

THE NAZI HOLOCAUST

8. Bystanders to the Holocaust Volume 1

Michael R. Marrus

Meckler

THE NAZI HOLOCAUST

Historical Articles on the Destruction of European Jews

8. Bystanders to the Holocaust Volume 1

Edited with an Introduction by

Michael R. Marrus

University of Toronto

1989

Meckler

Westport • London

Publisher's Note

The articles and chapters which comprise this collection originally appeared in a wide variety of publications and are reproduced here in facsimile from the highest quality offprints and photocopies available. The reader will notice some occasional marginal shading and text-curl common to photocopying from tightly bound volumes. Every attempt has been made to correct or minimize this effect.

The publisher wishes to acknowledge all the individuals and institutions that provided permission to reprint from their publications. Special thanks are due to the Yad Vashem Institute, Jerusalem, the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York, and the Leo Baeck Institute, New York, for their untiring assistance in providing materials from their publications and collections for use in this series.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Bystanders to the Holocaust / edited by Michael R. Marrus.

p. cm. — (The Nazi Holocaust ; v. 8)

Includes index.

ISBN 0-88736-263-X (v. 1 : alk. paper) : \$ (set)

1. Holocaust, Jewish (1939–1945) — Public opinion. 2. Refugees, Jewish. 3. Jews — Palestine — Politics and government. 4. Jews — United States — Politics and government. I. Marrus, Michael Robert. II. Series.

D804.3.N39 vol. 8

940.53'18 s—dc20

[940.53'18]

89-12247
CIP

British Library Cataloging in Publication Data

Bystanders to the Holocaust. — (The Nazi Holocaust; v.8).

1. Jews, Genocide, 1939–1945

I. Marrus, Michael R. (Michael Robert) II. Series

940.53'15'03924

ISBN 0-88736-263-X v.1

ISBN 0-88736-264-8 v.2

ISBN 0-88736-268-0 v.3

ISBN 0-88736-266-4 set

Copyright information for articles reproduced in this collection appears at the end of this volume.

Introductions and selection copyright © 1989 Meckler Corporation. All rights reserved. No part of this material may be reproduced in any form by any means without prior written permission of the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages in review.

Meckler Corporation, 11 Ferry Lane West, Westport, CT 06880.

Meckler Ltd., Grosvenor Gardens House, Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0BS, U.K.

Printed on acid free paper.

Printed in the United States of America.

Contents

Series Preface	xi
Introduction	xiii

Part One: Perceptions of the Holocaust

Did the Zionist Leadership Foresee the Holocaust? ANITA SHAPIRA	3
The Holocaust in National-Socialist Rhetoric and Writings: Some Evidence against the Thesis That before 1945 Nothing Was Known about the "Final Solution" HANS-HEINRICH WILHELM	19
When Did They Know? YEHUDA BAUER	52
Hitler's Holocaust: Who Knew What, When, and How? WALTER LAQUEUR	60
Auschwitz and the Archives RICHARD BREITMAN	80
Pious Sympathies and Sincere Regrets: The American News Media and the Holocaust from Krystalnacht to Bermuda, 1938-1943 DEBORAH E. LIPSTADT	99

Part Two: Unwanted Refugees

Who Shall Bear Guilt for the Holocaust: The Human Dilemma HENRY L. FEINGOLD	121
Exodus 1933-1939: A Survey of Jewish Emigration from Germany WERNER ROSENSTOCK	143
Jewish Emigration from Germany: Nazi Policies and Jewish Responses (I) HERBERT A. STRAUSS	161
The Jewish Refugee Community of Shanghai, 1938-1945 DAVID KRANZLER	210
'The Line Must Be Drawn Somewhere': Canada and Jewish Refugees, 1933-9 IRVING ABELLA and HAROLD TROPER	230
Rescue Operations through Vilna YEHUDA BAUER	262
Roosevelt and the Resettlement Question HENRY L. FEINGOLD	271

Churchill and the Jews: The Holocaust	
MICHAEL J. COHEN	330
British Government Policy towards Jewish Refugees (November 1938-September 1939)	
MARTIN GILBERT	353
The British Government and the German Immigration 1933-1945	
BERNARD WASSERSTEIN	394
The Bermuda Conference and Its Aftermath: An Allied Quest for "Refuge" during the Holocaust	
MONTY N. PENKOWER	413

Part Three: Jewish Communities

(i) *General*

Jewish Denial and the Holocaust	
WALTER LAQUEUR	435
Jewish Foreign Policy during the Holocaust	
YEHUDA BAUER	467

VOLUME TWO

(ii) *Palestinian Jewry*

The Reactions of the Zionist Movement and the Yishuv to the Nazis' Rise to Power	
YOAV GELBER	477
Zionist Policy and the Fate of European Jewry (1939-1942)	
YOAV GELBER	538
Some Aspects of the <i>Yishuv</i> Leadership's Activities during the Holocaust	
BELA VAGO	580
Palestinian Jewry and the Jewish Agency: Public Response to the Holocaust	
DINA PORAT	601
The Activities of the Jewish Agency Delegation in Istanbul in 1943	
DALIA OFER	629
Ben-Gurion and the Holocaust of European Jewry 1939-1945:	
A Stereotype Reexamined	
TUVIA FRIELING	658
Al-domi: Palestinian Intellectuals and the Holocaust, 1943-1945	
DINA PORAT	692

(iii) American Jewry

The American Jewish Leadership and the Holocaust	
DAVID S. WYMAN.....	723
Stephen Wise and the Holocaust	
HENRY L. FEINGOLD	750
“Courage First and Intelligence Second”: The American Jewish Secular	
Elite, Roosevelt and the Failure to Rescue	
HENRY L. FEINGOLD	762
Activism versus Moderation: The Conflict between Abba Hillel Silver	
and Stephen Wise during the 1940s	
ZVI GANIN	799
In Dramatic Dissent: The Bergson Boys	
MONTY NOAM PENKOWER.....	824
American Jewish Unity during the Holocaust—The Joint Emergency	
Committee, 1943	
EDWARD PINSKY	853
The Campaign for an American Response to the Nazi Holocaust,	
1943-1945	
SARAH E. PECK	871
Jewish Organizations and the Creation of the U.S. War Refugee Board	
MONTY N. PENKOWER	905
What American Jews Did during the Holocaust	
MARIE SYRKIN	923
The Goldberg Report	
YEHUDA BAUER	942

(iv) Other Jewish Communities

Iraqi Jews during World War II	
HAROLD PAUL LUKS	953
Patterns of Jewish Leadership in Great Britain during the Nazi Era	
BERNARD WASSERSTEIN	973
Switzerland and the Leadership of Its Jewish Community during the	
Second World War	
GERHART M. RIEGNER	988

VOLUME THREE

Part Four: The Soviet Union

The Jews in the Soviet Annexed Territories 1939-41	
SHIMON REDLICH.....	1009
Soviet Media on the Fate of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Territory (1939-1941)	
BEN-CION PINCHUK.....	1021
Jewish Refugees in Soviet Poland 1939-1941	
BEN-CION PINCHUK.....	1034
Jews in General Anders' Army in the Soviet Union	
YISRAEL GUTMAN	1052
The Attitude of the Soviet Union to the Rescue of Jews	
DOV LEVIN.....	1118

Part Five: Neutrals

The International Red Cross and Its Policy Vis-à-Vis the Jews in Ghettos and Concentration Camps in Nazi-Occupied Europe	
MEIR DWORZECKI.....	1133
Sweden's Attempt to Aid Jews, 1939-1945	
STEVEN KOBLIK	1173

Part Six: Churches

(i) Catholics

History and Rolf Hochhuth's <i>The Deputy</i>	
LEONIDAS E. HILL	1201
The Vatican and the Jews: Cynicism and Indifference	
JUDAH L. GRAUBART	1214
Records and Documents of the Holy See Relating to the Second World War	
JOHN S. CONWAY	1227
Catholicism and the Jews during the Nazi Period and After	
JOHN S. CONWAY	1246
Weizsäcker, the Vatican, and the Jews of Rome	
OWEN CHADWICK.....	1263
French Churches and the Persecution of Jews in France, 1940-1944	
MICHAEL R. MARRUS.....	1284

Vatican Policy and the “Jewish Problem” in “Independent” Slovakia (1939-1945) LIVIA ROTHKIRCHEN	1306
The Vatican's Endeavors on Behalf of Rumanian Jewry during the Second World War THEODORE LAVI.....	1333

(ii) Protestants

German Protestantism and the Jews in the Third Reich RICHARD GUTTERIDGE	1349
Theological Myth, German Antisemitism and the Holocaust: The Case of Martin Niemoeller ROBERT MICHAEL.....	1372
Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Jews: Thoughts and Actions, 1933-1945 RUTH ZERNER	1390
The Dutch Protestants, the Third Reich and the Persecution of the Jews GER VAN ROON.....	1406

APPENDIX

Jewish Emigration from Germany: Nazi Policies and Jewish Responses (II) HERBERT A. STRAUSS	1415
Footnotes for: Some Aspects of the <i>Yishuv</i> Leadership's Activities during the Holocaust BELA VAGO.....	1483
Copyright Information.....	1489
Index	1495

Series Preface

The Holocaust, the murder of close to six million Jews by the Nazis during the Second World War, stands as a dreadful monument to mankind's inhumanity to man. As such, it will continue to be pondered for as long as people care about the past and seek to use it as a guide to the present. In the last two decades, historical investigation of this massacre has been unusually productive, both in the sense of extending our understanding of what happened and in integrating the Holocaust into the general stream of historical consciousness. This series, a collection of English-language historical articles on the Holocaust reproduced in facsimile form, is intended to sample the rich variety of this literature, with particular emphasis on the most recent currents of historical scholarship.

However assessed, historians acknowledge a special aura about the Nazis' massacre of European Jewry, that has generally come to be recognized as one of the watershed events of recorded history. What was singular about this catastrophe was not only the gigantic scale of the killing, but also the systematic, machine-like effort to murder an *entire* people — including every available Jew — simply for the crime of being Jewish. In theory, no one was to escape — neither the old, nor the infirm, nor even tiny infants. Nothing quite like this had happened before, at least in modern times. By any standard, therefore, the Holocaust stands out.

While Jews had known periodic violence in their past, it seems in retrospect that the rise of radical anti-Jewish ideology, centered on race, set the stage for eventual mass murder. As well, Europeans became inured to death on a mass scale during the colossal bloodletting of the First World War. That conflict provided cover for the slaughter of many hundreds of thousands of Armenians in Turkey, a massacre that Hitler himself seems to have thought a precursor of what he would do in the conquest of the German *Lebensraum*, or living space, in conquered Europe. Still, the extermination of every living person on the basis of who they *were*, was something new. For both perpetrators and victims, therefore, decisions taken for what the Nazis called the "Final Solution" began a voyage into the unknown. As the Israeli historian Jacob Katz puts it: "This was an absolute *novum*, unassimilable in any vocabulary at the disposal of the generation that experienced it."

For more than a decade after the war, writing on the Holocaust may be seen in general as part of the process of mourning for the victims — dominated by the urge to bear witness to what had occurred, to commemorate those who had been murdered, and to convey a warning to those who had escaped. Given the horror and the unprecedented character of these events, it is not surprising that it has taken writers some time to present a coherent, balanced assessment.

The early 1960s were a turning point. The appearance of Raul Hilberg's monumental work, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, and the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961 stimulated debate and investigation. From Israel, the important periodical published by the Yad Vashem Institute [Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority], *Yad Vashem Studies*, made serious research

available to scholars in English. German and American scholars set to work. Numerous academic conferences and publications in the following decade, sometimes utilizing evidence from trials of war criminals then underway, extended knowledge considerably.

As a result, we now have an immense volume of historical writing, a significant sample of which is presented in this series. A glance at the topics covered underscores the vast scale of this history. Investigators have traced the Nazi persecution of the Jews before the implementation of the "Final Solution," showing links both to Nazi ideology and antisemitic tradition. They have indicated how the Germans coordinated their anti-Jewish activities on a European-wide scale in the wake of their territorial conquests, drawing upon their own bureaucracy and those of their allies, enlisting collaborators and various helpers in defeated countries. They have also devoted attention to the victims — whether in East European ghettos or forests, in Central or Western Europe, or in the various concentration and death camps run by the SS. Finally, they have also written extensively on the bystanders — the countries arrayed against the Hitlerian Reich, neutrals, various Christian denominations, and the Jews outside Nazi-dominated Europe.

The volumes in this series permit the reader to sample the rich array of scholarship on the history of the Holocaust, and to assess some of the conflicting interpretations. They also testify to a deeper, more sophisticated, and more balanced appreciation than was possible in the immediate wake of these horrifying events. The literature offered here can be studied as historiography — scholars addressing problems of historical interpretation — or, on the deepest level, as a grappling with the most familiar but intractable of questions: How was such a thing possible?

* * *

I want to express my warm appreciation to all those who helped me in the preparation of these volumes. My principal debt, of course, is to the scholars whose work is represented in these pages. To them, and to the publications in which their essays first appeared, I am grateful not only for permission to reproduce their articles but also for their forbearance in dealing with a necessarily remote editor. I appreciate as well the assistance of the following, who commented on lists of articles that I assembled, helping to make this project an educational experience not only for my readers but also for myself: Yehuda Bauer, Rudolph Binion, Christopher Browning, Saul Friedländer, Henry Friedlander, Raul Hilberg, Jacques Kornberg, Walter Laqueur, Franklin Littell, Hubert Locke, Zeev Mankowitz, Sybil Milton, George Mosse, and David Wyman. To be sure, I have sometimes been an obstreperous student, and I have not always accepted the advice that has been kindly proffered. I am alone responsible for the choices here, and for the lacunae that undoubtedly exist. Special thanks go to Ralph Carlson, who persuaded me to undertake this project and who took charge of many technical aspects of it. Thanks also to Anthony Abbott of Meckler Corporation who saw the work through to completion. Finally, as so often in the past, I record my lasting debt to my wife, Carol Randi Marrus, without whom I would have been engulfed by this and other projects.

Introduction

Any discussion of the reactions of those outside Nazi Europe to the persecution and murder of European Jewry must begin with the question of “Who knew what, when, and how?” As will be seen, there is no simple answer that can be given to this question. Circumstances varied in Europe and North America, of course. Some channels of information were better than others. As numerous scholars have demonstrated, information about the fate of European Jews flowed steadily to the West, dispatched from many sources, notably the Polish Home Army. Such news attained a considerable degree of volume and accuracy in the second half of 1942. But there were wide variations in how this information was received. One historian wisely distinguished between “information” and “knowledge” — emphasizing that people did not always absorb the news they received from Nazi occupied Europe and indeed that they frequently tended to suppress such information, being either incapable or unwilling to accept the facts that were presented to them.

This section goes on to portray a wide variety of responses — or non-responses — to the Jews’ plight. For the period before the outbreak of war in 1939 the issue of Jewish refugees is obviously a central concern, and various essays outline and explain the restrictionist policies of Western countries and, to a much lesser degree, the Soviet Union. These articles set restrictionism in both national and international contexts, examining the basic circumstances that help condition subsequent responses, after the outbreak of fighting in 1939. Wartime attitudes and policies are also examined, notably those of the American and British governments. Other bystanders are also discussed, including Jewish communities in the West, the Jews of Palestine, and Christian churches.

Part One

Perceptions of the Holocaust

Anita Shapira

Did the Zionist Leadership Foresee the Holocaust?

Historical research on the Holocaust is susceptible to more than the ordinary number of pitfalls that lurk in wait for a historian on his tedious route to catch the meaning and feeling of a certain period. Loaded with emotions and arousing deep involvement, it became more often than not a scourge with which Jews tended to chastise one another. The collective sense of guilt, shared by all Ashkenazi Jews who had survived the war, brought about an incessant search for where to place the blame for the pitifully minuscule rescue efforts. During this still ongoing exchange of accusations, words and sentences were taken out of their historical context and endowed with a new meaning, the result of a hindsight acquired in the light of subsequent events.

The Zionist leadership was more vulnerable to these accusations than any other Jewish group. Aspiring to represent the national will and vitality as well as proclaiming itself as the leadership of the whole Jewish people, it had virtually volunteered to carry the burden of the Jewish fate. Thus it was counted on to be capable of doing what other groups and organizations were unable to do, and it became the victim of the very expectations it had aroused. Part of the misconception of Zionist competency stemmed from the Zionist claim to prescience of the impending catastrophe. I propose to look at the sources of this claim and to examine its actual meaning in the light of Zionist policies and plans on the eve of the Second World War.

Zionism was one of the responses to the crisis that emanated from the encounter of the Jews with the threat to their very existence posed by the increasingly violent expressions of Jew-hatred since the

Anita Shapira

pogroms of 1881. This date marks the beginning of the emergency period in Jewish history, which was to continue until after the resettlement of the Holocaust survivors and the establishment of Israel. This feeling of urgency, which to a certain degree had accompanied Jews since the dispersion, became more acute as we draw near to the twentieth century. Though stemming from different origins and using different methods and expressions, the message implied both by the governments in Eastern European states and by the modern political antisemitic movements in Central and Western Europe was essentially the same: the Jews were undesired elements that the antisemites would like to be rid of. More than any persecution and discrimination, it was that nagging feeling of physical insecurity that shaped the Jewish outlook and *Weltanschauung*. Insecurity was the driving force that caused Jews to leave home and hearth and to look for a new haven on the one hand, and to create a Jewish state on the other.

Since the appearance of Theodor Herzl, this vague feeling of personal insecurity was adopted as a basis of the Zionist prediction about the destiny of European Jewry. Some historians tend to minimize Herzl's contribution to Zionist ideology *vis-à-vis* his undisputably singular contribution to the molding of the Zionist movement. I think that they are mistaken, however. Herzl was one of the first thinkers to point out the dynamics of modern antisemitism. He described it as the result of neither church incitement nor Jewish strangeness and isolation but rather as emanating from the modern process of emancipation and assimilation. Modern antisemitism was discerned as the natural offspring of the progress of European society—democratization and the growing involvement of the masses in public life. Jews were hated now not because they kept apart but, on the contrary, because their acculturation was so successful as to turn them into a threat to the emerging non-Jewish lower middle classes, who feared these talented competitors. Thus Herzl outlined a process, built into the mainstream of European modernization, that inevitably linked progress to antisemitism. The conclusions he drew from his analysis were that, irrespective of the good or ill will of rulers, a terrible disaster was inevitable.¹

This assessment was the first stage in the emergence of Catastro-

1. See, for example, Theodor Herzl to the family council of the Rothschilds, June 13, 1896, *The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, ed. Raphael Patai, trans. Harry Zohn (New York, 1960), pp. 130–32.

Did Zionist Leadership Foresee the Holocaust?

phe-Zionism. According to this perception, if the Jews wanted to avoid disaster they had to embark on a completely different path, clearly divorced from age-old Jewish patterns, by establishing their own polity.

The second stage of Catastrophe-Zionism was formulated during the first decade of the twentieth century. While Herzl's vision evolved from the conditions prevalent in Central and Western Europe, the new outlook owed its inception to the social and political climate in Russia at the turn of the century as well as to the specific Jewish malaise there. Heavily influenced by revolutionary currents in Russia, this version of Catastrophe-Zionism tended to emphasize the social and economic trends that would inevitably lead to the destruction of Jewish society. Adapting to the Jewish scene the famous Marxist prognosis about the inevitable polarization of society, young Jewish socialists assumed that unless the Jewish people underwent a revolutionary change they were doomed to be annihilated in the imminent cataclysmic struggle. The Jews belonged mostly to the lower middle classes, which were bound to become extinct as a result of the polarization. The only way in which they could avoid being crushed by the triumphant march of history would be by joining the ranks of the proletariat, that class which by definition was certain to be acclaimed as victor in the ensuing conflict. The polarization, however, which was surely causing even greater pauperization and misery to the Jewish masses than to others, failed to result in the expected proletarianization. The reasons this process remained incomplete were complicated, explained the Jewish socialists, but they all seemed to stem from the deep-rooted animosity of the non-Jewish population. Non-Jewish employers preferred to employ non-Jews. Jewish industry was too small and insignificant to provide badly needed jobs for the impoverished Jewish masses. Instead of joining history's march, Jews were being cast to the margins, finding no hope or solace even in the future victory of socialism. Thus, although the socialist analysis was rooted in an outlook and reality completely different from Herzl's a decade earlier, the conclusion was essentially the same. Jewish frameworks and ways of life could no longer sustain the Jewish people. Modern conditions were posing a threat to the survival of the Jews. This was essentially an existential threat.

Life in the Pale of Settlement seemed to supply endless examples to prove the validity of this perception. The combined effects of pop-

Anita Shapira

ular hostility, anti-Jewish riots, and legal discrimination in all the fields that might lead to social mobility were widespread pauperization with no visible hope of change. Thus emerged the well-known Zionist theory of the Negation of Exile. Its first and foremost meaning was that the Jewish people in Europe had no chance of survival. The conclusion was Zionistic: that is, only in a land of their own could the Jewish people experience the necessary processes of regeneration. This stage in Zionist ideology is not part of this discussion, but the vision of Damocles' sword posing an ever-present existential threat actually seems to point to a prescience of the future catastrophe. This vision was to return in the teaching of leading labor leaders, such as Yitzhak Tabenkin, for whom it became not only a tenet of faith but also the inspiration for a widespread educational program, centered on the Halutz movement, intended to hasten as much as possible the rescue of Jewish youth and the upbuilding of Palestine. The imminent catastrophe became, as a matter of fact, a cornerstone in the teaching of all the Zionist youth movements, from Betar on the Right to Hashomer Hazair on the Left. Naturally enough, the more a movement was Palestine oriented, the more it emphasized the impending disaster. The deteriorating state of affairs of Polish Jewry during the 1930s added credibility to this perception and lent force to the demands for increasing the pace of building up Palestine and enlarging the *aliyah* quotas.

The strongest premonitions of doom were, as usual, presented by writers and poets. J. H. Brenner drew a picture of a hopelessly decaying society, and while his heart drove him to Palestine, his logic did not let him enjoy the pleasures of wishful thinking. Like most of the Second Aliyah leaders, he was not certain if the Jewish people could muster the vitality necessary for such an ambitious project. The same sort of insight can be found in the works of U. Z. Greenberg.

Do these manifestations necessarily mean that the Zionists had a foresight of the Holocaust denied to other Jewish theorists? I will try now to examine this point by analyzing their attitudes to a specific issue that caused, at the time, a great controversy. As a part of this controversy, all Zionist leaders made an effort to express their views of the past, the present, and the future of the Jews. The issue was the partition proposal sponsored by the Peel Commission. Formed by the British government in the autumn of 1936 in the wake of the Arab Rebellion that had raged since April of that year, the commission presented the Zionists with the dilemma of accepting half a loaf

Did Zionist Leadership Foresee the Holocaust?

or gambling on a whole one. It proposed to establish two independent states in Palestine—one Jewish and one Arab. As is well known, the whole question soon became theoretical, as the British eventually retreated from their proposal and instead of establishing the two states, issued the White Paper of 1939, which was disastrous from the Jewish point of view. The ensuing disputes give us, however, an opportunity to observe whether the Zionists, when faced with a momentous decision, were affected by their often-stated fear of the coming catastrophe. In order to decide this point, I propose to review their assessment of the probability of a world war; the spans of time they projected; the place that the fate of European Jewry occupied in their considerations as a whole; and finally, what sort of disaster if any, they envisioned.

As far as I can verify, the first reference by a Zionist to the probability of the outbreak of a new European war was made by Chaim Arlosoroff, then head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, in his famous letter to Chaim Weizmann of June 30, 1932. The letter, a masterpiece of political acumen, alluded to the rearmament race and the increasing tension in Europe and concluded that one could safely assume a war would break out within the next five or ten years. Arlosoroff went on to analyze the implications of this prediction for the Zionist enterprise. He foresaw the eventuality of a British-Arab alliance, which would be highly detrimental to the Jewish community in Palestine. He worried about the frustratingly slow pace of the upbuilding of the country and pointed out that, if the disastrous economic conditions in Eastern Europe continued and Palestine was unable to offer immediate relief, the Jews might despair of Zionism and seek other alternatives to alleviate their suffering. The time span he referred to in this context was about twenty years. How did he reconcile the incongruity between his vision of an imminent war and his long-range prediction that the Jewish masses would grow tired of waiting for the Zionist dream to materialize? It seems that Arlosoroff did not consider the coming war as a major event, not to mention a watershed, in the history of European Jewry. Taking for granted the continuation of Jewish life in Europe, the next war notwithstanding, he worried only about the Zionist position in Palestine.²

2. Chaim Arlosoroff to Chaim Weizmann, June 30, 1932, *Yoman Yerushalayim*, published by Mapai (n.p., n.d.), pp. 338–42.

Anita Shapira

The following five years saw the Nazis rise to power in Germany and the isolation of the Jews and their exclusion from German society, the outbreak of the war in Manchuria, the occupation of Ethiopia by Italy, and the reentry of the German army into the Rhineland. A civil war was going on in Spain, and the independence of Austria was tottering. In Poland the military junta that had ruled the country since the death of Józef Piłsudski responded to the ugly mood of Polish public opinion and launched an increasingly antisemitic policy. This was the European background against which the Twentieth Zionist Congress convened in Basel to decide whether to adopt or reject partition.

The debate encompassed a great variety of questions, such as: Can a Zionist reconcile his ideology with the partition of Zion? Is partition an *ad hoc* solution, or does the establishment of the state entail an end to Zionist aspirations for the whole country? How is partition going to affect relations with the Arabs? What are Zionist priorities? Should the establishment of a viable Jewish entity precede the establishment of a state, or should the state become the agent of change? Would a state serve as a vehicle for large-scale immigration, or would it be better to decline the offer, continue the slow-but-steady buildup in the country, and wait for better times, assuming that the proposed miniature state would have no chance of survival, to say nothing of absorbing millions of Jews?³

The problem that was never discussed, but was implied by many delegates, was the question of time. Was the time factor working in favor of the Zionists or against them? Those who believed that time needed to be gained prepared to postpone the decision on the constitutional change in Palestine. Others believed that time was either running out or had a negative bearing on Zionist interests. They were ready, though mostly with reservations, to accept the partition plan as the lesser of two evils, believing the alternative would be a freeze on the future growth of the national home. The previous years,

3. An abundance of material exists on this subject. The various positions expressed in both open and closed sessions are repeated almost endlessly in newspapers and archival documents. The main sources used in preparing this essay were the relevant minutes of the Mapai Central Committee, the Mapai Council, the Smaller and Greater Actions Committees for 1937–38, and the council meeting of the Labor World Alliance (Ihud), which were published in full in *Al darkei mediniyutenu: Moazah olamit shel ihud Poalei Zion, 29 July–7 August 1937* (Tel Aviv, 1938). Other sources include *Ha-kongres ha-zioni ha-esrim* (n.p., n.d.), the writings and speeches of Vladimir Jabotinsky, and the memoirs of David Ben-Gurion. The primary sources are all in Hebrew; translations throughout the text are mine.

Did Zionist Leadership Foresee the Holocaust?

1933–35, had been marked by mass immigration, large-scale investments, and an economic boom. The general feeling was that, given a few more years like 1935, the longed-for Jewish majority in Palestine would materialize and make all sorts of compromises unnecessary. Thus the question of predicting the outline of the next few years became crucial. The pessimistic view, which envisioned a British-initiated freeze on immigration and settlement as the alternative to partition, was motivated primarily by the development of the Arab national movement. The optimistic view tended to minimize its importance. In both cases the context was first and foremost a Palestinian one, and the fact that time was running out in Europe was only marginally mentioned in the whole long and penetrating debate.⁴

Those who browse through the newspapers of 1937 and 1938 might naturally assume that people at the time were aware of the increasing tension and eve-of-war atmosphere in Europe. This we understand in retrospect, however; the Zionist leadership then still perceived war as farfetched. The possibility of a world war does appear among the arguments advanced by both supporters and opponents of partition. Tabenkin presented partition as a British strategy in view of the possibility of war, a strategy that involved discarding its commitments to the Jews and creating two vassal states—one Jewish and one Arab.⁵ Among the supporters of partition, David Ben-Gurion, in just one of his many speeches, hinted at the deteriorating international situation, the danger of a new world war, and the international complications that could be expected to follow in its wake.⁶ All in all, however, references to the expected world war were few and superficial, and when the prospect of war was mentioned, it was in the context of the fate of Palestine rather than the fate of European Jewry. It seems that Alfred Mond, first Lord Melchett was right when he observed:

To my astonishment several speeches dealt with the Jewish Problem, as though the question of the Jews exists in a vacuum. . . . We have to study the Jewish Problem in the context of the Spanish Civil War; we should be alert to the undertakings made by England toward Italy and to

4. The pessimistic view in this matter was represented by Ben-Gurion. See the minutes of the Greater Actions Committee, April 22, 1937, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem (hereafter CZA), S5/2141. The optimistic view was represented by Yitzhak Tabenkin. See the minutes of the Mapai Council, July 1932, Labor Party Archives, Beit Berl (hereafter BB), 22/12.

5. Tabenkin, in *Al darkei mediniyutenu*, p. 194.

6. Ben-Gurion, in *Ha-kongres ha-zioni ha-esrim*, p. 106.

Anita Shapira

the dangerous situation in Germany and the defense position of its neighbors.⁷

No comment was made on his remarks.

Reactions were not essentially different outside the World Zionist Organization. Shalom Ash, in an emotional speech before the Jewish Agency Council, spoke of the anxiety shared by many in face of the approaching world war and in the same breath added that, as a result, no plans could be made for more than the next ten to fifteen years.⁸ One of the fiercest critics of Zionist policies was Vladimir Jabotinsky, the leader of the Revisionist movement, who in 1935 had quit the World Zionist Organization and had set up the New Zionist Organization. Jabotinsky's political power base was in Poland. However, as late as the summer of 1939, he still would not believe that a world war was about to erupt. Neither, a year earlier, had he foreseen the appeasement policy of the British government. Welcoming the representatives of the Czechoslovakian government to the convention of the New Zionist Organization in 1938, which took place in Prague, he greeted them and the other delegates by declaring, "The great nation that occupies all our thoughts at this time will desert neither you nor us in our hour of need: her word is as firm as a rock and she will keep it."⁹

The only person to mention a time span of less than ten years was Meir Grabovsky, who said, "It might, perhaps, happen that the next five years will be more crucial than the entire generation."¹⁰ In an early session of the Mapai Central Committee he recalled the slaughter that had taken place in the Ukraine during the First World War, and, in the context of the expected war in Europe, he went on to add: "In the light of the spread of antisemitism in Europe, I cannot estimate the future scale of the slaughter which awaits the Jews."¹¹ These were isolated, chance comments, however, with no follow-up. The threat of war loomed large in newspaper headlines and radio broadcasts. A big rearmament plan debated in Britain was exten-

7. Lord Melchett, in *ibid.*, p. 168.

8. Shalom Ash, in *ibid.*, app. M.

9. Jabotinsky, "Mool tokhnit ha-halukah: Tokhnit ha-asor," speech to the convention of the New Zionist Organization, Prague, February 1938, in his *Neumim: 1927-1940* (Jerusalem, 1948), p. 292.

10. Meir Grabovsky, in *On Our Policy-Making*, p. 130.

11. Grabovsky, in the minutes of the Mapai Central Committee, April 15, 1937, BB, 23/37.

Did Zionist Leadership Foresee the Holocaust?

sively reported in the press. Yet there is no evidence to show that the Zionists were really aware that Europe was teetering on the brink of a crisis. On the occasions when they did foresee a crisis, they related it to the Palestinian situation. An extreme example of this focus can be found in the position taken by Yitzhak Gruenbaum, the former leader of Polish Jewry, who was an enthusiastic supporter of partition precisely because he foresaw a world war on the horizon. Even he did not seem to reflect on its implications for his brethren in Poland, however. His only concern was how best to prepare for this eventuality in terms of the Jewish community in Palestine.¹²

Both those for and those against partition made much of the question of *aliyah*. Chaim Weizmann presented the Congress with a plan for the immigration of one hundred thousand Jews per year over the next twenty years. These two million, who were to include the vast majority of the younger generation of European Jewry, would, according to Weizmann, change the face of Palestine.¹³ Ben-Gurion referred to similar numbers—the immigration of one hundred thousand Jews per year over a period of fifteen years. This mass immigration, he stated, would open the way for a change in the political situation in Palestine at the end of those fifteen years.¹⁴ Both refer, first and foremost, to the effect of immigration on the political situation in Palestine, and not to its effect on the situation of the Jews in Europe. The figure they mention—one hundred thousand immigrants a year over ten to fifteen years—appear repeatedly in speeches made by both supporters and opponents of partition, and it seems to have been universally accepted. There were those who questioned whether this plan was realistic and argued that the British would not agree to such large-scale immigration to a small and weak state. Others raised the question of what would happen once those fifteen years were up and the small, partitioned state was unable to absorb further immigration, while Jews continued to beat at its gates.¹⁵ The opponents of partition did not disagree with the argument of the supporters that the immediate absorption capacity of a Jewish state would be greater than that of the national home. The

12. Yitzhak Gruenbaum, in the minutes of the Greater Actions Committee, April 22, 1937, CZA, S5/2141.

13. Chaim Weizmann, in *Ha-kongres ha-zioni ha-esrim*, pp. 70–71, 33.

14. Ben-Gurion, in *Al darkei medinyutenu*, pp. 76, 77.

15. See, for instance, Golda Meirson, in *ibid.*, pp. 122–23.

Anita Shapira

argument revolved on the question of whether the limited capacity of a tiny state would be sufficient in the long run to absorb millions of Jews, and thus provide a substantial solution to Jewish needs.¹⁶

Jabotinsky bitterly attacked the partition plan, which he saw as constituting a death sentence for Zionism. He rejected outright the idea that the partitioned state would be a sort of Jewish Piedmont, a bridgehead for expansion over the whole country. He protested against the willingness, expressed at the Zionist Congress, to relinquish most of Palestine. In his opinion this meant "the relinquishment of the territory necessary to save six to eight million Jews without a homeland."¹⁷ At a mass meeting in Warsaw he referred to Weizmann's plan for the immigration of two million young people within twenty years as designed to save only a vestige of the people—only a chosen few—while the remainder would be left to its fate.¹⁸ This passage is often quoted as testimony of both Jabotinsky's prescience and his sensitivity to the fate of the Jews.

As an alternative to Weizmann's plan, Jabotinsky presented his own plan: "Within ten years an additional million Jews should be settled west of the Jordan, thereby ensuring a large Jewish majority in this part of Palestine. At the same time half a million Jews should settle on the other side of the Jordan."¹⁹ Without going into the question of whether Weizmann's plan or Jabotinsky's had the better chance of succeeding, I would like to draw attention to the similarities between them. Both envisioned the scale of immigration at one hundred thousand a year. Both foresaw rapid development rather than revolutionary change. Neither showed a deep concern about the future of the Jewish people in the course of the coming decade. Neither really foresaw the Holocaust.

The partition controversy called attention to the fact that Palestine could not offer an immediate solution for the needs of the millions of distressed Jews in Europe. According to the most optimistic estimates, only two or three million would be absorbed in Palestine in the course of the next two to three decades, whether in a parti-

16. See, for example, Dr. Yitzhak Schwartzbart, in *Ha-kongres ha-zioni ha-esrim*, pp. 58–59.

17. Jabotinsky, "Neged tokhnit ha-halukah," a speech to the members of Parliament, July 13, 1937, and "Mool tokhit ha-halukah," *Neumin*, pp. 279, 297, 298, 314.

18. In his speech in Warsaw in 1936, Jabotinsky spoke about giving priority to immigrants aged twenty-three to twenty-seven, a policy similar to that advanced by Weizmann. "Polin taazor ve-teazer ba-tokhnit ha-evakuazyah," *ibid.*, p. 219.

19. Jabotinsky, "Mool tokhnit ha-halukah," pp. 297, 299.

Did Zionist Leadership Foresee the Holocaust?

tioned or a whole and undivided Palestine. It is true that the advantages and disadvantages of an independent, though small, state as a vehicle for furthering mass immigration were mentioned. However, mass immigration was presented first and foremost as ensuring the growth and development of the Jewish stronghold in Palestine. Very few involved in the debate presented the needs of European Jewry as grounds for large-scale immediate immigration. Furthermore, in general, even those few who referred to the situation in Europe preferred to do so in relation to its effects on Zionist fortunes. The fear of a wave of territorialism or Bundism, which would follow a loss of faith in Zionism on the part of the Jewish masses, recurred as an argument for partition.²⁰

The year was 1937, and although it appeared that the situation of German Jewry had stabilized to the point of continued existence within the well-defined limitations of the Nuremberg Laws, the same year saw a significant deterioration in the condition of Polish Jewry. Pshitik, Brisk, Czestochowa—the names of towns in which pogroms were carried out against Jews—and then reports of the trials of those Jews who had defended themselves against the rioters appeared frequently in the newspapers. The restrictions of Jews to ghetto benches in the universities, their expulsion from campuses, and the murder of Jews in railway cars had become a daily reality that was reported in the Palestine press. Yitzhak Yatziv, a correspondent for the newspaper *Davar*, traveled throughout Poland that summer, and his reports described in detail the acts of brutality and economic dispossession carried out against Polish Jews. In the light of this oppression in Poland, it is surprising how little the situation of the Jews in Europe was mentioned in the partition discussions.

Naturally the representatives of Polish Jewry were more concerned about their desperate situation. They were also aware of the enthusiasm with which the common people in Poland had greeted the partition plan. However, it appears that they, too, like all the others, were divided as to their assessment of the time and impending catastrophe. Moshe Kleinbaum (Sneh) was the most outspoken and unequivocal spokesman of those who raised the problem of Polish Jewry in support of the immediate adoption of the partition plan.

20. See, for example, Eliyahu Golomb, in the minutes of the Mapai Central Committee, August 29, 1937, BB 23/37; Gruenbaum, in the minutes of the Smaller Actions Committee, January 11, 1938, CZA, S5/307; and Eliyahu Dobkin, in *Al darkei medinyutenu*, p. 161.

Anita Shapira

The Jews of Poland and of Eastern Europe, he said, now found themselves in an insupportable position: "The question of immigration is a burning matter of life and death [*Noytfrage*] for Polish Jewry, and must be resolved positively."²¹ This, in his opinion, was the supreme criterion by which any political proposal should be judged. The uniqueness of Kleinbaum's position lay in the fact that it saw the partition plan from the viewpoint of the immediate interests of Polish Jewry rather than from that of the long- or short-term interests of either Zionism or the Jewish community in Palestine, the perspectives of most of his colleagues. Kleinbaum's stand was bitterly attacked by Yitzhak Schwartzbart, the Polish-Jewish leader of the General Zionist Alliance. Schwartzbart hotly denied the assumption, which could be read into the words of Kleinbaum and others, that Polish Jewry would be prepared to accept any territorial concession in Palestine as long as they received the right to immigrate, and that if immigration should be halted for any period of time they would begin looking for alternative solutions. He even went as far as to term this assumption "a libel against Polish Jewry." Schwartzbart was not the only Polish Zionist leader to hold this position. Heschel Farbstein of the Polish Mizrahi also protested Kleinbaum's demand that the partition plan be adopted in light of the desperation of Polish Jewry: "The Jews of Poland themselves will protest against this forcefully. They will see it as an insult to their feelings, if Zionist policy is based on pity."²²

The press was filled with reports of the enthusiasm that gripped the masses of Polish Jews upon learning of the proposal for partition. The editor of the newspaper *Haynt* expressed his reservations over partition—according to the tactic dictated by the Zionist executive. He was assaulted by a poor porter, "We've had enough of *Tisha be-Av*," cried the porter. "Give me a bit of *Simhat Torah*."²³

One Zionist who had quit the Revisionist party declared a march to Palestine, and he was soon joined by a thousand young men. On the other hand, a Revisionist demonstration against the partition plan succeeded in attracting only a few hundred demonstrators.²⁴

21. Moshe Kleinbaum, in the minutes of the Greater Actions Committee, April 22, 1937, CZA, S5/2141.

22. Yitzhak Schwartzbart and Heschel Farbstein, in *Ha-kongres ha-zioni ha-esrim*, p. 82.

23. Quoted by Jacob Helmann, in *Al darkei mediniyutenu*, p. 102.

24. Ibid.

Did Zionist Leadership Foresee the Holocaust?

The enthusiasm of Polish Jewry for the plan altered the opinion of at least one delegate. Eliahu Dobkin said that his visit to five European countries had persuaded him that "it is impossible to feed the Diaspora with no more than hopes of a great Zionist enterprise in the future."²⁵ Others, however, exhibiting more than a trace of superiority, declined to take the opinions of the ignorant and suggestible masses into consideration. "For decades we have been fighting with the masses, some of whom were apathetic toward our aspirations and some of whom opposed them outright; so why should we now turn them into our guides?"²⁶ At their most generous they argued that "what is permissible to a desperate Jew lacking any possibility of fending for himself is absolutely impermissible to a serious political movement such as ours."²⁷

Those isolated individuals who brought forward the condition of Polish Jewry as evidence in support of the partition plan painted a grim picture of a world hostile to the Jews. But there were also those who, paradoxically, found hope in that unhappy situation. After all, Jewish misery had always acted as a stimulus to the Zionist enterprise. "I do not maintain that 'the eternity of Israel will not fail,'" exclaimed Meir Kotick, "but rather that 'the troubles of Israel will not fail.' Under the pressure of the afflictions of the Jewish masses, we will overcome any difficulty, including those bound up with the implementation of the mandate."²⁸

This fundamentally optimistic outlook, which can be traced back to Herzl's notion that an antisemitic but otherwise enlightened world would adopt a positive solution of the Jewish Problem, was also to be found in Jabotinsky's thinking. His confidence, as late as 1938, that England would eventually make good its vow²⁹ and his belief in the negotiations he was conducting with the Polish government over a plan for the gradual and orderly evacuation of Polish Jewry from the country were based upon his deep-rooted faith in European culture and humanity. This approach found its expression on the leftist side of the Zionist camp in the words of Mendel Singer:

25. Eliyahu Dobkin, in *ibid.*, p. 161.

26. Mendel Singer, in *ibid.*, p. 143. A protest of attitude toward Polish Jewry was voiced by Kleinbaum and Henryk Rosmarin, in *Ha-kongres ha-zioni ha-esrim*, pp. 144–54.

27. Josef Bankover, in *Al darkei mediniyutenu*, p. 153.

28. Meir Kotick, in *ibid.*

29. Jabotinsky, "Lamut o likhbosh et ha-har," *Neumin*, p. 325.

Anita Shapira

"I see serious danger in describing our situation in the world as though everybody and everything are against us."³⁰ This statement was made after Singer had returned from extensive travels throughout Poland, which he reported in a series of shocking articles in *Davar*.

What characterizes these positions is the lack of urgency. The Zionists foresaw a crisis that had to be acted upon within the next few decades; they described an emergency but not something inescapable and immediate. This feeling that time was running out, and yet not really, that although time was exerting pressure it did not necessitate an immediate reaction at any price, is even to be found in the words of a speaker who began his remarks by saying, "We are faced with the distress of the millions in the countries of exile . . . and they are faced with the danger of extinction in the very near future." At first sight these words seem to express a very real sense of immediate disaster. But Arie Tartakover continued by raising objections to the idea of partition on the grounds that "we will also not establish a temporary haven that is not viable for an extended period."³¹ Only one who feels secure that nothing urgent is bound to happen would reject the idea of "a temporary haven" for the sake of the unforeseeable future. In the debates, arguments, and especially in the newspaper articles of the period, there is a tendency to describe the condition of the Jews of Eastern Europe in the most extreme terms. (German Jewry is scarcely mentioned). Thus, for example, an editorial in *Davar* spoke of "the atrocities of extermination and annihilation in the eastern part of Europe."³² Zalman Rubashov described the situation in Poland as "the tremendous holocaust that exists there."³³ Chaim Weizmann told the Twentieth Zionist Congress of saving two million young people, calling them "the surviving remnant."³⁴ The use of terms that for a later period have an unbearably painful significance gives the impression that people at the time were invested with the power of foresight. But an examination of the context in which these words were spoken proves that they were used to describe situations that were difficult, to be sure, but of the

30. Mendel Singer, in *Ha-kongres ha-zioni ha-esrim*, p. 143.

31. Arie Tartakover, in *Al darkei medinyutenu*, pp. 130, 131.

32. *Davar*, August 31, 1937.

33. Zalman Rubashov, in the minutes of the Mapai Central Committee, February 2-3, 1938, BB, 23/38.

34. Weizmann, in *Ha-kongres ha-zioni ha-esrim*, p. 33.

Did Zionist Leadership Foresee the Holocaust?

same dimensions that the Jews had learned to cope with over generations.

An illustration can be found in Mendel Singer's article, "The Polish Vale of Tears." After describing the desperate state of affairs in Poland, he continued:

A friend described the situation of the Jews of Poland as being hopeless, with no way out. I tried to console him, and I asked him, "What will the Poles do with three and a half million Jews? If the Poles remove from the Jews the possibility of earning a livelihood, the Jews will become a burden on the government! After all, the government will not let them all die of hunger! The Poles must eventually understand where their policies are leading!" My friend remained silent. We both understood how bitter were these words of consolation.³⁵

In summary, the partition debate and its aftermath show the limits of ideology as a guide to the future. Ostensibly the Zionists were best equipped to understand and evaluate the dangerous situation that was evolving. It seems that a wide gap existed, however, between their ideological perception and its eventual application to everyday life. The Zionists tended to project two time tables that somehow did not connect. One timetable related to the prediction of the imminent catastrophe, the other to actual developments. The more the first timetable was used as a propaganda device, the more it became devoid of immediate meaning and assumed the nature of a theoretical concept. The second timetable was applied to the Palestinian sphere. Partition, mass immigration, and the eventuality of a world war were all considered primarily in the light of their implications for the Zionist endeavor in Palestine. When Zionist leaders spoke of an imminent disaster in Europe, they mentioned time spans much longer than those they used in reference to the Palestinian situation. Somehow the two timetables never converged.

It would be wrong to assume, as some imply, that the Zionist leadership was indifferent or not deeply concerned about the fate of European Jewry. One has only to remember that most of them had been born and raised in Eastern Europe, and that their families were still there, to discard such a simplistic notion. The fact remains, however, that in the debates of 1937–38 they attached little importance to the issue of the approaching war and to the fate of European Jewry.

Two false assumptions, so it seems, were at the root of this atti-

35. Singer, *Davar*, June 1, 1937.

Anita Shapira

tude: one a mistaken assessment of the time until the outbreak of the expected war; the other a mistaken assessment of the possible impact of that war on the Jewish community in Palestine and on European Jewry. The Jewish community in Palestine, the culmination of Zionist hopes, was considered to be in a very vulnerable position, its very existence endangered and precarious. The Jews of Europe, on the other hand, so the Zionists assumed, would somehow manage to survive, just as they had survived war on previous occasions.

Generals tend to prepare for the last war; so did the Jewish leadership, including the Zionists. They expected suffering and disasters in the scale of World War I: battle deaths, famine, plague, rampant pogroms—an ordeal similar to what Jews had already been through. There was nothing in Jewish history to make the Zionists expect a disaster of different dimensions. Deep down in their hearts, Jews still believed in the innate humanity of European culture. But primarily, one simply cannot imagine that which is not supported by historical experience. Even the case of German Jewry did not provide clues pointing toward a holocaust. One might even imagine that Zionist leaders understood Nazi threats about the annihilation of European Jewry as they understood their own prophecies of gloom: partly believing them and partly dismissing them as propaganda.

Thus, in spite of all the theories on the issue of Catastrophe-Zionism, so characteristic of the activist trends in the Zionist movement, on the eve of the Second World War, no one read the writing on the wall.

The Holocaust in National-Socialist Rhetoric and Writings

*Some Evidence against the Thesis that before
1945 Nothing Was Known about the "Final Solution"**

Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm

THE ARGUMENT AS TO how much and who in the Third Reich knew or must have known about the concentration camps, mass murders and other National-Socialist atrocities and how much they knew has not yet ended — four decades later. In the immediate postwar years, nearly everyone claimed to have known nothing or next to nothing. Even former *Reichsmarschall* Göring, one of the principal manipulators of the "Final Solution," was no exception, pretending he heard about the regime's crimes only after its collapse. *Generaloberst* Alfred Jodl, Hitler's most important military advisor until the very end, declared under oath in Nuremberg to have known nothing about the massacres of Jews. *Generaloberst* Heinz Guderian was the popular panzer leader, whom Hitler had appointed as chief of staff of the German Army for several months after the assassination attempt of July 20, 1944, and who, in the postwar period, apart from a

* This is a considerably enlarged and revised version of an essay which originally appeared in the *Festschrift* for Helmut Krausnick on the occasion of his 75th birthday, *Miscellanea*, W. Benz et al., eds., Stuttgart, 1980, pp. 131–148.

HANS-HEINRICH WILHELM

de-nazification procedure, was never tried. He wrote in his memoirs in 1950:

I am unable to say anything from my own observations or experience concerning the excesses of Himmler's racial theories. Hitler and Himmler kept this part of their program strictly and successfully secret. Himmler's "educational methods" through concentration camps have meanwhile become sufficiently well known. During his lifetime the public knew little about it. For the public as well as for me, the inhumanities perpetrated in the camps came to light only after the collapse. The system of keeping the concentration camp methods secret deserves to be called positively brilliant."¹

Guderian was outdone by his former close collaborator, General res. Walther K. Nehring, who, in a 1971 letter to the editor of an Irish military journal, made an even more untenable claim: "The whole world knows that there was absolutely no connection between 'Belsen and Buchenwald' and the Wehrmacht, that the facts of these terrible crimes were not even known, and that occasional vague rumors were dismissed as impossible."²

Clinging to dubious conjectures in order to protect oneself until there was evidence to the contrary was fairly common and at least psychologically understandable in the situation after 1945. In fact, this attitude was on the whole not only tolerated but even partly well received also by those who had indeed

¹ Heinz Guderian, *Erinnerungen eines Soldaten*, Neckargemünd, 1960, p. 405.

² In a statement concerning a book review in *An Consantoir*, June 1970 of the 10th reprint of the English edition of Guderian's memoirs ("Panzer Leader") and the subsequent lively discussion in the readers' letters, January 25, 1971.

Still adequate for Buchenwald: E. Kogon, *Der SS-Staat, Das System der deutschen Konzentrationslager* (reprint), Munich, 1974; for Bergen-Belsen, cf. E. Kolb, "Bergen-Belsen," *Studien zur Geschichte der Konzentrationslager* (series *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*—hereafter *VfZ*, vol. 21), pp. 130–153. According to Kolb, toward the end of the war, for lack of other accommodations, as many as 30,000 Bergen-Belsen prisoners were quartered in the barracks of the nearby military training area (p. 149). Jodl actually claimed in Nuremberg that officers of his department returned "very enthusiastic" from a tour of the Oranienburg concentration camp (*IMT*, vol. XV, p. 366).

THE HOLOCAUST IN NS RHETORIC

remained in ignorance until the total military catastrophe. For many, to deny the past was a great deal more comfortable from more than one aspect than to face it and analyze it on the basis of the criteria of a state under the rule of law. As in Austria, so also in the partitioned remainder of the former "Altreich," Eichmann hunters amazingly quickly became "after all unpopular,"³ regarded as "non-persons," and socially ostracized almost like the former SS-functionaries they were trying to track down. Most of the "respectable average citizens" were greatly concerned about their clean slate, regretting postwar Germany's restricted maneuverability in international circles, and would probably have liked nothing better than that those SS-functionaries would assume "tactfully" and as quietly as possible the personal consequence of the destruction of their world. They would very much have preferred this rather than waiting until one day the slowly moving wheels of justice caught up with them and the unavoidable reawakening of "the past" would once again harm "German prestige." However, only a few of the former SS-functionaries did this favor.

Because everyone claimed to have seen nothing, to have heard nothing and, in any case, to remember nothing, I suppose, not only some of the elder scholars in the field, often ridiculed as far too credulous inhabitants of their "ivory tower" called current history, witnessed with all signs of relief, as a late rehabilitation of "oral history" method, the appearance of the first different versions. Their number increased as time went by and harder sanctions were no longer to be feared. But the wider public did not take notice of these more refined reports — not only in Germany. So it is still a task for all historians not inclined to relapse in melancholy and fatalistic resignation to tell *their* truth, growing more complicated with each new document in their collections. Some poor examples must be enough to show the reader

³ Ruth v. Mayenburg, *Blaues Blut und rote Fahnen, Ein Leben unter vielen Namen*, Vienna–Munich, 1977, p. 337.

HANS-HEINRICH WILHELM

the dimensions of this task and of the still existing deficits in thoroughly research.

Little notice was taken of Eugen Kogon's replies to the questions "What had the Germans known of the concentration camps?" and "How had the German people reacted to the injustice?" given in his book about the "SS-State" that was long out of print and only republished in 1974. The extremely frank testimonies of Prince Ferdinand von der Leyen in his memoirs, which appeared in 1965 and in which he did not mince words on this and other "delicate" subjects, seem to have been read by none at all.

"... An even more horrific communication arrived from one of our branches. There, SS-Commandos had penetrated into the houses and, from the upper stories, threw down those children not yet able to walk, through the windows onto the pavement. Nowadays, some people are again inclined to dismiss such things as horror tales of a bygone epoch. However, at that time, the outsider who had chanced to witness such inhumanity would have been wary of revealing such dangerous knowledge had it not corresponded to the truth.

The methodicalness of the killing must finally have become visible even to the totally blind. One could also have imagined that the work commandos, where a part of those still able to work were concentrated, were only one station on the road to the "Final Solution."

Shortly before, an acquaintance, an officer from the area of Heeresgruppe Nord, had shown me photographs of the shootings of Jews which had hardly seemed believable to me. But now, there could no longer be any doubt that these were not instances of individual bestial brutality, but rather a systematic operation....

It is probably true that apart from the participants, who kept quiet, the whole extent of the horror was hardly known to anyone; but those who were in the East, and especially those who were in the General Government, must at least have heard of the extermination of the Jews, though they were not in a position to verify the vast numbers and the bestiality of the executions which were talked about. However, those in the military echelon who knew nothing of the German bestiality could at best ascribe this ignorance to wanting not to know, according to the maxim "ignorance is bliss," by simply refusing unwelcome talk on the subject. A commander-in-chief who claims he had not known what had taken place in this sphere at the rear of the military area lacks credibility....

THE HOLOCAUST IN NS RHETORIC

Twenty years later I asked General Warlimont, who occupied the highest position in the Supreme Army Command after Field Marshal Keitel and *Generaloberst* Jodl, whether, in the circle to which he belonged in those years, ignorance of the Jewish "Final Solution" had been possible. It seems obvious that in this military environment, which had been granted no influence on political or party decisions, the "Jewish Question" was not the main subject of conversation, so that his answer, that he knew little about it, cannot simply be brushed aside. But, and the "but" needs to be underlined, this assumes that officers occupying the most senior positions were blind and deaf all those years to what did not concern their own sphere, though one would imagine that those positions were filled by men of superior intelligence. Thus there remain but two possibilities: to doubt their intelligence or their honesty. This kind of not knowing was easy to maintain: a strict word by a superior would have sufficed to discourage any "thirst for knowledge." Yet, this strict word already presupposed knowledge....

A people whose *Staatsjugend* (National Youth) sang "When Jewish Blood Squirts from the Knife" can hardly claim belief in the harmlessness of this organized rabble-rousing. Even the most naive could hardly have failed to see that it did not stop with this song.

Today, the credibility of those generals [of the Supreme Military Command] is merely of psychological or historical interest. But what was the reality regarding the majority of the German people? I was rarely on leave, so that my impressions could be no more than sporadic. But there is no doubt whatsoever that there was not a single person in Germany who did not know that the Jews were being harmed, and had been for years.... The terrible thing was that these crimes were not isolated cases. After all, the extermination of millions of people demands many thousands who are prepared to kill, not from passion, but as a profession. A certain number were doubtlessly sadists to be found at all times and in all places. But the majority could hardly have been criminals already at home.... Maybe they even considered themselves heroes....⁴

Under the overwhelming influence of the predominant thesis — the alleged impenetrable secrecy — the guild of historians searched almost exclusively in the former "secret" sources for the necessary evidence for the trigger effect of the motives, the

⁴ Cf. Kogon, *loc. cit.*, pp. 393–401; F.v.d. Leyen, *Rückblick zum Mauerwald, Vier Kriegsjahre im Oberkommando des Heeres*, Munich, 1965, pp. 62–68, also pp. 6–8, 23–25, 29–30, 49–50, 61, 83–84, 104, 128–130, 158–159, 164.

HANS-HEINRICH WILHELM

short- and long-term aims, and for the actual acts of the "Final Solutioners" and their international accomplices. The fact that publicity is often the most effective method of maintaining secrecy — in spite of numerous, relevant *bons mots* by politicians, at least since the time of Bismarck — had not yet come to their notice or they were simply unable to imagine that in such an exceptional case someone could consider utilizing such methods. In instances where it was impossible to obtain "secret" evidence from official, somiofficial or "party official" provenance, and even more intimate sources, such as diaries and private correspondence, did not expedite matters, the guild was easily and frequently intimidated by those who "naively" pressed about such "unresolved" points. Recently, a British writer, apparently in a bid for publicity and an attempt to increase his fame at almost any price, caused a momentary sensation with the amazing statement that Hitler himself had known nothing of the "Final Solution," and that his staff had deceived him.⁵

There is no doubt that Hitler approved the "Final Solution." In 1944 he proudly declared himself in favor of it, after the "Final Solution" had been set in motion in great style in 1941/42 and, apart from Hungary, had almost been completed. On May 26, 1944, he still "justified" it, anticipating numerous arguments of the right-wing radicals' apologetics after 1945, during a course of instruction for generals and officers at Berchtesgaden repeatedly interrupted by "living applause"⁶:

What I believe I must regard as an ideal worth striving for is a nation which in its entirety presents a healthy image. Because in the long run I would be unable to represent state interests with a different kind of entity: one day it will disintegrate, at the latest upon the entry of a

⁵ Cf. H. Broszat, "Hitler und die Genesis der 'Endlösung,' Aus Anlass der Thesen von David Irving," *VfZ*, vol. 25, 1977, pp. 769–775, and the preceding discussion in the mass media, triggered by the article "Kecke Revision" in *Der Spiegel* of July 4, 1977, pp. 72–74.

⁶ Cf. the annotated reprint of the complete text: H.-H. Wilhelm, "Hitlers Ansprache vor Generalen und Offizieren am 26. Mai 1944," *Militär-geschichtliche Mitteilungen*, no. 20, 1976, pp. 123–170.

THE HOLOCAUST IN NS RHETORIC

catalyst which suddenly unites and mobilizes this leftist mass, and that, after all, is what the foreign body of Jewry has been....

I have therefore from the beginning made it the aim of my movement to overcome the former class-state. I must admit now that in one sphere this was easy for us. Within the German nation we had all in all some 800,000 Jews, in the Ostmark more than a million and with the Sudetenland well above a million.... There were many who did not understand why just here I acted so brutally and ruthlessly, and the social class which did not understand was precisely the one that ought to be the most grateful to me....

I have pushed Jewry out of its positions, pushed it out ruthlessly. Here too I acted exactly as nature does, not cruelly, but rationally, in order to preserve the better....

By removing the Jew, I eliminated the possibility of the formation of any kind of revolutionary nucleus or germ cell.⁷ One can of course tell me: Well, could you not have solved this more simply — or rather, not more simply, because everything else would have been more complicated, but more humanely? Officers, sirs, were engaged in a life and death struggle. If our opponents were to be the victors in this battle, the German people would be exterminated. Bolshevism would slaughter millions and millions and millions of our intellectuals. Those not killed by a shot in the neck would be deported. The children of the upper classes would disappear, be eliminated. This whole bestiality has been organized by the Jew. Today incendiaries and other bombs are being dropped on our cities even though the enemy knows that he only hits women and children. Quite ordinary trains are being shot at, peasants in the field are shot. In one night, in a city like Hamburg, we lost more than 40,000 women and children who were burned. Do not expect anything else from me but that I attend the national interest without consideration in the manner which I believe will produce the greatest effect and benefit for the German nation.

(Prolonged and lively applause)

Precisely here, just as everywhere else, humaneness would be the most profound cruelty toward one's own people. If I already incur the hatred

⁷ The claim that with the removal of the Jews, the last possible internal trouble spot had been eliminated, became a frequently quoted saying in National-Socialist rhetoric from 1943 on and partly also already in NS-literature; see additional examples in the documents quoted above in footnote no. 6, pp. 167–168, note 74.

HANS-HEINRICH WILHELM

of the Jews, then at least I do not want to miss the advantages of such hatred.

(Hear, hear!)

The advantage lies in our having a cleanly organized entity with which none can any longer interfere.

Just look at the other states in comparison. We have gained insight into a state that went in the opposite direction: Hungary. The entire state undermined and corroded, Jews everywhere, right to the top positions, Jews and again Jews, and the whole of the state covered by an, I must say, unbroken net of agents and spies who have not so far launched their attack because they feared that a premature attack would drag us in, but they lay in wait for this attack. Here too I intervened and this problem will also now be solved, as I am forced to state: The Jew has placed the extermination of the German people on his program. I stated on September 1, 1939 at the German Reichstag: If someone believes in exterminating the German nation through such a world war, he is mistaken; if Jewry really arranges this, then the one to be exterminated will be Jewry.⁸

(Lively applause⁹)

It was perhaps the most important step to tidy our internal affairs... What had we not all to eliminate!...

There was and still is considerable perplexity as to how well informed Propaganda Minister Goebbels was. This uncertainty is due to the yet unpublished fragments of his diary. Many riddles would find quick solutions by recourse to the official documents of his ministry and of the Berlin *Gauleitung*, which was directed

⁸ As a matter of fact it was not on September 1, 1939, but on January 30, 1939 that Hitler stated before the Reichstag: "If international Jewish finance inside and outside Germany should succeed once again to plunge the nations into a world war, the result will not be the Bolshevization of the earth and hence Jewry's victory, but the extermination of the Jewish race in Europe!" (Verhandlungen des Reichstags, Stenographische Bericht, 4. Wahlperiode 1939-1942, vol. 460, p. 16)

⁹ Expressions of approval in such situations were not uncommon at that time. Cf. *Goebbels-Reden* H. Heiber, ed., vol. 2 (1939-1945), Munich, 1978, pp. 147 f. (November 17, 1942), 161, 166 (January 30, 1943), 177-179, 182-183, 186 (February 18, 1943), 223-224, 226, 228, 231-236 (June 5, 1943), 330-331 (June 4, 1944); cf. also note 77 for the complete printed text of this speech (cf. footnote 6).

THE HOLOCAUST IN NS RHETORIC

by Goebbels in *Personalunion*. Unexplicably this has not been done until now. Many riddles would never have arisen if in the search for suitable evidence, not only in the sensational case of the Minister of Propaganda, but in general, all printed material — all “open sources” — had not been ignored in the mistaken assumption they were useless for this purpose.

For reasons of space we cannot deal at length with Goebbels' speech at the Nuremberg Reichstag in 1936, which was fundamental for National-Socialist doctrine concerning the Jewish character of Bolshevism, but which, since 1945, has been curiously overlooked.¹⁰ We shall only quote the end of another unfortunately forgotten treatise by Goebbels on the “*Rassenfrage und Weltpropaganda*” (Question of Race and World Propaganda) published in 1934 in the series *Rasse*, of the *Schriften zur politischen Bildung*, issue 1930 of *Friedrich Manns Pädagogisches Magazin*, a then highly reputed periodical:

There is nothing that is impossible. It is merely a question of making the seemingly impossible possible by the power of the spirit. Germany will not be wrecked by the racial problem, on the contrary: The future of our people lies in its solution. As in so many other spheres, we shall also here march ahead as the pioneers of the whole world. The revolution that we have made is of epoch-making significance. Perhaps at the end of it, the poet's word will come true that “One day Germany's character will lead the world to its recovery!”¹¹

¹⁰ J. Goebbels, *Der Bolschewismus in Theorie und Praxis, Rede auf dem Parteikongress in Nürnberg 1936*, Munich, 1936; cf. also *Goebbels-Reden*, vol. 1 (1932–1939), pp. 246–250 (Goebbels on September 16, 1935 in Nuremberg at a special conference of Gauleiters and District Propaganda Chiefs on the “Wesen, Methoden und Ziele der Propaganda”), and Goebbels' Party Convention speech of September 14, 1935, explained there along propaganda-tactics lines: “Der Bolschewismus — die Internationale des Grauens,” which was at that time also printed in the daily press.

¹¹ J. Goebbels, “Rassenfrage und Weltpropaganda” (= *Schriften zur politischen Bildung*, Gesellschaft “Deutscher Staat” ed., Series XII, *Rasse*, No. 6: *Fr. Mann's Pädagogisches Magazin*, No. 1390), Langensalza, 1934, pp. 1–17.

HANS-HEINRICH WILHELM

Two examples in extenso will illustrate for what one has to be prepared in the systematic disclosure, yet to come, of the genre of "open sources": a leading article by Goebbels in the prestigious paper *Das Reich* from 1943, which has not been quoted since 1945; and a somewhat obscure tractate from 1944 by Dr. Robert Ley, the *Reichsorganisationsleiter* of the NSDAP, the leader of the German Labor Front and founder of the organization "*Kraft durch Freude*" (Strength through Joy).

According to Hans Dieter Müller, the publisher of a "facsimile cross-section" of *Das Reich*, this weekly began on May 26, 1940 with a circulation of half a million, which by the spring of 1944 had increased to almost a million and a half, thus closely approaching the total circulation of the *Völkischer Beobachter*.¹² It ceased to appear not before April 22, 1945 and was the only National-Socialist newspaper that gained remarkable acceptance even abroad. In Germany itself, according to Müller, the marketable imitation of the noble *Observer* within a few months had become "the favorite of the middle-class intelligentsia and the most widely read paper among the officer corps.... The weekly *Das Reich* can be considered the greatest journalistic success in the Third Reich." To take double advantage of this success, Goebbels' editorials were exploited by the Great German Radio. Every week, on Friday evenings and again on Sunday mornings, these articles were read out word for word — as Müller put it, as "customary edification and weekly sermons" — often followed by a commentary and detailed interpretations, to say nothing of the customary press echo at home and abroad and its inevitable multiplex "recycling" in the NS mass media in the following weeks. According to an editorial eulogy for Goebbels ("*Unser Leitartikler*" — Our Leader Writer) on the occasion of his 45th birthday, in the November 1, 1942 issue,¹³

¹² *Facsimile-Querschnitt durch Das Reich*, H.D. Müller, ed., introduction by H. Pross, Munich, 1964, p. 7; for the following cf. in particular pp. 7–29 ("Portrait" of the journal and commentary).

¹³ Reprinted by Müller, *ibid.*, pp. 128 ff..

THE HOLOCAUST IN NS RHETORIC

the positive response to the editorials by “Dr. G.” was extraordinary, perhaps surpassing that of the rest of the journal which ranked high in the public’s favor. Müller commented on the reprint of this eulogy in his “*Facsimile-Querschnitt*”: “According to [my] memory, the considerable response to Goebbels’ editorials among the troops at the front was a fact.”¹⁴

Already on November 16, 1941 — in an editorial “The Jews Are Guilty!” — Goebbels, with a number of grandiloquent sentences, had adopted a basic attitude to the “Final Solution,” in full swing since June 22, 1941:

The historic guilt of the Jews for the outbreak and expansion of this war has been sufficiently proved to need no further elaboration. The Jews wanted their war and now they have it. But the prophecy uttered by the Führer on January 30, 1939 at the Reichstag is coming true, namely that if Jewish international finance should succeed once again in plunging the nations into a world war, the result would not be the Bolshevization of the earth and hence Jewry’s victory, but the destruction of the Jewish race in Europe.

We are just experiencing the fulfillment of this prophecy and thus a fate though hard but more than justified is overtaking Jewry. Pity or indeed regret are totally inappropriate. In instigating this world war, Jewry had an entirely mistaken estimate of the forces at its disposal, and it is now suffering the gradual process of annihilation which it had intended for us and would have carried out unhesitatingly if it had had the power to do so. It now perishes according to its own precept of “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth!”

In this historical conflict, every Jew is our enemy irrespective of whether he vegetates in a Polish ghetto or still ekes out a parasitical living in Berlin or Hamburg, or whether he engages in warmongering in New York or Washington.... There are Jews who, from their external appearance, are hardly recognizable as such.... These are the most dangerous... The Jews gradually have come to realize that they are totally isolated and they are now trying a new trick.... The Jews are dispatching their compassion guard. With this they may temporarily confuse a few simple souls, but not us. We know precisely where we stand with them.

Already on their account we must win the war. If we were to lose it, those Jewish honorable men, pretending to be harmless, would suddenly

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

HANS-HEINRICH WILHELM

turn into ferocious wolves. They would pounce on our people, on our women and children, so as to wreak their vengeance on them, for which there is no precedence in all of history.... We can no longer turn back from our battle against Judaism — quite apart from the fact that we don't in the least want to. The Jews must be separated from the German national community because they endanger our national unity.

This is an elementary law of national and social hygiene. They will never give any peace. If they could, they would drag one nation after another into war with us. What do they care for the ensuing suffering of humanity when they can get all the world under their plutocracy and bloody tyranny! The Jews are a parasitical race which, like a rotten mold, will cover the cultures of nations of good health but poor instinct. There is only one effective remedy: to excise and dispose.

How mean the stupid, thoughtless and sentimental arguments of a few remaining friends of Jews are vis-à-vis this world problem which has occupied mankind for thousands of years!... There is a difference between one human being and another, just as there is a difference between one animal and another.... The fact that the Jew still lives among us does not prove that he belongs among us, just as the flea, by virtue of dwelling in a house, does not turn into a domestic animal. If Mr. Bramsig or Mrs. Knöterich feel a stir of pity at the sight of an old woman wearing the Yellow Star, then let them kindly not forget that a distant nephew of that old woman named Nathan Kaufman who sits in New York has prepared a plan according to which the German population under the age of 60¹⁵ is to be sterilized, and that the son of her distant uncle, a warmonger, by name of Baruch or Morgenthau or Untermayer, stands behind Mr. Roosevelt in order to push him into the war....¹⁶

Klopstock already gave us the good piece of advice not to be overly just; our enemies would not nobly consider the beauty of our error.

Nowhere does this apply more than in our relationship with the Jews. Here, softness is not merely weakness, but neglect of duty, as well as a

¹⁵ Cf. W. Benz, "Judenvernichtung aus Notwehr? Die Legenden um Theodore N. Kaufman," *VfZ*, vol. 29, 1981, pp. 615–630, and Th. N. Kaufman, *Germany Must Perish*, Newark, New Jersey, 1941, *idem*, *No More German Wars! Being an Outline of Suggestions for Their Permanent Cessation*, Newark, New Jersey, 1942. Benz: "The Name 'Nathan' is a German Invention." It would appear that by introducing this new Nathan, it was hoped in Berlin to strike a decisive blow at the tradition of Lessing's Nathan in Germany. This is also borne out by the fact that until the end of the war no attention was paid to Kaufman's considerably "milder" second work where plans for sterilization were no longer mentioned, but where there was a great deal about "re-education."

¹⁶ Amongst others, cf. also R. Ley, *Roosevelt verrät Amerika*, Berlin, 1942.

THE HOLOCAUST IN NS RHETORIC

crime against state security.... There is no difference between one Jew and another. Every Jew is a sworn enemy of the German People.... Every German soldier who falls in this war must be put on the debit account of the Jews. They have him on their conscience and that is why they must be made to pay.... The Jews enjoy the protection of the enemy countries. No further proof is needed for the pernicious role they play in our nation.... After his defeat, the decent foe deserves our magnanimity. But the Jew is not a decent foe, he only pretends.... It's the business of the government to finish with them once and for all. No one has the right to act on his own initiative, but everyone has the duty to honor the measures of the state against the Jews, to support them vis-à-vis everyone and not to be led astray by any tricks and evasions by the Jews, but clearly recognize the danger of the Jews....¹⁷

Under the headline "The Most Dangerous Enemy" and as a kind of commentary to an unusually large eye-catching front-page photograph, *Das Reich* on May 9, 1943 published another pertinent editorial by Hitler's Chief Propagandist, entitled: "The War and the Jews." According to the caption, the photograph showed Rabbi David de Sola Pool and Aron L. Weinstein "at the head of a procession of rabbis at the founding of a society combating racial politics." If the quotation of Bernard Lecache from "Le droit de vivre" on November 18, 1938 was correct, the main aims of this society were to enforce a war without pardon, to decree an economic blockade against Germany and to quarter the German nation. The issue appeared three months after the

¹⁷ The full text is reprinted by Müller, *op. cit.*, pp. 98–101. Goebbels had already come out with an article about Jews, mimicry and "Chuzbe" (*sic*) in the 29th issue of the paper, on July 20, 1941, in which he prophesied the Jews a judgment not only in Germany but in all of "awakening" Europe: "The stab will be administered without mercy and without pity. The enemy of the world is brought down and Europe has its peace.... Just as the fist of the awakening Germany once smashed down on this colossal filth, thus one day the fist of awakening Europe will smash down on it "

Goebbels also elaborated about Jewish *chutzpah* in a speech in Wuppertal on November 17, 1942 (*Goebbels-Reden*, vol. 2, pp. 147f). In the same speech he also repeated the Klopstock quotation (p. 154). Additional analogies on the argumentation here and in the following article by Goebbels, also in the *Goebbels-Reden* of the years 1942/1944 mentioned above in note 9.

HANS-HEINRICH WILHELM

Stalingrad debacle, but still several weeks before the beginning of the operation "Zitadelle" against the Soviet salient at Kursk and before the Anglo-American landing in Sicily. The plain speech of Goebbels this time succeeded in eclipsing even his own article of November 16, 1941. Considering its basic similarity of purpose, it is hardly surprising that there were repetitions and overlappings. Nevertheless, because of its undisputably fundamental significance, we shall quote almost in full this document, never reprinted since 1945¹⁸:

The naivety, not to say, ignorance with which in the fourth year of this gigantic struggle certain circles in Europe still relate to the "Jewish Question" is truly amazing. They simply refuse to comprehend that this is a war of the Jewish race and its allied nations against Aryan humanity as well as against Western culture and civilization. Hence, all that is dear and precious to us Germans and Europeans as champions of the principle of a civilized world order hangs in the balance. Those circles all too easily see the "Jewish Question" as a human question. They therefore judge it more according to a sudden stir of the emotions than according to reasoned understanding and cool common sense. And yet, there is no doubt whatsoever that by showing the slightest weakness in the solution of the "Jewish Question," especially now in the course of this war, we might possibly open the door to the most dreadful danger for our people, our Reich and all of Europe.

Jewry wanted this war. Wherever one looks in the enemy camp, on both the plutocratic and the Bolshevist side, behind the front-line exponents of the opposing military leadership, one sees the Jews as motivators, agitators and rabble rousers. They organize the enemy's war economy, they draw up the extermination and annihilation plans intended for the Axis powers, from among their ranks in England and the United States are recruited the vengeance-seeking agitators, foaming blood at the mouth, as well as the political amok runners, and in the Soviet Union, the terrorist GPU-Commissars. It is they, therefore, who constitute the cement that holds the enemy coalition together. They see in the National-Socialist Reich a power that is a match for them and their aspiration for world domination not only from the military, but also from

¹⁸ In the omitted parts Goebbels devoted his wishful thinking to the indeed existing, but much overestimated question of rising anti-Semitism even in Great Britain and the United States.

THE HOLOCAUST IN NS RHETORIC

the intellectual aspect. Hence their rage and their profound hatred. Do not imagine that the Old Testament outbursts for revenge with which they fill their newspapers and radio programs are nothing but political literature. They would carry them out to the last letter, had they the power to do so.

It is therefore a decree of state security that in our own country we adopt those measures which appear suitable for protecting the fighting German national community from this danger. Here and there this might lead to grave decisions, but that is of no account in the face of this danger, because this is a racial war. It emanated from the Jews and pursues no other plan or aim but the destruction and annihilation of our nation. We are Jewry's only remaining obstacle on its path to world domination. Were the Axis powers to lose the war, there would no longer be a dike capable of protecting Europe from the Jewish-Bolshevik inundation...

No prophetic utterance of the Führer is coming to pass with such tremendous certainty and inevitability as: "If the Jewry succeeds in provoking a second world war, it will not lead to the extermination of Aryan mankind but to the obliteration of the Jewish race."¹⁹ This process is a significant event in world history, and since it will presumably lead to unforeseen consequences, it needs time. But it can no longer be stopped. This process is now dependent upon its direction along the right channels and above all to knock the weapon of public deception out of the hand of the Jews who are, naturally, putting up a desperate fight. It can be noticed already today how the Jews, as the catastrophe threatening them draws closer, attempt to dissolve slowly in the background. Instead, they send forth their Publicity-Goyim. It won't be long before they claim that it was'n't they and proclaim their innocence to high heaven.

It cannot be denied, of course, that we have some experience in this sphere and we shall definitely see to it that they will not succeed in this. The Jews will have to answer for their innumerable crimes against humanity's happiness and peace, and one day the punishment they already suffer in Germany will catch up with them all over the world.²⁰ We discuss this without any feelings of resentment; the times are too serious for planning naive acts of revenge. What is involved here is a world problem of the utmost importance which can and must be solved by the generation alive today. There is no room here for sentimental considerations. In the case of Judaism we are facing the embodiment of

¹⁹ Cf. footnote 8 and the relevant passage in the article of November 16, 1941.

²⁰ Cf. footnote 17 and pp. 26–29.

HANS-HEINRICH WILHELM

the general decline of the world. We either overcome this danger or the nations will be overcome by it.

Moreover, no one is to tell us that the victor ought to practice magnanimity. For the time being, we are victorious only in our own country. However, the victory at home has increased the infernal hatred of world Jewry for us, while the Jews under Axis control still consider themselves to be its outpost. They desire the defeat of the Axis powers because only from this they can assure themselves the restoration of their former privileges. What is more natural than that we first rid ourselves of the danger threatening us, i.e. that we first of all free our rear to enable us to continue our fight against the outside energetically and unconditionally?²¹ The only choice one ever has with regard to Judaism is to abdicate power to it or to contest its rights altogether. We have adopted the second way. Just as our opponents unconditionally follow the former, so we follow the latter. The future will show who comes off well. Anyway, as things are developing, they appear to favor us rather than our enemies. Not love, but hatred for the Jews is everywhere on the increase. It is our firm belief that by the end of this war, mankind completely informed in the "Jewish Question" will face Judaism.

We are fully aware that they hate us from the depth of their hearts. But we feel extremely comfortable with this hatred. There is no suffering which they would not bring upon us if they had the power. That is why one must not grant them even the appearances of power. Moreover, it is our duty, on the strength of our deeper insight, to instruct the world in their going about and doing mischief, to keep on proving the disastrous role they play, especially in the instigation and implementation of this war, to attack them incessantly, to accuse them without mercy of the crimes they have committed, until the nations begin to wake up. It may take a long time, but it's worth it because we thus obliterate the most dangerous foe which has ever threatened the life, freedom and dignity of mankind. Here, mercy is impossible. Pity we only have for the countless millions of our own nation and the other European nations who would be

²¹ Cf. Hitler's remarks, pp. 4–5, and Himmler's Sonthofen speech of May 24, 1944 to generals, Archives of *IfZ*, MA-316, sheet 2614608–46: "Another question that was decisive for the internal security of the Reich and of Europe was the "Jewish Question." It was uncompromisingly solved according to orders and to rational understanding.... I am convinced of one thing: I would have been pessimistic about the front put up in the East of the General Government if we had not solved the "Jewish Question" there, that is to say, if the ghetto in Lublin had still existed and the giant ghetto with 500,000 people in Warsaw, whose clearance, gentlemen, last year cost us five weeks of street fighting...."

THE HOLOCAUST IN NS RHETORIC

defenceless exposed to the hate and extermination desires of this devilish race if we here were to grow weak and finally fail in this battle.²² It is precisely the narrow-minded intellectual, who to this day is the most likely to defend the Jews, who would be their first victim.

For that reason vigilance is in place here for everybody. We must be on our guard because the international enemy of the world goes about his business with the greatest cunning. From the depths of his dark guilty conscience, he has a premonition that this war, which he instigated so irresponsibly, and which was to be his last stride toward world domination, has developed into a war for his racial existence. He tries desperately to arrest the now inevitable course of events. It won't help him. We shall carry on with it. By the end of it, Hitler's prophecy, which world Jewry merely ridiculed when it was uttered in 1939, will have come true.

In Germany the Jews laughed when we first stood up against them. By now, they definitely no longer feel like laughing.²³ They chose the war

²² As we know, Himmler expressed himself on the same lines — even more drastically — on October 4, 1943 in a speech to *SS-Gruppenführers* in Posen, *IMT*, vol. XXIX, pp. 122–123; J.C. Fest, *Das Gesicht des Dritten Reiches, Profile einer totalitären Herrschaft*, Frankfurt, 1969, pp. 138–139.

²³ The “*vergangene Lachen*” [vanished laughter] gradually became part of the sayings, obligatory in every speech made by a leading NS-functionary on the “solution of the ‘Jewish Question’”; thus Hitler on September 30, 1942 in the Berlin Sport Palace: “The Jews in Germany also once laughed at my prophecies. I do not know if today they still laugh or whether they no longer feel like laughing. Now too I can but declare: Their desire to laugh will everywhere vanish,” *Hitler-Reden und Proklamationen 1932–1945*, M. Domarus, ed., vol. II/2, Wiesbaden, 1973, p. 1920. Hitler, on November 8, 1942 in the Munich Löwenbraukeller: “They laughed at me for being a prophet. Of those who laughed at that time, countless numbers no longer laugh. Those who still laugh today, soon will no longer laugh.” (*Völkischer Beobachter*, November 10, 1941, here quoted according to a readers’ letter page from *Der Spiegel* of March 5, 1979; this passage is missing in Domarus). Goebbels on January 30, 1943: “International Jewry rejoices as it has so frequently rejoiced!... They were mistaken in the enemy camp.... From the depth and breadth of our nation the shout for an absolute total war effort in the widest sense of the word reaches our ears!...” (Heiber, *loc. cit.*, pp. 161–166). Goebbels on June 5, 1943 at the Berlin Sport Palace: “It is possible that the Jewish press agitators in London and Washington approach the war with the kind of ‘mood’ which they miss with the German people. The reason is that they themselves, unfortunately, never feel the war! The ‘mood’ of their racial comrades in Germany presumably differs considerably from theirs! That is, because being also responsible for this war, they bear a certain part in it, as they deserve!... One day retribution will come!... The Jews in London and Washington rejoice too soon.... The

HANS-HEINRICH WILHELM

against us, but it is about to turn into a war against them. When they

disastrous operations of the Jews are being recognized ever more clearly in all countries.... It won't be long before the call for the party guilty of this terrible drama of the nations will sound throughout the world! We shall see to it that this question will then also receive a reply!... Many times before in their history the Jews were close to this triumph — just as they believe they are today. But always, at the last moment their downfall occurs from the uttermost height to the lowest depth! That's how it is also going to be this time, this time too Lucifer will fall! Our Europe will not offer them the crown, but the armored fist! The Jew will not be the patriarch and the ancestor of the whole world, but a leper, the scum, the victim of his own criminal ambition which will founder on our strength and on the understanding of our nation!... As the Colorado beetle destroys the potato fields — in fact, cannot but destroy them — the Jew destroys states and nations! Against this there is one resort only, namely: to remove this danger totally!" (*Goebbels-Reden*, vol. 2, pp. 223–224, 228, 234–235). Goebbels on June 4, 1944 on the Adolf-Hitler-Platz (Hauptmarkt) in Nuremberg: "It would have been very unwise if we had given exact explanations to the Jews, prior to the Seizure of Power, of what we intended to do with them. It was quite good and useful that at least part of the Jews thought: 'Oh well, it won't get quite so bad; they talk a lot, but it still remains to be seen what they are going to do.' It was quite good that [they] did not take the National-Socialist movement quite as seriously as it actually deserved..." (Heiber, *loc. cit.*, p. 330).

The Jewish lack of seriousness as a provocative symbol of a Jewish feeling of superiority vis-à-vis the mediocrity of the anti-Semitic petit bourgeois was obviously extremely well suited to the propagandistic incitement of a nation, which normally liked to think of itself as having a far greater sense of humor than other nations and considered this to be a kind of national virtue: Humor turned against oneself was no longer amusing. Even grand masters at biting irony such as Goebbels and Hitler seemed unable to stand it when someone else, without uttering a word, smiled complacently or merely had momentary good reasons for sneering at them — even if that someone lived far away in London or Washington. A man like Robert Ley, outwardly the good-natured Rhinelander, appeared to suffer even more at the mere thought that others might mock him, of all people, or at a safe distance make fun of him while he once again, with but scant hope for real success, sweated out his guts rhetorically. These people, themselves social climbers, have-nots, and only all too familiar with the mental state of a people which saw itself as a "young nation," as a people of have-nots — without space, without a place in the sun, took very seriously their resentment vis-à-vis anyone within the establishment. They therefore insisted on being taken absolutely seriously as the representatives and spokesmen of their nation and considered themselves personally discriminated against and their national honor offended by any kind of condescension.

THE HOLOCAUST IN NS RHETORIC

planned the total destruction of the German people, they signed their own death warrant. Here too, world history will be the last judgement.

Was it possible that on the basis of selective perception millions of readers and listeners simply did not see or hear the decisive passages of an article such as this? Had Goebbels, with all his tendency toward metaphorical and occasionally even euphemistic paraphrasing, still not expressed himself with sufficient clarity? Did his notorious blustering without any obligations also on this occasion leave sufficient loopholes? Dogs that bark don't bite. Did Hitler's crafty Propaganda Chief merely intend to provoke the foreign countries with some passages in *Das Reich* intentionally kept vague in order to triumphantly "clarify" in the next issue that the Germans are better than their reputation and that there isn't a true word in the anti-German "horror-propaganda"? How ingenuous did an attentive reader of *Das Reich* need to be to gather from such an article that the Jews were not threatened with complete biological extermination in the entire Axis dominion, but that so far, considering the circumstances, they were still comparatively well off and that this would not change within the foreseeable future?

It cannot be ruled out, of course, that by May 1943 many readers of *Das Reich* had different worries which kept them from reading Goebbels' editorials with their customary thoroughness. But what about the others? Did they too only take in what they wanted to absorb? Had "one" got tired by 1943 of the constant new editions of anti-Semitic tirades from the Propaganda Ministry? Did the listeners, at the mere announcement of what broadcast was awaiting them, switch off, either literally or figuratively? Or was it for different reasons that some of the readers of 1943 "no longer remembered" this article in 1945? How can it be explained that even among the paper's illustrious group of writers — whose significance for postwar Germany's political journalism still needs closer examination, but should on no account be underrated—there was no one able to recollect this

HANS-HEINRICH WILHELM

ominous article?²⁴ Or that it was not remembered even by their personal opponents and their less successful rivals?²⁵ An investigation for which it is not too late even now may produce astonishing, but more likely disappointing results.²⁶ Why did foreign readers, one of whom according to Hans Dieter Müller was Winston Churchill, keep so strangely silent? Question upon question.

This article, which seems to have widely hushed up, is also missing in Hans Dieter Müller's *Facsimile-Querschnitt*, and appears neither in the current biographies of Goebbels nor in the most distinguished studies on the subject of the Holocaust, and as a result it has not yet been mentioned in any NS-court case. It is a different matter when it comes to Robert Ley's last concoction on the "Jewish Question" still in print, in a way the "grand summary" of his "experiences" in this sphere. This article reveals by itself even today to everybody that self-respecting readers would hardly have accepted it from the first word to the last, and as a rule quickly laid it aside; whether with justification, is a different question. However, the repulsive low niveau of his essay, of which long passages read merely like the umpteenth rehash of Dietrich Eckart's "*Das Judentum in uns und ausser uns*," full of gross misunderstandings vis-à-vis the *Vorlage* and even

²⁴ In his review of the Harlan film "*Jud Süß*" for *Das Reich*, Karl Korn wrote on September 29, 1940: "One senses and recognizes from this film that the Jewish problem in Germany has been internally overcome." For many years after the war, the co-founder of the FAZ belonged to the elite of the Federal German feature-page editors. Also Rudolf Augstein and Friedrich Luft, Gerhard F. Hering and Theodor Heuss published in *Das Reich*, like many others.

²⁵ Müller, on the privileges of *Das Reich* contributors: "Socially [they] belonged to the leading journalists: an editor received from 700 to 900 Reichsmark; a department head from 1,100 to 1,500 Reichsmark; this corresponded to the salary scale of a colonel and above. Payment per line was from 40 to 50 Reichspfennige, but there were also higher remunerations.... As an editor, one was 'not available' for military service" (p. 13).

²⁶ A certain foretaste may already be conveyed by R. Augstein's confession, "I Had not Known," *Der Spiegel*, January 29, 1979, on the occasion of the first transmission of the TV Holocaust series, p. 20.

THE HOLOCAUST IN NS RHETORIC

more undifferentiated, more vulgar, presumptuous and self-righteous, must have repelled even the young readers, obediently ready to be indoctrinated, from the ranks, let us say, of the "Hitler Youth" (*HJ*) or the "Organization of German Girls" (*BDM*).²⁷ To swallow something of that kind required a special

²⁷ Cf. Dietrich Eckart, *Ein Vermächtnis*, A. Rosenberg, ed., Munich, 1928, pp. 191–230.

Already for the NS- classicist Eckart, the Jews were nothing but a synonym for anti-metaphysic worldliness, for untruthfulness, soullessness, shamelessness, impiety, superstition, irreligiosity, denial of immortality, materialism, fatalism, pantheism, anarchy, chaos and vacuousness, while to the non-Jews, to the extent that they were not already infected by the Jews, Eckart attributed invariably the opposite extremes. As to Eckart, the subliminal influence of the old theological tradition in criticizing the Jews was just obvious.

Eckart not only quoted Paul, Spinoza, Goethe, Kant, Schopenhauer, Voltaire, Pascal, Weininger and Martin Buber, he actually tried to conduct a halfway honest discussion with them. With Ley, the same quotations are already treated as "declined cultural values," as barely understood play-material, more or less convincing, possibly effective because of the accumulation of quotations. The beam in his own eye which still hurt Eckart, Ley never even noticed. The exceptions where he retroactively remembered it are few in number. Eckart was still able to postulate: "The world maintains itself... only by world-affirmation. In the case of the Jewish people this is represented completely purely, without an admixture of world-negation.... World-negation cannot disappear because it is an essential feature of the soul of mankind which is immortal.... If the Jew-people was to disappear, there would no longer be a nation that would uphold world-affirmation: the end of time will have come.... It follows from all this that Judaism forms part of mankind's organism like, let us say, certain bacteria of the human body, and is just as indispensable. As we know, our body contains a mass of small microorganisms without which, though they feed on us, it is bound to perish; somewhat similarly, mankind needs the Jewish element in order to preserve its human vitality until it has fulfilled its earthly mission.... Hence, we have to accept the Jews in our midst as a necessary evil, who knows for how many more millennia.... The mission of the German people ends, I am firmly convinced, with mankind's last hour, which we would never reach if the world-affirmation of the Jews among us were to disappear before then; this is because existence without world-affirmation is impossible.... There isn't—and never has been — an absolute world-negator, a person who is completely indifferent to earthly existence. Equally, there is no absolute world-affirmer, the kind of person who is not even for one moment moved by the thought of eternal continuity.... All of us swing to and fro between world-negation and world-affirmation; it just depends where one places one's emphasis..." (pp. 215–218, 223). Such statements would have been out of the question with Robert Ley.

HANS-HEINRICH WILHELM

kind of stomach! It is sufficient to mention merely the language of the subheads, which were no doubt intended to attract readers: "Judaism means destruction, extermination, ruin and murder!"; "He who eats [food] of Jews, will die of it!"; "The weapon of the Jew is money, gold is his idol"; "Moses Rothschild against the German worker"; "The eternal Jew"; "Judah must die." In addition there were the "illustrations" by Werner Kruse from Berlin in the well-known style of *Der Stürmer* with captions such as "The Jew as a *Halbkünstler* [semi-artist]"; "The Jew as an oppressor of mankind"; "The Jew bribes and is bribed"; "Princes and royal houses in the spider's web of the Jews"; "The Jew who promises paradise"; "The Jew — a parasite and a sponger"; "Camouflage of the Jews"; "With his bad blood the Jew contaminates the racially pure nations of Europe"; "Europe united in the battle for freedom against Bolshevism and Judaism." With such willingness for "didactic diminution," for intellectual sacrifice in the service of propaganda apparently directed at very simple souls, for primitiveness manifested on the part of Ley or his ghost writers, who would expect authoritative statements on the actual policy of the German Reich toward the Jews or indeed signposts for the future? Even so, there were such.

The eighty-page pamphlet published in 1944 by Franz Müller in Dresden—in Dresden, of all places—has the title *Pesthauch der Welt* [Pestilential Miasma of the World], so as to avoid any error concerning the object against whom this opus was directed. It depicted on its title page a ragged Ahasverus-figure with a tied-up bundle, a long, unkempt beard, piercing eyes, malevolently bared teeth and the obligatory overlong hooknose, quickly making his getaway. In all likelihood, it represented nothing more than the slightly rehashed notes of a rather typical speech by Ley. There was the inimitable pastoral tome, the defiant pathos of a "great confessor," plagiarizing Luther and other prominent figures of Protestant Church history, there was the proneness to an unsophisticated conglomeration of ideas, to risky associations devised on the spur of the moment, to concep-

THE HOLOCAUST IN NS RHETORIC

tual vagueness, which easily results from free association. Even now, there were still clearly identifiable moments of ecstatic, self-induced intoxication and pseudo-religious effusion, but on the other hand also “glowing” outbursts of hate-filled diatribes, by the end of which the orator, in his fanatic zeal and pharisaic self-righteousness, falling victim to his own autosuggestion, hardly seemed to know what he was saying. For his lack of dialectic incisiveness, as compared to Goebbels, Ley tried, not only on this occasion, to compensate with a rag bag of emotional pomposity, indiscriminately collected, a misunderstood or queerly re-interpreted medley of “higher education.” Where, as in this case, cheap “Führer” sycophancy did not come to his rescue in slightly more complicated situations and did not enable him to reach the concluding climax, considered indispensable in all meetings arranged to fanatize the so-called *Volksgemeinschaft* (“national community”), Ley’s intellectual efforts, according to contemporary reports, made very often a miserable impression. For popular opinion, always keen on character defamation, there was no doubt of the cause: the former food chemist was said to keep up an intimate relationship with the bottle.

Consistency, an elementary demand of scholarship, did not trouble Ley. Yet, for the political agitator, strange as it sounds, this weakness was hardly a disadvantage since an untrained public takes no notice of “such trivialities,” and a demagogue not inhibited by such “blinkers” can gain an enormous advantage over his more scrupulous colleagues. On this point Ley proved himself a faithful disciple of his lord and master who had already stated in *Mein Kampf* that it was easier and more effective to pursue a policy with a vague and inherently inconsistent party program than one that is clearly defined, conclusive and logically constructed. In this present instance, Ley, however unintentionally, overstepped the line to the pathological, while others, less rash, successfully fished in troubled waters of an unclearly marked frontier, until one day, in one way or another, a stop was put to their game.

HANS-HEINRICH WILHELM

Most of Ley's inconsistencies were the result of his craving for the mighty synthesis, for reconciling not only apparent but also actual antagonisms. As a prototype of the "*simplificateur terrible*," this fanatical poltroon, in his crazy endeavor to have almost everything over one common denominator, rarely could be stopped. Though himself suffering from blindness, he preached in glowing terms to everyone willing to listen; blind trust, blind obedience, blind faith in the "doctrine" he considered right, out of the firm conviction that he belonged to that select group which had fully recognized what stopped the world from disintegrating. His "dualistic conception of the world," supposedly based on scientific knowledge, that is to say, simple empirical observations, facilitated the unambiguous classification of all treated phenomena according to ethical and esthetic criteria, in other words, his extremely intolerant black and white representation. On the side of the "good party," that of the Ley's, everything was naturally perfect or at least close to perfect, while on the "bad side," the opposing one, by definition nothing was permitted to withstand, even slightly, Ley's criticism. Everything about the "enemy," the *altbösen Feind* (the evil foe of old, in the Lutheran sense), in this case, the Jews, like the devil of damnable or, speaking in medieval terms, of the devil. Everything was their fault. Even the most absurd allegations were justified: *credo, quia absurdum*. At times the Jews, like the devil of the old popular works and fairground plays, are too stupid and foolish for Ley; at times, they are too smart and cunning for him to qualify as an equal partner. Here they are too lazy and parasitical; and here, too diligent and industrious. On the one hand they stick together like leeches, even across the frontiers of class and country, and on the other, they are entirely at odds with one another, the classic embodiment of anarchy and chaos, unfit for any kind of social or civil amalgamation. One moment they are present as the symbol of subversion toward all authority and born enemies of any discipline, the next moment they appear as members of a gigantic world conspiracy, centrally directed, whose members are obedient only to its own com-

THE HOLOCAUST IN NS RHETORIC

mand, which can tomorrow call on its “fifth columns” in any and every country of the world to give the signal for revolution. In Ley’s view, all foreign governments had long since lost the power to extract themselves from the omnipotent influence of their Jewish “advisers” and clients, thus making the idea of revolution by the “princes of this world” and the “fathers of the lie” obsolete. Ley’s “plan for salvation” was in keeping with his abstruse “dualistic picture of the world”: the “redemption” of Aryan mankind from its seemingly insuperable, prolonged plight, from the claws of this omniscient Moloch, by means of exterminating the Jews, and then eradicating the “Jewish way of thinking” also amongst non-Jews.

The many insoluble contradictions in his portrayal of the enemy did not cause Ley a single moment of ideological embarrassment—in the late stage of his insanity in which *Pesthauch der Welt* was created. He may well have thought it “realistic” to consider the epitome of an enemy capable of absolutely everything, even the greatest inconsistencies. That the Jews projected their own wishful thinking on to their God Yahve no longer required any proof for Ley. In the way Ley portrayed Him, God-Yahve exhibited a whole series of characteristics which many a neo-Germanic Feuerbachian could only envy. This ought to have led to the inference that a remarkable closeness of character existed between the twentieth-century “pure Aryan” Wotan followers and the Old Testament Jews, hardly conforming to Ley’s harsh criticism of Yahve. Had Ley wanted his Germans to be the way the Jews were—in his view—and did he only blame the Jews for not being Germans, because they did not fight on his side with almost unchanged equipment? Not a little pointed in that direction.

Was Ley’s antitype, his quite unpromethean Lucifer, really so alien to his nature as he liked to pretend? Or was this late successor to the medieval Anti-Christ, often tagged with anti-Semitic clichés and derided for his Yiddish jargon, likewise a product of intensive introspection and a Feuerbach projection? From where did Ley take the intimate knowledge of all which

HANS-HEINRICH WILHELM

he imputed to his "archenemy of mankind," a composite of Mephistopheles, *Kasperle-Teufel* and Yahve, if not from within himself? How was it possible that so many of the allegedly empirically derived descriptions of the everyday actions of "the Jews" denoted activities of "the Germans" in World War II which, while wisely unmentioned, were undoubtedly known to Ley? Were there no Fifth Columns on the German side? Had not some Germans harbored plans for world power for their nation, with little concern for the methods they adopted for their implementation? What part was to be — and actually was — played by German nationals living abroad in the forced integration of Europe and in the extension of the German sphere of hegemony? What was the German attitude in internal and foreign policy to the maxim: "Divide and Rule"? How monolithic was Hitler's "*Führerstaat*"? Were there not also the beginnings of total anarchy in the Third Reich? Did the cult of "national unity," for years energetically fostered by Ley, not lead to any practical results? Did the Third Reich in its internal and external propaganda actually renounce the demagogic methods? How did the very institution of a propaganda ministry and the great number of audacious historical misrepresentations in Ley's book correlate with the Eighth Commandment and with the National-Socialist claim on the monopoly of truth? How could one reproach other nations for being chauvinist, but recognize as a right, or like Ley, as socialism, only that which aided the German nation?²⁸ Was the claim of being chosen limited to the Jews or were similar claims made by other nations, including the Germans? Were there no people in Germany in 1944 who would not or could not stop the extermination of another nation, fully aware that by this they were signing their own death warrant?

All too much points to the fact that Ley's attempt at portraying the nature of the Jews in its entirety, to bare their "innermost

²⁸ J.C. Fest quotes Ley's saying: "Socialism is what is useful to the nation!" (*loc. cit.*, p. 58).

THE HOLOCAUST IN NS RHETORIC

nucleus," turned into an involuntary exposure of himself, into an amazingly faithful reflection of "the Germans," especially the inner world of the "ugly German" of those years with all its "inner conflict." On closer inspection the "subhuman" turns out to be — both for good and for evil — the hidden or incorrectly pretended dead brother of the "I," as the imminent alter ego or at least as the necessary antithesis of real self-perception. In Ley's case, the most essential prerequisite was missing: the willingness for ruthless self-judgment when required. Possibly the best way to do justice to Ley's peculiar book is to interpret it as an expression of the "identity crisis" of a period laboring under false polarizations and as an important contribution to a "schizophrenia of everyday life" during the final phase of National-Socialist rule. It had been intended merely as logical evidence for the rightness of the "Final Solution" policy, i.e. as a conclusive ideological justification, a belated rationalization of a process that was rationally inexplicable in some of its aspects, and that was essentially completed by that time.

Let us allow Ley to speak for himself:

This war is an ideological battle and the side with the strongest faith will be the victor. The one with the strongest faith is invariably he who is convinced that he is right and who is indeed right, who acts correctly and with common sense, who understands the laws of nature and acts according to them.

In nature, life is an eternal struggle, and struggle is the father of all things. But a struggle is possible only between two opposing poles and powers. Mankind has named these opposing worlds "good" and "evil," "God" and "Satan," "noble" and "mean," "construction" and "destruction," "life" and "death"....

We claim that human structure in society — state, economy and culture — derives from the harmony of common blood, common race, and that the opposition is embodied in mankind's antipodals, in the Jew as the antipodal race. The National-Socialist idea is anti-Semitic because it does not fight the Jew for religious reasons, but solely from racial knowledge of ideological depths that the nations cannot live as racial communities unless they guard themselves from the Jews. The Jew is not just an enemy in his personal appearance, but still more in his Jewish mentality and his Jewish ideology....

HANS-HEINRICH WILHELM

Quite obviously, the destruction within the Jew is graded. There are Jews whose blood is affected to a lesser degree and others whose blood has completely disintegrated into fragments. Consequently there are also Jews who worship only profit and live by exploiting their host nations, and other Jews, already advanced in the biological process, who try to mate with the men and women of their host nations. A third kind of Jew, completely corroded within, indulges in ritual murder, i.e. his physical urge drives him to drink the blood of the host nations.²⁹

The Führer once said in a conversation with Dietrich Eckart:³⁰ "It does appear to be as you once wrote that one can only understand the Jew if one knows what, in the final analysis, his goal is: beyond world domination to the destruction of the world. He believes that he must get the better of mankind in order, so he tries to convince himself, to be able to secure paradise on earth for it.... However, already from the methods that he employs, one sees that secretly his goal urges him in a different direction. While pretending to himself that he elevates humanity, he torments it into desperation, into insanity, into its ruin. If he is not stopped, he will destroy it. That's what he is geared for, that's where it pushes him — even though he dimly suspects that by this he destroys himself as well. He cannot help himself, he has to do it. I think that the main cause for his hatred is the absolute dependence of his existence on that of his victims. To be forced to destroy someone and at the same time to harbor a presentiment that this leads inexorably to one's own doom, that's what it is: if you want, the tragedy of Lucifer...."

In one sphere, however, one must grant the Jew the greatest talent.

²⁹ Over the centuries the vampire motive, as we know, has time and again played an important role in anti-Semitism. Only in the year 1965 did the Catholic Church withdraw an express pronouncement by Pope Sixtus V (1585–1590) concerning the alleged ritual murder of a two-and-a-half-year-old child in Trient. Until this day, no case of Jewish ritual murder has been criminologically proved anywhere in the world.

In a *metaphorical* sense, in the history of mankind naturally the Jews, as well as others, not infrequently, made themselves a name as "blood suckers."

³⁰ This source of information could not be verified. In the light of Eckart's view, quoted in note 26, which here underwent a considerable change of meaning, it is doubtful that the conversation was actually conducted in this manner. Ley may well have been correct in assessing Hitler's estimate of the Jews. Almost every sentence against the Jews ascribed to Hitler could be applied with a great deal more justification to Hitler himself. In his case, active and passive persecution mania were verifiably mutually conditioned, and interacting. For him fear of encirclement and maniacal eagerness to destroy and exterminate were paired. Ultimately, this destructive mania actually culminated in self-destruction.

THE HOLOCAUST IN NS RHETORIC

There is no one in the world more gifted for crime, for lying, cheating, exploiting and swindling than the Jew...

It is perfectly clear that this war is the sole doing of Judah. The Jew Rothschild already said in London in 1934 that he would leave nothing undone in order to drive the world into war against National-Socialist Germany.

Since the Jew numerically constitutes a disappearing minority among mankind, he has to seek and find allied nations willing to carry out his inhuman intentions. Since from the human aspect the Jew is, and must be, the greatest of all criminals, he will seek this help where there is affinity, and that is among the dregs and scum of humanity. Every nation has a certain percentage of rabble and criminal elements... The Jew surrounds himself with this national dirt and turns it into his elite units and shock-troops.... An appeal to decency, sincerity, to courage and character is harder than an appeal to cowardice, malice and weakness. The Jew as a master of hypocrisy exploited this and invented sectarianism, Freemasonry, bourgeois mysticism and other superstitions in order to hunt simpletons and, like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, lure people to his lime twig. After all, the Jew knows that he can rule and destroy only if he succeeds in dividing the rest of mankind. The maxim "divide and rule" originates with the Jews.³¹ Hence, he is the enemy of all unity, of any organic construction and of every community.... He needs chaos in order to submerge. He has to destroy beauty to prevent his ugly Jewish mug of a face from being seen. The most glaring embodiment of this Jewish vileness we find in the Soviet Union....

Thus I claim and prove that Judaism and Bolshevism have always and at all times been, and still are, one and the same thing. Moses, as the founder of the Jewish Rabbinical state, was the first exponent of the teaching which today we call Bolshevism. From then until Stalin, a single red thread runs through human history which is visible wherever Judah is active in trying to destroy human culture, human beauty and national unity....³²

³¹ Cf. J. Vogt, "Divide et impera — Die angebliche Maxime des römischen Imperialismus," *Das Reich, Idee und Gestalt, Festschrift Für Johannes Haller*, Stuttgart, 1940, pp. 21–44. The Büchmann edition of 1972 considers Ludwig XI (1461–1483) to be the spiritual author to whom Prosper Mérimée attributed the directive "Diviser pour régner," from which the Latin motto was finally derived. However, it is not yet found in Machiavelli.

³² Cf. in particular D. Eckart, *Der Bolschewismus von Moses bis Lenin*, Munich, 1924; E. Nolte, "Eine frühe Quelle zu Hitlers Antisemitismus," *HZ*, 192, 1961, pp. 60–93, also F. Heer, *Gottes erste Liebe, 2000 Jahre Judentum und Christentum, Genesis des österreichischen Katholiken Adolf Hitler*, Vienna, 1967, pp. 377–383.

HANS-HEINRICH WILHELM

The pinnacle of this Jewish desire for destruction has been reached in the present. Never before has Jewish Bolshevism confronted mankind as freely and as openly as today. The Jew believes that he can now drop his hypocritical mask and consider mankind ripe for him to establish his Jewish world dominion — which is another word for Jewish destruction....

However, in Western Europe, as a result of the ideology of the French Revolution, the Jew became the master.... If someone rebelled, he was exterminated. Even Napoleon was a victim of the Jews. Whole nations were used as pasture and if necessary, consumed and destroyed by these Asiatic locust swarms....

This ought to suffice as a brief outline of the Jew's essential nature, his origin, his religion, mentality, methods and his world alliance. The Jew signifies death and therefore for everyone who wants to live, the fight against the Jew is an unavoidable necessity. As far back as history reaches, we can establish that all nations, provided they were young, healthy and strong, banned the Jews from their community and kept them at a distance.

The Jewish problem has always remained the same. In our fight against Judah, we find ourselves in the best company which history has produced. Today, as in the past and as in the future, "He who eats [food] of Jews will die of it!" is applicable. He who suffers the Jew in his midst, adopts his customs, makes contracts with him, immerses himself in his mentality, eats, drinks and dwells with him, maybe actually considers him chosen and believes that he can learn something from him or who, to crown it all, actually expects the world's salvation to come from the Jew, will inevitably perish. He will die of it as did the Egyptians, Persians, Greeks and Romans, who, becoming old, were no longer able to fend off the Jews. Judah is like the carrion-kite that attacks its victims as it is dying. He then sucks his blood to the last drop until he dies a miserable death, after which it looks for a new victim. Wherever he settles, the greatest danger threatens. The influx of Jews is a sign of old age, weakness and infirmity. The Jew signifies death!

Similarly, fighting the Jews signifies youth, strength, self-confidence and a positive approach to life. He who rids himself of the Jews attains health and approaches an age of inconceivable development, greatness and magnificence. We are taught this by the greatest and most reliable teacher of the centuries, the infallible history of mankind.³³ He who eats

³³ For the rape of Clio, Ley adds the mocking praise of the eternal mother of all wisdom, with special emphasis on her supposed infallibility. In other words, for his gross historical misrepresentation, his distorted and maliciously "recorded" historical picture, our artist, in all innocence, claims infallibility.

THE HOLOCAUST IN NS RHETORIC

[food] of Jews will die of it, and he who fights, exterminates and totally rids himself of the Jew, will live, never ever to die. Let us Germans consider this and act accordingly!

Have we really done everything to exorcise the Jew and his world, his spirit and his devilries from our midst? Many think it would be enough to remove the Jew physically, that if we no longer saw him and the yellow star became increasingly rare, this would solve the Jewish Problem in Germany. So why go on bothering with the Jews? We were paying the Jews too much respect. Our hatred of the Jews was turning us into ridiculous Don Quixotes, tilting at windmills. It is time we put an end to this.

These Germans are mistaken. Their point of view merely shows that they know the Jewish Problem only superficially or not at all. Is it enough merely to exterminate the louse and leave the brood alive? Is it enough to rid oneself of lice but to continue meeting others who are still infested with vermin? The brood that we keep alive is the Jewish world, the Jewish mentality and the Jewish spirit still surrounding us everywhere, confronting us and pursuing us wherever we go. And we still find these lice-ridden neighbors in Europe, especially among our enemies and above all with Bolshevism... Judah must die!

Thus in this battle against Judah there is quite clearly nothing but either or. Any halfway measure leads to our own downfall. Judah and his world must die if mankind wants to live; there is no choice other than to conduct a merciless battle against the Jew in every manifestation until the last Jewish way of thought has been destroyed everywhere....

We National Socialists have destroyed the Jewish spirit along with the Jews in Germany. And we shall not end this battle until final judgment has been pronounced on the Jews. Judah must die!³⁴

He insists on the apotheosis for the world history sanctioned by himself. Nothing less will do. Or is he actually a humble servant of the godhead, dreadfully misjudged by us, who like many a greater man can claim invariably to have tried hard, but whose intellectual gifts proved insufficient for advancing his understanding? Cf. footnote 32.

³⁴ R. Ley, *Pesthauch der Welt*, Dresden, 1944. The numerous instances of emphasis in the original were not reproduced here because they would merely have caused confusion in the selected texts. Some striking evidence for Ley's paranoia. A great deal of his "historical deductions" and other materials interesting mainly with regard to his complicated — and not unimportant — person, less with regard to the other questions in our article, could not be brought forward within the frame of this paper. Readers who therefore are missing the exact proof for my harsh characterization of Robert Ley in one point or another are herewith requested to pardon me and read *Pesthauch der Welt* in full length. Of the very few copies still existing one is available in the library of the *Institute für Zeitgeschichte* in Munich.

HANS-HEINRICH WILHELM

Is there anyone who read these excerpts from *Petshauch der Welt* to the end and still dares to maintain that the "Final Solution" had been successfully kept secret by the Nazis until 1945 and had therefore never been the subject of public discussion? Rolf Hochhuth claimed already some years ago that in actual fact the entire world had shared the knowledge of the killing of the Jews. "That nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand of the more or less civilized populace professed after Hitler's death not to have known to where the European Jews had been deported — is humanly understandable, but a lie." Already at that time Hochhuth was able to offer several pieces of evidence for this assertion. In any case, after the appearance of his "Vorstudien zu einer Ethologie der Geschichte" — still insufficiently taken notice of by the scholars of current history in Germany and abroad — one can hardly deny him the right to his opinion on subjects of contemporary history, which for a long time was only conditionally granted him as an author of plays and novels. Merely the fact that he subsumed the National-Socialist racial madness under those mental diseases generally no longer treated by psychologists, but by psychiatrists, and in that context quoted Nietzsche's dictum, "In the case of individuals, madness is a rarity — but with groups, parties, nations and epochs, it is the rule,"³⁵ might still be considered somewhat too far-reaching by a number of serious scholars, even when closely following such an "ordeal" as the word-for-word comprehension of the rarely comprehensible Ley outpourings. Will Ley one day find his Elias Canetti who will help us — the general public, less versed in psychology and psychiatry — at least a little along

³⁵ R. Hochhuth, "Als Nachwort [to the comedy "*Die Hebamme*"] ein Blick auf Wörter, Zum Beispiel 'Endlösung' und 'Wohnungswürdig,'" *Die Hebamme, Erzählungen, Gedichte, Essays*, Reinbek, 1972, pp. 287–303, here: p. 288; "Vorstudien zu einer Ethologie der Geschichte," *ibid.*, pp. 352–425. The Nietzsche quotation forms one of the principal leitmotives of the novel which is rich in historical documentation and reflections: *Eine Liebe in Deutschland*, Reinbek, 1978.

THE HOLOCAUST IN NS RHETORIC

the way to decoding and interpreting the inner laws of Ley's "thinking"?³⁶ The systematic disclosure — still missing, mentioned, and greatly desirable — of the remaining contemporary German "open sources" on the Holocaust would most likely derive considerable benefit from it.

³⁶ Cf. in particular Canetti's brilliant exegesis of "Denkwürdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken" by Daniel Paul Schreber, Leipzig, 1903, *Masse und Macht*, Frankfurt, 1983, pp. 487–523.

When Did They Know?

By YEHUDA BAUER

IF ONE WISHES to deal with the problem of the reaction of the Jewish and non-Jewish world to the Nazi genocide while it was going on, one must first consider the question: When did the knowledge of Nazi persecutions harden into the realization that the Germans were murdering Jews not merely haphazardly, but with the aim of exterminating the entire Jewish population?

We must remember that the concept of genocide was scarcely known in 1941 or 1942. The idea that a modern state could plan the extinction of millions of human beings purely on the basis of their belonging to a particular ethnic group was not easily assimilable, either by Jews or non-Jews. Even in Europe it took some time before the Jewish victims themselves became convinced that what the Germans were after were the lives of *all* of them.

We now know that the organized mass slaughter of Jews began with the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. This was done by mobile extermination units sent into the newly-conquered territories; in November-December 1941 the establishment of the first extermination camp at Chelmo heralded the planned murder of Jews in Poland and other Nazi-occupied countries. The knowledge of deportations and persecutions was not meager even then, but it was based only on scattered reports that were not put together to form a total picture. This was the case not only in Britain and the United States, but also in Palestine where, as late as July 7, 1942, Yitzhak

Gruenbaum, head of the Jewish Agency's department for the Diaspora and its Rescue Committee, discounted the stories of mass murders in the Wilno and Kowno regions of Lithuania because the numbers reported were larger than the known number of Jews in those areas. He concluded, hopefully, that while horrible things were certainly happening there, reports of mass extermination must be exaggerated. This combination of disbelief and knowledge based on detailed but scattered reporting prevailed until the late spring of 1942, about one year after the beginning of the mass extermination campaign.

Most authorities give August 8, 1942 as the date when the knowledge of the extermination campaign was imparted to the world, through a telegram sent by Gerhardt Riegner, the Geneva representative of the World Jewish Congress, through the American and British embassies in Switzerland to the WJC in London and New York. The importance of this cable lies in the fact that Riegner reported a plan of mass extermination, and not just maltreatment, hunger and large-scale killings. The Americans, as we know, refused to hand the cable to Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, WJC leader in New York, but Rabbi Wise received the cable on August 28, twenty days after it was sent. However, the cable was not as unequivocal as it has been made out to be. It presented the plan as an "alarming report" and added that "we transmit information with all necessary reservation as exactitude cannot be confirmed." It is not

really surprising therefore that officials at the State Department should hesitate as to what to do about the report beyond asking for further verification. The implication of Arthur D. Morse's recent book, *While Six Million Died*, that the cable itself was sufficient ground for decisive action, cannot be accepted without some reservations.

However, there was still another report, at least as authoritative as the Riegner cable, which had reached the Western world some months previously, and which should have been far more effective in awakening both the Jewish and the non-Jewish worlds to what was going on in Poland. The report is actually mentioned in the most authoritative books on the Holocaust, but its implications seem to have escaped the authors. This report, which follows here in the original and in translation was transmitted to London, probably by radio, by the Jewish Socialist Party in Poland, the "Bund." It is dated May 1942. Its very first sentence is the focal point of its message, concluding from the facts that are contained in the rest of the paper that the Germans have "embarked on the physical extermination of the Jewish population on Polish soil." To make clear why this conclusion was reached, the paper describes the steps by which the Germans had proceeded in order to attain their aim. Starting in Eastern Galicia, which is that part of Eastern Poland (pre-war) which had first been occupied by the USSR and then conquered by the Germans in the summer of 1941, the destruction of Jewish populations spread to the West of Poland and then to the center, the so-called General Government. The institution of the gassing vans at Chelmno is then accurately described, and the approaching end of the Warsaw ghetto itself is implied.

The paper gives a figure of 700,000 victims of planned mass extermination

—which, in the light of what is known to us today, seems to have been an understatement. The writers—the report is couched in the first person plural—have no doubt that the responsible Germans will be brought to justice. But this is no consolation to a whole people marked for destruction before their liberators arrive. The authors therefore ask the Polish Government in Exile—and through it the major Powers—to threaten German nationals residing in Allied countries with the fate that the Germans have in store for the Jews. This demand, impossible as it was from the point of view of the free world, was thought to be "the only possibility of saving millions of Jews from destruction," as seen from the desperate perspective of the ghetto.

IT SEEMS that the Polish Government in Exile in London took the report seriously. On June 2, 1942, the BBC broadcast the gist of the report to Europe, specifically mentioning the figure of 700,000, but not dwelling on the aspect of the report which indicates a concerted plan for physical extermination. The persons who insisted most vehemently that the report was accurate, and who did everything in their power to make it publicly known, were the two Jewish representatives on the Polish National Council in London, Szmul Zygielbojm of the Bund and Dr. Ignacy Schwarzbart of the Zionist group. They brought the issue before the Polish National Council on June 10, and that body issued a call to all the Allied Parliaments incorporating the main points included in the May report. On June 26, Zygielbojm again broadcast the main points of the report to Europe, but he could not promise effective retaliation. The victorious allies, he said, would find the "proper means of compelling the German barbarians to pay for all their unbeliev-

able crimes." Three days later, at a press conference in London of the World Jewish Congress, Dr. Schwarzbart declared that a note on the threatened annihilation of European Jewry had been handed by the Polish Government in Exile to Anthony Drexel Biddle, American Ambassador to the Governments in Exile in London. This apparently did not prove to be of much avail because the Polish National Council found it necessary to repeat its June 10 resolution on July 8, adding that it had in its possession "newly revealed facts of the systematic destruction of the vital strength of the Polish nation and the planned slaughter of practically the whole Jewish population." The Polish exiles, at least, were justifying the hopes that the authors of the May report had placed upon them. This time, the Poles convinced the British Minister of Information, Mr. Brendan Bracken, to lend his hand, and on July 9 a press conference was held in which he participated, along with Stanislaw Mikolajczyk (Minister of Home Affairs in the Polish Government in Exile), Zygielbojm and Schwarzbart. At that conference the May report was fully utilized, along with other facts that had come to light in the meantime.

The problem remains as to what exactly was done with these reports, and whether they were utilized by Jewish or non-Jewish leaders to arouse public opinion or to map out a plan of action. The question as to the attitude of the press in this matter is therefore of vital importance. The only British daily that brought out some of the news concerning the May report was the conservative Daily Telegraph. In its issue of June 25, 1942, on page 5, it published the details of the report, including the report's conclusion that the Nazis intended to exterminate Polish Jewry, and gave details about the gassings at Chelmo. A leader in the same paper on June

27 more or less reiterated the argument, and further items and articles on June 30 and July 1, gave the gist of the World Jewish Congress press conference, and some comments upon it.

Until that moment—that is between June 2, 1942, when details of the May report were first broadcast over the BBC, and the early days of July—not a single British or American daily—with the solitary exception of the Daily Telegraph—gave any coverage to the report. Obviously, the Daily Telegraph, a very respected and widely-read paper, had made the issue clear and anyone who had any interest in the matter could read it there. The Jewish press in England, such as the *Zionist Review*, the *Jewish Chronicle* and, of course, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA), also publicized the details of the report, so that the Jewish leadership on both sides of the Atlantic must have been well aware of them.

On July 8, 9 and 10, the Daily Telegraph published more items in connection with the Jewish situation and gave prominence to a broadcast by Cardinal Hinsley of London, who declared his horror at the massacres, stressing the veracity of the reports on which he based his condemnation. The *Times* of London broke its silence with a short item on Hinsley, and on July 10, gave an inaccurate picture of Bracken's press conference with headlines that the Germans were "aiming at extermination" of Poles, whereas what the Jews were suffering was a "plight." Parallel items appeared in *The New York Times*. The Polish Government in Exile's Bulletin for Home Affairs, faced with allied and Jewish complacency, added: "If the Polish reports from the Homeland do not find credence with the Anglo-Saxon nations and are considered to be untrustworthy, they surely must believe the reports from Jewish sources." Setting

Współpraca z...
Pracownicy...

Teka nr 15.

Światowy Związek Żydów / 102.26

Raport Bundu w sprawie prześladowań Żydów.

Od dnia wybuchu wojny rosyjsko-niemieckiej, Niemcy przystąpili do fizycznego wytopiania ludności żydowskiej na terenach ziem polskich, używając do tej pracy Ukraińców i szaulisów-Litwinów. Zaczęło się to w miesiącach letnich 1941 r., przede wszystkim w Galicji Wschodniej. System postępowania był wszędzie następujący: spędzano mężczyzn od 14 do 60 lat w jedno miejsce - na plac, cmentarz, tam ich wyrzynano lub rozstrzeliwano kaemami lub granatami. Groby musieli sami wykopywać. Dzieci w domach sierot, pensjonariuszy w domach dla starców, chorych w szpitalach - rozstrzeliwano, kobiety zabijano na ulicach. W wielu miastach wywożono Żydów w "nieznanym kierunku" i zabijano w okolicznych lasach. Zamordowano we Lwowie 30.000 Żydów, w Stanisławowie 15.000, w Tarnopolu 5.000, w Złoczowie 2.000, w Brzeżanach 4.000 /miasto liczyło 18.000 Żydów/, a obecnie 1.700 /. To samo działo się w Zborowie, Kołomyży, Samborze, Stryju, Drohobyczu, Zbaraniu, Przemyślanach, Kutach, Sniatynie, Zaleszczykach, Brodach, Przemyślu, Rawie Ruskiej i innych.

Akcje wymordowania powtarzały się w tych miastach wielokrotnie. W wielu trwają jeszcze nadal - Lwów.

W miesiącach października i listopada zaczęło się to samo dziać w Wilnie, na Wileńszczyźnie i na Litwie Kowieńskiej. W Wilnie zamordowano w ciągu listopada 50.000 Żydów. Obecnie jest w Wilnie 12.000 Żydów. Ogólna ilość bestialsko zamordowanych Żydów na terenie Wileńszczyzny i Litwy Kowieńskiej wynosi według różnych szacunków 300 tysięcy osób.

We wrzeczniu zaczęło się mordowanie Żydów w okolicach Słonimia. Wymordowano prawie wszystkich w Żyrowiczach, Lachowiczach, Mirze, Kossowie i innych. 15-go października zaczęła się akcja w Słonimiu. Zamordowano przeszło 9.000 Żydów. W Równem zaczęło się mordowanie w pierwszych dniach listopada. W ciągu trzech dni rozstrzelano przeszło 15.000 osób - mężczyzn, kobiet i dzieci. W Hanczowiczach /obok Baranowicz/ rozstrzelano 6.000 Żydów. Akcja wymordowywania Żydów objęła wszystkie ziemie polskie za Sanem i Bugiem. Przytocziliśmy tylko niektóre miejscowości.

W listopadzie-grudniu zaczęło się również wymordowywanie Żydów na terenie ziem polskich, przyłączonych do Rzeszy, t.zw. Warthegau. Wymordowanie odbyło się tu za pomocą zagazowania, którego dokonywano we wsi Chełmno, 12 km. od Koła /pow. Ełski/. Do zagazowania używano specjalnego samochodu /komory gazowej/, do którego załadowywano po 90 osób. Ofiary chowano w specjalnych grobach na polanie w lesie lubardzkim. Groby wykopywali sami rozstrzeliwani. Dziennie gazowa przeciętnie 1.000 osób. Zagazowano w Chełmnie od listopada 1941.r. do marca 1942.r. Żydów, mieszkańców z Koła, Dąbia, Bugaju, Izbiicy Kuj. razem 5.000 osób, 35.000 Żydów z ghetta łódzkiego oraz pewną ilość

- 2 -

Cyganów.

W lutym 1942 r. wyćpienie Żydów zaczyna się na terenie t.zw. Gen. Gubernatorstwa. Początek: Tarnów, Radom, gdzie dzielnice żydowskie zaczęli odwiedzać codziennie Gestapowcy i SS-mani którzy zabijali systematycznie Żydów na ulicach, na podwórzach i w mieszkaniach. W marcu zaczęła się masowa akcja wypędzania Żydów z Lublina. Wymordowano przytym bestialsko dzieci i starców w domach sierot i starców, chorych w ogólnym i epidemicznym szpitalu, jak również wielu mieszkańców na ulicach i w domach. Ogólna ilość ofiar ponad 2.000. Wywieziono z Lublina w "niewiadomym kierunku", w zaplombowanych wagonach około 25.000 Żydów, po których wszelki ślad zagał. Około 3.000 Żydów stało umieszczonych w Majdanku Tatarskim, przedmieściu Lublina, w barakach. W Lublinie nie ma ani jednego Żyda. W ostatnich dniach marca w Krakowie według listy zabrano przeszło 50 Żydów, których rozstrzelano przed bramami. W Warszawie z 17 na 18 kwietnia, Gestapowcy urządzili w ghetcie krwawą noc. Powyciągali z mieszkań według listy 50 Żydów, mężczyzn i kobiet, których bestialsko zamordowali przed bramami. Wielu nie zastali w mieszkaniach. Od 18 kwietnia codziennie zabijają już teraz w biały dzień po paru Żydów w mieszkaniach i na ulicach. Akcja ta idzie według listy ułożonej i obejmuje wszystkie środowiska Żydów warszawskiego ghetto. O dalszych krwawych nocach mówi się dalej. Według szacunku, Niemcy wymordowali dotychczas 700.000 Żydów polskich.

Fakty powyższe wykazują niezbicie, że zbrodniczy rząd niemiecki przystąpił do wykonania zapowiedzi Hitlera, że 5 minut przed końcem wojny, jakkolwiek ona się zakończy, wymorduje on wszystkich Żydów w Europie. Wierzymy niezłomnie, że hitlerowski Niemiec, za ich potworności i bestialstwa będzie w swoim czasie przedstawiony odpowiedni rachunek. Dla ludności żydowskiej, która przeżywa niesłychaną gehennę, nie jest to wystarczającym pocieszeniem. Milionom obywateli polskich narodowości żydowskiej grozi natychmiastowa zagłada.

Zwracamy się przeto do R.P., jako do opiekuna i reprezentanta całej ludności, zamieszkującej ziemię polską, aby niezwłocznie podjął niezbędne kroki, celem niedopuszczenia do zgładzenia Żydostwa polskiego. W tym celu R.P. winien wywrzeć swój wpływ na Rz.P. Sprzym. i czynniki miarodajne w tych państwach, aby natychmiast zastosować politykę odwetu wobec obywateli niemieckich i wobec piątej kolumny zamieszkujących terytoria państw sprzymierzonych i ich sojuszników. O zastosowaniu zasady odwetu Rz.P. i Rz.P. Sprzym. winny zawiadomić rząd niemiecki. Musi on wiedzieć, że za bestialskie wyćpienie ludności żydowskiej już obecnie odpowiadać będą Niemcy w USA i innych krajach.

Zdajemy sobie sprawę z tego, że domagamy się od R.P. zastosowania niezwykle kroków. Jest to jedyna możliwość uratowania milionów Żydów od niechybnej zagłady.

Maj, 1942.r.

aside the fact that the Poles here deluded themselves as to the extent of Jewish influence—a common delusion based in the last resort on anti-Jewish prejudice—the whole point was that Jews themselves either did not believe the reports or did not want to believe them, and so the stage was set for procrastination.

Several points seem to emerge from this brief description. The main one is that it is somewhat difficult to put all the blame for complacency on British or American statesmen, some of whom could not exactly be described as friends of the Jews, when Jewish leaders made no visible attempt to put pressure on their governments for any active policy of rescue. The Jewish leadership could hardly plead lack of knowledge. From the early part of June, 1942, they ought to have known, from a Jewish source fortified by the prestige of the Polish Government in Exile, of what was going on in Europe; and they did not have to wait for Mr. Sumner Welles to tell Rabbi Stephen S. Wise on August 28, 1942 the content of the Riegner

message from Geneva. To the disbelief in the extent of the atrocities were presumably added the fear of arousing anti-Semitism if the United States were requested to act specifically in the interest of Jews in Europe, and loyalty to President Roosevelt, who was directing an effort against Japan and Germany that was not going too well in the summer of 1942. The notion gained ground that nothing could be done for Europe's Jews except increase the war effort and thus bring nearer the end of the war. No attempt to arouse Jewish and general public opinion was ever made. The plea of the Bund, of Zygielbojm, of Schwarzbart, that by the time victory came there would be nobody left to be saved and that action was needed immediately—this plea was ignored. The most that was uttered was a demand to threaten Germany with retaliatory air-raids. The report of the Bund was forgotten.

YEHUDA BAUER is a member of the faculty of the Hebrew University, and is director of its Oral History Department.

Folder No. 15—Polish Underground Study—item 26

Report of the Bund Regarding the Persecution of the Jews

From the day the Russo-German war broke out, the Germans embarked on the physical extermination of the Jewish population on Polish soil, using the Ukrainians and the Lithuanian fascists for this job. It began in Eastern Galicia, in the summer months of 1941. The following system was applied everywhere: men, fourteen to sixty years old, were driven to a single place—a square or a cemetery, where they were slaughtered or shot by machine guns or killed by hand grenades. They had to dig their own graves. Children in orphanages, inmates in old-age homes, the sick in hospitals were shot, women were killed in the streets. In many towns the Jews were carried off to “an unknown destination” and killed in adjacent woods. 30,000 Jews were killed in Lwów, 15,000 in Stanisławów, 5,000 in Tarnopol, 2,000 in Zloczów, 4,000 in Brzeżany (there were 18,000 Jews in this town, only 1,700 are left). The same happened in Zborów, Kołomyja, Sambor, Stryj, Drohobycz, Zbaraż, Przemyślany, Kutry, Sniatyn, Zaleszczyki, Brody, Przemyśl, Rawa Ruska and other places.

The murder actions were repeated in these towns many times. In some, they are still in progress—Lwów.

In the months of October and November, the same began to happen in Wilno, in the Wilno area and in Lithuania. 50,000 Jews were killed in Wilno during the month of November. 12,000 are now left in Wilno. The total number of the Jews murdered in a beastly fashion in the Wilno area and in Lithuania is 300,000, according to various estimates.

The killing of the Jews in the area of Słonim started in September. Almost all were murdered in Żyrowice, Lachowicze, Mir, Kossów and other places. In Słonim, the action started on October 15. Over 9,000 Jews were killed. In Równe the killing started during the first days of November. In three days over 15,000 people, men, women and children were killed. In Han-

cewicz (near Baranowicze) 6,000 Jews were shot. The action of killing Jews embraced all Polish territories beyond the San and the Bug. We have mentioned only some of the localities.

In November-December, the killing of Jews also began in the Polish territories incorporated into the Reich, the so-called Warthegau. The murder was accomplished by gassing in the hamlet of Chelmno, twelve kilometers from the town of Koło (county of Koło). A special automobile (a gas chamber) was used. Ninety persons were loaded each time. The victims were buried in special graves, in an opening in the Lubard Woods. The victims themselves had to dig their own graves before being killed. On the average, some one thousand persons were gassed every day. From November 1941 until March 1942, a total of 5,000 persons were gassed at Chelmno, Jewish residents of Koło, Dąbie, Bugaj, Izbica Kujawska, 35,000 Jews from the Lodz ghetto and a number of Gypsies.

The extermination of Jews in the territory of the so-called Government-General started in February 1942. The beginning: Tarnów, Radom, where Gestapo and SS-men came to the Jewish quarters every day, killing the Jews on the streets, in the courtyards and in the homes. In March, the action of mass expulsion of the Jews out of Lublin started. Children and elderly people in the orphanages and old-age homes were murdered in a beastly fashion along with the patients in the hospital for general and epidemic diseases and numerous residents were killed in the streets and the homes. In all, there were over 2,000 victims. Some 25,000 Jews were carried off in “an unknown direction” out of Lublin, in sealed railway cars. They disappeared without a trace. Some 3,000 Jews were interned in barracks at Majdanek Tatarowy, a suburb of Lublin. No Jew has remained in Lublin. In Kraków, during the last days of March, fifty Jews were picked out from a list and shot in front of the gates. Dur-

ing the night of April 17-18, the Gestapo arranged a blood-bath in Warsaw. They dragged fifty Jews, men and women, from their homes, picking them from a prepared list, and killed them in a beastly fashion in front of their gates. Some they could not locate in their homes. Every day since April 18, they kill a couple of Jews in their homes or in the streets during day time. This action proceeds according to a prepared list and embraces Jews of all levels in the Warsaw Ghetto. There is talk about more bloody nights. It is estimated that the Germans have already killed 700,000 Polish Jews.

The above facts indicate without any doubt that the criminal German Government has begun to realize Hitler's prophecy that in the last five minutes of the war, whatever its outcome, he will kill all the Jews in Europe. We firmly believe that the Hitlerite Germans will be held fully accountable for their fearful bestialities at the proper time. For the Jewish population, which is going through an unheard-of hell, such consolation is insufficient. Millions of Polish citizens of Jewish extraction are in immediate mortal danger.

We are, therefore, addressing ourselves to the Government of Poland, as the caretaker and representative of the entire population living on the soil of Poland, immediately to take up the necessary steps to prevent the destruction of Polish Jewry. The Polish Government should influence the Governments of the United Nations and the competent factors in those countries immediately to apply the policy of retaliation against the Germans and against the fifth column living in the countries of the United Nations and their allies. The Governments of Poland and the United Nations should let the German Government know of the application of the policy of retaliation. It should know that Germans in the USA and other countries will, already *now*, be held responsible for the beastly extermination of the Jewish population.

We are aware of the fact that we are requesting the Polish Government to apply unusual measures. This is the only possibility of saving millions of Jews from inevitable destruction.

May, 1942.

Walter Laqueur

Hitler's Holocaust

Who Knew What, When, & How?

WHEN THE British Army entered Belsen on 15 April 1945, a correspondent opened his dispatch with the following words:

"It is my duty to describe something beyond the imagination of mankind."

But Belsen was not even an extermination camp; people died there from hunger and disease, few were deliberately killed. Three years had passed since the world had first been informed about the existence of extermination camps; their location was known, the methods of murder, the numbers of the victims, even the names of their commanding officers. But all this had not quite been grasped or understood or registered; and this raises certain questions.

I have tried to discover how the first news about the "final solution" (Hitler's *Endlösung*) reached the outside world in 1942—the Jews inside and outside Europe, the Poles, the Allies, and the

neutrals. On one hand, this is a study in "Wartime information", which shows that Nazi Germany was not a hermetically closed society, that despite secrecy and disinformation the accurate and believable facts of the final solution became known through many different channels. But it also touches on a wider cognitive issue: What is the meaning of "to know" and "to believe"? The problem was put most succinctly by Judge Felix Frankfurter in a meeting during the War with Jan Karski, a recently arrived Polish underground emissary, who informed him about the mass slaughter in Europe. Frankfurter told Karski that he did not believe him. When Karski protested, Frankfurter explained that he did not imply that Karski had in any way lied—he simply meant that he could not believe him—there was a difference. . . .

SHORTLY AFTER THE END of the War Abbé Glasberg, a courageous churchman of Russian-Jewish origin who had done much to save French Jews, wrote that he found it difficult to explain how during all these years the Allied intelligence services should have not known—or ignored—the truth about the Hitlerite extermination camps which extended over many square kilometres and in which millions of people had been incarcerated.¹

It is a legitimate question. True, no intelligence service is omniscient; but in this specific instance there was no need for brilliant analytical skills and great penetration. Letters and postcards told the story, and sometimes it was even reported in the press. The critical period is July 1941 to the end of 1942. American intelligence was then only starting its operations while the British services were already in top gear. While everything that happened in Nazi-occupied Europe was of interest to these services, there were, of course, priorities; and the fate of an ethnic or religious minority did not figure very high on their agenda. But, on the other hand, no intelligence service in Europe could

WALTER LAQUEUR, on the basis of new research and hitherto classified documents in various European and American archives, presents here for the first time the story of a tragic puzzle—why all of Europe, including the Russians and the British (and their American allies), as well as the Swiss and Swedish neutrals, the Vatican and the International Red Cross, "knew" about Genocide . . . and did nothing.

In a new book, entitled *"The Terrible Secret"* (shortly to be published by Weidenfeld in London and Little, Brown in New York), Professor Laqueur—who has contributed to *ENCOUNTER* since its earliest numbers—breaks new ground as on historical and, perforce, as on psychological. As the appalling, unbelievable news of the extermination camps at Auschwitz reached the West—Hitler's grisly "Final Solution" was public knowledge in 1942—the idea of mass murder became meaningless and death a mere statistic. Evidently the human eye could not take in so much misery, the mind could not grasp so much cruelty. In the shadow of such knowledge of the Holocaust we become aware of the blindness of perception: the horrific paradox of "knowing" and still not being "aware."

M. J. L.

¹ The Abbé Glasberg, *A recherche d'une patrie* (Paris, 1946), p. 64.

Hitler's Holocaust

possibly help hearing about "the Final Solution" in 1942 for the simple reason that it was common knowledge on the Continent. Details were perhaps shrouded in mystery, but the picture in general was not. As Hitler had predicted, the Jews were "disappearing."

The Allied governments heard about this from a variety of sources. In Britain there was SIS (Special Intelligence Service, i.e. military intelligence) which was, in principle, in charge of all news-gathering operations. But Special Operations Executive (SOE) which had been founded to function abroad under the control of the Ministry of Economic Warfare (MEW) did in fact also collect news in France, in Denmark, and elsewhere. All intelligence from Poland was passed to SIS automatically from the Polish Second Bureau, except that concerning purely domestic affairs. Similar agreements existed between Britain and Dutch, French, Czech and Norwegian Intelligence. But SOE was also active in Poland. MI5, the Security Service, obtained interesting information from the various interrogation centres it was running; so did MI9 (CSDIC) and MI19, dealing with British soldiers and civilians escaping from the continent respectively. Decoding and deciphering came from GC and CS (the government code and cypher school), whereas

aerial reconnaissance was in the hands of the Air Ministry. The bureaucratic complications were manifold; but whatever the source, important news should always have reached the Prime Minister, the War Cabinet, and the Chiefs of Staff.²

But what is "important news"? Intelligence quite often consists of small and perhaps insignificant items which, taken in isolation, appear to be of no consequence. A certain pattern emerges only if they are interpreted in a broader context. There is, furthermore, an unlimited number of ways of getting things wrong and only one right answer. Intelligence, like writing history, is a matter of selection, and the fact that a certain event was duly observed does not *per se* mean that it was correctly understood. It certainly does not mean that such information always reached the higher ranks of the Intelligence services (such as the Joint Intelligence Committee which acted as a liaison between the various agencies) and especially not the War Cabinet whose capacity for absorbing information was, of necessity, limited.

Thus, for my purposes, it is not sufficient to establish that members of one branch of the Polish or British Intelligence "knew." It is important to know how widely the information was distributed, whether it was read and accepted; and this, of course, is usually more difficult to document.³

² The structure of British Intelligence is described authoritatively in F. H. Hinsley *et al.*, *British Intelligence in the Second World War*, Vol. I (London, 1979).

³ But sometimes the documentary details can be established.

Emissaries from Poland arriving in Britain were interrogated and debriefed by the British services before they could contact the Poles. One of the Wartime emissaries describes his arrival in Britain as follows:

"After my arrival on a Scottish airport I was first interrogated by Major Malcolm Scott, probably on behalf of counter-intelligence; his family owned a factory in Lwow and he spoke Polish as well as I did. I was then debriefed in the 'Patriotic School' in South London by representatives of various other intelligence services; in greatest detail by MI9 who were interested in the fate of the British prisoners-of-war. I was also interviewed by McLaren and Osborn of the Foreign Office (Polish Intelligence). Depositions were made; I saw some of them recently among the papers in the Public Record Office. There was no interest in what I had to report on the fate of the Jews; there was one exception, and this was on a personal rather than official basis."

To these three who were informed about the systematic extermination of Jews, Majors (subsequently Colonels) Gubbins and Perkins should be added, who were dealing with Poland on behalf of SOE; Major Gubbins later became operational head of all SOE. Neither of them was apparently expected to, or did, take an interest in this subject.

⁴ *Die Zeitung* (London), 25 October 1941. The Swedish account was also carried in the *Sunday Times* of 24 October and in other newspapers. Eichmann's name had figured in Swedish diplomatic reports much earlier—in November 1939, but this account was based on a report made by two members of the Swedish embassy in Berlin, Einar von Post and Karl Damgren, about transports of Jews from Moravia.

DURING THIS TIME London was the focal point for news from Occupied Europe. Not all information received in the West came from Intelligence sources. The Americans had an embassy in Berlin until December 1941, in Budapest and Bucharest until January 1942, in Vichy up to late 1942. Jewish organisations received most of their information from their representatives in Geneva; and further news was received through dozens of different channels, such as visitors to or from neutral countries, the press, soldiers who had escaped, civilians who had been exchanged, and others.

Much information could be found in the daily press. Thus, a report entitled "THE APOCALYPSE" in a London German-language newspaper in October 1941 said that the Jews deported from Germany were to be killed in one way or another. It was based on a report originally published in the Swedish *Socialdemokraten* on 22 October and stated *expressis verbis* that "there was no doubt that this was a case of premeditated mass murder." The account also mentioned Adolf Eichmann as the head of the operation.⁴

1. The Russian Self-Censorship

WE MUST FIRST TURN TO Russia, because it was in the areas occupied by the Nazis following their rapid advance between June and October

Walter Laqueur

1941 that the systematic murder of European Jewry began. This was the task of the *Einsatzgruppen*, special units which entered the Soviet Union with the German troops. By November 1941 they had killed about half-a-million Jews. At first, little was known about this to the general public, for these areas were virtually cut off from the outside world. American Jewish newspapers carried reports about the killing of Jews in certain border towns, but this was probably no more than guesswork based on the behaviour of the Nazis in Poland and elsewhere. A little later Swedish papers reported that ghettos had been organised in Vilna, Kaunas, and Bialystok. According to a broadcast from Moscow Radio in August, some 45 Jews had been machine-gunned near Minsk.⁵ On 5 September, the London Polish government-in-exile knew about the Riga ghetto; and on the 18th of that month the news reached Zurich from Poland that Bialystok ghetto had been destroyed (which was quite untrue, for it was one of the last to be liquidated, in 1943). On 22 October 1941, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) correspondent in Zurich quoted a Ukrainian newspaper (*Krakovskie Vesti*) as reporting that the German forces had expelled the Jews to an unknown destination and that in Zhitomir out of 50,000 Jews only 6,000 remained. On 29 October, another report from Polish circles in London said that 6,000 Jews had been killed in Lomza; and in early November the Swedish press announced that Riga Jews were on half-rations. More and more information was received—but perhaps not enough, as yet, to realise the magnitude of the disaster.

THEN, ON 25 NOVEMBER 1941, JTA carried a sensational and remarkably accurate report which it said had originated "on the German frontier" but had been delayed. According to "an unimpeachable source", 52,000 men, women and children had been put to death in Kiev. The victims (it was said) did not lose their lives as a result of a mob pogrom but by "merciless, systematic extermination." It was one of the most "shocking massacres in Jewish history", and similar events had taken place elsewhere in other Soviet towns. We do not know where this report originated; it certainly did not come from a Russian source.

⁵ *Stockholm Tidningen*, 22 July and 10 August 1941; *Aftonbladet*, 18 August 1941.

⁶ *Pravda*, 7 January 1942. Occasionally there were Soviet reports for publication abroad only: for instance, the report issued by the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in Kuybishev on the murder of 72,000 Jews in Minsk between November 1941 and April 1942. This appeared in British and American newspapers (cf. *Daily Telegraph*, 15 August 1942), but not in the major Soviet newspapers.

Most likely it emanated from Polish circles. Confirmation from Soviet sources came, however, in early January 1942 when it was made known that 52,000 people had been killed in Kiev. The US embassy in Moscow tried to establish whether all (or most) of these had been Jews; and on 16 March 1942 it received an affirmative answer. But on the next day the Jewish press announced (on the authority of the *Soviet War Bulletin* in London) that there had been a misunderstanding, and that only 1,000 Jews had been killed. This "correction" was, of course, quite misleading, but it is impossible now to establish whose error it was.

Meanwhile, there was more alarming news. On 2 January 1942 the London *Jewish Chronicle* reported, on the authority of Soviet partisans operating behind the German lines, that the Germans had killed hundreds of Jews in Rostov-on-the-Don. Polish sources reported in March the destruction of Lithuanian Jewry. By 15 May 1942 this news was quite detailed: 7,000 had been killed in Shavli; 30,000 were left out of 70,000 in Vilna. The Stockholm newspaper *Socialdemokraten* reported that the Jews in the Riga ghetto were selling their last belongings; this was based on a report in the Nazi *Deutsche Zeitung in Ostland*. From Soviet sources there was very little information. A detailed report from Borisov was an exception: 15,000 Jews had been killed there (25 March 1942); there was a shorter and less specific account of the mass murder of Jews in Mariupol.

IN A NOTE signed by Molotov and addressed to all governments with which it maintained diplomatic relations, on 6 January 1942 the Soviet Union dealt with the

"monstrous villainies, atrocities and outrages committed by German authorities in the invaded Soviet territories. . . ."⁶

This note extended over many pages, and there were three references to Jews. Once they were mentioned together with Russians, Ukrainians, Letts, Armenians, Uzbeks and others who had also suffered; the second time there was a short reference that on 30 June, when the Germans had entered Lvov, they had staged an orgy of murder under the slogan "Kill the Jews and the Poles." And, lastly, there was the reference to the murder of the 52,000 in Kiev. It stated that many mass murders had also been committed by the German occupiers in other Ukrainian towns and then continued:

"These bloody executions were especially directed against unarmed and defenceless Jewish working people. According to incomplete figures, no less than 6,000 persons were shot in Lvov,

Hitler's Holocaust

over 8,000 in Odessa, nearly 8,500 were shot or hanged in Kamenets-Podolsk, more than 10,500 shot down with machine guns in Dnepropetrovsk and over 3,000 local inhabitants shot in Mariupol. . . . According to preliminary figures about 7,000 persons were killed by the German fascist butchers in Kerch."

Altogether Molotov accounted for some 90,000 victims, less than one fifth the figure of those who had actually been killed.⁷

On 27 April 1942 a second Soviet note was published also signed by Molotov. It extended over 27 pages, dealt with looting, the institution of a régime of slavery, the destruction of the national culture of various peoples, the desecration of churches, the torturing and killing of workers and peasants, the raping of women, and the extermination of prisoners of war. But it did not mention that while a great many people of various nationalities had indeed been robbed, injured and even killed, the Jews—unlike the others—were singled out for wholesale destruction. In this document the Jews were mentioned just once—together with Russians, Moldavians, Ukrainians, and other victims.

There was a third Molotov note (14 October 1942), on the responsibility of the Hitlerite invaders and their accomplices for atrocities perpetrated, in which the Jews were not mentioned at all. But, as an addendum (or post-script), an unsigned statement was distributed on 19 December 1942 by the Soviet Foreign Ministry Information Bureau dealing specifically with the "execution by Hitlerite authorities of the plan to exterminate the Jewish population in the occupied territory of Europe." This was a relatively short document, but it presented more facts and figures than had been published in the preceding year-and-a-half taken together. It also mentioned the plan to concentrate millions of Jews from all parts of Europe "for the purpose of murdering them."⁸

⁷ The fact that Soviet reports about categories of victims were selective was noticed in Washington. The OSS "Department of research and analysis" published a nine-page memorandum in 1943 entitled *Gaps in the Moscow Statement of Atrocities*, which stressed that "non-Aryans were not mentioned. . . ." (OSS-Washington D.C., R&A-1626, 12 December 1943).

⁸ *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, 19 December 1942.

⁹ *Front bez linyi fronta* (Moscow, 1975), p. 63. This is a collection of essays written by or about NKVD agents left behind in the Nazi-occupied areas. Vasili Ardamatski's novel, *Granat calling Moscow*, also deals with this topic. The official three-volume history of the Ukraine during the War mentions the fact that on 28 September 1941 the German authorities gave orders to the Jewish population to assemble at eight o'clock next morning; but from this point on the nationality of the victims is no longer mentioned. *Ukrainska ia SSR v velikoi otechestvennoi voini Sovetskovo Sayuza 1941-45*, Vol. I (Moscow, 1978), p. 351.

WHY DID IT TAKE the Soviet government eighteen months to publish these facts and what were the reasons inducing it to play down the numbers of Jews among the victims, or even pass over it in silence?

The first six months of the War were, from the Soviet point of view, the most difficult. Millions of soldiers were taken prisoner, large parts of the country lost. The population frequently gave a warm welcome to the foreign invaders. There were few if any partisans during these early months of the War. But, on the other hand, not everyone in the Occupied areas became a collaborator with the Germans, and not a few Soviet Intelligence agents were left behind. In addition, parachutists were dropped early on behind German lines, some to commit acts of sabotage, others to collect information. There was radio contact between the Occupied territories and "*Bolshaya Zemlia*" from the very beginning; and while there is no reason to assume that the NKVD (as it was then called) and the Red Army Staff received daily bulletins from every Occupied village, there is every reason to assume that the Soviet authorities were from the beginning well informed about all important events in the Occupied territories. While Russian archives have not been opened to curious Western (or even Soviet) researchers, Soviet authors proudly mention how well their authorities were informed about "all that happened on the other side."

ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS CASES was that of N. I. Kusnetsov who, in the guise of a German officer (under the name of "Paul Siebert"), became part of the establishment of Erich Koch, one of Hitler's three satraps in Eastern Europe. Koch had established his headquarters in Rovno. Since, up to 1941, every second inhabitant of the city of Rovno was a Jew, their disappearance—they had all been executed in the town or its vicinity—could not possibly have escaped the attention of this Soviet master-agent.

The fate of the Jews—and how much was known about it at the time—occurs infrequently in Soviet post-War writings. Thus, a discussion between two KGB (NKVD) agents in Kiev in late 1941:

"You know, of course, what happened in Babi Yar?"

"Yes, and the same happened in Vinnitsa. . . ."

There is always a reluctance to mention the fact that these victims were Jews. For the Soviet authorities, the agents left behind in Kiev, Odessa, Minsk, and many other places were by no means the only source of information; as Soviet troops retook in the winter offensive of 1941-42 some of the regions previously seized by the *Wehrmacht* they saw what had happened under German occupation.

Walter Laqueur

Thus, with a few exceptions (such as the note of 13 December 1942), the Soviet line was that the Hitlerite invaders behaved, generally speaking, like barbarians. But there was no mention of the fact that the Jews were singled out for "special treatment."

What was the reason for this silence?

The Soviet authorities could argue that even though the Nazis singled out the Jews in their campaign of murder, little would be gained if the Soviet Union publicised this fact. For the murder of the Jews may well have been quite popular in some sections of the population: Ukrainians, Lithuanians, and Latvians had played a prominent part in the massacres. If the German invaders, nevertheless, rapidly became unpopular in the occupied areas, it was not because of their behaviour towards the Jews. For this reason, and perhaps also because of certain other considerations, the Soviet authorities played down the "Final Solution." Not unlike the Vatican, the Russians certainly knew much more than they decided to publish. The news about the *Einsatzgruppen* came mainly from neutral journalists, from Polish Intelligence, and from Hungarian and Italian soldiers fighting on the Eastern front. It did not come from those who knew most about it.¹⁰

2. News in The West

BY 1 JULY 1942 more than one million Jews had been killed in Eastern Europe. What was known about this in the West?

Hitler's offensive in Russia was in full swing, the German armies were advancing in the direction of Stalingrad, Rostow, and the Caucasus. The *Einsatzgruppen* had finished their second sweep in Russia. In Poland the destruction of the ghettos had begun in March with the removal of the Jews from Lublin district (the very region in which, according to Nazi propaganda, a Jewish "autonomous region" should have come into existence). The gas-chambers of Chelmno, Belzec, and Auschwitz were working. The notorious

Wannsee conference had taken place six months earlier; the deportations from Slovakia had begun in March, and trainloads of Jews were beginning to arrive in Poland from Central and Western Europe.

From Russia there was little information. Correspondents in Switzerland picked up random items from Nazi newspapers in the occupied areas. Thus, the *Grenzbote* of Bratislava announced in April that the "deportations" from Slovakia had taken place, and the Belgrade *Donauezeitung* wrote in June that no Jews were left in Kishinev. The correspondent in Turkey of the London *Sunday Times* also reported in April 1942 that 120,000 Rumanian Jews had been killed, a figure which proved to be remarkably accurate. All these were minor items as far as the world press were concerned, overshadowed by the news of the great battles on the War fronts, and they did not attract much attention. In May and June 1942, with great delay, some more information became available about events in the Baltic countries. On 15 May, Polish sources in London provided figures on Vilna—the murder of 40,000.¹¹

On the following day a correspondent of the London *Evening Standard* in Stockholm reported that the number was even higher: 60,000 Jews had been killed in this city alone. The news was published on the authority of a man who had escaped from Vilna and had just arrived after a dramatic escape via Warsaw and the port of Gdynia. The report was quite specific; it mentioned Ponary, the railway station outside Vilna where most of the killing had taken place. The item was picked up by some American and Jewish newspapers. Two months later (on 21 July), the US Ambassador reported it to Washington. There was silence for another two weeks, but towards the end of May 1942 information which had reached London through Polish couriers and radio messages found its way into the press. On 2 June, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) broadcast excerpts from various reports received from Eastern Europe: 700,000 Jews had been killed so far. This figure was based on a report sent out by the Jewish Labour *Bund* from Warsaw, and in fact considerably understated the number of victims. But the Polish Jews had no full picture of the situation in the Soviet Union and the Baltic countries. Unlike Himmler they had no professional statisticians at their disposal for reviewing the progress of the "Final Solution."

The reports from Warsaw caused a flurry of activity in Polish circles—General Sikorski notified the Allied governments in a dispatch ("Extermination of the Jewish population is taking place to an unbelievable extent") on 10 June. The Polish National Council (the Parliament-in-exile) addressed an appeal to the free parliaments. On 9 June, General Sikorski said in a broadcast on the BBC:

¹⁰ Towards the end of 1942 some more material became known from Soviet sources; but more often than not it was scheduled for publication outside the Soviet Union. Thus, a quotation from a diary written by a private "Christian" in February 1942: "Since we have been in this town we have already shot more than 13,000 Jews. We are south of Kiev."

Or the interrogation of P.O.W. Karl Brenner, Crimean front, 20 June 1942: "None of the Jews were ever seen again. It is said that they were shot 15 miles from Simferopol along the Feodosia road." *New Soviet Documents on Nazi Atrocities* (Soviet Embassy, London, 1942).

¹¹ Jewish Telegraph Agency bulletin (15–16 May 1942).

Hitler's Holocaust

"The Jewish population in Poland is doomed to annihilation in accordance with the maxim 'Slaughter all the Jews regardless of how the war will end.' This year veritable massacres of tens of thousands of Jews have been carried out in Lublin, Wilno, Lwow, Stanislawow, Rzeszow and Miechow."

At first the newspapers did not take much notice. After all, news about Nazi persecutions came from many parts of Europe, and they were probably exaggerated. The fact that Jews were not "persecuted" but *exterminated* had not yet registered.

The first to stress the difference was the London *Daily Telegraph*, in two reports on 25 and 30 June 1942. These publications were a first turning-point because the journalists and their editors had realised that in the various news items from Eastern Europe a sinister new pattern had emerged; these were no longer "pogroms" in the traditional sense. The first dispatch began as follows:

"More than 700,000 Polish Jews have been slaughtered by the Germans in the greatest massacres in the world's history."

It then announced that "the most gruesome details of mass killings even to the use of poison gas" were revealed in a report sent secretly to Shmuel Zygielbojm, the Jewish representative on the Polish National Council, by an active group in Poland (the *Bund*, which was not, however, mentioned by name). The *Daily Telegraph* report reviewed the mass exterminations in East Galicia and Lithuania, and the use of gas vans and the Chelmno camp, as well as other facts and figures. The correspondent ended:

"I understand that the Polish government intends to make the facts in the report known to the British and Allied governments."

This had already happened.

The second report, five days later, said in its headline "MORE THAN 1,000,000 JEWS KILLED IN EUROPE." It was based on further investigations, not just the *Bund* report, and made one important point which had not been clearly spelled out previously: it was the aim of the Nazis "to wipe the race from the European continent", the policy of exterminating the Jews was also to cover Western Europe. In France, Holland, and Belgium there had been many executions; and mass deportations to Eastern Europe were now taking place. In Rumania 120,000 Jews had been killed, and two trainloads of Jews were leaving Prague every week for Poland.

"It is estimated that the casualties suffered by the Jewish people in Axis-controlled countries already far exceed those of any other race in any war. . . ."

The *Daily Telegraph* stories attracted much attention. They were followed by radio broadcasts in June (by Arthur Greenwood, leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party; by Cardinal Hinsley; by the Dutch Prime Minister; by Zygielbojm, speaking in Yiddish; and a few others). The *New York Times* picked up the *Daily Telegraph* reports on 30 June and 2 July, and published them somewhere in the middle of the paper. The editors quite obviously did not know what to make of them. If it was true that a million people had been killed this clearly should have been front-page news; it did not, after all, happen every day. If it was not true, the story should not have been published at all. Since they were not certain they opted for a compromise: to publish it, but not in a conspicuous place. Thus it was implied that the paper had reservations about the report: "Quite likely" the story contained some truth, but "probably" it was exaggerated.

SUCH ATTITUDES were by no means limited to the American press. From the moment Hitler had come to power in Germany, *The Manchester Guardian* had shown much sympathy for the persecuted Jews. Yet on 31 August 1942, more than two months after the news about mass extermination of Jews in Europe (and certain additional information) had been received, an editorial in *The Guardian* stated that

"the deportation of Jews to Poland means that Jewish muscles are needed for the German war effort."

It was, in brief, a matter of slave labour rather than murder.

But why single out *The Guardian*? President Roosevelt was saying exactly the same thing. The failure to understand was by no means limited to newspapers in Britain and the USA. Hebrew papers in Palestine were equally unhappy about the "unproven and exaggerated rumours", about the fact that news agencies and correspondents were competing in transmitting atrocity stories in gruesome detail.¹²

Shmuel Zygielbojm, the *Bund* representative on the Polish National Council, had provided the material for the *Daily Telegraph* stories. His colleague on the Council, Dr Ignacy Schwarzbart, was also active. He appeared on 29 June at a press conference sponsored by the World Jewish Congress in London together with Sidney Silverman, a Labour MP, and Ernst Frischer, a member of the Czechoslovak State Council. Ignacy Schwarzbart (1888–1961) had been a member of the pre-War

¹² See Y. Gelber's excellent monograph: *Haltonut ha'lvrit be' Erez Israel al Hashmadat Yehudel Europa*, in *Dapim le'heker hashoa ve'hamered* (Tel Aviv, 1969), p. 46.

Walter Laqueur

Polish parliament; unlike Zygielbojm he was not a Socialist. His statement dealt with the murder of Jews in Wilno, Pinsk, Bialystok, Slonim, Rowno, Lvov, Stanislawow, Lomza, and some two dozen other places. He announced that in Lublin part of the Jewish population had been slaughtered and the rest had disappeared; and he also gave figures about the Chelmno gassings.¹³ This press conference was reported the next day in most British newspapers under headlines such as OVER 1,000,000 DEAD SINCE THE WAR BEGAN (*The Times*), 1,000,000 JEWS DIE (*Evening Standard*), MILLION JEWS DIE (*News Chronicle*), BONDAGE IN EASTERN EUROPE: A VAST SLAUGHTERHOUSE OF JEWS (*Scotsman*). But most of these reports were fairly short, not conspicuously displayed, and contained few details. Few Western newspaper readers had ever heard about Lomza and Stanislawow; and while, by now, it seemed fairly certain that something sinister was happening in Eastern Europe, there were still doubts about the extent and the real meaning of these unhappy events.

IN JULY AND AUGUST the general attitude among Jews was a mixture of concern and confusion. There were mass meetings in New York (Madison Square Garden, 21 July), and protest demonstrations in various other cities, and on 23 July the chaplain of the House of Representatives read a special prayer for the Jewish victims as the session of the House opened. In London there were resolutions by the national executive committees of the Labour Party (22 July) and the Trade Unions; a Labour delegation went to see Foreign Secretary

Anthony Eden (24 August) and John Winant, the US Ambassador. On 2 September, there was a large protest rally in Caxton Hall at which Herbert Morrison and Jan Masaryk spoke. Zygielbojm, in a passionate speech, reiterated that crimes had been committed that had no precedent in human history, crimes so monstrous that the most barbaric acts of past ages appeared as mere trivialities:

"In Poland a whole people is being exterminated in cold blood... it is estimated that the total number of Jews murdered by the Germans in Poland up to May this year was 700,000."

Zygielbojm seemed over-excited and overwrought to many of those present. Yet, by the time he made his speech the number of Jews killed was at least a million-and-a-half, and the Warsaw ghetto had been all but emptied.¹⁴

3. The Riegner Report

THE QUESTION OF the number of victims quite apart, a clear general pattern had emerged. Obviously, there had been a decision at the highest level to kill all Jews. When had it been taken? This information could not possibly come from Warsaw or from Riga, and we have now to turn to an episode which has been recounted before but which is still far from clear. The first news that Hitler had actually ordered the extermination of European Jewry by gassing was received in July 1942 by Dr Gerhard Riegner, the representative of the World Jewish Congress in Switzerland, from a German industrialist. Riegner sent the following cable to London and Washington:

"RECEIVED ALARMING REPORT THAT IN FUEHRER'S HEADQUARTERS PLAN DISCUSSED AND UNDER CONSIDERATION ACCORDING TO WHICH ALL JEWS IN COUNTRIES OCCUPIED OR CONTROLLED GERMANY NUMBERING THREE-AND-A-HALF FOUR MILLIONS SHOULD AFTER DEPORTATION AND CONCENTRATION IN EAST BE EXTERMINATED AT ONE BLOW TO RESOLVE ONCE FOR ALL THE JEWISH QUESTION IN EUROPE STOP THE ACTION REPORTED PLANNED FOR AUTUMN METHODS UNDER DISCUSSION INCLUDING PRUSSIC ACID STOP WE TRANSMIT INFORMATION WITH ALL RESERVATION AS EXACTITUDE CANNOT BE CONFIRMED STOP INFORMANT STATED TO HAVE CLOSE CONNECTIONS WITH HIGHEST GERMAN AUTHORITIES AND HIS REPORTS GENERALLY SPEAKING RELIABLE."

Some of this was already known, and some was incorrect. The plan was not "under consideration" but had been adopted many months earlier. Nor was it intended to kill all the Jews at one blow,

¹³ But Schwarzbart took a more cautious line than Zygielbojm.

In a letter to the editor of the London *Jewish Chronicle* (dated 29 June 1942, unpublished, Schwarzbart archives), he wrote that "every exaggeration in rounding up figures is not only needless but also harmful and irresponsible." He regretted that "my colleague in the National Council" had taken it upon himself to refer to 700,000 Jews who had been murdered whereas one should have said "exterminated." Schwarzbart followed the lead given by the Polish Minister of Information, Professor Stanislaw Stronski, who said (on 9 July, at a press conference sponsored by the British Ministry of Information) that the figure of 700,000 which had appeared in the press "included both those murdered directly and those who died as a result of the German extermination policy."

It is not readily obvious why Schwarzbart should have attributed so much importance to the difference between being "murdered" and being "exterminated", unless he doubted the veracity of the reports from Poland. The *Bund* report, in any case, was quite unambiguous: 700,000 Jews had been murdered (*Niemcy wymordowali...*).

¹⁴ Zygielbojm committed suicide in March 1943, in protest against the general indifference shown with regard to the fate of the Jews in Poland. See footnote 49 below (p. 22).

Hitler's Holocaust

which would have presented insurmountable technical difficulties. But, for all this, it was of course true that Hitler had made a decision, and now a German source had made it clear that this did not refer to widespread pogroms but to a "Final Solution." Riegner transmitted the information "with all reservation." One could hardly blame him for such caution.

GERHARDT RIEGNER was just 30 years of age at the time. He was a native of Berlin and a doctor of law. He and Richard Lichtheim, his senior by 30 years who represented the Jewish Agency in Geneva and the father of the writer George Lichtheim, were the two chief Jewish representatives in continental Europe. But who was the mysterious industrialist?

Various versions have been published about his identity. He arrived in Switzerland in July 1942. It was not his first visit in Wartime. He had been in contact through a common friend with Dr Benjamin Sagalowitz (1901–70), the press officer of the Swiss Jewish community. The industrialist was in charge of a factory employing some 30,000 workers, and was a passionate enemy of the Nazi system. Driven by his conscience, he wanted to warn the world so that something could be done in time to counteract Hitler's designs. The industrialist asked the mutual friend to convey the news to Sagalowitz who was not, however, in Zurich at the time. After his return he transmitted the information to Riegner assuming that Riegner could reach Rabbi Stephen Wise in New York and through Wise, President Roosevelt. Leland Harrison, the US Ambassador in Berne, insisted on knowing the name of the informant and since there was no other

quick and certain channel to transmit the news to the USA, Sagalowitz gave the name (and indicated the position) of the industrialist to Harrison, who sealed it in an envelope. Sagalowitz concludes his account as follows:

"Dr Riegner did not get the name from me, I brought the two gentlemen together only in February 1945. To relieve my conscience I told the industrialist after the war that I had given his name to the American minister and he understood. . . ."¹⁵

Neither the archives of the late Dr Sagalowitz nor the files of the National Archives in Washington or the personal files of Ambassador Harrison provide a clue to his identity.¹⁶ The files of the Berlin Swiss Legation in which applications for Wartime entry visas were preserved have been destroyed, and I have been assured that the records of the Swiss border police no longer exist.

Why should the industrialist who, as these lines are written, is no longer alive have insisted on anonymity even after the end of the War? There are two possible explanations. Could he have been a Swiss diplomat or an official of the International Red Cross or the World Council of Churches? This, for a variety of reasons, is unlikely.

The second possibility is more probable and more intriguing. When Riegner tried to establish in 1942 whether his informant could be trusted, he was given to understand (by Benjamin Sagalowitz) that the industrialist had on previous occasions given the Allies information on impending changes in the German Army high command (the deposition of von Bock in winter 1941), and, even more important, the date of Operation *Barbarossa*, the invasion of the Soviet Union. The official history of British Intelligence in the Second World War mentions among other warnings that the SIS representative in Geneva had heard (in late March or early April 1941) from a well-placed informant in German official sources that Hitler would attack Russia in May.¹⁷ The British authorities will not disclose his identity for another 25 years (if ever); most of the personal files of the various Intelligence Services were apparently destroyed after the War. In any case, it is not certain that the industrialist was indeed the source.

THE REACTION TO the Riegner cable in London and Washington can be summarised briefly. On 10 August 1942 the Foreign Office received the message; four days later Frank Roberts of the Central Department wrote that the message could not be held up much longer although he feared that it would have embarrassing consequences: "Naturally we have no information bearing on this story." This was certainly true in the sense that there had been no report about a decision taken by

¹⁵ Benjamin Sagalowitz (a brochure privately published by his friends after his death in 1970), p. 31.

¹⁶ According to the Hebrew edition of Arthur Morse's *While Six Millions Died*, it was Artur Sommer, but this is not correct.

Sommer had been on the outer fringe of the literary "Stefan George Circle", served as a World War I officer, and later became a member of the Nazi Party. He was an economic specialist in the German *Abwehr*, and when in Switzerland kept Professor Edgar Salin (a distinguished German refugee scholar) informed about atrocities and opportunities to rescue Jews in the *Reich*.

In my efforts to establish incontrovertible proof as to the identity of the historic informant, I was led to other probabilities (as outlined in my article, "The Mysterious Messenger & the Final Solution", *Commentary*, March 1980). But my search proved finally inconclusive beyond the fact that his name starts with S. The only living knowledgeable source, Gerhard Riegner, has been asked about the matter countless times; but, having given his word not to divulge the man's name, he has steadfastly refused to respond. However, there is some reason to believe that the mysterious messenger was not, in fact, a major industrialist.

¹⁷ F. H. Hinsley et al., *British Intelligence in the Second World War*, p. 58.

Walter Laqueur

Hitler. But then Roberts had heard from David Kelly nine months earlier about the disappearance of some one-and-a-half million Jews; there had been other such stories from Polish sources, as D. Allen, also from the Central Department, noted (but Allen still thought it was a rather "wild story").

The cable was handed by the Foreign Office to a Labour MP, Sidney Silverman, who was subsequently seen at the Foreign Office by Sir Brograve Beauchamp and Colonel Ponsonby. He wanted to telephone Rabbi Stephen Wise in New York, who had contacts in the White House, but was told that this was out of the question; the Germans always listened in to such conversations. Furthermore he should consider whether any action taken by the Jewish institutions might not "annoy the Germans and make any action they were proposing to take even more unpleasant than it might

otherwise have been..." Lastly he was told that HM Government had no information confirming Riegner's story.

THE GENERAL VIEW in the Foreign Office was that the Germans were indeed treating the Jews very cruelly, starving them, and even massacring considerable numbers of those who were of no use to them in their growing labour difficulties. The Polish reports that the Germans had more far-reaching designs were apparently not believed. If the Jewish Congress wanted to publish Dr Riegner's story there was no objection, even though there was the possibility that the Jews would be victimised as a result and that Dr Riegner's source would be compromised. The British Government on its part had no intention of giving publicity to the report or using it in propaganda to Germany without further confirmation.¹⁸ In short, the Foreign Office was not very helpful; but, with all its reservations, it did deliver the message.

The US State Department did not. Howard Elting, the US Vice Consul in Geneva, requested that the message be delivered to Rabbi Stephen Wise; but the State Department's division of European affairs opposed this. Paul Culbertson, the assistant chief, did not like the idea of sending the dispatch on to Wise. Elbridge Durbrow regarded the nature of the allegations as "fantastic." On 17 August, Leland Harrison was informed that the cable had not been delivered in view of the apparently unsubstantiated nature of the information.¹⁹ But on 28 August, a copy of the Riegner cable reached Wise via the British Foreign Office which, despite grave doubts (on which more below), had not suppressed it.²⁰ Rabbi Wise got in touch with Sumner Welles who advised him to refrain from any public announcement of Hitler's extermination order until confirmation could be obtained.

DURING AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER 1942 additional evidence reached Washington. Some came from Geneva, including the confirmation of Hitler's decision by Carl J. Burckhardt, the "foreign minister" of the Red Cross.²¹ On 3 October Riegner forwarded the evidence of two young Jews who had crossed the Swiss border; one of them was Gabriel Zivian who had been a witness to the massacre of the Jews in Riga and had arrived on 22 September.²² The other new arrival had been from France to Stalingrad and back, and knew many details about the murders in Poland and Russia. Neither could possibly shed any new light on the *Fuehrer's* order, nor could the postcards from Warsaw which had been received by Stern-

¹⁸ Comments on the Riegner cable by F. Roberts, D. Allen, E. A. Walker, Miss Scofield, and draft prepared for Sir Brograve Beauchamp in F.O. 371 30917 XK 6759.

¹⁹ Harrison asked Howard Elting Jr., the Vice Consul whom Riegner had first contacted on receiving the news, to send the cable directly to the Department of State. But his own comment (in a cable to Washington on the same date) was more than sceptical—he regarded it as a "wild rumor inspired by Jewish fears." A summary of his cable was passed on to OSS (RG 226, Berne, Folder 2, Box 2, Entry 4).

²⁰ A cable sent from the London branch of the World Jewish Congress on 1 September, suggesting action and international publicity, was intercepted and read by the US censorship, and promptly forwarded to the US State Department. A note to American Secretary of State A. A. Berle is affixed: "We will suppress if you approve."

²¹ I will attempt to tell the full Burckhardt story in another place. He was a prolific historical writer, but unfortunately left no relevant correspondence. I believe I was the first historian, except for their own annalist, who had access to the files of the International Red Cross, in which Dr Burckhardt was one of the dominant Wartime figures.

When the IRC, which was very well-informed, officially decided to stay neutral, i.e. very silent, Dr Burckhardt found it necessary (after October 1942) to pass on what he had come to know. He spoke with an old Jewish friend and colleague from the Geneva Centre of Advanced Studies; he saw Paul Squire, the US Consul in Geneva, and informed him that while he had not actually seen the order he could confirm that Hitler had signed a death-warrant in 1941: that before the end of 1942 the *Reich* was to be freed of all Jews. Squire asked him whether the word extermination was used; Burckhardt explained that the actual phrase was *Judenrein* (clean, free or empty of Jews).

I have been assured by a director of the IRC that a search made in the Geneva IRC offices failed to turn up a Burckhardt report of this conversation. Squire's memo was in the form of a personal letter to Harrison, the US Minister in Berne, (*National Archives*, 9 November 1942). In his covering note Squire observed that, on the basis of Dr Burckhardt's information, "for the unfortunates only one solution remained, namely death."

²² Dr Riegner wrote a seven-page *Report concerning the Jews in Latvia* on the basis of the Zivian interrogation (*World Jewish Congress, Institute of Jewish Affairs, Archives, London*).

Hitler's Holocaust

buch (the representative of orthodox Jewry) in Montreux reporting the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto. But all these items fitted only too well into the general picture. So did a report from the US Embassy in Stockholm and another, very long and detailed, from Anthony J. Drexel Biddle Jr. (US Ambassador to the Allied governments-in-exile in London). This was based on a memorandum by Ernst Frischer, the Czech parliamentarian, who had appeared at the press conference in London in late June together with Schwarzbart and Silverman, whose report stated that there was no precedent for such organised wholesale killing in all Jewish history, nor indeed in the whole history of mankind. A copy of Biddle's report was sent directly to the White House.

US diplomats abroad were asked by the State Department to find out whether they had heard anything which could shed light on the Riegner report. Finally, on 22 October, Harrison met Dr Riegner and Richard Lichtheim, collected sworn affidavits from them, and forwarded the evidence to Washington. Eleven weeks had now passed since the original Riegner cable—and eleven months since the news about mass murder in Russia had first been received in the West.

Further reports from Jewish and non-Jewish circles continued to arrive. An account from a Vatican source said that mass executions of Jews in Poland were continuing. The number of Jews killed in each of the major centres was counted in tens of thousands. The victims were said to have been killed by poison gas, in chambers especially prepared for the purpose.²³

The British Foreign Office had forwarded the Riegner cable to the United States despite the fact that it feared "embarrassing repercussions." Informed opinion in London was that German policy was to use able-bodied Jews as slave labour, not to exterminate them "at one blow." Even by late November officials in London still thought that

there was no actual proof of these atrocities. But the probability was sufficiently great to justify some Allied "action", which in practical terms meant the publication of a declaration.

NOT ALL THE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION emanating from Geneva was helpful, and some was quite wrong. Thus (according to another cable, sent by the Jewish representatives) the order for extermination had been proposed by Herbert Backe, the Nazi commissar for food supply, who wanted in this drastic way to alleviate the existing shortages, whereas Frank and Himmler had been opposing "the Final Solution" because Jewish labour (especially Jewish specialists) was needed for the War effort. This, needless to say, was pure speculation; Hitler's decision had nothing to do with Germany's food situation.²⁴

There were certain discrepancies between the reports: some alleged that the Jews had been killed by poison gas, others mentioned some form of electrocution. There was one account claiming that the corpses of the victims were used for the manufacture of soap and artificial fertilisers (this apparently came from Sternbuch in Montreux, who had heard it from a Polish source). Riegner reported a similar story on the authority of an "anti-Nazi officer attached to German Army headquarters": there were two factories processing Jewish corpses for the manufacture of soap, glue, and lubricants. These unlikely stories reinforced the scepticism in London and Washington. As Frank Roberts wrote:

"The facts are quite bad enough without the addition of such an old story as the use of bodies for the manufacture of soap."²⁵

It emerged after the War that the story was in fact untrue. But the hair of female victims was used for the War effort; and the rumours about the production of soap from Jewish corpses had gained wide currency, in any case, among non-Jews in Poland, Slovakia, and Germany. They appeared in various confidential German reports and even in exchanges between Nazi leaders.²⁶

But the repetition of rumours of this kind made all information about "the Final Solution" suspect in the eyes of highly-placed Americans and Englishmen, who had found it inconvenient in the first place. One of them was Victor Cavendish-Bentinck, the chairman of the British Intelligence Committee, who wrote as late as July 1943 that the Poles, and to a far greater extent the Jews, tended to exaggerate German atrocities "in order to stoke us up."²⁷

IT WAS SAID THAT the news about the systematic mass murders could have "embarrassing repercus-

²³ 23 November 1942, National Archives 740.0016 E.W. 1939/726.

²⁴ Typical of the amateurish way in which Dr Riegner's information was handled in the United States was the fact that everything that had been sent from Geneva, including information which was clearly *not* scheduled for publication, was published in the *Congress Weekly* of 4 December 1942.

²⁵ Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939–1945* (1979).

²⁶ See, for instance, Raoul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1961), p. 470 (Slovakia), p. 331 (Poland).

²⁷ PRO FO 371/34551. In a letter to me (October 1979) Mr Cavendish-Bentinck wrote that his pre-War experience of Germany had been limited, and that he therefore disbelieved the atrocity stories in 1942–43. He added that when he visited Auschwitz in late 1945 and reported to the Foreign Office that millions of people had been killed there, it was *still* not believed in the Foreign Office.

Walter Laqueur

sions." Whom could it embarrass? It was believed in London and Washington that stories like these would at best sidetrack the Allies from the War effort; it was argued (by the head of the Southern Department of the Foreign Office in September 1944) that it would compel various heads of offices "to waste a disproportionate amount of their time in dealing with wailing Jews."

4. Diplomats & Decrypts

AS THE RIEGNER REPORT reached London, a senior British official noted that "we have, of course, received numerous reports of large-scale massacres of Jews, particularly in Poland."²⁸

Where did these "numerous reports" originate? Some came from the usual intelligence sources, others from prisoners-of-war who had succeeded in escaping from the Continent and had accidentally witnessed such scenes. One of the escapees who later became famous was Airey Neave (a prominent Tory parliamentarian who was killed by Irish terrorists on the premises of the House of Commons in 1979). He had witnessed the early stage of "the Final Solution" in Poland. A British officer who had been hiding in Warsaw and escaped in early June of 1942 was said to be the source of an OSS report from Lisbon.

Some reports came through ordinary diplomatic channels. Thus David Kelly (head of the British Legation in Switzerland, in a letter dated 19 November 1941 to Frank Roberts of the Central Department of the Foreign Office):

"Here are a few miscellaneous items I have just heard from colleagues. The Pole told me . . . that 1½ million Jews who were living in Eastern (recently Russian) Poland have simply disappeared altogether; nobody knows how and where."²⁹

The forwarded report is of considerable interest. It is one of the first, if not the very first, indication that news of the activities of the *Einsatzgruppen* had reached the West and also the fact that hundreds of thousands of Jews had been killed. The source was Alexander Lados, the Polish diplomatic representative in Berne. He was neither a naive man nor a sensationalist; he had been Minister of the Interior in the government-in-exile before moving to Switzerland. He had no radio contact

with Poland, so the information could have reached him only through a Polish courier on his way to the West. The news was substantially correct—one-and-a-half million Jews had lived in the territories occupied by the Germans since the invasion; those who had not escaped had been killed. There were other such reports from various sources.

BUT THERE WERE, in addition, two other major sources of information: one highly secret, the other quite open. The secret story of the *Enigma* decrypts (*Ultra*, *Triangle*) became gradually known during the 1970s. Throughout much of the War British intelligence was able to intercept internal radio signals inside Nazi Germany and to read them. In the headquarters of this operation in Bletchley which employed thousands of people, the *Luftwaffe* code was first deciphered and subsequently other codes; the *SS* code was broken in late 1941 and also that of the *Abwehr*. Many studies of the Second World War which did not take this into account will certainly have to be rewritten, for it does make a difference whether Army, Navy or Air Force commanders, facing basic decisions, were quite reliably informed about the strength of the other side and its intentions. True, much vital information was not transmitted by wireless telegraphy but by telephone, teleprinter, or courier (always preferred over shorter distances). Thus communication between Berlin and Madrid was by wireless and could be read—whereas the letters exchanged between Berlin and Paris could not be intercepted.

British Intelligence could have known about "the Final Solution" through the *Enigma* decrypts. But did it? It will not be possible to provide a conclusive answer to this question for a long time. Many *Ultra* signals have been released in recent years but almost exclusively concern naval and air operations, and these too are incomplete. Material pertaining to *Wehrmacht* and *SS* Intelligence is not accessible so far, and some of it may never be released. The same refers to US decrypts; Britain was not the only country to intercept German radio communications in Eastern Europe during the War. Thus the evidence available is incomplete and indirect, and it must be analysed in terms of probability rather than certainty.

THE *SS* CODE was broken by British Intelligence, but most of the signals read in Bletchley apparently dealt with foreign intelligence, and not with "the Final Solution." I have been assured that those reading the cables to and from the chief state-security office (RSHA) learned, in fact, about the mass murder of Jews from MI6 sources.³⁰ Up to 1943, when a computer was installed, only a relatively small part of the material intercepted was in fact decoded. It was a matter of hit-and-miss,

²⁸ D. Allen, PRO FO 371/30917 (dated 14 August 1942).

²⁹ David Kelly to Frank Roberts, FO 371 26515.

³⁰ By, for instance, Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper and Mr Peter Calvocoressi.

It is not known and probably will not be known for a

Hitler's Holocaust

and signals dealing neither with the military build-up nor with high-grade political intelligence were given low priorities. Information about Jews was hardly considered top priority. It has also been said that, for technical reasons, reception from Eastern Europe was uncertain. But this did not prevent *Ultra*, in the spring of 1941, from collecting important evidence about the invasion build-up of the German Army and Air Force against the Soviet Union in Poland.

Did the *SS Einsatzgruppen* actually use wireless for their progress reports? This question can be answered in the affirmative. The *Einsatzgruppen* reports state that they used not only teleprinter but also radio stations. Operation Report 131 (dated 10 April 1942) announces, for instance, that *Einsatzgruppen* A and B used Radio Smolensk; Group 6; Stalino; 7A Klinzy and Orel; 9 Witebsk; 10 Feodosia; 12 Federowka. Radio stations at Kiev, Charkow, Nikolaev, and Simferopol were also used.

There was, in any case, yet another source of information which had a direct bearing on "the Final Solution." British Intelligence was closely analysing on a daily basis the movements of German trains. There was a special "Railway Research Service" at the Ministry of Economic Warfare, which, with the help of *Enigma*, broke the German railway code in February 1941. At the same time, quite independently, SIS also discovered the code and this made it possible to follow the movement of German trains all over Europe.³¹ Railway Intelligence was, of course, especially interested in irregular patterns; and the trains carrying the Jews to Poland, and inside Poland to the concentration camps, cannot have escaped their attention. If German railway staff reached the conclusion that Auschwitz had become one of Europe's most important and populous centres in

view of the many trains directed there, the same thought must also have occurred to Allied Intelligence.

Was it perhaps a place of great importance for Hitler's War effort? Quite probably, therefore, an effort was made to find out more about what, if anything, was being produced in Auschwitz and the other camps. Such studies were probably undertaken, but they have not been declassified.

Was information concerning the extermination of European Jewry suppressed by the Intelligence Services? The answer seems to be yes, but in view of the fact that many of the files of these services have been destroyed, it may not be possible to prove conclusively whether this was indeed the case, and if so, for what reason. This is not to question the integrity of those Intelligence officers who in later years have denied all knowledge. As Churchill once observed: memories of war should never be trusted without verification. But verification has been made impossible in this case.

5. The Facts Slip Through

THERE WERE OTHER SOURCES of information on which one can report with greater certainty.

Unlike the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany was not a hermetically closed country, even in Wartime. Tens of thousands of foreign citizens continued to live and to travel in Germany and some of them also went to the occupied territories in the East. North and South American diplomats and journalists (with the exception of Argentina and Chile) left Germany in January 1942; but there were still the neutrals such as Spain and Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland, Ireland and Turkey, and, of course, Germany's allies and satellites. They had embassies in Berlin and there were many local consular offices (Sweden had 53 such offices, Finland 32, Denmark 30, even Portugal had 20). Many of these consuls were German citizens, but those in key posts (such as Hamburg, Prague, or Vienna) were usually foreign nationals; Swiss consuls were always Swiss citizens.

It was not the main assignment of consular officers to provide political intelligence; but they would not be reprimanded for picking up and passing on gossip and news items. (One example: a Swiss citizen who had by accident witnessed a massacre in Ukraine did inform his consul in Hamburg.) Consuls would extend help to citizens of the countries they represented. Among these citizens there would invariably be some Jews, who foolishly had stayed on in Germany. There were others, whose claims were shaky (widows or descendants of Turkish or Spanish citizens). But investigations had to be made in each case; and thus diplomatic and consular personnel were bound to learn that

long time by whom and in what circumstances the *SS* code was broken. We do know, however, that the Polish Second Bureau had deciphered the *SD* code and was regularly reading it well before the outbreak of the Second World War. This has been described in some detail in the memoirs of the head of this task force, Marian Rejewski, a gifted mathematician (Marian Rejewski, *Wspomnienia o mej pracy w Biurze Szyfrow Oddziału II w latach 1930-1945*, unpublished, Warsaw, Military Historical Institute). See Richard S. Woytak, *On the Border of War and Peace: Polish Intelligence and Diplomacy in 1937-1939 and the origins of the Ultra Secret* (New York, 1979), p. 101.

It is quite likely that the *SD* code was changed after August 1939. But we do not know whether it was changed radically; and for this reason it cannot be said with any certainty whether the British services simply continued where the Poles had stopped in 1939 or whether a major new effort was needed to break it. All that matters in this context is that the *SS-SD* codes could be read in Britain by late 1941.

³¹ F. H. Hinsley, *British Intelligence* . . . , pp. 357-58. Documents pertaining to *Ultra* railway intelligence are not yet accessible at the Public Record Office.

Walter Laqueur

Jews were being deported, that their property was being seized, that they were disappearing without trace. When two of the secretaries at the Turkish Embassy in Berlin (who happened to be Jewish) suddenly vanished—or when a similar lot befell the German-language teacher of the Ambassador of Siam in Berlin—questions would be asked.

There were many ways in which foreign nationals living in the *Reich* might learn about the fate of the Jews. Thus Goebbels in one of his staff conferences (on 11 March 1941) mentioned with evident indignation that he had just learned that half the foreign students in Berlin were staying in "Jewish apartments."

The Finnish Ambassador, Professor Kiwimaeki, was a personal friend of Felix Kersten, Himmler's masseur (and one of the best informed people in the *Reich*). Kiwimaeki was warned by Kersten in July 1942 that Himmler wanted the Finns to surrender their Jews.

The Swedes received information from a variety of sources; it was a Swedish diplomat, Baron von Otter, who was approached by Kurt Gerstein in the Warsaw-Berlin express. Gerstein, as Chief Disinfection Officer of the *Waffen SS*, was in charge of supplying the poison to the camps. He had just returned from an inspection tour attending to technical details such as the relative advantages of *Zyklon B* (hydrogen cyanide) and carbon monoxide in killing people and he told Baron von Otter, who informed Stockholm.³²

This was an accidental meeting, but others were routine. The Swedish Embassy's pastor was in

constant touch with oppositionist elements in the German Protestant Church and tried, unsuccessfully, to rescue some of the converted Christians (for instance, the adopted daughter of Jochen Klepper, a well-known author). Counsellor Almquist of the Embassy also participated in these rescue attempts. Swedish businessmen in Warsaw were in touch with the Polish underground (and some were arrested). Swedish diplomats were bound to learn about the mortal danger facing the Jews. It is unlikely, to put it mildly, that they (and other neutral representatives in Berlin, which sometimes included even Germany's allies, such as Italy and Hungary) would have gone out of their way to try to prevent the enforced journey of a Jew from Germany or Holland or France to some East European destination unless they knew that deportation was a sentence of death.³³ Only a very few, such as Baron von Otter, had received a briefing on the technology of mass murder. But these were technical details; about the end result there was no doubt.

THE DIPLOMATS constituted only a small part of the foreign community in Wartime Germany. Even after the exodus of the American journalists in December 1941 there were still some hundred foreign journalists stationed in Nazi Germany. Their number slightly increased in 1942–43 and it was only during the last year of the War, when the lines of communication broke down, that many of them left. The majority came from "satellite" countries, which is not to say that they were always enthusiastic about Nazi politics. There were also quite a few correspondents from neutral countries. The main Swiss newspapers were represented, and *Svenska Dagbladet*, *Dagens Nyheter*, *Stockholm Tidningen*, *Nya Daglight Allehande* and even *Socialdemokraten* had permanent Berlin correspondents. Their reports were, of course, strictly censored but this does not mean that they did not know more than what was written for publication.

NAZI OFFICIALS were not always capable of keeping even top secrets. Thus Professor Karl Boehme, head of the foreign press department of the Ministry of Propaganda, announced at a reception at the Bulgarian Embassy—in May 1941—that he would "soon" be *Gauleiter* of the Crimea. (Following this incident he was indeed sent to the Eastern front—but as a soldier, and it was only owing to Goebbels' personal intervention that he was not shot.) If military secrets of this importance were accidentally revealed, "the Final Solution" was more widely discussed and commented upon. True, foreign correspondents were not permitted to

³² Personal communication from Baron von Otter, (25 August 1979). Otter at first composed a report about the meeting but then decided not to mail it since he was to return to Stockholm within a week after the event. Interviewed in 1979, von Otter said that it was a "totally unique situation. I was the first diplomat to find out what was happening in Germany..." What if his superiors had passed on the report to the Allies and the Allies had made the facts known? Otter thinks that the German people would not have believed it, and in any case "it was in an iron grip" (*Aftonbladet*, 7 March 1979). Soederblom, the head of the political department in the Foreign Ministry, to whom von Otter reported, said that "we judged it too risky to pass on information from one belligerent country to another" (*Aftonbladet*, 8 March 1979). Was no credence given to the information? or wasn't it considered of sufficient importance to pass on to the Allies? The explanation that it was "too risky" can hardly be taken seriously: there were ways and means to transmit the information without implicating the Swedish government. I am grateful to the Swedish Foreign Ministry for having given me access to the hitherto closed file in February 1980. The result was negative; it contained hardly anything that was not known before.

³³ Dr Hans Lindberg, author of a study of Swedish refugee policy from 1936–41, believes that it is unlikely that the Swedish authorities knew about the mass murders prior to Baron von Otter's report. He bases this belief on an interview with Ambassador Gosta Engzell, who was then in a key position in the Swedish Foreign Ministry. See Hans Lindberg, *Svensk flyktningpolitik under internationellt tryck 1936–41* (Stockholm, 1973).

Hitler's Holocaust

travel freely in Eastern Europe during the War, but there were still guided tours for both resident journalists and those specially invited. Thus, a group was taken to Kiev in October 1941 to see the destruction wrought by the Bolsheviks. Captain Koch, who was in charge of them, was asked about the murder of many thousands of Jews in the Ukrainian capital—this was merely a few days after Babi Yar. He denied all knowledge whereupon the journalists, according to an *Abwehr* report, told him that they knew about it anyway ("*dass sie darueber doch genau Bescheid wuessen*").³⁴ Journalists could not print such stories, but they talked about them; most of them went on home leave quite frequently and would inform their editorial offices, families, friends.

Albert Mueller (foreign editor of the *Neue Zuercher Zeitung* from 1934 to 1965) wrote in retrospect that there was no "direct news" but that the deportations and the concentration in ghettos were impossible without announcements in the German press in occupied Poland which was read by the foreign correspondents in Berlin. "We received no picture of photographic exactitude, only silhouettes. . . ."³⁵ But the silhouettes were quite revealing, and Mueller also remembers the information he received early on in the War from an unimpeachable source, a lawyer and reserve officer stationed then in the Warthegau (the Polish region annexed by Germany in late 1939), about the mass graves for Jewish victims. The officer added in his message that the incident was less uncommon than the fact that it had reached his courtroom at all. On another occasion the Dutch government-in-exile informed Mueller and his colleagues that the central register office in Amsterdam had been destroyed by the Resistance because of certain indications that there were in Poland installations for mass murder (or that these were about to be completed).

The neutrals in Wartime Germany were, thus, another important channel through which the Allied Governments learned about conditions in the Nazi-occupied countries and also about the fate of the Jews. Some of the neutrals reported to British and American connections (just as, for instance, some of the Spanish diplomats stationed in London passed on information to Berlin). But even those who had no direct Allied connections reported to their superiors in Stockholm, Berne, and other capitals; they talked to their friends, colleagues, and business associates. "Gossip" of this kind

could be picked up by Allied diplomats and agents in the neutral capitals.

Letters sent out of Germany and neutral countries were read with attention in various Allied censorship offices. Read in conjunction with press and news agency reports, they were an important source of information. A Foreign Office report on *Conditions in Germany and Occupied Countries* (dated 18 February 1942 and based entirely on material of this sort) noted "a ruthless new drive to clear the *Reich* of the Jews." A large proportion of the Red Cross postal messages out of Germany during January 1942 "were from unfortunates on the eve of their departure to Poland or unknown destinations." There were exact data about many cities. As regards the conditions awaiting the deportees it was said that direct information was not easy to come by—an obvious understatement. But it was also stated that "rumours leaking through into Germany are reported to have caused a number of Jews to prefer suicide to deportation" (letter from Lugano, 9 January 1942). From America there came a "horror story" of thousands of the inmates of a ghetto somewhere near the Russian front being put to death in an attempt by the authorities to stamp out typhoid. Such reports were periodically put together; they show that much of interest could be culled from seemingly unpromising sources.³⁶

6. *Knowing & Not Knowing*

INFORMATION ABOUT MASS MURDER was available in London by late summer of 1942, but no great publicity was given to it. The decision to play down the news is not of direct relevance here, for it belongs to the general political and moral problem of Allied reactions. But the issue cannot be bypassed altogether, for if the information about "the Final Solution" had been publicised more widely, more people in occupied Europe would have heard about it, and earlier at that. The role of the British Ministry of Information, headed at the time by Brendan Bracken, remains to be explored in this connection. I have been assured by some who worked with him and knew him well that he believed that the news was so "horrific" that it would be discounted as a propaganda lie of Goebbelsian dimensions. He did chair a press conference in July 1942 arranged by the Polish government in London, and spoke with horror and indignation about the atrocities committed against the Jews. He also declared that retribution would be administered when victory was won. But there was also the consideration that, politically, it would be unwise to give too much publicity to this specific Nazi crime.

The planning committee of the Ministry of Infor-

³⁴ Lahusen report on trip to Russia, NOKW 3147, 23 October 1941.

³⁵ *Neue Zuercher Zeitung*, 5 May 1979.

³⁶ PRO FO 371/30898. Censorship reports will not be declassified in Britain for another fifty years. The one quoted above reached me by accident. It shows that these reports were a source of great importance.

Walter Laqueur

mation (MOI) had reached the conclusion in July 1941 that while a certain amount of horror was needed in British home propaganda, this was only to be used sparingly

"and must always deal with the treatment of indisputably innocent people. Not with violent political opponents. And not with Jews."³⁷

Why not with Jews? Were they, perhaps, not "indisputably innocent"? No, the reason was more complicated. According to the experts of MOI the public thought that people singled out as victims were probably "a bad lot." Thus, paradoxically, MOI referred in 1942 to the "holocaust of Catholics" in Europe, but to the Jews it referred only rarely and not in terms of a holocaust even after the facts about "the Final Solution" had become known.

There was a further reason. As a senior official of MOI wrote at the time, for 20 years between the two World Wars there had been an effective campaign against atrocity stories and some people had become contra-suggestible. He, personally, did not know whether there was a "corpse factory" or not, but most people believed there was not.³⁸

The same argument was quite frequently used in the United States. When John Pehle, director of the War Refugee Board, wanted to publish the Auschwitz report of two escaped prisoners in 1944, Elmer Davis (head of the Office of War Information) protested. Publishing these reports would be counter-productive; the American public would not believe them, would only consider them World-War-One-style atrocity stories. But the OWI pundits also used the opposite argument. In Occupied Europe the truth about "the Final Solution" would be believed, and this would strike such mortal fear into the hearts of the non-Jews that all resistance to the Nazis would collapse.

There was a third argument, and it was probably the decisive one. There is, in the words of the historian of MOI,³⁹ a complete absence of minutes and memoranda relating to this issue, but he is in no doubt that

"the Ministry almost certainly hesitated because of the widely reported prejudice in the British Community against the Jews."

³⁷ MOI Memorandum (25 July 1941), INF 1/251.

³⁸ MOI Memorandum, R. Frazer (10 February 1942), INF 1/251.

³⁹ Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale* (London, 1979), pp. 164–66.

⁴⁰ The editorial writers of the leading British newspapers were certainly less hesitant than the bureaucrats at the time. There were strong, detailed and frequent editorial comments in *The Times*, *The Manchester Guardian*, the *Daily Telegraph* and other daily newspapers throughout December 1942.

Anti-Semitism figured throughout 1940 and 1941 in many issues of the *Home Intelligence Weekly Report*. For unknown reasons there were much fewer such reports during the second half of 1942; but then, towards the end of the year, "anti-Semitism appears actually to have been revived by the authoritative disclosures of the Nazis' systematic massacres of the European Jews." The *Weekly Reports* of 8 and 15 December 1942 announced extreme horror, indignation, anger, and disgust. But in the *Weekly Report* of 29 December the conclusion was reached that as a result of the publicity

"people become more conscious of the Jews they do not like here. . . ."

This, then, was undoubtedly the main reason for playing down the murder of the Jews. MOI used this argument with regard to the home services of the British Broadcasting Corporation; the intelligence services and the Foreign Office used similar reasons with regard to the BBC's European services.

PWE (Political Warfare Executive) was certainly well informed about "the Final Solution." In its headquarters at Electra House in London it not only received relevant items from all other British intelligence services, but it had a group of 30 analysts at the British Embassy in Stockholm reading all newspapers from Axis and neutral countries. Once a week a special RAF plane would fly the material to London. But PWE was equally uneasy about the use of "the Jewish theme" in leaflets dropped over the Continent or in broadcasts. Even towards the end of the War Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart (director of PWE) explained to a fellow British diplomat that it was quite pointless to intensify the appeals to save the doomed Jews; such declarations would only result in increased maltreatment. Furthermore paper, planes, and broadcasting hours were limited, and PWE had many other commitments. Whatever the reasons—and there were at least half-a-dozen differing arguments—the conclusion was always the same. No one in the West suggested suppressing the information about the mass murder altogether (and, in any case, the control of institutions such as MOI and PWE over the media was far from absolute). But the official consensus was to refer to it only sparingly.⁴⁰

IN OCTOBER 1942 the Jewish Telegraphic Agency learned of the Riegner cable and published its gist without attribution. In November Rabbi Stephen Wise was asked to come to Washington, and he was told by Sumner Welles that additional information received by the State Department confirmed the deepest fears, thus releasing him from

Hitler's Holocaust

silence. He told a press conference in Washington that he had learned through sources confirmed by the State Department that half of the estimated four million Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe had been slain in an "extermination campaign."⁴¹

On 17 December 1942 the eleven Allied governments and De Gaulle's Free France Committee published a common declaration which announced that the German authorities were now carrying into effect Hitler's oft-repeated intention of exterminating the Jewish people in Europe. This was followed by editorials, broadcasts, and public meetings. There seemed to be no more doubt about the authenticity of the terrible news.

But on 10 February 1943 after Leland Harrison, the US minister to Switzerland, had forwarded yet another message from Dr Riegner on "the Final Solution" he was asked by Breckinridge Long (Assistant Secretary in charge of the Special War Problems Division) no longer to accept and transmit such reports to private persons in the United States.⁴² There were influential circles in Washington who did not want reports of this kind to be circulated. They felt even more strongly than their colleagues in the British Foreign Office that these reports could have "embarrassing" repercussions.

Or could it still be that attitudes were motivated by genuine doubts about the veracity of the "horror stories?" News about Nazi atrocities had been widely published in the American press from 1939 onwards. Commenting on some of these reports, the *New York Herald Tribune* published an editorial (5 December 1941):

"the sum of it all indicates that the fate reserved for the Jews by the Nazis is worse than a status of serfdom—it is nothing less than systematic extermination."

During the first six months of 1942 there were reports of mass executions, and all the important messages coming out of Poland were also published. US embassies in Budapest and Bucharest reported the Kamenets-Podolsk massacre and the deportation to Transnistria. The cables on these events by Franklin M. Gunther (US Ambassador to Bulgaria) apparently created some displeasure in the Department; but all that matters

in this context is that the relevant information was available in Washington. US diplomatic personnel were still stationed in the Axis countries up to the end of 1941, and in Vichy for a year after; Jewish institutions furthermore provided a steady stream of information. The files of the Department of State are full of such material: information, queries, appeals for help, suggestions for action, protests.

As early as 7 October 1941 Ray Atherton of the European Division of the State Department had sent a 60-page memorandum, "Poland under German Occupation" to Colonel William (Bill) Donovan, at that time still "Coordinator of Information." A member of the US Embassy in Berlin, who had formerly served in Warsaw, had received this document from a Pole. It described conditions in Poland before the German invasion of the Soviet Union and said that it was the endeavour of the German authorities in Poland to "ruthlessly and entirely exterminate the Jewish element from the life of Aryan communities." Terms such as "extermination... elimination... liquidation" were repeatedly used, and it was stressed that Nazi policy was to make the Jews disappear from Europe.⁴³ While reports such as these did not specifically refer to physical extermination, they left little to the imagination. A long signal (Lisbon, 20 July 1942) begins as follows:

"Germany no longer persecutes the Jews, it is systematically exterminating them... These facts moreover have been corroborated by many returning citizens of European origin now here."⁴⁴

But were these reports read in Washington? When, three months later, Professor Felix Frankfurter voiced his apprehension about the fate of the Jews to President Roosevelt he was told not to worry—the deported Jews were simply being employed on the Soviet frontier to build fortifications...⁴⁵

Roosevelt most certainly did not read every single intelligence report from Eastern Europe. But it is equally certain that he knew more than he admitted to Felix Frankfurter on 16 September 1942. One month before (on 22 August) he had said in a White House press conference:

"the communication which I have just received... gives rise to the fear that as the defeat of the enemy countries approaches, the barbaric and unrelenting character of the occupational régime will become more marked and may even lead to the extermination of certain populations."

WHO WERE THE "certain populations"? Certainly not the people of the Netherlands and Luxembourg, from whose governments-in-exile he had received the information.

Roosevelt's general attitude was perhaps most

⁴¹ *New York Herald Tribune*, 25 November 1942.

⁴² Henry L. Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue* (New Brunswick, 1970), p. 180.

⁴³ NND 750140. The document is of considerable interest because it is the first detailed statement on the situation in Occupied Poland prepared by the Polish underground.

⁴⁴ N.A. Records of OSS, 26896. This report is identical with information received by Richard Lichtheim in Geneva and forwarded by him to Jerusalem.

⁴⁵ Stephen S. Wise papers, Frankfurter to Wise (16 September 1942).

Walter Laqueur

succinctly stated in a reply to a letter from General Sikorski early in July 1942. The Polish chief-of-state had suggested drastic action as a deterrent against German terrorism. Roosevelt said that he was fully aware of these actions but there was no answer except the crushing of the military might of the Axis powers. America was deeply incensed about the barbaric behaviour of the Nazis, but it would not stand for acts of retaliation such as the indiscriminate bombing of the civilian population of enemy countries.⁴⁶

Roosevelt was kept fully informed by, among others, long cables from A. Drexel Biddle, Ambassador with the exiled governments in London and a personal friend. But given his belief that the only politically and strategically sound course was "the most effective prosecution of the war" he did not pay attention to the news about "the Final Solution", and he may even have considered it inopportune.

Another report, probably from the same source, begins with a discussion of the chronology of "the Final Solution":

⁴⁶ General Sikorski's letter is dated 22 June 1942, Roosevelt's answer 3 July. These documents as well as the cables emanating from A. Drexel Biddle can be found in National Archives, record group 84, Warsaw 1942, file 711-Jewish atrocities.

⁴⁷ RG 226, OSS 27275.

⁴⁸ OSS, R & A. Nr. 605; *New York Herald Tribune*, 29 October 1941 (Oechsner dispatch). Richard Helms had worked for Fred Oechsner at the Berlin United Press bureau; when Oechsner joined OSS he enlisted Helms for the organisation.

Arthur J. Goldberg, subsequently a Supreme Court Justice and US representative to the United Nations, was asked in late August of 1942, by General William Donovan whose special assistant he was, to organise a London office of the Labor Division of the OSS which Goldberg directed. Adolph Held, president of the Jewish Labor Committee, suggested Shmuel Zygielbojm as one of several useful contacts. The two became friends in autumn 1942; they met both officially and socially.

"In the course of these meetings Mr. Zygielbojm informed me about Hitler's program for the 'final solution'. He also provided me with evidence supporting the information he furnished. I forwarded this information to General Donovan through OSS channels. At this point my memory becomes faulty. I believe that he not only advised me about the death camps but also about the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto and requested either a bombing of Auschwitz and/or the Warsaw ghetto. . . . I recall that upon receiving an answer to my urging that his request be honored and that it was negative, I asked him to have dinner with me at Claridges where I was staying. With understandable pain and anguish I told him that our government was not prepared to do what he requested because in the view of our high command, aircraft were not available for this purpose. The next day he committed suicide—this I recall vividly. . . ."

(Letter to author, 15 November 1979).

⁴⁹ Since writing these lines I have been able to unearth much more evidence on Sam Woods and his sources of information (thanks to Ruben Hecht, then of Basle, now residing in Haifa, who worked closely with Woods during the War). Woods did get and transmit such information.

"The exact date when Hitler decided to wipe the Jews from the surface of Europe in the most literal sense of the word, namely by killing them, is unknown. Evacuations and deportations accompanied by executions date as far back as the Polish campaign, but the organised wholesale slaughter of whole communities and trainloads of Jews appears to have been practised not before the German attack on Russia."⁴⁷

It ends with the destruction of the working of gassing vans outside Minsk.

The OSS report just quoted was by no means the only one. One of the first on "the systematic liquidation of the Jews" is dated 14 March 1942, but some leading OSS officials had known, and written about it, even before. One of them was Fred Oechsner, formerly head of the United Press Bureau in Berlin, who went on to cover the war in the East with the German and Rumanian army and had been to Odessa and other places. He reported in October 1941 from German sources about the special treatment of the Jews in Kiev, Zhitomir, Kherson and other places ("the Ukrainians took care of matters"). Major Arthur Goldberg, who worked for the OSS in London, was given details about "the Final Solution" by Shmuel Zygielbojm and passed the information on to Washington.⁴⁸

THE BEST-INFORMED AMERICAN on things German in 1941–42 was probably the legendary Sam Woods (1892–1953), commercial attaché in Berlin and later, from early 1943 Consul General in Zurich. A Texan who knew no German and pretended not to have the slightest interest in politics, Woods engaged with great success in freebooting intelligence activities outside any organisational framework. In Berlin in February 1941 he received a copy of the German battle order for *Barbarossa*, and later in Zurich he received information that the Germans were debating whether to work on the atomic bomb—to mention only two of his major scoops. There is reason to assume that Woods knew from his German contacts about the fate of the Jews; but since, more often than not, he conveyed his information to his superiors by word of mouth, it is doubtful whether this will ever be proven.⁴⁹ The Germans apparently never suspected Woods during his Berlin period (1937–41); they became interested in him only after his appointment in Zurich.

In another account a soldier of the Italian Expeditionary Force to Russia is quoted: "God will chastise us terribly for the assistance we render to all these crimes." A report dated August 1942 was a copy of a message sent to Rabbi Stephen Wise and intercepted by the US authorities:

"There is hardly a Jew to be found in the whole of Eastern Poland, including occupied

Hitler's Holocaust

Russia . . . The Jews deported from Germany, Belgium, Holland, France, and Slovakia are to be slaughtered. . . . Since this slaughter would attract greater attention in the West, the Jews must first be deported to the East, where other countries are less likely to learn of it."

Reports from French officers (who escaped or were repatriated from prisoner-of-war camps in Poland) as well as from M. Charles Mercier (a Red Cross representative) mention not only "*choses incroyables sur les massacres des Juifs*" but also concrete details such as the extermination of the whole Jewish population of the town of Rawa Ruska.⁵⁰ Yet another message says that "Jews in the East not excluding Eastern Galicia and Lwow are being systematically murdered. There are none left in the larger Soviet Ukrainian towns, in Lithuania they will be soon completely exterminated."⁵¹ A signal datelined "German frontier—15 November, 1942", probably based on the report of a journalist, deals with the murder of Jews in the Baltic countries and says that the procedure will serve as an example elsewhere.⁵² Lastly, the OSS received, through liaison officers, much information from Polish sources in London. Reports dated August and September 1942 included details about camps such as Treblinka as well as Polish and German eye-witness accounts.

IN THE LIGHT OF THESE and other reports, published and secret, one would assume that not only the US Intelligence community and officials of the State Department, but also average newspaper-readers, were aware, as 1942 drew to its close, that the Jews of Europe were being systematically exterminated. But this was by no means the case, and while one can think of various explanations the reasons still remain something of a riddle.

President Roosevelt may have been too busy to study the newspapers in great detail, and he was certainly a less avid reader of intelligence reports than Winston Churchill. But what about the diplomats and the Intelligence agents in the field?

Two examples should suffice.

On 5 April 1943, Herschel Johnson, US Ambassador to Sweden, sent a cable to Washington

in which he reported that of the 450,000 Jews in Warsaw only 50,000 remained. There were some incorrect details in his cable: the stories about the lethal methods used (gas) were said to be a distortion of the facts, for the Jews had all been killed by German army firing-squads and some of the German soldiers had revolted. This report is remarkable, however, for a very different reason. By April 1943 the great majority of Polish—and European—Jewry was dead. Ambassador Johnson surely must have been aware of the fact. An experienced diplomat, he was serving at the time in one of the most exposed and most interesting listening-posts as far as Nazi-occupied Europe was concerned. He had read, no doubt, about the fate of the Jews in the American press; he had seen translations from the Swedish press. The year before he had sent a cable to Washington about the destruction of Baltic and Ukrainian Jewry. Yet he ended his cable of April 1943 with the following words:

"So fantastic is the story told by this German eyewitness to his friend, my informant, that I hesitate to make it the subject of an official report."⁵³

It is possible, though not very likely, that the news from Poland had somehow by-passed the US Ambassador to Sweden.

BUT NO ONE WAS better informed during these years about events inside Nazi-occupied Europe than Allen Dulles, representing the OSS in Berne—which makes the incident which took place in June 1944 all the more difficult to explain.

Two inmates of Auschwitz, Vrba and Wetzler, had succeeded in escaping to Slovakia and wrote a long and detailed report about their experiences which later became famous and was widely circulated by the US War Refugee Board. The report contained many new details but all the essential facts had, of course, been known for a long time. The report was taken by a courier to Budapest and from there to Switzerland. Garrett (the representative of the British news agency, Exchange Telegraph) received a copy which he took to Allen Dulles on 22 June 1944. Dulles read it in his presence:

"He was profoundly shocked. He was as disconcerted as I was and said: 'One has to do something immediately'. . . ."⁵⁴

A cable was sent by Dulles to the Secretary of State the following day. Eighteen months earlier the *New York Times* and other American newspapers had repeatedly featured news items such as TWO THIRDS OF JEWS IN POLAND HELD SLAIN—ONLY 1,250,000 SAID TO SURVIVE OF 3,500,000 ONCE

⁵⁰ OSS 88254. The Research and Analysis department of OSS concluded as early as March 1942 that "the pattern of German violence includes the systematic liquidation of Jews" (Report 605, 14 March 1942).

⁵¹ OSS 24736.

⁵² OSS 24728.

⁵³ Herschel Johnson to Secretary of State (Stockholm, 5 April 1943).

⁵⁴ Werner Rings, *Advokaten des Feindes* (Duesseldorf, 1966).

Walter Laqueur

THERE.³⁵ Even if it is assumed that not a single additional Jew had been slain since December 1942, it is impossible to understand Allen Dulles's surprise and shock.

WHAT EMERGES from these and similar incidents is that the process of perception and learning is more complex than commonly assumed. The fact that some information has been mentioned once—or even a hundred times—in secret reports or in mass-circulation newspapers does not necessarily mean that it has been accepted and understood. Big figures become statistics, and statistics have no psychological impact. Some thought that the news about the Jewish tragedy was exaggerated; others did not doubt the information, but had different priorities and preoccupations.

A moving interpretation based on personal experience has been given by W. A. Visser 't Hooft (a Protestant theologian and the first secretary of the World Council of Churches), who spent the War years in Switzerland. He had received, in October 1941, alarming reports about the deportation of Jews from Germany and other occupied countries to Poland—but, writing 30 years later, he noted that it took several months before the information received entered his consciousness.

"That moment occurred when I heard a young Swiss businessman tell what he had seen with his own eyes during a business trip to Russia. He had been invited by German officers to be present at one of the mass killings of Jews. He told us in the most straightforward and realistic way how group after group of Jewish men, women and children were forced to lie down in the mass graves and were then machine-gunned to death. The picture he drew has remained in my mind ever since. From that moment onward I had no longer any excuse for shutting my mind to information which could find no place in my view of the world and humanity."

Why, in the view of this prominent churchman, did the outside world remain indifferent? Was it because the victims were Jews?

"I do not underestimate the reality of such anti-Semitism but I have found little evidence that

this played the main role in this situation. It was rather that people could find no place in their consciousness for such an unimaginable horror and that they did not have the imagination, together with the courage to face it. It is possible to live in a twilight between knowing and not knowing. . . ."³⁶

I will attempt to explain, in my forthcoming book, why even the Jews in Europe and America were incapable of grasping, comprehending, registering the horror. The whole question of why the information was not believed is one of the riddles that make understanding the catastrophe so difficult. The rejection of information which for one reason or another is unacceptable may well be a normal psychological mechanism, at least up to a point. But beyond that point, when the veracity of the information becomes incontrovertible, continued resistance to it becomes almost inexplicable—all the more so when the events concerned are not of marginal importance or occurring in some faraway country, but constitute mortal danger to the survival of one's people or oneself.

But the case of such a remarkable spirit as Richard Lichtheim must always be excepted. He reported the exterminations in 1942, estimated with horror that almost the entire Jewish people was being destroyed, and wrote in October 1942, "... It is my painful duty to tell you what I know. There is nothing I could add. The tragedy is too great for words. . . ."³⁷

ALL THE EVIDENCE shows that news of "the Final Solution" had been received in 1942 all over Europe, even though many details were not yet known. If so, why were the signals so frequently misunderstood or ignored?

Neither the United States Government nor Britain or Stalin showed any pronounced interest in the fate of the Jews. The information was known not only to the chiefs of Intelligence but also to leading foreign affairs and defence officials and, to a considerable extent, even to the average newspaper-reader. There was no deliberate attempt to stop the flow of information on the mass killings (except in Washington, between August and December 1942). Some officials thought the information much exaggerated; others thought it of little interest. But even those who accepted the news were not to be deflected from their priorities by considerations not "directly concerned" with the War effort. Thus, "too much publicity" about the mass murders was thought to be undesirable, for it was bound to generate demands to help the Jews and this was thought to be detrimental to the War effort. Winston Churchill showed more interest in the Jewish tragedy than Franklin Roosevelt, and

³⁵ *New York Times*, 4 December 1942, p.11. Two days earlier it had been said in an editorial in the same paper that "to sum up this horrible story, it is believed that 2m. European Jews have perished and that five millions are in danger of extermination."

³⁶ W. A. Visser 't Hooft, *Memoirs* (London, 1973), pp. 165–6.

³⁷ Lichtheim correspondence, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem.

Hitler's Holocaust

Roosevelt more than Joseph Stalin; but even he was not willing to devote much thought to the subject.

The impact of the news on the broad public was small and short-lived. The fact that "millions" were being killed was almost meaningless. People could perhaps identify with the fate of an individual or a family, but not with the fate of millions. The

statistics of murder were dismissed from consciousness.

When the horrific reports about conditions in a mere transit camp like Bergen Belsen came in during the spring of 1945, the very last days of the War, there was surprise and shock. No one had known, no one had been prepared for this. . . .

© Walter Laqueur 1980

Auschwitz and the Archives

RICHARD BREITMAN

THERE has been an outpouring of recent scholarship on the Nazi regime's murder of five to six million Jews, and on Western reaction to this "Final Solution of the Jewish question." Some writers (including those reviewed here) have set forth new evidence, developed intriguing interpretations, and succeeded in reaching beyond the scholarly world and capturing a broad public audience. In addition, there is at least one new scholarly journal, the *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual*, focusing specifically on the Holocaust, while the well-established Leo Baeck Institute *Year Book* sometimes has a section containing several articles on the subject. Even the *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, with much broader historical coverage, provides regular coverage of the Final Solution. Any attempt to synthesize all the recent scholarship would be outdated before it was published. One could probably write a good essay about the existing review essays alone.

I will limit myself here to three recent books about the secrecy of the Final Solution and authorization for the Nazi policies of genocide, as

This review essay was written in 1984 and updated slightly after publication was delayed. I am grateful to John Conway and Rudolf Vrba for their criticisms of an early draft. They bear no responsibility for numerous points on which we disagree.

The essay is dedicated to Franklin Ford.

The Terrible Secret: Suppression of the Truth About Hitler's "Final Solution." By WALTER LAQUEUR. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1980. Pp. 276. \$12.95. Paper, New York: Penguin, 1982. \$5.95.

Auschwitz and the Allies. By MARTIN GILBERT. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981. Pp. 368. \$15.95. Paper, \$8.00.

Hitler and the Final Solution. By GERALD FLEMING. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984. Pp. 203. \$15.95.

Auschwitz and the Archives

well as a few related articles. Each work addresses historiographical controversy, and each requires examination in some depth. Walter Laqueur's book and Martin Gilbert's study contradict each other in certain ways; Gerald Fleming's work, which first appeared in German in 1982,¹ is a lightning rod for a wider debate, currently raging among specialists, about Adolf Hitler's power and efficacy as dictator and anti-Semite.

Some studies have indicated that the German public knew little about the Final Solution,² in part because the Nazis kept the program top secret and built most of their extermination camps outside Germany proper. Walter Laqueur, author of numerous works on European history and international affairs (and coeditor of the *Journal of Contemporary History*) demonstrates, however, that during 1941–42 information about mass killings of Jews flowed regularly through Germany and Poland to neutral nations in Europe, to the Allies, and to European Jewish communities and world Jewish leaders.

The Terrible Secret is not a study of the inadequate responses (relief and rescue efforts) by Western governments to the Final Solution.³ Laqueur by and large limits himself to how much was known and where the information came from. He concedes at the outset (pp. 4–5) that the destruction of records and the massive demands of his research ruled out a comprehensive presentation; he would attempt an interpretation supported by examples and illustrations. Even so, most readers will go away overwhelmed by the weight of his evidence that the outside world knew a good deal about the "terrible secret" by December 1942, which is Laqueur's stopping point. By then information about the Final Solution had been widely published, and the United States and Great Britain, under pressure from the Allied governments-in-exile, had formally denounced Nazi Germany's policy of extermination of the Jews.

1. *Hitler und die Endlösung: "Es ist des Führers Wunsch . . ."* (Wiesbaden and Munich, 1982).

2. Lawrence D. Stokes, "The German People and the Destruction of the European Jews," *Central European History* 6 (1973): 167–91; Ian Kershaw, "The Persecution of the Jews and German Popular Opinion in the Third Reich," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 26 (1981): 261–89. Stokes (esp. 184–91) distinguishes between public knowledge of the *Einsatzgruppen* killings and public unawareness of the death camp operations.

3. The latest work here, and the best work on American policy, is David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews, 1941–1945* (New York, 1984). Wyman does not, however, seriously weigh whether outside pressure or bargaining would in fact have induced the Nazis to modify their extermination policy. See my review in *Washington Jewish Week*, 27 Dec. 1984.

Richard Breitman

Although Laqueur describes how German officials, industrialists, soldiers (and their relatives), railway employees, German and Polish workers, and the areas near the extermination camps all received information about what was occurring, this evidence does not quite cover his conclusion (pp. 31–32, and 201) that millions of Germans knew by the end of 1942 that most of the deported Jews were no longer alive. It would have been safer to maintain that millions of Germans knew that a substantial number of Jews had been killed. Laqueur might have highlighted the distinction (which he does make) between knowledge of the Final Solution—the overall program—and information that mass killings had taken place in a number of locations. To convert the second into the first required either additional information or careful analysis of Nazi behavior. Anti-Semitism may have diminished public (and official) awareness, but it was only a contributing factor in a more general process. Most Germans were preoccupied with other matters and shied away from politically dangerous and morally sensitive concerns (and most westerners were preoccupied with the war effort). Thus, information regarding mass killings and atrocities often did not command attention, belief, or knowledge.

Laqueur emphasizes the role of the Polish underground in bringing information about the Final Solution to the West and praises the response of the Polish government-in-exile. He also presents a cogent summary of how many reports of mass killings reached neutral nations, particularly Switzerland and Sweden. These nations surrounded by Nazi territory were the best listening posts for the United Nations during the war.

Laqueur repeatedly states and demonstrates that a great many persons, Jews as well as non-Jews, heard or read gruesome reports but could not believe them. Atrocity stories during World War I, subsequently uncovered as falsified, made even well-informed government officials and educated readers skeptical about the extent of Nazi atrocities. Hitler's decision to wipe out a "race" at a time when labor was scarce was illogical, which was another reason not to lend credence to stories of widespread murder. Poles and European Jews supposedly had an interest in blackening the image of the Nazis; therefore, others often discounted reports of mass extermination.

Above all, the magnitude of the Final Solution and the inhumanity required to implement it were almost literally beyond the comprehension of many. In one vivid episode (p. 237) Felix Frankfurter told Polish

Auschwitz and the Archives

emissary Jan Karski, a non-Jew, that he could not believe Karski's report of mass extermination, although Frankfurter accepted Karski's honesty (and perhaps even accuracy). In another case (p. 194), Gerhart Riegner, Swiss representative of the World Jewish Congress, found that officials of his own organization abroad, as well as other Jewish leaders, refused to accept the statistics he was sending about the numbers of Jews killed. Some Jewish leaders underestimated the viciousness of Nazi leaders and clung to a false optimism. Psychological barriers prevented many from comprehending the brutal reality. Even those directly interested found it possible to remain in the twilight between belief and disbelief. Laqueur's perceptive interpretation thus emphasizes the psychological gap between receiving information and absorbing knowledge that might serve as the basis for action.

Government agencies and officials, however, are expected to collect and analyze information carefully. Hence, Laqueur criticizes official American and British statements that the Nazis were deporting Jews to the east for labor in war-related plants (pp. 94, 224). Laqueur goes too far in maintaining that Washington received no reports of the deported Jews being used as laborers,⁴ but correctly argues that the balance of evidence should have indicated otherwise by the summer of 1942. If government officials did not credit reports of mass extermination, it was partly because they did not wish to be pressed to undertake rescue or relief measures for European Jewry. Later events, such as the Bermuda Conference in April 1943, strengthen this judgment, and Laqueur generally presents a very strong case.

* * *

While Laqueur argues that the "terrible secret" was not really secret, Martin Gilbert, the official biographer of Winston Churchill, maintains that the existence of the gas chambers at Auschwitz-Birkenau remained unknown to the Allies until mid-1944. Relying partly on Laqueur's work and Bernard Wasserstein's *Britain and the Jews of Europe*, Gilbert first retraces some of the paths by which news of the Final Solution reached the West, and deals with British and American refugee policy generally. He then contrasts the level of knowledge about mass killings

4. See S. Pinkney Tuck to Secretary of State, 9 July 1942, National Archives Record Group 84, American Embassy Vichy, Confidential File 1942, 840.1. Also Howard Elting, Jr. to Leland Harrison, 11 Aug. 1942, with attached report by Donald Lowrie, NA RG 84, Box 829, American Consulate Geneva, Confidential File 1942, 800.

Richard Breitman

with the lack of specific information about Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest and most deadly of the extermination camps. Auschwitz had been a labor-concentration camp since 1940; gas chambers were constructed at nearby Birkenau only in 1942. Later a synthetic oil plant at Monowitz was added. This combination of operations created some confusion in the West about what was taking place at Auschwitz.

Gilbert ultimately concedes that a few accounts of the assembly-line murder at Birkenau leaked out (e.g., an April 1943 report written by a Pole who reached London, which claimed at least 60,000 prisoners had been killed), but such information allegedly never made an impression (pp. 130, 151, 179–80). The “secret of Auschwitz,” to which Gilbert repeatedly refers (pp. 87, 92, 105, 115, 175, 180, 339), was even by Gilbert’s standard not absolute but relative: much less was known about Auschwitz than about other extermination camps.

Gilbert, however, leaves the reader with a different impression in his epilogue:

The actual name of Auschwitz, as a concentration camp, had been known in the west throughout the first two years of its operation, and even earlier. But it was known and publicized solely as a camp where terrible things happened to Polish non-Jews: above all, to “Aryan” Poles. . . . Between May 1942 and June 1944, almost none of the messages reaching the west had referred to Auschwitz as the destination of Jewish deportees, or as a killing center (p. 340).

Here and elsewhere he makes the error of drawing conclusions from what he did *not* find in the archives: if mass killings of Jews at Auschwitz went unmentioned in documents from government and Jewish officials, then Auschwitz’s gas chambers must have been unknown. Such a conclusion would be risky in the best of circumstances—it assumes that one has ordered all relevant files and not overlooked anything. In this case, Gilbert also implicitly assumes that the British government has released all intelligence documents in which Auschwitz might have been mentioned.

Despite the title of his book and his sporadic analysis of American information on Auschwitz, Gilbert relies primarily on British and Jewish sources. He seems less familiar with American operations—e.g., he promotes War Refugee Board representative Roswell McClelland to the post of American minister in Switzerland. More importantly, if Gilbert had looked more carefully in the United States National Ar-

Auschwitz and the Archives

chives, he would have found additional Polish reports on Auschwitz. Some of the information regarding the multipurpose Silesian camp was incomplete; some reports even exaggerated the horrendous death rate. What is telling against Gilbert's interpretation, however, is not the accuracy or inaccuracy of the statistics, but rather the transmission of Polish information to the Allies about the gassing of Jews at Auschwitz-Birkenau before mid-1944.

On 20 January 1943 the Polish Foreign Ministry in London handed American Ambassador Anthony Drexel Biddle a note describing the mass extermination of Polish Jews. Although lacking a description of the gas chambers at Auschwitz-Birkenau and underestimating the fatalities, the Polish report did describe Auschwitz as the most notorious of the camps and concluded that at least 58,000 people had perished there. Later on the author described Auschwitz as the "dreaded 'camp of death.'" ⁵ Roughly the same statistic appeared in a Polish publication monitored by American army intelligence in April 1943. This time, however, the report described three Nazi methods of disposing of prisoners, pointed out that mass executions were carried out at Brzezinka (Birkenau) near Auschwitz, and specifically noted the existence of gas chambers and crematoria. "Many carloads of Russian war prisoners and Jews" unable to work were said to have been killed in this way. ⁶ Another Polish report, which reached the American consul general in Istanbul in June 1943, simply referred to the "execution camp at Auschwitz." ⁷

A report reaching the Polish General Staff in London in May 1943 contained an estimate of the death count at Auschwitz: from the establishment of the camp until December 1942, 640,000 people had died there—among them 520,000 Jews, 65,000 Poles, 26,000 Soviet prisoners, and 19,000 women, mostly Polish. The crematorium at the camp consumed 3,000 bodies daily. The Polish source also maintained that camp statistics underestimated mortality; thousands died anonymously. Polish authorities in London had no reason to keep such information from Britain or the United States. (No less an authority than British Secret Intelligence Service Chief Graham Stewart Menzies told one American

5. Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Biddle, 20 Jan. 1943, NA RG 84, Box 2784, American Embassy Warsaw (in London), 1943 vol. 8, 711 Atrocities.

6. Nazi Black Record, NA RG 165, Box 3138, Poland 6950.

7. Burton Berry to secretary of state, 21 June 1943, copy in NA RG 226, doc. 38346.

Richard Breitman

official positively that the Poles and other governments-in-exile in London possessed no information that he did not know of.)⁸

Other Polish reports complemented the May 1943 document, even if statistics continued to vary.⁹ The Polish general staff headquarters in London received in January 1944, and passed to the Americans in March, a new report from a female Polish agent that 468,000 Jews had been gassed at Auschwitz by September 1942. This was actually too high a figure: the highly reliable Vrba-Wetzler report (discussed below) mentioned several hundred thousand Jews gassed between July and September 1942. This January 1944 report also described the capacity of the gas chambers and crematoria. The record number gassed in one day was thirty thousand (much too high a figure); the crematoria could accommodate about ten thousand. The neighboring population called the resulting flames "the eternal fire." After describing the arrival of specific convoys, the source compiled a list of the German criminals there. She observed, "History knows no parallel of such destruction of human life and only a German could have perpetrated it." In his cover letter to Washington the American military attaché described the Polish source as completely reliable and passed along her request that the report receive as wide a distribution as possible. The same report word for word, probably sent out through a different channel, reached the London office of the Office of Strategic Services, which also sent it to Washington.¹⁰ Could the British have been ignorant of it? I think not.

Only the escape in 1944 of Rudolf Vrba and Alfred Wetzler, two Jewish prisoners from Auschwitz, sufficed, according to Gilbert, to

8. NA RG 218, Joint Chiefs of Staff, CCS 334 Polish Liaison (Washington), Folder 3.0. Sophia Miskiewicz of the Center for Strategic and International Studies at Georgetown University was kind enough to translate this document for me. For Menzies's statement, Paul [Peabody?] to General Hayes Kroner, Military Intelligence Service, War Department, 12 June 1943, NA RG 319, Box 956, Poland 350.09. The discussion was of Order of Battle information, but Menzies's reported statement was a sweeping one.

9. In the summer of 1942 Polish resistance chief Stefan Korbonski notified Polish representatives in London that 7,000 Jews per day were being deported and gassed. See Laqueur, *Terrible Secret*, 113, and Korbonski's letter to the editor, *Commentary* (January 1984): 8. Although I found no specific verification, there are still all too many documents classified. Korbonski's claim is credible.

10. Military attaché's report, 20 Mar. 1944, NA RG 165, Box 3138, Poland 6950. F. L. Belin to William Langer, 10 Apr. 1944, NA RG 226, doc. 66059. I am indebted to Raul Hilberg, who discovered the OSS copy, and to Robert Wolfe, director of the Modern Military Branch of the National Archives, who realized that Hilberg's discovery and mine matched.

Auschwitz and the Archives

expose the "secret of Auschwitz."¹¹ Their odyssey, which Gilbert narrates in vivid detail (on the basis of information from Rudolf Vrba), and their unbelievably detailed report on the camp indeed opened a great many eyes in the West. Two other Jewish escapees quickly added substantiation. What could be done?

Some Jewish organizations began to push for Allied bombing of the rail lines to Auschwitz and the gas chambers themselves in July 1944, but this was very late: Himmler was to order the destruction of the crematoria in November. The SS evacuated the surviving prisoners from Auschwitz in January 1945, as Russian armies approached. In the meantime both London and Washington found insufficient reason to take military action against a nonmilitary target. Gilbert's epilogue is quite explicit about the main reason why Auschwitz escaped Allied attack for so long: Because the gassing operations there went undetected "... there could be no Allied response as far as Auschwitz was concerned for the first two years of its operation; two years during which more than a million and a half Jews had been murdered" (p. 340).

Thus, there is more involved here than chronological accuracy. If Auschwitz was no secret before June 1944, then the Allies' failure to bomb the death facilities at Auschwitz must be attributed to causes other than lack of knowledge. The pathbreaking scholar on the American decision not to bomb Auschwitz, David Wyman, did not rely on lack of information about killings of Jews at Auschwitz as a factor.¹² The British government and the American War Department were not inclined to employ men and resources to rescue civilians in enemy territory; both made that explicit in early 1944. Later proposals to bomb Auschwitz, including several from the War Refugee Board, seemingly were not given serious consideration in Washington.¹³

British handling of requests to bomb Auschwitz in mid and late 1944 was somewhat different, because Winston Churchill and, to a lesser extent, Foreign Minister Anthony Eden supported the idea. Gilbert's research here is enlightening; this section (pp. 262-323) is the strongest

11. On the incredibly detailed Wetzlar-Vrba report on Auschwitz, as well as other eyewitness accounts, see John S. Conway, "Frühe Augenzeugenberichte aus Auschwitz: Glaubwürdigkeit und Wirkungsgeschichte," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 27 (1979): 260-84.

12. David S. Wyman, "Why Auschwitz Was Never Bombed," *Commentary* (May 1978): 37-46. *idem*, *The Abandonment of the Jews*, 288-307.

13. Many of the relevant American documents are reprinted in John Mendelsohn, ed., *The Holocaust: Selected Documents in Eighteen Volumes* (N.Y., 1982), vol. 14, 95-152.

Richard Breitman

part of the book. With the Air Ministry and a good part of the Foreign Office opposed to bombing the camps, only massive and repeated pressure from above would have brought a positive decision. Churchill did exert pressure, but he obviously had many other concerns. And even Churchill did not favor some schemes to save Jewish lives, such as the infamous offer conveyed by Eichmann to Joel Brand to exchange Hungarian Jews for a variety of goods. Anything that might have impaired Allied military progress and endangered military cooperation with the Soviet Union remained beyond the pale. Perhaps the British did not bomb the gas chambers at Auschwitz because the necessary information did not reach Churchill and Eden early enough, but even this limited argument is open to debate. Would they have taken up this possibility at all before D-Day succeeded?

In any case, one can hardly pass off the limited attention of Allied intelligence services and military authorities to the Final Solution as part of the "secret" of Auschwitz. Laqueur explains the difference between the plethora of information about the Final Solution and belief in it. Gilbert reverts to lack of information about Auschwitz as the reason for Western inaction in one major case. Some of his research is deficient, and his interpretation is unconvincing.

* * *

David Irving's inaccurate claim that Adolf Hitler was unaware of the Final Solution until 1943, and that Heinrich Himmler, not Hitler, was the driving force behind the program,¹⁴ provoked British scholar Gerald Fleming to try Hitler for mass murder. Most readers will vote for conviction on the evidence presented. Fleming establishes a direct line between Hitler's early anti-Semitism and wartime genocide. He cites (among other pieces of evidence) a 1922 conversation, a description of which is at the Institut für Zeitgeschichte, in which Hitler went into a paroxysm of rage and promised that as soon as he obtained power he would make the destruction of the Jews his first and most important task and would publicly hang as many as possible (p. 17). According to Fleming, Hitler came to realize that few Germans would go so far. Consequently, the Final Solution had to wait until Himmler had built up an appropriately loyal, ideological force in the SS and until war

14. David Irving, *Hitler's War*, (N.Y., 1977), esp. xiv, 392, 504. See the extensive and effective criticism of Irving by Charles W. Sydnor, Jr., "The Selling of Adolf Hitler: David Irving's 'Hitler's War,'" *Central European History* 12 (1979): 169-99.

Auschwitz and the Archives

provided an effective cover and distraction to others. Moreover, Hitler wanted his own cover. The Führer was to have no official link to either the so-called euthanasia program, the gassing of alleged genetic defectives, or the Final Solution itself. After information about the euthanasia action leaked out and stirred up public protest Hitler became all the more convinced, Fleming argues, that the Final Solution must be kept as quiet and as distant from him personally as possible. It was, in any case, part of his personality not to reveal his true intentions—he even boasted of this fact to General Halder in September 1938 (p. 18).

Fleming cleverly penetrates these efforts at deception, using a variety of known sources as well as newly-uncovered evidence, some drawn from the Latvian State Archives in Riga. He shows that the perpetrators consciously used language that veiled but nonetheless revealed reality. The term “evacuation” (*Evakuierung*) was used to describe both the treatment of mentally ill patients gassed in the euthanasia program and the deportation of Jews to death camps. It was a code word for mass extermination less obvious than the infamous “special treatment” (*Sonderbehandlung*): Himmler’s statistical expert was actually forced to delete the latter from a report on the victims of the Final Solution submitted to Himmler and Hitler. Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel confirmed in a postwar affidavit that Hitler used semantic conventions to communicate with even his closest political aides (p. 19). Fleming nonetheless uncovers several slips, where words such as “liquidation” were used in documents (and the information given to Hitler himself). He also quotes several contemporary sources, such as the official minutes of the conference between Hitler and the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, in November 1941, in which the German dictator expressed his desire not only to obliterate Jewish-communist hegemony in Europe but also to annihilate Jews “living under British protection in Arab lands” (p. 104).

All of this establishes quite clearly that Hitler was well aware of mass killings of Jews and others from the beginning and that his barbaric ideology became official German policy. Fleming thus effectively disposes of David Irving’s attempt to shield Hitler from the worst crimes of the regime. But the evidence for a general authorization of the Final Solution by Hitler is less direct and less specific. Fleming relates several episodes where individuals tried to protest against the killings and were told that Hitler had approved them. Himmler, Heydrich, Interior Ministry State Secretary Wilhelm Stuckart, Party Chancellery aide Viktor Brack, and Reich Commissar Erich Koch all made it clear in conversa-

Richard Breitman

tions with others that the Führer had authorized the extermination of the Jews. Himmler gave a number of speeches to Nazi and SS officials in which he spoke of the order which he had received. Foreign Office bureaucrat Martin Luther wrote in August 1942 that in July 1941 Göring had commissioned Heydrich to handle the Final Solution on instructions from the Führer (pp. 46, 61). Since Hitler wished to avoid a direct written order, on more than one occasion he expressed his "wish" to Himmler that Jews disappear (pp. 75–76, 128). This wish nonetheless carried the force of an order. This is hearsay testimony, but there is a lot of it coming independently from numerous individuals.

Fleming devotes much attention to drawing the portrait of the fanatical but cunning anti-Semite, driven to eliminate Jews but anxious not to be implicated in mass murder. He relies in part on evidence from Hitler's statements and behavior before and after 1941. Assuming Hitler's consistency, he projects this image into the critical months of decision during 1941. Supported by what Himmler allegedly told Rudolf Höss in the summer of 1941, about which Höss long ago testified and wrote in his memoirs, Fleming concludes that Hitler ordered the Final Solution that summer (p. 47).

Unfortunately, the nonchronological structure of the book makes it difficult for the reader to grasp how and when Hitler arrived at his conclusion to translate ideology into practice. Christopher Browning's work, which reaches basically similar conclusions about Hitler's authorization of the Final Solution in the summer of 1941, is in some ways superior to Fleming's because of Browning's careful attention to the order and logic of events in 1941. Noting that the *Einsatzgruppen* killings of Russian Jews was well underway, Browning regards the 31 July 1941 memo from Göring to Heydrich as a commission incited or solicited by Hitler to draw up a more comprehensive plan of destruction. Hitler then presumably approved specific plans before construction of the extermination camps began toward the end of 1941.¹⁵

In a recent lecture at Brandeis University, now published as part of a

15. Christopher R. Browning, "Zur Genesis der Endlösung: Eine Antwort an Martin Broszat," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 29 (1981): 96–109. Browning's article has now appeared in English as well: "A Reply to Martin Broszat Regarding the Origins of the Final Solution," *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual* 1 (1984): 113–32. See also his recent book *Fateful Months: Essays on the Emergence of the Final Solution* (New York and London, Holmes & Meier, 1985).

Auschwitz and the Archives

collection,¹⁶ Eberhard Jäckel argues that a single order was most unlikely. Even with regard to the decision to invade the Soviet Union, Hitler held a series of conferences and issued a number of different instructions. One must assume that he communicated a decision to murder millions of men, women, and children even more circumspectly, and that technical arrangements had to be improvised. Documentary evidence on the Holocaust is poor, according to Jäckel, because of oral transmission of orders, destruction of documents, what Fleming calls semantic conventions, evasive testimony by those who survived, and incomplete attention to key historical issues by postwar interrogators. Jäckel nonetheless maintains that the decisive change in Nazi Jewish policy from emigration to extermination came during the period of preparing the war against the Soviet Union, and that Adolf Hitler was responsible. No one else had ever advocated systematic murder as the solution to the Jewish problem, and given the nature of Hitler's position in the Third Reich and the importance of the policy, no authorization by subordinate agencies is conceivable.

There is, however, another current of scholarship. In a long article in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, the eminent West German (Bochum) historian Hans Mommsen announced his disagreement with those who trace the Final Solution back to Hitler. Mommsen accepts part of David Irving's case, stating that liquidation measures were discussed neither officially nor privately in Hitler's headquarters. ("Irving ist insoweit zuzustimmen, als die Liquidationsmassnahmen im Führerhauptquartier weder amtlich noch privat zur Sprache gekommen sind.")¹⁷ Unlike Irving, however, Mommsen does not try to exculpate Hitler. Hitler was the ideological and political originator of the idea (p. 399). But Hitler's emotional need for an archenemy was not enough to force him to make an uncomfortable decision. He might publicly or privately threaten Jews with destruction, but Himmler's ambition and the loyalty of the SS supplied the missing link: they carried out what they perceived as his will without explicit authorization. Mommsen even questions how much Hitler took note of the reports of the *Einsatzgruppen* killings that reached him (p. 409). In any case, Hitler issued no master plan.

By dismissing the significance of Hitler's rhetoric, Mommsen under-

16. Eberhard Jäckel, *Hitler in History*, Series for the Tauber Institute for the Study of European Jewry, 3 (Hanover, N.H., 1984), 44-65.

17. Hans Mommsen, "Die Realisierung des Utopischen: Die 'Endlösung der Judenfrage' im 'Dritten Reich,'" *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 9 (1983): 391.

Richard Breitman

cuts some of the evidence, such as Hitler's speeches and private conversations, used by those who regard Hitler as the master planner. The Bochum historian also draws conclusions from the absence of certain kinds of evidence, going so far as to argue that if Hitler had given an oral command to carry out the Final Solution, someone at Hitler's headquarters would have known about it—and would not have withheld this information after 1945 (p. 417). Just why Hitler's loyal subordinates would have felt obliged to discuss their knowledge of the Final Solution is unclear.

Mommensen's interpretation expands upon two longstanding and related controversies about planning and improvisation in Nazi Germany. Some scholars have regarded the development of Hitler's racial ideology as the key to the Final Solution. Although mass extermination could only be carried out clandestinely in wartime, Hitler had resolved to destroy the Jews much earlier.¹⁸ Fleming's book is a recent and useful addition to this camp. Without going back so far, Helmut Krausnick and others have placed Hitler's authorization of mass killings early in the wartime period.¹⁹

Others, such as Karl Schleunes, Uwe Dietrich Adam, and more recently Martin Broszat have traced various Nazi Party and government initiatives, including fostering Jewish emigration, to deal with the Jewish problem throughout the 1930s and into 1941. Hitler intervened only occasionally and not always decisively.²⁰ With the conquest of additional territory, a much larger mass of Jews became more of a burden

18. Until Fleming, the most forthright advocate of a preplanned Final Solution was perhaps Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews* (New York, 1975). But predetermination is surely also the implication of Eberhard Jäckel's *Hitler's Weltanschauung: A Blueprint for Power*, tr. Herbert Arnold (Middletown, Ct., 1972). For reviews of the literature and the controversy, see John S. Conway, "The Holocaust and the Historians," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (July 1980): 153–64; the concise summary in Klaus Hildebrand, *The Third Reich* (London, 1984), 146–51, and the extended discussion in Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (London, 1985), 82–103. Extremely useful as well is the historiographical introduction to the American edition of Fleming's book, written by Saul Friedländer. Forthcoming is Otto Dov Kulka, "Major Trends and Tendencies of German Historiography on National Socialism and the 'Jewish Question,' 1924–1984," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 30 (1985).

19. Helmut Krausnick, "Judenverfolgung," in Hans Buchheim et al., ed., *Anatomie des SS-Staates* (Munich, 1967), vol. 2, esp. 297.

20. Karl A. Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy Toward German Jews 1933–1939* (Chicago, 1970), esp. 73, 258. Uwe Dietrich Adam, *Judenpolitik im Dritten Reich* (Düsseldorf, 1972). Martin Broszat, "Hitler und die Genesis der Endlösung," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 25 (1977): 739–75.

Auschwitz and the Archives

and threat to the Nazis. The war also ruled out resettlement in Madagascar, an idea Himmler had backed. The Final Solution was the last one consistent with Nazi ideology to be tried. Adam maintains that Hitler arrived at the decision to exterminate only late in 1941, after the process was well underway.

If Fleming's case rests partly on applying a general image of Hitler to a specific situation, Mommsen's argument depends far more heavily upon research which describes various centers of power (polycracy) in the Third Reich, and which has described Hitler generally as a "weak dictator."²¹ (If Hitler was both a domineering leader and a fanatical anti-Semite, why should he have refrained from carrying out his desire to destroy the Jews?) Mommsen views Hitler as personally incapable of translating his harsh rhetoric into reality; government and party agencies could and did frequently operate independently of him. Competition for jurisdiction and pressure from anti-Semitic radicals brought about the Final Solution.

In a careful assessment of the polycratic school, Ian Kershaw agrees that administrative chaos and competition in the Third Reich was not simply a product of Hitler's divide and rule strategy, and that some Nazi officials were able to establish independent power bases. Kershaw warns against the conclusion, however, that Hitler was a weak dictator.²² Klaus Hildebrand, one of the main opponents of this polycratic view, argues that in foreign policy Hitler's role was in no way metaphorical, symbolic, or the product of social dynamics; he personally directed foreign policy toward expansion and racial domination.²³ This is very much the thrust of Gerhard Weinberg's formidable study of Hitler's foreign policy as well,²⁴ and surely this finding has some relevance to the debate over Nazi Jewish policies.

Part of this general controversy over Hitler's power is methodological and even ideological. Some historians plainly reject the idea of attributing as much power and influence to one individual as others have ascribed

21. There has been a running debate in *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* between "monocrats" and "polycrats." Martin Broszat and Hans Mommsen have been among the leading figures in the polycratic camp. For specific citations of the literature, see Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship*, 61–81.

22. Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship*, esp. 78–81.

23. Klaus Hildebrand, *The Third Reich*, 146.

24. Gerhard L. Weinberg, *The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany: Diplomatic Revolution in Europe, 1933–1936* (Chicago, 1970); *idem*, *The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany: Starting World War II, 1937–1939* (Chicago, 1980).

Richard Breitman

to Hitler. The prevailing trend of twentieth-century historiography is against the great man in history; it should be no great surprise that some scholars have sought to analyze the social, economic, and bureaucratic conditions that limited Hitler's weight in the Third Reich. Limits there undoubtedly were, but the question is where to place the emphasis—on the man whose astonishing rise as politician and dictator gave him more power than anyone in the world except perhaps Stalin, or on the susceptibility to Nazism of the elites and masses that accepted him and carried on with their affairs during the Third Reich? There is no reason to assume that Hitler was equally strong or equally weak in all areas of policy. Saul Friedländer states that Hitler held dearly to two obsessions—the conquest of Lebensraum and the war against the Jews—and here he intervened at crucial stages.²⁵ While we now know a great deal about Hitler's actual role in foreign policy, there is much research that needs to be done on the Final Solution.

There is little chance to resolve the dispute over whether the Final Solution lay in Hitler's mind during the 1930s or even earlier. Since the "improvisation" school refuses to accept Hitler's rhetoric as evidence of his real intentions, then no amount of evidence about Hitler's views before the war will be conclusive for these scholars. The Final Solution could not have been predetermined, because the government and party did not do anything to carry it out. Quite the contrary. The Nazis allowed Jews to emigrate.

The "predetermination" school might also consider how (or whether) allowing Jews to emigrate in the manner chosen by the Nazis during the 1930s fit into the Nazis' global campaign against Jewry. It cannot rely solely on the notion that Hitler was biding his time. It might also be well to concede that there is indeed a gap between even the strongest ideological conviction about mass extermination and a program to carry it out. Hitler could have changed his views or been distracted by other problems. In that sense, the Final Solution could not have been completely predetermined.

With the outbreak of the war, however, one can see the origins of Hitler's authorization of mass killings.²⁶ In early September 1939 he traveled aboard a special train toward the front to get a first-hand view of the German conquest of Poland. On 12 September Hitler's train

25. Fleming, *Hitler and the Final Solution*, xviii.

26. I am leaving out all consideration of the Nazi euthanasia program here. Henry Friedlander has prepared a major study of the subject.

Auschwitz and the Archives

stopped at the Silesian town of Ilnau. The chief of German military intelligence, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, was delivering a report to General Keitel in one of the cars when Hitler and General Jodl walked in. Hitler soon interrupted Canaris and delivered one of his customary monologues about what the French would do in the west—nothing. He then proceeded to discuss German options in Poland and went into detail about the need to break all elements of the Polish will to resist. Canaris's aide Erwin Lahousen, who was present in the railway car on that day, later testified under oath that Hitler had said:

it was especially necessary to eliminate the clergy, the aristocracy, the intelligentsia, and the Jews. Now I don't remember the exact term that he used, but it was not ambiguous and it meant "kill." There is one expression that he used in this connection, which I am sure of, and I want to give it to you here. It is "Political Housecleaning."²⁷

Although plans for the mass killing of millions were not yet drawn up, Hitler already knew his goal.

On 19 September General Franz Halder wrote in his diary that Reich Security chief Reinhard Heydrich had reported an imminent political housecleaning in Poland: Jews, intelligentsia, clergy, nobility. The army leaders had insisted that the housecleaning be deferred until the army had withdrawn and the country turned over to a civilian administration. On 21 September Heydrich sent an express letter to the *Einsatzgruppen* commanders regarding planned anti-Jewish measures. In this message Heydrich specified that the final goal, which must be held strictly secret, would require considerable time to carry out. But one could get there in stages, which would begin immediately. Although he did not spell out exactly what the final goal (*Endziel*) was, Heydrich did make clear that Germany and the annexed portions of Poland were to be cleared of Jews. Aryanization could be planned now and "emigration" carried out later. When Adolf Eichmann was shown this document in pre-trial interrogation in Israel, he quickly concluded that the term *Endziel* could only have meant physical extermination.²⁸ Various scholars have questioned or disagreed with this reading of Heydrich's mes-

27. NA RG 238, Interrogation of Erwin Lahousen, 17 Nov. 1945.

28. *The Halder Diaries: The Private War Journals of Colonel General Franz Halder*, ed. Arnold Lissance (Boulder, 1976), 10. Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Axis Criminality, *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, 6 (Washington, 1946), Document 3363-PS, pp. 97-100. *Eichmann Interrogated: Transcripts from the Archives of the Israeli Police*, ed. Jochen von Lang and Claus Sibyll, tr. Ralph Manheim (New York, 1983), 92-93.

Richard Breitman

sage,²⁹ but they have not taken the context into account—the evidence of Hitler's statements on 12 September. Moreover, on 2 July 1940 Heydrich described the 1939 *Einsatzgruppen* killing of leading elements in Poland as the result of Hitler's instructions (*Weisungen*).³⁰ Only the killing of the millions of Polish Jews, who surely in Hitler's mind constituted a potential source of danger and resistance to Germany, was deferred.

Another late 1939 document makes it clear who the supreme authorities on the Jewish question were. After receiving a subordinate's proposal to confiscate all telephones of German Jews, Martin Bormann told another chancellery official that Himmler would discuss directly with the Führer all measures against the Jews ("... dass der Reichsführer SS alle Massnahmen gegen die Juden direkt mit dem Führer besprechen würde").³¹ It certainly does not appear that Hitler was avoiding the hard decisions that would have to be made in the future.

Mommsen's contention that Hitler did not even discuss liquidation measures cannot be sustained. One illustration relates to the fate of the French Jews in the unoccupied zone. In November 1942 the Germans moved into the territory until then under the authority of the Vichy government. On 10 December Heinrich Himmler consulted his Führer on what should be done with assorted enemies of the Third Reich now in the Nazis' grasp. There are two records of the meeting, one handwritten by Himmler, the second typed later by a Himmler staff member with initials RF and signed (HH) by Himmler. Both documents are dated 10 December, and it appears from both that Himmler and Hitler were the only ones present.³²

Himmler apparently brought to the meeting a third document. He had already drafted an order (dated December 1942) to Gruppenführer Heinrich Müller of the Reich Main Security Office to establish a special camp for those Jews in France, Hungary, and Romania who had influ-

29. See for example, Seev Goschen, "Eichmann und die Nisko-Aktion im Oktober 1939: Eine Fallstudie zur NS-Judenpolitik in der letzten Etappe vor der 'Endlösung,'" *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 29 (1981): 81–82.

30. Helmut Krausnick, "Hitler und die Morde in Polen; Ein Beitrag zum Konflikt zwischen Heer und SS um die Verwaltung der besetzten Gebiete," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 11 (1963): 206–9.

31. "Notiz für Pg. Friedrichs," 6 Dec. 1939, NA RG 242, T-81, Roll 676/5485594.

32. NA RG 242, T-175, Roll 94, Frame 2615330; Roll 103/2625558. Himmler to Müller, Dec. 1942 [the day was left blank], NA RG 242, T-175, Roll 103/2625557. Himmler's handwritten notes, 10 Dec. 1942, NA RG 242, T-175, Roll 94/2615330.

Auschwitz and the Archives

ential relatives in the United States. Himmler described these Jews, whose number he estimated at ten thousand, as valuable hostages (*wertvolle Geiseln*). They would work in the camp, but under conditions that would allow them to remain alive (*Dort sollen sie zwar arbeiten, jedoch unter Bedingungen, dass sie gesund sind und am Leben bleiben*).

Himmler's handwritten notes of his meeting with Hitler show that the Führer approved this proposal. Next to Himmler's "Sonderlager für Juden mit Anhang in Amerika" there appear two check marks indicating Hitler's positive response. Interestingly, the typewritten version contains no mention of this plan. Himmler was properly discreet part of the time.

The typewritten memorandum does note that Hitler ordered (*der Führer hat die Anweisung gegeben*) that the Jews and other enemies in France be arrested and deported (*abtransportiert werden*). Only after Hitler had spoken with Laval would Himmler implement the plan. The number of Jews was estimated (incorrectly) at six to seven hundred thousand. If ten thousand Jews were to be kept alive in a special camp, and six hundred thousand were to be deported, there is little doubt about the intended fate of the deportees. These Jews in France were in fact sent to Auschwitz.

But the handwritten Himmler notes are even more explicit. Point three on Himmler's agenda of police matters was "Juden in Frankreich, 600–700,000, sonstige Feinde." After conferring with Hitler, Himmler not only checked off the item but wrote in the margin "abschaffen." The word is ambiguous enough to be translated either as "do away with" or "send away." The Jews in France were indeed sent away—to Auschwitz-Birkenau. David Irving managed to interpret the evidence in such a way that Hitler authorized the removal of the six or seven hundred thousand Jews and the separation of those with influential American relatives in a special camp. Irving commented parenthetically: "Himmler's notes do not indicate that he mentioned to Hitler the alternative fate of the others [the 600,000–700,000]." ³³ But Fleming, in passing, read Hitler's "abschaffen" as "get rid of" (p.8, n.24). Would Mommson join Irving in arguing that Hitler had no knowledge of the fate of those Jews? And if Himmler had to consult Hitler, and Hitler had to give Laval prior notice, how can one maintain the notion of a dictator who

33. Irving, *Hitler's War*, 462.

Richard Breitman

was not directly in command of, or even particularly interested in, the Final Solution itself?

Historiographical controversies about Nazism have a long life span. Some would say, for example, that A. J. P. Taylor's argument about the origins of the Second World War is still alive. It would be rash to predict that the dispute over Hitler's role in the Final Solution will soon be over. Given the entrenched positions of the combatants and the acrimony of the dialogue, neither side is likely to make concessions easily. A settlement can only come through additional research carefully integrating what is already known with new discoveries of evidence. In this sense, Fleming's book is a step in the right direction.

Deborah E. Lipstadt



PIOUS SYMPATHIES AND SINCERE REGRETS: THE AMERICAN NEWS MEDIA AND THE HOLOCAUST FROM KRYSTALNACHT TO BERMUDA, 1938-1943

INTRODUCTION

The role of the American news media, in formulating and reflecting American public opinion, has been the topic of increasing interest in recent years. Its ability to report accurately conflagration and confusion and, at the same time, to create a measure of it has been debated and analyzed in connection with American foreign policy in the Middle East, Southeast Asia and, most recently, Iran.

The role of the American daily and periodical press during an earlier period of conflagration and confusion, the Holocaust, is the topic of this paper. The focus is on the manner in which the press reported on and reacted to news of the persecution and extermination of European Jewry, to American refugee policy, and to contemplated alterations in that policy. Ultimately, an attempt is made to determine the manner in which the press might have reflected and affected American public opinion.

Since it was the relationship between the press and the attitudes of the general public which was in question, those sectors of the press that had a special interest in this issue, e.g., the Yiddish press and the Anglo-Jewish press, were considered to be outside the parameters of this investigation.

KRYSTALNACHT

When, on the night of November 8, 1938, the glass was shattered in Jewish homes and stores throughout the Reich, also shattered were most vestiges of American doubts about the degree to which violence was fundamental to Nazi ideology. American public opinion, as reflected in both the press and public-opinion polls, was universal in its condemnation. Despite the intense criticism, many Americans—among them government officials and the press—still seemed to fail to recognize that the

Nazis could not be reasoned out of this seemingly facile policy of anti-semitism.

The official German explanation that the riots and destruction of Jewish property were a "spontaneous expression of wrath" by the German people was dismissed with derision. *Time* referred to "the so-called mobs," while *Newsweek* was quizzical about the ability of supposedly spontaneous gatherings to wreck such "methodical destruction."¹ The *Philadelphia Record* pointed out that, unlike Krystalnacht, "riots do not generally happen on a timetable." *Commonweal* considered the murder of the German envoy to Paris, Ernst vom Rath, "just incidental to wholesale extermination." It was the excuse for which the Nazis had been waiting. Had it not come, they would have found another alibi for such an outburst. *Christian Century* believed the riots the "result of no sudden impulse."² Tongue in cheek, the *New York Times* pointed out that the rioters "worked with a precision that was a tribute to a spontaneous demonstration."³

While condemnation of that which had taken place was well nigh universal, some papers such as the *Springfield Republican* refused to believe that a nation of apparently civilized people could condone such action. Unable to accept the notion that from the ranks of a people who had bred Schiller and Goethe could come the perpetrators of a modern-day pogrom, it differentiated between Nazi storm troopers and the general German public, adhering to what might be termed a policy of "separation":

It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the German people, as humane in general as any nation, are under the control of a government with the morals of a lynching party at its worst.⁴

The desire to separate the German radicals from the moderates, the mob from the leadership, and the government from the general populace, was a manifestation of the inability of the press and public to appreciate the extent to which violent antisemitism was officially sanctioned by the Nazi regime. Throughout this period non-Germans tried to reason with the German government regarding its maltreatment of Jews. They failed to understand that that which appeared to them as irrational was, in fact, the rational policy of a regime anxious to rid itself of one segment of its population as rapidly and completely as possible.

The most influential German language newspaper in America, *Staatzeitung und Herald*, had long maintained a policy of silence about many controversial events in Germany. Faced with Krystalnacht, it too subscribed to this policy of "separation" and condemned the pogroms as the work of "fanatics in the ranks of the party in power who are trying to drag a great people into the mire of their sadistic lowness."⁵

Krystalnacht, as well as Nazi motivation for it, was understood by most of the press in financial terms, reflecting—once again—a desire to

ascribe a rationale to such action. The Nazis, various newspapers and journals noted, had reaped tremendous financial gains as a result of the fines levied on the Jewish community and the economic decrees promulgated subsequent to November 9th. The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* believed "the confiscation of Jewish wealth and property to be a revelation of the government's need of new funds" and the primary objective of Krystalnacht. In a similar vein, the *Nation* noted that the world's moral outrage tended to "becloud" the fact that these were "pogroms for profit," resulting in "easy money" for the Nazis.

It is significant that those journals, such as the *Nation*, which were to emerge as staunch supporters of action to rescue Jews from the Nazi grasp, were unable to believe that Nazi antisemitism was not just the means to another unrelated end. The desire to find a reasonable explanation for an ostensibly irrational action engaged many editors.⁶ Had they carefully examined the statements made by a host of Nazi leaders and been able to accept them as valid, they would have recognized the futility of such an effort.

The press, well aware that Krystalnacht was sure to fortify the already substantial surge of refugees, analyzed Reich Jewry's future in terms of the enforced pauperization they now faced for immediate and practical reasons.⁷ The Jewish community was left not only destitute, but without the tools for financial recovery. Refugee resettlement—a difficult task under any circumstances and one which, as the Evian Conference had revealed, few nations were willing to undertake—became virtually impossible when the refugees were both destitute and Jews.

No one saw, nor could have been expected to see, that Krystalnacht was the initial step in a far more terrible and final phase of persecution. The *Christian Century* did wonder what would happen if in the future the Germans decided not just to subject the "Jews to economic and social disadvantage, but to massacre them"?⁸ It posed no answer to what it obviously considered a rhetorical question.

A select number of reporters, who spent time in the Reich, were among the few who recognized that threats against Jews could no longer be cavalierly dismissed as Nazi rhetoric. Otto Tolischus, of the *New York Times*, cautioned readers in a front-page story about the dangers of ignoring the "seriousness" of "lurid" Nazi predictions such as those contained in *Das Schwarze Korps*, the official Gestapo paper, which had warned that if the Jews were not evacuated from Germany at once, they would be "starved into crime" and "exterminated with fire and sword."⁹ While Tolischus was not predicting the Final Solution, he, along with a few others, did recognize that the future held more than financial impoverishment for Reich Jewry;¹⁰ it might—and ultimately did—include ghettoization, mandatory badges of recognition, physical persecution and total financial and social separation from German life; i.e., the complete extermination of their *community*.

American revulsion at this officially sanctioned pogrom was so intense and condemnation of deliberate Nazi impoverishment of the Jews so severe, that President Roosevelt, keenly sensitive to public opinion, recognized that he had a mandate for action.¹¹ Throughout his career Roosevelt "persistently refused to formulate policies that might outrun the possibilities of majority support." This case was to be no different. The universal indignation given expression by the press reflected the American desire for a forceful response. The president knew he could act. If there remained any question about the matter, *Time*, which used the daily press as a major source for its own news reports, noted that:

Singular was the U.S. attitude in one respect: on a question of foreign affairs concerning which it seldom has much feeling, the U.S. public had spontaneously expressed a strong national feeling. President Roosevelt had a mandate from the people which he was bound to translate into foreign policy.

Roosevelt's practice of allowing the "pace of the evolution" of his policies to be governed "by public reaction" helps explain his decision to allow an entire week to elapse prior to speaking out on the issue.¹²

His recall of American Ambassador Hugh Wilson from Germany was greeted by both public and press with almost unanimous approval. Characteristic of general press sentiments was the *New York Times*, whose editors believed it "difficult to conceive of a more forceful expression of this country's displeasure short of severance of diplomatic relations." *Newsweek* considered the recall "remarkable." The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* believed it a "fit and timely protest," while the *Philadelphia Inquirer* assured Roosevelt that the American people stood solidly behind him.

Some papers were a bit more restrained in their approval. The *New York Sun* believed the president

... in deference to public sentiment in the United States ... no doubt wished to record in some unmistakable manner this nation's deep concern and displeasure.

At the same time, the *Sun* reminded the president of the "impropriety of interfering in the domestic affairs of a friendly power." Vestiges of the appeasement mentality, which had dominated the thinking of segments of the world, surfaced in the *St. Louis Globe Democrat's* dubious reaction to the recall. It wondered "what such action would achieve, other than to increase pressure on the helpless Jews." The *Lincoln Journal*, one of the few papers that opposed the recall, cautioned Americans not to be moved by "mass hysteria" that resulted from their "subjection to propaganda and appeals of various causes."

The dubiousness of the *St. Louis Globe* and the disapproval of the *Lincoln Journal* were exceptions to the rule, however. The *New York Herald*

Tribune most closely expressed American feelings when it reminded the president that, while they strongly approved his action, the American people had no desire to go to war with Germany.¹³

In light of subsequent events, some might fault Roosevelt's recall of Wilson, which was not a full diplomatic recall, but rather a request that he return to provide a "first-hand picture of events," as restrained and hardly constituting a radically new foreign policy. However, in view of the fact that those harmed were not American citizens, his actions were explicit and forceful. Furthermore, he had precisely gauged the public's desire for a strong but limited response, as was substantiated by press reaction and by a number of public-opinion polls taken within a short time of Krystalnacht.

Roosevelt, who was well aware of the emphatic American desire to remain out of war, had faced strong opposition to his attempts to increase armament production and had to lobby assiduously against concerted efforts to strengthen the Neutrality Act. An extraordinary appeal from him had prevented the House from passing a constitutional amendment requiring a national referendum before the country could go to war. In May 1939 a Gallup poll revealed that Americans regarded maintaining neutrality as the "most important problem" before them.¹⁴

A politically conservative Congress had just been elected and Roosevelt knew that his policies, foreign and domestic, would face its opposition. His recall of Wilson was perfectly balanced, satisfying the country's desire for a strong response, but yet not threatening to draw it into the ever-intensifying crisis. Although unique in the annals of American diplomatic history, it must also be noted that it was an action which, not by chance, struck out at the perpetrators of the persecution while essentially ignoring the victims. This was to characterize much of Allied wartime policy—not as a result of a lack of sympathy for Reich Jewry, but because of the fact that the aid most needed by the victims was precisely that which Americans were unwilling to offer: refuge in this land.

AMERICA: NO MORE A LAND OF REFUGE

If Americans felt strongly about remaining out of war, they felt equally, if not more so, about not altering immigration policy. Americans had been opposed to immigration for over two decades. A *Fortune Magazine* poll, taken several months before Krystalnacht, revealed that 67% of the American people opposed the immigration of German and Austrian refugees. Another 18 percent were willing to allow them to enter, but only under the existing stringent quota laws. In April 1939 Americans repudiated the idea of their country serving as a haven for the persecuted by a margin of ten to one.¹⁵ It was much easier to strike out at those who

perpetrated the suffering than to advocate changes which would have succored the persecuted. Such changes would have run counter to the dominant sentiments of the American public.

The anti-immigration mood was reflected in and reinforced by the editorials of many of the major dailies and magazines. The *New York Times* observed that no real answer to the immigrant problem was to be found in the gradual absorption of refugees through enlarging the quotas, and argued that "the United States cannot be expected to perform today . . . the historic service it previously performed."¹⁶ *Time* let Walter Lippman, whom it described as "America's most influential Jewish pundit," speak for it. He believed that nothing could be done for the persecuted Jews, except possibly to find them refuge in Africa. The implication was clear: if Lippman, a Jew, believed that America should not solve the refugee crisis by liberalizing its quota system, than could *Time* or any individual non-Jew be faulted for thinking likewise?¹⁷ The *Christian Science Monitor* also rejected alteration of immigration laws and counseled that the best protest was prayer, a small comfort, it must be noted, for thousands of Jews in concentration camps or lined up before foreign consulates and embassies trying to get visas to safer, more hospitable, lands.¹⁸

The *Christian Century*, the most prominent Protestant journal in the country, maintained that, despite the fact that Krystalnacht revealed that the Nazis' "inexorable purpose [was] to annihilate the Jewish population of Germany," it was "highly inadvisable to let down our immigration barriers." Doing so would create "evils as great as those which it was designed to cure."¹⁹ This magazine relied on an economic and social thesis to support its argument.

The standard economic theory utilized by anti-immigrationists posited that liberalization of the quota system would exacerbate the already severe unemployment problem plaguing America. Immigrants were seen as job competitors who, because they were willing to work for less, stole employment from native Americans.

Some tried to counter this by demonstrating that refugees, many of whom were not in the job market, were an asset not a burden, bringing with them expertise previously lacking in America and freeing the country from dependence on foreign imports. These arguments could not, however, dispel the image of refugees pushing Americans out of work. Denials by various department stores, some of which were *not* coincidentally owned by Jews, of the rumor that they were firing their employees in order to hire refugees, were apparently of little avail. These rumors prevailed, despite repeated denials.²⁰

Christian Century did not base its opposition solely on economic grounds. It was, in fact, more concerned about the social than the economic implications of a change in immigration policy. The United

States, it believed, already had to contend with the problem of integrating nationalities and races which "were wholly irrelevant to our common national life." Permitting entry of additional Jews would be a "tragic disservice to the Jews in America," would "hardly contribute at all to the alleviation of the anguish of Jews in Germany," and would exacerbate that which the journal described as America's "Jewish problem," seriously reducing the rate of Jewish cultural and social assimilation.²¹

Christian Century had fallen prey to a distinctly antisemitic line of reasoning: Jews—their actions, interests, economic endeavors; in short, their very presence—cause antisemitism. Hitler, according to this rationale, had legitimate reason for his antipathy towards Jews. Although atrocities were condemned, the hostility from whence they had sprung was justified.

Another argument used by magazines and newspapers that opposed entry of refugee Jews was that America was then experiencing a significant rise in organized antisemitism.²² *Saturday Review of Literature* estimated in September 1940 that one in three Americans read some form of fascist literature, much of which was antisemitic.²³ Although a number of magazines took issue with the more common charges—that Jews were capitalists, Communists and warmongers—they were hard-pressed to dispel the general sense of hostility which, according to public-opinion polls, prevailed and was increasing.²⁴ The implication, although not as explicit as *Christian Century's* editorial view, was clear: more Jews meant more antisemitism.

There were a few journals, including *Nation*, *New Republic* and *Commonweal*, which repeatedly demanded liberalization of American immigration laws, in light of the contemporary situation.²⁵ On occasion they were joined by other sectors of the press in voicing appeals for action, not just the rhetoric of action, on behalf of persecuted Jews.²⁶

Although they pointed out to their readers that popular outbursts of anger served as an effective catharsis, but did little to succor the victims, their combined eloquence could not counter the overwhelming weight of public and press opinion that adamantly opposed any relaxation of quotas. Some editors supporting immigration liberalization recognized the futility of such an endeavor and acknowledged that the most that could be anticipated was complete allocation of existing quotas.

This situation prompted interesting role reversals on the part of prominent Americans. Herbert Hoover, the overseer of refugee rescue and aid during World War I, argued that "America cannot open its doors in the face of unemployment and suffering. Sanctuary must be found elsewhere." Henry Ford, the industrial magnate whose newspaper, the *Dearborn Independent*, had published the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, took a stand diametrically opposed to Hoover and called for the immediate entry of Jewish refugees into America.²⁷

It was Hoover, not Ford, who reflected public sentiments, sentiments which the press consistently reinforced: America could no longer serve as a home for huddled masses yearning to breathe free.

IF NOT HERE, WHERE?

Since the quota system was considered virtually immutable, the press' interest was sparked by proposals for resettlement of Jews in other areas. Frequently mentioned as alternatives were British Guiana, Tanganyika, Kenya, Rhodesia and Madagascar. Various newspapers and magazines anticipated that Britain, which was anxious to win American support for its rearmament program and foreign policy,²⁸ would find an isle of refuge in her vast empire. There was press skepticism about British willingness to settle Jews in areas subject to German territorial claims. Was this, some editorials mused, a ploy to strengthen Britain's hold on the lands in question?

The relative merits of different sites were frequently debated. Most recognized that the willingness of The Netherlands, France and Switzerland to accept a limited number of refugees would "scarcely make a dent in the evacuation program." Relatively unpopulated areas of the world offered, some contended, the most feasible alternative. The *Springfield Republican* observed that, "since the best parts of the globe were already pre-empted, it was necessary to fall back on marginal lands which were available because they are not desirable." While some press voices believed the areas under discussion were too "impractical for serious discussion," others contended that the situation was so desperate that measures that "heretofore may have seemed visionary" now had to be discussed seriously. Yet other editorials recognized that, notwithstanding the seriousness of the situation, trying to settle a highly educated urban population in an area that was primarily populated by cacti, jungles and wild animals was an impracticable solution for a very real problem.²⁹ In general, however, most of the press shied away from discussing the merits of specific areas and simply stressed the need of providing refuge somewhere—*other than here*.

Many newspapers and magazines believed that the German policy of stripping Jews of practically all their possessions prior to departure was the chief obstacle to refugee resettlement. Unless, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* observed, the Germans permitted the "refugees to take some of their possessions with them, the end of this ghastly upheaval is a long way off."³⁰ While pauperization of the Jews did make their relocation more difficult, it was not the sole, or possibly even the primary, obstacle, as would be clearly demonstrated by the reaction to proposals to bring refugee children to this country as will be discussed below.

It was against this background of enforced pauperization that George Rublee, head of the International Refugee Committee, went to Berlin to try to convince the Germans to allow Jews to retain sufficient capital to facilitate resettlement elsewhere. The Reich initially agreed to permit emigration and "promised," barring any unforeseen incidents, not to molest those Jews who remained. Some editorials greeted this decision with hosannas, reassured, it appears, that an element of rationality had returned to German thinking. *Newsweek* believed it constituted the first concrete "achievement on their [the Jews'] behalf." *Time* considered it Hitler's "truce" with them.³¹ The *Nation* and the *New York Times* were more skeptical, noting that the hailed "truce" constituted naught but a statement of that which the Reich *might* be willing to do, contained *no* guarantees, and was *not* an agreement in the traditional sense of the word; i.e., one to which both parties could be expected to adhere. If the proposal contained an element of reason, the *Nation* conceded, it was only present when judged against the "background of the tenor of the blackmail which preceded it."³²

Ultimately, nothing was to come of these different schemes. Discussion of them, however, probably satisfied the press' and the public's desire to feel that something would be done without allowing one more refugee than was absolutely necessary to tread on American shores.

SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN

The one significant break in American editorial opposition to alteration of existing refugee legislation occurred in response to Senator Robert Wagner and Representative Edith Rogers' introduction in 1939 of a bipartisan bill to permit the entry over two years' time of 20,000 German Jewish children under the age of 14. More than 85 newspapers from 36 states supported it, among them 26 from the South, a region that ardently favored immigration restriction.³³ The suffering of little children touched the hearts of editors and publishers in a manner that their parents' suffering had not.

Many of those papers which favored the bill were concerned that readers might fallaciously assume they had abandoned their restrictionist stand. Some might have also feared that their support of the Wagner-Rogers bill would have less impact if they were thought of as pro-immigration papers. They, therefore, coupled their words of support for the bill with strong reassurances to readers that the measure did not constitute a change in immigration quotas which they still favored:

The United States cannot and should not be asked to succor all the victims of race prejudice and high politics . . . set cruelly adrift by the new barbarism. But the children are a special case.³⁴

Much as Americans sympathize with the oppressed peoples of Europe, it is impossible to offer sanctuary . . . to all refugees, however urgent their need. It would dishonor our traditions of humanity and freedom, however, to refuse the small measure of help contemplated by the Wagner resolution.³⁵

Another oft-repeated theme was that, while there were legitimate economic grounds to bar refugees from this country, the children, who would not enter the job market for a number of years, were an exception to the rule:³⁶

With millions of unemployed on our hands, there is good reason for examining with the greatest care any proposal to relax our immigration restrictions. But the objections to letting down the bars to men and women of working age do not apply to children.³⁷

Although those papers that used the opportunity to question the wisdom and morality of American immigration policy were in the distinct minority, some did do so:

When it comes to turning [American] indignation into action, we seem to be like most of the other countries. To the question where these tragic people are to go for refuge, the conventional reply is that somehow, sometime we'll find them a nice cozy landing in Africa or up the Amazon. What we should do and do soon is relax our immigration laws to let into the United States as large a proportion of these people as we can fairly be called on to receive—if not larger.

Other papers pointed out that the bill could be supported because in recent years quota allocations for Germany and Austria had not been filled.

The widespread editorial support for this bill must not be understood as a manifestation of a weakening of America's resolutely anti-immigrationist stance. If anything, it reflected a hardening of that resolve. The wisdom of existing policy was not questioned; the bill was presented as a one-time exception to the rule and readers were assured that it was not "a precedent for breaking down the immigration laws."³⁸

The *Miami Herald* adopted a unique position by expressing that which other newspapers may have been reluctant to admit. It dismissed the economic objections to immigration as "extraordinary foolishness," noting the immigrants were not only workers but consumers and, therefore, constituted an economic asset, not burden. Nonetheless, it opposed alteration of the quota system, arguing that

[the] proper objection to too-free immigration is social and political, not economic. Too much immigration can make serious difficulty with the social order and with politics. . . . America is right in admitting no more immigrants than can be adjusted to their new environment and to our way of thinking and carrying on.

Although this paper did not explicitly cite Jewish immigrants, its position was noticeably parallel to *Christian Century's*, which had argued that more Jews would "exacerbate America's Jewish problem." Despite these social and political objections, the *Miami Herald* approved of the bill, only because the children were "young enough [to be] given the right chance to be 'Americanized' with quickness and ease."³⁹

When first introduced, the press expected the bill to pass easily: "General approval is bound to come."⁴⁰ "Americans almost unanimously support the Wagner bill."⁴¹

There is a rumor that the plan will be opposed. We don't believe it. This is a land which professes admiration and even reverence for the source of the saying: "Suffer little children to come unto Me!"⁴²

But the bill's opponents did not sit idly by in the face of this outspoken support. Amassing a broad base of opposition to it, they cited a variety of objections, including American children were in need, therefore charity must begin at home and that the bill was but the beginning of a concerted effort to force extensive changes in the immigration system.

The bill's opponents did not rely on overtly antisemitic arguments. However, as the *Nation* observed, "a subtle and effective argument is the *sotto voce* contention that this is a Jewish bill." Despite Wagner and Rogers' assurances to the contrary, opponents claimed "all the children [to be admitted] are Jewish." This charge was answered by editorials that pointed out that the children would include Jews and "Aryans";⁴³ and by Sidney Hollander, President of the National Council of Jewish Federations, in his testimony supporting the bill: "Statements have been made . . . that if this bill is passed, it will benefit primarily Jewish children . . . if it were [true], I doubt if I would as strongly urge the passage of the bill."⁴⁴

Despite editorial conviction that the vast majority of Americans favored the measure, there is evidence to the contrary. A *Cincinnati Post* survey in May 1939 revealed that of those polled, 77 percent opposed the bill. An earlier survey taken shortly after Krystalnacht had demonstrated similar sentiments: 66 percent opposed plans to allow "10,000 refugee children from Germany to be brought into this country and taken care of in American homes."⁴⁵ In view of deep-seated American opposition to any liberalization of quotas, this response is hardly surprising.

Even though the bill was supported by religious leaders, theatrical personalities, academicians, social workers and union leaders, a substantial segment of the national press and politicians—with the exception of those from the Roosevelt administration—the opponents prevailed. The bill was amended so that, instead of providing 20,000 additional places for children, it would have reserved 20,000 existing places for them, resulting in a stiffening and not a relaxation of the quota system. Its sponsors allowed it to die in committee.

ENEMIES WITHIN OUR GATES

The defeat of the Wagner-Rogers bill, as well as the refusal to allow itinerant ships like the S.S. *St. Louis* to land, must be understood within the context of the nativist, isolationist and antisemitic sentiments that prevailed in the 1930s and early 1940s. Chances for liberalization of immigration policy lessened markedly as the situation in Europe became more precarious and the Nazi web spread Westward. By 1939 another argument had been added to the arsenal of anti-immigration opposition: refugees were potential "fifth columnists" poised to do fatal harm to this country. As Western Europe fell before the Nazi *Blitzkrieg*, this conviction gained momentum.

The press' preoccupation with fifth-column activities helped to perpetuate the myth that Nazi agents had successfully infiltrated extensive sectors of American life.⁴⁶ While Germany did attempt to create a favorable climate of American opinion and to forge a web of spies, there is little evidence—and there was even less then—that refugees, particularly Jewish refugees, were involved.

The *Nation* was one of the few magazines that repeatedly took issue with these allegations. When the Visa Division of the State Department charged that refugees "with relatives in German . . . territory were forced to act as Nazi agents in order to save their kinsmen from reprisals," the *Nation* asked the State Department to "cite a single instance of coerced espionage."⁴⁷ No evidence substantiating these charges was ever provided. Nonetheless, stories about Nazi activities in this country appeared in a variety of papers and magazines, including: *American Magazine*, *Readers Digest*, *Survey Graphic*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and the *New York Herald Tribune*. The latter claimed that 42 Nazi agents had been found in Belgium camouflaged as Jewish refugees. Samuel Lubell charged in the *Saturday Evening Post* that "disguised as refugees, Nazi agents had penetrated the world as spies." He relayed an "unofficial report" of a Gestapo school where spies were taught to "speak Yiddish, read Hebrew, pray," and even submitted to circumcision to make their disguise complete.⁴⁸

Some articles argued that refugees were unlikely candidates for spy activities because their dress, language and mannerisms drew attention to them, and that identifying refugees as Nazi agents was a legacy of German propaganda that dumped persecuted people abroad in order to create confusion and consternation in enemy lands. The climate of fear was so pervasive that J. Edgar Hoover, who in 1940 counseled extreme vigilance against fifth columnists, reversed his position in 1941 and warned against "cooked-up hysteria" and "ugly schemes of vigilance and fearmongers." But the press-reinforced "milieu of apprehensiveness" rendered all counter arguments futile.⁴⁹

IF NOT NOW, WHEN?

By the spring of 1942 news of the systematic extermination of European Jewry had reached the West. The Polish government-in-exile reported that 700,000 Jews had died as a result of the German plan for the complete elimination of European Jewry. The *New York Times*, one of the few papers that carried this news, reported in a 17-line article on the bottom of page 5, that 700,000 Jews had died, but failed to mention the program of extermination. A few days later, on July 2nd, a one-column article on page 6 provided a fuller report on the "slaughter" of Polish Jewry, but contained the disclaimer that the figure of 700,000 victims probably included "many who died of maltreatment in concentration camps, or starvation in ghettos or of unbearable conditions of forced labor." The *Times* found it hard to believe that 700,000 could be systematically murdered.

Six months later when, on December 17, 1942, the Allied nations issued a joint declaration confirming the existence of a program for the murder of all European Jewry, that two million Jews had already died and that five million might be dead by the end of the war,⁵⁰ most newspapers and magazines took heed of this announcement. Some featured it as a prominent news item. But soon it would fade from the front page as attention turned to waging the war.

Although the press reacted with revulsion at the news of the murders, it generally accepted the official Allied view that rescue could only come with victory. Some journals, the *Nation* and *New Republic* most prominent among them, took exception and pressed for immediate action, contending that when victory came, no one would be left to save. Their eloquent but lonely editorial voices asked America to respond to the moral imperative of action and not to watch with indifference while the "spiritual and physical crucifixion of the Jews" proceeded apace.⁵¹ Their request proved futile.

THE STRANGE CASE OF THE *CHRISTIAN CENTURY*

Although not all journals and papers reacted with the same degree of urgency, few were as skeptical as the *Christian Century*. Skepticism had marked its response from the outset of German persecution of the Jews. In 1933 it had cautioned "all thoughtful persons, Jews as well as Christians [to] put . . . tighter curbs upon their emotions until the facts are beyond dispute." Early in December 1942, prior to the Allied announcement confirming the German annihilation program, it attacked Stephen Wise for telling the press that Jews were being mass-murdered. Even if true,

which this prominent Protestant journal acknowledged it might be, it wondered "whether any good purpose" was served by Wise's statements. Its editors found his accusations to be "unpleasantly reminiscent of the 'cadaver' factory lie which was one of the propaganda triumphs of World War I." Two weeks later, when praising the Allied statement, they ignored the fact that it confirmed that which they had just denounced Wise for making public. Even their "tone of approval [of the Allied declaration] carried little moral outrage":

The calm tone of the pronouncement does not reflect an absence of emotion, but the presence of a cold determination not to expend in vain outcry one unit of emotional energy which can be better employed in bringing the war to such a conclusion that this gigantic crime can be stopped. . . . The right response . . . is a few straight words to say that it had been entered in the books and then redoubled action on the fronts.

Christian Century seemed more pleased by the restrained nature of the declaration of evidence of mass murder than upset by events.

This cautioned response continued. In May 1943 *Christian Century* acknowledged the "stupendous slaughter" of two million Jews, basing its confirmation on "accurate statistics" contained in the *Information Service Bulletin* of the Federal Council of Churches. Although this magazine, in September 1943, observed that European Jewry was in a "desperate plight" and called for the shipment of food to the starving and provision of asylum in America and Palestine, a year later, in September 1944, it apparently forgot it had acknowledged the mass murders when it noted reports of the "alleged killing of a million and a half persons" [emphasis added] at a camp near Lublin; and pointed out that the "parallel between this story and the 'corpse factory' atrocity tale of the First World War is too striking to be overlooked."⁵²

ALLIED RESPONSE: THE BERMUDA CONFERENCE

In the early part of 1943 increased demands were voiced for some action to curtail this horror. Those newspapers which joined in calling for an Allied response included: the *Los Angeles Times*, *Miami Herald*, *New York World Telegram*, *Boston Traveler*, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, *New York Times* and *Philadelphia Bulletin*. They did not contest the idea that the "war effort comes first," about which the *New York Times* was quite emphatic:

Nothing, not even the desperate plight of the refugees, can be permitted to interfere with an undertaking in which the lives of men and women of many nations are being sacrificed,

The *Times* believed that, notwithstanding the war's priority, measures "could be devised which go beyond the palliatives which appear designed

to assuage the conscience of the reluctant rescuers rather than to aid the victims." The *New York Herald Tribune* observed that days of mourning and pious expressions of sympathy were pointless unless they were "[a] dynamic stimulus to action."⁵³

Facing escalating press criticism for failing to act, British and American leaders agreed to convene a conference on refugees. [In keeping with previous policies, *refugees*, not Jews, were the subject.] Originally scheduled for Ottawa, the conference was shifted to Bermuda in order to make attendance virtually impossible for those who wished to monitor proceedings or lobby for a particular approach to the problem.

It was a gathering which, like its pre-war counterpart at Evian, was doomed to failure because the likeliest solutions had been ruled out by the participants before it convened. The Americans were instructed not to commit the United States to enlarging its quotas; the British refused to consider the possibility of Palestine as a haven for Jews.

Some believed that the two governments were anxious "to pull off a propaganda coup by calling such a conference."⁵⁴ If so, their hopes were dashed when the gathering met with intense criticism. While in progress, Ida Landau fiercely attacked it in the *New York Post*. She believed it was "floundering in its own futility" as the delegates "pursued their deliberations in an attitude of doleful defeatism," and suggested that they might "better go home" where they can make a "better contribution to the war effort by puttering in their victory gardens."⁵⁵ Freda Kirschway, editor of the *Nation*, described Bermuda as a "farce" devoted to finding an excuse why nothing could be done, not to finding a solution."⁵⁶ In *Free World* Congressman Emanuel Celler condemned Bermuda as a "puppet show" in which "even the strings were visible."⁵⁷

Despite this criticism of the Allied effort—or lack thereof—no perceptible policy changes were made. Towards the end of the war some efforts were undertaken and a small number of Jews were brought to this country. These measures were essentially pallatives, however, which came after the fact.

CONCLUSION

What might we conclude about the press' treatment of the news about the persecution of European Jewry in the Period between Krystalnacht and Bermuda?

The gruesome story in all its detail was accessible by the end of 1942. Although it took some news, e.g., the activities of the Einsatzgruppen in Russia longer to reach the world than others, e.g., the Warsaw uprising, the complete tale of horrors was available long before the war ended. Some papers and journals treated the news with a greater measure of

urgency than others. In most cases, though, it was not considered of primary importance.

The press' treatment of this story must be understood within the context of the entire conflagration in which the United States was then involved. Atrocities of all sorts were perpetrated by the Germans, who had exterminated their own unfit and had enslaved and massacred major segments of Europe's population. The mass murder of the Jews was but one of these atrocities, one of the more extreme and severe, but just one among many.

To suggest that rescue measures be taken when Americans were giving their lives in Europe was unthinkable to most Americans and to the editors of the papers and magazines they read. With few exceptions, e.g., the *Nation* and the *New Republic*, the press fully accepted the Allied contention that the preferred means of ending these horrendous acts was to win the war as rapidly as possible. The press showed no editorial inclination to try to change public opinion or government policy.

Despite the fact that the genocide reports were confirmed by the Allies in December 1942, in January 1943, 49% of the population believed the tales of mass executions and murders to be "just rumor." This crisis of disbelief did not dissipate with time. In December 1944, although 75 percent of those polled believed that the Nazis had "murdered many people in concentration camps," they estimated the number killed as "100,000 or fewer."⁵⁸ An American professor of journalism, assigned to the British Information Services, observed in 1942:

I have been shocked . . . by the seeming callousness with which friends and acquaintances decline to accept reports [of atrocities] . . . even when . . . based on unimpeachable evidence or on official proclamations and admissions in the Nazi-controlled press. . . . Either readers and listeners are numbed or they say: "It just can't be true."⁵⁹

This refusal to believe persisted to as late as April 1945. The English publication, *New Statesman and Nation*, expressed "impatience with people who don't believe, don't even now believe, and say that this [accounts of systematic extermination at Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen] is merely a newspaper stunt or is government propaganda."⁶⁰

We are dealing with a "metahistorical" gap between information and knowledge in which the former did not result in the latter. There are a number of explanations for this phenomenon. People did not have an historical framework within which to place such an event. Unprecedented, unfathomable, it was easily dismissed. Reports of mass killings by gas and ravines full of bodies were characterized as resurrected versions of World War I atrocity tales. Although the public may have had a hard time accepting it as true, editors and correspondents were provided with

enough verification to wipe away most doubts. However, their treatment of the news about the persecution and murders often served to reinforce, not dispel, doubts.

The tendency to discount these reports as fallacious was also reinforced by popular concerns about propaganda. The *Atlantic* noted that most people "think of lies when they hear of propaganda." The same English columnist, who expressed "impatience" with people's refusal to believe, admitted that he suspected that "propaganda is even now [April 1945] not wholly absent."⁶¹

The failure to believe may be partially attributed, therefore, to propaganda concerns and the absence of historical precedent. It may also have been a defense mechanism. Little could have been done by any individual to rescue the victims, thus making it psychologically more expedient to repress the knowledge that anything should be done. When reality is intolerable, it is less burdensome to deny its existence than to deal with the guilt it might arouse. While the press cannot be held "responsible" for the refusal to believe, it does not seem to have been particularly concerned about the dissolution of doubt. It too, in fact, often seemed to doubt some of the news it reported.

The wartime failure to believe differed markedly from the pre-war situation. Although no one understood then that "extermination," as threatened by Nazi leaders, meant complete physical annihilation, the horror of Jewish life in the Reich was known. Pre-war acts of treachery were witnessed and reported by American correspondents. Some news was contained in Nazi publications. One did not have to depend on "unsubstantiated" reports. The legal actions against Jews, the direct cause of much of their suffering, were officially announced by the German government ministries. At that time there was little cause for doubt, disbelief or denial. Despite this, all these reactions persisted in the press and among the public. American refusal to accept the reports as wholly valid made it easier to adhere to a policy of opposition to liberalization of refugee legislation.

Even when Americans believed what was reported and were appalled by it, e.g., Krystalnacht, their revulsion did not lessen their anti-refugee, anti-involvement sentiments. The press reflected and reinforced this position. Some are wont to condemn the president, State Department and Congress for failing to make America a haven for the oppressed. However, it was the overwhelming consensus of American public opinion that restricted immigration should remain policy. The press, with few exceptions, supported and strengthened this popular opinion. On the one occasion it tried to counter it, during the Wagner-Rogers debate, it failed. During most of the period, though, the American press demonstrated little desire to do so. It clearly was both a fairly accurate barometer and stabilizer of American public sentiment.

If one believes America's historic role is to provide a home for "huddled masses yearning to breathe free," then it failed in the performance of its historic task at this critical juncture in history. However, the truth of the matter is that, while this may have been the role America once played, by 1920—and certainly by 1940—this was no longer the case. In the hearts of most Americans, and on the pages of their newspapers and magazines, was engraved another statement, one which gave much truer expression to their feelings: we are genuinely sorry about European Jewry's condition and suffering—if all that is reported is really true—but you must understand that our doors are closed and shall remain so.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

NOTES

1. *Time*, Nov. 11, 1938, p. 19; *Newsweek*, Nov. 21, 1938, pp. 17-18.
2. *Contemporary Jewish Record* (CJR), Nov. 1939, p. 56 ff., Jan. 1939, pp. 41-50; *Commonweal* (CMW), Nov. 25, 1938, p. 113; *Christian Century* (CC), Nov. 23, 1938, pp. 1422-23.
3. *New York Times* (NYT), Nov. 10, 1938, p. 1, Nov. 11, 1938, pp. 1-2; *New Republic*, Nov. 23, 1938, p. 60; *Christian Science Monitor* (CSM), Nov. 10 and 12, 1938.
4. *Springfield Republican*, as quoted in *NYT*, Nov. 12, 1938, p. 4.
5. *Staatzeitung und Herald*, as quoted in *Nineteenth Century*, Jan. 1939, p. 120; *CJR*, Jan. 1939, p. 42.
6. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, as quoted in *NYT*, Nov. 12, 1938, p. 4; *Nation*, Jan. 7, 1939, pp. 33-35.
7. *New York Herald Tribune* (NYHT), Dec. 31, 1938, Jan. 1, 1939; *Nation*, Jan. 7, 1939, pp. 33-35; *New Republic* (NR), Nov. 23, 1938, p. 60, Nov. 30, 1938, p. 87, Dec. 21, 1938, p. 189; *Newsweek*, Nov. 21, 1938, pp. 17-18, Nov. 28, 1938, pp. 13-14.
8. *CC*, Nov. 23, 1938, pp. 1422-23.
9. *NYT*, Nov. 23, 1938, p. 1.
10. D.C. Watt, *Britain Looks to Germany* (London, 1965), p. 21; A.J. Sherman, *Island Refuge: Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich, 1933-1939* (Berkeley, 1973), p. 219.
11. *Time*, Nov. 21, 1938, p. 18; *Newsweek*, Dec. 12, 1938, p. 16; *New Republic*, Dec. 21, 1938, p. 189; *CMW*, Dec. 9, 1938, p. 177.
12. Selig Adler, *Isolationist Impulse* (London, 1957), p. 279; Elmer Roper, *You and Your Leaders* (N.Y., 1957), p. 71; *Time*, Nov. 28, 1938, pp. 10-11.
13. *Fortune*, April 1939, p. 102; *NYT*, Nov. 12, 1938, p. 4, Nov. 15, 1938, p. 1; *Nineteenth Century* (NT), Jan. 1939, pp. 118-128; *CJR*, Jan. 1939, pp. 41-51.
14. Adler, op. cit., pp. 270-73; *Public Opinion Quarterly* (POQ), Oct. 1939, pp. 395-96.
15. *Fortune*, July 1938, p. 80, April 1939, p. 102.
16. *NYT*, Nov. 16, 1938, p. 22.
17. *Time*, Dec. 5, 1938, p. 18.

18. *CSM*, Nov. 15, 1938, p. 20.
19. *CC*, Nov. 30, 1938, pp. 1456-59.
20. John R. Carlson, *Under Cover* (Philadelphia, 1943), p. 66; *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, April 1939, p. 3; David Wyman, *Paper Walls* (Mass., 1968), pp. 6-7; *Survey Graphic*, Oct. 1940, pp. 534ff., *CMW*, Oct. 1939, pp. 531-33, Nov. 25, 1938, p. 11; *Current History*, May 1939, pp. 19-22; *NR*, July 20, 1938, pp. 291-92; *Time*, Dec. 5, 1938, p. 18.
21. *CC*, Nov. 30, 1938, pp. 1456-59.
22. Donald Strong, *Organized Antisemitism in America* (Washington, 1941), pp. 138, 171.
23. *Saturday Review of Literature*, Sept. 14, 1940, pp. 3 ff.
24. *Fortune*, April 1939, p. 102; *Nation*, Jan. 7, 1939, p. 25; *CJR*, May-June 1939, pp. 6-19, July-Aug. 1939, pp. 43-44; *CC*, Nov. 30, 1938, pp. 1461-62.
25. *Nation*, July 6, 1940, pp. 4-5; *NR*, Nov. 23, 1938, p. 60, Nov. 30, 1938, p. 87, June 28, 1939, p. 197, April 28, 1941, pp. 592-94; *CMW*, Nov. 25, 1938, p. 113; *Colliers*, Dec. 31, 1938, p. 50, Jan. 27, 1940.
26. *Survey Graphic* (SG), Oct. 1940, pp. 524-26; *New York Daily News* (NYDN), March 16, 1939, as quoted in "Admission of German Refugee Children," *Joint Hearings Before a Subcommittee on Immigration, U.S. Senate and Subcommittee on Immigration and Naturalization, House of Representatives*, April 20-21, 1939, p. 31; *Forum*, Nov. 1938, pp. 209-210.
27. *National Jewish Monthly* (NJM), Jan. 1939, p. 156; Herbert Hoover, *Further Addresses upon the American Road* (N.Y., 1940), p. 244.
28. Sherman, op. cit., p. 173.
29. *The Springfield Republican*, as cited in *CJR*, Jan. 1939, pp. 41-50; *CSM*, Nov. 16, 1938; *Time*, Nov. 28, 1938, p. 11; *NR*, Nov. 30, 1938, p. 87; *Newsweek*, Nov. 28, 1938, pp. 13-14, Dec. 12, 1938, pp. 16-17; *Atlantic Monthly*, Dec. 1938, p. 777; *CC*, Dec. 7, 1938, p. 1485.
30. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, as quoted in *CJR*, Jan. 1939, p. 50.
31. *Newsweek*, Feb. 27, 1939, p. 19; *Time*, Feb. 27, 1939, p. 22.
32. *Nation*, Feb. 25, 1939, pp. 219-20; *NT*, Jan. 1939, pp. 118-223.
33. *Congressional Record*, Vol. 85, 76th Congress, 1st Sess., pp. 1457-58, 2338-41, 2805, 3865-68, 4817-19, and Appendix, pp. 641-42, 656-66, 835-36, 1073-74, 1681-82, 1886-87, 2057-59, 2792-94, 3299; *Joint Hearings*, pp. 8, 45-49 ff.; Wyman, op. cit., pp. 78, 244.
34. *NYHT*, Feb. 11, 1939, as quoted in *Joint Hearings*, p. 11.
35. *Galveston News*, Feb. 20, 1939, as quoted in *Joint Hearings*, p. 21. See also *Sioux City Journal*, Feb. 18, 1939; *Asheville Times*, Feb. 23, 1939; *Washington Star*, Feb. 16, 1939, in *Joint Hearings*, pp. 12, 17, 34.
36. *NYT*, Feb. 18, 1939; *Richmond Times Dispatch*, Feb. 15, 1939; *Pathfinder*, Feb. 25, 1939; *Montgomery Advertiser*, Feb. 17, 1939; *Trenton State Gazette*, Feb. 23, 1939; *Chattanooga News*, Feb. 27, 1939, all quoted in *Joint Hearings*, pp. 12, 14, 24, 25.
37. *Washington Post*, Feb. 13, 1939, as quoted in *Joint Hearings*, p. 9.
38. *NYDN*, March 16, 1939, as quoted in *Joint Hearings*, p. 31; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 25, 1939, as quoted in *Congressional Record*, op. cit., p. 2793; *St. Petersburg Evening Independent*, March 24, 1939, in *Joint Hearings*, p. 38.
39. *Miami Herald*, Feb. 21, 1939, as quoted in *Joint Hearings*, pp. 22-23.

40. *Pensacola News*, Feb. 15, 1939, as quoted in *Joint Hearings*, p. 26
41. *Danbury News-Times*, Feb. 20, 1939, as quoted in *Joint Hearings*, p. 26.
42. *Dayton Daily News*, Feb. 20, 1939, as quoted in *Joint Hearings*, p. 33.
43. *Nation*, July 1, 1939, p. 3; Wyman, op. cit., pp. 85 ff.; *New York Sun*, as quoted in *Congressional Record*, op. cit., p. 1681; *Pathfinder*, op. cit.; *Montgomery Advertiser*, op. cit.; *Fort Wayne Journal Gazette* in *Joint Hearings*, p. 20.
44. Brody, op. cit., p. 342.
45. *Congressional Record*, Vol. 84, Pt. 14, 76th Congress, 1st Sess., p. A-3237; Wyman, op. cit., pp. 95-96; Henry Cantril, *Public Opinion* (Princeton, 1951), p. 1081.
46. Wyman, op. cit., pp. 185-86.
47. *Nation*, July 19, 1941, p. 45.
48. *NYHT*, Oct. 10, 1940, p. 24; Wyman, op. cit., pp. 189-90; *American Magazine*, Sept. 1940, pp. 44ff., Nov. 1940, pp. 16 ff., Dec. 1940, pp. 24 ff., April 1941, pp. 14 ff., Feb. 1941, pp. 35 ff.; *Nation*, July 20, 27, Aug. 10, 24, Sept. 7, 21, Oct. 19, Nov. 2, 6, 30, Dec. 28, 1940; *Readers Digest*, Dec. 1940, pp. 28 ff.; *Saturday Evening Post*, May 29, 1941, pp. 12, 89; Wyman, op. cit., p. 190; *Harpers*, Sept. 1940, pp. 38 ff.; *SG*, Oct. 1940, pp. 503 ff.
49. *Nation*, Aug. 31, 1940, pp. 163-64; *American Magazine*, Aug. 1940, pp. 18 ff., Aug. 1941, pp. 24 ff.; *America*, July 6, 1940, pp. 345-46, Sept. 14, 1940, pp. 623-24, Aug. 1941, pp. 24 ff.; *America*, July 6, 1940, pp. 345-46, Sept. 14, 1940, pp. 623-24, Sept. 21, 1940, pp. 651-52; *NR*, Aug. 18, 1941, p. 208; Wyman, op. cit., pp. 190-91.
50. *NYT*, June 27, 1942, p. 5, July 2, 1942, p. 6, Dec. 18, 1942, pp. 1, 26.
51. *NR*, Dec. 21, 1942, pp. 816-19, Aug. 30, 1943, pp. 299-316; *CC*, March 3, 1943, p. 253, Sept. 8, 1943, pp. 1004-05; *Nation*, Jan. 2, 1943, pp. 8-11, Jan. 9, 1943, pp. 48-51, Feb. 6, 1943, pp. 196-200, Feb. 27, 1943, p. 293, Mar. 13, 1943, pp. 366-37, June 5, 1943, pp. 796-97.
52. *CC*, April 5, 1933, p. 443, Dec. 9, 1942, pp. 1518-19, Dec. 23, 1942, p. 1597, Dec. 30, 1942, p. 1611, May 5, 1943, p. 533, Sept. 8, 1943, pp. 1004-05, Sept. 13, 1944, p. 1045, May 9, 1945, pp. 575-76. See Hertz Fishman, *American Protestantism and a Jewish State* (Detroit, 1973), pp. 54-55.
53. *CJR*, Feb. 1943, pp. 235-36; *NYT*, April 19, 1943, p. 18.
54. Saul Friedman, *No Haven for the Oppressed* (Detroit, 1973), pp. 170-180.
55. *N.Y. Post*, April 23, 1943, p. 4; Friedman, op. cit., p. 171.
56. *Nation*, June 5, 1943, pp. 796-97.
57. *Free World*, July 1943, pp. 16-20. The meeting was also severely condemned by American Jewish leaders. See *NYT*, April 29, 1943, p. 9.
58. Cantril, op. cit., p. 383; Charles Stember, *Jews in the Mind of America* (N.Y., 1966), p. 141.
59. Vernon McKenzie, "Atrocities in the World War II—What we Can Believe," *Journalism Quarterly*, Sept. 1942, pp. 268-76.
60. *New Statesman and Nation*, April 28, 1945, p. 267.
61. Carl J. Friedrich, "The Poison in our System," *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1941, p. 662; *New Statesman and Nation*, April 28, 1945, p. 267.

Part Two
Unwanted Refugees

Who Shall Bear Guilt for the Holocaust: The Human Dilemma*

Henry L. Feingold

A simple searing truth emerges from the vast body of research and writing on the Holocaust. It is that European Jewry was ground to dust between the twin millstones of a murderous Nazi intent and a callous Allied indifference. It is a truth with which the living seem unable to come to terms. Historians expect that as time moves us away from a cataclysmic event our passions will subside and our historical judgment of it will mellow. But that tempered judgment is hardly in evidence in the historical examination of the Holocaust. Instead, time has merely produced a longer list of what might have been done and an indictment which grows more damning. There are after all six million pieces of evidence to demonstrate that the world did not do enough. Can anything more be said?

Given that emotionally charged context, it seems at the least foolhardy and at the most blasphemous to question whether the characterization of the Holocaust's witnesses as callously indifferent does full justice to the historical reality of their posture during those bitter years. There is a strange disjuncture in the emerging history of the witnesses. Researchers pile fact upon fact to show that they did almost nothing to save Jewish lives. And yet if the key decision makers could speak today they would be puzzled by the indictment, since they rarely thought about Jews at all. Roosevelt might admit to some weakness at Yalta, and Churchill might admit that the Italian campaign was a mistake. But if they recalled Auschwitz at all it would probably be vague in their memories. The appearance of three articles dealing with the reaction to the Holocaust in America in this issue of *American Jewish History* offers an opportunity to rethink the assumptions underlying our research. Perhaps, it is premature to do so.

Historical research in the area of the Holocaust is beset with problems of no ordinary kind. It seems as if the memory of that man-made catastrophe is as deadly to the spirit of scholarship as was the actual experience to those who underwent its agony. The

* The following article introduces another feature in the new format of *American Jewish History*—the thematic essay, which will appear in the journal on an occasional basis. Contributed by distinguished scholars, it will delineate certain problems of concern to the specialists in the field or deal with issues of recurring significance in American Jewish history.

answers we are receiving are so muddled. The perpetrators have been found to be at once incredibly demonic but also banal. The suspicion that the victims were less than courageous, that they supposedly went "like sheep to the slaughter," has produced a minor myth about heroic resistance in the Warsaw ghetto and the forests of eastern Europe to prove that it wasn't so. Like the resistance apologetic, the indictment against the witnesses is as predictable as it is irresistible.

That is so because in theory at least witnessing nations and agencies had choices, and there is ample evidence that the choices made were not dictated by human concern as we think they should have been. In the case of America the charge of indifference is heard most clearly in the work of Arthur Morse, who found the rescue activities of the Roosevelt administration insufficient and filled with duplicity, and Saul Friedman, who allowed his anger to pour over into an indictment of American Jewry and its leadership.¹ One ought not to dismiss such works out of hand. And yet it is necessary to recognize that they are as much cries of pain as they are serious history.

The list of grievances is well known. The Roosevelt administration could have offered a haven between the years 1938 and 1941. Had that been done, had there been more largess, there is some reason to believe that the decision for systematic slaughter taken in Berlin might not have been made or at least might have been delayed. There could have been threats of retribution and other forms of psychological warfare which would have signaled to those in Berlin and in the Nazi satellites that the final solution entailed punishment. Recently the question of bombing the concentration camps and the rail lines leading to them has received special attention. The assumption is that physical intercession from the air might have slowed the killing process. American Jewry has been subject to particularly serious charges of not having done enough, of not using its considerable political leverage during the New Deal to help its brethren. Other witnesses also have been judged wanting. Britain imposed a White Paper limiting migration to Palestine in the worst of the the refugee crisis, the Pope failed to use his great moral power against the Nazis, the International Red Cross showed little daring in interpreting its role vis-a-vis the persecution of the Jews. The list documenting the witnesses' failure of spirit and mind

1 Arthur D. Morse, *While Six Million Died* (New York: Random House, 1965); Saul S. Friedman, *No Haven for the Oppressed* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1973).

could be extended; but that would take us away from the core problem faced by the historian dealing with the subject.

He must determine what the possibilities of rescue actually were. Failure cannot be determined until we have some agreement on what was realistically possible. There is little agreement among historians on what these possibilities were, given Nazi fanaticism on the Jewish question. Lucy Dawidowicz, for example, argues compellingly that once the ideological and physical war were merged in the Nazi invasion of Russia in June 1941, the possibilities for rescue were minimal. That, incidentally, was the position also taken by Earl Winterton, who for a time represented Britain on the Intergovernmental Committee, and Breckinridge Long, the Undersecretary of State responsible for the pot-pouri of programs which made up the American rescue effort during the crisis. Other historians, including myself, have pointed out that the Nazi *Gleichshaltung* on the Jewish question was nowhere near as efficient as generally assumed. The war mobilization of their economy, for example, was not achieved until 1944. Opportunities for rescue were present especially during the refugee phase, when the final solution had not yet been decided upon and possibilities of bribery and ransom existed. It was the momentum of this initial failure during the refugee phase which carried over into the killing phase.

The point is that in the absence of agreement on possibilities, historians are merely repeating the debate between power holders and rescue advocates which took place during the crisis. The latter group insisted that not enough was being done and the former insisted that the best way to save the Jews was to win the war as quickly as possible. Nothing could be done to interfere with that objective – including, ironically, the rescue of the Jews. When Stephen Wise pointed out that by the time victory came there would be no Jews left in Europe, he exposed what the argument between rescue advocates and their opponents in fact was about. It concerned priorities, and beyond that, the war aims that ordered those priorities. What rescue advocates were asking then, and what the historians of the role of witness are asking today, is: why was not the Jewish question central to the concern of the witnesses as it was to the Nazis who spoke about it incessantly? But we cannot solve that question of priorities until we have some answer to the question of what World War II was all about, and what role the so-called “Jewish question” played in it.

Clearly, Allied war leaders were wary of accepting the Nazi priority on the Jewish question. The war was not one to save the Jews, and they would not allow war strategy and propaganda to be

aimed in that direction. None of the conferences that worked out war aims and strategy – the Argentia meeting which produced the Atlantic Charter (August, 1941), the several visits of Churchill to Washington, the Casablanca Conference (January, 1943), the Quebec conference (August, 1943), the Moscow Conference (October, 1943), the Teheran Conference in November, and finally the Yalta and Potsdam conferences in 1945 – had anything to say about the fate of the Jews. The silence was not solely a consequence of the fact that Allied leaders did not remotely fathom the special significance of what was happening to Jews in Nazi concentration camps. Even had they understood, it is doubtful that they would have acknowledged the centrality of the final solution. To have done so would have played into Nazi hands and perhaps interfered with a full mobilization for war. Hence Roosevelt's insistence on using a euphemistic vocabulary to handle what Berlin called the Jewish problem. There was distress in the Oval Office when George Rublee, who had unexpectedly negotiated a "Statement of Agreement" with Hjalmar Schacht and Helmut Wohlthat in the spring of 1939, spoke of Jews rather than the "political refugees," the preferred euphemism. The two agencies concerned with Jews, the Intergovernmental Committee for Political Refugees which grew out of the Evian Conference, and the War Refugee Board carefully avoided the use of the word Jew in their titles. When the American restrictive immigration law was finally circumvented in the spring of 1944 and a handful of refugees were to be interned in Oswego outside the quota system, just as had been done for thousands of suspected Axis agents active in Latin America, Robert Murphy was cautioned to be certain to select a "good mix" from the refugees who had found a precarious haven in North Africa. Undoubtedly what Roosevelt meant was not too many Jews. The crucible of the Jews under the Nazi yoke was effectively concealed behind the camouflage terminology conceived by the Nazi bureaucracy and the Allies. Even today in eastern Europe unwillingness persists to recognize the special furor the Nazis reserved for the Jews and the relationship of the Jews to the Holocaust. The Soviet government does not acknowledge that it was Jews who were slaughtered at Babi Yar; and in Poland the Jewish victims have become in death what they were never in life, honored citizens of that nation. In the East it became the Great Patriotic War and in the West it was ultimately dubbed the Great Crusade, never a war to save the Jews. Those who examine the history text books continually note with despair that the Holocaust is barely mentioned at all.

The low level of concern about the fate of the Jews had a direct

effect in strengthening the hands of those in Berlin responsible for implementing the final solution. They became convinced that the democracies secretly agreed with their plan to rid the world of the Jewish scourge. "At bottom," Goebbels wrote in his diary on December 13, 1942, "I believe both the English and the Americans are happy that we are exterminating the Jewish riff-raff." It was not difficult even for those less imaginative than Goebbels to entertain such a fantasy. Each Jew sent to the East meant, in effect, one less refugee in need of a haven and succor. Inadvertently the final solution was solving a problem for the Allies as well. Nazi propaganda frequently took note in the early years of the war of the reluctance of the receiving nations to welcome Jews. They watched London's policy of curtailing immigration to Palestine, American refusal to receive the number of refugees that might have been legally admitted under the quota system, the Pope's silence. Goebbels' impression was after all not so far from the truth. Smull Zygelbojm, the Bundist representative to the Polish Government-in-Exile, came to much the same conclusion shortly before his suicide.

Yet Zygelbojm, who was very close to the crisis, was bedeviled by the dilemma of what to do. He was dismayed by the assumption underlying a request for action that he received from Warsaw in the spring of 1943. The message demanded that Jewish leaders "go to all important English and American agencies. Tell them not to leave until they have obtained guarantees that a way has been decided upon to save the Jews. Let them accept no food or drink, let them die a slow death while the world looks on. This may shake the conscience of the world." "It is utterly impossible," Zygelbojm wrote to a friend, "they would never let me die a slow lingering death. They would simply bring in two policemen and have me dragged away to an institution." The bitter irony was that while Zygelbojm had come to have grave doubts about the existence of a "conscience of the world," his former colleagues in Warsaw, who were aware of the fate that awaited Jews at Treblinka, could still speak of it as if it was a reality.

Once such priorities were in place it proved relatively easy for State Department officers like Breckinridge Long to build what one historian has called a "paper wall;" a series of all but insurmountable administrative regulations, to keep Jewish refugees out of America. "We can delay and effectively stop for a temporary period of indefinite length," he informed Adolf A. Berle and James C. Dunn on June 26, 1940, "the number of immigrants into the U.S. We could do this by simply advising our consuls to put every obstacle in the way and resort to various administrative ad-

vices [sic] which would postpone and postpone.” That is precisely what was done; only in the year 1939 were the relevant quotas filled. During the initial phase the mere existence of strong restrictionist sentiment reinforced by the Depression proved sufficient. After the war started, the notion that the Nazis had infiltrated spies into the refugee stream was used. The creation of a veritable security psychosis concerning refugees triggered the creation of a screening procedure so rigid that after June 1940 it was more difficult for a refugee to gain entrance to the neutral United States than to war-time Britain. During the war a similar low priority for the rescue of Jews might be noted in the neutral nations of Latin America and Europe, the Vatican and the International Red Cross. There was no agency of international standing which could press the Jewish case specifically. But that is a well known story which need not be retold here.

The question is, why did not the witnessing nations and agencies sense that the systematic killing in the death camps by means of production processes developed in the West was at the ideological heart of World War II, and therefore required a response? Why were they unable to fathom that Auschwitz meant more than the mass destruction of European Jewry? It perverted the values at the heart of their own civilization; if allowed to proceed unhampered, it meant that their world would never be the same again. Roosevelt, Churchill and Pius XII understood that they were locked in mortal combat with an incredibly demonic foe. But as the leaders of World War I sent millions to their death with little idea of the long-range consequences, these leaders never had the moral insight to understand that the destruction of the Jews would also destroy something central to their way of life. Even today few thinkers have made the link between the demoralization and loss of confidence in the West and the chimneys of the death camps. The Holocaust has a relatively low priority in the history texts used in our schools. It is merely another in a long litany of atrocities. Today as yesterday, few understand that a new order of events occurred in Auschwitz, and that our lives can never be the same again.

Yet how could it have been different? If the key decision makers at the time were told what Auschwitz really meant, would it have made a difference? They would have dismissed the notion that they could make decisions on the basis of abstract philosophy even if the long-range continuance of their own nations were at stake. They were concerned with concrete reality, with survival for another day. Until the early months of 1943 it looked to them as if their enterprise would surely fail. And if that happened, what matter abstract

notions about the sanctity of life? The sense that *all* life, not merely Jewish life, was in jeopardy may have been less urgently felt in America, which even after Pearl Harbor was geographically removed from the physical destruction wrought by war. In America it was business as usual. What was being done to Jews was a European affair. Roosevelt viewed the admission of refugees in the domestic political context, the only one he really knew and could control to some extent. He understood that the American people would never understand the admission of thousands, perhaps millions, of refugees while "one third of the nation was ill housed, ill fed and ill clad." In case he dared forget, Senator Reynolds, a Democrat from North Carolina in the forefront of the struggle to keep refugees out, was there to remind him, and did so by using the President's own ringing phrases.

That brings us to one of the most bitter ironies of all concerning the role of America. The Roosevelt administration's inability to move on the refugee front was a classic case of democracy at work, the democracy which American Jewry revered so highly. The American people, including its Jewish component before 1938, did not welcome refugees. So strong was this sentiment that it would have taken an act of extraordinary political courage to thwart the popular will. Had Roosevelt done so there was a good chance, as Rep. Samuel Dickstein, the Jewish Chairman of the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization pointed out, that there would have occurred a Congressional reaction of even more restrictive laws in the face of the crisis. Roosevelt was occasionally capable of such political courage, especially on a major issue. Witness his action on the Destroyer-Bases deal which he implemented by Executive Order in September, 1940. But in the case of refugees, even Jewish refugee children, he chose to be more the fox than the lion. He settled first for a politics of gestures. That is perhaps the key to the mystery of the invitation of thirty-two nations to Evian extended in March, 1938 to consider the refugee problem. The invitation was carefully hedged. It stated that the United States would not alter its immigration regulations and did not expect other states to do so. That of course consigned the Evian Conference to failure.

Soon the "politics of gestures" became more elaborate. It featured among other things an enthusiasm for mass resettlement schemes. That usually amounted to tucking away a highly urbanized Jewish minority in some tropical equatorial rainforest or desert to "pioneer." The Jews predictably could not muster much passion for it. Resettlement imposed on Jews, whether conceived in Berlin

or Washington, they understood as a concealed form of group dissolution, and they would have little to do with it. Thus it was doomed to failure.

By the time Henry Morgenthau Jr., Roosevelt's Secretary of the Treasury and perhaps his closest Jewish friend, was enlisted in the rescue effort, it was already late in the game. Morgenthau did succeed in convincing the President to establish the War Refugee Board in January, 1944. He prepared a highly secret brief which demonstrated that the State Department had deliberately and consistently sabotaged efforts to rescue Jews. It was a devastating document, and the WRB which it brought into existence did play an important role in saving those Hungarian Jews in Budapest who survived the war. But it was created too late to save the millions.

Similar practical concerns dictated the response of other witnessing nations and agencies. Pressed unwillingly into a life-and-death struggle for survival, British leaders predictably viewed German anti-Jewish depredations within the context of their own national survival. It was a foregone conclusion that in balancing the needs of the Jews against their own need for Arab loyalty and oil should there be a war, the latter would win out. Within that context they were, according to one researcher, more generous to Jewish refugees than the United States. Apparently moral considerations did bother some British leaders after the betrayal of the White Paper. It was partly that which led to the hedged offer of British Guiana for a small resettlement scheme. That colony had been the scene of two prior resettlement failures, and posed many other problems, so that except for some territorialists like Josef Rosen, Jews did not welcome it with enthusiasm and Zionists certainly did not see it as a substitute for Palestine. The indifferent response of Jewish leaders exasperated Sir Herbert Emerson, chairman of the Intergovernmental Refugee Committee. The subtle anti-Semitism in his reaction was not uncommon among middle echelon bureaucrats in London and Washington: "The trouble with the refugee affair was the trouble with the Jews and most eastern people," he complained in Washington in October, 1939, "there was always some other scheme in the background for which they were prepared to sacrifice schemes already in hand."

The problem with assessing the role of the Vatican as witness is made complex by the fact that such power as it had was in the spiritual rather than the temporal realm; and yet the Pope faced a problem of survival which was physical, involving as it did the institution of the Church. Just as we expected the leader who introduced the welfare state in America to demonstrate a special sensitivity to the plight of the Jews, so the Pope, who ostensibly

embodied in his person the moral conscience of a good part of the Christian world, was expected to speak out, to use his power. He did not, and it does not require a special study of Church politics to realize that its priorities were ordered by crucial requirements in the temporal rather than the spiritual sphere. During World War II it also sensed that it faced a struggle for mere survival. The Vatican probably possessed more precise information on the actual workings of the final solution than any other state. And while the Pope had none of the divisions Stalin later sought, he had an extensive, brilliantly organized infrastructure which might have been brought into play for rescue work and a voice that had a profound influence with millions in occupied Europe. Yet the Pope remained silent, even while the Jews of Rome were deported "from under his window." That posture contrasted sharply with the activities of certain Dutch and French Bishops and some lesser officials like Cardinal Roncalli, later Pope John, who were active in the rescue effort. But these did not bear the responsibility for the survival of the institution of the Church itself.

One need not search out the reason for the Pope's silence in his Germanophilia or in his oversensitivity to the threat the Church faced from the Left. The latter had been demonstrated under the Calles and Cardenas regime in Mexico and during the Civil War in Spain. But observing that the Church genuinely felt the threat of "Godless Communism" is a long way from concluding that therefore Pius XII accepted the Nazis' line that they were the staunchest opponents of a Communist conspiracy which was somehow Jewish in nature. The immediate threat, to the Church during the years of the Holocaust emanated from Berlin, and we know today that Hitler did indeed intend to settle matters with the Church after hostilities were over.

The Nazi ideology posed not only a physical threat, but also divided the Catholic flock. Over 42% of the SS were Catholic, and many top-ranking Nazi leaders, including Hitler, Himmler, Heydrich and Eichmann, were at least nominally so. The war itself had placed the Vatican in a delicate position since Catholics fought on both sides. The Pope's primary problem was how to walk that delicate tightrope. The determination not to speak out on Jews, which was at the very center of Nazi cosmology, should be viewed in that light. His choice was not basically different from that of the British in the Middle East or of Roosevelt on refugee policy.

The International Red Cross also thought in terms of its viability as an agency whose effectiveness was based on its ability to maintain a strict neutrality. It faced a legal dilemma, for while the Nazis spoke endlessly about the threat of "international Jewry" the Jews

of Germany were legally an "internal" problem during the refugee phase. After the deportation and internment in camps began, their status became even more difficult to define. When Denmark requested the Red Cross to investigate the fate of Danish Jews deported to Theresienstadt, it could do so since the request indicated that Denmark continued to recognize them as Danish citizens. But such requests were not forthcoming from other occupied countries. And the Danish request set the stage for one of the cruelest hoaxes of the war. The Red Cross delegation which visited Theresienstadt to carry out that charge apparently was totally taken in by the Potemkin village techniques, and gave the "model" camp a clean bill of health even while inmates were starving to death and being deported to Auschwitz behind the facade. Overly sensitive to the fact that it was a voluntary agency whose operation depended on the good-will of all parties, it did not press the case concerning Jews with determination. Food parcels were not delivered to camps until 1944, nor did it press for a change of classification of certain Jewish inmates to prisoners of war. That tactic, suggested by the World Jewish Congress, might have saved many lives. It was for that reason that Leon Kubowitzki, the leading rescue proponent of the World Jewish Congress, found that "the persistent silence of the Red Cross in the face of various stages of the extermination policy, of which it was well informed, will remain one of the troubling and distressing riddles of the Second World War." Yet here too one can observe how the integrity and well being of the agency took precedence over the rescue of the Jews. It may well be that the priorities of nations and international agencies are directed first and foremost to their own well-being and cannot be readily transferred for altruistic reasons to a vulnerable minority facing the threat of mass murder.

We come next to a question which embodies at once all the frustrations we feel at the failure of the witnesses and is for that reason posed with increasing frequency in Holocaust symposia and in publications on the catastrophe. The question of bombing Auschwitz and the rail lines leading to the camp raises the twin problems of assessing the failure of the witnesses and of determining the range of possibilities and their relationship to strategic priorities. The assumption is that interdiction from the air was, in the absence of physical control of the death camps, the best practical way to interrupt the killing process.

A recent article in *Commentary* by Professor David Wyman and another by Roger M. Williams in *Commonweal* demonstrate beyond doubt that by the spring of 1944 the bombing of Auschwitz

was feasible.² Thousands of Hungarian and Slovakian Jews might have been saved had the American 15th Air Force, stationed in Italy and already bombing the synthetic oil and rubber works not five miles from the gas chambers, been allowed to do so. Moreover, by the fall of 1944 Auschwitz was well within the range of Russian dive bombers. Given that context, the note by Assistant Secretary of the Army John J. McCloy that bombing was of "doubtful efficacy" and the Soviet rejection of the idea are the most horrendously inhuman acts by witnesses during the years of the Holocaust. All that was required was a relatively minor change in the priority assigned to the rescue of Jews.

Yet a perceptive historian cannot long remain unaware of the seductive element in the bombing alternative. All one had to do, it seems, was to destroy the death chambers or the railroad lines leading to them, and the "production" of death would cease or at least be delayed. Things were not that simple. Jewish rescue advocates were late in picking up the signals emanating from Hungary for bombing, and even then there was little unanimity on its effectiveness. It was the World Jewish Congress which transmitted the request for bombing to the Roosevelt administration; but its own agent, A. Leon Kubowitzki, held strong reservations about bombing since he did not want the Jewish inmates of the camps to be the first victims of Allied intercession from the air. There was then and continues to be today genuine doubts that, given German fanaticism on the Jewish question and the technical difficulties involved in precision bombing, bombing the camps could have stopped the killing. The *Einsatzgruppen*, the special killing squads which followed behind German lines after the invasion of Russia, killed greater numbers in shorter order than the camps. The Germans were able to repair rail lines and bridges with remarkable speed. And, of course, Auschwitz was only one of the several camps where organized killing took place.

Most important, the bombing-of-Auschwitz alternative, so highly touted today, does not come to grips with the question of the fear that the Germans would escalate the terror and involve the Allies in a contest in which the Germans held all the cards. In a recent interview, McCloy cited this reason rather than the unwillingness to assign war resources to missions that were not directly involved in winning the war as the reason uppermost in Roosevelt's mind when the bombing alternative was rejected. An almost un-

2 *Commentary*, LXV, 5 (May, 1978), 37-46; *Commonweal*, Nov. 24, 1978, 746-751.

noticed sub-theme in McCloy's August 14th note spoke of the fear that bombing might "provoke even more vindictive action by the Germans." Survivors and rescue advocates might well wonder what "more vindictive action" than Auschwitz was possible. But that views the bombing alternative from the vantage of the Jewish victims—which, as we have seen, is precisely what non-Jewish decision makers could not do, given their different order of priorities and sense of what was possible. The people who conceived of the final solution could in fact have escalated terror. They could have staged mass executions of prisoners of war or of hostages in occupied countries or the summary execution of shot-down bomber crews for "war crimes." Their imagination rarely failed when it came to conceiving new forms of terror, nor did they seem to possess normal moral restraints as one might find in the Allied camp. That was one of the reasons why the final solution could be implemented by them.

Nevertheless, one can hardly escape the conclusion that bombing deserved to be tried and might conceivably have saved lives. The failure to do so, however, is best viewed in the larger framework of the bombing question. It began with a collective *démarche* delivered by the governments-in-exile to the Allied high command in December, 1942. That request did not ask for the bombing of the camps, but for something called "retaliatory bombing." That notion too was rejected because of the fear of an escalation of terror, and rescue advocates did not pick up the idea until it was all but too late. There is good reason to believe that retaliatory bombing offered even greater hope for rescue than the bombing of the camps themselves.

In 1943, when the death mills of Auschwitz and other death camps ground on relentlessly, bombing was in fact not feasible but retaliatory bombing was. That was the year when the heavy saturation bombing of German cities was in full swing. In one sense the bombing of Hamburg in July, 1943 and the savaging of other German cities, including the bombing of Dresden, which many Germans consider a separate war atrocity, make sense today only when considered in the context of the death camps. Albert Speer and our own post-war evaluation of saturation bombing inform us that it had almost no effect on curtailing German war production. Not until one industry, fuel or ball bearings, was target-centered did the Nazi war machine feel the pinch. Yet it might have furnished rescue advocates with an instrument to break through the "wall of silence" which surrounded what was happening to Jews. Even bombing interpreted as retaliatory could have remarkable effects,

especially in the satellites. When Miklos Horthy, the Hungarian regent, called a halt to the deportations on July 7, 1944, he did so in part out of fear that Budapest would be subject to more heavy raids as it had been on June 2nd. It was the bombing of Budapest, not Auschwitz, that had the desired effect. We know that Goebbels in his perverse way fully expected such a *quid pro quo* and had even taken the precaution of planning a massive counter-atrocity campaign should the Allies make a connection between bombing and the death camps. Himmler also had already made the link. We find him addressing his officers on June 21, 1944 on the great difficulties encountered in implementing the final solution. He told the gathered group that if their hearts were ever softened by pity, let them remember that the savage bombing of German cities "was after all organized in the last analysis by the Jews."

Yet the natural link between bombing and the final solution made by Nazi leaders was not shared by Allied leadership or by Jewish rescue advocates. Had they done so, it is not inconceivable that the fear of disaffection and the terrible price the Reich was paying might have led more rational-minded leaders in the Nazi hierarchy to a reevaluation of the final solution, which was after all a purely ideological goal. Not all Nazis were convinced that the murder of the Jews was worth the ruin of a single German city. We do not know if such a rearrangement of Nazi priorities was possible; the theme of retaliatory bombing was not fully picked up by rescue advocates, and by the time the notion of bombing the camps came to the fore in March, 1944, millions of Jews already were in ashes. That is why the twelve-point rescue program which came out of the giant Madison Square Garden protest rally in March, 1943 is as startling in its own way as McCloy's later response to the plea to bomb Auschwitz. It was silent on the question of bombing. It seems clear the researchers into the role of the witnesses in the future will have to place failure of mind next to failure of spirit to account for their inaction during the Holocaust.

I have saved the discussion of the role of American Jewry for the end because it is the most problematic of all. For those who remain convinced that American Jewry failed, how the problem is posed does not really matter, since the answer is always the same. Still, how did it happen that American Jewry possessing what was perhaps the richest organizational infrastructure of any hyphenate group in America, experienced in projecting pressure on government on behalf of their coreligionists since the Damascus blood libel of 1840, emerging from the Depression faster than any other ethnic group, boasting a disproportionate number of influential

Jews in Roosevelt's inner circle, and chairing the three major committees in Congress concerned with rescue,³ despite all this was unable to appreciably move the Roosevelt administration on the rescue question?

Stated in this way, the question provides not the slightest suggestion of the real problem which must be addressed if an adequate history of the role of American Jewry during the Holocaust is ever to emerge. For even if all of these assets in the possession of American Jewry were present, one still cannot avoid the conclusion that American Jewry's political power did not match the responsibilities assigned to it by yesterday's rescue advocates and today's historians. We need to know much more about the character and structure of American Jewry during the thirties, the political context of the host culture in which it was compelled to act, and the ability of hyphenate or ethnic groups to influence public policy.

The political and organizational weaknesses of American Jewry during the thirties have been amply documented. It seems clear that the precipitous shift of the mantle of leadership of world Jewry found American Jewry unprepared. A communal base for unified action simply did not exist. Instead there was fragmentation, lack of coherence in the message projected to policy makers, profound disagreement on what might be done in the face of the crisis, and strife among the leaders of the myriad political and religious factions which constituted the community. It may well be that the assumption of contemporary historians that there existed a single Jewish community held together by a common sense of its history and a desire for joint enterprise is the product of a messianic imagination.

One is hard-pressed to find such a community on the American scene during the thirties. Even those delicate strands which sometimes did allow the "uptown" and "downtown" divisions to act together vanished during the crisis. The issues which caused the disruption stemmed from the crisis and seem appallingly irrelevant today. There was disagreement on the actual nature of the Nazi threat, the efficacy of the anti-Nazi boycott, the creation of a Jewish army, the commonwealth resolution of the Biltmore Conference, the activities of the Peter Bergson group, and the way rescue activities were actually carried out around the periphery of occupied Europe. There was something tragic in the way each separate Jewish constituency was compelled in the absence of a unified

3 Rep. Sol Bloom, House Foreign Affairs Committee; Rep. Samuel Dickstein, House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization; Rep. Emanuel Celler, House Judiciary Committee.

front to go to Washington to plead separately for its particular refugee clientele. In 1944 Rabbi Jacob Rosenheim, director of the Vaad Ha-Hatzala, the rescue committee of the Orthodox wing, explained why he found it better to act alone. He observed that the rescue scene "was a dog eat dog world (in which) the interest of religious Jews (is) always menaced by the preponderance of the wealthy and privileged Jewish organizations especially the Agency and the Joint." Clearly for Rosenheim the Nazis were not the only enemy. It did not take long for the unfriendly officials in the State Department to learn about the strife within the community. In 1944 we find Breckinridge Long writing in his diary: "The Jewish organizations are all divided amidst controversies. . . . there is no cohesion nor any sympathetic collaboration [but] . . . rather rivalry, jealousy and antagonism." It was a fairly accurate observation.

Yet one can have doubts whether the Administration's rescue policy would have been appreciably changed had the Jews had a Pope, as Roosevelt once wished in a moment of exasperation. In the American historical experience the ability of pressure groups to reorder policy priorities has been fairly circumscribed. The Irish-Americans, perhaps the most politically astute of all hyphenate groups, tried to use American power to "twist the lion's tail" in the 19th and 20th centuries. Yet with all their political talent they were unable to prevent the Anglo-American rapprochement which developed gradually after 1895. During the years before World War I the German-Americans were a larger and more cohesive group than American Jewry during the thirties. Yet they failed to prevent the entrance of America into war against their former fatherland. And adamant opposition of Polish-Americans did not prevent the "Crime of Crimea," the surrender of part of Poland to the Soviet Union at Yalta.

There are more examples which could be cited to establish the fact that hyphenate pressure has not been distinctly successful in pulling foreign policy out of its channels once it has been firmly established that a given policy serves the national interest. Despite the rantings of the former head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and others, Jews have done no better than other groups in this regard. That it is thought to be otherwise is part of the anti-Semitic imagination, which has always assigned Jews far more power and importance behind the scenes than they possessed. It is one of the great ironies of our time that many Jews share the belief that they possess such secret power. It is a comforting thought for a weak and vulnerable people. It should be apparent to any Jew living in the time-space between Kishinev and Auschwitz that such can hard-

ly be the case. A powerful people does not lose one third of its adherents while the rest of the world looks on.

The charge that American Jewry was indifferent to the survival of its brethren during the Holocaust is not only untrue, but would have been highly uncharacteristic from a historical perspective. Much of American Jewry's organizational resources in the 19th and 20th century – the Board of Delegates of American Israelites, the American Jewish Committee, the Joint Distribution Committee and the various philanthropic organizations which preceded it, the American Jewish Congress, the various Zionist organizations and appeals – was structured in relation to Jewish communities and problems abroad. From its colonial beginnings, when American Jewry welcomed "messengers" from Palestine, it has consistently demonstrated a strong attachment to Jewish communities overseas. The Holocaust years did not mark a sudden change in that pattern. A close perusal would indicate that virtually every means of public pressure, from delegations to the White House to giant public demonstrations – techniques later adopted by the civil rights movement – were initially used by American Jewry during the war years to bring their message to American political leaders. They were not terribly effective because leaders were not fully attuned to Jewish objectives, and because the war itself tended to mute the cry of pain of a group trying vainly to convince America that its suffering was inordinate and required special attention.

Given the circumstances, American Jewry seemed bound to fail. Sometimes one is tempted to believe that such was the case with everything related to the Holocaust, including the writing of its history. Those who despair of the role of American Jewry forget that throughout the war years the actual physical control of the scene of the slaughter remained in Nazi hands. Wresting that physical control from them, the most certain means of rescue, required a basic redirecting of war strategy to save the Jews. Even under the best of circumstances, military strategists never would have accepted such restrictions. British historian Bernard Wasserstein, searching through recently declassified British documents, discovered that at one point, as the war drew to a close, Churchill and Eden actually favored a direct military effort to save the Jews. But they did not succeed in breaking through the middle echelons of the bureaucracy and the military command to effect it. That is the reason why the American failure during the refugee phase (1938–1941), and the failure to support the notion of retaliatory bombing and the bombing of the camps and rail lines leading to them looms so large today. Such steps were possible without a massive redirecting of strategy and without great sacrifice of lives

and material. Aside from the possibility of ransoming proposals, which came at the beginning and end of the Holocaust, there seemed to be no other way to rescue appreciable numbers.

Besides the lack of precedent for responding to such a situation, American Jewry was plagued by its inability to get the fact of systematized mass murder believed. Few could fathom that a modern nation with a culture that had produced Goethe, Heine, Bach and Beethoven, the German *Kulturgebiet* which Jews especially linked to progress and enlightenment, had embarked on such a program. It beggared the imagination. The immense problem of gaining credibility was never solved during the crisis and contributed notably to the failure to activate decision makers to mount a more strenuous rescue effort. The role of the State Department in deliberately attempting to suppress the story of the final solution, a now well-known and separate tragedy, made breaking through the credibility barrier even more difficult.

It is in that context that the role of Rabbi Stephen Wise in asking Sumner Welles to confirm the Riegner cable, which contained the first details of the operation of the final solution, is best viewed. American Jewish leadership might be accused of ignorance, ineffectiveness, or just sheer lack of stature, as Nahum Goldmann recently observed, but the charge of betrayal is unwarranted and unfair. The contents of the Riegner cable, which spoke of the use of prussic acid and the production of soap from the fat of the cadavers, was so horrendous that to have publicized it without confirmation would have resulted in widening the credibility gap. Middle echelon State Department officials were not remiss in accusing Jewish leaders of atrocity mongering. In the context of the history of the thirties that charge was far from innocent. The notion that Americans had been skillfully manipulated by British propaganda into entering World War I was common fare in the revisionist history which made its debut in the thirties. A warning that British and Jewish interests were plotting to bring America into World War II had been a major theme in a speech delivered in September 1941 in Des Moines by Charles Lindbergh, a greatly esteemed national folk hero. It was but a small jump for the isolationist-minded American public to believe that it was happening all over again. The neutrality laws passed by Congress in the thirties were based on the same supposition.

Although the delay in several months in publicizing the Riegner report was probably costly, it was necessary to gain credibility. Moreover, a duplicate cable had been forwarded to the British branch of the World Jewish Congress, so that there was little danger that the story could have been permanently suppressed by

the State Department. Eventually even the Department's attempt to cut off the flow of information at the source was discovered and used to remove its hand from the rescue levers.

The inability to believe the unbelievable was not confined to Washington policy makers. It plagued Jewish leaders who were right on top of the operation and had every reason to believe it. The strategies developed by the Jewish Councils in eastern Europe, "rescue through work" and "rescue through bribery," and eventually the surrender of the aged and the infirm in the hope that the Nazis did not intend to liquidate useful Jews, was based on the assumption that the Nazis did not intend to kill *all* the Jews.

Even after the press made public news of the final solution, most Americans, including many Jews, simply did not absorb the fact of what was happening. A poll of Americans in January, 1943, when an estimated one million Jews already had been killed, indicated that less than half the population believed that mass murder was occurring. Most thought it was just a rumor. By December, 1944, when much more detail was available, the picture had not drastically altered. Seventy-five percent now believed that the Germans had murdered many people in concentration camps. But when asked to estimate how many, most answered one hundred thousand or less. By May, 1945, when Americans already had seen pictures of the camps, the median estimate rose to one million, and 85% were now able to acknowledge that systematic mass murder had taken place. But the public was oblivious to the fact that the victims were largely Jewish. The inability to understand the immensity of the crime extended to the Jewish observers around the periphery of occupied Europe. They underestimated the number who had lost their lives by a million and a half. The figure of six million was not fully established until the early months of 1946.

The credibility problem was at the very core of the reaction of the witnesses: they could not react to something they did not know or believe. The problem of credibility takes us out of the realm of history. We need to know much more about how such facts enter the public conscience. How does one get people to believe the unbelievable? Rescue advocates did not succeed in solving that problem during those bitter years; and that, in some measure, is at the root of their failure to move governments and rescue agencies. In democracies it requires an aroused public opinion to move governments to action. Without that there is little hope that governments who are naturally reluctant to act would do so.

Thus far no historians have probed the role of Jewish political culture, those assumptions and qualities of style and habit which shape relationships to power and power holders, in accounting for

the Jewish response. To be sure there are some untested observations in Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of European Jewry* and Lucy Dawidowicz's *The War Against the Jews*. But no systematic study of its workings during the Holocaust years has been published. It is such an elusive subject that one can seriously wonder if it can be examined by modern scholarship. Yet it is precisely in that area that one of the keys to our conundrum regarding the Jewish response may lie.

Underlying the response of Jewish victims and witnesses at the time is an assumption about the world order so pervasive that we tend to forget that it is there at all. Jews believed then that there existed somewhere in the world, whether in the Oval Office or the Vatican or Downing Street, a spirit of civilization whose moral concern could be mobilized to save the Jews. The failure to arouse and mobilize that concern is the cause of the current despair regarding the role of the Jewish witness, and which leads to the search for betrayers. It is an assumption that continues to hold sway in Jewish political culture, despite the fact that there is little in recent Jewish experience that might confirm the existence of such a force in human affairs.

To some extent that despair is present in most literary works dealing with the Holocaust, especially in the speeches and works of one of the leading spokesmen for the victims, Elie Wiesel. It is a contemporary echo of what the Jewish victims felt before they were forced to enter the gas chambers. Emmanuel Ringelblum and others recorded it in their diaries. They wondered why no one came to their rescue and often assumed that the civilized world would not allow such a thing to happen. It can be heard most clearly in the message sent to Smull Zygelbojm which asked Jewish leaders to starve themselves to death if necessary in order to "shake the conscience of the world." The assumption was and continues to be that there is a "conscience of the world."

American Jewry, no less than others, shared that belief. Most of them were convinced that Roosevelt's welfare state, which reflected their own humanitarian proclivities, was a manifestation of that spirit of concern. That is why they loved him so; after 1936, even while other hyphenates began to decline in their political support, American Jewry raised the proportion of its pro-FDR vote to over 90%. Yet if they searched for deeds which actually helped their co-religionists, they would have found only rhetoric. That and their support of FDR's domestic program proved sufficient to hold them even after he had passed from the scene.

It may be that the Jewish voter had not resolved in his own mind the problem of possibilities of rescue or even the need for it. He

assumed in his private way that the "authorities" were doing all that could be done. American Jewish leaders who were aware of the previous dismal record of government intercession in the Jewish interest nevertheless were hard-pressed for an alternative. They might have recalled how hard Jews had fought for an equal rights clause in the Roumanian Constitution at the Congress of Berlin in 1878, only to see it almost immediately thwarted by the Roumanian government. They surely were aware that dozens of diplomatic intercessions on behalf of Russian Jews at the turn of the century had come to nothing. Surely they knew that the most successful single effort to bring better treatment for their coreligionists, the abrogation of the Treaty of 1832 with Czarist Russia in 1911 had come to nothing. They might have recalled that when Louis Marshall turned to the Vatican in 1915 with a request that it use its influence to halt the anti-Jewish depredations in Poland, the response had been indifferent. The League of Nations, which many Jews imagined would house the spirit of humanity and even amplify it, had become a dismal failure by the thirties. They must have noted Roosevelt's niggardly response to the refugee crisis and Britain's reneging on the promise contained in the Balfour Declaration. They must have seen how drastically the situation had deteriorated even since World War I. At that time one could at least hint that Berlin would do for Jews what London would not and gain concessions. In short, they could not have failed to understand that for Jews living in the thirties the world had become less secure and benevolent than ever. But living with the knowledge of total vulnerability in an increasingly atavistic world is a reality almost too painful to face. One had to choose sides, and clearly Roosevelt with all his shortcomings was still better than the alternatives. There were in fact no alternatives, not on the domestic political scene and not in the international arena. The truth was that during the years of the Holocaust Jewish communities were caught in the classic condition of powerlessness which by definition means lack of options. That was true of American Jewry as well.

In that context the central assumption of pre-Holocaust Jewish political culture becomes understandable. It was based as much on powerlessness as on residual messianic fervor, or the universalism of democratic socialism which large numbers in the community adhered to. As a general rule it is precisely the weak and vulnerable who call for justice and righteousness in the world. The powerful are more inclined to speak of order and harmony. It is in the interest of the weak to have a caring spirit of civilization intercede for them. That may explain why Jews especially called on a threatened world to be better than it wanted to be.

For American Jewry the notion of benevolence and concern in the world was not totally out of touch with reality. Bereft of specific power, they did in fact make astounding economic and political advances in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. Despite occasional setbacks, the idea that progress was possible, even inevitable, was deeply ingrained in American Jewry's historical experience. More than other Jewries who lived in the West, they had to some degree been disarmed by their history so that they never fully understood the signs that all was not well in the secular nation-state system. The most important of these signs was the relative ease with which the nations ordered and accepted the incredible carnage of World War I. That experience contained many of the portents of the Holocaust, including the use of gas and the cheapening of human life. The rise of totalitarian systems in the inter-war period which extended further the demeaning of individual human dignity was not part of their experience, so they did not understand what the massive bloodletting in the Soviet Union and the transferring of populations like so many herds of cattle signified. They did not understand that the nation-state was dangerously out of control, that all moral and ethical restraints had vanished and only countervailing power held it in check.

Many Jews still looked to the nations for succor; they sought restraints. "We fell victims to our faith in mankind," writes Alexander Donat, "our belief that humanity had set limits to the degradation and persecution of one's fellow man." The countering facts were of too recent a vintage to seep into their historical consciousness and alter their visions and assumptions about the world in which they lived. Jewish leaders and rank and file blithely disregarded the mounting evidence that states and other forms of human organization, even those like the Holy See which professed to a humanizing mission through Christian love, were less than ever able to fulfill such a role. The behavioral cues of states came from within and were determined by the need of the organization to survive at all costs. With a few notable exceptions the rescue of Jews during the years of the Holocaust did not fit in with such objectives, and they were allowed to perish like so much excess human cargo on a lifeboat.

The indictment of the witnesses is based on the old assumption that there exists such a spirit of civilization, a sense of humanitarian concern in the world, which could have been mobilized to save Jewish lives during the Holocaust. It indicts the Roosevelt administration, the Vatican, the British government and all other witnessing nations and agencies for not acting, for not caring, and it reserves a special indignation for American Jewry's

failure to mobilize a spirit which did not in fact exist. It is an indictment which cannot produce authentic history. Perhaps that cannot really be written until the pain subsides.

Exodus 1933-1939
A Survey of Jewish Emigration from Germany

BY WERNER ROSENSTOCK

Introduction

THE following essay does not claim to be a scientific and statistical analysis of German-Jewish emigration. The accomplishment of such a task, desirable as it would be, is impossible, mainly because there was no German authority or Jewish organization which systematically recorded all cases of emigrating Jews. We must therefore depend on estimates. Yet even these estimates may lead to wrong conclusions if mechanically compared with one another. Some only refer to professing Jews, others to all persons of Jewish origin, while still others also include non-Jewish political victims of Nazi persecution. As far as the meagre statistics of countries of reception are concerned, they only reveal the number of those arrivals who were officially admitted as immigrants or refugees, but not of those who, to save their skins, entered illegally or arrived as 'tourists'. There may also have sometimes been political reasons for the Jewish organizations keeping the estimated number of newcomers to certain countries on the low side, because they feared that higher estimates might lead to immigration restrictions; in other instances the Jewish organizations may have tried to avert increased pressure from the Nazi authorities by laying stress on the speedy and 'satisfactory' progress of emigration. In addition, we may easily get a distorted picture, if we forget that many German Jews re-emigrated from their first country of reception (especially from European and certain South American countries) and that others perished when their country of refuge was overrun by the Nazis. Lastly, estimates were bound to change in the course of time due to the natural increases and decreases by births and deaths.

For all these reasons the object of this essay cannot be but more than a modest attempt at compiling the sparse material as far as it is worth preserving for future historians, and at giving a rough outline of the trends which marked the exodus of German Jewry.

It is estimated that about 250-300,000 Jews left Germany during the National Socialist régime.¹ The process was not evenly spread over the whole of the period between February 1933 and the outbreak of war² and we may discern two distinct

¹In the 'Wannsee Protocol' of 20th January, 1942 (reprinted in Poliakov-Wulf: 'Das Dritte Reich und die Juden', Berlin 1955) which laid down the methods of the extermination policy, the number of Jews who emigrated from Germany up to 31st October, 1941, is estimated at 360,000 (apart from 147,000 from Austria and 30,000 from Czechoslovakia). This figure seems to be very much on the high side. On the other hand, Arthur Ruppin's estimate ('Jewish Fate and Future') of 200,000 (140,000 between 1933 and 1938 and 60,000 between 1st January and 31st August, 1939) is definitely too low. Kurt R. Grossmann (The Wiener Library Bulletin 1952 Nos. 1/2) estimates the number of German Jews who succeeded in emigrating at 285,000, and Bruno Blau (The Wiener Library Bulletin Nos. 3/4) gives 310-315,000, which is slightly above the upper limit of our estimate. Further details will be given in the course of this essay.

²To the surprise of many, emigration did not come to an absolute standstill at the outbreak of war, though, of course, it was then restricted to neutral countries. Before the United States entered the war, they could have saved thousands of affidavit holders had they not rigidly stuck to the quota system.

Werner Rosenstock

phases. About 150,000 left during the first five and a half years, i.e. up to the middle of 1938, and 100–150,000 afterwards, i.e. mainly after the pogroms of November 1938. This shows that many German Jews were reluctant to emigrate so long as they were not exposed to the atrocities of the concentration camps.

If this essay includes more material on the first of the two phases, this is mainly due to the fact that comparatively little reliable information is available about the second phase. There is another, incidental reason. Before the author left Germany, he was able to collect some data about the emigration up to 1st July, 1938 and this material has been preserved.

It is proposed first of all to survey the official sources available and in the subsequent chapters to deal with the subject from three aspects, namely a chronological abstract of the annual emigration; an analysis of the emigration process according to the countries of destination, and, a summary of the geographical distribution of emigrated German Jews both on 1st July, 1938 and after the war, in 1954.

CHAPTER I

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

There are no official and comprehensive statistics of emigration, but some conclusions may be derived from the following three sources:

1. The annual reports of the *Zentralausschuss für Hilfe und Aufbau* (Central Council for Help and Reconstruction) which worked under the auspices of the *Reichsvertretung der deutschen Juden* (Central Board of German Jews).
2. The statistics of certain countries of immigration.
3. The reports of the *Meldestelle für Binnen-und Auswanderung* (Record Office for Migration) under the auspices of the *Preussische Landesverband juedischer Gemeinden* (Federation of Jewish Communities in Prussia).

However, for reasons given below, each of these sources is only of limited value for the purposes of this essay.

1. Reports of *Zentralausschuss*

The annual reports of the *Zentralausschuss* only cover the so-called 'assisted' emigration, i.e. those cases in which the central Jewish migration authorities lent their help (financially or otherwise). Cases of unassisted emigration, which were in the majority, are not included in these reports. Moreover, it is hardly possible to estimate the percentage of assisted cases in the total number of emigrants.

The reports of the *Zentralausschuss* distinguish between four categories of assisted cases according to the destination of the emigrant: emigration to European countries and overseas (both assisted by the *Hilfsverein* of Jews in Germany), emigration to Palestine (assisted by the *Palästina-Amt*), and repatriation of Jews from Eastern Europe to their countries of origin (assisted by the *Hauptstelle für jüdische Wanderfürsorge*, the Main Office for the Care of Eastern Jewish Migrants.)

The figures for the years 1933–1937 read as follows:

Jewish Emigration from Germany

Year	'Palästina-Amt'	'Hilfsverein'		'Hauptstelle f. j. Wanderfürsorge'	Total
		Europe	Overseas		
1933	3,741	6,117	943	18,694	29,495
1934	4,948	1,931	1,297	11,236	19,412
1935	3,982	927	1,617	9,998	16,524
1936	2,908	717	4,738	3,753	12,116
1937	1,551	504	5,258	630	7,943
1933-7	17,130	10,196	13,853	44,311	85,490

Whilst these figures may give some indication of the changing trends of emigration over the course of years, their value is limited mainly for the following two reasons:

(a) The assisted cases of the *Hauptstelle* include not only those Eastern Jews who were repatriated, but also those who were given assistance as transmigrants or as migrants from one place to another inside Germany (*Binnenwanderer*). The actual number of repatriates is therefore considerably less than the figure given in the respective column, as is accordingly the total number of assisted emigrants.

(b) As already stated, the proportion of assisted and unassisted emigrants cannot be reliably assessed. Only in 1937, when detailed statistics were initiated by the *Meldestelle* of the *Landesverband* (cf. Par. 3 of this chapter) can this proportion be assessed with a greater degree of certainty. In that year assisted emigration amounted to about 37 per cent. of the total.¹ Of course, as these statistics for 1937 show, the shares of the countries of destination differed widely. While the comparatively inexpensive emigration to European countries was assisted in only 10 per cent. of the cases, the proportion of assisted emigrants to the Argentine amounted to 59 per cent., and countries like Palestine (35 per cent.) and certain South American States (39 per cent.) approach most closely the average total percentage of 37 per cent.

The statistics of the *Zentralausschuss* refer only to the emigrant's immediate destination. Actually, quite a few emigrants to European countries later on settled in Palestine or overseas.

2. Statistics of Immigration

Among the few countries which reveal the origin of their newcomers in their statistical abstracts are Palestine and the United States, two countries of special importance for the migration of German Jews.

(a) PALESTINE

The following figures appear in a report 'Jewish Immigration into Palestine during January 1933-June 1938' (published by the Jewish Agency, Jerusalem):

¹Cf. *C.V. Zeitung* 1938 Nr. 24.—Mark Wischnitzer (Jewish Emigration from Germany 1933-1938, *Jewish Social Studies*, January 1940) estimates the proportion of assisted cases at 25 per cent. The limited value of the statistics of assisted cases for an assessment of the total emigration may be seen from the following example: Whereas the assisted emigration to Palestine in 1936 was lower than in 1935 (2,908 as against 3,982) the total emigration was higher (7,896 as against 7,447).

Werner Rosenstock

Year	Total Immigration	Of these from Germany	
		Persons	Percentage
1933	27,289	6,803	25
1934	36,619	8,497	23
1935	55,407	7,447	13
1936	26,976	7,896	29
1937	9,441	3,286	35
1938(a)	4,304	1,387	32
Total	160,036	35,316	22
Others(b)	19,583	4,280	22
Total Immigration	179,619	39,596	22

(a) Jan. to June. (b) Especially legalized tourists.

Whilst, according to this table the number of immigrants from Germany to Palestine up to June 1938 amounted to 39,590, it is estimated by experts at 44,000.¹

(b) UNITED STATES

Immigration figures for the years 1933 to June 1935 are given in the Report of the American Labour Department,² according to which 10,059 persons from Germany immigrated to the United States during the period under review, of whom 3,503 were Jews. The annual total German immigration quota³ amounted to 25,957. Of this quota only 4·8 per cent. was used in 1933, 15·6 per cent. in 1934 and 17·9 per cent. in 1935. In the light of later developments this seems hardly credible, but an explanation will be given later. The figures for the period after 30th June, 1935, are taken from a series of articles by Arnold Horwitz: *Die Wanderungslage Ende April 1938*.⁴

January 1933 to December 1933	535
January 1934 to December 1934	2,310
January 1935 to June 1935	658
July 1935 to June 1936(a)	6,750(b)
July 1936 to June 1937	6,750
July 1937 to June 1938	10,000
Total (approx.)	27,000

(a) The quota year runs from July 1st to June 30th. (b) Estimated.

3. Reports of the Meldestelle

Another important source is to be found in the exceptionally interesting and reliable quarterly reports of the *Meldestelle für Binnen- und Auswanderung*, published by its

¹Cf. Albert J. Phiebig: 'Statistische Tabellen' (Schocken-Almanach 5699—1938/9.)
²*Informationsblaetter der Reichsvertretung* (InfBl) 1936 S.63.
³The German quota only covered those persons whose birthplace was situated in the *Reich* according to its frontiers at that time, i.e. not German Jews from territories which became Polish after the first World War. However, the above table of immigration figures for January 1933 to June 1938 also includes German-Jewish immigrants who did not come under the German quota.
⁴Israel. Fam. Bl. (II') 1938 Nr. 17.

Jewish Emigration from Germany

Secretary, Max Birnbaum, in the *Juedische Gemeindeblatt für die Synagogengemeinden in Preussen und Norddeutschland*.¹ In fact, these reports represent the only fairly accurate statistical material in existence. They are based on a semi-official census and include all relevant particulars about the emigrants, such as last place of residence, country of destination, occupation, age, family status, nationality, etc.; and they cover the whole of the 'Reich', not only Prussia. Unfortunately, the *Meldestelle* only started its work as late as 1st January, 1937. Yet some of the conclusions which may be drawn from its reports are also applicable to the preceding period.

CHAPTER II

CHRONOLOGICAL ABSTRACT OF EMIGRATION

According to an estimate made by the author in 1938 and at that time confirmed by the Statistical Department of the *Reichsvertretung* the annual number of emigrants between 1933 and 30th June 1938, was roughly as follows:

Year	Number of Emigrants during the year	Total from 1933 onwards
1933	37,000	37,000
1934	23,000	60,000
1935	21,000	81,000
1936	25,000	106,000
1937	23,000	129,000
1938(a) ..	14,000	143,000

(a) First six months.

These figures are also accepted by Wischnitzer² who relates that, according to the High Commissioner for Refugees, 80,000 Jews had emigrated up till the end of 1935 and that emigration in 1936 and 1937 amounted to 20-25,000 persons per year. The estimate of the total emigration up to the end of 1936 and 1937 as given by Zielenziger³ is only slightly higher (1936: 111,000 as against 106,000 in the above estimate, 1937: 135,000 as against 129,000). This discrepancy does not upset our results and in view of the close approximation it may rather be regarded as a further confirmation of our estimate.⁴

The table shows that emigration was particularly high during the first year of the Nazi régime but remained fairly steady from 1934 up to 1937.⁵ The higher figure for

¹PrG 1937 Nr. 8, 11; 1938 Nr. 1, 4, 7 and 10.

²Loc. cit.

³K. Zielenziger: *Die Auswanderung der deutschen Juden seit 1933* ('Population' Vol. 11 No. 3, London, December 1937).

⁴According to Sir John Hope Simpson: 'Refugees' (Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, July 1938) about 93,000 Jews had emigrated up to 1st April, 1936. This too confirms the approximate correctness of our estimate (81,000 up to the end of 1935 and 106,000 up to the end of 1936).

⁵Wischnitzer (loc. cit.) maintains that the Nuremberg Laws of September 1935 resulted in an increase of emigration. This is, however, not corroborated by the figures given above.

Werner Rosenstock

1933 had various causes. By the laws of April 1933 and the *Gleichschaltung* of Jewish firms, many professional men, civil servants and private employees lost their positions and were forced to build up their lives anew outside Germany. Others left because they were in danger on account of their political activities. Among the early emigrants there were also certain people of wealth who took a pessimistic view of the future and preferred to accept some immediate loss than risk a further deterioration in the years to come.¹ Later developments proved them right. Goebbels' threat that one day the Jews would be glad if they could leave the country with nothing but a rucksack, was to become a cruel reality. Lastly the high emigration figure for 1933 is also due to the fact that, under the impact of events, many Jews left the country without realizing the difficulties in store for them in a strange environment. They were utterly unprepared and more often than not handicapped, especially if their vocation was useless in the country of refuge or their linguistic proficiency insufficient. It was in the light of their disappointments and failures that, in the subsequent years, emigration was planned more thoroughly, taking into account the requirements and opportunities of the countries of reception. Consequently, emigration which had often been panicky in the first year slowed down from 1934 onwards.

Even at an annual emigration rate of 20–25,000 which started in 1934, Germany would have been *judenrein* within a tangible future, all the more so as the predominance of higher age groups would have accelerated the extinction of the community. However, the first five and a half years of 'normal' emigration were followed by mass evacuation during the last remaining pre-war year. In this one year almost as many Jews left Germany as during the preceding 5½ years. The policy of increased pressure which culminated in the pogroms of November 1938 started after the 'Anschluss' of Austria in March 1938. There followed in early summer the wholesale arrest of Jews who, at some time in their lives, had infringed the law, mostly by minor and administrative offences.² Release from concentration camp was only granted on condition of immediate emigration.³ A few months later, Polish Jews

¹In other cases wealth proved an impediment to emigration. People clung to their assets and were afraid of losing even part and of giving up the comfort to which they had been used. Furthermore, during the initial years, Jewish businessmen participated in the upward trend of various trades and industries. Others who had sold their businesses (especially retailers in the provinces) lived on the proceeds of their sales. Advanced age was a further obstacle for embarking on the adventure of emigration. Ultimately, many founders of well-known Jewish enterprises either left too late and had to spend the rest of their lives in poverty or perished in extermination camps. It would be tempting to say that they had fallen victims to their own lack of foresight. However, we now know of many a lost opportunity of overthrowing the Nazi régime, and in 1933 nobody could say whether the optimists or the pessimists would prove right. It is easier to know what is right after the event.

²There were cases of offences against minor licensing regulations, and many offences had been committed as long ago as before the first World War. Other victims of this so-called 'Vorbestrafenaktion' were Jews who, in 1933 or shortly afterwards, had been tried by the Nazis for political reasons and who had already served their sentences. The number of genuine 'criminals' was small. Like all basic principles the age-old rule that nobody should be punished twice for the same offence ('Ne bis in idem') was here ignored as in innumerable other crimes against Human Rights committed by the Nazis.

³This policy faced the Jewish emigration organizations with difficult problems as far as genuine 'criminals' were concerned. Should the limited emigration facilities be used for them at the expense of other Jews? After the November pogrom the same problem arose on an even larger scale. The Gestapo had realized that pressure resulted in emigration. Yet, whenever the Jewish organizations yielded to pressure in one case there was the danger of increased pressure in other cases.

Jewish Emigration from Germany

who technically were still of Polish nationality though they had long since severed their connections with Poland were deported to the Polish frontier. The final turning point was reached with the pogrom on 10th November.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF THE EMIGRATION PROCESS

The proportionate share of the countries of reception in the annual emigration differed widely from year to year. It is the object of this chapter to analyse this aspect of the emigration process and to classify each year's emigration in three categories of destination: Europe, Palestine and countries overseas.

1933: The Rush to Western Europe

During the first year (1933) with its total emigration of 37,000, most emigrants left either for other European countries or for Palestine, whereas only comparatively few went overseas. According to the report of the *Zentralausschuss*, 57 per cent. of the 'assisted' emigrants went to European countries, 34 per cent. to Palestine and only 9 per cent. overseas. To assess the distribution of the total emigration (*i.e.* including the 'unassisted' cases) it is necessary to take into account the fact that the number of unassisted cases was higher among emigrants to neighbouring European countries than among those to Palestine and overseas, where substantial travel expenses were involved. A further reason for assuming a higher percentage of emigrants to European countries results from the fact that the 57 per cent. 'assisted' European emigrants do not include the cases of assisted repatriation. In the light of all these circumstances, the total distribution of emigrants in 1933 can be estimated as follows:

Europe (including repatriates)	..	..	..	72-74 per cent.
Palestine	..	..	..	19 per cent.
Overseas	..	..	..	7-9 per cent.

Whilst admittedly this estimate may be questionable in its details, it shows beyond doubt the predominance of emigration to European countries; Palestine lagged far behind, and the percentage of emigrants overseas was even smaller.

The estimate is confirmed in a survey by Arthur Prinz,¹ then a responsible official of the *Hilfsverein*. He covers the period up to 1st April, 1934 and arrives at the following figures:²

Europe	..	..	..	41,000	77 per cent.
Palestine	..	..	..	10,000	19 per cent.
Overseas	..	..	..	2,900	4 per cent.
				<hr/> 53,900	<hr/> 100 per cent.

Among the European countries to which emigrants turned, France played the

¹Arthur Prinz: *Der Stand der Uebersee-Auswanderungsfrage*.

²As the quotation shows, Prinz estimates the number of emigrants up to 1st April, 1934 at 53,900. This is a higher figure than that in the estimate given in Chapter II (37,000 in 1933 and a quarter of 23,000 in 1934, *i.e.* about 46,000 up to April 1934).

Werner Rosenstock

largest rôle. Prinz¹ assumes that about one-third of European emigrants took refuge there². There follows Poland as a country of repatriation, then Czechoslovakia and the Netherlands and, to a lesser extent, Switzerland, Belgium and Great Britain.³

There were many reasons for most of the emigrating Jews going to other European countries. Many preferred these neighbouring countries because they knew more about them than about distant places abroad. Often they felt too deeply attached to the old Continent of Europe.⁴ Furthermore, they hoped they would thus be able to retain their contacts with relatives and friends left in Germany.⁵ Lastly, admission (though not permission to work) was less difficult and travel expenses were comparatively low.

For many, residence in these countries was to be only temporary. The difficulties both in the administrative sphere (residence and labour permits) and in the economic field often made absorption impossible and resulted in re-emigration.⁶

In retrospect, those 'unfortunate' re-emigrants who could not strike roots in their country of sojourn were more fortunate than their fellow-refugees who stayed behind and fell victims to the invading Nazis during the war.

1934: The Emergence of Palestine

An analysis of the emigration in 1934 presents an entirely different picture. A substantial decrease of the 'spontaneous' emigration to European countries caused a reduction in the total emigration by almost 40 per cent. (from 37,000 in 1933 to 23,000). It also resulted in a proportionate decrease in the European emigration and a proportionate increase in the emigration to Palestine and overseas. In this year, emigration to Palestine reached its peak both in absolute figures (about 8,500) and in respect of its share in the total emigration figures. More than one third (37 per cent.) of the German Jews who emigrated in 1934 went to Palestine. Among the countries overseas, the U.S.A. started to play a larger part; whereas in 1933 they had accepted hardly more than 1 per cent. of that year's emigrants, their share increased to about 10 per cent. (2,300 emigrants) in 1934. Next to the U.S.A., Brazil took the first place among the countries overseas, to be followed by South Africa and Argentina.

Of the 'assisted' emigrants only 23 per cent. (1933: 57 per cent.) went to European countries, whereas 61 per cent. (1933: 34 per cent.) went to Palestine and 16 per cent. (1933: 9 per cent.) overseas. To estimate the total emigration percentages (*i.e.* including the unassisted cases) we must first increase the proportion for European countries to which unassisted emigration was higher than to the more distant countries overseas and Palestine. As to Palestine's share we know that the total percentage amounted to 37 per cent. (see the preceding paragraph and the absolute figures given in Chapter II).

¹Loc. cit.

²Similarly Wischnitzer (*loc. cit.*).

³Prinz assumes that about 2,000 had gone to Great Britain up to April 1934.

⁴Eventually many paid for this with their lives.

⁵In the course of years, visits of emigrants to Germany were made increasingly difficult and eventually forbidden.

⁶Some returned to Germany after their failure. Later on such re-entrants were put into so-called *Schulungslager* (virtually concentration camps) and return became impossible.

Jewish Emigration from Germany

Taking all these facts into account, the estimate for 1934 can be given as follows:

			1934	1933
Europe	..	..	35-40 per cent.	72-74 per cent.
Palestine	..	..	37 per cent.	19 per cent.
Overseas	..	..	23-28 per cent.	7-9 per cent.

1935: The Increase of Emigration Overseas

In 1935 for the first time emigration to countries overseas was higher than to European countries. Among the 'assisted' emigrants only 14 per cent. went to European countries, whereas 27.6 per cent. went overseas¹ and 61.5 per cent. to Palestine. We know that the total percentage (*i.e.* including the unassisted cases) for Palestine amounted to 36 per cent. We also know that the total percentage of emigrants to European countries is always higher than that of the assisted cases. The distribution of emigrants in 1935 can therefore be estimated as follows:

			1935	1934
Europe	..	..	26-31 per cent.	35-40 per cent.
Palestine	..	..	36 per cent.	37 per cent.
Overseas	..	..	33-38 per cent.	23-28 per cent.

1936: The Final Shift to Countries Overseas

While in 1935 emigration overseas had already overtaken emigration to European countries, in 1936 for the first time it also exceeded emigration to Palestine. The 'assisted' emigration in this year is classified as follows: Europe 8.5 per cent., Palestine 34.5 per cent. and overseas 57 per cent.² The total emigration to Palestine in 1936 amounted to 8,180, *i.e.* 34 per cent. The distribution over the three groups of countries of reception may be estimated as follows:

			1936	1935
Europe	..	..	20-25 per cent.	26-31 per cent.
Palestine	..	..	34 per cent.	36 per cent.
Overseas	..	..	41-46 per cent.	33-38 per cent.

1937: The Increased Participation of the U.S.A. and Argentina

Whereas in the preceding years we have had to depend on rough estimates, the year 1937 is the first one for which the exact reports of the *Meldestelle* of the *Landesverband* of the Prussian Communities are available. As already stated, they cover not only Prussia, but the whole of the 'Reich'.

(a) If we first consider the *proportionate share of Europe, Palestine and countries overseas* in the total emigration, we become aware of a decisive change. The share of Palestine has sunk by more than 50 per cent. The summary reads as follows:

¹The absorption by the countries of reception fell into the same order as in the preceding year, *i.e.* U.S.A., Brazil, South Africa and Argentina.

²Among the South American countries of reception, Paraguay and Uruguay began to play their part.

Werner Rosenstock

		1937	1936
Europe	.. ..	25 per cent.	20-25 per cent.
Palestine	.. ..	15 per cent.	34 per cent.
Overseas	.. ..	60 per cent.	41-46 per cent.

(b) The reports of the *Meldestelle* also reveal the number of immigrants to each of the main countries of immigration. As, however, the *Meldestelle* may not have embraced all cases, the actual number of immigrants is assumed to have been higher. The following table contains both the figures of the *Meldestelle* and an estimate published by the *C.V.-Zeitung*.¹

MAIN COUNTRIES OF IMMIGRATION IN 1937

Country of Immigration	<i>Meldestelle</i>	Estimate	
		Number	Percentage
Europe (excl. Repatriates)	4,653	5,000	21
Europe (Repatriates)	653	1,000	4
Europe Total	5,306	6,000	25
Palestine	2,950	3,680	15
U.S.A.	6,665	8,800	38
Argentina	1,357	1,640	7
Brazil	745	850	4
Other South American countries ..	1,247	1,600	7
South America Total	3,349	4,090	18
South Africa	447	500	2.2
Australia	252	300	1.3
British Empire Total	699	800	3.5
Other countries overseas	115	130	0.5
Total	19,084	23,500	100

This table shows that, compared with the preceding years, the destination of emigrants overseas changed substantially. Brazil and South Africa lost their prime importance as countries of reception. On the other hand, emigration to U.S.A. rose to an extent unknown before and was twice as large as that to Palestine. There was also an increase of immigration to Argentina, partly due to the admission to the ICA settlements of that country, and among other South American countries, Columbia came more into the foreground. Finally, there was an increase of immigration to Australia. Thus, the restrictions imposed by some previously important countries of reception were, to some extent, compensated for, and the total emigration in 1937 was only slightly smaller than in the preceding year.

(c) The statistics of the *Meldestelle* also make it possible to classify the emigrants of 1937 according to the *German provinces and towns from which they originated*. This is reflected in the following table:²

¹C.V. 1938 Nr. 24. An estimate published by Simpson (loc. cit.) differs only slightly and seems to be based on the same source.

²Preuss. Gem. Bl (PrG) 1938 Nr. 4.

*Jewish Emigration from Germany*DISTRIBUTION OF EMIGRANTS ACCORDING TO LAST GERMAN
PLACE OF RESIDENCE

Area	Persons	Total Emigration Percentage	Percentage of area in total Jewish population of Germany ¹
Prussian Provinces (excl. large cities):			
East Prussia	339	1.5	1.8
Brandenburg	132	0.6	1.5
Pomerania	208	0.9	1.3
Grenzmark	41	0.2	0.6
Lower Silesia	102	0.4	} 2.8
Upper Silesia	563	2.5	
Prov. Saxony	218	0.9	1.4
Slesvig-Holstein	39	0.2	} 3.1
Hanover	310	1.4	
Westphalia	695	3.1	3.7
Hesse-Nassau	1,177	5.2	4.1
Rhineland	1,220	5.4	5.6
Total Prussian Provinces ..	5,044	22.3	25.9
Large Cities:			
Berlin	5,558	24.5	31.9
Frankfort	2,580	11.4	5.2
Breslau	905	4.0	4.0
Cologne	1,282	5.6	3.0
Dusseldorf	242	1.1	1.0
Essen	266	1.2	0.9
Hanover	150	0.7	
Total Prussian Cities ..	10,983	48.5	46.0
Total Prussia	16,027	70.8	71.9
Other German Provinces:			
Saar	411	1.8	2.6
Hesse	1,279	5.7	3.6
Hamburg	672	3.0	3.4
Saxony (excl. Leipzig) ..	257	1.1	} 4.1
Leipzig	281	1.2	
Baden	1,158	5.1	4.1
Bavaria	1,779	7.9	8.3
Wurttemberg	772	3.4	2.0
Total Germany	22,636	100.0	100.0

This table shows that, in relation to the share in the total Jewish population of Germany, emigration was particularly high from the large communities of Frankfort (11.4 per cent. as against 5.2 per cent. of the total Jewish population), Cologne (5.6 per cent. against 3 per cent.), and in the province of Hesse (5.7 per cent. as against 3.6 per cent.). In all other areas the difference in one direction or the other was negligible and probably fortuitous. To explain the comparatively high figures for Frankfort and Cologne it must be appreciated that they also include emigrants who originated from surrounding towns or villages and who, to escape the brunt of

¹According to the German census of 1933, i.e. not counting the proportional changes by Jewish migration inside Germany, especially from the smaller places to the large cities.

Werner Rosenstock

anti-Semitism at these small places, had taken up temporary residence in the larger cities.

For the same reason Berlin, too, had an influx from the provinces. It is not unlikely (although exact figures are not available) that in 1937 the percentage of German Jews who lived in the capital was higher than in 1933, when it was 31 per cent. In any event, it was hardly lower. Nevertheless, only 24·5 per cent of the emigrants of 1937 had their last place of residence in Berlin. This indicates that pressure there was not quite as strong as in other parts of Germany. The individual Jew was less exposed and lived in comparative anonymity. Although he moved almost exclusively among Jews, the size of the Jewish community and the variety of its educational, cultural and social opportunities made him forget that he lived in a spiritual Ghetto.

(d) The *Meldestelle* has also investigated the inter-relationship between areas of origin and countries of reception.¹ This analysis reveals that the emigrants to the United States² consisted in the first place of Jews from Southern and Western Germany (Westphalia, Hesse-Nassau, Rhineland, Baden, Bavaria, Hesse and Wurttemberg), whereas Berlin, *e.g.* with its share of 24·5 per cent. in the total emigration, participated only to the extent of 10 per cent. in emigration to U.S.A. These figures confirm that emigration to U.S.A., being dependent on sponsorship by American relatives, was particularly high in those areas from which numerous Jews had emigrated in the nineteenth century. The descendants of these early emigrants now came to the rescue of their relatives still domiciled in Germany.

Emigrants to Western European countries were more numerous from Western Germany, whereas—in accordance with the composition of the Jewish population of those areas—the number of repatriates to Eastern Europe was proportionally higher from the territories east of the Elbe (especially Berlin, Breslau and Leipzig). The share of Berliners in emigration to Argentina and—as long as it was still possible—to Brazil, was particularly high.

(e) A further aspect of the statistics of the *Meldestelle* is the *age* of the emigrants.³

AGE GROUPS OF EMIGRANTS IN 1937

Under 20	..	..	4,781	22·1 per cent.
20 to under 40	..	..	9,813	45·6 per cent.
40 to under 50	..	..	3,358	15·6 per cent.
50 and more	..	..	3,609	16·7 per cent.
Total	..	..	<u>21,561</u>	<u>100·0 per cent.</u>

A comparison of the quarterly reports for 1937 reveals that the proportion of the older age groups was steadily increasing. There were more parents who joined their children abroad and the deteriorating conditions in Germany also compelled older people to leave the country.

¹Cf. C.V. Zeitung 1938 Nr. 24, PrG 1938 Nr. 1 and 4, J.G. 1938 Nr. 15.

²They amounted to 38 per cent. of all emigrants in 1937.

³The break-up according to age did not cover all registered emigrants. This explains the smaller total.

Jewish Emigration from Germany

1938: The Growing Importance of U.S.A.

The reports of the *Meldestelle* only cover the first six months of 1938.

(a) The period is marked by a further increase of emigration to countries overseas. The proportionate share of Europe, Palestine and overseas is as follows:

	Jan.-June 1938	1937
Europe	27.2 per cent.	25 per cent.
Palestine	10.8 per cent.	15 per cent.
Overseas	62.0 per cent.	60 per cent.

The total emigration during the first six months of 1938 is estimated by Birnbaum¹ at 14,000. This indicates an increase of emigration and would have corresponded to a total of 28,000 for the whole year as against 23,000 for 1937. In fact, emigration during the second half of the year was even larger because of the increased pressure, culminating in the November pogroms.

(b) According to the reports of the *Meldestelle* which are, however, based on incomplete information, the main countries of immigration were as follows:

MAIN COUNTRIES OF IMMIGRATION JANUARY-JUNE 1938

Country of Immigration	Jan.-June 1938		1937
	Number	Percentage	Percentage
Europe (excl. Repatriates) ..	2,359	21.2	21
Europe (Repatriates)	673	6	4
Europe Total	3,032	27.2	25
Palestine	1,201	10.8	15
U.S.A... .. .	4,348	39.1	38
Argentina	983	8.8	7
Brazil	56	0.5	4
Columbia	630	5.7	
Uruguay	240	2.2	
Other South American countries..	238	2.1	7
South America Total	2,147	19.3	18
South Africa	130	1.2	2.2
Australia/New Zealand	203	1.8	1.3
British Empire Total	333	3	3.5
Other Countries	69	0.6	0.5
Total	11,130	100.0	100.0

A comparison between the figures for 1938 and 1937 reveals, apart from the decrease in emigration to Israel, a further increase in emigration to U.S.A. The United States received far more immigrants than any other single country. There was also an increase of immigration to Argentina, and Columbia's share (in relation to the smallness of that country) was comparatively high. On the other hand, the survey reflects the immigration bars of Brazil and South Africa. The figures for both these countries are negligible.

¹PrG 1938 Nr. 10.

Werner Rosenstock

(c) The distribution of emigrants according to their last places of residence in Germany does not differ substantially from that of 1937. In Hesse the proportionate share in the total emigration was again high (although not quite so high as in the preceding year), and there was an increase in Silesia (probably due, *inter alia*, to the expiration of the German-Polish Convention on Upper Silesia).

(d) The inter-relation between the area of origin and country of reception was also very similar to that in the preceding year. In some districts which already in 1937 had been conspicuous by their large share in the emigration to the U.S.A., the proportion of emigrants to that country grew still further in 1938. Whereas of all Jewish emigrants about 40 per cent. went to the U.S.A., the proportion amounted to as much as 70 per cent. in Baden and Hesse, and 65 per cent. in Bavaria.

(e) The break-down according to *age groups* is as follows:

AGE GROUPS OF EMIGRANTS JAN.-JUNE 1938

	Jan.-June 1938		1937
Under 20	3,250	26.5 per cent.	22.1 per cent.
20 to under 40	5,043	41.2 per cent.	45.6 per cent.
40 to under 50	2,025	16.6 per cent.	15.6 per cent.
50 to under 65	1,527	12.5 per cent.	} 16.7 per cent.
Over 65	386	3.2 per cent.	
Total	12,231	100.0 per cent.	100.0 per cent.

The increase in the youngest age group was probably due to emigration to Palestine under the auspices of the Youth Aliyah and to the admission of young people to U.S.A. and Australia.

1939: Mass Evacuation

As already indicated in Chapter II, the events of the second half of 1938, especially the November pogroms, increased the urgency of emigration. The position was aggravated by the fact that the difficulties in finding refuge abroad had increased considerably. Immigration to Palestine was restricted, and the German immigration quota of the United States was overdrawn. Many other countries to which German Jews had previously emigrated, *e.g.* South Africa, ceased to admit Nazi victims. Some persecutees found temporary asylum in Western European countries, but, in retrospect, we know that this did not save them. Others went to Shanghai, the only place in the world where an immigration visa was not required (although the possibilities were limited by shipping difficulties); they had to suffer great danger during the Japanese occupation and emigrated after the war to other countries. The desperate situation of these times is symbolized by the ill-fated Hapag ship *St. Louis*, which was carrying 900 German Jews to Cuba, who were refused landing permits because their visas were considered invalid. The ship returned to Europe and the passengers, who were afraid of being sent back to Germany, were directed from Antwerp to Belgium, France, the Netherlands and England. Perhaps the greatest share in the rescue work in 1938-39 was taken by Great Britain. Despite economic depression and unemployment, that country

Jewish Emigration from Germany

admitted about 40,000 of the 100–150,000 emigrating German Jews.¹ Most of them entered the country as transmigrants and were expected to re-emigrate when their visas for the U.S.A. or their certificates for Palestine became due.² However, the war intervened and after the war those who wanted to stay permanently were allowed to apply for naturalization.

CHAPTER IV

THE GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF EMIGRATED GERMAN JEWS

A. DISTRIBUTION IN 1938

It is assumed that, as at 1st July, 1938, between 140–150,000 Jews had left Germany³ of whom about 107,000 had taken up residence overseas (including Palestine) and about 35–43,000 in other European countries.

I. RESETTLEMENT OVERSEAS

The regional distribution in countries overseas⁴ was according to Phiebig as follows:

Palestine	44,000
U.S.A.	27,000
South America	26,150
Argentina	13,000
Brazil	7,500
Uruguay	1,500
Columbia	1,400
Peru	250
Chile	1,000
Other countries	1,500
British Empire	9,400
South Africa	7,600
Australia	1,000
Other Commonwealth Countries	800
Other Countries Overseas	800
Total	<u>107,350</u>

Although these figures are only estimates, they may be accepted as semi-official because they have been compiled by the Statistical Department of the *Reichsvertre-*

¹To these must be added about 20,000 refugees from Austria and about 10,000 from Czechoslovakia. The rescue work of those days included *inter alia* the admission of 10,000 children and the establishment of the Kitchener Camp (Richborough) for male transmigrants. Further details are given in the author's article 'The Jewish Refugees' in *Britain's New Citizens* (published by the Association of Jewish Refugees, London, 1952).

²Children and old people were usually given permanent residence.

³See also Sir John Hope Simpson: *Refugees* (Royal Institute of International Affairs, July 1938). He estimates the number up to 1st April, 1938 at 137,000. To these must be added about 7,000 for the three months up to 1st July, 1938. Wischnitzer (loc. cit.) estimates the figure up to 1st July, 1938, at 150,000.

⁴Including those who first took refuge in other European countries.

Werner Rosenstock

tung. They are also re-affirmed by Wischnitzer¹ as far as the proportion between the countries in question is concerned. The absolute figures are bound to differ because Wischnitzer also includes emigrants from Austria.

The figure for the U.S.A. is borne out by the immigration statistics quoted in Chapter I. The corresponding figures for Palestine differ slightly (44,000 in this table as against 39,590 in the report of the Jewish Agency quoted in Chapter I). However, this discrepancy of 10 per cent. is not substantial. The figures for other countries are in accordance with the estimates by Arnold Horwitz.²

Two facts stand out particularly in this table of the regional distribution of emigrants: the comparatively small share of a country as vast as the United States, and the great number of those who found a new homeland in Palestine. The total number of immigrants into the U.S.A. during the five and a half years up to 1st July, 1938 (27,000) was hardly greater than the German immigration quota for one year (about 26,000). There is no single factor which would explain this phenomenon. Perhaps Palestine had a stronger appeal for those who had decided to leave the old Continent, although in those days many still preferred to move to one of the neighbouring European countries. Others may have seen better economic prospects in the young South American states. One reason was the reluctance to ask more or less distant relatives in the U.S.A. for affidavits. This reluctance was only gradually overcome. The figures for the post-war distribution of the former German Jews, given below, reveal that ultimately the share of the U.S.A. in the absorption of emigrants was to become very substantial.

As to the outstanding part played by Palestine—almost the smallest of all territories into which German Jews immigrated—the reasons are both emotional and practical. After having experienced the shock of being cast out from a country which German Jews, irrespective of their Jewish outlook, had considered their homeland, many of them recovered their self-respect by associating themselves with the cause of Zionism. The younger generation was especially attracted by this ideal. The importance of these motives is not to be minimized even if we recall the special facilities and advantages (transfer of capital, etc.) offered to emigrants to Palestine. When the total Jewish immigration to Palestine dropped from 55,000 in 1935 to 27,000 in 1936, the number of immigrating Jews from Germany did not decrease. The decline in German Jewish immigration started only one year later (see the immigration statistics in Chapter I).

2. EMIGRATION TO EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

The number of German Jews who went to other European countries is estimated at about 33–43,000. This estimate leaves a comparatively wide margin of uncertainty. The figures given by Phiebig,³ which, being based on the material of the *Reichsvertretung*, could have been reliable, are restricted to emigration overseas and do not include the figures for Europe. In an estimate published by the *Reichsvertretung* in their *Informationsblaetter*, July–September 1936,⁴ it is claimed that up to

¹Loc. cit.

²IF 1938 Nr. 17, 19, 25, 26, 27, 29.

³Loc. cit., Chapter IV 1.

⁴Quoted by K. Zielenziger, loc. cit.

Jewish Emigration from Germany

1st April, 1936, 40,000 Jews had left for other European countries, viz. 22,000 as emigrants to Western and Central European countries and 18,000 as repatriates to their Eastern European countries of origin. Even if we allow for the fact that after April 1936, the number of migrants (emigrants and repatriates) to European countries was not as high as it had been immediately after 1933, and that some of the original emigrants had meanwhile re-emigrated from Europe, the corresponding figure for 1st July, 1938, would be at least 50,000. This exceeds any of the other estimates. The high estimate seems to be mainly due to an exaggerated assessment of the number of repatriates.¹

According to Wischnitzer, a Memorandum submitted by the *Reichsvertretung* to the Intergovernmental Conference on Refugees in Evian (July 1938) assessed the number of German Jews who had emigrated up to 1st July, 1938, at 150,000, of whom 33 per cent. had gone to Palestine, 42 per cent. overseas and 25 per cent. to Europe.² This would mean that the number of emigrants to European countries (including repatriates) amounted to about 37,000, a figure which may come nearer to reality.

3. SUMMARY

If we classify the main countries of reception according to the number of German Jews who had settled there by 1st July, 1938, we obtain the following table:

CLASSIFICATION ACCORDING TO NUMBER OF IMMIGRANTS IN JULY 1938

1. Palestine	..	..	..	..	..	..	44,000
2. European countries (including repatriates)	..	..	..	..	..	..	37,000
3. U.S.A.	..	..	..	..	..	..	27,000
4. Argentina	..	..	..	..	..	..	13,000
5. South Africa	..	..	..	..	..	..	7,600
6. Brazil	..	..	..	..	..	..	7,500

Of the other countries, none had accepted more than 1,500 each, *e.g.* Uruguay 1,500, Columbia 1,400, Chile 1,000, Australia 1,000.

B. SUBSEQUENT CHANGES

By the end of 1938, this balance had already changed in so far as the number of immigrants to the U.S.A. had become almost equal to that of immigrants to Palestine³; furthermore, the proportion of immigrants to Columbia and Australia⁴ had risen. During the first nine months of 1939, *i.e.* up to the outbreak of war, these

¹In 1937, the repatriates were about 15 per cent. of the emigrants to European countries (*Meldestelle* Report quoted in C.V. Zeitung 1938 Nr. 24). However, for the total period under review the percentage was higher, because many Eastern European Jews returned to their countries of origin during the first years of the Nazi régime.

²This means in absolute figures: 50,000 to Palestine, 62,500 overseas and 37,500 to Europe. Phiebig gives a lower figure for Palestine (44,000), but the same estimate for emigrants overseas.

³Wischnitzer (*loc. cit.*) estimates the number of Jewish immigrants from Germany and Austria to the U.S. by the end of 1938 at 52,000, and it must be assumed that this includes a high proportion from Germany.

⁴'Prior to the annexation of Austria by the Nazis in March 1938, Jewish refugee immigration to Australia was negligible'. (S. W. Krieger, Sydney, in *Dispersion and Resettlement*, published by the Association of Jewish Refugees in Great Britain, 1955). According to him their number amounted to about 7,100 in September 1939 and to 12,000 in 1953.

Werner Rosenstock

trends continued. This period is also marked by large-scale immigration to Great Britain, Chile¹ and, to a smaller extent, to Shanghai.

The position was entirely different after the war. The Jewish communities of all belligerent European countries with the exception of Great Britain had been destroyed. The number of survivors, especially among the refugees, was lamentably small. On the other hand, the number of German-Jewish immigrants outside Europe rose by the influx of re-emigrants especially from Great Britain, the European Continent and Shanghai. The main countries affected by this post-war immigration were Palestine, Israel, U.S.A. and several South American states.

The table of the geographical distribution in 1954 with which this essay concludes is, with slight amendments, quoted from the brochure *Dispersion and Resettlement* and based on information from German-Jewish residents in the countries of resettlement.

Most of these figures include immigrants from Austria and Czechoslovakia; they cannot therefore be compared with the figures previously quoted in this essay which referred only to immigrants from Germany. Furthermore, the margin of error is high in countries with a comparatively large population of former Central European Jews. This applies in the first place to the United States.

In the case of some countries the assessment was difficult because Central European immigrants had ceased to be a distinct group.

Finally, the methods by which contributors of material for this table arrived at their estimates also differed. In the case of some countries but not all, the estimates include children born in the country of resettlement.

For all these reasons the value of the table does not lie in its absolute figures, but in the indication which it gives of the approximate proportionate share of each country of reception.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF IMMIGRANTS FROM CENTRAL EUROPE IN 1954

1. U.S.A. ..	160-190,000	9. France ..	7- 8,000(a)
2. Israel ..	90-115,000	10. Uruguay ..	6,000
3. Great Britain	50- 55,000	11. Belgium ..	4,000(a)
4. Argentina ..	40,000	12. Sweden ..	3,000
5. Brazil ..	17,000	13. Columbia ..	2,200(a) (b)
6. Chile ..	15,000	14. Switzerland ..	1,700
7. Australia ..	12,000	15. Bolivia ..	1,500(b)
8. South Africa ..	7-11,000		

(a) From Germany only.

(b) Due to re-emigration the figure is considerably below that of original immigrants.

Whilst, as already pointed out, the absolute figures are bound to leave a wide margin of uncertainty, the table establishes beyond doubt that the list of countries which absorbed Nazi victims from Central Europe is headed by the United States, followed by Israel and, at some distance, by Great Britain and Argentina. All other countries accepted considerably less Jews from Central Europe.

¹'Almost 90 per cent. of the Jewish Immigrants from Germany and Austria arrived in Chile between the months of May and August, 1939.' (Julius Lomnitz, Buenos Aires, in *Dispersion and Resettlement*).

Jewish Emigration from Germany

Nazi Policies and Jewish Responses (I)

BY HERBERT A. STRAUSS

I. MIGRATION AND THE ANTISEMITIC TRADITION

The archetype at the core of Jew-hatred is controlled by the dialectics of ethnological fantasies. Stereotyped hatred thrives on distance from its object.* Greater closeness creates invidious fear, competition, spatial constriction. The "solution" to emotional tension lies in increasing the distance to the reputed source of the discomfort. Greater distance, in the vague miasma of hate fantasies, takes all forms known to xenophobia. The "final solution" represents the ultimate distancing – death.¹

Migration, movement by the minority towards and away from the majority, has historically embodied the dynamics in this dialectics of space. Like acculturation, migration has been generally characteristic of populations in modern industrialising societies. There has been a momentous *Binnenwanderung* from countryside to city over the past two hundred years. National unifications have uprooted previously isolated and regional cultures and created new syntheses through acculturation. The great East-West trek of labour and impoverished

*The author acknowledges gratefully the assistance of Dr. Daniel Schwartz, Hebrew University and University of the Negev, Beersheva, in researching parts of this essay, and the unflagging encouragement received from Dr. Curt C. Silberman and the Board of the Research Foundation for Jewish Immigration, New York. It grew out of a contribution he is preparing for the forthcoming M. Dobkowski and H. A. Strauss, *A Social and Intellectual History of the Jewish Immigrant from Nazi Germany in the U.S.A.* (*The Jewish Immigrant of the Nazi Period in the U.S.A.*, H. A. Strauss (ed.), sponsored by the Research Foundation for Jewish Immigration, New York, vol. VI). Research and writing was supported by a grant of the National Endowment for the Humanities, Washington, D.C. in the summer of 1977. Lack of time dictated the limitations and omissions of subject matter areas such as the international Jewish communal effort to aid Jewish émigrés from Germany. The author thanks the American Federation of Jews from Central Europe, New York, for granting him a two months' leave of absence to work on this essay in the summer of 1977.

¹The *völkisch* tradition on which Nazi antisemitism was based appeared, quite properly to observers, as no more than a fantastic and vaporous miasma as long as its protagonists retained their marginal or crackpot positions in German society and culture. The idea of extermination was blended with eugenics, justifications for war or racial imperialism. It was summarised following the First World War in a Bavarian infantryman's letter to Bavarian Ministerpräsident von Kahr in which the internment of Jews in concentration camps, their murder in reprisal for allied advances into Germany and their complete despoliation are proposed as serious possibilities. Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Allgem. StA, M Inn 66 138: cf. Werner Jochmann, 'Die Ausbreitung des Antisemitismus', in *Deutsches Judentum in Krieg und Revolution 1916–1923*. Ein Sammelband herausgegeben von Werner E. Mosse unter Mitwirkung von Arnold Paucker, Tübingen 1971 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 25), p. 450, n. 144. For a recent review of the same see E. Goldhagen, 'Weltanschauung und Endlösung', in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte (VfZ)*, 24 (October 1976), No. 4, pp. 379–405. Both extermination and emigration were present simultaneously in some minds at some time in this tradition.

rural migrants from Europe across the seas led forty to sixty million emigrants from Europe to America alone between 1830 and 1939. The Second World War has uprooted about sixty million people. The ebb and flow of migrant labour in post-war Europe, legal and illegal immigration to America, the arrival of ethnically different migrants in Great Britain, the peopling of Palestine/Israel, to quote a few examples culturally close to Western readers, have continued the migratory trend. Movement has surpassed rootedness in the experience of industrial man.²

Jewish migration has partaken in both of these worlds, the archetypical tension and the structured rationality. German Jews have been part of the East-West trek and the urbanisation movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Their acculturation in Germany, the moving closer of two cultural traditions, has been accompanied by movement in physical space. Roots the young believed to be centuries deep had extended to no more than the usual two urban generations in one locality. Jewish urban concentration had been recent, like that of the German environment. The Jewish population reservoirs of Germany's Eastern region (Posen-Poznań, Silesia) and of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires (Poland, Galicia) have kept Germany's Southern and Western Jewish populations from the steep decline demographic developments had in store for them.³

Structural, i.e., economically motivated, migration, had aroused the concern of governments from early on. Prussian governments of the *Vormärz* period instituted elaborate enquiries to search for immigrants, e.g. from Hesse, Holland or Bavaria, that might have caused a disproportionate growth in the Jewish population. Jewish cultural movements into the coveted preserves of government, university or professional services and occupations were fended off as trespasses on inner space. Throughout modern Jewish history in Germany, the immigrant *Ostjude* cast his shadow over the state governments' migration policies.⁴

In the anti-Jewish movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, pre-occupations such as these fixated the spatial theme in minds and literature. The *Ostjude* was to be barred from "moving into" economy and society. Immigration was to be prohibited. He was to be placed under *Fremdenrecht*. Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe were expelled at regular intervals in spite of German-Jewish resistance to such government action. Police raids (*Razzias*), internment

²For a review of the literature concerning migration and acculturation see H. A. Strauss, 'Changing Images of the Immigrant in the U.S.A.', in *Amerikastudien/American Studies*, 21, No. 1 (1976), pp. 119-137.

³For an excellent review of demographic trends immediately prior to the Nazi period see E. Ben-nathan, 'Die demographische und wirtschaftliche Struktur der Juden', in *Entscheidungsjahr 1932. Zur Judenfrage in der Endphase der Weimarer Republik*. Ein Sammelband herausgegeben von Werner E. Mosse unter Mitwirkung von Arnold Paucker, Tübingen 1965 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 13), pp. 87-134.

⁴Prussian government enquiry, 1840: cf. H. A. Strauss, 'Prussian Policies towards the Jews 1815-1847', in *LBI Year Book XI* (1966), pp. 112-116; *Ostjuden*: S. Adler-Rudel, *Ostjuden in Deutschland 1880-1940. Zugleich eine Geschichte der Organisationen, die sie betreuten*, Tübingen 1959 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 1). Other information, *Ostjuden*; courtesy Dr. Jack Wertheimer, New York, N.Y.

at concentration points, threatened expulsions punctuated the disturbed domestic peace after the First World War.⁵

The *Ostjude* turned into the paradigm for his Western brother. The *völkisch* hate literature sprouting after the depression of 1873 called for the placing of Jews in Germany under *Fremdenrecht*. Some writers demanded that all Jews be forced to leave and resettle abroad. By 1912, placing German Jews under *Fremdenrecht* and restricting Jewish cultural and economic freedom became the *all-deutsche* means to force Jews to leave Germany: "Glaubst du," said Heinrich Class, "daß ein ehrenhafter Jude sich solchen Gesetzen unterwirft? Er wird den Staub des unwirtlichen deutschen Bodens von den Füßen schütteln und sich anderwärts eine Heimat suchen. Hart, aber unvermeidlich."⁶

The rise of Social Darwinism, eugenicism and racism created the "racial Jew". Antisemitism was rationalised into race science. Spatial fantasies of removing the Jew covered a wide variety of means to this end. *Fremdenrecht*, the destruction of Jewish participation in public life, the curtailing of Jewish economic activities, were incorporated into the Nazi anti-Jewish programme. Their esoteric intent – the removal of Jews, expulsion, emigration. The killing of the Jew as a hostage for German collective misfortunes or in revenge for alleged misdeeds of "World Jewry" was only marginally present as yet in the miasma of these fantasies. Emigration and extermination were points in the esoteric continuum, means to the spatial ends. Extermination as goal remained unstated in Nazi propaganda until years of persecution had passed, but was present as an insane *ultima ratio* in radical thought, subdued by the *reality* principle of economics and politics. The practical programmes elaborated by Nazi party and (in part former) government officials between 1930 and 1933 reflect the structure of anti-semitic programming. They aimed at discriminatory and exclusionary *Fremdenrecht* legislation and at creating a situation that would force Jews out of Germany. Emigration as the immediate goal remained unstated in the unfolding anti-Jewish legislation.⁷

⁵The "Ostjuden" theme recurs in pre-1914 German *völkisch* antisemitism, e.g., in Ahlwardt (1895); Debates in the Prussian Abgeordnetenhaus 20th November and 21st November 1880; Böckel (1887); Dühring (1881); the *Antisemiten-Petition* to Bismarck (1881); *Bund der Landwirte* (1893); Sigl (1896); Schneider (1890); Paasch (1892); the programme of the *Soziale Reichspartei* and other publicists or writers; Treitschke attacks Eastern Jews as well as the urbanisation-migration of German Jews, but considers restrictions on immigration as ineffective for the desired full national and social integration of Jews in Germany, i.e., Jewish self-destruction. (*Preussische Jahrbücher*, 1879–1880). Cf. G. L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology. Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*, New York 1964 (pb. edn.), pp. 126–145; L. S. Dawidowicz, *The War against the Jews 1933–1945*, New York 1975 (pb. edn.), pp. 42–62, and printed materials, *sub voce* authors mentioned above.

⁶The emigration-expulsion theme in German antisemitism as linked with demands for placing Jews in Germany under *Fremdenrecht* recurs frequently in conjunction with the theme of removing or barring Jews from participation in German life. A typical example is offered by Konstantin Freiherr von Gebtsattel (1913): cf. Jochmann, *loc. cit.*, p. 466. The above quotation is trans. from D. Frymann (pseud. for H. Class), *Wenn ich der Kaiser wär – Politische Wahrheiten und Notwendigkeiten*, 3rd edn., Leipzig 1912, p. 77. Class summarises pre-war *völkisch* thought on *Fremdenrecht* propagandised after 1918 by the *Völkische Schutz- und Trutzbund*, Count Reventlow and other political figures on the nationalist Right and feeding into the twenty-five-point programme of the Nazi party of 1920. For a (critical) appraisal of the use of police and administrative justice in dealing with aliens in Germany see Ernst Isay, *Das Deutsche Fremdenrecht. Ausländer und Polizei*, Berlin 1923.

⁷Hitler's first recorded antisemitic utterance speaks of "planmässige gesetzliche Bekämpfung und

II. MIGRATION AND RESISTANCE

In response, emigration became the only effective means available to German Jewry in opposing Nazi persecution.⁸ It was caused by this persecution, and must be interpreted, in its ebb and flow, as closely related to the ebb and flow of this persecution. It was not planned by the Jewish community, only one of whose segments, the minority Zionist group, had demanded of Jews in Germany that they emigrate to Palestine in existential commitment to the Jewish nation and people. The emigration of Jews from Germany began as a spontaneous movement in 1933, and, as will be argued below, remained largely unaffected by the social planning or policies of Jewish representatives in Germany or abroad. It was the only available means, as it turned out, to save the lives of a considerable part of the Jewish minority in Germany, and to transfer its cultural substance abroad, there to enter into new links with the cultures and societies that had the foresight to receive them.

In spite of its crucial role for the history of German Jewry, the scholarly study of this migration movement, as emigration as well as immigration, has taken a back seat in institutionally sponsored research compared to the pre-1933 period of German-Jewish history, and to the Holocaust period, primarily for Eastern Europe. As a result, many questions remain unanswered. The observations presented in this essay were limited by the lack of *Vorarbeiten*. They should be read with these limitations in mind.

III. DEMOGRAPHIC ASPECTS OF GERMAN JEWRY 1933–1945

Between 1933 and 1945 German Jewry declined from an estimated 525,000 Jews (by religion) to an estimated 25,000 (by “race”). This decline is documented in Table I.

The actual number of persons threatened by the “racial laws” of the Nazi régime exceeded these figures. This group was made up of persons married to a Christian spouse and not of the Jewish religion, and persons of varying degrees of Jewish ancestry, so-called *Mischlinge* not of the Jewish religion. *Mischlinge* of the Jewish religion were considered Jews (*Geltungsjuden*) and exposed to precisely the same measures as Jews. The number of *Mischlinge* remains subject to considerable insecurity. Tables IIa and IIb present some of the estimates and data available.

Beseitigung der Vorrechte des Juden ... (Fremdengesetzgebung). Sein [des Antisemitismus der Vernunft] letztes Ziel muss unverrückbar die Entfernung aller Juden überhaupt sein.” (Hitler to Adolf Gemlich, 16 September 1919, in E. Deuerlein, ‘Hitlers Eintritt in die Politik und die Reichswehr’, *VfZ*, 7 (April 1959), No. 2, p. 204). For the programmes elaborated by Nazi officials 1930–1932 see U. D. Adam, *Judenpolitik im Dritten Reich*, Düsseldorf 1972, pp. 28–46, esp. the programme first published by the late Shaul Esh in *Ha’aretz* (1st April 1963) which aims at the expulsion of the Jews from German life with the hoped-for effect of Jewish emigration “if the laws would be harsh enough”. (Adam, *op. cit.*, p. 33).

⁸On this see Konrad Kwiet, ‘Problems of Jewish Resistance Historiography’, in *LBI Year Book XXIV* (1979), esp. pp. 55–56.

TABLE I
Decline of German Jewry

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of Jews</i>
1925	564,379
January 1933	525,000 (estimated)
June 1933	499,682
May 1939	213,390
September 1939	185,000
October 1941	164,000
1942	139,000
1st January 1943	51,257
April 1943	31,910
1st September 1944	14,574
mid-1945	25,000 (estimated)

Sources: German census data (1925, June 1933, May 1939); data published by *Reichsvertretung (Reichsvereinigung) der Juden in Deutschland* (October 1939 to September 1944); estimates (1945).⁹ NB: Data for 1939–1944 include “full Jews by race” since they were placed under the jurisdiction of the Jewish *Reichsvereinigung* by decree of 14th July 1939, i.e., including Jewish spouses of “mixed marriages” whose children were Christians.

TABLE II a
Jews living in mixed marriages

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of Jewish-Gentile marriages</i>
1933	35,000 (estimate)
May 1939	20,000
1st December 1942	16,760
1st April 1943	16,658
1st September 1944	12,487

TABLE II b
Persons of Jewish descent (Mischlinge)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Estimated number</i>
1933	292,000
1935	200,000
17th May 1939	84,674 (German census based on self-declarations and probably understated)

Sources: Y. Bauer, p. 114 (1933); Lösener (1935).¹⁰

⁹*Statistik des Deutschen Reiches*, vol. 451, No. 5; vol. 453, Nos. 2 and 4; 451, No. 5; *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich*, 59 (1941/1942); K. Drobisch, *et al.*, *Juden unterm Hakenkreuz. Verfolgung und Ausrottung der deutschen Juden 1933–1945*, Berlin (East) 1973; H. Genschel, *Die Verdrängung der Juden aus der Wirtschaft im Dritten Reich*, Göttingen 1966 (for other sources see tables, *ibid.*, pp. 274–291).

¹⁰Y. Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper. A History of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee 1929–1939*, Philadelphia 1974, p. 114; B. Lösener, ‘Als Rassereferent im Reichsministerium des Innern’, *VfZ* 9 (July 1961), No. 3, pp. 277–282; Adam, *op. cit.*, p. 136 (quoting Lösener Memorandum, 10th

If the (estimated) number of Jews not affiliated with the Jewish religion (15,000) is added to the total number of Jews by religion, in mixed marriages and by descent, Nazi "racial measures" affected a total of about 867,000 persons living in Germany in 1933 to a greater or lesser degree.

The Jewish population in Germany, long before the rise of Nazism, had "been abnormal in its age structure – compared to the German age structure – in a way bordering on the grotesque". Tables III a, III b and III c indicate the steep acceleration of this "abnormality".

TABLE III a

Changes in the age structure of Jews in Germany, 1933 and 1939

<i>Age</i>	<i>June 1933</i>	<i>September 1939</i>	<i>% Decrease</i>
60 and over	81,400	59,700	27
40–59	157,400	76,600	51
25–39	119,700	24,100	80
16–24	58,600	9,700	83
0–15	82,700	15,000	82
Total	499,800	185,100	

Sources: Genschel, based on *Jüdisches Nachrichtenblatt* (interview with Hirsch); census data 1933; Reichsvereinigung statistics 1939.¹¹

TABLE III b

Persons 60 years and over

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
1933	81,444	16.30
1938 (beginning)	96,200	27.49
1938 (end)	90,500	30.17
September 1939	59,700	32.25
31st July 1941	60,941	36.44

Source: Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe*, pp. 216 f.

November 1935). The figure for 17th May 1939 was obtained by German census takers: "Mischlinge" were to report the Jewish descent of grandparents in closed envelopes to be added to the census form, i.e., incriminate themselves in Nazi eyes, hardly a reliable census situation. The figure is thus probably far below the actual number of such persons.

¹¹Genschel, *op. cit.*, p. 263 (the figures in Table III a for 1939 from *Jüdisches Nachrichtenblatt* (Berlin), (30th November 1939), interview with Dr. Otto Hirsch; S. Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe unter dem Naziregime 1933–1939 im Spiegel der Berichte der Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland*, Tübingen 1974 (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 29), pp. 216f. At the Wannsee Conference 15th–17th January 1942, Heydrich estimated that 30 per cent of Jews in Germany were sixty-five years or older; cf. Drobisch, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

TABLE IIIc
Jews age 0-18, 1933-1941

<i>Age</i>	<i>1933</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>1938a</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>1938b</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>9/1939</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>7/1941</i>	<i>%</i>
0-6	24,318	4.87	7,200	2.06	6,000	2				
0-16	86,219	17.26	35,700	10.20						
0-17					36,600	12.20				
0-15							15,000	8.1		
0-18									20,669*	12.36

*About 15,400 Jews by religion. *Source*: Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe*, pp. 218 f.

TABLE IVa
Children born to Jews, 1933-1939

<i>Year</i>	<i>Jews by race</i>	<i>Jews by religion</i>
1933	1,246	1,146
1934	1,001	903
1935	1,139	1,046
1936	1,109	992
1937	1,174	1,076
1938	1,230	1,117
1939*	325	284
Total	7,218	6,564

*January to 31st May 1939.

TABLE IVb
Children born to Mischlinge (with two Jewish grandparents), 1933-1939

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number born</i>	<i>Jews by religion</i>
1933	1,095	180
1934	1,052	147
1935	992	157
1936	715	108
1937	647	102
1938	614	69
1939*	174	16
Total	5,289	779

*January to 31st May 1939.

An additional illustration of the steep demographic decline of German Jews is provided by the number of births and the (partly estimated) excess of deaths over births for the period. This is outlined in Tables IV a-d.

TABLE IV c

Children born to Mischlinge (with one Jewish grand-parent), 1933-1939

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number born</i>	<i>Jews by religion</i>
1933	920	4
1934	979	6
1935	1,044	3
1936	998	4
1937	936	5
1938	973	4
1939*	388	3
Total	6,238	29

*January to 31st May 1939.

Source for Tables IV a-c: German census, 1939.¹⁸

TABLE IV d

Excess of births over deaths among Jews in Germany, 1933-1935

<i>Years</i>	<i>Number</i>
1933-1938	29,500
1938-1939	18,000
1940-1941	12,000
1942-1945	13,500
Total	72,000

Sources: Genschel; R. Korherr, 'Der Inspekteur für Statistik' of the RSHA reported a total of 61,693 for 1933-1942. See S. Klarsfeld (ed.), *The Holocaust and the Neo-Nazi Mythomania*, New York 1978, App. (The first Korherr Report), p. 169. The figures for Jewish births quoted by Korherr, *op.cit.*, p. 181 combine Tables IV a to d, and use slightly different base figures. His total for Jewish births, 1933-1942 is 15,221.¹⁹

¹⁸Statistik des Deutschen Reiches, vol. 552, No. 4 (1944), pp. 40-41.

¹⁹Genschel, *op. cit.*, p. 291. The late Hanns Reissner, in personal communication with the author, argued that the figures compiled in Table IVb exaggerated the excess of deaths over births by a factor of 2 (72,000 as compared to 35,000) and estimated both emigration and extermination figures correspondingly higher. (285,000 émigrés over against 270,000.) In view of the age structure of Jews in Germany, and the excessive suicide rate prior to the assembly of Jews for deportation in Berlin (10 per cent according to my information, obtained at the time from the Jüdische Gemeinde

TABLE V a

Jews of German and foreign nationality in Germany, 1925, 1933 and 1939

	1925			1933			1939		
	<i>Tot. Jews</i>	<i>For. nat.</i>	%	<i>Tot. Jews</i>	<i>For. nat.</i>	%	<i>Tot. Jews</i>	<i>For. nat.</i>	%
Total	564,000	107,747	19.1	499,682	98,747	19.8	221,763	25,783	11.6
Prussia	403,969	76,387	18.9	361,826	84,801	23.4	165,897	17,000*	10.2*
Berlin	172,672	43,838	25.4	160,564	48,075	29.9	78,713	15,000*	19.0*
Saxony	23,000*	15,000*	65.2*	20,584	13,716	66.6	7,017	4,000*	57.0*
Leipzig	12,700*	10,250*	80.7*	11,564	8,547	73.9	5,000*	2,500*	50.0*
Munich	10,000*	2,700*	27.0*	9,005	2,408	26.7	5,000*	1,000*	20.0*
Dresden	5,000*	3,000*	60.0*	4,397	2,671	60.7	2,000*	1,000*	50.0*

* Estimated. Source: Adler-Rudel.¹⁴

TABLE Vb

Nationalities of foreign Jews in Germany, 1925, 1933 and 1939

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Total foreign Jews</i>		<i>Total foreign Jews</i>		<i>Total foreign Jews</i>	
	<i>1925</i>		<i>1933</i>		<i>1939</i>	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
Poland	50,993	47.3	56,480	37.2	10,000	38.8
Austria	13,509	12.5	4,647	4.7		
Czechoslovakia	5,620	5.2	4,275	4.3	500	1.9
Hungary	3,179	3.0	2,280	2.3	800	3.1
Romania	3,240	3.0	2,210	2.2	500	1.9
USSR (Russia)	9,505	8.8	1,650	1.7	100	0.4
Latvia/Lithuania	3,063	2.9	1,730	1.8	100	0.4
Other	7,776	7.2	5,515	5.6	600	2.3
Stateless	9,908	9.2	19,746	20.0	13,000	50.4
No information	954	0.9	214	0.2	200	0.8
Total	107,747	100.0	98,747	100.0	25,800	100.0

Source: see Table Va.

German Jews, the introduction makes clear, had been kept from steeper demographic decline by the immigration of foreign Jews which had set in in larger numbers with 1880. The process of their naturalisation as German citizens had been much impeded since the state governments, to whose jurisdiction naturalisation proceedings in part belonged, had been slow in granting naturalisation to foreign Jews. As a result, significant numbers of German-born and acculturated children of foreign Jewish immigrants continued to bear foreign passports. Nationality and acculturation did not coincide.

Tables Va and Vb indicate the decline in the number of foreign Jews in Germany, and their national origin.

Foreign Jews in Germany thus did not completely compensate for the decline in fertility among German Jews by number of immigrants. Fertility among foreign Jews has been presumed as being higher than among German Jews whose number would have diminished further without immigrants. Their decline 1933–1939 was steeper than that of German Jews (from 19.1 per cent of all Jews in 1933 to 11.6 per cent in 1939).

Berlin up to 1943, a 25 per cent according to B. Blau, 'Die Juden in Deutschland von 1939–(sic) 1945', in *Judaica* 7 (1951), pp. 271–284) the higher death figure appears more likely, although a margin of error in these estimates (were suicides of persons on deportation lists counted as deportees or suicides?) cannot be excluded.

¹⁴Adler-Rudel, *Ostjuden in Deutschland*, p. 165. Asterisked figures are estimates. Figures for 1939 based on German census data: cf. *Wirtschaft und Statistik*, 31 (May 1941) No. 9.

Information on the social and economic development of German Jewry during the Nazi period will have to be deferred at this point, since the basic trends cannot be properly understood without a consideration of Nazi policies and the Jewish responses evolved in reaction to these policies. The census data of 1939, obtained following the complete destruction of Jewish economic activities on 9th/10th November 1938 (semi-ironically dubbed "*Kristallnacht*" (*Reichskristallnacht*)), fail to reveal socio-economic changes prior to that destruction. No cohesive analysis of the period based on the published or new archival data is known to this writer. However, some aspects of Jewish socio-economic conditions at the beginning of the period under discussion appear relevant for developments during the period and thus for emigration.¹⁵

The urbanisation of the German-Jewish population, like its demographic development, had anticipated the trend towards leaving the countryside among the general population for some time prior to the Nazi period. (It had corresponded in extent to the urban drift of similar socio-economic groups in the general population.) In 1933, this trend, accentuated by the economic dislocations of the depression, had concentrated 49.6 per cent of the entire Jewish population in six major cities. This is shown in Table VI.

TABLE VI

*The Jewish population in six German cosmopolitan cities
(Großstädte), 1933*

	<i>Population</i>	<i>% pop. general</i>	<i>% Jews</i>
Berlin	160,564	3.8	32.1
Frankfurt a. Main	26,158	4.7	5.2
Breslau	20,202	3.2	4.0
Hamburg	16,885	1.5	3.4
Cológne	14,816	2.0	3.0
Leipzig	11,564	1.6	2.3
Totals			
six cities	250,189	33.36	49.6 ¹⁶

In all other forty-six German *Großstädte* (over 100,000 inhabitants) lived 103,931 Jews, or 0.9 per cent of the population of these cities, and 20.8 per cent of the Jewish population.

Thus, the total percentage of Jews living in major cities in 1933 amounted to 354,121 persons or 67.8 per cent of the Jewish population.

¹⁵See also below, pp. 338 ff.

¹⁶M. P. Birnbaum, 'Die jüdische Bevölkerung in Preussen. Verteilung und Struktur im Jahre 1931', in *Gegenwart im Rückblick. Festgabe für die Jüdische Gemeinde zu Berlin 25 Jahre nach dem Neubeginn*, H. A. Strauss and Kurt R. Grossmann (eds.), Heidelberg 1970, p. 118.

By 1937, 200 of the 1,600 Jewish *Gemeinden* (congregations, corporations under public law until 1st January 1938¹⁷) had ceased to exist, while the rate of Jewish concentration in seven major *Großgemeinden* (cosmopolitan Jewish congregations) had reached 63 per cent of the Jewish population. Eighty-five per cent of all Jews in Germany now lived in fifty-two *Gemeinden*, while only 15 per cent resided in the remaining 1,348 congregations.¹⁸

Already prior to 1933, the cities had attracted economically more viable and younger members of the Jewish community in search of economic advance or careers closed to talent in the confinement of the village or small town. Exceptions to this general observation, leaving special local conditions aside, rural and small-town Jewish *Gemeinden* contrasted sharply in per capita income with their larger sister congregations. Persecution-related conditions continued this trend during the Nazi period. Emigration was paralleled by internal migration. In October 1938, 42 per cent of all Jews in Germany (127,600 persons) lived in Berlin alone. Jewish welfare agencies furthered the trend away from small Jewish settlements because concentration allowed more effective social care. The rural Jew of the Nazi period was an impoverished Jew in many sectors of the country.¹⁹

Statistics do not reveal the qualitative role Jews played in German economic life, some of whose sectors were led by Jewish firms (branch-leadership) while others (textiles, furs, the metal trade, the – declining – private banking industry) were characterised by significant concentration of Jewish businesses or professionals. Compared to the Christian environment, the German-Jewish group had distinct economic characteristics. More than the Christian population, Jews had engaged in *Handel und Verkehr* (trade and commerce), 61.3 per cent of the Jewish, as compared to 19.4 per cent of the general population in 1933. Jews were also strongly represented in professions and public or private service jobs (12.5 per cent, as compared to 8.4 per cent). Fewer Jews had been occupied in industry or the crafts (32.1 per cent, as compared to 40.4 per cent), in agriculture and forestry (1.7 per cent, as compared to 28.9 per cent – all data for 1933). Almost half of the Jewish population (46 per cent, as compared to 16.4 per cent) were self-employed. One third of the Jewish population were white-collar employees, and only 8.7 per cent classified themselves as workers (as compared to 46.4 per cent of the general population). In Bennathan's description Jews were primarily

"by profession economically independent breadwinners or employees in the commercial departments and the administration of commercial enterprises. The self-employed, too . . . commercially trained and active as businessmen. In every branch of industry Jews were employed in the office, in sales, as travelling salesmen, or commercial administrators (*kaufmännische Direktoren*). The only exception to this rule were craftsmen (like tailors and butchers) and the legal and medical professions . . . Of 240,000 breadwinners (1933) (and their employed families) about 200,000 belonged to the major 'Jewish' categories (self-employed and leaseholders (66,891), commercial employees (83,398), textile and leather industries (11,651), health-related professions (8,006), and legal profession (4,442), teaching and academic pursuits (4,885), the arts, film and photography (4,245). Only 12,972 Jews were workers, mechanics, employed in the food industry or related clerical positions."²⁰

¹⁷See below, p. 342.

¹⁸Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe*, pp. 150 ff.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 150–158.

²⁰H. A. Strauss, 'The Immigration and Acculturation of the German Jew in the United States of America', in *LB I Year Book XVI* (1971), pp. 76 f.; Bennathan, *loc. cit.*, pp. 112 f.

Although the average income of the Jewish appears to have exceeded that of the general population, including wage earners in 1931 and subsequently,²¹ the majority of German Jews in 1933 belonged socially to the lower middle and working classes (33.5 per cent employees, 8.7 per cent workers including immigrant workers, and a substantial – unknown – percentage of the self-employed). The numbers of the indigent and people on public assistance had increased with the onset of the depression. Structural factors increasingly barred the classical route of commercial employees towards independence:

“As a result of growing state capitalism and an increase in the number of cartels and trusts, more and more Jews were eliminated from their economic positions, especially in commerce, and many lost their independence as employers.”

Precise data are as yet unavailable to estimate the number of persons belonging to the middle and upper middle classes among German Jews, either in terms of the German status system and its (partly pre-modern) ascriptive values, in terms of income, or in regional or local status and class contexts. The census data suggest a relatively stronger representation of these classes among Jews – although on somewhat different status-value terms than among the general population.²²

IV. DEMOGRAPHIC ASPECTS OF GERMAN-JEWISH EMIGRATION

American folklore and most American immigration research institutions and archives perceive post-1880 immigrants as young adult workers or as families with a respectable number of children passing through Ellis Island on the way to an ethnic ghetto, a steel mill, the railroads or a sweatshop, to become the subject, in the 1970s, of the new American labour history, recently attuned to its ethnic components.²³

German-Jewish realities did not correspond to this classic image. In numbers and social type, the Jewish immigrant from Germany resembled more the 300,000 French Huguenots expelled from France in the wake of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, or the 150,000 Jews estimated to have lived in Castile prior to 1492. Basically urban, an ageing and over-aged group, concentrated in commerce and selected professions, their occupational structure reflected choices made long before the emigration crisis had brought home that industrial concentration and large-scale merchandising and sales organisations

²¹Birnbaum, *loc. cit.*, p. 113. The “self-employed” included considerable numbers of small establishments (agents, salesmen, repairmen, petty retailers of all kinds and similar businesses). Persons who lost their jobs would characteristically gravitate towards independence, apart from the trend towards independence observed as characteristic of Jewish economic attitudes. Jewish over-representation in this category dwindles if it is compared to the parallel occupational group. Bennathan, *loc. cit.*

²²R. Stahl, ‘Vocational Retraining among Jews in Nazi Germany, 1933–1938’, in *Jewish Social Studies* (1939), p. 169.

²³For a concise statement of the new orientation of American labour history towards ethnicity see H. G. Gutman, ‘Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America, 1815–1919’, *American Historical Review* 78 (1973), No. 3, pp. 531–587.

were relegating their small-scale entrepreneurial or crafts' skills to a backwater. The major obstacle to Jewish mass emigration lay probably as much in the occupational and age structure of the Jewish community, as it derived from Jewish perceptions of themselves in their relationship to German society and politics, or in restrictionism in immigration countries.

The total number of all persons leaving Germany on account of "racial" persecution cannot be established. Up to 867,000 Jewish and "non-Aryan" Germans were affected by Nazi decrees barring officials, students, university teachers, pastors, actors, writers, journalists or political activists from exercising their professions, pursuing studies at universities, completing their examinations, doing business or entering upon their careers.²⁴ Statistics on aid given to them, when available in the limited literature on the subject, are insufficient. Considerable numbers of "non-Aryan" Christian Germans may be presumed to have been active in government, politics, the professions, industry or commerce, and if they emigrated at all, to have gone unrecorded by any census, without the aid of the Protestant, Catholic or Society of Friends agencies that aided their co-religionists. Estimates of the total number of émigrés from Germany, Austria and

TABLE VII
Total number of émigrés

<i>Year</i>	<i>Jew. pop.</i>	<i>1,000 Emigr.</i>	<i>1,000 Excess deaths</i>	<i>1,000 Deport.</i>
1933	525,000(est.)	37	5.5	
1934		23	5.5	
1935		21	5.5	
1936		25	6.0	
1937		23	7.0	
1938		40	8.0	
17th May 1939	213,390			
31st December 1939		78	10	
1940		15	8	10
1st May 1941	169,000			
1st October 1941	164,000	8	4	25
1942	139,000	8.5	7.5	73
1943	51,000		5	25
1944	14,500			1
1945	20-25,000			
Total		278,500	72,000	134,000

Sources: Genschel; Rosenstock; Blau.²⁵

²⁴See, e.g., L. E. Reutter, *Die Hilfstätigkeit katholischer Organisationen und kirchlicher Stellen für die im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland Verfolgten*, 2nd edn., Hamburg 1970.

Czechoslovakia range up to 500,000, including persons not of the Jewish religion.²⁵

The total number of Jewish émigrés can be estimated from German census data, Jewish sources and the reports periodically submitted to Nazi authorities by the *Reichsvereinigung* during the Second World War. Table VII summarises these data.

Given a certain margin of error, an estimate of between 270,000 and 300,000 Jewish émigrés from Germany appears a reasonable approximation, born out by cross-checks with the available census totals. About 30,000 of these are estimated to have been interned in their countries of refuge in occupied Europe during the Second World War, and to have perished in the Holocaust. Comparisons with the official statistics of immigration countries are inconclusive because of the frequent double-counts of persons re-emigrating from their first country of settlement, the lumping together of all Central European refugees into one category, the use of visitors' visas for immigration in the expectation of converting them into permanent residence permits following arrival, and of illegal entry. Thus, about three-fifths of German Jewry succeeded in leaving the country. About 10,000 Jews (5,000 in hiding, and 5,000 returnees from concentration camps) or less than 1.5 per cent of the original 525,000 German Jews of 1933 survived in Germany.

The age composition of émigrés as implied by Tables III a to c was weighted towards the young and the productive middle-aged cohorts, as would be expected. The ratio of persons over sixty years of age climbed from 16.54 per cent in 1933 to 36.44 per cent in July 1941, while persons between nought and thirty-nine years of age decreased by 80–83 per cent. In contrast, the ratio of children under eighteen years of age (the available data are not entirely comparable) suggests a smaller relative decline in spite of the steep decrease in absolute numbers.

²⁵W. Röder, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, München (personal communication), 1976/1977.

²⁶Adjusted from Genschel, *op. cit.*, p. 291; German census data (see n. 9); W. Rosenstock, 'Exodus 1933–1939. A Survey of Jewish Emigration from Germany', in *LBI Year Book I* (1956), p. 377 (Rosenstock's are the most precise and reliable of the available estimates); Blau, *loc. cit.* These data, it should be stressed, rest to some extent on estimates. Possible changes concern individuals who had left the Jewish religion and succeeded in changing to "privileged status" in passing into the non-Jewish community, or emigrated as "non-Aryan" Christians. (Conversions for the period were estimated by one source – Blau – as 3,319.) Emigration figures are based in part on estimates, especially for the first few years of the period, where flight and the repatriation of foreign nationals as well as returns by persons who had left Germany and returned subsequently (see below p. 357) made precise recording difficult. Precise Jewish statistics on émigrés are available only for the period January 1937 to June 1938, and in the unpublished reports submitted periodically by the *Reichsvereinigung* to Nazi authorities during the Second World War. These reports had been used by Blau, *loc. cit.* and by Drobisch, *op. cit.*, SS statistics on emigration are based on unrefined calculations. Korherr in Klarsfeld, *op. cit.*, p. 182, includes Sudetenland Jewish emigration in his figure of 352,534 for 1st January 1943. Heydrich, at the Wannsee Conference of January 1943, spoke of 360,000 émigrés from the *Altreich*. Suicides to avoid being deported to concentration camps were estimated at 10 per cent of the number called up for deportation, as this writer learned in Berlin in 1941–1942. Other estimates place the ratio of such suicides as high as 25 per cent (Blau). The number of "non-Aryans" found in 1945 in Germany includes about 14,000 living "legally in mixed marriages not subject to deportations" (and not included in the census figure for 16th June 1933 for "Jews by religion"). The number of Jews surviving in hiding in Germany until 1945 estimated at 5,000 is equally subject to insecurities. Finally, one estimate had placed the number of émigrés at 254,000 (Blau, *loc. cit.*), another at 236,000 (Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe*).

The emigration of children of school-leaving age had been one of the first priorities of the *Reichsvertretung* in 1933,²⁷ and at least 18,000 children had left Germany as "unaccompanied children" to be placed in foster homes or families.²⁸ The relatively large number of children aged nought to six in 1938 suggests the hypothesis that families with infants tended to postpone emigration. The 1938 figure presumably includes the 7,200 children born 1933/1938. Additional factors contributing to the relatively large percentage of children remaining in July 1941 (to which 2,270 "non-Aryan" Christian children must be added) may have been the failure of major countries, above all the U.S.A. and the British Colonial Office and the High Commissioner for Palestine, to permit the non-quota immigration of unaccompanied children. In the U.S.A., the German-Jewish Childrens' Aid Committee asked that only children from well-to-do families be selected from among German Jews for placement in U.S. foster homes. This was designed to minimise the social problems expected from poorer children. Placement also bogged down in the interminable bureaucratic paper-shuffling characteristic of some social agencies. A bill to admit German-Jewish children outside the U.S. quota, the Wagner-Rogers bill, was never reported out of Committee since Congressional support for lifting immigration restrictions was missing in 1939. Following the *Kristallnacht*, the *yishuv* in Palestine offered to arrange for the adoption of 10,000 Jewish children from Germany, and to receive 100,000 German Jews still of productive age. This was rejected by the Colonial Secretary who offered to admit Jewish children to Great Britain instead, if Jewish aid organisations would guarantee their maintenance. The admission of about 8,000 unaccompanied children to Great Britain after November 1938 was thus "firmly linked" with British immigration policies on Palestine. 3,262 children were brought by emigration to Palestine through the good offices of the *Youth Aliyah*, whose German branch (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Kinder- und Jugend-Alijah*) cooperated with Palestine's childrens' village "Ben Shemen", childrens' homes and the kibbutz organisations to resettle them following preparatory training. Finally, reluctance among German-Jewish families to part with children, and to have children complete their schooling before emigrating may have been a further influence on the low number of emigrating unaccompanied children.²⁹

Foreign Jews, i.e., Jews of foreign nationality, as may be inferred from Table Va, were concentrated heavily in the major cities of Prussia and Saxony. The attack on their residence in Germany had been a continuous programme point of *völkisch* antisemitism since the 1880s. In consequence, when the Prussian Conser-

²⁷See the forthcoming Pt. II of this essay in *LBI Year Book XXVI* (1981).

²⁸For regulations governing the selection of unaccompanied children to the U.S.A. see *The Jewish Immigrant of the Nazi Period in the U.S.A.*, vol. I: *Archival Resources*, comp. S. W. Siegel, New York 1979; H. L. Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue. The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust, 1938-1945*, New Brunswick, N.J. 1970, pp. 148-155. For the admission of unaccompanied children to Great Britain see A. J. Sherman, *Island Refuge. Britain and the Refugees from the Third Reich 1933-1939*, Berkeley-Los Angeles 1973, p. 211 (House of Commons Debate 14th December 1938). See also Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe*, pp. 97-100.

²⁹H. Gärtner, 'Problems of Jewish Schools in Germany during the Hitler Regime', in *LBI Year Book I* (1956), pp. 126-129, 138-141, records that parents tended to keep their children in German schools to complete their education before emigration, even where equivalent Jewish schools were available.

vative coup of 20th July 1932 ousted the elected Social Democratic administration, they came under attack even before Hitler's ascendance to power. The Conservative Prussian Minister of the Interior, von Gayl, had prepared a decree allowing for the revocation of their acquired German nationality for persons naturalised between 9th November 1918 and 30th January 1933. This decree was enacted by the Nazi government 14th July 1933. By 1936, 2,200 naturalisations had been revoked in Saxony alone.³⁰

As far as can be gathered from the available information, foreign Jews formed strong components of the crafts, especially in the textile, cigarette, shoe, beauty, leather and cleaning industries, while their entrepreneurial and commercial classes were active in these fields and in the arts (theatre, opera, music) and in real estate ownership and management.³¹ In 1933, Jews of foreign nationality are said to have left small or middle-sized towns in appreciable numbers and joined the *Binnenwanderung* of German Jews.³² About 10,000 to 12,000 Jews of foreign, mostly Eastern and South-eastern European nationality, were assisted by the *Hauptstelle für jüdische Wanderung*, Berlin, which had cared for Jews of foreign nationality since the First World War to return to their country of origin or nationality. Repatriates thus represented almost 30 per cent of all Jewish émigrés from Germany in 1933. In 1936, the number of trans-migrants of foreign nationality (present in smaller numbers earlier on) "increased". The first group of émigrés among Jews of foreign nationality had a preponderance of younger men (age and sex distribution among this group appeared to have differed from that of German Jews as a whole in having more youth and an excess of men over women)³³ and included primarily persons marginally integrated into the German economy. By 1936, *Hauptstelle* statistics suggest, 24,200 Jews had been assisted in their repatriation, i.e., if these figures are correct and their number is included in the totals for émigrés, of a total of 106,000 émigrés, almost one fourth had been repatriates of foreign nationality by 1936.

The role of foreign Jews in emigration patterns from Germany, aside from isolated information and repatriation figures, has not been analysed at this writing. The number of foreign Jews included in émigrés to other countries than Palestine has never been determined. It would have to be added to the number of repatriates to arrive at more precise determinations of the ratio of foreign Jewish to German-Jewish emigration. Their position in Nazi Germany was ambivalent, since they were protected by their status as foreign nationals and made the occasion for numerous intercessions at the *Auswärtiges Amt* by foreign diplomats when their rights were violated. Fearing reprisals against Germans abroad (*Auslandsdeutsche*), the Foreign Office remained sensitive to such intercessions. However, it did reject all protests against the mistreatment of German Jews as "interference in German domestic affairs". On the other hand, foreign Jews were strongly represented in sectors of the economy that were accessible to informal radical and terror pressures (workers and employees, retails and crafts,

³⁰*Rasse und Recht*, Ristow (ed.), I (1937), p. 423, as quoted by Adam, *op. cit.*, p. 81 n. 65.

³¹Bennathan, *loc. cit.*, p. 122.

³²Information courtesy Prof. Henry Huttenbach, Department of History, The City College New York (unpublished study), 1978.

³³Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe*, pp. 94-99; Bennathan, *loc. cit.*, p. 99 n. 19.

travelling salesmen and fair-going) and to administrative discriminations in granting or renewing licence. No data have so far come to light to assess the importance of these factors for the group's pattern of emigration.

By 1939, the ratio of foreign Jews had declined more steeply than that of Jews of German nationality (from 19.8 per cent of all Jews to 11.6 per cent of all Jews in Germany). Among the factors that may have contributed to this result were the brutal expulsion of 14,000 to 17,000 Jews of Polish nationality on 28th October 1938, the younger age structure, wider links with relatives abroad and marginality in the economy.

The ratio of immigrants of foreign nationality among immigrants from Germany to Palestine, 1933–1945 appears to have remained below the ratio of such Jews in the German-Jewish population.³⁴

V. NAZI PERSECUTION: PATTERN AND POLICIES

The truism that the pattern of Nazi persecution was the root cause of the pattern of Jewish emigration presents complex problems at closer analysis, because the factors that made Nazi policies towards Jews polymorphous also created a confused reality, and led to confused perceptions among almost all parties to the deed, including the victims whose emigration is the subject of this essay.

The statistical pattern reviewed above shows that Jewish emigration from Germany fell from a peak of 37,000 in 1933, to 21,000 in 1935, rose to 25,000 in 1936, fell once again in 1937 and reached its final crescendo in 1938 before and after the pogroms of 9th/10th November, the *Kristallnacht*, to continue through 1940.

Nazi persecution was equally divided into periods if nation-wide trends and *Reich*-level measures are considered.³⁵

The first period, from 30th January 1933 to mid-1933, was dominated by the multiple violence occurring across Germany. It was mainly perpetrated by the SA which, in several states, had been drafted as auxiliary policemen. The main targets of this violence were political enemies of the régime, persons against whom local Nazi individuals harboured political – sometimes personal – grudges, lawyers, physicians, members of the *Reichstag*, persons considered guilty of past misdeeds, etc. On 1st July 1933, the Ministry of the Interior recorded that 26,789 persons were held in “protective custody”, the euphemism for the internment of political opponents.³⁶ All of these victims included persons of the

³⁴See Tables Va and Vb, pp. 321–322 above.

³⁵Coherent accounts of Nazi policies: Adam, *op. cit.* (for internal decision-development and policy), and Genschel *op. cit.* (economic policy). The following is based on these two accounts and: Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe*; Bauer, *op. cit.*; Blau, *Das Ausnahmerecht für die Juden in Deutschland 1933–1945*, 2nd edn., Düsseldorf 1954 (collection of laws); Dawidowicz, *op. cit.*; R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of European Jews*, Chicago 1961, pp. 43–124; H. Krausnick, ‘The Persecution of the Jews’, in H. Krausnick *et al.*, *Anatomy of the SS State*, New York 1968, pp. 1–126; H. Buchheim, ‘The SS-Instrument of Domination’, *ibid.*, pp. 127–302; M. Broszat, ‘The Concentration Camps 1933–1945’, *ibid.*, pp. 397–460. F. Neumann, *Behemoth. The Structure and Practice of National Socialism 1933–1944*, revised edn. (pb. reprint), New York 1963. Also consulted for background social history: *Oral History Collection*, Research Foundation for Jewish Immigration, New York.

³⁶M. Broszat, *op. cit.*, p. 410.

Jewish religion. Sadistic tortures, beatings and gangster-like killings characterised these events. They went on in a highly charged atmosphere of street demonstrations, marches, elections, the take-over of state and local governments and the dissolution of the political parties, workers' associations and trade unions.

For the Jewish minority *qua* Jews this terror phase brought legislative exclusion primarily from "public life" – *öffentliches Leben* – including the removal of certain categories of civil servants, lawyers and judges, a curtailment of the activities of Jewish physicians, etc. The "boycott day" of 1st April 1933, and widespread local pressures brought attacks on Jewish retail stores and large-scale dismissals of Jewish employees, partly (under pressure) by Jewish-owned firms. Jews began to be excluded from cultural activities, the press and the arts. As associations were brought in line with Nazi principles – *gleichgeschaltet* – numerous Jews lost their positions. Antisemitic propaganda and harassment were intense, but did not lead – they never did in Germany – to non-organised, spontaneous pogrom-style attacks on Jews. The passivity of broad strata of the population in Germany remained a constant throughout the period of persecution.³⁷

Phase II began during the summer of 1933. Sadistic SA brutalities were confined and institutionalised in the newly founded concentration camps. Legislative activity against Jews continued. It affected primarily professionals, students, foreign Jews, Jewish employees and workers, the legal position of Jews, the theatre and Jewish business. Characteristic for this phase of creeping persecution was the announced intention not to interfere with Jewish economic activities. This was declared *Reich*-policy. Numerous attacks and pressures of many kinds by local Nazi organisations and propaganda agencies as well as intense defamation continued.

Phase III divided into two sub-periods. In April 1935, a new wave of street terror and propaganda attacks began nation-wide, culminating in July in pogrom-like mass attacks by Hitler Youth and SA on Jews on the Berlin Kurfürstendamm. This sub-phase was stopped by the party leadership on Hitler's orders. The Nuremberg Laws passed on 12th September 1935 and subsequent *Verordnungen* deprived Jews of German citizenship rights and led to the exclusion of all remaining Jewish civil servants, artists, university teachers, judges and other public servants. The activities of other professionals like lawyers and physicians continued to be curbed, and Jewish art dealers prohibited from pursuing their business. Legal and local economic pressures to force the sale of Jewish business continued, but Jewish business kept being assured by *Reich* agencies that its activities would be protected.

Phase IV, covering most of 1936 and extending into the autumn of 1937, once again saw creeping persecution, primarily through continued Nazi pressures on local levels. *Reich* decrees excluding Jews from the economy extended to occupations considered "semi-public" or "quasi-public" in Germany, such as accountants, consultants on foreign currency or tax matters, apothecaries, veterinarians, book-dealers; publishers and similar groups. Creeping pressures were also exerted

³⁷See also Kwiet, *loc. cit.*, esp. p. 45.

on rural cattle and produce traders, Jewish representatives of large companies working abroad and on Jewish private banks. (Some large companies had shifted Jewish managers abroad to promote business and protect them and their employers from Nazi harassment.)

In the autumn of 1937, Phase V opened with a concerted drive to force the sale of the remaining (1st April 1938: 39,552) business establishments, an estimated 50 per cent of the number existing in 1933.³⁸ The drive to "Aryanise" (enforce the transfer of business from a Jewish to a German owner at depressed prices) now extended systematically to big Jewish business and manufacturing. Persons owning more than RM 5,000 were obligated to register all their holdings with the government in April 1938, and a series of *Berufsverbote* and decrees sharply narrowed the sphere of Jewish economic activities. Physicians and lawyers lost their remaining practices. Licences were withdrawn from salesmen and agents. Jewish communal institutions suffered a change in legal status and severe disadvantages in their economic and service activities. In mid-1938, the synagogues of Munich, Düsseldorf and Nuremberg were torn down as part of "urban renewal" or to make way for subway construction. On 28th October 1938, between 14,000 and 17,000 Polish-Jewish nationals were expelled to Poland under inhuman conditions. Following the pogroms of 9th/10th November 1938, all Jewish activities in the German economy were prohibited, Jews were forced to make good the damage they suffered through the organised vandalism of SA units across Germany and to pay RM 1.25 billion to "atone" for the murder of German diplomat Ernst vom Rath at the hands of a Jewish student in Paris. About 30,000 Jewish men were interned in German concentration camps.

The last phase, VI, of the emigration period lasted until October 1941. Jews were now forced to live off their savings or receive social assistance. They were drafted into forced labour in factories or had to accept low menial jobs. The first deportations began in 1940 (Baden, Stettin, Vienna, Prague, Moravska-Ostrava). On 1st October 1941, the RSHA prohibited further emigration, although exceptions to this prohibition continued throughout the later war years.

Already this first review suggests that, in its framework of defamation and anti-Jewish propaganda, Nazi persecution was selective in the groups whose economic or professional activities it curtailed or destroyed. The periodisation of this summary reveals two kinds of influence patterns: an interplay between terror and street pressure and legislative measures, and between *Reich* level measures and local or regional pressures. Both in its "on-again-off-again" timing, and in the action patterns occurring on the different levels of German social and political space, persecution policy was polymorphous.

The political activities from which the pattern of persecution derived tend to support this observation.

³⁸A. Krüger, *Die Lösung der Judenfrage in der deutschen Wirtschaft. Kommentar zur Judengesetzgebung*, Berlin 1940, p. 44. Krüger was a *Ministerialrat* in the Economics Ministry. The figure 39,552 is based on the Nazi registration of Jewish business decreed on 26th April 1938. The figure for 1933 was an Economics Ministry estimate.

It has often been pointed out, in part with apologetic intent, that even under the extreme propagandistic and terror pressures accompanying the German elections of 5th March 1933, the Nazi vote rose only to 43.9 per cent from its earlier high (in completely free elections) of 37.3 per cent (1932a). Phrased differently, the about 51.9 per cent of Nazi and German nationalist voters supporting Hitler outright in March 1933 saw no hindrance in the antisemitic policies with which the Nazi party had interlaced its electoral appeals with varying degrees of salience and intensity. German right-nationalist antisemitism, the literature has made abundantly clear, rested on older anti-Jewish traditions. Conservatives had accepted an antisemitic platform for their party as early as 1892 (Tivoli Programme). The ready acceptance of Hitler's chancellorship by Conservatives, Catholic political leaders, church dignitaries and the *Beamtenschaft* rested to a considerable extent on a common anti-liberal and anti-modernist political mood for which Jews exemplified the enemy, especially in such highly visible fields as journalism, films, literature and the arts (the cosmopolitan avant-garde minority culture misnamed "Weimar culture").³⁹

Thus, in 1933, not one but several antisemitic strains coexisted within the broad consensus of centre-right government and politics. Programmes for anti-Jewish action prepared by Nazi "shadow" ministerial and party officials before 1933, and the legislative programme dated 6th April 1933, first published by the late Israeli scholar Shaul Esh in 1963, summarise the consensus among the several strains of antisemitism in Germany.⁴⁰

The administrative travail from whose strained intra-governmental and intra-party quarrels the over 400 anti-Jewish *Reich* laws and decrees were born, reflect, in part, the disintegration of the *völkisch*-centrist consensus of 1933. These administrative quarrels – which do not indicate opposition to antisemitism, or philo-semitic trends within the ministerial bureaucracy – explain changes in policy only to a limited degree and derive from several sources. They originate, for one, in the "*institutionelle Bewahrungspolitik*" typical of polycentric administrative patterns. They originate also with the differences among the Nazi coalition in granting priority to antisemitism as contrasted with such priorities as domestic economic recovery, foreign trade and international relations. They denote differences in form, and contrasts between, the "*bekoved* antisemitism" (Hebrew for "honourable", an ironic folk-term used in Germany) of conservative moderates and the vulgarities of the violence and murder squads among Nazi extreme radicals. In sum, they reflect unstable balances between the members of the government coalition of 1933.⁴¹

³⁹See above, notes 5–7 for references and literature.

⁴⁰The draft programme published by Esh foreshadows the course of anti-Nazi measures, not because it was followed as a blueprint but because it summarises the mutual accommodations of the several strains of anti-Jewish *völkisch* and Nazi thought with some accuracy. See also n. 7.

⁴¹For the story of intra-ministerial and party-government cooperation and conflict on anti-Jewish measures see Adam, *op. cit.* Of special significance is his summary of constitutional developments which provide the background for the decision-making process in anti-Jewish legislation. The *Reich* cabinet stopped meeting in 1935. Individual ministries, although theoretically gaining power through the (never completed) *Reichsreform*, were reduced, in consequence, to a process of negotiations in initiating and drafting laws. The (equally unresolved) position held by Nazi party agencies *vis-à-vis* the government extended the number of agencies whose input was taken into consideration

The influence of non-Nazi power centres on antisemitic policy diminished in step with their general loss of influence (denoted by the Röhm affair of 30th June 1934, the assumption of the president's office by Hitler on 2nd August 1935, and the Nazification of the military high command and the foreign office leadership). The dismissal of Hjalmar Schacht as economics minister in 1937, and the rise of SD, Gestapo and RSHA were the most influential components of these shifts in power for Jews in Germany.

A summary review of the policy background of the periodisation introducing this chapter will substantiate these general observations.

In 1933, the first phase, numerous anti-Jewish terror attacks accompanied legislative exclusions or restrictions imposed on Jews in the professions, the civil service, universities or other public positions. Terror against Jews was far exceeded by the universal violence and terror unleashed against Communists, Socialists and other enemies of the régime. Politically, it served to put "revolutionary" pressures on local and state governments and administrations by using or threatening violence unless legal or constitutional changes were effected. The laws incorporating terror-induced changes *ex-post-facto* failed to establish uniform conditions for Jews, since states and localities, courts and education authorities enacted different laws and decrees on Jewish restrictions.

Legislative restrictions, in this situation, were perceived as "normalisations" and "moderate policies" by Jews and ministerial officials alike. That a Jewish agency, the *Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten* (R.j.F.), for the first and only time during the period, succeeded in having a law amended prior to its promulgation indicates the initial fluidity of the Jewish situation.⁴³ (This fluidity should cau-

in drafting laws. The much discussed "polycentrism" of administration in the Third Reich thus pitted the several policy-making agencies against each other and permitted Hitler to manipulate agencies and policies as the ultimate arbiter in cases of dispute.

This control pattern continued, on another level, methods that had proven successful in Hitler's manipulation of conflicts within the NSDAP prior to 1933: cf. J. Nyomarkay, *Charisma and Factionalism in the Nazi Party*, Minneapolis, Minn. 1967. Hitler's power rested, of course, on his control of the physical means of coercion – army, police – his dictatorial monopoly of political power through the Party, and his charismatic effect on public opinion, see M. Broszat, *Der Staat Hitlers. Grundlegung und Entwicklung seiner inneren Verfassung* (pb.), München 1969.

Care must be taken, however, to assess properly the role of these agencies *vis-à-vis* Jewish policies. Since these agencies, especially radical Nazi party groups, maintained their independent initiatives, they set the framework for policy options and thus exercised considerable influence on substantial issues of policy. Adam's view that ministries had no influence on policy after 1935 may be somewhat misleading. Concentration on administrative controversy is to be related consistently to the socio-economic structures, whose interest was served by the ideologically rationalised policy proposals. One of these structures was represented by the career interests of ministerial bureaucracies. Others reflect the shift towards big business and away from the lower-middle-class economic romanticism that had been one of the professed goals of Nazi social policy prior to 1933. The shift, in 1938, to radical expulsion of Jews from economic life was inherent in the increase of state control over business and industry, i.e., the alliance with big business was shifting into a more state-capitalistic phase. The acquisition of Jewish productive and other capacities and entitlements by industry represents a dialectic counterpart to the simultaneous loss of business independence to increased state control. Thus, Jewish policies played a central role in the socio-economic evolution of the Nazi power system and can not be divorced from the *historische Faschismusbegriff*.

⁴³The law in question, *Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums* of 7th April 1933, provided exemptions for Jewish war veterans, the fathers or sons of Jewish soldiers killed in action in the First World War, and officials in service since before 1st August 1914 from forced dismissal from the civil

tion against using Jewish documents of the early period as basis for reconstructing the policy of Jewish communal agencies in Germany for the entire period.) Policy was controlled by, and was part of, domestic political considerations during the *Gleichschaltungs*-period. Whether anti-Jewish terror was initiated or merely used by Hitler to effect the desired changes remains unclear. It was tolerated, defended, or, certainly in the case of the abortive anti-Jewish boycott of 1st April 1933, initiated by Hitler and Goebbels.

Phase II coincided with the Nazi government's decision to use the political gains achieved by the terror phase to ease German economic problems and initiate rearmament. Programmes for either area brought an alliance with conservative power centres. Rearmament was to proceed in an orderly fashion, i.e., the military high command was entrusted with reconstructing the armed forces (and a new air-force was to be built up clandestinely) along the lines of military technology. It was to be based on the necessary military and industrial infrastructures. With this programme, Hitler and the generals had rejected the option of a "people's army" proposed by *SA-Führer* Ernst Röhm. His opposition to the new army led, one year later, to his and his henchmen's murder, and the political decline of his military-political troopers. In its rearmament drive, the Nazi government had obtained the cooperation of German industry and big business and a representative of big finance, Schacht (a "Christian-conservative" antisemite of long standing) was appointed economics minister (2nd August 1934).⁴³

Reich-level policy to keep Jews unmolested in the economic sphere originated in this conservative turn. Jewish economic activity was as yet considered vital for German domestic recovery and foreign trade. The Economics Ministry under Schacht, by promoting this policy, acquired the image of a "moderating influence" in intra-government competition with other ministries. It found Hitler's (tactical) support, i.e., economic consideration and rearmament took priority over Nazi party promises of relief to the *Mittelstand* and attacks on monopolies, trusts and banking. As a result of the turn to big business and industry, the Nazi *Mittelstand* organisations lost political power and were submerged in the Labour Front. Their disappointment was deflected into sporadic terror acts, widespread local Nazi party pressures and numerous propaganda attacks against Jewish retail business across the country. Effective especially on local levels where Jewish business was highly visible, the *Mittelstand* eliminated Jewish competition, managed to take over Jewish stores at bargain prices and drove Jews into the bigger cities. Central authorities, including the Ministries of Foreign Affairs,

service. The clause had been inserted on the insistence of President Hindenburg in response to a petition submitted by the Jewish War Veterans Association. All such exemptions for Jews were rescinded following the Nuremberg Laws of 12th September 1935. The fluidity of this early period is also indicated by the fact that Jewish dignitaries were made to publish protests against "atrocities" abroad, see the forthcoming Pt. II of this essay in *LBI Year Book XXVI* (1981).

⁴³Cf. K. D. Bracher, W. Sauer, G. Schulz, *Die nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung. Studien zur Entwicklung des totalitären Herrschaftssystems in Deutschland 1933-1934*, Köln Opladen 1960; K.-J. Mueller, *Das Heer und Hitler. Armee und nationalsozialistisches Regime 1933-1940*, Stuttgart 1969, pp. 88-141.

Interior and Economics, attempted to assert "legality" against such wild actions.⁴⁴

The Nuremberg Laws, which placed Jews under *Fremdenrecht*, had fulfilled a traditional programme point of the German antisemitic tradition. They were by no means a legislative coup sprung by Hitler on unsuspecting *Judenreferenten* in the ministries, as suggested in the literature. Like earlier measures, they were designed to fix in law what the street violence and terror occurring in the spring and summer of 1935 had aimed at, a further step in the radical exclusion of Jews from German life. Their racism linked them with the ideology of Nazi radicals, while their quality as "laws" passed by the *Reichstag* appeased the moderate demands of the Economics Ministry for "legal solution". That official Jewish declarations supported "law and order" as preferable to street terror reflects this constellation.⁴⁵

Phase IV, 1936–1937 reflected not only the delicate state of foreign affairs reached by German expansionism with the occupation of the demilitarised zone of the Rhineland (March 1936) and by Germany's military unpreparedness against possible Western interventions, but also the propaganda purpose of presenting the image of an orderly, anti-Communist Germany to the world while attention was riveted on the Olympic Games in Garmisch-Partenkirchen and Berlin in 1936.* The near-total lack of reaction by Nazidom to the murder of a German *Gauleiter* (Wilhelm Gustloff) in Switzerland in February 1936 must be compared to the violent "reaction" following the murder of vom Rath in November 1938. Intra-government disputes now centred on fine points in the definition of the Jew. In education, the law, medicine and, especially the economy, Jewish activities were restricted progressively while major steps were postponed. Gestapo and SD began to compete with government and Party agencies for influence on Jewish policy, and embraced radical emigration as the openly acknowledged goal of Nazi policy.⁴⁶

The next phase begun in the autumn of 1937 was linked with major changes in the policies and perceptions of the Nazi government. Domestically, economic preparation for war was intensified as war in Europe entered the practical calculations of the Nazi government.⁴⁷ Industry, under this stimulus, approaching limits in its productive capacities, stood to gain from additional allocations of raw material or foreign currency by absorbing Jewish big business, even if the increased cartellisation derived from "Aryanising" Jewish firms met with hostility from the Nazi *Mittelstand*. In foreign trade, the bilateral arrangements entered into with South-eastern Europe, Latin America and Asia by Schacht had

⁴⁴Genschel, *op. cit.*, pp. 139–150; A. Schweitzer, *Big Business in the Third Reich*, Bloomington, Ind. 1964. For documentation on regional economic pressures throughout the period see *Dokumente über die Verfolgung der jüdischen Bürger in Baden-Württemberg durch das nationalsozialistische Regime, 1933–1945*, 2 vols., P. Sauer (ed.), for Archivdirektion Stuttgart, Stuttgart 1966, *passim*.

⁴⁵For the text of the Declaration of the central Jewish representation, the *Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland*, see Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe*, pp. 191–193.

*In this connection see the essay by P. H. Y. Mayer, 'Equality – Egality. Jews and Sport in Germany', pp. 233–238, in this volume of the Year Book – (Ed.).

⁴⁶For the rise of the SD and the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (RSHA) in the determination of Jewish policy see Buchheim, *op. cit.*; Krausnick, *op. cit.*; H. Höhne, *Der Orden unter dem Totenkopf. Die Geschichte der SS*. (pb.), vol. 2, Frankfurt a. Main–Hamburg 1969, pp. 343–367.

⁴⁷Cf. the date of the Hossbach-Memorandum, 5th November 1937.

increased Germany's independence from markets controlled by the liberal-democratic industrial nations of the West. The anti-German boycott resulting from persecution could be disregarded. Schacht's dismissal from office (September–November 1937) signalled the first of several major new concentrations of government power in the hands of the Nazi hierarchy (Hitler, Göring, Ribbentrop).

Under such changed conditions, the fixations on the “*zersetzende Einfluss*” of Jews on morale in the First World War revived: Hitler's Memorandum on the Four-Year Plan (most likely dated August 1936) implied fear of sabotage directed against Germany's intensified rearmament and autarky drive on the part of the Jews, and called for laws providing collective reprisals against all Jews should this contingency arise.⁴⁸

Finally, the events surrounding the *Anschluss* in Austria added another element and changed the condition of Jews in Germany. Austrian atrocities and greed had resulted in a fast take-over of numerous Jewish firms and had led to the mass exodus of Jews. In 1938, the SD's *Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung* was founded in Vienna to force a mass emigration of the Jewish community. Compared to the Austrian exodus, German emigration figures were low. A memorandum by a *Bankdirektor* in charge of “Aryanisation” (Dr. Binder, Dresdner Bank) notes as of 23rd May 1938 that prices for Jewish property were still too high since Jews showed “strong reluctance” to put them on the market.⁴⁹ The *Kristallnacht* pogroms of November 1938 thus stand at the end of a planned long-range policy. They offered an immediate occasion for the long-prepared final exclusion of Jews from the last area they were still active in, the German economy.

With the destruction of the Jewish economic position, the semi-independence enjoyed by the community during the first six years of Nazi rule and Nazi policies against Jews sunk to a low priority. Diplomacy and war took the centre of the stage. From now on, not policy but police measures shaped persecution. The drafting of Jews for forced labour owed probably as much to the Nazi fear of having to make welfare payments for the Jewish poor as to their desire to humiliate and proletarianise Jews by forcing them to work under degrading conditions. Robbing and despoiling powerless victims needed no policy, and found no opposition within government or party. The rapidly diminishing number of Jews had been brought under the control of unified anti-Jewish policies directed by the RSHA and its SD, much as, after the destruction of all Jewish voluntary associations, only one central Jewish agency, the *Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland* established 4th July 1939, coordinated what remained of Jewish communal life. In Berlin, the SD set down a *Reichszentrale für jüdische Auswanderung* modelled on its Vienna *Zentralstelle* to centralise “all work for Jewish emigration” until the war, the changing age and social structure of the Jewish population, and increased immigration restrictions abroad made their work redundant.

⁴⁸Text of Hitler's *Denkschrift*: W. Treue, ‘Hitlers Denkschrift zum Vierjahresplan’, in *VfZ*, 3 (1955), No. 2, pp. 184–210.

⁴⁹Genschel, *op. cit.*, pp. 153 ff., quoting Nuremberg documents NG 1526 and NI 13, 462.

VI. ECONOMIC IMPACT OF NAZI PERSECUTION

The emigration of Jews from Germany was a social movement of individuals and families. The decision to leave had to be made by individuals and families, not by a government, a social agency, a communal representation or the religious community of the *Gemeinde*. In line with the tradition of close family cohesion among Jews (and, of course, other ethnic groups or nationalities), family ties abroad and mutual aid between members of the extended family played a major role in the selection of the immigration country: the social support derived from the family tradition was also required by the laws of immigration countries (including and especially the U.S.A.). They recognised the family as a safe guarantee of immigrant support during the first steps of resettlement and thus prescribed prior declarations by (preferably close) resident relatives of the prospective immigrant that he would be received by his primary social group. Where exception to this rule of family-centred migration occurred, they concerned the young of working age whose traditional severance of ties to the nuclear family coincided with their age upon emigrating. Having children of school age may have been a factor in delaying the date of emigration. Family cohesion may also have played a role in the small number of children placed by German Jews in foster and home-care placement programmes initiated in foreign countries prior to the *Kristallnacht*, when the situation had become sufficiently threatening to outweigh family cohesion and the emotional strain of separating from young children.⁶⁰

Beyond social ties such as these, which transcended class and occupational determinants of behaviour, both the emigration and the immigration movement of Jews from Germany were strongly influenced by the economic impact of persecution and the economics of immigration countries. As has been pointed out above, the polymorphous character and discontinuous timing of major persecution and extrusion measures directed against Jews in Germany created confusing and contradictory stimuli for the several groups affected by Nazi persecution. Nonetheless, the terror and defamation welling up – or called up – from time to time remained constant in official propaganda, the radio, the newspapers, posters and antisemitic literature and created an atmosphere of persecution even where Jewish-German relations had continued on personal or professional levels,

⁶⁰The basic family character of Jewish emigration emerges clearly from the interviews collected by the Oral History Project of the Research Foundation for Jewish Immigration, New York, U.S. immigration statistics, and the immigration statistics of other countries (number of dependents) where available. Exceptions concern the migration, in 1933–1934, of Jews of foreign nationality returning to their country of origin; the unaccompanied children; the men migrating prior to their families to ICA colonies in Brazil; and *chaluzim*, primarily male (there was a reported scarcity of women entering *hachscharah*). The immigration to the U.S. in the early to mid-thirties, before larger numbers began to arrive, also included single men – a tradition typical also for the Jewish immigration from Germany of the 1920s – Gärtner, *loc. cit.* (see n. 28), as we have seen, comments on the slow shift of Jewish pupils from German to Jewish schools and the parental desire to complete their children's education before leaving Germany. An unknown (but probably small) number of young couples emigrating, e.g., to Palestine concluded fictitious marriages to use the provisions of certain types of certificate that admitted couples under one certificate.

or, as was more usual, where the general population remained passively silent, rather than aggressively active in support of Nazi defamation.⁵¹

The major factor – except for the two extreme periods of persecution, 1933 and 1938 – that influenced the timing of emigration was thus the threat to economic survival, anticipated or actual, that resulted from persecution measures, anticipated or actual, and correspondingly, the availability of the opportunity to emigrate to another country not as a temporary exile but with the intention of permanent settlement. Persecution and defamation, mass imprisonment in concentration camps, the din of harassment as much as the resurgence of Jewish identification among large groups, especially the young, had helped Jewish leadership to shift the emphasis in the German-Jewish equation from the German to the Jewish and turn the challenge of exile into the opportunity of striking roots in a more responsive and humane environment, wherever possible, and begin another cycle of acculturation – even in the homeland Palestine-Israel. The following chapters of this essay will relate economic factors to the emigration process and point out the economics of the admission policies of countries that, collectively, added up to the “closed world” facing the German Jew in the 1930s.

The economic development of Jews in Nazi Germany appears to have followed two divergent directions, increasing impoverishment, unemployment and loss of professional capacity on the one hand, and relative economic recovery from depression levels on the other. Impoverishment stimulated emigration, recovery tended, in many cases, to retard it. To begin with the first: some impoverishment was caused by the exclusion of Jews from public and semi-public functions due to Nazi legislation, although professionals having middle-class status may be presumed to have had financial reserves adequate enough to prepare for emigration, transfer funds (e.g., through *Haavara*) or find substitute employment in the Jewish organisations (primarily lawyers, health personnel, academicians, teachers, law students).⁵² Legal exclusion does, of course, not ade-

⁵¹This observation on the attitude of the German public towards “legal” or terror measures against Jews, or Nazi party pressures for forced sales of Jewish property, has not been subjected to a systematic, nation-wide analysis. It rests, in part, on the personal observations of the author, 1933–1943. The two major physical attacks on Jewish persons or property punctuating the steady pressures of the period were either carried out by SA radicals (1933) or by Party and SA units ordered to burn the synagogues while the police rounded up Jews for internment in concentration camps (1938) – on orders. Silent passivity did not exclude the frequently commented upon termination of personal and social contacts between Jews and Christians or expressions of personal protest, see Ian Kershaw, ‘Antisemitismus und Volksmeinung. Reaktion auf die Judenverfolgung’, in M. Broszat und E. Froehlich (eds.), *Bayern in der NS-Zeit. II: Herrschaft und Gesellschaft im Konflikt*, Munich-Vienna 1979, pp. 281–348. No doubt, fear of Nazi reprisals for being a “Jew-lover” played a role in some cases of such withdrawal. The Gestapo files extant (e.g., Düsseldorf) were reported to contain a number of cases (upward of 400) concerning support for Jews or breaches of the provisions against sexual relations with Jews.

⁵²A relatively large number of Jewish physicians was reported to have emigrated to Palestine 1934–1936. A list published by the *Notgemeinschaft deutscher Wissenschaftler* (Zürich) listed over 600 persons in all fields and professions seeking positions abroad. The placement of Jewish lawyers and public officials removed from their positions in 1933/1935 is reported by Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe*. A book published by the Council of Jews from Germany in memory of martyred Jewish communal officials in Germany includes persons who had entered Jewish service after losing their professional positions or had been unable to complete their studies, including some of the 2,000 *Referendare*

quately reflect extra-legal boycotts, local pressures or terror measures. Among the groups so excluded were the following:

University personnel (all kinds): 800, 7th April 1933; 2,000 (estimate), 14th November 1935.

Physicians: Number of practising physicians: 7,800–8,000, 1933; about 6,000, 1st January 1935; about 3,300, 1st January 1937; about 3,150, 1938; 709, 1st October 1938 (restricted to Jewish patients).

Dentists: Number of practising dentists: about 1,150, 1933; about 750, November 1936.

Apothecaries: Number: 657 (200 forced to close), 1936.

Lawyers: About 5,400, number prior to 7th April 1933 (estimate for Prussia); 3,030, June 1933; 1,735, 1st January 1938; 200 (admitted for practice among Jews as "legal counsels"), December 1938.

Referendare: Number about 2,000, 1933.

Civil service: Total number of "non-Aryan" *Beamte* estimated at 6,000 in 1933 of whom 5,000 were dismissed in 1933 and 1,000(?) in November 1935.

Writers, journalists, etc. [no estimates available].

Artists: Number of persons engaged in "cultural and artistic professions": 4,245, June 1933; in 1935 persons not self-employed – with few exceptions – barred from membership in professional organisations, number unknown; in 1936 2,357 performing and plastic artists were registered with the Jewish Kulturbund.

All occupations not identified as agriculture, industry and crafts, commerce and transportation (Öffentlicher Dienst und private Dienstleistungen): 29,974, June 1933.⁶³

Loss or restriction of occupational function led a substantial ratio of these (and other) professionals to seek substitute employment. Others prepared their emigration. They became part of the "intellectual migration". Precise data on the religious or professional division of this group are not available at this time. The 7,500 academics and professionals reported by the High Commissioner for re-

(lawyers in public-training positions – obligatory for being licensed as lawyers). *Bewährung im Untergang*, E. G. Lowenthal (ed.), Stuttgart 1965, *passim*. In 1933/1934, the German Zionist leaders emigrated to Palestine, and were replaced by younger men who may be presumed to have included persons formerly employed in the German sector. The *Reichsvertretung*, especially in its managerial personnel (as different from its political leadership) also included such persons, e.g., Cora Berliner, Otto Hirsch, Paul Eppstein, Friedrich Brodnitz, Arthur Lilienthal, Paul W. Meyerheim, Paula Fürst, Richard Joachim and others.

⁶³The available sources present some difficulties since not all people who could be identified by Jewish names belonged to the Jewish religion. Thus counting persons excluded for example under para. 3 of the *Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums* of 7th April 1933 and its enabling legislation ("non-Aryan" descent as reason for dismissal) will not automatically yield the number of Jews extruded. The above figures are based on the following sources: Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe*, pp. 139–141, 143, 146; Bauer, *op. cit.*, p. 113; Blau, *Ausnahmerecht*, Nos. 3, 78; Krüger, *op. cit.*, p. 46; German census, 1933.

fugees as having been placed by mid-1934 included about 5,500 professionals, some 700 academic teachers and students.⁵⁴

Figures for Jewish unemployment for the period vary considerably from observer to observer. The German census of 16th June 1933, counted 34,000 presumably not including "dependents", as without gainful employment. For 1935, an estimate placed Jewish unemployment in Germany at 48,000 for employees and workers, and 37,000 for "independents". German-Jewish sources placed the figure at 40,000 for 1936 and 1937, in spite of the decline in the population due to emigration and excess of deaths over births.⁵⁵

The total number of persons in receipt of one of the several forms of public welfare at some time during the period is not known. However, in 1935/1936, Jews were excluded from receiving *Winterhilfe*, i.e., support from a special German fund financed by contribution drives, made quasi-obligatory by public pressure, including prescribed deductions from business earnings and wages. The Jewish community then organised its own *Jüdische Winterhilfe* sanctioned by the authorities, and based on a similar collection principle each year from 1935/1936 to 1939.

As Table VIII indicates, between one fifth and one fourth of German Jews received welfare support from the fund. In absolute numbers, school-age children, store owners, commercial employees and persons without occupation headed the list. Needs were above average in North and North-East German rural areas, the *Hanse* cities (Hamburg, Bremen) and the Palatine, below average in Bavaria and Berlin.

If small loans and other forms of social aid are included in the estimate of

TABLE VIII

Jewish recipients of support from Jüdische Winterhilfe

<i>Years</i>	<i>No. supported</i>	<i>No. of Jew. pop.</i>	<i>Percentage supported</i>
1935/36	83,761	409,000	20.5
1936/37	82,067	389,000	21.0
1937/38	77,231	375,000	20.6
1938/39	70,000	286,000	25.0
end of 1939	52,000	204,000	26.0

⁵⁴The best single source for the emigration of persons in politics, public life, the sciences and the arts on a world-wide basis is the *International Biographical Dictionary of Central European Émigrés 1933-1945*, vol. I: *Öffentliches Leben* (in German), 1979, vol. II: *The Arts and Sciences* (in English), München-New York (vol. II in preparation). The Dictionary was initiated by this author and carried out jointly by the Research Foundation for Jewish Immigration and the *Institut für Zeitgeschichte*, München. It is based on a collection of about 25,000 life histories housed at the Foundation and the Institute in New York and Munich in identical copies.

⁵⁵The higher estimate for 1935 is quoted in Bauer, *op. cit.*, p. 137, based on a report by Bernhard Kahn, the then European Director of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. For other estimates (based on *Reichsvertretungs* statistics see Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe*, p. 132.

supported persons, as many as 33 per cent of the German-Jewish population may have received some form of social assistance in 1935 – about 52,000 Jews received assistance from the government welfare system. In 1935, about 35 per cent of Jewish public funds were used for social assistance, and of the 1,400 Jewish congregations left in Germany in 1937 (of 1,600 in 1933), 610 could no longer meet their needs without assistance from regional organisations.⁵⁶

Thus, while these figures add up convincingly to proof of the increasing impoverishment of Jews in Nazi Germany, at the other end of the socio-economic scale German Jews shared in the recovery brought about by Nazi policies of economic pump-priming and rearmament. The data documenting this trend are less precise. The basic index: size and distribution of tax revenues from the *Gemeindesteuer* (tax) has not been investigated. It was paid as a percentage of the income tax by Jews until Jewish *Gemeinden* lost their traditional status as *Körperschaften des öffentlichen Rechts* (corporations under public law) on 1st January 1938.⁵⁷ Indirect data, however, permit some tentative conclusions.

In 1933, the number of indirect Jewish businesses and craft-workshops was estimated as between 75,000 and 80,000. This possibly inflated number included a considerable number of middling and marginal stores, craft-workshops and similar enterprises and does not reveal the significance of Jewish branch leadership in the characteristically “Jewish” sector (textile, metal trade, produce trade, art dealing, banking and related fields and others). Attempts to estimate the value of Jewish business property for 1933 remain highly tentative. On 1st April 1938, Nazi sources reported 39,552 establishments of all kinds still in being. The Nazi census of Jewish property of 26th April 1938 recorded total Jewish property as 7,050 billion *Reichsmark* (8,426 billion minus 1,376 billion debts and other debits) exclusive of property owned by foreign and stateless Jewish owners (about 0.5 billion *Reichsmark*).⁵⁸ Between April 1938 and April 1939, the removal of Jews from industry was reported to have progressed “especially well”. The

⁵⁶For *Winterhilfe* figures see A. J. Phiebig, ‘Statistische Tabellen’, in *Almanach des Schocken Verlags auf das Jahr 5699*, Berlin 1938/1939, pp. 145 f.; Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe*, pp. 161–165. An excellent overview of the social aid given by German Jews during the Nazi period in different forms and to different groups is found *ibid.*, pp. 121–182. For *Kleingemeinden* see *ibid.*, pp. 150–158.

⁵⁷*Gesetz über die Rechtsverhältnisse der jüdischen Kultusgemeinden vom 28. März 1938*. The law was retroactive to 1st January 1938.

⁵⁸Authorities (Dr. Kurt May, Director of United Restitution Organization, Frankfurt a. Main, and Dr. Walter Schwarz, the editor-in-chief of the authoritative *Rechtsprechung zur Wiedergutmachung*) have confirmed in letters to the author the difficulty of arriving at near-precise figures for Jewish-held property. Dr. Schwarz has estimated the amount at “10 bill. RM and probably considerably more” for 1933. (W. Schwarz, *Rückerstattung nach den Gesetzen der Alliierten Mächte*, Die Wiedergutmachung nationalsozialistischen Unrechts durch die Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bd. I), München 1974, p. 365 s. tit. 10. A lower estimate (RM 7.2 billion) was offered by Nehemia Robinson (*Beraubung und Wiedergutmachung*, 1962, p. 13). Both figures appear low: a Nazi census of Jewish property instituted by the Reich Economic Ministry in April 1938 claimed RM 7.05 billion as total Jewish assets (after deducting liabilities). *Reichswirtschaftsministerium. Vertrauliches Rundschreiben* dated 21st November 1938, signed A. Krüger, MinRat (on face sheet). (Photocopy of typewritten original in the possession of the author, courtesy Dr. K. May, Frankfurt a. Main. Provenance unknown.) The number of Jewish firms still extant in 1938 is reported by Krüger, *op. cit.*, p. 44. (Krüger’s figures are based on reports on Jewish property by Jews who had no conceivable interest in 1938 in using accounting methods maximising their holdings. This figure must be considered on the low side as well.)

exclusion *in toto* and *by decree* of Jews from entire branches of business – as distinct from continuous informal pressures to liquidate (“Aryanise”) by forced sales – began on 6th July 1938.⁵⁹ As has been pointed out above, the government had begun its drive to “Aryanise” large Jewish business firms following the Economics Minister, Schacht’s retirement, 5th September 1937, when the rearmament economy had begun to produce at capacity and the government’s initiative to “Aryanise” the large Jewish firms met with their economic interest. Until that time, the attitudes of Nazi economic authorities had been ambivalent towards the placing of orders with Jewish traders and manufacturers, and government agencies on municipal, state or *Reich* levels as well as the army had been under consistent attack by party radicals for placing government orders with Jewish firms. Similar controversies arose over the Economics Ministry’s practice of permitting the establishment of new Jewish enterprises (August 1935) – surely an indication that such enterprises were still being founded. Three major Jewish banks remained members of the *Reichsanleihenkonsortium* (a group of banks charged with the marketing of government financial instruments) until 1938. Major Jewish firms were “Aryanised” in 1937–1938, in part before the *Kristallnacht* destroyed all Jewish retail business and enforced the liquidation of the rest.⁶⁰

In line with this trend – the maintenance of Jewish economic positions and

TABLE IX

Flight tax paid by all emigrants

<i>Year</i>	<i>Amount</i>
1932/1933	1 million
1933/1934	45 million
1934/1935	70 million
1937/1938	81 million
1938/1939	342 million

Source: *Wirtschaftliche Mitteilungen*, ed. Deutsche Bank, 5 (1939); (30th May 1939), p. 143; see Hilberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 90 f.

⁵⁹*Gesetz zur Änderung der Gewerbeordnung für das deutsche Reich vom 6. Juli 1938*, RGBl 1938, p. 823. Krüger, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

⁶⁰No systematic analysis of the pattern of “Aryanisation” and the progressive liquidation of Jewish firms has been attempted to date on a *Reich* level. The available literature restricts itself to single firms or illustrates general trends by example. Allied and German restitution files should offer primary materials for such a study. (Examples of such approaches are provided by Hilberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 66–82; Genschel, *op. cit.*, pp. 144–176 and *passim*; Drobisch, *op. cit.*, pp. 164–167; for the attack on newly-founded Jewish firms see Adam, *op. cit.*, pp. 123 f.) For bank participation in the *Reichsanleihenkonsortium* see Max M. Warburg, *Aus meinen Aufzeichnungen*, New York 1972, p. 154 (privately printed). A study of such “Aryanisations” would, of course, have to be supplemented by the inclusion of firms liquidated under Nazi pressures, or firms which had been “pseudo-Aryanised” by being taken over and continued by loyal employees or non-Jewish partners.

their participation in the German economy under the weakening protection of the Economics Minister, Schacht – figures for the flight tax to be paid by all persons leaving Germany permanently since 1931, shown in Table IX, suggest that major Jewish firms continued to function until 1937–1938.

This tax – *Reichsfluchtsteuer* – was originally imposed on persons owning upward of RM 200,000 or owning RM 20,000 in property in 1931. In 1934, the tax base was changed to include those owning RM 50,000 at any time since 1931, or having earned RM 20,000 and above per annum since that date. It was paid for capital exported above the minimum amounts and was assessed at 25 per cent of the transferred property. The amounts reported as having been transferred via *Haavara* to Palestine 1937 to 1939 (RM 31.4 million, RM 18.8 million and RM 8.2 million respectively) peaked in 1937 and near-equalled the years 1935 and 1936 for the year 1938. The figure for 1939 constitutes a significant drop-off.⁶¹

In the absence of break-downs for the flight tax and the *Haavara* data, the ratio of number of émigrés to amount of flight tax or *Haavara* transfer, or the distribution of tax payments and transfers by size cannot be determined. The increase in flight taxes by 422 per cent paid by émigrés in 1938/1939 corresponds roughly to the increase in emigration from Germany following the *Kristallnacht*. In spite of this lack of conclusive evidence, the data suggest clearly that more wealthy German Jews emigrated in 1937/1938 and 1939 than in the earlier years of the Nazi régime.

Further indirect evidence for German-Jewish business recovery may be deduced from the following: the contributions to the *Jüdische Winterhilfe* which were collected in parallel to the general Nazi *Winterhilfe* rose proportionately in three collections, i.e., the amounts collected remained equal in spite of the declining numbers of Jews in Germany (1935/1936, RM 3.644 million; 1936/1937, RM 3.630 million; 1937/1938, RM 3.316 million). The per-capita income of Jewish wage earners based on tax deductions from salaries remained higher than the income of Catholic or Protestant wage earners in 1936 (RM 2,234 for Jews compared to RM 2,017 for Protestants, RM 1,921 for Catholics). However, Jews reporting represented only 0.2 per cent of total reports compared to 0.8 per cent Jews in the total population.⁶²

⁶¹For the breakdown of *Haavara* transfers by year see Feilchenfeld, *op. cit.*, p. 75. A search made in the German microfilm materials at the National Archives, Washington D.C. has not yet turned up material relevant to the *Kirchensteuer* (church tax) collected at varying ratios of the income tax, or their breakdown. A manuscript by M. P. Birnbaum on the *Preussische Landesverband jüdischer Gemeinden* which presumably includes data on this expanding tax on which had been reported by that author only in part in previous publications was not available to me when this article was completed. A search for the breakdown of the flight tax by size of individual payment or source has been equally unsuccessful to date, and the German archives (which presumably contain the files of the *Finanzämter*) could not be searched due to limitations of time. The *Haavara* archives should also contain breakdowns of the annual transfer figures not reported in Feilchenfeld, *op. cit.*

⁶²Data for *Winterhilfe* contributions are cited in Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe*, p. 164. They contrasted sharply with the falling income reported for contributions to *Blaue Karte*, the broad-based collection scheme for welfare aid. (The American immigrant fund "Blue Card" constituted a direct transfer of the scheme, including its name, to the U.S.A. It has continued to this date to support extremely indigent immigrants beyond the funds available to them from U.S. Social Security payments or German *Wiedergutmachung* pensions.) It may be conjectured that the falling contributions

On a similar level, the repayment rate of loans granted by *Jüdische Wirtschaftshilfe* to marginal commercial and crafts enterprises rose from near zero in 1933 to 50 per cent in 1935, 65 per cent in 1936 and 75–80 per cent in 1937/1938.⁶³ In 1934, the Jewish vocational guidance agencies advised that Jewish business needed apprentices and that commerce offered promising careers to suitable young Jews. While this advice⁶⁴ reflects the policy of the *Reichsvertretung* to maintain Jewish economic positions in Germany as a matter of reason and self-preservation, it also indicates at least continued business activities among Jewish firms.

Details like these illustrating the participation of Jewish business of several kinds in the recovery need to be related to the history of local persecution and pressures described above. While small and middling Jewish communities, employees and those excluded from their occupations fought marginality, and between 20 and 25 per cent of all Jews received public assistance, Jewish business and manufacturing, especially the larger establishments, succeeded in maintaining their economic positions and, presumably, shared in the upswing of the economy.

For the pattern of Jewish emigration from Germany, the existence of “two Jewish economies” offers an additional clue in explaining its flow and timing. Clearly, social strata among Jews who had lost their foothold in the economy were not absorbed by the “Jewish sector”. In 1933, about two-thirds of Jewish employees had been employed by Jewish firms, and the dwindling of the number of Jewish firms by about 50 per cent in about five years is clearly reflected in the persistent unemployment figures. For this group, retraining for settlement abroad in crafts or agriculture constituted a constructive response to being extruded from the German economy. The strong *chalutz* movement of the first years (1933–1936) and the rapid build-up of retraining facilities in Germany, as well as *Youth Aliyah* emigration, study abroad and the beginning of overseas migration would appear to reflect this condition. A limiting consideration in explaining the relatively slow decline (50 per cent in five years in spite of persistent publicity and local pressures) in the number of firms registered, may have been the fact, mentioned above, that new firms were established by Jews during the Nazi period. This may, however, reflect in part, the tendency among Jews, observed for the pre-1933 period as well, to respond to a loss of jobs by founding a tiny independent, door-to-door, one-man sales agency, or by taking to peddling and middlemen positions for which no or minuscule capital was needed. Unless more

to *Blaue Karte*, reflect precisely the “two economies” characteristic of German Jews during the period, since contribution to *Blaue Karte* came from the Jewish population at large beset by increasing impoverishment and unemployment. Data for the income of Jewish employees are included in *Statistik des Deutschen Reiches*, vol. 492, 1937, p. 20, and *ibid.*, vol. 530, p. 22 (for 1934 and 1936, respectively). They reflect, of course, the previously reported higher levels of income among Jews, see Birnbaum, *loc. cit.* Another reflection of this contrast may be found in the fact that Jews in Germany funded an overwhelming part of Jewish welfare costs through their own contribution. See Bauer, *op. cit.*, p. 127 and see the forthcoming Pt. II of this essay in *LBI Year Book XXVI* (1981). Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe*, pp. 180–181, considerably understates the ratio contributed by German Jews to their *Selbsthilfe* if his data are compared with the expenditures reported for foreign aid by Bauer, *loc. cit.*

⁶³For loan repayment figures for the Berlin *Wirtschaftshilfe* see A. Szanto, ‘Economic Aid in the Nazi Era. The Work of the Berlin *Wirtschaftshilfe*’, in *LBI Year Book IV* (1959), p. 212.

⁶⁴Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe*, pp. 49f.

information is available, conclusions drawn from these figures remain tentative in view of other intervening factors, including the policies of immigration countries towards admitting Jews from Germany who had no visible means of support.

The figures for capital transfers also suggest that although the pattern of emigration cannot be related precisely to continued Jewish business activities in Germany – as will be seen below, and as is indicated by flight tax and *Haavara* figures – a strong group of Jewish firms had remained active until, in the last pre-*Kristallnacht* phase, Nazi measures set in and forced sales or liquidations. That this was in line with the polymorphism of Nazi policies and its deceptive signals to Jewish business has been made clear above. While it would be quite unrealistic to expect that conditions characterised by business expansion were conducive to the realism or pessimism that was needed to unmask Nazi polymorphism as temporary expediencies, and exchange the known miseries of selective persecution for the rigours of pulling up stakes and re-starting a new cycle of life and work in unknown surroundings, no doubt the lack of political acumen and the comfortable *embourgeoisement* of life in Germany blocked early insight into the Nazi threat as much as economic considerations. The tendency to consider oneself immune to measures affecting other members of the community as long as Nazi policies, for historic reasons or by design, practised selective persecution, remained a constant characteristic in the reaction of Nazi victims during the Holocaust phase as well.

VII. RESTRICTIONISM IN HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE

If these data and their interpretation are correct, stabilisation and, possibly economic expansion as well as economic decline and impoverishment were characteristic of the first four and a half years of Jewish life in Nazi Germany. The pattern of persecution described earlier, the timing of persecution measures and the selective ways in which such measures affected different social and economic groups explain this divergence of socio-economic trends in the context of Nazi policies.

The economic pattern relates to the timing and the group breakdown of émigrés from Germany in a number of ways – although intervening variables and the paucity of immigration data for many countries make the relationship considerably less than precise. Generally, groups pushed into marginality could be expected to react to their plight with preparations for emigration. Among these groups, however, were a considerable number of professionals of all kinds who had been the first target of Nazi attacks. Thus economic class and displacement by persecution did not coincide, and the early wave of émigrés in 1933–1934 included intellectuals, artists, academics, physicians, lawyers, students and other groups from the public or “semi-public” sectors of the economy. For the entire period, local displacement fed into the emigration pattern to an extent that is impossible to determine since the *Binnenwanderung* remained unrecorded until 1937. This erased the possibility of differentiating numerically for geographic and social origin if rural displacement, as has been assumed, did indeed move lower income or economically as yet unestablished younger groups from country to city.

In attempting to break down the Jewish emigration of the years 1933/1934 and 1937/1938 into its social components, however, the economic policies of admission in *immigration* countries has to be reviewed. This policy tended to strengthen the economic selectivity of the emigration process, but it also counter-balanced it in important respects.

The Nazi government, as has been made clear, had no interest at any time in an orderly emigration of Jews from Germany, even if, as noted above, the moderate attitudes of several ministries are taken into consideration, and their intentions and humane effects are acknowledged. They did not create an *immigration* policy or plan. "Plans" amounted to no more than empty talk. The government never cooperated with the League of Nations' High Commission for Refugees. It aborted negotiations initiated by the Intergovernmental Committee for Refugees set up by the Evian Conference. Diplomatic feelers and SD "plans" concerning a resettlement of German Jews on the island of Madagascar (a Utopian idea broached by the Polish government and private groups for Jewish citizens in the 1920s and 1930s) remained in the realm of fantasy. The emigration, not the immigration or resettlement of German Jews, were Nazi goals prior to the deportations and genocide. Nazi efforts on all levels concentrated on making Germany "judenrein".

Ideologically, the Nazi leaders rationalised their chaotic policies in propaganda and diplomatic conversations. Germany, it was said, expected foreign public opinion to understand and sympathise with Nazi antisemitism better the more "the world gained first-hand experience with the Jewish question" created by unregulated Jewish immigration.⁶⁵

In consequence, the Nazi government refused to respond to whatever protests were lodged publically or through diplomatic channels by other governments against the expulsion of Jews from Germany, and against the chaos created by robbing Jews of most of their property before permitting them to leave. Diplomatic protests against Nazi measures concerned primarily the mistreatment of foreign nationals residing in Germany. Foreign governments, in turn, proved reluctant to yield to pressures and entreaties by Jewish and liberal groups for policy-level intervention in Germany on behalf of a more orderly or planned Jewish emigration. Such intervention, it was argued, would not only legitimise Nazi persecution of German Jews by helping in their removal from Germany; it would also tend to encourage the governments of Poland, Romania and Hungary to follow the Nazi example and force their Jewish nationals into emigration. In addition, such planning presupposed an available area of settlement, or changes in the restrictions applied by governments to immigration. Fear of the economic and social problems, including increased antisemitism that would be

⁶⁵Hitler saw antisemitic tendencies grow in Poland, Czechoslovakia, France, Great Britain, Holland, South America and other countries, and boasted that his "export of antisemitism" and the arrival of Jewish émigrés from Germany had caused a new universal hostility to Jews. Hitler-Pirow conversations, 24 November 1938 DGFP, ser. D., vol. IV, pp. 338-340; Hitler-Csáky conversation, 16th January 1939, DGFP, ser. D., vol. V, p. 366; Schumburg (Referat Deutschland) Circular to all diplomatic representations 25th January 1939, DGFP, ser. D., vol. V, pp. 931-932. See E. Ben Elissar, *La Diplomatie du IIIe Reich et les Juifs (1933-1939)*, Paris 1939, pp. 400f.

created by "Jewish mass immigration" had added domestic considerations to diplomatic calculations.⁶⁶

To some extent, this policy of creating chaos in immigration countries succeeded in turning the dispersal of Jews from Germany into a national problem in each country accepting, or asked to accept, German Jews, and into an international problem on the level of international organisations.

The League of Nations proved ineffective to do more than draw attention to and, to some extent, alleviate some problems connected with the search of German Jews for a haven. As early as 1933, the League of Nations Assembly had created a "High Commission for Refugees (Jewish and other) coming from Germany". It was set up as a quasi-separate body and housed away from Geneva (in Lausanne). Pending the return of Nazi Germany to the League which, in self-deception, European diplomats as yet hoped for, it was felt that German feelings were to be respected. (In addition, the legally effective date for Germany's renunciation of membership in the League occurred only in 1935.) The League expected member states to help in solving the "economic, financial, and social problems created by the large number of persons from Germany, Jewish and other, seeking refuge". Handicapped by its separation from the League's structure, and by the restrictive policies of member states, the Commission's work remained limited to remedial action. James G. McDonald, its first High Commissioner resigned on 31st December 1935 expressing in his letter of resignation his frustration over the unwillingness of governments to "subordinate considerations of diplomatic correctness to . . . humanity".⁶⁷

It would be a-historical, however, to see the (already moribund) League's failure to act on behalf of planned emigration apart from the policies pursued by the major immigration countries to which, theoretically, German Jews might have turned for admission. Whatever Utopian schemes of "natural law" may have exercised the minds of international lawyers through the centuries in postulating a law of nations that would enjoin states to admit aliens to their territory, the admission of aliens had been regulated by economic, political or demographic considerations as perceived by governments defining their *raison d'état* in response to national socio-political interest structures.⁶⁸

⁶⁶See Bauer, *op. cit.*, pp. 105–179 *passim*, for the role of this motive in American-Jewish discussions concerning large-scale planning for emigration from Germany. For reference to the diplomatic issues involved see Sherman, *op. cit.*, p. 202; Feingold, *op. cit.*; Wyman, *op. cit.*; Ben Elissar, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

⁶⁷The League had played a major role in population transfers affecting Greeks, Turks and Bulgarians following the First World War. See H. A. Strauss, 'Greek-Turkish and Greek-Bulgarian Population Transfers after World War One', paper delivered at the American Historical Association Annual Convention, Washington D.C., December 1976 (unpubl.). Its "Nansen-Office" had successfully alleviated some of the post-war refugee problems, and had created the "Nansen-passport" for stateless refugees.

⁶⁸See R. Plendes, *International Migration Law*, Leiden 1972, pp. 38–70, for a review of these principles and the historic practices of states disregarding them. Several supreme courts or administrative agencies (Poland 1927, Austria 1922, Argentina 1935, U.S.A. 1931), the Convention on the Status of Aliens adopted by the Sixth International Conference of American States (1928), and the Draft Convention adopted at the International Conference on the Treatment of Foreigners held under the auspices of the League of Nations (Paris 1929) are examples of immediate pre-Hitler affirmations of state sovereignty over the admission of aliens to national territory. Plendes, *ibid.*, pp. 62 f., notes 148–150.

Historically, population policies affecting the admission of aliens had expressed themselves in rationalisations of these interest structures by economic theoreticians. Mercantilists had stressed the significance of strong productive populations for the economic and political power of states. As a result, eighteenth-century absolutist governments tended to encourage the selective immigration of population groups considered assets to their developing economies. Jewish migrations had selectively profited from mercantilist policies, as had Christian dissenters expelled *en masse* from their homelands (Huguenots, Salzburg Protestants). With the French Revolution, fear of political subversion appeared first as a motive in national migration policies (U.S. Aliens and Sedition Act, British Alien Bill, Swiss legislation, Canadian supervision of immigrants). For Jews (e.g., during the Napoleonic, or Metternich period) the fear of governments of their "excessive increase" was both a stimulus (to emigrate) and a barrier (to constructive immigration) within Europe, including the Germany Confederacy. Following a period of relatively free immigration policies after 1815, the Revolution of 1848, once again, led to restrictive policies by governments fearing political subversion. Several European governments date the beginning of their immigration legislations to 1848/1849, while such immigration countries as the U.S.A., Latin-American countries or Canada maintained relatively free admission policies for aliens, in line with their interest in demographic and economic development. Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe after 1880 profited from these policies. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, however, racist moods, combined with nationalist and protectionist interests in Western Europe, led to the beginning of restrictionist immigration legislation. Western European states, never "open-hearted receivers of foreign nationals",⁶⁹ progressively tightened admission policies, introduced police supervision (registration) of aliens and restricted their economic activities, especially employment by licensing and work permit requirements. Government legislation also reflected prevailing views as to which immigrant populations might be "desirable" or "undesirable" for a national economy. (Oriental exclusion policies directed against Chinese and Japanese immigrant labour in the U.S.A. and Canada, quota systems, hostility to Jewish immigration, e.g., in Great Britain, the U.S.A. or late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century Germany are examples of a general trend.) Finally, the First World War, the outbreak of which was accompanied by widespread spy and anti-foreign hysteria in Europe, led to further tightening of restrictions on the admission and free movement of aliens. The war inaugurated the broad policies of restrictionism that characterised the 1920s:

"La première guerre mondiale précipita le mouvement. Successivement atteints par les crises économiques et sociales, les États crurent y parent en appliquant une politique étroitement nationaliste et protectionniste."⁷⁰

Thus, when Hitler struck, and forced German Jews to seek havens abroad, international migration restrictions had reached one of their peaks. The depression that had led German voters to ultra-nationalism or ultra-leftism and to substantial anti-liberal protest- and frustration-voting had also induced potential

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 43–44.

⁷⁰D. Visscher, as quoted *ibid.*, pp. 58 f.

target countries for Jewish immigration from Germany to tighten admission and employment requirements for prospective immigrants.

The ideology used to justify such policies reflects pre-Keynesian values. Nineteenth-century economic theory had viewed the fluctuations of business increasingly as crises of purchasing power (i.e., imbalances between the supply and demand for goods) rather than as results of speculation or financial misdealings by banks or exchanges. As a result, the preservation or increase of purchasing power of national populations, and thus the admission of immigrants, became focal points of public economic policy. Industrial slowdowns, and the unemployment of native labour began to be added to earlier concerns with political subversion as a prime motive in restricting immigration. The dates of new decrees restricting immigration in European states appear to be linked with political or economic crises: 1849, 1857, 1882, 1920, 1929. In the words of an American expert (1931):

"The limit of production is, in one sense, determined by the buying population or consumer. In another sense immigration is limited by land-absorptive capacity. The addition to a nation's population of such [immigrant] poor buying power does not improve business conditions but rather impoverishes them by adding to those who must be given food for consumption without the means, even through no fault of their own."⁷¹

In traditional development-immigration countries (Latin America, Canada, Australia/New Zealand), the depression was related to the steep fall in international raw material prices, their main export article. There, restrictionism in admission policies took the form of differentiating between occupations desirable for national development, and occupations considered undesirable for immigrants, or adequately filled by natives or residents. In these countries, as in the U.S.A., economic arguments were reinforced by (admitted or implied) ethnic or racial biases. "Ethnic homogeneity", "desirable genetic endowment", the "proper demographic mixture of high-quality immigrants" are easily recognisable code words for the racist element in the restrictionism of the period.⁷²

Government policies of this kind generally were supported by labour unions defending native workers against increased unemployment or the competition of cheaper foreign labour, by industry wary of additional social problems, or by professional or occupational groups protected by legislation against the competition of foreign nationals or financial burdens. Middle-class liberal governments, in accordance with long-standing fears of "foreign subversive elements", had no desire to aggravate social conflicts by sharpening labour or lower-middle-class unemployment. A survey done in 1931, for example, revealed that in the U.S.A. "three out of every five jobs are closed to aliens . . . four out of every five memberships in labor unions are open to citizens only, and . . . innumerable laws in each of the states deter an alien from entering many occupations".⁷³ In a differ-

⁷¹H. Fields, 'Closing Immigration throughout the World', *American Journal of International Law*, vol. 26 (1936), p. 675.

⁷²H. H. Laughlin, *The Codification and Analysis of the Immigration-Control Laws of each of the Several Countries of Pan-America*. Analysis Volume, Carnegie Institute Washington D.C., Eugenics Research Office, 1936 (mimeo.) reflects quite explicitly the racist and cultural-nationalist background of restrictionism for the period under discussion.

⁷³Fields, *op. cit.*, p. 674, quoted from Harold Fields, 'Unemployment and the Alien', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, I (1931).

ent political climate, where awakening nationalisms competed for power, economic arguments of a similar nature were advanced by Great Britain in its role as the mandatory power for Palestine. While the basic rationale for restricting Jewish immigration was political, it took the form of linking immigration with the "economic capacity" of that country to absorb immigrants, presumed to be a fixed quality independent of demographic or socio-economic stimulation, the world market, capital import or labour and entrepreneurial skills.

For the German Jew contemplating emigration as a necessity, a precaution, or an act of faith (Zionism), the combined impact of immigration restrictions and economic discrimination he would face in his quest for security from oppression supplied the second series of factors influencing the timing of his emigration. His information about historic details, or about the world-wide migration crisis was, no doubt, incomplete. It was derived from sources of varying reliability, subject to his educational and linguistic proficiencies, his grasp of world affairs or his provincialism. How intensely information on immigration opportunities was sought was related to the pattern of persecution, the intensity of defamation and the deprivation of livelihood experienced as their result. The pursuit of immigration opportunities had primarily depended on personal initiatives in establishing contacts with relatives abroad and overseas. Once the decision was made, however, solid information was available to him. It was provided by the network of emigration advisors established in major Jewish centres by the Jewish aid organisations, by several types of literature at his disposal, the increasingly frequent reporting of the Jewish press on immigration countries or letters from relatives abroad.⁷⁴

VIII. THE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES OF REFUGE

If these general observations are tested against the actual migration situation, i.e., if restrictionism in a given country is matched with the flow of Jewish (or "political") emigration, however, the correlation is less clear-cut, and not applicable in all cases as a factor in emigration.

This applies particularly to Europe and to the years 1933–1935, the first three years of Jewish emigration from Germany. During these years, European countries headed the list of migration targets. The two most reliable estimates (based on the figures of a German and a U.S. Jewish aid organisation) suggest that 72 to 77 per cent of Jewish émigrés resorted to European countries in 1933; 35 to 40 per cent in 1934; 26 to 31 per cent in 1935; and 20 to 25 per cent in 1936. In 1937, and during the first six months of 1938, European countries were chosen by 25 per cent of Jewish émigrés, including 4 per cent repatriates (i.e., primarily

⁷⁴These sources of the "images" of immigration countries are as yet unanalysed. Reports in the Jewish press reflect changes in immigration goals, beginning with Europe and Palestine (1933–1935) and increasing emphasis on overseas countries from 1936 on. The press and *Jüdische Auswanderung, Korrespondenzblatt des Hilfsvereins der Juden in Deutschland* also reprinted selected letters, sometimes from former journalists. For a classified list of references to migration issues see 'Emigration and Immigration in the German Jewish Press, 1933–1939', in *Jewish Immigrants of the Nazi period in the U.S.A.*, vol. III-2, comp. Daniel Schwartz, N.Y. 1980 (in print).

residents of foreign, mostly Eastern European, nationality). These ratios were upset by the pressure felt by émigrés following the November 1938 pogroms in Germany, and eight months earlier, by the panic flight of Viennese Jews across the Austrian frontiers into Switzerland and other neighbouring countries, and into Western Europe generally. (Yugoslavia, Italy and Czechoslovakia had closed their frontiers as soon as Austrian-Jewish migration pressures became evident in March/April 1938.) With the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the Nazi-Soviet Pact, the Second World War and the fall of Poland, France, Holland and Belgium to Axis conquest, Eastern as well as Western European countries ceased to be targets for German-Jewish immigration and became centres of rescue and flight. Only neutral countries (Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, Sweden) or overseas havens remained to save Jews from incarceration and deportation to death camps when legal emigration from Germany ended in October 1941.⁷⁶

Table X, compiled from a variety of sources, reflects the *entry* or *presence* of Jewish émigrés from Germany or Austria at a given time based on estimates for selected European countries made at the time. The table reflects the "refugee" character of Jewish emigration within Europe. Each major advance of violent persecution brought about the entry of larger numbers of Jewish persecutees. Great Britain, France, Holland, Belgium and Switzerland as well as the Czechoslovak Republic were heirs to liberal traditions concerning the "right of asylum" for political and religious persecutees. Some of these traditions had been anchored in constitutional provisions. In the past they had been accepted by public opinion as part of the national self-image (*Staatsidee*), and in periods of persecution, had been followed with honourable liberality. This tradition had remained a factor throughout the 1930s in these countries, and had become part of the internal government (or public opinion) assessment of immigration policies. Politically, parties of the liberal centre and the left were more prone than rightist-nationalist parties to combine the humanitarianism inherent in the idea of asylum for persecutees with the defence of the economic interests of their constituents in time of depression. For small countries, concern with pressure on the part of Nazi Germany at times also played a part in their attitude towards Jewish immigration from Germany. As a result, domestic political and government changes affected the degree of restrictionism or liberality towards the refugee-immigrant residing in the country or asking for a visa. In most countries, the Jewish welfare establishments or representative Jewish bodies cooperated with government agencies and with the representatives of overseas immigrant Jewish aid agencies to ease the admission of Jewish refugees by working for their re-migration to final destinations. In other countries, fear of increasing anti-semitism or *Überfremdung* led such Jewish bodies to accept restrictionist trends in national policy. (Frequently, both motives were present in Jewish attitudes.) The impact of such policies, from whatever sources or for whichever motive, turned most European countries into countries of transient migration, and considerable government and police pressures were exerted to reduce the number of

⁷⁶Rosenstock, *loc. cit.*, based on material of the *Zentralausschuß für Hilfe und Aufbau*, the social welfare arm of the *Reichsvertretung*; Bauer, *op. cit.*, based on published and archival materials engendered by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

resident émigrés through re-migration. In most countries this situation changed only following the outbreak of the Second World War.

In general, caution is indicated in estimating the number of Jewish refugees for some of the countries included in Table X. This is especially true of the figures for France, possibly also for Belgium and Italy and, to a minor extent and for limited periods, for Switzerland. The pressure of persecution, especially in 1933 for political refugees, and 1938–1939 for Jewish refugees from post-*Anschluß* Austria and post-November Germany often forced refugees to cross borders illegally, i.e., to avoid either the exit controls of passports (which would have led to their arrest and worse), or the procurement of an entrance visa in a passport if available (which made contact with Nazi control agencies like police or Gestapo necessary, with similar consequences). Another form of illegality (most typically in France) was brought about by the fact that residence permits of various kinds carried time limits at the end of which the refugee was expected to have left the country or face arrest, imprisonment or, the worst contingency, deportation to his country of origin. For numerous refugees of the middle- and later 1930s in Europe, the refusal of German authorities to renew German passports for émigrés, especially for visible and activist political enemies of the régime, and the lengthening list of émigrés being deprived of their German nationality by the Nazi authorities created the personal and political nightmare of “statelessness”.⁷⁶ For refugees ready to re-migrate to overseas countries, some countries of intermediate settlement in Europe had followed a policy providing travel documents in lieu of passports. The League of Nations High Commission for Refugees also had worked for the provision of such papers for stateless post-1933 refugees (Convention of Geneva, 4th July 1936).

However, all such identity papers presupposed that the immigrant had been granted legal residence in a country of refuge – and such residence was contingent on the alien’s proof of nationality. Through provisions such as these, persecutees were forced to enter illegally or stay on beyond the time granted originally. In situations such as these, refugees, at times supported by political friends, sympathetic officials or “lenient” interpretations of government regulations, were forced to exist in the loose interstices of immigration, residence or work rules governing their stay. In European countries of refuge, illegality and humanitarianism thus formed a functional corrective to breaches of the tradition of asylum, and, once the emergency had passed, were recognised as justified mitigations of harsh national policies.

In 1933, when Hitler struck and Europe was still at, or near, the peak of the world depression, the countries bordering Germany had long had provisions on

⁷⁶*Gesetz über den Widerruf von Einbürgerungen und die Aberkennung der deutschen Staatszugehörigkeit*, 14th July 1933, RGB I, S. p. 480. The passport system controlling the movement of people across frontiers had been universally adopted only with the First World War. Previously, even where provisions for passports as basis for transnational travel existed, “legislation was allowed to pass into desuetude” (Plendes, *op. cit.*, p. 59). For such immigration countries as the U.S.A., the then valid provisions for naturalisation required a “declaration of intention” (first papers) which, in practice, permitted the issuance of travel papers, in any event hardly a pressing need for recent immigrants struggling in entry-level jobs to make ends meet.

TABLE X

Estimated numbers of Jewish refugees from Germany/Austria having entered (ent.) or present (pr.) in selected European countries, 1933-1939.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Belgium</i>	<i>Czechoslovakia</i>	<i>France</i>
1933		4,000 ent.	8,900-9,500 ent.
1934			10,000-12,000 pr.
			2,400-3,000 re-emigrated.
1935		800 pr.	9,000 pr. of whom 2,000 illegal residents.
1936		6,500 ent. (1933-1936)	
1937			7,000 pr. of whom 2,500 supported.
1938	15,000 ent. (1933 to Sept. 1938). 13,300 pr. Nov. 1938. 3,000 ent. illegally (Nov./Dec. 1938).	5,000-6,000 pr.	10,000 pr. beginning 1938. 13,500 ent. to Dec. 1938-January 1939. 25,000 pr., incl. 2,000 Czechoslovaks.
1939	25,000 pr. (March). 400 per week illegal entrants (March 1939).		7,500 Baden deportees to Gurs (22nd October 1940)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Netherlands</i>	<i>Great Britain</i>	<i>Italy</i>
1933	3,682 ent.	300-400 per month.	
1934	1,200-1,500 returned to Germany, 1933/1934. Total 9,000 ent. 1933/1934.	100 per month.	
1935			1,000 pr.
1936	600 ent. per month (late 1936).	"Several thousand" pr. (8th Sept. 1936).	
1937	11,000 pr. 1933-1938 of whom 2,000 on relief.	11,000 total entry 1933-Sept. 1938 + 400 transit.	6,000 pr. 7th Sept. 1938. Italian race laws.
1938	2,000 ent. (elderly relatives of resident immigrants).		

Year	Netherlands	Great Britain	Italy
1939	10,000-12,000 pr. Feb. of whom 3,000 supported. 7,000-8,000 pr. Sept.	46,458 ent. 1933-Sept. 1939 of whom: aged 1-18 trainees elderly domestics at Richborough camp residents	(?) 10,000 left by Sept. 1939.
<hr/>			
Year	Switzerland		
1933	10,000 ent. Bad. Bahnhof Basle, March-Sept. (all kinds, German nationals). 5,000 pr.		
1934			
1935	2,000 pr.		
1936			
1937			
1938	3,000 ent. from Austria March-April. 2,000 enter illegally (after April 1938). 3,000 enter from Italy (to Sept. 1938).		
1939	2,300 enter from Austria (July-August 1938). 10,000-12,000 pr. (late 1938/ early 1939). 5,000 pr. (Sept. 1939). 300 children ent.		

Compiled from Bauer, *op. cit.*; R. Fabian/C. Coulmas, *Die deutsche Emigration in Frankreich nach 1933*, Munich-New York-Paris-London 1978; *Aid to Jews Overseas. Report for 1939*, Am. Jew. Joint Distribution Committee, New York 1940; C. Ludwig, *Die Flüchtlingspolitik der Schweiz seit 1933 bis zur Gegenwart* (1957), Bern 1966; A. J. Sherman, *Island Refuge. Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich 1933-1939*, Berkeley-Los Angeles, Cal. 1973.

their statute books, and worked out administrative procedures, controlling the admission, residence and gainful work of aliens.⁷⁷

The restrictive potential of "alien laws" affected alien workers except where seasonal work or workers indispensable for a branch of industry dictated otherwise. Unemployment figures suggest the obvious motives for the restrictionist interpretations generally applied at the time: France – 400,000 (1936); Great Britain – 2,224,000 (1933), 1,804,000 (1938); Switzerland – 68,000 (average between monthly fluctuations of 101,000 and 49,000, 1933), 93,000 (average 1936); the Netherlands – 451,000 (1936); Czechoslovakia – 70,000 (1933).⁷⁸

Disregarding national differences in police practice or the local, state (canton) or federal authorities concerned, practically all European countries established at least one of the following conditions for the residence permits of aliens: a work permit from a government authority or a government-approved contract with a native employer; "sufficient means" to support the immigrant and his family; an occupation considered useful or desirable (i.e., non-competitive with native occupations); a wealthy relative or sponsor able to guarantee the livelihood of the alien while in the country. Admission generally called for pre-entry visa procedures based on various proofs of health, non-criminality, trustworthiness or economic viability; all countries demanded registration of aliens within specified periods following their arrival. In several countries (France, Switzerland, Holland) residence permits were granted in cooperation between central (federal) and local or regional authorities. Loss of nationality (i.e., statelessness and thus non-deportability to the home country) represented reasons (e.g., in France and Switzerland) for withdrawal of residence permits and were grounds for either forced return to home country, or expulsion across a frontier. Enforcement of these provisions was handled with consideration, however, during several periods of the refugee emergency, or was subject to political and media pressures for liberalisation. There were several refinements of the web of restrictive measures to which aliens found themselves subjected, and the administration of restrictive policies varied from one country or period to another. Governments, however their policies may have appeared at the time, and however they appear in the retrospective light of the Holocaust or post-war immigration policies towards political refugees (e.g., Hungarians, 1956; Czechs, 1968) or "guest workers", were conscious of the sensitive issues related to immigration, and of the cross-pressures created by political and economic interests. And many governments failed to live up to their professed ideals or political traditions and employed harsh restrictive measures to keep Jewish refugees from entering their countries.

In sum, alien laws in liberal-democratic Northern and Western Europe and in liberal-democratic Czechoslovakia hovered between traditions of asylum, the right-left political divisions within the country and the "national interest" defined as balances between public opinions, political traditions, the economic nationalism dictated by business and employment conditions, and, for Jews coming from Germany, and more strongly, from Austria, real or anticipated fears of xenophobic and antisemitic reactions. For Jews or political refugees in panic

⁷⁷For these provisions concerning aliens see Appendix.

⁷⁸Bauer, *op. cit.*, p. 170 and *passim*; Ludwig, *op. cit.*, (see Table X), p. 62.

flight, however, it may safely be presumed that considerations such as these hardly entered into the decision to leave Germany in early 1933. The extent of this flight cannot be determined with precision: as terror unfolded following the Nazi takeover, a considerable number of Jews used the opportunity to travel, presumably as tourists, to such countries where the easy admission of such tourists had been an interest of the tourist industry. That 10,000 persons entered Switzerland between April and September 1933 at one frontier railroad station alone (*Badischer Bahnhof*, Basle) suggests the extent of the temporary escape to safety, and the widespread return movement from such havens.⁷⁹ The economic problems created for émigrés by their inability to secure gainful employment in European countries of refuge explains adequately the relatively uniform decline in absolute and relative numbers of Jewish refugees in Western Europe and Czechoslovakia. In 1933–1934, Jewish opinion as well as the Jewish press in Germany had gained a clear view of the increasing misery of middle-class émigrés and their families in Western countries sliding into marginality and, ultimately, poverty and dependence on welfare. Return migration appears to have persisted through early 1935 when a Nazi threat of internment in a concentration camp for returnees appears to have put a stop to such return movement. (Pupils or students studying abroad, however, were able to return for visits even after that date.) For the bulk of émigrés, however, re-emigration to a final destination beyond Europe was the only acceptable solution for their difficulties. It is in this light that German-Jewish emigration to European countries in absolute or relative numbers is to be evaluated. Aggravated persecutions of Jews in Upper Silesia, Austria, Germany, Danzig and Czechoslovakia, once again introduced mass pressures for admission, especially in 1938–1939. In response, most countries tightened restrictions for the admission of refugees once again, closed their frontiers or pushed émigrés strongly into re-migration.⁸⁰ In spite of these new restrictions, however, considerable numbers of refugees succeeded in crossing the frontiers to European countries of refuge. Public opinion, revolted by the orgy of brutality and despoliation, began to understand that the emigration of Jews from Germany had been more than a *Wirtschaftsemigration* all along. Parliamentary debates, the press, the churches and liberal organisations overcame bureaucratic or ministerial scruples and reasserted traditions of asylum in spite of continued economic difficulties. One country (Great Britain) changed its earlier restrictionism and admitted a considerably larger number of refugees, including unaccompanied children, than any other country in a ten-month period. The outbreak of the war in Europe led belligerents to close their frontiers to German nationals and thus stop emigration, except for transit visas to ports or neutral countries. Of occupied countries, only immigrants to Denmark were spared major involvement in the Holocaust when Danish resistance succeeded in saving

⁷⁹For Netherlands, see Bauer, *op. cit.*, pp. 170f.; for Switzerland, see Ludwig, *op. cit.*, p. 65; no corresponding figures are available for other countries. The movement included also German Jews of foreign nationality as indicated by the figures of émigrés – returnees of this group assisted by the *Hauptstelle für jüdische Wanderfürsorge*, Berlin, which was charged with care for Jews of foreign nationality, see Adler-Rudel, *Jüdische Selbsthilfe*, pp. 94–97.

⁸⁰Switzerland, for example, succeeded in halving the number of émigrés present from 10,000 to 5,000 between January and September 1939, Bauer, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

most Jewish refugees by ferrying them to neutral Sweden. Substantial numbers were also saved in France, Belgium and Holland in underground operations, while about 21,000 Jewish refugees (including 9,119 German and 3,655 Austrian nationals) survived the war in Switzerland. In spite of the efforts of many individuals and organisations, however, an estimated 30,000 Jewish refugees residing in Axis-occupied Western Europe were deported to Eastern Europe and perished there.⁸¹

(END OF PART I)

⁸¹In France, their internment was aided by the police and administration of Vichy France; the documentary material bearing on the involvement of the French bureaucracy in these events is said to have been destroyed following the Second World War.

Part II of this article appears in the Appendix, beginning on page 1413.

APPENDIX

The legal provisions concerning aliens provide only a framework for often widely varying interpretations and applications by administrative departments, and their language permits considerable adaptability to changing social, economic or political conditions. The major applicable legal provisions for major European countries *prior to 1933* are:

Belgium: (for texts see H. Bekaerd, *Le Statut des Etrangers en Belgique* 2 vols. (vol. Ia and Ib) Brussels 1940; reprints of all provisions 1830–1939 pp. 475–668.)

Netherlands: Law 13th of August 1849 concerning admission and expulsion of aliens, *State Journal* No. 39; Act of 4th June 1858, *State Journal* No. 46; Royal Decree of 7th July 1887; *State Journal* No. 141; Revision of Royal Decree of 7th July 1887; Law of 17th June 1918, *State Journal* No. 410; Law of 16th August 1918, *State Journal* No. 52; Royal Decree of 11th August 1920, *State Journal* No. 669; and of 12th December 1922, *State Journal* No. 671. Regulations concerning Foreigners, article 27 and Criminal Code Art. 438, as amended by Royal Decree of 31st March 1922, 12th December 1922.

France: Loi sur la naturalisation et le séjour des étrangers en France, 3 décembre 1849, *Collection Complète des Lois* (C.C.L.) 1894, pp. 415–420; Décret relatif aux étrangers résidants en France, 2 octobre 1888, C.C.L., 1888, pp. 279–280; Lois relatives au séjour des étrangers en France et à la protection du travail national, 8 août 1893, C.C.L., 1893, pp. 371–373; Lois sur l'exercice des professions ambulantes et réglementation de la circulation des Nomades, 16 juillet 1912, C.C.L., 1912, pp. 408–415 (Art. 9: "Les art. [?] et 3 de la loi du 8 août 1893 sont modifiés et complétés comme il suit"); Décret portant à création d'une carte d'identité à l'usage des étrangers, 2 avril 1917, C.C.L., 1917, pp. 137–139; Décret réglementant la délivrance des cartes destinées aux étrangers, 10 juillet 1929, C.C.L., pp. 504–505; Décret complétant le décret du 10 juillet 1929 etc., 21 mai 1932, C.C.L., 1932, pp. 242–243.

Switzerland: Bundesratsverordnung vom 21. November 1917 betreffend die Grenzpolizei und die Kontrolle der Ausländer; Verordnung vom 29. November 1921 über die Kontrolle der Ausländer, as amended by Bundesratsbeschluß vom 7. September 1925 und Bundesratsbeschluß vom 16. Oktober 1928. (See Ludwig, *op. cit.*, pp. 14–27, includes historic review); Bundesgesetz vom 26. März 1931 über Aufenthalt und Niederlassung der Ausländer, und Vollziehungsverordnung vom 5. Mai 1933. (Provisions concerning military deserters or objectors, and references to Art. 70 a. 120 of the Federal Constitution are not included.)

Austria: Inlandarbeiterschutzgesetz vom 19. Dezember 1925, BGB No. 457.

Czechoslovakia: Law of 13th March 1928, Collection of Czechoslovakian Laws and Decrees, 1928, No. 39.

Great Britain: Aliens Act of 1905 (5 Edw. 7, c. 13); Aliens Restrictions Act of 1914 (4 and 5 Geo. 5, c. 12); Aliens Restriction (Amendment) Act of 1919 (9 and 10 Geo. 5, c. 92); Order in Council of 1920 (Aliens Order). (S.R.O. No. 448.) For additional references to pre-Hitler restrictionist laws or decrees see Fields, *op. cit.*, pp. 675–699, and Plendes, *op. cit.*, p. 63, n. 151.

For the period following the Nazi seizure of power in Germany, the interpretation of administrative legislation concerning aliens reflected the leniency or harshness of public policies. A comprehensive scholarly analysis of the legislative and administrative history of alien law remains a *desideratum*. The monographic studies for several countries (France, Switzerland, Netherlands, United Kingdom, U.S.A.) quoted throughout section VIII illustrate the complex patterns of domestic and foreign influences that shaped the admission of Jews from Germany and Austria in the 1930s. Among the basic decrees or laws, applicable to the immigration of Jewish refugees and developed in response to the economic and political situation as perceived by changing governments during the period, were the following:

Belgium: Royal Decree 15th December 1930; the Belgian ratification of the Convention on Refugees of the League of Nations of 25th May 1936 (11th October 1936); ratification of the Statute of the League of Nations for Refugees coming from Germany of 4th July 1936 (5th December 1936); Instructions Générales pour l'application des arrêts royaux . . . relatives aux étrangers en Belgique 29 octobre 1936; Convention concernant le statut des réfugiés provenant de l'Allemagne, 10 février 1938.

Netherlands: Government Declaration 30th May 1934; Circulars, Ministry of Justice, 3rd July 1934; 10th October 1934; 15th March 1935; 23rd March 1938; 7th May 1938.

France: Décret modifiant la réglementation de la délivrance des cartes d'identité destinées aux étrangers, 6 février 1935, 35 C.C.L., pp. 53–56; Décret sur les marchands ambulants étrangers, 30 octobre 1935, C.C.L., p. 787; Décret tendant à protéger les artisans français contre la concurrence des artisans étrangers, 8 août 1935 (Bull. annoté des lois 1935, p. 338); Le président de la République Française, . . . l'arrangement conclu à Genève le 4 juillet 1936 – . . . les articles 196, 197 et 351 du code du timbre fixant . . . du droit exigible pour la délivrance et le visa des passeports, 17 septembre 1936 (le Bull. législatif Dalloz, 1936, p. 759; Décret sur la police des étrangers, 2 mai 1938, 38 C.C.L., pp. 310–311; Décret réglementant les conditions de séjour des étrangers en France, 14 mai 1938, 39 C.C.L., pp. 344–348; Décret tendant à assurer la protection du commerce français, 17 juin 1938, 38 C.C.L.; Décret-Loi relatif à la situation et à la police des étrangers, 12 novembre 1938 (Bull. annoté des lois, 1938, pp. 396–400; Décret-Loi relatif à la carte d'identité de commerçant pour les étrangers, 12 novembre 1938 (Bull. annoté des lois, pp. 400–401).

For a more detailed discussion of the legal provisions governing the nationality, naturalisation, immigration, work and other aspects of French legislation on refugees see now B. Vormeier, 'Dokumentation zur französischen Emigrantenpolitik (1933–1944). Ein Beitrag'. in H. Schramm, *Menschen in Gurs. Erinnerungen an ein französisches Internierungslager (1940–1941)*, Worms 1977, pp. 259–274 (Anhang C: Analytische Liste der wichtigsten französischen Gesetze betreffend die Ausländer), and *passim*.

Switzerland: Weisung des Eidgenössischen Justiz- und Polizeidepartments (EJPD) an die kantonalen Polizeidirektionen, 31st March 1933; Beschluß des Bundesrats (BBR) über die Behandlung der politischen Flüchtlinge, 7th April 1933; Kreisschreiben des EJPD, 20th April 1933; dto., 14th September 1933; dto., 8th August 1937; BBR, 28th March 1938; BBR, 19th August 1938; BBR, 10th Octo-

ber 1938; BBR, 20th January 1939 (for other Kreisschreiben und Weisungen see Ludwig, *op. cit.*, *passim*).

For the Swiss-SD agreement to stamp the letter "J" (for *Jude*) in red into German passports following the *Anschluß* of Austria, see Ludwig, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-134. (For the British reaction to the proposal of identifying Jews in this manner see Sherman, *op. cit.*, pp. 89 f.)

Great Britain: Foreign Office, Passport Control Division, Circular Visas for Holders of German and Austrian passports entering the United Kingdom, 27th April 1938, Sir Samuel Hoare (Home Secretary), House of Commons, 21st November 1938, Hansard, pp. 1428-1483. Internal Home Office Memoranda (unpublished). See Sherman, *op. cit.*, *passim*, esp. pp. 213, 215 for 1938-1939.

The Jewish Refugee Community of Shanghai, 1938-1945

by David Kranzler

The year 1938 was a watershed for world Jewry. The doom of the thousand-year-old communities of Central Europe was clearly foreshadowed by the *Kristallnacht* of November 1938. The pogrom released a previously repressed panic, and every Jew wanted to escape from Hitler's Greater Germany. Those who held American or other visas got out as soon as possible, but the majority became victims of almost universal restrictions and quota systems. Most countries had shut their doors against the Jewish refugee: only one place in the world offered any refuge at this critical time—Shanghai.

A teeming metropolis of over four million Chinese and nearly a hundred thousand foreigners (including Japanese), Shanghai was an open city, requiring no papers or visas of any sort for entry. This condition lasted until August 1939 when the first restrictions on immigration were imposed by the Japanese authorities. Even so, Shanghai, with its great distance from Europe, its strange environment and culture and its reputation as a hotbed of international intrigue and immorality, would hardly have appealed to many of the fleeing German and Austrian Jews at any other time, and these factors inhibited many potential emigrants until it was too late. Nevertheless, between 1938 and 1941, some 17,000 to 18,000 refugees, including 1,500 Gentile 'non-Aryans' and 1,100 Polish Jews, found their way to Shanghai. They had followed two major routes: by sea, from the end of 1938 to 10 June 1940; and by land, from 11 June 1940 to 7 December 1941.

The sea route was taken primarily by refugees who emigrated as a direct result of the *Kristallnacht*. They usually left from Italy and

The author, a history graduate of Columbia University, New York, is at present Social Science Librarian at Queensborough Community College of the City University of New York.

sailed (generally on Italian lines) via Suez or the Cape directly to Shanghai. This emigration reached its peak during the first half of 1939, when it was slowed down by the first restrictions, and stopped completely on 10 June 1940, when Italy entered the war. After that, refugees travelled by train from Germany through Russia and Siberia to the Far East. They usually continued to Manchuria and from there made for Shanghai. Others, particularly Polish refugees, went on to Kobe in Japan, and eventually ended up in Shanghai. The journey for the German or Austrian refugees, whether by sea or land, was usually uneventful and even relaxing. Though restricted to 10 RM in cash, they were permitted to take many of their belongings.

The Polish Jewish refugees, on the other hand, were among the thousands who, as Hitler advanced into Poland, had fled to Lithuania, then neutral, with nothing but the clothes they stood up in. Among this group was the only Talmudic College that survived as a unit: the Yeshiva of Mir. In their attempts to secure exit visas from Russian-occupied Lithuania during the latter part of 1940, some students of Dutch origin from this yeshiva convinced a sympathetic Dutch consul in Kovno to issue so-called visas to Curaçao in the Dutch West Indies. Armed with these end-visas, the students were issued transit visas to Japan by a sympathetic Japanese consul in Kovno named Sugihara, who eventually granted as many as ten thousand Japanese transit visas to the desperate Polish refugees. Only two thousand ran the risk of asking for Soviet exit permits which allowed them to head for Japan via Siberia.

Whereas most of the approximately 2,600 German and Austrian refugees who came to Japan during 1940–41 had their papers in order, the Polish Jews, travelling with dubious visas, found themselves stranded in Kobe. Their

transit visas were extended by the Japanese for weeks and months, until about half of them were able to travel to countries in the Western hemisphere—this in a country whose leadership was essentially pro-German and was soon to conclude the Tripartite Pact with Hitler and Mussolini. Moreover, in Japan at that time various antisemitic elements both in and out of the Government were actively expressing the Nazi line through the German-subsidized magazine *Yudaya Kenkyu* and translations of antisemitic works such as *The Jewish Offensive against Japan* by Muto-Teiiti. The Japanese also shared the fear, so prevalent in the United States at the time, that Communist spies had been planted among the refugees.

The extraordinary and at times contradictory behaviour of the Japanese authorities is partly explained by their exaggerated notions of Jewish financial and political power. They had studied and distributed Nazi propaganda tracts such as the *Protocols*, and their very belief in the authenticity of this propaganda prompted them to help Jewish refugees. Moreover, the Japanese antisemite was *sui generis*; he meant to utilize 'Jewish power' for Japan's greater good. The fear of antagonizing 'influential Jewish elements' in the United States and England, and the hope of diverting this influence in Japan's favour, helped to shape the favourable policy of the Japanese authorities towards the Jewish refugees both in Shanghai and in Japan proper during 1940-41. Much of this policy was set forth at a ministerial conference held in Tokyo on 6 December 1938, and only partially altered after Pearl Harbour. There were other less important factors: the lack of mutual trust between Japan and Germany and the humane element which was conspicuously and spontaneously displayed by the general public in Kobe in spite of several incidents that might easily have fanned anti-refugee resentment.

Thus, as war fever gripped Japan during the fall of 1941, the 1,100 Polish refugees, still stranded in Kobe, were shipped to Shanghai. Here, the refugees from Hitler had been preceded by the Sephardic (Bagdadi) and the Ashkenazi (Russian) migrations. The Sephardim had come from Bagdad during the nineteenth century and had founded settlements in India, the coastal cities of China, Japan, Malaya and

the Dutch East Indies. They acted as catalysts for the industrialization and commercial development of the Far East. Arriving in the wake of the opening of China's ports in the middle of the nineteenth century, such families as the Sassoons, Hardoons, Kadoories, Ezras and Abrahams became extremely wealthy. In Shanghai their number never exceeded five or six hundred, but their economic, social and political position made them part of the white international upper class. Although British by choice, their Jewish heritage was not neglected. By the 1930s, they had established a wide range of institutions: two magnificent synagogues, a Jewish school, a hospital and a Zionist organization.

The Russian Jews differed from the Sephardim in almost every way—economically, socially and even in their religious heritage and outlook. These Ashkenazi Jews came to Shanghai in brief spurts from the end of the nineteenth century, in large numbers after 1905 and still more after 1918–19, as part of the general migration of White Russians to the Far East. The last large group arrived via Harbin, following the Japanese occupation of Manchuria. Though more numerous than the Sephardim—close to four thousand—the Ashkenazim never achieved the commercial success of the early settlers, being essentially, with few exceptions, lower middle class. Employees rather than employers, they played a minor role in Shanghai's social and cultural life. They too organized a few religious institutions of their own, such as an Orthodox synagogue, an old-age home and their own club. They surpassed the Sephardim in nationalist feeling and had a strong Zionist organization. The economic, social and cultural gulf between the two communities was not bridged until after the war. Despite their many institutions, both communities seemed destined to cultural assimilation.

However, a new chapter in the history of Shanghai's Jewish community began with the arrival of thousands of German and Austrian refugees in the winter of 1938. By the end of December 1938, over 1,500 refugees had arrived, and the number reached four thousand three months later, equalling that of the Sephardic and Russian Jews. Still the flight to the only place without visa requirements continued,

reaching its peak of close to 14,000 in June–August 1939. The total was expected to rise to between 20,000 and 30,000 by the end of the year. This figure would have been surpassed had it not been for the severe shortage of available shipping space, and for the first restrictions on immigration to Shanghai imposed by the Japanese in August 1939, which limited the total number of refugees in the city to between 17,000 and 18,000.

The initial response of the Sephardic and Russian communities to the appeal for relief of the newcomers was swift and generous. It came despite a severe economic crisis caused by the city's devastation in the Sino-Japanese war of 1937, during which many Russian Jews lost both home and business. Prominent old-established residents of Shanghai had formed the *International Committee for Granting Relief to European Refugees*, headed by Paul Komor and known as the *IC* or the *Komor Committee*, in August 1938. Personal rivalries and the vast increase in immigration led to the formation of another relief organization, the *Speelman Committee*, named after its Dutch Jewish financier chairman, Michel Speelman, which became known as *CFA* (Committee for Assistance of European Refugees in Shanghai). The two committees functioned separately and eventually concentrated on different aspects of relief. The *IC* served the stateless refugees in a consular capacity, issuing identity cards, maintaining personal files and promoting projects such as the Milk Fund and the Thrift Shop. Most valuable, however, in the long run, proved to be the disbursement of loans to refugees wishing to establish an independent livelihood. The money for this Rehabilitation Fund came from its chief supporter, Sir Victor Sassoon, the Sephardi magnate; during the first year of its operation, over 1,300 refugees reached some degree of self-support with such aid. The *CFA* concentrated on providing lodgings for the growing number of indigent refugees. During the first two months, sufficient funds and goods in kind were contributed locally to care for most needs. The first refugees were either housed in the YMCA, in a Sephardi synagogue, or in an office building donated by Sir Victor; or were given cash subsidies to pay for their room and board. But the increase in the number of refugees seemed

to overwhelm the resources of the local relief committees. Among the first to respond to an appeal for help (though only in the form of one-time donations) were the Jewish communities of Egypt, the *Council for German Jewry* in London, and the *Joint Distribution Committee* of New York. Although thousands of dollars were sent to the one place in the world where a refugee could live most cheaply (5 US cents a day), there were no on-going commitments which would have permitted long-range planning. Only when the British and Egyptians stopped aid in August 1939 did the *JDC* make such a commitment.

Just as important as financial aid was the need for professional social workers to establish a proper relief programme instead of the existing ad hoc setup organized by well-intentioned but amateurish businessmen and volunteers, and it was not until the middle of 1941 that the *JDC* was to send help, by which time the need had become desperate. Still, the achievements were far from unimpressive. Within one difficult year provision had been made for housing over 2,500 destitute refugees in permanent camps and feeding an additional 5,000. One figure, which indicates the sheer size of the task, is that over four million meals were served to about 8,000 refugees in 1939. The camps (or *Heime*), which were to become the object of constant criticism, seemed to be the only possibility of catering for the needs of a rapidly growing indigent refugee population with the limited funds available in a Shanghai suffering from a severe housing shortage. The first of these *Heime* was a converted White Russian army barracks, which also served as the administrative centre and the prototype for the four later *Heime*. Its kitchen also supplied food for the other *Heime* and the thousands outside receiving free or cheap meals. In addition to lodgings, the camps provided free medical services; otherwise, however, the Rehabilitation Fund did little to train people or help them to find a job so that they could become independent. Moreover, the attitude towards Shanghai as a 'transit centre' inhibited any long-range planning. Many of the difficulties in the *Heime* stemmed from a somewhat autocratic administration, a staff of more than 500, and the lack of privacy inherent in camp-life. Many residents suffered from depression

due to unemployment, especially the intellectuals to whom Shanghai offered no openings.

The first impression of Shanghai, with its imposing buildings along the water-front, soon gave way to a less pleasant view as the refugees arrived in Hongkew, the Japanese-controlled sector of Shanghai's International Settlement. The scene of the heaviest fighting during the 1937 hostilities and inhabited primarily by Chinese labourers and the poorest of the White Russian emigrés, it was to become home for the majority of the refugees. The depressing ugliness and poverty of Hongkew made it attractive to refugees, for here housing and food were cheap. All the camps were established in this district which also abounded in the lane-type houses so popular amongst refugees. They contained as many as ten rooms, each of which became an apartment for a whole refugee family. Many such houses and stores were rebuilt by enterprising refugees who, within two-and-a-half years, helped to give parts of Hongkew a European character, with open-air cafés, snack bars and concert halls. The sausages, coffee and pastries added a *Mittel-Europa* flavour, earning the district the nickname 'Little Vienna' and considerable popularity among Chinese, Japanese and Europeans. The best residential section of International Shanghai was the French Concession. About 10% of the refugees, those who were able to afford it, moved into this neighbourhood. Still others lived in the British sector of the International Settlement, slightly less select than the French Concession.

The goodwill displayed towards the refugees upon their arrival was neither universal nor of long duration. By the end of December 1938, as the number of refugees approached 1,500 and the rate of arrival rose with no end in sight, there was great anxiety among the residents, including Jews, that Shanghai would be unable to absorb this influx. Their concern was manifested in various ways, reflecting Shanghai's complex and varied population. Nevertheless, whether overtly or covertly, whether as a cause or merely as a side-effect, most of the negative reactions can be traced to the overriding fear of economic competition and the severe housing shortage. It is important to note that such fears were not felt by the majority of Shanghai's Chinese, whose standard

of living was far below any European level; they frightened only small foreign elements and the still smaller group of Western-trained middle-class Chinese. Most directly affected were about 25,000 White Russians and some Russian Jews who had still not found their niche in Shanghai's economy or had not recovered their war-losses of 1937. The mere rumour that a bus company intended to replace its White Russian drivers with cheaper refugee labour caused widespread concern and a certain measure of antisemitism, eagerly propagated by Nazi elements among the old German colony. Objections to the refugees by Shanghai's wealthy Westerners was also to some extent based on the fear of 'loss of face' if menial jobs were performed by the refugees in a society where the white man was respected only for his power and wealth. They also feared complications in Shanghai's municipal yet international politics, as shown by the Japanese attempt to woo both the German Nazis and the refugees simultaneously in the controversial municipal elections of April 1940.

The well-to-do Sephardim shared all these fears. They also felt that they should not shoulder alone what really amounted to a world Jewish problem. This view was reinforced by the failure of the major Jewish relief organizations during the first nine months of immigration to make funds available for financial or personal assistance. These apprehensions spread through the Municipal Council to the various governments in charge of the International Settlement. Their efforts were directed to preventing the emigration from Germany of those thousands of potential refugees who had no alternative haven but Shanghai. Thus, the governments of the United States, Britain and France, and the major Jewish organizations in these countries tried to persuade the German government not to permit the use of its ships, and the Jewish *Hilfsverein* to discourage Jews from going to Shanghai, and this at a time when the Axis powers, for reasons of their own, were not only permitting, but even encouraging emigration. Germany continued her pressure to make thousands leave even without visas; Italy permitted the use of her ports and shipping lines; and Japan, the real power in Shanghai, maintained public silence.

Only in August 1939, when the refugee population had reached 14,000, did Japan take practical steps to restrict immigration. Even this was done only after the Japanese, in keeping with their exaggerated notion of Jewish power, had consulted the influential heads of the Sephardic community. These in turn had been fully backed by the *JDC* and *HICEM* in the US, and the Council for German Jewry in London. The restrictions were first promulgated on 9 August and given more detailed shape on 22 October 1939; with a few minor changes they remained in effect until Pearl Harbour. Henceforth, Jews could only enter Shanghai if they had close relatives or evidence of a job there, or (after May 1940) could produce a \$400 guarantee. The last condition was met by many refugees through the \$400 advanced from *JDC* funds, which was afterwards returned to enable other refugees to enter Shanghai. Many Shanghai residents, including non-Jews, vouched for non-existent jobs, thus enabling additional refugees to receive entry permits. Apart from about 1,100 refugees who arrived from Japan in the autumn of 1941, the flow of new immigrants to Shanghai was drastically reduced.

The most difficult challenge to the newcomers was posed by the contraction of Shanghai's economy and export markets, the development of which by 1930 had transformed the once sleepy mud-flats of a hundred years earlier into the fifth largest port in the world. Thus, unlike the Russian Jews, the newcomers found no economic expansion, no flourishing industry or trade that could use their skill and initiative; moreover, their middle-class background and their age—the average being over 40—made integration even more difficult. The majority were white-collar workers, skilled artisans, professionals, businessmen and artists, who found no outlet for their talents. Nor were they prepared for the climate, or for the sanitary, economic, social and linguistic conditions. Unaware of the hot, humid summers, freezing winters and the intervening rainy season, the refugees arrived without suitable clothing, and the merchants did not realize that their wares would rot. Few refugees spoke English, Shanghai's business language, and still fewer had the time or patience to complete any of a number of courses set up for them. These

were among the primary reasons for the failure of over nine hundred refugee business ventures. People thought in terms of gold dollars which made everything seem so cheap, but the fallacy was that earnings were paid in the lower Shanghai dollars. Living in the more inexpensive parts of Hongkew also proved a handicap for the development of good business connections, while competition with the White Russian émigrés caused friction and even street brawls. The use of refugee strike breakers only exacerbated such antagonism.

Nevertheless, a majority of the refugees, at least until the establishment of the ghetto in 1943, somehow managed to survive economically, while a minority did quite well. A rough 1941 estimate gives an idea of the economic situation—though the figures never remained static. Approximately 2,500 of the 17,000 refugees lived in camps, completely dependent upon relief for the necessities of life; 5,000–6,000 led an independent but precarious existence outside the camps, from which they received free or low-cost food; the remaining 9,000–10,000 fell into three categories: the first and largest group lived on money sent by friends or relatives abroad; the second, comprising about 2,500 newcomers, earned from \$200 to \$500 a month and received no relief; the last, or prosperous, group of about the same number were successful in business or in the salaried professions. Though no refugee enterprise made even a ripple in the overall economy of Shanghai, there were a few fairly large business ventures employing scores of workers. Among these were manufacturers of household linen, leather goods, clothing, food, chemicals and pharmaceuticals. Heavy industry requiring large capital investment was out of the question. A minor boom in construction was caused by the rebuilding of bombed-out sections of Hongkew. New products and skills were introduced in the food industry, which found customers among all sections of Shanghai's population. Some craftsmen of superior skill even competed successfully with Chinese labour. Before Pearl Harbour a few refugees established small firms, while one elderly gentleman provided a 'waking' service which included the latest weather forecast. Altogether, the drive and ambition displayed by the refugees was both admired and resented by the local population.

Shanghai's semi-tropical climate, its highly insanitary and crowded conditions—particularly in the camps—made the refugees, most of them in poor physical condition, particularly susceptible to the many diseases prevalent in Shanghai, dysentery, typhus, beri-beri, cholera and a host of parasitic worm infections. Conditions worsened during the ghetto period when food shortages became acute. In these circumstances it was a minor miracle that relatively few epidemics broke out, and that the death-rate was kept low. Mortality figures for 1939–46 ranged from 130 per thousand (1940) to 320 per thousand (1942), and more than half of those who died were over 61. Much of the credit for this must go to the care provided by the medical services set up by the relief committees, and the refugee doctors who worked under the severe handicaps of inadequate equipment and unfamiliarity with the Shanghai diseases, while often suffering the same symptoms of malnutrition as their patients.

Though destined to share the same fate as their German and Austrian co-religionists, the Polish refugees, the last to arrive in Shanghai, in many ways formed a distinct and in some respects a unique group among the refugees, resulting from differences in age composition, and socio-economic, religious, political and cultural backgrounds. Many of their distinctive behaviour patterns were to be maintained throughout their stay in Shanghai, and in time left a marked imprint on all Shanghai's Jews, particularly the Russians. The Polish refugees were far less homogeneous than the others, although their views ran the full gamut of pre-war Polish Jewry's political and religious spectrum. They included a Hassidic rabbi, followers of the Orthodox Agudath Israel, Bundists and Zionists, both Labour and Religious. There were Yiddish writers, actors, teachers and other professional people, as well as farmers and artisans. The largest group was Orthodox, consisting of over 400 students of the Talmud, teachers and rabbis, representing the variegated strands making up the cultural elite of East European Jewry. A strong sense of shared identity and culture forged this heterogeneous individualistic group into the most cohesive of Shanghai's Jews. Their unforming pride and *esprit de corps* brought them

into conflict with the various Jewish relief committees and after Pearl Harbour exploded in acts of costly defiance against the Japanese military authorities. They refused the degrading standards of relief offered by the *Heime*, nor did they meekly submit to being herded into the ghetto on Japanese orders.

The Polish refugees were fortunate that support from several quarters enabled them to maintain their standards throughout their life in Shanghai. Perhaps the most important factor was the friendly attitude of the Russian Jewish community, more kindly disposed towards these East European refugees with whom they had a greater cultural and national affinity than with the more Westernized Central Europeans. Moreover, the dedication of a few individuals, such as Rabbi Meyer Ashkenazi and his associates of the Russian Jewish community, succeeded in mobilizing resources to a degree not shown to the German refugees. Their efforts included the formation of their own relief committee, which supplemented the cash subsidy received from the *CFA*, the setting up of an employment agency and of a restaurant to provide good but inexpensive meals. Moreover, every educational, cultural and religious institution organized by the Polish refugees was subsidized by the Russian Jews. Various groups among the Polish refugees received financial assistance from United States sympathizers and others. For example, the Bundists and the Writers several times received substantial sums even after Pearl Harbour, as did the rabbinical groups who obtained funds from the United States, even after May 1942, when the *JDC* refused to communicate with Shanghai because of the Trading with the Enemy Act.

The financial help given by the Russian Jews to the Polish refugees was largely repaid in a cultural exchange. If awareness of their Jewish identity was more prevalent among the Russian Jews than the German refugees, it was, even so, much weaker than among the Polish group, whose influence was soon felt in every religious and cultural sphere. Plays, broadcasts, Yiddish newspapers and Talmud classes were established by the Polish refugees and enthusiastically accepted by the Russian community, particularly by the young Jews rediscovering the heritage neglected by their

parents. In spite of the alien and often hostile environment and, above all, of the never-ending struggle for survival, these cultural activities were maintained throughout the occupation. A superficial view of the abundance of newspapers, organizations, schools, libraries and concerts might suggest a normal and peaceful communal life. Nothing could be more misleading. All this was produced by a harassed, ill-fed and ill-housed community, largely dependent on charity. After Pearl Harbour, an ever-increasing bleakness replaced the earlier optimism and the hope of leaving Shanghai. Yet even so, Shanghai was the only refugee centre which could boast of three German language dailies; there were also several good weeklies, quarterlies and house organs, among them a scientific medical journal with articles in English, German and Chinese. The Polish refugees also put out several publications, including a trilingual weekly, *Unser Leben*. Nor were the theatre, radio, or the fine arts neglected. In spite of the financial problems, over sixty plays, classic and original, were staged. Some of them, acted by well-known performers, rivalled, but for their primitive scenery, their European productions, which is the more remarkable considering that rehearsals took place in unheated halls and after a hard day's work as a waiter, messenger, or in some other uncongenial occupation. Producers of the Yiddish plays had to contend with a lack of printed texts which had to be written from memory. Until Pearl Harbour, when all radio sets were confiscated, at least one hour each day was devoted to German-language programmes featuring news and cultural broadcasts. Yiddish programmes were also broadcast until Japan entered the war. Musicians on the whole fared a little better than their fellow artists. In the long run, they actually raised the rather mediocre standards of Shanghai's musical life by their symphony orchestras and music schools. Many concerts were given to packed audiences even during the ghetto period, when on two occasions the entire refugee audience was granted permission to leave the designated area.

Like so many other ventures among the newcomers, Zionist organizations in Shanghai began as separate units within the framework of already existing Russian Jewish branches.

In the autumn of 1939, the refugees established an independent organization called the *AZO Theodore Herzl* (*Allgemeine Zionistische Organisation*), which reached a membership of close to 2,000, but factional disputes and personality clashes soon split it into a number of small groups. The Pacific war made it necessary to play down Zionism's political aspects and concentrate on social activities. Among Zionists, too, the sheer zest of the Polish refugees made itself felt and inspired their German fellow-Zionists. The vitality of the East Europeans expressed itself in the proliferation and enthusiasm of impassioned orators and active organizers.

One aspect of refugee life that shone brightly amidst the general gloom was education. Though an excellent school already existed among the older Jewish community, it was neither large enough nor close enough to Hongkew to serve more than temporarily. Within six months, two schools were established, the larger, with over 600 pupils, being free to poor families, while the second, a private school, catered for about a hundred pupils. The first was popularly referred to as the Kadoorie, after the wealthy Sephardi who helped to raise funds for it, while the second was called the Freysinger school after its German headmaster. The Kadoorie school was essentially secular, though the Bible, Biblical history and Hebrew were part of the curriculum. Attempts were also made to provide kindergartens, and extension courses for teenagers. Nor were the adults neglected, since courses were offered to them in handicrafts and Judaic studies. A people's university called the Asia Seminar and run by a refugee scholar, Y. Tonn, offered a wide selection of both liberal art and scientific courses.

In religious matters too, the German refugees attempted to reconstruct their own traditional forms. Early arrivals had to join the existing religious institutions, but as their numbers increased, they conducted their own services in the existing synagogues; religious services were conducted in each of the *Heime*. However, the German refugees, with their 'liberal' tradition, soon organized their own synagogue as well as an independent *Jüdische Gemeinde* (Jewish Communal Association), which eventually included all factions and looked after the

religious needs of most German refugees. It also served many social needs, particularly in providing additional welfare and religious education. After the Japanese occupation of Shanghai, it unwittingly achieved political status, acting as the official link between the refugees and the Japanese authorities. In this capacity during the ghetto period, it had to carry out the onerous task of collecting all former identity cards or passports and issuing new Japanese-sponsored 'Resident Certificates.'

The small group of orthodox refugees were dissatisfied with the Jewish education offered by the two secular Jewish schools. They established a Talmud Torah (afternoon Hebrew school) which by 1944 had close to 300 pupils, some of them Russian and Sephardic. These efforts were intensified after the arrival of the Polish refugees who helped to organize a Jewish Day School (Yeshiva) for advanced students. A school for girls was also established despite opposition from various quarters. Among the Polish Jews, the followers of the Agudath Israel and the Yeshiva students showed the greatest determination to establish an adequate institutional framework for their piety by organizing Talmudic courses. They maintained, whether they were en route to Vladivostok, Kobe or Shanghai, a rigorous study schedule of 18 hours a day. Despite or perhaps because of the uncertainties, discomforts and dark threats of an alien environment, they delved all the more deeply into the 'sea of Talmud', which now also stood for their lost homes and families. A project for a lithographic reprint of the major Jewish classics including almost the entire Talmud, led to the publication of over 125 titles, among them some Yiddish ones. A few new books were also added to the list.

Under the Nuremberg Laws, about 1,500 non-Aryan Gentiles of Jewish or part-Jewish descent were among the refugees. The relief committees cared for the poor among them without discrimination, although personal antagonisms between Jewish and non-Jewish refugees were frequent. Protestant, and to a lesser extent Catholic, missionaries ministered to their respective flocks.

The outbreak of war in the Pacific had several direct implications for the foreign population, especially the new 'enemy nationals,' a

group to which most of the well-to-do Sephardim suddenly found they belonged. Although not interned for another year, they were slowly eased out of their positions and replaced by Japanese. Preoccupied with their problems, many wealthy Sephardim now found it impossible to attend to the relief programme, responsibility for which fell more exclusively on the Ashkenazim. Ironically, for a year or so the stateless refugees enjoyed a status more privileged than the enemy nationals. The Japanese takeover of the American and British firms in Shanghai increased unemployment and put additional strain on already overburdened relief services. The official break between the US and Shanghai closed the lucrative export trade to the United States and also deprived refugees of assistance from American friends and organizations. Psychologically, the loss of all hope of leaving Shanghai aggravated their condition.

At that time, the *JDC* commitment had reached a level of \$ (US) 30,000 a month, which fed 8,000 refugees and housed 2,500. To husband their slender resources, the number of food recipients was cut by half, catering only for the poorest camp inmates, the aged and the children, and even their rations were reduced. The rest had to fend for themselves. The staff of over 500 were given their notice and a month's salary but, to their credit, almost all came to work just the same. The *JDC*, as a patriotic organization, refused to contravene the Trading with the Enemy Act by using neutral channels. Its last cable dated 21 May 1942, sent to Shanghai from Paraguay, instructed its agents to cease all further communication. This policy was adhered to, despite repeated attempts by the *JDC* to receive official permission for re-establishing ties with the refugees. The *Vaad Hahatzalah* and *HIAS-HICEM*, on the other hand, maintained contact and assistance via Sweden, Uruguay and Switzerland. At the end of 1943, the State Department was persuaded to re-open channels to Shanghai.

Without their realizing it at the time, the fate of the refugees had already been determined by the Japanese authorities; plans abrogating their preferential treatment had been reviewed immediately after Pearl Harbour, since earlier policies rested on an exaggerated notion of Jewish influence in the Western

democracies. It was now more politic to conform to Nazi pressures and segregate the refugees. A first warning of the impending plans was communicated to the Jewish leaders by a Japanese vice-consul in July 1942, who suggested that they should use all their influence to avert a catastrophe. The Jewish leaders held a conference, but were arrested by suspicious Japanese authorities. Though soon released and assured that refugees had nothing to fear, there is evidence that the establishment of a ghetto had already been planned for November 1942. At any rate, the refugees were left unmolested until 18 February 1943, when the Japanese, in a well-publicized move, announced the establishment of what was officially referred to as the 'designated area'. Preceded as it was by a series of antisemitic articles in the Shanghai press justifying their actions, this confirmed the refugees' worst fears. Already inhabited by nearly half the refugees, the ghetto was now to house an additional 8,000 who had managed to find a means of livelihood and residence outside. These had to uproot themselves once more and move into a crowded, squalid area of less than a square mile, unrelieved by even a patch of green, with its own population of about 100,000 Chinese and others. Neither the word, 'Jew' nor the word 'ghetto' was used, reflecting deep Japanese sensitivity on Jewish and racial questions. Instead, only the euphemisms 'stateless refugees' and 'designated area' were authorized, even in private.

The term 'stateless refugees' was applied to those who had 'arrived in Shanghai since 1937 from Germany (including former Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, etc.), and who have no nationality at present'. The date is significant, since it excepted Russian Jews, increasing the antagonism between them and the refugees, who accused them of 'betraying their brethren'. Undoubtedly, it was Japan's delicate political position vis-à-vis Russia that lay behind the exemption, rather than anything the Russian Jews could do themselves. Wives were considered as belonging to the same category as their husbands, a fact used by the German consulate in Shanghai to pressurize Aryan spouses into divorcing their partners.

The Japanese assumed that the relocation could easily be made by an exchange of apart-

ments. While the prosperous had little difficulty in exchanging greatly superior for inferior accommodation, many Chinese living in the area nevertheless refused to leave their houses even for better ones outside the ghetto, and this, oddly enough, proved a psychological boon to the refugees who thereby felt less totally isolated. The ghetto limits were marked by signs posted at certain exits and occasional roped-off areas, and the presence of Japanese armed guards supplemented by unarmed members of the Jewish auxiliary police called the 'Foreign Pao Chia'. This Jewish unit of a Japanese-designated city-wide self-policing patrol was also in charge of checking the passes of refugees at exit points. Some Pao Chia became officious, while others were sympathetic and helpful. All 'stateless refugees' were issued with new identity cards called 'resident certificates' with the term 'German Refugee' overprinted and a yellow stripe across the top distinguishing the holders from the other non-Chinese, whose cards were striped green. Another means of identification outside the ghetto was the red or blue metal lapel badge required to be worn by those with passes, with the words 'Allowed to pass' in Chinese.

The Japanese established a supervisory office called the *Bureau for Stateless Refugees*. In keeping with their policy, they used few of their own nationals to run the ghetto. The Bureau Director General was Tsutomu Kubota, a former naval officer, while his assistants, Ghoya and Okura, supervised the issuing of passes. A third assistant, Kano, joined them later. These, a secretary and the armed sentries constituted the Japanese ghetto administration. Kubota had relatively little contact with the refugees; he preferred dealing with the heads of the community, delegating the dirty work to Ghoya and Okura, who were to become objects of much hatred and fear. Ghoya was in charge of the quarterly and monthly passes, while Okura dispensed the short-term ones ranging from a few hours to several weeks. It was Okura who usually meted out punishment to the hapless refugee caught infringing ghetto regulations. Although the tall, powerful Okura was probably the more vindictive, Ghoya, short and ugly, was a more colourful and infamous figure. This self-styled 'King of the Jews' would play with

children and the next moment, in a show of spite, would kick or slap their parents. Immediately afterwards he might hand the bewildered refugee a pass far in excess of the original request. One refugee made his application wearing a top hat. When Ghoya angrily shouted 'do you want to make fun of me?', he replied that he always wore such ceremonial headgear when seeing important officials. After that he always received his pass immediately.

The impact of the ghetto on the refugees was damaging, but not deadly. Though a few panicked, the majority stoically accepted the inevitable. The 'free' Russian Jews were made the unwilling tool of the Japanese in carrying out the onerous task of squeezing nearly 8,000 refugees into the ghetto within three months. A committee called the *Shanghai Ashkenazi Collaborating Relief Association* or *SACRA* was formed a few days after Pearl Harbour. It was headed by A. J. Cohan, a Japanese-educated Jewish doctor of Turkish ancestry. The very nature of its task made *SACRA* intensely unpopular, even though it deliberately procrastinated as much as possible so that relocation took over a year to complete. Its main task was to locate and finance housing in the ghetto for those unable to afford it. The funds were to be raised by 'taxing' the Russian community. It also had to supervise relief activities; in fact, the most serious impact on the refugees as a result of the Proclamation was the contraction of an already narrow economic base. Those who had succeeded in establishing some sort of standard of living suffered greatly. Among the signs of worsening conditions was the fact (noted in Japanese documents) that many stalls were set

up in the winter of 1943 selling essential clothing needed for warmth. For the first time, refugees were seen begging in the streets and at least seven women were registered as prostitutes.

Inflation, rocketing in 1944 and almost out of control by 1945, accelerated the process of pauperization. By the beginning of 1944, five or six thousand refugees were dependent on relief, which meant one meal of 1,350 calories, a subsistence-level diet insufficient to maintain bodily resistance. With the relief funds running critically low by the end of 1943, the entire refugee community was on the brink of disaster. Had it not been for the removal of the US ban on communications, allowing *JDC* funds to reach Shanghai via Switzerland, catastrophe would have been inevitable. Now the amounts were substantial enough not only to alleviate the worsening conditions, but also to provide more nutritious rations for the 11,000 who were to be on relief by 1945.

Before the war ended, the refugee community witnessed its saddest hour. On 17 July 1945, the ghetto experienced an accidental but devastating air-raid on Japanese installations in Shanghai, which left 31 refugees dead, 25 injured and over 700 homeless, in addition to hundreds of Chinese casualties. The refugees helped fellow Jews and Chinese alike. The grateful Chinese offered money to the refugee camps, and when the gift was politely refused, they brought cakes as a token of appreciation.

The termination of hostilities found the Jews still somewhat restricted behind ghetto barriers; only on 3 September 1945, when an American goodwill mission reached Shanghai, did the ghetto officially come to an end.

IRVING ABELLA and HAROLD TROPER

'The line must be drawn somewhere': Canada and Jewish Refugees, 1933-9

ON 15 MAY 1939 907 desperate German Jews set sail from Hamburg on the luxury liner *St. Louis*. Like many who had sailed on this ship before, these passengers were – or at least had been – the cream of German society: distinguished, well-off, educated, cultured. Most had contributed much to their native land. All were now penniless. They had been stripped of their possessions, hounded out of their homes and businesses and now their country. Their most prized possession was the entrance visa to Cuba each carried on board.

For the Jews of Germany life had become impossible. Countless thousands had been brutalized, murdered, or sent off to concentration camps. The Nazis were anxious to empty Germany of its Jews – but where could they go? Initially neighbouring countries such as Holland, France, and later Great Britain had accepted some, but soon the nations of the world had clanged shut their gates before these helpless men, women, and children. Germany was determined to throw their Jews out; everyone else seemed just as determined not to let them in.

A poignant joke at the time says it all. A Jew wishing to travel goes to a Berlin travel agent who places a globe in front of him, whirls it, and says: 'Choose.' After studying the globe for a short time the Jew looks up with a pained expression and asks: 'Do you have anything else?'

The Jews on the *St. Louis* considered themselves lucky. They were leaving. When they reached Havana on 30 May, however, their luck had run out. The Cuban government refused to recognize the en-

The authors are indebted to Robert F. Harney of the Multicultural History Society of Ontario, David Rome of the Canadian Jewish Archives, and Lawrence Tapper of the Canadian Ethnic Archives for their encouragement and assistance.

trance visas; none of these wretched people were allowed to disembark, even when they threatened mass suicide.¹ The search for a haven now began in earnest. Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Panama were approached, in vain, by various Jewish organizations. Within two days all the countries of Latin America had rejected entreaties to allow these Jews to land. On 2 June the *St. Louis* was forced to leave Havana harbour. The last hope seemed to be either Canada or the United States.

The latter did not even bother sending a reply. Instead it sent a gunboat to shadow the *St. Louis* as it made its way north. The American coast guard had been ordered to make certain that the *St. Louis* stayed far enough off shore so that it could not be run aground nor could any of its frantic passengers attempt to swim ashore.² Now only Canada remained uncommitted.

The plight of the *St. Louis* had touched some influential Canadians. On 7 June several of these led by the eminent historian George Wrong, and including B.K. Sandwell of *Saturday Night*, Robert Falconer, past president of the University of Toronto, and Ellsworth Flavelle, a wealthy businessman, sent a telegram to prime minister Mackenzie King begging that he show 'true Christian charity' and offer the homeless exiles sanctuary in Canada.³

Jewish refugees were far from the prime minister's mind at this time. He was in Washington accompanying the Royal family on the final leg of its triumphant tour of North America. The *St. Louis*, he felt, was not a Canadian problem. Nonetheless, he asked O.D. Skelton, the undersecretary of state for external affairs, to consult the acting prime minister, Ernest Lapointe, and the director of immigration, F.C. Blair, for their advice.⁴ Both these men were known for their staunch opposition to Jewish immigration to Canada. They did not disappoint King. Lapointe stated that he was 'emphatically opposed' to the admission of the *St. Louis* passengers, while Blair, the bureaucrat, claimed that these refugees did not qualify under immigration laws for admission and that, in any case, Canada had already done too much for the Jews.⁵ Why should Canada 'go out of her way,' he asked Skelton, to allow in people who would likely 'smuggle themselves' across the border to the United States? Blair's great fear, however, was that if these Jews were to

1 G. Thomas and M.M. Witts, *The Voyage of the Damned* (New York 1974), 135-217

2 *New York Times*, 3-5 June 1939

3 Public Archives of Canada [PAC], King Papers, Wrong et al. to King, 7 June 1939, 238579

4 PAC, King Diary, 8 June 1939, King Papers, King to Skelton, 8 June 1939, 237087

5 King Papers, Skelton to King, 9 June 1939, 237095-6

find a home they would 'likely be followed by other shiploads.' No country, he added, could 'open its doors wide enough to take in the hundreds of thousands of Jewish people who want to leave Europe: *the line must be drawn somewhere.*'⁶

Their last flickering hopes crushed, the despairing passengers of the *St. Louis* headed back for Europe (where the governments of Britain, Belgium, and Holland finally offered temporary shelter). There, many would die in the gas chambers and crematoria of the Third Reich.

In 1933, when Adolf Hitler became chancellor, Jews constituted approximately 1 per cent of the German population; to reduce, and eventually eliminate that percentage became one of Hitler's major objectives. Over the next few years legislation was passed stripping Jews of their citizenship, barring them from schools, from government positions, and from access to the courts, subjecting them to arbitrary arrests and detention, confiscating their property and businesses, and imposing on them enormous collective fines. In addition, acts of violence against Jews and their property were officially sanctioned and even encouraged. In large part, these measures were designed specifically to force Jews to emigrate. And many who could, did. Yet, at the same time, to compound the problems of prospective emigrants, Jews were forbidden to carry German passports and were stripped of all their assets. Without capital Jews became even less attractive as immigrants. Thousands were randomly rounded up and pushed into the no-man's land beyond German borders.

As German frontiers expanded into the Rhineland and, by 1938, into Austria and Czechoslovakia, so did the number of Jews under German rule. Hundreds of thousands were leaving for Poland, France, Britain, Holland, Belgium, and Switzerland. Hundreds of thousands more would have had these nations allowed them in. None of these countries were pleased with the influx of these unexpected – and unwanted – guests. They provided only a temporary haven and insisted that these refugees look for a permanent home somewhere else, anywhere else. Indeed, some countries – especially in Eastern Europe – where anti-semitism was a way of life, began making noises about following the German precedent and forcing out unwanted Jews.⁷ An acute refugee problem was fast becoming explosive.

International refugee organizations could not begin to cope with the problem. The League of Nations had created the Commission for

6 PAC, Department of Immigration Records [IR], Blair to Skelton, 8 June 1939; 16 June 1939, file 644452 (our italics)

7 J. Hope Simpson, *The Refugee Problem: Report of Survey* (London 1939), 49–66

German Refugees but its accomplishments were pathetic. Most member states chose to ignore or belittle the plight of refugees, in the hope perhaps that the problem would either disappear or solve itself. Most nations argued that if there was a solution it must be on the basis of an accommodation between Germany and her non-Aryan population. No countries came forward either to accept those refugees left in Germany or those living temporarily in the countries surrounding her. As Chaim Weizman, then a leading Zionist and later first president of the State of Israel put it: 'The world seemed to be divided into two parts – those places where the Jew could not live, and those where they could not enter.'⁸ Canada fell into the latter category.

Of the more than 800,000 Jews seeking refuge from the Third Reich in the years from 1933 to 1939, Canada found room within her borders for approximately 4000.⁹ In a world which was decidedly inhospitable to refugees, Canada was no exception. Yet, even by the standard of the time, Canada stood virtually alone in the niggardliness of her contribution. Argentina, for example, admitted 22,000; Australia, 10,000, and was preparing to receive 15,000 more when war broke out; Brazil, 20,000; China, 15,000; Great Britain, 85,000; Palestine, 100,000; the United States, 140,000; and even penurious Mexico and Colombia had each accepted about 20,000.¹⁰

8 Quoted in A.J. Sherman, *Island Refuge: Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich 1933-9* (London 1973), 112

9 It is impossible to specify the exact number of refugees of all classes, or Jewish refugees in particular, admitted into Canada in the prewar years. In reply to a letter in 1940 from an MP requesting these statistics, the director of immigration conceded: 'We have no refugee classification in our immigration statistics as the term is a temporary variable one and we try to keep statistics by race [ethnicity], nationality, occupation and destination.' Nevertheless, it is possible to systematically approximate the total number of Jewish refugees. In these years government statistics reveal that, of a total immigration of some 100,000, only 6000 were Jews. By allowing for those Jews who entered Canada from countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom, beyond the shadow of the Nazi threat, or who emigrated before Nazi expansion made flight imperative, we can assume that about 4000 entered as refugees. This latter figure is given added weight when considered in the light of the findings of Michael Proudfoot. In his important study of world refugee movements, Proudfoot employs international statistics to estimate that in the period between 1933 and the outbreak of war, Canada admitted 6000 refugees of all classes of whom 1500 were Sudeten Germans. It is not unreasonable then to assume approximately 4000 of the remaining refugees were Jews. IR, Blair to J.F. Pouliot, 16 July 1940, file 673931/1; *Canada Year Book, 1940*, 152; 1941, 114; Louis Rosenberg, *The Jewish Population of Canada*, Canadian Jewish Population Studies no 2. (Montreal 1947); Michael J. Proudfoot, *European Refugees, 1939-52* (London 1952), 27

10 Proudfoot, *European Refugees*; Simpson, *The Refugee Problem*, 54-63; A. Tartakower and K.R. Grossman, *The Jewish Refugee* (New York 1944), 263-4, 318-27

That Jews were not welcome in Canada during the 1930s is not surprising; no one else was either. With a third of its people out of work Canada was understandably not receptive to the notion of accepting more job-hungry immigrants. That the economic consequences of the depression throttled immigration cannot be denied. What should be stressed, however, is that the depression also afforded the dramatic opportunity for Canadian officials to complete a process of restriction begun in the boom years of the 1920s.

Canadian immigration policy had always been as ethnically selective as it was economically self-serving. When economic necessity dictated the admission of non-British and non-American immigrants it was always in descending order of ethnic preference. Following British and American immigrants, preference was given northern Europeans and then central Europeans. At the bottom were the Jews, Orientals, and blacks.¹¹ Those 'non-preferred immigrants' were acceptable as long as they were out of sight, risking life and limb in the mines and smelters of the West and North, holed up in lumber camps deep in the forest, or farming the more marginal areas of the western wheat frontier. Those who escaped this life for perhaps the even worse one in Canada's urban centres to compete for jobs with native or British-born artisans were less acceptable. And to immigration officials the worst culprits were the Jews. Jews, according to Blair, were 'city people.' To almost every request to admit Jewish farmers or agricultural workers, Blair had the same response: it was impossible to keep them on the farm or in the bush. Every attempt to do so had failed. Jewish workers, he claimed, could not 'eat Gentile food' and so took the 'earliest opportunity' to leave for the city 'which is about the only place [they] can find [their] fellow countrymen.'¹²

With the disposition of less desirable immigrants to drift towards cities and the gradual decline in demand for unskilled labour, by the mid-1920s the Canadian government began to restrict the immigration of those on the bottom rungs of the ethnic preference ladder. When, in 1928, the deputy minister of immigration, W.J. Egan, ordered that the admission of Eastern European immigrants be cut back by two-thirds, he explained that though the economy was doing well, these 'non-preferred country immigrants had drifted into non-agricultural work almost immediately upon arrival ... and [were] filling positions that might have been filled by immigrants from the Mother Country.'¹³

11 See, for example, *Canada Year Book*, 1939, 158

12 IR, Blair to Mrs I. Grenovsky, 5 Dec. 1938, file 644452; PAC, Manion Papers, Blair to R.A. Bell, private secretary to Manion, 29 Feb. 1938

13 *Canadian Annual Review*, 1928-9, 153-9

The onset of the depression gave the government the opportunity to complete drawing the restrictionist circle around Canada. In 1930 an order-in-council (PC 1957) was introduced allowing in only those immigrants with enough capital to establish and maintain themselves on farms. In the following year another order-in-council (PC 659) effectively banned all non-agricultural immigrants who were of non-British or non-American stock. For all intents and purposes, just at the time when she was most needed, Canada shut herself off from the rest of the world. And for the remainder of the decade – and indeed beyond – a determined Canadian government fought every attempt by the wretched European refugees to breach this protective wall of orders-in-council.

The person entrusted with the task of ensuring that there was no breach was Frederick Charles Blair. As director of the Immigration Branch of the Department of Mines and Resources during these years Blair made almost all of the decisions – no matter how small – concerning who got into Canada. And from the point of view of European Jewry this was most unfortunate. Just when they most needed a friend at the gate, they had an enemy; instead of the philo-Semite they required, they had an anti-Semite; instead of the humanitarian, they got a narrow-minded bureaucrat. According to those who knew him, Blair was a tough administrator who ‘stuck to the rules’ – which is not so surprising since he drafted most of them himself.¹⁴

Born in Carlisle, Ontario, in 1874, of Scottish parents, Blair joined the Department of Agriculture in 1901, and two years later became an immigration officer. In 1924 he was appointed the assistant deputy minister of immigration and in 1936 he became director of the branch with full deputy-minister status. He was a religious man, an elder of the Baptist church, and a dedicated civil servant. Indeed, so devoted was he to his job that when he finally retired in 1944, four years beyond normal retirement age, he had accumulated about two years’ worth of sick leave.¹⁵

As the man responsible for Canadian immigration policy, Blair had some seemingly peculiar ideas. According to one observer he ‘took the stand that people should be kept out of Canada instead of being let in.’¹⁶ Yet these notions hardly seemed to bother the Canadian government which kept him in his sensitive position as long as it could. He was, as James Gibson, an external affairs official, recalls, ‘the single most difficult individual I had to deal with the whole time I was a public

14 PAC, Historical Personnel Files, vol. 420, file on F.C. Blair

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.; Austin Cross in *The Family Herald and Weekly Star*, 16 June 1943

servant. He was a holy terror!’¹⁷ Perhaps this was why he stayed in his job for so long; he was precisely the man the King government wanted in this position. His inflexibility, fetish for regulations, and unchallenged control over immigration matters were a convenience to an administration which had no intention of allowing in Jewish refugees but wished to avoid the calumny of not doing so. Though ostensibly Thomas Crerar was the minister responsible for immigration, in fact Blair made policy and implemented it. Crerar knew little of the workings of the immigration branch, and cared even less. He relied almost totally on its director for advice.¹⁸

To Blair the term refugee was a code word for Jew. Unless ‘safeguards’ were adopted, he warned Crerar, Canada was in danger of being ‘flooded with Jewish people.’¹⁹ His task, as he saw it, was to make sure that the ‘safeguards’ did not fail. Indeed, he was inordinately proud of his success in keeping out Jews. As he put it: ‘Pressure on the part of Jewish people to get into Canada has never been greater than it is now and I am glad to be able to add, after 35 years experience here, that it was never so well controlled.’²⁰ Blair expressed a strong personal distaste for Jews and especially for ‘certain of their habits.’ He saw them as unassimilable, as people apart ‘who can organize [their] affairs better than other people’ and therefore accomplish more.²¹ He complained bitterly that Jews were ‘utterly selfish in their attempts to force through a permit for the admission of relatives or friends.’ ‘They do not believe,’ he added, that ‘No’ means more than ‘Perhaps ...’²² Furthermore, Jews, he lamented, ‘make any kind of promise to get the door open but ... never cease their agitation until they get in the whole lot.’ Behind these Jewish attempts to somehow get their co-religionists into the country, Blair saw a conspiracy ‘to bring immigration regulations into disrepute and create an atmosphere favourable to those who cannot comply with the law.’ As he commiserated to the traffic manager of the Canadian Pacific Railway: ‘If there is any surer way to close the door in their own face, I do not know of it.’²³

17 Interview with James Gibson, Vineland, Ontario, 26 June 1978

18 See Gerald Dirks, *Canada's Refugee Policy: Indifference or Opportunism?* (Montreal 1977), 44–97; Robert Domanski, ‘While Six Million Cried: Canada and the Refugee Question 1938–41’ (unpublished thesis, Institute of Canadian Studies, Carleton University, 1975), 14–16.

19 IR, Blair to Crerar, 12 Oct. 1938, file 54782/5

20 IR, Blair to F.N. Sclanders, commissioner of Saint John Board of Trade, 13 Sept. 1938, file 54782/5

21 IR, Blair to Crerar, 28 March 1938, file 54782/5

22 IR, Blair to H.R.L. Henry, 30 Jan. 1939, file 644452

23 IR, Blair to W. Baird, 4 May 1938, file 54782/5

It seems that Blair's contempt for the Jews was boundless. Only a short time after the outbreak of hostilities in Europe in 1939 Blair confided to his immigration commissioner in London: 'Someone has facetiously said that numbers of our Jewish refugees lustfully sing "Onward *Christian* Soldiers" but are very content to stay here and grab up all opportunities.'²⁴ In a revealing letter to a strong opponent of Jewish immigration Blair wrote:

I suggested recently to three Jewish gentlemen with whom I am well acquainted, that it might be a very good thing if they would call a conference and have a day of humiliation and prayer which might profitably be extended for a week or more where they would honestly try to answer the question of why they are so unpopular almost everywhere. ... I often think that instead of persecution it would be far better if we more often told them frankly why many of them are unpopular. If they would divest themselves of certain of their habits I am sure they could be just as popular in Canada as our Scandinavians ... Just because Jewish people would not understand the frank kind of statements I have made in this letter to you, I have marked it confidential.²⁵

Though it was Blair who gave the final interpretation of government regulations and who acted as the de facto judge and jury on individual requests for admission, to blame him alone for Canada's response to the refugee crisis would be both overly simplistic and incorrect; after all, he was only a civil servant, albeit a powerful one. As a functionary he simply reflected the wishes of his superiors; it was they who were ultimately responsible for government policy. Not to accept refugees was a political decision, not a bureaucratic one. It was Mackenzie King and his cabinet which, in the final analysis, must shoulder the responsibility.

Once Canadian Jews realized that attempting to deal with immigration officials was hopeless, they began flexing their political muscle. Only when it was too late did they discover how flabby it was. Taking charge of the pressure campaign was the organization that was generally recognized as the representative voice of the community on social and political matters, the Canadian Jewish Congress. Founded in 1919, by the mid-1930s the congress was a weak and disorganized body. It was underfinanced – wealthy Jews saw it as a tool of more recent and less-monied immigrants, and unrepresentative – both the far left and the conservative elements of the community remained outside. Only in

²⁴ 1R, Blair to W.A. Little, 24 Oct. 1939. file 54782/6

²⁵ 1R, Blair to Sclanders, 13 Sept. 1938. file 54782/5

the latter part of 1938, when the wealthy industrialist Samuel Bronfman became active – he was elected president in January 1939 – did the congress become a credible and weighty vehicle for Jewish interests. Indeed, until then it was the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society [JIAS], an organization founded by the congress in June 1920, which acted as the voice of the community on matters affecting immigration and which did much to help individual immigrants.²⁶

By default, therefore, the task of putting forth the Jewish position fell on the shoulders of Jewish members of parliament. In the Liberal sweep in the 1935 election three Jews had won seats: two Liberals, Sam Jacobs from Montreal, the congress president, and Sam Factor from Toronto, and one CCFer, A.A. Heaps from Winnipeg. The Jewish community saw the 1935 Liberal victory as a harbinger of better things. After all, it was the Bennett government which had introduced the restrictive orders-in-council and which snubbed various Jewish delegations attempting to have these orders moderated.²⁷

These hopes, however, were dashed almost immediately following the elections. In a meeting with Crerar, Jacobs and Benjamin Robinson, president of JIAS, were told that there would be no exception made for German Jews. Unless they met the requirements necessary for immigration – that is, unless they had sufficient capital to establish a successful farm – they would not be allowed in under any circumstances.²⁸ And Crerar kept his promise. For the next two years almost no Jewish refugees arrived in Canada. And those few who did manage to come entered under specific orders-in-council, exempting them from the usual immigration requirements. Most of these were relatives of Canadian Jews. Some orders-in-council, however, were granted as 'favours' to prominent government supporters – including Sam Jacobs – to distribute to a fortunate few in the Jewish community.²⁹ It was a cynical activity, but it worked. For the most part Canadian Jews, though restive, remained loyal to the Liberal government. They had little choice. Making up just over 1 per cent of the population, Canadian Jews knew they did not have the power to change govern-

²⁶ Simon Belkin, *Through Narrow Gates: A Review of Jewish Immigration, Colonization and Immigrant Aid in Canada* (Montreal 1966), 169–70; Joseph Kage, *With Faith and Thanksgiving* (Montreal 1962), 66–9

²⁷ Belkin, *Through Narrow Gates*, 170–3

²⁸ IR, Memorandum for file, Blair, 20 Jan. 1936, file 54782/4

²⁹ YIVO Institute, New York, Jewish Historical Collection, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society [HICEM], files, Report of JIAS Montreal, 18 Feb. 1937; interview, Saul Hayes, Montreal, 20 June 1978. See also Leo Heaps, *The Rebel in the House: The Life and Times of A.A. Heaps, M.P.* (London 1970), 155.

ment policy. And until they did, they would accept what crumbs were thrown their way. After all, saving a few lives was better than saving none.

The congress did establish a refugee committee in 1937, but its main function was to work with railway colonization officials, to help in the settlement of the handful of Jewish farmers able to break through into Canada. However, even this activity was short-lived for in April 1938, at the behest of Blair who did not believe that Jews could be farmers, railway colonization agents in Europe were told to allow in as few Jewish 'agriculturalists' as possible.³⁰ Thus, when a German Jew, Hans Heinemann, applied to enter Canada as a farmer he was told by an overenthusiastic agent of the Canadian Pacific Railway in Hamburg that Jews were no longer being allowed into Canada.³¹ It seemed, therefore, that by 1938 the Canadian government was taking steps to close the loopholes through which some Jews were still entering Canada. As the general secretary of the Canadian Jewish Congress, H.M. Caiserman, grimly informed Rabbi Stephen Wise of the American Jewish Congress, 'the possibilities of an increased Jewish immigration to Canada at present are nil.'³²

In March 1938, just when Canada was further restricting Jewish immigration, Hitler marched into Austria and several hundred thousand more Jews became refugees – some, those who had escaped from Germany, for the second time. As a response to this, and to quiet the storm of protest raised by more liberal elements in the United States, President Franklin Roosevelt took the bold step of issuing an invitation to most of the nations of the world to meet together to discuss possible solutions to the refugee problem. What no one at the time knew – but some suspected, the real purpose of the conference was, according to the author of the plan, secretary of state Cordell Hull, to give the United States the initiative 'to get out in front and attempt to guide the pressure, primarily with a view toward forestalling attempts to have immigration laws liberalized.'³³

Had Canadian officials been aware of the Americans' real motives, they would have been relieved. They were not, however, and thus when the formal invitation to attend this conference arrived in late

30 IR, Memorandum for file, Blair, 19 April 1938, file 54782/5

31 Canadian Jewish Congress [CJC], CPR, Hamburg, to H. Heinemann, Breslau, 8 May 1938. Heinemann sent a copy of this telegram to the congress with a plea for the congress to help him save his family from the Nazis.

32 CJC, Caiserman to Wise, 4 Feb. 1938

33 National Archives, Washington, State Department Records, Memorandum on Refugees, 1938, files 900-1/2; 840-8

March, they were decidedly uncomfortable. Even though the Americans had assured Canada that no country would be expected to 'receive a greater number of emigrants than is permitted by its existing legislation' and that private organizations would be expected to fund this emigration,³⁴ the Canadians felt Roosevelt was baiting a trap. Once committed to attending the conference, the Canadians would be expected to do something to alleviate the refugee problem. And this, King dreaded, meant 'admitting numbers of Jews.'³⁵ His fears were reinforced by Skelton who warned that the publicity generated by the conference would likely result in strong 'domestic pressure' in Canada to do something for the Jews.³⁶

The prime minister of Canada was obsessed with the notion that the admission of Jewish refugees might destroy his country. As he confided to his diary: 'We must ... seek to keep this part of the Continent free from unrest and from too great an intermixture of foreign strains of blood ...' Nothing was to be gained, he believed, 'by creating an internal problem in an effort to meet an international one.' Allowing Jewish refugees into Canada, he told his cabinet, might cause riots and would surely exacerbate relations between the federal government and the provinces. In effect, any action permitting an appreciable number of Jews to settle in Canada would, in King's mind, undermine the unity of the nation. This was no time for Canada to act on 'humanitarian grounds.' Rather, said the prime minister, Canada must be guided by 'realities' and political considerations.³⁷

The realities King had in mind were the attitudes towards refugees in general and Jews in particular within Quebec. He was absolutely convinced that that province would react violently to the admission of Jewish refugees. And with reason. Almost every French-language newspaper had warned the government against opening Canada's doors to European Jews. As *Le Devoir* put it: 'Why allow in Jewish refugees? ... The Jewish shopkeeper on St. Lawrence Boulevard does nothing to increase our natural resources.'³⁸ And this statement was mild compared with vicious anti-Semitic utterances appearing regularly in such papers as *La Nation*, *L'Action Catholique*, and *L'Action Nationale*. As well, many French-Canadian politicians spoke out – both within and without the confines of parliament – against Jewish immi-

34 John Munro, ed., *Documents on Canadian External Relations*. vi: 1936–39 (Ottawa 1972) [DCER vi], Memorandum from the United States Delegation, 25 March 1938, 790–1

35 King Diary, 29 March 1938

36 King Papers, Skelton to King, 25 March 1938, C122621

37 King Diary, 29 March 1938

38 Quoted in David Rome, 'A History of Anti-Semitism in Canada,' unpublished manuscript, Montreal 1978, unpaginated

gration. These Liberal members, in particular Wilfrid Lacroix, C.H. Leclerc, and H.E. Brunelle, led the anti-refugee onslaught. Indeed, in a speech in the Commons several months later, Brunelle denounced Jews as having caused 'great difficulties' wherever they lived.³⁹ In addition, both the prime minister and the Immigration Branch received many letters from such Quebec organizations as the St Jean Baptiste Society, the councils of various counties, several *caisses populaires*, and the provincial Knights of Columbus protesting against any possible government backsliding on the refugee issue.⁴⁰ In fact, not long afterwards Lacroix delivered to the House of Commons a petition signed by nearly 128,000 members of the St Jean Baptiste Society opposing 'all immigration and especially Jewish immigration.'⁴¹

The prime minister, but more especially his Quebec lieutenant, Ernest Lapointe, were also aware of the grievous situation in which the province's Liberal party found itself. Thrown out of office in 1936 by the Union Nationale under Maurice Duplessis, the Québec Liberal party was badly split and in a state of disarray. Anything which might further weaken it, King and Lapointe felt, would have to be avoided – no matter the cost. Thus, on Lapointe's recommendation the federal cabinet swallowed hard and refused to disallow the heinous Padlock Act. To do otherwise would, according to Lapointe, have been 'disastrous' for the Quebec Liberal party.⁴² Allowing in Jewish refugees would also, at least in Lapointe's mind, play into the hands of Duplessis' nationalist forces and further weaken Liberalism in Quebec. Whatever Lapointe's personal feelings were on this matter – and there is no evidence that he favoured Jewish immigration – for political reasons alone he felt justified in taking a hard line against allowing in refugees. And King believed that 'if the Liberal party was to remain a national party' he had no alternative but to accept the views of Lapointe and his French-Canadian colleagues in the House.⁴³ The prime minister sin-

39 See, for example, Brunelle's speech in House, Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 1939, 1, 305.

40 See, for example, IR, file 165172.

41 *Debates*, 1939, 1, 428. For a survey of anti-Semitism in Quebec, see David Rome, *Clouds in the Thirties: On Anti-Semitism in Canada, 1929-1939*, 3 vols. (Montreal 1977); Lita Rose Betcherman, *The Swastika and the Maple Leaf* (Toronto 1975); W.D. Kernaghan, 'Freedom of Religion in the Province of Quebec' (PhD thesis, Duke University, 1966).

42 King Diary, 5 and 6 July 1938

43 H. Blair Neatby, *William Lyon Mackenzie King. III: The Prism of Unity* (Toronto 1976), 268. Canadian Jewish leaders were not unaware of the position of cabinet ministers from Quebec. Following the provincial Liberal party's defeat in Quebec, the president of the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society in Montreal reported to his board 'that he had it on good authority that the French Canadian element in the Federal Cabinet is strongly opposed to the admission of Jews to Canada.' JIAS, Eastern Region (Montreal), Minutes of the Board of Directors, 9 Dec. 1936

cerely believed that illiberal policies were acceptable so long as the basic Liberal objective – national unity – was maintained.⁴⁴

Largely because of this hostility in Quebec, King was reluctant to attend the conference on refugees. For the better part of the next month, while almost all the nations of the world were replying positively to Roosevelt's invitation, and despite the anxious inquiries of the Americans, Canada did not respond. No one in government circles was enthusiastic about attending, least of all the prime minister. Who knew what evil would emanate from this conference? A country – and a prime minister – wedded to the doctrine of no commitments could hardly relish the thought of a conference in which some sort of Canadian commitment would be expected.

As King and his cabinet dallied, Blair was increasingly active. At the behest of Skelton he drafted a response rejecting the invitation. Attending this meeting, Blair said, might involve 'the admission to Canada of many who by training and manner of life are not fitted for the development of any of our primary industries, but would add to the congestion and competition of our cities.'⁴⁵ More to the point, it was not 'feasible,' he said, 'to encourage the influx of immigrants of one race and not of others.' He privately told Skelton that it was unfair 'to let down the immigration barriers for the benefit of any particular race or class.'⁴⁶ Personally, Blair did not feel that the problem was all that serious. As he put it: 'No problem exists except for the Jewish people,' and the refugee situation, he added, was much worse immediately following the Great War.⁴⁷ He warned that the government's first priority must now be to decide 'whether Canada can afford to open the door to more Jewish people than we are now receiving' since 'there is going to be a general Jewish drive for admissions to other countries.' Little good for Canada, he predicted, would come out of attendance at the conference. Canadian policy, he stated, should be not to change its restrictive immigration practice, but simply to announce at the meeting that the government would 'show sympathetic consideration where possible to prospective refugee immigrants.'⁴⁸

What apparently most disturbed Blair was the possibility of a successful conference. 'If the nations now asked to cooperate to save the Jews of Germany and Austria, manage by sacrifice to accomplish this purpose it will please the Germans who want to get rid of this group ... and

44 King Diary, 6 July 1938

45 IR, Blair draft, 19 April 1938, file 644452

46 King Papers, Blair to Skelton, 14 April 1938, C122627

47 IR, Memorandum for file, Blair, 19 April 1938, file 644452

48 IR, Blair to Crerar, 28 March 1938, file 644452

it will encourage other nations to do likewise and this is probably the greatest danger. Can immigration countries afford to encourage such an eventuality? It is akin in a sense to the paying of ransom to Chinese bandits.'⁴⁹ Clearly the real threat to Blair was that the Eastern European countries such as Poland, Hungary, and Roumania would learn from the German precedent and attempt to deport their unwanted Jews.

In addition, Blair had just been advised that the German government had officially announced that it would no longer allow Jewish emigrants from Germany back into the country. At once Blair informed Skelton that Canada has no alternative but 'to refuse the admission of German nationals without presentation of passports endorsed as valid for return to Germany.' His argument was as ingenious as it was cold-blooded: 'If we accept people from Germany on one-way travel documents, we have no excuse for refusing a like class from other countries, and we will soon reach the place where the only persons we can deport will be British subjects and U.S. citizens ... I wish the immigration countries would take united action in refusing to admit nationals of countries who will not allow return by deportation.'⁵⁰

It was not until the latter part of April that King finally made his decision. In fact, Canada probably had no choice. As Skelton warned the prime minister: 'It would not look too well to be the only country, except Fascist Italy, declining even to sit on a Committee.'⁵¹ On 26 April the Canadian government officially announced that it would attend the conference which was to be held in the small French resort town of Evian on the Swiss border. (Switzerland had already rejected the honour of holding the meeting on her territory.) At the same time King informed the Americans that he thought it wrong to encourage countries such as Germany which were trying 'to throw upon other countries the task of solving their internal difficulties.'⁵²

The news of the Evian Conference activated the leadership of Canadian Jewry. They felt the time was opportune for some serious, though necessarily secret, lobbying. The Jewish community was in an apprehensive mood. Yet the congress executive felt that discussions with government officials were 'a matter of extreme delicacy.' As Caiserman warned Congress officers in Western Canada: 'I have in mind that we refrain from mass meetings, publicity and noise, because such methods

49 IR, Memorandum for file, Blair, 19 April 1938, file 644452

50 IR, Blair to Skelton, 8 April 1938, file 644452

51 King Papers, Skelton to King, 21 April 1938, C122124

52 DCEP VI, King to Simmons, 26 April 1938, 793-4

would nullify what we have in mind.'⁵³ What congress officials feared most of all was that demonstrations might both alienate the government and create an anti-Semitic backlash throughout the country. As Caiserman stated: 'Experience concerning the refugee situation has convinced us that too much publicity has always proven detrimental to any request for the widening of the doors for the entry of our co-religionists to Canada ... In Quebec any public agitation for the entry of Jews would bring with it ... a flood of counter agitation.'⁵⁴ The congress role was not to mobilize Jewish opinion but to monitor it – to guard against any outburst, spontaneous or otherwise, which might rebound against the community at large. Again it was the Jewish MPs who were the most active. They lobbied unceasingly to get the government to go to Evian. They met with Crerar in a vain attempt to have the immigration regulations modified. Finally, with their colleagues J.S. Woodsworth and Colonel A. Vien they met with King and argued vigorously for a more sympathetic approach to the refugee question.⁵⁵ King offered his sympathy but little else. He agreed, however, to set up a special committee of cabinet to look at the problem. This proved to be a hollow gesture since, of the five ministers appointed, two, Lapointe and Fernand Rinfret, were openly hostile to Jewish immigration.⁵⁶ Indeed, when this committee met with the Jewish MPs, Lapointe pointedly refused to attend. Jacobs, Factor, and Heaps met privately with the two French-Canadian cabinet ministers and vainly pleaded with them to be less inflexible. Even promises by the Jewish MPs that no Jewish refugees would be permitted to settle in Quebec failed to budge them. Rinfret, and more significantly Lapointe, were unyielding in their determination not to allow Jewish refugees into Canada.⁵⁷ The cabinet committee met several more times, achieved nothing, and disbanded.

Congress leaders felt betrayed. They had kept the lid on the Jewish community, had been discreet in their negotiations with the government, and had, for their pains, received nothing in return.⁵⁸ And their demands had been minimal. As the president of JIAS informed his

53 PAC, Western Canadian Jewish Historical Society Papers [wcJH], Caiserman to M.A. Averbach, 15 April 1938, vol. 101

54 CJC, Caiserman to O.B. Roger, 25 April 1938

55 CJC, Heaps to N.A. Gray, 25 May 1938; Benjamin Robinson (president of JIAS) to O.B. Roger, 23 May 1938

56 King Papers, Cabinet Memorandum, 18 May 1938, 214192

57 King Papers, Pickering to King, 2 June 1938, 214193; CJC, Heaps to Caiserman, 23 May 1938

58 CJC, N.A. Gray to Caiserman, 26 May 1938

counterparts in Europe: 'Our negotiations are directed for the admission of a limited number of refugees over a period of four years.'⁵⁹ The congress was asking for the admission of a few hundred families for whom it would accept full financial responsibility. Yet even this proved to be too much for the Jewish MPs to pry out of the government. Though it had not yet lost all hope that Ottawa would come through with some concessions, the congress now began thinking seriously of alternative forms of action.

Meanwhile, without much enthusiasm, the Canadian government began preparing for the Evian Conference. As Canada's representatives, King appointed the Canadian delegate to the League of Nations, Hume Wrong, and the commissioner of immigration in London, William R. Little. Wrong's instructions were succinct: listen, make notes, say as little as possible, and under no circumstances made any promises or commitments.⁶⁰ Canada was participating at the conference, the prime minister added, only for 'information,' – and for no other reason. In any case, King reminded Wrong that since the League of Nations was shortly to discuss the universal problem of refugees, 'it would be neither practical nor just to discriminate in favour of refugees from Austria or Germany.'

Similarly, in his instructions to Little, Blair suggested that he go on the offensive and point out to the other delegates that Canada had done much more than was required to help solve the Jewish refugee problem. Fully 25 per cent of all special orders-in-council had been given to Jews, he said. In an attempt to halt the Jewish exodus from Germany in its entirety, Blair suggested that since Jews were being robbed of both their assets and their citizenship, 'the two essentials of immigration,' Little should approach the other delegates to persuade their governments to take a united stand against accepting the immigrants 'without either capital or recognized citizenship.' And in case Little missed the point, in a personal letter two days later, Blair emphasized that there was 'not much enthusiasm in many quarters here for any increase in our Jewish immigration.'⁶¹

To make certain that whatever concession which might be forced on Canada at Evian was kept at a minimum, the creative director of immigration found a method which was simple and clever. He delayed the admission of the handful of Jewish refugees with substantial amounts of capital whose applications had already been approved by his department but whose names had not yet been forwarded to cabinet

⁵⁹ CJC, B. Robinson to HICEM, Paris, 2 June 1938

⁶⁰ DCER VI, King to Wrong, 11 June 1938, 301–5

⁶¹ IR, Blair to Little, 4 and 6 June 1938, file 644452

for the necessary order-in-council. If Canada were forced to make a gesture, only then would the names to be sent forward. Until then, however, these helpless Jews would have to wait.⁶²

As delegates to the conference began arriving, Wrong smelled a rat. The meeting, he predicted, was 'going to be a most unpleasant affair' and his participation in it was 'an unwelcome duty.' The proceedings, he feared, 'look very amateurish,' and the entire concept clearly was 'not the product of any well thought-out scheme' but simply 'one of Mr. Roosevelt's sudden generous impulses.' If the Americans were seriously concerned with helping refugees, he wondered, why would they send as their delegates Myron Taylor, 'a steel tycoon,' and two minor foreign service officers, one of whom was 'a capable authority on the administration of the quota law.' Though he realized that there was not much support for the admission of refugees into Canada, he begged the prime minister not to make his instructions 'entirely negative.'⁶³

King ignored Wrong's plea. Rather, in a strongly worded letter he reminded the Canadian delegate that Canada was at Evian only to 'exchange information.' Furthermore, Wrong was put on notice that if the Americans made concrete proposals to solve the refugee problem he should oppose them while trying neither to 'lead in this opposition' nor to be 'obstructionist.'⁶⁴ And to forestall any American action, King forcefully informed Washington that Canada would neither support nor be a member of any committee which would formulate and carry out a long-range programme to solve the refugee crisis. Canada, he reminded the Americans, could make no commitments to accept any refugees as this would 'raise real difficulties from the point of view of the Canadian Immigration Service.'⁶⁵ Though King was concerned with the plight of Germany Jewry, he seemed even more concerned over the administrative problems of Canadian Immigration officers.

The prime minister had already been informed by Blair that from the point of view of the Immigration Branch accepting German Jews would only exacerbate the situation. As Blair told Skelton: 'The Jews of Canada will not be satisfied unless the door is kept open in some way to all the Jews from other countries.' Canadian Jews, he added, were largely from Eastern Europe and would apply unremitting pressure to admit fellow Jews from this area.⁶⁶ As well, he reminded Crerar that in 1923 Jews had tricked immigration authorities into allowing into Canada more Rumanian Jews than had been agreed to. 'Running true

62 IR, Blair to Jolliffe, 13 June 1938, file 644452

63 DCER VI, Wrong to Skelton, 21 June 1938, 806-7

64 King Papers, King to Wrong, 30 June 1938, 223086

65 DCER VI, King to Simmons, 28 June 1938, 807-10

66 IR, Blair to Skelton, 13 June 1938; Blair memorandum, 13 June 1938, file 644452

to form,' he added, they would now likely use every loophole to bring in their co-religionists from Poland, Rumania, Russia, and Hungary. 'We will not,' he warned, 'satisfy Canadian Jewry by a special effort limited to the Jews of Germany and Austria.'⁶⁷

As soon as the conference began, Wrong realized that Canadian worries had been groundless. The American delegate, Myron Taylor, was the first speaker. Instead of the magnanimous gesture all the representatives expected – and feared – the contribution of the United States government to solving the refugee crisis, Taylor announced, would be to fill its entire German-Austrian quota of 27,730. The delegates sat stunned following Taylor's speech. The nations of the world had been mobilized for this? The collective sigh of relief from the assembled representatives was almost audible as Taylor sat down. For the Jews of Europe, Taylor's speech was a cruel letdown; for everyone else at Evian it was a godsend. It was clear that the Americans saw Evian as an exercise in public relations; they had no concrete proposals to solve – or even alleviate – the crisis. If the Americans were going to do nothing, it was hardly likely that anyone else would do anything either.

Sure enough, for the next few days delegate after delegate arose and announced that their respective nations were doing all they could to solve the crisis and that stringent immigration laws prohibited them from doing more.⁶⁸ In a short speech Wrong echoed these sentiments, announced that Canada had much sympathy for the impossible situation in which the refugees found themselves but that it could do no more than it was already doing – which was a great deal. 'Certain classes of agriculturalists,' he said, were welcome; everyone else was out of luck.⁶⁹

For ten days, from 6 to 15 July, the thirty-two nations represented at Evian went through the motions of trying to solve the refugee problem without one – with the exception of the Dominican Republic – committing itself to accept more than a mere handful. Thus the conference concluded with a unanimous resolution that the nations of the world were 'not willing to undertake any obligations toward financing involuntary immigration.' Almost as an afterthought the delegates also approved the creation of an Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees to further study the problem.

Evian had clearly shown that no one wanted Jews. The world had

67 IR, Blair to Crerar, 14 June 1938, file 644452

68 D.A. Wyman, *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis, 1938–1941* (Boston 1968), 43–51. See also H.L. Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue: The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust, 1938–1945* (New Brunswick, NJ 1970).

69 PAC, External Affairs Records [EA], Wrong Speech to Evian Conference, box 1870, file 327–1

been offered them and had declined with thanks. The Jews were now solely Germany's problem and, having turned their backs, the nations of the world could hardly in conscience object to the solution. In the eyes of the Nazis, the world had given them *carte blanche* to solve their Jewish problem – their way. As a Nazi newspaper put it: 'The Evian Conference serves to justify Germany's policy against Jewry.'⁷⁰ So, as the Jew suspected but never really believed until Evian, he was on his own.

The tragic failure of Evian exposed the impotence of world Jewry in general and Canadian Jewry in particular. Not only did the latter have no input in its own government's policy, it was not even told what this policy was. Indeed, only days before the conference began, a JIAS official in Montreal complained to his colleagues in Paris: 'It is quite possible that more will be found about the intentions of our Government in France than we learn on this side.'⁷¹ Canadian Jews had not expected much from their government, but even they were disappointed in how little they received. As the president of JIAS lamented: 'It is quite obvious that the most that can be expected of Canada is to be more lenient in its application of the present regulations.'⁷² But even this was a false hope.

Just one month after Evian, on 26 August, Crerar met with Blair and other ranking immigration authorities to review the government's position on refugees. Clearly Crerar had been moved by the tales of horror emanating from Germany and was anxious to do something to aid the refugees. The minister told his officials that, while he thought 'great care should be taken, we probably should admit more of these unfortunate people on humanitarian grounds.'⁷³ The well-meaning but naïve Crerar was no match for Blair and his 'experts.' By the time the meeting was over the thoroughly confused Crerar had agreed in fact to tighten restrictions even further. Apparently unaware of the regulations, Crerar agreed to raise the necessary capital requirement of prospective Jewish immigrants from \$10,000 to \$15,000. Canada's official response to Evian, then, was to make it almost impossible for any Jew to immigrate; there were not many refugees with \$15,000.

What was perhaps most appalling about Blair's machinations was his admission to an Anglican clergyman not long afterwards that for some time he had been convinced that the destruction of European Jewry

70 *Danzinger Vorposter*, quoted in Peggy Mann, 'When the World Passed by the Other Side,' *The Guardian*, 7 May 1978, 18

71 CJC, M.A. Salkin to HICEM, Paris, 23 June 1938

72 CJC, Robinson to Oscar Cohen, 14 July 1938

73 IR, Blair memorandum on meeting with Crerar, 26 Aug. 1938, file 54782/5

was at hand. In an all-too-prophetic letter to Canon W.W. Judd of Toronto, Blair stated that he feared that Jews were facing virtual 'extinction' in Europe. Allowing more of them into Canada, he informed Judd, would not solve the problem.⁷⁴

For A.A. Heaps, who had for some time counselled Canadian Jewry to remain silent and to trust its leaders, the government's response to Evian was the last straw. Screwing up his courage, he wrote a passionate, bitter letter to his friend Mackenzie King stating that he had been betrayed by a duplicitous government whose 'oft-repeated promise' of allowing a reasonable number of refugees to come to Canada had proved to be a hoax. Though Evian had been traumatic for Heaps, he felt that one last desperate appeal to King, pointing out the iniquitous behaviour of his government, might shame the prime minister into some action. As he put it: 'The existing regulations are probably the most stringent to be found anywhere in the whole world. If refugees have no money they are barred because they are poor, and if they have fairly substantial sums, they are often refused admittance on the most flimsy pretext. All I say of existing regulations is that they are inhuman and anti-Christian ... Practically every nation in the world is allowing a limited number to enter their countries ... The lack of action by the Canadian government is leaving an unfortunate impression ... I regret to state that the sentiment is gaining ground that anti-Semitic influences are responsible for the government's refusal to allow refugees to come to Canada ...' King shunted the letter off to Crerar and Blair for their consideration. Heaps did not get a reply.⁷⁵ His was the last serious attempt by a Jewish MP to influence the government. Seriously weakened by the death of Sam Jacobs in late September, the contingent of Jewish MPs was no longer a factor in the battle for the admission of refugees. As the executive director of JIAS sadly informed Jewish officials in France: 'The remaining two Jewish members of Parliament were finally compelled to give up their efforts ... [as] they find themselves unable to be of any material assistance.'⁷⁶

Embittered and frustrated, Jewish community leaders began giving serious consideration to organizing a nondenominational, anti-Nazi group which might more effectively lobby on behalf of the refugees. Perhaps a wider coalition of forces in which Jews would be less conspicuous – though no less active – and for whom refugees would be seen as a humanitarian rather than a Jewish cause, might succeed

74 IR, Blair to W.W. Judd, Oct. 1938, file 54782/5

75 King Papers, Heaps to King, 9 Sept. 1938, 214195; H.R.L. Henry to Heaps, 15 Sept. 1938, 214197

76 CJC, Salkin to James Bernstein, Paris, 3 Oct. 1938

where Jewish groups had not. At its annual convention in October the congress endorsed the creation of a nonsectarian body which could 'approach the Government and appeal to them directly for favourable consideration on purely humanitarian ground.'⁷⁷ Fortuitously, at exactly this moment, a respected non-sectarian organization had decided, on its own, to undertake precisely this course of action.

For some time the Canadian League of Nations Society had been in a state of despondency and had become almost moribund. As the world seemed hell-bent on another war, the organization had seemingly become as irrelevant as the league itself. Most of its membership were deeply disturbed by the apparent inhumanity of the Canadian government's refugee policy. In a sense, the Jewish refugee issue proved to be a boon to the society; it gave it new life, and new sources of membership and funds. It seemed to be the last great moral crusade of a dismal decade. In early October the society announced that it would 'place the strength of [its] entire organization behind a move to aid the Jewish refugees ... by requesting the Canadian government to take immediate action.' The society's president, the indefatigable Senator Cairine Wilson, a close friend and political ally of the prime minister, stated that the organization was already beginning to mobilize for such an effort. As part of that effort the Canadian Jewish Congress covertly promised to finance the campaign, but fearful that the society might be tarred as a 'Jewish front,' it was agreed that 'Jewish representation should be small.'⁷⁸

Within a few weeks it hardly seemed to matter. Time had run out for German Jewry. On 9 and 10 November occurred the worst pogrom in modern world history to that time. *Kristallnacht* (literally crystal night, because of the broken glass from Jewish homes and businesses that littered the streets in every city, town, and village in Germany and Austria) was incited by the government to terrorize the Jews. Countless synagogues, Jewish stores and homes were plundered and razed. Men, women, and children were wrenched from their homes, beaten, shot, or dragged off to concentration camps. Scores were killed, hundreds injured, thousands arrested.

These tragic events finally touched the prime minister of Canada. 'The sorrows which the Jews have to bear at this time,' he wrote in his diary, 'are almost beyond comprehension.' 'Something,' he added, 'will have to be done by our country ...'⁷⁹ Coincidentally, on the following

77 CJC, Proceedings of 1938 Convention

78 PAC, League of Nations Society of Canada Papers, Executive Minutes, 15 Oct. 1938; interview, Constance Haywood, Toronto, 8 May 1978; *Western Jewish News*, Winnipeg, 6 Oct. 1938; WCJH, Oscar Cohen to B. Sheps, 30 Oct. 1938

79 King Diary, 12 Nov. 1938

day, he personally shared in Jewish grief as he attended the funeral of Mrs Heaps. Again, he was overwhelmed by the breadth of the tragedy which was about to envelop the Jews. Writing in his diary that night he noted that it would be 'difficult politically,' and his cabinet might oppose him, but he was going to 'fight' for the admission of some Jewish refugees since it was 'right and just, and Christian.'⁸⁰

The following week while he was in Washington for talks with Roosevelt concerning the upcoming visit of the Royal family, the conversation turned to the ghastly lot of Jewish refugees. While the president, Myron Taylor, and Cordell Hull discussed what could be done, King remained silent. In his own words, he 'just listened.' Yet during the conversation he 'felt more than ever' that since countries with 'more crowded areas,' such as Great Britain and the United States, were accepting refugees, Canada must open her doors. On his return to Ottawa he told the governor general, Lord Tweedsmuir, that on humanitarian grounds alone Canada should allow in some refugees and warned that 'if we tried to keep our country to ourselves, we would lose it altogether some day.' It seemed at long last that Canada was prepared to do something for the desperate Jews of Germany.⁸¹

It was precisely at this time that the Jews of Canada mobilized for one last dramatic effort to help save Germany Jewry. *Kristallnacht* had driven the community into a state of frenzied activity. On 14 November, at a special emergency meeting, the executive council of the Canadian Jewish Congress decided to proclaim Sunday, 20 November, 'a day of mourning' at which memorial meetings would be held across the country. It instructed its local organizations to ensure that these meetings were 'non-sectarian,' that non-Jewish community leaders play a 'prominent role,' and that most of the speakers be Gentile. These meetings were to 'capitalize on the sympathy' felt towards the helpless victims of Nazi brutality and to 'impress' the government that public opinion was in favour of admitting some of them to Canada. In addition, each community was sent a draft of a protest resolution which should be adopted at these meetings and forwarded to Ottawa.⁸²

Surprisingly, with only five days to organize, the congress achieved dramatic results. Across Canada from Glace Bay, Nova Scotia, to Victoria, British Columbia, mass meetings were held and resolutions passed pleading with the government to open its heart and, more especially, its gate. And at almost every one of these meetings the featured speaker was a non-Jew. Mayors, judges, MPs, and businessmen took their place on the platform in support of the refugees. Twenty

⁸⁰ Ibid., 13 Nov. 1938

⁸¹ Ibid., 17 and 20 Nov. 1938

⁸² CJC, Memorandum from H. Caiserman, 15 Nov. 1938

thousand participated in Toronto, four thousand in Winnipeg, six hundred in Quebec City, two hundred in Vegreville, Alberta, eight hundred in Niagara Falls, twelve hundred in Kingston, three hundred in Humboldt, Saskatchewan. Telegrams, resolutions, petitions, and letters poured into the offices of the prime minister and various members of parliament. The demonstrations were, in the words of the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, an example of the 'brotherhood of man asserting itself.' Scores of newspapers across the nation, with the singular exception of the French press in Quebec, called for a more generous policy towards refugees.⁸³ To capitalize on this vast outpouring of public support, a high-powered delegation of Canadian Jews arrived in Ottawa on 22 November to meet with the prime minister to plead the case for Jewish refugees.

Unfortunately, it seemed they had come too late, for on the day they arrived in Ottawa the cabinet took up the refugee question. Despite King's urging to make some 'provision' for refugees, the Quebec ministers, led by Lapointe, were solidly opposed. Rather than press the issue and risk alienating Quebec, King announced to the press that the whole question needed further study.⁸⁴ This decision prompted the first serious signs of dissension within the Jewish community. The *Hebrew Journal* of Toronto castigated the congress leadership for being too timid for too long. It called for more militant action against a government which had humiliated the Jewish community by 'shamelessly' making decisions concerning refugees the day before a delegation of Jewish leaders was to meet with the prime minister to make its representation.⁸⁵

It was a shaken group of Jews who were ushered into King's office on 23 November. It included both Jewish MPs and the leaders of all the important community organizations, including the congress, JIAS, and the Zionist Organization of Canada. They pleaded with King and Crerar to open up Canada's doors by a crack and to admit 10,000 refugees whom the community would guarantee would not become public charges. They were politely rebuffed. King pointed out that unemployment in Canada was still high and that his first duty was 'the avoidance of strife ... maintaining the unity of the country,' and fighting 'the forces of separatism.' He sympathized with the refugees, he said, but he had 'to consider the constituencies and the views of those supporting the Government.' Crerar added that there were great ad-

83 CJC, Regional reports on 20 Nov. meetings; clipping file, Nov. 1938, with excerpts from thirty-five newspapers and weeklies; *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 22 Nov. 1938

84 King Diary, 22 Nov. 1938; *Toronto Star*, 23 Nov. 1938

85 *Hebrew Journal* (Yiddish), 23 Nov. 1938

ministrative problems involved and in any case Canada had already accepted three hundred refugees over the past year. With that the delegation was excused.⁸⁶

On the following day King again met his cabinet and, as he recorded in his diary, he once more asked them to adopt a 'liberal attitude,' to act as the 'conscience of the nation' even though it might not be 'politically most expedient,' and offer some aid to Jewish refugees. There was no response to his appeal. The cabinet, according to the prime minister, feared 'the political consequences of any help to the Jews.' What it was prepared to do, after some discussion, was to help find a home for these Jews 'in some [other] land.' King then dropped the issue as he 'did not wish to press the matter any further.'⁸⁷

For Canadian Jews the cabinet decision was a shock; to their leaders it was devastating. Following a week of mass organization, demonstration, and protest, a week in which almost every English-language newspaper in the nation had condemned the government for its timidity, a week in which thousands had signed petitions demanding a more generous policy towards the refugees, it was generally assumed that the cabinet response would be positive. Especially mortified were Jewish leaders who had come to the prime minister with what they considered a minimal package that would cost the government nothing – allowing in a mere 10,000 refugees over a five-year period who the Jewish community would guarantee would never become 'burdens on Canadian society.' The prime minister had rejected every proposal and had told the Jews that if they wanted a change in government policy they should go out and 'arouse public opinion.' This the congress set out to do at once.⁸⁸

Immediately following the fruitless confrontation with King, congress leaders met with Senator Cairine Wilson of the League of Nations Society of Canada. Together they began planning a vast lobbying and educational campaign to be undertaken by the society's newly created Canadian National Committee on Refugees [CNCR] to point out to Canadians the advantages to be gained by accepting Jewish refugees. These activities would be largely funded by the Canadian Jewish Congress.⁸⁹

On 1 December, it seemed as if the Jewish community had won over its most important convert. On that day during a cabinet meeting

⁸⁶ King Diary, 23 Nov. 1938; King Papers, A.J. Freiman (president of the Zionist Organization of Canada) to King, 23 Nov. 1938, 213348

⁸⁷ King Diary, 24 Nov. 1938

⁸⁸ CJC, Caiserman to Sheps, 28 Nov. 1938; *Toronto Star*, 25 Nov. 1938

⁸⁹ CJC, Oscar Cohen to Sheps, 29 Nov. 1938

Thomas Crerar, obviously troubled by his government's behaviour, announced to his stunned colleagues that he was prepared to recommend the admission of 10,000 refugees. The cabinet would not budge. Disassociating himself from the hapless immigration minister, whose proposal he thought was made 'without consideration' of the problems involved, King found a convenient solution. He suggested to his colleagues that they make use of the BNA Act to justify their inaction. He would publicly announce that nothing could be done for German Jews until the provinces were consulted, since immigration legislation was concurrent. At the same time he chided Crerar, told him to do his homework, and to prepare a statement which the cabinet would discuss.⁹⁰

Crerar's defection clearly troubled King. Even more bothersome, however, was the announcement on the same day by the Australian government that it was now prepared to admit 15,000 refugees over the next three years. At once Crerar warned the prime minister that Canada would be put under 'a good deal of pressure' to follow suit.⁹¹ As well, King received a trenchant letter from A.A. Heaps that the Australian decision had made him 'ashamed' as a Canadian and that the government's policy was 'inhumane' and 'lacking principle.'⁹²

On 13 December, the cabinet took up the refugee issue once again. Aware that he had no support either from his cabinet colleagues or his departmental officials, Crerar read a statement, drafted by Blair, which said nothing about the admission of 10,000 refugees but which simply recommended the easing, ever so slightly, of the present immigration regulations.⁹³ After straying somewhat, Crerar had again been brought back into line. A relieved cabinet accepted the new position not to change the regulations but to interpret them 'as liberally as possible.' What this meant in practice, according to the prime minister, was that Jews already landed in Canada as tourists would be allowed to remain. However, no more Jewish refugees would be admitted to Canada 'lest it might foment an anti-Semitic problem ... and [create] a new problem.'⁹⁴ Thus, after months of wrestling with the question of Jewish refugees, the cabinet had at long last found an answer: keep them out.

Ironically, at the same meeting at which it was decided not to allow in Jews, the cabinet agreed to permit the entry of Czechs and Sudeten

90 King Diary, 1 Dec. 1938

91 King Papers, Crerar to King, 2 Dec. 1938, C122661

92 Ibid., Heaps to King, 2 Dec. 1938, 214198

93 IR, Draft Statement ... regarding Refugees, 12 Dec. 1938; King Papers, Pickersgill to King, 13 Dec. 1938, file 644452

94 King Diary, 21 Dec. 1938

Germans since they were underwritten by a \$500,000 gift from the British, French, and Czechoslovakian governments and since, in King's words, they 'had been sacrificed for the sake of the world's peace of which [Canadians] were beneficiaries.'⁹⁵

There were, however, several additional reasons for the choice of Czech over Jew. The British government was applying heavy pressure on the dominions to admit Sudeten refugees. Indeed, immediately following the Munich agreement, Malcolm MacDonald, the dominions and colonial secretary, called together all the high commissioners and informed them that 'all those concerned with the recent settlement in Czechoslovakia had a greater responsibility in the matter than fell upon them, for example, in respect of the Jewish refugees in Germany and Austria.'⁹⁶ As well, the Canadian high commissioner in London was using what influence he had to make sure that restrictions on Jews entering Canada remained.

For Jewish refugees anxious to come to Canada it was unfortunate that the Canadian representative in London was, to say the least, no partisan of Jewish immigration. Vincent Massey, the prominent scion of the wealthy Massey family, had in fact become a fringe member of the aristocratic, largely pro-German and anti-Semitic Cliveden set centred around Lord and Lady Astor.⁹⁷ Though he was much too 'Anglophilic' to have the confidence or even the trust of Mackenzie King – indeed, the prime minister had once told Massey to his face that he was 'quite wrong on his views of most things' – his recommendations still had weight with the government, especially when they were in line with policies being considered by cabinet.⁹⁸ And on the question of Jewish refugees, their positions coincided.

Massey was enthusiastic about the anti-Nazi Sudetens, most of whom were Social Democrats or Catholics. Many of them, he told the prime minister, were skilled craftsmen, professionals, and farmers – exactly the type of settlers Canada craved. And perhaps even better, only a

95 Ibid. For details see IR, file 916207, and B.A. Gow, 'A Home for Free Germans in the Wilderness of Canada: The Sudeten Settlers of Tupper Creek, British Columbia,' *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, x, 1978, 62–74.

96 Quoted in Sherman, *Island Refuge*, 141. See also DCER VI, Massey to King, 18 Oct. 1938, 828.

97 Interview with James Gibson. See also Vincent Massey, *What's Past Is Prologue* (Toronto 1963), 114–15; Christopher Sykes, *The Life of Lady Astor* (London 1972), 364–411; D.C. Watt, *Personalities and Policies* (London 1965), 26, 119, 161.

98 J.L. Granatstein and R. Bothwell, 'A Self-Evident National Duty: Canadian Foreign Policy 1935–9,' *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 111, 1975, 214; King Diary, 5 Oct. 1935; Lester B. Pearson, *Mike: The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson*, 1: 1897–1948 (Toronto 1972), 105–6

small percentage of them were Jews. He immediately saw an opportunity to score some public relations points for Canada at minimal cost. Would it not be a wonderful tactic, he suggested to King, to accept 'as many as possible Aryan Sudeten Germans.' These, he stated, were surely 'more desirable' than other refugees. But more to the point: 'If we could take a substantial number of them it would put us in a much stronger position in relation to later appeals from and on behalf of non-Aryans.' He also pleaded that the government consider Sudeten Germans 'quite separately from other refugees ... as they include ... many persons who would be much more desirable as Canadian settlers and much more likely to succeed in our country than certain other types of refugees.'⁹⁹ And in case the prime minister missed the point, Massey emphasized that 'these refugees are of a superior type to certain other categories of refugees who are engaging our attention.'¹⁰⁰

Such cynicism was clearly not unappreciated in Ottawa and Skelton was quick to assure Massey that his suggestions were 'in line' with proposals already before cabinet.¹⁰¹ It was not long after the high commissioner's recommendations arrived that the government decided to keep out the Jews and let in the Sudeten Germans. Massey was delighted with this decision. He congratulated King and at the same time informed him that there were now a large number of Central Europeans 'of means and education' who would enrich Canada 'in both the material sense and otherwise' who were finding Canadian immigration laws 'too wooden.' Canada was missing a golden opportunity, he told King, if it did not accept these people. Naturally, he added, he did not have in mind Jews, but rather 'the numerous non-Jewish people who find life quite intolerable under the Nazi regime.' In addition, he urged the prime minister to publicly announce that Canada was prepared to admit an unspecified number of non-Jewish German political refugees from the Sudeten.¹⁰²

By the onset of 1939 an unofficial unholy triumvirate had been forged in the Immigration Service, the cabinet, and, to a much lesser degree, the Department of External Affairs against refugees in general and Jewish refugees in particular. In Immigration the intransigent and morally obtuse Blair gave vent to his anti-Semitism by placing every possible bureaucratic encumbrance in the path of refugees. In cabinet Ernest Lapointe scuttled any cabinet backsliding – including that of the

99 DCER VI, Massey to King, 29 Nov. 1938; Massey to Skelton, 1 Dec. 1938, 837, 844-5

100 EA, Massey to King, 2 Dec. 1938, box 1870, file 327-11

101 Ibid., Skelton to Massey, 2 Dec. 1938

102 Ibid., Massey to King, 13 Jan. 1939, box 1870, file 327-111; King Papers, Massey to King, 3 Feb. 1939, 231607-10

prime minister – on the refugee issue. In External Affairs Vincent Massey flirted with the aristocratic crowd in London, while doing what he could to keep Jews out of Canada. Individually, each had significant power; collectively, they seemed beyond challenge. Each had his own sphere of influence but on the refugee issue these spheres overlapped. Though there is no evidence that they consulted on this issue – and they likely did not – what united them was a common conviction: Canada did not need more Jews.

Though the prime minister was not a prisoner of this anti-Jewish coterie, he could not help but be influenced by it. When the foremost immigration authority, the leading French-Canadian politician in the country, and the nation's senior foreign diplomat spoke, he listened, especially since they were all saying the same thing. King himself vacillated. At times his humanitarian and religious instincts led him to argue the refugee case; yet always his political instincts overcame these arguments. His sympathy for the refugees was genuine. He sincerely wanted to find them a home – anywhere but in Canada. Thus the barriers would remain. Only a vast public outcry, he told a delegation from the CNCR, could overturn them. He urged the delegates to go out to the nation and provide it with a 'proper education on this question.'¹⁰³ Just how much public support would have to be generated before the government would change its policy, King did not indicate. He did not have to. The combined forces of Jews and the CNCR, he knew, could hardly overcome government policy.

Nor did he particularly want them to. Above all else, King was committed to keeping Canada united. Allowing in Jews, he feared, would disrupt that unity, and not only in Quebec.¹⁰⁴ Anti-Semitism, perhaps most overt in that province, was prevalent throughout English-speaking Canada as well. Jewish quotas existed in various professions, universities, medical schools, and industries. Jews were restricted from buying property in some areas, from holidaying at some resorts, from joining many private clubs or using their recreational facilities, and even from sitting on the boards of various charitable, educational, financial, and business organizations.¹⁰⁵ Anti-Jewish sentiments were being voiced regularly, and with impunity, throughout these years by many respectable newspapers, politicians, businessmen, and churchmen, and by leading officials of such groups

¹⁰³ PAC, Cairine Wilson Papers, Minutes of CNCR Founding Convention, 6 Dec. 1938, 4

¹⁰⁴ Neatby, *King*, III, 304–5

¹⁰⁵ CJC, Files on Anti-Semitism in Canada 1930–40. These contain reports to the congress from Jews throughout Canada on anti-Jewish attitudes and behaviour in their localities.

as the Canadian Corps Association, the Orange Order, the Knights of Columbus, and prominent farm and business organizations.¹⁰⁶ There was even some violence as Jew and anti-Semite confronted one another on the streets of Toronto, Winnipeg, or other Canadian cities.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, so grave did this problem appear that at its founding convention the CNCR resolved that one of its major priorities must be to combat the anti-Semitism that seemed so rife in Canada.¹⁰⁸

If it is possible to overemphasize the extent of anti-Semitism in Canada at this time, it is not possible to ignore it. It existed and King was well aware that it did. Any move to admit Jewish refugees, he feared, might cost him political support. Although some organizations and some high-placed members of some religious groups such as the Anglican and United churches actively campaigned on behalf of Jewish refugees, most Canadians seemed indifferent to the suffering of German Jews and hostile to admitting some of them to Canada. Indeed, in March of 1939, the Rev. Claris Silcox, the general secretary of the Social Service Council of Canada and a leading pro-refugee advocate, delivered what he called a 'post-mortem' on Canada's refugee policy to a large audience at the University of Toronto. He listed a series of reasons for Canada's failure to respond to the crisis. These ranged from timid leadership and a bad economic situation to the success of Nazi propagandists and the xenophobia in Quebec. But the most important reason, he claimed, was 'the existence throughout Canada ... of a latent anti-Semitism.'¹⁰⁹ It was this anti-Semitism, he charged, which had prevented Canada from carrying out its duty as a Christian nation and which allowed her government to close Canada's doors to Jewish refugees.

Nevertheless, despite all the obstacles, Jewish leaders persevered; they had no choice. In December 1938 all the disparate refugee activities of the Jewish community were united into a single organization, the Canadian Committee for Jewish Refugees [CCJR] headed by the congress president, Samuel Bronfman. Though it was understaffed and underfunded, it co-operated with various local refugee committees in organizing a series of 'educational' campaigns. In January 1939,

106 CJC, Files on Anti-Semitism; Betcherman, *The Swastika and the Maple Leaf*, 99–137; Howard Palmer, 'Nativism and Ethnic Tolerance in Alberta, 1920–1972' (PhD thesis, York University, 1973)

107 See, for example, *Toronto Star*, 17–19 Aug. 1933, for descriptions of the infamous Christie Pits riots.

108 PAC, Cairine Wilson Papers, Minutes, 7

109 United Church Archives, Silcox Papers, Speeches, 'Canadian Post-Mortem on Refugees,' Toronto, 21 March 1939

for instance, Silcox was sent out on a speaking tour of Western Canada. Officially travelling under the banner of the CNCR to address community groups and service clubs, he was actually funded out of Toronto by the CCJR. A gifted public speaker, Silcox attracted both wide media coverage and editorial support for his cause. He also made himself available to local Jewish groups and helped organize refugee committees throughout the West. In addition, the local committees worked with the CNCR to publicize the successful business ventures begun by refugee industrialists in Britain and the United States and pointed out the opportunities which Canada was missing by keeping these people out. Similar arguments were also made respecting the potential wealth of scholarly and scientific manpower that could now be Canada's for the asking.¹¹⁰

Buoyed by numerous supporting editorials and a gratifying response to public speakers, Jewish leaders were again in Ottawa in late February. Convinced that there was now a groundswell of popular support in English Canada, they fully expected 'a definite and favourable decision.' As delegates would later report to their communities: 'It was felt that by now opinion has been crystallized and the government is in a position to tell the Jews of Canada what it intends to do.'¹¹¹ And indeed it was. Though polite and sympathetic, it was unyielding. Crerar and Blair congratulated the Jewish delegates on their success in coalescing so much national support in so short a time but offered them nothing. Indeed, a disingenuous Blair told them that with respect to the Sudeten refugees, there would be no discrimination against Jews, 'a number of whom would be included in the allotment.'¹¹² Two weeks later Crerar announced in parliament that after a careful study of every family, he could assure the House that 'probably 95 percent of these people are Roman Catholics.'¹¹³ Quebec could hardly complain; nor could Vincent Massey.

The meeting with Crerar and Blair finally disabused Jewish leaders of any notion they still cherished that the government would change its policy. King saw no need for any shift. He felt that whatever popular support there was for refugees in English Canada was ephemeral. As well, with an election in the offing, could he dare alienate his base in Quebec? As he explained to George Wrong, who had written of his agony and frustration over Canada's shameful behaviour towards the

¹¹⁰ WCJR, Oscar Cohen to Sheps, 30 Dec. 1938; Silcox Papers, Clipping File, Western Canada Tour, Jan. 1939

¹¹¹ CJC, Report on Interview with T.A. Crerar and F.C. Blair, 24 Feb. 1939, 1

¹¹² Ibid., 4

¹¹³ *Toronto Star*, 10 March 1939

refugees, the issue was 'the most baffling of our international problems.' He promised to make a 'contribution to its solution' but feared that by doing so he might create a 'condition which it may be more difficult to meet than the one it is intended to cure.' Allowing in Jewish refugees, he dreaded, would undermine the Canadian unity he had fought so hard to maintain.¹¹⁴

It was now almost too much for Canadian Jews to bear. There was no longer any hope of convincing the King administration to change its mind. Yet with newspapers full of horror stories of German Jews being whipped through the streets, thrown off roofs, and dehumanized in every possible way, Canadian Jewry could not possibly admit defeat. Failure was unthinkable even as the unthinkable was beginning to happen in Europe. Thus a newly revamped Jewish refugee committee was formed in March 1939 under the leadership of an energetic young Montreal lawyer, Saul Hayes.¹¹⁵ The creation of yet another committee was too much for one prominent Jew. Mirroring the rancour that was now pervading the community, S.M. Shapiro, the publisher of the *Hebrew Journal*, complained bitterly: 'The policy of secret diplomacy pursued until now has not brought results. The public was duly impressed by the arguments advanced that any undue publicity was likely to do harm to the cause ... For two years the leaders of the Congress sought to assuage any misgivings on the part of the Jewish public by assuring it that they were negotiating with the authorities in Ottawa. The impression was conveyed that they were given some secret commitment by the government. Yet ... it is becoming apparent that the secret negotiations accomplished nothing and that our leaders had no more promises from the Ottawa government than if they had done nothing at all in the matter.'¹¹⁶

Though his judgment was harsh, Shapiro was undoubtedly correct. Jewish leadership had been led down a garden path by the King administration. And yet they were still anxious to have another go at the government, this time with the revitalized refugee committee. That Hayes and his committee would have succeeded where others had failed is doubtful. They did not even get the chance: events in Europe were moving too quickly. As the committee was making preparations to go to Ottawa, Hitler was making preparations to go to Warsaw.

¹¹⁴ King Papers, Wrong to King, 17 Feb. 1939; King to Wrong, 25 Feb. 1939, 238576-8.

¹¹⁵ CJC, Caiserman to Sheps, 13 March 1939. During the war years Hayes was to prove such an effective advocate for Jewish refugees on the government's refugee board that Blair complained: 'To prevent the more generous scale of assistance to Jewish cases ... I think the best way to do this would be to get rid of Sol [sic] Hayes ...' IR, Blair to Byers, 20 Sept. 1941, file 694687.

¹¹⁶ *Hebrew Journal*, 2 May 1939

Hitler struck first. On 1 September Germany marched into Poland. The fate of European Jewry was sealed. Blair, Lapointe, Massey, and King had stood fast just long enough. The Canadian Jewish community would soon turn its attention to saving the remnants of Auschwitz.

The Canadian government's success in withstanding pressure from pro-refugee groups, both Jewish and non-Jewish, was virtually complete. The Depression, the general apathy in English Canada, the outright hostility of French Canada, the unyielding opposition of certain key officials, the prime minister's concern for votes, and the overlay of anti-Semitism that dominated official Ottawa thinking on the question combined to ensure that no more than a mere handful of Jewish refugees would find a haven in Canada. And even the outbreak of hostilities held its own irony for the refugees. Ever watchful lest Jews might slip past him, Blair did not see the beginning of the war as an excuse to let down his guard. With thousands of Jewish refugees desperately scrambling to escape still unoccupied Europe, Blair confidently advised Skelton that there was no need to worry. The Jews would not get into Canada. After all, most of these refugees were German nationals and, therefore, enemy aliens. Enemy aliens were expressly forbidden admission into Canada.¹¹⁷ The line had been drawn. It was not about to move.

¹¹⁷ IR, Blair to Skelton, 16 Nov. 1939, file 644452

*Rescue Operations through Vilna**

YEHUDA BAUER

ACCORDING TO AVAILABLE DATA, the number of refugees in Vilna reached approximately 14,000.¹ This figure is based on statements of Rabbi Grodzenski and of the AJDC ("Joint") representative in Vilna, Moses W. Beckelman; according to these reports, about seventy per cent of these refugees came from the territories occupied by the Germans, and the remainder from the area annexed by the Soviets. 2,440 of the refugees were *Yeshiva* students and 171 were rabbis; approximately 2,065 refugees were members of the Zionist Pioneer movements. Furthermore there were among the refugees a considerable number of leaders of the Jewish political parties of Poland as well as intellectuals. Two types of organizations tried to aid this group of refugees in Vilna: the local organizations of Lithuanian Jewry and organizations from abroad. I will try to examine the attempts aimed at helping the refugees within Lithuania itself as well as the efforts made to rescue as many people as possible from there.

The organizations which operated within Lithuania were: the Refugee Committee in Vilna; HICEM and HIAS—the Jewish emigration organizations, whose local representative was Yeshayahu Rosovsky; the Palestine Office in Kaunas (Kovno), directed by Zvi Brick (Barak), now living in Israel; and the committee established in December 1939 by Dr. Jacob Robinson. This last committee was

* This paper, originally delivered at the Convention organized by the Yad Vashem Scientific Advisory Board in April 1972, is printed here with additional notes and references. For Concentration of Refugees in Vilna on the Eve of the Holocaust," see pp. 201–214.

¹ The numbers are based on data available in the *AJDC Archives*, in particular on the reports to the JDC Executive (18.9.1940), JDC summaries (23.4.1941) and the Beckelman report (18.11.1939). Rabbi Rodzensky also transferred his records to the JDC.

YEHUDA BAUER

formed as a roof-organization to include all the other committees and councils, including the Rabbinical Council of the city of Vilna, whose main duty was the care and welfare of the *Yeshiva* students and rabbis who fled from Poland.²

Alien residents were under the supervision of the Lithuanian Ministry of the Interior, more exactly, the administrative branch of the Ministry, which was headed by the official Alekna. His duties involved dealing with the relief and aid administered to Polish and Jewish refugees, including prisoners-of-war; this latter group consisted of soldiers from the Polish Army who had crossed the border. The Lithuanians confiscated their arms and placed them in camps. Alekna and the Lithuanian officials who were in charge belonged to the more or less liberal administration which had ruled Lithuania during the inter-war period and which was still in power.

On December 9, 1939 the Ministry of the Interior issued a statute regulating the position of war refugees. This ordinance and the ones which followed were directed primarily against the Poles. The Lithuanians aimed at curtailing the demographic and cultural supremacy of the Poles in Vilna; more bluntly, these laws were intended to prepare the eventual expulsion of Poles from Vilna. Jewish representatives who came into contact with the Lithuanian authorities were told this more or less explicitly. The statute limited the freedom of movement of the refugees; the laws issued after it, in December 1939 and January 1940, dealt with the registration of refugees, the dismantling of the Polish underground, and the prevention of any possibility of its reorganization, especially within a military framework.

Subsequently, the above Committee headed by Dr. Robinson explained to the Lithuanian administration that the Jews were not opposed to this policy. Quite the contrary, the Jews were neutral in the struggle between the Lithuanians and Poles, and had no desire to place any obstacles in the way of the Lithuanian authorities in regard to any matter not directly related to the plight of the Jewish refugees in Lithuania or the new Jewish residents, namely the 60,000 Jews of Vilna. The Committee headed by Dr. Robinson, who himself had excellent contacts with the ruling circles, met

² See Z. Barak, "Polish Refugees in Lithuania in the Years 1939-1941" (Hebrew), to be published in the Book of Lithuanian Jewry. I am grateful to Mr. Barak for enabling me to make use of his paper.

RESCUE OPERATIONS THROUGH VILNA

with members of the Lithuanian Government, including among others the Deputy Prime Minister. As a consequence of this intercession, the Lithuanian Government attempted by means of the newspapers to stimulate more positive feelings and opinions toward the Jewish refugees among the population.

All these activities could not have succeeded if it had not been for outside help, which came mainly by means of the JDC and its representative, Beckelman, who was sent to Vilna. Actually Beckelman came with two other groups, namely with a representative of the "Committee of Polish Jews" in London, Kaiser, and H. Foster Anderson from the "Polish Relief Fund," an organization aided by American Jewry. Kaiser, however, left Vilna in January 1940 and further took no part in activities there. Another emissary was H. Redfern, representative of the Relief Committee of the former President Herbert Hoover, who endeavoured to organize relief measures for war-victims immediately after the outbreak of the Second World War. Most of the money, though, came from the Joint. The other two organizations contributed relatively small amounts, perhaps a total amount of roughly \$ 15,000–20,000, whereas the Joint provided approximately \$ 742,000 for the period of September 1939 to June 1940, constituting the major source of support.³

The Lithuanian Government, lacking foreign currency, tried to acquire the dollars which came from this source for itself; it also wanted to supervise the distribution of these funds to the refugee groups in local currency. Thus a dispute in this matter began between the Jewish representatives and the Lithuanian Red Cross, which had been placed in charge of refugee affairs by the Ministry of Interior. The head of the Lithuanian Red Cross was General Sutkus; this General came into contact with the International Committee (in which Anderson, Redfern and Beckelman took part) and began long, arduous negotiations on the question of how the money was to be used and distributed. Beckelman achieved a significant accomplishment: in exchange for a promise of American dollars, he got the Lithuanian Red Cross to consent to the Lithuanian Government's adding fifty per cent in the local currency to every dollar that was exchanged into *lits*, i.e., two-thirds of the funds would come in fact from the Joint and one-third from the Lithuanian Government. Moreover the Lithuanian Red Cross agreed that the money would

³ *JDC Archives*, R-6, report for the year 1940 dated 23.4.1941.

YEHUDA BAUER

be distributed by the Central Jewish Refugee Committee. This accomplishment was achieved despite the continuous attempts by the Lithuanians to control distribution of the money and thus gain influence over the refugee groups, and exploit them for their own purposes.

The Joint had more than a few clashes with several refugee groups, mainly the small group of Bundists of approximately 400 people, who had wanted to leave the Refugee Committee. Only after prolonged negotiations was an agreement reached that although the Bundists would not join the Refugee Committee, they would coordinate the distribution of funds to their members jointly with the Committee.

During this period of independent Lithuania, that is to say from September 1939 till June 1940, a very serious effort was made at getting out as many people as possible from there to any possible place of refuge in the world. To this end, there was complete cooperation between HICEM and HIAS on the one hand and the Palestine Office on the other.

The Committee set up by the Palestine Office for distributing the few entrance permits to Mandatory Palestine which had been set aside for Lithuania during this period included Dr. Zeraeh Wahrhaftig, Dr. Moshe Sneh and Avraham Bielopolsky. Until April 1940, 543 people left Lithuania, 406 of them to Palestine and most of the remainder to the United States, with a few individuals going to some other places in the world. Emigration from Lithuania entailed tremendous difficulties. The usual routes were partly sealed off. Although the Germans were prepared to grant permits for passage through Germany to Italy, the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem hesitated to use this route. Emigrants therefore had to arrive somehow by various ways to Western Europe and from there to ports in Italy or southern France, and thence to Palestine. In the end an exit route was found and a Swedish-Soviet airline company transported a considerable number of the emigrants to Sweden and from there to Western Europe. This route too was sealed off, however, following the German invasion of Western Europe (Belgium and Holland) in May 1940; contacts with Western Europe were however, not completely cut off.⁴

The second period of the refugee groups of Vilna began on June

⁴ See Barak, *ibid.*

RESCUE OPERATIONS THROUGH VILNA

15, 1940 with the entry of Soviet troops. The Soviets set up their administration within a few days, although the conquest was officially completed only on August 3, when Lithuania was annexed to the Soviet Union.

The problem now was how to deal with the refugees under the new conditions. Since the American Government refused to allow the transfer of additional funds from the United States to Lithuania, the American representatives, and mainly Beckelman of the Joint, faced the problem of maintaining financial help. Amazingly enough an agreement was achieved between Beckelman and the Lithuanian Red Cross, now under new administration and management, according to which the Red Cross would continue to allocate funds under the terms fixed previously, in anticipation that funds would eventually be forthcoming from abroad. Although at that time the American Government was freezing funds in the United States, this regulation was bound to change, and until then the Lithuanian authorities were to continue their support. This accord was in force from June until the end of October or the beginning of November. 400,000 *lits*, or almost \$ 75,000, reached the refugees by this means, but actually no money reached the Soviet authorities. Beckelman continued to have influence on the distribution of this money. He remained in Kaunas and Vilna until the end of 1940. By early 1941, when it was clear to everyone that additional American funds or dollars would not be forthcoming, the Soviet authorities regarded the affair as closed. Beckelman was permitted to leave Lithuania and the Soviet Union, and later reached Japan.⁵

At this point mention should be made of a unique rescue act. The Japanese Consul in Kaunas, Sugihara, had arrived there in the autumn of 1939 in order to keep an eye on Soviet-German relations following the Ribbentrop-Molotov Agreement. His mission consisted in reporting to the Japanese chiefs-of-staff (and to a lesser extent to the Japanese Foreign Office, with which, it appears, his relations were tense) on Soviet and German troop movements. With the Soviet conquest of Lithuania in 1940, Sugihara's presence became undesirable and he was instructed to leave the city by the end of August.

On August 10 approximately, the first Jews came to Sugihara with papers issued by the Dutch Consul in Kaunas with visas,

⁵ Beckelman's final report, 27.5.1941, file 41—Lithuania, *JDC Archives*.

YEHUDA BAUER

or in any case with permits in their passports or papers, allowing them to enter Curaçao in the West Indies. Ostensibly it was possible to reach the place. The Dutch Consul and the Jews who came to Sugihara did not, however, disclose the fact, that according to Dutch law the Governor-General of Curaçao had to approve the entrance of every person; a visa was not required, only the endorsement of the Governor-General. At this stage the Japanese Consul was told only that these Jews, holders of passports of various nationalities, including Poles, needed Japanese transit-permits; such visas might hopefully allow their holders to receive Soviet exit-visas.

The Japanese Consul contacted Tokyo for approval; with no answer promptly forthcoming, Sugihara began—apparently in the latter half of August—issuing Japanese transit-permits to Jews, holders of Polish papers, and afterwards to Jews who possessed other papers, *sauf conduits*, or indeed any kind of document at all. It should be added that Sugihara's assistant was Goetke, a German *Volksdeutscher*, who likewise took part in issuing Japanese visas in the passports of Jews. On August 20, the Consul received an urgent telegram from the Foreign Office in Tokyo barring any further such action; nevertheless he continued to issue visas until he left Kaunas on August 31, 1940.⁶

At the same time and in a similar fashion steps were undertaken to enable Jews reach Palestine *via* Odessa. After much endeavour by Chaim Barlas, the Jewish Agency representative in Istanbul, the British Consul in Kaunas granted 250 Palestine certificates. Approximately 550 additional forms were prepared that served as warrants declaring that a Palestine immigration certificate awaited the holders thereof in Istanbul. With these papers it was possible to travel to Moscow and from there to Istanbul and to Palestine. This operation was carried out at great speed. Later about 400 additional certificates were prepared by local Jews using false British seals. During the summer and autumn of 1940, a total of about 1,200 Jews passed through Odessa on the way to Palestine.⁷

Another exploit was the intercession of Dr. Wahrhaftig at the

⁶ See file 1054 in the Department of the Righteous, Yad Vashem.

⁷ See Barak, *ibid.* One of these immigrants was Dr. Israel Sheib (Eldad), see his book *Maaser Rishon* ("The First Tithe"), Hamatmid, 1948 (Hebrew); also B. Oren, "From Vilna via Japan to the Free World," *Yalkut Moreshet*, 11, 1969 (Hebrew), pp. 34–54.

RESCUE OPERATIONS THROUGH VILNA

head of a group of Zionist leaders who met with senior officials in the Soviet-Lithuanian Government; the officials were requested to grant exit-permits from the Soviet Union. The meeting seems to have taken place at the end of June or in July 1940; in September of the same year the permits were approved. At first a Soviet order had been issued that no foreign currency was to be held by private citizens. Afterwards however, following the granting of the Japanese and British transit-permits, the question was raised as to how the Jews permitted to leave were to pay for their exit-permits and travelling expenses from the Soviet Union. Astonishingly enough, this was handled by "Intourist," which told the Jews to bring dollars (which were not supposed to be in their possession) in order to pay for travel expenditures as tourists. And that was exactly what happened: the Jews paid the money, received exit-permits from the Soviet Union, as well as train trickets, etc. Holders of the Japanese permits traveled to Vladivostok by the Trans-Siberian Railroad, and from there *via* Tsuruga—to Kobe, in Japan.

In Kobe, there was a small Jewish community of approximately 200 Jewish merchants, only one of whom was a Japanese citizen. A Japanese who was eventually to convert to Judaism and who now lives in the United States, Abraham Kotsuji, came into contact with them. This man, who succeeded in getting hold of a sum of money by means of a relative, went to Kobe and bribed the city's chief of police, paying him a sum of 300,000 yen. Afterwards he met for talks with the Japanese Foreign Minister Matsuoka. According to Kotsuji, the Foreign Minister realized that these people were after all only seeking a temporary stay in Japan until they would be leaving for other countries; he therefore decided to concede to the Jews the right to come to Kobe, if they committed themselves to remain there for only a limited period and then to proceed on their way.⁸

Despite Beckelman's warnings, the Joint in New York was not ready for the wave of refugees who were arriving in Japan. The first Jews from Lithuania arrived at Kobe in October 1940, the last ones in May 1941. During this period, JDC spent about \$ 350,000, an enormous sum at that time, to support the Jews there.⁹ A

⁸ "From Tokyo to Jerusalem," for an excerpt from Kotsuji's book see *Yalkut Moreshet*, 11, 1969 (Hebrew), pp. 54-58.

⁹ Leavitt's letter of 28.5.1942, file 40-2, *JDC Archives*.

YEHUDA BAUER

local committee of public leaders who were arriving then from Lithuania, headed by Dr. Wahrhaftig, was organized; this Committee cared for the refugees during their stay in Kobe. Afterwards it helped to take care of acquiring tickets for the passage on ships and similar needs. All this was done with the financial support of American organizations, including the Rescue Committee of Rabbis which was set up in New York in November 1939.

The total number of Lithuanian Jews who passed through Kobe (German and Austrian Jews also came there) amounted to 2,180. Among them was a group of 220 persons which finally reached Palestine from Kobe by way of Burma, Hong Kong, Singapore and India.

A special group among the Jews who were in Kobe and who went to the United States was a group of *Yeshivah* students. An attempt was made to allow 3,500 or 3,800 Jews, *Yeshivah* students and rabbis, to enter the United States; this attempt failed. The Zionist movement, the Joint, in fact all the Jewish organizations except for the Rescue Committee of Rabbis, were not prepared to deal with this case due to anxiety lest it increase the anti-Semitism then widespread in the United States. A small group of 29 from those who had been designated for immigration through this plan reached Canada, 273 the United States, and about one thousand were eventually transferred to Shanghai and joined the ca. 18,000 refugees already there.¹⁰ A serious dispute had arisen over this problem between the Rescue Committee and the Joint; the former had requested that precedence and preference be given to the rescue of rabbis and their pupils, but the Joint officials refused, claiming that Jews must be saved with no preference given to any group of any kind.

If we look at the total picture, it can be easily discerned that we are speaking of a very small number of rescued people. In 1940 approximately 250,000 Jews were in Lithuania, of whom 4,000 were saved, despite all the efforts made at rescuing more; this serves as an indication of the true extent of rescue. On the other hand one must realize and appreciate the tremendous efforts which

¹⁰ H. Buchman's letter of 3.9.1941, Rescue Committee, file 1940-1942. *JDC Archives*, as well as CJFWF's memorandum on the Rescue Committee of 14.1.1942, file 40-2, *ibid.*; see also file Japan, June 1941-1944, letter to Sam Hayes, 3.11.41, *ibid.*

RESCUE OPERATIONS THROUGH VILNA

were invested and which bore no relation to the actual results; every possible effort was made to save Jews. It should be pointed out that this effort was not limited to any single circle or group, but was of general Jewish concern. Among these 4,000 were a considerable number of ordinary Jews, families and individuals who exerted utmost personal effort to escape, although only a tiny minority succeeded.¹¹

¹¹ At the end of my lecture I was asked by one of the listeners about the refugees of Suwalki. Indeed, one of the most important rescue operations of the Refugee Committee in Vilna was that from the area of Suwalki, in which about 2,400 refugees were involved, although they did not properly belong to the Vilna centre since they arrived in late October or early November 1939. Emissaries of the Joint met with the Deputy Prime Minister of Lithuania, Bizauskas, and tried to persuade him not to expel these people. A mixed Lithuanian-Jewish Investigating Committee was sent to the border. Protocols were written and evidence taken; after a period of terrible plight in the no-man's land between conquered Poland and Lithuania, the refugees were finally admitted into Lithuania. There are a number of testimonies from Jewish sources on this subject regarding Lithuanian village-Jews who smuggled these people across the border into Lithuania, virtually on their backs. We have evidence about a youth among the country Jews (his name is unknown) who it seems, was in charge at least partially, of this rescue operation. See for instance Beckelman's memorandum of 18.1.1939 file 45—Poland, Refugees, 1937–1939; a Jewish physician's report of 15.11.1939 on the refugees' condition; for additional material on the subject, see the above files at the *JDC Archives*.

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION *

HENRY L. FEINGOLD

I.

THOUSANDS OF EUROPEAN JEWS went to their deaths believing until the last moment that they were being resettled. How did the term "resettlement," a rather benevolent word with connotations of renewal, become a code word for the implementation of the Final Solution? At least part of the answer lies in the fact that between 1938 and the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, Nazi authorities considered making the Reich *judenrein* by means of resettlement, rather than by mass murder. Best known to us are the plans for Jewish reservations in Madagascar and Lublin. These schemes, however, never viewed resettlement in a positive sense and in practice, resettlement by the Nazis turned out to be a precursor to liquidation or, as occurred in many instances, merely another form of the Final Solution. "There is no question of a Jewish state," warned Alfred Rosenberg, in reference to the Madagascar project, "but only of a Jewish reservation."¹

The term resettlement was also used extensively by the Allies. One of the solutions considered during the refugee crisis was the organization of agricultural communities in unused lands — as opposed to the admission of single refugees or families into hard-pressed existing communities. Such schemes called for the establishment of settlements

* For the abbreviations used in this article, see p. 181.

¹ The Black Book Committee, *The Black Book: The Nazi Crime Against the Jewish People*, New York, 1946, p. 91.

HENRY FEINGOLD

which ranged in size from those involving hundreds to new nation-states involving millions.

Eventually a bridge developed between the two contrasting conceptions. Thus, during the early months of 1939, both sides involved in the refugee chaos — the receiving nations bordering on the Reich and the Nazis who were responsible for the crisis—agreed upon a solution which was primarily based on resettlement. Providing empty spaces was one of the major tasks assigned to the receiving nations by the “Statement of Agreement” which was the product of the Rublee-Schacht and Pell-Wohltat negotiations.

As things turned out, few Jews who survived the Holocaust owe their lives to resettlement projects. In fact, there was actually only one partially successful colonizing venture, and those who did escape were saved due to their timely flight. Moreover, hope of rescue through resettlement became increasingly remote as the Nazi *Drang nach Osten* brought increasingly larger numbers of Jews under Nazi hegemony.

An examination of the newly-opened James G. McDonald papers at Columbia University confirms what other manuscript collections have already made abundantly clear. A large number of the rescue schemes proposed by the Roosevelt administration during these early years were based on resettlement. Moreover, dozens of schemes were brought to the attention of the Administration and the refugee advocates on the President’s Advisory Committee on Political Refugees (PACPR), which acted on its behalf. This paper will include a brief survey of these schemes and a description of Roosevelt’s thinking on resettlement. It will then focus on the four schemes in which the Administration played a role: Alaska, Mindanao, British Guiana and Santo Domingo. Finally, we will attempt to discover why resettlement, in which so many well-meaning persons invested so much, failed to fulfill its potential as a means of rescue. Indeed, we want to answer a more basic question. Was resettlement ever a viable alternative to “solve” what Roosevelt called the problem of the political refugees and what the Germans simply referred to as the Jewish problem?

II.

From the moment that the Roosevelt administration unexpectedly issued an invitation to thirty-two nations to meet at Evian-les-Bains

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

to try and solve the refugee problem, it was compelled to rely heavily on the idea of resettlement. Since the Administration considered its stringent immigration laws immutable, the invitation stated that no nation would be expected to alter its own immigration regulations. Once at Evian, however, it quickly became apparent that the participants, especially the delegates of the Latin American republics, were reluctant to admit any immigrants whatsoever. One by one the delegates rose to make known their nation's unwillingness to open their gates. "Nations loath to give asylum to Jews," read the headline of the *Christian Science Monitor*.² Roosevelt's initiative, which had received an unexpected amount of press coverage, was going nowhere.

The imminent failure of the conference undoubtedly was one of the factors which compelled the Roosevelt administration to direct itself in earnest to the resettlement alternative. James G. McDonald had been appointed Chairman of the President's Advisory Committee on Political Refugees when the invitation to Evian had been extended. The PACPR was supposed to be the Administration's quasi-official clearing house on refugee matters. It was also supposed to coordinate the work of the private refugee agencies, and as it turned out, it became the body which screened the various resettlement proposals. In November, McDonald, who sometimes suspected that Roosevelt had forgotten that he had created such a body, received one of his rare invitations to the White House. Once there he was urged to speed up the Committee's efforts to locate resettlement havens especially in Latin America.³

Shortly thereafter, George Warren, the Executive Secretary of the PACPR, suggested that the Latin American delegates be approached informally at the forthcoming Lima Conference. The refugee issue had already been placed on the agenda at the suggestion of Helio Lobos, the Brazilian delegate at Evian, but Warren was convinced that in private the Latin American officials would be more magnanimous in accepting refugees, especially if they could be assured of receiving immigrants who would be able to help in the development of agriculture and local industry.⁴ The State Department informed Warren that

² *Christian Science Monitor*, August 3, 1938, p. 1.

³ James McDonald to Frederick P. Keppel, November 21, 1938, McDonald MSS.

⁴ George Warren to Cordell Hull, November 25, 1938, McDonald MSS.

HENRY FEINGOLD

they placed little hope in the informal approach, and as it developed they were right.⁵ The participants at the conference rejected the pro-refugee resolution. Things had not changed two years later, when Cordell Hull went to the Havana Conference with instructions from Roosevelt "to consider the possibility of saying something in regard to the ancient principle of political asylum."⁶ Roosevelt preferred to think of the refugee crisis as a political one and of the Jews involved as "political refugees." In the midst of the crisis, however, the Latin American countries on which the Roosevelt administration had placed much hope, closed their doors to refugees.

In November 1938, Roosevelt met with a group of State Department officials at his Warm Springs retreat in Georgia in order to engage in a thorough examination of the resettlement alternative. Among those present were William Phillips, Ambassador to Italy, George Messersmith, temporarily an Assistant Secretary of State, and Hugh Wilson, Ambassador to Germany, who had been recalled from Berlin by the Administration in response to *Kristallnacht*. Before he left Washington, the President had informed newsmen that he was giving a great deal of thought to the refugee question, but the time was not yet right to make his thinking on the subject known.⁷ At his request, Sumner Welles forwarded all the Department's files on resettlement to Warm Springs.⁸ The Warm Springs discussions triggered several probes on the resettlement front.

Roosevelt's sudden interest in resettlement was partly based on the fact that his Evian initiative had opened up a diplomatic Pandora's Box and partly on his vision of himself as a wise, humanitarian statesman. At Roosevelt's behest, a new international immigration agency had been established in addition to those already in the field which the Administration chose not to use. The Intergovernmental Committee on Political Refugees (IGC) which was created at the Evian Conference was directed by George Rublee, an old Groton

⁵ Lawrence Duggan to Joseph Chamberlain, December 9, 1938, McDonald MSS.

⁶ Franklin Roosevelt (hereafter—FDR) to Cordell Hull, July 3, 1940, FDRL/OF 3186.

⁷ NYT, November 16, 1938, p. 22.

⁸ NA/SDDF, 840.48, Refugees 985½, November 26, 1938; FDRL/OF, 76-c, November 26, 1938.

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

crony of the President's. The negotiations which Rublee conducted with Reich officials concerning the refugee problem unexpectedly began to bear fruit in the early months of 1939. The success of the talks would largely depend on whether or not a haven could be found for the resettlement of the Jews of Germany. Both Rublee, and his successor Robert Pell, urgently pleaded with the State Department for concrete proposals with which to spice their negotiations. Palestine, which might have been the Administration's most logical choice, was placed off limits at Whitehall's insistence. In addition, there were problems in the Middle East which the Administration had no desire to aggravate.

The idea of resettlement, moreover, struck a responsive chord among the general public and political leaders. Was America not the fruit of a successful resettlement effort in the seventeenth century? "The shores of New England offered a refuge for the Pilgrim fathers," read one of the hundreds of suggestions received by the PACPR, "and the shores of our country have ever since been a haven for the oppressed."⁹ (The second assertion had, of course, not been true since 1921.) Similarly, the Baruch-Hoover scheme to establish a "United States of Africa" raised the hope that the refugees would "build in Africa a new country like America."¹⁰ Moreover, the latter suggestion was more appealing since it did not dredge up the embarrassing reminder that the nation's interior could no longer play its traditional role.

The analogy to colonial America was sometimes taken to ridiculous extremes. Thus the resettlement prospects in British Guiana, ten degrees above the equator, were believed by one Administration official to be identical with the conditions faced by the early settlers in Virginia and "therefore suitable for a Jewish pioneering effort."¹¹

Roosevelt's personal proclivities for geography and nation-building also played a significant role. During his stint as Assistant Secretary of the Navy in the Wilson administration, he had some peripheral

⁹ Robert G. H. Tallman, "The Alaskan Resettlement Corporation for Refugees," October 20, 1938 (mimeographed), McDonald MSS.

¹⁰ Lewis Strauss, *Men and Decisions*, New York, 1963, pp. 124-125.

¹¹ George Warren to Myron Taylor and George Rublee. (Statement by Comings, former United States Health Surgeon and at the time head of the Pan-American Sanitary Bureau), December 15, 1938, McDonald MSS.

HENRY FEINGOLD

connection to the writing of a new constitution for Haiti, and in the 1920 campaign he blew the matter out of all proportion by boasting that he had written the constitution.¹² In addition, during the 1920's, he had submitted a peace plan (to win the Bok prize) in a contest sponsored by the *Ladies Home Journal*. His love of sailing and traveling had given him a firsthand knowledge of geography which was further cultivated by his hobby of collecting stamps from faraway places. Moreover, his Administration already had some experience in resettling people. In the spring of 1935, a Resettlement Administration had been established to move Americans from unproductive soil to areas more suitable for agriculture. Resettlement, albeit of a different sort, was thus already part of the working policy of the New Deal.¹³

Roosevelt believed that the outbreak of war would aggravate the refugee problem, and this belief reinforced his tendency to think in terms of nation-building. The forthcoming meeting of the officers of the IGC, which was scheduled to be held in Washington in October, offered an opportunity to make his thinking on the problem known. He therefore rejected all suggestions to cancel the meeting. The war had only made the refugee problem more urgent.

Thus the meeting was convened on October 16 in an atmosphere of despair. Six weeks of war had demonstrated that the Nazi war machine was formidable, perhaps even invincible. The fate of the Jewish refugees seemed unimportant to the delegates, who faced the possibility that their own homelands would soon be invaded and that they themselves would become refugees. What was so special about the Jews? Herbert Emerson, the new chairman of the IGC, informed the conferees that Britain would be compelled to withdraw her generous offer of aid for resettlement in British Guiana.¹⁴ The war had changed the situation and British resources were hard pressed.

¹² Rexford Tugwell, *The Democratic Roosevelt: A Biography of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, Baltimore, 1969, p. 345.

¹³ That such proclivities still persist in Washington is attested to by George Ball who blames the Vietnam adventure partly on the fantasy of nation building. George W. Ball, "The Lesson of Viet Nam, Have We Learned or Only Failed?", *NYT Magazine*, April 1, 1973, p. 13.

¹⁴ Warren, Circular letter to members of PACPR, n.d. (probably October 1939), McDonald MSS.

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

The climax of the meeting was the President's long-awaited address. He began with a pessimistic prognosis. The problem which the delegates presently faced was minor compared to what the future held in store. He predicted that after the war the refugee problem would encompass from ten to twenty million persons. In view of this fact, Roosevelt believed that the IGC, which was a product of his own imagination, was thinking on "too small a scale." They must "clear the decks" of the piddling refugee problem they now faced, Roosevelt urged. Massive resettlement ventures using "modern engineering techniques," which would capture the imagination of the world had to be undertaken. An altered version of Emma Lazarus' poem "The New Colossus" ended the remarkable display of New Deal rhetoric: "Let us lift a lamp beside new golden doors for the poor, for the huddled masses yearning to breathe free."¹⁵

The delegates were stunned. They had not succeeded in finding havens for a few thousand refugees, and here the President was talking in terms of millions. He had presented a grandiose vision, but not a single suggestion as to how that vision might be realized. A few weeks later Roosevelt elaborated further. The occasion was a memorandum from Paul Van Zeeland, the former Prime Minister of Belgium who had been appointed to head the Coordinating Foundation charged with implementing the "Statement of Agreement" with the Reich. Van Zeeland outlined a detailed resettlement program which called for small agricultural and industrial projects whose financing would be arranged "on a strictly business basis... as investors not as dispensers of charity." That was necessary, he thought, because of the paucity of offerings and the lack of available funds. Each project would be financed separately and after an initial period of dependence on a parent holding company, would be expected to operate at a profit.¹⁶

Roosevelt did not approve of Van Zeeland's scale of planning, as it did not "stimulate the imagination," and "missed the psychology neces-

¹⁵ Official Minutes of the Officers of the Intergovernmental Committee on Political Refugees, October 17, 1939; Minutes of the twenty-ninth meeting of the President's Advisory Committee on Political Refugees, October 23, 1939, FDRL/OF, 3186; Warren Circular Letter to "Members of President's Advisory Committee," November 6, 1939, McDonald MSS.

¹⁶ Van Zeeland to Hull, December 1, 1939, *FRUS*, II, pp. 154-155.

HENRY FEINGOLD

sary for success." According to Roosevelt "this [was] not the time to speak of small settlements...the picture should be in terms of millions of square miles occupied by a coordinating self-sustaining civilization." "I could raise money on that," boasted the President, "far quicker than if I talked in terms of individual communities...overall planning on enormous scale is essential."¹⁷ Ironically this statement was made in December 1939, and at that point not a single project supported by the Administration had borne fruit. Roosevelt understood what had to be done, and understood the importance of size. When it came to supporting a scheme for resettlement in Alaska, however, we shall see that he did not dare assume the political risks involved in supporting the project. At a critical juncture, he preferred to switch to the postwar problems which offered a suitable platform for his grandiose ideas.

In 1940, in fact, FDR took steps to implement his postwar program. Henry Field, an anthropologist, was brought to Washington and put to work on a secret project to research possible resettlement havens. By 1945, the "M" project, as it was known, had produced 666 classified colonization possibilities. Roosevelt even entertained plans to make the North African desert bloom by using desalinated water and building air-conditioned cities.¹⁸ These plans, however, had no bearing on the refugee crisis; they were earmarked for postwar problems. The thinking of Dr. Ales Hřdlička of the Smithsonian Institute also caught the attention of Roosevelt. In contrast to Bowman's generally pessimistic outlook, Hřdlička was convinced that Latin America could absorb a large number of immigrants. But his advice that the Administration establish an "immigration nucleus," was reasoned to death by the State Department.¹⁹

Thus throughout the crisis, Roosevelt's thinking was visionary and out of touch with the facts of the case. He did not acknowledge that the refugee problem primarily involved Jews and was unwilling to take the political risks involved in contributing to a solution.

* * *

¹⁷ FDR memorandum to Sumner Welles, December 4, 1939, FDRL/PSF, Box 24.

¹⁸ David S. Wyman, *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis, 1938-1941*, Amherst, 1968, p. 59.

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

On the grass roots level, however, resettlement continued to be considered a real alternative. Virtually every refugee group had its favorite resettlement scheme. In addition, private persons, many of them undoubtedly refugees, were attracted to the idea. The archives are full of detailed schemes written neatly in European script and excessively formal language, which outline some plan to save the refugees by colonization. Private companies like Ford and Birdseye Foods also momentarily entered the picture. The most fertile source for ideas were the private Jewish agencies. At times, one particular area suddenly became very popular. Before Berlin became interested in Madagascar, it had been investigated by a Japanese survey team in 1929, the Polish Lepecki Commission in 1937, and the French in 1939. In fact, the dream of Madagascar was not discarded until May 1941, when a highly confidential report by the Research Institute on Peace and Post-War Problems finally delivered a definitive report which noted the island's deficiencies as a resettlement site.²⁰ Yet islands and tropical rain forests in which troublesome minorities could be tucked away continued to have an allure of their own. Before Charles Lieberman, President of the Refugee Economic Corporation, became enraptured with Mindanao and the Dominican Republic, he was attracted to Cyprus. One scheme, submitted through Albert Einstein, suggested that refugee intellectuals be settled in the Belgian Congo and other "unsettled" areas in Africa.²¹ Even the Soviet experiment in Birobidzhan did not escape perusal. The suggestion to send Jewish refugees there, however, was rejected by the Soviet authorities.²²

The number of schemes received by the Administration increased sharply after *Kristallnacht*.²³ A proposal submitted by Kurt Battsek, quoted generously from the Bible and presaged the actual arrangement finally reached with Berlin. Battsek suggested the establishment of a Jewish resettlement corporation with a capital of £50,000,000 which

¹⁹ Ales Hřdlička to FDR, May 27, 1942, Long MSS.

²⁰ Max Gottschalk to McDonald, May 15, 1941, McDonald MSS.

²¹ McDonald to Albert Einstein, May 30, 1935, McDonald MSS (Leo Baeck Institute).

²² McDonald to Felix Warburg, September 9, 1935, McDonald MSS (Leo Baeck Institute).

²³ Memorandum of meeting called to consult with Mr. Jaretzki and Mr. Warren on colonization projects, December 1938, McDonald MSS.

HENRY FEINGOLD

he assumed would partly be contributed by Lord Victor Rothschild.²⁴ A Dr. Stolper hit upon the same idea.²⁵ Charles S. Dewey, formerly Assistant Secretary of the Treasury (1924-1927) and financial adviser to the Polish Government (1928-1930), submitted an elaborate scheme which linked the solution of the refugee problem to the outstanding debts still owed to the United States. According to his plan, the debtor nations would be allowed to repay their debts by furnishing havens in their colonies or other forms of aid. A meeting of the Brookings Institute held on February 10, 1939, seriously pondered the possibilities of implementing Dewey's scheme.²⁶

Some of the proposals to solve the refugee crisis might serve as comic relief. Thus Mrs. Julia S. Hotchkiss of Westport, Connecticut, assured McDonald that her suggestion was delivered "from an unprejudiced point of view" since "she had not, nor [had] any of [her] relatives a drop of Jewish blood." She began by suggesting a "ship of freedom" to be sponsored by the forty-eight states, which would transport the refugees out of Europe. Unfortunately, she had not yet decided where the vessel would deposit its human cargo. Eight months later she thought of a solution and hastened to submit it to McDonald under the rubric "A New Solution to the Jewish Problem." Seemingly totally unaware of what Jews had been doing for generations, she proposed that Palestine be purchased from the Arabs and when that was done that a "Temple of Peace" be erected in Jerusalem. As a token of Britain's good faith, Jacob's Pillar, a statue then apparently housed in the British Museum would be "surrendered" and placed in the temple. Mrs. Hotchkiss, it seems, was also an art lover.²⁷

The idea of rich Jews purchasing a haven, much the way one purchased a newspaper, also occurred to William Randolph Hearst who thought that the Belgian Congo was a suitable piece of real estate. The authorities in Leopoldville quickly denied, however, that the Congo was for sale.²⁸ The proposals to buy a solution to the crisis

²⁴ Kurt Battsek to Lord Victor Rothschild, March 27, 1938; Battsek to McDonald, May 30, 1938, McDonald MSS.

²⁵ Minutes of the Third Meeting of the PACPR, June 2, 1938, Wise MSS.

²⁶ Charles S. Dewey to Myron Taylor, February 9, 1939, McDonald MSS.

²⁷ Hotchkiss to McDonald, April 13, 22, and December 21, 1938, McDonald MSS.

²⁸ Leopoldville to State Department, February 8, 1939, NA/SDDF, 855.55 J/1.

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

are interesting because they were as popular in Washington as they were in Berlin, and were apparently based on a populist caricature of rich Jewish bankers in control of the world's money markets. James McDonald made good use of this notion when he visited Latin America in 1935. In his talks with Latin American officials he frequently conjured up the image of Jewish money following Jewish refugees.²⁹

In some cases, resettlement schemes emanated from friendly sources within the Administration. Such, we shall see, was the genesis of the Alaska scheme. In December 1938, the press reported a "vast refugee plan" in the works at the Department of Labor. It called for the retraining of young Jews from Central and Eastern Europe and their systematic emigration, while guaranteeing the security of the rest of the Jewish population.³⁰ Frances Perkins refused to reveal the details of the plan, but it appears to have been one of the ideas which was included in the agreement with Berlin. No doubt she eventually realized that retraining was futile if the refugees had no place to practice the new skills.

The retraining process was essential if Jews were to be able to do pioneering work, and this may have been the reason that so many Jewish groups sponsored such programs. Not only the *Reichsvertretung* but also the various local and regional organizations of German Jewry supplemented training that the Zionists had given on their *hachshara* farms for years. In Vienna, where the refugee problem became acute following the *Anschluss* in March 1938, a special group, the League of Jewish War Veterans, established a retraining project on the banks of the Danube.³¹ The Germans did not disturb the project, but the group's plan to settle in Australia, Kenya, or Rhodesia never materialized.

One of Roosevelt's favorite potential resettlement sites, the Orinoco Valley, was suggested by Antonio Gonzalez, former Venezuelan Minister to the United States.³² Although Isaiah Bowman frowned on the idea and the Venezuelan delegate at Evian spoke of his coun-

²⁹ McDonald to Dr. Paulo Carneiro (Secretary of Agriculture, Pernambuco), April 12, 1935, McDonald MSS (Leo Baeck Institute).

³⁰ *NYT*, December 1, 1938, p. 12.

³¹ *NYT*, July 18, 1938, p. 4.

³² FDR to Gonzalez, June 3, 1938, FDRL/PSF, State Department File.

HENRY FEINGOLD

try's need to establish a "demographic equilibrium," which freely translated meant a refusal to admit refugees, interest in Venezuela continued and was ultimately transferred to the Orinoco Plateau.³³ In 1941, Samuel D. Phillips, who maintained a long-term interest in resettlement in Venezuela, became convinced that the local authorities had changed their minds and were now ready to accept refugees. The PACPR was informed, but nothing developed.³⁴

In September 1938, a suggestion was made that refugees be settled in Mesopotamia, and in December the first probes were made regarding resettlement in Ecuador. The latter became a favorite project of Colonel Wally Cohen, a member of a group in England, headed by Anthony de Rothschild, which played a role similar to the PACPR. For a while, the Viennese veterans group also appeared interested in the project and it was rumored that the Nazi authorities in Vienna would make an exception in the case of these veterans and would allow them to leave with the equivalent of £50 each, rather than in the usual penniless state. The veterans planned on a grand scale. They would settle 100,000 Jewish families over a twenty year period.³⁵ That was in February 1939, however, and war was only months away. Despite the cooperation of the Anglo-Ecuadorian Land Company and the Anglo-Ecuadorian Oil Fields Ltd., little could be achieved. The Church was especially strong in Ecuador, and thus the special attention given by the Ecuadorian authorities to the International Hebrew Christian Alliance, a new group representing non-Aryan Christians, was understandable.

In April 1939, two delegates from Quito arrived in London authorized "to negotiate an agreement for agricultural settlements to be established in different regions of the country." Eventually a proposal to settle 1,000 refugees was presented to the London group. However, the motives of one of the negotiators, Mr. Frederico Vottelez, who it appeared was a German refugee anxious to supervise the planned resettlement projects, aroused suspicion. The negotiators, moreover, failed to appear in New York to present the details of their scheme.³⁶

³³ Evian Proceedings, July 21, 1938.

³⁴ B. W. Hebsch to McDonald, February 28, 1941, McDonald MSS.

³⁵ Memorandum by Col. Waley Cohen, December 14, 1938, McDonald MSS.

³⁶ Warren to Stephen Morris (State Department), July 31, 1939, McDonald MSS.

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

In the interim, the plan became increasingly farfetched. A cable from Anthony de Rothschild raised the number of refugees to be resettled to 10,000 and urged the PACPR to send a survey commission to that country. Warren turned to the State Department for advice.³⁷ The communication ends there, and few Jews were admitted to Ecuador.

In December, interest was suddenly aroused regarding resettlement in Canada, where the province of British Columbia was ostensibly interested in receiving refugees. However, the French in Quebec, whose representatives held the balance of power in the Canadian parliament, refused to agree to such proposals.³⁸

The prospect of resettlement in the Mexican province of Lower California, which was also introduced in December, was the brain-child of Frederick Cox among others. He had formerly been British Consul in Costa Rica, and was something of an amateur geographer. McDonald, however, was skeptical.³⁹ Unless a way could be found to obtain the approval of Lazaro Cardenas, the Mexican President who had expropriated American and British oil interests a few months earlier and was contemplating selling his oil to boycotted Germany, the situation was hopeless. Nevertheless, in January, Alfred Jaretzki, Joseph A. Rosen, Charles Liebman, and McDonald conferred with a Mexican representative and drew up an official request to Cardenas concerning the resettlement of refugees in Lower California.⁴⁰ McDonald recalled that Rublee had served as Dwight Morrow's assistant in Mexico, when the latter had literally charmed President Plutarco Calles not to enforce Article 17 of the constitution which gave the Mexicans sub-soil rights. Perhaps Morrow and Rublee could be called on for a repeat performance with Cardenas in order to convince him to do something for refugees.

In June, the PACPR received an affirmative report on Mexico from

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Warren to Taylor and Rublee, December 15, 1938, McDonald MSS.

³⁹ Stephen Wise to McDonald, December 21, 1938 and McDonald to Stephen Wise, December 28, 1938, McDonald MSS; Memorandum, Division of American Republics, March 3, 1939, NA/SDDF, 840.48, Refugees 1531; Isaiah Bowman's group later made a positive study of resettlement possibilities in Lower California, Bowman to McDonald, April 17, 1941. McDonald MSS.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* (McDonald to Stephen Wise).

HENRY FEINGOLD

the Mexican Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs. Frank Aydelotte of the American Friends Service Committee and Dr. Bernard Kahn of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) consulted with Cardenas in August 1939,⁴¹ and preparations were made to resettle two hundred families. The liaison with Cardenas was to be Prof. Frank Tannenbaum of Columbia University whose book, *Peace By Revolution: An Interpretation of Mexico*, written in 1933, endeared him to Cardenas. In its final form, the plan called for the resettlement of 2,500 refugees who would be selected from among German and Spanish loyalist refugees, as well as Mexicans who were to be repatriated from the United States. The first stage was supposed to be a trial settlement of two hundred families.⁴² The inclusion of Spanish refugees among the settlers complicated things, however, and the PACPR, due to its status as an unofficial agency of the American Government, thought it the better part of wisdom to break off contact lest it arouse controversy. The families ultimately selected for resettlement in Mexico were primarily Polish and Spanish Catholics rather than Jews.

Haiti and Surinam received some attention in the early months of 1939. The former excited the mind of Anthony de Rothschild, but never received the support of the State Department whose officials at first considered the republic too unstable to absorb refugees and later rejected it on the grounds that it was too close to the Panama Canal to admit German-speaking refugees who might be spies.⁴³ The situation in Surinam was not much better. The initiative came from a newly organized group, headed by Daniel Wolf, which was affiliated with the Jewish Colonization Society. The group enlisted the help of Professor Schrieke, Director of the Royal Colonial Institute of Amsterdam and it was decided to survey the area. The help of the British Guiana Survey Commission, which was organized by the PACPR, was requested,⁴⁴ but the State Department was uncertain whether the Wolf group had the support of the Dutch Government. An inquiry soon revealed that the group was not backed by the Dutch authorities and the PACPR hastily rejected the offer for a joint survey. Similarly, the

⁴¹ Warren to Taylor, June 16, 1939, McDonald MSS.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Welles to FDR, January 5, 1939, FDLR/OF 3186.

⁴⁴ Anthony de Rothschild to Warren, January 25, 1939, McDonald MSS.

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

PACPR rejected the offer to participate in a British survey of Northern Rhodesia.⁴⁵

The State Department was also skeptical regarding resettlement possibilities in Bolivia. Its doubts were borne out in 1941, when the Bolivian legislature considered a resolution to prohibit "Jews, Mongols and Negroes" from entering the country.⁴⁶ For a time, the admission of refugees to Costa Rica was advocated by Leo Sach, the former American Ambassador to that country, but his argument that resettlement would strengthen the security of the Canal was hardly acceptable to the security-minded State Department who suspected refugees of being enemy agents.⁴⁷ The proposals for resettlement in Chile met a similar fate. The State Department feared that any discussion of the refugee issue in the Chilean parliament would excite "violent partisanship."⁴⁸ Chile, it must be recalled, possessed a sizeable German minority and did not intend to declare war on the Axis.

There were several reasons why Latin America's largest and potentially wealthiest republic became the Administration's major hope for resettlement. In contrast to Argentina, with whom the United States competed on the world market, Brazil had always been especially close to the United States. After the Evian Conference, Helio Lobos, the Brazilian delegate, was offered the vice-chairmanship of the IGC in the vain hope that the honor would encourage the Brazilian authorities to open Brazil's vast interior to settlement.⁴⁹ Lobos, however, rarely attended the subsequent meetings of the IGC. Moreover, Brazil steadfastly resisted all attempts to induce her to accept refugees. When James McDonald and Guy Inman visited Latin America in 1935 to encourage a more liberal immigration policy, he found Brazil the best hope for refugee absorption and an "extremely hard nut to crack."⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Warren to Taylor, February 9, 1939, McDonald MSS.

⁴⁶ Nathan Goldberg, "Immigration Attitudes of Mexicans: An Insight," *Rescue*, July/August 1945, quoting from the *Inter-American Monthly*, December 1942.

⁴⁷ Leo Sach to FDR, December 5, 1939, NA/SDDF, 840.48, Refugees/1115.

⁴⁸ Warren to Evans Clark (20th Century Fund), January 29, 1940, McDonald MSS.

⁴⁹ *FRUS*, I, p. 787 (September 13, 1938); Rublee to Hull, *FRUS*, I, p. 772 (August 25, 1938).

⁵⁰ McDonald to Warburg, April 30, 1935 and McDonald to Dr. Walter Rotschnig, April 4, 1935, McDonald MSS.

HENRY FEINGOLD

That observation was borne out by the manner in which the remarkable offer by Henry Ford was handled. We first hear of Henry Ford's interest in the refugee problem in the crucial month of December 1938. After a meeting with Rabbi Leo Franklin in Dearborn, Ford, who had never bothered to halt the distribution of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* even after his public apology, advocated the admission of Jewish refugees to the United States. He told reporters that although the Jewish workers in his plants did not as a rule stay long, he felt they possessed "special adaptability in the fields of production, distribution and agriculture." They demonstrated marked "ability and loyalty" and he would do everything in his power to encourage the Jewish back-to-the-land movement which he thought would solve all the world's problems.⁵¹ This was quite a remarkable display from a man who was never known as a friend of the Jews and who had recently accepted a medal from the Nazi government.

In the interim, the PACPR had also begun to focus on Brazil. Isaiah Bowman, who had been retained by the Committee, set to work examining the resettlement possibilities in various regions of Brazil. He had previously written that the climate, high cost of housing, scarcity of food, and primitive market conditions in the Amazon region would make it difficult to sustain colonies.⁵² The intercession of Pope Pius XI, however, had softened the attitude of Dictator Getulio Vargas toward non-Aryan Christians, and it was announced that three thousand such refugees would be resettled in St. Catharina, Minas Gerais, and Sao Paulo.⁵³ Perhaps a similar concession could be obtained for Jewish refugees?

In the early months of 1941, Ford again became involved in the refugee problem. McDonald received word regarding Ford's interest in using his plantations in Brazil for the resettlement of refugees, and he hastened to Dearborn to meet with the mogul. According to McDonald's version of the events—related in a confidential memorandum—it was a strange meeting. McDonald spent most of his time speaking to Harry Bennet, Ford's right-hand man. He was given a

⁵¹ *NYT*, December 1, 1938, p. 12.

⁵² Isaiah Bowman, *Limits of Land Settlement: A Report on Present-day Possibilities*, New York, 1937, pp. 319-337 (hereafter — Bowman).

⁵³ *NYT*, June 25, 1939, p. 22.

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

detailed description of Fordlandia, one of the larger plantations in the Amazon. McDonald experienced some difficulty in discerning the purpose of the Ford offer, since it was never stated explicitly. Finally Ford himself appeared and McDonald, deciding to take the bull by the horns, described the problem and outlined a plan in which the Ford plantations would be used as the basis for large resettlement ventures. He proposed a large-scale settlement which would be established jointly by Brazil, the United States, and Ford. Ford momentarily showed interest when he heard of the possibility of dealing directly with governments, but shortly thereafter returned to his favorite topic, the causes of the war and its relation to money power. "Nothing was settled definitely," but McDonald contacted the State Department to learn the official American position and establish communications with the Vargas government.⁵⁴ Welles replied that the Ford offer was firm enough, but also informed McDonald that the news from Brazil was not hopeful. Convinced that Jews would not be pioneers in the Amazon and afraid that the Jews would pose "endless difficulties," the Brazilian Government rejected Ford's offer.⁵⁵

It was only natural that the Roosevelt administration would first focus on Latin America, just as the British naturally focused on their possessions in Africa. However, following the realization of the British Guiana scheme, about which more presently, an interesting reversal occurred. Roosevelt's enthusiasm appeared to grow the further away such projects were from the Western Hemisphere, while London became firmly wedded to a scheme in Latin America.

The most intriguing of the Administration's African schemes was the so-called "Big Idea," which sometimes also bore the name of Bernard Baruch. Deceptively simple in its outlines, the plan called for Jews to contribute a tithe of their resources so that \$300,000,000 could be raised to establish the new republic. The nation would be carved out of a "sufficiently large" section of Kenya, Tanganyika, and Northern Rhodesia and would be open to all those who needed a haven. Baruch planned for the new nation to be "under the sovereign con-

⁵⁴ Confidential Memorandum, March 25, 1941, and McDonald to Welles, April 1, 1941, McDonald MSS.

⁵⁵ Welles to McDonald, April 21, 1941, McDonald MSS; Jefferson Caffrey to Hull, April 19, 1941, NA/SDDF, 840.48, Refugees/2543.

HENRY FEINGOLD

trol of England" because England "will have nothing but a democratic government."⁵⁶ The fact that England had an imperial claim on the territory may also have had some bearing on that decision. Once the new republic was established, Baruch envisaged ten million of "the strongest and most courageous people" resettling there to escape "from these over-regulated, goose stepping civilians of Russia, Germany and Italy."⁵⁷ Trouble was foreseen with the British who would have to cope with the opposition of the British settlers already in the area. Moreover, it would serve as an alternative to the British Guiana scheme on which the Colonial Office had become fixated. "If Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Baldwin want to fully solve the problem, there it is," said Baruch.⁵⁸

Lewis Strauss, who had helped enlist the support of his mentor, Herbert Hoover, for the project, was a little more realistic and understood how visionary such a proposal was. Nonetheless, he agreed with Baruch that mass immigration was a key to development of Africa and that it would be accompanied by an increase in world trade. Strauss believed that the project would act like a Keynesian pump-primer as he was convinced that periods of prosperity were directly correlated with periods of immigration.⁵⁹ For Baruch, the important thing was not to confine the new state to Jews, as such a policy would be self-defeating. Samuel Rosenman, the President's speech writer, agreed. "It is no solution," he informed Roosevelt, "to create a world ghetto instead of many local ones."⁶⁰ The bubble of enthusiasm did not finally burst until Strauss broached the idea to Malcolm MacDonald and hit a stone wall.⁶¹

For a while, Roosevelt displayed keen interest in the establishment of an entire new nation with the help of American planning and Jewish largess. Thus when Hamilton Fish Jr. was dispatched to investigate and enlist support for the idea, Roosevelt was annoyed that he had not been informed of the move. Fish, a Republican, represented Roosevelt's own Dutchess County district in the House of Represen-

⁵⁶ Strauss, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Warren to Taylor, June 7, 1939, McDonald MSS.

⁶⁰ Rosenman memorandum to FDR, December 5, 1938, FDRL/PPF, 64.

⁶¹ Strauss, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

tatives, and he served as a constant reminder to the President that he rarely carried his own district. During the campaign of 1940, Fish, who also headed the Interparliamentary Union, became part of Roosevelt's alliterative slogan "Martin, Barton, and Fish." No love was lost between the two. "I wish this great Pooh Bah would go back to Harvard and play tackle for the football team," Roosevelt wrote, "he is qualified for that job."⁶²

Not everyone involved in the efforts to solve the refugee problem shared the Administration's enthusiasm for large visionary schemes. Isaiah Bowman had earlier warned the Administration that "talk of empty spaces in Africa and Latin America belongs to a species of thinking we call geopolitical" and was "fundamentally misleading."⁶³ The more Bowman examined these areas, the more convinced he became that Roosevelt had been taken in by a dangerous myth. By 1941, he had prepared several reports for the Administration, the PACPR, and the Refugee Economic Corporation (REC), and his team had participated in the preliminary surveys of British Guinea, Santo Domingo, and Mindanao. Bowman had also organized special field studies in Southwest Asia together with the Institute of Pacific Relations and in Australia and New Zealand. Surveys had been prepared, or were in preparation, for the former German colonies in Africa, as well as for Costa Rica, Lower California, Bolivia, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, and Columbia.⁶⁴ In short, the Bowman group was among the most experienced in the theoretical aspects of colonization. While Bowman was generally pessimistic about the possibilities for large-scale resettlement, his assessment of specific areas showed considerable variation. Thus, for example, his opinion regarding Angola, on which the Administration's attention focused momentarily, was relatively positive.⁶⁵ Portugal had successfully launched a colonization project of its own on the plateau, and Bowman felt that the area was "well suited to settlers of European

⁶² Elliot Roosevelt (ed.), *FDR: His Personal Letters, 1928-45*, Vol. II, New York, 1950, p. 951 (November 1, 1938).

⁶³ Bowman to FDR, July 5, 1942, Long MSS.

⁶⁴ Bowman to McDonald, April 17, 1941, McDonald MSS.

⁶⁵ Bowman to FDR, November 4, and 25, 1938, FDRL/PPF 5575, See also J. H. Wellington, "Possibilities of Settlement in Africa," in Bowman, *op. cit.*, pp. 279-282.

HENRY FEINGOLD

stock.”⁶⁶ Thus after London’s rejection of the “United States of Africa” scheme, the plans for large-scale resettlement naturally moved to other areas. Angola had never belonged to Germany so that it did not offend Jewish sensibilities, nor did it interfere with Berlin’s vision of someday repossessing her African territories.⁶⁷

The Administration’s shift of focus from the British possessions to Angola can be attributed mostly to Sumner Welles. “The possibilities of Angola appear of such importance,” he informed Roosevelt in January 1939, “as to warrant heroic efforts to overcome political obstacles.”⁶⁸ One such obstacle was Antonio Salazar, the authoritarian Prime Minister of Portugal, who did not take kindly to the idea of foreigners establishing colonies in Angola. Moreover, Portugal had not been invited to the Evian Conference and was therefore not a member of the IGC. A method would have to be found to court Lisbon. Since Britain was Portugal’s traditional mentor, it was decided to approach London. A message was sent to Chamberlain which among other things, mentioned the possibility of developing Angola as an alternative to Palestine. “I cannot emphasize too strongly,” wrote Roosevelt, “the importance which I attach to the creation of a supplemental Jewish homeland as a step essential to the solution of the Jewish problem or my belief that Angola offers the most favorable facilities for its creation.”⁶⁹ In Roosevelt’s mind, Baruch’s idea had become attached to another one so that the nondenominational character which Baruch desired was no longer present. Yet the basic vision was still there. Roosevelt had simply dangled some bait before the British Government, which was increasingly hard-pressed regarding its “inhumanly political” policy of restricting Jewish immigration into Palestine. “Even if the political difficulties could be overcome,” Roosevelt confidentially informed Chamberlain, “it is doubtful whether

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 281.

⁶⁷ In the case of the former German colony of Tanganyika, for example, both Berlin and certain Zionist spokesmen were opposed to Jewish colonization, *German Documents*, Series D, Vol. IV, pp. 333-341 (November 18, 1938); *British Documents*, 3rd Series, Vol. III, pp. 295-296 (November 24, 1938); Wise to Taylor, November 23, 1938, Wise MSS.

⁶⁸ Welles memorandum to FDR, January 12, 1939, FDRL/OF 3186.

⁶⁹ FDR to Taylor for transmission to Chamberlain, January 14, 1939, *FRUS*, II, pp. 67-69.

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

Palestine could absorb and maintain the necessary influx of population.”⁷⁰ Salazar could be won over to the idea by the promise of increased prosperity and the prospect that “he would become the greatest figure in the history of his country and our time.”⁷¹ Moreover, there were some precedents for welcoming outsiders to Angola. The Boers had established a successful colony there in 1900, and the Jewish territorialists had given it serious consideration in 1912. When a group of German-Jewish pioneers inquired about settlement opportunities in 1931, however, they were discouraged by the authorities.

Neither the British nor the Portuguese were very enthusiastic about Roosevelt’s proposal. Lord Herbert Emerson, Chairman of the IGC, berated the idea as “utopian” and “unrealistic,” and his assistant Earl Winterton, chided Myron Taylor about his “dream of Angola.” Taylor actually was as opposed to the idea of a “new Palestine” in Angola as Winterton, but for different reasons. He had become convinced that most Jewish refugees wanted neither Palestine nor Angola as a haven, but rather some established community where they could live out their lives in peace.⁷²

Chamberlain, already near the end of his term, briskly rejected the Roosevelt’s inquiry about Angola, and suggested that the normal diplomatic channels be used. A second letter by Roosevelt emphasized that he considered the matter important and “that we have no intention of letting the matter drop,”⁷³ but it too was ignored by Whitehall. Private probings in Lisbon, however, were more successful. After five months of negotiations, Jacques Politis, a member of the French branch of the Rothschild family, obtained permission to purchase land and the unconditional acceptance of a limited numbers of refugees.⁷⁴ A representative of the Baruch-Ittleson-Rosenwald group joined the survey team. Meanwhile, however, Roosevelt had become peeved at Baruch’s premature leakage of the “Washington Secret.” Late in 1939, therefore, official contact was established through Paul Van Zeeland, who was an old friend of Salazar. He cautioned the State Department “not to indulge in subterfuge when dealing with the Portuguese autho-

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Taylor to FDR, June 25, 1939, *FRUS*, II, p. 127.

⁷³ Hull to Taylor, February 15, 1939, *FRUS*, II, p. 70.

⁷⁴ Achilles to Bowman, May 26, 1939, NA/SDDF, 840.48, Refugees/1640.

HENRY FEINGOLD

rities.”⁷⁵ Van Zeeland, as we have seen, preferred the more practical, small-scale, self-sustaining projects. He need not have worried, however, since the war which broke out a month earlier put an effective end to the Administration’s grandiose schemes for creating a new America in Africa, which might take the place of Palestine.

Interest in Angola, however, continued into 1943. The most persistent were Dr. M. Kirschberg and Jacob Rosenheim. The former had been advocating settlement on the Angola plateau since the early thirties and continued to hope that the Nazi authorities would send camp inmates to settlements in West Africa.⁷⁶ The latter, a leader of Agudas Israel, informed McDonald in 1943 that his group had obtained the “sympathetic interest” of an important Portuguese cabinet official.⁷⁷ Nothing, however, ever came of the idea.

Italian-occupied Ethiopia served as a kind of counterpoint theme to Angola. It was apparently one of the many notions discussed at the Warm Springs conference which was attended by Ambassador Phillips. The Italian people for the most part never understood the *animus* against the Jews nor did they wish to emulate the German example in this respect. Thus one of the solutions proposed by the Fascist Grand Council was to resettle the Italian Jews in Italy’s new colony. In this manner, two problems would be solved. Ethiopia would be settled by Italian subjects, and at the same time, Italy would be made *judenrein* in keeping with the Nazi model. The only problem was that Italian Jews were reluctant to leave the homeland for the wilds of Ethiopia.⁷⁸ They were equally reluctant to resettle in Palestine, an alternative which the Mussolini regime also encouraged for a time.

As in the case of Salazar, the Administration’s approach to Mussolini was not successful. The dictator suggested that Brazil, Russia, or the vast interior of the United States offered better opportunities for the refugees.⁷⁹ As in the case of Angola, private individuals proved

⁷⁵ Pell memorandum of conversation with Van Zeeland, November 8, 1939, *FRUS*, II, p. 154.

⁷⁶ Jacob Rosenheim (Agudas Israel) to McDonald, May 26, 1943, McDonald MSS.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*; See also Charles Liebman to Taylor, June 10, 1943, NA/SDDF 840.48, Refugees/4022.

⁷⁸ Phillips to State Department, June 12, 1939, *FRUS*, II, p. 64.

⁷⁹ Phillips to FDR, December 10, 1938, NA/SDDF 840.48, Refugees/1319 ½; see also *Ciano Diaries, 1939-1943*, London, 1947, p. 5, and *German*

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

to be more persistent in their efforts than was the government. The most notable in this respect was a Dutch Protestant Minister, Frank Van Gildmeester, who entertained hopes of establishing the world's greatest Jewish city on the shores of Lake Tana. His group, the International Committee to Aid Jewish Refugees, however, was no more successful in convincing the Fascist government than was Ambassador Phillips. The resistance of Italian Jewry to resettlement, the unpopularity of settling in an "occupied" area, the lack of financing and rumors concerning van Gildmeester's collaboration with the Gestapo put an end to the hopes of founding a great Jewish metropolis on Lake Tana.⁸⁰

This plan was replaced by an even more visionary project — the idea of an autonomous Jewish republic in the province of Harar. In 1942, rumors circulated that Mussolini was willing to make this province part of an autonomous Jewish state, provided that British and French Somaliland contributed some territory to the province to make it viable. The scheme was denounced as a trap by the American Jewish Congress, but a "Harar Council for the Autonomous Jewish Province in Harar" was nevertheless established by Erwin Kraft.⁸¹ Kraft, who was apparently a German refugee, had previously been involved in refugee schemes. One of his plans was connected with an organization by the name of "The American *Kulturkampf* Association," which he founded in March 1939 to counteract Nazism.⁸² Needless to say he failed to realize any of his objectives.

Mussolini's reference to the interior of the United States as a suitable location for resettlement highlighted the embarrassing vulnerability of the Roosevelt administration. Roosevelt, unwilling to tangle with the restrictionists in Congress, had long since given up the notion of bringing masses of refugees directly to the United States, and that was the major reason for the search for resettlement havens elsewhere. The idea of bringing refugees to America, however, had never been totally abandoned by refugee enthusiasts. There was, moreover, a specific Jewish tradition of agricultural colonization in the United

Documents, Series D, Vol. IV, p. 548.

⁸⁰ *NYT*, October 17, 1939, p. 25.

⁸¹ Letter to State Department announcing organization of group, December 12, 1943, NA/SDDF 840.48, Refugees/4967.

⁸² Kraft to McDonald, March 28, 1939, McDonald MSS.

HENRY FEINGOLD

States. In 1825, for example, Mordecai Noah, the Tammany Sachem and prominent Jewish political leader, had organized the ill-starred Ararat scheme near Grand Island, Buffalo where, he hoped, Jews would "be gathered from the four quarters of the globe . . . to resume their rank and character among the governments of the earth."⁸³ Earlier, an evangelistic preacher, W.D. Robinson, had come to the astounding conclusion that "Jewish towns and villages adorning the banks of the Mississippi and Missouri" would not only "ameliorate the unfortunate state of this class of human beings,"⁸⁴ but would also be an asset to the development of the country. With the arrival of the East European Jews, several agricultural colonies were established with the help of the Baron de Hirsch Fund. Some were peopled with recruits from the *Am Olam* movement who, like the early *Biluim* of Zionist fame, were motivated by populist Tolstoyan back-to-the-soil notions. However, the colonies which had been established in the Sicily Islands of Louisiana; Cremieux, South Dakota; New Odessa, Oregon; and Beersheba, Kansas, had failed within the first decade of their founding. A group of agricultural settlements had stubbornly clung to life in Southern New Jersey, aided by their proximity to Philadelphia. They were still operating in the thirties, albeit in a different form, and were asked to help out during the crisis. A training farm for German-Jewish refugees was established in the vicinity, and the infusion of refugee farmers helped give the colonies a new lease on life, as the newcomers played a role in the establishment of the lucrative poultry industry.⁸⁵

The efforts to found Jewish agricultural settlements in the United States were continued by the Refugee Economic Corporation, which founded a new agricultural colony in Van Eden, North Carolina.⁸⁶

⁸³ Joseph L. Blau and Salo W. Baron (eds.), *The Jews of the United States, 1790-1840: A Documentary History*, New York, 1963, vol. III, Document 314, p. 895.

⁸⁴ "Memoir Addressed to Persons of the Jewish Religion in Europe, On the subject of Immigration to, and Settlement in, One of the Most Eligible Parts of the United States of North America," October 20, 1819, Morris U. Schappes (ed.), *A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States, 1654-1875*, New York, 1950, Document 68, p. 141.

⁸⁵ Joseph Brandes, *Immigration to Freedom: Jewish Communities in Rural New Jersey Since 1882*, Philadelphia, 1971, pp. 323-325.

⁸⁶ Refugee Economic Organization, Annual Reports, 1939-1943.

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

The massive resettlement schemes in the interior of the country, however, such as those suggested at one point by Paul Baerwald, Chairman of JDC, could not be realized as long as the restrictive immigration laws were in effect.⁸⁷ For resettlement projects to succeed in the United States, a way had to be found to circumvent the law. The scheme to settle refugees in Alaska in 1940 did not succeed, but in 1944, when millions of European Jews had already been murdered, the laws were finally circumvented.

In June of that year, the Administration implemented the "free ports," or as Roosevelt preferred to call it, temporary havens project. The concept of "free ports" was popularized by Samuel Grafton, a columnist for the *New York Post* who ingeniously combined several elements from previously existing plans. "A free port," he wrote, "is a place where you can put things down for a while without having to make a final decision about them. . . . We do it for commercial cans of beans. . . . it should not be impossible to do it for people."⁸⁸ The Administration charged the War Relocation Authority with establishing a temporary haven at an obsolete army facility in Oswego, New York, and 983 refugees, of the "proper Jewish-Christian mix" were admitted outside the immigration quota on the condition that they would return to their homes after hostilities had ended. Strictly speaking, the temporary havens project was not a resettlement scheme. It simply stored people away for the duration. An earlier proposal to implement a similar scheme on the Virgin Islands, which had the support of Harold Ickes and Governor Cramer, was bitterly opposed by Breckinridge Long, who viewed it as an attempt to sneak refugees, some of whom might be enemy agents, into American territory without subjecting them to the elaborate screening process which he had been instrumental in establishing.

The major attempt to alter the immigration law and thus enable the resettlement of masses of refugees on American territory took place in 1940. In that year, refugee advocates combined with people from the Department of the Interior and others who sensed an oppor-

⁸⁷ As early as June 1938, Paul Baerwald, Director of the JDC, had suggested mass resettlement in the interior of the country, where the Rotary and YMCA would retrain the refugees. Minutes of the Third Meeting of the PACPR, June 2, 1938, Wise MSS.

⁸⁸ "What is Free Ports?", *New York Post*, April 5, 1944.

HENRY FEINGOLD

tunity to develop Alaska to put the Administration's intentions to a major test. The fact that Alaska would some day come to the attention of refugee advocates was a foregone conclusion. The territory possessed an estimated 100,000 square miles of unused arable lands and was inhabited by only 30,000 white settlers. It seemed like a "virgin empire" which badly needed population and development. Most important, its suitability for resettlement had already been tested by the Administration itself. In 1935, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration had resettled some 170 families from drought-stricken areas in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota in the Matanuska valley in the Pacific coastal region of the territory. Three years later, the colonists, who had organized themselves into the Matanuska Valley Colonization Association, were producing a bumper crop. Not all Alaskans were happy about the colony, but in 1937, the Governor of Alaska, John W. Troys, called for "more colonies like Matanuska."⁸⁹

The PACPR asked the Administration about Alaska even before the Evian Conference, but the results had been discouraging. George Brandt, then the State Department's liaison with the Committee, informed its members that Alaska clearly fell within the purview of the immigration law and any attempt to circumvent the quotas would surely backfire.⁹⁰ Brandt's reply was bad news for refugee enthusiasts since changing the law was considered to be virtually impossible. They reasoned, however, that Alaska was a special case, since it clearly needed the refugees as much as the refugees needed it.

Interest in the territory was therefore maintained by refugee advocates. In August 1938, McDonald communicated with Dr. Carl L. Alsberg, the author of a new report on Alaska, and inquired about the absorption capacity of the territory. Perhaps the answer was infiltration rather than resettlement?⁹¹ Private groups were also attracted by the possibilities in Alaska. One of the earliest of these seems to have been the Alaskan Resettlement Corporation for Refugees founded by Robert G. H. Tallman of Denver in early 1939. In his first mailing, he cited Alaska's *Report for the Annual Fiscal Year* (ended June 30,

⁸⁹ Robert J. Caldwell, "The American Far North," *Foreign Affairs*, 1939, p. 516.

⁹⁰ Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the PACPR, June 10, 1938, Wise MSS.

⁹¹ McDonald to Alsberg, August 8, 1938, McDonald MSS.

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

1937) as proof that the territory needed additional inhabitants. Tallman, moreover, had a plan. He urged the issuance of special low-interest Refugee Colonization Bonds to finance resettlement. The immigration law would be amended to permit the entry of those immigrants accepted by the corporation after screening. Such an influx, he argued, would do a lot to stimulate the territory's sluggish economy as well as keeping "alive these aspirations and achievements of freedom and democracy."⁹² The cry was next taken up by Charles Buckley, the Democratic Representative of a heavily Jewish district in the Bronx. To the chagrin of the State Department, he offered to introduce a measure for refugee settlement in Alaska.⁹³ The PACPR's interest in the idea also continued.⁹⁴

Sometime early in the development of the idea to make Alaska a resettlement haven, Harold Ickes and Henry Wallace, the Secretary of Agriculture whose department could conceivably have contributed the know-how to make any resettlement project a going concern, were won over to the scheme. For a time, even the Army and Navy Departments became interested since an empty Alaska posed a serious defense problem for them.⁹⁵ In August 1939, the Department of the Interior released a report entitled, "The Problem of Alaskan Development," written by Harry Slattery, the Department's Undersecretary. The major thrust of the report was that Alaska's development required people. Without an increase in population, the territory would remain an economic backwater indefinitely. Slattery considered the existence of refugees, many of whom were experienced businessmen with some capital behind them and an empty Alaska with a stagnating economy, nothing less than a divinely ordained confluence of circumstances which it would be sinful not to utilize. His plan for financing settlement, however, differed markedly from Tallman's. He called for the establishment of a federally chartered public purpose corporation to develop the lumber, mineral, fur, and fishing industries. The primary concern was to develop the territory's economy and in the

⁹² The Alaska Resettlement Corporation, October 20, 1938, McDonald MSS.

⁹³ Charles Buckley to FDR, November 18, 1938, and State Department to Buckley, December 7, 1938, FDLR/OF 3186.

⁹⁴ Meeting of individuals called to consult with Mr. Jaretzki and Mr. Warren on colonization projects, December 2, 1938, McDonald MSS.

⁹⁵ Warren to Taylor, January 27, 1939, McDonald MSS.

HENRY FEINGOLD

process help the refugees. Like Tallman, he envisaged a suitable modification of the quota system. Once a refugee settled in Alaska, he would be compelled to remain there for five years, after which time he would have to go through the regular process to obtain a visa for the mainland.⁹⁶

With the assistance of Felix Cohen, the Department's Assistant Solicitor, the Alaskan Development Bill, encompassing the major provisions of the Slattery report, was drawn up. In February 1940, H.R. 5971 was introduced in the House by Frank R. Havenner, and S 3577 by William H. King and Robert F. Wagner in the Senate. A special pressure group, the Alaskan Development Committee, headed by Erwin Klaus busily organized public support for the measure. "The plan of developing Alaska," Klaus wrote to McDonald, "is in keeping with the American pioneering tradition and can be the answer of a democracy to totalitarian forces." He claimed, moreover, to have the endorsement of 84.5% of the 340 newspapers who bothered to comment on the bill.⁹⁷

Despite the public relations campaign and the firm support of the Department of the Interior which had reissued the Slattery report in April, the chances of passage were not good. Much depended on an endorsement from the President. For a moment it seemed as if such support might be forthcoming. The President was preparing a statement on refugees for the forthcoming meeting of the officers of the IGC, which at the President's insistence had been scheduled for October. Harold Ickes had forwarded a copy of the Slattery report to the White House with a strong recommendation for approval and a suggestion that it be placed before the IGC.⁹⁸ Both Welles and Hull reacted negatively to Ickes' suggestion, however, since they feared that it would stir up too much excitement and raise false hopes. Roosevelt wavered. "Do you think I should sign this?" he inquired of Welles.⁹⁹ The reply came back in no uncertain terms, as it had a year earlier to Buckley's untimely proposal.

Thus precisely at the moment when Roosevelt addressed the officers of the IGC urging them to think in "grander" terms, Roosevelt had

⁹⁶ Harry Slattery, "The Problem of Alaskan Development," pp. 38-41.

⁹⁷ Klaus to McDonald, August 15, 1940, McDonald MSS.

⁹⁸ Ickes to FDR, October 18, 1939, FDRL/OF 3186.

⁹⁹ FDR to Welles, October 19, 1939, FDRL/OF 3186.

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

a proposal in hand which, if passed by Congress, would have met all his requirements. He did not give the proposal his support. When the chips were down, Roosevelt reverted back to empty rhetoric regarding the postwar refugee problem and nation building schemes in Africa, which were preferable since they involved no political risk and there was little chance of their ever being realized.

It should be noted that the President had more than a vague idea of what was involved. When Ickes met Roosevelt in November, he seemed fully aware of the content of the Slattery report and even offered some interesting amendments. He would move 50,000 immigrants into Alaska over a five year period. Half of the newcomers would be natives, while the other half would be made up of aliens admitted outside the quota, but whose nationalities would be in accordance with the quotas prescribed by the existing immigration law. To avoid the criticism which would surely arise "if there were an undue proportion of Jews," their percentage of the group should be limited to ten per cent.¹⁰⁰ Roosevelt had apparently not yet realized that the problem of those he insisted on labelling as "political refugees" was in fact a problem of unwanted Jews.

Despite the absence of Administration support and opposition from domestic restrictionists and leading Alaskans, many of whom were convinced that the object of the King-Havenner Bill was to "dump" unwanted Jews in Alaska, Ickes introduced the measure to Congress.¹⁰¹ On May 13, 1940, hearings began before the Senate Committee on Territories and Insular Affairs. Harold Ickes led off with a strong statement in favor of the bill. He was followed by some of the proposals' prominent supporters such as Clarence Pickett, Executive Secretary of the American Friends Service Committee, Dr. Vihljalmur Stefanson, the Arctic explorer, Dr. Alvin Johnson, Director of the New School for Social Research, and Dr. Frank Bohn, a noted authority on land settlement. Only three witnesses testified against the bill.

Behind the scenes, however, opposition to the King-Havenner Bill was gathering force. It emanated not only from the still powerful re-

¹⁰⁰ Harold L. Ickes, *The Secret Diary of Harold Ickes*, Vol. III, "The Lowering Clouds," New York, 1954, pp. 56-57; Wyman, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-103.

¹⁰¹ *NYT*, August 27, 1939, section IV, p. 7.

HENRY FEINGOLD

strictionist element in Congress, which considered the measure little more than an ill-concealed attempt to bring refugees into the country "by the back door," but also from some of Alaska's leading political figures, such as Anthony J. Dimond, the territory's congressional delegate, Ernest Gruening, Director of the Department of the Interior's Division of Territories, and Don Carlos, the mayor of Seward, Alaska. Their arguments ran the gamut from skepticism regarding the financial aspects to the suspicion that refugee advocates were using the notion of Alaskan development as a screen to conceal their real objective which was to find a haven for refugees. In order to refute this charge, the King-Havenner Bill stipulated that at least fifty per cent of any new jobs created would be given to American citizens. These stipulations, however, were ignored by those opposed to the measure, and the King-Havenner Bill was never reported out of committee.

In January 1941, Representative Samuel Dickstein disinterred the measure, emphasizing his favorite gambit, the use of the unused places in the quotas of the previous six years. For good measure, he also stressed the security factor involved in populating Alaska. Again the same forces of opposition were aroused and the measure never reached the floor of Congress.

* * *

In contrast to the King-Havenner Bill, the plan to resettle refugees in the Philippines was not opposed by the restrictionists. Under the provision of the Tydings-McDuffie Law, the Philippines had become a virtually self-governing commonwealth in November 1935, and was to be completely independent after a ten year transition period. The government of the island, led by Manuel Quezon, could decide for itself whether it would accept refugees. For that reason, the proposal to establish a resettlement colony on the island of Mindanao seemed more likely to succeed and was supported by the Administration.

The idea of resettlement on Mindanao, which was proposed by refugee enthusiasts in mid-1938, was not new. The Philippine authorities, aware of the deteriorating situation in the Pacific, had been concerned about the composition of the population of that island and considered colonizing it with its own citizens. (In 1937, it was estimated that about 14,000 Japanese resided on the island. Most lived in the

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

province of Davao where they dominated the hemp growing industry.) Eight to ten million dollars had been earmarked for public improvements on the island.

Thus REC officials were positively impressed when they established contact with Philippine government officials in November 1938.¹⁰² Philip Frieder, a merchant who did business in the Philippines, met with Quezon and the President spoke of the possibility of absorbing millions of refugees and of his government's willingness to sell land on very reasonable terms. Quezon had requested that the REC delegation wait until the matter could be communicated to the State Department. The delegation's enthusiasm knew no bounds and they were convinced that they had found the answer to the refugee problem. "If this plan goes over," he wrote to his brother, "... it will be a bigger project than Palestine. The land is more fertile than Palestine, there are more minerals, timber — as a matter of fact, it is the richest land in the Philippines — virgin soil. This is such an enormous proposition that one can hardly visualize potentialities of same." Frieder was already thinking of a Hoover dam "which can supply electricity and current for all of Mindanao." At the same time, he was a little worried and asked Quezon why the area had not been more thickly settled.¹⁰³

In fact, other refugee enthusiasts had discovered the island before the REC. In August, Paul V. McNutt, the American Commissioner, had received an inquiry from the State Department regarding the possibility of settling two hundred refugee families. After a hasty survey, McNutt optimistically reported back to Welles that ten times that number could be absorbed and possibly an additional 5,000 families could be resettled at a later date.¹⁰⁴

The refugee agencies were quite excited at the new development. The details of a large-scale resettlement project were being planned by McNutt and Quezon.¹⁰⁵ It was believed that a settlement of 30,000 Caucasian refugees on Mindanao would go far to counteract the Japanese threat to the island. When the final plans became known,

¹⁰² Minutes of the Thirteenth Meeting of the PACPR, December 8, 1938, McDonald MSS.

¹⁰³ Herbert Frieder to Charles Liebman, December 8, 1938, McDonald MSS.

¹⁰⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, McNutt and Welles, December 16, 1938, Na/SDDF 840.48, Refugees 116 1/2.

¹⁰⁵ Warren to Rublee, December 9, 1938, McDonald MSS.

HENRY FEINGOLD

however, the enthusiasm waned. The Philippine offer was actually carefully circumscribed and left many unanswered questions. The first contingent of refugees would be limited to 1,000, barely enough to make a dent in the refugee problem. Moreover, the economic prospects, which had appeared so rosy, were now uncertain. In order not to compete with domestic producers of staples, who had only limited access to the American market, the settlers would not be allowed to raise sugar, hemp, and coconuts. A committee of the Filipino legislature had recommended that the settlers limit their crops to rubber, citrus fruit, and vegetables. In effect, the settlement would be limited to sustenance farming which meant that the settlement could never become financially independent. How could a large settlement with virtually no hope of ever showing a profit be financed? George Warren desperately tried to redeem the situation by suggesting that the settlement be based on small industry rather than agriculture,¹⁰⁶ but that was considered impractical.

Nevertheless the REC, acting jointly with the PACPR, made plans to send a survey commission to Mindanao. By now, the State Department was far more reserved about the plan, and the planners were cautioned not to publicize the offer, lest the market price of land rise and domestic opposition be aroused. Moreover, Emilio Aguinaldo, the venerable independence fighter, had already spoken of the need to resettle Filipinos rather than alien refugees.¹⁰⁷ Meanwhile, a remarkably optimistic report had been prepared by Isaiah Bowman. "Mindanao," the report began, "seems to offer sufficient possibilities to guarantee a successful future for selected groups of European settlers."¹⁰⁸ In July, an optimistic report on Mindanao, the second largest island in the Philippine archipelago, was in the hands of the State Department. The commission had seen two tracts of arable land which they believed were suitable for colonization, but one required an access road which would cost an estimated \$400,000. A more likely site, one which was accessible by national highway, was located on the Bukednon plateau. This area, however, was under

¹⁰⁶ Warren to Taylor and Rublee, January 3, 1939, McDonald MSS.

¹⁰⁷ *NYT*, April 23, 1939, p. 33.

¹⁰⁸ Karl J. Pelzer to Warren, Memorandum on Settlement Possibilities on the Island of Mindanao, January 21, 1939, McDonald, MSS.

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

private grazing and agricultural leases which had twenty-five years to run and had an option for renewal.¹⁰⁹ The optimistic reports regarding Mindanao's emptiness now appeared in a different light. True the island had only 1,265,000 inhabitants in 1935 and only 6% of the land of any province was under cultivation, but these lands were in the most accessible areas of the island. The final report of the survey commission, issued a month after the outbreak of war, recommended the leasing of 100,000 acres in the Bukednon area for an eventual settlement of 100,000 refugees. It also prescribed non-competitive crops to be grown for the home market.¹¹⁰ The State Department, anxious to publicize an "American" solution to the refugee problem prepared to transmit the news to the IGC in London.

The director of the project would be Charles J. Liebman, the well-known agricultural expert who worked with both the REC and Agro-Joint, while the actual on-the-spot control of the project would be in the hands of Dr. Stanton Youngberry. Within a few months, a program for selecting and retraining refugees was initiated. Several Jewish refugees who had found a precarious haven in Shanghai had already requested to join the settlement,¹¹¹ and care was taken to maintain good relations with the Philippine authorities. When McDonald expressed greater hope for the resettlement scheme in Santo Domingo, he received an exasperated communication from Liebman cautioning that such statements might offend Quezon and endanger the project.¹¹²

Unaware of the fate which awaited the Jews of Europe, the project developed at an excruciatingly slow pace which made it virtually impossible to rescue Jewish refugees while there was still time. The survey had taken an inordinately long time to complete and the selection and retraining of refugees, the clearing of the sight and the building of houses took even longer. The location of the Philippines caused transportation and communications problems, and not until the spring of 1941 was the site ready for the absorption of the refugees. By then, however, it had become extremely difficult to get them

¹⁰⁹ Morris (State Department) to Department of Interior, July 14, 1939, McDonald MSS.

¹¹⁰ Survey Commission Report on Settlement Possibilities on Mindanao (mimeographed), October 17, 1939, Wise MSS.

¹¹¹ Pell to McDonald, November 21, 1939, McDonald MSS.

¹¹² Liebman to McDonald, November 21, 1939, McDonald MSS.

HENRY FEINGOLD

out of occupied Europe. Moreover, almost before the project could get underway the islands were occupied by the Japanese.

* * *

We turn next to two schemes which claimed much of the Roosevelt administration's limited energy for refugee rescue. They are the projects for settlement in British Guiana and Santo Domingo.

There is some reason to believe that the idea for resettlement in British Guiana began in the deep recesses of the British Foreign Office where there was a concern, not so much about the fate of the Jewish refugees, but about muting the outcry regarding the restriction of Jewish immigration to Palestine. British Guiana was first officially mentioned as a possible resettlement site by Chamberlain in a speech before the House of Commons on November 21, 1938. The scheme, moreover, offered the advantage of being located in the Western Hemisphere rather than in Africa, where settlers had already made known their opposition to schemes to resettle Jewish refugees.

The PACPR was asked to participate in a survey of the area to locate a likely site. At the same time, Robert Pell and Theodore Achilles of the State Department were apprised of developments within the government by Anthony de Rothschild, whose role on the British scene was similar to that of James McDonald. They, in turn, transmitted the information to the PACPR with a strong recommendation that it participate in the venture. It was advice that the State Department would have cause to regret. Much of the preliminary planning for the mixed survey commission was done by Joseph Rosen and E. C. Bataille of the Jewish Colonization Association and Dr. Mortimer Kahn, an anthropologist associated with the Cornell Medical Center. Kahn had made nine previous trips to the Guiana highlands, which it was believed offered the best prospects for resettlement.

From the outset, the selection of the members of the commission was controversial since the members of the Jewish Colonization Association who participated on the commission were considered to be unobjective regarding settlement possibilities.¹¹³ The PACPR itself came into possession of previous surveys whose findings were mixed.

¹¹³ Warren to Taylor and Rublee, December 15, 1938, McDonald MSS.

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

Sir Alfred Sherlock, who participated in the British survey conducted in 1927 as part of the preparations for the settlement of Assyrians, did not believe, "owing to the nearness of the equator," that white men could inhabit the area. Sir Geoffrey Ebans and Brigadier General Browne concurred with that report, especially as it concerned commercial viability: "[Settlers] might scrape along on a bare existence. There is no market whatever for their products and there are no means of communication." The report concluded by stating that "any money which was spent in this country for this purpose would be better spent elsewhere."¹¹⁴ Moreover, the resettlement of 20,000 Assyrians by the League of Nations had been a dismal failure.

British enthusiasm for the British Guiana scheme, it should be noted, was not unanimous. In December 1938, there was a minor controversy over the technical feasibility of the project in the pages of the London *Times*. A letter by a former settler, who had lived in the colony for twenty years, challenged virtually every affirmative assertion made by another former settler, L. H. T. Ashburner. "Why think of British Guiana," asked the reader, "when there are millions of acres in Canada and Australia crying out for settlers."¹¹⁵ It was the same question many Jewish refugees advocates were asking.

More bad news came from the preliminary reports composed by Bowman and Kahn,¹¹⁶ who both emphatically rejected the British Guiana scheme. Bowman pointed out that not only had the Assyrian settlement failed, but so had numerous other ventures in similar areas. Bush-yaws, yellow fever, and other tropical diseases would surely decimate the ranks of any group of settlers in short order. Settlement, he argued, might indeed occur anywhere, but supporting such a venture would be expensive. Settlement in the hinterland of British Guiana "would be like a city in the South Pole. Civilization could maintain it, but the cost would be prohibitive."¹¹⁷

Despite such reservations, the PACPR proceeded with the organiza-

¹¹⁴ Memorandum on British Immigration to British Guiana (excerpts from 1927 report), December 12, 1938, McDonald MSS.

¹¹⁵ Letter to the Editor, *Times*, December 16, 1938.

¹¹⁶ Warren to Taylor and Rublee, January 3, 1939, McDonald MSS.

¹¹⁷ Preliminary Draft of Report on Settlement Possibilities in British Guiana and Surinam (Bowman), January 1939. McDonald MSS; Hull to FDR, November 21, 1939, FDRL/PSF, Hull Folder.

HENRY FEINGOLD

tion of the commission, aware that the entire project would be damaged if Britain were to drop out as she threatened to do.¹¹⁸ On January 31, 1939, it issued a press release announcing the names of the members of the survey commission which would leave for Georgetown on February 8 and remain there for three months. In other words, the commission's trip coincided with the crucial negotiations about to take place in London regarding the formation of the Coordinating Foundation, the agency which was to be established, upon Berlin's request, to bail out German Jewry. The announcement of the names of the members of the survey commission, especially that of Dr. Joseph Rosen, whose association with territorialism made him anathema to Zionists such as Stephen Wise, created difficulties. Even Bowman agreed "that it would be rather easy to forecast what he [Rosen] would say on Palestine or British Guiana."¹¹⁹ Wise also expressed the "profoundest doubts" about British Guiana and linked it to the White Paper about which he was "heartsick."¹²⁰

Yet the urgency of having some resettlement project on the road before Robert Pell returned to Berlin to continue negotiations could hardly be denied. "The essential point remains," wrote Anthony de Rothschild, "that for political and other reasons we must take the necessary steps to get some schemes working if only on an experimental scale."¹²¹ In addition the Rothschild group was being pressured by the Colonial Secretary, Malcolm MacDonald, who had told them that there was no alternative to British Guiana.

Despite pressure from the upper echelons of the British Government, the realization of the project never seems to have proceeded smoothly. In April, on the occasion of the publication of a preliminary report by Dr. Rosen, controversy broke out anew. Rosen's primary argument, one that previewed the final report, was that Guiana was the best that could be expected. As far as the actual possibilities of resettlement, he avoided committing himself. "It does not require any extensive investigation to readily concede that British Guiana is not by any means an ideal country for large-scale settle-

¹¹⁸ Warren to Taylor and Rublee, January 3, 1939, McDonald MSS.

¹¹⁹ Bowman to Wise, February 6, 1939, Wise MSS.

¹²⁰ Wise to MacDonald, May 19, 1939, McDonald MSS.

¹²¹ Rothschild to Warren, May 26, 1939, Wise MSS.

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

ment," read the introductory sentence of the preliminary report.¹²² He acknowledged that there were soil, climatic, transportation, and potential racial problems. Nonetheless, there were no "good" areas and the problem of refugee rescue was so urgent that the mere political availability of Guiana was, according to Rosen, a strong point in its favor. "The problem reduces itself," he concluded, "to a consideration as to whether British Guiana, in spite of the obvious disadvantages, offers any feasible potential possibilities for development of refugee settlement on a suitable scale."¹²³ Rosen also noted that the project would be expensive, and he estimated that it would cost \$1,500 to \$2,000 to resettle each family or approximately \$3,000,000 to resettle 5,000 people.¹²⁴

The final report, which was made public in May, faithfully reflected Rosen's reasoning. The territory "would not be considered suitable for *immediate* large-scale settlement," but the potential of British Guiana justified a "trial settlement."¹²⁵ Rosen defended the report against its detractors.¹²⁶ The health and sanitary conditions, "provide no insurmountable problems," he told members of the PACPR.¹²⁷ Moreover, the prospects for the success of a trial settlement were good. The main thing was to begin work and keep in mind the urgency of the refugee problem. However, not everyone agreed with Rosen's appraisal. Bowman, for example, pointed out that the trial settlement would not be an experiment at all, but an artificially sustained enterprise." "I am bound to say," read the last sentence of his response to the commission's report, "that I think the money that is proposed to invest in such a trial settlement could be better expended in other places."¹²⁸ It was an argument Bowman and others had made many times before.

¹²² Dr. Joseph A. Rosen, "Problem of Large Scale Settlement of Refugees from Middle European Countries in British Guiana," April 14, 1939.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Report of the British Guiana Refugee Commission to the President's Advisory Committee on Political Refugees of the United States of America*, May, 1939.

¹²⁶ Moffat Diary, June 1, 1939.

¹²⁷ Minutes of the Twenty-fifth Meeting of the PACPR, April 20, 1939.

¹²⁸ Memorandum on the Report of the British Guiana Commission — Remarks Submitted by Isaiah Bowman, May 19, 1939, McDonald MSS.

HENRY FEINGOLD

Such controversy, however, hardly put a crimp in the plans of the British authorities. They were determined more than ever to wrap things up in a neat package. The British Guiana scheme was firmly linked in their minds to the Coordinating Foundation. On May 12, 1939, Prime Minister Chamberlain appeared before Parliament to announce his government's formal acceptance of the British Guiana report. The government would slightly expand the land offer and encourage inquiries into the possibilities of industrial development. In addition, it would provide the necessary arterial communication between the coast and the interior provided adequate private capital was forthcoming to make the venture a success. Once that occurred, the government would grant the colonists a measure of autonomy, although they would not, of course, control such matters as revenue, customs, and security.¹²⁹

All these concessions would be granted providing that the funding came from other sources — the private, primarily Jewish, refugee and self-help agencies, such as the JDC, or the American Government. This was the key to the problem. The leaders of the JDC hesitated to support the Coordinating Foundation and opposed linking it with the British Guiana scheme. Thus there was no response to Anthony de Rothschild's urgent pleas to raise large sums of money. Wealthy Jews like Baerwald, Ittleston, Jaretzki, Warburg, and others were not the only ones opposed to the British maneuvering. The State Department was chagrined at the diplomatic coup which enabled the British to exploit the refugee crisis in order to get money from private American sources for the development of a remote area of the British Empire, by means of a project which simultaneously earned them headlines for their humanitarian efforts on behalf of refugees, pushing the news of the White Paper into the background.¹³⁰

The British tactics did not work, however, particularly because their success was dependent on Jewish funds. The leaders of the JDC had long since become convinced that the task of resettling thousands, and eventually perhaps millions, of refugees could not be achieved solely

¹²⁹ Pell to State Department, transmitted to Warren, May 12, 1939, McDonald MSS.

¹³⁰ WCF to Taylor, June 5, 1939, McDonald MSS; *FRUS*, II, pp. 139-140, (July 7, 1939); Minutes of the Twelfth Meeting of the PACPR, November 21, 1938.

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

by private philanthropy. Moreover, when the British linked the plans for British Guiana to the Coordinating Foundation, it automatically earned the animosity of those elements in the Jewish community who opposed having any dealings with Berlin regarding the "ransom" of German Jewry, such as the American Jewish Congress, the Jewish Labor Committee, and the boycott committees. Abba Hillel Silver, Chairman of the United Palestine Appeal, cut off his organization's subsidy to the PACPR and was firmly opposed to contributing to the Coordinating Foundation. When he was told of the less militant attitude of Stephen Wise, Silver asserted that "Rabbi Wise does not represent the Zionists on the President's Committee . . . [and] nothing Rabbi Wise said or promised binds anyone else."¹³¹ A member of the PACPR concluded that "Dr. Silver's attitude is in part at least explained by a conflict of personalities and organizational politics."¹³²

The supporters of the anti-Nazi boycott adamantly opposed the transfer plan to which the British Guiana scheme had become attached. Angered by the fact that no one had bothered to find out how the Jews felt about the plan, Joseph Tenenbaum, a leader of the boycott movement, pointed out that London had "closed the only remaining haven in Palestine and substituted for it the wilds of British Guiana, which at best, could only accommodate 5,000 Jews in the next few years at considerable cost and sacrifice."¹³³ The paramount problem, argued Tenenbaum, "is not how to get the Jews out of Germany, but where to settle them."¹³⁴ British Guiana was certainly not the answer. The German transfer proposal, in which Rublee and Pell had placed so much confidence, was in reality "a preposterous scheme of extortion." The statement was made in July, and war was but a few weeks away.¹³⁵

That was the state of affairs when Helmut Wohltat, Schacht's successor at the talks, arrived in London, ostensibly to attend a conference on whaling. The American leadership had not been able to decide on their support of the Coordinating Foundation and certainly not its link to the British Guiana scheme. They also had various ob-

¹³¹ WCF to Taylor, June 5, 1939, McDonald MSS.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ "The German Refugee Transfer Plan, Memorandum Submitted by Dr. Joseph Tenenbaum," July 1939, McDonald MSS.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

HENRY FEINGOLD

jections concerning organization and funding. Wohltat, however, evinced no interest in the question of organization or resettlement, which he considered to be the business of the "outside Jews." He simply wanted to know if sufficient capital to convince the Führer was involved.¹³⁶ If not, there was no point in talking. Sensing that an opportunity was slipping away, the British Foreign Office and, to some extent, the Roosevelt administration, showed signs of impatience at the reluctance of the Jews to participate. As Herbert Emerson described it, "The trouble with the whole refugee affair was the trouble of the Jews and most eastern people. There was always some other scheme in the background for which they were prepared to sacrifice schemes which were already in hand."¹³⁷ Threats to withdraw the offer of British Guiana began to be heard from Whitehall.¹³⁸

The JDC finally succumbed and agreed to finance its share of the cost, but the linkage of British Guiana to the establishment of the Coordinating Foundation continued to pose problems. Joseph Tenenbaum and Adolph Held, Chairman of the Jewish Labor Committee, asserted that the Rublee plan was not the answer to the burning question of the day. "Where will the immigrants supposedly helped by the Rublee plan go?"¹³⁹ Held urged the JDC to reverse its decision on funding the Coordinating Foundation. Caught betwixt and between, the JDC leadership decided to stall, and requested that the agreement be altered to make the Coordinating Foundation appear as a secretariat rather than the agency which would provide capital for the transfer of goods.¹⁴⁰ When Strauss cabled from London that the \$500,000 appropriated was inadequate, he received the following cable in reply: "JDC AS YOU KNOW UNDER ATTACK FOR FINANCING NEW CORPORATION STOP BESIDES PALESTINIAN FRIENDS ALWAYS SUSPICIOUS GUIANA SCHEME."¹⁴¹

The French authorities were, if anything, even more adamantly op-

¹³⁶ Pell to State Department, June 15, 1939, McDonald MSS.

¹³⁷ Pell to Hull, July 13, 1939, *FRUS*, II, p. 34.

¹³⁸ Pell to State Department, June 22, 1939, McDonald MSS.

¹³⁹ Held to JDC, July 12, 1939, McDonald MSS.

¹⁴⁰ Warren to Pell, July 13, 1939 and Warren to Taylor, July 14, 1939, McDonald MSS.

¹⁴¹ Cable to Rosenberg, Jaretzki, and Hyman to Lewis Strauss, July 13, 1939, McDonald MSS.

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

posed to the participation of French Jews in financing the Coordinating Foundation. Henry Bérenger at one point threatened to resign from the IGC if the negotiations with the Germans continued. "The French Jews were not stupid little fish," he explained excitedly, "Robert de Rothschild was not a stupid little fish. Mr. Taylor could have his trap. He could put his head in it..." He, Bérenger, would not permit the "gaunt prophet" (Ruble) and the "romantic acolyte" (Pell) whose "fonction" was "apparently to go to Berlin every week or so and salute Hitler's, or is it Goering's behind," to seduce French Jewry.¹⁴²

Nevertheless, the JDC decided that it could not permit such a rescue opportunity to slip by, and it would therefore go ahead with plans for a trial settlement of 250 refugees. A complex financing arrangement was thereupon worked out whereby funds left over from the colonization ventures of Agro-Joint in the Soviet Union would be added to the funds in ICA's possession. Moreover, if the Czech fund was also added to the contribution of the British and French groups, there would be sufficient capital to at least start the project. In addition, the British promised at the last moment to make some funds available under "certain conditions."¹⁴³ Roosevelt's invitation to the officers of the IGC to meet with him in Washington convinced some British officials that a major American-sponsored breakthrough, perhaps an offer of a haven in Alaska, perhaps the promise of matching funds for resettlement, was imminent. Strauss suggested that it was time to seek the help of powerful congressional leaders such as Senators Borah, Johnson, and Nye.¹⁴⁴ The decision was taken on July 20, 1939. War was barely six weeks away.

When the war did break out, the plans which had taken over a year to prepare were radically changed at one stroke. The Roosevelt administration began to move towards more stringent visa regulations and the British withdrew their offer of reasonable provisions for land title and financial assistance in British Guiana. The matter of resettlement havens was thrown back to the private refugee and Jewish self-help agencies who had previously demonstrated that the solution of the refugee problem was beyond their resources. For a time, momen-

¹⁴² Pell to Moffat, April 17, 1939. Moffat MSS.

¹⁴³ Memorandum of Lewis Strauss, August 21, 1939, McDonald MSS.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

HENRY FEINGOLD

tum carried them forward. They continued to select young Jews who had the potential to become pioneers, but the necessary support of the governments was now directed elsewhere. Britain and France were preoccupied with their own survival, and Roosevelt chose to take off on a visionary excursion of nation building in a territory he never bothered to mention. Soon other victims would feel Hitler's lash and compete with the refugees for a share of world concern.

* * *

In 1938 and 1939, the Roosevelt administration became involved with dozens of resettlement schemes only one of which, the Santo Domingo project, bore some fruit. The project presents an opportunity to examine what might have been had resettlement been undertaken earlier. Moreover, the failure of other projects to get underway tended to focus more attention on Santo Domingo than the project really deserved.

The first we hear of resettlement in Santo Domingo was at the Evian Conference in July 1938, where the idea was mentioned, albeit informally, as a prospect. Early in August, the proposal was officially confirmed by Trujillo and the subject was discussed on several occasions by the PACPR. In December, after due consultation with the State Department, the PACPR sent Alfred Houston to meet with Trujillo. He brought a letter of introduction from Sumner Welles, who wielded considerable influence in the Caribbean republics, but this did not mean that the Department was enthusiastic about Trujillo's largess. It had reservations about resettling German-Jewish refugees in the Caribbean and was skeptical about Trujillo's claim that 100,000 could be absorbed by the tiny republic.

After several interviews with the dictator, Houston attained confirmation of the offer and details regarding the admission of the refugees. Trujillo promised to provide public land as well as some of his own private estate to settle as many as 100,000 refugees. Moreover, there would be no entrance fees for the refugees. It all seemed too good to be true. Trujillo mentioned only one indispensable requirement. "Refugees may be of any race or religious belief, provided they are of Caucasian races, namely white."¹⁴⁵ For Jews escaping the

¹⁴⁵ Alfred Houston to Charles Liebman, January 2, 1939, McDonald MSS.

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

Nazis, conditions of this sort might have seemed a refreshing change. We shall presently see, however, that this racial requirement had an irony all its own.

Once again a survey commission was formed. Information on markets, soil, and types of agriculture had to be gathered beforehand. The task fell primarily to James Rosenberg, Chairman of Agro-Joint. Soon, however, there was disturbing news from Paris. Dominican Republic authorities had extended a similar offer to 1,000 Czech refugees and Spanish refugees from Southern France had also been contacted. It looked as if the tiny republic would become a "dumping ground" rather than a haven for refugees.

In March, the survey commission, which included Atherton Lee, Director of the Agriculture Department's experimental station in Puerto Rico, and B. Washburn, a public health expert, examined the proposed site. Predictably their report was favorable. Sosua, the area surveyed, was part of Trujillo's personal estate and consisted of 26,000 acres of good land in the northern part of the island east of Puerto Plata.

The State Department, however, which was reluctant to have refugees settled in the Caribbean due to its concern about the political stability of the island republics, began to earnestly urge caution.¹⁴⁶ The matter of publicity was particularly problematic. On the one hand, it might raise the price of land and offend others, such as Quezon, who had also made offers. On the other hand, as time went on, it became apparent that the Dominican scheme would be the only project which the Administration could adduce to prove its good intentions. Sosua became for the Roosevelt administration what British Guiana became for London — evidence of its efforts on behalf of the refugees. Moreover, the Americans soon discovered that the project could serve other purposes as well. Thus it was continuously cited by the State Department in answer to Pell's urgent requests that he be given some concrete evidence that resettlement was a reality so that he could conclude his negotiations in Berlin. When Roosevelt addressed the officers of the IGC in Washington he again made reference to the project. He hoped it would be "the forerunner of

¹⁴⁶ Hull to Rublee, January 18, 1939, *FRUS*, II, pp. 70-71.

HENRY FEINGOLD

many similar projects in other countries.”¹⁴⁷ A year later, Robert Pell again communicated with George Warren regarding the delicate matter of publicity. He was informed that Rosenberg had retained Mrs. Rebecca Reyer for public relations purposes. Her press releases soon appeared in the *Herald Tribune*, *Daily Mirror* and the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency Bulletin*, and a special booklet on the project was prepared.¹⁴⁸ Pell soon felt that a saturation point had been reached: “The trouble now is,” he informed McDonald, “as a consequence of the arrival of Spanish refugees in that country, that we are having too much publicity.”¹⁴⁹

As in other projects, the actual process of resettling the refugees was painfully slow. The Dominican Republic Resettlement Association, Inc. (DORSA) was not established until January 1940. It was incorporated in New York State under the directorship of James N. Rosenberg, and the occasion of the incorporation served as an opportunity to focus public attention on the project. The officers of DORSA as well as some IGC and State Department officials appeared on the island to celebrate the signing of the contract between DORSA and the government of the Dominican Republic. The colony’s charter guaranteed the settlers’ full economic and civil rights, and the corporation was granted a tax exemption. Two months later, the first sizeable contingent of a proposed total of five hundred settlers arrived on the island. It would take some time for the colony’s complement of settlers to be filled. The figure of 100,000 refugees had long since been abandoned.

Almost from the beginning, the settlement was plagued with unpredictable troubles. As a result of the entrance of Italy into the war in June 1940, a group of settlers from that country was unable to reach the Dominican Republic. Moreover, after the initial publicity, the Administration showed almost no interest in the colony. When McDonald requested a congratulatory telegram for the celebration of the colony’s first anniversary in January 1941,¹⁵⁰ Welles rejected the

¹⁴⁷ Official Minutes of the Meeting of the Officers of the Intergovernmental Committee on Political Refugees, October 17, 1939.

¹⁴⁸ Warren to Pell, November 8, 1939, McDonald MSS.

¹⁴⁹ Pell to McDonald, November 15, 1939, McDonald MSS.

¹⁵⁰ McDonald to Welles, January 24, 1941, McDonald MSS.

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

idea as such a message "might possibly appear to be more than was required to indicate our abiding interest in the project..."¹⁵¹ Moreover, the idea of creating a model refugee project in the Dominican Republic which other Latin American states might emulate, did not materialize. We have seen instead that the republics firmly closed their doors to Jewish refugees. Fortunately they chose not to examine the results of the Sosua experiment too closely. Had they done so they might have discovered that the results of a major expenditure of time, effort, and money were meager indeed.

The colony became enmeshed in internal problems and in the Administration's security psychosis. A confidential FBI report found in the State Department archives describes the refugees as "allergic to work" which, according to the observer, was being performed by the natives while the refugees lounged half-naked in shorts. The report also suggested that the Jewish refugees were signaling and feeding German submarine crews operating in the Caribbean.¹⁵² Social problems among the settlers also plagued the project. One could be retrained to do agricultural work, but retraining for collective living was another story. The internal harmony in the colony was sometimes wrecked by intense personal animosities. Meanwhile, leadership and administrative problems compounded Sosua's difficulties and financial support for the project began to fail.¹⁵³ It was apparent that the project would not develop beyond its first phase. In January 1943, one Jewish journal expressed doubt whether the project would survive.¹⁵⁴ What ultimately happened to the family life of those Central Europeans thrown willy nilly into a Caribbean ambience, which featured a far less rigid sexual code, would make an interesting theme for a dozen novels. DORSA apparently fulfilled only Trujillo's goal.

III.

With this admittedly incomplete survey as background, we are ready to seek a preliminary and necessarily tentative answer to a key prob-

¹⁵¹ Welles to McDonald, January 28, 1941, McDonald MSS.

¹⁵² Unsigned confidential memorandum, December 1, 1942, NA/SDDF 840.48, Refugees/4839.

¹⁵³ McDonald to Epstein, April 10, 1942, McDonald MSS.

¹⁵⁴ *Congress Weekly*, January 15, 1943, pp. 8-9.

HENRY FEINGOLD

lem in Holocaust research — was resettlement ever a viable rescue alternative? The question is a crucial one especially if one accepts the notion, as I do, that the Final Solution was not presaged in the historical development of Nazism. In other words, there was a period between 1938 and mid-1941 when the possibility of resettling the Jews of Europe might have served, even for the Nazis, as an alternative to mass murder.

One is bound to say at the outset that had Alaska, Mindanao, British Guiana, Sosua, and the dozens of other projects mentioned in this paper been able to get underway rapidly, thousands, perhaps millions of Jews, and especially those in Western Europe, might have survived the Holocaust. The projects were not started quickly enough because they required inordinate will, energy, and financial resources, none of which were available to the rescue advocates who thought in terms of resettlement. Thus the fact that more could have been rescued in this way is only true theoretically, just as it is theoretically true that more Jews might have been saved had the railroad system of Europe broken down. In practice, there was very little chance of ever realizing the resettlement schemes.

Two separate sets of problems were involved in the resettlement projects. One stemmed from the resettlement process itself and from those who were involved in it; the other concerned those nation states who sought to use it for their own purposes. We have seen that beyond the term resettlement, there existed a series of technical problems which had to be solved before a settlement could actually be founded. One could not simply remove people of all ages and backgrounds to some remote corner of the world and hope that they would thrive. The quality of the soil, climate, transportation, market conditions, access to markets, and other problems had to be examined by experts. In the case of British Guiana, climate and accessibility were crucial factors on which the experts found it difficult to agree. This was also the case in Mindanao, where the government was willing to extend generous terms except that it denied the colony the all-important right of producing for the commercial market. By limiting the settlement to sustenance farming, all the other assets were cancelled out and the colony was relegated to economic limbo.

When the hope of profit vanished, so too did the hope of raising the funds necessary to finance the projects. Financing, we have seen,

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

could not be provided by private philanthropy alone and there was precious little opportunity to obtain funds from governments who were either at war or did not feel any responsibility toward a minority of another nation's citizens. Considering the conditions of the world markets in 1939, it seems highly unlikely that such resettlement schemes could ever have loosened the purse strings of private investors. Without commercial viability, the settlements would have become little more than warehouses to store unwanted people for the duration. Now one can argue that at least in that way they could have remained alive, and that it was rescue after all, not profit, which was the key consideration. As it developed, however, the creation of such projects depended in the long run not on humanitarian sentiments, of which there were precious little in the world of the thirties, but on the promise of returns on capital investments. Had it been possible to guarantee a profit and harness the forces of the market, resettlement havens might have materialized more rapidly and in greater numbers.

The alternative was to somehow compel the nations to accept responsibility for supporting the refugees. In view of the British White Paper and the Roosevelt administration's attitude toward resettlement in Alaska, that was hardly likely to happen. Nonetheless, some great philanthropic effort might have enlisted the sympathy of the smaller nations. In this respect, Roosevelt's visionary scheme was in reality far more practical than those of such professionals as Rosen, Rosenberg, Liebman, and Van Zeeland. He understood at an early stage that the dream of small, commercially profitable settlements envisaged by the planners of the Coordinating Foundation, was chimerical. It was not big enough to attract international sympathy nor was it a significant step toward solving the refugee problem. Moreover, the projects were far too expensive. In 1938, the Jewish Agency, one of the most experienced colonizers, estimated that it cost £1,200 to resettle one family,¹⁵⁵ and other estimates were approximately the same. The Coordinating Foundation thought in terms of \$10,000 per family, while an estimate to settle three hundred set-

¹⁵⁵ "Large Scale Settlement in the Eastern Mediterranean," *Bulletin of the Economic Research Institute of the Jewish Agency*, Vol. II, No. 9-10, September/October 1938, p. 159.

HENRY FEINGOLD

tlers in British Guiana came to \$3,000,000.¹⁵⁶ The lowest estimate came from Waley Cohen, a member of a British group interested in settlement in Ecuador. He estimated £52 per person, but that did not include the cost of transportation.¹⁵⁷ The matter of financing was of crucial importance since it was common knowledge that a primary cause for the failure of resettlement schemes was a lack of funds. Yet even if Roosevelt had not been so visionary in proposing large-scale resettlement, there was a more serious criticism that one might level against him. He was never able to produce an area where such a large-scale resettlement project might be realized.

Chaim Weizmann once noted with chagrin, that of all the territories being considered "none could be found in the temperate zone."¹⁵⁸ Climate, however, was a primary consideration, not only in terms of what geographers called "biological optimums" but also in terms of soil and other factors.¹⁵⁹ Thus Bowman's argument that British Guiana's "political availability is not going to change the climate" had a great deal of truth to it.¹⁶⁰ Joseph Rosen's effort to defend the scheme by arguing that Jews as a Mediterranean people were "apt to acclimatize under tropical conditions more easily than others," was no answer at all, when one considers that Jews, having resided in Europe for generations, possessed no built-in talent for pioneering in the tropics.¹⁶¹

The demographic and social profile of those who had to be resettled militated against colonization anywhere. Having no agricultural tradition to speak of, the Jewish population of Europe was perhaps least suited for resettlement on agricultural colonies. Thus, for example, 73.7% of the German Jews, the primary candidates for resettlement,

¹⁵⁶ David H. Popper, "A Homeland for Refugees," *Annals*, Vol. CCIII, May 1939, p. 178.

¹⁵⁷ Memorandum by Colonel Waley Cohen, December 14, 1938, McDonald MSS.

¹⁵⁸ Chaim Weizmann, "Palestine's Rôle in the Solution of the Jewish Problem," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 20, No. 2, January 1942, pp. 324-338.

¹⁵⁹ A. G. Price, "Refugee Settlement in the Tropics," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. XVIII, July 1940, pp. 659-670.

¹⁶⁰ Memorandum on the Report of the British Guiana Commission—Remarks submitted by Isaiah Bowman, May 19, 1939, McDonald MSS.

¹⁶¹ Dr. Joseph Rosen, "Problem of Large Scale Settlement of Refugees from Middle European Countries in British Guiana," April 14, 1939.

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

were over forty. In fact, had the Nazis waited a few generations, the Reich would have been practically *judenrein* by the turn of the century due to the low birthrate, natural attrition, and high intermarriage rate among German Jews. Only 1.7% were employed in agriculture, whereas a whopping 52.5% were involved in trade and commerce.¹⁶² Moreover, the high degree of urbanization intensified during the Weimar period as the sources of livelihood in the smaller towns and villages were liquidated. Almost one-third of German Jewry and one-half of the Jews in Prussia lived in Berlin. The Jewish communities in the provincial capitals, Breslau, Cologne, and Frankfurt also grew apace.¹⁶³ In addition, the most qualified candidates for colonization had, in many cases, already immigrated to Palestine.

To be successful, pioneering required zeal, optimism, willingness to uproot oneself, and physical stamina. These are attributes possessed by youth and idealists; they must come from within. The Pilgrims, the Mormons, the *chalutzim*, and the settlers of Birobidzhan and the Crimea, all had a sense of mission generated by an ideology. They willingly assumed the challenge of colonization. The story is quite different when resettlement is imposed on a group, when it is a reflection of their impotence. The average Jewish refugee could muster little enthusiasm for any of the resettlement schemes. He merely wanted to survive in a world which gave him no quarter. After years of observing the refugee chaos, Myron Taylor became convinced that what the Jewish refugees really wanted was "to get into settled countries where they can set up their lives in existing communities... in commercial and industrial activities."¹⁶⁴ Undoubtedly that accounted for the "drift back" phenomenon in Latin America. Refugees admitted as farmers soon moved to the cities, where they competed with the indigenous merchants. According to Brazil's chief of immigration, Jewish refugees were not admitted because of "their unwillingness to

¹⁶² Rudolph Stahl, "Vocational Retraining of Jews in Nazi Germany," *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. I, No. 2 (April 1939), p. 171; Bruno Blau, "The Jewish Population of Germany, 1939-1945," *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. XII, No. 2 (April 1950), pp. 161-172.

¹⁶³ Ernest Hamburger, "One Hundred Years of Emancipation," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, Vol. XIV, New York, 1969, p. 59.

¹⁶⁴ Taylor to Welles, June 25, 1939, *FRUS*, II. p. 127.

HENRY FEINGOLD

[follow] a pioneering life.”¹⁶⁵ Two years later, when the Ford offer came up for consideration, that view had not changed. “It is the view of the Brazilian government,” stated Welles, “that such refugees would not remain in the Amazon region and in these unsettled times the Brazilian government would, consequently have ‘endless difficulty’ with them.”¹⁶⁶

The attitude of the Brazilian authorities was dictated by something more than anti-Semitism. Isaiah Bowman made a similar observation, “The migrant in 1937 wants civilization to follow him because the homeland is comparatively rich and safe in contrast to the meagerness and limited security of life on the frontier.”¹⁶⁷ Nonetheless, anti-Semitism was certainly an important factor, and it at least partially accounts for the failure of the various resettlement projects. Thus, for example, the “endless difficulties” foreseen in Brazil were apparently confined to Jewish settlers. Brazil’s attitude towards non-Aryan Christians, who were allowed to infiltrate by the thousands, was obviously entirely different.¹⁶⁸ They were preferred by the Brazilian authorities, just as the American Congress preferred non-Jewish British children to Jewish refugee children from France. The same held true of Mexico and Ecuador which preferred uprooted Catholics to Jewish merchants and professionals. The latter were anathema on two counts — they were Jewish and they were merchants. In practice, however, the economic profile of baptized Jews was not very different than that of those who had not converted.

The anti-Jewish sentiment in Latin America was first evidenced at the Evian Conference. Francisco Calderon, the delegate from Peru, had not “forgotten the teachings of Nietzsche, that Jewish influence,

¹⁶⁵ Moffat Diary, February 15, 1939.

¹⁶⁶ Welles to McDonald, April 21, 1941, McDonald MSS.

¹⁶⁷ Bowman, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

¹⁶⁸ As early as April 1935, McDonald spoke of “accumulating evidence of the contagious character of Nazi propaganda of Anti-Semitism, often disguised as ardent nationalism. Already there are indications that Jewish young men are being excluded from certain of the professions... For example medicine and the Police. The Argentinians are very prone to copy and unfortunately just now they are inclined to copy the Germans.” He also observed that anti-Semitism had made great inroads among Latin American officialdom. McDonald to Felix Warburg, April 30, 1935, McDonald MSS.

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

like leaven or ferment, is of value to all nations.” Peru, however, had quite enough ferment and her immigration laws, like those of her northern neighbor, were designed to protect the racial composition of the nation.¹⁶⁹ Most of the Latin American republics followed a similar pattern. When Stephen Wise and Nahum Goldmann planned a trip to Latin America in the final months of 1940 for the purpose of mobilizing the local Jewish communities for the difficult tasks which lay ahead, they were cautioned by Adolphe Berle, then an Assistant Secretary of State and later to become Ambassador to Brazil, that their activities “might energize the anti-Semitic feelings” of the natives.¹⁷⁰ The anti-Jewish sentiment was particularly strong in Mexico, where the Federation of Mexican Farmers urged stricter immigration laws against Jews because “almost all of them came in under false pretenses and did not engage in work as they promised. They have all become merchants and gangsters.”¹⁷¹ Moreover, if Jewish refugees could not be classified as “merchants or gangsters,” then subversives would do as well. That was a common assumption of Latin American security agencies. Mexico, after all, was the only major Latin American republic to actively support Loyalist Spain. Paradoxically, when Jewish refugees were not accused of being Communists by their unwilling Latin American hosts, they were being accused of harboring spies by the American security agencies and the State Department. In Latin America, moreover, some of the regimes, such as that of Getulio Vargas in Brazil, had taken to mimicking the rhetoric of the “wave of the future” emanating from the continent. They were aided in this endeavor by the pro-Nazi ethnic Germans who lived in Brazil, Bolivia, Argentina, and Chile.

Anti-Semitism, it should be noted, was not confined to the receiving nations of Latin America. The government of the Union of South Africa was naturally reluctant to admit refugees because they might disturb the country’s apartheid pattern of development.¹⁷² In British Guiana, according to Joseph Rosen, the variation on the racial theme

¹⁶⁹ Evian Proceedings, July 9, 1938, p. 31.

¹⁷⁰ Memorandum, conversation of Berle, Wise, and Goldmann, December 10, 1940, NA/SDDF 840.48, Refugees/2350.

¹⁷¹ Nathan Goldberg, “Immigration Attitudes of Mexicans: An Insight,” *Rescue*, July/August 1945, p. 3. (See note 46.)

¹⁷² NA/SDDF 840.48, Refugees/5846, May 25, 1944.

HENRY FEINGOLD

was unique. There blacks were "outspokenly in favor of Jewish immigration, because they were convinced that it would raise their living standards, but their Indian neighbors were far less so inclined and the white planter class of the interior, like their peers in Rhodesia, Kenya, and Tanganyika, could muster very little enthusiasm for the admission of Jewish refugees.¹⁷³

Most ironic was the fact the same Jews who were expelled from the Reich because of their religion were desired elsewhere because they were white. It is one of the bizarre aspects of the Holocaust that the Jews who came to the Dominican Republic to escape one racist gehenna were able to do so only because Trujillo was convinced that their blood was desirable to improve the indigenous breed.

The Trujillo regime was not the only government which was interested in resettlement for ulterior motives. The same was true of the United States and Great Britain. By linking the British Guiana scheme to the Coordinating Foundation, Whitehall was able with one stroke to pass the responsibility for further action to private organizations and thus simultaneously relieve the public pressure generated by the White Paper. At the same time, the British Colonial Office could look forward to having Jewish capital and human resources develop a particularly remote and hopeless outpost of the British Empire. The scheme was perfect. Its advantages did not escape C. G. Vickers, a partner in the London law firm retained by Lewis Strauss to draw up the charter for the Coordinating Foundation. "It will be ironic," he wrote to Harold Lucas, "if we succeed in developing the Empire with Polish Jews, having failed to do so with Englishmen..."¹⁷⁴ British Guiana, however, was mostly intended to deflect pressure from the British Government. DORSA came to play a similar role for the Roosevelt administration. In fact, it was mentioned endlessly as evidence of what might be done, even after it had become evident that Sosua was not a particularly successful venture.

One of the primary reasons why resettlement never became a practical hope for rescue was that several years were required before any refugees could actually be settled. One had to wait for offers to

¹⁷³ Rosen, "Problems of Large Scale Settlement..." April 14, 1939, p. 5. (See note 161.)

¹⁷⁴ Vickers to Harold Lucas, June 6, 1939, McDonald MSS.

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

materialize, then a suitable site had to be selected by a survey commission which examined the feasibility of settlement by checking such factors as the soil, market conditions, and the health situation. Next, a contract had to be signed with the local government. After that was done, prospective pioneers had to be selected and retrained so that they could be farmers. Only then was the group transported to the site, where they were housed and fed until the settlement became self-sustaining. Often roads had to be built and financial arrangements negotiated. There were a myriad of details which had to be taken care of before resettlement on any scale could occur. The case of Mindanao is a good illustration of this lengthy process. The idea materialized in mid-1938, but settlers were not actually ready to begin colonization until three years later. Roughly the same amount of time was necessary in Sosua and British Guiana. Events of course did not await feasibility studies. The outbreak of war in September 1939 caught most of these ventures only halfway completed. It interfered with transportation and the selection of pioneers, and especially with financing. Most important, it focused the attention of governments on their own well-being. After September 1939, official enthusiasm for resettlement diminished considerably.

The question might be asked why the projects were not implemented with greater urgency. Why wasn't the process speeded up? One ought to recall that between 1938 and 1941 few were aware of the consequences of failure. The relationship between the German concept of resettlement and annihilation was not fathomed by those involved in resettlement, just as it was not understood by the victims themselves. The credibility factor, the inability to believe that Hitler meant to kill the Jews, plagued not only the victims but their would-be rescuers as well.

Aside from the Zionists, who were unenthusiastic about resettlement for their own reasons, only one person consistently reminded the Administration and rescue advocates of the futility of thinking in terms of mass resettlement. Few people, however, could allow themselves to hear the voice of Isaiah Bowman because to accept the notion that there were simply no longer any empty spaces in the world where one could embark on grandiose nation building schemes meant giving up a good part of the rescue effort. There were few alternatives. Bowman had warned in the introduction to his work,

HENRY FEINGOLD

Limits of Land Settlement, that "new land will accommodate too slow and small a stream of civilization to be of real importance..."¹⁷⁵ Pioneering had changed radically since the great age of colonization in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At that time, settlement was voluntary rather than coerced and most pioneers, convicts and indentured servants excepted, were convinced that a better life awaited them in the New World. While they were often disappointed, and commercial factors often joined together with idealistic ones, there was sufficient motivation for settlers to move to the colonies of their own volition. Moreover, these pioneers came from countries where the economy and society were based on agriculture. By the 1930's, however, there had been a considerable change. Society had become urbanized and even agriculture was well on the road to being commercialized. It required retraining to teach the would-be pioneers what their ancestors "knew" as a matter of course. It also required management ability and a knowledge of marketing, which were relatively new variables in colonization. Moreover, emigrants in previous centuries were bound for lands which, in terms of soil quality and climate, offered better conditions than those of the homeland. That was hardly true in the thirties, when resettlement sites were frequently located in underdeveloped lands in torrid climates.

Yet it is possible to entertain some doubt regarding Bowman's pessimistic prognosis, which was primarily based on physical factors and ignored ideological ones. The most successful resettlement venture of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Jewish settlement in Palestine, was, after all, achieved by practically the same human material, or an East European variation thereof. The Jewish pioneers in Palestine faced incredible difficulties as far as the soil and climate, not to mention the unsympathetic attitude of governments and the hostility of the native population. Nonetheless, a nation state was established with the kibbutz settlements serving as one of the pillars of the new society. "If one wills it," said Herzl, "it is no legend." Had there been a will and a sense of urgency, many of Bowman's reservations might have been overcome in time. We have seen, however, that that was far from being the case.

Might an infusion of Zionist pioneering skill and zeal have made

¹⁷⁵ Bowman, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

resettlement more feasible? The case is stated eloquently by George Backer, a JDC official who appealed for a more active rescue effort at the Bermuda Conference. He claimed that "the general feeling was that the Zionists had sabotaged efforts to find other places for Jews." "They thought," according to Backer, "that if there were pressure on America, and by Americans on Britain the doors of Palestine would be opened. But they were naive in this. If the Zionists had helped in leadership," Backer asserted, "perhaps tens of thousands would have been saved." "It is horrible to think," he concluded, "how responsible we were for all that happened. The ships were there and the people were not saved."¹⁷⁶

Backer's accusation, like many indictments made in retrospect, contains just enough truth to make it appear reasonable. However, its underlying assumption, that Zionist zeal and resources were transferrable, was mistaken. Zionism was, after all, organically focused on Palestine as Zion, not on British Guiana which was, in effect, a competing venture. It was only natural that the Zionist movement regarded such substitutes with ambivalence.

By 1930, the Zionist movement, helped by the crisis, had captured the center stage of world Jewry. Nonetheless, we have seen how London and Washington gave the old Zangwillian territorialism, Zionism without Zion, a new lease on life. Roosevelt's idea of a "supplemental national home" and the outlines of the British Guiana scheme bore a remarkable resemblance to the old vision of the territorialists. In fact, the signs of territorial revival were to be found everywhere during the thirties. Not only did dozens of groups (such as the group of Austrian veterans and the Daniel Wolf group in The Hague), spring up as a result of the crisis, but in 1935 the Freeland League for Jewish Territorial Organization, a successor to ITO (Jewish Territorial Organization) was founded in Poland. In 1938, the International Jewish Colonization Society, an umbrella organization, came into being. These supplemented existing groups such as the Refugee Economic Corporation and Agro-Joint, which had sponsored colonizing ventures in Argentina, Russia, and other areas. Whereas territorialism seemed

¹⁷⁶ Interview with George Backer, Oral History Division, Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, October 20, 1966 (not verbatim).

HENRY FEINGOLD

to be infused with new energy, the Zionist enterprise became hopelessly enmeshed in big power politics, and it was never able to acknowledge that the movement did not possess the political leverage necessary to extricate itself.

In 1939, to acknowledge the fact that London could at one blow compromise a movement that had taken decades of agonizing effort to build up, would have constituted a breach of faith. Such a course of action was not permissible, after most Jews had finally become convinced that Palestine was the necessary solution. Zionists were compelled to reason that if refugees were barred from entering Palestine as a result of a political decision, then that decision would have to be undone politically. Thus the primary thrust of Zionist agitation during the war was to have the White Paper revoked and to establish the Jewish State. For actual rescue, an underground network, called *Aliyah Bet*, was established.¹⁷⁷

Several American Zionist leaders in fact shifted their position on resettlement once the extent of the catastrophe became known. When Tanganyika was considered early in the crisis, Wise's reaction was purely emotional: "I would rather have my fellow Jews die in Germany than live somehow, anyhow, in the lands which bear the imprint of yesterday's occupation by Germany, in lands which may tomorrow be yielded back... to Germany."¹⁷⁸ This statement was made, however, in November 1938, when few were able to fathom the fact that the alternative was in fact death. Later Wise could not muster much enthusiasm for the Alaska scheme or the temporary haven idea. As a Zionist, he found it difficult to transfer his allegiance to schemes which offered so little hope of fulfillment. Nonetheless, he never directly opposed such ventures when they held out promise of rescue. As early as 1937, he appeared willing to settle for Kenya and Uganda. "Being a Semite," he wrote to his friend Pesach Rosenblatt, "I would be willing to do a little bargaining with Britain..."¹⁷⁹ Again when the question of partition came to the fore in 1938 he wrote, "If we must have a limited Palestine [then give the Jews] some additional English

¹⁷⁷ Yehuda Bauer, *From Diplomacy to Resistance: A History of Jewish Palestine, 1939-1945*, Philadelphia, 1970, pp. 61-67, 116-118.

¹⁷⁸ Wise to Taylor, November 23, 1938, Wise MSS.

¹⁷⁹ Wise to Pesach Rosenblatt, July 19, 1937, Wise MSS.

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

colony.”¹⁸⁰ The abrogation of the White Paper and the establishment of a commonwealth remained uppermost in his mind, but in 1943 he urged that the Allies prepare “temporary refuge and even permanent asylum” for those who may not wish to return to the lands of “famine and slaughter” after the war.¹⁸¹

While Abba Hillel Silver would not appropriate a penny for the Coordinating Foundation lest Palestine “get the short end of the bargain” and even cut off the PACPR, by 1943 he had somewhat altered his attitude. At the Bermuda Conference, held in April of that year, the World Jewish Congress came preciously close to advocating resettlement when it suggested setting aside “uncultivated areas... with a view toward agricultural settlement.”¹⁸² Moreover, it should be noted that not all Zionists opposed separating the rescue issue from that of the White Paper and the establishment of a Jewish state. The Revisionist group, headed by Peter Bergson (Hillel Kook), which was active in the United States counseled early that the goals of rescue and statehood were working at cross purposes and ought to be separated. As early as May 1942, the *Jewish Forum*, an Anglo-Jewish monthly, argued that it would be “folly to think of establishing 100,000 Jews a year in Palestine and ignore the crying needs of millions of other Jews.”¹⁸³ In June, the magazine sponsored a discussion on “Palestine and Auxiliary Immigration Stations.” The idea of resettlement never gained the wholehearted support of the Zionists but, as we have seen, neither did it win the support of most of the Jewish community or even of those who were candidates for resettlement. During the years under consideration, most Jews did not succeed in reconciling themselves to the injustice which had befallen the Jewish people. Resettlement seemed to compound the felony.

It has been argued that the resettlement alternative might have proven more effective as a rescue alternative had suitable areas been offered. There was a great deal of bitter truth in Weizmann’s observation that “the world is divided into two groups of nations — those that want to expel the Jews and those that do not want to receive

¹⁸⁰ Wise to Rosenblatt, May 9, 1938, Wise MSS.

¹⁸¹ Stephen S. Wise, *As I See It*, New York, 1944, p. 130.

¹⁸² Memorandum Submitted to the Bermuda Refugee Conference by the World Jewish Congress, April 14, 1943, Wise MSS.

¹⁸³ *Jewish Forum*, May 1942 (editorial).

HENRY FEINGOLD

them.”¹⁸⁴ Had a proper offer been made and been backed by the powers, the situation might have been different but no such offer materialized, although many likely places were mentioned. The most promising areas, Alaska, Angola, Kenya, or Northern Rhodesia were rejected by the powers. Had resettlement havens been developed in these countries, thousands of Jews might have been rescued.

In summation, one conclusion seems compelling. While many more Jews might have been saved had resettlement been pursued energetically in the period between 1938 and 1941, the concept lacked whatever was necessary to generate the enthusiasm and passion needed to ensure its success. During this period, resettlement was imposed by one group upon another. In such cases, resettlement more than likely constitutes a form of community dissolution. That was certainly true of the Nazi concept of *Umsiedlung*. When carried out in the West, the idea of tucking away a despised minority in some tropical wilderness was only slightly less lethal.

¹⁸⁴ Laurie and Maurice Cowan, *The Wit of the Jews*, Nashville, 1970, p. 71.

ROOSEVELT AND THE RESETTLEMENT QUESTION

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>British Documents</i>	<i>Documents on British Foreign Policy</i> , 3d series, Vol. III.
<i>FDRL</i>	Franklin Delano Roosevelt Papers at Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.
<i>/OF</i>	Official File.
<i>/PPF</i>	President's Personal File.
<i>/PSF</i>	President's Secretary File.
<i>FRUS</i>	<i>Foreign Relations of the United States</i> , published by State Department.
<i>German Documents</i>	<i>Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945</i> , Series D, Vol. IV, V.
<i>Long MSS</i>	Papers of Breckinridge Long, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, includes his diary.
<i>McDonald MSS</i>	Papers of James G. McDonald, School of International Affairs, Columbia University and Leo Baeck Institute.
<i>Moffat Diary and MSS</i>	Papers of J. Pierrepont Moffat, Harvard University.
<i>NYT</i>	<i>The New York Times</i> .
<i>NA/SDDF</i>	National Archives/State Department Decimal File.
<i>Wise MSS</i>	Stephen S. Wise Papers, Brandeis University.

Michael J. Cohen



CHURCHILL AND THE JEWS: THE HOLOCAUST*

This paper will focus primarily on the policy and reactions of Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of England from May, 1945 until July, 1945 to the destruction of European Jewry. In one respect the task before the historian is difficult, since he is forced to draw conclusions from a dearth of evidence, due to a conspicuous abstention by Churchill from any activity on behalf of European Jewry during the war.

It is my opinion that the studies written so far on British policy towards European Jewry have passed over Churchill's role too lightly. In particular, I would question the prevalent conclusion that amid all the insensitivity, even callousness of the officials, Churchill was a lone exception in comprehending "the historical significance" of the Holocaust.

A.

Churchill's long association with the Jews and Zionism stretched from his very earliest childhood. Those relations were at times ambivalent, and at times chequered. There is no reason to suppose that Churchill was not tarred with some of the more traditional prejudices that characterised the class from which he came. There is evidence that he subscribed to many of the stereotyped images regarding the Jews' prodigious wealth, power and influence.

The young Winston became familiar at first hand with these so-called Jewish accoutrements from his father's somewhat irregular relations with the first Baron Rothschild, Nathaniel Mayer. As a recent study has pointed out, the younger Winston significantly omitted the nature of his father Randolph's relations with Rothschild. He did not mention his:

growing intimacy with Rothschild, to whom he "turned for everything" by 1888, to whom he entrusted cabinet secrets, the interest of whose firm

*This article derives from a paper given at the Annual Conference of the American Historical Association in New York, in December, 1985.

he pressed in Persia, India and Burma, who was—to general discomfiture—his closest adviser as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and to whose bank he owed £66,000 when he died.¹

Winston, with his father, was a frequent guest at the Rothschild country estate, Tring; and on more than one occasion, Winston, or his father, mobilised Rothschild's connections to further his, Winston's, career. In 1905, Winston encountered a further aspect of Jewish influence, when he stood as Liberal candidate for a constituency, N.W. Manchester, with a large proportion of Jewish voters. (It may be noted that during his campaign, Winston supported the Territorialists, who favoured a temporary Jewish national home in East Africa, rather than the Zionists—this for the prosaic reason that N.W. Manchester was a stronghold of the Territorialists.)²

On one occasion, in June, 1914, Churchill was even accused by a fellow member of Parliament of sinking to anti-Semitic rhetoric, in order to push through a measure to which he had expected serious opposition. The occasion was the so-called "Shell debate", when Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, proposed that the government purchase a majority shareholding in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. Churchill defended the purchase of oil reserves in a remote, vulnerable area, with an attack against what he called the cut-throat malpractices of the Royal Dutch Shell Company. In particular, he focussed on the Anglo-Jewish head of the combine, Sir Marcus Samuel.

Sir Marcus had already been made the butt of an anti-Semitic campaign in 1911, when the Shell Company had been castigated as the root cause of a taxi-strike, the result of a rise in the price of petroleum. The animosity and the prejudice of those affluent classes which used the taxicab is reflected well in the following passage from the *Sporting Times*, a paper which catered to their leisure needs. As Chaim Bermant has put it, the paper's comment on Sir Marcus Samuel was made in one of its "less sporting moments":

Sir Marcus Samuel is a typical Jew. He is a pronounced Jew. You could never take him for anything else. He is stout, swarthy, black-haired, thick-nosed, thick-lipped, bulge-eyed—in short, he fulfils every expectation that one habitually forms of the prosperous Jew . . .³

In the opinion of Bermant, when Churchill was faced with the task of persuading the House of Commons to make a dubious investment in foreign oil resources, while traditional sources were able to provide all Britain's needs, "Churchill was too much of a demagogue to forego the applause to be had from attacking someone who was not only at the head of a vast combine but a Jew, and an unpopular Jew at that."⁴

Churchill's oblique references to sharp practices by the Shell Company (rather than to the Anglo-Dutch combine), went down very badly

in the house. Churchill referred to "a long, steady squeeze by the oil trusts all over the world", but he reserved his main attack for Shell which, he asserted, had engineered the attack on the government's proposed purchase. He stated facetiously:

We have no quarrel with the "Shell". We have always found them courteous, considerate, ready to oblige, anxious to serve the Admiralty, and to promote the interests of the British Navy and the British Empire—at a price. The only difficulty has been the price.⁵

Press reports noted that at that point Churchill beamed in the direction of Samuel Samuel, M.P., a relative of Sir Marcus, and a member of the board of the oil combine. (Sir Marcus himself was absent from the debate.)⁶

Churchill's personal asides came in for heavy criticism from both sides of the House, both from those who later voted for, and from those who voted against his bill. Conservative member George Lloyd (a future High Commissioner to Egypt, and Churchill's appointee as Colonial Secretary in 1940) commented: "I must say that many of us think, with due respect, that the personal imputation with regard to the hon member's interests in oil companies comes very badly indeed from the other side." Yet the most outspoken attack on Churchill came from Mr Watson Rutherford, M.P., who in fact voted *for* the motion. He explained that he had been at a loss initially to comprehend Churchill's personal attack on Samuel. He had then deduced that the First Lord, fearing the difficulty he would encounter in passing the bill, had decided that "the best course of action to get them to support it was to raise the question of monopoly and to do a little Jew-baiting." Rutherford suggested that the true reason for the sharp rise in oil prices was simply the great rise in demand, and not "because some evilly-disposed gentlemen of the Hebrew persuasion had put their heads together."⁷

During the debate, Churchill was challenged several times to substantiate his charges that Shell asked exorbitant prices. He declined to reply, on grounds of security. It was a charge that Churchill never substantiated, because it was simply untrue.⁸

The incident may be counted among the numerous political blunders that punctuated Churchill's long career. This was apparently the only incident of this kind, and cannot therefore be taken to indicate any long-standing prejudice. However, the incident does reflect the extent and depth of anti-Jewish prejudice in England at the time, whether at the grass-roots level, or as a factor to be exploited in the House of Commons by a politician who feels himself to be in desperate straits.

The reverse side of the Churchill coin was a strong liberal, humanitarian tradition. From 1904-1905, Churchill was one of the leaders of the parliamentary opposition to the Balfour administration's bill to regulate

and supervise the immigration of aliens (primarily Russian Jews). The Liberal Party, which Churchill joined in 1904, took the line that the proposed legislation infringed the hallowed principle of granting political asylum to victims of persecution. Yet Churchill's motives cannot be said to have been entirely altruistic.

When he had crossed the floor of the House in 1904, Churchill had been selected as prospective Liberal candidate for the preponderantly Jewish constituency of N.W. Manchester, one of the centres of the campaign against the aliens bill. A natural bond of mutual interest was soon formed between Churchill and the influential Jewish leaders in his constituency. As his son and biographer noted later: "It is not without significance that many of his leading supporters in Manchester were Jews."⁹ Whether, as one historian has concluded, Churchill was motivated by a mix of "expediency, political tactics, and his own humanitarianism alike"¹⁰ or whether "the influence of a militant Jewish vote merely intensified and stiffened an attitude and line of action which would have become apparent anyway",¹¹ it seems clear that Churchill was not motivated exclusively by humanitarian liberalism.¹²

During the 1930's, Churchill's sense of humanity was outraged by the Nazi persecution of the Jews. Clement Attlee has testified how, one day, he met Churchill at the House of Commons, and the latter recalled what was being inflicted on the Jews, all the time "with tears pouring down his cheeks."¹³ This sense of outrage never left him. During the latter stages of the war, once "the terrible secret" of Hitler's "final solution" was exposed, Churchill would make repeated references, to different audiences, to it being "the most horrible crime ever committed in history." However, this historian must ask also to what extent, if any at all, were those laudable sentiments followed by any meaningful actions?

B.

The first issue to be clarified is what was the general policy of the Churchill government to European Jewry during World War Two? Of course, Churchill himself did not personally formulate or execute that policy, quite to the contrary. Albeit, as we shall note below, Churchill did intervene actively to ensure that there would be no infringement (at least not in the Jews' case) of that cardinal principle of Allied high policy, that there would be no negotiation with the enemy, short of total and absolute surrender. At the same time, it must be stressed that Churchill could not have failed to have been aware of his government's policy towards the Jews. However, not only did he never seriously dispute or contest it (as he did on numerous occasions on the question of Zionism and Palestine), but he refused to be actively involved. His personal assistant, Brendan

Bracken, was given to understand that he, Bracken, should not bring any issues concerning the Holocaust to the Prime Minister, but that Foreign Secretary Antony Eden had full authority to determine the government's policy in this sphere.¹⁴ Where necessary, replies to appeals sent to Churchill were drafted at the Foreign Office, and returned to No. 10 Downing Street for Churchill's signature.

The principles guiding Foreign Office policy were as follows: no aid to the Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe, if that meant breaking the strict economic blockade which Britain imposed on the Continent; as noted already, no negotiations, short of absolute surrender, with the Germans; and no large-scale movement of refugees out of Europe. The Foreign Office feared that any large-scale population movements would exert pressure on Allied supply lines, or that any significant admissions of refugees into Britain herself or into her colonial empire would present an insuperable problem of feeding the extra mouths. And last, but perhaps not least, there was the ever-nagging fear that a flood of Jewish refugees would create an irresistible pressure for the entry of some into Palestine, thereby forcing Britain to exceed the limit of 75,000 laid down in the Palestine White Paper of May, 1939.¹⁵ This rationale was given lucid, if cold-hearted, expression in a Foreign Office reply of February, 1943 to an alleged offer by the Romanian government to release some 70,000 Jews, deported previously to Transnistria. In the Foreign Office view, the Romanian offer was:

clearly a piece of blackmail which, if successful, would open up an endless process on the part of Germany and her satellites in south-eastern Europe of unloading, at a given price, all their unwanted nationals on overseas countries. . . . To admit the method of blackmail and slave-purchase would mean serious prejudice to the successful prosecution of the war. The blunt truth is that the whole complex of human problems raised by the present German domination of Europe, of which the Jewish question is an important but by no means the only aspect, can only be dealt with completely by an Allied victory, and any step calculated to prejudice this is not in the interest of the Jews in Europe.¹⁶

In a pioneering classic on the subject, Professor Bernard Wasserstein lays the major part of the blame for the fact that so few Jews were able to escape Europe during the first two years of the war at the door of the British government. This was because while the Germans yet favored a policy of evacuation over extermination, the British did their best to seal off all escape routes to Palestine:

From mid-1941 the escape routes from south-east Europe were effectively barred by the Germans and their allies to all save a handful of intrepid or fortunate refugees.

The British government thus found itself superceded by the Germans

from 1941 as the major agency preventing Jewish escape from Europe to Palestine.¹⁷

During the war itself, the Foreign Office adhered rigidly to the doctrine that the Jews were not a nation, but a religious community, who would have to await their turn for liberation, along with their fellow citizens in the countries of their residence. Of course, this required some myopia in regard to Hitler's actual policy, which had determined genocide for the Jews as such, and not as citizens of the various European countries in which they lived. At times, quite absurd reasoning was employed. One example is a minute authored by Richard Law, Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office. The following is a response written in December, 1942 to a Jewish appeal to establish a separate relief organization for the Jews:

The Jews without doubt suffered enormously by Hitler's deliberate policy, but other people have suffered as well, and to segregate the Jews as a racial problem in Europe would surely play into the hands of anti-Semitism.¹⁸

Thus it was argued that more important than trying to save lives was the need to observe caution, to avert any increase in anti-Semitism! The Foreign Office dogma was not entirely free of logical inconsistencies, and at times even produced fits of conscience. For example, the Allies' broadcast warnings of retribution for crimes against the Jews, publicised in December, 1942, produced universal expectations which the government had no intentions of living up to. Five days after the declaration, a Foreign Office official noted:

How can we say that "we have every sympathy and willingness to play our part" when we refuse to take any positive steps of our own to help these wretched creatures? Why should anyone else do anything if we refuse?¹⁹

Underpinning Foreign Office policy lay the dogma that the Jews were not a nation and that they should not be given a state of their own in Palestine, as the Zionists demanded, but should assimilate in Nazi-free post-war Europe. This 'principle' was undoubtedly re-enforced by the fear that should the government waiver in its White Paper policy an Arab rebellion would sweep Palestine and perhaps spread to other parts of the Middle East. Thus, for example, when in July, 1940 arrangements were made for the evacuation of Polish soldiers from south-east Europe to Palestine, the High Commissioner of Palestine suggested to the Colonial Office that only non-Jewish Poles be considered. He added that "he had reason to believe that Polish authorities would be willing to arrange that only non-Jews should come to Palestine".²⁰

Foreign Office minutes all too frequently reflected tinges of anti-

Semitism, and comments such as 'These Jews are never satisfied', abound. There was a significant contrast between the niggardly quantities of food relief the government allowed to be sent to the Jews of central and eastern Europe, and the operation whereby the Allies supported the entire food needs of the population of Axis-occupied Greece between 1942 and the end of the war. The critical difference between support of the Jews and of the Greeks was in the presence, or lack, of a political motive. While the Allies wanted to ensure the survival of an independent, pro-western Greece, they had no intention of 'flooding' Palestine, or the colonies, not to mention Britain herself, with masses of European Jews. Thus all the Zionists' pleas for a national military unit were turned down (except for the Jewish Brigade, during the closing stages of the war) for fear that such a unit would place the Allies in the Jews' debt at the peace conference.

Therefore, the Jews of Europe would have to await rescue and liberation along with the other nationals of the Continent. As one official noted in May, 1943, not without a certain cynicism: "We cannot give any assurance that we propose to collaborate in the German policy of a 'Judenrein' Europe".²¹ Such views persisted after the war too. Foreign Secretary Bevin argued that the vast majority of European Jews would have to remain in Europe, for surely, the Allies had fought the war precisely in order to rid Europe of racism! In August, 1946, Winston Churchill endorsed Bevin's view emphatically:

. . . No one can imagine that there is room in Palestine for the great masses of Jews who wish to leave Europe, or that they could be absorbed in any period which it is useful to contemplate. The idea that the Jewish problem could be solved or even helped by a vast dumping of the Jews in Europe into Palestine is really too silly to consume our time in the House of Commons this afternoon . . .²²

This speech was made less than a month after the infamous Kielce pogroms in Poland. Some 175,000 Polish Jews had returned to their Polish 'homeland' after the war. On 4 July, 1946, the medieval charge of blood libel was revived against the Jews of Kielce, and in the pogrom which followed, in which government forces took part, and against which the local bishop refused to intervene, 42 Jews were brutally murdered, and hundreds injured. Within three months, over 100,000 Jews had fled back to the West.²³

The officials who were responsible for executing this policy, and some of their superiors, have come in for a generous dose of criticism, and rightly so. Even when allowances are made for the psychological barriers which inhibited a full and prompt appreciation of the nature of the final solution, there undoubtedly remain other factors too—in-difference bordering on prejudice, insensitivity and remoteness from the

travails of 'foreigners', not to mention political motives, grounded in what is commonly called "the national interest". However, it is a cardinal feature of the British political system, and a healthy one at that, that the Minister and not the officials bear responsibility, and ultimate responsibility is borne by the head of the government, the Prime Minister. Even had the ministers involved been entirely ignorant of what had been going on (which they were not), they would yet be responsible. The fact that ministers, and the Prime Minister as well, knew less than they might have done, was due to the fact that they deliberately averted their eyes. As we shall note below, Churchill was in fact intimately involved, in 1944, in the inter-connected issues of the rescue of Hungarian Jewry and the bombing of the Auschwitz death camp.

Whatever the case, Churchill was *not* regarded as a disinterested or detached party by his contemporaries. Among those who found most difficulty in comprehending Churchill's aloofness were the Jews themselves. In December, 1942, on the eve of the Allies' declaration promising retribution to the Nazis, James de Rothschild wrote to Churchill, asking him to receive a delegation of leading British Jews. His letter stated: "I can imagine what the Prime Minister feels about the unspeakable torments through which the Jews in Europe are going through at present, and I hope that he will agree to receive us." But Churchill's response did not match up to Rothschild's anticipation. Routinely, Rothschild's letter was passed on to the Foreign Office, with a covering note from Churchill's secretary, advising the department that the Prime Minister's office would not be sending any acknowledgement, and that the Foreign Office, in its reply, should make it clear that it was handling the request, at the Prime Minister's request.²⁴ As in his dealings with the Zionist leader, Dr Chaim Weizmann, there was clearly an element of uneasy, unclear conscience in Churchill's behaviour.

On 19 December, 1942, Churchill received a personal appeal from Samuel Zygielbojm, on behalf of Polish Jewry. Zygielbojm, Jewish Bundist deputy to the Polish National Council in London, informed the Prime Minister that hundreds of thousands of Polish Jews were being done to death, and that of a total of 3½ million Polish Jews, barely one-third still survived. He begged Churchill "to find the means to save those few Polish Jews who still may have survived". There is no record of any reply from Churchill, and there was no Allied intervention to stop the slaughter.²⁵ "Reprisal bombings" were considered, but rejected by the Chiefs of Staff, on the grounds that such action might escalate acts of brutality against civilians and captured British pilots. and might provoke a stream of like appeals from other allies. There remained too the usual "anti-Semitic" bugbear: "Since Hitler had depicted this war as one against the Jews, any air-raid avowedly on their behalf would merely serve enemy propaganda."²⁶ In July, 1944 Churchill toyed

once more with the idea of retaliation-bombing, this time as a counter to the German 'V-weapon', but the air staff advised against. During the war at least half a million German civilians were killed by air bombing, but specific reprisal bombings were never carried out.²⁷

On 12 May, 1943, Zygielbojm committed suicide, in protest at Allied inaction and hypocrisy. In a note written just before his death, he indicted the Allies:

The responsibility for this crime—the assassination of the Jewish population—rests above all on the murderers themselves, but falls indirectly upon the whole human race, on the Allies and their governments, who have so far taken no firm steps to put a stop to these crimes . . .²⁸

The leaders of Anglo-Jewry refused to believe that a government headed by Churchill could at one and the same time express its revulsion at what the Nazis were doing, and yet prevent Jews escaping occupied Europe, due largely to their fears that some of the escapees might find their way to Palestine. In January, 1943, the Marchioness of Reading, President of the British Section of the World Jewish Congress, wrote to Churchill what he later called "one of the many moving appeals recently addressed to the government". Her letter deplored the bureaucracy's obtuseness to "the horrible plight of the Jews at the mercy of the Nazis", and laid down a challenge:

I have said to myself what can I do, who can help? and the answer is clearly, only Mr Churchill can help and I can at least write and beg him to do so. In other days I would have come in sackcloth and ashes to plead for my people; it is in that spirit that I write. Some can still be saved, if the iron fetters of red-tape are burst asunder . . . I learn with amazement that His Majesty's representatives in Turkey withhold certificates for Palestine and threaten deportation to those who have escaped, because they are 'illegal'. England cannot merely sink to such hypocrisy that our members of Parliament stand to show sympathy to the Jewish dead and meanwhile her officials are condemning these same Jews to die? *You cannot know of such things. I do not believe you would tolerate them.* There are still some 40,000 certificates for Palestine under the White Paper regulations. Mr Churchill will you not say they are to be used now, for any who can escape, man woman or child? Is it possible, is it really possible to refuse sanctuary in the Holy Land?²⁹

Churchill did not intervene, and the residue of the White Paper immigration certificates were not placed at the disposal of any Jew who might escape Europe. As usual, Churchill's reply was drafted for him by the Foreign Office, which made enigmatic references to "the great practical difficulties" in arranging any exodus of European Jews, and about the danger of inhibiting secret negotiations then under way.³⁰ In February, 1943, the government granted a special allocation of 4000 certifi-

cates for children from Bulgaria; the remainder of the quota were deliberately rationed so as to last for the duration of the war.

Leaders of Anglo-Jewry continued to be troubled by the Prime Minister's apparent acquiescence in Foreign Office policy towards the Jews but, like their compatriots across the Atlantic, who endured similar qualms about the policy of the Roosevelt administration, they did not make their anxieties public. But those close to Churchill felt constrained at times to pour out their private anxieties as in the following extract from a private letter written to Churchill by his old friend, Lord Melchett, in May, 1944:

There is one psychological factor which I think ought not to be overlooked . . . That is the feeling of frustration and exasperation which this policy has caused—coming as it does from a government over which Mr Churchill presides. His wholehearted championship of our cause in the past has made our people turn to him as a saviour and it has been extremely difficult even for an intelligent population to understand how some of these acts could be carried out by a government under his leadership, unless it be either that the information was kept from him or that it was put forward in some perverted form.³¹

C.

In retrospect, it may be claimed that the options open to the Allies during the first years of the war, when the Germans overran much of Europe, were admittedly limited. However, it may also be claimed that warnings, and/or demonstrations by the Allies would have given hope to, or at least sounded the warnings much earlier for, much of European Jewry; in addition, a demonstration of Allied sincere intent might have persuaded the Nazis to have slowed down, or even postpone their 'Jewish' policy. In the words of a Jewish Agency spokesman, proposing the bombing of the Auschwitz camp, in July, 1944, such Allied action would "give the lie to the oft-repeated assertions of Nazi spokesmen that the Allies are not really so displeased with the work of the Nazis in ridding Europe of Jews."³²

However, as the allies took the offensive, and "the tide turned", the military options for inhibiting or halting the continuing slaughter of the Jews increased significantly. Reference will be made here to just two initiatives, which overlapped each other in the summer of 1944; the Joel Brand 'trucks for blood' mission, and the proposal to bomb the Auschwitz death camp and the railway lines leading to it.

I. The 'Blood for Trucks Offer'

On 19 May, 1944, Joel Brand, a member of the Hungarian Zionist Relief

and Rescue Committee, brought to the west an offer from Adolf Eichmann (which in fact originated from his superior, Himmler), to release one million Jews, primarily the remnants of Hungarian Jewry. (Hungary had fallen under direct German occupation the previous March.) In return, the Germans asked for 10,000 trucks and quantities of food and provisions. In a clumsy attempt to split the Allies, it was promised that the materiel would be used only in the east, i.e. against the Soviets.

By 1 June, 1944, the British War Cabinet, with Churchill in the chair, had in fact rejected the scheme, since it would involve an infringement of the policy of no negotiation with the enemy short of total surrender.³³ Other arguments against accepting the offer were that the movement of 1 million Jews across Europe, and the costs of their maintenance in Allied or in neutral countries would inhibit the prosecution of the war, and would establish a dangerous precedent for the future extortion of 'blood-money'. In addition, not least of the government's anxieties, was that such a large movement of Jews must exert an irresistible pressure for mass migration to Palestine. This latter factor was certainly high up in the considerations of those Foreign Office officials in charge of policy in the Middle East. The closing passage of the following minute shows quite clearly how the strict adherence to the White Paper immigration quota was elevated to the level of an Allied war priority:

We do not, of course, wish to impede the escape of Jews from Hitler's clutches, but we must always bear in mind the fundamental facts of the Palestine immigration problem; namely, that the outstanding balance of 27,500 places for Jewish immigration *must* if possible be made to last for the whole of the remaining period of the war against Germany.

Eastern Department must ask Refugee Department, who handle refugee questions for the *whole* Foreign Office, not to dissociate themselves from the needs of other departments. . . . If H.M. government's policy is wrongly handled on the refugee question, if too many undesirables are admitted to strengthen the Hagana, or if Palestine is suddenly flooded by a spate of Jews, as the Jewish Agency desire, we shall almost certainly have to cope with Arab disturbances over the whole Middle East . . . This would be intolerable in the year of the second front. Nothing could serve the German purpose better and we must not get into a position of being unable to refuse an uncontrollable flood of immigrants if German policy changes, as much as we wish to pursue a humanitarian policy.³⁴

However, the British could not simply dismiss the matter out of hand, since the Americans were involved too, having heard direct of the Brand mission from their consul in Istanbul. The Americans too had their ulterior motives, although these forced them to different conclusions from those of the British side. As put retrospectively by a Foreign Office brief:

The only reason why, at the outset, H.M. government did not dismiss the Gestapo proposals with contempt was that the U.S. government, particularly in an election year, is deperately anxious that nothing, however fantastic, has been neglected which might lead to the rescue of Jews.³⁵

In its representations to both the British and the American governments, the Jewish Agency urged that Brand be allowed to return to Budapest, if only as a tactic to draw out the negotiations, and thereby hold up further deportations to Auschwitz, estimated to be proceeding at the rate of 12,000 a day. The Foreign Office, now apprehensive lest they be charged with insensibility to the fate of the Jews, suggested as a counter that negotiations with the Germans might be carried on via the Swiss government, rather than via Brand. The Department reported to the ambassador in Washington that it had refused to 'dangle a carrot' before the Germans. The ambassador was asked to check on the Agency's claim that the American War Refugee Board (set up the previous January, at the behest of Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau Jr.) *was* constitutionally permitted to deal directly with the Germans. The British view was that any direct contact with the Germans would ruin Soviet trust in the West."³⁶

On this occasion, Churchill took a more stringent view than his Foreign Office. When he received copies of the Foreign Office telegrams to Washington, he minuted: "Surely we cannot negotiate with the Germans on this matter, certainly not without the Cabinet being consulted. This is not the time to have negotiations with the enemy."³⁷ Eden had to explain to Churchill that they could not "entirely disregard Jewish interest in this matter", and it was therefore thought best to lay all the possible options before the Americans. Churchill concurred, but insisted that not only would there *not* be any negotiation with the enemy, but any approach whatever would have to receive the prior sanction of the Cabinet.³⁸

Inconveniently for the British side, the Americans did agree to 'dangle the carrot' before the Germans. On 9 July, they proposed that Brand himself should be allowed to return to Budapest, to tell the Germans that the Allies would convey their views via a protecting power. The Americans suggested that the Allies consider arrangements for accommodating all Jews allowed to leave German-controlled territories, in Allied or neutral countries. These steps were predicated, naturally, upon Soviet assent.³⁹ In fact, the Russians had been informed of the Brand mission by the British ambassador in Moscow, on 14 June. Four days later, the Soviets laid down their own emphatic veto: "on any conversations whatsoever with the German government."⁴⁰

In any case, Churchill himself had determined against any negotiations with the Germans on behalf of Hungarian Jewry, whether to realise

the rescue of the one million Jews, or simply as a delaying tactic. Upon receipt of the American reply, Churchill enquired of his own staff about the nature of the negotiations proposed by the Americans. It was explained to the Prime Minister that:

it is quite usual to negotiate with the enemy through a protecting power, and this is done when, for example, we wish to arrange an exchange of prisoners of war. It has even been done in other instances with the object of getting Jews out of German hands.⁴¹

However, the staff brief concluded, the Foreign Office was not committed to any approach through a protecting power, and had been keeping the ball in play due mainly to the dangers of a point-blank refusal and, because of "*the continued clamour of Jews in London.*"⁴²

It was on the basis of this brief that Churchill laid down his personal veto on any form of negotiation on behalf of Hungarian Jewry, on 11 July. It seems to this writer that there is a certain logical inconsistency (or failure to comprehend the enormous stakes involved, for the Jews) between the first and the second parts of Churchill's directive to Eden. At the date of writing, Churchill had been apprised in full concerning the deadly capacity of the Auschwitz death camp, and the number of victims it had already claimed. (See below.) Thus, in the first part of his much-quoted minute, Churchill referred to the final solution as follows:

There is no doubt that this is probably the greatest and most horrible crime ever committed in the whole history of the world, and it has been done by scientific machinery by nominally civilised men in the name of a great state and one of the leading races in Europe. It is quite clear that all concerned in this crime who may fall into our hands, including the people who only obeyed orders by carrying out the butcheries, should be put to death after their association with the murders has been proved.⁴³

But Churchill was pre-occupied with a retribution to be exacted *after* the war, one that would be of little consolation to those 100,000's of Jews about to be drawn into the Nazis' deadly net, over whose release the projected negotiations were concerned. There was a literally-fatal gap between Churchill's horror at the nature of the crimes described to him, and his rigid adherence to the sacred principle of no negotiation with the enemy. And this, even after his own staff had explained to him that the very same principle had in fact been waived on several occasions, not only to secure the release of Allied prisoners of war, but "even" to secure the release of Jews! Even the Foreign Office saw some point in dragging out some form of negotiation, to gain a stay of execution, although there was certainly no intention of actually bringing such negotiations to any successful conclusion.

But Churchill himself, while expressing his abhorrence of the crime then in process, concluded that same minute:

I cannot therefore feel that this is the kind of ordinary case which is put through a protecting power, as, for instance, the lack of feeding or sanitary conditions in some particular prisoners' camp. There should therefore in my opinion be no negotiations of any kind on this subject. Declarations should be made in public, so that everyone connected with it will be hunted down and put to death.⁴⁴

Upon receipt of Churchill's directive, Eden summoned a further meeting of the War Cabinet's Committee on Refugees. In the interim, Eden himself had received an additional piece of key information. British intelligence now reported that Brand's mission was merely a smoke-screen to cover the Gestapo's principal object, the initiation of separate peace talks with Britain and the United States.⁴⁵ Supplied with the new information, Eden convened his committee which, as might be expected, voted against all further consideration of the Brand scheme.⁴⁶

Eden's report on the committee's decision back to Churchill relied heavily upon the new intelligence as the primary reason now for rejecting "the combined Brand-Gestapo approach". Once again, Eden felt constrained to explain to Churchill the need for caution in their reply to the Americans, due to the 'Jewish interest'. (This was a novel reversal of the roles usually played by the two men on the Palestine issue.) Eden warned of:

The differences of opinion we shall probably encounter in Washington, where electoral necessities and the War Refugee Board backed by Mr Morgenthau dictate a willingness to play with any scheme, however objectionable . . . which can be represented as rescuing European Jews.⁴⁷

Churchill endorsed the line taken by Eden ('I entirely agree') and the draft drawn up by the Foreign Secretary for the Americans.

On the very day that the Foreign Office telegram was despatched to Washington, the story of the Brand mission was leaked to the press. The *New York Herald Tribune* condemned the scheme as a form of "low extortion"; on the next day the London *Times* ran a story under the headline—"Monstrous Offer", and stated that the Allies would not fall for the German ruse of provoking a rift between the West and the Soviets. The Zionists reconciled themselves to the fact that the Brand mission had been finally aborted.⁴⁸

At this distance, any judgements passed on the Allied reactions to the Brand mission must perforce be partly moral, and partly hypothetical. It is impossible to assess with any certainty just how many Jews could have been saved. On 18 July, 1944, Admiral Horthy in fact called a halt to further deportations of Hungarian Jews, although Auschwitz itself continued to exact its toll of Jews from other countries. Undoubtedly, at the time of the long-awaited second front (the Normandy landings had begun in June, 1944), the Allies were justifiably concerned not to fall into

any German trap to split the Allies. But who can now say what the British attitude might have been had there not been the nagging problem of what to do with the rescued refugees, or what to tell the Arabs if large numbers made their way to Palestine? It would appear that even Churchill himself was concerned about the latter point. One tantalising piece of evidence, the diary of Henry Morgenthau Jr., indicates that Churchill too would not breach the Palestine White Paper immigration quotas for the sake of any Jewish refugees that might be rescued. During a visit to London by the Secretary of the Treasury, in August, 1944, he discussed the situation of Hungarian Jewry with Eden and Churchill. Churchill is recorded as having stated that he was against lifting the White Paper quota in order to get Hungarian Jews out, since he had promised the Arabs that while the war was on he would allow that quota to stand.⁴⁹

When all considerations are taken into account, the gap between the alleged appreciation of 'the enormity of the crime', and the terrible, uncharacteristic paucity of Allied ingenuity, suggests that indeed, the murder of millions of Jews was a secondary consideration for Allied leaders, for Churchill as much as for anyone. The actual process of negotiation may have of itself saved lives, even had there been no positive outcome. Therefore, to quote Prof. Bauer, "The real conclusion is that Brand did not fail. It was the West that failed."⁵⁰

II. The Project to Bomb Auschwitz

The proposal to bomb the Auschwitz death camp, and the railway lines leading to it, was also the subject of intensive debate within the government, during July and August, 1944. Where the Brand proposal was rejected on grounds of high policy (though less worthy motives were also influential too), the Auschwitz project was turned down on alleged logistical grounds which in fact were disingenuous. Contrary to what the Jews were told at the time, the Allies *did* have the resources, the technical know-how and the logistical capacity to have carried out such an operation successfully.

On 6 July, 1944, Eden told Churchill of an appeal he had just received from Dr Weizmann, asking the British government "to do something to mitigate the appalling slaughter of Jews in Hungary". Weizmann reported that 60,000 Jews were being gassed and burned to death each day at Birkenau (the death camp at Auschwitz II; the figure apparently should have been 6000). Eden told Churchill that the figure of 60,000 might be an exaggeration, but on the next day, he himself gave the same figure, in a second report, describing the four crematoria at Birkenau. It was alleged that over the past year, some 1½ million Jews had been murdered in this single camp.⁵¹

The Auschwitz camp had been operating since 1942 but until 1944 it had been known only as a place where "terrible things happened to Polish non-Jews, above all, to 'Aryan' Poles seized for resistance activity inside Poland itself". A few isolated reports on Auschwitz had been printed in the western press, but for various reasons had not made any impact. As noted by Martin Gilbert: "These 'lost' references to Auschwitz-Birkenau do add up to a definite and detailed picture, which, had it been taken in, might well have served as a basis for general knowledge and for requests for publicity, warnings, or action."⁵² Since April, 1944, detailed information was supplied by escapees, by the Swedish government and by the Czech government-in-exile.⁵³

On 8 July, 1944, the day after Eden's second report to Churchill, the *Times* published a full report on Auschwitz-Birkenau, based on information supplied by the Polish Ministry of Information. The article noted that on 15 May, 1944, 62 railway carriages filled with Jewish children aged two to eight years had been despatched to Auschwitz, and that every day since, six train-loads of Jews had "been put to death in the gas chambers of that dreaded concentration camp."⁵⁴

It can hardly be claimed that there was any dearth of information! On the day that he received Eden's second report on Auschwitz, together with the Zionist appeal to bomb the camp, Churchill responded with characteristic, spontaneous humanity:

Is there any reason to raise these matters in the Cabinet? You and I are in entire agreement. Get anything out of the Air Force you can and invoke me if necessary. Certainly appeal to Stalin. On no account have the slightest negotiations, direct or indirect with the Huns. By all means bring it up if you wish to, but I do not think it necessary.⁵⁵

It will be recalled that on 11 July, just four days after the exchange of these internal minutes, Churchill had vetoed the Brand mission, while avowing that the Nazi treatment of the Jews was "the greatest and most horrible single crime ever committed in the whole history of the world."⁵⁶

It would seem that it is upon the evidence of these two minutes alone that until now, the historians have exempted Churchill from the general execration heaped upon the British government for its failure to take any action against Auschwitz. It has been claimed that Churchill was the one man "who did understand the enormity of the crimes",⁵⁷ and that it was the narrow-minded, bigoted officials who "got the better of Churchill on this particular issue", and that Churchill, "with his broader imagination, was almost alone in his grasp of the magnitude of the disaster", whereas in contrast, "the narrower horizons of the official mind rarely stretched to encompass the vastness of the horror which had overtaken the Jews of Europe." On this occasion, an admittedly powerful, pugnacious Prime Minister was forced to tread warily, when faced with the

unanimous opinion of the Whitehall bureaucracy ("a dangerous animal when aroused"), which was determined to prevent a mass flight of Jews from Europe.⁵⁸

It is not my purpose either to trace again the discussion of the project through the corridors of Whitehall, nor indeed to contest the verdict that the officials of the Foreign Office and the Air Ministry delayed and sabotaged the bombing project.⁵⁹ The point to be considered here is whether those officials or their ministers were in fact even questioned, cautioned or warned by Churchill, during the nearly two months for which the project was under consideration? If Churchill did indeed comprehend "the enormity of the crime", then why, in plain language, did he not press his ministers and their officials to actually *do* something about it? In order to substantiate the claim that the bureaucrats were able "to thwart the will even of the most powerful Prime Minister in British history", evidence must be brought to prove that that will was in fact exerted. But the reader of the accounts quoted here will search in vain for any hint that Churchill so much as even gave a second thought to the Auschwitz project, after his much-quoted directive to Eden, to 'get what he could from the RAF'. We are informed that at the end of August, 1944, when the project was finally abandoned, Churchill was apparently abroad, and "does not appear to have been told of the decision."⁶⁰

Churchill's government, at all levels, had learned only too well that the Prime Minister was not a man whose determination could be thwarted with impunity. Quite to the contrary, Churchill was a man with a penchant for delving into the most petty of administrative details, even at the height of the greatest crisis.⁶¹ It would not have been at all difficult for Churchill to have uncovered the tactics being employed by the bureaucrats, nor the disingenuity of the excuse finally given the Zionists for abandoning the project. (The Americans in fact had abandoned the project on 4 July, three days before it was raised in London.⁶²) Not only *was* Auschwitz within range of Allied bombers, but it was in fact situated within a key target area for Allied strategic bombing, in Upper Silesia. This area, with its synthetic oil and rubber complexes, became a top priority bombing target on the eve of the Normandy landings. American bombers regularly overflew the Auschwitz camp during August and September, 1944; they in fact photographed it several times, and even dropped bombs on it, by mistake!⁶³

It is also argued that Churchill was too pre-occupied with the larger issues of running the war, and thus the bureaucrats were able to take advantage. However, this argument is greatly weakened by the fact of Churchill's very deep involvement in another episode, which at this very same time was unravelling in a theatre of the war quite removed from the French coasts.

On 1 August, 1944, the Polish Home Army rebelled against the Nazi

regime in Warsaw. The revolt began in the evident anticipation of an imminent Soviet conquest. The western alliance, and Churchill in particular, took an especial interest in the fortunes of the Polish Home Army, a non-Communist, pro-western force, whose success or demise would probably determine the political character of the post-war regime in Poland. Stalin too made the same calculation and, drawing the opposite conclusion to Churchill's, he halted the advance of the Red Army some ten miles short of Warsaw itself. Thus the Germans were permitted to decimate the poorly-supplied Poles.

The British government, and Churchill personally, made every possible effort to fly in aid to the Polish revolt. The RAF was ordered to drop supplies on Warsaw, notwithstanding warnings that losses would be prohibitive, and that the chances of the supplies reaching the Poles were minimal. Of the 181 bombers which flew to Warsaw between 8 August and 20 September, 1944, 31 failed to return. On one day alone, 18 September, 1,284 supply canisters were dropped in the Warsaw area; a mere 288 actually reached Polish hands, and the rest fell to the Germans.⁶⁴ Without Soviet support on the ground, the air missions were doomed, involving what many would regard as a pointless waste of valuable pilots' lives and war materiel for a cause that was already lost.

But this operation was one in which Churchill took a personal interest, down to the operational level. He followed the progress of the sorties via the Air Ministry, headed by his long-standing associate, Sir Archibald Sinclair.⁶⁵ He sent personal appeals to Stalin to allow Allied planes to make refuelling stops at Soviet air bases and tried to mobilise Roosevelt to exert pressure on the unwilling Soviet dictator.⁶⁶

In the United States, on the eve of the presidential elections, the air missions served as demonstrations to the large electorate of Polish origins of the government's humanitarian concern for the tragic fate of a devastated ally. In England, especially at No. 10 Downing Street, there was a deep concern to work for a pro-western regime in Poland after the war. The missions to Warsaw may have served an important post-war political interest, but they did not serve any immediate military or strategic goal. As such, they were a departure from the principle, invoked inevitably in the case of any plans to rescue Jews, of not diverting military resources from the supreme cause of defeating the Germans.

By coincidence, the Auschwitz and the Warsaw projects not only occurred at the same time, but also involved approximately the same geographical area. At the very same time that British officials were explaining to the Zionists that Allied planes did not have the capacity to reach Auschwitz, their planes were in fact flying "just to the west of Cracow, virtually over Auschwitz itself", on their way to Warsaw. Churchill's biographer informs us that maps used by the pilots, showing the routes, are to be found in Churchill's private archives.⁶⁷

In short, it is obvious that the Allies, whether the officials, or their political superiors, had their own set of priorities, and that the fate of the Jews was not high up on their list. To quote Martin Gilbert once more:

It was the agony of Warsaw, not the agony of the Jews that had come to dominate the telegraphic exchanges of the Allied leaders.⁶⁸

The incredible efforts made to salvage the Polish revolt indicate the resources that might be tapped, if only there was a will, and a priority-clearance. But this was *not* the case either with the Brand proposals or the Auschwitz project.

In the light of all of the above, can it yet be maintained that Churchill was unique in his comprehension of the "historical significance of the Holocaust"? It may be stated immediately that it took a generation to pass after the war before it was possible to begin to understand this terrible historical event, with its repercussions not only for the Jewish people, but for the very essence of civilization itself. One might even venture to suggest that in fact Churchill himself later shrank from facing any deep examination of his own inaction during the war. The following passage, from a speech of Churchill's before the House of Commons in August, 1946, might indicate, quite apart from the obvious distortion of history, a conscience that was unable to come to terms with Allied policy to the Jews during the war:

I must say that I had no idea, when the war came to an end, of the horrible massacres which had occurred; the millions and millions that have been slaughtered. That dawned on us gradually after the war was over.⁶⁹

POSTSCRIPT

What conclusions were drawn by the Zionist leadership after the war? In contrast to latter-day historians, they did not exculpate Allied leaders, neither Churchill, nor Roosevelt.

After the war, the Zionist leaders expected Churchill to make good his promise to Weizmann (given at their last-ever meeting on 4 November, 1944) to make a 'generous' partition of Palestine once the war with Germany was concluded. The Zionists regarded the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine as the minimum whereby the Allies could offer some recompense and restitution for the price paid by the Jewish people during the war.

When Churchill procrastinated, and finally replied that nothing could be done for the Zionists until the peace conference, the leaders' frustration and bitterness overflowed. Rabbi Fishman, of the religious

Mizrahi movement, thought the time had come to break their silence over British inaction:

... they should tell the Cabinet and particularly the Prime Minister that preaching to them was not enough; the P.M. had done nothing for them during his period of office ... No people had been fooled as the Jewish people had been fooled by the British government. He would have to say that in America.⁷⁰

Rabbi Fishman was expressing a universal Jewish sentiment, but the other leaders opposed his tactics. They knew they could not permit themselves the luxury of alienating Churchill, who was expected by all to secure a second term as Prime Minister. In addition, there was the well-founded fear that if the leaders publicised their real feelings about the Churchill administration, widespread disorders would sweep Palestine.

Ben-Gurion regarded Churchill's reply as:

... the greatest blow they had received. People here and in America were living in a fool's paradise. In America their people thought that Dr Weizmann had an offer in his pocket of a Jewish state in a part of Palestine ... Mr Churchill had no bad intentions towards them; he still considered himself as a friend of Zionism. But what Mr Churchill believed and things as they existed were quite different ... For him the delay was an escape, a way out ... The Jewish people had been let down completely ... They were absolutely powerless and helpless, but it was most evil to deceive their people.⁷¹

Yet no Jewish leader felt more deceived and betrayed than did Dr Chaim Weizmann. For more than a generation, he had steered Zionism on a pro-British orientation, and since the late 1930's had placed his trust in Churchill personally. Weizmann agreed with Ben-Gurion that had Churchill wanted to settle matters, he could have done so. As it was, the Prime Minister's letter was "an insult to their intelligence".⁷² In a further speech, in closed session, one week before the British general elections, Weizmann threw off the veneer of diplomatic finesse acquired during some 40 years of intercourse with the British establishment, and reverted to the style of the persecuted Diaspora Jew, the tribune of a vanquished, helpless people:

The P.M., General Smuts, the late President Roosevelt, had all let them down, maybe not intentionally, but inadvertently. They made promises which they did not carry out or mean to carry out. They were only a small people; he could not fight Churchill or Truman, but he could keep his conscience clear by telling them 'You have done what you have done, but you cannot expect me to swallow it'. He felt very bitter; he had reached the end of a long road. They had tried their best.

He had no confidence in the meeting of the Big Three. Nobody cared

what happened to the Jews. Nobody had raised a finger to stop them being slaughtered. They did not even bother about the remnant which had survived.⁷³

BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY

NOTES

1. Cf. R.F. Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill* (Oxford, 1981), p. 395, and R. Davis, *The English Rothschilds* (Chapel Hill, 1983), p. 202.
2. Cf. Randolph S. Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill*, Vol. 1, *Youth: 1874-1900* (Boston, 1966), pp. 174, 206, 273-74, 330; also Michael J. Cohen, *Churchill and the Jews* (London, 1985).
3. Chaim Bermant, *The Cousinhood: The Anglo-Jewish Gentry* (London, 1971), p. 287.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 308.
5. *H.C.Deb.* 5th Series, Vol. LXIII, col 1151.
6. R. Henriques, *Marcus Samuel* (London, 1960), p. 581.
7. *H.C. Deb.* 5th Series, Vol. LXIII, cols 1153, 1229.
8. A detailed study of the episode will be found in M. Jack, "The Purchase of the British Government's Shares in the British Petroleum Company, 1912-1914," *Past and Present*, No. 39 (April, 1968), pp. 139-168.
9. Randolph S. Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill: The Young Statesman, 1901-1914* (Boston, 1967), p. 80.
10. B. Gainer, *The Alien Invasion: The Origins of the Aliens Act of 1905* (London, 1972), p. 146.
11. A. Garrard, *The English and Immigration, 1880-1910* (Oxford, 1971), p. 143.
12. Cf. also Cohen, *Churchill and . . .*, pp. 17-25, 35-40.
13. C.E. Attlee, "An Observer Appreciation," in P. Stansky (ed.), *Churchill: A Profile* (London, 1973), p. 196.
14. M. Sompolinski, *The Anglo-Jewish Leadership, the British Government and the Holocaust*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Bar-Ilan University, 1977, p. 230 (in Hebrew).
15. *Ibid.*
16. Foreign Office-Washington Embassy, 27 February, 1943, FO 371/36676, W3019.
17. Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe, 1939-1945* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 39, 45.
18. R. Law-Major T.L. Dugdale (Chairman of Conservative Party), 7 December, 1942, FO 371/32682, W16534.
19. Minute of 22 December, 1942, FO 371/32682, W 17521.
20. Quoted in Wasserstein, *Britain and . . .*, pp. 353-54.
21. Quoted in review of Wasserstein, by J.P. Fox, in *European Studies Review*, Vol. 10/1 (1980). At the time of writing, Fox was employed by the Foreign Office.
22. *H.C.Deb.* 5th Series, Vol. 426, col 1252, 1 August, 1946.
23. Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust* (New York, 1982), p. 341.

24. Rothschild-Col. Harvie Watt, 16 December, 1942, Prem 4/51/8, and Martin (Churchill's secretary)-V.G. Lawford, 18 December, 1942, FO 371/32682, W17520.
25. Martin Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies* (New York, 1981), p. 100.
26. Ibid, p. 106-107. It should be noted that reprisal bombings were considered at the request of the Polish government, on behalf of the Poles—the Jewish cause was tagged on by Churchill.
27. Wasserstein, *Britain and . . .*, pp. 306-307.
28. Ibid, pp. 304-305.
29. Lady Reading-Churchill, 16 January, 1943, Prem 4/51/8. My emphasis.
30. Churchill-Lady Reading, 21 February, 1943, Ibid.
31. Quoted in J. Goodman, *The Mond Legacy* (London, 1982), p. 192.
32. Z4/14870, Central Zionist Archives (hereafter CZA), quoted in Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies*, p. 279.
33. Meeting of Cabinet Committee on Refugees, 31 May, 1944, CAB 95/15/32, and Cabinet meeting on 1 June, 1944, in Gilbert, *Auschwitz and . . .*, p. 218.
34. Minute by Charles Baxter, head of Eastern Department, 17 February, 1944, FO 371/42723, WR2188.
35. J.R. (44) 19, 12 July, 1944, FO 371/42810, WR323.
36. Foreign Office tels. 5958, 5959, 1 July, 1944, Prem 4/51/10.
37. Churchill minute, 2 July, 1944, FO 371/42759, W10025.
38. Eden-Churchill, 6 July, and Churchill minute, 8 July, 1944, Prem 4/51/10.
39. Halifax-Foreign Office, 9 July, 1944, FO 371/42808, WR149.
40. B. Wasserstein, *Britain and . . .*, p. 256.
41. Minute of 10 July, 1944, Prem 4/51/10.
42. Ibid. My emphasis.
43. Churchill-Eden, 11 July, 1944, FO 371/42809, WR274; copy in Prem 4/51/10, reprinted in Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Vol. VI, Triumph and Tragedy* (London, 1954), p. 597.
44. Ibid.
45. Cf. Yehuda Bauer, *The Holocaust in Historical Perspective* (Seattle, 1978), p. 81.
46. Minutes of Committee meeting on 13 July, 1944, FO/371 42810, WR 323.
47. Eden-Churchill, 16 July, 1944, FO/371 42809, WR 274. Copy in Prem 4/51/10.
48. *New York Herald Tribune*, 18 July, and *Times*, 19 July, 1944, quoted in Y. Bauer, *The Holocaust in . . .*, pp. 149-50.
49. Morgenthau memo on trip to London, August, 1944, *The Morgenthau Diaries*, Book. no. 762, p. 205, the Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park.
50. Y. Bauer, *The Holocaust in . . .*, pp. 154-155.
51. Eden-Churchill, 6 and 7 July, 1944, Prem 4/51/10.
52. M. Gilbert, *Auschwitz and . . .*, p. 340.
53. Bauer, *The Holocaust in . . .*, p. 138.
54. *The Times*, 8 July, 1944, p. 3.
55. Churchill-Eden, 7 July, 1944, Prem 4/51/10, and FO 371/42809, WR 276.
56. Cf. above, p. 15. Two days later, Churchill coined the same phrase, in a private letter to Lord Melchett; Cf. Z4/14.69611. CZA.
57. M. Gilbert, *Auschwitz and . . .*, p. 341.
58. B. Wasserstein, *Britain and . . .*, pp. 350, 38-39.

59. Ibid, pp. 307-321, M. Gilbert, *Auschwitz and . . .*, cap. 31, and M. Cohen, *Churchill and . . .*

60. B. Wasserstein, *Britain and . . .*, p. 316.

61. Cf. Arthur Bryant, *Triumph in the West, Vol. 1, Turn of the Tide, 1939-1943*, based on the diaries of Field-Marshal Viscount Alanbrooke (London, 1957), pp. 300-301. Alanbrooke was the Chief of the Imperial General Staff for most of the war.

62. Y. Bauer, *History of . . .*, p. 321.

63. Cf. David Wyman, "Why Auschwitz Was Never Bombed," *Commentary*, Vol. 65, no. 5 (May, 1978), pp.

64. Details in *ibid*, pp. 44-46.

65. Sinclair had been Churchill's aide de camp, when he served on the western front from 1916-1917, and served as Churchill's private secretary from 1918-1922.

66. Cf. correspondence in FO 800/412.

67. M. Gilbert, *Auschwitz and . . .*, p. 322. The maps are on p. 323.

68. *Ibid*, p. 322.

69. Speech of 1 August 1946, *H.C. Deb.* 5th Series, Vol. 426, col. 1258.

70. Discussion of Zionist Political Committee, London, 23 May, 1945, ZA/302/29, CZA.

71. Discussion of Zionist Political Committee, London, 13 June, 1945, *ibid*.

72. Weizmann speech on 14 June, 1945, *ibid*.

73. Weizmann speech on 27 June, 1945, *ibid*.

*British Government Policy
towards Jewish Refugees
(November 1938 – September 1939)*

MARTIN GILBERT

THIS ARTICLE TRACES the evolution of the British Government's policy towards Jewish refugees from Germany and Central Europe, during the ten months between the *Kristallnacht* and the outbreak of war.¹ It is based principally upon the archives of the Prime Minister's Office, the Foreign Office, the Treasury, and the Colonial Office, and a number of private collections of papers.²

As a result of the alertness of its diplomatic and consular representatives in Germany, the British Government received full details of the anti-Jewish violence of the *Kristallnacht* throughout November 11 and 12, when telegraphic reports reached the Foreign Office from the Embassy in Berlin and from the Consul-General in Frankfurt, R.T. Smallbones. "I am

¹ It forms part of a larger study of British policy towards the Jews during the Mandate years, see Martin Gilbert, *Exile and Return: the Emergence of Jewish Statehood*, London, 1978.

² All Cabinet, Premier, Foreign Office and other British Ministerial papers, being Crown Copyright, are published by permission of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London. I should like to thank the Keeper of the Public Records, and the staff of the Public Record Office, London, for their courtesy in making these documents so readily available.

MARTIN GILBERT

informed that arrests of male Jews up to the age of 60 are being made on a large scale," Sir George Ogilvie Forbes telegraphed from Berlin on November 11. All Jewish schools, newspapers and cultural organizations had been closed down. It was even rumoured that the Germans intended to confiscate all Jewish capital.³

"Every synagogue in the district has been destroyed," Smallbones reported on November 12, "and all rabbis together with other religious leaders and teachers are under arrest."⁴ On November 13, Ogilvie Forbes telegraphed again: the Germans had just announced that from the new year no Jew could be a retailer, an exporter, or a manager of a business. All damage done to Jewish property would have to be paid for by the Jews themselves, who would also have to pay a massive fine. Many Jews, Ogilvie Forbes reported, "are wandering about in the streets and parks afraid to return to their homes," and he added: "I can find no words strong enough in condemnation of the disgusting treatment of so many innocent people, and the civilised world is faced with the appalling sight of 500,000 people about to rot away in starvation."⁵

The events of the *Kristallnacht* cast a fearful pall over the Jews of Germany, Austria and the Sudetenland. Once more, the pressure for emigration mounted, but on November 14, only four days after the night of terror, Lord Halifax told the Cabinet, as the official minutes recorded, that "The government would shortly be confronted with a very difficult decision, namely, was it not to be regarded as fundamental to obtain a settlement with the Arabs?" Malcolm MacDonald, speaking immediately after Halifax, told his colleagues:

The government had to choose between its commitments to the world of Jewry and its commitments to the world of Islam. In

³ Foreign Office papers (hereafter—F.O.) 371/21637.

⁴ F.O. 371/21637.

⁵ F.O. 371/21637.

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS REFUGEES

spite of the adversities which it was now suffering, the world of Jewry remained extremely influential. For example, there were said to be three million Jews in the United States. On the other hand, the British Empire itself was to a very considerable extent a Moslem Empire, some 80 millions of our fellow subjects in India were Moslems. From the defence point of view it was literally out of the question that we should antagonise either the Moslems within the Empire or the Arab kingdoms of the Near East.

MacDonald concluded: "This might very well mean that we could not contemplate even a distant future in which there could be a Jewish majority in Palestine."⁶

Here was the conclusion which the Jews feared most of all. An attempt to mitigate it was touched on at the Cabinet meeting of November 14, when, as the minutes recorded, a "brief discussion took place of the possibilities of Jewish settlement elsewhere than in Palestine." The Cabinet agreed that the sending of Jewish refugees to places outside Europe "would become an issue of first-class importance in the event of Jewish immigration into Palestine being restricted." Mention was made "of the possibilities of settlement" in Brazil, British Guiana and Western Australia.⁷

How serious were these alternatives? On the day after the Cabinet meeting, Roger Makins, an official working in the Central Department of the Foreign Office, noted that "the pitiful condition to which German Jews will be reduced will not make them desirable immigrants,"⁸ while that same day Neville Chamberlain told a deputation from the Council for German Jewry that the idea of a British Government loan was "premature, and hardly worth discussing at this stage."⁹

Also on November 14, MacDonald reported to his Cabinet

⁶ Cabinet papers (hereafter—Cab.) 27/651.

⁷ Cab. 27/651.

⁸ F.O. 371/22536.

⁹ F.O. 371/22536.

MARTIN GILBERT

colleagues on a talk he had held with Weizmann two days before, when he had found Weizmann "naturally very despairing about the situation of the Jews in Central Europe in general and Germany in particular." So desperate was Weizmann that he asked MacDonald if the Government of Iraq might not agree "to some development scheme along the Euphrates which would enable a considerably larger population to settle there." For such a scheme, Weizmann believed, the Jews themselves "would be ready to raise £20,000,000 or £30,000,000." This could be used either to enable Iraq to take "300,000 Jews as direct settlers," or to take 100,000 Arabs from Palestine "whose land would then pass to Jewish immigrants."¹⁰

Within the Foreign Office, those who had followed German affairs since the advent of Nazism understood what the new persecutions meant. On November 15, Michael Cresswell, who had only recently returned from several years in Berlin, noted on Ogilvie Forbes's most recent report: "This far exceeds the other barbarities which the Nazis have been guilty of in the last five years. It is of a quite different order; with winter beginning in Berlin, the outlook for these miserable people is absolutely hopeless." One could not be surprised, Cresswell added, "if large numbers of them prefer suicide to death by starvation and exposure. At the same time, tens of thousands are being sent to concentration camps . . ." ¹¹

R.T. Smallbones, the Consul-General in Frankfurt, sent a further report to London on November 16, in which he told of "scenes of indescribable, destructive sadism and brutality;" of householders locked into their lavatories while "the mob entered and destroyed everything or threw everything on to the streets, where in some cases they were set on fire." Smallbones reported that there had been "innumerable cases of suicide" in Frankfurt and the near surroundings, and he added: "I personally know

¹⁰ Cab. 24/652.

¹¹ F.O. 34/21637.

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS REFUGEES

of eleven acquaintances who have taken their lives to avoid being arrested.”¹²

The *Kristallnacht* ended all hope of an improvement in the situation of the half million Jews of Germany, Austria and the Sudetenland. But the situation of the Jews was ominous also in Poland, Germany's eastern neighbour, and a potential victim of German territorial aspirations. On November 20, the British Ambassador in Warsaw, Sir Howard Kennard, reported to Lord Halifax on Poland's hostile attitude towards the three million Jews who lived within the borders of the Polish state. Most Poles, he wrote, “regard it as inevitable that in order to induce a state of mind favourable to emigration among the Jews, their position here must be made less comfortable.” Kennard added: “Local excesses—not organized, as recently in Germany, but more or less spontaneous—are of not infrequent occurrence.”¹³

Following the *Kristallnacht*, there was once again talk about alternate havens in remote colonial lands. But Weizmann knew that such talk would not provide any realistic alternative. On November 20, he wrote to the leader of the Liberal Party, Sir Archibald Sinclair:

All the fancy ‘territorialist’ projects are useless. It's merely dangling false hopes before the eyes of tortured people. It needs millions untold and years of labour before all these exotic countries could receive an appreciable number of refugees. One can absorb refugees

¹² F.O. 371/21638. It is interesting to note that a year later, after the outbreak of war, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, Sir Alexander Cadogan, noted that the British Consuls in Germany had derived most of their information about Nazi atrocities “from persecuted Jews, who are not, perhaps, entirely reliable witnesses,” F.O. 371/23105. On April 21, 1940 the head of the News Department at the Foreign Office, Reginald Leeper, noted: “As a general rule Jews are inclined to magnify their persecutions. I remember the exaggerated stories of Jewish pogroms in Poland after the last war which, when fully examined, were found to have little substance.” F.O. 371/24472.

¹³ F.O. 371/21638.

MARTIN GILBERT

quickly only in highly developed countries and there you meet with limited factors inherent in the present social structure like unemployment and antisemitism!

Weizmann's letter continued:

We could *easily take now* into Palestine 50,000 people if they *would let us*. We could employ them and all the untold money which is being spent on giving these people temporary shelter could be used effectively for settling them permanently in Palestine. But they don't let us and here is the tragedy! Hence all the fanciful diversions.¹⁴

On November 21, the House of Commons discussed Jewish immigration into Britain, in the wake of the *Kristallnacht*. During the debate several members of Parliament urged the Government to relax its immigration restrictions. More than 65,000 German and Austrian Jews had already found a haven in Britain, but there was surely room for more. "I speak," one Labour MP, Alderman Logan, declared, "as an orthodox Catholic, feeling to the depth of my heart the cause of the Jew," and he continued:

I hear mention made of the question of money. If we cannot have civilisation contented, if we cannot bring sunshine into the lives of people, without being concerned with the question of money, civilisation is doomed. To-day an opportunity is offered to the British nation to take its proper stand among the nations of the world. . .

The appeal of Logan and of those who felt as he did was answered by the Home Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, who sought to remind the House of what he called "some of the difficulties" of a greater immigration. Hoare then explained what he meant:

¹⁴ Viscount Thurso papers: I am grateful to the Librarian and Archivist of Churchill College, Cambridge, for enabling me to consult these papers; and to the Weizmann Institute, Rehovot, for permission to publish this particular letter.

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS REFUGEES

In this country we are a thickly populated industrial community with at the present moment a very large number of unemployed. Competition is very keen with foreign countries, and it is difficult for many of our fellow-countrymen to make a livelihood at all and keep their industries and businesses going. It is quite obvious that there is an underlying current of suspicion and anxiety, rightly or wrongly, about alien immigration on any big scale. It is a fact, and we had better face the fact quite frankly, that below the surface—I know it from my own daily experience at the Home Office... there is the making of a definite anti-Jewish movement.

I do my best as Home Secretary to stamp upon an evil of that kind. That is the reason why I have prohibited demonstrations in certain parts of London where inevitably they would stimulate this evil movement.

Faced with a fact of that kind, while I think very few hon. Members look upon this problem with greater sympathy than I do, I have to be careful to avoid anything in the nature of mass immigration which, in my view, would inevitably lead to the growth of a movement which we all wish to see suppressed.

“That means,” Hoare added, “that we must keep a check upon individual cases of immigrants.”¹⁵

The Jews could draw little comfort from such an answer. All over the world, individuals sought to help them, and humanitarian feelings were roused by their plight; but all over the world where regulations, visas and quotas held sway, governments set up barriers which could not be crossed, and warned of anti-Semitic reactions that could not easily be denied.

On November 28, Pinhas Rutenberg went to see MacDonald at the Colonial Office. Any restriction of Jewish immigration to “a mere 15,000 or 20,000 or 30,000 Jews a year.” Rutenberg told MacDonald, would be “a capitulation to Arab pressure.” Hundreds of thousands of Jews “were looking for a country to live in.” They could not be settled in British Guiana, and if too

¹⁵ This, and all subsequent quotations from Parliamentary Debates are taken from Hansard and are reproduced by kind permission of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London.

MARTIN GILBERT

many went to Britain "or other countries," there would be "an anti-Semitic movement which would check the flow." But they could go to Palestine, Rutenberg insisted, "without any harm coming to the Arabs." MacDonald replied, however, that there was a "very strong anti-Semitic movement" which already existed in Palestine, "and which was resulting in violence and bloodshed every day."¹⁶

As 1939 opened, the situation of the Jews of Europe reached a crisis. On January 14, 1939 the British Consul-General in Munich, John Carvell, sent Lord Halifax a harrowing account of the situation inside Dachau concentration camp, where, despite the release of two to three hundred Jews a day during December, 7,000 Jews still remained in the camp, including boys of seventeen from the Jewish Seminary at Würzburg, and "professional men between the ages of 50 and 60." According to Carvell: "Apparently the first day of captivity was one of indescribable horror since no released prisoner has been able or willing to speak about it. It may be imagined that the prisoners herded together like cattle in a stockyard were tortured by the fear of the slaughter-house."

Carvell went on to describe the harsh conditions in the camp, and noted:

Accounts of brutal treatment at the hands of the guards are too consistent to have been mere fabrications. Prisoners have been buffeted, kicked, and even beaten and bastinadoed with steel birches. Some guards never speak to prisoners without hitting them across the mouth with the back of the hand. The medical attendants are particularly callous in their disregard for prisoners requiring medical attention.

As a result of their ill-treatment, Carvell noted, many of those who were released "are unable to walk and some have been carried to the station unconscious."¹⁷

¹⁶ Cab. 24/652.

¹⁷ F.O. 371/23052.

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS REFUGEES

Meanwhile, the pressures were growing inside the Foreign Office against the mounting flood of "illegal" immigrants seeking to escape from Eastern Europe and trying to reach Palestine. On January 24, the Foreign Office urged the British Legation in Sofia to press the Bulgarian Government "to take immediate steps to put an end" to the movement of illegal immigrants through Bulgaria.¹⁸

The Foreign Office expert who drafted this telegram—C.W. Baxter of the Central Department—explained that same day to Malcolm MacDonald:

It seems to me that it is equally arguable that it is morally wrong for us to insist on sending more and more Jews into Palestine against the wishes of the Arab inhabitants of that country and the Middle East. After all, the moral satisfaction we may derive from sending more Jews to Palestine without Arab consent must be weighed against the moral right of the Arabs to have some say in the question of admission of aliens into their country.¹⁹

Acutely aware of such attitudes, Dr. Weizmann discussed Jewish immigration with Lord Halifax on January 24. Halifax noted, in his report of their conversation, that Weizmann was anxious that, "while he was not particularly concerned with the numerical limit at which immigration might be fixed—a thousand more or less was, he said, a matter of no great importance on a long view—the thing that was fundamental was that His Majesty's Government should not undermine the whole basis of right by which Jews were in Palestine at all." And Weizmann had gone on to explain to Halifax that, "it would be to place Jewry in an unbearable position were we to say that immigration was to be permitted only by agreement with the Arabs. This would have the effect of reducing the position of the Jews in Palestine to one of sufferance instead of one, as they claimed, of right."²⁰

¹⁸ F.O. 371/23246.

¹⁹ F.O. 371/23221.

²⁰ F.O. 371/23221.

MARTIN GILBERT

From this discussion, it was clear that the Zionists adhered to that very Jewish "right" to enter Palestine which was established in the "Churchill" White Paper of 1922, and which MacDonald had secretly rejected six days before Halifax's discussion with Weizmann.²¹ In order to overcome this problem, the Government now made an attempt to persuade Weizmann to abandon all Jewish rights in Palestine. This attempt was made at the specific suggestion of Lord Halifax, and with the support of the Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence, Sir Thomas Inskip. Would it not be possible, Halifax asked in a Foreign Office minute on January 26, to get "the Jews themselves" to agree to give up their rights "instead of having it forced on them" ²²; and on the following day Malcolm MacDonald told the Cabinet that, "If we could now persuade the Jews to make a unilateral declaration as had been suggested by Lord Halifax the whole atmosphere might be changed for the better." MacDonald was afraid, however, that even if Dr. Weizmann were prepared to entertain such a declaration, "his constituents would

²¹ On January 18, 1939, as both Jewish and Arab leaders prepared to come to London for the Round Table Conference on the future of Palestine, Malcolm MacDonald had set out for his Cabinet colleagues the crux of the new policy in a secret Cabinet memorandum. As the MacDonald memorandum explained: "We cannot accept the contention that all Jews as such have a right to enter Palestine... It would clearly be absurd to admit that all the millions of Jews in the world have a right, which they should be allowed to exert if they wished, to settle in Palestine... We cannot avoid an eventual clash, if we continue to carry out the Balfour Declaration, between the forces of persecuted, desperate, brilliant, constructive Jewry in Palestine and the widespread pan-Arab movement which is rallying to the defence of its weakest brethren the Arabs of Palestine... Arab detestation of the Jewish invasion into Palestine being what it is, it would be wholly wrong to suggest that this large Arab population should one day in their own native land and against their will come under the rule of the newly arrived Jews." These sentences became the basis of the government's policy. F.O. 371/23221.

²² F.O. 371/23221.

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS REFUGEES

not for a moment allow him to make it." Nevertheless, MacDonald agreed that a strenuous effort should be made to persuade Weizmann "to give favourable consideration to this declaration."

During the meeting of January 27, Lord Zetland, the Secretary of State for India, pressed for the immediate passing of a 33 per cent maximum Jewish population in Palestine. Zetland told the Cabinet that he was constantly being urged by the Indian Moslems to support the Arab claims in Palestine. The Minister of Health, Walter Elliot, declared that he attached "greater weight to the United States than to Arabia at the present moment" but Zetland warned that "this problem of Palestine was not merely an Arabian problem, it was fast becoming a pan-Islamic problem." If the Conference failed to reach any agreement, he insisted, "or ended in what was regarded as a substantial victory for the Jews, serious troubles in India must be apprehended."

It was during the Cabinet meeting of January 27, that Malcolm MacDonald reinterpreted the Churchill White Paper statement of 1922, that the Jews were in Palestine "as of right, and not on sufferance." *As of right* MacDonald told his colleagues, referred only to those Jews who were already living in Palestine in 1922, and not to those who reached Palestine later, or might do so in the future.²³

The last week of January also saw serious obstacles raised against the possibility of some new Jewish haven being found outside Palestine; indeed, on January 30, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir John Simon, wrote to MacDonald about Jewish settlement in British Guiana: "It will indeed be a very serious business if the British tax payer, in addition to paying everything else which he is asked to pay for just now, has to pay for the settlement in various parts of the world of enormous numbers of refugees." ²⁴

²³ Cab. 27/651.

²⁴ F.O. 371/24087.

MARTIN GILBERT

Daily, more news was emerging from Germany about the conditions inside Hitler's camps. On February 2, the British Consul in Dresden, F.M. Shepherd, sent a full report to the British Embassy in Berlin, of the treatment of Jews at Buchenwald concentration camp. "There was not even enough water to drink," the Consul reported, "and there were only 20 lavatories for 10,000 men." One doctor, later released, had reported to the Consul that he "had seen people beaten with barbed wire birches." Of the 10,000 inmates, including "professors and other leading Jewish men," as many as 350 had died since the previous November.²⁵ Three weeks later, on February 25, the Foreign Office received a detailed and horrible account of the fate of individual German and Austrian Jews from the Tel Aviv-based Association of Jewish Settlers from Germany and Austria; it had been sent from Tel Aviv on February 8, and listed 133 cases concerning the immediate families of German and Austrian Jews who had reached Palestine. The following seven cases were typical:²⁶

Father has been arrested and brought to a concentration-camp. Mother was burnt to death while worshipping in the synagogue which was set on fire. Her dead body was found among the debris.

Father died because of cruel treatment in concentration-camp. Mother has been left alone in Germany and is deprived of any means of livelihood.

Father-in-law was thrown out of the window by Nazis and died immediately. Mother-in-law remained in Nuremberg alone. Both children are in Palestine.

Father-in-law is a *shohet* (butcher according to Jewish rites.) He was filmed by the Gestapo and forced to dance while killing an animal. Now this film is shown in the exhibition 'Der ewige Jude' (The Eternal Jew) which is being held in Vienna. In view of

²⁵ F.O. 371/23052.

²⁶ F.O. 371/23245.

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS REFUGEES

the fact that thousands of people are visiting this exhibition, he is in acute danger of being assaulted and even killed by persons who have seen this film.

In September 1938, the mother (78 years old) fled to her son in Prerau (Czechoslovakia). Recently she was expelled from Czechoslovakia. She is almost blind and quite helpless.

Father was murdered in a concentration camp, mother, 57 years old, is left absolutely alone in Germany, is penniless, homeless and destitute. Is the only Jewess left in a small town, nobody dares to offer her refuge or help.

Aged father (71 years old) was imprisoned but subsequently released. His house was raided several times. He was robbed of his belongings and finally evicted from his flat. Now he is all alone and homeless. Palestine is his only hope.

During February and March 1939, new decisions were made by the Cabinet with regard to Palestine. Each of these decisions proved fatal to Palestine being kept open to refugees. The principle behind these arguments had been summed up clearly by MacDonald at the Cabinet meeting of January 27, when he had told his colleagues that "He was satisfied that we could not afford to forfeit the confidence and friendship of a large part of the Moslem world. If we lost that now we would lose it for a long time, whereas if we reached a settlement in Palestine along the lines proposed, Jewish criticism in America would not have any permanent effect on Anglo-American relations."²⁷

While Palestine was being closed, however, several territorial requests were being made, on behalf of Jewish refugees, not only by British Governors and High Commissioners, but also by foreign governments. There was even a short time during which President Roosevelt put forward the thought that the Portuguese might be persuaded to open Angola to Jewish settlement, but it was the Permanent Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office.

²⁷ Cab. 27/651.

MARTIN GILBERT

Sir Alexander Cadogan, who pointed out that in view of the lack of population in many of the British Colonies it would not be very tactful for Britain to take part in pressing the Portuguese to open their Colonies instead. Cadogan believed in an alternative solution. On February 8, he wrote in a Foreign Office minute for Lord Halifax: "Are we really trying to find a place for them in e.g. Northern Rhodesia? It would help enormously towards an 'Arab' solution of Palestine if we could at the same time offer an alternative 'home' elsewhere."²⁸

But no such alternative home could be found. Nor could the pressure of American Jewry act as a counterweight, however that pressure was expressed. Indeed, American Jewish pressure had the exact reverse effect on the policy makers of pan-Islamic and Indian Moslem pressure. Thus Lacy Baggallay minuted on February 8: "If Jewish immigration into Palestine is not stopped we shall be heading for trouble. We cannot hope to please both the Jews and Arabs. If our solution displeases the Jews, they will let off a lot of hot air—particularly those in the U.S.A. If our solution displeases the Arabs, they are likely to act."²⁹

During February, all British consuls had been instructed to warn shipping agencies not to take Jews on board for Palestine. But on February 24, in a telegram which was to set the pattern for future British policy, Sir Reginald Hoare, the Minister in Bucharest, informed MacDonald that, in spite of these instructions, "I have little doubt that this exodus of Jews will continue." Hoare added: "We must ourselves take effective police and naval measures to prevent the smuggling of unauthorized refugees into Palestine either from the High Seas or over land."³⁰

Measures were taken, and these measures were to a certain extent successful, so much so that Lord Halifax was informed by the King's Private Secretary, Sir Alexander Hardinge, on February 28, while the London Conference was still in session,

²⁸ F.O. 371/23222.

²⁹ F.O. 371/23222.

³⁰ F.O. 371/24088.

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS REFUGEES

that "The King has heard from Lord Gort that a number of Jewish refugees from different countries were surreptitiously getting into Palestine, and he is glad to think that steps are being taken to prevent these people leaving their country of origin."³¹ Two days later, on March 2, the Foreign Office telegraphed to Sir Neville Henderson, the British Ambassador in Berlin:

There is a large irregular movement from Germany of Jewish refugees who as a rule, set out without visas or any arrangements for their reception, and they attempt to land in any territory that seems to them to present the slightest possibility of receiving them. This is a cause of great embarrassment to His Majesty's Government and also, it appears, to the American Government, and the latter have expressed a wish that you should join American Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin in bringing situation to the attention of appropriate German Authorities and requesting them to discourage such travel on German ships.

Henderson did as he was instructed, urging the German Government "to check unauthorized emigration" of Jews from the German Reich.³²

These pressures were relentless; on March 8, when it was learnt in London that 850 Jews had embarked for Palestine at the Roumanian port of Galatz, aboard the *Astir*, a senior Foreign Office official, A.W.G. Randall, minuted: "I think we should reprove the Roumanian Government at once."³³

As for the colonial, or imperial alternative, this was typified on March 3, by an India Office comment on a proposal to send Jewish refugees to Burma: "There is no possibility of contemplating large scale settlement by European refugees in view of the strong objections which would be felt against such settlement to the prejudice of the indigenous races concerned."³⁴

³¹ F.O. 371/24085.

³² Treasury papers 188/226.

³³ F.O. 371/24081.

³⁴ F.O. 371/24088.

MARTIN GILBERT

Similar replies were given by every colony approached. On March 13, the Governor of Southern Rhodesia gave his reasons for turning down a request from sixteen Jews for refuge, informing the British Consul-General in Alexandria: "My Government regrets they are unable to accede to request of the sixteen German Jews mentioned in your telegram to migrate to this Colony. Capacity of Southern Rhodesia for absorbing aliens is definitely limited. Numerous applications are being received, and only those of a suitable type with connections here, as agriculturists with sufficient capital, are being admitted."³⁵

In London, the Round Table Conference was drawing to a close. Despite the absolute refusal of the Palestinian Arabs to accept any Jewish immigration, the other Arab States had acted as mediators, and a solution had been found. Yet it was a solution entirely against every Zionist request and hope: "The Jews for their part," Neville Chamberlain told the Cabinet's Palestine Committee on March 6, "must be made to face up to the fact that a veto on immigration was inevitable after the initial period."³⁶ Two days later Malcolm MacDonald reported to the Cabinet on March 8, that whereas the Palestinian Arabs "had proved very difficult" in accepting any further Jewish immigration whatsoever, the representatives of the neighbouring Arab States, while supporting the Palestine Arabs in public, had, in private, "indicated that they are prepared to contemplate the immigration of 50,000 Jews over a period of five years, provided that the Arabs were in a position to veto the continuance of Jewish immigration after that date."³⁷ On March 15, German troops occupied Prague, and the Jews of Bohemia and Moravia were added to the ever growing number of second-class citizens, whose future in the Third Reich was a matter for the gravest concern. In all, 118,000 former Czech citizens were designated

³⁵ F.O. 371/24091.

³⁶ Cab. 27/651.

³⁷ Cab. 23/97.

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS REFUGEES

Jews, according to the Nuremberg Laws. In London, the Jewish representatives continued to press for an "open-door" policy with regard to Jewish immigration into Palestine. But, despite Jewish protest, the Cabinet now took the view that it was the Jews who should have made some compromise agreements with the Arabs in the past. The current impasse arose, Halifax told his Cabinet colleagues on March 22, "through no fault of the Arabs but through failure of the Jews to co-operate with the Arabs."³⁸ and on the following day, when the White Paper was finalized, Malcolm MacDonald informed his colleagues: "We must not enable the Jews to hold up constitutional progress by refusal to co-operate with the Arabs."³⁹

Dr. Weizmann, leaving England on March 24, wrote to Neville Chamberlain: "Never before have I left England with so heavy a heart. A cloud hangs over the relations between the Jewish Agency and British ministers. Through all the ups and downs of more than 20 years I have found support in the thought that, to quote Lord Balfour's words, 'We are partners in the great enterprise,' " an enterprise, Weizmann added, "which means life or death to my people."⁴⁰

The new policy, with its harsh implications for almost all refugees, was put into effect with amazing rapidity, even before the proposed White Paper was published by the Government, or debated in Parliament. Indeed, during April, anti-refugee pressures were quickly put on the governments of Hungary and Yugoslavia. Nor were these pressures always unwelcome to the ambassadors who received them. On April 11, an Independent Member of Parliament, Eleanor Rathbone, wrote to Winston Churchill: "When I was in Prague on refugee business I heard from everyone—refugee workers, journalists, etc.—that the British Legation was completely aloof, uninterested and unhelpful over refugee questions." And she added: "In Bucharest, the British

³⁸ Cab. 23/98.

³⁹ Cab. 23/98.

⁴⁰ Premier papers 1/352.

MARTIN GILBERT

Minister (as admitted to me by a member of his family) was strongly anti-Semite, though the persecution of Roumanian Jews had already begun.”⁴¹

On April 20, the Cabinet’s Palestine Committee discussed possible United States’ objections to the British policy of preventing Jewish refugees from going to Palestine. But Lord Halifax was able to report to his colleagues that he had discussed this very question with the American Ambassador, Joseph Kennedy, and that Kennedy had told him “that we ought not to over-estimate Jewish influence in the United States.” Later in the same Cabinet meeting, Neville Chamberlain declared, with all the authority of his premiership, that it was of “immense importance” from the point of view of strategy, “to have the Moslem world with us,” and he added: “If we must offend one side, let us offend the Jews rather than the Arabs.”⁴²

Continual efforts were made to put this policy into practical effect. On April 25, the British Minister to Greece, Sir Sydney Waterlow, was able to telegraph to the Foreign Office from Athens: “As a result of my representations Greek Government have now issued an order to Greek Port Authorities and Consular Offices abroad to the effect that it is from now on forbidden to transport Jews to Palestine in Greek ships if they are not in possession of passports or valid visas.” Waterlow added, as his personal opinion: “I am satisfied that this order will go a long way to putting an end to this traffic.”⁴³

In Palestine itself, the search for “illegal” immigrants continued even for those who managed to slip ashore. On April 22, the High Commissioner, Sir Harold MacMichael, was able to telegraph to Malcolm MacDonald: “On information given by Arabs to the military and police, 218 illegal immigrants were

⁴¹ Quoted in Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, Vol. 5, document volume “The Wilderness Years,” London, 1976.

⁴² Cab. 24/285.

⁴³ F.O. 371/24089.

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS REFUGEES

captured yesterday in orange groves south of Rehovot.”⁴⁴ For the policy-makers in London, these “illegals” were not true refugees at all. On April 26, Patrick Reilly minuted that the Jews who were seeking to reach Palestine from Czechoslovakia were people who “need not leave anyhow”: some of them, he added, “are definitely criminals or spies.”⁴⁵

The terrible conditions on board the refugee ships were made even worse by the long delays and even longer return voyages which British policy imposed upon them. On April 3, the British Vice-Consul in Constantza, Anthony Kendall, reported to the Foreign Office on the progress of the ship *Sandu*, with 350 refugees from Central Europe on board, which had been forced to return to Roumania from Palestine. Even though the Jewish Agency had been able to send food and water on board at Haifa, after twenty-five days at sea, the Consul reported, “the filth and congestion had to be seen to be believed.” The conditions on the ship were “absolutely shocking.”⁴⁶

On April 28, the Foreign Office received a press cutting from the *New York Times*, dated April 23, with an article by Joseph Levy, describing conditions on board another ship, the *Assimi*, which had likewise managed to reach Haifa. According to Levy: “When a police officer announced the Government’s order for the steamer to leave, the passengers tore off their clothing and screamed that they would rather be killed than sent back to sea. Some prayed and recited psalms.”

On May 8, Sir Sydney Waterlow suggested that the 700 refugees on board a third ship, the *Astir*, should be allowed temporarily into Cyprus. But this prompted Patrick Reilly to ask, on May 9: “Why should the British Empire take these refugees. We have nothing to show that they are in any way suitable settlers.” Reilly added: “Their position is horrible, for

⁴⁴ F.O. 371/24089.

⁴⁵ F.O. 371/24083.

⁴⁶ F.O. 371/24089.

MARTIN GILBERT

they have been on this small ship since March 7.”⁴⁷ But the policymakers did not allow themselves to be influenced by the conditions on board the *Astir*, and that same day, May 9, Randall noted that the Colonial Office “could hold out no hope that they would be allowed into Cyprus, which is too near Palestine anyhow.”⁴⁸

Meanwhile, as the *Astir* proceeded on its journey towards Palestine, the Foreign Office continued to put pressure on Roumania not to allow the boat to go on, and there was anger when that pressure failed. On May 9, the Foreign Office telegraphed to Sir Reginald Hoare, the British Minister in Bucharest, that the “failure of Roumanian authorities to prevent their departure has caused serious embarrassment to His Majesty’s Government, who are entitled to ask that Roumanian Government should assist in a difficult situation by taking the refugees back.”⁴⁹

On May 10, Sir Sydney Waterlow was able to report success for Britain in the wider, pan-Arab sphere. “Egyptian Minister here,” he telegraphed to the Foreign Office from Athens on May 10, “has informed me that Palestine Government’s action in arresting and ordering away vessels having on board illegal Jewish immigrants has had profound effect in Egypt, as well as proof of good faith and intentions.” Waterlow’s telegram continued: “Such concrete action had far more value in the eyes of an Oriental than any number of promises and agreements,” and he went on to urge continued vigilance, and action. “For this reason,” he added, “it seems to me most desirable that every effort should be made to prevent steamship *Astir* landing her passengers in Palestine.” He intended his own part in this to be a positive one. “I will endeavour,” he promised, “to furnish early information of her movements.”⁵⁰

⁴⁷ F.O. 371/24089.

⁴⁸ F.O. 371/24089.

⁴⁹ F.O. 371/24089.

⁵⁰ F.O. 371/24090.

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS REFUGEES

By the end of April 1939, the Palestine White Paper was finalized, imposing upon Palestine severe restrictions which would fix an upper limit of 100,000 on the number of Jewish immigrants to be admitted over the following five years, after which the Arabs would have an effective veto on any further Jewish immigration. MacDonald himself was aware of the basic unfairness of this decision. "As regards the policy itself," he told his Cabinet colleagues on May 1, he had admitted frankly that "certain points had been inserted to meet Arab pressure and which, perhaps, would have been omitted if the matter were looked at on strict merits."⁵¹

On May 9, 1939, a special Cabinet Committee on Refugees discussed a proposal to settle 500 Jewish families in British Guiana. Sir John Simon's economic objection had been overcome by a pledge from British Jewry to finance the settlement. But nevertheless the proposal was opposed, for, as Malcolm MacDonald told his Committee, "Lord Moyne and his colleagues on the Royal Commission on the West Indies were sceptical as to the possibilities of any extensive white settlement in British Guiana." MacDonald himself had another reason for hesitation, telling his Committee that he was "afraid that when the refugee settlers became British subjects (i.e. after five years) they would acquire the right to migrate into the United Kingdom if they wished."⁵²

On May 26, an Inter-Departmental Conference, at which Foreign and Colonial Office representatives were present, discussed the question both of those "illegal" immigrants already on their way to Palestine, and of those who might soon set off. The official minutes of the conference recorded:

...The subject could be conveniently divided into two parts.

(1) How to prevent further Jewish refugees from Central and South Eastern European countries from embarking on ships en

⁵¹ Cab. 23/99.

⁵² F.O. 371/24090.

MARTIN GILBERT

route for Palestine. (2) What, if any, steps should be taken with regard to the two Greek ships mentioned.

1. It was agreed, however...that strong pressure should be brought at once upon the Governments of the remaining countries [Greece, Hungary, Poland, Roumania and Yugoslavia] to take effective measures to put a stop to the traffic...

2. The following alternative courses of action were considered:

- (a) to admit them to Palestine.
- (b) to decline all responsibility.
- (c) to obtain permission for them to disembark in the port of embarkation.
- (d) to secure permission for them to land temporarily in some British colony in the Eastern Mediterranean, with a view to their ultimate settlement in a proposed Jewish colony elsewhere.

It was agreed that while (a) must be avoided at almost any cost (b) might occasion serious criticism in this country on the ground of callousness, and that therefore a fresh attempt should be made to secure (c).

One conclusion of the Conference of May 26, was that the Roumanian Government "should be asked to take them back"; and in order to bring "the utmost moral pressure to bear" on the Roumanians actually to accept the Jews back, and to set them en route to the Eastern European towns from which they had fled, it was agreed that the British Government "should offer as their own contribution to the solution of the problem, to supply free of charge, food, water and any necessary medical supplies at the Roumanian port of embarkation in each case sufficient for a short period say 15 days, while the negotiations were proceeding with the Roumanian Government."⁵³

Once more, the idea of "a proposed Jewish colony elsewhere" had been raised. But on the following day a Government Minister, Lord Winterton, wrote as follows to the Foreign Office about the possibility of Kenya—which had been raised at the Evian Conference in 1938. "Nothing," he declared in a letter

⁵³ F.O. 371/24090.

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS REFUGEES

to A.W.G. Randall on May 27, "could be more calculated to injure any organized Settlement Scheme in any territory, British or otherwise, than an unorganized flow of refugee immigrants *pari passu* with the formation of the settlement, and unconnected with it." Writing of what he had said at Evian, Lord Winterton told Randall that: "my recollection is that I spoke on more than one occasion of a 'trial settlement' in Kenya. I think that I *safeguarded the position* further by indicating, without mentioning figures, that if the experiment succeeded it would only eventually provide for the settlement of a small number of families." The figure mentioned, Winterton thought, had been "at most" three hundred.⁵⁴

The focus of Foreign Office attention now turned to the Danube. On the same day that Lord Winterton was especially barring out Kenya to any substantial Jewish settlement, the British Ambassador in Belgrade, Sir Ronald Campbell, was pressing the Yugoslav Government "to cooperate with His Majesty's Government . . . in putting a stop to attempts at illegal immigration into Palestine."⁵⁵ Three days later, on May 30, Campbell handed the Yugoslav Foreign Minister an *aide memoire* in which he stated that the British Government was "deeply concerned at the increase in attempts to land at ports in Palestine; Jewish refugees embarked in ships flying the Greek or some other flag at ports in various European countries, including Yugoslav ports in the Adriatic." The *aide memoire* continued:

A number of these embarkations have lately been taking place in Roumanian ports, and many of the Jewish refugees so embarked come from neighbouring countries. His Majesty's Minister at Bucharest has accordingly been instructed to suggest that the Roumanian Government take steps to make the entry into Roumania of persons in transit dependent in every case on proof of permission to enter a third country, or alternatively to take

⁵⁴ F.O. 371/24090.

⁵⁵ F.O. 371/24091.

MARTIN GILBERT

proper steps to prevent the embarkation at a Roumanian port of any person not possessing a visa for a third country.

His Majesty's Representatives at Warsaw, Budapest, and Athens have also been instructed to approach the governments to which they are accredited in the matter and to urge them to cooperate with His Majesty's Government and the other Governments concerned in putting a stop to these attempts at illegal immigration into Palestine. His Majesty's Government earnestly hope that the Yugoslav Government will use their best endeavour to the same end.⁵⁶

Within the Foreign Office in London, Randall had pondered the proposal of the Inter-Departmental Conference of May 26, for paying the Roumanian fifteen days' worth of food and water before sending the Jewish refugees back towards Poland, Central Europe, and above all Germany. Randall was very much against this British contribution, for, as he explained in a departmental memorandum on June 1:

The payment could only be offered by us if it was strictly limited, on the other hand it could only be attractive to the Roumanians if there was no limit, since there is no prospect of the negotiation at the end of a fortnight resulting in disposing of the majority of the cases who are German.

The question has to be faced what should be done with the non-Roumanian Jews when the limited period for which we might be prepared to pay for them came to an end. I confess I see no satisfactory answer to this question.

We could not press the Roumanian Government to return the German and Czechoslovak Jews to their country of origin; the proposed temporary solution of Cyprus has, I understand, been firmly rejected by the Governor; it is unthinkable that a miscellaneous crowd of Jews could be admitted to any other part of the Empire.

We therefore seem driven back, pending an approach to the Treasury, to making one more attempt to place the responsibility where it really lies, namely on the Roumanian and Greek Governments . . .⁵⁷

⁵⁶ F.O. 371/24091.

⁵⁷ F.O. 371/24090.

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS REFUGEES

Four days after Randall wrote this memorandum, with its added information that even Cyprus had now been barred as an alternative to Palestine, the House of Commons debated the refugee question. During the course of the debate, Josiah Wedgwood spoke with much bitterness against the Colonial Office and Foreign Office policy in carrying out the White Paper with such vigour. "Conduct worthy of Hitler," he declared, "conduct worthy of the Middle Ages, cannot be carried on by the British Government in 1939." Wedgwood added, with a direct reference to Malcolm MacDonald: "He may succeed in stopping this illegal immigration, but if he does the report of it will stink in the nostrils of posterity."

During the summer of 1939, the number of Jewish "illegal" immigrants seeking to reach Palestine grew considerably. In response, the British Government continued, with mounting vigour, to seek to stop the ships reaching Palestine. Every country that allowed Jews to pass through found itself faced with strong British displeasure. In June 1939, British anger was turned against the Roumanian Government; on June 9, Patrick Reilly, of the Foreign Office, protested against "the Roumanian Govt's complete failure to stop the scandalous traffic of illegal immigrants into Palestine."⁵⁸

According to the Roumanians, however, passengers coming down the Danube in *one* ship, and then transferring to another, were never legally within Roumanian jurisdiction. Such was the law of the Danube—according to the Definitive Statute of 1921. Commenting on this on June 14, Randall minuted for his Foreign Office colleagues: "The Roumanian argument about the international status of the Danube is plausible, but it also reveals an absence of any wish to collaborate with HMG to stop this traffic."⁵⁹

The British enquiries into places of refuge other than Palestine

⁵⁸ F.O. 371/24083.

⁵⁹ F.O. 371/24091.

MARTIN GILBERT

continued throughout the summer of 1939. On June 3, the Foreign Office received information from the Indian Ocean island of Socotra. Officially, it was reported "Jewish refugee settlement in Socotra is quite impractical." But, as a further minute explained, the ruler of Socotra, a Muslim, had made it clear that "if only they were Christians and not Jews there would be no trouble."⁶⁰

But on June 15, the Foreign Office learned, from the British Legation in Bogota, that the Colombian Government had decided to suspend Jewish immigration, and had just refused to issue 1,500 immigration permits to Jewish applicants. Randall noted: "This is disappointing, but the same thing is happening all over S. America."⁶¹ That same day the Foreign Office received a report from Sir John Maybin, the Governor of Northern Rhodesia, on the possibility of Jewish settlement there. Large-scale Jewish settlement had been proposed, by one of Churchill's former advisers at the Colonial Office, Major, and now Sir Herbert Young. But, as the Governor wrote:

I am frankly alarmed at the thought of European children being born and brought up in such a regime where an insufficient and ill-balanced diet would be inevitable and no amenities of life possible. The result, as I foresee it, would be physical degeneration.

To these physical dangers would be added the even more serious danger of mental and moral degeneration. The educational facilities even for our present European population are far from satisfactory.

The Governor's objections continued:

⁶⁰ F.O. 371/24091. The island of Socotra had a population of 12,000 in 1939, and is 1,400 square miles in extent. Until the end of the seventeenth century its population had been Christian, but by 1800 they had come under Muslim rule and influence. In 1886 the Sultan had entered into protectorate treaty relations with Britain.

⁶¹ F.O. 371/24086.

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS REFUGEES

I am sure that you will agree that it would be unfair to allow European children to grow up in this Territory ill-nourished and ill-educated, and that very grave problems for the future would be created thereby. It will strain our resources to provide education for the existing population. To increase that strain by introducing a large number of settlers who would contribute little directly or indirectly to the revenue might well create a problem beyond our financial means.

Commenting on the Governor's arguments, a senior member of the Foreign Office, Sir Orme Sargent, an opponent of the appeasement of Nazi Germany, noted caustically on June 23: "I can imagine a great many of these arguments are being used with equal sincerity to prove that Jewish colonisation in Palestine was bound to fail on economic and climatic grounds."⁶²

On July 6, in a debate in the House of Lords, several Peers urged a British Government loan towards the resettlement of Jewish refugees in British Guiana. But on July 7, at a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Refugees, Sir Samuel Hoare, the Chairman of the Committee, confirmed Britain's support for the Evian Conference decision, "that no participating Government would give direct financial assistance to refugees." It was essential, Hoare explained, that Britain should "put first the general financial stringency, which precludes consideration of any further burden on the British taxpayer except on urgent grounds." On July 13, one of the United States representatives on the Intergovernmental Committee for Refugees, Robert Pell, reported to Washington that the British Representative on the Committee, Sir Herbert Emerson, had told him:

...that it was not the intention of the British Government to permit 'mass settlement' in Guiana or anything resembling the situation in Palestine. He said at most it would agree to the establishment of a group of 50 here and 50 there interspersed throughout the territory and not forming a homogeneous mass of

⁶² F.O. 371/24091.

MARTIN GILBERT

Jews. He said that the idea which seemed to be held in American circles that something akin to a Jewish state could be set up anywhere in the world was Utopian in the extreme . . .⁶³

During the autumn of 1939, the British Government made several attempts to influence United States opinion against the "illegal" immigration. But there were counter-sympathies difficult to combat: in particular a further report sent by Joseph Levy to the *New York Times*, and published on June 2, which had roused sympathy throughout the United States for the plight of the refugees during their perilous journey towards Palestine. The ship concerned was a Greek cattle boat, the *Liesel*, with 906 Jews on board, which had reached Palestine on June 1. The passengers, who included 300 women and children, had come from Poland, Roumania, Germany and Czechoslovakia. Allowed by the authorities to enter, their number was to be deducted from the next immigration schedule. "It goes without saying," Levy noted, "that the British soldiers and constables here are happy when the human contraband they have apprehended are finally released. They look sympathetically upon joyful reunions of long separated families."

In his article, Levy also wrote of less fortunate refugees, 424 in all, who had left Danzig nearly three months before, and were "now stranded on the Island of Crete in utter destitution, starvation and sickness. These castaways lack elementary sanitary necessities." Levy's article continued:

Under normal conditions illegal immigrants constitute the best constructive elements for the country, since those whose entry is effected with the approval of national Jewish organisations are previously trained for Palestine life and labor conditions.

But groups organised by the Revisionists are based on the wider assumption that any Jew willing to go to Palestine is acceptable.

It is no secret that the Jewish population of Palestine is sympa-

⁶³ Quoted in Joshua Sherman, *Island Refuge*, London, 1973, p. 253.

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS REFUGEES

thetic and helpful to all organisations now taking the latter wider view.

It is interesting to note that even the Palestine Arabs in general are not antagonistic toward these illegal immigrants. Many of the latter recount instances of Arab charity when they wandered unknowingly into Arab villages. While some of the Fellaheen ran to report them to the police, the refugees report, others sheltered the newcomers, sharing their bread and olives.

On July 22, in order to attempt to lessen the impact of Levy's article, the Colonial Office prepared a special note on the subject of illegal immigration. This note was sent confidentially to all British Consuls in the United States, for use in trying to win American sympathy for the British point of view. "Every country which operates a quota system," the note read—a clear reference to the strict United States legislation, "must protect its laws from infringement, and its citizens from mass-invasion." The immigration traffic itself was "a dirty, sordid, crooked business." The Jews of Palestine, in helping the immigrants to get ashore, were "palpably neglecting their duties as citizens," and, having been in favour of law and order during the earlier Arab riots, it "ill becomes them of all people to play the other game now." The Colonial Office note also sought to point out to the British Consuls, and through them to the American public, that:

The idea is fostered by Jewish circles that they are justified in trying to break the law by virtue of some super-legal higher morality, and in extenuation they cite the persecutions in Greater Germany, and the desperate plight in which many European Jews now find themselves. But in this view they, like so many other lawbreakers, are thinking only of themselves, and fail to realise that what they are doing is fundamentally anti-social—as anti-social as the German persecution of which they complain.⁶⁴

A phrase had been used in this Colonial Office note to the effect that the Jews from Poland and Roumania were not *bona*

⁶⁴ F.O. 371/24091.

MARTIN GILBERT

fide refugees. This argument had first reached London from the Chargé d’Affaires in Warsaw, Clifford Norton, who had written on July 6, about the Jews reaching Poland from Prague; “It is true that many of those now more or less earmarked by the Refugee Organisation are non-political refugees, mostly Jews who left the Protectorate perhaps prematurely in panic.” Yet Norton had also given a graphic picture of what fate might be in store if these Jews returned to Prague: “If I began to tell you,” he wrote to Randall, “the stories *we can vouch for* . . . nostrils or cheeks slit, swastikas branded etc., you would agree that one can feel little certainty as to what might happen to them.”⁶⁵

Reading Norton’s report, and ignoring his account of the terrors which a return to Czechoslovakia might involve, on July 24, Patrick Reilly minuted:

The problem of the Czech refugees is an extremely difficult one, particularly as regards the refugees in Poland. A great many of these are not in any sense political refugees, but Jews who panicked unnecessarily and who need not have left: many of them are quite unsuitable as emigrants and would be a very difficult problem if brought here.⁶⁶

On July 30, Neville Chamberlain commented on the persecution of the Jews of Germany in a letter to one of his sisters. “I believe the persecution arose out of two motives; A desire to rob the Jews of their money and a jealousy of their superior cleverness.” His letter continued: “No doubt Jews aren’t a loveable people; I don’t care about them myself;—but that is not sufficient to explain the Pogrom.”⁶⁷

⁶⁵ F.O. 371/24084.

⁶⁶ F.O. 371/24100.

⁶⁷ Templewood papers. I am grateful to the librarian and staff of the University Library, Cambridge, for access to this collection, the private papers of Sir Samuel Hoare, later Viscount Templewood, Home Secretary from May 1937 to September 1939.

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS REFUGEES

On July 20, the House of Commons again debated the refugee policy, and Britain's financial contribution. Several MPs, among them Josiah Wedgwood, Alfred Duff Cooper, and Leopold Amery, spoke bitterly against the Government's policy of not accepting that many of the Jews who fled were really refugees, in the technical sense.

During the debate, MacDonald revealed that, to show its displeasure at the continuation of "illegal" immigration, the Government had decided "a short while ago" to suspend all legal immigration. This suspension, he told the House, would remain in operation for a further six months. At the same time, "illegal" immigrant ships would still be intercepted and turned back.

Duff Cooper, who had resigned from the Cabinet after Munich, was speaking for the first time on Palestine. "It seems to me," he said, "that the latest announcement that because illegal immigration is succeeding, legal immigration has to be stopped, is another lamentable proof of failure. It is like a petulant school-master who, because some boys play truant, keeps in those who come to school." The Jews and Arabs, Duff Cooper went on, were both "old friends" of Britain. If two old friends come to you for help, you help the one who has "the greatest need," clearly, in this instance, the Jews; and he added: "Before these islands began their history, a thousand years before the Prophet Mohammed was born, the Jew, already exiled, sitting by the water of Babylon, was singing: 'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its cunning.'"

During his speech Duff Cooper spoke of what a "hateful experience" it was for the Arab to see his land "passing out of his hands into those of another race," but he went on to ask: "What hateful experiences are other races going through at the present time? Compare it, for a moment, with the long torture that is being inflicted on the Jews." His speech ended with an appeal to the Government not to close Palestine to the Jews, and he declared:

MARTIN GILBERT

In the course of their long persecution, they have begun once again to see a hope of return. It is us, it is the British people, British statesmen, the fore-runners of right hon. Gentlemen on the Front Bench, who have raised that hope in their hearts. It is the strong arm of the British Empire that has opened that door to them when all other doors are shut. Shall we now replace that hope that we have revived by despair, and shall we slam the door in the face of the long-wandering Jew?

On the day after this debate Lord Beaverbrook's mass-circulation *Daily Express* commented scathingly on the financial aspects: "Jews all over the world should be willing to help the persecuted and homeless of their own race. Our own Exchequer cannot bear the burden." The Jewish organizations had, however, almost exhausted their funds, which came entirely from private donations. On August 2, an all-Party deputation went to see the Chancellor of the Exchequer to urge him to make available to Jewish refugees a sum of £ two million, as a separate sum from the £ four million which had originally been proposed for Czechoslovak refugees in general. But this request was rejected,⁶⁸ and on August 4, Lord Winterton told the House of Commons that extra funds were not available for "these unfortunate refugees."

At this very moment British funds had been refused, Jewish refugees were being denied entry into more and more countries, among them Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Nicaragua, while at the same time France, Belgium, Holland and even Switzerland were tightening their entry regulations and frontier controls. As far as entry into the United States was concerned, since April 1939, its refugee quotas had been completely filled, not only for the remaining eight months of 1939, but for the whole of 1940 and 1941 as well; nor could any number of appeals to President Roosevelt give the refugees any hope of a change in United States policy.

⁶⁸ F.O. 371/24100.

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS REFUGEES

On July 31, 1939, a specific question was asked in the British Parliament about the plight of those Jewish refugees from Czechoslovakia who had crossed over the frontier in to Poland. The question was directed to Chamberlain, but a note in the Foreign Office files states: "PM does *not* wish to see."⁶⁹ Nevertheless, some answer had to be given by someone. Despite Clifford Norton's letter of July 6, and a further detailed despatch from Katowice, in Poland, of July 7, both of which had been discussed at the Foreign Office for a week before the Parliamentary question, the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, R.A. Butler, told the House of Commons that the Prime Minister "has received no very recent reports on the position of refugees from Czecho-Slovakia in Poland."

For the Cabinet meeting of August 4, Malcolm MacDonald had asked that the question of illegal immigration be put specially on the agenda. At the meeting itself he gave his colleagues a report of what was being done. As a first step, the High Commissioner in Palestine had been authorized "to make the recent drastic announcement that no immigration quota would be issued for the next six-monthly period October 1939–March 1940." It was essential, MacDonald said, "that we should adhere firmly to this decision," which was already making the Jewish leaders realize "that they would have to use their influence to stop illegal immigration in order to secure the resumption of legal immigration."

The second step in progress, MacDonald added, was the "strong representations" being made by the Foreign Office to certain Governments "against their laxity in the matter of the discouragement of this traffic." MacDonald continued:

Very strong representations had been made in particular to Roumania, Poland and Greece, and the first results of this action had been good. Roumania and Greece had taken action which

⁶⁹ F.O. 371/24084.

MARTIN GILBERT

should secure much stricter surveillance, and while the good effect of our representations might not last, since the power of Jewish money was great, for the present at any rate the results were good.⁷⁰

MacDonald's reference to what he called "the power of Jewish money" was ill-chosen. In reality, the situation of European Jewry in 1939 was precarious and weak, and the funds of the Jewish charitable institutions nearly exhausted. In mid-August news of just how desperate the Jewish situation was in Europe reached the Foreign Office from Slovakia, when a full report of the fate of Slovak Jewry reached them on August 17, through the League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The report was distressing. Non-Jews, private Slovak citizens, encouraged by the Germans, "do all they can to rob and plunder Jewish property and persecute the Jewish people." Other Slovaks, "unable to show their hatred of the Germans, so vent their wrath instead upon the Jews." More than 85,000 Jews were affected by the new mood. "Jew-baiting" was a frequent occurrence. All but a tiny proportion of Jews had been excluded since the previous March from all the professions, and from the universities. Many Jewish shops and businesses had been forced to close. For this reason, many Slovak Jews were joining the "illegal" movement to Palestine: "Their nerves can stand no more," the report explained. "Fear of the unknown in other countries is more pleasant to them than present persecution and feeling that they are trapped." Several thousand had already fled, and some had even succeeded in reaching Palestine: "This made the others more reckless," the report added, "especially as conditions in Slovakia grew worse."⁷¹

What was the Foreign Office reaction to this report? On August 18, Patrick Reilly minuted:

⁷⁰ Cab. 27/651.

⁷¹ F.O. 371/24085.

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS REFUGEES

I don't know whether our relations with the Slovak Govt through HBM Consul at Bratislava are such as to make it possible for him to take any useful action with the Slovak Govt. If so, he might use our willingness to apply some of the Govt fund to Slovakia as an inducement to get the Slovaks to reduce pressure on Jews to leave, or at least to discourage them from trying to go to Palestine.⁷²

On August 23, news of the Nazi-Soviet pact effectively sealed the fate of Poland's three million Jews. The news of the pact was announced in the middle of one of the sessions of the twenty-first Zionist Congress, being held in Geneva. On the following day Arthur Ruppin, one of the Palestine delegates, noted in his diary: "The news exploded like a bomb."⁷³

In his final words to the Congress on the evening of August 24, Weizmann told the delegates: "If, as I hope, we are spared in life and our work continues, who knows—perhaps a new light will shine upon us from the thick black gloom," and he ended: "The remnant shall work on, fight on, live on, until the dawn of better days. Towards that dawn I greet you. May we meet again in peace." The official protocol of the Congress recorded how, at this point: "Deep emotion grips the Congress. Dr. Weizmann embraces his colleagues on the platform. There are tears in many eyes. Hundreds of hands are stretched out towards Dr. Weizmann as he leaves the hall."⁷⁴

Despite the Nazi-Soviet pact, the pressures against Jewish immigration, which Malcolm MacDonald had outlined to his Cabinet colleagues on August 4, continued to be applied. On September 1, the Germans invaded Poland, and Warsaw was subjected to the most severe bombing raid hitherto known. But even the coming of war did not soften British policy towards the

⁷² F.O. 371/24085.

⁷³ Quoted in Alex Bein (editor), *Arthur Ruppin: Memoirs, Diaries, Letters*, London, 1971, p. 299.

⁷⁴ Quoted in Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, London, 1972, pp. 532-533.

MARTIN GILBERT

Jews. Further pressure was put on Turkey on September 1, "to do what they can to delay ships carrying illegal immigrants," as Halifax telegraphed to the British Ambassador in Ankara.⁷⁵

That same night, September 1, another "illegal" immigrant ship, the *Tiger Hill*, reached the sea a few miles off Tel Aviv, with 1,200 immigrants on board. The ship was challenged by a British police vessel, which, seeing its challenge ignored, opened fire. Two Jews on board the ship were killed: their deaths "legalized" by an Immigration Ordinance which had been published four months earlier, on April 27, 1939, and which authorized police vessel commanders to open fire at ships suspected of trying to bring illegal immigrants ashore. Having been fired on, the *Tiger Hill* was run aground off Tel Aviv. Shortly after the ship was beached, a third passenger, a woman, died of exposure and exhaustion.⁷⁶

On September 8, five days after the British declaration of war on Germany, the American Ambassador in Berlin, who had been put in charge of all British interests, telegraphed to London with a request from the State Department. The request read: "Please ascertain from British Government whether German nationals of the Jewish race who hold immigration permits issued by British authorities in Germany will be allowed to enter Great Britain and if so advise procedure to be followed in stamping or visaing their passports." This was the British answer, dated September 18:

On the outbreak of war all visas previously authorised or granted became void, and it is left to the individual to make an entirely fresh application which will be dealt with in accordance with

⁷⁵ F.O. 371/24094.

⁷⁶ For an account of this incident, see Daphne Trevor, *Under the White Paper: Some Aspects of British Administration in Palestine from 1939 to 1947*, Jerusalem, 1948. For a detailed study of the British Government's wartime policy towards the Jews, see Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe, 1939-1945*, London, 1979.

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS REFUGEES

the war time regulations which do not contemplate the grant of visas to refugees of this nature.⁷⁷

It was on September 18, the same day as this decision, that Dr. Weizmann went to see Malcolm MacDonald, as a matter of urgency, to plead with MacDonald for permission to allow 20,000 Polish Jewish children to enter Palestine. These 20,000 would still not complete the 25,000 special quota of immigrants envisaged in the White Paper four months before, and, in a letter to MacDonald, Weizmann had written, movingly, for "immediate permission" to move the children from Poland to Palestine. "The economic burden of supporting them," Weizmann added, "will naturally fall upon the Jewish people, inside and outside Palestine. We pledge ourselves to provide for them. It therefore depends on your decision alone whether the lives of Jewish children shall be saved or not."⁷⁸

Weizmann's appeal was discussed in the Colonial Office that same afternoon, in MacDonald's room, and with MacDonald present. The official minutes of the meeting were taken by Lacy Bagallay. Its decision, its arguments, and its tone, constituted a terrible blow to Jewish hopes. As the minutes recorded:

Mr. MacDonald said that his own view had at first been that we should make some effort to meet this request, on humanitarian and other grounds. On reflection, however, he had felt that it must be turned down. Technically it might be possible for us to admit 20,000 Polish Jewish children to Palestine straight away without going back on our pledge to the Arabs not to exceed the immigration figures laid down in the White Paper and our decision to hold up the current immigration quota owing to illegal immigration.

The position about the 25,000 refugees is that it has always been intended that they should be introduced gradually over the five-year period, and in fact the first quota period made provision for a certain number of these refugees, although it subsequently

⁷⁷ F.O. 371/24100.

⁷⁸ F.O. 371/23251.

MARTIN GILBERT

had to be cancelled for the reason already mentioned. In any case, it has always been contemplated that these refugees should include persecuted Jews of all countries, and not only Poland.

It might be possible to get round the technical difficulty of our promise with regard to illegal immigration by keeping the children in Cyprus or some such British territory until the new quota period began, and then introducing them into Palestine. But he thought that, even though this might not actually be breaking our promise, it would certainly be so regarded by the Arabs.

Furthermore, there were technical difficulties about getting the children there and making arrangements for the reception of so large a body at once, whatever Dr. Weizmann might say about accepting responsibility for their maintenance. The position in all the Middle Eastern countries was delicate, and he thought that to accept Dr. Weizmann's proposal might have serious consequences.

There was, furthermore, the consideration that H.M.G. were at war and everything must be subordinated to the winning of the war. However brutal it might sound, to remove 20,000 children from Poland at this moment would *pro tanto* simplify the German economic problem.

As against this must be set the possibility of hostile comment in America and other countries should this chance of relieving distress in Poland be missed. But here again the distress weighed equally on Christians and Jews alike, and the Christians were far the more numerous. On the whole, therefore, he felt that, without saying anything about Arab sentiments, he should reply to Dr. Weizmann that the acceptance of his request might prejudice the successful prosecution of the war, and, for that reason, must be turned down.⁷⁹

Even American pressure for some relaxation of British Colonial restrictions met with a negative response. On September 25, a week after Weizmann's meeting with MacDonald, a special War Cabinet Committee on refugee problems decided, and so informed the United States Government, that Britain could not assist the emigration in war time of "Reich nationals," and that

⁷⁹ F.O. 371/23251.

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS REFUGEES

large-scale settlement in British colonies was to be "suspended" for the duration of the war.⁸⁰

In fact, less than a thousand refugees had been allowed to enter British Colonial Dependencies in the six months from March to September 1939, the very six months when the Colonial alternative had been so much discussed. The following figures for those six months up to September 30, are taken from the official Colonial Office statistics: Cyprus 291 Jews; Kenya 216; North Rhodesia 186; Malaya 88; Hong Kong 43; British Honduras 23; British Guiana 19; Swaziland 13; Ceylon and the Bahamas 10 Jews each; the Gold Coast and Malta seven each; the Bechuanaland and Nyasaland Protectorates six each; Jamaica five; Fiji, the Uganda Protectorate and Sarawak three each; and the Leeward Islands and Gibraltar one Jew each. Fourteen further colonies had refused to take any Jews at all: these included Barbados, the Gambia, Mauritius, Nigeria, the Seychelles, the Somaliland Protectorate and Tanganyika.⁸¹

With the coming of war, the British Government had not only continued, but even intensified, its attempts to halt the flow of "illegal" Jewish refugees; indeed, Royal Navy ships, ostensibly on contraband duty, were used during the winter of 1939 to intercept immigrant ships. The success of this policy, and of the pressures which continued to be applied on foreign governments, was commented on by J.S. Bennett, the official in the Colonial Office responsible for Jewish immigration, when he noted on September 15, 1939:

Roumania has prohibited the departure of Jews to any destination. Turkey has been asked to obstruct (on sanitary and safety grounds) the passage of ships carrying Jewish immigrants through the Bosphorus. Greece has introduced legislation with heavy

⁸⁰ F.O. 371/24078.

⁸¹ These statistics were prepared by the Colonial Office at the end of September 1939; there is a copy in F.O. 371/24097.

MARTIN GILBERT

penalties for any of their nationals engaging in the trade. Panama had promised to put a stop to the irregular use of her flag. All other countries concerned have been strongly pressured to cooperate and have undertaken to do so. We can only wait and see.⁸²

On September 20, the Deputy Under-Secretary of State at the Colonial Office, Sir John Shuckburgh, alarmed at the number of "illegals" who had succeeded in leaving Central Europe, expressed, in a departmental minute, his hope that, as a result of the outbreak of war, "some of the sources of supply may dry up."⁸³ Five days later the Foreign Office rejected a suggestion by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to help facilitate the passage of German Jewish refugees seeking to reach Palestine through Italian ports: such help would, it was argued, be contrary to the decision of the Cabinet Committee on Refugees to "suspend" the emigration of Reich nationals in war time.⁸⁴ On September 26, a further Foreign Office minute by G. M. Warr of the Western Department explained that "no refugees who were in Germany at the outbreak of war would be admitted to the UK." A "few," he wrote, might be allowed in from neutral countries, "but these cases would have to be carefully considered."⁸⁵

Since the outbreak of the war, all "illegal" refugees who did manage to reach Palestine were being interned in a camp at Athlit, just south of Haifa. This decision alarmed the officials of the Colonial Office, one of whom, Harold Downie, the head

⁸² Colonial Office papers (hereafter C.O.) 733/395. For a detailed account of the part played by the Colonial Office in carrying out the provisions of the Palestine White Paper, with special reference to Jewish immigration, see Ronald W. Zweig, "British Policy to Palestine, May 1939-1943; the Fate of the White Paper." Cambridge PhD, 1978.

⁸³ F.O. 371/24094.

⁸⁴ F.O. 371/24095.

⁸⁵ F.O. 371/24101.

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS REFUGEES

of the Middle East Department, suggested to Malcolm MacDonald on October 10, that it should be publicly announced that when the war was over these internees would be "transferred to the country from which they came."⁸⁶ MacDonald agreed, noting four days later that, in his view, the British Government should adopt the policy of "sending them back to mainland Europe after the war."⁸⁷

As 1939 came to an end, British pressure on foreign governments continued; so much so that, on December 20, the Colonial Office wrote to the Foreign Office of Turkey's continuing laxity in allowing refugee boats to pass through the Bosphorus on their way from the Black Sea. "We therefore suggest," the Colonial Office letter read, "that the Turkish Government might be invited to enact legislation prohibiting their merchant marine from engaging in this traffic, on the lines of the law enacted by the Greek Government at our request in the earlier part of this year..." Of the refugee ship whose passage had prompted this protest, the Colonial Office wrote: "We trust that, even if the *Sakaria* cannot be turned back, she will at least be refused all facilities at Turkish ports on her passage through."⁸⁸

On December 29, the "illegal" immigration was discussed at the Foreign Office, where Warr minuted: "The only hope is that all the German Jews will be stuck at the mouths of the Danube for lack of ships to take them..."⁸⁹

⁸⁶ C.O. 733/395.

⁸⁷ C.O. 733/395.

⁸⁸ C.O. 733/395.

⁸⁹ F.O. 371/24097.

Bernard Wasserstein

The British Government and the German Immigration 1933-1945

The roots of British policy towards the German immigration in the Nazi period can be traced back to the firmly established Victorian tradition of free immigration and political asylum and to the political struggles and legislative action which eventually limited that tradition between 1905 and 1919.

Between 1826 and 1905 there was, in effect, total freedom of immigration to Britain. Although an Aliens Act limiting that freedom was passed by Parliament in 1848 it never took effect and in 1850 the Act expired without any alien having been denied entry or expelled under its provisions. Although the presence in Britain of many radical political refugees occasionally led to diplomatic complications with European powers, these never led the British Government to limit immigration during the Victorian period. Nor was there any significant public hostility to European refugees, such native xenophobia as existed being directed rather at the illiberal European regimes from which the refugees had fled. The prevalent attitude was expressed by the Conservative Lord Malmesbury in 1852 when he declared in Parliament: 'I can well conceive the pleasure and happiness of a refugee, hunted from his native land, on approaching the shores of England, and the joy with which he first catches sight of them; but they are not greater than the pleasure and happiness every Englishman feels in knowing that his country affords the refugees a home and safety'.¹ Against this friendly background the number of foreigners registered in census returns in England and Wales rose from 50,289 in 1851 to 118,031 in 1881.

In 1881, however, a new type of immigration began which was to lead by 1905 to the end of the Victorian liberal tradition of free entry. This was the immigration of Russian Jews. By 1901 the number of aliens counted in the census was 247,758, and it has been estimated that of these about 100,000 were Jews who had entered Britain in the two previous decades.² This influx, so much larger in volume than the immigration of the mid-Victorian period and very different from it in social character, helped give birth to what has been described as 'a tradition of antisemitism in Britain' between 1876 and 1939.³ For much of the period this was confined, particularly in its more virulent forms, to the political fringe. But by the turn of the century there was considerable public opposition to east-European Jewish immigrants, particularly in areas of highly concentrated settlement such as the East End of London. Antisemitism coalesced with a general xenophobia during the Boer War (1899–1902) to produce demands for restriction of immigration. The Aliens Act of 1905 empowered immigration officers to refuse to admit undesirables – the diseased, the insane, the criminal, and the putative public charge. Although passed by Balfour's Conservative Government against Liberal opposition, the Liberal Government administered the Act after 1906. The passage of the Act appears to have had a psychological effect on the volume of immigration which shrank considerably between 1906 and 1914.⁴

The outbreak of the First World War and the bitter anti-German feeling of the war years led to further legislation which greatly limited rights of entry and which, in addition, imposed restrictions upon aliens resident in Britain. Immediately upon the outbreak of the war the Government introduced an Aliens Restriction Bill which passed through all its stages in Parliament in one day, 5 August 1914. The Act, designed 'in time of war or imminent national danger or great emergency to impose restrictions on aliens', required all aliens to register with the police and gave the Home Secretary the power to exclude or deport without appeal.⁵ Of an estimated total of 50,000 Germans resident in Britain in 1914 about 40,000 were interned.⁶ War hysteria, which compelled the resignation of the allegedly Germanophile Lord Chancellor, Lord Haldane, and led to bans on performances of the music of Beethoven, rendered difficult the position even of long-established and naturalised Germans in England. At the instance of a Scottish baronet, the Crown was induced to bring an action calling upon Sir Ernest Cassell and Sir Edgar Speyer 'to show by what authority they claimed to be Privy Councillors' since they were not natural-born British subjects.⁷ German- and Austrian-

The British Government & the German Immigration 1933-1945

born British citizens felt obliged to write a series of 'loyalty letters' to *The Times*, asserting their loyalty to their adopted land. There were attacks on shops owned by Germans or by persons with German-sounding names – often Jews.

The restrictive legislation introduced during the war survived its end and was extended by Lloyd George's coalition Government in the Aliens Restriction Act of 1919 and the ensuing Aliens Order of 1920. These provided that, in addition to the restrictions enacted in 1914, no alien might enter the country other than temporarily unless he had a Ministry of Labour permit or had visible means of support; moreover, any alien might be refused admission by an immigration officer; there was no appeal from the Home Secretary's decision. The legislation enacted between 1905 and 1919 remained in effect until after the Second World War: indeed, in its application to immigration from much of continental Europe, it was overridden only upon British accession to the Treaty of Rome, with its provision for free movement of labour within the European Economic Community, in 1972.

The legislative basis for British policy towards the German emigration to Britain between 1933 and 1945 therefore originated in hostility to the immigration and settlement of Jews and of Germans. Of the 49,500 Germans and Austrians (not including trans-migrants passing through the country) admitted to Britain between 1933 and 1939 perhaps 90 per cent were Jews. That such a large number of German Jews were admitted in spite of the anti-Jewish and anti-German roots of the immigration laws in force at the time was remarkable. It is thus hardly surprising that some public opposition to the influx, often couched in the traditional terms of the anti-immigration movements of the early part of the century, surfaced almost immediately. On 9 March 1933, Mr E. Doran, Unionist MP for Tottenham North, asked the Home Secretary in the House of Commons whether he would 'take steps to prevent any alien Jews entering this country from Germany'. The Home Secretary replied that it was

not within the contemplation of the law that there should be discrimination against aliens on grounds of religious belief or racial origin, but there are adequate powers under the Aliens Order to protect this country from any undesirable influx of aliens.⁸

Although correct as a description of the legal provisions of the Act, the response was, as we have seen, hardly accurate as an explanation of the

political origins and purpose of the legislation. Whatever might be 'within the contemplation of the law' the Government, as will be seen, did not don social, political, or religious blinkers in its consideration of the issue between 1933 and 1945.

The initial wave of emigration from Germany of political opponents of Hitler and of Jews (some 37,000 of whom are estimated to have fled the country in 1933)⁹ compelled the British Government soon after the Nazi accession to power to review its policy regarding the admission of German refugees. At a Cabinet meeting on 5 April 1933 the question 'of the admission of Jews entering this country from Germany' was considered 'as a matter of urgency', and it was decided to form a Cabinet Committee on Aliens Restrictions under the chairmanship of the Home Secretary.¹⁰

In a report to the committee on 6 April the Home Secretary noted that over the previous few days there had been a 'marked increase' in the number of aliens arriving in Britain and he added that 'analysis of the records shows that the bulk of this increase is due to an influx of Germans, mainly of the professional classes and probably Jews'. The Home Secretary continued that 'in theory, the Home Office will have power to regulate the stay of such people by refusing to grant further extensions, but in practice it may prove very difficult to insist on their return to Germany while present conditions continue in that country'. Under the current administration of the Aliens Order, 'Jewish refugees from Germany who are unable to satisfy the Immigration Officer as to their means of maintenance would be refused leave to land'.¹¹

Appended to the Home Secretary's report was a document signed by four representatives of the Anglo-Jewish community: Neville Laski and Lionel L. Cohen of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, L.G. Montefiore of the Anglo-Jewish Association and Otto M. Schiff of the Jews' Temporary Shelter. This outlined arrangements put in hand by the community to look after immigrants on arrival. The document contained a pledge which was to provide an essential foundation for the Government's willingness to permit substantial immigration from Germany until the outbreak of the war. On behalf of the Anglo-Jewish community the representatives declared: 'All expense, whether in respect of temporary or permanent accommodation or maintenance, will be borne by the Jewish community without ultimate charge to the State'.¹² Indigents would thus not fall on the public purse.

The Home Secretary's memorandum invited the Cabinet Committee to consider 'whether there is any ground for a relaxation of

The British Government & the German Immigration 1933-1945

the provisions of the Aliens Order so as to allow of the admission of persons of this class on the basis of the guarantee given by the Jewish community'. The memorandum stated (as it turned out over-optimistically) that 'it may be taken that the Jewish community is willing and has ample means to implement its guarantee of temporary maintenance for the refugees'. The Home Secretary continued that, were Jewish refugees to be admitted on the basis of the guarantee, 'Immigration Officers will continue to exercise their powers to refuse leave to land to any individual alien on medical grounds or on grounds personal to him such as known criminal activities or known association with subversive movements'. This hint of political concern was made explicit in the final paragraph of the memorandum:

There is, of course, a risk that the influx of refugees from Germany may include a certain number of Communists, but any who are prominent in the Communist Movement are known, and would be excluded by the Immigration Officers. As regards other persons who are suspected on arrival of Communist activities, steps can be taken to see that they are refused leave to land or that the question of giving them leave is referred to the Secretary of State for decision.

The Cabinet Committee considered the issue with particular attention to the number of refugees who might be expected to arrive. The Anglo-Jewish representatives were said to have estimated that the total number expected 'should not exceed three to four thousand, the bulk being members of the professional classes'. However, the committee doubted whether 'it is possible to form any correct estimate at the present time', noting that if anti-Jewish trends in Germany persisted, 'the pressure to migrate will be greatly increased'. 'Grave objections' were expressed to the proposal to relax immigration restrictions on the basis of the Jewish community's guarantee, and the committee's report to the Cabinet stated:

While it is true that the Jewish Community are prepared to guarantee accommodation and maintenance for the refugees, it is inevitable that sooner or later the Government will be pressed to waive the condition that the refugees must not enter into employment. . . . It is not possible to forecast the actual effect on unemployment of a waiver of the condition, or the extent to which the refugees might displace British labour, but we agree with the Ministry of Labour that public opinion would be extremely sensitive on the subject, and that if it could be demonstrated in a few

individual cases that British workmen had lost their jobs to Jewish refugees, the demand for a reimposition of the restrictions and their rigid enforcement would be irresistible.

The committee therefore recommended that the existing immigration arrangements should be maintained, that certain further restrictions should be added in order to strengthen controls and that the Anglo-Jewish representatives should be informed that while there could be no question of relaxing entry restrictions, the Government would be prepared to consider extending permission to stay for refugees whose maintenance was guaranteed by the Jewish community.¹³

The Cabinet approved the committee's recommendations in a meeting on 8 April 1933 but its discussion of the issue, as recorded in the minutes, was less negative in tone than that of the committee. It was argued in the Cabinet that it would be in the public interest to

try and secure for this country prominent Jews who were being expelled from Germany and who had achieved distinction whether in pure science, applied science, such as medicine or technical industry, music or art. This would not only obtain for this country the advantage of their knowledge and experience, but would also create a very favourable impression in the world, particularly if our hospitality were offered with some warmth.

As to the dangers anticipated by the Minister of Labour concerning possible displacement of British workmen in competition for jobs, the Cabinet 'were anxious' (so the minutes anonymously proceeded) to avoid 'the other danger of creating an atmosphere in Europe critical to this country'.¹⁴

Although no formal change in the law issued from these deliberations, the cautiously welcoming attitude of the Cabinet set the keynote for government policy until the outbreak of the war. The emphasis was to be on attracting persons of independent means or those who would not compete in the labour market. The Jewish community's guarantee, initially accepted only in relation to those refugees already in the country, soon broadened to include subsequent arrivals. The numbers of these far exceeded initial expectations and the Jewish community together with the churches and other bodies found it necessary to form special institutions to cope with the flood. Foremost among these were the Council for German Jewry, the Jewish Refugees Committee, the Central British Fund for German

The British Government & the German Immigration 1933-1945

Jewry, and the Academic Assistance Council. Substantial sums were raised by these bodies to finance the integration of refugees; by 1939 the Jewish community alone had raised £3,000,000 (exclusive of contributions by individuals for the maintenance of refugees whom they had brought into the country and guaranteed personally). Large sums were also raised by appeals to the general public. The community's guarantee was maintained until after the outbreak of the war in spite of the fact that the numbers arriving were more than ten times the original estimate. The role of the voluntary organisations in facilitating the influx was thus of critical importance. Moreover, the records of government discussions of the refugee issue between 1933 and 1939 demonstrate that the financial and administrative contribution of the voluntary bodies was the indispensable condition of official readiness to permit the entry of further large numbers of refugees.¹⁵

In the first phase of the German emigration the countries absorbing the largest numbers of refugees were France (an estimated 21,000 by April 1934), Palestine (10,000), Poland (8,000), Czechoslovakia (3,500), and Holland (2,500). England was estimated in April 1934 to have absorbed 2,000 (although this may have been rather lower than the actual figure).¹⁶ After the initial wave of emigration in 1933 when 300 to 400 German Jews were stated to be entering Britain each month, the volume declined to about 100 per month in 1934.¹⁷ However, after the promulgation of the Nuremberg Laws in September 1935 there was a slight increase in the level of Jewish emigration (which rose from an estimated 21,000 in 1935 to 25,000 in 1936).¹⁸ Meanwhile destinations other than Britain were beginning to close their doors. Out of the total of 106,000 German Jews who emigrated between 1933 and 1936, Palestine was able to absorb 23,963;¹⁹ the outbreak in 1936 of a serious Arab rebellion against the British mandatory government in Palestine led to restrictions by the government on Jewish immigration. In the years 1937 to 1939 the number of German Jews entering Palestine declined to 11,864, out of a total Jewish emigration from Germany of 141,000.²⁰ As Palestine and other countries raised barriers to entry the pressure on Britain increased.

A memorandum prepared in the Home Office in 1934 reveals some of the preoccupations of official thinking on the refugee issue. Of particular interest is the definition given to the 'right of asylum':

An individual foreigner has no claim as of right to be admitted to

this country on the ground that he is a political or religious refugee. The so-called right of asylum, as defined both in the dictionaries and the legal text-books, is nothing but the competence of every State, inferred from its territorial supremacy, to allow a political or religious refugee to enter. . . . The right is not the right of a foreigner to admission, but the right of the State if it thinks fit, to receive a foreigner fleeing from persecution.

Foreigners resident in Britain might after a while acquire the right to engage in propaganda against foreign governments. Terrorist activities, however, were a different matter, although the memorandum noted that 'different degrees of public sympathy would be extended to a person implicated in a plot (accompanied by violence) against the present regimes in Germany or Russia, and a person who had made an attack on the President of France'. In general, the document concluded, policy towards political refugees must be decided 'with due regard to two divergent principles – on the one hand the established tradition of hospitality to political and religious refugees, which has been exercised with a good deal of liberality in the past . . . and on the other the necessity, which is recognised by the powers given under the Aliens Order, of preventing the admission and securing the removal of aliens whose presence in this country is for any reason undesirable'.²¹

The increased pressure on Britain did not, however, lead to the exclusion of significantly larger numbers of 'undesirable' aliens. The number of Germans and Austrians refused permission to land under the Aliens Order of 1920 was 484 in 1933; in 1935 it was 365; and in 1937 it was 438.²² In the years 1935–7 the efforts of the voluntary organisations, the British Government and the League of Nations were concentrated on seeking to secure an 'orderly' exodus of refugees from Germany. Little progress was made, however, as was evident in the report submitted to the League by the High Commissioner for Refugees coming from Germany, Sir Neill Malcolm, on 1 September 1937:

While there have been no wholesale expatriations from Germany, the placing and final settlement of refugees having already left their country of origin has not made great progress. On the one hand, measures taken by Governments in regard to immigration have brought the numbers of departures from Europe for overseas countries down to a very low level. On the other hand, the lack of the funds required to finance refugee emigration – particularly that

The British Government & the German Immigration 1933-1945

of non-Jews – has been one of the chief determining factors in that situation. In consequence, and despite the hopes which had been entertained, steps taken during the year with a view to a solution of the problem of refugees coming from Germany have not been numerous.²³

Any lingering hopes that an 'orderly' solution might be achieved by international cooperation were to be dashed by the convulsive effects on the international system of German expansion from March 1938 onwards. Following the *Anschluss* on 12 March the numbers of refugees seeking to enter Britain increased sharply. A Home Office memorandum on 14 March considered the new situation arising from the *Anschluss*. It pointed out that it seemed 'certain that economic and political pressure in Austria will lead to a large increase in the number of refugees of Jewish race or ancestry who will seek admission to this country'. There appeared to be a particular 'danger that the small Jewish trader and businessman of limited means will be forced out of business and out of his country, and may be driven by economic and political pressure to seek asylum here'. The question therefore arose:

... as a matter of policy, whether we are to acquiesce in the influx of an uncertain number of refugees, who may not be individually undesirable but may create social and labour problems, or whether a more rigid control is to be set up against new entrants of this type.

A new complicating factor, the memorandum continued, was the news that the Jewish community was now having difficulty meeting the guarantee given to the Government in 1933 and they had 'intimated that they cannot extend this undertaking to new arrivals, though they would still be prepared to make an exception for refugees whom the Home Office or the Ministry of Labour decide to admit to this country after consultation with the [German-Jewish Aid] Committee'. Against this background the Home Office therefore suggested that 'immediate steps should be taken to require that all persons holding Austrian or German passports who seek to enter this country should be in possession of a British visa'.²⁴

After inter-departmental discussions and Anglo-German negotiations on the issue, new instructions were issued by the Passport Control Department of the Foreign Office on 27 April 1938. These explained that 'the main purpose of the visa will be to regulate the flow into the United Kingdom of persons who, for political, racial or

religious reasons, may wish to take refuge there in considerable numbers'. Particular care was to be exercised in the case of 'persons who describe themselves as visitors':

Such persons, especially those who appear to be of Jewish or partly Jewish origin, or have non-Aryan affiliations, should be discreetly questioned as to their family circumstances, and how their business or employment has been affected by recent events; and if it is suspected that emigration is intended, the applicant should be invited to say so frankly.

Under the heading 'Potential refugees or emigrants (declared or suspected). Cases in which visas should be refused', the circular stated that 'the test should be whether or not an applicant is likely to be an asset to the United Kingdom':

Among those who must be regarded as *prima facie* unsuitable will be:

- (a) Small shop-keepers, retail traders, artisans, and persons likely to seek employment.
- (b) Agents and middlemen, whose livelihood depends on commission and, therefore, on trade activity.
- (c) Minor musicians and commercial artists of all kinds. . . .
- (d) The rank and file of professional men – lawyers, doctors, dentists.

On the other hand passport control officers might grant visas, without reference to London, to 'Distinguished persons, i.e. those of *international* repute in the field of science, medicine, research or art' as well as certain 'industrialists with a well-established business'. Visas were not to be refused to persons in these categories without reference to London.²⁵

The massive new pressure for emigration from the Reich led the United States Government to propose in March 1938 the establishment of an international committee 'for the purpose of facilitating the emigration from Austria, and presumably from Germany, of political refugees'.²⁶ The British Government agreed to the proposal and, after lengthy diplomatic consultations, it was decided to inaugurate the committee with an international conference which opened at Evian on 6 July 1938. In the weeks leading up to the conference Whitehall officials deliberated at length inter- and intra-

The British Government & the German Immigration 1933-1945

departmentally as to the attitude to be adopted at Evian by the British delegation.

The instructions issued to the British delegation reminded them that while the meeting at Evian was to be limited to the problem of refugees from Germany, other 'interested governments' would be watching the proceedings; it was therefore 'important to avoid giving the impression that the meeting was going to create such facilities for emigrants that other countries would with impunity force sections of their population to leave'. On immigration prospects in the United Kingdom the instructions stated:

It has been the traditional policy of successive British Governments to give shelter to persons who are compelled to leave their own countries by reason of persecution for their political and religious belief or of their racial origin, but His Majesty's Government are bound to have regard to their domestic situation and to the fact that the United Kingdom is not a country of immigration and to recognise that for demographic and economic reasons this policy can only be applied within narrow limits.

Nevertheless, the memorandum continued, within those limits, Britain was prepared 'on the grounds of humanity to adopt an even more liberal policy'. Only a limited number of persons without resources could be admitted, that number depending to a large extent on the help given by the voluntary organisations. A more liberal policy could, however, be adopted towards refugees with capital, students, academics, professional persons and refugees who, with the help of the voluntary bodies, could be trained with a view to emigration overseas.

The memorandum made it clear that neither Palestine nor the colonial empire offered much prospect of space for refugees. The delegation was warned that 'reference to the possibilities of immigration into Palestine should be avoided if possible'. There then followed a discouraging country-by-country survey of the empire. Northern Rhodesia might accommodate at most 500 families, to be settled as farmers 'on a subsistence basis' provided Jewish or other organisations found necessary finance. There were some encouraging reports from Kenya but no final policy had yet been adopted. Barbados offered 'no possibility of refugees in these categories being able to make a living'. In British Guiana there were 'no possibilities'. In British Honduras 'there might be an opening for one veterinary surgeon'. In Ceylon there were 'no possibilities'. In Cyprus there were

'no prospects' save perhaps for 'a few butchers with a capital of £500-£600'. Fiji had openings only for photographers, opticians and oculists with more substantial capital. Hong Kong reported 'no possible openings' and Jamaica 'no possibilities'. Malaya and Mauritius were similarly negative. Nyasaland indicated 'few, if any, possibilities'. Trinidad reported possible openings for two refugees, but added that the Chamber of Commerce was 'strongly opposed to the encouragement of Jewish refugees for work in the Colony'. Finally, Zanzibar conformed to the general pattern with the notation that 'there might be an opening for a German-Jewish dentist later, but at the present time for political reasons the atmosphere is not favourable'.²⁷

The generally unpromising tone of the survey of the colonial empire was reflected in the similar attitudes of Dominions' governments and indeed of nearly all governments attending the Evian conference. Save for the establishment of the Inter-Governmental Committee on Refugees, the conference achieved nothing beyond providing an agreeable setting for a lamentable succession of speeches in which delegate after delegate expressed sympathy for the plight of the refugees from the Reich and then proceeded to explain why it was impossible for his government to offer anything other than a token contribution to a solution of the problem. Lord Winterton, who headed the British delegation (the largest at the conference), adhered closely to his instructions, although he put a rather more optimistic interpretation on the possibilities for refugee settlement in Kenya than his instructions (or the future course of events) perhaps warranted. The Evian conference made it clear to the British Government that, in the event of any further surge of German emigration, neither foreign nor colonial governments were likely to offer any succour. The potential pressure on Britain would as a result be all the greater.²⁸

The test of the 'even more liberal policy' on immigration into Britain came almost immediately as a result of the incorporation of the Sudetenland into Germany following the Munich conference. On 21 September 1938 Wenzel Jaksch, leader of the Social Democratic Party in the Sudetenland, appealed to the British and French governments to help his followers whose lives were threatened by the German occupation. Herr Jaksch asked whether room might not be found in the British Dominions.²⁹ However, after consultations with the Dominions' High Commissioners in London, the conclusion was reached that the Dominions were unlikely to take more than a small proportion of the refugees. The suggestion was made that they might

The British Government & the German Immigration 1933-1945

be settled in Mexico or the USSR but a Foreign Office official commented that this hardly seemed 'worth serious consideration since Herr Jaksch's people are mostly anti-Communist and we are scarcely in a position to approach either Mexico or the Soviet Union'.³⁰ The problem was exacerbated by the reported reluctance of the Czech Government to accept German refugees in Czechoslovakia; the Czechs were even threatening to comply with German demands that anti-Nazi Sudeten Germans be sent to Germany. A note prepared by a Foreign Office official, R.M. Makins, on 18 October, pointed out that some temporary visas had already been made available to Jaksch for individuals in imminent peril; these, Makins opined, were 'probably mostly well-known political agitators'. Makins urged that in general mass emigration of anti-Nazis from the Sudetenland 'must be excluded' and that British influence should be used 'to secure that as many refugees are either sent home, if they are willing to go, or else settled in Czechoslovakia'.³¹ Under public pressure from the Labour and Liberal parties (plus some Conservatives), the churches, the press, and voluntary organisations, the Government eventually adopted a rather more welcoming attitude towards Sudeten and other ex-Czechoslovak refugees. By the outbreak of the war about 6,000 former inhabitants of Czechoslovakia had been admitted to Britain.³²

But even while the Sudeten refugee problem was being debated a further massive wave of emigration from the Reich was generated by the Nazis with the forcible expulsion in October 1938 of thousands of Polish Jews and the panic flight which followed the *Kristallnacht* in November. The final year of the peace saw the German emigration reach its numerical peak (40,000 Jews alone emigrated in 1938, and 78,000 in 1939),³³ and there was correspondingly heavy pressure for entry into Great Britain. The discussion of possible outlets for refugee settlement in the colonial empire continued until after the outbreak of the war, and there were occasional bubbles of optimism as to the prospects in Kenya, Northern Rhodesia and British Guiana. A pioneer party of fifty refugee settlers for British Guiana was ready to depart from Britain in August 1939 but they were prevented from sailing by the outbreak of the war.³⁴ Although this and other such exotic schemes covered reams of official paper no significant scheme of imperial refugee settlement was ever implemented. An offer by the Palestine Jewish community to absorb 10,000 Jewish children from Germany in November 1938 was shelved by the British Government on the ground that it conflicted with its immigration policy in Palestine, which was now moving swiftly towards the strict

exclusionism enshrined in the Palestine White Paper of May 1939. In these circumstances the Government felt obliged to make some compensating gesture and it was therefore decided to admit the 10,000 children to Britain.

The Movement for the Care of Children from Germany, the voluntary organisation chiefly responsible for the admission of the children, represented the British liberal spirit at its most effective. The first parties of children began to arrive in Britain in December 1938 and they continued until a few days after the British declaration of war in September 1939. About 90 per cent of the children were Jewish. An appeal for funds by the former Prime Minister, Lord Baldwin, met with donations of over £500,000. Children were, in general, lodged with British foster-parents. The Government, without making any formal change in immigration laws or regulations, did, in fact, in these months modify the application of its policy so as to move closer to the 'even more liberal' position promised at Evian. In a statement to the Inter-Governmental Committee on Refugees on 1 November 1938 the British delegate, Lord Winterton, announced that 'the only limit in fact to the number of refugees who can be admitted is constituted by the ability of the voluntary organisations to provide means for their maintenance and opportunities for their employment'.³⁵ Although the voluntary bodies reached virtual saturation-point by the summer of 1939, they managed to cope with the flood, and the Jewish community's guarantee was maintained until after the outbreak of the war.

The declaration of war marked a turning-point both as regards the government's policy on immigration from Germany and in official and public attitudes towards refugees already in Britain. If the months between Munich and the outbreak of war can be said to mark a peak of government and public sympathy for the German emigration, the graph of generosity declined to reach a nadir by the summer of 1940. In part this was because of public xenophobia and hysteria not dissimilar to the anti-German outbreaks of the First World War. But it was also the result of sudden changes in government policy upon the outbreak of the war.

At 11.00 a.m. on 3 September 1939, when Britain found herself formally at war with Germany, all visas granted to enemy nationals were automatically invalidated. The Home Office noted that 'apart from the practical difficulties of making contact between the refugee in enemy territory and the refugee organisations in the United Kingdom, which are likely to be almost insuperable, it would be necessary for us

The British Government & the German Immigration 1933-1945

to proceed with the utmost caution having regard to the possibility that enemy agents might by this means be introduced into this country'.³⁶ With few exceptions this remained government policy throughout the war. No refugees emanating from enemy-occupied territory were to be admitted to Britain; although large numbers of citizens of allied countries occupied by Germany were admitted in the course of the war, the policy of exclusion tended to be applied particularly to Germans (and to Jews), with the exception of persons regarded as of value to the British war effort. Nevertheless, no German refugees who actually reached Britain were turned back to Europe. The difficulties of emigration, particularly after the fall of France, and official discouragement of enemy alien immigration combined to reduce the flow of German refugees to Britain to a trickle during the war.

As in the First World War, suspicion of German attempts to infiltrate spies and agents led to restrictive moves against Germans in Britain. In April 1939 the Committee of Imperial Defence approved 'the action taken by the War Office in earmarking accommodation for 18,000 civilian internees'.³⁷ Secret 'Administrative Instructions for Internment Camps', issued on 25 August 1939, designated a number of sites for proposed camps, among them Northolt Park Racecourse, Butlin's holiday camps at Clacton and Dovercourt, and the Kitchener Camp at Richborough, Kent, which was already occupied by refugees.³⁸ On 4 September 1939 the Home Secretary, Sir John Anderson, announced in the House of Commons that tribunals were to be established to review all Germans, Austrians and Czecho-Slovaks in the country in order to determine whether they should be interned. The operation was virtually completed by January 1940; by then a total of 528 aliens had been interned and 8,356 subjected to lesser restrictions, while the overwhelming majority (some 60,000, including pre-1933 immigrants and non-refugees) were left at liberty.³⁹

The end of the 'phoney war' period in the spring of 1940, however, brought a change in public attitudes, and the rapid collapse of Dutch, Belgian and French resistance to the German invasion heightened the 'fifth-column' panic in Britain. Responding to the public mood, and to a reported order by the newly-appointed Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, to 'collar the lot!', the Government embarked in May 1940 on a policy of general internment of adult 'enemy aliens'.⁴⁰ A total of 27,200 were arrested, the majority being refugees from Germany and Austria - 'friendly enemy aliens' as they were dubbed in the jargon of the time. The arrests had their tragi-comic aspects - as when at 1.30 p.m. on 13 July 1940 a group of CID men walked into the Hampstead

Public Library and ordered all Germans and Austrians to leave, quietly. They were presumably acting on the 'known haunts' theory of criminal behaviour. The Isle of Man, which had housed civilian internees during the First World War, was once again turned into a vast metropolis of aliens. About 8,000 Germans and Italians were deported from Britain to Canada and Australia, sometimes suffering robbery and physical ill-treatment en route.

However, the public mood, which initially favoured these measures, soon switched back to a more lenient attitude. The change resulted from scandals in the administration of some internment camps, from complaints that pro- and anti-Nazi Germans were being interned together (fights sometimes following), from a dawning recognition that the internment of refugees served no rational purpose and from such events as the sinking by a German torpedo of the liner, *Arandora Star*, with the drowning of 600 German and Italian deportees, many of whom, it was subsequently shown, were refugees.

Once again the Government responded to the mercurial change in public mood; hardly a month after issuing the order for wholesale internments the Home Secretary announced that he was considering the release of certain classes of internees. By August 1941 as many as 17,745 internees had been released, and some of the deportees were permitted to return to Britain; by April 1944 only twenty-five refugees were still reported interned.⁴¹ Although subject to continuing restrictions the lot of German exiles in Britain improved steadily in the later part of the war, many being permitted to join the British armed forces or to make contributions in other ways (as by broadcasting) to the British war effort.

Towards the end of the war, however, as British troops moved into western Germany, the question of the future disposition of German exiles in Britain once again became a live issue in Whitehall. There was a strong tendency in official quarters to regard the German emigration in Britain as a temporary rather than a permanent addition to the population. With the collapse of Nazism and the British occupation of part of Germany, this view was expressed by the Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison, who told the Cabinet Committee on Refugees, on 16 May 1945:

We ought to act on the assumption that those who had come here had done so temporarily, and ... they should eventually go back whence they came. It was often said that the Jewish refugees in this country were terrified of returning to Germany. We should not be

The British Government & the German Immigration 1933-1945

influenced by this attitude. It was possible that post-war Germany would abandon antisemitism altogether. If the Jews were allowed to remain here they might be an explosive element in the country, especially if the economic situation deteriorated.⁴²

This view was not, however, translated into an official policy of encouraging the repatriation of German refugees, the majority of whom (particularly the Jews among them) were to remain permanently settled in Britain.

British policy towards the German emigration may therefore be seen as an alloy of the elements of xenophobic restrictionism and liberal hospitality traditional (at different periods) in British politics. There were very few formal changes in policy, the shifts occurring rather by administrative fiat, often in response to public pressure. The British record as regards admission of German emigrants between 1933 and 1939 was (particularly in the critical years, 1938-9) a generous one by contemporary international standards. With the outbreak of the war what had become a 'half-open-door' policy was abruptly reversed. The internments of mid-1940 marked the low point of British policy towards emigrants in Britain. Thereafter the treatment of refugees improved, although they remained subject to the provisions of the 1920 Aliens Order as well as other restrictions. The tremendous contribution to British public, economic, academic and cultural life by the German immigrants during and after the war demonstrated the wisdom of the British Government's cautiously compassionate policy towards the German immigration between 1933 and 1945.

Notes

1. Quoted in B. Porter, *The Refugee Question in Mid-Victorian Politics*, Cambridge, 1979, pp. 1-2.

2. V.D. Lipman, *Social History of the Jews in England 1850-1950*, London, 1954, pp. 87-90; the difficulties in making such an estimate are discussed *ibid.* and in L.P. Gartner, 'Notes on the Statistics of Jewish Immigration to England 1870-1914', *Jewish Social Studies*, XXII, 2, April 1960, pp. 97-102.

3. C. Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876-1939*, London, 1979, p. 233.

4. Bernard Gainer, *The Alien Invasion: The Origins of the Aliens Act of 1905*, London, 1972, pp. 199–202.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 207.
6. H. Kellenbenz, 'German Immigrants in England' in C. Holmes (ed.), *Immigrants and Minorities in British Society*, London, 1978, pp. 63–80.
7. C.C. Aronsfeld, 'Enemy Aliens, 1914–1918: German-born Jews in England During the First World War', *Jewish Social Studies*, XVIII, 1956, pp. 275–83.
8. Quoted in A.J. Sherman, *Island Refuge: Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich 1933–1939*, London, 1973, p. 28. This monograph is the best analysis of British policy on the German immigration up to the outbreak of the Second World War.
9. H.A. Strauss, 'Jewish Emigration from Germany – Nazi Policies and Jewish Responses (I)', *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, XXV, London, 1980, p. 326.
10. Report of Cabinet Committee on Aliens Restrictions, 7 April 1933, Public Record Office (PRO), Kew, CAB 24/239.
11. Home Secretary's Memorandum to Cabinet Committee on Aliens Restrictions, 6 April 1933, *ibid.*
12. 'Proposals of the Jewish Community as Regards Jewish Refugees from Germany', *ibid.*
13. Report of Committee on Aliens Restrictions, 7 April 1933, *ibid.*
14. Quoted in Sherman, p. 32.
15. For a general discussion of the role of the voluntary organisations see N. Bentwich, *They Found Refuge*, London, 1956.
16. 'Comparative Table of Distribution of Refugees' (based on information collected by the League of Nations High Commission for Refugees), PRO FO 371/17700/178.
17. Strauss, p. 354.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 326.
19. *Ibid.*; D. Gurevich (ed.), *Statistical Handbook of Jewish Palestine 1947*, Jerusalem, 1947, p. 104. This figure refers to German citizens (or former citizens) and does not include Jewish refugees from Germany holding Polish or other foreign citizenship.
20. *Ibid.*
21. 'Memorandum respecting Foreign Political Refugees in the United Kingdom', 30 November 1934, PRO FO 371/18553/196.
22. Sherman, p. 270.
23. Report submitted to the Eighteenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the League of Nations by the High Commissioner, Sir Neill Malcolm, League of Nations Document No. A.17. 1937. XII.
24. Home Office Memorandum, 14 March 1938, PRO FO 372/3282/22.
25. Foreign Office Circular, 27 April 1938, PRO FO 372/3284/9.
26. Memorandum communicated by the United States Embassy in London to the Foreign Office, 24 March 1938, PRO FO 371/21747/109.
27. Memorandum of instructions for the United Kingdom Delegation to the Evian Conference, July 1938, PRO FO 371/22529/66.
28. For a fuller account of the Evian conference, see Sherman, Chaps. 4, 5.
29. Foreign Office memorandum, 13 October 1938, PRO FO

The British Government & the German Immigration 1933-1945

371/21583/231-6.

30. *Ibid.*

31. Note by R.M. Makins, 18 October 1938, PRO FO 371/21584/407-11.

32. Sherman, p. 255.

33. Strauss, p. 326.

34. Bentwich, p. 42.

35. Statement by Lord Winterton, 1 November 1938, PRO FO 371/22536/237.

36. E.N. Cooper (Home Office) to A.W.G. Randall (Foreign Office), 18 September 1939, PRO FO 371/24100/120 ff.

37. Extracts from minutes of CID meeting, 6 April 1939, Home Office papers, 144/1262 (700470/2).

38. Home Office papers, 144/21258 (700463/39).

39. For a fuller account see B. Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-45*, London, 1979, Chap. 3.

40. See P. and L. Gillman, *'Collar the Lot!': How Britain Interned and Deported its Wartime Refugees*, London, 1980.

41. See Wasserstein, pp. 107-8.

42. Minutes of Cabinet Committee on Refugees, 16 May 1945, PRO CAB 95/15.

The Bermuda Conference and Its Aftermath: An Allied Quest for "Refuge" During the Holocaust

BY MONTY N. PENKOWER

The awakening of the conscience of the Allied nations to one of the direst deeds in history, the attempted annihilation of the Jewish people by the Third Reich, began on December 17, 1942. That morning British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden announced in the House of Commons that eleven of the United Nations and the French National Committee condemned in "the strongest terms this bestial policy of cold-blooded extermination" and resolved in this Allied statement to bring its perpetrators to justice. Following brief comments from some of those present, a member of Parliament asked with trembling voice whether the members would stand in quiet protest against this "disgusting barbarism." The chamber rose for an unprecedented two minutes of silence. That same hour Moscow and Washington saw publication of the "United Nations Declaration on Jewish Massacres."¹

It had been four months since the British and U.S. governments had first received a report from the Geneva office of the World Jewish Congress about a rumored Nazi plan to kill all European Jewry. Disbelief, especially in the U.S. State Department, slowly gave way to credence following confirmation of the fact by the Polish government-in-exile, the WJC, the International Red Cross, the YMCA, and other sources. To-

wards the end of November, Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles released WJC president Stephen S. Wise from his pledge not to publicize this and other reports until the department had verified them. But at a time when one senator estimated that Europe's Jews were being slaughtered at a rate of five per minute, most newspapers buried in the back pages the stark reality of some two million Jews killed since the start of World War II.²

The pendulum swung the other way on December 8. Extreme pressure from various groups, spearheaded by Alexander Easterman, political secretary of the WJC in England, and Szmul Zygielbojm, Bundist representative on the Polish National Council, led the British government to send the State Department that day a first draft of the projected declaration. In Washington President Roosevelt received a delegation of six American Jewish organizations which presented him two memorandums. The first set forth the hopes of the Jews of the world that the president, "the symbol of humanity's will to fight for freedom," would speak and act now on behalf of the Jews of Europe, and the other detailed how almost two million Jews had been killed by the Nazis while the remaining five million who might still be alive in Europe were threatened with death. "The mills of the gods grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly small," rejoined the chief executive, as he reiterated his

© 1981 by Monty N. Penkower

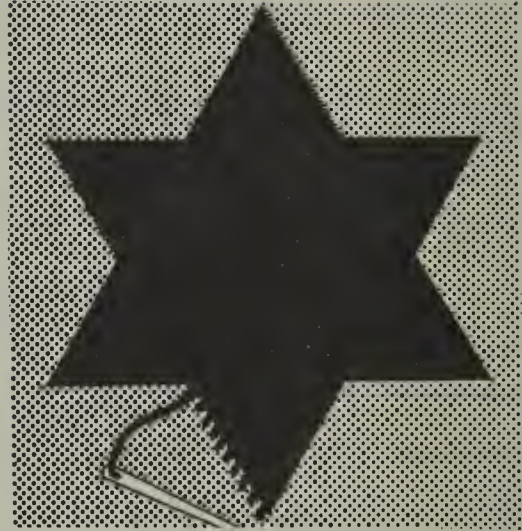
The author is Professor of History at Touro College. He wishes to thank Professors Henry L. Feingold, Joseph G. Lowin, and Michael Popkin for their comments.

¹Great Britain, *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), Dec. 17, 1942, cols. 2082-2087; Alexander Easterman, interview with Andrea P. Rosen, Oct. 25, 1977 (in author's possession).

²Arthur D. Morse, *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy* (1967), chs. 1-2; Henry L. Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue: The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust, 1938-44* (1970), pp. 168-171; Gerhart M. Riegner, interview with author, Apr. 22, 1977; U.S., Congress, Senate, *Congressional Record*, 78th Cong., 1st sess., 1943, 89, pt. 9: A125.



Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden held it "fantastically impossible" for the United Nations to ask Hitler to release the Jews.



promise of the previous July that the Germans would be held "to strict accountability in a day of reckoning which will surely come." Two days later, the Polish government-in-exile chronicled the horrors in *The Mass Extermination of Jews in German-Occupied Poland*. The truth could no longer be denied.³

Jewish leaders in America and England hailed the United Nations declaration. Some of those who had been in the Oval Office on December 8 asserted that it would "solace and hearten the Jewish people throughout the world." The same day that the statement was broadcast in twenty-three languages to all countries in Nazi-occupied Europe, Selig Brodetsky, president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, wrote Eden that Jews would see it as "a further high example of the traditional British attitude in all that concerns humanity and civilization."⁴

At the same time, most demanded immediate action, rather than retribution after the war. "It is good but not good enough," declared the *New York Post*. The United Nations Information Office's detailed report *Persecution of Jews on*

December 19 resulted in a spate of editorials in Great Britain. While the Nazi Ministry of Propaganda termed (for the benefit of neutral countries) the declaration "a bit of typical British-Jewish atrocity propaganda," Eleanor Rathbone (Independent M.P.) urged her government to lead neutrals by relaxing immigration restrictions. Polish officials called for retaliation against the Nazis. Others insisted that the 1939 White Paper on Palestine, limiting Jewish immigration there to seventy-five thousand by April 1944, be lifted, and that the United Nations welcome all Jews escaping Axis Europe.⁵

The pressure on Great Britain to implement the intentions of the joint Allied statement mounted. Zygielbojm, armed with a firsthand underground report from Poland about the murders which began in the Warsaw ghetto in mid-July and the burning of Jewish corpses within an area of fifty kilometers in Belzec, conveyed to Churchill and Roosevelt on December 19 an SOS appeal for rescue of Jewish survivors in Poland. Four days later a delegation of Britain's Jews recommended to Eden that the International Red Cross and the Vatican be asked to cooperate and that the Jewish escapees be admitted to every Allied or neutral territory, especially Palestine. They wanted leaflets denouncing the atrocities dropped over Germany and the Third Reich asked to allow Jews, particularly women and children, to leave. Harold Nicholson (Labour M.P.) urged the British government to "revise its obstinate policy on ref-

³Easterman to Perlzweig, Jan. 15, 1943, U 142/13, World Jewish Congress Archives, New York (WJC); Easterman-Rosen interview; Morse, *White Six Million Died*, pp. 30, 32-33; "Memorandum Submitted to the President of the United States," Dec. 8, 1942, Nazism 1942-43 files, American Jewish Committee Archives, New York (AJCA); American Jewish Congress, Washington, D.C., news release, Dec. 8, 1942, *ibid.*; Nora Levin, *The Holocaust: The Destruction of European Jewry, 1938-45* (1973), p. 673.

⁴Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA), Dec. 20, 1942; Selig Brodetsky to Anthony Eden, Dec. 18, 1942, C 14/16, Board of Deputies of British Jews Archives, London (BDA).

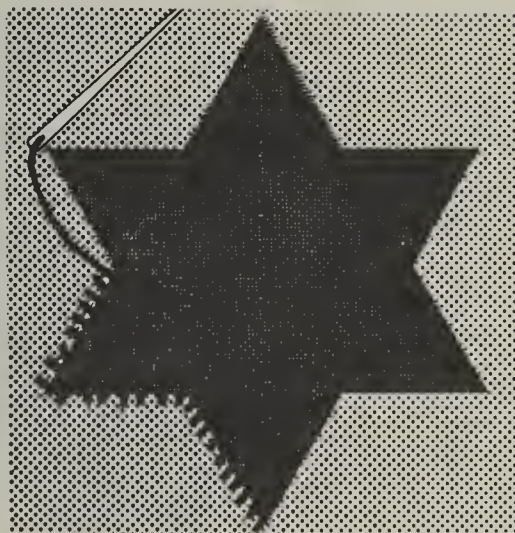
⁵JTA, Dec. 21, 1942; *New Judaea* (Dec. 1942):39-42.



Richard K. Law, parliamentary under secretary of state for foreign affairs, headed the British delegation at the conference. Courtesy of UPI.

ugees" and to approach the Palestine problem "with greater energy, imagination and unselfishness." The *New Statesman and Nation* insisted that the British government ask Sweden and Turkey to save Jewish children and open its own doors as well. The parliamentary under secretary of state for foreign affairs, Richard K. Law, heard suggestions from the Board of Deputies on December 30 that neutral governments be given guarantees that the refugees would be moved from their territories by the war's end and that short-term accommodations could be found in North Africa, Palestine, the Isle of Man, Eire, and the United States.⁶

The Foreign Office had hitherto taken the lead in responding to the awesome tidings. Unlike its Washington counterpart, it had forwarded the first cable about the Nazi murder plan from Gerhart M. Riegner, secretary of the WJC's Geneva office. Only in this fashion did Stephen Wise learn of it and press Welles for help. The British authorities had urged State often to establish a joint war crimes commission, and their threat of a unilateral war crimes commission or similar organization forced the American government to concur two days before the intended deadline of October 7. Eden and Law, "genuinely horrified and moved" by reports from the WJC's Alexander Easterman and



others, had pressed for and finally achieved the Allied declaration.⁷

The Foreign Office objected, however, to emphasizing the plight of the Jewish people and had grave doubts as to the possibilities for rescue. It wished to treat Jews as "nationals of existing countries," and not to see the formation of an individual Allied force composed of Palestinian and other Jews or separate representation of Jewish concerns at international conferences. Arab unrest required that Zionist agitation for a Jewish state in Palestine be dampened. The foreign secretary, when introducing the UN declaration, spoke in unspecific terms of "certain security formalities" and "immense geographical and other difficulties," cautioning that "what we can do at this stage must inevitably be slight." Five thousand Jews, forty-five hundred of them children, would be allowed to enter Palestine under the White Paper quota from Axis-controlled Bulgaria, but the military situation, Eden informed a Jewish delegation, made North Africa "unstable" as a haven. In addition, Portuguese colonies were not "readily available" for refugees entering Spain at about fifty a day; the Swiss sought a relaxation of the Allied war blockade to receive food provisions before taking in more Jewish refugees; "restrictive legislation" existed in all countries of the Western Hemisphere, including the United States. The year 1942 closed with Zygielbojm's December 19 appeal hanging and the Foreign Office in receipt of a telegram from the British ambas-

⁶*The Ghetto Speaks*, Mar. 1, 1943, pp. 1-5, Bund Archives, New York; Szmul Zygielbojm to Winston Churchill, Dec. 19, 1942, Prem 4, 51/6, Public Record Office, London (PRO); memorandum of visit of British Jewish deputation to Eden, Dec. 23, 1942, C 10/2/8-1, BDA; JTA, Dec. 27, 1942; memorandum of meeting with Law, Dec. 30, 1942, C 10/2/8-2, BDA.

⁷Morse, *While Six Million Died*, pp. 14, 26-28; Easterman-Rosen interview.



Assistant Secretary of State Adolph Berle, Jr., declared immediately after the conference that nothing could be done to save "these helpless unfortunates" until the defeat of Germany. Courtesy of the Historical Picture Service.

sador in Washington, Lord Halifax, asking his government to seek U.S. cooperation over the so-called refugee problem.⁸

For three weeks the British authorities mulled over Halifax's cable and the incessant public demand for results. On January 6, 1943, Zygielbojm received his answer to the appeal: a copy of Eden's December 17 speech in Parliament, with its concluding words of hesitation, and the assurance that his government was investigating all practical means for rescue. On the same day, January 6, Eden sought a statement from Myron Taylor, U.S. member on the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees and Roosevelt's personal representative to the Vatican, against Zionist "extremist" claims for Palestine. Three days later, Eden secured the war cabinet's approval to have Halifax inform the State Department that Great Britain, "despite its substantial contribution" in receiving refugees, was prepared to discuss further joint possibilities with the United States in the matter. On January 11, the cabinet agreed to Eden's memorandum that no differentiation should be made between Jews and other refugees in all rescue efforts. Awaiting a final draft of the British position, Halifax urged Assistant Secretary of State Adolf A. Berle, Jr., to remove immediately the approximately four

thousand Jewish refugees from France now in Spain to safer North Africa. In the meantime, Hitler's New Year message predicting the annihilation of "International Jewry" approached realization. The world read news bulletins of large deportations begun from the capital of Eastern Galicia, a deportation rate of Belgian Jewry exceeding twenty thousand per month, and the discovery by the advancing Red Army of towns in the Caucasus strewn with thousands of dead Jews.⁹

Dissatisfied with official British reticence, English advocates of immediate rescue lost little time in formulating programs. A meeting of members of Parliament and Jewish representatives on January 7 had debated Eleanor Rathbone's memorandum "The Case for an Offer to Hitler." Several doubted its advisability, especially if Britain were to take the lead. Most of those present agreed on "a token gesture" to accept a number of refugees, and then, with the establishment of a special Allied council, to ask other United Nations to do likewise. The Joint Foreign Committee, representing the Anglo-Jewish establishment, called for a UN body to carry out all practical measures. As if

⁸Elizabeth E. Eppler, "The Rescue Work of the World Jewish Congress During the Nazi Period," in *Rescue Attempts During the Holocaust* (1977), pp. 56-60; *New Judaea* (Dec. 1942):37; colonial secretary's memorandum, Dec. 14, 1942, CAB 65, 168/42/9, PRO; Eden, remarks to British Jewish deputation, Dec. 23, 1942, C 10/2/8-1, BDA; Foreign Office memorandum, Jan. 1942, CAB 95/15, PRO.

⁹Foreign Office to Zygielbojm, Jan. 6, 1943, Prem 4, 51/6, PRO; Lord Halifax to Myron Taylor, Jan. 6, 1943, 867N.01/1837, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives (hereinafter cited as RG 59, NA); Halifax-Berle talk, Jan. 14, 1943, 840.48 Refs/3557, *ibid.*; Eden draft, Jan. 9, 1943, WP 43 (13), CAB 66, PRO; Jan. 11, 1943, discussion, CAB 65, 6/43/4, PRO; JTA, Jan. 3, 8, 14, 18, 1943. The Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, set up after the 1938 Evian Conference, did little to save Jews and other refugees during the war.



divining an SOS dated January 13 from the underground Jewish National Committee of Poland begging for arms, the rescue of ten thousand children through a German exchange, and \$500,000 for self-defense and aid, Zygielbojm publicly called for reprisals against the Nazis as the only way to save the remnant of Polish Jewry. Rathbone, vice-chairman of the National Committee for Rescue From Nazi Terror, pressed in Parliament for a specific reaction from the Vatican. There was no time to lose, the Zionist representative on the Polish National Council, Ignacy Schwartzbart, warned the WJC in New York, since the official German creation of fifty-five "compulsory ghettos" in Poland marked "the final step to complete extermination." Could united world action even now stay the hand of the determined executioner?¹⁰

The British aide-memoire on "Refugees From Nazi-Occupied Territory" arrived at the State Department on January 20. The problem at hand, it began, should not be treated solely as a Jewish one. Transportation difficulties, anti-Semitism where "an excessive number of Jews are introduced," and the Axis "embarrassing" other countries by flooding them with aliens, as

Germany had done before the war, posed alleged dangers. Still, the British government would not take "a merely negative response to a growing international problem." England had found accommodations for nearly 100,000 refugees; her colonies were taking another 134,000. Would the American government issue additional visas for entry into its borders and assist in shipping refugees elsewhere, such as North Africa and Santo Domingo? If the Anglo-American alliance could arrive at some understanding, approaches could then be made to other governments to examine possibilities, perhaps through a closed Allied conference.¹¹

The Americans had received a disingenuous document. Conclusive figures for the number of civilian refugees in Great Britain and the East African colonies, as one contemporary analysis made clear, had not been supplied. Only 300 refugees came to Jamaica, and Palestine had never admitted the 1,500 "illegals" deported from its waters in December 1940 to Mauritius. Nor should the British statement have included prematurely 4,500 Bulgarian Jews slated for acceptance or the 29,000 to be allowed entry into Palestine until March 31, 1944. Indeed, since the latter figure was simply that allowed by the prewar White Paper, there was no reason to mention this number as further evidence of Britain's efforts on behalf of Nazi victims. And the British ignored entirely the specific Nazi project to murder all of

¹⁰Memorandum of meeting, Jan. 7, 1943, C 10/28-2, BDA; Joint Foreign Committee memorandum, Jan. 11, 1943, David Mowshowitz Papers, file 100, YIVO Archives, New York; Warsaw ghetto cable, Jan. 13, 1943, printed in *Zygielbojm Magazine*, Bund Archives, New York; *JTA*, Jan. 12, 1943; *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), Jan. 20, 1943, cols. 184-186; Ignacy Schwartzbart to WJC New York, Jan. 19, 1943, 204A, WJC. The Joint Foreign Committee was composed of leading members from the Board of Deputies and the Anglo-Jewish Association.

¹¹*Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)*, 1943, 1:134-137.

European Jewry—and therefore the immediate need to concentrate on their plight—by combining this group with questionable numbers of all other refugees in Europe.¹²

Whatever the aide-memoire's limitations, the State Department dragged its feet. Foggy Bottom did consult its representatives in North Africa regarding British concern about the Jewish refugees in Spain, reporting to Halifax on January 30 that evacuation to that area had been accepted in principle. But the department employed war censorship to quash receipt of further cables from the WJC's Geneva branch to New York headquarters on the ground that private messages might cause neutral countries "to curtail or abolish our official secret means of communication." A long message of January 21 from Riegner and a Jewish Agency representative, which arrived before the department's ban, reporting even greater atrocities in Poland and the fact that 70,000 survivors of 136,000 Rumanian Jews deported to Trans-Dniestria in the southern Ukraine faced death by starvation, convinced the WJC that more aggressive measures were necessary to attain some concrete Allied rescue effort. Stephen Wise began preparations for a rally in New York on March 1 to "Stop Hitler Now!"¹³

Proponents of speedy rescue claimed that Palestine represented the most obvious solution to the problem, a position the British and American governments had not accepted. A month earlier, 68 U.S. senators and 182 representatives had signed an appeal for "millions of homeless Jews" to be allowed to "reconstruct their lives in Palestine" after the war. Lord Herbert Samuel, first high commissioner for Palestine, gave Eden his personal opinion that the country could provide for a population of three million and the entry of Jews should be encouraged forthwith. Upon receiving Riegner's cable of January 21 from the Foreign Office, the WJC's British section drafted a memorandum on rescue that emphasized the need for an international authority to consider all havens, especially Palestine. Its proximity to eastern Europe and the presence in the Promised Land of an organized Jewish community of six hundred thousand able to care for Jewish refugees made it "the most readily available sanctuary." The Jewish Agency informed both governments at the same time

that Palestine west of the Jordan River could maintain at least another three million inhabitants, exclusive of the southern Negev region. The agency asserted that the mass colonization necessary to "meet the needs of Jewish migration after the war" could take place only in a self-governing Jewish commonwealth in the ancient Jewish homeland. Yet both London and Washington, preoccupied with the effect on their war effort of Arab unrest about Zionists' expressed intentions, remained hostile. The White Paper, Colonial Secretary Oliver Stanley announced in Commons on February 3, should be strictly adhered to: "Winning the war is the most important thing of all."¹⁴

But what would the triumph be worth if it coincided with Hitler's victory against the Jewish people? The Germans, "with complete disregard for the flood of protests" that followed the UN declaration, "are cold-bloodedly carrying on with the completion of the murderous task," Zygielbojm warned the world. On January 27, a little more than a month before the crematoria at Auschwitz were enlarged to the point where forty-six ovens could burn 500 bodies per hour, the Polish government-in-exile reported that some 58,000 of the 85,840 prisoners in Auschwitz had perished. German postal authorities in Poland and the Baltic states, according to a Stockholm report, had begun to use a special stamp in returning letters addressed to the victims: "Died in the course of liquidation of the Jewish problem." Ninety-five percent of 86,000 Jews in Yugoslavia before the war were now dead, stated that country's government-in-exile. For the first time, Berlin radio informed the German people that mass executions of Jews had been carried out in occupied territories as a "precaution against Bolshevism." A message received from the Jews of Poland on February 10 and published by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency read, "Is the world really unable to save us?" "Hurry," read another on February 18, "otherwise our complete extermination is unavoidable!"¹⁵

¹⁴FRUS, 1942, 4, pp. 549-550; Samuel statement in memorandum of visit of British Jewish deputation to Eden, Dec. 23, 1942, C 10/2/8-1, BDA; WJC British Section draft of memorandum, Jan. 28, 1943, C 10/2/8-2, BDA; Jewish Agency memorandum, Jan. 25, 1943, Z5/1444, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem (CZA); FRUS, 1943, 4, for State Department opposition to Zionism; Stanley statement, Feb. 3, 1943, *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), cols. 863-867.

¹⁵JTA, Jan. 2, 10, 27, Feb. 1, 3, 10, 17, 18, 1943; Morse, *While Six Million Died*, p. 45. Such reports led the Polish government-in-exile, via Zygielbojm, to approach the Foreign Office informally on behalf of all Jews for the first time. Its proposals were, as in the past, quickly dismissed. Memorandum of Feb. 25, 1943, and Allen minute, FO 371/34362, PRO.

¹²Ilya Djour, "The Preparations for the Bermuda Conference," *Yivo-Bleter* 21 (1943):5-19.

¹³FRUS, 1943, 1:250-258; Hull to Murphy, Jan. 16, 1943, 840.48 Refs/3559 CF, RG 59, NA; Morse, *While Six Million Died*, pp. 42-43; Riegner and Lichtheim to WJC, Jan. 19, 1943, 206A, WJC. The Foreign Office also forwarded this cable to the WJC in London, Norton to FO, Jan. 25, 1943, Foreign Office (FO) 371/34361, PRO.

Harrassed by an impatient public, the Foreign Office kept its counsel. The Jews in the United States should give the British government due credit for accepting 4,500 of their Bulgarian co-religionists, it informed the Washington embassy. "Hopes of a move *en masse* should be gently discouraged," however, due to the "overwhelming" transit problem from Turkey. Admitting privately that this grant of 4,500 and the 29,000 left under the White Paper was "really only scratching the surface," a senior member of the Eastern Department insisted to the Board of Deputies' secretary that "America had a considerable leeway to make up." The State Department could especially help in North Africa and with the Latin American countries. As for the Polish government-in-exile's repeated request for reprisals, this would interfere with "the most effective" targets in the Allied strategic bombing offensive. Machinery did not seem to exist for dealing with reported atrocities in Lithuania, confidentially added the Central Department's W.D. Allen to a colleague, especially as "we cannot allow the Poles to regard Vilna as Polish." A newspaper exclusive, first published in the *New York Times* on February 13, that Rumania would allow the remaining seventy thousand Jews in Trans-Dniestria to be transferred by ship to Palestine met with the Foreign Office's swift response: no nation would accept any such offer. The gesture, if successful, might open up the prospect of "unloading at a given price all unwanted nationals on overseas countries." Allied victory, went this standard reply, should be the only answer.¹⁶

The Foreign Office could not, however, remain impervious to sharp parliamentary debates, thundering newspaper editorials, and the memorandums of Eleanor Rathbone and others, and a month after its aide-memoire had been delivered, it presented an ultimatum on February 20 to the State Department. Richard Law informed the U.S. chargé in London on February 20 that HMG could not postpone beyond the next week some reply in Parliament to persistent queries about its activities to help the Jews of Europe. The U.S. government should join the British in convening a United Nations confer-

ence in London to examine the refugee question. The State Department should grant special visas to refugees, then invite other nations to follow suit. International guarantees, including repatriation, could be given the neutral powers that they would be aided in carrying this burden at the end of the war.¹⁷

By February 25 the Foreign Office's threat had again produced its desired effect, and the State Department submitted a formal reply to the British aide-memoire of January 20. The U.S. government had dispensed large amounts of money for refugees and called the 1938 Évian Conference, precursor to the Intergovernmental Committee for Refugees. Visas numbering 547,775 had been issued in occupied Europe between 1939 and June 30, 1942 (228,964 in the war years), with many more authorized between 1939 and 1942. State had authorized over five thousand visas for admission to the United States from France, Spain, and Portugal, sought help for refugees from Switzerland and other neutrals, and aided refugees in Spain, including the transfer of a number to North Africa. No new restrictions, except for security checks, had been placed on the number of aliens allowed to enter this country since Pearl Harbor. Thousands of civilian enemy aliens and dangerous Axis nationals were being taken care of in American camps, thereby freeing supplies abroad for refugees in need. As to the future, congressional immigration laws must continue to bind the government. The executive committee of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees was best qualified to continue solving the refugee problem, which should not be confined to "persons of any particular race or faith." An informal "preliminary exploration" by the Anglo-American alliance in Ottawa might facilitate action by the intergovernmental committee.¹⁸

Now it was the Britishers' turn to be handed a crafty document. Why quote Myron Taylor's July 1938 statement at Évian against "dumping" German Jews on the "international market," which had hinted at economic retaliation against Germany, when the only way to rescue Jews in 1943 was to remove them from Axis Europe? In addition, only 21 percent of Poland's immigration quota to the United States had been filled between 1933 and 1938, despite an excess of applicants for American visas. In fact almost 100,000 fewer people than the number of au-

¹⁶FO to Washington embassy, Feb. 3, 1943, FO 371/34967, PRO; Brotman-Roberts talk, Feb. 9, 1943, Mowshowitz Papers, file 100, YIVO Archives; FO memorandum, Feb. 17, 1943, FO 371/34550, PRO; Allen minute, Feb. 20, 1943, FO 371/34362, PRO; *New York Times*, Feb. 13, 1943; FO to Washington embassy, Feb. 26, 1943, FO 371/34967, PRO. The Foreign Office's last response was prompted by Jewish Agency president Chaim Weizmann's urgent letter to Ambassador Halifax, begging HMG to carry out this "humanitarian act." Weizmann to Halifax, Feb. 16, 1943, Weizmann file, Zionist Archives, New York (ZA).

¹⁷Rathbone memorandums, Feb. 12, 24, 1943, C 102/8-2, BDA; JTA, Feb. 1943; *FRUS*, 1943, 1:138-140; war cabinet discussion, Feb. 22, 1943, 33/43/4, CAB 65, PRO; Palestine Elected Assembly statement, Feb. 22, 1943, FO 371/36661, PRO; Brotman to Law, Feb. 23, 25, 1943, C 116/4-1, BDA.

¹⁸*FRUS*, 1943, 1:140-144.



thorized visas mentioned in State's note were actually admitted during the years from 1933 to 1942, and only a little more than half of this total came from all of Europe. According to the U.S. government's immigration reports, 71,290 of the entire number of immigrants from Europe, and about 60,000 of those from Nazi-occupied countries between 1939 and 1942, were Jews. The American offer to take five thousand French children had not materialized, and thus should not have been included in a survey of actual help for Nazi victims. Internment camps for Japanese from the West Coast and Germans and Italians from the Americas had no bearing on the problem in question, except for the fact that suspected Axis agents had been admitted—unlike Jews in peril of their lives—outside of visa restrictions. The State Department's note followed the British example in overlooking the exceptional threat facing the Jewish people. Only the previous day, Hitler had rebroadcast his determination to complete the Final Solution.¹⁹

Unaware of these diplomatic maneuvers, an aroused Jewish opinion pressed for action. Seventy-five thousand people sought admission to the American Jewish Congress's March 1 "Stop Hitler Now!" rally in Madison Square Garden. There they heard Jewish Agency president Chaim Weizmann bemoan the apathy of the Christian world, and received messages of support from England's archbishop of Canterbury and Arthur Cardinal Hinsley calling for "speedy deeds" to meet the "most appalling horror in recorded history." The following day, Sumner Welles declared that the meeting's



England's archbishop of Westminster, Arthur Cardinal Hinsley, joined the archbishop of Canterbury in calling for "speedy deeds" to meet the "most appalling horror in recorded history." Courtesy of UPI.

eleven-point program of rescue was receiving the most serious and sympathetic consideration from both Roosevelt and the State Department. Wise forwarded the proposals to Secretary of State Cordell Hull on March 5, along with a reminder that little had been done to implement the UN declaration just when the Germans were accelerating their program of systematic mass murder.²⁰

The same day, however, the State Department published a summary of the February 25 note to Great Britain, thereby leading outsiders to believe that the State Department had initiated a call for a conference. The unsuspecting British had no time to consult with one of the proposed hosts, the Canadian government. Officials of the WJC headquarters in New York were shocked, since the move completely undercut their understanding of Welles's assurance of March 2 by emphasizing the limited possibilities of rescue. But Welles, in a harsh interview with the British chargé in Washington, insisted that the British government must not continue to give the impression that "it was the great outstanding champion of the Jewish people." Since Washington's proposed host, the Canadian government, opposed a conference on its territory, Eden ultimately acceded to

¹⁹Dijour, "Preparations for the Bermuda Conference"; Feingold, *Politics of Rescue*, pp. 261, 264; JTA, Feb. 24, 1943.

²⁰"The 'Stop Hitler Now' Demonstration," *Congress Weekly*, Mar. 5, 1943; Henry Morgenthau, Jr., *Diaries*, Dec. 31, 1943, vol. 688-11, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (FDRL); Wise to Hull, Mar. 5, 1943, 740.0016 EW 1939/815, RG 59, NA. Wise also sent a copy to the president. "Memorandum of the Resolutions," PTF 5029, FDRL.

Hull's recommendation of Bermuda as the site for the meeting. On March 23 the secretary triumphantly informed Roosevelt, who heretofore had maintained a guarded silence on the subject, that everything was ready.²¹

Recovering from their surprise, the British authorities staked out their position for the talks. In Parliament, Eden applauded the Polish government-in-exile's support of repatriation as "the best way to solve the immediate and post-war problems." While the Foreign Office forwarded another cable to the WJC from Riegner, depicting continuing deportations from Berlin, Holland, and France, it dismissed his "pretty far-reaching proposals" to exchange Jews for Germans en bloc. As for rescue, the Foreign Office informed the Board of Deputies of the transport difficulties and that many British women in Nazi Europe would have to be released before other exchanges with Germans for Jews could take place.²²

The private comments Eden had made in the United States at the end of February no doubt most sharply reflected his government's views. In an interview with Wise and the president of the American Jewish Committee, Joseph Proskauer, representing American Jewry's Joint Emergency Committee for European Jewish Affairs, Eden rejected as "fantastically impossible" their request that the United Nations ask Hitler to release all Jews. Refugees in Spain and Portugal could not be sent to Palestine because "the Mediterranean is not clear." To the suggestion that England help get additional Jews out of Bulgaria, the foreign secretary replied, "Turkey does not want any more of your people." The joint committee's second important proposal that the UN send food to occupied Europe for the Jews, the way the Allies had saved a starving Greece during the winter of 1941, seemed to make no impression upon the man who in 1938 resigned from the British cabinet rather than accede to the debacle of Munich. Hewing to Britain's earlier stance regarding the Rumanian offer of seventy thousand Jews from Trans-Dniestria's concentration camps, Eden more candidly warned Hull in the presence of Roosevelt that acceptance of the threatened Bulgarian Jews might well lead Hitler to make similar offers for



Pope Pius XII received repeated requests from Stephen Wise through Myron Taylor to intervene on behalf of the Jewish people.

Poland and Germany. Aside from the problem of ferreting out enemy agents, he went on, "There simply are not enough ships and means of transportation in the world to handle them."²³

Of all the major government officials involved in these matters of rescue, Myron Taylor best sensed the immediate plight of the Jews. He had regularly forwarded Wise's requests that Pope Pius XII intervene on behalf of the Jewish people. Wise and Proskauer found Taylor very cordial and pleased with the joint committee's memorandum on rescue, saying that it followed the lines along which he had been thinking for some time. But he was unsuccessful in persuading Eden to hold a meeting of the intergovernmental committee to take up the refugee question.²⁴

Given his independent views, Taylor refused to head the American delegation to Bermuda. A leading member of FDR's Advisory Committee

²¹FRUS, 1943, 1.144-147; Morgenthau Diaries, Dec. 31, 1943, vol. 688-II, FDRL. According to the British minister, however, Welles admitted in effect that publication of the American note was "a calculated political action" designed to cast the United States in the "beau role." Cited in Halifax to FO, Mar. 6, 1943, FO 37136655, PRO.

²²Eden statement, Mar. 3, 1943, *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), col. 318; Norton to FO, Mar. 11, 1943, and Bracken to Locker-Lampson, Mar. 12, 1943, FO 37134362, PRO; Roberts to Brotman, Mar. 16, 1943, C 11/64-1, BDA.

²³Joint Emergency Committee on European Jewish Affairs, minutes, Mar. 29, 1943, Manson files, Abba Hillel Silver MSS., The Temple, Cleveland, Ohio; Office Committee minutes, American Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs, Mar. 30, 1943, ZA; President's Advisory Committee on Political Refugees, minutes, Mar. 30, 1943, PAC files, James McDonald Papers, Columbia Univ., New York; FRUS, 1943, 3:38.

²⁴Taylor to Cicognani, Feb. 26, 1943, Myron Taylor MSS., FDRL; Joint Emergency Committee, memorandum submitted to Taylor, Mar. 22, 1943, Joint Emergency Committee files, AJCA; Braunstein to Silver, Mar. 23, 1943, Manson files, Silver MSS.; Taylor to Long, Mar. 26, 1943, 740.0016 EW 1939/959, RG 59, NA; Goldmann to Taylor, Mar. 24, 1943, ZS/1161, CZA; meeting, Apr. 10, 1943, Joint Emergency Committee files, AJCA.

on Postwar Foreign Policy, he believed that private conversations with Eden and other British officials could attain as good a result as "a well advertised conference which must not fail." Taylor recognized that both governments had to decide in concrete terms on places of temporary settlement, costs, and guarantees regarding permanent refugee settlement. He believed Assistant Secretary Berle should immediately initiate such action, regardless of a conference that might "result in unexpected developments and commitments."²⁵

Taylor's analysis erred only in not grasping that both governments had already decided to exclude Jewish representatives from a conference which would be used not for rescue but for cosmetic effect. Bermuda's inaccessibility would keep away the public, while no interested organizations would be invited to attend the closed sessions. Europe's Jews were dying every day by the thousands, but both governments announced that the discussions would be "primarily exploratory" in nature.²⁶

The State Department, where refugee matters were under the direction of Assistant Secretary Breckinridge Long, did all it could to insure that the conference would yield minimal results. Maintaining a zealous control since Pearl Harbor over visas for aliens on the broadest grounds of "security," Long never altered his view that Jewish agitators were responsible for the unceasing pressure on State to effectuate a radical rescue policy. He was particularly anxious lest the conference's possible aid to Jews, together with public meetings, newspaper advertisements, Senate resolutions, and speeches by prominent Americans, be exploited by the Nazi propaganda office as proof positive that Jews commandeered the country's military drive. He shared with his subordinates a suspicion of British intentions. Britain's desire for a camp in North Africa would spark Moslem resentment, in Long's opinion, and he pressed for revival of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees as the sole end of the Bermuda proceedings. While the British announced a delegation of first rank (Richard K. Law, Home Office Under Sec-

retary Osbert Peake, and Admiralty Financial Secretary G.H. Hall, with A.W.G. Randall of the Foreign Office's Refugee Department to serve as its secretary), their opposite numbers were decidedly inferior. William Dodds, president of Princeton University, and Sen. Scott Lucas of Illinois had no experience in refugee matters; Long counted on Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee Sol Bloom of New York, more interested in personal recognition within the Executive and State departments than in championing Jewish causes, to serve as a sop to some Jews and to tow the given line. Three other advisers, who had previously indicated their support of Long's position, would go along to guarantee that all proceeded without a hitch.²⁷

Both governments arrived at final positions before the conference began. On April 2, the British war cabinet's Committee on Reception and Accommodation of Refugees unanimously agreed that their government should not undertake any commitments beyond transporting the five thousand refugees from Bulgaria to Palestine. Allied agreement with the Axis powers to accept Jews from central Europe was "out of the question." As for the U.S. government, its delegates received instructions on April 13 to make no commitments on shipping, funds, or new agencies for relief. The Americans could only grant monies to neutral governments aiding refugees. Nor could Palestine be considered as a temporary place of refuge, the State Department's Near Eastern Division hastened to add. Such resolution "would create serious risks of disaffection, perhaps accompanied by outbreaks in the Arab and Moslem world," and thereby interfere with combat operations. With these positions set, the American team joined their British allies in Hamilton on April 16, 1943.²⁸

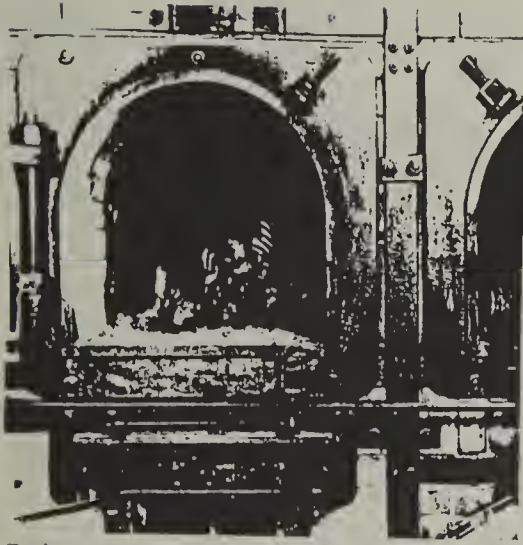
Four months had passed since the UN declaration. Little help had been forthcoming from the Anglo-American alliance during that time, and now its representatives found themselves ensconced in quarters graciously put at their disposal by the Bermuda legislature to mark the island's first international conference. "Unless action is undertaken immediately," the Joint Emergency Committee for European Jewish Affairs warned Under Secretary Welles, "there

²⁵Hull to Roosevelt, Mar. 23, 1943, OF 3186, FDRL; Taylor memorandum, Apr. 17, 1943, and Taylor to Welles, Apr. 18, 1943, Taylor Papers, FDRL. Nahum Goldmann, vice president of the WJC, also told a Foreign Office representative during Eden's visit that no conference was necessary. In Goldmann's view, the Allies should make the offer of food (for those not freed by the Germans) and refuge, and leave it up to the Nazis to accept or refuse. Strang memorandum, Mar. 24, 1943, FO 371/36658, PRO.

²⁶Feingold, *Politics of Rescue*, pp. 192-194; Wise to Welles, Apr. 14, 1943, Emergency Joint Committee, AJCA; Walker minute, Apr. 11, 1943, FO 371/36659, PRO.

²⁷Feingold, *Politics of Rescue*, pp. 137-148, 159-166, 194-200, 231-237, 243; Fred L. Israel, ed., *The War Diary of Breckinridge Long* (1966), pp. 307, 309; FO to Washington embassy, Apr. 6, 1943, FO 371/36657, PRO; Halifax to FO, Apr. 7, 1943, FO 371/36658, PRO.

²⁸Cabinet Committee on Refugees meeting, Mar. 31, 1943, and decisions, Apr. 2, 1943, FO 371/36657, PRO; Morse, *While Six Million Died*, p. 48; Alling to Reams, Apr. 14, 1943, War Refugee Board records (WRB), box 17, FDRL.



Dachau: Crematoria. "To 5,000,000 Jews in the Nazi death trap Bermuda was a cruel mockery."

may soon be no Jews left alive in Europe."²⁹ Those still surviving and all others interested in their rescue would discover in time that they had no cause to place their last hopes either in the deliberations about to commence or in their aftermath.

The statements made by some delegates shortly before the Bermuda Conference began its closed sessions already signaled the defeatism of the two governments. "We will not fail in this crisis," Senator Lucas assured Americans, but he added that only Congress could determine their government's immigration policy. ("He is not too hopeful," the Foreign Office privately noted.) Reporters in Bermuda were informed that shipping difficulties precluded immediate rescue. Richard K. Law, heading the British group, insisted that only the triumph of the Allied armies would help the refugees. Professor Dodds, his opposite, added that the problem was "too great for solution" by the two governments at this first international meeting to discuss refugees since the Wehrmacht invaded Poland and began to fulfill Hitler's prophecy concerning the destruction of European Jewry in the event of global conflict.³⁰

Although the conference had its genesis in the public's reaction to the UN Declaration on Jewish Massacres, the Jews had no staunch allies at Bermuda. The Americans, who could claim neither knowledge of nor responsibility for the

problem, followed their instructions to the letter. They accepted the British agenda and arrived at a harmony of minds. Dodds and the State Department officials squelched Bloom's expressed hope of perhaps negotiating with the Axis, and they agreed with the British that the Roosevelt-Churchill policy of unconditional surrender must remain inviolate. No exchange of prisoners or lifting of the Allied blockade to bring relief to European Jews would be permitted. The State Department's expert on shipping (and head of its Visa Division) even outdid the British in dismissing all possibility of using Allied vessels for rescue, although the Americans did agree to share the cost of chartering two Rumanian ships to transport the offered five thousand Bulgarian Jews to Palestine.³¹

Proposals for places of refuge died aborning. A British suggestion that Portuguese ships bring up to fifteen thousand refugees to Angola led Breckinridge Long's chief assistant on refugee matters to counter that Angola might not wish to help; Dodds recommended that the suggestion be sent to the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees. Mention of Santo Domingo, Madagascar, British Honduras, and Cyrenaica as refugee centers, to be referred to their respective governments for future discussion, all suffered a similar fate. British pressure for a center in North Africa met with the rejoinder that, aside from objections of the U.S. military, "American troops would not tolerate that any country occupied by them should put Jewish refugees in concentration camps." The British found the Americans willing to accept the restrictive White Paper quota, Dodds again clamping down on Bloom. As a quid pro quo, congressional immigration laws would also not be open to question. Nor would the conference discuss a Swedish offer—contingent upon assurances of Anglo-American aid—to admit twenty thousand Jewish children from Axis-controlled countries.³²

One of the American staff tried but failed to stir his colleagues to undertake what he termed "an act of moral force, an act against reason . . . that those who are now helpless and cannot help anyone will be saved from disaster." George Backer, former owner of the *New York Post*, who

²⁹FRUS, 1943, 1:148; Wise et al. to Welles, Apr. 14, 1943, Joint Emergency Committee files, AJCA.

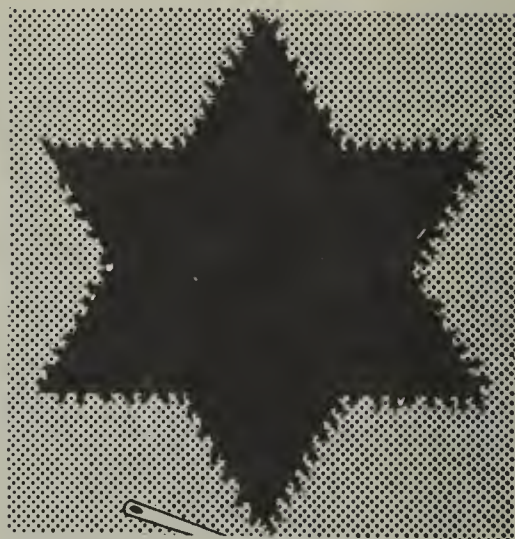
³⁰TA, Apr. 13, 1943; FO memorandum, Apr. 16, 1943, FO 371/36659, PRO; Morse, *While Six Million Died*, p. 49.

³¹The American notes of the conference discussions may be found in box 203 of the Breckinridge Long Papers, Library of Congress. The British record is in FO 371/36725, PRO. Also see the astute analysis in Feingold, *Politics of Rescue*, pp. 197-204. I remain unconvinced by the defense of Dodds in Saul S. Friedman, *No Haven for the Oppressed* (1973), p. 173.

³²See note 31; S. Adler-Rudel, "A Chronicle of Rescue Efforts," *Publications of the Leo Baeck Institute, Yearbook* 11 (1966):220-229.

now headed the American branch of the Organization for Rehabilitation and Training, had been invited to wait outside the conference doors as a concession to the Jews and to newspaper pressure. When the U.S. delegates called in their entire staff for a frank discussion after the official talks had ended, Backer let loose. Far more must be done than merely transport the estimated 5,000 Jewish refugees then in Spain to a camp in North Africa and accept the White Paper quota, he urged. The Bermuda Conference would be a failure unless negotiations were undertaken with the neutrals and the Vatican for removal of 125,000 Jews from eastern Europe. At least allow the Jews, who have lived in Europe for nineteen hundred years, to "have their seed saved," Backer pleaded. The Jewish Agency, whose memorandum Backer had forwarded to the American representatives, would take 94,000 immediately into Palestine, he added. Alleged military and shipping difficulties served as the convenient foil to these arguments, however, and his poignant appeal went unheeded. On his return to the states, Backer confided his frustration to the Jewish Labor Committee: "The Jewish question met a deaf wall at Bermuda," he exclaimed. Had he known beforehand of such opposition to saving European Jewry, he would not have joined the American delegation.³³

This "facade for inaction," in the later words of British chief delegate Richard Law, ended as inauspiciously as it had begun. A brief public statement, making no reference to Jews as such, assured the world that a substantial number of refugees would be aided through concrete recommendations. The proposals decided upon could not, however, be made public at this time. In fact, the conferees recommended only resurrecting and expanding the intergovernmental committee and its responsibilities and moving twenty-one thousand refugees, including the estimated five thousand Jews, from Spain to North Africa. The Jewish organizations, in absentia, had called for negotiations with Germany via the neutrals to free Jews not permitted to leave Europe, and havens in the United States, Latin America, the neutral countries, and



Palestine. Their memorandums were quickly dismissed, relegated to archives.³⁴

The conference results satisfied the State Department entirely. Assistant Secretary Long, reflecting in early May on the March 1 New York rally, worried that the "hot headed masses . . . would take the burden and the curse off Hitler." He could now rest content. Assistant Secretary Berle could also breathe more easily, having ruled out two weeks earlier a threat of raids against German towns on military and moral grounds and having dismissed Palestine as a place of refuge because of the inevitable Arab agitation to follow. (At that very moment, he could be found in the vanguard of those secretly urging a joint Anglo-American statement on Palestine to postpone any answer for that vexing problem until after the war, thereby acceding to the White Paper.)³⁵ Even Under Secretary Welles, supporter of the Zionist cause, and who had assured Wise and Proskauer that Bermuda would be a success if it rescued only fifty thousand Jews, officially wrote Wise in June that constant efforts were being made to carry out the conference's recommendations, "including several mentioned by you." Only Myron Taylor again challenged his colleagues' smugness, re-

³³Minutes of two meetings, Apr. 25, 1943, Long Papers; Halifax to FO, Apr. 15, 1943, FO 371/36659, PRO; Weizmann to Law, Apr. 15, 1943, Weizmann Archives, Rehovot (Israel); Office Committee minutes, May 6, 1943, Jewish Labor Committee Archives, New York. A Foreign Office member dismissed the Jewish Agency memorandum in this fashion: "It is naively assumed the United Nations could provide transport for all these people. That alone makes the memorandum fantastically out of relation to reality. This memorandum is obviously political . . . Jewish dominance of Palestine by greatly increased immigration." Minute, Apr. 17, 1943, FO 371/36701, PRO.

³⁴Law quoted in Morse, *While Six Million Died*, p. 57; FRUS, 1943, 1:173-174; Law to FO, Apr. 27, 1943, FO 371/36659, PRO. For copies of these memorandums, see box 203, Long Papers. My analysis of these proposals and the response of the two major powers to them differs from the conclusions of S. B. Beit-Zvi, *Hatsiyonut HaPost-Ugandit BeMashber HaShoa* (1977), pp. 321-326.

³⁵Feingold, *Politics of Rescue*, p. 207; Berle memorandum to Hull and Long, Apr. 20, 1943, box 202, Long Papers; Monty N. Penkower, "The 1943 Joint Anglo-American Statement on Palestine," *Herzl Yearbook* 8 (1978):212-241.

fusing to organize a meeting of the moribund intergovernmental committee until the American and British governments first obligated themselves to insure temporary and permanent havens for the Jews. "The Bermuda Conference was wholly ineffective, as I view it," he wrote Hull, Welles, and Long, "and we knew it would be."³⁶

The British delegation also left Bermuda fully content. Its three members, in a memorandum to the Foreign Office which Eden forwarded to the war cabinet, expressed pleasant surprise at the frank concord that reigned from April 19 to 28. Unanimity had been achieved, and although the American representatives regularly put on the intergovernmental committee "difficult or disagreeable tasks which the United States government was clearly unwilling to carry out alone," the two groups had arrived at a mutually satisfactory position regarding that committee as well. The conference achieved very little regarding the immediate relief and rescue of refugees; how far it would succeed in "more modest aims will appear as time goes on." But in one respect the discussions had proved thoroughly profitable. The note of "asperity, jealousy and suspicion" of His Majesty's Government in certain American official circles was dispelled, and it seemed that a foundation of understanding and cooperation on the refugee issue had been established in its stead. If so, the British government could "appeal confidently to American goodwill in all such refugee burdens in the future as we consider should not be placed exclusively on our own and British Colonial Governments." This welcome result should not be publicized, but "our ten agreeable days of discussion with the Americans in Bermuda will not have been wasted if we can succeed in keeping this one reality alive."³⁷

Such optimism just when Goebbels published the Nazi order to annihilate the Jews without mercy could hardly be justified, and the public roundly denounced the Bermuda proceedings as a tragedy of unfathomable proportions. The Committee for a Jewish Army to Fight Hitler, led by an Irgun delegation from Palestine, blasted the conference on May 4 with a full-page advertisement in major newspapers: "TO 5,000,000 JEWS IN THE NAZI DEATH TRAP BERMUDA WAS A CRUEL

MOCKERY." Not long before, that same group had attacked in similar fashion the failure of London and Washington to respond regarding Rumania's offer of the remaining Jews in Trans-Dniestria. Its Emergency Committee to Save the Jews of Europe subsequently urged the American government to create a specific agency without delay to rescue Jews; international agencies were to aid in their protection and emigration. In four months, panels of leading experts observed, six hundred thousand Jews from the German satellite nations could be evacuated to Palestine, with an additional one hundred fifty thousand taken to other temporary locations. Pointed criticism in Parliament and Congress exposed the sterility of the conference. Eduard Beneš, president of the Czech government-in-exile, privately compared the Allied disregard for the fate of beleaguered Jewry to the betrayal of his country by the same governments five years earlier.³⁸ When food reached Greece through the Allied blockade, exchange of prisoners took place via the International Red Cross, Allied boats returned empty from theaters of war, and the Germans stopped the use of gas on the Russian front after England's prime minister threatened to retaliate in kind, a mantle of "callous indifference" covered the major Allied powers.³⁹

Manifest at the very moment when the Jews of the Warsaw ghetto took up arms to avenge their people murdered in Auschwitz, Treblinka, Belzec, and Majdanek, the apathy of the two governments represented at Bermuda appeared especially criminal. The final German assault against the remaining sixty thousand inhabitants of the ghetto's over four hundred thousand Jews began on the same day that the Bermuda Conference opened. Radio and newspaper bulletins conveyed these events to the world, but help never reached the defenders. In a last attempt to stir Roosevelt and Churchill from passivity to action, Zygielbojm took his life; his suicide note read, "[as] an energetic cry of protest against the indifference of the world which witnesses the extermination of the Jewish

³⁶Welles quoted by Proskauer in Apr. 10, 1943, meeting, Joint Emergency Committee files, AJCA; Welles to Wise, June 24, 1943, file 264, WJC; Taylor to Hull, Welles, and Long, Apr. 30, 1943, cited in memorandum on Bermuda Conference, Feb. 22, 1943, box 3, WRB, FDRL; Taylor to Emerson, May 25, 1943, Taylor Papers.

³⁷Law, Peake, and Hall memorandum to FO, June 28, 1943, FO 371/36725, PRO.

³⁸JTA, May 7, 1943; *New York Times*, May 4, 1943; Peter Bergson, interview with author, June 22, 1972; Monty N. Penkower, "In Dramatic Dissent: The Bergson Boys," *American Jewish History* 70 (Mar. 1981):281-290; *Parliamentary Debates (Commons)*, May 19, 1943, cols. 1119-1204; U.S., Congress, Senate, *Congressional Record*, 78th Cong., 1st sess., 1943, 89, pt. 10: A2154, A2389-2390, A2566; Weizmann-Beneš talk, May 19, 1943, ZS/1377, CZA.

³⁹Potter to E. Roosevelt, July 15, 1943, Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe files, Jabotinsky Archives, Tel Aviv; Goldmann to Gruenbaum, Apr. 5, 1943, Z6/18/15, CZA; Smertenko to Villard, May 27, 1943, file 3570, Oscar G. Villard Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard Univ.

people without taking any steps to prevent it."⁴⁰ Hitler would not wait patiently for the two war-lords' reply.

The originators of the conference, who it appeared had convened the Bermuda sessions not so much to save the Jews from death as themselves from public censure, now felt pressed to give proof of their professed intentions. They were not prepared to accept the view of James G. McDonald, first League of Nations high commissioner for refugees, who had resigned from that post in December 1935 in protest against Allied inactivity to save Jews, that the Jewish refugees had "no other land to which to go" but their Promised Land of old. Roosevelt studiously avoided mentioning Palestine in messages at the time to Zionist organizations, and he gave that and the rescue of European Jewry low priority in winning the war. Even Churchill, unyielding advocate of a large Jewish state in Palestine, officially seconded the Foreign Office's position on British refugee activity.⁴¹ Both governments had decided well in advance of the Bermuda meeting not to press for large-scale havens. To where now could they turn? In an air of desperation, these reluctant rescuers snatched at North Africa to answer their critics.

The first move in this direction on the highest level took place on May 7, with Secretary Hull's memorandum to FDR about the Bermuda proceedings. The secretary had declared his preference in November 1942 for the return of refugees after the war to their homes "in a world in which Jews, like every other race, are free to abide in peace and honor." He now asked Roosevelt if he would agree to the conference's suggestion for a temporary camp in North Africa, to be followed by postwar repatriation. Hull would not support changing immigration laws or bringing in refugees as temporary visitors, thereby risking prolonged, bitter controversy in Congress and other forums. On May 14, the president gave his approval to the North African proposal. As for moving refugees, costs should be shared with Great Britain, the American contribution to be taken out of relief funds assigned to former New York governor Herbert Lehman, director of the State Department's Office of Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation Operations (OFRRO). North Africa could be used as a depot for the twenty thousand refugees presently in Spain, Roosevelt agreed, but not on a permanent basis without

full approval of all authorities concerned: "I know, in fact, that there is plenty of room for them in North Africa, but I raise the question of sending large numbers of Jews there. That would be extremely unwise."⁴²

The president's personal caution about the mass movement of Jews to North Africa reflected the concerns of his State and War departments. As early as June 1942, State tried without avail to persuade FDR that a declaration regarding Palestine's future along the principles enunciated in the Atlantic Charter would counter Axis broadcasts to the Middle East, which promised Arab independence and total elimination of the Jewish national home. Similar fears led the president's personal representative in North Africa, Robert Murphy, to join the State Department in successfully recommending that the Crémieux Decree, which had granted French citizenship at birth for Algeria's Jews, not be restored by the Free French government. At the same time, the chief of the War Department's Military Intelligence Division (G-2) cautioned that pro-Zionist statements by eminent American officials would alienate the Moslem world and threaten the security of American troops in the Middle East. On the same grounds, in January 1943 Allied headquarters in North Africa turned down a suggestion from the Committee for a Jewish Army that a Jewish legion be formed from native French and European refugee Jews located there. G-2 informed Breckinridge Long during the Bermuda talks that the War Department's strong objections to transporting Jewish refugees to North Africa "should preclude any further consideration of the matter." To shift attention from Palestine and North Africa as large havens for Jews, a confidential study on April 30 by G-2's Middle East Section, embracing a totally pro-Arab position for Palestine, concluded that the Cameroons in central Africa should be the place of shelter for those European Jews who survived the war.⁴³

Until Roosevelt's memorandum of May 14 to Secretary Hull, the American government had limited its commitment to the estimated 5,000 Jewish refugees in Spain. Two hundred thousand dollars had been allotted for these and the other refugees there, and the President's Advisory Committee on Political Refugees had

⁴⁰Morse, *While Six Million Died*, p. 52; JTA, Apr. 22, 1943; Zygielbojm to Raczkiewicz and Sikorski, May 1943, in Zygielbojm Magazine, Bund Archives.

⁴¹James G. McDonald, "The Time for Discussion Is Past," *New Palestine* 33 (Mar. 19, 1943):5-7; Welles to Early, Mar. 4, 1943, 840.48 Refs/3721, RG 59, NA; Roosevelt to Flynn, Apr. 9, 1943, OF 700, FDRL; Churchill quoted in *Palcor*, Apr. 8, 1943.

⁴²FRUS, 1943, 1:176-179. The intergovernmental committee's director had first suggested the North African camp for refugees in November 1942, only to be informed by Taylor that the idea was "impractical." FRUS, 1942, 1:477-478, 481.

⁴³Penkower, "1943 Joint Anglo-American Statement on Palestine," pp. 224-225; Robert Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors* (1965 ed.), pp. 183-184; McIntyre to Roosevelt, Dec. 21, 1942, box 69, PSF, FDRL; memorandum of Long-Strang talk, Apr. 22, 1943, box 203, Long Papers.

recommended that one thousand Jews go to Palestine and that between 500 and 1,000 proceed to Jamaica. Replying to the British government's first expression of interest in a joint refugee program in North Africa, Hull had cautioned that military considerations were paramount. A second British request on March 24 met with Assistant Secretary Long's rebuff that only the French, then in political control of the area, could decide the issue. At most, the two governments, with a personal assist from Churchill, had protested in mid-April against the Spanish government's closing the Pyrenean frontier to Jews fleeing France.⁴⁴

Roosevelt and Churchill discussed the matter in mid-May. The prime minister's interest in settling Jews in the former Italian colonies of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, to serve as satellites of a future Jewish state, sparked the opposition of Roosevelt's foremost adviser on postwar settlement, Isaiah Bowman. Bowman's fears of a violent reaction in the Arab world found their way into a State Department memorandum that FDR handed Churchill while the latter visited Washington. During that same trip, Eden cabled from London that he was dismayed and depressed at the objections of the U.S. joint chiefs to a small center somewhere in North Africa. The camp could get British pilots and other Allied prisoners out of France, he pointed out. The few Jewish refugees involved would not pose a problem of shipping, while the center might be located sufficiently remote from important Arab areas. A favorable decision would also halt "extremely serious" criticism in Parliament. "It is our last hope of carrying through a modest suggestion to which we attach great political and military importance," Eden implored. Churchill agreed to his foreign secretary's request that he take up the recommendation with the president at the White House and then left for England to work it out.⁴⁵

Complete agreement between Roosevelt and Churchill for the refugee camp was obtained only in early July. Both Eden and his superior did not think the difficulties cited in Bowman's memorandum insurmountable so long as temporary havens were contemplated, although the British War Office opposed Cyrenaica because of probable Arab antagonism. For days the British embassy in Washington pressed the matter. At

last, on June 18, following Under Secretary Welles's advice that Churchill send a personal message to FDR, Eden drafted a note that the "former naval person" forwarded at the end of the month: "Our immediate facilities for helping victims of Hitler's anti-Jewish drive are so limited at present that the opening of the small camp proposed for the purpose of removing some of them to safety seems all the more incumbent on us." Roosevelt finally gave his approval on July 9; "I am most grateful," his ally replied a few days later.⁴⁶

Still, the camp which was to receive an original estimate of five to seven thousand Jews was not even organized by the end of 1943. Having the American and British governments' agreement to contribute \$500,000 each, OFRRO director Lehman instructed his chief of the North African mission in Algiers that plans for setting up the camp should be vigorously developed. The use of French military barracks occupied by the U.S. Army at Camp Maréchal Lyautey, ten miles north of Casablanca near Fedala, was approved by the State Department, General Eisenhower, and the French authorities "in principle" on September 1. Moses Beckelman was appointed the project's director. By the time UNRRA came into being in November under Lehman's directorship, the French government, which had thought of imposing internment conditions on the center, finally agreed to turn over the facilities to the new organization. It set down two conditions, however: the refugees must be limited to two thousand and be eventually removed by the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees. But UNRRA had as yet virtually no funds, and while Lehman assured the State Department of his new organization's willingness to take over the camp, the Foreign Economic Administration was given temporary responsibility for the proposed site. Not one Jewish refugee had been moved from Spain to the Moroccan location.⁴⁷

A further complication arose during early 1944 in the difficult relations between the newly formed War Refugee Board and the American ambassador to Spain, Carlton J. Hayes. The WRB sought to remove promptly to Camp Lyautey as many stateless and unprotected refugees as facilities permitted, and to have the Spanish government take all action to encourage the entry of refugees into Spain. Such efforts, it

⁴⁴FRUS, 1943, 1:137, 142, 258, 278, 284, 290-291; Long-Campbell talk, Mar. 24, 1943, box 202, Long Papers. The British dragged their feet on Palestine's admitting the 1,000 refugees. McDonald to Welles, Feb. 5, 1943, 840.48 Refs/3593, RG 59, NA.

⁴⁵Penkower, "1943 Joint Anglo-American Statement," p. 218; FRUS, *Conferences at Washington and Quebec, 1943*, pp. 342-346.

⁴⁶Churchill to Stanley and Eden, June 8, 1943, and Eden to Churchill, June 15, 18, 1943, Prem 4, 51/4, PRO; FRUS, 1943, 1: 307-325.

⁴⁷FRUS, 1943, 1:334-335, 339-340, 345, 359, 367; Ackerman memorandum, n.d., box 39, WRB, FDRL; "Report on Middle East Camps," UNRRA MSS., ME 1, pp. 28-29, UN Archives, New York.

suggested to Hayes, would include easier border controls and the setting up of camps on Spanish territory until the refugees were moved southward. The ambassador replied on February 28 that a total of some 1,300 (not the earlier estimate of 5,000) refugees might be classified as stateless. They included about 400 Spanish Sephardic Jews from Greece, who had been allowed by the Germans to leave for Spain, and who would in the main apply for admission to the Fedala camp.⁴⁸ Another 450 persons had also applied for evacuation to Fedala. The Spanish government, for diverse reasons, opposed further relaxation of its border controls, and to push for this action could have seriously jeopardized the escape of Allied soldiers from German-held territories to that country.⁴⁹

The WRB argued, a month later, that its vigorous efforts, Allied victories, and the melting of snow in the mountainous region should stimulate the flow of refugees to Spain, but failed to convince the American ambassador. Hayes did press for better treatment of Jewish refugees in Spain's worst internment centers. At the request of board director John Pehle, he reluctantly intervened to have the Spanish government intercede with the Germans on behalf of an additional four hundred Sephardic Jews transferred from Athens to the Theresienstadt ghetto. But he remained at odds with the WRB; Eleanor Roosevelt's personal intercession, which Pehle obtained, with the president failed to secure Hayes's removal. Given the ambassador's reading of Spanish nationalism and the country's strategic position vis-à-vis Germany during the war, he failed to accept the WRB's assignment of chief priority to rescue.⁵⁰

⁴⁸FRUS, 1944, 1:992-994, 996-999. These Jews, who had lived in Salonika for several centuries, had continued to claim citizenship in the country from which their ancestors had been expelled in 1492. The Spanish government, with urging by Hayes, continued to recognize this claim, "albeit grudgingly." During the German invasion of Greece, the Spanish consul prevented their deportation to Poland by giving them visas and arranging their transport to Spain on the promise of the American and British embassies that they would be moved elsewhere as soon as possible. "Report on Middle East Camps," pp. 31-32; John P. Wilson, "Carlton J. Hayes, Spain, and the Refugee Crisis, 1942-45," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 62 (Dec. 1972):105-106.

⁴⁹FRUS, 1944, 1:996-999.

⁵⁰Ibid.:1013-1015, 1935-1936; Joseph H. Lash, *Eleanor: The Years Alone* (1972), p. 109; Wilson, "Carlton J. Hayes," pp. 107-110. The WRB moved after obtaining a WJC report about the sympathy of Franco's brother for the Spanish Jews in Greece, and upon receipt from the WJC of a Jewish Agency cable warning of their deportation to Theresienstadt. WRB to Madrid, May 27, 1944, and Goldman to Pehle, May 11, 1944, box 47, WRB, FDRL. For the Spanish government's poor record on behalf of Jewish refugees, particularly given scant Allied pressure as regards the rescue of Jews, see Chaim Avni, *Sefarad VeHaYehudim BeYemai HaShoa VeHalmantsipatsiya* (1974).



Chaim Weizmann persistently warned the Allies of the need for action but was met with opposition and apathy.

Eventually, the bulk of these Sephardic Jews arrived at Camp Maréchal Lyautey. Beckelman, meanwhile, spent weeks in Spain early in 1944 helping the American and French governments screen refugees, but the number, as Ambassador Hayes had predicted, proved disappointingly small. UNRRA rejected about 25 percent of the applications from Jews, notwithstanding the ambassador's requests for a broad definition of "refugee," while Beckelman would not encourage refugees to leave for the camp because of UNRRA's voluntary status. The French continued to refuse refugees at the Fedala center permits to work or to leave the camp area. Finally Germany's tightening grip on France halted the stream of refugees to Spain. As pressure on Spain decreased, the local authorities improved their treatment of the "stateless," and the urge to leave the country lessened. The first consignment reaching Casablanca on May 12 numbered only thirty-eight refugees. By the end of June 1944, nearly six hundred more arrived from Madrid.⁵¹

⁵¹Wilson, "Carlton J. Hayes," p. 107; "Report on Middle East Camps," pp. 30-31; Beckelman to Anderson, Feb. 12, 20, 1944; Friedman memorandum, Feb. 24, 1944; Beckelman's talk with French authorities, Mar. 25, 1944; Ackerman report, Apr. 20, 1944, all in box 39, WRB, FDRL; Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees Annual Report, Apr. [?], 1943, UNRRA MSS., box 40,631, ERO files, UN Archives.

In July, UNRRA director Lehman gave his consent to the eventual liquidation of the camp. The bill authorizing an appropriation from the U.S. government to UNRRA had become law on March 28, but Lehman had trouble getting the center transferred from the Foreign Economic Administration to his agency's jurisdiction. Beckelman estimated that no more refugees would arrive from Spain, and he thought it impractical to continue the expense of operating a camp with a population of never more than seven hundred. Relations with the local French authorities continued to be difficult, and supplies from the army and the United States were virtually nonexistent. Beckelman began to urge that the haven be closed, and Lehman overrode the WRB's objections and gave his concurrence in July. That same month, the center director finally secured the French provisional government's approval of the camp's transfer to UNRRA. The British continued to withhold their consent, however, and only when the camp reached the point of liquidation did the actual transfer take place—on October 5 retroactive to September 1, 1944.⁵²

While the camp at Fedala thus proved to be as limited a gesture as the conference that spawned it, the suggestion of complementary centers at Tripolitania and Cyrenaica came to naught. The British had been asked at Bermuda to consider Cyrenaica, and Roosevelt expressed to Churchill in July 1943 his interest in the possibility of both areas as refugee havens. Assistant Secretary Long again made the proposal informally to the British minister in Washington six months later in an attempt to shift the public's focus away from Palestine. In March 1944, the WRB indicated its readiness to share costs and transportation for the project with the British as a real opportunity to rescue many Jews via Turkey and the Black Sea. Secretary Hull seconded the idea as "extremely important," adding that the two proposed camps could also take refugees from southern Italy. But the British minister for war refused to accede even to Tripolitania, writing Richard Law that Arab alarm and "Zionist propagandists" would create "an additional security problem for us at a time when we are already hard pressed to meeting existing commitments in Palestine and elsewhere in the Middle East." The Foreign Office failed to convince its military authorities that acceptance of Tripolitania would

be a "far less objectionable alternative" than opening Palestine to Jewish refugees beyond the White Paper quota. Moreover, while Roosevelt made it clear that there should be "no discouragement under any circumstances" of the escape of refugees to Italy from the Balkans, Robert Murphy, now U.S. political adviser on the staff of the supreme allied commander, Mediterranean Theater, saw to it that help would not be tendered Marshal Tito's partisans in evacuating Jews then in Yugoslavia by Allied ships returning to Italy. The British government's approval in early June 1944 for a camp in Tripolitania for one thousand to fifteen hundred refugees never materialized; the Foreign Office reluctantly ruled out Cyrenaica because of the political problems involved.⁵³

The final saga of the 432 Sephardic Jews in the camp near Casablanca epitomized the fate of the "Wandering Jew," especially during the years of the Holocaust. Negotiations for their transfer to the Middle East had been complicated by the fact that the Egyptian government regularly refused to admit refugees lacking guarantees of repatriation. As an international agency, UNRRA could supply no such assurance, and it seemed that the Greek government would be loath to allow this group to return to their original homes. By early October, they found themselves in the Greek colony at Nuseirat in the southeast of Palestine, a fait accompli that the British and Displaced Persons Division in Cairo had to accept uneasily. These officials correctly suspected that the majority would immediately leave the camp to join Jewish settlements nearby. Indeed, by January 15, 1945, 229 had done so. The remainder returned with the Nuseirat colony to Greece. The Greek government later protested strongly to UNRRA against what it viewed as unwarranted concealment of these people, whose formal return it would have refused. Its officials even called (to no effect) for the removal of the UNRRA representative in charge of repatriation from the Middle East. The Casablanca camp closed its doors on November 23, and despite the fact that one thousand Jewish refugees in Spain still needed an outlet, the U.S. Army got the center back in February 1945 to house prisoners of war.⁵⁴ The Bermuda Conference attained its complete dénouement.

⁵²"Report on Middle East Camps," pp. 30-31; State Department to Winant, Aug. 15, 1944, and Board to Mann, Nov. 20, 1944, box 39, WRB, FDRL. The head of the Civil Affairs Office's refugee section foresaw these difficulties early and urged (unsuccessfully) that only the admission of all endangered refugees by the United Nations would afford the "basic solution." Johnson to Fryer, Feb. 18, 1944, box 30, WRB, FDRL.

⁵³FRUS, 1943, 1:323-324; FRUS, 1944, 1:1007-1008, 1018-1019, 1053-1054, 1058-1059, 1070-1071; Law to Grigg, Apr. 3, 1944, and Grigg to Law, Apr. 4, 1944, FO 371/42728, PRO; Randall memorandum, Apr. 13, 1944, and Law to Grigg, Apr. 22, 1944, FO 371/42729, PRO; Pehle to Stettinius, June 16, 1944, box 70, WRB, FDRL.

⁵⁴"Report on Middle East Camps," pp. 32-33, Perez Leshem, "Rescue Efforts in the Iberian Peninsula," *Publica-*

Thus did the British and American governments undertake a quest for "refuge"—not rescue—in the Bermuda Conference and in its aftermath, the camp near Casablanca. Beset by public demand for forthright action, each hid behind questionable figures on their admission of people desperately in need. Ships were found to transfer over four hundred thousand German prisoners of war to internment centers in the United States outside current visa regulations, but not Jews facing death. Palestine's available doors also remained closed, except for the pre-war White Paper quota. With the final decisions arrived at even before the conference opened, it is understandable that the two powers took leave of the proceedings fully satisfied. Disintering the defunct Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, Breckinridge Long's tactic to silence those truly interested in rescue, was a cynical ploy. In the greatest irony of all, the Bermuda conferees limited their attention to the small number of refugees who had in fact already found a precarious haven in neutral Spain. The Jews in Nazi transit and concentration camps, the subject of the December 1942 UN declaration, were not placed on the diplomatic agenda. Indeed, the word *Jews* could not be found in the final communiqué from the conference. And the Fedala camp, that Eden so aptly characterized as "a modest suggestion" primarily to still critics and save Allied soldiers, ultimately sheltered only a few hundred Jews who had the good fortune to cross General Franco's borders.

The paltry efforts of the conference and the consequent North Africa refugee center failed to save either the people expressly marked for destruction or enhance the Allied powers' moral prestige. Nor could it have been otherwise, when the Anglo-American alliance refused to match Hitler's fanatic determination to murder all of European Jewry with an equally determined effort to rescue them. So long as the authorities most capable of action maintained, as Eden put it to Parliament a month after the empty show staged at Bermuda, that "the only real solution for this problem that can be found is a solution of final and complete Allied victory," Hitler's Final Solution for the so-called Jewish problem could not be thwarted. Generosity, courage, and speed, which Eleanor Rathbone and others valiantly but vainly demanded, went wanting. These attributes could not be found in officials who feared, in Richard Law's frank phrase at Bermuda, that negotiations with Berlin

might succeed and that "would be relieving Hitler of an obligation to take care of these useless people."⁵⁵

Rather than risk such embarrassment, it would be much less troublesome to call on the exigencies of war and not to admit that the fate of the Jews uniquely differed from that of other refugees. The Anglo-American notes calling for a primarily exploratory series of secret, isolated meetings, as well as all replies from State and the Foreign Office to their ever-growing number of detractors, must be viewed in this light. Definite possibilities for the rescue of Jews in Trans-Dniestria and Bulgaria, Sweden's offer for twenty thousand Jews, exchanges for prisoners of war, funds for self-defense and relief, threats of reprisals, Allied guarantees to neutral countries, food parcels, as well as reception centers in Palestine, Latin America, the United States, Cyrenaica, and Tripolitania—all scarcely received the serious consideration merited by the one people for whom delay meant death. The two governments found it far easier to sidestep the great challenge and to breathe the very spirit of defeatism and despair.⁵⁶ This attitude seized the two leaders of the West as well.

Roosevelt failed to champion an active rescue program. When four hundred Orthodox rabbis, organized by the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe, marched on Washington in October 1943 to secure an Anglo-American governmental agency for rescue, FDR chose to dedicate a few bombers to the Free Yugoslav forces rather than receive the clergymen's delegation. Apart from fighting a global war, the president found himself confronted with restrictive immigration quotas, a possible recurrence of "Jew Deal" charges, a hostile Congress, and State Department apathy if not anti-Semitism. Assistant Secretary Long continued to trumpet the worth of the impotent Intergovernmental Committee for Refugees, brand rescue advocates "emotionalists who are misled by Hitler," and to provide 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue with the same inflated number of refugees admitted to the United States which the American delegation had used at Bermuda. Not until December did critics succeed in unmasking the hollowness of the State Department's touted rescue record. Pressure from the public, mem-

⁵⁵*Parliamentary Debates (Commons)*, May 19, 1943, cols. 1133, 1197; Law quoted in Feingold, *Politics of Rescue*, p. 199.

⁵⁶For a similar lack of priority given by the Anglo-American alliance to the rescue of Jewry during the latter half of 1943, specifically regarding a plan to send funds from the U.S. for underground work in Rumania and France, see Monty N. Penkower, "Jewish Organizations and Creation of the U.S. War Refugee Board," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 450 (July 1980):127-132.

bers of Congress, and Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr., all disgusted with the dilatory tactics of Long and others in the department, finally forced FDR to end State's obstructive monopoly on rescue and relief by creating the War Refugee Board in January 1944 through executive order. He resorted to that instrument only once again to admit 918 Jews and 64 other refugees to Fort Oswego, New York, where they were interned for the rest of the war. The president spent much time on planning postwar settlements for Jews who would not live to see these memorandums when Hitler's *Gottterdammerung* sounded.⁵⁷

Churchill relegated the succor of European Jewry to secondary importance during the war. In private correspondence, he emphasized "the great difficulties we are encountering and shall continue to encounter." Even if the Germans were to release all Jews under their stranglehold, "transport alone presents a problem which will be difficult of solution . . . but we shall do what we can." For him these efforts included an understanding with the Foreign and Colonial offices to have the White Paper run its course, with no attempt made to secure an agency parallel to the War Refugee Board across the ocean. He turned to the Foreign Office to answer in his place Harold Laski's cry of anguish on behalf of the Labourite's fellow Jews: "Can not even now something be done to give them a sign to relieve their agony?" He and Roosevelt omitted the Jewish people from the Moscow Conference's formal statement in October 1943 about those suffering Nazi atrocities. Neither man, in the course of their secret correspondence with one another, raised the possibility of rescuing the targets of Hitler's obsessive hatred. Like FDR, Churchill focused on the period after the war. His firm support for a large Jewish state in Palestine came too late, however, to those whose

traditional homelessness such a commonwealth would have ended.⁵⁸

The United Nations Declaration on Jewish Massacres, therefore, awakened the world's conscience but did not arouse the major Allies to translate that urgent moral call into action. That declaration remains the single international document dealing solely with Jewry's unparalleled plight in World War II. "Deeds commensurate with the gravity of the hour," called for in a last cable from the doomed fighters of the Warsaw ghetto uprising while the conference's delegates basked in the Bermuda sun, had not followed. The pleas and reasoned proposals of a concerned public could not move London and Washington to meaningful action. Chaim Weizmann's bitter observation, included in a memorandum to the conference, which the Jewish Agency could not deliver in person, that "the world is divided into countries in which the Jews cannot live and countries which they must not enter" had proved only too true during the Holocaust.⁵⁹

In the end, the refuge sought by the Anglo-American alliance in the Bermuda Conference and in Camp Maréchal Lyautey mocked the Jewish victims. British and American officialdom resorted to the familiar litany of "rescue through victory" as their watchword for the best reply to the Third Reich's *Endlösung*.⁶⁰ They emerged triumphant in May 1945, but a price not measurable in numbers alone had been paid. Six million Jews were forever enveloped in the darkness of the long night. □

⁵⁸Churchill quoted in Eppler, "Rescue Work of the World Jewish Congress," p. 59; Laski to Churchill, July 6, 1943, and Churchill note, attached, Prem 4, 51/8, PRO; *FRUS*, 1943, 1:768-769; Roosevelt-Churchill wartime correspondence, FDRL; Penkower, "1943 Joint Anglo-American Statement on Palestine."

⁵⁹Morse, *While Six Million Died*, p. 53; Weizmann (Jewish Agency) memorandum to Bermuda Conference, Apr. 14, 1943, box 59, Elbert Thomas Papers, FDRL.

⁶⁰Feingold, *Politics of Rescue*, p. 198. Assistant Secretary Berle's public insistence, immediately after the Bermuda Conference ended, that "nothing can be done to save these helpless unfortunates" until the defeat of Germany was to the Foreign Office a "valuable indication" that U.S. official circles "realized the difficulty in the rescue problem." Walker note on Berle speech in Boston, May 2, 1943, FO 371/36661, PRO.

⁵⁷William Hassett, *Off the Record With FDR* (1958), pp. 209-210; Feingold, *Politics of Rescue*, pp. 301-303; Penkower, "Jewish Organizations," pp. 132-134; Penkower, "Dramatic Dissent," pp. 291-297; Pehle to Morgenthau, July 25, 1944, Morgenthau Diaries, vol. 758, FDRL.

Part Three

Jewish Communities

i General

Jewish Denial and the Holocaust

Walter Laqueur

ON APRIL 5, 1943, Hershel Johnson, the United States Ambassador to Sweden, sent a cable to Washington in which he reported (on the authority of a former German consular officer) that of the 450,000 Jews in Warsaw, only 50,000 remained. The report was true, if somewhat belated—the events described had taken place some eight months earlier and had been widely noted in the world press. Johnson's cable is remarkable mainly for its last sentence: "So fantastic is the story told by this German eyewitness to his friend, my informant, that I hesitate to make it the subject of an official report."

It is difficult to understand Johnson's hesitancy. The year before, he had reported the destruction of Baltic, Ukrainian, and White Russian Jewry; why should he have been surprised that the same thing had now happened in Poland? But the syndrome was quite common. Few Americans, for example, were better informed about events in Nazi-occupied Europe than Allen Dulles, who represented the OSS in Berne. Yet one day in June 1944, Dulles received a report which "profoundly shocked" him. Two inmates of Auschwitz had succeeded in escaping to Slovakia; the long and detailed account they wrote of their experiences (which later became very famous and was widely circulated) was taken to Budapest, and from there by courier to Switzerland. The representative of the British news agency Exchange Telegraph gave

WALTER LAQUEUR, a contributing editor of *COMMENTARY*, is chairman of the Research Council of Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C. The present article is based in part on a larger study (to be published under the title, *The Secret*) of how the first news of the "Final Solution" reached the Jewish public, the German population, the neutrals, and the Allied governments.

a copy to Dulles, and registered the latter's shock upon reading it. "He was as disconcerted as I was and said: 'One had to do something immediately. . . .'" A cable was sent by Dulles to the Secretary of State the following day. There is no reason to believe his shock was not genuine.

Jews were as liable as non-Jews to disbelieve the information coming out of Europe. In 1943 Felix Frankfurter met with Jan Karski, a Polish emissary who reported to him about the mass slaughter in Eastern Europe. Frankfurter listened and then told Karski that he did not believe him. When Karski protested, Frankfurter explained that he did not mean Karski had spoken untruthfully, only that he could not believe the story—after all, there was a difference.

The question of what was known about the Holocaust and when, and of why the information was not believed, is one of the riddles that make understanding the catastrophe so difficult. The rejection of information which for one reason or another is unacceptable may well be a normal psychological mechanism, at least up to a point. But beyond that point, when the veracity of the information becomes incontrovertible, continued resistance to it becomes almost inexplicable—all the more so when the events concerned are not of marginal importance or occurring in some faraway country, but constitute mortal danger to the survival of one's people or oneself.

In what follows I shall be tracing how the news about the "Final Solution" become known, not so much to the world at large as to world Jewry, and how that news was received. I should note at the outset that in a study of this kind there are many pitfalls, above all the temptation of hindsight. Nothing is easier, so many years after the events, than to apportion praise and blame, or to claim that everyone should have known what was going to happen once fascism came to power. But such an approach is ahistorical. Nazism was an unprecedented phenomenon; with all the abominations of fascist Italy, during the twenty years of its existence some *twenty* enemies of the regime were actually executed, and a number of these had in fact engaged in "armed struggle." There was no precedent in modern European history for the

murderous character of Nazism; little wonder, then, that most contemporaries were caught unprepared. Even what happened in Germany and Austria before 1939 could not be reasonably considered the logical prelude to genocide.

And yet, when all allowances have been made, it is also true that from a reconstruction of the events of 1942, few emerge unblemished. The story is one of failure—the failure of Jewish leaders and communities inside and outside Europe, and, of course, the failure of non-Jews in high positions in neutral and Allied countries who did not care, or did not want to know, or even suppressed information once it became available.

It is, in short, a story of relevance to our own day and age.

“**W**ORLD Jewry” is a term that has been frequently used by Jews, the friends of Jews, and the enemies of Jews; as a political reality it has never existed. When World War II broke out, the Jewish communities of the world were no more united than they had been in the past. The Zionists had their emissaries in non-occupied Europe, as did the various non-political aid and rescue organizations such as the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC); the Orthodox religious groups had their own small network, keeping their distance from the rest. There was no central body to collect and sift the news from Nazi-occupied Europe. Most Zionist leaders were in Palestine and almost wholly preoccupied with the dangers facing the Jewish community in that country. Some were in America, far away physically and psychologically from events in Europe; even Chaim Weizmann, who normally resided in London, was in the United States for most of 1941-42.

The only body in existence uniting several organizations was the World Jewish Congress (WJC), a voluntary association of representative Jewish communities and organizations founded (to quote its constitution) “to assure the survival and to foster the unity of the Jewish people.” It had come into being in 1936 at a meeting in Geneva attended by delegates from 32 countries. Its president was Rabbi Stephen Wise, the elder

statesman of American Jewry; Nahum Goldmann was the chairman of its executive board.

Wise was an influential figure in American domestic politics; he had been on close terms with President Wilson and was the one Jewish leader who could reach Roosevelt. He had attended the Versailles peace conference and spoken there on behalf of the rights of the Jews (and the Armenians). But while he was a man of great charm and moral force, a staunch fighter for many a good cause, his experience was basically in American affairs and there was in him a streak of naiveté.

Goldmann was different. He had met all the famous leaders of his time (and never made a secret of the fact). He was a man of the world *par excellence*, equally at home in Berlin and London, in Paris and New York. But with all his travels and talents as a diplomat of the old school, there was something suspect about his political judgment. In 1931 he had been instrumental in overthrowing Weizmann as leader of the world Zionist movement because Weizmann was too soft vis-à-vis the Arabs; in early 1933 he had assured German Jewish leaders that it was quite unthinkable that Britain and France would permit a takeover by Hitler. There were more such misjudgments, both before and after.

It was not at all clear why the two leading figures of the WJC should be in New York, far away from the scene of the tragedy. Wise obviously *had* to stay, in view of his many commitments and also because of his connections; Goldmann's place should therefore have been in London, as near as possible to the scene of events. It could be argued that politically Washington was infinitely more important than London, but London was a crucial listening post and also the obvious spot from which to launch political initiatives. Goldmann, however, apparently did not believe in the possibility of political action. In a speech in November 1941 he said that the problem of European Jewry was more one of relief than of politics. Political intervention would be of no value, he argued, since most of the governments concerned were practically puppet dependencies of Germany. This was a strange pronouncement from

a man who more than anyone else was expected to take political action; indeed, the countries he mentioned specifically—Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria—were the very ones about which something could have been done. It was also quite inconsistent with declarations he had made earlier in the war when he had solemnly announced that unless immediate political intervention was attempted to save European Jewry, "our generation will be burdened with a terrible responsibility before Jewish history."

Thus, when the first news of the mass killings reached London in late 1941 and in 1942, all the leading figures of "world Jewry" were far away, and none was well informed. The British section of the WJC, where some of the early news was received, was headed by Eva Marchioness Reading, the daughter of Alfred Mond. A great lady of much public spirit and some political connections, she acted, needless to say, mainly as a figurehead. The secretaries of the London branch were Noah Barou and Alex Easterman, the former a specialist on cooperative finance. The head of the International Affairs Department of the WJC in New York was Maurice Perlzweig, whose training had been in the rabbinate; he was furthermore quite new to the job, having been transferred from London to New York in 1942. All these were competent and hardworking men, but they themselves would have been the first to admit that they were not equipped to cope with problems of such enormity which no one could have foreseen. Perhaps their most effective ally was Sidney Silverman, chairman of the British section of the WJC, a left-wing Labor member of Parliament, like Stephen Wise a somewhat naive man but a born fighter who intuitively seems to have understood that European Jewry was facing a disaster unparalleled in history and that one had to react quickly.

THESE were the main actors on the scene when the storm broke in the summer of 1942, with a cable sent to London by Gerhard Riegner of the WJC office in Geneva, reporting Hitler's decision to kill European Jewry.

Sidney Silverman, in a telegram from London, informed Wise and Goldmann of the contents of Riegner's cable on August 24, 1942. On September 1, in another telegram signed Barou-Easterman, the London branch of the WJC wrote: "Suggest following urgent action: First, public declaration leading political religious other authorities in all free countries; second, press conference; third, you approach Vatican; four, we approach United Nations make formal categorical pronouncement etc. etc."*

In New York there *was* an inclination at first to go public, but then second and less sound counsels prevailed. It was decided that Rabbi Wise should turn to the State Department for advice. Had Washington heard anything about the subject and what kind of action did it suggest? Wise and Goldmann had in fact no real doubts about the authenticity of the reports; one of their fears was that publicity would only add to the feeling of despair among the prospective victims. But what help could they possibly expect from the State Department, which had tried to keep this information secret in the first place? Was it that they did not know how to react, and wanted to gain a little time? Or did they perhaps think there was a faint hope the news was wrong, or at least exaggerated after all?

The State Department, to do it justice, did in fact make some inquiries concerning information it had apparently received quite independently in early August. The Department now turned to the Vatican for *its* information, as in ancient times kings and rulers used to consult the Delphic oracle, and with similar results. Meanwhile, Jews were being killed in Auschwitz and Treblinka, Sobibor, Belzec, and Chelmno at the rate of 5,000 to 10,000 a day. But Wise and Goldmann had some reassurance for their colleagues in London: they had been told that the deportations from Warsaw were meant to supply labor for the building of fortifications on the Polish-Soviet border (this was

* This cable was read by U.S. censorship and forwarded to the State Department. A note to Assistant Secretary of State A. A. Berle is affixed: "We will suppress if you approve."

apparently what Roosevelt had told Felix Frankfurter); one had to wait for the return of Myron Taylor, the U.S. envoy to the Vatican, and the timing had to be right. The State Department, in any event, was "deeply sympathetic and cooperative." "We urge postponement publicity until right effect producible [in] entire American press," was the content of another message by Goldmann, Wise, and Perlzweig to London. In another cable, on October 9, they announced "problem receiving consideration highest authorities whose guidance imperative." This last was quite simply false: neither the President nor the Secretary of State was giving consideration to the problem. Nor was it clear what waiting "until right effect producible" meant. True, it would have been most desirable if the U.S. government had officially confirmed the news from Geneva, joined the Jewish leaders in their protest, and suggested effective countermeasures. But how could anyone have expected even for a single moment that this was likely to happen?

In November, Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles summoned Stephen Wise to Washington and told him that the news from Europe was essentially true; but the question of whether the U.S. government would do anything about it was left open. Thus, on November 24, Stephen Wise called a press conference in which he announced that he had learned "through sources confirmed by the State Department" that half of European Jewry had been slain in an extermination campaign. The publication in any case could not have been delayed any longer. Two days earlier the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem had officially announced that the horrible news from Eastern Europe was indeed correct.

How had the news reached the Jewish organizations in the first place? Obviously it was not just a matter of one cable or one message. There had been dozens and hundreds of items, some seemingly reliable, others of doubtful provenance. It ought to be recalled that Nazi-occupied Europe was never hermetically sealed, and the news about the massacres of 1941 and of the deportations to the death camps in 1942 reached

London and New York through many channels, including from newspapers in the occupied countries. True, the newspapers in the Reich hardly ever dealt with the subject, and the papers from Belgrade and Bratislava, from Cracow and Riga, did not mention it much more often. But from a careful reading of the press a certain pattern emerged which, at the very least, was enough to inspire grave fears. For if it was true that, as these papers announced, town after town—including some (such as Kishinev) with a pre-war Jewish population of 100,000 or more—had become empty of Jews (*judenrein*), if whole countries were being “purged,” what had become of the Jews?

There was another source of information, utterly obvious and straightforward and therefore frequently forgotten: postcards and letters sent from Nazi-occupied countries to neutral places. Even from the ghettos such messages could be sent up to the end of 1942, and in many instances later. They took a week or two to reach Switzerland or Sweden, and not much longer to reach Spain and Turkey. Throughout the war, in addition, cables could be sent from Nazi-occupied Europe to Switzerland and Turkey, and vice versa. It was even possible to talk by phone; the Slovak Jewish leaders had frequent long-distance conversations with Zurich and Geneva.

Much information emanated from those who had escaped from the ghettos and death camps. Thousands of Jews went underground, hiding in cities or villages or forests or assuming non-Jewish identities in order to live a “normal” life. There were escapes from Holland and France into Spain and Switzerland via the underground railway established by Joop Westerweel and Joachim Simon (Shushu) in Holland and by “Croustillon” and “Pierre Lacaze” in southern France. There were more or less fixed points at which the border-crossing took place—at Pau and Perpignan, near Oloron, and through Andorra. Many hundreds escaped this way from Nazi-occupied countries. Jews from the Polish ghettos fled both to the East (into the Soviet Union) and to the south, through Slovakia to Hungary. There were Jewish smugglers,

taxi and truck owners at the Slovak-Polish border, whose help was invaluable; the guards on the Hungarian frontier could frequently be bought off. From Hungary some continued via Rumania to Turkey and onward to Palestine. (From 1942 on the Rumanian government no longer opposed emigration in principle; the main difficulty facing the Jews was that no country wanted to have them.) Jews from Croatia and southern France went into Italy, where they felt much safer for the time being. A group of Jewish agricultural pioneers rowed from the Danish island of Bornholm to Sweden; some tried to do the same from Holland to the United Kingdom. Jews with false papers even joined "Organization Todt," the Nazi labor service, were sent to various parts of Europe, and eventually escaped; a Polish Jew who had joined one of these labor battalions walked into Sweden from Norway. A few reached Sweden as stowaways from Baltic ports. A few young German Jews walked over the Swiss border in the middle of the war, a few dozen Greek Jews were taken out in old caiques by the Cairo branch of MI-9, headed by Lt. Col. Tony Simmonds, who had been with Wingate in Palestine in the 1930's.

Even at the time of a massacre some would get away. The *Einsatzgruppen* and their local assistants were in a hurry; there was so much work to be done. Some Jews pretended to be dead, and then, during the night, crawled away; others jumped from the cars or trains leading to the place of execution, or succeeded in hiding. Those who had miraculously been saved would try to reach the nearest remaining Jewish community, where they would report what they had witnessed.

Nor were the death camps themselves escape-proof. The first flights from Chelmno and Treblinka occurred within a few days after these camps began to operate. The most difficult to escape from was Belzec, but the place had been visited by Kurt Gerstein (the SS officer who tried to stop the mass murder) who talked about it to several German friends and foreign diplomats.

There were about 10 escapes from Sobibor before the revolt there and 60 during the fighting; a few dozen inmates fled Treblinka before the revolt

and perhaps 20 during it. Auschwitz, the largest of the camps, had 667 escapees (of whom 270 were subsequently caught); in 1942 there were 120 escapes, the year after, 310. Among those who fled were at least 76 Jews. In his autobiographical notes Rudolf Hoess, the commandant of Auschwitz, wrote that it was virtually impossible to stop news from the outside world from reaching Auschwitz, and vice versa. When Himmler visited Auschwitz he complained about the "high, unprecedented numbers of successful escapes" and asked the commandant to use every possible means to put an end to them. But the escapes continued.

Some Auschwitz inmates were actually released by the German authorities. There were 952 releases during the first half of 1942, 26 during the subsequent six months, and some even in 1943. In early 1944 a considerable number of Jewish women were freed from the camp owing to the intervention of Oskar Schindler, a German who ran a factory in Cracow.

THOSE who had escaped from the camps had no reason to keep silent, and those legally released were also not greatly worried by the undertaking they had signed never to reveal anything. But if the ones who reached Warsaw were believed, there was much more skepticism in Western Europe and also in Hungary. The story of the two young Roman Catholics from Holland who were released from Auschwitz on May 12, 1942 is not untypical. One of them later told the historian Louis de Jong: "The worst thing was that you simply could not get through to those closest to you. That gave you a terrible sense of isolation, as if a steamroller was about to run you over. You felt like screaming it from all the housetops but knew it was just waste of your breath—no one would believe a word you told them." The year after, 1943, four women who were Jehovah's Witnesses returned from Auschwitz to Holland and faced the same reaction: "Most people refused to believe us." In many circles it was only in late 1943 and in 1944, with the evidence piling up from many sources, that the news about the camps was taken more seriously.

The idea of collecting and analyzing the testimony of escapees—whether or not that testimony was fully believed—occurred both to the Jewish Agency and to British Military Intelligence, and in late 1942 an institution with the innocent and rather vague name Inter Service Liaison Department (ISLD) was established under Colonel Teague in Haifa; the Jewish liaison officers were Reuben Zaslani (Shiloah) and Gideon Ruffer (Rafael). Interrogating recent arrivals from Europe, ISLD gathered much information of value, but the enterprise would have been of even greater value had it started earlier and had it not been limited to those who reached Palestine; debriefing by the Allies in Spain and Switzerland was no more than sporadic.

As for other news about the early stages of the "Final Solution," the Polish underground network known as Warsaw-London was the most important channel of communication. But there was another of equal, or almost equal, importance which led from groups of Zionists or individuals in occupied Europe to Geneva, and from there to the head offices of the Jewish Agency for Palestine in Jerusalem. Switzerland was a vital listening post on the continent, more so than in World War I when there had been other places, like Copenhagen and Amsterdam. The importance of Switzerland had not been foreseen by the Jewish institutions, and no special preparations had been made; the presence of Jewish emissaries in Geneva and Zurich was more or less accidental. Once the war broke out, and especially after the fall of France and Italy's entry into battle, Switzerland was almost entirely cut off; with the occupation of Vichy France by the Germans, the isolation became total. Communications were also affected; airmail from Switzerland to Palestine hardly ever took less than four weeks and frequently took longer. Sometimes important news would be transmitted by telegraph, but the relatively short messages would always raise further questions in the recipient's mind, followed by requests for details. And so the emissaries in Geneva got accustomed to writing long letters, which resulted in still further delays and misunderstandings.

THE senior Jewish representative in Switzerland was Richard Lichtheim, one of the early leaders and spokesmen of Zionism in Germany. Born to a wealthy Berlin family in 1885, he became, at the early age of twenty-eight, editor of *Die Welt*, the central organ of the world Zionist movement. During World War I he represented the Zionists in Turkey, engaging in various diplomatic missions and interceding on behalf of Palestinian Jewry, then suffering from the mistreatment of malevolent Turkish governors. After the war he was for a number of years a member of the World Zionist Executive in London. In 1925, opposing Weizmann's hesitant and "weak" line, he joined the Revisionists, but the extremism of Jabotinsky (and *a fortiori* of some of his younger followers) eventually repelled him, and ten years later he rejoined the main Zionist camp. The Zionist leadership was willing to employ him again, but not in a front-line position. Lichtheim had always been a little too independent in his judgment for the bureaucratic apparatus, he had never lived in Palestine for any length of time, and his command of Hebrew was uncertain, to say the least. As a German Jew he never quite fit into the closely-knit group of East Europeans who dominated Zionist politics. When he was sent to Geneva in 1939, no one realized how vital that city would be in the years to come, not in terms of policy-making but as a source of information.

In some ways Lichtheim was eminently suited to his assignment. Of all the Zionist leaders of his generation he had the surest grasp of world politics. He was widely read in recent European history and had followed international politics for three decades from a close angle. His analytical skill was impressive. He never had any illusions about Hitler's immoderate aims and mad ambitions, nor did he have any false hopes with regard to the response of the Western allies to the fascist dictators. His predictions about the course of the war and developments in the postwar period were remarkably accurate. True, his reports did not have a great impact back home in Jerusalem, but it is doubtful whether anyone else, even if more in tune with the Zionist leadership, would have been

successful in explaining the grim realities of Nazi Europe.*

As the war broke out, Lichtheim set up shop at 52 rue des Paquis—the Palais Wilson—and initiated a correspondence with Jerusalem which ranged from the fate of individuals to that of whole communities. His basic tenor was pessimistic, but it was not a pessimism that led to passivity. He had suggestions for saving at least some of the Jews of Europe and he repeated them relentlessly—without much success. In a letter written after the fall of France he mentioned the existence of a “specific office dealing with the solution of the Jewish Question”—Eichmann’s department in the State Main Security Office. Others were to discover this more than two years later, but at the time the “Final Solution” had not yet been put on the agenda; the Nazis were planning “radical emigration” and settlement in Madagascar. “What will become of the Jews of Europe?” Lichtheim asked as 1940 drew to its close:

I feel that a word of warning to the happier Jews of England and America is necessary. It is impossible to believe that any power on earth will be able (and willing?) to restore to the Jews of Continental Europe what they have lost or are losing today. It is one of the superficial beliefs of a certain type of American and British Jew that after Great Britain’s victory—for which, of course, the Jews all over the world are praying—everything will be all right again with the Jews of Europe. But even if their civil rights can be restored, what about the property confiscated, the shops looted, the practices of doctors and lawyers gone, the schools destroyed, the commercial undertakings of every description closed or sold or stolen? Who will restore all that and how? . . . And what will be left of the Jews of Europe? I am not speaking of the hundreds of thousands who during these years of persecution have managed to escape and are now trying to build up a new life in Palestine, in the USA, in South America, Australia, San

* The following is based on the Lichtheim correspondence kept in the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem. I knew Richard Lichtheim through his son, George, and in the late 1940’s, when he was living in Jerusalem, I discussed with him the work he had done in Geneva.

Domingo, or elsewhere. There are the refugees in Europe who tried to escape but did not go fast and far enough. . . . What will become of them after the war?

As Lichtheim saw it, there would be a mass of several hundreds of thousands after the war in a "permanent no-man's land, drifting from one frontier to another, from concentration camps to labor camps, from there to some unknown country and destiny." It was a remarkably accurate forecast—even though, when he wrote about "an ocean of blood and misery" Lichtheim did not believe that millions would be killed. Today his predictions may appear unduly optimistic; among his contemporaries they were considered examples of unwarranted despondency.

The situation was rapidly changing for the worse. After the Nazi invasion of Yugoslavia and the establishment of the fascist Ustasha state in Croatia, the plight of the Jews there became "desperate," Lichtheim wrote. There was no reaction from Jerusalem. Later in 1941, Lichtheim reviewed the deportations from Germany, Austria, and the Protectorate. Jews from German cities were being concentrated in Berlin, others had been deported to Poland or other Eastern European countries. Similar expulsion orders had been given in Vienna and Prague. So far, no information had been received to indicate that anything untoward had happened to those deported to Eastern Europe, and the ones remaining behind were employed in German war industries. On the whole, everything considered, the picture seemed to be not too bad. Some Jews had been arrested but few people had been actually killed in Germany. Yet Lichtheim had dark forebodings. He concluded his report as follows:

With all these degradations added to actual starvation and brutal treatment, the remnants of the Jewish communities of Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia will probably be destroyed before the war ends and not too many will survive.

In November 1941, before the mass deportations and the death camps, Lichtheim again ended a dispatch on a solemn note:

With regard to Germany, Austria, and the Protectorate it must be said that the fate of the Jews is now sealed. . . . Generally speaking, this whole chapter bears the title: "Too late." There was a time when the U.S. and the other American states could have helped by granting visas. But this was obstructed by the usual inertia of the bureaucratic machine and by red tape.

WAS there anything that could still be done to help? Lichtheim noted that America still had some influence with Vichy and could make use of it. At least some of the persecuted Jews in France could be rescued in this way. He returned to this point in another letter, sent to Weizmann. Again he stressed that the fate of the majority of European Jewry was sealed. Of those deported to the East only a minority of the younger and stronger would survive. The whole policy of deportation to the devastated towns of Western Russia in the middle of the winter was "murder combined with torture." The Red Cross had been informed, but what could it do against the will of the Gestapo? He transmitted the most recent information received in Geneva and then noted:

It is a curious thing that President Roosevelt never mentioned the Jews whenever he spoke of the oppressed nations. The governments of the democracies may have been led to believe that there would be still more terrible persecutions if they mentioned the Jews in their speeches. I think this to be a mistake. Events have shown that the Jews could not have suffered more than they have suffered if the statesmen of the democracies would have said the word.

But perhaps there was another motive; perhaps they wanted to avoid the impression that the war had anything to do with the Jews. In that case, "Great Britain and America should say: We are neither Jews nor do we wage war for the Jews—we are battling for mankind against the enemy of mankind."

Where, Lichtheim asked, were the voices condemning the atrocities and warning the perpetrators "*that they will be held responsible*" (emphasis in the original)? Lichtheim thought that in

some cases, such as Rumania, Hungary, Slovakia, Croatia, and Vichy, such a warning might have had, and "*might still have,*" a deterrent effect. Germany was of course a much more difficult case, but even there some persons or circles might be influenced. There was no answer to the questions raised by Lichtheim.

In the winter of 1941 the Nazi war machine suffered its first major setback in the Soviet Union. Lichtheim noted the enormous losses, but was scornful of the rumors that the generals would take over and force Hitler into the background. As for the situation of the Jews, the picture was getting gloomier and gloomier. From a letter in February 1942 to Arthur Lourie, the head of the emergency committee in New York:

The number of our dead after this war will have to be counted not in thousands or hundreds of thousands but in several millions, and it is difficult to imagine how the surviving will ever be able to return to a normal way of life.

If anything, Lichtheim understated the magnitude of the catastrophe. Yet at the time his gloomy predictions were the exception: in February 1942 no one wanted to hear of millions of victims.

But Lichtheim stuck to his theme: the measures that could and should be taken to slow the tide of persecution. He repeatedly emphasized the need for public, formal protests and warnings by Allied leaders, and urged approaches to the Catholic Church. In March 1942, together with Riegner and Sally Mayer, the president of the Swiss Jewish community, he met Monsignor Bernardini, the Papal Nuncio in Switzerland, and handed him a detailed report about the situation of the Jews. The Nuncio stated that he was aware of the unfortunate situation and had already reported it to Rome, but that he would do so again and recommend certain specific steps. Soon afterward, Lichtheim sadly noted that the efforts of the Vatican in Slovakia had been of no avail.

While Lichtheim watched the slow destruction of European Jewry he was told of plans made by notables in Jerusalem to reestablish their organizations in Europe after the war. For this kind of

"postwar planning" he had nothing but scorn:

My personal prognosis is quite somber. Those Jews still alive after the war will be engulfed by Russia and the neighboring countries. I do not share the optimism of those who expect the toleration—let alone the support—of Zionism by Bolshevism. The remnants of European Jewry will have to look somehow for an existence overseas.

The mass killings in Poland were first made public in the world press in late June 1942. At this time, Lichtheim reported that Central Europe was to be made *judenrein* by means of deportation and direct or indirect killing "through starvation or even shorter methods."

The Jews in almost all countries of this tormented continent live only in the fear of deportation which aims at their physical destruction quickly or over a longer period, or fear of slave labor in intolerable conditions. Their only thought is toward rescue and escape, but this will be possible only in a very few cases.

IN August 1942 an English friend sent Lichtheim a report of a debate in the House of Commons earlier that month about postwar problems of resettlement. One speaker had said 7 million Jews would need homes after the war; another mentioned the figure of 9½ million. Lichtheim wrote bitterly in reply: "People in England do not know what is now going on in Europe." How could even Jewish leaders believe that 5 or 6 million Jews would remain after the war to be resettled? After analyzing the figures Lichtheim stated categorically, "We now know that deportation means death—sooner or later."

Of the former Polish, German, Austrian, Czechoslovak, Yugoslavian Jews—together 3½ million—and of the others who have been or will be deported, very few will survive. . . . This process of annihilation is going on relentlessly and there is no hope left to save any considerable number. . . . Therefore it is no exaggeration to say that Hitler had killed or is killing 4 million Jews in Continental Europe and that no more than 2 million have a chance of surviving. With every month that passes this chance be-

comes smaller and one year hence even these figures may appear too optimistic.

Meanwhile (on August 15, 1942), Lichtheim had dictated a report based on the account of two eyewitnesses who had come directly from Poland, one of them a non-Jew, "a very reliable and well known personality." Both had stories to relate that were, as Lichtheim wrote in an accompanying letter, "so terrible that I had some doubts whether I should forward it or not." (He kept the report for two weeks before mailing it.) The report, which was also sent to Stephen Wise and was intercepted by the State Department, dealt with the mass killings of the Jews in Warsaw, Lithuania, and elsewhere, and mentioned Belzec as well as the fact that Theresienstadt, the showplace in the Protectorate, was merely an interim station for most of the deportees. The report dwelled upon the death trains and the role of the Lithuanian helpers of the SS; it also stated that no Jews were left in the regions east of Warsaw. There were some incorrect statements in the report, such as the allegation that the corpses of victims were used for fat and fertilizers, and that the whole non-Jewish population of Sevastopol had been killed. But by and large it gave an unvarnished picture of the situation—as Lichtheim pointed out in his comments. Certain facts, he said, had been confirmed quite independently by other sources:

All this gives a most sinister meaning to the other information contained in this report—incredible as it may seem to readers in England and America. In fact, I believe the report to be true and quite in line with Hitler's announcement that at the end of this war there will be no Jews in Continental Europe.

The report met with disbelief not only in England and America but also in Jerusalem. Yitzhak Gruenbaum, one of the leading figures of Polish Jewry and a member of the Jewish Agency Executive, sent Lichtheim a cable in reply:

Shocked your latest reports regarding Poland which despite all difficult [to] believe stop haven't yet published do everything possible verify cable.

Gruenbaum did try to ascertain whether the report was true. He sent a cable to Rabbi Marcus Ehrenpreis in Stockholm; had the venerable rabbi heard anything about it? Ehrenpreis, in his middle seventies at the time, a prolific author and one of the pioneers of modern Hebrew literature, was one of the most unlikely authorities on current events in Eastern Europe, and was unwilling to make any effort to find out. Leo Lauterbach, head of the Zionist Organization Department, was somewhat more cautious in his reply to Lichtheim:

Frankly, I am not inclined to accept all the statements at their face value and without having, of course, any evidence to the contrary have great doubts as to the accuracy of all the facts contained therein. . . . One must also learn from experience to distinguish between reality, grim as it is, and figments of an imagination strained by justified fear and which grows to believe what is whispered without being able, in the circumstances, to check its veracity.

But then he added that "without going into gruesome details" one could not help accepting the main facts and interpretation as contained in Lichtheim's letter. What emerged from Lauterbach's confused response was that while Jerusalem was by now persuaded that the situation was very bad, it did seem not quite as bad as Lichtheim described it.

DURING the following days and weeks more evidence came to light in quick succession. On September 26, Lichtheim cabled London that the ghettos of Warsaw and Lodz were nearly empty, with the majority of the population deported to some unknown destination. On September 29, in a letter to Arthur Lourie in New York: "The total destruction of the Jewish communities in Belgium and Holland is nearly complete." On September 15, in a letter to London, again reiterating his old complaint: "Far too little has been said and done by the Allies to warn the Nazis and their satellites of the consequences of their crime." Now, however, with the turn of the tide in the war, prospects were better than they had been ever before. He warned that unless ac-

tion were taken, the remaining Jewish communities in Europe, i.e., the 800,000 in Hungary and the 300,000 in Rumania, would also perish.

On October 5, Lichtheim sent to Jerusalem (and to London and New York) "a most harrowing report about the situation in Lettland." For a long time there had been sporadic news about the slaughter in the Baltic countries, which had, in fact, taken place a year earlier. But it had been very difficult to obtain reliable reports; there was no correspondence with Vilna and Riga and very little traffic. The "harrowing report" was based on the evidence of Gabriel Zivian, a young Jew from Riga, who had witnessed the massacres on the spot, made his way to northern Germany, and worked as a hospital aide in Stettin. Miraculously, he had received an entry visa to Switzerland through some relations in Geneva. Riegner interviewed him like an examining magistrate (Riegner's words) for eight hours. This was in August 1942; a little later, another young Jew of Polish origin also reached Switzerland illegally. Since he was quite ill, he could not be sent back to Germany but was hospitalized under police supervision. A physician called Riegner: they had a patient who was telling horrible stories. Could Riegner possibly come and find out whether there was anything to this?

Lichtheim forwarded this account and said in an accompanying note: "We have heard from other sources of similar mass murders in Poland." Then, on October 8, he prepared a detailed reply to Gruenbaum, who had doubted the veracity of his earlier reports. "I can easily understand that you are unwilling to believe the report in question." But the sources were trustworthy. How could one possibly investigate the matter on the spot? No observers were permitted to approach the regions of death. The only available testimony was that of German officers returning from the East. But there had also been letters and postcards from Jews in Poland, and there could no longer be any doubt as to the intentions of Hitler and the Gestapo. He ended the letter as follows:

I foresaw this development long ago. In my letters to London and New York I have constantly

warned our friends of what was coming and I have submitted certain proposals. But I always knew that in the case of Hitler, nothing we or others would do or say could stop him. Therefore I have asked our friends in London and New York to try to save at least the Jewish communities in the semi-independent states of Rumania, Hungary, Italy, and Bulgaria. . . .

But we have to face the fact that the large majority of the Jewish communities in Hitler-dominated Europe are doomed. There is no force which could stop Hitler or his SS who are today the absolute rulers of Germany and the occupied countries. It is my painful duty to tell you what I know. There is nothing I could add. The tragedy is too great for words.

THE correspondence with Jerusalem continued. There were more facts, but they hardly affected the general picture. On October 16, in a private letter to Lauterbach:

I have the impression that my previous reports have not always found the necessary understanding. Some of our friends did not want to believe that something like this can happen, others may have been misled through different (i.e., less alarming) reports. It is pointless to deal now with the motives which have caused this. Events speak an inexorable language and we face these events impotently, or almost so. . . .

On October 20, he wrote another long summary of recent events. The deportations to Poland and inside Poland, he stated, had nothing to do with the Nazi war effort or the need for more labor. "There is a plan behind these measures to exterminate immediately the largest possible number of Jews." Previously there had been pogroms and mass executions, but they had been of a local character, and it had been thought that despite everything—despite slave labor, starvation, and all the other deprivations—at least the younger and stronger might survive and some communities would not be completely destroyed:

But it has become more and more evident in the course of the last three or four months (and you will have seen this from my reports) that even this outlook was too optimistic and the latest de-

portation measures have made it quite clear what is contemplated.

Lichtheim then mentioned reports according to which there had been discussions in Hitler's headquarters about the complete annihilation of the Jews within the next few months. At the end of July, Hitler had signed a formal order approving a plan of total extermination. Reliable witnesses had seen the order signed by Hitler in his headquarters. Lichtheim concluded, for once in a spirit of complete resignation:

For the large majority of the Jews of Europe there seems to be no hope left. They are in the hands of a raving madman who has become the absolute ruler of Continental Europe by the will of his own guilty people and by the tragic blindness of statesmen who from 1933 to 1939 have tried to make a deal with the devil instead of driving him out while there was still time to do so.

Five weeks later, on November 25, at a meeting in Tel Aviv, Eliyahu Dobkin of the Jewish Agency Executive said, "Perhaps we have sinned as the first terrible news came to us two months ago via Geneva and Istanbul and we did not believe it." This sentiment was echoed by many others in the following weeks. But the information had, of course, arrived much earlier. It now remains to be asked, what prevented its acceptance in the first place, and what caused the reappraisal in November 1942?

WHEN the war broke out, more than half-a-million Jews were living in Palestine. Most of them had been born in the countries occupied by Nazi Germany, and most had friends and family in Europe with whom they tried to keep in touch through postcards and letters sent by way of neutral countries or short "Red Cross letters" (special forms in which messages of up to twenty-five words could be transmitted). In the beginning many such letters and postcards came, then fewer and fewer. Thus the public in Palestine came to depend for its information mainly on newspaper reports. Correspondents sys-

tematically picked up news of Jewish interest from papers in Nazi-occupied Europe, from the Swedish and Swiss press, and of course also from the infrequent reports in the British, American, and Soviet media.

But just as the Jewish Agency Executive thought that Lichtheim was exaggerating, and just as the reports by Riegner and others were thought to be unduly pessimistic, the Palestinian Jewish press quite frequently dissociated itself editorially from the alarmist information published in its own columns. A few examples should suffice. Moshe Prager, a Polish Jewish journalist, was the author (in 1941) of the first, and for the time being the only, book on the life of Polish Jewry under Nazi occupation. In his preface, Yitzhak Gruenbaum praised the supreme ability of Polish Jewry to adjust itself to the Nazi horrors, and predicted that its spirit would triumph over degradation, torture, and destruction. Prager himself saw the main Nazi aim as one of turning the Jews into despicable beggars; as for the Jews, they were fighting with their last efforts to keep their honor and not be defeated.

Terms like adjustment, triumph, honor, and defeat are of course singularly inept expressions in connection with the "Final Solution." But these comments were made in 1941, and at the time they seemed not altogether unreasonable. What happened in Eastern Europe in 1940 had, after all, occurred before in Jewish history: Jews had been deprived of their elementary rights, there had been sporadic pogroms and economic ruin. There seemed no reason to doubt that the great majority of European Jewry would survive the war. Thus, correspondents and commentators debated whether the Nazi plan to concentrate the Jews in the Lublin area was really all that terrible (because self-government had its advantages) or whether the scheme was just a fraud which would result in one giant concentration camp (as the *New York Jewish Daily Forward* reasoned).

But there was to be no concentration in the Lublin region, no resettlement scheme. After the invasion of the Soviet Union, the information received no longer spoke of the closing of businesses

and the violation of human rights, not even of hunger and disease. It spoke of mass murder. But the perceptions which had been formed in an earlier period did not change. As the press saw it, Jewish life continued in Eastern Europe, albeit under very difficult conditions. There was a frantic search for rays of hope. Thus, the left-wing press reported with satisfaction that the agricultural training centers in Poland and other countries in which *halutzim* (pioneers) were preparing themselves for life in Palestinian collective settlements continued to operate. Orthodox newspapers noted with equal satisfaction that 24 Jewish bookshops were still open in the Warsaw ghetto, and three in Cracow. *Ha'olam*, the organ of the world Zionist movement, published virtually no news about the massacres during the first half of 1942; it did, however, feature an article by Apollinari Hartglass, a Polish Jewish leader who had escaped from Warsaw after the Nazi invasion and who tried to prove that although the world had initially ignored the Jewish catastrophe, now that it had discovered its propagandistic uses it was "actually exaggerating it twofold and more." Other Hebrew newspapers reported that Amsterdam was to be the embarkation point of European Jewry for some unknown destination overseas; another paper quoted a Polish professor who had fled to America to the effect that while the Jews would merely be deported, the Poles would all be killed by the Nazis.

Although massacres were reported in the papers, so was every rumor, however incredible, and unlimited scope was given to wishful thinking, and unwittingly to Nazi disinformation. And even when news of the massacres was printed it was widely doubled. *Hatzofeh* called correspondents to order in March 1942; they should show greater responsibility and not "inflate out of proportion every bad rumor." *Davar* editorialized that one should treat with caution the atrocity stories coming from "soldiers returning from the front." Both *Davar* and *Hatzofeh* put the blame on sensation-mongering journalists on the one hand and competition among news agencies on the other. "The irresponsible informants . . . absorb every rumor, they desperately look for every piece of bad news,

every enormous figure, and present it to the reader in a way which makes the blood curdle in one's veins. . . ."*

When, in later years, people in Palestine sought to explain the ongoing misinterpretation—not to put it any more strongly—of the news from Europe, some pointed to mitigating circumstances. The summer of 1942 saw Rommel's advance into Egypt; the Africa Corps was poised to strike at Egypt, a German invasion of Palestine seemed at hand. It was only in the first week of September 1942 that Rommel was checked at Alam Halfa; and Montgomery's counteroffensive, which broke German dreams in Africa, did not begin until October 23. Up to that date the Jewish community in Palestine seemed in immediate danger, and all other problems were bound to take second place. Yet this hardly explains the lack of interest or understanding shown *before* Rommel's advance during the summer. And it certainly does not explain the lack of understanding shown by American and British Jewry.

IT WAS not, in the final analysis, a matter of information or the lack of it. As a labor leader was to put it, "The community read and heard but did not absorb; and it did not raise its voice to alarm Jewish communities elsewhere." After November 1942 there were many voices raised in self-accusation, and there was much re-creation against the leadership which had, after all, had more information at its disposal and yet had not sounded the tocsin.

The leadership had indeed known more. On April 17, 1942, Moshe Shertok, the head of the Zionist Political Department, addressed Sir Claude Auchinleck (commander of the Eighth Army in North Africa and Montgomery's predecessor) as follows:

There can be little doubt that if Palestine were overrun by the Nazis nothing less than complete

* These and other examples can be found in Yoav Gelber's study, *The Response of Palestinian Jewry to News of the European Holocaust 1942-43* (Hebrew), published so far only in part.

annihilation would be the lot of the Jews of this country. The destruction of the Jewish race is a fundamental tenet of the Nazi doctrine. The authoritative reports recently published show that that policy is being carried out with a ruthlessness which defies description. Hundreds of thousands of Jews have perished in Poland, the Balkan countries, Rumania, and the invaded provinces of Russia, as a result of mass executions, forced deportations, and the spread of famine and disease in ghettos and concentration camps. An even swifter destruction, it must be feared, would overtake the Jews of Palestine, were they to fall under Nazi sway. . . .

These were strong words, written, moreover, well before the revelations of the Polish government-in-exile. Why, then, did the Jewish Agency disbelieve Lichtheim? The answer is that everything Shertok had said could also be found in the newspapers at the time, and also was not fully believed. Shertok's alarming words have to be read, furthermore, in the context in which they were written: the Jewish community of Palestine was in *immediate* danger, and in his letter Shertok pressed specific demands for the defense of Palestine—more Jewish soldiers, more arms, a large-scale program of military training, the expansion of the militia. To reinforce these demands Shertok invoked not only the military threat posed by Rommel (which' was quite real) but also the news about large-scale persecutions in Europe which had been reported countless times but which were nevertheless more distant and probably only half-believed.

Another example of the confusion then prevailing: at the time Shertok addressed his letter to Aichinleck, the Zionist leader Melech Neustadt (Noi) was on a mission in Istanbul; in May 1942 he returned to Palestine and in two long addresses in closed session gave the most detailed and authoritative account then available to the Jewish leadership. There was no one better informed at the time: Noi had established contact, from Turkey, with fifty Jewish communities in Poland and with virtually every other European country. He had discovered, much to his surprise, that with certain exceptions (the Baltic countries and Eastern Poland) communication could easily be established.

The bad news was the fate of Croatian and part of Rumanian Jewry, of which Noi was fully informed. There had been victims in Eastern Galicia, and Lodz was more or less cut off from the outside world. It had been learned that "unproductive elements" had been deported from Lodz to Minsk, Kovno, and Riga. Noi said it was pointless to comment on the rumors concerning the fate of the Jews of Eastern Poland (and the Baltic countries); one simply did not know. But he also said that nothing was more harmful than "exaggerated information" which weakened and even put into doubt correct news about real atrocities. The good news was that all over Europe Jewish life continued, and that the Zionist youth movement was still active under very difficult conditions.

Noi's information was in part amazingly detailed. He had exact figures on hospitals and orphanages in Warsaw, the price of bread in various ghettos, and the number of participants in sundry agricultural courses. Some of it was also very recent: he knew about the unsuccessful intervention of the Vatican in Slovakia. His prediction was that, while the Nazis wanted physically to destroy the Jews, they also wanted to employ them for the war effort: "and it is possible that this will save a great part of European Jewry."

Which was more striking in these reports, the measure of knowledge or the measure of ignorance? The mass killings in the former Soviet territories had been reported in the press many months earlier, and Polish sources had confirmed the destruction of most communities in Lithuania and Eastern Galicia. But as seen from Istanbul these were still "rumors": silence did not necessarily mean death but perhaps only isolation.

LATER it was argued that certain Jewish leaders in the United States as well as in Palestine delayed the publication of the full truth about the European tragedy because they feared it would have a depressing, perhaps even a paralyzing, effect on the morale of the Jewish community in Palestine at a time of emergency. But explanations of this kind are more than dubious. Internal evidence shows that many Jewish leaders

were genuinely skeptical with regard to the extent of the catastrophe until November 18-19, when four of them went to interview a group of Jewish women and children of Palestinian nationality who had just arrived from Europe.

They had been exchanged for a group of German nationals who had been detained at the beginning of the war on Allied territory. A first such exchange had taken place in December 1941, involving some 46 women and children. But no one had paid much attention at the time, and the arrivals had apparently little of interest to tell: they had not come from the Baltic countries or Western Russia where most of the massacres had taken place. Then came the second group, which would be followed by a third, much smaller, contingent in February 1943 and some further exchanges in the summer of 1944, mainly via Spain.

The November 1942 group of 137 was permitted to leave Poland on October 28, and Vienna (where they were kept for a few days prior to their departure) on November 11. On November 14, their train arrived at the Syrian border. Among them were 78 Jews (10 elderly men, 39 women, and 29 children) and of these 69 were Palestinian citizens. After a cursory interrogation by British military intelligence they were taken to Athlit, which had once been a British military camp (and also a detention center) some miles south of Haifa, near the sea. It was there that two members of the Jewish Agency Executive and two senior officials visited them.

The new arrivals came from thirteen different cities in Poland, from Berlin and Hamburg, from Belgium and Holland. They had also had the opportunity to meet in Vienna with the head of the Jewish community and his deputy, who told them that 400 Jews were left out of a community of 200,000. While most of the women had been held for some weeks in various prisons in Poland prior to their departure, they were able to move about more or less freely in Vienna. Thus they could provide a fairly comprehensive picture of the situation not only in Poland but also in other parts of Europe.

But were they reliable? The visitors from Jeru-

salem seem to have been quite skeptical at first. So often before, simple-minded (and even not-so-simple-minded) people had just repeated rumors often baseless in character. But the new arrivals could not be so easily dismissed. Among them was a scientific researcher at the Hebrew University, two members of Kibbutz Degania B (members, that is, of the Palestinian elite), a Zionist leader of long standing, and other such witnesses.

Eliyahu Dobkin, one of the visiting officials, summarized his findings in an address to the Histadrut Executive on November 25, 1942; similar reports were delivered to the leading bodies of the Jewish Agency and Mapai, the Labor party. "As I was sitting in Athlit and listening to the stories of tens of women it became clear to me that however great the sorrow, there remains no doubt and we have to accept it. Perhaps we sinned when we did not believe the first news which came via Geneva and Istanbul two months ago." What emerged from these accounts was, first, that a German government commission had been set up earlier in the summer under a certain commissar Fen or Foy to destroy Polish Jewry.* Furthermore, Dobkin continued, the majority of Polish Jewry had already been deported or was about to be deported. Among those who had arrived there was no one from Warsaw, the biggest ghetto, but they had met in (Polish) Upper Silesia some Jews who had escaped from Warsaw and who told them that only 40,000 Jews remained in the capital. (There were in fact still 60-70,000.) Of 40,000 Jews in Czestochow only 2,000 were still there; of 20,000 in Piotrkow only 2,600; of 30,000 in Kielce—1,500. There was a gen-

* This information was, in fact, wrong or at the very least inaccurate. There was no "special committee"; a regular department had been instituted in the main State Security Office several years earlier. "Operation Reinhard," in honor of the late Reinhard Heydrich who had been shot in Prague, was to exterminate Polish Jewry; it was under the command of Odilo Globocnik. Paradoxically, these inaccurate details had a greater impact on the Jewish leadership and public than the previous, more accurate reports. Up till now they had thought in terms of pogroms rather than systematic destruction, but if a special commission had been appointed, this shed new light on the character and the purpose of the persecutions.

eral picture of murder and ruin. They had not been able to extract from those interviewed information about the fate of the deported. They had been sent in an "unknown direction" and there was no news from them, no letters, no personal regards.

What did it all mean? There were various rumors in Poland and they were apparently correct: some big concrete structures had been put up near the Russian-Polish border in which the victims were killed by poison gas and burned. (This referred apparently to Sobibor, which was near the Russian border.) On the other hand, a woman from Oswiecim (Auschwitz) had told a story about three stoves for burning Jews which had been put up in a camp near that city.†

Above all, there was the systematic murder of children and elderly people. Dobkin said he would never forget the story of an eight-year-old boy who had been hiding with his five-year-old sister in the house when the police came to collect them. He had warned the little girl not to make a sound, but, overcome by fear, she had cried, was found, and was taken away—one story out of hundreds of thousands.

What also emerged from these accounts was that the campaign of destruction had affected other countries besides Poland—Germany and Austria, Slovakia, Yugoslavia, and Holland. No country under Nazi rule had been spared. In all of Germany only 28,000 Jews were now left (the actual number was nearer 50,000) and there were even fewer in Austria.

THE representatives of Palestine Jewry who listened to the speech and read the evidence that had been submitted to them were, of course, deeply shocked. It had been one thing to reject the impersonal news in the paper or on the radio, based perhaps on doubtful informants. It was impossible not to accept the personal

† There were no Jews in the city of Auschwitz; the witness was in fact from nearby Sosnowiec. She said that two more chimneys were now built; from time to time Jews from the neighborhood were brought to the camps. Other new arrivals mentioned Belzec and Treblinka.

evidence of witness after witness. And those listening to the reports and reading the evidence asked themselves, in the words of one of them: "Is it possible that such authentic news did not reach America? I heard from Ben-Gurion [who was in the U.S. at the time] that they had heard the shocking news even before we did." Dobkin: "The news reached us and America via Geneva. But from the way people reacted here I can well imagine how they reacted over there. When we got the information many could not believe in its authenticity. Ben-Gurion says that in America they thought this was one of the methods of atrocity propaganda. We now have to make American Jewry understand that the information is indeed correct." There was great pressure to act immediately. As one of the participants said, "Three days have already passed." Three days!

On November 22, 1942 the Jewish Agency Executive published an announcement: news had been received from "authoritative and reliable sources" that the Nazis had started a systematic extermination campaign in Poland. During a three-day period, expression was to be given to the feeling of the community and the conscience of the world was to be aroused. There were demonstrations, meetings, speeches; the newspapers appeared with a black frame around the front page. Emergency and rescue committees were set up, emissaries were sent to Constantinople and other places to try and reach the Jews in occupied Europe; the idea of sending parachutists was discussed for the first time. But, as the U.S. Consul General in Jerusalem wrote in a cable to Washington, the feeling was one of tragic impotence—what could Palestinian Jewry possibly do to provide effective help?

From late November 1942 the subject of the Holocaust was to preoccupy the Jewish communities in America, in Palestine, and in Britain without interruption. But even now the full extent of the disaster had not altogether registered: Jewish organizations in America and elsewhere continued to publish declarations about Jewish life in the ghettos that stressed the continuing proud stand of the Jewish masses. Zionists, including leaders of the World Jewish Congress, became absorbed in "postwar planning" and paid little more than

ceremonious attention to what was happening in Europe—"in stark contrast," as the historian Yehuda Bauer has pointed out, "to the outcries from Geneva and Istanbul demanding immediate action to save the remnants."

IN LATER years, Gerhard Riegner noted how bewildered he and his colleagues in Geneva had been by the inability of the Jewish leadership abroad to understand both the extent and the speed of the destruction. It spoke of 2 million victims when in fact 4 million had already died. The Institute of Jewish Affairs in New York published a study with figures which were altogether inexact and which then appeared in the European press. The New York Rescue Committee sent out lists of thousands of Polish Jews to whom parcels should be dispatched when neither the recipients nor the addressees any longer existed. "We [in Geneva] had the impression that they no longer understood what was happening. Their attitude can be explained by optimism and the incapacity to accept the worst. For us this was simply incomprehensible."

Jewish Foreign Policy during the Holocaust

YEHUDA BAUER

In the famous controversy between Dr. J. Herzog and the well-known historian A. Toynbee, Herzog contended that the Holocaust was unique among mass-murders in the modern era: Was this uniqueness a factor in the awareness of the Jewish leadership, or in the behavior of the Jews at the time of the Holocaust itself? Did this uniqueness animate the foreign policy of various Jewish leaderships?

In our time, foreign policy is carried out only rarely according to sophisticated advance planning. There tends to be a gap between the plan and the implementation, but there is usually some sort of continuity that is based on the perception of basic national interests. The underlying assumption in carrying out any foreign policy objective is that there exists a governing authority that indeed has the real power to carry out such a policy. In the Jewish nation during World War II, this element was missing: there was no one governing authority, no real power — economic, military, political — there was not even a sense of true unity. A serious crisis of sheer existence, which no one anticipated, arose.

Because of the lack of unity in the leadership, we must talk about the different groups of leadership. I suggest, for analytical purposes, four main categories: 1) The official Zionist movement; 2) the non-Zionist movements; 3) the radical-

national opposition; 4) the voices from the countries of the Holocaust.

To what extent did the Zionist movement see itself as representing the whole Jewish nation, rather than just a movement whose purpose was to build Eretz Israel as a Jewish political entity? Indeed, to what extent was the Zionist movement the representative of the Jewish people, including those who lived under Nazi rule?

Similar questions apply to the other leadership groups: Did the anti-Zionist Agudath Israel represent only the Orthodox-religious public or was it supposed to represent, and did it in fact represent, the interests of the whole nation? Did the non-Zionist leadership in the U.S. and England (the American Jewish Committee, the American Joint Distribution Committee, the Anglo-Jewish Association) represent the whole nation? What precisely was the nature of the radical movements — Kook-Bergson in the U.S., and the Irgun and Lehi in Palestine — and did these radical movements offer an alternative to the official Zionist policy? Finally, what were the voices from the Holocaust saying?

The basic assessment that the Zionist movement and the Jewish people were fragmented is obvious. For example, during the war, the World Jewish Congress was represented in

Switzerland by Gerhart Riegner. However, his office also included Alfred Silberschein, head of a relief organization named "Relico," which was affiliated with the Congress, and their relationship was strained. The Jewish Agency and the Zionist Organization were represented by Shmuel Schepps, Haim Posner, Menachem Kahani, and others, among whom there was friction. All these people were in conflict with Nathan Schwab, head of the Halutz Office, who did not get along with members of his own office, and other youth movement representatives. Another perpetual conflict existed between all the above-mentioned and Saly Mayer, head of the JDC and the group representing the Vaad Hahatzala of Orthodox rabbis headed by Isaac Sternbuch. Similar situations can be cited in Lisbon, London, New York, and for at least part of the time, Istanbul. The ever-heightening conflicts between Ben-Gurion and Weizmann, the constant tension between Rabbi Stephen Wise and Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver in the U.S., the strife between parties in Palestine all attest to unending fragmentation and disintegration in the Jewish leadership.

An analysis of parallel situations in other nations during the same period yields a similar picture. In Britain, the situation included a constant struggle between the Colonial Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs around the question of Palestine, jealousy and conflict among the other ministries, and the struggle for seniority in the British army. In the U.S., the State Department clashed with the Treasury, and the Congress with the Army Chiefs. Whereas the inner conflicts and

disputes in the U.S. and England could not escalate to a level of catastrophe, as long as a political framework existed which made the final decisions and implemented policy, the Jews did not have a political entity which could make *binding* political decisions.

Nevertheless, if we look closely at the Zionist movement — and for the purpose of our discussion we include not only the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Organization but also the World Jewish Congress — we find that a consensus did exist among a large majority of the movement.

General policy directions were followed that were centered on a basic aspiration to create, at the end of the war, a Jewish state in Palestine, or to turn Eretz Israel into a Jewish state. The opposition to the leadership, from the Left (Hashomer Hatzair) and from various centrist movements, accepted democratic restraints within the framework of the Zionist movement, thus turning the objective of striving for a state into a general, accepted policy. The marvel is that a national movement so fragmented geographically and ideologically, laboring under such adverse war conditions, despite all its inner struggles and conflicting interests, succeeded in reaching something resembling agreement about the central issue. This did not happen at the beginning of the war, but only after about a year and a half of factional struggles. The first half of 1941 saw the victory of this tendency in Jerusalem; acceptance by the American Diaspora followed. The crystallization of the demand for a Jewish Commonwealth came with the Biltmore Conference in May,

1942, and was endorsed in November of the same year in Jerusalem.

How does European Jewry fit into this policy? We can trace two distinct lines of thought, though they were not directly expressed by the leaders of the Zionist movement.

One took into account the fact that Jewish Palestine did not have the capacity — economic, social, or political — to serve as a haven for the Jewish masses. Accordingly, it was necessary to ignore other problems and devote all energies to establishing an autonomous Jewish entity in Palestine so that the Jewish people would be assured of a future. The second, and complementary, line of thought was that by bringing part of European Jewry to Palestine, it would be possible to turn the Jewish settlement into a politically independent power: after all, bringing the Jews to Palestine was in keeping with the “ingathering of the exiles.”

In other words, there could be no discussion of saving Jews so long as there was no state or equivalent entity; it was imperative to concentrate exclusively on building the Yishuv — economically, socially, demographically, militarily, and politically.

The war is frequently divided into two periods: the first, until November, 1942, when the Yishuv did not know about the planned murder of European Jews; the second, after November, 1942, when the news of the mass-murders was accepted as fact in Jewish Palestine. Zionist policy did not then deny the facts as they perceived them, but said that there was no way to save the endangered Jews of Europe — what could be

done was to ensure Jewish victory at the end of the war, i.e., the establishment of a Jewish state for all the displaced Jewish refugees remaining in Europe.

Chaim Weizmann, for example, talked about the mass losses of one or two million victims, and about the homeless survivors who would make their way to Palestine. Biltmore was supposed to provide a solution to this crisis. Since there were close to a million Arabs and over half a million Jews in Israel, a mass immigration of a few million Jews after the war would turn Palestine between the Jordan and the Mediterranean into a Jewish state with a 20 to 25 percent Arab minority. The Jewish plight would solve itself dialectically, and the state would be the mechanism for the solution.

Paradoxically, this policy was accepted as its basis — the existence of millions of Jewish refugees who would make their way to Palestine — was being destroyed.

Zionist policy in the first part of the war was based on another assumption, which is documented in countless sources, though not always clearly or explicitly. This assumption deals with the limited power — political and economic — of the Jewish people. Factually, there is no doubt about the truth of this assumption. A brief look at Washington and London government files reveals how insignificant was Jewish influence at that time. The Jews addressed themselves to considerations of justice and legal obligations. There was no pragmatic way to pressure these governments.

The small Jewish Yishuv, until the end of 1942 living under the specter of being conquered by the Nazis, did

not at all impress the British, and its threats did not amount to much during these years. In later years this situation changed, and the British, anxious indeed about uprisings and revolts, set about crushing these insurrections as they occurred.

British Jewry had no political power to speak of. The arguments here were, again, based not on power, but on justice and law; their influence was minuscule.

The same situation prevailed in the U.S., where a large anti-Semitic movement existed throughout the war. Until the U.S. entered the war in December, 1941, Jewish leaders were afraid of being charged with war-mongering, and after that, there was a very real fear of the accusation that America was fighting a war for the Jews. Jewish economic power was non-existent in the U.S. at that time. Indeed, the anti-Semitic issue of Jewish influence had been raised successfully during World War I. The Zionist leadership, which tried to fight its war according to the precedent of World War I, was in this way very similar to other political leaderships. Obviously, they failed, just as did all those who tried to fight the Second World War as the First had been fought.

Zionist policy, then, was based on insufficient power, and its hopes did not materialize during the war itself. What brought about change in this situation? From 1943 on, the Zionist movement in the U.S. became a grass roots movement, largely due to Abba Hillel Silver and Emmanuel Neumann, whose efforts were based on the success of the opposition headed by Hillel Kook (Peter Berg-

son).

These efforts were the cornerstone of the Jewish lobby that later made a very significant contribution to the establishment of the Jewish state. This is undoubtedly connected to the fact that American Jewry, in the decade before the War, was mostly American-born and had become part of the American public by absorbing the new homeland's political culture. The slow acceptance in the general society of what is known as American pluralism brought about the legitimization of powerful groups who demanded the right to influence policies.

Here was a basis for electoral power, partly enhanced by the rapid penetration by Jews of the American elite in many different fields. This was a realistic basis for political struggle in the future. Despite the news of the Holocaust there was no major change in Zionist policy. On the contrary, the news produced a shocked silence. Many rescue attempts were made, but largely so no one could claim after the war that they had not been made.

In the actions and thoughts of leaders on all levels I have found a sense of frustration with rescue attempts, not because of the lack of desire to rescue, but because the Jews had no real means of rescuing — no army, no access to occupied Europe, either from Palestine or from other locations. Every attempt encountered a blank wall — the Palestinian paratroopers' episode, the transfer of monies to Europe, the negotiations during the last part of the war. Only the great Western powers could help but, despite all efforts, the Zionist movement could not galvanize them.

With no prospect of rescue, the focus continued to be the future of Palestine. It is likely that because of this focus potential small rescue efforts — involving more money, and more penetration attempts, despite the hardships — were disregarded. It was Menahem Bader who wrote, at the beginning of 1943 from Istanbul, that just as earlier, no one believed the murders, so now people did not understand that there were, still, channels for help. The policy continued to center on the aspiration to establish a Jewish state — but for whom? No one believed that any Jew would survive in Nazi Europe. For whom then? For the remaining beaten refugees? To quote Ben-Gurion in September, 1944:

What have you done to us, you freedom-loving peoples, guardians of justice, defenders of the high principles of democracy and of the brotherhood of man? What have you allowed to be perpetrated against a defenseless people while you stood aside and let it bleed to death, without offering help or succor, without calling on the fiends to stop, in the language of retribution which alone they would understand. Why do you profane our pain and wrath with empty expressions of sympathy which ring like a mockery in the ears of millions of the damned in the torture house of Nazi Europe? Why have you not even supplied arms to our ghetto rebels, as you have done for the partisans and underground fighters of other nations? Why did you not help us to establish contacts with them, as you have done in the case of the partisans in Greece and Yugoslavia and the underground movements elsewhere? If, instead of Jews, thousands of English, American, or Russian women, children, and aged had been tortured every day, burnt to death, asphyxiated

in gas chambers — would you have acted the same way?

What was the policy adopted by the alternative leadership groups? Perhaps the most pathetic was that of the Irgun and Lehi (despite other differences between them). Early in 1941, Lehi toyed with the idea of a pact with Nazi Germany against the common enemy — Britain. The Irgun around that time was more pro-British than the official Zionist movement. However, during the second half of the war, information about the Holocaust arrived, and a radical change swept the Irgun. The effect of the information was that it caused the Irgun openly to declare war against the British; from the beginning of 1944, the Irgun was determined to help save the remnants of the refugees. This war against the British indirectly provided assistance to the murderers of the Jewish nation against whom the British were fighting; it stemmed from a deep rage over Jewish helplessness both in Europe and in Israel.

This inescapable conclusion can be explained only in psychological terms, an outburst of aggression against the closest object that can be accused of betrayal, cruelty, etc. The Irgun tried to overcome this inconsistency by identifying the British with the Nazis; much was said, against all political logic, about the "Nazi-British." However, this aggressiveness released, in many, feelings of intense fury and helplessness, in light of what was happening in Europe. There was one question that could not be asked then, but must be asked now: How many Jews were actually saved as a result of the

Irgun rebellion during World War II? The answer is obvious — none. With the end of the war, the scenario changed radically. The Irgun war on the British against the backdrop of homeless survivors and anti-Zionist British policy coalesced with the war for an independent Jewish state in Eretz Israel.

The non-Zionist Jewish organizations had a quasi-policy toward the non-Jewish world. The position of Agudath Israel is instructive. It sustained its anti-Zionist direction, and accordingly had little difficulty concentrating on efforts to influence the big powers to offer *any* assistance to save European Jews. The political future of Eretz Israel did not interest Agudath Israel. However, Agudath Israel was a partisan element, not a nationalistic one. It was primarily concerned with great religious personages, rabbis and their families — the rest of the population did not actively concern some in Agudath Israel.

This was not the view of all Agudath Israel leaders (for example, in Slovakia). Nor was this the attitude of the leaders of the Agudah in the U.S., when they demanded that the Americans bomb the rail-lines leading to Auschwitz. But one cannot talk in terms of a clear policy, or anything more than an attempt to influence the Western administrations as a response to demands from Europe.

The same situation existed at the JDC. "When in doubt, ask the State Department" was the motto of the JDC as expressed by James N. Rosenberg at the beginning of the war. The JDC did not have an independent policy, nor did the American Jewish Committee, which sup-

ported it. JDC efforts to save the persecuted Jews of Europe were conditioned by unquestioned loyalty not only to the U.S., but to the Roosevelt administration's policy, as perceived by JDC leaders. Though the situation in Europe was very different, and JDC representation there was independent and daring, it is difficult to talk about a real, consistent policy.

The only policy of the Jewish leadership in Nazi Europe was one of constant rescue attempts and attempts to arouse the free world at large. For example, Jews in Slovakia and in Hungary followed this policy of rescue attempts, culminating in the famous rescue committee of Komoly and Kastner in Budapest. This case constitutes a radical alternative to the policies discussed above.

The leaders of the group came from the two extremes of Jewish life: Rabbi Michael Dov Weissmandel, son-in-law of Rabbi David Halevi Ungar of Nitra, and Mrs. Gizi Fleischman, head of WIZO in Slovakia. Ungar was the leader of Agudath Israel. Weissmandel was the political leader of the Orthodox anti-Zionist movement; Fleischman was the dominant leader of the Zionist movement and the JDC representative in Slovakia. The group which these people headed, named the "Working Group," attempted to negotiate with the Nazis an end to the murders in return for a bribe, monetary or political. Later, this policy was implemented by Kastner and Brand in Hungary, and in JDC representative Saly Mayer's negotiation with the S.S.

It seems to me that there is no escaping the conclusion that, despite simple political logic, this policy had a chance of success. Himmler, after all, was aware as early as the spring and summer of 1942 that Germany could not win the war. The Nazis, of course, truly believed that international Jewry was their main enemy, that it was these Jews who ran the Western-Bolshevik war against them. Therefore, the idea arose that the Jews could be used against the West. The decision to murder the Jews, which was accepted not earlier than the spring of 1941 was not, as Hitler used to say about his policies, an irrevocable decision.

Prior to 1941, two solutions for the "Jewish Question" were considered: expulsion, and emigration for a price. Mass-murder replaced expulsion, but this did not necessarily exclude "selling" Jewish lives, temporarily at least, if the price for the exchange were essential to Nazi policy. Weissmandel and Fleischman tried to exploit these possibilities and to negotiate an agreement where money would serve only as a means to much more concrete benefits to Himmler (in contrast to Hitler's opinion): contact with the West with the intention of creating a joint front against the USSR.

In a series of letters written between 1942 and 1944, Weissmandel and Fleischman cried out to the free Jewish world to try to move it to an emergency action aimed at a negotiated rescue of the Jews in Europe. But the political helplessness of the Jews would have barred any such response to these pleas even if the situation had been clearly understood, which was not the case.

The Zionist leadership in Israel

tried to help and sent the money that was requested by the Jewish negotiators. But it was not within the power of the Jews of the Allied countries to change their policies and to bring about negotiations for saving Jews. Moshe Sharett, one of the Jews who understood the Nazi offers, called on the British to conduct negotiations without letting the Nazis have their wish, thereby effecting an immediate halt to the slaughter; in the meantime, the war might end. His demand was denied. There was no chance that his demands would be met, since there was no political power backing him.

There was no foreign policy of the Jewish people during the Holocaust: moreover, such a foreign policy was impossible. The Zionist movement took a political line that presents a difficult problem. They saw the struggle for a Jewish state as their top priority. There were those who espoused different priorities: Menahem Bader and Venja Pomeranz in Istanbul, Wilfrid Israel and Shlomo Adler-Rudel in London, Peter Bergson in the U.S., and people like Weissmandel, Fleischman, Israel Kastner, and Saly Mayer. A different approach was also offered by Gerhart Riegner in Geneva and his friend Richard Lichtheim. But they did not dictate Zionist policy. Moreover, it is highly doubtful whether the direction suggested by some of these personalities would have resulted in greater success in the rescue attempts; indeed they might eventually have hurt the effort to create a Jewish state, a lone refuge for the wounded Jewish people.

The Zionist movement had to concentrate on the struggle for Eretz Israel. It sought to insure the future,

but may have failed to exploit real possibilities to confront the existing tragedy. The Zionist movement did claim to represent the whole Jewish nation, but whether this claim was justified remains questionable. Does Israel, after 1948, speak in the name of all Jews? Does the understandable egotism of a sovereign state coincide on every issue with the interests of the Jewish people in the Diaspora? In order to answer these questions we must examine these interests — whether they are merely abstract or have a realistic basis — and examine Israel's level of response to these interests. It is still unclear whether Hitler won his war against the Jews; the state of emergency has not passed. The Jewish people today are facing both inner and outer crises.

They diminish in numbers, and are again an outcast among the nations of the world. There is a growing tendency towards aggressiveness, both inward and outward. The massacre of the European Jewish community demolished a great reservoir of people who strove for a national, territorial center. A new reality now exists, and I am doubtful that the Jewish people and the State of Israel have a foreign policy that understands this reality or acts upon it. ■

YEHUDA BAUER is the Head of the International Center for the Study of Antisemitism at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. A different version of this article appeared in Hebrew in Ha'aretz, April 10, 1983.