Altruism During History’s Darkest Hour:
Varian Fry’s Refusal to Compromise Despite Perpetual Conflict

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“I stayed because the refugees needed me."  
—Varian Fry, 1941

In June 1940, millions of refugees found themselves facing peril as a result of the German invasion of France. Among the refugees were significant cultural icons, who had made remarkable advances in the arts and sciences. With the faces of European culture being threatened by a savage dictatorship, one American—Varian Fry—saved approximately 2,000 refugees from Marseille in 1940–41. Throughout his rescue operation, Fry encountered perpetual conflict from French and American authorities who urged him to cease his benevolent work and return to the United States. Fry, however, was influenced by a moral obligation to save refugees, fueling his decision to refuse compromise. Fry’s legacy is pertinent today, demonstrating the power of altruism in times of crisis.

**Invasion of France**

On September 3, 1939, the United Kingdom declared war against Germany, marking the beginning of the Second World War. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, once an advocate for appeasement, dismissed any hopes of peace following the German attack on Poland two days prior. Having made previous attempts at compromise, Chamberlain threatened German Führer Adolf Hitler with an ultimatum to remove troops from Poland, which was left unanswered.

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1 Varian Fry to Lilian Fry, September 14, 1941, Lisbon, Portugal.
Following Chamberlain’s declaration of war, France joined the United Kingdom to form the Allied forces.\(^4\)

Although the Allies were supported by the potent French military, Germany continued ruthlessly occupying Europe. On June 22, 1940—less than a year after the war began—the French government surrendered to Germany by signing an armistice.\(^5\) The armistice, an unlikely compromise conceived by Hitler, split France into two zones: a northern zone occupied by Germany, and a southern zone, centered around the city of Vichy and swayed by fascist morals (see Appendix I).\(^6\)

Since his appointment as German Chancellor in 1933, Hitler had targeted a large number of ethnic and political groups, deeming them “inferior” to the Aryan race.\(^7\) Shortly after the armistice was signed, four million of these threatened civilians—including Jews, communists, and homosexuals—fled to southern France. The armistice, however, notoriously introduced a clause in Article XIX, obliging France to “surrender upon demand all Germans named by the German Government.”\(^8\) Although the order directly impacted only German anti-fascists, any individual in France wanted by Hitler was in danger.\(^9\)


\(^8\) "Franco-German Armistice: June 25, 1940," The Avalon Project, Yale Law School.

Hundreds of the anti-fascists threatened by Article XIX were also prominent cultural figures, responsible for enriching European civilization. These individuals included Marc Chagall, Lion Feuchtwanger, and Otto Meyerhof, among countless others.\textsuperscript{10}

\textbf{Birth of the Emergency Rescue Committee}

The effort to save Europe’s esteemed minds began on June 25, 1940, in New York. A group of concerned Americans hosted a luncheon at the Commodore Hotel, with the goal of collecting money to rescue cultural figures trapped in France.\textsuperscript{11} Ultimately raising $3,000, the luncheon prompted the establishment of the Emergency Rescue Committee (ERC), an organization dedicated to bringing cultural figures to the United States.\textsuperscript{12} The ERC immediately created a list of 200 cultural figures to save and contacted First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt about the possibility of obtaining emergency visas. Roosevelt, an ardent proponent of refugee relocation, persuaded her husband to grant emergency visas for all the listed cultural figures.\textsuperscript{13}

Despite its recent triumph, the ERC needed to send a representative to facilitate rescue activities in Marseille, a city in southern France. There was one volunteer, thirty-two-year-old journalist Varian Fry, a young and inexperienced candidate with no knowledge of the means required to run such an operation.\textsuperscript{14} Fry, however, volunteered given his adamant disgust toward fascism. Earlier in his career, Fry had traveled to Berlin to investigate the reputed antisemitism

\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Full List of Clients of the Centré Américain De Secours; List in Alphabetical Order}, Report no. 2e, Varian Fry Papers, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.
\textsuperscript{12} Varian Fry to Anna Eleanor Roosevelt, July 18, 1940, Foreign Policy Association, New York, New York.
\textsuperscript{13} Mary Jayne Gold, Crossroads Marseille, 1940, (New York: Doubleday, 1980), xiv, xvi.
\textsuperscript{14} Varian Fry to Anna E. Roosevelt, June 27, 1940, Foreign Policy Association, New York, New York.
prevailing in Germany.\textsuperscript{15} Much to his disgust, Fry witnessed young Nazi toughs driving “men and women, cut and bleeding, down the streets, hitting them with clubs.”\textsuperscript{16} The abhorrent display of violence influenced Fry to become active in Nazi-resistance domestically.\textsuperscript{17}

After failing to scout a qualified representative, the ERC designated Fry as its European ambassador in mid-July. He left the United States on August 4, 1940, expecting to return twenty-five days later.\textsuperscript{18}

\textbf{Unanticipated Adjustments}

Once Fry arrived in Marseille, he witnessed the streets “crowded with thousands of refugees of every description, fleeing the North” (see Appendix II).\textsuperscript{19} Although Fry’s top priority was saving the cultural figures on his list, he refused to simply ignore the other refugees.\textsuperscript{20} After witnessing the impact of Hitler’s wrath once again, Fry felt obliged to rescue as many people as possible. At a time when genocide lurked throughout all of Europe, Fry’s greatest fear remained “[refusing] help to someone who was really in danger and learn later that he had been dragged away to Dachau or Buchenwald because [he] had turned him away.”\textsuperscript{21}

The easiest way for refugees to leave France was by crossing through neutral Spain and fleeing to Lisbon, where most boats leaving Europe departed.\textsuperscript{22} Unfortunately, to leave France, a variety of documents were required including an exit visa. French exit visas were difficult to


\textsuperscript{17} Sullivan, Villa Air-Bel, 182.

\textsuperscript{18} "Letter from Mildred Adams, Executive Secretary of the Emergency Rescue Committee," Mildred Adams to Varian Fry, August 3, 1940.

\textsuperscript{19} Fry, Assignment: Rescue, 6.

\textsuperscript{20} Justus Rosenberg, "Interview with Justus Rosenberg," telephone interview by author, April 2, 2018.


\textsuperscript{22} Rebecca Erbelding, "Interview with USHMM Historian," telephone interview by author, February 2, 2018.
obtain, as anti-fascists requesting travel documents from French officials were run through a system, identified, and reported to German authorities. This conflict between government and humanity was originally resolved through Fry’s decision to break French law. Realizing the threat toward refugees would not diminish, Fry forged immigration papers and smuggled refugees across the Franco–Spanish border via the Pyrenees Mountains.

Fry initially compromised with Vladimir Vochoč, a Czech Consul illegally printing passports in Bordeaux. Vochoč agreed to grant Fry with passports in exchange for the funding required to print the visibly authentic documents. Fry additionally received help from other refugees in devising creative escape routes, with Johannes and Lisa Fittko introducing the successful “F” route.

French Authorities: Carrying Out Another’s Agenda

Shortly after Fry’s arrival in Marseille, word of his intentions rapidly spread throughout France. Fry’s presence ignited hope in refugees, attracting thousands to his room at the Hotel Splendide. By Fry’s third week in Marseille, however, police arrived at the Splendide and arrested refugees, raising questions regarding Fry’s work. The American’s illegal activities were not revealed, but he needed to be cautious—provoking conflict was the last thing Fry needed as it would make rescuing refugees exceptionally difficult. To alleviate tension, Fry

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25 Fry, Surrender on Demand, 18-19.
26 "Memorandum about "F" Route," Varian Fry Papers, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.
28 Fry, Surrender on Demand, 12.
established the Centre Américain de Secours (CAS), a relief organization serving as a cover for his underground work.29

Realizing he was unable to rescue refugees and maintain a cover alone, Fry enlisted the help of several volunteers.30 From interviewing refugees to delivering Fry’s secret messages, each volunteer played an integral role in the rescue mission, clandestinely carrying out the work required to save lives.31 The CAS also received support from Frank Bohn, another American rescuer in Marseille, and the local U.S. Vice Consul, Hiram Bingham IV.32

Despite Fry’s precaution, French police remained vigilant toward his work. On multiple occasions, Fry found authorities raiding his hotel room, looking for evidence proving his work comprised of more than relief.33 The raids were also meant to scare Fry into leaving Marseille.34 The French government, although somewhat sympathetic toward anti-fascists, would face detrimental consequences from Hitler if found guilty of inadvertently supporting the rescue of refugees.35 Fry recalled a police officer once warning him: “If I had found anything suspicious, it would be necessary for me to arrest you here and now.”36

Whereas mutual concessions seemed to be the safe option to resolve conflict, Fry refused to compromise and leave France. The risks of staying in France were well-outlined by Marseille police, who warned illegal activity could result in arrest, expulsion, or death.37 Nevertheless,

30 Gold, Crossroads Marseille, 1940, 155.
31 Rosenberg, telephone interview by the author.
32 “Mrs. Elena Frank,” Varian Fry to Hiram Bingham IV, November 8, 1940, Marseille, France.
34 Varian Fry to Lilian Fry, September 14, 1941, Lisbon, Portugal.
35 Fry, Surrender On Demand, 51.
36 Fry, Assignment: Rescue, 21.
Fry’s moral obligation to rescue refugees prohibited him from acquiescing in pursuit of security. Fry justified his actions by explaining: “I stayed because the refugees needed me.”

Although Fry’s intentions were noble, his refusal to compromise only strengthened conflict with French officials. On December 1, 1940, Fry was arrested and held on a prison boat called the SS Sinaia. At the time, Henri-Philippe Pétain, head of unoccupied France, was preparing to visit Marseille. Taking precautionary measures, police arrested approximately 20,000 people posing a potential risk to Pétain’s safety. After three days on the Sinaia, French authorities released Fry but continued gathering evidence to convict him. A police report dated December 30, 1940, proposed Fry’s expulsion on the alleged grounds he was “leading an operation… [protecting] foreigners of doubtful morality or of political tendencies that are hostile to France.”

Expelling Fry, however, was met with reluctance; the United States, a neutral yet formidable nation, had associated itself with neither the Allied nor the Axis powers. French police feared that arguably unjustifiable action against Fry would prompt negative portrayal of France in the United States. French authorities felt this would threaten already-fragile relations between the two countries, prompting the menacing American military into war against the Nazi-collaborating French government.

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38 Varian Fry to Lilian Fry, September 14, 1941, Lisbon, Portugal.
41 Chief of French Police, The Suspect Activity of Mr. Varian Fry, Report, Bouches du Rhone Department, Minister of the Interior, Marseille, France.
42 Telegram from William Leahy, June 15, 1941, American Embassy, Vichy.
43 Erbelding, telephone interview by the author.
To expel Fry with a valid reason, French police continued gathering incriminating evidence; in the meantime, authorities persistently urged Fry to leave France. However, with measures not taken against him, Fry continued his rescue operation determined to save refugees regardless of cultural significance.\textsuperscript{44} Although the Franco-German armistice rewrote the French agenda, Fry’s intentions remained unaffected by opposing views. Whereas both sides were determined to alleviate the inevitable conflict, neither was willing to compromise their respective desires.

\textbf{American Officials: Conservation of Neutrality}

As Fry encountered opposition from French authorities, he simultaneously faced disapproval from American officials.\textsuperscript{45} Following the many fatalities during the First World War, a political movement called “isolationism” escalated in the United States, favoring little intervention in international conflict while supporting efforts to block refugees.\textsuperscript{46} Rooted from national security concerns, isolationists feared Nazi spies were posing as desperate refugees and infiltrating American borders.\textsuperscript{47} This prompted further efforts from State Department officials to limit refugee admission, with Assistant Secretary Breckinridge Long even suggesting consulates should “put every obstacle in the way and [require] additional evidence… [to] postpone the granting of the visas.”\textsuperscript{48} As the American government supported isolationism, maintaining

\textsuperscript{44} Daniel Bénédite, Administrative Report: The Stages of the Committee's Development, Report, Centre Américain De Secours, Marseille, France, 1941.
\textsuperscript{45} Sumner Welles to Anna Eleanor Roosevelt. December 11, 1940.
\textsuperscript{47} Erbelding, telephone interview by the author.
\textsuperscript{48} “Breckinridge Long's Memorandum,” Breckenridge Long to Adolf A. Berle Jr., and James C. Dunn, June 26, 1940.
healthy relationships with belligerent nations remained a high priority; therefore, any American citizen threatening diplomatic relationships—including Varian Fry—was condemned and denounced by the State Department.\(^\text{49}\)

On September 18, 1940, Secretary of State Cordell Hull wrote a telegram to Bingham, instructing him to meet with Fry and Bohn and assert: “[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.”\(^\text{50}\) The telegram, condemning Fry’s and Bohn’s rescue operations, demanded the Americans return to the United States immediately.

Although Fry was determined to save refugees, there were many benefits to compromising. Having only one month’s absence from his job, his career with the Foreign Policy Association was uncertain given he further prolong his stay in Marseille.\(^\text{51}\) Fry also would be reunited with his wife, Eileen, and be provided immunity from the risks of rescuing refugees.\(^\text{52}\) Fry, however, refused to give into pressure from opposing views. Responding to Hull, Fry reaffirmed his stance by describing the position anti-fascist refugees were in:

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\text{Deprived of all hope... hundreds of these new stateless are confined to the concentration camps of France... already overcrowded and clearly unfit for human habitation, additional hundreds are at this moment being directed [to these camps].}\(^\text{53}\)
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Whereas Fry refused to compromise, his compatriot Frank Bohn quickly acquiesced. The pressure was too much for him who, like Fry, was tenaciously being urged to leave. Hull’s telegram was the last straw for Bohn, who could not summon the courage to stay. By the first

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49 Erbelding, telephone interview by the author.
50 Cordell Hull to Hiram Bingham IV, September 18, 1940, Department of State, Washington, DC.
52 Varian Fry to Eileen Hughes Fry, February 15, 1941, Marseille, France.
53 Varian Fry to Cordell Hull, November 18, 1940, Vichy, France.
week of October, Bohn left Marseille.\textsuperscript{54} Despite Bohn’s decision to compromise, Fry was not persuaded by the evolving currents. The journalist-turned-humanitarian had no ambition to leave France until every refugee threatened by Hitler was saved. Fry set off a flame between humanitarianism and government, and no amount of fire was influencing him to succumb to pressure.

On January 15, 1941, Fry went to the American Embassy in Vichy to renew his passport, due to expire in seven days.\textsuperscript{55} Shortly after he entered, a secretary told Fry, “My instructions are to renew [your passport] only for [an] immediate return to the United States, and then only for a period of two weeks.”\textsuperscript{56} Without a passport, Fry’s work was put in more danger, giving French authorities legitimate reason to expel him. Fry, however, knew he could not leave Marseille—although he was supported by committed volunteers, the refugees needed him.\textsuperscript{57} Three weeks after his passport expired, Fry wrote: “As long as [the refugees] beg me to stay on… I shall stay.”\textsuperscript{58} Despite the increasing danger, Fry continued rescuing refugees, as his altruistic ways outweighed regard for personal safety.

\textsuperscript{54} Fry, Surrender on Demand, 92.
\textsuperscript{55} “Memorandum for Mr. Varian Mackey Fry,” Ruth Shipley to Varian Fry, July 22, 1940, Department of State, Passport Division.
\textsuperscript{56} Paldiel, "Diplomats in Service to Humanity," in Sheltering the Jews, 140.
\textsuperscript{57} Anita Kassof, M.A., Varian Fry and the Emergency Rescue Committee: A Resource Guide for Teachers (Grades 7-12), Washington, DC: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.
\textsuperscript{58} Varian Fry to Eileen Hughes Fry, February 15, 1941, Marseille, France.
Legacy

Fry’s work was risky from the beginning, and eventually, the inevitable occurred. On August 27, 1941, over a year after arriving in Marseille, French police expelled Varian Fry on the grounds he was “[protecting] Jews and anti-Nazis.” Although Fry’s work was ended by an ultimatum beyond his control, his legacy is still relevant today. Because of his courage, Fry rescued approximately 2,000 refugees, including Lion Feuchtwanger, Max Ernst, and Hannah Arendt.

Three months after Fry returned to the United States, Japan attacked American naval base Pearl Harbor, prompting President Franklin Roosevelt to declare war. It would not be for another three years, however, until the American government finally prioritized rescuing refugees by creating the War Refugee Board on January 22, 1944. In the meantime, Fry advocated for Nazi-resistance by giving lectures and writing articles. He wrote for magazines such as The New Republic and continued condemning America’s poor treatment of refugees until the end of the war in 1945.

The cultural figures Fry saved in Marseille also went on to make further contributions to American culture. Upon arriving in the United States, Franz Werfel published a novel, The Song of Bernadette, which instantly became a bestseller. Marc Chagall continued his illustrious art career, with his window, “Peace”, featured at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

59 Fry, Assignment: Rescue, 173.
Appendix III).\textsuperscript{65} Wanda Landowska played the harpsichord for American audiences until retiring in 1955.\textsuperscript{66}

Fry’s legacy is most notably shown through his lasting impact on modern humanitarianism. In 1942, the International Relief Association and the Emergency Rescue Committee combined to form the International Rescue Committee (IRC), an organization that has rescued and provided relief for millions, from Cubans fleeing Castro in 1960 to Syrian refugees in 2018.\textsuperscript{67} Fry left a significant legacy on the IRC, with Flavia Draganus, IRC Global Communications Director, remarking, “[Fry’s] spirit has persisted for over 75 years and echoes throughout all of our programs worldwide.”\textsuperscript{68} Fry and other Holocaust heroes also leave behind a legacy that serves as an instruction for standing up against bigotry in the 21st century.\textsuperscript{69}

Conclusion

Varian Fry was an ordinary man who left an extraordinary legacy. Though he faced conflict from French and American authorities, he persisted, determined to not compromise and leave millions facing peril. Since his death in 1967, Fry has left behind a legacy that can be traced through the post-war contributions of the cultural figures he rescued and through the modern day International Rescue Committee. Despite his relatively unknown status, Fry is an


\textsuperscript{68} Flavia Draganus, email interview by author, February 1, 2018.

\textsuperscript{69} Talia Langman, "Importance of Holocaust Education," Email interview by author, May 5, 2018.
especially relevant figure today, demonstrating the power of refusing to compromise when faced with perpetual conflict.
The map above shows the demarcation line separating occupied and unoccupied—also known as Vichy—France. Marseille, a port city in southern France, was deemed desirable as it bordered the Mediterranean. Most refugees, however, escape from Lisbon, via Spain.

Citation

Appendix II

This picture was taken by Hiram Bingham IV outside of the American consulate in Marseille, sometime between from 1940 to 1941. It shows how there were many refugees desperate to get papers to flee France. It explains why Fry stayed in Europe longer than the month he was supposed to and justifies Fry’s refusal to compromise with French and American authorities.

Citation

Bingham, Hiram, IV. *View from above of refugees lined up outside the American consulate in Marseille*. 1940-1941. RESCUE MISSIONS--Diplomatic Rescue--France: American Rescue Missions--Bingham, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC.
After the Second World War ended, Marc Chagall created a number of stained-glass windows, with his work entitled “Peace” featured at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. It was dedicated in 1964 to Swedish Diplomat Dag Hammarskjöld, who passed away in 1961.

**Citation**

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

Advertisements


This advertisement proved to me that Varian Fry continued advocating for refugees even after he left Marseille. This source is a true testament to Fry’s devotion to battling the isolationist attitudes that persisted even after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The advertisement also proved to me that Fry was determined to fight hate through education and taking action, a message that is extremely important for combatting discrimination in the 21st century.

Armistices


Easily one of my best primary sources, I used the Franco–German armistice to gain historical context relating to the formation of Vichy France, and how the new state posed a threat toward Jews and other anti-Nazis. I paid special attention to the citation, as there isn’t a citation procedure for armistices. I used the treaty citation method and combined it with the website citation method, as I felt it was imperative to give much-deserved credit to the Avalon Project.

Books


A reprint of Fry’s initial autobiography, Surrender on Demand, I used this book to learn about the refugee situation in southern France, and why it was critical for somebody like Fry to rescue these desperate anti-fascists. The memoir was an integral source for my paper, better explaining why Fry had a strong moral obligation to rescue refugees.


Fry published his memoir, Surrender on Demand, in 1945, and it was re-released in 1997. One of my favorite sources, the autobiography perfectly summarizes Fry’s conflict with the French and American government, and helps me understand how Fry’s refusal to compromise influenced his work. It also provided an in-depth explanation for information
other dry secondary sources briefly covered. Finally, Fry’s memoir was imperative in helping me form analysis and interpretation about my topic, was often already done in other secondary sources I used.


Mary Jayne Gold recorded her experiences with the CAS in her memoir, published in 1980. I primarily used her account to gain another CAS-related perspective other than Fry’s. It was difficult to obtain this book, however, as no copies were in my state’s libraries, and the cheapest copy cost over $100. I inevitably requested an Interlibrary Loan through my local library to obtain the book from the St. Louis Central Library.


Joseph Lash was a close friend of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, and wrote many books about the benevolent figure in American history. I consulted one of his memoirs to obtain context about the beginning of the ERC’s work, which Roosevelt was surprisingly active in. Lash’s memoir provided me with information regarding the role of Eleanor Roosevelt within the ERC, while helping me understand that the ERC was highly dependent on the support of significant people to rescue other significant people.

**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 ERC and Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) about his work. This cablegram depicts Fry’s plans to rescue Marc Chagall, Max Ernst, and André Breton (some of the most significant people he rescued). It puts Fry’s rescue work on a timeline, and helps me understand some of the other methods Fry used to rescue refugees.

**Charts**


Although the Holocaust seized the lives of six million Jew, there were many other ethnic and political groups persecuted by Hitler. I used this chart to see some of the other groups that were deemed “undesirable” by the German dictator. It elaborates on the notion that Fry wasn’t motivated to rescue specifically Jews- he wanted to rescue anybody who was at risk by Hitler, which included Gypsies, blacks, communists, and, unfortunately, many others.
Congressional Publications

http://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/74th-congress/session-1/c74s1ch837.pdf.

President Roosevelt signed the first of the four Neutrality Acts on August 31, 1935. The first act banned the United States from exporting weapons or any ammunition to countries engaged in war. It helped me understand how isolationism was paving into American legislation, and the approaches taken to ensure the United States wouldn’t be involved in the Second World War.

http://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/74th-congress/session-1/c74s1ch837.pdf.

The second of four Neutrality Acts was signed on February 26, 1936, and reaffirmed the role of the President in the case of war. It interestingly was only in effect until May 1, 1937, which conversely helped me understand that even though it was due to expire over a year after, isolationism still prevailed after May 1937. This prompted me to furthermore investigate when isolationism reigned popular, especially after war was declared.

Executive Orders

**Exec. Order No. 9417, 3 C.F.R. (1944).**

After over two years of fighting in the Second World War, President Franklin Roosevelt finally passed this executive order that created the War Refugee Board to assist European refugees. The order provides short-term historical context regarding how the United States treated anti-fascist refugees, and how refugees were finally being made a priority over two years after Fry left Marseille.

Government Publications


The *Reich Citizenship Law of September 15, 1935* was essentially an outline that ensured the protection of all German citizens deemed “superior”. I used this law to understand some of the tactics Hitler used to persuade citizens to support him as *Führer*, along with the steps he took to further discriminate those he deemed “inferior”. The law also stripped Jews living in Nazi-annexed lands of their citizenship, creating an additional obstacle in the immigration process. Fortunately, a document called an *affidavit in lieu of passport* assisted Fry in sending passport-less refugees to the United States.

I used this law to understand further steps taken to segregate Jews and other “inferiors” from Aryans. A lot of what was detailed in the law pertained to how Jews could associate with Germans and German culture- i.e. Jews couldn’t hang the Nazi flag, or marry those of Aryan blood. It was significant in further discrimination of Jews, and is instrumental in contradicting the heinous belief that the Holocaust didn’t happen.

Interviews


After searching through four hours of interview material, I was able to get a testimony about Varian Fry from a Holocaust survivor, Hans Cahnmann. Cahnmann described Fry as a very good man, who helped him get a visa. Cahnmann wasn’t on Fry’s list, but because of Fry’s assistance, Cahnmann went on to complete work relating to Vitamin A for the National Institutes of Health (NIH).


Elizabeth Kaufmann Koenig was a Holocaust survivor that idolized Varian Fry. Even though she wasn’t saved by Fry, I deemed her interesting oral history to be primary because Koenig provided a first-hand description of how disgracefully Fry was treated in the United States shortly after he left France. Her father had hoped to publish a book about Fry, but he was told another person was already doing this. This never happened, and most secondary books about Fry weren’t written until the 1990s.


After persistently contacting Mr. Justus Rosenberg for six months (Mr. Rosenberg is the last surviving collaborator of Varian Fry), I was able to interview him on April 2. Rosenberg brought up the important point that Fry prioritized cultural figures designated by the ERC, but also helped other refugees flee France. Otherwise, I asked many deep and thought-provoking questions, and his responses were consistent with what I already knew.

I initially consulted this interview to gain context about Justus Rosenberg in preparation for my interview with him the following day. However, as I continued listening to his story, I learned a significant amount of information of how Fry’s team at the CAS came to be, how they met each, along with other some of the relationship dynamics among members in the rescue operation. Rosenberg’s interview was also instrumental in obtaining another CAS-based perspective chronicling the story of Varian Fry.

Journal Articles


This journal article advertised one of Wanda Landowska’s performances in America in 1923, showing why her work was important. It details how unknown the harpsichord was, which shows why somebody like Landowska, working to revive the instrument, was important to bring to the United States.

Letters

Anna Eleanor Roosevelt to Eileen Hughes Fry. May 13, 1941. The White House, Washington, DC.

Though the First Lady expressed support for Fry early on, this letter shows her wavering support for the humanitarian. It proves that Fry’s conflict with the American government resulted in serious repercussions, with the withdrawal of backing from Eleanor Roosevelt. This furthermore proves how powerful Fry’s refusal to willingly compromise was in 1941.

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

I used this letter to understand how even though Eleanor was in fierce support of Fry, isolationism was prevalent everywhere in the American government, even with the war-pushing president, Franklin Roosevelt. This created major obstacles, but shows how even before he left for Marseille in August 1940, Fry refused to be fazed by conflict.


This letter shows how the State Department felt their “support” for the CAS was generous and shouldn’t be stretched. It helped me understand the State Department policies enacted during Fry’s rescue operation that made it difficult for refugees to come through American
borders. Through the word choice incorporated by Everett, I also gained an even further understanding of American apathy toward refugees.

**Daniel Bénédite to Varian Fry, March 31, 1942. Marseille, France.**

Even after Fry left Marseille, he was still in contact with the CAS’s operations in Europe. Bénédite’s letter proves Fry’s devotion to refugees persisted after he was forced to compromise in August 1941. The letter also shows how the CAS was able to function without Fry, proving he left a legacy on rescuing refugees in unoccupied France.

**Daniel Bénédite and Paul Schmierer to Varian Fry, October 4, 1942.**

I used this letter to learn about the short-term legacy of Fry’s work. The CAS’s operations were ended in June 1942, about ten months after Fry left Marseille, and the succeeding head, Daniel Bénédite, was on trial. It proves that there were many risks involved with Fry’s work which, even though didn’t impact the American, obviously impacted his associates.

**"Decorative Tribute by Henry Glauber for Varian Fry." Henry Glauber to Varian Fry.**

Presumptively written after Fry’s death in 1967, this letter from one of the people Fry saved, Henry Glauber, expresses gratitude for Fry’s actions. It’s decoratively written, showing the artistic talents of those Fry saved. It also shows the humanity behind each refugee, as it details Glauber’s life until the beginning of the Second World War, and how he was much more than one of two-thousand saved by Varian Fry.

**Hugh Fullerton to H. Freeman Matthews, August 14, 1940. Marseille, France.**

This letter perfectly expresses the contradicting attitudes of Marseille Consul Hugh Fullerton. Though Fry encountered a lot of conflict from Fullerton, this letter shows that he was at least willing to forward his concerns to the American embassy. It helps me develop a balance of research through understanding a different side to Fullerton who, while he didn’t support Fry, clearly didn’t altogether condemn him.

**"Letter Written by Varian Fry to the American Consul at the U.S. Embassy in Vichy Seeking His Help in Obtaining an Exit Visa for Walter Meyerhof." Varian Fry to H. Freeman Matthews. December 17, 1940.**

Otto Meyerhof was a Nobel Prize winner saved by Fry in 1940. Meyerhof, oddly enough, wasn’t on the list of two-hundred cultural figures compiled by the ERC. Even after Meyerhof left France in September 1940, however, his son Walter was still in France. This letter shows Fry’s continued efforts to save refugees that weren’t on his list, as he was hoping to secure an exit visa for W. Meyerhof. The letter also embodies Fry’s dedication to rescue refugees, extending beyond an initially-anticipated month-long assignment.
Max Ascoli, Dean at the New School for Social Research- a major supporter of the ERC- wrote a letter to the ERC secretary, Ingrid Warburg, to explain the need for ERC support for Varian Fry. At the time, the ERC was being somewhat influenced by isolationist demands for Fry to compromise, which, ergo, created conflict between the ERC and Varian Fry.

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

One of many examples of communication between Fry and Bingham, this letter shows the support Bingham provided Fry while he was in Marseille. This letter also helped me understand how Bingham’s role was much more beyond granting documents- he also helped smuggle Lion Feuchtwanger out of an internment camp, a difficult yet noble action from the anti-isolationist diplomat.

Following Fry’s arrest, Under-Secretary of State Sumner Welles wrote to the First Lady, in a very apathetic tone, that Fry’s work was posing a threat toward French laws through his interaction with “various persons whom the French police had on the suspect list.” Along with his description of Fry’s arrest, it’s clear that Welles isn’t fond of providing support for the journalist-turned-humanitarian, stirring conflict between Fry and American officials.

One of many examples of interaction between Welles and Roosevelt, this letter provides more balance of research by explaining all that the American government has done for refugees, and reaffirms that there is little that the State Department could (and would) do for the ERC and CAS. It addresses the downfalls of proposed immigration techniques, including Nansen passports and honorary citizenship, proving that neither Fry nor the American government was willing to compromise in this nasty conflict,
Sumner Welles to Anna Eleanor Roosevelt, October 1, 1940. Washington, DC.

From the beginning of Fry’s work, French authorities heavily opposed the CAS. Though the Prefecture theoretically approved Fry’s work, it didn’t settle any conflict Fry faced in France. This letter, from Sumner Welles, to Eleanor Roosevelt, details the French desire, as early as October 1940, for Fry to leave France. It also briefly notes the desire for Bohn to leave Marseille as well, which he did later that month. This letters helped me understand the development of conflict, and how Fry’s conflict with American authorities was present early in his rescue operation, even after negotiating emergency visas from the First Lady.


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, which wasn’t easy due to the State Department’s reluctance towards granting passports for citizens. I drew from this letter that isolationism couldn’t persist in throughout all of the Second World War given the quick and organized ambition of the ERC, a group of outspoken interventionists that weren’t afraid to act.


I used this letter from Varian Fry to Eleanor Roosevelt to understand the importance and difficulty of finding a person willing “to risk their lives many times over” to rescue refugees in France. It helps me understand why Fry was the quintessential last resort, yet worked a rescue operation that changed history. It also enhances why it was impressive that Fry refused compromise on many different occasions, given how large of an obstacle lack of experience presented initially.

Varian Fry to Cordell Hull. November 18, 1940. Vichy, France.

This letter for Secretary of State Cordell Hull shows not only how Fry refused to compromise but also his persistent demand for American intervention in France. It helps me understand how Fry refused to compromise and Fry’s lack of reluctance in asking for what he wanted. Through describing the horror that was France for anti-fascist refugees, he provides a sense of raw humanity that justifies the stubborn and aggressive characteristics he exhibited while in France.

Varian Fry to Eileen Hughes Fry. February 15, 1941. Marseille, France.

Fry did a great job detailing his work within the letters he sent home, especially when he was communicating with his wife, Eileen. His letter of February 15 shows the difficulties he was facing with some of his colleagues, and provided me with a vital first-hand perspective
on Fry’s moral obligation to rescue refugees in France. Furthermore, it explains that Fry did not want to be in Marseille, but felt that he had no choice, showing his inspiring altruism.

Varian Fry to Lilian Fry. September 14, 1941. Lisbon, Portugal.

Shortly after being expelled, Fry wrote to his mother to inform her about his expulsion and briefly explained his feelings toward his work. It shows how Fry developed character over the past year. This source also became instrumental in comprehending the moral obligation that motivated Fry in France, with his short yet iconic quote: “I stayed because the refugees needed me”. The theme “Conflict and Compromise” is also well displayed through this letter, which became an essential source in my research.


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. I also used this letter to understand the chronological order of events leading up to Fry’s departure for Europe in August 1941.

Varian Fry to Representative Samuel Dickstein. September 15, 1943.

I used this letter to better understand Varian Fry’s role in refugee advocacy, and how he was willing to write politicians to lobby for better refugee treatment. Representative Samuel Dickstein was proposing a resolution that would prioritize refugee rescue within the United States government. In this letter, Fry made suggestions to how the resolution could be improved so the process of admitting refugees would be significantly faster.


Emanuel Winternitz asked Wanda Landowska in 1945 if she would like to perform at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She responded with this letter, designating what she would play on her harpsichord. The letter shows the short-term and indirect impact that Varian Fry had on American culture, as Landowska was able to play for American audiences because of Fry’s rescue mission.

Magazine Articles


A heart-wrenchingly accurate portrayal of Nazi persecution of Jews, this article perfectly summarizes Fry’s reason and devotion to saving refugees during the Holocaust. It gave sadly precise detail of the Nazis’ treatment of Jews with Fry’s persuasive interventionist
flare. The magazine article also shows why rescuing refugees needs to be done, and how Fry refused to compromise his belief-set even after he left France

Memorandums


This memorandum was a perfect example of isolationist views held by Assistant Secretary of State, Breckinridge Long. It conveys the mentality of blocking immigration inquiries as much as possible, and helps me understand the American attitudes and mindsets that influenced conflict with Varian Fry’s rescue operation.


From an unidentified secretary at the White House, this memorandum passes a note from Eleanor Roosevelt, asking her husband to look at Fry’s letter of June 27. It does a good job of showing the First Lady’s desire to assist the efforts of non-government refugee organization, with the American government doing very little to support refugees.


The SS Alsina left Marseille for Rio de Janeiro in January 1941, but in May 1941, found itself in Dakar, Senegal. Reissig, of the Spanish Refugee Relief Campaign, wrote a memorandum explaining how several countries (including the United States) were repeatedly refusing to intervene and blaming others for the Alsina not crossing the Atlantic.

"Memorandum about "F" Route." Varian Fry Papers, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

As Fry was rescuing refugees, he devised a variety of creative routes to smuggle refugees out of France. I found this memorandum while scouring through the microfilm with the Varian Fry Papers, Series IV, Box 10. It details what the “F” Route, created by Johannes and Lisa Fittko, was, and why it was important throughout Fry’s rescue mission.


With strict policy in wild support of isolationism, this memorandum from President Roosevelt to his wife, briefly yet forcefully states that the American government cannot, under any circumstance, support Fry. This shows that conflict between Fry and the American government was inevitable from the very beginning of Fry’s work.
“Memorandum for Mr. Varian Mackey Fry.” Ruth Shipley to Varian Fry. July 22, 1940. Department of State, Passport Division.

I used this memorandum to understand basic logistics about Varian Fry’s passport and when it would be expired. It helps with my balance of research, showing how the State Department was generous to grant a passport to Fry, but also sets a precedent for troubling Fry when his work became increasingly difficult.

Newspapers


During the war, many day-to-day updates were written by the Associated Press (AP) and were furthermore included in small-town newspapers throughout the United States. Oddly enough, this newspaper article gave me a piece of vital historical content I needed. Though details of Fry’s arrest are well detailed, the exact dates weren’t well-documented in the other sources I consulted. This source provided me with the crucial date that my research lacked from secondary (and other primary) sources.


I used this newspaper article to gain a better understanding of Chamberlain’s reaction following Germany’s attack of Poland on September 1, 1939. It puts the beginning of the Second World War into historical context, and helps me understand why Chamberlain’s final ultimatum was necessary given Germany’s previous record of ruthlessly invading other European countries.


I consulted this newspaper article to confirm Fry’s active involvement in advocacy for refugees even after he left Marseille. It shows the inhumane way that the American government treated refugees, as it was extremely difficult for refugees to come into the United States. This source also showed that the American media was informing citizens of how the government was responding to the refugee crisis, proving that the public was swept
by isolationist perspectives as well- Fry was one of few Americans to independently save anti-Nazis during the Holocaust.


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, showing the unfortunate potency of the German military. It also provides perspective to how the new prime minister, Marshal Philippe Pétain, interacted with Nazi German officials.


This article is a reprint of an article Varian Fry wrote in the New York Times shortly after his encounter with antisemitism in Berlin. It was instrumental in understanding why Varian Fry was so heavily involved in Nazi resistance, why he volunteered to become the ERC’s representative, and why he had a moral obligation to not compromise with opposing views.


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

Surprisingly, there were reports as early as September 1, 1941 explaining Fry’s 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 public refused to take a definite stance on refugees.


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 antifascists, which was deeper in this newspaper article than briefly explained in the armistice. Finally, like some of the other newspaper articles, this article clearly shows that the American press was informing its citizens of the atrocities towards Jews and other anti-Nazis, which wasn’t being well-acted upon by American citizens.

Photographs

Bingham, Hiram, IV. *View from above of refugees lined up outside the American consulate in Marseilles. 1940-1941. RESCUE MISSIONS--Diplomatic Rescue--France: American Rescue Missions -- Bingham, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC.*

Marseille in 1940 was full with refugees who were desperate to emigrate from France. Taken by Vice-Consul Hiram Bingham IV, this photograph shows some of the refugees lining up at the American consulate in Marseille. It perfectly summarizes the refugees issues, and powerfully explains Fry’s moral obligation to save refugees.


I consulted this picture to see what the squalid living conditions in France’s internment camps were like. It justifies Fry’s letter back to Cordell Hull following the forceful telegram
written that stated Fry and Bohn wouldn’t be supported by American government due to legality issues of smuggling refugees and forging documents.

Political Cartoons


Before becoming a renowned children’s author, Theodor Geisel was a political cartoonist, speaking against isolationist views during WWII. This cartoon brilliantly shows lack of empathy in America by conveying how many were reluctant to save children. It does a great job of justifying interventionism, and shows the conflict Fry overcame.


Pierre Laval was an important figure in unoccupied France, and was a 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. This, furthermore, provided me with an understand of what Fry’s conflict with the French government was like.


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. It also shows how even if people *did* care, a majority of interventionist-supporters weren’t acting upon their beliefs.

Posters


Though there was a concern for national security pertaining to Nazis in the United States, antisemitism and xenophobia was also highly prevalent. This poster displays this, and helps me understand how unwelcome European refugees were. It also deepens the striking similarities between the Holocaust and the modern refugee crisis in Syria, justifying why it’s important to study Fry’s story as an instructional tale of how society needs to act in the face of human crisis.
Reports


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 grounds that he was allegedly “leading an operation… [protecting] foreigners… of political tendencies [hostile] to France.” Though this report didn’t expel Fry, it perfectly conveyed the conflict with French authorities. This proposal for expulsion also set a precedent for further attempts to expel Fry, which inevitably occurred in August 1941.


Daniel Bénédite was Fry’s replacement when Fry was expelled. He wrote an administrative report about the work of the CAS, detailing how it came to be, how it dealt with various obstacles, and how it became successful. Although Bénédite was around to chronicle a good portion of the CAS’s work, he wasn’t historically accurate when detailing the formation of the CAS, which was prompted from the initial arrests at the Hotel Splendide. Nonetheless, I still used the rest of this report, which provided another CAS-based perspective.

Full List of Clients of the Centré Américain De Secours; List in Alphabetical Order. Report no. 2e. Varian Fry Papers, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Throughout my research, there were many conflicting figures regarding how many people Fry saved. Some said 1,500 while others said 4,000. The number consistent with most sources was around 2,000, which was shown through this report detailing all the people helped by the CAS. I also used this source, from the Varian Fry Papers at Columbia University, to see significant names I encountered throughout my research, including Marc Chagall and Wanda Landowska, but also less-profile names like Hans Cahnmann.

Speeches


In one of the newspapers I annotated, I found a transcript of Neville Chamberlain’s official declaration of war against Germany. It directly explains how the invasion of Poland was the last straw in the United Kingdom’s declaration of war, and how Chamberlain had no choice,
even after long hoping for appeasement. It also provides me with historical context about the beginning of the Second World War, which was obviously crucial for my research.


To better understand President Franklin Roosevelt’s stance on American neutrality, I consulted his Fireside Chat addressed on the day the Second World War broke out. It shows his support for neutrality, but is confusing given that some messages sound contrary to commonly-held isolationist belief. It also shows the isolationism didn’t associate itself with either party, as there were Democrats supporting both isolationism and interventionism.


I listened to President Roosevelt’s fifteenth Fireside Chat to understand how the United States was more concerned about involvement in war than European lives lost succeeding the May 10th attack on Luxembourg, Belgium, and the Netherlands. It also shows how whereas war and saving refugees were mainstream topics, not much was being done in the United States to provide support abroad.


This speech is President Roosevelt’s address to Congress about a declaration of war following the attack on Pearl Harbor. It provided me with historical context about the United States’ involvement in the Second World War, but more importantly, showed that even though war was declared in late 1941, the War Refugee Board still wasn’t created until early 1944, which justifies Fry’s need to advocate for refugees when he returned from Marseille.

Telegrams

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

Cordell Hull, Secretary of State, wrote to Bingham that the American government cannot support the actions of Varian Fry and Frank Bohn. 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 the American government’s desire to maintain friendly relations.

Without a date or designated recipient, I found this telegram from the Richard Kaplan Papers at the Wisconsin Historical Society. It proves to me that Fry’s role was in question from his own organization, the ERC, and that others from different organizations, including the International Relief Association, were highly supportive of Fry’s humanitarian actions.


Similar to the telegram from Kirchwey, this telegram has an unclear recipient. It serves the same purpose as the telegram from Kirchwey, but includes more raw emotion, and emphasizes the importance that Fry should receive both protection and the ability to continue his humanitarian work. The telegram boldly portrays Fry’s refusal to compromise, along with the courage he possessed within his efforts.


Having no prior knowledge of how Fry was allowed to work in Marseille for a year, this telegram from American Ambassador William Leahy shows why France was reluctant to expel Fry. It provides vital insight to Franco-American relations preceding Pearl Harbor and shows the unification of the French and American governments against Varian Fry. It also provides another perspective in the fragile relationship between the two countries, as most sources I encountered highlighted the American desire to not provoke conflict with France.
Secondary Sources

Books


I visited my local Jewish Museum in October 2017 for unrelated reasons when I encountered this book in the gift section. Knowing that Fry saved Marc Chagall, I used this book as the first step in bridging together Fry’s long-term yet indirect legacy. I learned that Chagall’s work frequently depicted biblical themes, with these illustrations portraying scenes in all five books of the Old Testament.


Written by critically-acclaimed professor Blanche Wiesen Cook, this book supplied great information that helped me with details of the relationship between the Emergency Rescue Committee and the U.S. government. It explained First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt’s involvement with Varian Fry, while providing links to an abundance of additional sources, most of which are primary.


I used this book to initially gain historical context and understand what the Second World War was, who Adolf Hitler was, and what his motives were. This book was essential because most secondary sources about Fry only cover the start of the Second World War and the annexation of France, not filling me in with information regarding how everything came to be.


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.

This chapter from a book about Holocaust saviors 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.


A well known book about Varian Fry, I used this biography to provide me with context about Varian Fry’s motives in becoming an opponent of isolationism. 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. I also looked through McClafferty’s extensive bibliography, which furthermore led me to leaning about Varian Fry’s two autobiographies, Assignment: Rescue, and Surrender on Demand.


This book does a great job of explaining how the United States felt about Fry’s work and why. In addition, it emphasizes the importance of which sources best tell the story of Varian Fry, helping me narrow which types of primary sources I should specifically be looking for, and which ones would benefit me the most.


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 Fry’s refusal to 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 modern-day society and humanitarianism.
Congressional Publications


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.


I consulted this congressional publication that contained remarks from the President of the International Rescue Committee, Reynold Levy. Levy instrumentally explains Fry’s legacy that he left on the modern-day IRC, and the importance of acknowledging the life and impact of Varian Fry. It deepens what I previously learned from my interview with Flavia Draganus, and elaborate upon the legacy Fry left with the International Rescue Committee.


After finding out about Varian Fry through the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website, I was quick to look for congressional records briefly detailing the story of Varian Fry. Knowing that these records would be addressed to representatives and/or senators with no prior knowledge of Fry, I knew these texts would provide me with the bare basics of information about my topic. Fortunately, I was able to achieve this, opening the door to a multitude of additional research questions/pathways.

Documentaries


Narrated by film-legend 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 movement, it brought to my attention to a multitude of other primary sources ranging in medium.
Defying the Nazis: The Sharps' War. Directed by Ken Burns and Artemis Joukowsky. United States, 2016. DVD.

This compelling film—co-directed by esteemed filmmaker Ken Burns—provided credit to Martha and Waitstill Sharp, relief workers in unoccupied France that collaborated with Fry. It helped me understand the rescue of Lion Feuchtwanger, along with information regarding the people Fry worked with to both maintain the CAS’s cover as a method of preventing further conflict.

Interviews

Draganus, Flavia. "Interview with IRC Global Communications Director." Email 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 today. Through understanding how Fry had an influence on modern humanitarianism, I gained further understanding of how action from any person—regardless of background—can make a difference, which drastically increased my motivation to tell the story of Varian Fry.


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. Because of my interview with her, I received crucial information regarding the background, political affiliation, and motives of isolationism. This also helped me with my balance of research, and gave me perspective to why conflict with Fry was even prevalent. Erbelding also gave me tips on my project, which inspired me to take a different approach on Fry’s relation to the NHD theme.


Talia Langman, of the Anti-Defamation League, spoke with me about the importance of telling Holocaust hero stories like those of Varian Fry, Oskar Schindler, and Nicholas Winton. My interview with her was imperative because it helped me to adjust the argument in my paper, which more so relates to the importance of telling Varian Fry’s story, as it serves as instruction to how society needs to fight bigotry and discrimination today.

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


I re-interviewed Mr. Sauvage approximately two months after I initially contacted him. I asked him about the complex rescue of refugees such as Walter Meyerhof, and more about what Fry’s main legacy is in today’s society. Sauvage also proofread my paper for historical accuracy, and said that it was good to go for competition.

Journal Articles


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 in unoccupied France, some of antisemitic laws incorporated, and the legacy of the Vichy regime in modern France.


Featured in The Polish Review, this obituary details the life, accomplishments, and significance of Wanda Landowska. As one of the cultural figures I took a specific research angle toward, I obtained a better appreciation and general understanding of who she was, getting a better picture than previously explained through other primary sources detailing Landowska.


A journal article from the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), this source provided an interesting angle on Fry’s work, and how the museum 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 Second World War United States refugee policies), which were critical in the evolution of my project.


Pierre Sauvage wrote this journal article about Fry for Oxford University’s “Remembering for the Future” conference in 2000. I used his work to furthermore understand the operations of the CAS, how/with whom it operated, and why it was an important part of Fry’s rescue mission. With more questions about Fry, I contacted Sauvage to understand the conflict Fry encountered, specifically with the American government.

Magazine Articles


The role of Vichy France during the Second World War in relation to Nazi Germany is a highly speculated one, with people saying it was either a heavily influenced state or a fascist collaborator. Boissoneault takes a stance on the role of France in the Holocaust, helping me understand the antisemitism and brutality of the Mediterranean country during what was arguably history’s darkest hour.


I consulted this source to see how Varian Fry’s work compared to five significant Holocaust rescuers. One pattern I observed was that the other four rescuers were living in countries heavily involved in the war at the time of their rescue missions, whereas the United States—during the course of Fry’s work—wasn’t. It makes Fry’s work significant compared to the operations of Oskar Schindler or Raoul Wallenberg, as Fry acted at a time when he really wasn’t affected by the conflict in Europe.


The name Hiram Bingham IV consistently showed up across 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 understanding of the many sides of the American government throughout Fry’s rescue operations, and it supported and balanced the claim that American officials provided no support for Fry.

Manuscript Collections

Box 1-3 MAD 2M/41/H7, Richard Kaplan Papers, 1905-2006, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison.

Richard Kaplan created multiple documentaries about Fry, and like any decent researcher, he collected many primary sources about the man. This manuscript collection, though deemed secondary, contained a lot of primary source material, specifically relating to correspondence among Fry and various State Department officials. I gained a better knowledge of isolationist motives, seemingly contradicting American attitudes, and other various topics that were vital in my research.

Series IV, Box 10, Varian Fry Papers, [ca. 1940]-1967, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

The original Varian Fry archives are located at Columbia University in New York. Although unable to access the actual files, I requested a microform that contained all of the files in Series IV, Box 10 of the collection. I used the citation method for manuscript collections (as there weren’t notable differences between the microform and the original collection), and deemed it to be secondary. Though I would normally consider this to be a tertiary source, as it contains both primary and secondary sources, the prevalence of secondary sources influenced my decision to categorize the general collection as secondary.

Maps


This map helped me understand what occupied France appeared as compared to the unoccupied region. I also used the map to see where significant French cities were located. I was able to identify where Bordeaux, the place illegal Czech passports were printed, was. I also looked at the long distance between the Pyrenees mountain range and Marseille, proving there was a long path to escape persecution. Finally, I noticed that even though Hitler occupied primarily northern France, the Atlantic coast was also interestingly under German control.
Newspaper Articles


This newspaper article provides a general summary of Varian Fry’s work, along with a comparison to how his work is much needed given today’s refugee situation. It shows the modern day legacy, and the modern necessity for somebody to feel morally compelled to save others the way Fry did in the 1940s.


There were many assets Fry’s associates in the CAS had that contributed to the journalist’s rescue work. Mary Jayne Gold’s obituary from the New York Times shows the power her wealth played throughout Fry’s rescue operation. The newspaper articles also provided me with general information about Gold, one of the CAS’s most significant humanitarians.


When Marc Chagall died in 1985, John Russell wrote an obituary for Chagall in the New York Times. Russell’s piece was well-written, and put an emphasis on the importance of Chagall’s post-war art contributions. Though Russell most likely didn’t know whom Varian Fry was, he does a great job of inadvertently explaining why Fry’s work is prevalent today through saving Chagall, whom Russell deemed to be “one of modern art’s giants”

Pamphlets


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 Holocaust museum. It was used to gain a general knowledge about Fry, and did a great job setting the scene for how French authorities felt about Fry's work. It also provided a small detail regarding an FBI investigation about Fry, which clearly conveyed the conflict between American officials and Varian Fry.

I used this pamphlet to see what essential historical context is required to understand the story of Varian Fry. Although there wasn’t a lot of information about conflict and compromise, I obtained some information about the history of Nazi Germany leading up the occupation of France, the formation of the ERC, and what happened to Fry after he left Marseille.

Podcasts


Though focused to persuade listeners about the modern Syrian refugee issue, this podcast provides amazing statistics that show how American status quo was highly in favor of blocking refugees. In a 1938 magazine poll, it’s 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, and the significance of an interventionist hero like Varian Fry.

Websites


This source gave a brief but clear explanation of what isolationism was and what the motives behind it were. The article also gave me an in-depth understanding of how various decisions within the American government (e.g. abstaining from membership in the League of Nations) contributed to the growth of the wildly-popular political ideology.


I used this article to understand the history behind Marc Chagall’s window at the United Nations (UN) headquarters, created after the Second World War. Though I initially struggled with determining the source’s credibility, it has received recommendations and acknowledgements from a variety of diplomats, including the former Secretary-General of the UN, Boutros Boutros-Ghali.
I used this article to understand who Franz Werfel was and what he did once he came to the United States because of Varian Fry. It explained the success of his novel, *The Song of Bernadette*, which was adapted into an Academy-award winning major motion picture. I also drew from this article that Varian Fry’s legacy is diverse in nature, with contributions made in science, film, art, and more.

I used this article about the history of the International Rescue Committee to see the operations that the IRC has conducted since Fry saved thousands of refugees during the Second World War. It helps me understand his legacy and the massive influence he has had on modern-day rescue and relief work, along with how he impacted humanitarianism as a whole. I also formed a personal connection by learning about the IRC’s role in saving Soviet Jews, which increased my interest in telling Fry’s story.

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, Dr. Gary Sheffield. I was informed of various military flaws that led up to the collapse of France, and important dates and events that led to the surrender of France on June 22, 1940.

When I was searching for NHD topics, I accidentally stumbled upon this article about Varian Fry. I was immediately drawn by the obvious presence of conflict and legacy, which inspired me to research about compromise relative to Fry’s story. I also saw hints throughout the text that showed Fry was the definition of an Unsung Hero; I wanted to focus my NHD project on an Unsung Hero, and from the moment I heard about Varian Fry, I knew I needed to research and tell his story.

Having no background knowledge on what the unoccupied French 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 antifascists living in unoccupied France needed to leave for the United States, as danger was clearly evident as early as July 1940.


I used this article to better understand how Varian Fry’s actions fit on a timeline compared to the events of the Second World War. It helped me understand how imperative events contributed to other significant specifically impacting Varian Fry; for example, the May 10th attack of Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg contributed to Germany’s invasion of France, along with national security concerns that boosted reason for isolationism in the United States.