DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: May 20, 1939

SUBJECT: Decree in Germany on the registration of the property of Jews.
The International Committee for Political Refugees.

PARTICIPANTS: The Polish Ambassador

Mr. Messersmith

COPIES TO: The Secretary

The Under Secretary

The Counselor

Mr. Moffat

Mr. Alling

The Polish Ambassador called to see me this morning and asked me if I could tell him what steps we were contemplating with respect to the German decree on the registration of the property of Jews. I said that he probably had seen in the press the note which we had addressed to the German Government through our Ambassador in Berlin, as it had been published in the press, and he said that he had seen it. He asked if he might inquire what further steps we were taking. I replied that we had not yet had any formal reply from the German Government other than a simple acknowledgment and that our next step would naturally await the reply of the German Government, which we were anticipating receiving at any time. The Ambassador endeavored
endeavored to explore by further questions what action we might take in case of a negative or unfavorable response by the German Government. He said that his Government was very much interested on account of the large number of Polish Jews in Germany. I replied that I was not in a position to give him any information as to what our next steps would be. We were awaiting the response of the German Government. I said that in general our note on the subject spoke for itself and that it was the general policy of this Government to protect the interests of its nationals to the fullest extent possible wherever such nationals might be domiciled.

The Ambassador then asked whether he could ask some questions with regard to the International Committee for Refugees, in which he said his Government was much interested. They had, as I knew, a very real emigration problem in Poland. He seemed to be familiar with the steps which have already been taken with regard to the setting up of the Committee. I told him there was little further that I could add to the information which he had. He then came to the first point which most interested him - he wished to know whether there was any possibility for extending the scope of the Committee beyond German and Austrian refugees. I said that, as he knew, our telegram to
to the governments had indicated the setting up of an international committee for considering ways and means of constructive aid to political refugees from Germany and Austria, and the governments which had replied had naturally done so on that basis. I assumed therefore that any enlargement of the scope of the work of the Committee would have to come through the initiative of the Committee with the consent of the participating governments. He endeavored to elicit what the attitude of our Government would be towards the enlargement of the scope of the Committee and I replied that I was not at the moment competent to give any information on that point.

He then came to the second point which interested him, which was "the large fund which was to be raised for emigrants". He spoke of this fund as though it were to reach $100,000,000. I replied that I understood that it was probable that funds might be raised by private persons in this and other countries to be used in settling emigrants but that on this point I had no specific information, as I doubted whether any definite plans had been made to this end and that action might probably be postponed until during or after the first meeting of the International Committee.

The Ambassador then asked whether I thought that it would
would be possible for the Polish Government to send an observer to the conference at Evian, as it was very much interested in what would be happening, and whether such an observer could establish special contact with the American representative, Mr. Taylor. I said that I could really not comment on this beyond saying that if the Polish Government wished to have someone in Evian during the conference I could perceive no objection that anyone could raise to that, and that so far as special contact with the American representative was concerned I supposed that any responsible official or representative of the Polish Government who might happen to be in Evian could have informal contact with our representative, as with that of any other country there.

The Ambassador, in leaving, asked whether he could call again at some later date to talk about the International Committee, and I told him that I would always be pleased to see him.

G. S. Messersmith