levels/middle/article/Vichy-France/75232>.

⁶ Kirke L. Simpson, "Truce Fails to Assure France Against Battles," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, June 25, 1940, accessed November 22, 2017. [access.newspaperarchive.com/us/utah/salt-lake-city/salt-lake-tribune/1940/06-25/page-3?tag=france&rtserp=tags/france?ndt=bd&pd=22&pe=28&pem=6&py=1940&pm=6&pey=1940&psb=relevance&pci=7](https://www.newspaperarchive.com/us/utah/salt-lake-city/salt-lake-tribune/1940/06-25/page-3?tag=france&rtserp=tags/france?ndt=bd&pd=22&pe=28&pem=6&py=1940&pm=6&pey=1940&psb=relevance&pci=7).

⁷ "Franco-German Armistice: June 25, 1940," The Avalon Project, Yale Law School.

⁸ Rebecca Erbeling, telephone interview by the author, February, 2, 2018.

⁹ "Varian Fry," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed October 10, 2017. <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005740>.

Background Information

Whereas cultural figures in France faced great danger, the American government refused to provide asylum for European refugees.¹⁰ Before the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, a political movement known as “isolationism” prevailed in the United States, favoring little to no American involvement in international affairs. Isolationism had gained strength in the early 1930s, with elements of the movement becoming prevalent in the American government.¹¹

Many isolationists were concerned about national security. Following the invasion of Belgium and Holland on May 10, 1940, there were increasing concerns of Nazi spies coming into America.¹² State Department officials also made efforts to block refugees from coming to the United States. Breckinridge Long, an Assistant Secretary, wrote that consulates should “put every obstacle in the way and [require] additional evidence... [to] postpone the granting of the visas.”¹³ A majority of Americans supported or accepted the refusal to admit refugees, doing nothing to advocate for European anti-fascists.¹⁴

Despite the overwhelmingly-popular status quo, a minority population known as interventionists opposed isolationism, insisting on saving at-risk refugees from France. It was inevitable that interventionists couldn’t completely change State Department attitudes, but they were determined to propose and persuade compromises to ensure the safety of endangered anti-fascists. One of these people was Varian Fry, a thirty-two year old journalist from New York.

¹⁰ "Immigration to the United States 1933–1941," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed January 25, 2018, <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10008297>.

¹¹ "American Isolationism in the 1930s," U.S. Department of State, accessed January 23, 2018, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1937-1945/american-isolationism>.

¹² "Breckinridge Long," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed January 31, 2018, <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10008298>.

¹³ "Breckinridge Long's Memorandum." Breckenridge Long to Adolf A. Berle Jr., and James C. Dunn. June 26, 1940.

¹⁴ Ron Elving, "This Isn't The First Time Americans Have Shown Fear Of Refugees," *NPR*, November 21, 2015. accessed January 31, 2018. <https://www.npr.org/2015/11/21/456857350/this-isnt-the-first-time-americans-have-shown-fear-of-refugees>.

In 1935, Fry traveled to Berlin on assignment, where he witnessed the brutal persecution of Jews.¹⁵ Shortly after, Fry joined a Nazi resistance group in the United States and used his role as a journalist to inform the public about the atrocities committed by the Nazi government.¹⁶

By May 10, 1940, when Germany conquered Belgium and Holland, Fry and his friend, Karl Frank, knew France was Hitler's next conquest.¹⁷ As many anti-fascist intellectuals lived in or found refuge in France, the two were determined to host a fundraiser to help rescue these cultural figures. Fry and Frank spoke with a professional fundraiser, Harold Oram, to seek advice for spreading awareness.¹⁸ With Oram's recommendation, a luncheon was hosted at the Commodore Hotel in New York, on June 25, 1940- three days after the armistice was signed. The recent events prompted many to donate generously, with \$3,000 raised in total.¹⁹ Additionally, an organization called the Emergency Rescue Committee (ERC), was formed from the luncheon. The ERC's mission was to save as many intellectuals as possible before any were arrested or killed.²⁰

¹⁵ Carla Killough McClafferty, *In Defiance of Hitler: The Secret Mission of Varian Fry* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2008), 4

¹⁶ U.S. Cong. House. *Honoring Varian Fry on the 100th Anniversary of His Birth*, by Steven R. Rothman, 110th Cong., 1st sess. Res. 743, October 15, 2007.

¹⁷ Rosemary Sullivan, *Villa Air-Bel: World War II, Escape, and a House in Marseille*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 182

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 184

¹⁹ U.S. Cong. House. *The Story of Varian Fry and the Emergency Rescue Committee*. By Thomas P. Lantos. 104th Cong., 2d sess. Doc. E380. Vol. 142. Series 38. 1996. Accessed October 12, 2017. www.congress.gov/congressional-record/1996/3/19/extensions-of-remarks-section.

²⁰ Mordecai Paldiel, "Diplomats in Service to Humanity," in *Sheltering the Jews: Stories of Holocaust Rescuers*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 137

Compromise Against Isolationism

Shortly after formation, the ERC established three major tasks: create a list of two-hundred cultural figures to save, persuade the State Department to grant two-hundred emergency visas (to be used throughout the duration of WWII), and send a representative to Marseille- a city in unoccupied France- to facilitate the rescue operation.²¹ There were many people working on compiling lists, but the latter two tasks were difficult. The State Department was strongly fueled by isolationist attitudes²², and there wasn't a known qualified candidate willing to go to Marseille.

In hopes of obtaining visas, Frank had previously scheduled a dinner meeting with First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, which took place the same day as the luncheon. Frank's objective was to convince Roosevelt that the ERC supported a worthy and important cause. Through convincing Eleanor, Frank hoped that she would persuade her husband to issue the ERC with emergency visas.²³

Similar to Frank and Fry, Mrs. Roosevelt was an avid interventionist and desperately wanted to help those targeted by the Nazis. Shortly after hearing Frank's proposal, Eleanor Roosevelt anxiously called her husband.²⁴ President Roosevelt didn't support isolationism, but viewed admitting refugees as impossible, asserting all that could be done was being done. This infuriated the First Lady, who angrily exclaimed, "[What] happened to us... we had been the traditional land of asylum and now we're unwilling to admit political refugees."²⁵

²¹ Sullivan, *Villa Air-Bel*, 186-187.

²² Erbeling, telephone interview by the author.

²³ Joseph P. Lash, *Eleanor Roosevelt: A Friend's Memoir* (1st ed. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 112

²⁴ *Ibid*

²⁵ Blanche Wiesen Cook, *Eleanor Roosevelt: The War Years and After, 1939-1962*. (Penguin Group: USA, 2016), 289-290

Following the dinner party, Frank connected Varian Fry with the First Lady. Two days later, Fry wrote a letter to Eleanor Roosevelt, requesting for two-hundred emergency visas and a qualified candidate to represent the ERC in Marseille.²⁶ Fry's proposal, calling on President Roosevelt to compromise against prevailing isolationism, included assurance that the ERC was secure on funds and could easily obtain a visa for their representative.²⁷ After receiving Fry's inquiry, Eleanor forwarded his letter to President Roosevelt, in hopes of persuading the stubborn politician. However, the President remained unconvinced, remarking, "[Fry]'s suggestion may have all the merit in the world but it most certainly cannot be authorized... by the government of the United States."²⁸

Nevertheless, as a result of persistent persuasion from Eleanor, President Roosevelt eventually compromised against isolationism and granted Varian Fry two-hundred emergency visas.²⁹ In spite of Roosevelt's support, the President never offered Fry a qualified candidate to represent the ERC in Marseille- this forced Fry to become the ERC's European ambassador.³⁰ Though Fry was highly motivated, he lacked the prowess required for such an undertaking; after all, he was just a journalist with some proficiency in French and German.³¹ He was only thirty-two years old and had no prior knowledge of the requirements to run a successful rescue operation. Despite the unideal circumstances, Fry left the United States for Europe on August 4, 1940. The ERC anticipated that he would return on August 29, 1940.³²

²⁶ Varian M. Fry to Eleanor Roosevelt, June 27, 1940, Foreign Policy Association, New York, New York.

²⁷ Varian M. Fry to Eleanor Roosevelt, June 27, 1940, Foreign Policy Association, New York, New York.

²⁸ Franklin D. Roosevelt to Eleanor Roosevelt, July 3, 1940. The White House, Washington, D.C.

²⁹ Paldiel, "Diplomats in Service to Humanity," in *Sheltering the Jews*, 137

³⁰ Varian Fry to Malvina Thompson. July 23, 1940. Foreign Policy Association, New York, New York.

³¹ McClafferty, In Defiance of Hitler, 3

³² "Letter from Mildred Adams, Executive Secretary of the Emergency Rescue Committee," Mildred Adams to Varian Fry, August 3, 1940

Persisting Amid Conflict

When Fry arrived in Marseille, he quickly encountered many laws and restrictions imposed by Vichy France. To leave France for the United States, a variety of documents were required in addition to an American visa, including a French exit permit.³³ However, if a refugee requested an exit permit from French officials, he or she could easily be identified and turned over to the Nazi government. This required Fry to forge documents and devise creative rescue routes to illegally smuggle the refugees out of France.³⁴

To find solutions for these problems, Fry was in dire need of support. He received some assistance from Vice-Consul, Hiram Bingham IV, but the isolationist American government provided Fry with no additional support.³⁵ Within a couple of days of arriving in France, Fry met a refugee named Albert Hirschman, who had a comprehensive knowledge of the black market and the Spanish frontier. Having previously fought in the Spanish Civil War, Hirschman knew that the Pyrenees mountains, lying at the Franco-Spanish border, could be used to circumnavigate French border police.³⁶ Hirschman's understanding of various escape routes and methods for obtaining illegal documents proved monumental in smuggling anti-fascist intellectuals out of France. Fry also received assistance from a Viennese cartoonist, Bill Freier, who flawlessly replicated stamps only an expert could tell were forged.³⁷

As Fry's work continued, however, he faced many additional surprises and setbacks that drastically altered his rescue operation. When Fry left for Europe, he anticipated he would travel

³³ U.S. Cong. House, 104th Cong., 2d sess. Doc. E38, vol. 142, series 38. 1996

³⁴ *Assignment, Rescue : The Story of Varian Fry and the Emergency Rescue Committee*. Washington, D.C.: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1997.

³⁵ "Saving the Jews of Nazi France," Smithsonian.com, March 01, 2009, accessed January 20, 2018. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/saving-the-jews-of-nazi-france-52554953/>.

³⁶ Varian Fry, *Surrender On Demand*, (Boulder, CO: Johnson, 1997), 24

³⁷ U.S. Cong. House, 104th Cong., 2d sess. Doc. E38, vol. 142, series 38. 1996

throughout Vichy France on a bicycle and look for intellectuals on his list.³⁸ However, soon after his arrival, word spread that an American relief worker was seeking out specific refugees to send to the United States. This attracted an influx of refugees to Fry's room at the Hotel Splendide.³⁹ Most of the refugees weren't on Fry's list but were in just as much danger. Though Fry's orders were to specifically save the two-hundred intellectuals on his list, he refused to ignore the other endangered refugees.⁴⁰

During Fry's third week in Marseille, local police arrived at the Hotel Splendide and arrested refugees. They questioned the details of Fry's work and the refugees' business at the Splendide.⁴¹ Fry's cover wasn't exposed, but he needed to be careful about keeping his work secret. Providing relief to refugees was legal in France, but smuggling them out of the country could be met with consequences of arrest, expulsion, or execution. To alleviate suspicion, Fry established the *Centre Américain de Secours* (CAS), a cover organization claiming to provide necessities for refugees.⁴² Relief wasn't in the ERC's budget, but Fry created partnerships with local relief organizations to help maintain the CAS's cover.⁴³

In addition to conflict with the French police, Fry encountered opposition from another angle- the American government.⁴⁴ Though Fry persuaded President Roosevelt to grant two-hundred visas before he left, the State Department was urging Fry to cease his rescue operation.⁴⁵ By September 1940, Fry had stayed longer than previously anticipated and was

³⁸ Fry, *Surrender on Demand*, 12

³⁹ *Assignment: Rescue: The Story of Varian Fry and the Emergency Rescue Committee*, directed by Richard Kaplan, by Christina Lazaridi, narrated by Meryl Streep, (1997; United States: Richard Kaplan Productions), VHS.

⁴⁰ Lyman, "Varian Fry: Assignment: Rescue," in *Holocaust Rescuers*, 31

⁴¹ Fry, *Surrender on Demand*, 33

⁴² U.S. Cong. House, 110th Cong, 1st sess. Res. 743, October 15, 2007.

⁴³ Fry, *Surrender on Demand*, 37

⁴⁴ *Assignment: Rescue*, Washington, D.C, USHMM, 1997.

⁴⁵ Paldiel, "Diplomats in Service to Humanity," in *Sheltering the Jews*, 139

nowhere near finished with his work. The State Department remained unsympathetic toward Fry's humanitarian work, with Secretary of State Cordell Hull writing, "[The United States cannot] countenance any activity by American citizens desiring to evade the laws of the governments with which this country maintains friendly relations."⁴⁶ Fry refused to compromise his moral obligations to rescue these refugees, despite isolationist views persuading him to leave. He knew his work was far from finished, and thus, Fry persevered amid conflict from his own government.

As tensions began to rise with the American government, French police remained vigilant as ever about the CAS. On many occasions, Fry found the police raiding his office, trying to find evidence that would prove his work comprised of more than solely relief.⁴⁷ In those situations, Fry would hide essential papers, such as his lists or escape routes. Other illegal documents, such as forged passports or identity cards, were immediately destroyed.⁴⁸ Though tensions refused to settle following each raid, Fry was able to continue his rescue work.

In December 1940, Fry was arrested and held captive at the Marseille harbor on a prison boat called the SS Sinaia. At the time, Marshal Philippe-Pétain, head of Vichy France, was about to visit Marseille. In preparation, local police arrested 20,000 people that posed a potential risk to Pétain's safety.⁴⁹ Though Fry was released after three days without punishment, French police continued to gather evidence to convict Fry. A police report from December 30, 1940 proposed Fry's expulsion on the alleged grounds he was "leading an operation that... protects foreigners of

⁴⁶ Cordell Hull to Hiram Bingham IV. September 18, 1940. Department of State, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁷ Lyman, "Varian Fry: Assignment: Rescue," in *Holocaust Rescuers*, 33

⁴⁸ U.S. Cong. House, 104th Cong., 2d sess. Doc. E38, vol. 142, series 38. 1996

⁴⁹ Paldiel, "Diplomats in Service to Humanity," in *Sheltering the Jews*, 139

doubtful morality or of political tendencies that are hostile to France.”⁵⁰ Despite desires to arrest the foreigner, French police were unable to gather enough evidence to support Fry’s expulsion.

Shortly after, on January 15, 1941, Fry went to the American Embassy to renew his passport. Although Fry expected no difficulty, he was told by a secretary, “My instructions are to renew it only for immediate return to the United States, and then only for a period of two weeks.”⁵¹ Without having a valid passport, Fry’s work was put in more danger. Fry knew he couldn’t leave Marseille to renew his passport; though he established a group of volunteers assisting him at the CAS, they needed Fry’s leadership in order to operate. This prompted Fry to continue his work with the large threat of not having a valid passport.⁵²

By June 1941, Hiram Bingham IV was reassigned and left Marseille. With Bingham’s absence, Fry’s help from the American government went from miniscule to non-existent.⁵³ On a frequent basis, he was told by Consul-General Hugh Fullerton that “[Fry would] be expelled any day if [he] were lucky enough not to be arrested and held on charges.”⁵⁴ Fullerton’s remarks did very little to persuade Fry from acting differently- by then, Fry had been responsible for saving many more refugees than the initial two-hundred intellectuals he was tasked with rescuing.⁵⁵

Fry’s work was risky from the beginning, and unfortunately, inevitable eventually occurred. Over a year after arriving in Marseille, Fry was officially expelled from France on August 27, 1941.⁵⁶ The French police accused him of saving anti-fascists in France, and his

⁵⁰ Chief of French Police. *The Suspect Activity of Mr. Varian Fry*. Report. Bouches du Rhone Department, Minister of the Interior. Marseille, France.

⁵¹ Paldiel, "Diplomats in Service to Humanity," in *Sheltering the Jews*, 141

⁵² Ibid, 140

⁵³ "Saving the Jews of Nazi France," Smithsonian

⁵⁴ Fry, *Surrender on Demand*, 86

⁵⁵ U.S. Cong. House, 104th Cong., 2d sess. Doc. E38, vol. 142, series 38. 1996

⁵⁶ Fry, *Surrender on Demand*, 224-226

expulsion was “ordered by the Ministry of the Interior, with the approval of the American embassy.”⁵⁷ On September 6, 1941, Fry permanently left Marseille.⁵⁸ Though conflict was resolved through a final, one-sided compromise, Fry’s rescue operation saved approximately 2000 people and the many generations that have since followed.

Conclusion

Varian Fry was an ordinary man who left behind an extraordinary legacy. By not letting isolationist views sway him, he negotiated a compromise that saved thousands of lives. When faced with resulting conflict from the French and American governments, he persisted, determined to not compromise his moral obligations. Prior to his death on September 13, 1967, and since then, he hasn’t received the recognition he deserves. Despite his relatively unknown status, Fry’s influence can be traced through the post-war contributions of the intellectuals he saved, and through the modern day International Rescue Committee, which has provided assistance to millions of refugees.⁵⁹ His legacy is as relevant as ever today, demonstrating the power of seeking compromise and persevering amid conflict.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 229

⁵⁸ McClafferty, In Defiance of Hitler, 148

⁵⁹ Flavia Draganus, email interview by author, February 1, 2018.

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

Armistices

"Franco-German Armistice : June 25, 1940." The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, 2008. Accessed January 4, 2018. <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/frgearm.asp#art19>.

I struggled to cite and classify this source in Chicago- it was a primary source, but couldn't be cited with the typical guidelines used for a government publication or congressional record. There also wasn't a typical format used to cite armistices- therefore, I took the citation process for websites and applied it to this source. I didn't use the miscellaneous option because I deemed it important to include information about where I found the source digitally.

Books

Fry, Varian. *Surrender On Demand*. Boulder, CO: Johnson, 1997.

This autobiography only differs from Fry's initial publication of *Surrender on Demand* with the inclusion of a preface by former Secretary of State Warren Christopher. Easily one of my best sources, the book provided me with an abundance of information about Fry's work. It speaks a lot about the conflict Fry faced from the French government which was due to the superior influence of Nazi ideology. I also used information from here to understand the stories behind randomly-listed facts incorporated from various secondary sources.

Lash, Joseph P. *Eleanor Roosevelt: A Friend's Memoir*. 1st ed. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1964. 111-13.

Joe Lash was a close friend of Eleanor Roosevelt, who wrote this biography about the former First Lady. It was used to gain more knowledge about the dinner meeting on June 25, 1940 (where he, the First Lady, Trude Pratt, Karl Frank, and Joseph Buttinger were all present) which prompted the compromise with FDR. It helped me better understand the tension between the Roosevelts, and partially why the president was reluctant to let refugees through American borders.

Cablegrams

Fry, Varian. "Cablegram from Varian Fry." Received by Museum of Modern Art, 21 Apr. 1941, Marseilles.

During his time in Marseille, Fry wrote many cablegrams back to New York to update the Emergency Rescue Committee and MoMA about his work. This such cablegram explains the plans Fry had to rescue Marc Chagall, Max Ernst, and André Breton (some of the most significant people he rescued). It helps put their rescue plans into historical context, along with briefly explaining some of the methods Fry used to rescue these refugees.

Journal Articles

"Music for the Harpsichord by Wanda Landowska." *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 1st ser., 18, no. 12 (November 1923): 292-93. Accessed December 19, 2017. www.jstor.org/stable/3254859.

When the Emergency Rescue Committee (ERC) assembled, their main goal was to save significant intellectuals trapped in France. This journal article, written to publicize one of Wanda Landowska's performances in America, shows why her work was important, thereby supporting the importance of Fry's actions. It details how unknown the harpsichord was, therefore showing why somebody like Landowska, working to reintroduce the instrument, was an important cultural figure.

Letters

Anna E. Roosevelt to Varian M. Fry. July 8, 1940.

Eleanor Roosevelt refused to be silenced by her husband's reluctance toward admitting refugees. In this letter, the First Lady doesn't tell Fry about the President's response, with sheer determination to sway the politician's stubborn ways. It helped me understand Eleanor Roosevelt's ardent interventionist attitudes, and how it reflected in what she did.

"Letter from Mildred Adams, Executive Secretary of the Emergency Rescue Committee." Mildred Adams to Varian Fry. August 3, 1940. In *Archives of the Holocaust: An International Collection of Selected Documents*. Vol. 5. New York, NY: Garland Publishing Inc., 1990. 1-3.

Before Fry left for Europe, he was given specific instructions from the ERC secretary, Mildred Adams about what he was to do in Marseille. This letter, detailing Fry's instructions, helps me understand some of the naive pre-accusations that the ERC and Fry made about rescue work in France. They also help me understand how reality was greatly impacted by conflict, as Vichy France laws created large obstacles that Fry was required to overcome.

"Letter to Anna E. Roosevelt." Varian M. Fry to Anna E. Roosevelt. June 27, 1940. Foreign Policy Association, New York, New York.

After Frank's meeting with Eleanor Roosevelt, Frank linked Fry to the First Lady to ask about emergency visas and a qualified representative. This letter shows Fry's request, and does a great job of conveying the interventionist compromise proposed by the young journalist. It was instrumental in helping me understand the compromise and the relationship between Fry and Eleanor Roosevelt.

"Letter to Malvina Thompson." Varian Fry to Malvina Thompson. July 23, 1940. Foreign Policy Association, New York, New York.

This letter does a great job of capturing the sense of urgency Fry felt toward rescuing refugees. It shows Fry's desire to go to Marseille as soon as possible, and lies down some basic logistics of his work leading up to the time he wrote this letter.

"Mrs. Elena Frank." Varian Fry to Hiram Bingham IV. November 8, 1940. Marseille, France.

One of many examples of communication between Fry and Bingham, this letter clearly shows the support Bingham provided Fry and the CAS while the diplomat was in Marseille. This letter also helped me understand how Bingham's role in Fry's work was much more beyond solely granting documents- he also helped smuggle refugees such as Lion Feuchtwanger out of internment camps scattered across Vichy France.

Varian M. Fry to Anna E. Roosevelt. July 18, 1940. Foreign Policy Association, New York, New York.

This letter from Varian Fry informs the First Lady about the progress of the ERC and Fry's selection to go to Marseille. There's a large focus on granting Fry a passport for France, which wasn't easy due to the State Department's reluctance towards granting passports for American citizens. This helps me understand some of the logistics of Fry's course, with a lot of the obstacles he needed to compromise against and with, in order to prepare to go to Marseille.

Memorandums

"Breckenridge Long's Memorandum." Breckenridge Long to Adolf A. Berle Jr., and James C. Dunn. June 26, 1940.

This memorandum was a perfect example of isolationist views held by Assistant Secretary of State, Breckenridge Long. It conveys the mentality of blocking immigration inquiries as much as possible, and helps me understand the American actions that turned into conflict with Varian Fry's rescue operations.

"Memorandum for E.R." Franklin D. Roosevelt to Anna E. Roosevelt. July 3, 1940. The White House, Washington, D.C.

With strict policy in wild support of isolationism, this memorandum from FDR to his wife, briefly (but forcibly) states that the American government cannot, under any circumstance, support Fry. This shows that even though FDR caved in, that conflict between Fry and the American government was inevitable from the very beginning.

"Memo For Miss LeHand." H.C.T to Missy LeHand. July 2, 1940. The White House, Washington, D.C.

From an unidentified secretary at the White House, this memorandum passes a note from Eleanor Roosevelt, which asks her husband to look at Fry's letter of June 27. It does a good job of showing the First Lady's desire to help refugees and non-government refugee organizations.

Newspapers

AP. "Hitler, Mussolini Will Draw Terms; Likely to Demand French Navy." *The Capital Times* (Madison, Wisconsin), June 17, 1940, 45th vol., no. 186. Accessed January 15, 2018. <https://access.newspaperarchive.com/us/wisconsin/madison/madison-capital-times/1940/06-17?tag=reynaud+quits+marshal+petain+heads+cabinet&rtserp=tags/reynaud-quits-marshal-petain-heads-cabinet?psb=relevance>.

During the war, many day-to-day updates were written by the Associated Press (AP) and included in small-town newspapers throughout the country. This article, incorporated in "The Capital Times," shows how by June 17, France was already requesting for an armistice. It gave me historical context for the Battle of France, and emphasizes the pathetic point that it took less than six weeks to defeat and conquer France.

AP. "Paris Is Declared An Open City To Spare It From Destruction By Nazis." *The Danville Bee* (Danville, Virginia), June 13, 1940, 15,428 ed. Accessed January 15, 2018. <https://access.newspaperarchive.com/us/virginia/danville/danville-bee/1940/06-13?tag=paris+is+declared+an+open+city+to+spare+it+from+destruction+by+nazis&rtserp=tags/paris-is-declared-an-open-city-to-spare-it-from-destruction-by-nazis?pc=6982&psi=100&pci=7&pt=8430&ndt=by&py=1940&pey=1949&psb=relevance>.

This newspaper article, also primarily used to provide historical context, shows how Paris was declared an open city to avoid further conflict. It's a good testament to how France acted toward the end of the war, with appeasement-esque attitudes, and helped me understand some of the reasons or motives for peace and surrender in the midst of war.

AP via Radio. "Reynaud Quits; Marshal Petain Heads Cabinet." *The Capital Times* (Madison, Wisconsin), June 17, 1940, 45th vol., no. 186. Accessed January 15, 2018. <https://access.newspaperarchive.com/us/wisconsin/madison/madison-capital-times/1940/06-17?tag=reynaud+quits+marshal+petain+heads+cabinet&rtserp=tags/reynaud-quits-marshal-petain-heads-cabinet?psb=relevance>.

Marshal Philippe-Pétain became the head of France on June 17, 1940, after former Prime Minister Paul Reynaud resigned. This article perfectly conveys his attitudes toward war and was a good example to his overall interactions with Third Reich, especially shown through the fascism and antisemitism prevalent in the succeeding Vichy regime.

Miller, Webb. "England Declares War: France Expected to Enter Fight at Noon." *The Sunday Messenger* (Athens, Ohio), September 3, 1939. Accessed January 23, 2018. <https://access.newspaperarchive.com/us/ohio/athens/athens-sunday-messenger/1939/09-03/page-15?tag=invasion+of+poland&rtserp=tags/invasion-of-poland?ndt=bd&pd=3&pe=5&pem=9&py=1939&pm=9&pey=1939&psb=relevance>.

Explaining any confusion I had about the roots of World War II, this newspaper article does a great job in expressing England's declaration of war and how France followed soon after. It also provided me with additional primary source material, while this source explains motive and clears up any prior confusion I had relating to historical context.

"Nazis Hold American as Pro-Jewish." *Somerset Daily American* (Somerset, Pennsylvania), September 1, 1941. Accessed November 7, 2017. <https://access.newspaperarchive.com/us/pennsylvania/somerset/somerset-daily-american/1941/09-01/page-6?tag=varian-fry&rtserp=tags/varian-fry?ndt=by&py=1935&pey=1947&psb=relevance>.

Surprisingly, there were reports as early as September 1, 1941, explaining Fry's work, arrest, and eventual expulsion from France. It explained why he didn't leave France until September 6, 1941, and explains his relationships with various organizations, such as the New School for Social Research. Finally, through a very unbiased stance, this article does a good job of conveying isolationism, and how the media refused to take a definite stance on refugees.

Simpson, Kirke L. "Truce Fails to Assure France Against Battles." *The Salt Lake Tribune*, June 25, 1940. Accessed November 22, 2017. access.newspaperarchive.com/us/utah/salt-lake-city/salt-lake-tribune/1940/06-25/page-3?tag=france&rtserp=tags/france?ndt=bd&pd=22&pe=28&pem=6&py=1940&pm=6&pey=1940&psb=relevance&pci=7.

Written the day that the armistice went into effect, this newspaper article shows the impact of Article XIX on the millions of refugees in France. It was instrumental to my research because it links Article XIX to the potential impact on German and non-German anti-fascists, which was deeper in this newspaper article than briefly explained in the armistice.

Political Cartoons

Geisel, Theodor Seuss. "Foreign Children." Cartoon. *PM* (New York City), October 1, 1941.

Before becoming a renowned children's author, Theodor Geisel was a political cartoonist, speaking against isolationist views during WWII. This cartoon brilliantly shows the lack of empathy by conveying how Americans were reluctant about even helping save children. It does a great job of stripping down interventionist views of isolationism and shows the conflict Fry had to overcome.

Geisel, Theodor Seuss. "Laval- Dachshund Belly." Cartoon. *PM* (New York City), May 8, 1942.

Pierre Laval was an important figure in Vichy France, and was a heavy proponent of fascism. This cartoon shows how low of a person Laval was by saying he was lower than the belly of a dachshund. It shows how the antisemitism prevalent in Vichy France wasn't solely because of Nazi-influence, but was also because of the important figures within the government.

Geisel, Theodor Seuss. "Not Contagious." Cartoon. *PM* (New York City), May 15, 1941.

This cartoon, published while Fry was in Marseille, shows Uncle Sam lying in a bed, next to another bed, called 'Europe'. Whereas five people were suffering in the European bed, Uncle Sam passively dismissed this, exclaiming, "What a lucky thing we've got separate beds!" This perfectly summarizes isolationist views and conveys the apathetic attitudes across the Atlantic Ocean.

Reports

Chief of French Police. *The Suspect Activity of Mr. Varian Fry*. Report. Bouches du Rhone Department, Minister of the Interior. Marseille, France.

Varian Fry was under heavy scrutiny from the French government, with many attempts made to arrest him. This police report shows the proposal to expel Fry from France on the account that he was allegedly committing rescue operations. Though this report didn't expel Fry, it perfectly conveyed the conflict with the French police. This proposal for expulsion also set a precedent for what was to come in August 1941.

Speeches

Chamberlain, Neville. "Text of Chamberlain's Speech." Speech, September 3, 1939. Accessed January 23, 2018. [https://access.newspaperarchive.com/us/ohio/athens/athens-sunday-messenger/1939/09-03/page-15?tag=england declares war france expected to enter fight at noon webb miller&rtserp=tags/england-declares-war-france-expected-to-enter-fight-at-noon-webb-miller?ndt=ex&pd=3&py=1939&pm=9&psb=relevance&search=ynd](https://access.newspaperarchive.com/us/ohio/athens/athens-sunday-messenger/1939/09-03/page-15?tag=england+declares+war+france+expected+to+enter+fight+at+noon+webb+miller&rtserp=tags/england-declares-war-france-expected-to-enter-fight-at-noon-webb-miller?ndt=ex&pd=3&py=1939&pm=9&psb=relevance&search=ynd).

This speech is Chamberlain's declaration of war against Germany. It directly states that the invasion of Poland was the reason for England declaring war, and how Chamberlain had no choice, even after long hoping for appeasement. It provides me with historical context about the beginning of World War II, which was obviously crucial for my research.

Telegrams

Cordell Hull to Hiram Bingham IV. September 18, 1940. Department of State, Washington, D.C.

Cordell Hull, the Secretary of State, wrote to Bingham that the American government cannot support the actions of Fry and any other rescue operation abroad. It hints signs of conflict early in Fry's work- just a couple of weeks after he was supposed to return- and clearly shows isolationism through their desire to maintain friendly relations. This helped my research because it helped me determine the development of conflict with the American government.

Secondary Sources

Archival Collections

Kaplan, Richard. *Richard Kaplan Papers, 1905-2006*. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

Directing multiple films about Varian Fry, this collection contains a balance of primary and secondary sources about Varian Fry and Kaplan's filmmaking process. I deemed this collection to be secondary, as it comprised of some secondary material, therefore defeating its primary status. Nonetheless, I was able to gain access to a variety of secondary source, particularly letters and reports.

Books

Cook, Blanche Wiesen. *Eleanor Roosevelt: the War Years and After, 1939-1962.* Penguin Group USA, 2016.

Written by critically-acclaimed professor, Blanche Wiesen Cook, this book supplied great information that helped me with identifying details of the compromise between the Emergency Rescue Committee and US government. It explained the First Lady's involvement with Fry, and provided links to an abundance of additional sources, most of which are primary.

Greenberg, Karen J. *Columbia University Library, New York: The Varian Fry Papers, The Fort Ontario Emergency Refugee Shelter Papers.* New York, NY: Garland, 1990.

A compilation of primary sources gathered over twenty years after Fry's death, this book helps me understand Fry's work through the lens of letters and reports. Most notably, I obtained Fry's letter from Mildred Adams, which detailed his tasks in Marseille. Though they didn't support me particularly with conflict and compromise, the primary sources provided gave a general landscape of Fry's work in France and what happened in the years to follow.

Lyman, Darryl. "Varian Fry: Assignment: Rescue." In *Holocaust Rescuers: Ten Stories of Courage*, 25-35. Berkeley Heights, NJ: Enslow, 1999.

This chapter from a book about Holocaust survivors gave me a deeper understanding of Varian Fry's work and the conflict Fry later had with American officials in France. It was used as part of my initial background research and did a good job of conveying the reluctance American officials in France had about Fry's illegal activity.

McClafferty, Carla Killough. *In Defiance of Hitler: The Secret Mission of Varian Fry.* New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2008.

A well known book about Varian Fry, I used this biography to provide me with context about Varian Fry's motives in becoming an interventionist. It does a great job of describing Fry's reaction to the persecution of Jews in Berlin, and how it influenced what he did in the short term, through joining a resistance group and using his role as a journalist to protest the Nazi government.

Paldiel, Mordecai. "Diplomats in Service to Humanity." In *Sheltering the Jews: Stories of Holocaust Rescuers*, 136-41. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996.

Even though the American government compromised with Fry, this book does a great job of explaining how the USA felt about Fry's work and why. In addition, it shows that much of the communication from the USA to Fry was via cablegram or telegram, helping me narrow which types of primary sources I should specifically be looking for, and would benefit me the most.

Sullivan, Rosemary. *Villa Air-Bel: World War II, Escape, and a House in Marseille*. New York: HarperCollins, 2006.

Having gathered a lot of information about the conflict portion of Fry's work, I came into this book with the intention of gathering information about the preceding compromise. Instead of this, I rather learned about Fry's massive role in organizing the luncheon where the ERC was formed. The ERC later partnered with the International Rescue Association in 1942 to create the International Rescue Committee, an active organization that has since assisted millions. This source was instrumental in showing Fry's modern legacy beyond the 2000+ lives he saved in Marseille, giving me even more perspective to how this unsung hero has influenced society and culture.

Congressional Records

U.S. Cong. House. *The Story of Varian Fry and the Emergency Rescue Committee*. By Thomas P. Lantos. 104th Cong., 2d sess. Doc. E380. Vol. 142. Series 38. 1996. Accessed October 12, 2017. www.congress.gov/congressional-record/1996/3/19/extensions-of-remarks-section.

For a while, I struggled to find evidence that supported claims of alleged conflict in relation to Fry's rescue operation. After annotating this congressional record from 1996, I was able to identify not only specific pieces of conflict, but also the motives and impact for the conflict, which came from anticipated and unexpected directions. I also better understood the difficulty, danger, and courage of Fry's daring rescue operation, after annotating this source

U.S. Cong. House. *Honoring Varian Fry on the 100th Anniversary of His Birth*. By Steven R. Rothman. 110th Cong., 1st sess. Res. 743. October 15, 2007. Accessed October 19, 2017. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/110th-congress/house-resolution/743/text>.

Recognizing Fry on what would have been his 100th birthday, this resolution in the House of Representatives provides a good summary of Varian Fry's life. It was used a foundation for my research to briefly understand who Fry was and how he saved thousands of refugees. It also gave an idea of the illegal activity he participated in that led to conflict.

Documentaries

Assignment: *Rescue: The Story of Varian Fry and the Emergency Rescue Committee*. Directed by Richard Kaplan. By Christina Lazaridi. Narrated by Meryl Streep. United States: Richard Kaplan Productions, 1997. VHS.

Narrated by Meryl Streep, this documentary provides important information regarding the isolationist attitudes expressed in America, along with Fry's frustration towards the State Department. Through including political cartoons mocking isolationism to actual speeches defending the FDR-based movement, it brought my attention to a multitude of other primary sources ranging in medium.

Interviews

Draganus, Flavia. "Interview with IRC Global Communications Director." E-mail interview by author. February 1, 2018.

Flavia Draganus is the Global Communications Director at the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the successor of the ERC. This interview with Ms. Draganus was instrumental in showing Fry's modern-day legacy, and how his work in 1939 can be shown throughout all of the work the IRC does nowadays. It also helped me understand Fry's role in modern day rescue operations.

Erbelding, Rebecca. "Interview with USHMM Historian." Telephone interview by author. February 2, 2018.

Rebecca Erbelding is a historian and archivist at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. I contacted her for specific information regarding the American government and its role in rescuing refugees. Following my interview with her, I received additional information regarding the background, political affiliation, and motives of isolationism. This helped me with my balance of research, and gave me perspective to why conflict with Fry was even prevalent.

Sauvage, Pierre. "Interview with Pierre Sauvage." E-mail interview by author. February 2, 2018.

Pierre Sauvage is an expert about Varian Fry, and is currently working on a documentary about the journalist. I interviewed him and asked him not only about the conflict with French and American governments, but with the ERC. He provided context to the contrasting attitudes from New York and Marseille, and how there was conflict because the ERC didn't thoroughly understand the situation in France the way Fry did.

Journal Articles

Adler, Jacques. "The Jews and Vichy: Reflections on French Historiography." *The Historical Journal* 44, no. 4 (December 2001): 1065-1082. Accessed October 15, 2017. www.jstor.org/stable/3133551.

I consulted JSTOR as a database for journal articles and found this journal article from the 2000 Historical Journal, printed through the Cambridge University Press. It helped me understand the discrimination of Jews prevalent in the Vichy France, some of antisemitic laws incorporated, and the legacy of the Vichy regime in modern France.

Roob, Rona. "From the Archives: Refugee Artists." *The Museum of Modern Art*, no. 6 (Winter 1991): 18-19. Accessed October 19, 2017. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4381143>.

A journal article from the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), this source provided an interesting angle on Fry's work, and how the MoMA got involved in saving artists. Though it was full of primary interesting and not critical information, it introduced a lot of general concepts (such as WWII USA refugee policies) that led me to further questioning and research pathways.

Maps

"Vichy France and French North Africa." Map. Yad Vashem. Accessed December 9, 2017. www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/newsletter/25/algeria_marocco.asp.

This map helped me understand what the demarcation line, separating occupied and unoccupied France, looked like, and which significant cities were where. It was able to identify where Bordeaux, the place illegal Czech passports were printed, was. It also showed the long distance between the Pyrenees mountain range and Marseille, proving to be a long path to escape persecution.

Magazine Articles

"Saving the Jews of Nazi France." Smithsonian.com. March 01, 2009. Accessed January 20, 2018. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/saving-the-jews-of-nazi-france-52554953/>.

The name Hiram Bingham IV consistently showed up throughout my research. With no prior knowledge of who he was, I consulted this magazine article to help explain Bingham's assistance for Fry and the rescue work he performed on his own account. It helped my understand of American conflict, as it supported and balanced the claim that the American government provided no support for Fry.

Pamphlets

***Assignment, Rescue : The Story of Varian Fry and the Emergency Rescue Committee.* Washington, D.C.: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1997.**

Though considered a book by the University of Wisconsin-Madison library, I determined this source to be a pamphlet given it didn't have an ISBN, and was the companion for the former Varian Fry exhibit via the USHMM. It was used to gain a general knowledge about my topic, and did a good job setting a scene for how the French felt about Fry's work. It also gave a detail regarding the FBI investigation about Fry, which clearly conveyed the conflict between the United States government and the journalist.

Podcasts

Elving, Ron. "This Isn't The First Time Americans Have Shown Fear Of Refugees." NPR (audio blog), November 21, 2015. Accessed January 31, 2018. <https://www.npr.org/2015/11/21/456857350/this-isnt-the-first-time-americans-have-shown-fear-of-refugees>.

Though focused to persuade listeners about the modern Syrian refugee issue, this podcast provides amazing statistics that show American status quo was highly in favor of not admitting refugees. In a 1938 magazine poll, its shown that over two-thirds of Americans were opposed to admitting refugees. This really helped my research because it represents the popularity of isolationism in American society.

Websites

"American Isolationism in the 1930s." U.S. Department of State. Accessed January 23, 2018.
<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1937-1945/american-isolationism>.

This source gave a brief but clear explanation of what isolationism was and the motives behind it. The article also gave me an in-depth understanding of not just what isolationism was, but how various American political decisions (i.e. abstaining from membership in the League of Nations) contributed to the growth of the wildly popular political ideology.

"Breckinridge Long." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Accessed January 31, 2018.
<https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10008298>.

Breckinridge Long was a key figure in isolationism within the American government (more specific the State Department). This article from the USHMM not only detailed the life of a man deemed by many to be an anti-Semite, but explained individual policies that made Fry's work in Marseille all the more difficult to accomplish.

Ochayon, Sheryl Silver. "The Jews of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia." Yad Vashem . Accessed December 9, 2017.
<http://www.yadvashem.org/articles/general/the-jews-of-algeria-morocco-and-tunisia.html>.

This article, providing a map I include in my paper, provided me with context and the formation of the Vichy government. It also explained why Hitler only invaded northern France and not southern France a question I was curious about and struggling with. It also briefly helped me understand some of the antisemitism prevalent within Vichy France.

Sheffield, Dr. Gary. "History - World Wars: The Fall of France." BBC. March 30, 2011. Accessed January 15, 2018. **http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/fall_france_01.shtml.**

To understand the Battle of France- an important piece of historical context relating to my topic- I consulted this website from a senior lecturer at King's College in London. I was informed of various military flaws that led up to the collapse of France, and important dates that led up to the surrender of France on June 22, 1940.

"Varian Fry." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Accessed October 10, 2017.
<https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005740>.

When I was searching for NHD topics, this was the first source where I learned who Varian Fry was. I was immediately drawn by the obvious presence of conflict and legacy, which inspired me to research about relative compromises. I also saw hints throughout the text that showed Fry was the definition of an Unsung Hero- as I wanted to focus my NHD project on an Unsung Hero, I was hooked on the Varian Fry story from the beginning.

"Vichy France." Britannica School. February 6, 2009. Accessed October 14, 2017.
<https://school.eb.com/levels/middle/article/Vichy-France/75232>.

Having no background knowledge on what the Vichy France government was, this source provided me with valuable information regarding the government's establishment and its collaboration with fascist/ Nazi-based ideals. This, consequently, helped me understand why anti-fascists living in unoccupied France needed to leave for the United States, as danger was clearly evident as early as July 1940.

"What is a Consulate?" Discover Diplomacy. Accessed December 28, 2017.
<https://diplomacy.state.gov/discoverdiplomacy/docs/208083.htm>.

With no prior knowledge about what consulates, embassies, or ambassadors were, this article from the U.S. State Department helped explain what these terms meant. Because these terms came across sources quite frequently, it was important to understand what they meant, as it helped me understand the conflict between Fry and the U.S. State Department.