

THE BRITISH PRESS  
AND THE HOLOCAUST  
1942-1943

by

Julian Duncan Scott  
University of Leicester

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### Abbreviations

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation.
FO	Foreign Office.
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
PRO	Public Record Office, Kew.
WJC	World Jewish Congress.

## Methodology

Scholars have tended to regard Andrew Sharf's 1964 study of The British Press and Jews Under Nazi Rule as definitive. His observations about the extent of knowledge of the Final Solution among the British Press have been cited, for example, by Bernard Wasserstein in his salient work about Britain's response to the news of the Holocaust.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, historians of the American response to the Holocaust have found Sharf's work useful in contrasting the widespread indifference of the U.S. Press, Government and general public to the apparently blissful situation prevailing in Great Britain where, Sharf asserts, 'on the whole question of atrocity and extermination, the Press knew well and printed accurately exactly what was happening'.<sup>2</sup> Deborah Lipstadt, for example, has contrasted the American and British Press response to the announcement by the World Jewish Congress in June 1942 that over a million Jews had been massacred by the Nazis since the beginning of the war. Basing herself on information from Sharf's book, she asserted that 'In Britain, the story was treated in a direct and forceful style', while 'the American reaction was far more muted. Behaving in a way that would become almost a hallmark of American press treatment of news of Nazi mass murders, papers placed the various stories on inner pages and allotted them but a few lines. Consequently, readers were left free to accept this news as valid or to dismiss it as unverified information in which the paper had little faith'.<sup>3</sup> However, what Lipstadt perhaps did not realise was that Sharf based his work on a collection of Press cuttings and thus probably did not see the majority of these British articles in their original context in the pages of the newspapers. Further investigation of these articles in their original positions reveals that in this case and, as we shall see, throughout the period 1942-43 the British Press displayed a similar pattern of response to that of its American contemporaries as described above.<sup>4</sup>

Lipstadt herself, in Beyond Belief, often emphasises how important it is to analyse articles in relation to their environment. In her paper, The New York Times and Holocaust News, she explained the groundbreaking methodology which she was to

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Wasserstein, Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945, (Oxford, 1979).

<sup>2</sup>Andrew Sharf, The British Press and Jews Under Nazi Rule, (Oxford, 1964), p. 113.

<sup>3</sup>Deborah Lipstadt, Beyond Belief, (New York, 1986), pp. 163-164.

<sup>4</sup>Sharf, *op. cit.*, (p. 1) explains that his work 'is based on a collection of cuttings, covering most matters of Jewish interest from 1919 to 1951, which was presented to the Jewish Historical General Archives by the late Mr. Joshua Podro, the well-known Anglo-Jewish literary figure'.

later employ in researching the whole U.S. Press.<sup>5</sup> 'The importance a story is accorded by the editors is reflected in its page placement, headline size, and length', she said. In her preliminary work Lipstadt read through every fourth issue of the New York Times between 1936 and 1943. 'Each issue', she explained, 'was read in its entirety. The index was not used to locate articles. (Using the index would have meant missing many articles).' It could be assumed, she added, 'that the closer an article is to the front of the paper, the more likely it is to be read'. In the light of this the New York Times' record was not too impressive for she found that, with the exception of 1938, few reports of Nazi atrocities against Jews appeared on the front page of the New York Times and 'the majority were placed between pages four and nine....The fact of major import is the relative dearth of page-one stories'. Furthermore, she asserted, the chance that a reader would read a story also depended on its length - the reader assuming that subjects of larger articles were generally more important than smaller ones. In this respect the articles in the New York Times tended to be 'concise, with 20% of them under 20 lines and 14% of them between 21 and 30 lines long. In other words, one-third of all the articles were less than 30 lines'. Moreover, most of the longer articles discussed the topic of the fate of the Jews as only part of another story with the result that this 'reduced its accessibility to those readers particularly interested in it. A reader looking for this news might easily have missed it if it was merely a brief reference within a larger article on another topic'. Paradoxically, many of the shorter articles reported important information. Thus, she discovered, 'an announcement by the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee of the USSR that the Germans had killed 86,000 Jews in Minsk, 25,000 in Odessa and "tens of thousands" in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia appeared in a 9-line article, also at the bottom of the page'; and, by way of a further example, in April 1943, 'a 23-line article on page 11 reported two million Jews had been wiped out and five million were in danger of extermination'.

The importance of Lipstadt's observations is underlined by the findings of a 1949 study of readership patterns by the Mass Observation social survey unit, entitled: The Press and its Readers.<sup>6</sup> In libraries, the report found, the average reader spent four to five minutes reading a daily paper. In trains and buses, on the other hand, rather longer was spent, with an average of six minutes. While readers of 'class' newspapers took more time to read their papers than those of the 'popular' Press, all readers spent most time reading the front page news. Readers of four-page newspapers - such as the wartime Daily Mail, News Chronicle and Daily Herald - spent nearly half the total time

<sup>5</sup>Deborah Lipstadt, 'The New York Times and Holocaust News', Proceedings of the Seventh World Congress of Jewish Studies (Holocaust Research), World Union of Jewish Studies, Yad Vashem, (Jerusalem, 1980), pp. 45-73.

<sup>6</sup>Tom Harrison, The Press and its Readers, (London, 1949).

on the front page, a quarter on the other news page, page three. Not quite a fifth, the report declared, was spent on the second page, with its feature articles and editorial, and only a tenth on the back page. This is important, for as this thesis shows most articles on the fate of the Jews in Europe were printed on the back pages of the papers. Since it is clear that the readers understood that the most important news was printed on the front page, then the inside news pages and the least important on the back page it is reasonable to assume that the editors understood this too.

The Mass Observation report discovered that newspaper readers tended to be very selective about what they actually read in an issue. Headlines were scanned (with more attention being paid to the front page than any other) and only those items of interest to the reader are actually read. For example:

*A skilled working-man, aged 60. 'Wearing trilby hat, gloves, blue jacket, black striped trousers. Takes up News Chronicle. First spends 2 minutes skipping through the whole contents of the front page, only reads thoroughly columns dealing with miners. Turns to second page and straight away reads readers' letters which are headed "Too Old at 47". This takes 12 minutes. Spends the next 12 minutes glancing through "Spotlight" by A.J. Cummings - this article headed "No Iron Dukes Now". Reads no more. Does not even glance at pages 2 and 3.*

A 55 year old unskilled working man who had told an interviewer that there was nothing he didn't read in his newspaper had immediately before described his reading routine as: 'It all depends on the mood I'm in. Usually I read the Live Letters first. Then I look at the pictures or anything interesting.' The report commented that 'This man thinks he has read the entire paper when he has looked through everything that has appealed to him, or struck him as interesting....it seems likely that most people who say they read through all the paper are in fact almost equally selective in their reading. People tend to forget the things in which they are not interested'. As we shall see, articles which reported the fate of the Jews were rarely accorded positions on the front page and consistently denied eye-catching headlines.

The 'serious parts of the morning paper[s]', the report went on, were read 'sketchily and without much interest by a high proportion of "ordinary" people', although 'this proportion dwindles considerably when the group under observation is above average education and intelligence'. 'For the bulk of the people,' it said, 'morning paper reading means a source of moderately light news reading, mixed with a supply of sports news, cartoons and 'funnies', features and gossip. Even so, however little importance people attach to news other than gossip, this report has clearly shown that the bulk of reading is in fact news reading.' 'In particular,' it added, 'it seems clear that the paper's presentation of the news plays an important part in determining choice of

paper.' Only a minority of between a quarter and a fifth of all readers read the news with real care and judgement, and these people tended to read the 'class' dailies such as The Times and Daily Telegraph. The report stated that readers of The Times, Daily Telegraph and News Chronicle emerged as the most interested in the news, with readers of the Daily Mail, Daily Express and Daily Herald following close behind. The report reproduced the following table as a rough guide to which readers of which newspapers took the most interest in the news:

*Percentage of people reading these Daily papers who can say correctly which government is in power in Yugoslavia:*

Daily	%
The Times	87
Daily Telegraph	52
News Chronicle	43
Daily Herald	36
Daily Mail	36
Daily Express	35
Daily Graphic	35
Daily Mirror	16

To the Sunday reader, the report added, 'news is less important and features have a proportionately increased draw...although numerically news items are still remembered most of all, the impression they make on Sunday paper readers is much slighter than that made by features'. One reason for this, it said, was that 'on Sundays so much newspaper reading is done casually, not only at all sorts of odd times of the day, but also with a feeling of relaxation rather than of duty'.

Sharf's pioneering work cannot therefore be considered as definitive. Knowing that a newspaper printed a certain article on the fate of the Jews and subjecting that article to textual analysis is of course important. However, to get a fuller and more perceptive picture of Press response to the Holocaust these other factors which Lipstadt has highlighted must be taken into account. Accordingly, this study of the British Press and the Holocaust has been based on Lipstadt's methodology. I have studied every edition of five national daily newspapers (The Times, Daily Telegraph, Daily Mail, Daily Herald and the News Chronicle) and three national Sunday newspapers (The Observer, The People and the News of the World) for the period January 1942 to June 1943, a length of time spanning the Allies' reception of the first

reports of Nazi massacres of Jews in Russia to the Allies' official recognition of the existence Final Solution, the failure of the Bermuda Conference on refugees and the final liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto. In addition, every issue of the Jewish Chronicle between January 1942 and June 1943, and the Manchester Guardian for December 1942, have been studied and used as controls. These two newspapers, particularly the Jewish Chronicle, have been invaluable for ascertaining what information was available to the British Press throughout this period since an absence of articles on the fate of the Jews in the national newspapers did not always mean that there was no information to print. Studying each individual issue of each newspaper is not only preferable to using Press cuttings for the reasons cited above, but also for the reason that if I missed articles on the fate of the Jews of Europe when I was deliberately searching for them then they would certainly have been invisible to the reader in 1942 and 1943.

It might be argued that too much stress has been laid upon page positioning, layout, length and headline size, and that such persistent reference to these factors becomes tedious. However, I consider that such a methodical, quantitative approach provides the most effective way of communicating the extent of the Press' 'unbelief' with regard to the news of the extermination of the Jews. The vastness and sheer horror of the Holocaust presents historians with certain unique methodological problems. How, for example, can one adequately bring people to an understanding of the meaning of the figure of six million dead? The figure of six million is simply incomprehensible, out of the ordinary experience of the normal mind - it leaves us cold, and robs the dead of their humanity. It masks the fact that each one of the dead was somebody's mother or father, brother or sister, son or daughter, and the fact that they each knew how to laugh, how to cry, and how to feel pain. Comprehension has, therefore, to be aided by breaking the figure down into more readily assimilable groups; only then can the extent of the disaster which befell European Jewry be assimilated. This, indeed, is Martin Gilbert's approach in The Holocaust, where the reader is skilfully introduced to the lives of and atrocities committed against individual after individual; the building up of hundreds of such pictures thus creates a forceful (and extremely distressing) impression on the mind of the reader.<sup>7</sup> However, just as the annihilation of European Jewry was vast in extent, so too was the denial of such information by the Western Allies. The reports which reached the Free World spoke of the deliberate murder of tens of thousands of Jews in such and such a place, fifty thousand here, one hundred thousand there and so on. Thus, the failure of the British Press to assimilate the news of the Final Solution took place as a *process* over a period of many months and should not be thought of as a single complete act. Only a

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<sup>7</sup>Martin Gilbert, The Holocaust, (Glasgow, 1986).

quantitative approach can begin to convey something of the vast extent of the 'unbelief of the British Press, public and Government; of how time after time the news of the massacres of Jews was relegated to the back page or simply ignored altogether. This approach has also necessitated the careful logging of how and what information concerning the massacres became available to the British Press, which I hope will prove useful to other historians looking at the subject of 'what did we know, and when did we know it?'. To some extent, however, the analysis of page positioning, headline size and so on, as a gauge of newspaper attitude to the news of the Final Solution, was dictated by the lamentable lack of archive material. The great majority of British newspapers have long since disposed of such background material so that really only The Times and Manchester Guardian archives have survived intact. Moreover, I found very few references to the persecution of the Jews in the personal papers of such newspaper men as Lord Beaverbrook, Walter Layton and Lord Astor, and a similar paucity of material with regard to the News Department in the Foreign Office files. Even so, the lack of reference to the issue of the persecution of the Jews in such background material as does exist at the above locations is in itself instructive; it is indicative of how the persecution of the Jews was really a peripheral issue in the mind of the Press.

Each newspaper was specially selected for inclusion in this study. A 1943 Ministry of Information survey reveals that The Times and the Daily Telegraph were the leading 'class' daily national newspapers during that period with circulations of about 500,000 and 2 million respectively.<sup>8</sup> According to the survey these two papers were read 'by high proportions of the upper economic groups and those with higher education...more by the old than by the young, and more in the south than in the north', and by 'relatively high proportions of those in managerial and professional jobs, clerical workers and the retired and unoccupied'. No serious study of the British Press and the Holocaust could possibly have omitted these two newspapers, read as they were by some of the most influential people in Britain, and which took pride in providing the most detailed and accurate news services.

'Popular' newspapers were chosen according to their circulation *and* their political tendency. It would be facile to make conclusions about the attitude of 'the British Press' towards reports of atrocities against Jews on the basis of a study of newspapers without mass circulation. Similarly, it would be a mistake to make conclusions about the attitude of 'the British Press' from a study of newspapers of the

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<sup>8</sup>Publications Division of the Ministry of Information, Wartime Social Survey, NEWSPAPERS - An Inquiry into Newspaper Reading amongst the Civilian Population, Leicester University Library, UK/OFF.

same political stance.<sup>9</sup> The Daily Mail, Daily Herald and News Chronicle were chosen for study on account of the fact of their high daily circulations (adding up to over 10 million) and because together they spanned the breadth of political opinion.

The Daily Mail, described by the Political and Economic Planning's 1938 Report on the British Press as 'Independent Right-Wing Conservative', was read by about 3.1 million people each day.<sup>10</sup> According to the Ministry of Information survey, the Mail was read 'rather more in the provinces than in London and has a high proportion of readers in the older age groups'. On the other side of the political spectrum lay the Daily Herald. The Herald was a Labour newspaper - in fact the Labour Party owned 49% of it (the other 51% belonged to Odhams Press Ltd.). According to the survey, in July 1943 the Herald had a circulation of 4.2 million, a high proportion of which were male readers. It was 'particularly popular amongst the lower economic groups, those with elementary education, workers in heavy manufacturing, miners and transport and building workers'. The News Chronicle was a Liberal newspaper; as Viscount Camrose said in his British Newspapers and their Controllers: 'It has stood four-square and true for many years as the organ of the Liberal party. Perhaps its Liberalism has faded slightly into a more Leftish atmosphere in recent times but it remains the accepted exponent of the old Liberal faith.'<sup>11</sup> According to the survey, its circulation in July 1943 was about 2.8 million.

No comment on the Sunday newspapers and their reaction to news of the extermination of European Jewry would really have any value without taking into account the News of the World and The People. These two newspapers accounted for 53% of the Sunday newspapers read in the Ministry of Information survey. The News of the World, it said, 'reaches a larger public than any other newspaper. One third of the civilian population saw this paper "last Sunday" '. Its circulation rose from over 3,750,000 in 1937 to a mammoth 7,548,061 in September 1946, while The People's circulation grew from over 3,000,000 in 1937 to 4,613,957 in 1947!<sup>12</sup> However, according to the survey the News of the World and The People were read by 'only a small proportion of the upper economic groups...[their] readership being highest in the lower economic groups'. They were read, it added, 'much less by those with higher education than by those with elementary education,' and were, 'more popular amongst manual workers than with the non-manual groups'.

<sup>9</sup>The term 'British Press', as used in the title to this thesis and throughout its contents, refers to the main national daily and Sunday 'popular' and 'class' newspapers - not to evening or provincial papers.

<sup>10</sup>Political and Economic Planning, Report on the British Press, (London, 1938), p. 117.

<sup>11</sup>Viscount Camrose, British Newspapers and their Controllers, (Andover, 1947), p. 73.

<sup>12</sup>1937 figures from Political and Economic Planning, *op cit.*, p. 84; 1947 figures from Camrose, *op. cit.*, p. 13.



Of the two 'class' Sunday newspapers defined by Viscount Camrose the Observer has been chosen.<sup>13</sup> According to the survey the Observer (and its rival the Sunday Times) 'are read very much more [than the News of the World and The People] by the higher economic groups and by those with higher education'. Its circulation grew from 214,000 in 1936 to 361,367 in 1947.<sup>14</sup>

Since so much stress has been laid upon factors such as page positioning, headline size and layout, it is essential to understand the format of the newspapers. The 'popular' daily and Sunday newspapers (Daily Mail, Daily Herald, News Chronicle, The People and News of the World) were not tabloid sized as 'popular' newspapers are today, but were broadsheets. By 1942, as a result of the wartime shortage of newsprint, 'popular' daily newspapers had been reduced to just four pages. Our three 'popular' dailies tended to follow the same layout. The latest and most important war news naturally formed the leader on the front page throughout 1942 and 1943, but other important non-war news was also to be found there. Page two was the domain of the editorial, political cartoon and feature articles, while pages three and four (the back page) carried a mixture of less important war and other news and sporting items.

Similarly, the 'class' papers had also been reduced in size; the Daily Telegraph, for example, had been reduced to six pages. Like its 'popular' contemporaries war news always formed its front page leader although important non-war news was often printed on the front page too. Page two was given over to classified advertisements, personal notices and stock prices, while page three formed its main inside news page covering both war and other news. Editorials, feature articles and regular columnists were printed on page four, and further war and other news on page five. Page six (the back page) contained a mixture of classified advertisements, crossword puzzle, and general news. The Times ran to ten pages, and was unique among the papers studied in that its front page was totally given over to classified advertisements and personal notices. Page two was always given over to reporting 'Home News'; page three to 'Imperial and Foreign' news; while page four formed its main news page on which the most important news (mostly war) was printed. Its editorials, special feature articles and letters to the editor were printed on page five; photographs, the crossword and miscellaneous articles on art and nature and so on were printed on page six. The Court Circular, and obituaries were placed on page seven, further letters to the editor and

<sup>13</sup>The other was the Sunday Times. Camrose, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>14</sup>1936 figure from Political and Economic Planning, *op. cit.*, p. 84. 1947 figure from Camrose, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

miscellaneous 'home' articles on page eight. City news and stock prices were printed on page nine and page ten was totally devoted to classified advertisements.

The People, The Observer and the News of the World extended for eight pages each during this period. The People's front page leaders reported the latest and most important war news, but other news also found a place there. Pages two, four and five were dominated by feature articles and regular columnists such as 'Man O' The People', 'Philosopher', 'Piers England' and Hannen Swaffer. Pages three, six and eight reported further general war and other news, while sporting news predominated on page seven. The most important war and other news appeared on The People's front page while regular films, radio, art, music, theatre and other such columns filled page two. Book reviews dominated page three, while the 'Notes of the Week' column and extensive feature articles appeared on page four. Page five was the main inside news page; page six contained more feature articles and other less important news; profiles of important individuals and the 'Men and Money' column appeared on page seven, while sport and classified advertisements filled page eight.<sup>15</sup> Again, the most important war news predominated on the News of the World's front page, while page two contained mainly home news, with a combination of both on page three. The editorial, gossip columns, feature articles, theatre and wireless guides appeared on page four; a combination of domestic and war news, the obituary and news in brief on page five; a miscellany of fashion competition, horoscope, crossword, film guide, letters, gardening columns appeared on page six; further domestic news (usually crime) and a story appeared on page seven, while sports news dominated page eight.

All the above newspapers were eight columns wide, except for The Times which spanned seven columns. Headlines have been reproduced according to the following rough system (so as to aid understanding of their original impact):

10 point text represents a headline spanning a single column.

12 point text represents a headline spanning two columns.

14 point text represents a headline spanning three columns.

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<sup>15</sup>The People did not have an editorial.

## Introduction

### 'SEEING IS BELIEVING'

As the Allied armies swept across western Germany in April and May 1945 they liberated numerous concentration camps such as Belsen, Buchenwald and Dachau. Waves of shock and revulsion swept over the British public as newspaper reports, photographs and newsreels revealed the horror of the German concentration camps. The Daily Express organised an exhibition in its reading room in Regent Street, London, called 'SEEING IS BELIEVING', containing 22 photographs of atrocities from Buchenwald, Belsen and Nordhausen. On 3 May a Mass Observation investigator waited outside the exhibition and interviewed those who had just seen the photographs. In his subsequent report the investigator observed that (apart from a small number) most of those interviewed had heard something about conditions in the concentration camps before the recent publicity.<sup>16</sup> The majority of these, he said, placed the point of their knowledge before or at the beginning of the war: 'Some people had heard about them as far back as 1935-36, and others just before or at the beginning of the war. Some were less specific.' However, he revealed that although most of those interviewed had *heard* reports about conditions in the camps before or at the beginning of the war the vast majority of them had not *believed* in their veracity until the recent liberation of the camps. They had said, he reported, 'that they had not visualised anything so bad as the recent reports and photographs had shown, or had considered, until the recent publications, that what they had read or heard had been somewhat exaggerated'. One thirty-year old male had observed: 'I had a friend who was a Czech, but even then I doubted it.' A well-educated forty-five year-old female had said: 'I'd heard from different people even before the war started that they did such dreadful things to people who didn't believe in the Nazi principle - but no English person can imagine human beings would resort to such acts of barbarity.' A fifty-five year-old male had explained: 'About two years ago I read a book called "Dachau" written by a political prisoner. At the time, I thought it was exaggerated. I couldn't believe things like that really happened. But seeing is believing'. Similarly another forty year-old male had added: 'Well, I have heard of it some time now, but it was hard to visualise what they [the camps] were like. As the cards say SEEING IS BELIEVING.'

Other statistics collated by Mass Observation during April 1945 reveal a similar pattern of *knowledge and yet denial* of conditions in the concentration camps and

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<sup>16</sup>German Atrocities' 5/5/45, FR 2248, Mass Observation Archive, University of Sussex.

reports of atrocities in general. A poll conducted on 18 April revealed that 86% of those interviewed had heard about conditions in the German concentration camps before the recent publicity (leaving a significant 14% who had only just heard).<sup>17</sup> 'Roughly a third of the people who were interviewed', the report said, 'claimed to have realised how horrific they were before the latest reports had been issued. More than half the people said quite openly that they had heard about them before, but had had no idea, that the treatment of the prisoners was nearly as bad as now realised it to be.' The majority of those polled had explained that although they had heard reports about conditions in the camps before the recent publicity they had not been able to assimilate or believe them. One fifty year-old female had observed: 'I don't think I ever realised things were quite so terrible.' Another (sixty-five year-old) woman had said: 'Well, in a way I did know, I knew they had been torturing the Jews for years, but to see all those terrible pictures - poor starved people dying worse than animals - seeing it as if you'd stood there yourself - it made something you could never forget.' Others also spoke about how seeing the photographs had converted *knowledge* into *belief*. One thirty year-old female had explained: 'Well, I knew something before, but now I know *definite*'; and a seventeen year-old young man added: 'I didn't *properly* know before.'<sup>18</sup> Perhaps the most intriguing statement of all was made by a well educated sixty-five year-old man: 'Well, I couldn't credit human beings with such behaviour, but now we have it on *good authority*.'<sup>19</sup>

Clearly 'Joe Public' believed that the photographs and newsreels showing conditions in the liberated concentration camps had an authority which all the newspaper, radio and Governmental reports, Allied declarations and denunciations of the previous twelve years had not possessed. So although most people professed to have *known* from these sources for a long time about conditions in the camps *they had suspended belief* until they saw with their own eyes what they considered to be incontrovertible evidence of German atrocities. Most people had therefore considered that what the Press, radio and Governments said about German atrocities could not be believed - only seeing was believing. As the Sunday Express somewhat self-righteously informed the nation on 22 April 1945:

...don't forget in your horror and anger that this isn't a new story. It has been going on in Germany for something like 15 years.  
All through these years skilled investigators and mutilated victims have been trying to tell you what was happening in that depraved and bestial country.

<sup>17</sup>Special Pre-Peace News Questionnaire', 18/4/45, FR 2228, Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>18</sup>My italics.

<sup>19</sup>My italics.

They have been telling their stories in newspapers, magazines and innumerable books. They have been trying desperately to awake the conscience of the world - which is really your conscience.

But you never really knew about these horrors until now. Why? Because, like the Germans who live smug and complacent in the towns beside the concentration camps, you didn't want to know.

You didn't want to have your comfortable mind disturbed.... You didn't really think it was any business of yours.

However, the disinclination to *believe* in the veracity of reports of Nazi atrocities against Jews not only affected the general public but the Press and Government too. The seeds of this phenomenon of unbelief were sown well before the outbreak of the Second World War. The Great War began as a splendid crusade in which there was no shortage of men willing to chance their lives for a stake of glory in a righteous cause. The general public expected a short, victorious conflict fought for limited aims, but, it soon developed into a slugging-match of unprecedented proportions that began to bleed each belligerent dry of a whole generation of young men. The military stalemate necessitated the full mobilisation of national resources, and so, for example, women became munition workers, land girls, milkmen, bus conductors and so on in order to free men for the front. Zeppelin and bomber raids on London and the South East, long-range shelling of coastal towns by the German Navy, and the increasing threat of national starvation as a result of U-boat activity brought the horrors of the war home to the British public. The propaganda professionals of the British Government began to perceive that the maintenance of Home Front morale and the seduction of neutral opinion was just as (perhaps even more) important as the maintenance of that of the men in the trenches, and directed their propaganda accordingly. As Phillip Knightley has observed: 'From a faltering start, with a series of appeals to purely nationalistic interests, a propaganda machine developed that became the envy of the world. Beginning with a Parliamentary War Aims Committee and a small department at Wellington House in the office of the Insurance Commissioners - financed from revenue for "HM Foreign and Other Secret Services" - Britain by the end of the war had created a propaganda organisation [the Ministry of Information] that became the model on which Goebbels based that of the Germans some twenty years later.'<sup>20</sup>

The war fostered an incestuous relationship between the British Press and the propaganda organisations. Press men became part of the official propaganda set-up. In February 1917, for example, a Department of Information was created which included on its Advisory Committee, C.P. Scott, editor of the Manchester Guardian; Lord Northcliffe, proprietor of The Times and the largest circulation paper the Daily Mail;

<sup>20</sup>Phillip Knightley, The First Casualty, (London, 1982), p 66.

Robert Donald, editor of the News Chronicle; and, joining later, Sir George Riddell, the proprietor of the News of the World. Lord Beaverbrook, proprietor of the Daily Express, (who presided over its successor, the Ministry of Information) replaced Lord Northcliffe when he left to set up the British War Mission in the United States.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, journalists such as C.E. Montague, formerly of the Manchester Guardian, and Edward Cook, formerly of the Pall Mall Gazette, the Westminster Gazette and the Daily News, became censors. After an initial period of suspicion, during which war correspondents expected to be arrested if they went near the front, the military authorities began to court war correspondents. The correspondents were accorded honorary officer rank, chauffeured around the battlefields in limousines, and quartered together with their censors in comfortable chateaux, far away from the horrors of the trenches:

When once known, the war correspondents were trusted and liked - by the Staff. There lay the trouble They lived in the Staff world, its joys and its sorrows, not in the combatant world. The Staff was both their friend and their censor. How could they show it up when it failed?...They would visit the front now and then, as many Staff Officers did, but it could be only as afternoon callers from one of the many mansions of G.H.Q., that heaven of security and comfort. When autumn twilight came down on the haggard trench world of which they had caught a quiet noon-day glimpse they would be speeding west in Vauxhall cars to lighted chateaux gleaming white among scatheless woods.<sup>22</sup>

The correspondents at the front and their editors at home were no less patriotic than their military colleagues and considered that their primary duty was to do everything they could to help win the war - so they willingly took it upon themselves to reflect official propaganda themes, to play up the extent of victories and minimise the extent of defeats. As Sanders and Taylor explain: 'the British press became the servant of official propaganda more out of willing acquiescence than as a result of government coercion. The press, for its part, was in the main prepared to accept the increased output of official information and improved facilities as compensation for the temporary wartime restrictions imposed by censorship upon its customary freedom. Patriotism undoubtedly played an important role in this acceptance'.<sup>23</sup>

The cosy relationship between the Government, in particular the military authorities, and the Press was the subject of much criticism from the men in the trenches, and the Press' triumphalistic coverage of their day-to-day struggles for survival effectively destroyed their faith in the Press:

<sup>21</sup>Lord Northcliffe worked with Beaverbrook in the Ministry of Information as head of the department which directed propaganda at enemy countries.

<sup>22</sup>C.E. Montague, Disenchantment, (London, 1934), p. 101.

<sup>23</sup>Michael Sanders and Philip Taylor, British Propaganda during the First World War, (London, 1982), p. 31.

"Our casualties will be enormous," a General at G.H.Q. said with the utmost serenity on the eve of one of our great attacks in 1917. The average war correspondent - there were golden exceptions - insensibly acquired the same cheerfulness in face of vicarious torment and danger. In his work it came out at times in a certain jauntiness of tone that roused the fighting troops to fury against the writer. Through his despatches there ran a brisk implication that regimental officers and men enjoyed nothing better than "going over the top"; that a battle was just a rough, jovial picnic; that a fight never went on long enough for the men; that their only fear was lest the war should end on this side of the Rhine. This, the men reflected in helpless anger, was what people at home were offered as faithful accounts of what their friends in the field were thinking and suffering.

Most of the men had, all their lives, been accepting "what it says 'ere in the paper" as being presumptively true. They had taken the Press at its word without checking. Bets had been settled by reference to a paper. Now, in the biggest event of their lives, hundreds of thousands of men were able to check for themselves the truth of that workaday Bible. They fought in a battle or raid, and two days after they read, with jeers on their lips, the account of "the show" in the papers. They felt they had found the Press out. The most bloody defeat in the history of Britain, a very world's wonder of valour frustrated by feckless misuse of regimental glory and Staff shame, might occur on the Ancre on July 1, 1916, and our Press come out bland and copious and graphic, with nothing to show that we had not had quite a good day - a victory really. Men who had lived through the massacre read the stuff open-mouthed. Anything, then, could figure as anything else in the Press - as its own opposite even. Black was only an aspect of white. With a grin at the way he must have been taken in up to now, the fighting soldier gave the Press up.<sup>24</sup>

Millions of soldiers never recovered their faith in the Press. The collusion between Press and Government was perceived and marked, with enduring effects. 'So it comes', wrote C.E. Montague in 1922, 'that each of several million ex-soldiers now reads every solemn appeal of a Government, each beautiful speech of a Premier or earnest assurance of a body of employers with a maxim on guard in his mind - "You can't believe a word you read."'<sup>25</sup> Not that their disillusionment with the Press prevented them from buying newspapers in ever increasing numbers during the interwar period and throughout the Second World War. Increasing circulation figures, however, masked the fact that the working-man had become extremely cynical about the reliability of his newspaper. A Mass Observation report of 30 April 1942 revealed that readers of the high-circulation 'popular' newspapers were much more cynical with regard to the veracity of news in their paper than were readers of 'class' newspapers. For example, for every one reader who said that they trusted in the reliability of the Daily Mirror's reporting, thirteen expressed doubts; while the ratio was 1:1.1 for the Daily Telegraph and 1:2.5 for The Times. Thirty-five per cent. of Daily Express readers expressed an absolute distrust of the factual presentation of news in their chosen daily!<sup>26</sup> There is no doubt that such cynicism, especially when coupled with a

<sup>24</sup>Montague, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-103.

<sup>25</sup>*ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>26</sup>FR 1231, Mass Observation Archive.

much more focused distrust of atrocity reports, impeded the general public's assimilation of news of atrocities against Jews during the Second World War.

The German violation of Belgian neutrality in the summer of 1914 provided Britain with a moral *casus belli*, handed a propaganda coup to the Allies, and put German propaganda immediately on the defensive (it would never recover). Many of those in Britain who had warned against becoming involved in a European War were suddenly converted by the German invasion of Belgium. Volunteers swamped recruiting offices, desperate to join up and teach the Prussian bully a lesson. 'Each of them quite seriously thought of himself as a molecule in the body of a nation that was really, and not just figuratively, "straining every nerve" to discharge an obligation of honour....All the air was ringing with rousing assurances. France to be saved, Belgium righted, freedom and civilization re-won, a sour, crooked old world to be rid of bullies and crooks and reclaimed for straightness, decency, good-nature, the ways of common men dealing with common men.'<sup>27</sup> Rumours and reports abounded of 'Prussian' atrocities in little, defenceless Belgium: nuns were said to have been raped, babies bayoneted and children mutilated; it was alleged that unarmed civilians had been used as screens for the advancing Uhlans or massacred where they stood - all in the name of German 'Kultur'.

The Press, of its own accord, reinforced the popular hatred of the 'Hun', and missed no opportunity to vilify the barbaric 'Boche'. For instance, in a single report in the Daily Mail on 22 September, 1914, the Kaiser was successively referred to 'as a "lunatic," a "barbarian," a "madman," a "monster," a "modern judas," and a "criminal monarch" '<sup>28</sup> The satirical magazine Punch frequently reproduced illustrations which portrayed the Kaiser as a brutal murderer. For example, its 14 October 1914 edition carried a full-page illustration by Bernard Partridge entitled: ' "Punch" and the Prussian Bully.' The Kaiser was pictured, smoking gun in one hand and Imperial flag in the other, standing in the wreck of a Belgian village, surrounded by his victims (including a mother and child). The sub-title underneath proclaimed: 'THE TRIUMPH OF "CULTURE." - The Prussian Bully declares himself to be the Apostle of Culture.'

Not surprisingly, the British Government deliberately set out to fuel this popular hatred of the enemy by exploiting rumours of and deliberately manufacturing reports of German atrocities. This campaign of atrocity propaganda was intended to provide continuing justification of the Allied war effort, harden the resolve of both the

<sup>27</sup>Montague, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup>Knightley, *op. cit.*, p. 66.



soldiers in the trenches and those at home, and win over neutral - especially American - opinion. The propaganda professionals of the British Government inspired the creation of hundreds of books and pamphlets and graphic, emotive posters which laid bare the 'facts' of alleged German atrocities. They successfully exploited 'real' incidents such as the sinking of the *Lusitania*, the shooting of nurse Edith Cavell and the burning of the world famous library of Louvain, and were aided in their purpose by the enthusiasm and embroidering of the British Press.<sup>29</sup> The Press

gave great prominence to atrocity stories. In the absence of factual information - there was general criticism about the 'fog of war' - atrocity stories provided much-needed copy. The motives of the press were mixed: understandable patriotism mingled with sensationalism....There was...a lack of discrimination about the stories which were published, and little attempt was made to verify the details. The characteristic atrocity story came from 'a correspondent' some distance behind the scene of operations. It was invariably a supposedly verbatim account by an unidentified Belgian or French refugee. Even these accounts were second-hand, as were the reports gleaned by eager correspondents from refugees arriving in Britain. These stories were sensational news. No effort was made to spare readers of the vivid gory details - they were, indeed, 'violent appeals to hate and the animal lust for blood'.<sup>30</sup>

In any event there is no doubt that the atrocity stories were overwhelmingly accredited by the British public to be true. As Robert Graves later explained:

It never occurred to me that newspapers and statesmen could lie. I forgot my pacifism - I was ready to believe the worst of the German. I was outraged to read of the cynical violation of Belgian neutrality. I wrote a poem promising vengeance for Louvain. I discounted perhaps 20 per cent. of the atrocity details as wartime exaggeration. That was not, of course, enough.<sup>31</sup>

However, the wedge between the soldiers on one hand and the Press and Government on the other was further driven in by their coverage of alleged German atrocities. As C. E. Montague observed, there was a reaction amongst the men against atrocity propaganda and the 'Satanisation' of the Germans:

Reaching a front, you find that all you want is just to win the war. Soon you are so taken up with the pursuit of this aim that you are always forgetting to burn with the gem-like flame of pure fury that fires the lion-hearted publicist at home. A soldier might have had the Athanasian ecstasy all right till he reached the firing line. Every individual German had sunk the *Lusitania*; there was none righteous, none. And yet at a front the holy passion began to ooze out at the ends of his fingers. The bottom trouble is that you cannot fight a man in the physical way without somehow touching him....Just let the round head of a German appear for a passing second, at long intervals, above a hummock of clay in the middle distance. Before you had made a

<sup>29</sup>The German propagandists also aided the British atrocity campaign by their weak response to allegations of brutality.

<sup>30</sup>Cate Haste, *Keep the Home Fires Burning*, (London, 1977), pp. 83-84.

<sup>31</sup>Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That*, (London, 1929), pp. 99-100.

dozen sincere efforts to shoot him the fatal germ of human relationship had begun to find a nidus again: he had acquired in your mind the rudiments of a personal individuality...the hatred business had started crumbling....

If you took his trench it might be no better; perhaps Incarnate Evil had left its bits of food half-cooked, and the muddy straw, where it lay last, was pressed into a hollow by Incarnate Evil's back as by a cat's. Incarnate Evil should not do these things that other people in trenches do. It ought to be more strange and beastly and keep on making *beaux gestes* with its talons and tail, like the proper dragon slain by St. George. Perhaps Incarnate Evil was extinct and you went over its pockets. They never contained the right things - no poison to put in our wells, no practical hints for crucifying Canadians; only the usual stuffing of all soldier's pockets - photographs and tobacco and bits of string and the wife's letter, all about how tramps were always stealing potatoes out of the garden, and how the baby was worse, and was his leave never coming?<sup>32</sup>

Indeed, on 14 November 1917, C.E. Montague wrote to his wife: 'Of the spirit of hatred and revenge there is quite extraordinarily little among soldiers who do the actual fighting - much less than among some foolish journalists who try to relieve their feelings that way.'<sup>33</sup> Moreover, F.H. Keeling wrote concerning the shooting of nurse Edith Cavell: 'I see from the papers that the silly sentimental agitation about Nurse Cavell still goes on at home. A good many soldiers out here don't think much of it. I have discussed it with many and found all of my opinion - while admiring the woman immensely, I think the Germans were quite within their rights in shooting her. The agitation reveals the worst side of the English character.'<sup>34</sup>

The divide between the 'foolish journalists' and the men in the trenches on the issue of atrocities was perhaps most firmly established during the summer of 1917 when the British Press ran an atrocity story which alleged that the German Army had established a factory for the processing of the dead bodies of its soldiers into soaps, fertilisers, lubricant oils and glycerine for munitions. The Corpse Factory story, 'the most popular atrocity story of all', began in The Times on 16 April 1917, which reported:

One of the United States consuls on leaving Germany in February 1917, stated in Switzerland that the Germans were distilling glycerine from the bodies of their dead....

Herr Karl Rosner, the Correspondent of the Berlin *Lokalanzeiger*, on the Western Front...published last Tuesday the first definite German admission concerning the way in which the Germans use dead bodies.

We pass through Everingcourt. There is a dull smell in the air as if lime were being burnt. We are passing the great Corpse Exploitation Establishment (*Kadaververwertungsanstalt*) of this Army Group. The fat that is won here is turned into lubricating oils, and everything else is ground down in the bone mill into a

<sup>32</sup>Montague, *op. cit.*, pp. 147-149.

<sup>33</sup>Oliver Elton, *C.E. Montague - A Memoir*, (London, 1929), p. 197.

<sup>34</sup>Haste, *op. cit.*, p. 90. Nurse Edith Cavell ran a training hospital in Brussels and was shot by the Germans on 12 October 1915 for helping Allied prisoners to escape into neutral Holland.

powder which is used for mixing with pig's food and as manure - nothing can be permitted to go to waste.<sup>35</sup>

Another, very long, detailed article (from *La Belgique*) appeared in *The Times* on the next day which gave an account of the workings of a corpse factory near Coblenz. It is worth reprinting this article at length since, as we shall see, the corpse factory story bore a remarkable similarity to reports which reached the Allies of the German death camps during 1942-43 [see also *Appendix I*]; indeed, the ultimate exposure of the corpse factory story as a lie impacted directly on acceptance of reports concerning the Nazi death camps, blocking their general acceptance and assimilation.

We have known for long that the Germans stripped their dead behind the firing-line, fastened them into bundles of three or four bodies with iron wire, and then despatched these grisly bundles to the rear. Until recently the trains laden with the dead were sent to Seraing, near Liège, and a point north of Brussels, where were refuse consumers. Much surprise was caused by the fact that of late this traffic has proceeded in the direction of Gerolstein, and it was noted that on each wagon was written 'D.A.V.G.' German science is responsible for the ghoulish idea of the formation of the German Offal Utilisation Company, Ltd. ('D.A.V.G.', or 'Deutsche Abfallverwertungs Gesellschaft') a dividend-earning company with a capital of £250,000, the chief factory of which has been constructed 1,000 yards from the railway connecting St. Vith, near the Belgian frontier, with Gerolstein in the lonely, little-frequented Eifel district, south-west of Coblenz. This factory deals specially with the dead from the West Front. If the results are as good as the company hopes another will be established to deal with corpses on the East Front. The factory is invisible from the railway. It is placed deep in forest country, with a specially thick growth of trees about it. Live wires surround it. A special double track leads to it. The works are about 700ft. long and 110ft. broad, and the railway runs completely round them. In the north-west corner of the works the discharge of the trains takes place.

#### **The Bundles of Bodies**

The trains arrive full of bare bodies, which are unloaded by the workers who live at the works. The men wear oilskin overalls and masks with mica eyepieces. They are equipped with long hooked poles, and push the bundles of bodies to an endless chain, which picks them up with big hooks attached at intervals of 2ft. The bodies are transported on this endless chain into a long narrow compartment, where they pass through a bath which disinfects them. They then go through a drying chamber, and finally are automatically carried into a digester or great cauldron, in which they are dropped by an apparatus which detaches them from the chain. In the digester they remain from six to eight hours, and are treated by steam, which breaks them up while they are slowly stirred by machinery. From this treatment result several products. The facts are broken up into stearine, a form of tallow, and oils, which require to be redistilled before they can be used.

The process of distillation is carried out by boiling the oil with carbonate of soda, and some part of the by-products resulting from this is used by German soap-makers. The refined oil is sent out in small casks like those used for petroleum, and is of a yellowish brown colour.

There is a laboratory, and in charge of the works is a chief chemist with two assistants and seventy-eight men. All the employees are soldiers, and are attached to

<sup>35</sup>Knightley, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

the 8th Army Corps. There is a sanatorium by the works, and under no pretext is any man permitted to leave them. They are guarded as prisoners at their appalling work.

On 18 April The Times published a letter from C.E. Bunbury which suggested that the story of the corpse factory should be used in propaganda to neutral countries, and especially in the East where it would horrify followers of the Buddhist, Hindu and Moslem religions. Other similar letters were printed on the next day. The Times of 20 April recounted the story of a Sergeant in the Kents who had been informed by a German prisoner that the German Army boiled down their dead for munitions and pig food. It added: 'This fellow told me that Fritz calls his margarine "corpse fat" because they expect that's what it comes from.' In successive issues of The Times there was debate in the correspondence columns about the correct translation of the German word *Kadaver* - The Times confessed that many people had written to say that *Kadaver* was never used to describe a human corpse but expressed its own opinion that the best authorities acknowledged that *Kadaver* was also used to refer to the dead bodies of animals. In the meantime the corpse factory story had spread widely and was popularly believed to be true. An article even appeared in The Lancet which discussed the 'business aspect' of these corpse factories. On 20 April, the Daily Graphic, 'at the request of many readers', particularly highlighted the story. Its headlines proclaimed:

#### WHO CALL THEIR DEAD OFFAL

#### BODIES OF GERMAN KILLED BOILED DOWN FOR OILS AND FATS.

The Graphic reprinted 'what has so far been made known of the abomination in Germany by which their battlefield dead are collected, railed to factories, and reduced down to oils, fats, pig food, etc.', including The Times' articles of 16 and 17 April. It concluded: 'Such a revelation of the depths of inhumanity of which the German mind is capable demands further attention and publicity from the Allies. It should be possible to collect even fuller details, including the prospectus of this ghoulish company, and when collated and properly edited the story should be published widecast all over the world.' Punch, ever eager to focus on alleged German atrocities, produced a corpse factory illustration on 25 April 1917 [*Appendix 2*]. It pictured the Kaiser pointing out a smoke-belching corpse-factory in the distance to a horrified new recruit. The text underneath ran: 'CANNON-FODDER - AND AFTER. KAISER (*to 1917 Recruit*). "AND DON'T FORGET THAT YOUR KAISER WILL FIND A USE FOR YOU - ALIVE OR DEAD." [At the enemy's "Establishment for the Utilisation

of Corpses" the dead bodies of German soldiers are treated chemically, the chief commercial products being lubricant oils and pigs' food.]"

The British Government, ('although they knew there was not a particle of authentic evidence for the report'), were eager to prolong the life of the corpse factory story.<sup>36</sup> When the Government was questioned in Parliament on 30 April as to the veracity of the corpse factory story, Lord Cecil, speaking for the Government, replied evasively: 'the Government have no information at present beyond that contained in extracts from the German Press which have been published in the Press here. In view of other actions by the German military authorities, there is nothing incredible in the present charge against them. His Majesty's Government have allowed the circulation of facts as they have appeared through the usual channels'. Moreover, Cate Haste observes that the Government *actively* used the story in its own propaganda. A leaflet was produced which proclaimed:

Attila's Huns were guilty of atrocious crimes, but they never desecrated the bodies of dead soldiers - their own flesh, as well as the fallen of the enemy - by improvising a factory for the conversion of human corpses into fat and oils, and fodder for pigs. That is what the autocrats of Prussia have done - and admitted. 'Admitted' is too mild a word. They have boasted of it. It is an illustration of their much vaunted efficiency! A sign of their pious *Kultur*! Proof of their zeal to waste nothing! Further evidence of the Kaiser's self imposed deification! 'There is one law, mine!' How was the discovery made? Quite simply. Herr Karl Rosner, the Special Correspondent of the *Berliner Lokalanzeiger* on the Western Front, made the announcement in his published dispatch of 10th April'.<sup>37</sup>

Like many of the other anti-German atrocity stories produced during the war the corpse factory story spread successfully across the world, establishing itself in the popular mind as the epitome of 'Hun' evil and barbarity. It was so successful as propaganda that it was even accredited with being responsible for bringing the Chinese into the war on the side of the Allies.<sup>38</sup> But the story had, on the whole, not been believed by the men at the front and produced a most negative reaction against atrocity reports in general among them. The men were thoroughly disillusioned with the Press, in particular, with their 'hype' about atrocities.

When these soldiers returned home at the end of the war they talked and wrote about their experiences. Writing in 1922, for example, C.E. Montague exposed the inadequacies of the British General Staff, the corruptness of the regular army, the failures of the clergy and the cosy relationship between the Press and Government. He

<sup>36</sup>Arthur Ponsonby, *Falsehood in War-Time*, (London, 1940), p. 104.

<sup>37</sup>Haste, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

<sup>38</sup>Ponsonby, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-104.

powerfully communicated the soldiers' sense of disillusionment with the Press and atrocity stories. Disenchantment also contained one of the first of many post-war refutations of the corpse factory story:

German troops, it was written in our Press, had got, in certain places near their front, a proper plant for boiling down the fat of their own dead. It was not said whether the product was to be used as a food, or as a lubricant or illuminant only. Chance brought me into one of the reputed seats of this refinement of frugality. It was on the ground that our troops had just taken, in 1918. At Bellincourt the St. Quentin Canal goes into a long tunnel. Some little way in from its mouth you could find, with a flash-lamp, a small doorway cut into the tunnel's brick wall, on the tow-path side of the canal. The doorway led to the foot of a narrow staircase that wound up through the earth till it came to an end in a room about twenty feet long. It, too, was subterranean, but now its darkness was pierced by one sharp-edged shaft of sunlight let in through a neat round hole cut in the five or six feet of earth above. Loaves, bits of meat, and articles of German equipment lay scattered about, and two big dixies or cauldrons, like those in which we stewed our tea, hung over two heaps of cold charcoal. Eight or ten bodies, lying pell-mell, nearly covered half of the floor. They showed the usual effects of shell-fire. Another body, disembowelled and blown almost to rags, lay across one of the dixies and mixed with the puddle of coffee that it contained. A quite simple case. Shells had gone into cook-houses of ours, long before then, and had messed up the cooks with the stew.

An Australian sergeant, off duty and poking about, like a good Australian, for something to see, had come up the stairs, too. He had heard the great fat-boiling yarn, and how this was the latest seat of the industry. Sadly he surveyed the disappointing scene. Ruefully he noted the hopelessly normal nature of all the proceedings that had produced it. Then he broke the silence in which we had made our several inspections. "Can't believe a word you read, sir, can you?" he said with some bitterness. Life had failed to yield one of its advertised marvels. The Press had lied again. The propagandist myth about Germans had cracked up once more. "Can't believe a word you read" had long been becoming a kind of catch-phrase in the army. And now another good man had been duly confirmed in the faith, ordained as a minister of the faith, that whatever your pastors and masters tell you had best be assumed to be just a bellyful of east wind.

The effect was significantly added to in October 1925 when the New York Correspondent of The Times reported a speech by Brigadier General Charteris, formerly of Intelligence at G.H.Q. in France:

A painful impression has been produced here by an unfortunate speech of Brigadier-General Charteris at the dinner of the National Arts Club, in which he professed to tell the true story of the war-time report that Germany was boiling down the bodies of her dead soldiers in order to get fats for munitions and fertilizers. According to General Charteris, the story began as propaganda for China. By transposing the caption from one of two photographs found on German prisoners to the other he gave the impression that the Germans were making a dreadful use of their own dead soldiers. This photograph he sent to a Chinese newspaper in Shanghai. He told the familiar story of its later republication in England and of the discussion it created there. He told, too, how when a question put in the House was referred to him, he answered it by saying that from what he knew of German mentality, he was prepared for anything. Later, said General Charteris, in order to support the story, what purported to be the diary of a German soldier was forged in his office. It was planned to have this discovered on a dead German by a war correspondent with a passion for

German diaries, but the plan was never carried out. The diary was now in the war museum in London.<sup>39</sup>

The corpse factory story was further publicly discredited on 24 November 1925, when Lieutenant-Commander Kenworthy questioned the Secretary of State for War, Sir L. Worthington-Evans, as to the Government's opinion of the veracity of the story in the light of 'the recrudescence of the rumours of the so-called corpse conversion factory'. While admitting that the story was in fact only a 'rumour' the Secretary of State attempted to distance the war-time British Government from the creation of the story, and argued that 'on the information before them at the time, the War Office appear to have seen no reason to disbelieve the truth of the story'. On 2 December 1925 Arthur Henderson, M.P., was finally able to extract an authoritative acknowledgement from the British Government that the corpse-factory story was, after all, a fabrication. Sir Austen Chamberlain, speaking for the Government, announced: 'The Chancellor of the German Reich has authorized me to say, on the authority of the German Government, that there was never any foundation for it. I need scarcely add that on behalf of His Majesty's Government I accept this denial, and I trust that this false report will not again be revived.'<sup>40</sup>

Not unnaturally, public opinion on both sides of the Atlantic was shattered by all these revelations. Moreover, they inspired the creation of a whole body of revisionist literature, including both popular and scholarly works, which examined the use of propaganda in war. In Falsehood in War-Time, Arthur Ponsonby, M.P., carefully exposed the collusion between the Press and Government in the creation and publication of many of the First World War's atrocity reports. He pronounced the story of the Belgian baby (whose hands had allegedly been cut off by the Germans) to be a 'lie'; the allegation that the Germans had deliberately destroyed the famous Louvain altar-piece 'was not true'; there never was, he said, a baby of Courbeck Loo or a crucified Canadian; similarly, the story of the mutilated nurse had been invented by a 'deliberate individual liar'; no English prisoners had been tattooed by the Germans; reports of the 'fiendish cruelty' of German U-boat crews were 'monstrous', and the corpse-factory story was, he said, 'one of the most revolting lies invented during the war, the dissemination of which throughout not only this country but the world was encouraged and connived at by both the Government and the Press'. It was not true, he added, that Britain had entered the war in response to the German violation of Belgian neutrality, but the Government had used this as a moral pretext because they realised that the public would not have wholeheartedly supported a war

<sup>39</sup>The Times, 22 October 1925.

<sup>40</sup>Ponsonby, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

fought on account of 'a secret obligation to France', the existence of which had been officially denied for years. The Government, he said, had had to drag Britain into the war in order to honour its secret commitments and it had employed the untruth, the brazen lie and the atrocity report in order to do this - nor would their behaviour in the next war be any different. 'Falsehood is a recognized and extremely useful weapon in warfare, and every country uses it quite deliberately to mislead the enemy', declared Lord Ponsonby. 'The ignorant and innocent masses in each country are unaware at the time that they are being misled, and when it is all over only here and there are the falsehoods discovered and exposed. As it is all past history and the desired effect has been produced by the stories and statements, no one troubles to investigate the facts and establish the truth.' Governments knew, he said, the importance of sustaining the morale of the Home Front, so victories were exaggerated, and defeats minimised; 'the stimulus of indignation, horror, and hatred must be assiduously and continuously pumped into the public mind by means of "propaganda."...The public can be worked up emotionally by sham ideals. A sort of collective hysteria spreads and rises until finally it gets the better of sober people and reputable newspapers'. Atrocity reports, he said, 'were the most popular of all, especially in this country and America; no war can be without them'. 'The repetition of a single instance of cruelty and its exaggeration can be distorted into a prevailing habit on the part of the enemy. Unconsciously each one passes it on with trimmings and yet tries to persuade himself that he is speaking the truth.' Atrocity reports, he said, often emanated from the 'inherent unreliability and fallibility of human testimony....When bias and emotion are introduced, human testimony becomes quite valueless. In war-time such testimony is accepted as conclusive. The scrappiest and most unreliable evidence is sufficient - "the friend of the brother of a man who was killed," or, as a German investigator of his own liars puts it, "somebody who had seen it," or "an extremely respectable old woman" '.<sup>41</sup> Scholarly literature came to similar conclusions. Harold Lasswell, for example, in his celebrated (1927) Propaganda Technique in the World War, observed that 'When the public believes that the enemy began the War and blocks a permanent, profitable and godly peace, the propagandist has achieved his purpose. But to make assurance doubly sure, it is safe to fortify the mind of the nation with examples of the insolence and depravity of the enemy.'<sup>42</sup> Frederick Lumley added: 'If the populace is to be placed squarely behind the military, to work and to "give till it hurts,"...it must be made afraid....One of the most successful ways of making people afraid is to overwhelm them with atrocity stories.'<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup>*ibid.*, pp. 13-27.

<sup>42</sup>Harold Lasswell, Propaganda Technique in World War I, (Massachusetts, 1971), p. 77. See his chapter entitled: 'Satanism'.

<sup>43</sup>Frederick E. Lumley, The Propaganda Menace, (London, 1933), p. 230.



During the inter-war period the British public became convinced (nor were they very wrong) that most, if not all, of the atrocity reports of the First World War were lies created by Government 'propagandists' and disseminated by a collusive Press upon a naive populace. Moreover, they had come to the conclusion that all reports of atrocities, whether in war or peace, were suspect until they felt sufficient proof of authenticity was produced, a subjective state which in the case of Nazi atrocities against Jews was not realised until April 1945. The fact that atrocities were reported in the Press, and or accredited as true by the Government, did not mean that they were veritable, and might even indicate that another confidence trick was being attempted. In short, the public felt humiliated and degraded by the experience of the Great War and determined not to be so gullible again. The Times-Dispatch of Richmond, U.S.A., on 6 December 1925, spoke for public opinion on both sides of the Atlantic when it declared:

Not the least of the horrors of modern warfare is the propaganda bureau, which is an important item in the military establishment of every nation....A few years ago the story of how the Kaiser was reducing human corpses to fat aroused the citizens of this and other enlightened nations to a fury of hatred. Normally sane men doubled their fists and rushed off to the nearest recruiting sergeant. Now they are being told, in effect, that they were dupes and fools; their own officers deliberately goaded them to the desired boiling-point, using an infamous lie to arouse them, just as a grown bully whispers to one little boy that another little boy said he could lick him. The encouraging sign found in this revolting admission of how modern war is waged is the natural inference that the modern man is not over-eager to throw himself at his brother's throat at the simple word of command. His passions must be played upon, so the propaganda bureau has taken its place as one of the chief weapons.

In the next war, the propaganda must be more subtle and clever than the best the World War produced. These frank admissions of wholesale lying on the part of trusted Governments in the last war will not soon be forgotten.<sup>44</sup>

However, what was not perhaps realised by the general public was that the British Press and Government had also been deeply affected by the revelations of the post-war years. Indeed, both these institutions came to possess a deep-seated cynicism toward atrocity reports which, as we shall see, hindered their own assimilation of news of the persecution and extermination of the Jews. When, for instance, during the Summer and Autumn of 1942 reports of the extermination of Jews in the death camps reached the Foreign Office in London, officials reacted with incredulity. In early September a report reached the Foreign Office from the Agudas Yisroel (an organisation of orthodox Jews) which stated that the deportation and massacre of the Warsaw Ghetto was taking place and that 'the corpses of the victims

<sup>44</sup>Ponsonby, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-113.

are used for the manufacture of soaps and artificial fertilisers'. One Foreign Office official cautioned that the story 'should be treated with the greatest reserve. (Almost a similar report has been quoted in books written about the last war)'. Frank Roberts of the Central Department noted: 'The facts are quite bad enough without the addition of such an old story as the use of bodies for the manufacture of soap, etc'.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, we now know that the Nazis were making as much use of Jews' dead bodies as possible and such plunder was a major business at the death camps. The new arrivals were always stripped of everything they brought with them; jewellery, money, shoes, clothes, toys, and so on. Their hair was sent to Bavarian factories to be knitted into warm socks for soldiers, gold teeth were extracted, their bones crushed in electric grinders for fertiliser, artificial limbs and spectacles recycled, tattooed skin was made into decorative lamp shades, and at the Stutthof concentration camp even soap was made from the dead bodies.<sup>46</sup>

During the Second World War the British Government was extremely cautious about confirming the veracity of specific atrocity reports, especially the more horrific ones, since it remembered the experience of the Great War, and feared that if it made much of a story that was subsequently found to be false its propaganda would lose all credibility. In February 1942, Robert Fraser, head of the Production Department of the Ministry of Information, warned:

It must be remembered that the twenty years between the two wars were occupied by a well conducted campaign against atrocity propaganda, and that some people are contra-suggestible to atrocity propaganda. I do not know whether there was a 'corpse factory' or not. But most people believe there was not.<sup>47</sup>

For this reason too, the policy makers at the Ministry of Information were unwilling to make atrocities a *special* feature of their propaganda campaigns. Ian McLaine has observed that: 'for most of the war they were incorporated in the general propaganda about unscrupulous enemy methods rather than selected for special treatment: thus Germans were said to 'blast and bomb their way across the homes and bodies of human beings, machine-gunning even the sick in hospital and children in the playground'.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, in July 1941 the Planning Committee of the Ministry of Information (which met to consider whether atrocity stories should be taken out of the context of general propaganda and given special treatment) decided that when atrocities were used in propaganda, atrocities against Jews should be avoided:

<sup>45</sup>PRO FO 371/31097.

<sup>46</sup>Konnilyn G. Feig, *Hitler's Death Camps*, (London, 1983), pp. 200-202.

<sup>47</sup>Quoted by Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale*, (London, 1979), p. 168.

<sup>48</sup>*ibid.*, p. 166.

In self-defence people prefer to think that the victims were specially marked men - and probably a pretty bad lot anyway. A certain amount of horror is needed but it must be used very sparingly and must deal always with treatment of indisputably innocent people. Not with violent political opponents. And not with Jews.<sup>49</sup>

However, atrocities against Jews certainly figured in Britain's 'black' propaganda during the Second World War. The Special Operations Executive in London (S.O.1) manufactured rumours which were designed to discredit or mislead the enemy. Bradley Smith has written:

Since S.O.1 had "effective control" of the Overseas News Agency, its rumours (or "sibs," in propaganda parlance) were turned over to the "news" group, which in turn transformed them into stories for distribution to the Allied and neutral press. Once a "sib" had appeared in print, it was considered by S.O.1 as a "come back," and extra efforts were then made to extend its life by replanting it in the British press through the work of such men as C.V.R. Thompson of the *Daily Express*. Great care was lavished on the "sibs," each had to be approved by the Foreign Office and the War Office before release. Most of the rumours were what one would expect, tales that Hitler was going mad or that the Prussian military elite was turning against him. Some were unintentionally comical, such as the one released in September 1941 claiming that Britain had let loose 1,000 huge Australian sharks off the coast of Tunis.<sup>50</sup>

A favourite theme of the rumour-mongers, however, was the Nazi treatment of Jews, which 'certainly helped blur the line between reality and illusion'.<sup>51</sup> In the Summer of 1941, for example, a sib was released which alleged that the invasion of Russia had become so expensive for Germany that they had been forced to use Jewish blood for transfusions and employ Jewish doctors whose anonymity was preserved by the forcible use of masks. Another sib released in November 1941 claimed: 'It has now been proved that the typhus epidemic which prevented the capture of Leningrad was largely due to the appalling conditions of the Warsaw Ghetto. The troops could not be effectively isolated on the way through and each batch of reinforcements spread the disease further'.<sup>52</sup> Such sibs blended inconspicuously into the welter of other information concerning European Jewry which reached the British newspapers, effectively blurring the line between reality and illusion. The *Jewish Chronicle* of 2 January 1942 printed an article entitled: 'GHETTO LAW'S GRIM HARVEST - Typhus Ravages Nazi Poland.' This reported that an epidemic of spotted typhus was raging in Poland, the Baltic States and White Russia, producing panic among the Nazis. The Nazis, it said, were accusing the Polish ghettos of having spread the

<sup>49</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>50</sup>Bradley F. Smith, *Shadow Warriors - O.S.S. and the Origins of the C.I.A.*, (London, 1983), p. 86.

<sup>51</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>52</sup>PRO FO 898/69 sib R/730, 14 November 1941.

epidemic among the non-Jewish population, particularly the German troops, and reported that some of the Nazi authorities were clamouring for the removal of the ghettos to Russia. It also added that the Germans were calling up all Jewish doctors to fight the epidemic. On 9 January the Jewish Chronicle reported that 'the Nazi invaders of Russia, panic-stricken at their failure to cope with the typhus epidemic, have issued instructions that in places in the occupied territory where no ghettos exist, typhus-stricken Jews who are likely to cause the spreading of the disease are to be shot and their infected belongings destroyed. In Vilkomir and elsewhere, a number of Jews have already been murdered....Jewish doctors must register for work in the German military hospitals. The notorious Jew-baiting organ, the STUERMER, has published a special issue devoted to the menace to the Germans of the typhus epidemic. The paper is illustrated by horrible pictures of typhus-stricken Jews, and is full of charges against the Jews in the Baltic States, White Russia, and Poland of spreading typhus bacilli in order to destroy the German armies in the East. The STUERMER demands that Germany retaliate and destroy European Jewry without further delay'. As Bradley Smith declares:

At a time when Hitler - unbeknown to the British - was gearing up for "the final solution of the Jewish question" (in which gas chambers would be disguised as delousing baths), false stories that could confuse the minds of the victims as well as the torturers may have had tragic consequences. The killers needed rationalizations such as typhus epidemics spread by Jews. And the last thing the intended victims needed was uncertainty about what was happening in the east and what German policy toward Jews actually was. The British did not intend to smooth the path to the gas chambers, of course, but in looking for easy ways to score victories over an opponent that outmatched them in conventional weaponry, they courted disasters. As other rumors suggest, they also may have lost sight of the moral dimension of their activities.<sup>53</sup>

This blurring of reality rebounded on the British Government, however, as it became a victim of its own propaganda. It was conscious of the fact that it itself was issuing 'black' propaganda on the theme of atrocities against Jews so it assumed (quite rightly) that the Axis were doing this too. The whole area of reports of atrocities against Jews therefore appeared to the Foreign Office (who had to vet the British sibs) as prone to exploitation by propagandists, so that little confidence could be put in the veracity of reports of atrocities against Jews. Moreover, as the Government was still locked in mortal combat with the Zionists over the issue of Palestine, it assumed that the Zionist organisations were doing this too; embroidering, falsifying and exploiting reports of atrocities in pursuance of their aim - the creation of a Jewish State in Palestine.

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<sup>53</sup>Smith, *op cit.*, pp. 86-87.

After the issuing of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, British Government relations with Zionist organisations gradually deteriorated. As a result of increasingly antagonistic Arab opposition to the settlement of Jews in Palestine, the British Government, withdrew, at first in the 1920s very slowly, but in the 1930s with increasing haste from this commitment to establish a National Home for the Jews in Palestine over which it held the Mandate; and as it withdrew it came to regard the Zionists as opposition; indeed, as a highly motivated, unscrupulous foe who would stop at nothing in their pursuance of a Jewish State in Palestine. As Nazi Germany employed an ever harder policy towards the Jews of first Germany, then Austria and Czechoslovakia there were naturally more frequent and imploring calls, not just from the Zionist organisations and not just from Jews, for the opening up of Palestine for the reception of the rapidly increasing numbers of Jewish refugees. But these demands were increasingly at odds with British policy in Palestine which was at the same time moving from a pro-Zionist to a pro-Arab stance. The British Government considered that Palestine was strategically vital, and Italian and German propaganda among the Arabs there was thought to endanger Britain's whole position in the East. The Arab revolt of late 1937 to 1939, 'confirmed the fears of the strategic planners in London'. It 'represented a major challenge to British authority in the area and diverted British military resources on a massive scale.... At the height of the revolt more than two British division strengths were committed to the repression of the rebels, and 'It has been estimated that forty per cent. of the total British field force was tied down in Palestine - which was the equivalent of what British strategic planners reluctantly considered committing to France in the event of a European war. As a result Palestine became a major element in British strategic calculations' - the Arabs had to be placated; Jewish immigration to Palestine had to be restricted.<sup>54</sup>

On 14 February 1939, the Colonial Secretary, Malcolm MacDonald frankly declared the British Government's position on Palestine to the Jewish delegates at a conference on the problems of the region at St. James' Palace.

He emphasised that in the event of war 'the security of the British forces in the Middle East and lines of communication with India and the Far East' depended on the maintenance of friendly relations with governments in the region. He stressed the importance of the Suez Canal, of the British naval base at Alexandria, and of British oil interests in Iraq. All the Government's dispositions in the Middle East, MacDonald declared, were based on the assumption that it would enjoy in any war the active support of its allies and the benevolent neutrality of other states. A 'continuation of the estrangement in Palestine' would not only threaten the entire British position in the Middle East; it might also produce 'a good deal of unrest among the Moslems in India'. The Government, he continued, had received 'strong and unanimous warnings' from its military advisers and from British representatives

<sup>54</sup>Wassertstein, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

in the Middle East and in India as to the dangerous effects which might be predicted in the event 'of the pursuance of certain policies in Palestine'. If war broke out the Middle East might be the British Empire's 'Achilles Heel'. The defeat of the British Empire, he reminded his audience, would be a disaster as much for the Jews as for Britain.<sup>55</sup>

In May 1939 the Government produced a White Paper on Palestine which represented a total reversal of the Balfour Declaration policy. In the White Paper the Government declared 'unequivocally that it is not part of their policy that Palestine should become a Jewish State'. An autonomous Palestinian State was to be instituted within ten years, but until then Palestine was to remain under the British mandate. Jews were prohibited from buying land in an area covering most of Palestine and severely restricted in other areas, so that only in a section representing a fifth of the land, was the sale of land to Jews unrestricted. The White Paper also stated that for a period of five years Jewish immigration to Palestine would be restricted and that after that the Government had decided 'to permit further expansion of the Jewish National Home by immigration only if the Arabs are prepared to acquiesce in it'.<sup>56</sup>

Not unnaturally, the Zionists were stunned and embittered. An interview between Malcolm MacDonald and Chaim Weizmann on 13 May 1939 at MacDonald's country house showed the enmity between the British Government and the Zionist organisations.

The conversation reached its crisis when *Dr Weizmann*, in analysing the Government's new policy, said that at least in Hitler one found the virtue of absolutely frank brutality, whereas Mr MacDonald was covering up his betrayal of the Jews under a semblance of legality. He added that Mr MacDonald was handing the Jews over to their assassins. *Mr MacDonald* showed great indignation and said that it was no use to talk to him like that. He said that he knew that the Jews had been calling him a hypocrite and a coward. *Dr. Weizmann* replied: I have never called you a coward.<sup>57</sup>

Needless to say, the White Paper was carried. Large sections of the Press, it should be noted, supported the White Paper and this was certainly one of the factors which inclined them against supporting pleas for the opening up of Palestine for unrestricted Jewish immigration, when, in December 1942 it was officially confirmed that the Nazis were exterminating the Jews of Europe.

However, the animosity between the Foreign Office and Zionist organisations often spilled over and against Jews in general. In April 1941, for example, J.S. Bennett, an expert on the Middle East in the Colonial Office minuted in response to remarks by

<sup>55</sup>*ibid.* p. 17.

<sup>56</sup>*ibid.* pp. 19-20.

<sup>57</sup>*ibid.*, p. 21.

Rabbi Stephen Wise a leading American Zionist: 'the Jews have done nothing but add to our difficulties by propaganda and deeds since the war began....The morally censorious attitude of the United States in general over other peoples affairs has long attracted attention, but when it is coupled with unscrupulous Zionist 'sob-stuff' and misrepresentation, it is very hard to bear'. Sir John Shuckburgh, the Deputy Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, wrote in 1940: 'I am convinced that they [the Jews] hate us; they hate all Gentiles....So little do they [the Jews] care for Great Britain as compared with Zionism that they cannot even keep their hands off illegal immigration, which they must realise is a very serious embarrassment to us at a time when we are fighting for our very existence.' The Colonial Office official principally concerned with Palestine, H.F. Downie declared: 'This sort of thing makes one regret that the Jews are not on the other side in this war.'<sup>58</sup> Even the Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, confessed to Oliver Harvey, his Personal Secretary, in September 1941: 'If we must have preferences, let me murmur in your ear that I prefer Arabs to Jews.' Harvey affirmed this in April 1943, just four months after the British Government had officially confirmed that the Nazis were exterminating the Jews of Europe. Eden, he said, 'loves Arabs and hates Jews'.<sup>59</sup> As we shall see, the Foreign Office was highly suspicious of reports of atrocities against Jews and this suspicion was certainly communicated to the hesitating Press via its influential News Department.

The problem for German Jewry during the 1930s and, indeed, European Jewry during the Second World War, was that large sections of the British Press and Government believed that they too had a hidden political agenda. Neither the Press or Government doubted that the Nazis were committing atrocities against the Jews, but they felt that Jews were apt to exaggerate the extent of the atrocities committed against them for two main reasons: (1) people who had been persecuted, they believed, tended to exaggerate in their accounts of their maltreatment; (2) they supposed that Jewish people, especially Zionists, were apt to exaggerate the degree of their persecution so as to create a ground swell of support for the creation of a Jewish State in Palestine. Therefore, throughout the 1930s and, as we shall see, during the Second World War too, the British Press generally played down the extent and horror of the atrocities which the Nazis committed against Jews. The Press found it easier to accept the veracity of reports of discrimination than of brutal assault, of imprisonment than of torture. Newspaper correspondents in Germany who regularly received first-hand accounts of atrocities or were eye-witnesses themselves, often deliberately toned down the horror of their articles because they knew that the full truth would not be

<sup>58</sup>*ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>59</sup>Oliver Harvey, *The War Diaries of Oliver Harvey 1941-5*, ed. John Harvey, (London, 1978), pages 194 & 247.

believed by their editors at home. When, for example, Norman Ebbutt, the senior Berlin Correspondent of The Times, discovered that his most comprehensive and critical reports did not actually appear in the paper, he began to feed his more damning information to the American C.B.S. correspondent, William Shirer.

Owing to the paucity of newspaper archives few records remain which may unequivocally demonstrate how the above factors operated simultaneously to influence many of the British newspapers against printing news of Nazi atrocities against Jews. However, perhaps the best of the few which have survived is located in The Times Archive. On 20 December 1933, Stanley Simpson, The Times' Bavarian Correspondent, filed an extensive, carefully compiled and yet, it should be noted, toned down report of the regime of murder and torture in the concentration camp at Dachau. Simpson assured The Times' Foreign Editor, Ralph Deakin, that 'I have been at great pains to secure reliable first-hand evidence, and to check and verify all statements made.' He added: 'One or two points I should like to draw attention to in connection with it. First, the authenticity. This I can guarantee. I have exercised [*sic.*] every care in collecting and verifying the material and in selecting the parts of it which constitute the article. Where I have had a doubt about any point I have deliberately suppressed the statement in doubt.' His information, he told Deakin, came from a wide variety of sources: 'ex-prisoners, Nazi S.S. guards, the widows and relatives of the victims'. He hoped that 'if the facts about Dachau can be made known to the whole world it is possible that several lives may be saved and countless torments prevented. I have every reason to believe that if things are left as they are, that is, if the Nazis continue to think as they have thought up to now that the outer world knows nothing of these villainies, that dozens more prisoners in Dachau will perish before the winter is over. If the matter is taken up by The Times (especially if supported by the New York Times in the United States) it may be possible to arouse public indignation sufficiently to lead to the appointment of some kind of international commission to visit the camp. Even if this is not done I am convinced that the mere fact that people abroad know what is going on will have a restraining effect on Nazi brutality'. Simpson persisted in impressing throughout his letter how he had toned down the horror of his report and had endeavoured to report only the most reliable facts with regard to the camp:

Many of the incidents are not described in their full enormity for in many cases I have suppressed details purely out of regard for space. To give an instance of the care I have exercised in stating facts and avoiding risk of inaccuracy, I might mention the question of heating at the camp. There was definitely no heating there for the prisoners in October (when it was already severely cold) and, as far as I can hear since then heating appliances have not yet been installed. As I cannot be definitely certain on this point I have made no reference to it....Although I make allowances for



the facts that a wretched business of this sort affects one much more on the spot, I think you will agree that the Dachau story is a particularly wicked and damnable affair, even judged by what I have written alone....Please excuse this long letter, but there are one or two points left. The Nazis may try to ignore the article or dismiss it with a vague charge of "Gruel"; or they may be brazen enough to deny the facts in detail. In either case, it will not avail. The facts are absolutely right, and nobody need be concerned by their official statements and denials. They have been proved over and over again...to be demonstrably guilty of barefaced lying in their official reports. I have enough evidence to hang the commandant and half-a-dozen more in a civilised country, but in Germany of course I cannot call on my witnesses.

Simpson concluded hopefully: 'I'm sure you will agree that it would be in keeping with the best traditions of The Times if it could be the means of putting an end to or even mitigating the sufferings of these men, and of saving lives which, if nothing is done, will assuredly be sacrificed.'

When Simpson's letter arrived on Ralph Deakin's desk in London he quickly consulted Barrington-Ward, the Assistant Editor, as to what to do with the report. On 5 January 1934, in spite of Simpson's persistent assurances with regard to the toned down yet accurate nature of the report, Barrington-Ward minuted to Deakin:

This, as you say, is serious. I think that the next step is certainly to get Ebbutt's opinion upon it. Is Simpson a man unlikely to be carried away by atrocity stories? One knows that it is necessary - without doubting for a moment that cruelties have been practised in such places - to treat particular instances with caution in view of the sufferer's (especially the German sufferer's) capacity to believe that things have been even worse than actuality.<sup>60</sup>

Nevertheless, Barrington-Ward conceded that 'if Simpson is thoroughly trustworthy, and Ebbutt can find no serious flaw, the article will certainly have to be given, probably in company with a discriminating leader'. Ebbutt was duly contacted and replied favourably with regard to the accuracy of Deakin's information on 12 January: 'Having read carefully the article on concentration camps and the accompanying letter, I am of the opinion that we should publish it....I am fully convinced, myself, of the substantial accuracy of the details in the article, many of which have been known to me from other (also convincing) sources.'<sup>61</sup> Deakin wrote to Simpson on 19 January and assured him that his article was under 'careful consideration', but the fact that it contained nothing about conditions in the camp later than August 1933, it was felt, weakened the article 'considerably'.<sup>62</sup> Simpson replied in a letter of 5 February that he realised that the addition of more recent facts would improve his article, but he did not think that it was out of date as it stood when conditions within Germany were taken into account: 'The terrorism is so intense and such elaborate precautions taken

<sup>60</sup>Barrington Ward to Ralph Deakin, 5/1/34, Ralph Deakin's box, [The Times](#) Archive.

<sup>61</sup>Norman Ebbutt to Ralph Deakin, 12/1/34, *ibid*.

<sup>62</sup>Ralph Deakin to Stanley Simpson, 19/1/34, *ibid*.

to keep things secret that it is often weeks before news leaks out from the camp, and weeks before it can be tested and confirmed. The article represents months of careful research. It would be easy to pass on unconfirmed or half-confirmed reports of recent date, but that is precisely what I wanted to avoid at all cost, and I think the fact that all information in the article has been thoroughly sifted and proved beyond doubt outweighs the disadvantage of its not being as recent as could be desired.<sup>63</sup> Simpson responded by sending a few more recent details, concerning Dachau, to London on 12 February, but it was to no avail for The Times decided not to print the article at all. On 13 February, Barrington-Ward minuted to Deakin: 'The Editor is now inclined to feel that what has appeared lately in The New Statesman and Nation really disposes of this article.'<sup>64</sup> That evening Ralph Deakin wrote to Simpson in Munich:

My dear Simpson,

I am writing to confirm my telephone message of tonight, asking you to hold your hand in regard to the subject on which we have been in communication. The Editor has given the matter very careful consideration and feels that what has appeared lately on the subject in certain publications here really disposes of the article. It is in all the circumstances difficult to explain our point of view, but it seems best to let you know of this decision without further delay.

The Editor asks me to thank you for all the work you have done on this and other subjects. I am asking the accountant to credit you for it.<sup>65</sup>

The New Statesman and Nation article which Barrington-Ward referred to, entitled 'The Terror Continues - Sonnenburg Concentration Camp', was published on 20 January. The New Statesman's editor explained that the article had been printed in order to prove that the concentration camp terror, popularly thought to have abated, was in fact continuing 'unabated, though with increased secrecy'. However, its article was much less detailed, horrific and only slightly more up to date than Simpson's. Rather than stealing 'the Thunderer's' thunder, the information contained in the New Statesman's article complemented and confirmed the accuracy of the Simpson's information. However, The Times, dreading the prospect of exposing its neck on the issue of atrocities, seized on the New Statesman and Nation's article as a convenient pretext for not printing its own, more damning information. The paper undoubtedly concurred with the opinions of William Teeling, whose counsel Ralph Deakin had sought over the affair. Simpson's article, Teeling wrote to Deakin on 24 February, 'seems to me an article oozing with harmful possibilities and full of calculated propaganda, carefully leaving out sides that are extremely well run, i.e. the playground, shops, dormitories, heating, hospital, etc.' 'It seems to me,' he said, 'to be

<sup>63</sup>Stanley Simpson to Ralph Deakin, 5/2/34, *ibid.*

<sup>64</sup>Barrington-Ward to Ralph Deakin, 13/2/34, *ibid.*

<sup>65</sup>Ralph Deakin to Stanley Simpson, 13/2/34, *ibid.*

a terrible indictment - the publication of which could do no good, but immense harm. You must know how far the author is to be trusted - but to me it seems an exaggeration....I would also add that our Consul General in Cologne told me he went into every Jew case officially for atrocities and never found a real one. He believed "their oriental exaggeration had got the better of them" .<sup>66</sup>

It is my contention that the outbreak of the Second World War increased the established fears of the British Press with regard to the veracity of atrocity reports in general, and news of atrocities committed by the Nazis against Jews in particular. For the Press, public and Government the return of war opened further all the old wounds as far as reports of atrocities were concerned. Which information could be trusted and which could not? This was a very real problem. Paradoxically, as a result of its fears, the British Press looked to its Government for a lead concerning reports of atrocities in general and confirmation of specific reports in particular. In the Great War the Press and Government had co-operated in the publication of many exaggerated and false accounts of German atrocities; the outbreak of the Second World War witnessed the co-operation of the Press and Government in the suppression of many accurate reports of Nazi atrocities against Jews.

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<sup>66</sup>William Teeling to Ralph Deakin, 24/2/34, *ibid.* William Teeling was later knighted and served as M.P. for Brighton between 1944 and 1969.

## Chapter 1

### 'Hamlet without the Prince'

Jewish Chronicle, 23 January 1942.

In July 1941 Germany invaded the Soviet Union. Special extermination squads (Einsatzgruppen) which followed the rapidly advancing Wehrmacht began the extermination of Jews on Soviet territory; the 'Final Solution of the Jewish Problem', as the Nazis called it, had begun. In the Autumn of 1941 gassing experiments took place at Auschwitz, and by December 1941 the first death camp had begun operations at Chelmno in Poland, to be joined by five others during the next year. At the same time, however, news of these horrific developments began to seep out of Nazi occupied-Europe. The first hard evidence of the Einsatzgruppen massacres reached the Allies in the Winter of 1941. The Red Army's advance in December 1941 uncovered evidence of massacres of civilians which had been particularly targeted against Jews and this news soon reached British newspapers. However, it was not yet apparent that these massacres had been carried out in accordance with a concerted plan to exterminate the whole of European Jewry. Even the Jewish Chronicle, for instance, interpreted the massacres as a corollary of the German defeat around Moscow. The headlines to its leading front page article on 2 January 1942 declared:

#### THE RETREAT FROM MOSCOW Baffled Nazis Slaughter Jews

'Reports received in Moscow from Soviet guerrilla fighters behind the German lines', its report began, 'and from the Soviet regular troops who are now pushing back the invaders, reveal systematic anti-Jewish atrocities committed by the Nazis in occupied Russian territory....In Rostov-on-Don, before the retreat of the Nazis, they murdered about 600 Jews and sent several thousands more to places behind the lines for forced labour. The retreat of the invaders from a town is apparently almost always preceded by the execution of a number of Jews accused of having aided the victorious Russian Forces by signalling to them valuable information. All along the line of the German retreat, the pursuing Russians have found large numbers of Jewish civilians brutally killed by the Nazis'.

Further evidence of the Nazi extermination plan began to mount up rapidly. The 2 January 1942 edition of the Jewish Chronicle reported that the Nazi newspaper

Angriff had sworn that if ever Germany faced defeat in the war, the Jews of Europe would be exterminated before her fall: 'If the Nazi forces ever face defeat they say they will first exterminate all the Jews in all territories controlled by them....A well-known Polish leader who is now in Palestine states that he had heard it said in Nazi circles in Warsaw that "if we are obliged to retreat from Poland we shall blow up the ghettos and their inhabitants." ' However, while the paper regarded this as significant, it was not as an indication of German intentions to exterminate the Jews, but in revealing that the defeats in Russia and Libya had irrevocably shaken their confidence in ultimate victory.

Further evidence of Nazi atrocities against Jews became available to the British Press when, on 6 January 1942, Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Minister, broadcast on Radio Moscow the details of a Note which had been sent to all Governments which possessed diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. The Note catalogued German atrocities throughout German-occupied Soviet territory, including extensive eye-witness reports of atrocities committed in the newly recaptured areas around Moscow. It asserted that the Germans were putting into operation a deliberate and pre-planned policy of terror against the citizens of the Soviet Union:

#### DELIBERATE POLICY OF THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT

Irrefutable facts prove that the regime of plunder and bloody terror against the non-combatant population of occupied towns and villages constitutes not merely the excesses of individual German officers and soldiers, but a definite system previously planned and encouraged by the German Government and the German High Command, which deliberately foster the most brutal instincts among soldiers and officers in their army.<sup>67</sup>

Although the Soviet Government had little interest in distinguishing the fate of Jews from that of other 'Soviet citizens', the Note nevertheless contained information concerning the Germans' systematic massacring of Jews. It reported, in particular, the massacre of Jews in Kiev (at Babi Yar) and throughout the Ukraine:

Horrible slaughter and pogroms were committed by the German invaders in the Ukrainian capital, Kiev. In only a few days, the German bandits killed and tortured 52,000 men, women, old men and children, mercilessly dealing with all Ukrainians, Russians, and Jews who in any manner displayed their loyalty to the Soviet Government.

Soviet citizens who have escaped from Kiev describe the astounding picture of these mass executions. A large number of Jews, including women and children, were assembled together, in the Jewish cemetery. Before shooting, all of them were stripped naked and beaten up. The first group selected for shooting were

<sup>67</sup>U.S.S.R. Embassy (London), The Molotov Notes on German Atrocities, (London, 1942), p. 2.

made to lie on the bottom of a ditch, faces to the ground, and were shot with automatic rifles. The Germans sprinkled earth lightly over the victims and then the second party of Jews were made to lie down and were shot with automatic rifles - and so on.

Many mass murders were committed by the German Fascist invaders in other Ukrainian towns. These bloody executions were particularly directed against unarmed defenceless Jewish working people.

#### STRIPPED NAKED BEFORE MACHINE-GUNS

According to incomplete data, no less than 6,000 people were shot in Lwow, over 8,000 in Odessa, over 8,500 persons killed or hanged in Kamenets-Podolsk, 10,500 persons shot by machine-guns in Dniepropetrovsk; over 3,000 local inhabitants were shot in Mariupol, including aged men, women and children, all of whom were robbed and stripped bare before execution.

According to preliminary data, the German Fascist bandits killed approximately 7,000 people in Kerch.<sup>68</sup>

Not surprisingly the Jewish Chronicle fully reported these details in its front page leading article of 9 January. In contrast, however, the national Press neglected the Jewish aspect to these atrocities, and specific details concerning massacres of Jews were merged into the general picture of suffering. On 7 January, for example, the Daily Mail made the Molotov Note the subject of its leading front page article, following this up in its inside pages with an extensive feature article by George Murray. Jewish suffering, however, was not mentioned once. Even when it told of the massacre at Babi Yar the identity of the Jewish dead was obscured by being referred to as 'Soviet' victims. The News Chronicle apportioned the Molotov Note only 29 lines in a small article in the middle of its front page which barely transmitted the briefest details of the Note let alone draw attention to Jewish deaths. The Daily Herald printed its 59 line article on the Molotov Note on its back page. It stressed the planned nature of the atrocities against Soviet citizens but did not mention that Jews in particular had been selected as victims. The Times, in two reports, on 6 and 7 January, also stressed the planned nature of German atrocities in the Soviet Union. Its Kuibyshev correspondent, Ralph Parker, asserted in his 6 January article that German policy in the Soviet Union was to create a kind of devastated zone behind the front line. The Germans, he said, were proving to be far more bestial than the Tartars! They sought, 'by destroying centres of population, driving out the inhabitants, partly exterminating them, and partly leading them away as captives, and by annihilating the controlling elements in the population, to make impossible, or at least as difficult as possible, a rapid reorganization by the Russians of the territory they have recovered'. On 7 January the paper printed a British United Press (news agency) report which only cursorily listed Jews as co-sufferers with other 'loyal Soviet citizens'. The Daily Telegraph printed a 48

<sup>68</sup>*ibid*, p. 14.

line article on page four on 7 January. This, too, drew attention to the planned nature of the atrocities, but whilst it enumerated the list of dead in the towns and villages of the Ukraine (which the Note had identified as being predominantly Jewish) it obscured the Jewish identities of the victims so that 'Jews' became 'people'.

On 13 January, soon after the revelations of the Molotov Note, representatives of nine Allied nations occupied by the Germans, and observers from Great Britain, U.S.A., Soviet Union, and China, (and others) met to consider common policy towards German war crimes.<sup>69</sup> Each representative delivered a speech which enumerated specific German crimes against their people. In the course of these speeches the Jews were mentioned only once - by the representative of the Luxembourg Government. The Conference ended with the issuing of a Declaration of intent that German war criminals would be brought to justice.

The Conference received much attention from the Press which hailed the Declaration as a great step forward. The Daily Mail, for example, printed a major series of feature articles to mark the holding of the Conference. The articles were written by refugees from Czechoslovakia, Holland, France, and Norway, and they described conditions under German rule and listed war crimes that had been committed. However, the plight of the Jews was not mentioned at all in any of the articles.

The Daily Telegraph's editorial of 14 January discussed the issue of war crimes in the light of the Conference Declaration, but it made no mention of the plight of European Jewry. The paper explained that 'The [German] purpose is the simple slaughtering-out of Poles and Czechs, and Greeks and Yugoslavs, the tearing up by the roots of their living cultural organisms, leaving nothing but a remnant deprived of all the attributes of a national existence, crushed helpless and spiritually dead'. Thus, since the Jews had no national home they were not entitled to a mention, despite that fact that the Nazis had singled them out for 'special treatment'. However, while the national Press did not comment on or question the absence of Jewish representation at the Conference, this was a slight which the Jewish Chronicle did not take lightly. Even though its leading front page article on 16 January welcomed the Conference Declaration, its editorial on page twelve made lamentation: 'It is sadly illuminating to note that at the London meetings of representatives of the victims of German bestiality

<sup>69</sup>The occupied countries represented at the Conference were: Belgium, Norway, the Netherlands, Greece, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Luxembourg, Poland and Free France. The other observers at the conference were Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and India.

the Jewish people were not in any way represented'. 'We Jews have also suffered,' the paper added, '- we Jews, who were for years the first and only people trampled under the Nazi heel, who have been proclaimed the "chief enemy of Nazi Germany, and who, as the nationals of other States, and even as military prisoners of war, have been singled out for a double dose of atrocities!' In its editorial of 23 January, the Jewish Chronicle asserted that the Jews had a 'special prominence...among the martyred peoples' and that their enforced absence from the Conference was a 'form of presenting Hamlet without the Prince....The Jews figured as a sort of "also ran," and their case received a single reference in the course of the speeches'. The paper continued:

Our whole case was that a great people or community had been made the first and special target of the Dictators, and had hanging over them the threat, already partially accomplished of destructions. Their plight need particular attention, such as only the authority of the Conference could so forcibly give it. The very fact that some special device to recognise the special position of Jewry among the victims of Hitlerism was contrived, just because the Jews had no de facto national existence, would have been a magnificent gesture immensely heartening to the tortured Continental Jewries. It would have constituted a formal threat to the wretched quislings and satellite States still busily engaged in carrying out the Dictators' fell purpose. It would...have amounted to a formal and historical condemnation and outlawing of anti-Semitism and would have implied that the cruelties of this vile cult were among the other barbarities that the nations were out to punish....The Free French were admitted to the Conference though they could not possibly be regarded as a "governmental Power." All along, in fact, there has been a marked tendency on the part of the Allies not to stand too much on diplomatic punctilio in the matter of attendance at international gatherings....Only the Jews remain the slaves of political pedantry - or is it a mask for fear?

Anglo-Jewish pain at the widespread indifference to the plight of European Jewry was further expressed by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency in a report on 15 January headed, 'JEWS NOT REPRESENTED AT ALLIED CONFERENCE: "THE EMPTY CHAIR"'. It quoted the London Zionist Review which had declared, 'Many nations were represented at the Conference...[but] one chair was empty. The Jewish people was conspicuous by its absence. It was not invited. The Jews, who were the first to be attacked by the Nazis, the people whom Hitler decided from the very beginning of his career to destroy - their voice was not heard at St. James's Palace. The story of Jewish suffering in occupied Europe remained untold'.

The Joint Foreign Committee of the British Board of Deputies questioned the Chairman of the Conference, Polish Premier General Sikorski, on the matter of the absence of references to Jewish suffering at the Conference. Sikorski replied that an explicit reference to the sufferings of the Jews might 'be equivalent to an implicit recognition of the racial theories we all reject'.<sup>70</sup> The British Foreign Office was wholly

<sup>70</sup>Quoted by Wasserstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-166.



in agreement with the enforced absence of Jewish representation at the Conference. On 16 August, for instance, Frank Roberts of the Central Department of the Foreign Office minuted that he was 'glad to see that General Sikorski has behaved correctly in this matter'.<sup>71</sup> The British Government's opposition to special Jewish representation at the Inter-Allied Conference was undoubtedly a direct result of its long-standing struggle with the Zionist organisations. Acknowledging that the Germans had singled out the Jews for special treatment was, in its opinion, tantamount to a spiritual surrender to both German racism and Zionist claims that the Jewish people were actually a nation who were exiled from their homeland. Moreover, the Foreign Office also understood that recognition of the unique situation of the Jews of Europe would give added weight to demands for a unique solution - the opening up of Palestine to Jewish immigration (which, for fear of Arab opinion, the 1939 White Paper had determined to bring to a halt). For instance, Alec Randall of the Refugee Department in the Foreign Office, noted, on 19 August 1942, that 'the extreme Zionist campaign for a recognition of a distinct Jewish nationality is part of the propaganda for a Jewish sovereign state in Palestine, and it also no doubt aims at securing separate Jewish representation at any Peace Settlement'. He went on to add that he thought the campaign for a Jewish Army had this end in view, and so too did the attempts 'by various British Jewish bodies to obtain specific recognition of the sufferings of Jews in the Allied declaration of 13th January on war crimes'.<sup>72</sup> The Foreign Office held that the Jews were no different to any other passport holders of an occupied nation and were not to receive special attention. As Roger Allen minuted on 21 August 1942: 'Jews must be treated as nationals of existing states and not as having any separate Jewish nationality apart from the nationality shown on their passports'. Frank Roberts of the Central Department also minuted on 21 August 1942 that 'His Majesty's Government of course do not recognise a distinct Jewish nationality'.

The British Government's attitudes reinforced the prevailing climate of indifference towards Jewish suffering and found an echo, in particular, in the columns of the Press. They sub-consciously intimated to Press and public that Jewish claims (to the land of Palestine, a Jewish Army, and the need to address Nazi atrocities against Jews in Europe as distinct from that of the general suffering of the nations) were somehow reprobate since they upset very sensitive areas of policy at a time when Britain was fighting for its life. Indeed, these arguments were voiced by the Colonial Secretary, Lord Cranborne, when he defended the Government's Palestine policy in a debate in the House of Lords on 10 March 1942. The debate was held in the wake of

<sup>71</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>72</sup>Quoted by Wasserstein, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

the sinking of the refugee ship Struma which on reaching Turkey from Rumania had been refused entry to Palestine by the British authorities. The Turkish Government had the unseaworthy, engineless and grossly over-crowded schooner towed into the Bosphorus where it was cast adrift. She was sunk soon after either by a mine or torpedo and went down with 768 Jewish lives on board on 24 February 1942 - there was only one survivor. Dina Porat reports that the Jewish community in Palestine was outraged: 'Posters bearing the picture of Sir Harold MacMichael, "known as High Commissioner for Palestine, WANTED FOR MURDER of 800 refugees," appeared on many walls. The dead were collectively mourned, protest meetings were held'.<sup>73</sup> However, back in London, the News Chronicle reported the sinking of the Struma in a small 22 line article on its front page on 25 February, entitled: 'Ship Sinks With 750 Refugees'. It said:

Istanbul, Tuesday. - The Panama ship Struma with 750 Jewish refugees on board which was returning from Istanbul to Rumania after the refugees had been refused entry into Palestine, was sunk a few miles outside Istanbul this morning. It is thought the ship may have struck a mine.

Two salvage boats went out immediately, about seven miles outside the Bosphorus, but it is feared that most of the passengers are lost.

It is understood that the Palestine authorities were unable to grant entrance visas as the passengers left Rumania with the consent of the Rumanian authorities and therefore ranked as enemy aliens.

In fact, the sole survivor from the sinking, David Stoliar, reported later that it was a full twenty-four hours after the explosion that he was rescued despite the fact that 'The explosion occurred about ten kilometres from the Turkish coast. I saw the coast and I believed that the same [i.e. the ship] could be seen from the coast. Nobody came to our help from ashore'.<sup>74</sup> The News Chronicle's second article, on 27 February, was relegated to the back page, and received only 7 lines:

Only 2 Survived From  
Jewish Refugee Ship

Istanbul, Thursday. - Only two people out of 769 passengers aboard the Jewish refugee ship Struma, which sank off Istanbul on Tuesday, have survived. Five reached the shore, but three of them died of exposure.

The News Chronicle was a traditionally Liberal newspaper which generally sympathised with the Jewish case *vis-a-vis* Palestine, and so, accordingly, its presentation of the debate in the Lords on 11 March was supportive of those who had criticised the Government's Palestine policy. The headline, for example, declared,

<sup>73</sup>Dina Porat, The Blue and Yellow Stars of David, (London, 1990), p. 24.

<sup>74</sup>Quoted by Wasserstein, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

'APPEASEMENT STILL THRIVES IN PALESTINE, SAYS PEER.' The Daily Telegraph, on the other hand, which ardently supported the White Paper policy, did not report the matter of the sinking until it was debated in the House of Lords. Moreover, its report on the debate was overtly slanted in favour of the Government. Its opening line, for instance, proclaimed: 'Viscount Cranborne, Colonial Secretary and Leader of the House of Lords, dealt with a firm hand criticism of the Palestine administration in the House to-day'. As far as the Telegraph was concerned, those who questioned the White Paper policy were dangerous miscreants. Its editorial declared: 'There can hardly be a more flagrant abuse of the freedom of Parliamentary debate than occurred yesterday when the question of our policy in Palestine was raised in the House of Lords. Lord Davies thought it a fitting time to launch a violent attack upon the Palestinian administration...Lord Wedgwood came to his support with yet wilder accusations of anti-Semitism on the part of the Palestine authorities'.

The Times was no less ardent in its support of the White Paper policy than the Telegraph. The news of the sinking was cabled to The Times by its Turkish correspondent, C. Mavroude, who, in his article of 27 February absolved the Turkish Government of all responsibility and placed all blame for the tragedy on the Rumanian Government. 'The responsibility for this tragedy', he said, 'rests entirely on the Roumanian Government which drove away these unfortunates'. In its absolution of the Turkish Government, The Times was reflecting the Foreign Office's concern that the British Government's attempts to draw Turkey into the war on the Allied side would not be jeopardised by an outcry over the sinking. A.W.G. Randall, head of the Foreign Office Refugee Department, minuted on 26 February that 'no reflection must be cast on the Turks'.<sup>75</sup> Thus Mavroude's article was followed on 28 February by The Times' Palestine correspondent, Rev. C.T. Bridgeman, Canon of St. George's Cathedral in Jerusalem. Bridgeman postulated, that the Struma might well have been sunk by the refugees themselves as a protest against the British Government's decision to bar them entry to the country, and actually suggested that receiving Jewish refugees from Nazi oppression would further Hitler's aim, 'for this would reduce the number of Jews in those countries and would also arouse disquiet among the Palestine Arabs'. 'In other words...' 'Long live appeasement!' ', the outraged Jewish Chronicle declared in a leader on 6 March. It also seized the opportunity to denounce the indifference of the nation to the acute distress of the Jewish people:

THE tragedy of the Struma follows fairly closely upon another of like kind. If the sufferings of all the Jews uprooted from their homes and driven to wander from one closed land to another, or to roam in despair the seven seas, could be collected

<sup>75</sup>*ibid.*, p. 154.

and simply told they would form a monumental and damning indictment of contemporary civilisation. Yet in the presence of Jewish martyrdom the world's conscience tends to become atrophied, probably through monotonous repetition. Thus no Jews were called to the Allied Conference on Nazi savagery, and no Jew may fight the enemy whose first and foremost target he is under a Jewish banner.

Thus, moreover, the Struma tragedy was ignored by the rest of the national Press. The Daily Mail, for instance, reported the sinking in a single 11 line article on the back page of its 25 February edition; the matter henceforth disappeared without trace from its columns. The extent of Press indifference to the suffering of the Jews can be gauged by the fact that neither the Daily Herald nor the News of the World, The People nor The Observer printed a single line on the sinking of the Struma.

Jewish suffering was not an issue that sufficiently concerned the Press to occupy precious column space. The People's regular 'Piers England' feature, for instance, which was usually spread luxuriously over five columns, was devoted each week throughout the whole period 1942-1943, to revealing the appalling sufferings of people in Nazi-occupied Europe. However, between January and May 1942, in all his descriptions of Europe's suffering under the Nazis, 'Piers England' did not even allude to the persecution of the Jews; neither was the word 'Jew' to be found. In common with the other national papers the News Chronicle occasionally printed information concerning the execution of 'Jews and Communists' in France in reprisal for attacks on German soldiers; however, these articles were always very short indeed. Perhaps the most revealing example of the News Chronicle's attitude to Jewish suffering during January to May 1942 occurred on 6 April when the paper accorded 7 cursory lines to an article which reported the systematic massacre of over 100,000 Jews in the occupied Soviet Union:

#### Nazis Slaughter Jews

Kuibyshev, Sunday. - It is officially announced that the Germans killed 86,000 Jews at Minsk and in the outskirts of the city 25,000 at Odessa, tens of thousands in Lithuania and Latvia and all the Jews in Estonia - 4,500.

This article was printed near the bottom of the last column on the back page of the paper next to an advertisement for 'Cherry Blossom Boot Polish'. The article directly above it, which reported that Vichy had developed an airforce of 1,000 planes, was accorded 20 lines, whilst the article immediately beside it, which related that the striking miners at Fenwick Pit in Northumberland had rejected a management pay offer, was accorded much larger headlines (two columns wide) also received 20 lines. The lack of a significant headline, the shortness of the text, and the article's placement on the back page next to advertisements could only have communicated to the reader

that the paper did not consider that this news was important, and cast doubt upon the veracity of the information [see *Appendix 3*]. The Daily Mail's apparent interest in the area of war crimes fell away after the last of its articles commemorating the Inter-Allied Conference at St. James's Palace in January. Thus, apart from two references to 'Jews', alongside 'Communists', as the victims of German reprisals in France, the Mail did not make one single mention, from 1 January to June 30, of the Nazi persecution of the Jews of Europe. While the Daily Herald frequently sought to heighten public awareness of German barbarities, it considered that the persecution of the Jews represented only a small constituent part of the general picture of European suffering. Hence, Jewish suffering was mentioned alongside that of Poles, Czechs, Russians, Serbs and so on and was not accorded any special emphasis. Hannen Swaffer's column on 29 April, entitled 'HORRORS YOU CANNOT SEE,' affords a good example of this:

A MEMBER of the Air Ministry Staff was talking. He had felt an affront to his dignity that morning....Then, while his frustration seethed, an assistant brought in some photographs....

#### HELL IN EUROPE

"THEY came from Poland, he said, "from parts of Russia once captured by the Germans, from Yugoslavia and from Greece.

"They proved barbarities that no words could have described. They were pictures of piles of Greeks who had died slowly of starvation, Yugoslav patriots who had been disembowelled because of their resistance, rows of Jews massacred in the ghetto of Poland, and of unmentionable cruelties by the Nazis in Russia.

"I put them hastily in a drawer, lest my secretary should see them....

"Then I felt ashamed that, when so much indescribable suffering was being inflicted in half the countries of Europe, I had been upset by a trumpery slight."

The Herald, however, was not alone in this belief that atrocities against the Jews should not be singled out. Thus, even after nine years of Nazi rule the Press on both sides of the Atlantic had not yet perceived the central position of anti-Semitism in the Nazi psyche. As Deborah Lipstadt has observed:

The press correctly recognised that Nazi brutality toward conquered people was severe and that many peoples, particularly those in Eastern Europe, faced an awful fate. For much of the war the press treated the Jews as one of those peoples, one among many....As long as it failed to grasp that antisemitism was fundamental and central to Nazi ideology, it would not catch the signs of approaching deliberate annihilation and would not treat wartime persecution of the Jews as something different and distinct from the Germans' atrocious treatment of a multitude of other noncombatants. In this regard the press was simply replicating - consciously or not the entrenched policy of the Allied leadership.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>76</sup>Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, pp. 140-141. Although she speaks of the American Press her words apply perfectly to the British Press too.

Press indifference to the situation of the Jews of Europe resulted in its failure to take note of a stream of increasingly alarming, yet remarkably accurate, reports of massacres of Jews. The news that the Germans had gassed Jews at the Mauthausen Labour Camp, for instance, was only published by the Jewish Chronicle and The People. The Jewish Chronicle reported on 9 January that 'A leading foreigner in Berlin, who was interested in helping one of the prisoners with whose parents he was friendly, was finally informed by a Nazi official, after many approaches to the authorities, "No one gets out of Mauthausen alive. Even if the war were to be over to-morrow, the last survivors would be killed to-day. They are dying of poison gas'. The People's article of 18 January said: 'NAZIS have lately been experimenting with poison gas. Nearly 1,000 Jews and several hundred anti-Nazi refugees captured in France were made the victims of this "research." Further details are unprintable. Experiments were carried out in the most notorious concentration camp in the Reich - Mauthaus'.<sup>77</sup> In April a further report of the gassing of Jews at Mauthausen appeared and its veracity was confirmed by the Dutch Government. However, only The Times and the Daily Herald reported this new information. The Daily Herald placed its report in a fairly prominent position in the middle of the front page of its 2 April edition:

NAZIS GAS 740  
DUTCH JEWS

Of 12,000 Dutch Jews sent by the Nazis to the salt and sulphur mines of Mauthausen, Dutch circles in London have received the names of 740 who have died.

They were forced to work without protection amid the dangerous fumes of the mines, or were used as subjects for Nazi experiments with poison gas.

Despite protests by the Netherlands Government, in which the civilised world joined, urgent requests by the Red Cross for permission to visit the victims were curtly refused with the statement, "This is our own affair."

Not surprisingly, the Jewish Chronicle was shocked by this news and declared in its editorial columns on 10 April:

Even the blackest crimes in the Nazis records can scarcely surpass this stark barbarism. Even the cruellest tortures of the darkest ages are outdone by this cold, slow, deliberate, and ruthless doing to death of unarmed and unoffending fellow beings. One is tempted to ask whether the perpetrators of this ghastly infamy can be regarded as other than dehumanised monsters whose existence at this advanced stage in history throws doubt upon all our boasted progress.

Urgent requests by the Red Cross for permission to visit the victims were curtly refused with the words: "This is our own affair." Is it? Is not this abasing and shaming of our very human nature a challenge to men and women everywhere not fallen far below the level of jungle wild beasts? Even those who are most industrious

<sup>77</sup>In fact The People did not mention the Nazi persecution of the Jews again until 7 June 1942.

in apologising for their beloved Nazis should by now have the measure of their protégés. Even the hitherto least teachable members of the "be kind to the gentle German" cult will perhaps be pulled out of their dream with a jolt by the warning now vouchsafed by the fact that the Germans, the first to use poison gas in the last war, are still obsessed by the same villainy. If all these inhuman crimes are condoned at the peace, then we may say good-bye for ever to civilisation.

However, silence continued to reign in the columns of the national Press. The News of the World, for instance, printed only two reports on the persecution of the Jews between January and May; a four line article on 5 April said that 'Vichy radio reported last night that the entire Jewish population of Bratislava had been interned in ghettos'; and a 6 line article on 17 May which said that the Germans had, 'issued a decree forbidding Jews to have domestic pets - dogs, cats, or canaries'. The Observer, moreover, did not mention the word 'Jew' until 24 May. Most of The Times' articles concerning the persecution of the Jews (between January and May 1942) dealt with German reprisals against 'Communists and Jews' in occupied France for attacks on German soldiers and installations. There were five such articles throughout January to May; they were always short and factual, comprising only between 10 and 20 lines. Even so, The Times, disputed the official German description of their victims as 'Communists and Jews', asserting on 6 May that they were neither Communists nor Jews. 'From Paris comes the announcement that 20 "Jewish and Communist hostages" - in other and truer words', it said, '20 Frenchmen selected at random - have just been shot because a German soldier was killed in the city 10 days ago' <sup>78</sup> The Times persisted in its reticence despite the fact that its Special Correspondent in Moscow, Ralph Parker, confirmed, on 28 March, the veracity of the Molotov Note's information concerning the massacres of Jews and others in Kiev. Parker reported that 'fifty thousand Russians and Ukrainians have been murdered by the German occupants of the city of Kiev, according to information in the possession of a newspaper here. Pogroms against Jews, with whom are classed all known Communist activists and officials of the Soviet regime, are worse than anything which has ever been known before in the history of the old Ukrainian capital'. He added that 'many murders by machine-gun occur in the Lukyanovskaya cemetery, where the victims are made to dig their own graves. Those who can escape are filtering through the German controls into the countryside, where there is a better chance of getting food and joining up with the partisans'.

<sup>78</sup>The Times' stance is really representative of the general attitude of the Press since, although none of them actually declared it in words, they all continued throughout this period to print 'Communists and Jews' in parentheses. The Jewish Chronicle, however, did not doubt the Jewish identity of these victims.

One prominent factor in the Press' failure to discern the annihilitic design of Nazi treatment of the Jews, was that it had generally bored of commenting on what it regarded as Hitler's vain and rhetorical threats to exterminate the Jews which had frequently punctuated his speeches since at least 1933. On 25 February, for instance, the Daily Telegraph reproduced, in a front page article of great detail, the text of a speech that had been broadcast the night before to mark the anniversary of the Munich Putsch. After speaking about that military situation in Russia, he had told of how 'preparations are being made for the final struggle against this [Jewish] conspiracy which, from the banks of the plutocratic world to the Kremlin pursues the same purpose, the extermination of the men of the Aryan nations'. He went on, the Telegraph recorded, to promise the extermination of the Jews of Europe:

"This close alliance of Jewish capitalism and Communism is not new for us old National Socialists.

"As was the case in the first world war, in the interior of our country to-day, still Jews, and only Jews must be held responsible for the disunity of the nation. But there are great differences between our struggle to-day and at the end of the war of 1914-18.

"In 1919 the National Socialists were only a small group. To-day, however, the ideas of the National Socialist and Fascist revolutions have conquered many States, and my prediction is being fulfilled that by this war not Aryan mankind but the Jew will be exterminated.

"Whatever may be the future events of this war, and however long the war lasts, this will be the final result, and only after the extermination of the parasites will the world know a long period of collaboration between nations, and therefore a period of true peace."

However, in its subsequent detailed analysis of the content of Hitler's speech, the paper completely passed over his declaration that he was fulfilling his promise to exterminate the Jews, commenting solely on what the speech revealed about the military situation in Russia. A similar pattern may be observed in the Daily Telegraph's report on Hitler's speech of 26 April. It brushed aside the comments Hitler had made on the Jews with a cursory sentence: 'Hitler went on to make his *usual* attack on the Jews, who, he said, had manoeuvred both Britain and the United States into the war'.<sup>79</sup> After nine years of Nazi rule, the annihilitic content of Nazi speeches was not considered to be news; while the Press scrupulously analysed every word in the hope of discovering evidence of a breakdown of the German military machine, declarations of intent to exterminate European Jewry, and evidence of the practical outworking of such declarations passed unnoticed. During the first half of 1942, the pages of the Jewish Chronicle were consistently full of reports of massacres of Jews, few of which found their way into the national newspapers, even though such information was available equally throughout

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<sup>79</sup>My emphasis.



the British Press. It was clear from such reports that the scope and tempo of Nazi oppression and murder was increasing. For instance, on 30 January 1942, ten days after the opening of the Wannsee Conference, Hitler spoke to a large crowd at the Sports Palace in Berlin. His speech was monitored by the Allies:

We fully realize that the war can only end either with the extermination of the Aryan peoples or the disappearance of the Jews from Europe. While I guard myself against making rash prophecies, on September 1, 1939, I declared in the German Reichstag that this war would not end, as the Jews suppose, with the extermination of the European-Aryan peoples, but with the destruction of Jewry. For the first time the ancient Jewish maxim will be put in practice: "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth."<sup>80</sup>

Only the Jewish Chronicle took notice of this 'prophecy'. In its editorial column of 6 February it squared up to Hitler's 'bullish' taunts with a display of bravado declaring, for example, that 'if nothing more comes of this particular "intuition" than followed his announcement that the Russian Army was annihilated and that the war would be over in 1940, there is little cause for anxiety'. However, the columns of that same edition contained hard evidence that Hitler was making good his 'prophecy'. For instance, the headlines to the Jewish Chronicle's leading front page article announced:

#### MURDER IN THE UKRAINE 18,000 Victims in Poltava

'It is being reported,' the paper said, 'that in Poltava, in Nazi occupied Ukraine...the German invaders have executed 18,000 residents, mostly Jews'. Moreover, 'the Rumanian and German invaders of the great Russian Black Sea port of Odessa have announced their decision to make the city judenrein by the end of April. In the meantime, 10,000 Jews, mostly women and children have been exiled from the Odessa ghetto to the Dniester region, which is at present occupied by Rumanian troops'. It added that the Nazis had begun to publish a newspaper in the Ukraine in which they had issued a call for all Ukrainians to join in the extermination of the Jews.

On 13 February the leading article on the Jewish Chronicle's front page reported that the Polish Jewish Observer had told of how 1800 Jews had been shot in massacres in the vicinity of Wilno; 1000 had been shot in Troki in the space of a week; at Niemenczyn, 600 had been shot; 200 had been killed at Ajszyszkok; and in the Chelm concentration camp in Eastern Poland it had revealed, on the basis of an intercepted letter from a camp guard, that 'Jewish prisoners are shot on the spot. Beforehand, they

<sup>80</sup>Quoted by Arno Mayer, Why Did The Heavens Not Darken?, pp. 307-308.

have to dig their own graves. Then five of them are bound together so that they will all fall at the same time. Anything from 300 to 400 of these executions take place every day'. On 27 February the Jewish Chronicle announced that Belgrade had been declared 'Jew-Free', and on 13 March it reported in its leading front page article that Nazi officials had issued further declarations of their intent to totally exterminate the Jews of Europe:

The Nazi Press has given prominence to a statement by Goebbels regretting the German Government's past action in allowing tens of thousands of Jews to leave countries under the control of Germany to become the principal "war agitators" in Britain and America. But, say the Nazis, the Jews, especially those locked up in the ghettos, are entertaining false hopes if they believe that a defeated Germany will bring them relief.

Germany, they declare has the means of destroying the Jews whenever it may be found necessary, and the last bullets and poison gas will be kept in reserve for the realisation of Hitler's prophecy that this war is to result in the destruction of the Jews so that they can never again celebrate a victory over Germany.

Addressing a meeting at Posen (Poznan), the head of the Labour Front, Dr. Ley, said that though Germany was conducting war operations on various fronts, the principal war aim was directed against the Jews, and hence Germany was determined to go on fighting until the destruction of Jewry was achieved.

Broadcasting on the Purim festival, the radio said that the Jews living in the countries under German domination were not able to celebrate it this year as a Jewish victory against the "Aryans." The Fuhrer, declared the Nazis spokesman, had converted this year's Purim into a day of mourning for the Jews, and particularly for those in the ghettos. Moreover, he meant to see to it that the Jews should never be able to celebrate Purim again.

That same issue of the Jewish Chronicle also carried reports of terrible massacres of Jews in the occupied areas of the Soviet Union. It reported from the Soviet War News that at the German camp (for Soviet prisoners of war) at Borispol all the Jews among captured Soviet soldiers were being sought out and killed *en masse*. It added that the intercepted letter of a German camp guard stationed just south of Kiev had revealed that in his district 'the Nazis had already shot about 13,000 Jews'. This 13 March edition of the Jewish Chronicle also told of how the residents of the Czech fortress town of Terezin (Theresienstadt) had been ordered to leave in order to make room for 90,000 Czech Jews to be deported there. A week later the paper added that news of the forthcoming deportations to Theresienstadt had resulted in a wave of suicides among Prague Jewry, and on 10 April the Jewish Chronicle reported that the deportation of Czech Jewry to Theresienstadt had begun alongside the renewing of the deportations of German Jews 'to the East'.

Meanwhile, the situation of the Jews in the Soviet Union, as monitored by the Jewish Chronicle, had deteriorated significantly. On 27 March the paper reported that Kharkov had been the scene of the murder of 14,000 Jews and non-Jews after it had

been occupied by the Germans and that they were continuing to 'execute and imprison large numbers of Jews and non-Jews suspected of giving assistance to the Red Army....Thousands are being tortured in Kharkov prisons, where the death roll is appalling'. Moreover, 'According to the Nazi press only 702 Jews now remain in...Dnepropetrovsk[which] previously had a very large Jewish community....Eye-witnesses related that in the Jewish agricultural settlement of Stalindorf, the Nazi invaders destroyed all the property of the inhabitants, outraged many Jewish girls and women, and killed many Jews, including women and children'. In its front page leader the paper flashed the late news that the Nazis had murdered 15,000 Jews in Borisov:

Partisan forces which have been in contact with sections of the Russian Army have brought first news of a ghastly pogrom in Borisov (75 miles west of Smolensk) where the Nazis murdered 15,000 Jews - men, women and children. The adults were forced to dig their own graves first and were then mown down by machine-gun fire. The children were thrown down into the graves alive and buried. Partisans declare there were several hundred Russian witnesses of this ghastly atrocity.

The Jewish Chronicle presented a fuller account of the Borisov massacres in its front page leader a week later on 3 April. It said that the information came from two guerrilla leaders who had spent the previous two months operating behind German lines. Here the massacres were described in greater detail, and it was becoming clear that there was a consistency in the pattern of German massacres of Jews:

"After capturing Borisov, the Germans ordered all Jews to wear a special armband and to live in a ghetto for which they set aside one of the streets fenced with barbed wire. Then an announcement was suddenly posted stating that the Jews were helping the Soviet partisans and would be held responsible. This was a lie since none of us partisans could enter the ghetto, nor could the Jews leave it.

#### Children Buried Alive

"The day after the announcement appeared," they continued, "a pogrom started in the ghetto. Jewish homes were plundered by German soldiers from five o'clock in the morning until several victims were lined up and shot by Nazi firing squads. No difference was made between men and women. The children were not shot; but the Nazi soldiers threw them into the graves alive, occasionally knocking some of them unconscious with the butts of their rifles.

"The shooting of the adults was carried out carelessly, and many of the victims were only slightly wounded when thrown into the grave. As the graves were not deep and were hurriedly filled with earth, the non-Jewish population, which was forced to witness the horrible scene, actually saw the graves 'breathing' for two hours, during which many of the victims were apparently still alive.

Several days after disposing of the local Jewish population, the Nazis brought some 8,000 more Jews to Borisov from the western part of occupied White Russia, and executed them in the same manner." The commanders declared, "This same fate was meted out to all the Jews in the township of Shamkovo..."

The commanders had declared, the paper continued, 'that the policy of the German administration in the occupied territory is "completely to exterminate the Jews." Under the pretext that the Jews are helping the Russian guerilla bands, mass-executions of Jews are taking place in practically every Nazi-held town and village...."Following the two mass executions in Borisov," they concluded, "all the Nazi newspapers published in White Russia cynically reported that the Jewish problem in White Russia is now solved but there are still five millions Jews left alive in the United States" '.

News reached the Jewish Chronicle later that month of further large-scale massacres in the Soviet Union. On 24 April it reported that over 9,000 Jews had been slaughtered in like fashion in Mariupol, a small Ukrainian town on the shore of the Sea of Azov, and the paper vividly described the actual process of the massacre. On 1 May the Jewish Chronicle's front page leading article announced the latest news of massacres in Lwow: 'Mariupol - Borisov - Kharkov - Dnepropetrovsk - Poltava - Kiev - Minsk - these names are written in letters of blood on Soviet Russia's history. For they were the scenes of the Nazi massacre of tens of thousands of Russian civilians - Jews and non-Jews, men, women, and children. To them, now is added the name of Lwow, in Eastern Poland, where the Soviet Press reveals 13,000 Jews have been executed since the Nazis occupied the city'. Finally, on 22 May the paper announced that news had reached Moscow 'of appalling massacres of Jews by the German and Rumanian troops in the Crimea. In Simperopol, many thousands of Jews were slaughtered. In Kharkov, too, many thousands of Jews have lately been executed'.

Summer 1942 was to bring further news of unimaginable atrocities.

## Chapter 2

### 'Conspiracy of Silence'

Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 30 June 1942

Late in May 1942 the Polish-Jewish Socialist Bund sent a report (via the radio network of the Polish Underground) to Szmul Zygielbojm, its representative on the Polish National Council in London. The report stated that on the day that the Germans had invaded the Soviet Union they had also begun the 'systematic extermination of the Jews on Polish soil'. This had started, it said, 'during the summer months in Eastern Galicia'. 'Men between the ages of 14 and 60 were herded together in public squares and cemeteries where, after they had been forced to dig their own graves, they were massacred with knife, machine-gun and hand-grenade. Children from orphanages, old people in the institutions, the sick in the hospitals and the women in the streets were shot down in the most ruthless fashion. In many places Jews were rounded up for deportation to an unknown destination. That destination was cold-blooded massacre in nearby woods.' According to the Bund Report 30,000 Jews had been murdered in Lwow, 15,000 in Stanislawow, 5,000 in Tarnopol, 2,000 in Zloczow, and 16,300 in Brzezany. It added:

The same organised murder took place repeatedly in a large number of other towns, and in most places, for example in Lodz, still goes on. In October and November the murdering of Jews spread to Wilno and the Wilno County and into Lithuania, in the vicinity of Kowno. In November, 50,000 Jews were killed in Wilno....According to various figures which have been given the number of Jews killed in the Wilno district and in the neighbourhood surrounding Kowno in Lithuania, is something like 300,000. The slaughter of Jews in the district of Slonim began in September. Nearly all the Jews in Zyrowice, Lachowicze, Mir, Kosow and other towns were killed. On the 15th October the murder began in the town of Slonim itself and the victims numbered 9,000. In Rowno, in three days early in November, 15,000 persons, men, women and children, were done to death. In Hancewicze, near Baranowicze, 6,000 more were shot. The murder spread to the far side of the rivers Bug and San. Only a few of the names of the towns have been given here.

The report also contained the first evidence to reach the Allies of the gassing of Jews at the Chelmno death camp. 'In November and December', it said, 'began the massacre of Jews living in the territories in the west annexed to Germany, the so-called Warthegau. The killing there was done by gas. In the village of Chelmno, about 12 miles from Kolo in the Kolo county, special vans with gas chambers designed to hold 90 people at a time were used. After their death, the victims were buried in graves dug in clearings in the Lubardski woods. About 1,000 victims were destroyed each day in this manner, 5,000 from Kolo, Dabie, Bugaj, Izbica, Kujawska between November, 1941, and March, 1942, as well as 35,000 from the Lodz Ghetto and a number of

gypsies.' It added that in February 1942 'this extermination of Jews spread to the General-Government...S.S. guards...killed all the Jews they found in the streets, in the backyards and houses....The Jews in Lublin were wiped out....In addition, 25,000 Jews were taken from Lublin to "unknown destinations," and nothing more has been heard of them....There are now no Jews left in Lublin....In Warsaw the Gestapo staged a massacre in the ghetto on the night of the 17th/18th April. There is a list of Jews of all classes in the Warsaw ghetto, and the murders take place according to a system. In all, the Germans have so far murdered 700,000 Jews.'

The report concluded that these facts were proof that 'the crime-laden German Government is determined to bring to fulfilment Hitler's prophecy that, five minutes before the end of the war, whichever side may win, all the Jews in Poland will have been wiped out,' and added that 'millions of Polish citizens of the Jewish faith are faced with imminent death.' It pleaded with the Polish Government in London 'as guardian and representative of all the peoples in Poland, to save us from complete annihilation', asserting that the only hope of saving the Jews in Poland lay in the immediate application of reprisals against 'Germans and Fifth Columnists living in Allied countries'. 'The Allied Governments,' it declared, 'should inform the Germans of this form of reprisal and tell them they shall answer now for their inhuman effort to exterminate the Jewish people.' 'We realise that we are asking something very difficult and unusual. But how else are the millions of Jews to be saved from a certain and horrible death?'<sup>81</sup>

Zygielbojm and his Zionist colleague on the Council, Dr. Ignacy Schwarzbart, immediately informed the Polish Premier, General Sikorski, of the information that had been received. Soon after, on 9 June, Sikorski made a brief mention of some of the details from the report in a radio broadcast on the B.B.C. (although, however, he gave pre-eminence to details of Polish rather than Jewish sufferings). He declared that 'the Jewish population of Poland has been doomed to destruction in accordance with the Nazi pronouncements on destroying all the Jews regardless of the outcome of this war. Massacres of ten of thousands of Jews have been carried out this year. People are being starved to death in the ghettos. Mass executions are held; even those suffering from typhus are shot.'

Sikorski's broadcast failed to capture the imagination of the Press. Only two national newspapers, the Daily Herald and The Times, commented on the broadcast on the next day. Moreover, they both neglected to report Sikorski's first significant point:

<sup>81</sup>S. Zygielbojm, Stop Them Now: German Mass-Murders of Jews in Poland, (London, 1942).

that the Nazis were exterminating the Jews in accordance with their own proclamations. Consequently, Zygielbojm took immediate steps to secure greater publicity for the Bund Report, giving it as an exclusive to the Daily Telegraph which reproduced the information in an article on 25 June. However, D.E. Ritchie, the B.B.C.'s Assistant Director of European Broadcasting, later reproached Zygielbojm during a meeting at the B.B.C. on 3 July for having scuppered the news value of the Bund Report by '[having] given [it] to the Daily Telegraph first'. His knuckles having been rapped, Zygielbojm agreed in future to give priority to the B.B.C.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, giving the Bund Report to the Daily Telegraph may well have had an inhibiting effect on Press coverage of it, but this is not the most fundamental reason for the almost complete silence of the Press over the fate of European Jewry throughout June and July. Ultimately, as we shall see, the Press did not adequately report these claims of mass murder because it did not believe them.

On 19 June the Jewish Chronicle released more dramatic news which served to underline the increasing gravity of the situation in which European Jewry was finding itself. The headlines of its front page leader declared:

MASSACRE  
85,000 Jews Murdered

News 'is filtering through,' it said, 'of recent ghastly massacres of Jews in Nazi Europe. Some 85,000 men, women, and children are mentioned in the reports to hand. According to a Stockholm press message an eye-witness had related particulars of a wholesale massacre of Jews in Vilna which took place between May 7 and 20 and which was carried out by Lithuanian police under the direction of the Nazis Gestapo.' It added that 'Following the establishment of the so-called "autonomous status" of the Baltic States at the end of April, Jews who had been previously herded together in ghettos to the number of some 80,000, were arrested in batches and sent to the local prisons. On May 7 executions began. Men, women, and children were taken in lorry loads outside the town and machine-gunned. This went on every evening for thirteen days until some 60,000 of the people concentrated in the ghettos were destroyed.' Further down its front page the Jewish Chronicle reported that the Stockholm Press had also revealed that mobs in Latvia had taken advantage of the departure of the Russians in 1941 to kill some 25,000 Jews in a series of pogroms which had lasted for four days. Another front page article told of how the Stockholm Press had reported that the Nazis had machine-gunned 258 Berlin Jews in a barracks in Berlin as a reprisal for the alleged planting of a bomb in Berlin's anti-Communism exhibition.

<sup>82</sup>Quoted by Martin Gilbert, Auschwitz and the Allies, (London, 1981), p. 46.

Although these Stockholm Press messages were available equally throughout the British Press, only the Daily Telegraph and the Daily Herald reported the murder of the 258 Jews in Berlin, and only the Daily Express reported the massacre of the 25,000 Latvian Jews.<sup>83</sup> Paradoxically, whilst the Daily Herald's report on the Berlin massacre was accorded 38 lines and a bold headline on the front page on 15 June, fifteen days later it printed the details of the Bund Report (with its claim that 700,000 Jews had been murdered) in 33 line article on its back page with a run-of-the-mill headline. Surely this lack of consistency communicated to its readers that the former report was probably more reliable than the latter. Similarly, on 16 June the Daily Express expressed its reservations about the veracity of the news of murder of the 25,000 Jews by only according it eleven lines in an inconspicuous position on its back page. The credibility of the information was further undercut by the fact that the paper gave equal if not better treatment to other, less important news, such as the appointment of Sir Philip Ewen Mitchell as the Governor of Fiji. This serves to illustrate the very important point that smaller figures of dead were deemed more credible by the Press than larger, seemingly fantastic, and thus scarcely believable, figures. Whilst the Press could readily comprehend the murder of 258 Jews, a figure of 25,000 was simply unbelievable, and had no doubt (so the newspapers thought) been much exaggerated. Where the newspapers printed such large figures they usually betrayed their doubts as to their accuracy by, for example, withholding a significant headline, glossing over details, or by placing such news in inconspicuous positions within the paper.

The Daily Telegraph's 25 June article on the Bund Report, however, was accorded hitherto unparalleled attention for a report of atrocities against Jews. It was 135 lines in length and formed the lead article on page five, its main inside news page; it was spread over two columns and was given bold headlines:

GERMANS MURDER 700,000  
JEWS IN POLAND

TRAVELLING GAS CHAMBERS

'More than 700,000 Polish Jews,' it began emphatically, 'have been slaughtered by the Germans in the greatest massacre in the world's history.' 'In addition,' it said, 'a system of destruction is being carried out in which the number of deaths, on the admission of the Germans themselves, bids fair to be almost as large. The most gruesome details of

<sup>83</sup>Sharf, *op cit.*, p. 92, adds that the Evening Standard reported the Vilna (Latvian) massacre 'factually and with very little comment'.



mass killing, even to the use of poison gas, are revealed in a report sent secretly to Mr. S. Zygielbojm, Jewish representative on the Polish National Council in London, by an active group in Poland.' It added: 'It is strongly felt that action should be taken to prevent Hitler from carrying out his threat that five minutes before the war ends, however it may end, he will exterminate all Jews in Europe. It was the avowed intention of the Germans from the early days of the war to exterminate the Jewish population on Polish territory. In a 1940 New Year message Gauleiter Greiser said that the only use to be made of the Poles was as slaves for Germany, but for the Jews there was no future.' The paper stressed that 'this extermination policy began in 1941 in Eastern Galicia, and everywhere the procedure has been the same.' Under the sub-title 'SLAUGHTER BY GAS,' the paper told the British public for the first time of the gassings at the Chelmno death-camp:

In November the slaughter of Jews by gas in the Polish territories incorporated in the Reich also began.

A special van fitted as a gas chamber was used into which were crowded 90 victims at a time. The bodies were buried in special graves dug in the Lubardski Forest.

On an average 1,000 Jews were gassed daily. In Chelmno from November last March 5,000 from four towns together with 35,000 from the Lodz ghetto, and a number of gypsies were murdered in this way.

The paper concluded by describing the appalling conditions in the Warsaw ghetto, which it called 'an extensive concentration camp'. Thus the Daily Telegraph had unequivocally and clearly expounded the details of the Bund Report.<sup>84</sup>

Indeed, the main thrust of the Bund Report, that the Germans were exterminating Jews according to a plan, was confirmed the next day in an article in the Jewish Chronicle headed:

#### GERMANY'S WAR AIM "Physical Extermination of the Jews"

In the latest issue of Das Reich, it said, Goebbels had proclaimed that 'the extermination of the Jews is one of Germany's war aims'. 'The Jews are playing a most detestable game in this war,' Goebbels had said, 'and they will pay with the extermination of their race in the whole of Europe and probably elsewhere too.' Moreover, the Jewish Chronicle noted that 'a pogrom campaign has started throughout the German press, headed by the SCHWARZE KORPS', which had declared that 'it was not enough to eliminate the Jews from the economic system of Germany and the

<sup>84</sup>Gilbert asserts that Zygielbojm wrote the article himself, this would explain why it was so unequivocal. See Gilbert, Auschwitz and the Allies, p. 43.

other European nations....The war in Russia and President Roosevelt's policy...had made it necessary to revise the "magnanimous policy" hitherto followed by National Socialism towards the Jews.' 'Only now,' the Schwarze Korps had concluded, 'has it been realised that the Jew is the eternal and implacable enemy of Germany, and, therefore, of the whole of Europe, and that his physical extermination must from now on be the aim of Germany and her allies.'

If this information had been available to the Jewish Chronicle then it had equally been available to the whole of the British Press - the Jewish Chronicle had no monopoly on Das Reich! Indeed, this information most probably came from the Foreign Office which regularly collated items of news from Axis newspapers for the consumption of the British Press. However, apart from the Daily Telegraph (on 30 June) no national newspaper brought this information to the attention of its readers. Thus the Press continued its 'policy' of silence.

On the morning of 26 June, Zygielbojm, buoyed up by the Daily Telegraph's full account of the contents of the Bund Report, broadcast an upbeat message in Yiddish on the B.B.C. to the Jews in Poland. His words were recorded by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency and released in a report on 28 June:

After enumerating the crimes committed against the Jewish population in Poland by the Germans in the course of last year, Mr. Zygielbojm pointed out that there could no longer be any doubt that the physical destruction of the whole Jewish population was the aim of the invaders. He told his listeners that "every crime, every murder and every act of cruelty is being recorded by us, by the Polish Government, and none of these crimes will be passed without due reprisals. The German murderers," he declared, "are to pay for every drop of innocent blood they are shedding."

Mr. Zygielbojm went on to say that there was full understanding for the desire of the Polish Jews that steps should be taken at once to halt the terrible mass slaughter, and he assured his listeners that the Polish Government and the National Council, as well as the Governments of the Allied Nations, were considering measures of immediate reprisal....Mr. Zygielbojm spoke of the great admiration with which the world was looking upon those who in the midst of these horrible conditions had not lost their human dignity and pride and were maintaining their heroic bearing. "We know," he declared, "that those who possess such dignity and vitality cannot perish. We are convinced that in spite of all the inhuman sufferings and murders, you will live to see that day of retribution and liberation."

However, the British Press and public had not followed the plight of the Jews 'with close attention'. As we have seen, the British public had not been presented by the Press with the intimate details of Jewish suffering, and neither had the public

conscience been aroused by the Bund Report.<sup>85</sup> On 29 June the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Hertz, spoke on the B.B.C.'s European service in an attempt to prick the public conscience:

Some months ago I had the occasion to speak of the Jewish agony in enemy occupied lands. I stated that men would turn grey when they heard the full story of the Nazi torture and slaughter of the Jews in Poland. Those who might have doubted the accuracy of my information have now the official account just issued by the Polish Government, which records the cruel and fiendish killing of men, women, and children on a scale unparalleled in the annals of Europe. I envy not the man who will learn the details of this bestial carnage and not be stirred to the depth of his being, and roused to burning indignation by the orgy of savagery it reveals....And - most horrible thought of all - the slaughter of which we are told today is only a beginning. Nazi spokesmen have repeatedly informed the world that the whole of the Jewish population in Eastern Europe - seven million human beings - must be exterminated. And that sentence of death on an entire people is being carried out!...And the systematic mass murders now in full swing against the Jews in not intended to end with them. There is little doubt that many other people will similarly be doomed to extermination by these dehumanised criminals.

The British Section of the World Jewish Congress was also aware of the lack of Press and public interest in the new revelations and accordingly attempted to raise awareness by holding a Press conference in London at which the Bund Report was read out. A.L. Easterman, Political Secretary of the W.J.C. in London and a former Daily Herald Correspondent, has since described this Press Conference as 'a desperate effort to break through the wall of silence'.<sup>86</sup> Dr. I. Schwarzbart declared to the assembled Press representatives that well over a million Jews had been victims of Nazi atrocities in Europe since the beginning of the war. To the figure of 700,000 in Poland had to be added, he said, another 200,000 who had died in German-occupied White Russia and the Ukraine, and a further 100,000 in other Nazi-dominated countries. Dr. Schwarzbart produced additional information about atrocities committed against the Jews in Poland. 'The whole Jewish population of the town of Homsk was wiped out,' he revealed. 'The same happened in Motol, where all the Jews, including the children were driven out of their homes and the whole Jewish district set on fire. Many thousands of Jews were murdered at Wlodzimierz. A common grave, stretching over a mile, bears evidence of their fate. At Czyzow Szlachbecki, near Lonza, about 6,000 Jews were driven together into tank traps, where they were murdered and buried in a common grave.' Dr. Schwarzbart 'demanded that everything should be done to prevent the annihilation of the Jewish population in Poland. He expressed the belief that only immediate reprisals could deter Hitler from continuing the planned mass murder of

<sup>85</sup>Even so Zygielbojm's broadcast did have the effect of temporarily raising the morale of Polish Jewry. See Emmanuel Ringelblum's diary entry of 26 June 1942, quoted by Wasserstein, *op. cit.*, p. 303.

<sup>86</sup>A.L. Easterman's Appendix to Emrys Hughes', Sydney Silverman: Rebel in Parliament, (London, 1969), p. 221.

civilians'.<sup>87</sup> Dr. Schwarzbart clearly saw this recent news as evidence that the Nazis were, indeed, ruthlessly pursuing their 'avowed aim to exterminate the Jewish people'. Sidney Silverman, M.P., who presided, added in this context that 'in view of the news from Eastern Europe, one could easily imagine what would be the fate of the Jews in Palestine in the case of a German break-through [in North Africa] unless they were given weapons to defend their homeland'. Dr. Ernest Fischer, a member of the Czechoslovak State Council, reviewed the fate of the Jews in Czechoslovakia. He declared that in May and June, about half of the 90,000 Jews in the Czech Protectorate had been deported to Poland. Significantly, he added: 'Their identity is now identical with that of Polish Jewry.' He had therefore unequivocally declared to the Press that Jews who were deported to Poland were being massacred together with Polish Jews. In the light of this he made a desperate appeal to the conscience of the British Press, public and Government:

We cannot and will not understand that such horrors can be perpetrated without an attempt being made by the world to help the victims. Regular aid is being sent to British prisoners of war, to American internees, to Greece, to France and to the white civilians in Hong Kong. Why does the fount of mercy run dry where Jews are concerned? Britain's threat of reprisals caused Germany to think twice about using gas in Russia. Why do the appalling sufferings of the Jews leave the world cold?

The following day's Jewish Telegraphic Agency bulletin accurately described the Press conference as 'a pathetic [i.e. moving] appeal to end the "*conspiracy of silence*" about Jewish sufferings in the Nazi-occupied lands'.<sup>88</sup>

Of all the national newspapers studied the Daily Telegraph printed the most comprehensive and true to source report of the Press conference. Its 75 line article, printed on 30 June, was placed on page five. The headline declared emphatically:

MORE THAN 1,000,000 JEWS  
KILLED IN EUROPE

As it had done five days before, the Telegraph stressed that the mass murder of Jews was proceeding in accordance with the Nazis own declarations. 'The Germans have up to now slaughtered over 1,000,000 Jews in occupied Europe,' it declared, 'this represents one sixth of the Jewish population within that area. It was recently revealed in a document published exclusively in THE DAILY TELEGRAPH that of this number 700,000 were killed in Poland alone. It is the declared aim of the Nazis to wipe the race from the European continent. Goebbels in a recent issue of *Das Reich* wrote: "The

<sup>87</sup>Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 30 June 1942, p. 2.

<sup>88</sup>Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 30 June 1942. Italics mine.

Jews of Europe are playing a most detestable game in this war, and will pay with the extermination of their race in the whole of Europe and elsewhere too." ' Under the sub-heading 'EXTENDING WEST,' the Telegraph expanded on this theme. It proposed that the German policy of extermination was not only already in progress in the East, but was in the process of being extended to apply to the Jews of Western Europe too:

Reports of massacres, chiefly in the East European countries, have been reaching London recently. But there is a volume of evidence to show that the declared Nazi policy of extermination of the Jews is intended to cover the West as well.

In France, Holland and Belgium executions are carried out on a large scale, and scores of thousands are imprisoned in concentration camps. A very large number have been deported for forced labour to Eastern Europe and to the ghettos and reserves there.

Vichy has already applied 70 of the specific anti-Jewish laws.

The Telegraph also printed a summary of the information given out by Dr. Fischer, but along with every other paper it neglected to report his denunciation of the failure of public opinion.

The Daily Mail's coverage of the Press Conference was the most comprehensive among the 'popular' newspapers. Its article, printed at the top of page three, was relatively conspicuous owing to its bold, double columned headlines:

**Greatest Pogrom  
ONE MILLION  
J E W S D I E**

By referring to the Nazi slaughter of Jews as the '*Greatest Pogrom*' the paper was clearly trying to convey its unparalleled nature. The unprecedented nature of the massacre of the Jews meant that no new terminology had yet been worked out which would adequately describe what was happening. Thus, the Mail was constrained to use the word 'pogrom' with its previous historical associations - massacres, limited in their geographical extent and usually committed in 'hot blood'. This terminology, however, was unable to convey the true nature and extent of Hitler's 'Final Solution'. Those who commented in the Press and elsewhere on the Nazi extermination of European Jewry were hampered by the lack of adequate terminology and this impeded the general assimilation of the news coming from Europe. As we shall see, at the end of the year a

new word had begun to be used to describe the slaughter of European Jewry - 'holocaust'.<sup>89</sup>

Even so, the sixty-eight lines that followed the Daily Mail's headline represent an extensive, factual account of the details released at the Conference. 'ONE million Jews,' it said, 'one-sixteenth of the entire world population of Jewry, have been exterminated in Axis-controlled countries since the outbreak of war.' 'The story of the pogrom,' it added, 'was told at a conference in London yesterday called by the British section of the World Jewish Congress.' The paper reported methodically the details of atrocities which had been committed in each of the countries mentioned at the Conference - Poland, Latvia, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Germany, France, Holland, Belgium and the Soviet Union. From this report it was clear that the Nazis were murdering Jews *wherever* they found them. The report concluded:

Mr. S.S. Silverman, M.P., who presided over the conference, said that what was happening to the Jews to-day was part of an express Nazi design to exterminate them physically.

"We seriously claim," he declared, "that the casualties already suffered by the Jewish people in this war are greater than those of any other race in any other war."

The coverage given to the Press Conference by The Times lay in direct contrast to that of the Daily Telegraph and the Daily Mail. The Times placed its 39 line article (half the length of the Telegraph's) at the bottom of page two. The headlines read:

MASSACRE OF JEWS  
OVER 1,000,000 DEAD SINCE  
THE WAR BEGAN

The Times dealt cursorily with the new information that had been revealed at the Conference. It's sweeping sentences failed to communicate anything but the barest of the points made at the Press conference. The report lead with Silverman's declaration that 'the Germans were making no secret of their intention to exterminate the Jewish race.' 'Already in countries ruled by Germany,' it added, 'over 1,000,000 Jews had lost their lives since the war began, either by being shot or by being made to live in such

<sup>89</sup>Meaning 'large scale destruction, esp. by fire'; from the Greek *holos* whole, *kaustos* burnt. Pocket Oxford Dictionary, Seventh edition ed. R.E. Allen, (Oxford, 1990). An example of the use of the term 'holocaust' to describe the destruction of European Jewry may be found in the World Jewish Congress' report of 1 December 1942, Annihilation of European Jews - Hitler's Policy of Total Destruction, a copy of which may be found at PRO FO 371/30923 piece 122. 'HOLOCAUST' was the headline to a News Chronicle editorial on 5 December 1942, while an editorial in the Jewish Chronicle on 11 December also used the term to describe the destruction of European Jewry. It must be stated, however, that this term was used infrequently.

conditions that they died from epidemics or starvation. Germany apparently thought the extermination of the Jews was good propaganda, for German leaders, and especially Dr. Goebbels, never ceased from drawing attention to this part of the German war aims. Before Jews were killed in Rumania they were compelled to sign a declaration saying they were responsible for the outbreak of the war, and had to accept their punishment for it. The casualties suffered by the Jewish people in Axis-controlled lands already far exceeded the casualties of any other race in any other war.' Although the paper reported Drs. Schwarzbart and Fischer's calls for immediate reprisals against the Nazis, it omitted the former's lengthy enumeration of figures of Jewish dead, and the latter's revelations regarding the fate of Czechoslovakian Jewry.

The News Chronicle's coverage of the Press Conference was scant. Judging by the presentation of its article it is fair to say that the News Chronicle hardly considered the revelations of the Press Conference to be news at all since it 'hid' its report on its back page [see *Appendix 4*]. The Press Conference was not deemed significant enough to form an article in its own right, but was printed at the bottom of a 75 line article entitled: 'GERMANS DEPORTING 8,000 LORRAINERS TO POLAND: MORE FRENCH SABOTAGE.' This reported that the Germans had ordered, as a reprisal for resistance, the deportation of 8,000 Lorrainers to Poland, and that the Belgian King was being put under pressure to set up a Quisling Government. The news that the Nazis had so far killed a million Jews was given a paltry fifteen lines and an uninspiring sub-heading at the bottom of the article: 'MILLION JEWS DIE'.

Its comments are reprinted in full:

A million Jews have been killed by the Nazis in mass slaughters since Hitler invaded Poland, it was stated yesterday by leaders of Continental Jewry at the London offices of the World Jewish Congress (British Section).

Dr. Schwarzbart, Jewish member of the Polish National Council, stated that a Polish Jew was allowed only one-eighth of the ordinary ration of bread, sugar, meat, butter, etc., and starvation among Jews had reached a pitch hitherto unrecorded.

The Daily Herald also printed its article of 30 June on its back page, apportioning it only 33 lines at the top of the second column. It alone of the papers chose to highlight the Nazis use of gas in their extermination of the Jews. Its headlines read:

40,000 Died  
In Nazi Gas  
Chambers  
- POLISH M.P.

The opening line reported that 'GAS-CHAMBER executions by the Nazis were described in London yesterday to the British section of the World Jewish Congress.' It then told of Chelmno:

Here is part of a statement made by Dr. I. Schwarzbart, a member of the National Council of Poland:-

"Between November, 1941; and March, 1942, about 5,000 Jews from the towns of Kolo, Dab, Bugaj, and Izbica, and about 35,000 from the ghetto of Lodz, were taken to the town of Chelmno, in the Kolski district. There a new method of slaughtering was applied to them.

"They were loaded into mobile gas chambers and were gassed to death. Their bodies were buried in the Lubardski forest."

However, the paper glossed over the rest of the information which had been revealed at the Press Conference in a few concluding lines. 'Compiled from secret sources,' it said, 'by the Governments of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Russia, reports given to the Congress tell of barbarism unequalled in history. They told how Jews deported from Holland, Germany and Central Poland are being shot in Central Poland at the rate of a thousand per day. Case after case was given in which the entire Jewish populations of towns were wiped out.' Thus the Herald did remarkably little justice to news which it itself had declared told of 'barbarism unequalled in history' thus betraying an attitude of unbelief, unbelief.

It is apparent that the fundamentals of the Final Solution had been publicly stated by Jewish leaders in Britain by 30 June 1942. They had clearly proclaimed before assembled Press representatives that Jews deported from Western and Central Europe were being murdered, *en masse* alongside Polish Jews, and that methods of murder included starvation, shooting, and the use of poison gas at at least one 'special' camp. Moreover, these facts had been placed in the context of the Nazis own declarations of intent to physically annihilate the Jews of Europe. Even so, the Press, with the exception of the Daily Telegraph, generally failed to respond to this news. Walter Laqueur has declared of the American Press, but which is equally true of the British Press: 'The editors quite obviously did not know what to make of them [the reports]. 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 stories contained some truth, but probably it was exaggerated.' Indeed, of the British Press coverage of the Press Conference he has said: 'most of these reports were rather short, they were not conspicuously displayed and they contained few details.' But it is unfair to single out



the British Press since, Laqueur has explained, 'The failure to understand was by no means limited to newspapers in Britain and the United States. Hebrew papers in Palestine were equally unhappy about the "unproven and exaggerated rumours", the facts that news agencies and correspondents were competing in transmitting atrocity stories in gruesome detail".<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>Walter Laqueur, Terrible Secret, (London, 1980), pp. 74-75. For comment on the Press in Palestine see also Dina Porat, *op cit.*, pp. 26-27.

### Chapter 3

#### 'Clutching at Straws' Jewish Chronicle, 3 July 1942

More disturbing accounts of the extermination of Jews in Poland were released by the Polish Government on 1 July. The Bund Report had stated that 'about 25,000 Jews were deported from Lublin in sealed wagons to an "unknown destination," and all trace of them has been lost'. Now, the Polish Fortnightly Review revealed that the Jews from the Lublin ghetto had been transferred to the village of Majdan Tatarski (a holding camp near Majdanek), where 'almost the entire population was exterminated'.<sup>91</sup> Other Lublin Jews, it stated, had been 'carried over a period of several days to the locality of Sobibor, near Wlodawa, where they were all murdered with gas, machine-guns and even by being bayoneted'.<sup>92</sup> This confirmed the Bund Report's implicit proposition that deportation to an '*unknown destination*' meant deportation for the purpose of extermination. The Polish Fortnightly Review added that 'it is an authenticated fact that Lithuanian detachments of szaulis, who have recently been brought into Poland, were used for these mass executions. The fetor of the decomposing bodies in Sobibor is said to be so great that the people of the district, and even the cattle, avoid the place. One Pole working in Sobibor wrote a letter pleading to be granted a transfer elsewhere, as he could not remain in such conditions'.<sup>93</sup> Moreover, as Martin Gilbert has explained, 'as well as the killings at Sobibor, the Polish Fortnightly Review confirmed other mass murders in the former eastern provinces of Poland, including "several thousand Jewish children" massacred at Pinsk in the autumn of 1941, and some 12,000 German Jews deported from the Reich "only to be massacred when they reached Poland" '. Another section of the report was concerned with the fate of Poles at Oswiecim and it told of the experimental gassings of September 1941 in which 600 Soviet Prisoners of War and 300 Poles were killed by exposure to Zyklon B.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>91</sup>Polish Fortnightly Review, 1 July 1942. Quoted by Gilbert, *op cit.*, pp. 44-45.

<sup>92</sup>They were in fact sent to Belzec. The mistake is understandable in the light of the fact that trains from Lublin to Belzec set off on the track leading to Sobibor but then forked to the south in the region of Trawniki.

<sup>93</sup>This report of a terrible stench of dead bodies is accounted for by the fact that no crematoria were used to dispose of the dead at Sobibor. Rather, after gassing the bodies of inmates were thrown into pits and sprinkled with lime. Konnilyn Feig reports that 'the stench was terrible....The pit method proved slow, difficult, and very noticeable. The summer heat of 1942 produced a terrible smell and polluted water. A new process went into effect which spread the smell of burnt flesh and the sight of smoke and fure throughout the region.' See Feig, *op. cit.*, pp. 284-292.

<sup>94</sup>Auschwitz camp commander, Rudolf Hoess, described the gassing in his autobiography. See R. Hoess, Commandant of Auschwitz: The Autobiography of Rudolf Hoess, (London, 1959), pp. 163-165.

However, these new revelations were almost universally ignored by the Press, with only the Daily Telegraph printing a report (on 8 July) based on this information.<sup>95</sup> Even so, on 2 July a Jewish Telegraphic Agency report from New York gave added weight to assertions that the Nazis' were using poison gas in the extermination of Jews. It said that information which had been released by Dutch and Swiss sources earlier in the year (about the use of gas against Dutch Jews at the Mauthausen concentration camp) had been confirmed by the testimony of an American official who had lately been repatriated from Czechoslovakia. He reported that several hundred Jews from Prague had been transported to Mauthausen after being stripped of all papers and other identification. The Nazi authorities in the Protectorate, he said, had issued a false statement that the victims were being transported to the Lublin and Lodz ghettos in Poland. Subsequent circumstantial information had confirmed that they had been sent to Mauthausen and that the poison gas experiments had been continuing there.

On the evening of 2 July Zygielbojm spoke on the European service of the B.B.C. He summarised the recent reports about the extermination of the Jews in Poland, and then spoke in Yiddish to the Polish Jews. He dwelt upon the planned nature of the extermination, which was being pursued by means of 'shot, shell, starvation and poison gas'. But, unlike his broadcast of the week before, he gave no morale-boosting assurances of how the conscience of the world had been touched by the Jewish plight; nor even that the world was watching. Rather, he spoke of how 'it will really be a shame to live on, a shame to belong to the greatest crime in human history' if nothing was done to help the Jews. 'The Governments of Great Britain and America', he asserted, 'must be compelled to put an end to this mass murder. For if we do not try to find means of stopping it, we shall bear part of the moral responsibility for what is happening.' He concluded:

In the name of those millions of helpless, innocent, human creatures with their hands stretched out to the world - hands which the world cannot see - I call to all men and women whose conscience is still alive: destroy the burning shame which soils the human race, force the Nazi murderer to stop the massacre of hundreds of thousands of innocent people.<sup>96</sup>

His words were not reported by the British Press.

<sup>95</sup>The Daily Telegraph's article on the Polish Fortnightly Review formed the leading article on page five. It was headed: 'HIMMLER BEGINS NEW WAVE OF TERROR IN POLAND, EXPERIMENTS ON PRISONERS WITH LETHAL DRUGS.'

<sup>96</sup>Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 3 July 1942, p. 4.

On 3 July the Jewish Chronicle had its first opportunity to respond to the previous week's news, which naturally dominated its pages. Its leading front page article declared unequivocally that the deaths of Jews in Poland were part of a pre-determined plan of extermination. Its bold headlines ran:

**MASS MURDER IN POLAND**  
700,000 Jews Wiped Out  
**NAZIS' BESTIAL EXTERMINATION PLAN**

The text of this article was formed almost word for word from the Jewish Telegraphic Agency reports of 26, 28, 29 and 30 June. Thus the Bund Report was reprinted in full and both Zygielbojm and the Chief Rabbi's recent radio broadcasts were covered at length. However, on page six the paper introduced new information. It reported that the Nazis had closed Jewish schools in Germany and deported the schoolchildren to the Ukraine. The children, it explained, had been ordered to 'make themselves ready for the journey to the Ukraine at a few hours notice. They were allowed to take with them only 25 pounds of hand luggage'. 'The Nazis in Berlin', it added, 'have begun a systematic deportation of Jews to the East. The first group of deportees included the President of the Berlin Jewish Community, Heinrich Stahl, who is 74 years old, and his wife. Together with them the inmates of Berlin Jewish homes for the aged have been deported to an unknown destination in Eastern Europe. Reports indicate that the large-scale deportation of Jews has been resumed not only in Berlin but throughout Germany.' They were in fact being deported to the death camps in Poland.<sup>97</sup> On page seven the paper printed the text of an interview between a Jewish Chronicle correspondent and a Polish doctor who had just escaped from Poland. The correspondent enquired: 'tell me, doctor, ...are the reports of these terrible mass murders of Jews in Poland in any way exaggerated?' The doctor had emphatically replied: 'not at all, ...some of these reports do not tell a fraction of the tragic truth'.

The bold heading to the paper's leader was all the more powerful for its simplicity:

**M A S S A C R E**

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<sup>97</sup>Talk of German deportees being sent to the Ukraine was all part of the Nazi deception plan intended to make sure the Jews remained as unaware of their real fate as possible, thus aiding the smooth running of the extermination process. See Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, pp. 343-344, for Dov Freiberg's account of how a German used to address Jews just before they were sent to the gas chambers at Sobibor.

The leader-writer declared that the recent reports 'read like tales from the imagination of some drug-maddened creature seeking to portray a nightmare of hell'. 'The average mind', he said, 'simply cannot believe the reality of such sickening revelations, or that men, even the vilest and most bestial, could be found to perpetrate such disgusting orgies of sadistic mania.' Since the writer evidently understood the tendency to dismiss atrocity stories, he took great care to underline the veracity of the recent revelations:

And so there may be some who, hoping against hope, will be disposed to cry out that these things simply cannot be, and that, at least, the reports must surely have been exaggerated. There is little consolation to be had in such pathetic clutching at straws, for even if only one tithe of the reports are true, they would still be utterly revolting: unhappily there is only too much ground for the belief that even now the whole story has not been told....No longer do the Nazis airily dismiss these terrible reports as greuelpropaganda. They, themselves, on the contrary, have unblushingly proclaimed the extermination of the Jews as the goal of their policy. Goebbels only a few days ago, repeating the threat of extermination of Jews in the whole of Europe, added, "and probably elsewhere too." Further, the SCHWARZE KORPS, organ of Hitler's S.S., supported this with the announcement that the Jew's physical extermination must from now on be "the aim of Germany and her allies". In the light of these statements from their own mouths, what hope can there be that the facts may be even a little less than the terrible reports?

'Exaggerations?', he asked, ' "Not at all," says the escaped doctor, reported in these columns this week. He was once an anti-Semitic Polish Endek, so he is unlikely to have been prejudiced by undue sympathy with Jews. "Some of these reports," he declares, "do not tell a fraction of the tragic truth". '

In the light of this the leader-writer further developed his observation that the annihilation of the Jews of Europe was being centrally organised. He had perceived that massacre on this scale could not be the mere product of anarchical destruction by retreating soldiers, but had to have official sanction and direction. 'It is of the utmost importance to emphasise', he said, 'that all these devilries are not performed in heat or passion or panic. They are conceived in furtherance of high Nazi policy - the "geopolitik". 'Let it always be remembered', the writer warned, 'they practise murder not in hot blood or in panic, but cold-bloodedly and as part of a plan elaborated with Teutonic cunning and ingenuity.' 'All history provides no precedent', he declared, 'It is murder as a fine art, such as the blackest of barbarisms have never dreamed of.'

In his concluding paragraph the writer appealed for an 'indignant protest against the bloody Nazi conspiracy [to] be heard in the mother of Parliaments'. 'Some voice must be given to popular disgust at the present revelations', he declared. 'Upon the churches lies that tremendous moral obligation. To such German anti-Nazis as

there may be, there must be brought home the depth and intensity of the excretion their murder gang has aroused.' Moreover, he pleaded that the Government should give to Jews the immediate satisfaction of bearing arms under a Jewish flag so that they could 'strike back.' 'If Hitler is out to destroy the Jewish body', he finished, 'Britain, of all the lands, may be asked not to help him, however unintentionally, by strangling the Jewish soul.'

On 3 July Zygielbojm and Schwarzbart (attempting to rouse the public conscience) submitted the Bund report and a copy of the latter's statement at the W.J.C. Press conference of 29 June to all members of the Houses of Parliament. Schwarzbart's statement was also sent to high church dignitaries, to the professors of British universities and to judges of the high courts. In an accompanying letter Zygielbojm pleaded with the Parliamentarians to 'undertake immediately all possible steps to secure the initiation of a special action by the Governments of Great Britain, the United States of America and all other Allied nations to bring pressure to bear on the German Government to stop the slaughter of an entire nation before it is too late'.<sup>98</sup> This literature produced an immediate response from Cardinal Hinsley, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, and William Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury. On Wednesday 8 July Cardinal Hinsley 'powerfully denounced' the atrocities against Jews and non-Jews in Poland on the B.B.C. European Service. He declared: 'In Poland alone the Nazis have massacred 700,000 Jews since the outbreak of war. Must we not appeal to reason? A Jew is a man, and among rational civilised people no man can be condemned unless he is tried and found guilty. But the Nazis have done to death without the semblance of justice countless innocent peoples of the non-Aryan race. Innocent blood cries to heaven for vengeance; the Lord will repay in His own good time.'<sup>99</sup> Cardinal Hinsley affirmed the veracity of the latest atrocity reports and rebuked those who continued to dismiss 'even the clearest evidence with the sneer, "Oh! British propaganda." "But mighty is the truth; murder will out".'<sup>100</sup> In a speech on the same day, the Archbishop of Canterbury said that he desired 'to voice the protest against the new victims which the mania of the Germans has again offered to the bloodthirsty monarch of racialism in Poland....We cannot find words strong enough to castigate so terrible a violation of human and Divine law.'

Although these were undoubtedly the strongest public denunciations yet made by anyone of Church or State of the recent revelations, the Press remained largely

<sup>98</sup>Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 5 July 1942, Page 3.

<sup>99</sup>Jewish Chronicle, 10 July 1942, Page 1.

<sup>100</sup>Daily Telegraph, 9 July 1942, Page 5.

silent; only the Daily Telegraph and The Times reported these two important protests. That of the Daily Telegraph was by far the most substantial of the two papers. It printed its report on 9 July as the leading article on page five. It was 130 lines in length and covered two columns. The article consisted wholly of exhaustive quotations from the Cardinal's speech and its bold headlines proclaimed:

NAZI OVERLORDS "REVEL  
IN SADISM AND MURDER"

CARDINAL HINSLEY DENOUNCES  
ATROCITIES IN POLAND

The Times gave the report of Cardinal Hinsley's broadcast much more moderate treatment by placing it in the middle of page two and apportioning it only 43 lines of text - less than a third the size of the Daily Telegraph's article. It was headlined:

CARDINAL HINSLEY ON  
NAZI ATROCITIES

Even as these two papers were being sold a Press Conference was being chaired by the Minister of Information, Brendan Bracken. Also present was Stanislaw Mikolajczyk (Polish Minister of the Interior), Stanislaw Stronski (Polish Minister of Information), and Zygielbojm and Schwarzbart. Bracken assured the assembled Press representatives that those guilty of atrocities in Poland would be speedily brought to justice at the end of the war and 'tried as murderers, which they are'. 'The punishments will be in many cases', he concluded, 'the most severe known to any law.' Bracken's declaration had followed statements by Zygielbojm and Mikolajczyk. Zygielbojm restated the facts of the Bund Report. He understood, he said, that the facts of the atrocities were so horrific as to be difficult to believe but he had personal experience of the inhumanity of the Nazis. 'I wore the yellow badge all Jews are forced to wear', he declared. 'I lived in the ghetto when it started - when the Germans expelled tens of thousands of Jews, beaten and robbed of all their possessions, from their homes in Warsaw. I saw with my own eyes hundreds of acts of cruelty and murders that made one's blood curdle, and I have been more than once the victim of those cruelties.' The Germans, he added, were carrying out a deliberate plan to exterminate Jews and already in some towns there was not a Jew left alive. He asserted that the figure of 700,000 Jewish dead in Poland had to be accepted as true.

However, Zygielbojm was immediately contradicted in essence and some significant details by Mikolajczyk. Mikolajczyk placed Jewish suffering against a tapestry of wider Polish suffering; thus Jews were presented as primarily suffering for being part of the Polish nation rather than for being Jewish. He enumerated a figure of dead which directly contradicted that given by Zygielbojm just a few minutes before: in his estimation 400,000 Polish citizens (200,000 Poles and 200,000 Jews) had been killed by the Nazis since the beginning of the war. In addition to this, he said, 1,500,000 Poles had been deported to Germany for forced labour since the beginning of the war, whilst another 200,000 remained as prisoners of war. Thus, he concluded (in obvious deference to Zygielbojm), that the Germans were aiming at the extermination of the whole of the Polish population to make it possible to include the whole territory in their 'living space'.

Mikolajczyk's figures implied that the Bund Report's claim that 700,000 Jews had been exterminated was inaccurate by over 70%. Henceforth a thinking newspaper man might well have considered that if the Bund Report had exaggerated the figure of dead so wildly had it exaggerated other 'facts'? He now had cause to doubt all the details of the report, and everything that sounded fantastic or too horrific might be disregarded as exaggeration. Moreover, the accuracy of future reports concerning atrocities against Jews were now also placed further in doubt.

Although the Daily Telegraph's report of the Press Conference was the most comprehensive and balanced of the Press, the paper now shrank back somewhat from its apparent policy of exposing crimes against Jews on Polish soil. In its editorial of 10 July, for example, the paper commented on the recent revelations of the massacre of Jews in Poland. However, the editorial spoke throughout of the German plan and desire to exterminate the *Poles* as a race and nation and ignored the Jewish identity of the majority of the victims. The current 'merciless pillage and wholesale massacre', the paper said, was aimed just as much at the 'extermination of Polish national life and culture' as that of the Kaiser's regime. 'The difference is not of intention', it added, 'but of the degree of ruthlessness in the execution....The same pan-German tradition was at work in the pre-1914 as in the post-1939 era, only in a less totalitarian form.'

The Times' article on the Press Conference, written by its Diplomatic Correspondent Iverach McDonald, was 85 lines in length and was printed at the top of the fourth column on page three. It reported only Mikolajczyk's statement from the Conference, thus neglecting those of Zygielbojm and Schwarzbart. The News



Chronicle's 74 line article was printed as its leader on its back page. Its headlines stressed:

NEW ORDER IN POLAND  
MEANS THE DELIBERATE  
EXTERMINATION OF A PEOPLE

The effect of Mikolajczyk's statement can be clearly seen in the first few lines of this article, as the paper summarised what it believed the main points of the Conference were: 'HOW Germany is deliberately attempting to exterminate the *Poles* as a race - and especially hundreds of thousands of Jews - was related yesterday in London by the Polish Deputy Premier, Mikolajczyk, and other members of the Polish Government, introduced by Mr. Brendan Bracken, Minister of Information.'<sup>101</sup> Whilst the rest of the article was largely taken up with reporting Mikolajczyk's statement, only seven lines were accorded to Schwarzbart's statement and none at all to Zygielbojm's.

A few short lines from the Observer's 'NOTES OF THE WEEK' column of 12 July serve to illustrate further the effects of Mikolajczyk's statements at the Press Conference. At this juncture the Observer, which had hitherto not made any mention of any of the details contained in the Bund Report, found sufficient space to report unequivocally that 'the toll of the Gestapo's victims in Poland has reached the 400,000 mark'. The figure of 700,000 dead for Polish Jewry had clearly been too high for the paper to believe, but now that the figure of dead had been officially stated to have been much smaller it had no qualms about declaring that 'Germany's intention is extermination, not submission. The land is being cleared systematically - Lebensraum for Herrenvolk - and the mass executions are being carried out as often as not by machine-gun'. It concluded: 'No scepticism about "atrocities," no easy sentimentalism must stand in the way of justice. There can be no pacification in Europe, no co-operative living together until the shedding of this innocent blood has been expiated to the full'. But whose blood? The Jews were the head, not the tail of German atrocities in Poland.

It is apparent that the national Press, unlike the Anglo-Jewish Press, had not been quickened by the latest reports of the extermination of Jews in Poland. Indeed, instead of causing the newspapers to take more notice of the fate of the Jews of Europe, these reports had actually confirmed them in their indifference - with disastrous results. From the second half of July to the beginning of September a plethora of reports of the extermination of Eastern European Jewry reached the British

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<sup>101</sup>Italics mine.

Press. However, the Jewish Chronicle was the main, and often the *only* mouthpiece for these reports; it truly was 'a voice crying in the wilderness'. On 17 July the Jewish Chronicle related that American informants recently repatriated from Rumania had described to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency 'savage pogroms carried out by Rumanian troops under German direction in the reconquered provinces of Bukovina and Bessarabia'. 'No accurate figures are available on the total number of victims', it said, 'but it is known that in the vicinity of Kishinev alone 60,000 Jews were massacred. Only 9,000 Jews remained alive in this area after the Nazi commanded firing squads had finished their work.' It added:

There is no doubt, the Americans declare, that the Germans were determined to exterminate the Jewish population of Europe, but wanted to do it in such a way that they would not bear the odium of carnage.

In an article on page six the Jewish Chronicle also told of how 'a new concentration camp for Jews has been established in Belsyce [Belzec], in the Lublin district. About 9,000 Jews deported from Holland, Germany, Austria, Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia are already interned there, and the conditions are said to be horrifying. Executions occur daily.'

In its 24 July edition, the Jewish Chronicle revealed that Jewish deportees from Slovakia were understood to have been sent 'mainly to the Polish towns of Chelm, Lukow, and Medzereszc-Podalski, and to the notorious concentration camp in Oswiecim'.<sup>102</sup> Another article explained that large scale massacres were continuing in the Ukraine. 'The Nazi invaders of the Ukraine', it said, 'continue the mass executions of Jews....Horrible reports of Nazi outrages against Jews in Rumania and Transnistria (Rumanian occupied Ukraine) recently reached Palestine. The reports tell of Jews who were driven from their homes and burnt alive, or compelled to lie on roads, whereupon they were crushed to death by tanks passing over their bodies.' It added:

An eye-witness account of the mass-murder of Jews in Odessa by the Nazis has been published in the Moscow press. S. Kiebanov, a Jew who succeeded in fleeing from Odessa to the Soviet front tells how 25,000 Odessa Jews - men, women, and children - were crowded into barracks and machine-gunned. Later the barracks were set on fire and survivors burned alive.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>102</sup>Chelm lay on a direct rail line to the nearby death camp at Sobibor; similarly Lukow lay on a direct rail line to Majdanek.

<sup>103</sup>The fundamental accuracy of this information must be stressed; although the death rate was actually much higher than was stated in this report. For a good description of this incident see Gilbert, The Holocaust, pp. 217-218.

The paper's editorial recounted the details of an eye-witness report of the massacre of 5,000 Jews in Kerch in the Crimea. Josef Weingarten, who had managed to escape the massacre, had told of how the Nazis had rounded up Jews in Kerch every day. They had then been herded into trucks, and transported 'to their death under the pretext that they were being sent to work in the fields'. Weingarten had described the scene he had encountered as he, himself, was being taken to be murdered:

Approaching the village of Bagrow, we saw open trenches filled with bodies of well-known Kerch Jews. Piles of shoes and clothing lay near the huge graves....The trucks stopped at one of the trenches and we were ordered to undress completely and get into the pits. I shall never forget the lamentations of the women and children begging the murderers for their lives. Merciless laughter was the reply of the Nazis.<sup>104</sup>

Weingarten's story was given fuller coverage in the next week's issue of the Jewish Chronicle. It formed part of a lengthy article in which eye-witness reports of other massacres were also recounted. Four Jewish women, who had succeeded in escaping from Vitebsk, told how the Nazis had massacred 24,000 Jews in Vitebsk in the first few weeks after the fall of the city. Jacob Uzdinksy, from Ozorich, described how the Nazis had slaughtered 800 Jews from the town of Letchich in White Russia and many others from Yelsk.

Significantly, the Jewish Chronicle's leader on the front page of its 31 July issue proclaimed that there was a pattern to the reports of deportations of Jews, and that, therefore, the deportations of Jews from all over Europe to the East had to be seen as part of a co-ordinated plan. The article is worth quoting at length.

THE GREAT EXILE  
Europe's Jews Sent  
East  
NAZIS' INFAMOUS PLAN

While Istanbul reports declare that the German police have received orders that every Jew still remaining in Germany must be deported to Poland by tomorrow, news comes from Poland that the Nazis have started a mass expulsion of Jews from the Warsaw ghetto to an unspecified destination in the East.

It seems that simultaneously Jews are leaving the Reich crowded in cattle-trucks and that trainloads are also moving East from Warsaw.

A vast transference of the Jewish population of Europe is obviously in progress. The Warsaw deportations are said to have been accompanied by the mass slaughter of Jews considered unfit for manual work. A Jewish Telegraphic Agency message states: "Shootings are taking place in the streets, and Gestapo detachments are searching houses for people to be executed."

<sup>104</sup>Weingarten was only wounded in the massacre and stole out of the mass grave after dark and managed to escape to the Russian lines where he received medical treatment.

From Vienna, the deportation of Jews to Polish ghettos continues unabated. The only innovation lately introduced is that instead of the deportees three days' notice they are now being taken from their homes without notice. Even the inmates of a home for the Jewish blind have been deported. A number of them committed suicide.

From Holland likewise, comes news of Jews being deported eastwards. Every day, 600 of them, aged between 18 and 40, begin the ghastly journey. Altogether, 60,000...are scheduled for moving. Their property will be confiscated by the Nazis.

The tightening up of anti-Jewish measures, in Belgium is interpreted as indicating that preparations are being made by the Nazis for the mass deportation of Belgian Jews.

#### Round-up in France

Children from the age of eight are among the 28,000 refugees from Axis-conquered countries in Europe who have been rounded up in France during the past few days and sent to concentration camps. They are to be sent, it is believed to Upper Silesia [where Auschwitz was located]. The men have been taken to a concentration camp at Compiègne, the women to Nancy, and the children, separated from their parents, to the Winter Sports Palace in Paris.

The Nazis in occupied France have warned all foreign Jews liable to deportation to Eastern Europe to surrender to the police voluntarily and not to wait until their hiding places are discovered, otherwise they will be shot. A warning has also been issued to non-Jews that persons found sheltering or assisting alien Jews to hide from the authorities are themselves liable to deportation to Eastern Europe and may, in certain cases, be executed.

Indescribable scenes of despair among the Jews faced with arrest and deportation are reported by THE TIMES. Whole families are said to have committed suicide. All through the week, along the whole demarcation line, especially along the banks of the rivers Cher and Saone Jews were shot attempting to escape into unoccupied France.

The Vichy Government has meanwhile begun to expel alien Jews from unoccupied France in order to facilitate their deportation together with those from occupied France.

A week later the Jewish Chronicle printed more information about the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto. 'Warsaw Jews selected for deportations eastwards (it is revealed by Mr. Zygielbojm of the Polish National Council) have not only been allowed to take 30lb. of hand luggage with them, but were specifically ordered to include in their luggage any jewellery they might possess. This indicates that they are not being taken for forced labour, but may be executed, possibly in the woods near Warsaw.'

Indeed, on 19 July 1942 Himmler had ordered that the entire Jewish population of the General Government be 'resettled', *i.e.* exterminated, by 31 December 1942. Preparations were accordingly made for the 'resettlement' of the Warsaw Ghetto, which represented the largest concentration of Jews in Europe. On 21 July the Gestapo raided the Ghetto, seizing three members of the *Judenrat* and fifty-three other Jews, and shooting others in their homes. The next day, Hermann Höfle, the Plenipotentiary

in charge of the deportations, ordered Adam Czerniakow (chairman of the *Judenrat*) to prepare contingents of six thousand Jews, 'irrespective of sex and age, with certain exceptions', to be 'deported to the East'.<sup>105</sup> That same day the Ghetto was surrounded by Ukrainian and Latvian S.S. guards and the round-ups began, with Jewish children being initially targeted. Czerniakow committed suicide on 23 July when the Germans increased the daily quota of deportees to seven thousand. The first wave of deportations from the Warsaw Ghetto to Treblinka continued until 12 September; during this period 265,000 Jews were 'resettled'.<sup>106</sup>

Meanwhile Polish Resistance sent daily reports of the deportations to the Polish Government in London; their common theme, as Stefan Korbonski (head of the Directorate of Civil Resistance) put it in his cable of 26 July, was that the deported 'were taken away to meet certain death'. 'The Germans', Korbonski said, 'have begun the slaughter of the Warsaw ghetto'.<sup>107</sup> Korbonski's and other reports formed the basis of both a *Reuter* and a *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* release on 27 July. However, these cables were largely ignored by the British Press. Only the *News Chronicle* printed information from the *Reuter* cable.<sup>108</sup> It was accorded 24 lines at the bottom of the first column of the front page of its 28 July edition:

Mass Expulsion of  
Warsaw Jews

The Germans have started the mass expulsion of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto, with the aim of their extermination, according to news reaching the Polish Government in London.

Posters have appeared in the streets ordering, as a first step, the deportation of 6,800 Jews to an unspecified destination in the East.

Already two trainloads crowded to suffocation, have left Warsaw.

It is feared that when they reach their destination they will be executed as Jews deported from other Polish towns have been.

Near Wlodzimierz, in Eastern Poland, there is a common grave nearly a mile long containing the bodies of many thousands of massacred Jews.

Why did the Press remain silent? The answer probably lies in what the Ministry of Information and the Foreign Office News Department were at that moment communicating to the Press as to the veracity of the information. Owing to the absence of files in the Public Record Office this cannot be known with any certainty, but it seems probable from those sources we do have that the British Government viewed

<sup>105</sup>Adam Czerniakow's diary entry for 22 July 1942. See Raul Hilberg, Stanislaw Staron and Josef Kermisz (editors), *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow: Prelude to Doom*, (New York, 1979), p. 384. Quoted by Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, p. 388.

<sup>106</sup>Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, pp. 388-389.

<sup>107</sup>Quoted by Lukas, *The Forgotten Holocaust*, Kentucky 1986, p. 156.

<sup>108</sup>The *Daily Express* also printed the report on 28 July 1942. See Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, p. 174.

these reports with extreme scepticism. Walter Laqueur comments that although there was no 'systematic cover-up' of the information (in that case the news would not have reached the News Chronicle at all) 'the news was simply played down, and it was made the easier because it was always possible to claim that there was no confirmation from independent sources'. When it came to the crunch the British Press was always unwilling to risk a repeat of the fiasco of the last war's atrocity reports to which it had given substantial publicity but which had later proved to be false. It is likely, therefore, that the Government's attitude as to the veracity of these (and other) reports of atrocities weighed heavily upon the newspapers as they decided whether to print or not. Walter Laqueur has also observed that 'it is certainly true that the British Foreign Office, by and large, thought the information either unreliable or exaggerated', and that, 'those mainly responsible seem to have been some officials in the Foreign Office Intelligence Department'.<sup>109</sup> An indication of this is that the British run Polish radio station *Swit*, which masqueraded as a Polish resistance transmitter based on Polish soil, maintained a complete silence with regard to the Warsaw deportations. General Bor Komorowski, deputy commander of the Polish Home Army, later observed that 'there seemed to be only one possible explanation for this silence on the part of London. The news was so incredible that it had failed to convince.' He added that 'we ourselves had, after all, been loathe to believe the first reports we received of the exterminations. I was to learn later that this was, in fact, what happened.'<sup>110</sup> Moreover, it is clear from Stefan Korbonski's testimony that a number of officials in the Polish Government in Exile did not believe the reports either, and that it took time for the information to sink in:

This game lasted for a couple of days and evidently due to the daily alarm of the London station, the government finally replied. The telegram did not explain much. It said literally: 'Not all your telegrams are fit for publication.' I racked my brains trying to understand the meaning. Here they were deporting and murdering 7,000 people a day and London believed this was not fit for publication. Had they lost their heads - or what? It was only a month later that the BBC gave the news based on our information and only many months later the matter was explained to me by a government courier parachuted into Poland: They didn't believe your telegrams, the Polish government did not believe them nor did the British. They said you were exaggerating a bit in your anti-German propaganda. Only when the British received confirmation from their own sources the panic set in and the BBC broadcast your news.<sup>111</sup>

On 11 August Korbonski sent news of Czerniakow's suicide to the Polish Government in London. However, when the first article reporting Czerniakow's suicide

<sup>109</sup>Laqueur, *op. cit.*, p.113.

<sup>110</sup>Bor Komorowski, *The Secret Army*, (London, 1950), p. 101.

<sup>111</sup>Stefan Korbonski, *W Imieniu Rzeczypospolitej*, (Paris, 1954). Quoted by Laquer, *op cit.*, p. 113.

was printed, by The Observer on 16 August, the attributed source was not the Polish Government in London, but a cable from the Zurich correspondent of the Reuters news agency, dated 15 August; it is undeniable therefore that it was available equally to the British Press. Even so, of the Sunday papers surveyed only The Observer printed it, according it 36 lines and placing it at the bottom of the fourth column on page 8. The 'probable' extermination of the estimated 100,000 deportees was presented as coincidental to the news of Czerniakow's suicide.

#### JEWISH MAYOR'S SUICIDE

##### "Impossible" Demand of Nazis

The Mayor of the notorious Jewish ghetto of Warsaw, L.M. Czerniakov [*sic.*], has committed suicide.

He took his life with poison that he always carried with him, ready to die if the Germans ever demanded "the impossible" from him.

He took it because the German authorities, deciding that the ghetto was "overcrowded" - there are between half a million and 550,000 Jews within its walls - decided that at least 100,000 people should be deported from Warsaw to "an unknown destination in the East."

This was believed to be somewhere in the occupied Russian territory. Czerniakow knew that the 100,00 would most probably be massacred.

He was ordered by the Germans personally to prepare and submit the list of his people to be deported, at the rate of 7,000 daily, so that the 100,000 should have left within fortnight.

After the Germans entered Warsaw, Czerniakow acted as chairman of the Jewish Board of Deputies, and tried his utmost to protect the rights of his people through many negotiations with the Nazi authorities. - Reuter.

Of Monday's (17 August) national dailies only The Times ventured to print the Reuters cable. This was the first time that readers of The Times had read in their paper of the deportations from the Warsaw Ghetto.<sup>112</sup> The article was placed inconspicuously at the bottom of the fifth column of page three. The headlines could hardly have attracted much attention since they seemed to suggest that the ensuing article merely reported the death of the Jewish Mayor of the Warsaw Ghetto, rather than the liquidation of the Ghetto itself:

#### SUICIDE BY MAYOR OF WARSAW GHETTO

ZURICH. Aug. 15. - The mayor of the Jewish ghetto of Warsaw, L. M. Czerniakov, has committed suicide, it is learned here. He took his life with poison that he always carried with him, ready to die if the Germans ever demanded "the impossible" from him. He took it because the German authorities, considering that the ghetto was

<sup>112</sup>It was also its last reference to the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto until 22 December 1942.

"overcrowded" - there are more than half a million Jews within its walls - decided that at least 100,000 should be deported to "an unknown destination in the east." Czerniakov, who knew that the 100,000 would most probably be massacred, was ordered by the Germans personally to prepare and submit the list of his people to be deported at the rate of 7,000 daily. - Reuter.<sup>113</sup>

Curiously, while most newspapers observed a total silence over the reports of the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto a number of reports of atrocities against Jews in the Soviet Union managed to penetrate the 'wall of silence'. For instance, on 27 July Piers England, in The People, described in painful, graphic detail the destruction of a Jewish sect at Mlicka in the Carpathian mountains. The article received first-class treatment; it was 350 lines in length, and covered four columns at the top of the third page. Its bold headlines declared:

Only a Child  
Survived To Tell  
Of the Martyr-  
dom Of These  
Village People

### THE VICTIMS OF MLICKA

Piers England, who had regularly described Nazi atrocities in his weekly column, was acutely conscious of how the average mind found it difficult to believe atrocity reports. As a result he took great pains to communicate as effectively as possible the 'unbelievable' details contained in this report of the massacre at Mlicka. This was not a straight recounting of horrific facts which left the reader unmoved, but a vivid recreation of the massacre in the imagination of the reader. Piers England established both the humanity and innocence of the victims.<sup>114</sup> He described the devastating psychological effect that the massacre had had upon its only survivor, a young 13 year old girl. 'She will never be healthy', he declared. 'She has seen more than any human being was designed to see. Certain images [of the atrocity] are fixed, as it were, in the visual centres of her brain, like pictures on a spooled photographic plate.' 'Mlicka was a hamlet', he continued, 'occupied by a strange and gentle sect of Jews. It clung to the uplands in the shadow of the Carpathians. It was made up of ten or eleven little houses and a larger house strongly built of heavy logs. Where is Mlicka now?

<sup>113</sup>This article also appeared in the early editions of The Times on 18 August, when it was moved to the middle of the second column on page 3.

<sup>114</sup>Ministry of Information experts had observed that the general public thought that people who had been specially selected as victims had in some way brought persecution on themselves. See McLaine, *op. cit.*, (London, 1979), pp. 164-6.



Dust and ashes on the thirty-two winds of the world! And so are its people.' They had been a 'tremendously pious' people; 'their religion...was all they cared about. The men passed most of their days and nights in studying their holy books. The women tended the tiny houses and the little children. The wealth of the community consisted of a flock of about sixty sheep, five cows, a few fields of corn, and gardens of vegetables. They wove their own cloth; lived peacefully, hidden in their little remote place, and were harmless, engrossed and happy'. But then the Nazis came. The community of thirty-two had seen a force of Nazis in the distance and had immediately taken refuge in their Synagogue. It took time for the Germans to beat down the heavy Synagogue doors. In the meantime the Jews inside, certain of impending death, said their farewells. As the door began to crack the men folk killed their women so that they could not be shamed. 'I heard my mother's sister say to her husband: "Steady your hand, my beloved, and strike firmly." And he had his knife out, and he did so, and she fell, and I heard her cry out: "Hear O Israel!"'. But the little girl's father could not kill his daughter, and covered her with her mother's blood-soaked shawl. She fainted, and when eventually she regained consciousness she 'ran out, screaming and laughing and crying. The wicked men had gone. I could see them going slowly down the valley. I ran away. Mlicka was burning like a lamp. I do not know what happened after that....My mother looked so cold!' Piers England stressed that 'the bloodshed at Mlicka was only a drop in that steaming spate which the Nazis [have] let loose', and declared in conclusion: 'We must fight Nazism to the bitter end.'

This article was by far the longest yet written in 1942 on the subject of atrocities against Jews; it was, moreover, skilfully written. This story must surely have penetrated even the hardest of the hearts of some of the four million regular readers of The People. The Jewish Chronicle (7 August) commented that the 'tragic tale' of Mlicka had been 'touchingly told by Mr. Piers England, in a recent issue of the PEOPLE', but, clearly feeling the sting of the Press' silence over atrocities against Jews, it added: 'Lidice? How many Jewish Lidices have marked the rapine-march of the Nazi blood-lust? If only some of the newspapers would have a little more space for the Jewish martyrdoms, and a little less for the comparatively speaking trivial misdemeanours of a handful of Jewish renegades [*i.e.* black-marketeers].'

On 15 August the Daily Telegraph printed a 73 line article in the middle of its third page; its bold headlines stretched over two columns:

**NAZIS KILL 72,000 JEWS IN  
RUSSIAN CITY**

The Telegraph's New York correspondent reported that, according to the Overseas News Agency, 'an eye-witness account of the massacre of 72,000 Jews in Nazi-occupied Minsk has been made public in Kuibyshev to-day by the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee'. Sophia Ozejskaya, he said, had submitted an affidavit describing the massacre of over 35,000 Jews 'including infants, children and women' on 7 November 1941; 18,000 in a second execution on 23 February 1942; another 8,000 'mostly women' on 8 March 1942; and a further 11,000 on 29 April 1942. Accounts of the massacres were printed under the sub-heading 'DRIVEN INTO THE STREETS'.

Describing the first mass executions, Miss Ozejskaya said in her affidavit: "On Nov. 7, the anniversary of the Russian revolution, armed Fascist detachments broke into the Jewish ghetto at five a.m., surrounded five Jewish streets, and drove all men, women and children into the streets.

"This mass of Jewish people was then driven to the nearest square, lined up, placed on trucks and taken outside the city limits. There, near a former German cemetery beyond Calvaria, with the aid of explosives the Fascists had already made long deep ditches.

"The German soldiers first began to throw infants and children into the ditches alive. Babies were thrown into the ditches on top of the children.

"Next came the men. The Fascists then opened fire with machine-guns. The sun was already setting when the shooting ceased.

"The Fascists covered the common graves with a layer of sand. People living in the vicinity reported that some Jews succeeded later in digging their way out of the sand-covered graves. They were hidden in adjacent gardens and helped to escape."

On 17 August the Daily Herald printed its article, headed 'MASSACRED 72,000 MINSK JEWS'. Whereas the Daily Telegraph had obtained its information from an Overseas News Agency cable, the Herald took a Reuter message as for its source. In the event, it printed a much shorter account of the massacres than had the Daily Telegraph.

The coolness of the Press toward reports of the liquidation of Jews in Poland is startlingly apparent from its treatment of important new information which appeared in the Jewish Chronicle on 21 August. The headlines of the Jewish Chronicle's front page leader declared:

DEATH IN THE GAS  
CHAMBER  
Gruesome Story from  
Poland

The paper reported that 'Horrible details of the execution in mobile gas chambers of thousands of Polish Jews in the woods between the cities of Kolo and Chelmn, in the western part of Poland...were revealed at a meeting of Polish workers in New York.' It

added that the information had come from 'three of the Jewish gravediggers who were assigned by the Nazis to bury the dead in mass-graves as they were carted from the gas chambers. The three Jews succeeded in escaping from the dungeon in Chelmno castle in which they were confined each night after they had finished their gruesome work'. This was clearly dramatic news. The Free-World now had eye-witness evidence of the use of gas vans at the Chelmno death camp; and, moreover, their testimony was extraordinarily accurate.<sup>115</sup> They stated that the killings at Chelmno had begun at the end of 1941, when Jews from the district of Konon and the towns of Kolo, Dambie-on-Narew, Klodowa, Izbitz, and Bugaj, were 'taken to unknown destinations' and gassed at Chelmno. On 15 January 1942, it added, groups of Jews were deported to Chelmno from the Lodz ghetto. 'The first group was composed of 750 families, comprising about 3,000 persons. Other contingents followed.' The gravediggers faithfully exposed the workings of the camp; of the deceptions employed by the Germans so that their victims were unaware of their ultimate fate, the 'showers', and the technicalities of the gas vans themselves. Deportees, they reported, were stripped of all their belongings when they arrived at Chelmno's church. From here they were sent to Chelmno castle, 'a one-storey remnant of a palace ruined during the last war':

There the Jews were taken to an underground corridor where one of the group - who later turned out to be an S.S. officer - told them that they would all be returned to [the] Lodz ghetto where they would get jobs, but first they must bathe at the castle and have their clothes disinfected. Once the Jews had removed all their clothing, they were taken to a door which actually was a platform from which they were loaded on to large grey trucks with hermetically sealed rear doors. Once the Jews had been jammed inside, the truck proceeded to the woods, about four miles distant, in the direction of Kolo. There it halted at the execution place in a clearing which was surrounded by German police armed with machine guns. In one corner of the clearing was a large pit around which stood S.S. men, police, some civilians, and groups of Jewish gravediggers. As soon as the truck arrived at a spot about 100 yards from the pit, the chauffeur, who also served as executioner, turned on the gas apparatus which he controlled from the front of the motor truck.

As the gas seeped up from vents in the bottom of the body of the truck, anguished cries and poundings could be heard from the interior of the vehicle. After about fifteen minutes, usually, the noise stopped and the driver would go to the back of the truck and through a window located behind the driver's seat, peer to see if all the Jews were dead. When he had assured himself of that the truck was driven to the foot of the mass-grave and four of the Jewish gravediggers would be forced to drag the bodies out of the gas chamber and throw them down to their comrades waiting in the pit below.

But before the Jews were buried - the head of one at the feet of another in order to provide more burial space - German civilians examined each corpse, pulling off rings, and locketts and extracting metal fillings from teeth. When the bottom of the grave was filled, another layer of victims would be placed on top of those already there.

<sup>115</sup>See pages 212-223 of *'Those were the Days'. The Holocaust through the Eyes of Perpetrators and Bystanders*, by Ernst Klee, Willi Dressen and Volker Riess, (London, 1991).

This testimony had clearly confirmed one of the most horrific of the allegations contained in the Bund Report: that poison gas was being used in the extermination of tens of thousands of Jews. It also confirmed that the term 'deportation to an unknown destination' actually meant deportation for the purpose of *mass extermination*. That the Press remained far from convinced is evinced by the fact that the gravediggers' testimony only found its way into two of the national papers studied: the News Chronicle on 2 September and the Daily Telegraph on 3 September. The reluctance of the Press to give publicity to the gravediggers' report mirrored (and may have resulted from) the scepticism of both the Polish and British Governments. As soon as the gravediggers' report was published in the Jewish Press, Geoffrey Mander, M.P., tabled a Parliamentary question for 10 September: 'Mr. Mander.- To ask the Prime Minister, whether he has any statement to make with reference to the employment by the German Government of gas to murder a large number of Jews in Poland in mobile gas chambers; and if steps will be taken to interview the three men forced to act as gravediggers, who have now escaped, with a view to collecting evidence against the perpetrators of this new outrage.'<sup>116</sup> The Prime Minister, however, passed responsibility for answering the question to the Foreign Office, which, on 7 September, accordingly requested Frank Savery, the British Ambassador to Poland, to 'let us have a report early next week on the origin and reliability of these stories of gas chambers, or the whereabouts of the three escaped gravediggers, and on the views of the Polish Government, together with any material or suggestions which would help us in forming an answer for the Secretary of State'.<sup>117</sup> Savery discussed the matter with the Polish Ministry of Information and his reply arrived at the Foreign Office on the same day. Denis Allen of the Central Department promptly circulated a minute which gave details of Savery's findings. The Ambassador had reported, he said, that the gravediggers' story had been included in 'one of the periodical reports which the Polish Ministry of the Interior receive from their agents in Poland'. However, 'The official of the Polish Ministry of Information to whom Mr. Savery spoke was frankly sceptical of the truth of the story, although he admitted that he had no real means of checking its authenticity.' 'In spite of these doubts', he said, '(which may not have been shared by other members of the Polish Government), the story was apparently released to the Polish Social Information Bureau....Mr. Savery thinks that the release is probably attributable to the pressure of Polish Jewish interests in the Polish National Council.'<sup>118</sup> Certain difficulties were raised by Mander's question. Firstly, 'any reply to it might involve a risk of compromising the Polish Government's channels of communication

<sup>116</sup>A copy of Mr. Mander's question may be found at PRO FO 371/31097 piece 174.

<sup>117</sup>D. Allen to Frank Savery, 5/9/42, PRO FO 371/31097 piece 157.

<sup>118</sup>Presumably Zygielbojm and or Schwarzbart.

with Poland. Secondly, one of the Polish officials to whom he spoke, especially begged Mr. Savery that we should not say anything which might appear to cast doubt on the veracity of the Polish Government's sources of information. Thirdly, there is the fact that undue publicity in the House might involve further suffering for the Poles, in particular for the three gravediggers, who have so far escaped, and would only lead the Germans to be even more ruthless in order to ensure that on future occasions there should be no such survivors left to tell the tale'. Sir C. Dormer had suggested that the matter might be presented to Mr. Mander in the light of the above and 'that he should be asked on humanitarian grounds to withdraw his question'. If this was not considered to be the best solution Allen proposed that 'we shall merely have to return a very guarded reply on the lines that our attention has been drawn to the report in question, but the H.M.G. have no means of confirming it'. Frank Roberts noted underneath: 'I hope this can be withdrawn'; Sir Bernard Beauchamp also added: 'I think there are good grounds for asking Mr. Mander to withdraw'.<sup>119</sup> Sir Bernard Beauchamp consequently approached Mander, with the result that the question was withdrawn - on 'humanitarian grounds'.

The Foreign Office did not understand the significance of or believe the details contained in the gravediggers' report. Mander's question asked the Government to make a 'statement...with reference to the employment by the German Government of gas to murder a large number of Jews in Poland in mobile gas chambers'. It was thus an invitation to the Government to confirm and condemn the activities at Chelmno and elsewhere, a golden opportunity to unequivocally denounce the Nazi extermination of the Jews and promise retribution on those who perpetrated such crimes against humanity. But the evidence shows that such action was never even considered by the Foreign Office. Mander's question therefore placed the Foreign Office in a difficult situation; it was unwilling to confirm the gravediggers' testimony and hence could not condemn the German crimes, but neither could it 'say anything which might appear to cast doubt on the veracity of the Polish Government's sources of information'. In these circumstances only two options presented themselves; either Mander's question was withdrawn, or a totally non-committal reply would be given; the first option was chosen. The evidence suggests, however, that the Foreign Office's dilemma was not explained to Mander; rather, he was merely asked to withdraw his question 'on humanitarian grounds', and warned that his question would draw 'undue' attention to the gravediggers thus placing them and other 'Poles' in danger. However, the gravediggers' story had already been published in at least two of Britain's national newspapers, several American papers and given much attention in the Jewish Press on

<sup>119</sup>FO PRO 371/31097 piece 155.

both sides of the Atlantic; a question in the House of Commons would hardly have placed the gravediggers or others in any greater jeopardy of their lives than already existed. The Foreign Office thus emasculated the gravediggers' report, shunning the opportunity to confirm and condemn the German extermination of the Jews in Poland.

The Foreign Office position may well have impacted on the Press coverage of the gravediggers' report; journalists who called at the News Department seeking confirmation of their evidence would not have found it forthcoming. This may explain why only two of the newspapers studied printed details from the gravediggers' report. Indeed, it is clear from the treatment of their articles, and from the fact that they were printed almost two weeks after the Jewish Chronicle's report, that these two papers also possessed reservations about the veracity of the information. The News Chronicle placed its article at the top of the seventh column on its back page, and gave it the ambiguous headline:<sup>120</sup>

3,000 Were  
Taken from  
the Ghetto

As we shall see, in comparison to the Daily Telegraph, the News Chronicle printed a relatively full account of the gravediggers' report. Even so, a brief comparison with the Jewish Chronicle's article shows that the News Chronicle had stripped the testimony down to all but the essential facts. If the information was true then it was one of the greatest crimes in recorded history and should have been treated accordingly - with a more imaginative headline, positioning and size. However, the paper was not sure and so, while it must receive its due for printing the article when many papers failed to do so, it compromised on these essential points.

**THREE of 12 gravediggers forced to bury relatives, together with hundreds of Polish Jews killed in Nazi mobile gas chambers, have escaped to tell a truly grim story.**

The other nine were shot by the Gestapo and buried in the mass graves.

Three thousand men, women and children were taken away from the Lodz ghetto to the castle at Chelmno, 50 miles away, on January 15. First they were put into a heated barn, and told they were to take a bath before being taken to "do some work."

#### TWO BIG MOTOR-VANS

Soon they were pushed into a corridor leading to a platform, at the end of which were the gas chambers: two big motor vans with air-tight doors, metal lined.

<sup>120</sup>The headline said nothing of the main point of the article which followed - that *eye-witnesses* had confirmed that the Germans were using gas to exterminate Jews in Poland. See also *Appendix 5*.

Gauze-covered tubes linked up with an outside gas apparatus operated by the driver.

The vans drove into a wood and the gas was turned on. After 15 minutes Gestapo torches shone into the gas chambers. An S.S. officer nicknamed "Whip" then gave the order to open the doors.

#### STOLEN RINGS

Then the gravediggers could begin their work - after the Germans had taken from the bodies of their victims wedding rings and anything that was of gold.

From six to nine loads of victims were buried daily in graves holding 200 for about a fortnight.

One gravedigger named Ajzesztab, from Klodawa, had to bury his wife and two children. A fourth Jew, with relatives in London, buried his 60-year old father.

The Daily Telegraph, on the other hand, did not print an article directly on the subject of the gravediggers' testimony. Rather, it referred to it in the course of a 55 line article placed in the middle of page five on 3 September. This reported the details of a speech made by Zygielbojm at a meeting of the British Labour Party on the previous night, to protest against Nazi atrocities in Poland and Czechoslovakia. The Telegraph's headline was, however, a little more explicit concerning the use of gas than had the News Chronicle's of the day before:

#### GAS CHAMBER MASSACRES

#### NAZI SLAUGHTER OF POLISH JEWS

It had been over a month since the news of deportations from the Warsaw Ghetto had broken and only at this juncture did the Telegraph reveal this to its readers. 'A mass slaughter', it said, 'has started in the Warsaw ghetto, according to news reaching the Polish Government in London. Daily 7,000 people are taken from the ghetto ostensibly for deportation, but actually for extermination.' But, in its next sentence the paper spoke as if this information had only just been released: 'This was revealed by Mr. S. Zygielbojm a member of the Polish National Council, speaking last night in London at a meeting organised by the British Labour Party'. The paper proceeded to recount the details of Zygielbojm's speech. Zygielbojm had asserted, it said, that 700,000 Jews had been killed in Poland, and had added that twenty per cent. of the Jewish population in Poland were dying annually. Even then, he had added, the pace of destruction was not fast enough for the Germans and so 'the Jews of innumerable towns are herded together to be mown down by machine-guns....In many cases gas chambers have been installed'. Then, obviously making use of the gravediggers' testimonies, he explained that 'thousands wait their turn to be executed, because only 1,000 people a day can be killed in one gas centre. In Chelmno 40,000 people were gassed in 50 days....From

eye-witness accounts it appears that the Jews are forced to bury their own wives, children and parents.'

We have seen how during July and August 1942 the British Press failed adequately to report and comprehend the meaning of recent news of the deportation and extermination of Jews in Eastern Europe. Indeed, it is instructive to compare this with declarations made in 'STOP THEM NOW', a pamphlet printed by Liberty publications at the end of August 1942, in which the Bund Report and the gravediggers' testimonies were reproduced in full. In the introduction, entitled 'It IS True', Zygielbojm spoke against the prevailing attitude of disbelief. 'I realise', he said, 'that the facts contained in the two documents received from Poland and published in this booklet are so monstrous and inhuman that most normal persons would hesitate to believe them. And yet they are true and so is the fact that millions of people in Poland are to-day suffering immeasurably.' He had witnessed with his own eyes the capacity of the Germans for this kind of slaughter and emphasised that they 'do not seem to harbour hatred towards the persons they ill-treat, they are simply doing their job and doing it in cold blood'. These reports, he continued, had been written by people who had themselves suffered and therefore had to be believed; he was personally convinced that they were true. 'From these reports, as well as from other official news which the Polish Government here has received, it is apparent that the Germans in occupation have begun the studied and cold-blooded extermination of the Jewish population which they have for so long threatened.'<sup>121</sup> In conclusion Zygielbojm asked: 'Will the world allow it? Will YOU allow it? Means must be found to prevent it. STOP THE GERMANS NOW!' Interspersed within the pages of the Bund Report and the gravediggers' testimony were photographs of mass graves full of dead bodies. On the back page further information had been printed. 'Since the foregoing reports went to print', it added, 'fresh evidence of the non-stop destruction of the Jews in German-occupied territories has come to hand.' It briefly recounted the details of the deportations from the Warsaw Ghetto, Czerniakow's suicide, the Minsk massacres, and the following 'well authenticated account of the massacre of Jews in the Baltic States' which had 'reached the Belgian Government in London' and had been broadcast over the B.B.C. on Sunday, 16 August:

In Riga last April the Gestapo murdered thousands of Estonian and Latvian Jews. Many hundreds of Dutch and Belgian Jews, originally sent East to join labour battalions, were included in these massacres.

A great number of Estonian Jews, men, women, and even young children, together with thousands of Jews from the local ghetto, were taken in April in batches to a great plain outside Riga and mown down with machine-gun fire. The

<sup>121</sup>Emphasis in original.



massacre occupied fourteen consecutive days. The scenes were even filmed by the Gestapo.

It concluded in bold text: **'It is evident that the policy of the Germans is to wipe out entirely, not only the Jews in Poland, but the Jewish population of the whole of Europe.'**

## Chapter 4

### 'Special Circumstances' News Chronicle, 10 September 1942.

During the second half of July news of the round-up and deportation of Jews in the occupied zone of France reached the British Press. However, it initially showed as little interest in the fate of the Jews of France as it had of the Jews in Poland. The mass deportations of Jews in France were heralded by the imposition of measures which greatly increased restrictions upon their personal liberty. Even though the news of these restrictions came through British news agencies, (and was therefore available equally to the whole national Press), it reached the pages of very few newspapers. On 14 July, for instance, the Daily Telegraph alone printed information gleaned from an Exchange Telegraph cable in a 13 line article on page five. It said that the Jews of Paris had been forbidden the use of telephones, restaurants, cafés, to walk on the boulevards and in the Champs Elysees. Moreover, it added, they were henceforth only allowed to ride in the back of a tram or underground car. On the next day only the Daily Telegraph and the Daily Herald printed further news of restrictions (via Reuter). The Daily Telegraph placed its small ten line article at the bottom of its front page. 'The German authorities in Paris,' it said, 'have banned Jews from eating places, theatres and cinemas, public telephones, markets, sporting events and all other places of public resort.' The Daily Herald reported the same information in a 23 line article at the foot of column six on its front page under the headline: 'NAZIS ISOLATE PARIS JEWS.'

These restrictions, however, were only a prelude to the mass deportation of Jews from France to the death camps in Poland. News of the deportation plans soon reached the British Press, but here again Press reaction was limited and lukewarm. On 17 July the Daily Telegraph reported, without mentioning its source, the devastating news that the Germans had ordered the deportation of 20,000 Jews from the Occupied Zone of France. Although the article appeared on the front page, it was accorded only 10 lines at the bottom of the third column. 'Twenty thousand Jews', it reported, 'are to be deported from Occupied France to Eastern Europe by order of the German authorities, according to a Paris message quoted by the German radio last night. They are Jews "without nationality or alien Jews," who emigrated from Germany, Austria, Poland and Czechoslovakia'. The early editions of The Times on 18 July contained an article which it attributed to Reuter, and which compared almost word for word with that of the Telegraph's of the previous day. The Times' article, moreover, was also accorded only 10 lines and was placed at the bottom of the fifth column of page three. On 17 July the News Chronicle printed a slightly more detailed account of this Reuter

cable. Its 30 line article, placed in the middle of the back page, was headed: '20,000 JEWS MUST LEAVE FRANCE.'

The first reports of the round-ups were printed on 22 July by the Daily Herald and The Times. The Daily Herald's correspondent in Madrid reported, (in a 25 line article printed at the top of its back page), that 'MORE than 28,000 Paris Jews have been rounded up and sent to temporary concentration camps at Fraenes and Colombes in a new 48 hours swoop by the French police'. 'All Jews', he said, 'of recent Polish or Russian origin are to be sent back to those areas: the rest of the 28,000 will be sent to permanent concentration camps.' The Times' 'Special Correspondent on the French Frontier', G.H. Morison, wrote, (in a 43 line article printed in the middle of page three), that 'almost all the inmates of the three largest "Jews and Communists' camps" in the Paris region - namely, Compiègne, Le Drancy, and Orleans, have been suddenly deported to Poland, irrespective of age, health, or vocation'. The occupation authorities had casually notified the French through Dr. Brinon that 'the deportees would not return to France'. They had, in fact, been deported to Auschwitz.<sup>122</sup> Morison also described the heart-rending scenes that had occurred when the families of the inmates of these camps saw their loved-ones handcuffed and sent away on trains. These families, he reported, had responded to official messages telling them to visit the camps at a stipulated time, only to see the inmates taken away. When some of the men, incensed by the distress of their women, leaped forward to say a last farewell, they were beaten back with rifle butts. Then spontaneously the whole assembly - men, women, and children - sang the Marseillais, defying the threats of the German soldiers. Morison added in conclusion that this persecution of the Jews had been the cause of popular indignation:

Evidence accumulates daily that most French people are nauseated by the inhuman treatment of the Jews, and are showing their disapproval by making discriminatory regulations appear ridiculous. Students wear the yellow Star of David inscribed "jazz," or "swing," or "Chinese," instead of "Juif." Paris dress-makers design clothes trimmed with yellow flowers the exact size of the Star of David. Dog-owners pin to the collars the yellow star with the inscription "chien." Hundreds of these scoffers have been imprisoned in the last six weeks.

In fact the details contained in the Press reports of the French deportations were exceedingly accurate. German plans for the deportation of Jews from France had been finalised at the end of June and according to these plans 15,000 Jews a month were to be deported to the East; 100,000 in an initial sweep (50,000 each from occupied and unoccupied zones). The first transports to leave the occupied area were

<sup>122</sup> See Danuta Czech, The Auschwitz Chronicle 1939-1945, (London, 1990), pp. 176 ff.

to be from Bordeaux on 13 July, and subsequent transports were to leave at two day intervals from Bordeaux, Angers, Rouen, Châlons sur Marne-Nancy, and Orléans; then 22,000 Jews were to be seized in each Paris *arrondissement*. No distinction was to be made between Jews of French or other origin. Laval, however, managed to arrange a compromise whereby French policemen would help in the round-ups in return for the immunity of Jews of French origin. This upset the German deportation plans so that the Germans were unable in several places to meet their original quotas. In Paris 12,884 stateless Jews were rounded-up.<sup>123</sup> Raul Hilberg adds that 'men without family were sent directly to Drancy; families were routed through the race track (the Velodrome d'Hiver) to Pithiviers and Beaune la Rolande'. At these camps the children were separated from their parents, who were moved rapidly to the evacuation centre at Drancy. The ordeal suffered by the children was terrible.<sup>124</sup>

News of these terrible Parisian scenes soon reached the British Press via a Reuter cable from Zurich. This cable was reproduced in varying forms in most newspapers on 5 August; but the best coverage came from the Daily Herald. It accorded the report 30 lines in the middle of the first column of its front page.

PARIS IS IN  
GRIP OF  
A POGROM

A VIOLENT pogrom against Jews is reported to have been launched by the Nazis in Paris.

Mothers are hurling themselves from windows with their children rather than fall into the hands of the police and Nazi guards, says the Berne "Tagwacht."

French people are hiding families of Jews in cellars and empty houses to save them from arrest.

Hundreds of girls, and mothers with their children, have been herded into the Velodrome d'Hiver, where six-day bicycle races were formerly run.

The building is so overcrowded that there is hardly room to sit down.

Sanitary arrangements are lacking. Many women have died there in childbirth.

A number of young girls are reported to have been forced into prostitution.

The arrested men are reported to have been sent to slave labour in Germany. - Reuter.

The Daily Mail also printed its article in the middle of the first column of its front page, but apportioned it only 18 lines of text and gave it the briefer heading: 'PARIS POGROM'. It declared that the round-ups were 'equal to any carried out in Germany'. The News Chronicle, however, printed its article in the middle of the third column of its back page. Like the Daily Mail it, too, stressed how the Paris round-ups

<sup>123</sup>Raul Hilberg, The Destruction of the European Jews, (London, 1961), pp. 407-408.

<sup>124</sup>For a description how children suffered at the Velodrome d'Hiver see Yehuda Bauer, A History of the Holocaust, (New York, 1982), p. 233.

were on a par with previous pogroms in Germany. Its headlines, for instance, proclaimed:

NAZIS START PARIS POGROM  
"AS BAD AS ANY IN GERMANY"

The Daily Telegraph's 19 line article lurked at the bottom of the sixth column on page five. Its headlines ran:

NAZI POGROM IN  
PARIS REPORTED  

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NEW TERROR REGIME

It is apparent that although most newspapers printed this news of the Parisian round-ups there was an obvious disparity in its treatment. Some papers printed this news on their front page while others relegated it to their back pages; some articles were placed at the top of the page, others at the bottom. There was clearly no unity of opinion among the editors as to the relative importance of these deportations, and so, overall, coverage was patchy.

Only the News Chronicle and The Times carried the important news, on 6 and 7 August respectively, that Laval had agreed to the deportation of Jews from the unoccupied zone of France. That these two papers gave prominent coverage to the story over the next few days was almost wholly due to reports of widespread French resistance to the German deportation plan; suddenly the story had become valuable. The News Chronicle printed its 37 line article of 6 August at the top of the seventh column of its front page - hitherto an unparalleled length and position for any front page article reporting atrocities against Jews. Its headlines gave prominence to reports of French resistance to the round-ups rather than upon the deportations themselves:

FRANCE ANGERED  
AT JEW HUNT

The News Chronicle's Special Correspondent related that General de Gaulle's headquarters in London had received news that 'Laval has agreed that the French police in occupied France shall assist the Gestapo in rounding up all Jews of foreign origin - who are to be deported *en masse*'. In a further development, added the Correspondent, 'he had also agreed to hand over to the Nazis 10,000 Jews, said to be of foreign origin, living in unoccupied France'. He concluded:

## THE NEWS SPREAD

Everything possible has been done by the Government of Vichy to keep these revolting decisions secret, but reports of the measures of persecution, which are beginning to be carried out, have spread, causing wide popular indignation.

Even some Vichy Government officials are angered. The decision to hand over Jews from Vichy France to the Nazis follows arrests of foreign Jews all over unoccupied France.

Among Jews to be deported are 3,600 who were in concentration camps in Vichy France.

Another 1,000 Jews are due to be handed over to the Gestapo today, on Saturday, and on Monday.

This news moved the News Chronicle to print a powerful cartoon by the cartoonist 'Vicky' in its next issue. It is incredible that Vicky's cartoon was the first to be printed in 1942 on the subject of atrocities against Jews by any of the newspapers studied. Captioned 'WAILING WALL - 1942', the cartoon showed a gleeful S.S. man looking on as a number of indigent Jews, with arms raised towards heaven, kneeled at the foot of an impenetrable wall upon which were daubed in blood the large words 'EUROPEAN GHETTO'.

The early editions of The Times of 7 August carried the same information as had appeared in the late editions of the News Chronicle on 6 August. It appeared in the form of a 35 line article printed in the middle of the second column of page three. Its headlines reported:

## LAVAL ROUNDS UP JEWS

10,000 TO BE SURRENDERED  
TO GERMANY

'Public indignation', it began, 'is running very high, even among Vichy officials, and messages have reached General de Gaulle from France asking him to protest in the name of humanity'. Then it added:

Laval has agreed to surrender to Germany all Jews of so-called foreign origin in the unoccupied zone. Three thousand six hundred Jews, already in the concentration camps of Gers, Rivesaltes, and Verret have been designated for deportation. Another 1,000 are leaving Pau, Perpignan, and Marseilles for an unknown destination on August 6, 8, and 10. Mass arrests were also made in Lyons on Sunday.

In the occupied zone, the German authorities have been carrying out these orders with great cruelty. Children are being torn from their parents and sent to workhouses, where all trace of their identity is systematically suppressed. Some mothers who heard of these horrors killed their children and committed suicide rather than give themselves up to the Germans.

These new anti-Jewish measures are directed against all Jews alleged to be of foreign origin, even those who volunteered for service in the French Army in the Four Years' War.

The leader on page three in the early editions of The Times on 8 August consisted of a detailed account of the deportations of Jews from France with a special emphasis upon details of French resistance. Its noticeable headlines declared:

JEW'S' PLIGHT IN  
FRANCE

GERMAN CAMPAIGN  
FRUSTRATED

WAVE OF SYMPATHY

The paper's Diplomatic Correspondent, Iverach McDonald, summarised the situation of Jews in France: 'Reports and eye-witnesses reaching this country confirm the increasing persecution of French Jews in occupied France by the German authorities. French citizens of the Jewish faith or race are hardly allowed to shop, to eat, or even to sleep, for German soldiers have a habit of appearing at daybreak and carrying off some member of a family who disappears bound to an unknown destination....[to] somewhere in the East'. But, he added, this campaign of anti-Semitism had not had the intended effect of making the French hate the Jews. On the contrary, he said, 'the campaign...has failed entirely. The Jewish problem in France to-day, for the Germans, is a German-created pro-Semitism'. Indeed, people who had never been friendly to Jews had been known now deliberately to sit in the last carriage of underground trains as a statement against the Nazi terror. He added:

In the food queues, when a woman appears wearing the obligatory Star of David...other women will give her first place. Civil servants will go out of their way to help Jews through the formalities imposed on all citizens but most severely upon the Jews, for they felt that these people had already enough to suffer and that something should be made easier for them.

Under the sub-heading 'GERMAN FURY', McDonald concluded by describing how this sympathy had angered the Germans.

In reporting the deportation of Jews from France the Press had used the term 'unknown destination in the East', which implied that in the absence of specific information the ultimate destination and, therefore, fate of each individual batch of deportees was not known. Nevertheless, the Press did have enough information to understand that there was a strong probability that transports of Jews from France to the East would share the same fate as the Polish and Russian Jews. It was known from the Bund Report that the Germans were already operating a plan to exterminate all the Jews of Poland. It had been stated by Fischer at the W.J.C. Press Conference of 1 July

that Jews deported to Poland shared the same fate as the Polish Jews, and it may be recalled that, at the same time, Goebbels had conveniently trumpeted the Reich's intention to exterminate all of European Jewry. There were, as we have seen, many other indicators of what was happening in Eastern Europe. But the Press had not believed these reports, with the result that they did not discern that the deportations from France were in accordance with the Nazis' declared plan to exterminate the Jews of Europe.

In addition to the news of deportations of Jews from France, information concerning the deportation of Jews from Holland, Germany and Belgium also reached the British Press, but did not receive as much attention as the news from France. An article reporting deportations of Jews from Holland was printed by the Daily Telegraph on 28 July in a 45 line article on page three. However, the paper's Diplomatic Correspondent interpreted these deportations, (in much the same way that the massacres of Jews in Poland had widely been interpreted), as merely a single part of a wider German plan to 'exterminate' the Dutch nation as a whole. Consequently, its headlines read:

NAZI DESIGNS  
ON HOLLAND  

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EXTINCTION AS A  
NATION

The correspondent wrote that 'under the new decree banishing all Jews between the ages of 18 and 40 to Germany the Nazis are putting into force their scheme, announced a short time ago, for the deportation of 3,000,000 Dutchmen to the Baltic and eastern provinces for the purpose of colonisation.' 'Already', he said, '600 Jews a day are being rounded up and sent to German camps to await their fate as slave labourers. Having refused any part in Germany's Pan-European scheme, Holland must now submit to "Germanisation" of her important ports and industrial centres, particularly Rotterdam, at the mouth of the Rhine.' The correspondent placed these deportations from Holland in the context of a pre-meditated plan to deport, and thus subdue, people from every country in Europe: 'With the deportation of increasing numbers of Dutchmen under the colonisation scheme, the influx of Germans into Holland will also increase, until the Nazi plan for the disappearance of a distinctive Dutch nation will have been realised....The various measures which the Germans are taking in the occupied countries reveal not only their short-term but also their long-term policy for Europe. They hope to scatter the Dutch and other western European populations throughout their newly won domains to prevent their reorganising against



Germany.' The correspondent evidently saw no significance in the Jewish identity of these deportees.

The news of the deportation of Dutch Jews received 12 lines in the News Chronicle on 4 August. It merely stated that 'German controlled radio has announced in an official talk that all Jews are being deported from Holland, Dutch circles in London report. Jews were blamed by this source for inciting a "day of axes" and for instigating "un-Dutch blood-thirstiness." '

As we have seen Iverach McDonald's 71 line article in The Times on 8 August (concerning the deportation of French Jews) formed the leader on page three, but a report on the deportation of Jews from Holland, placed in the middle of the same page, received only 14 lines.

#### NAZI BRUTALITY TOWARDS DUTCH JEWS

##### BREAK-UP OF FAMILIES

Details of the ruthless way in which the transfer of Dutch Jews to the East is carried out have reached London. Jewish families are awakened in the early morning and ordered to take food for three days with them. They are then marched to the station and hundreds are huddled together in trains which leave for unknown destinations.

Cases are known in which the Germans have called on Jewish families in the middle of the night and ordered the girls of school age to follow them immediately. The girls are placed in trains and sent to a camp - it is not known what kind of camp.

It was, in fact, ultimately to a Death Camp.

News of renewed deportations of Jews from Germany also reached the British Press at this time. The later editions of the Daily Mail on 27 July carried an Associated Press bulletin as a 'Late News' item (it was therefore accorded little space). It was datelined 'Istanbul, Sunday'; and it told of how 'according to information received here, German police have orders that every Jew still in Germany must be deported to Poland by August 1. Report said that Jews were being moved from the Reich by trains and were jammed in cattle trucks'. No other paper printed this information.

On 3 August the News Chronicle's Special Correspondent in Lisbon, Portugal, reported in a 7 line article that 'Seventy Belgians, described as "Communists," 60 released war prisoners, and 1,000 Jews have been sent by the Nazis to Eastern Europe as reprisals for acts of sabotage in Belgium, it is reported here.'

Only in the context of widespread Press indifference to and misunderstanding of the significance of information which purely reported the deportation of Western European Jews can the Press' coverage of the deportation of Jews from France after the first week in August be comprehended. News of popular French resistance, spearheaded by the clergy, to the deportation of Jews from France began to reach the British Press. This news captured the imaginations of three newspapers in particular: The Times, News Chronicle and The People. As the News Chronicle candidly observed in its editorial of 10 September, 'it is perhaps, the special circumstances of unoccupied France which make these latest atrocities so horrible'. Press interest in the deportations, where it existed, was generally a result of the existence of these 'special circumstances' and not necessarily *per se* in the situation of the Jews. The news of French clerical opposition to the deportations appealed to The Times since, on the one hand, it had always maintained an interest in the Nazis' 'war on the churches', and, on the other, because it possessed an exceptional source of information concerning events in Vichy France via a network of Vichy collaborators (in Vichy's diplomatic service and in 'close relations with Laval') which Morison, its correspondent based in Zurich, had set up in July that year.<sup>125</sup> There is no doubt that The Times' subsequent coverage of resistance to the French deportations benefited from this improved news service; Morison's reports were extremely accurate and many clearly contained information which could only have come from his informers. The News Chronicle, traditionally a Liberal newspaper, had, like The Times, always been concerned for and maintained an interest in the fate of the Church under the Nazis. We have already observed that The People had maintained extensive coverage throughout 1942 of Nazi atrocities, and the cruelties inflicted on the Jews of France did not now escape its notice.

On 22 August The Times printed an article by Morison reported news of continued deportations from the occupied zone of France, and round-ups of Jews in the unoccupied zone. The headlines declared:

JEWS' PLIGHT IN  
FRANCE

SURRENDERED TO GESTAPO

Morison said that Parisian newspapers had, that week, revealed that 'several thousand Jews without nationality in Paris and elsewhere in the occupied zone had been

<sup>125</sup>See Franklin Reid Gannon, The British Press and Germany 1936-1939, (Oxford, 1971), p. 119; Morison to Deakin, 8 July 1942; Ralph Deakin's box, The Times Archive. See also Morison to Deakin, 17 May 1942 at that same location.

assembled in concentration camps, pending early deportation, and added that in the unoccupied zone also the French police had arrested more than 4,000 Jews without nationality, confining them in concentration camps.' Moreover, the German controlled Petit Parisien had declared that 'this measure is a first step towards the elimination of all French and foreign Jews from the French national community.' From this there could be no doubt that the Nazis intended to deport not only Jews of foreign extraction, but native born Jews too. Some of these stateless Jews, Morison revealed, had been handed over to the Germans by the Vichy regime: 'Although it was not officially admitted no fewer than 4,600 Jews without nationality living in the unoccupied zone were surrendered to the Gestapo for deportation up to August 18. Such other Jews in unoccupied France as have not yet been interned, have been ordered to compulsory residence in Cannes and Nice, where they can be seized at a moment's notice, and are thus doomed to live under perpetual fear of surrender to the Gestapo.' Morison concluded gloomily that 'altogether between 120,000 and 130,000 Jews of all nationalities, including French, are now in unoccupied France. Deportation would in the case of many denationalized Jews be equivalent to a sentence of death.'

Morison restated his forebodings in an article on 28 August entitled 'VIRTUAL DEATH SENTENCE.' He began by reporting the Petit Parisien's declaration that 'the round-up of all Jews of foreign nationality who have entered France since 1936 and are now living in the unoccupied zone must be completed to-day....The persons arrested are being assembled at Dijon, pending deportation to Eastern Europe.' In his concluding paragraph Morison attested to the (well-founded) sense of doom felt by the Jews of France:

Simultaneously, complying with instructions from the occupying authorities, Vichy ordered the mayors to erase immediately from the national registers the names of all Jews, whether of French or other nationality, who were arrested, interned, or deported to the occupied zone. Once their names are removed from the registers the persons concerned cease to have any legal existence, and are thus deprived of all their rights. Moreover their whereabouts will be subsequently untraceable. The Jews in the unoccupied zone who are still free fear that this amounts to confirmation of the rumour that the arrested Jews have virtually been sentenced to death.

In addition to this article, the paper also printed a report from its Portuguese correspondent in Lisbon, Walker. This was placed at the top of the fourth column of page three in the late editions of 28 August; but it was given a more prominent position at the top of the second column in the early editions of 29 August. Its headlines proclaimed:

ANTI-JEWISH DRIVE IN  
FRANCE  

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WHOLESALE ARRESTS AND  
DEPORTATIONS

Jewish refugees, Walker began, were being rounded-up throughout occupied and unoccupied France. In his next sentence, Walker, clearly aware that there might be those who would doubt the veracity of his report, stressed that '*responsible* eye-witnesses of the new anti-Jewish drive in both occupied and unoccupied France leave no doubt about its thoroughness.'<sup>126</sup> He explained that these deportations had been prompted by Laval's decision, at the end of July, to make up the deficit of French workers sent to Germany with Jewish refugees - 10,000 Jews were therefore to be deported.<sup>127</sup> The first arrests, he added, had been made in Marseilles on 3 August. On 5 August, he said, by the time the news had leaked out, there had been over 300 confirmed suicides in the 'free' zone. On 6 August the first Jews had left the camp at Les Milles 'for an unknown destination'; by 10 August, 2000 had gone, and another 1600 from other camps were due to leave soon. One-third, he said, were to be drawn from internment camps, and the remainder from the camps *des travailleurs*. Furthermore, all male Jews had been expelled from Rouen, while Jewish women had been given a fortnight to quit the city. Walker further reported that a number of protests had been made, including one by the Papal Nuncio to Marshal Pétain, but apparently they had been without effect.<sup>128</sup> He added that the horror of the Parisian round ups of 16 July had provoked widespread disgust and indignation throughout France:

Eye-witnesses who were in Paris state that the arrests began in the occupied zone on July 16, and that the quota there was about 30,000. Even Jewish children were liable to arrest. These eye-witnesses confirm reports that women threw their children from windows before jumping out themselves, and that the reluctance of the Gardes mobiles to carry out their distasteful task was so great that it was finally accomplished by the Wehrmacht.

Throughout France there is deep feeling on this matter, particularly in view of the fact that it is now widely known that the prisoners that have been returned are mostly hospital cases, who are unable to work, and that a large proportion of them

<sup>126</sup>Italics mine.

<sup>127</sup>Walker seems to imply that the deported Jews were being sent to forced labour in the Reich so as to supplement the numbers of those Frenchmen sent to Germany in accordance with Nazi demands. This was not the case. However, the fact that Laval had failed to provide his masters with the required number of workers must certainly have been one of the factors in his decision to sacrifice the Jews.

<sup>128</sup> John Morley, *Vatican Diplomacy and the Jews During The Holocaust 1939-1943*, (New York, 1980), p. 68, comments that 'when the deportations began in July 1942, the French [Catholic] bishops protested quietly to Pétain. It was, and is, widely believed that the nuncio [Archbishop Valeri] also protested the deportations. If so, there is no record of it in the Vatican documents. There is no indication that he dealt with Pétain personally at this time, even though it is generally thought that he did so.'

are tuberculosis. A stream of refugees is crossing the line of demarcation into the unoccupied zone, and, whether or not on higher orders, the frontier control appears to have been noticeably relaxed recently.

The Jews, however, were *not* being sent to the Reich as workers but to death camps in Poland.

Reports of a protest to Pétain by the Papal nuncio, Archbishop Valeri, also found their way into the pages of the Daily Herald, Daily Mail and the Daily Telegraph. The Daily Herald, which had obtained its information from a British United Press cable, placed its 9 line article on this subject in the middle of its back page:

VICHY ATTACKS JEWS:  
VATICAN PROTEST

Monsignor Valerio Valeri, Apostolic Nuncio in Vichy, has protested to the Vichy Government against the latest anti-Jewish measures the German radio said yesterday.

Laval had noted the protest, the radio added, but had stated it would not influence his decisions. - British United Press.

The Daily Mail's article, its information gleaned from a Reuter cable, fared little better; it was one line shorter than the Herald's, and was placed inconspicuously at the bottom of its front page:

Laval Snubs Vatican

Laval has rejected an urgent demarche by the Pope concerning Vichy's 'protective measures against Jews,' according to the German radio quoted by Reuter. He told the Papal Nuncio that 'he could not be influenced by the Holy See.'

The Daily Telegraph incorporated the report of the Nuncio's protest into an article which focused mainly on news of continued round-ups in the occupied zone. Although, therefore, at twenty lines the Telegraph's article was longer than both the Herald's or the Mail's it too was badly laid out; it was positioned in the lower half of the sixth column of page four. The article below it, which discussed a new Ministry of Agriculture order on onion growing, also received 20 lines.

LAVAL ARRESTS  
10,000 JEWS  
TO BE DEPORTED

Following the savage action taken against Jews in occupied France, mass arrests have been made with Laval's approval in occupied territory.

Radio-Paris broadcast yesterday that 10,000 Jews have already been arrested. They are all refugees who have entered France since 1936 and are to be returned to their countries of origin.

Although the Papal Nuncio is reported to have protested to Marshal Petain against the inhumanity of this action, the step was ineffective, and it is expected that Laval will comb out every victim of Hitler persecution to whom France had offered asylum during the Nazi excesses before the war.

The primary purpose of the deportation trains of 19, 21, 24 and 26 August was to transport Jewish children to Auschwitz. On 16 August the first group of children, 'a frightened flock of lambs', began their journey from Beaune-la-Rolande and Pithiviers to Drancy, and thence to Auschwitz.<sup>129</sup> Accurate information concerning these transports appeared in The People on 30 August. It reported that while protests had been made by French clergymen, the aim of the deportations and the ultimate destination of the deportees remained a mystery.

CHILDREN  
STOLEN BY  
GERMANS!  
from the French Frontier.

THE anti-Jewish drive in France has reached a new climax during the last few days in both the Occupied and the Unoccupied zones, where the latest German outrage is the rounding-up of 4,000 Jewish children in Occupied France.

These children were taken away from their mothers and herded together in three concentration camps at Pithiviers, Beaune-la-Rolande and at Drancy.

In the camps all documents and other identity proofs were taken away from the children and they were packed into railway trains and sent off into Germany.

Protests lodged with the Vichy authorities by some leading Frenchmen were of no avail, and nothing could be ascertained about either the aim behind the mass kidnapping or the destination of the transports.

When, during the first mass arrest of Jews in the Occupied zone on July 14, the Germans began tearing away young children from their mothers - even one-month old babies were not spared.

Laval was finally persuaded to see the Paris Gestapo chief about it. The answer of the Nazi boss was: - "Yes, we will do this, but only in Germany."

Of the national dailies only the Daily Telegraph made (brief) mention of the fate of these Jewish children on the next day. This appeared in a twelve line article at the bottom of its front page. 'Laval's latest anti-Jewish measure', it reported, 'is to herd thousands of Jewish children into concentration camps in Vichy France, according to reports received in Lisbon, states Reuter.' It concluded: 'The children were taken from the homes where they were under the care of relief organisations. This step follows the handing over to the Germans of 10,000 refugee Jews from labour and internment camps.'

<sup>129</sup>Martin Gilbert, Final Journey, (London, 1979), p. 143.

On the 1 September The Times printed another report of round-ups and of the growing resistance to them in Vichy. It was headed:

ROUND-UP OF JEWS IN  
FRANCE  

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HARROWING SCENES

Morison reported that eye-witnesses had given accounts of the harrowing scenes in Nice, Marseilles, and Lyons that had occurred when French police had rounded up, for the purpose of deportation, Jews of foreign origin who had recently lost their status as naturalised citizens of France (as a result of Vichy decrees). Many of them, he observed, were either up to seventy years old or young children. 'They were put into closed vans and taken to railway stations, where after a cursory examination they were herded into trucks and sent across the demarcation line to Dijon. Mothers were separated from children and wives from husbands. Many French people, particularly students, sympathising with the Jews, tried to intervene, and it is reported that hundreds of Jews were received into hiding in spite of the penalties for such action. On Thursday alone over 10,000 Jews were deported, and on Friday and Saturday nearly 3,000 more.'

The News Chronicle of the same day dwelt more directly on the news of increased French opposition to these round-ups. Its 27 line article was placed at the bottom of the second column of its front page and headed: 'Lyons Hid Jews From Police.' The paper declared that 'the persecution of Jews in non-occupied France...is meeting with growing opposition from the people'. 'The people' of Lyons, it added, had by various means resisted attempts by the police there to round-up 1,000 Jews 'of foreign origin' so that 'as a result only 119 arrests were made'. Furthermore, 'a Roman Catholic priest, addressing 30,000 pilgrims at Lourdes', had ended his sermon by asking them to pray especially for 'our brothers the Jews who are the most unfortunate of us all'.

The News Chronicle followed this up on the next day with another report which focused upon French resistance. This 41 line article was spread over two columns in the middle of its back page.

**ROUSING FRANCE AGAINST LAVAL'S POGROM**  
By a Special Correspondent

An appeal to the French population against the persecution of the Jews by Laval in non-occupied France was launched on Monday night by all the secret organisations of resistance in the country.

The appeal was made by means of clandestine newspapers, tracts, posters and was repeated in a Fighting French broadcast from London last night.

It called on the French people in Vichy-France to oppose in a determined but discreet manner (in order to avoid riots and reprisals) the Laval anti-Jewish policy, and the deportation of Jews, dictated by Berlin, and also to give all possible assistance to the Jews hunted down by the Vichy police.

**3,000 ARRESTS ORDERED**

Further information which reached General de Gaulle's Fighting French H.Q. last night states that in the last 24 hours the Prefecture of Lyons (where hundreds of "wanted Jews were hidden by people last week) has received a list containing the names and addresses of 3,000, supposed to be foreign Jews, who are to be arrested "at once."

Six hundred Jews, men and women, have arrived in camps at Venissieux and St. Fous (suburbs of Lyons) before being sent to Germany. Many of them bore traces of brutal treatment by the Nazis, and many had been separated from their young children.

Laval has agreed, on Berlin's request, to hand over to the Nazis 10,000 "foreign" Jews from non-occupied France.

The Daily Telegraph, which had obtained the same information from General de Gaulle's headquarters, printed a much more cut-down version of the above article. Its article was 26 lines in length and appeared in the middle of the third column of page five, headed:

**FRENCH ANGER AT  
JEWS' ARREST**

**FURTHER 3,000 NAMED**

On 4 September The Times' correspondent in Lisbon, Walker, further reported on the 'desperate' situation of Jewish children in Vichy France. This was a short 16 line article placed at the bottom of page three. Walker successfully communicated the sense of doom surrounding these soon-to-be-deported children, but stayed clear of conjecture about their ultimate destination and fate:



JEWISH CHILDREN'S  
PLIGHT  
PARENTS DEPORTED FROM  
VICHY FRANCE

It is learned from southern France that the plight of many of the children of the Jews who have been deported is desperate, and it is feared that unless action is taken in the next few days 5,000 children aged from two to 13 will also be deported to an "unknown destination."

Deportations from the unoccupied zone have hitherto been confined to men and women between the ages of 18 and 65, but apparently no arrangement were made for the children, who in certain towns are roaming the streets without food. The French people are doing all they can to help them, and the possibility of their deportation or worse is causing bitter resentment against Laval.

These continued references to the 'unknown destination' to which deportees from France were being sent evince the confusion felt by the Press over information concerning Germany policy towards the Jews of Europe. This confusion, it must be noted, was also (at some time) felt by every individual and organisation watching what was happening to the Jews in Europe - although some emerged from it earlier than others. Martin Gilbert has, for example, that Richard Lichtheim, the senior Jewish Agency official in Geneva, regularly rebuked the Allies and various Jewish leaders and organisations in the Allied countries for their misunderstanding of the situation. On 27 August 1942, for instance, Lichtheim complained to his Jewish Agency colleagues in London that 'people in England do not know what is going on in Europe'. He also intimated that the Jewish leaders, who still spoke of 'five or six million homeless Jews' in Europe after the war's end, had also failed to understand. 'In fact,' Lichtheim said, 'no more than two million would have survived, most of them, about 800,000 in Hungary.' 'We now know', he declared, 'that deportation means death - sooner or later.... This process of annihilation is going on relentlessly and there is no hope left to save any considerable number.' News reports of the fate of European Jewry at the end of August prompted him to write, on 31 August, that 'all these happenings...confirm the impression conveyed in my previous reports that there is a general plan behind these measures, to deport and destroy the Jews all over Europe.'<sup>130</sup> Indeed, as I have already shown, it was possible to come to an accurate understanding of what was happening. The British Press, however, was crippled in its understanding by indifference to the fate of the Jews; in general, it had neither the will nor the inclination to penetrate the psychological barrier embodied by the term 'unknown destination'.

<sup>130</sup>Quoted by Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies*, p. 66.

On Saturday 5 September the Free French Headquarters in London released a detailed report on the Parisian round-ups of 16 July. Although the report fell nicely for the Sunday Press, only The People carried the item, according it 66 lines at the top of page eight. The first half of The People's article described the horrors of the round-ups, while the second half reported the sympathetic reaction of the French clergy and populace. It perpetuated the rumour that the Papal Nuncio had intervened with Pétain on behalf of the Jews:

#### VATICAN DISPLEASURE

"Parisians were infuriated by the spectacle [of the round-ups]. Whenever possible the population helped the Jews and hindered the police."

An eye-witness said: "I was in a queue outside a butcher's shop when a girl, aged about eleven came flying down the street. She implored us: 'Please give me some food for my maman. The police are taking her away.'"

"Every woman in that queue took something out of her shopping bag and pressed it on the girl. A few minutes later two policemen came down the street, dragging the mother along. Several women clasped the girl and cried, 'Fear nothing, madame, we will take care of your daughter.'"

Laval's policy has aroused violent opposition in the "free" zone. At Nice, Marseilles, and Lyons the population - including many students - defended the Jews, abusing the police, demonstrating, and forming protective cordons.

The Catholic Church has, for the first time, taken a firm stand against Vichy. The Papal Nuncio, Monseigneur Valera Valeri, called on Petain and expressed the displeasure of the Vatican.

Of the national dailies on 7 September only The Times and the News Chronicle printed information from the Free French report. The Times' article was 35 lines in length and spread over the first two columns at the top of page three. Its headlines focused on the fact that Jews had been taken from hospitals:

#### THE TERROR IN PARIS

#### JEW DRAGGED FROM HOSPITAL

The Times carried two extra details in addition to the story told by The People; it reported that 300 French policemen, revolted by their orders, had been dismissed on account of their 'pro-Jewish' tendencies, and that the Archbishop of Toulouse, Monseigneur Saliege, had twice protested from the pulpit against the round-ups.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>131</sup> Archbishop Jules-Gerard Saliege was the first of five Catholic bishops to make official protests against the rounding-up and deportation of Jews from France at that time. On 23 August 1942, Saliege ordered a pastoral letter be read out in the churches of the diocese of Toulouse in which he attacked the maltreatment of the Jews. See Dr. Asher Cohen's, 'Immigrant Jews, Christians and French Jews', Remembering for the Future, Vol I, (Oxford, 1988), p. 225.

The paper's leader on page three was a 69 line article by Morison, headed:

VICHY'S JEWISH  
VICTIMS  
CHILDREN DEPORTED  
TO GERMANY

Morison declared in his opening sentence that 'the campaign against the Jews in France is continuing with unabated ruthlessness.' He observed that 'a train containing 4,000 Jewish children, unaccompanied, without identification papers or even distinguishing marks, left Lyons for Germany.' All the Jewish inmates of a number of camps, he added, had been deported to Germany. Furthermore, there had occurred another example of German deviousness; women and children of the inmates of these camps had been notified that they could visit their relatives, but once inside the camp, he said, they were forced to accompany the internees without being given any opportunity to make preparations. There was absolute despair among the interned Jews and eighty-six in the camp at Les Milles alone had attempted suicide by cutting their jugular veins with broken glass. In many towns, he continued, the police had refused to obey their orders to round-up Jews so that their places had been taken by Marshal Pétain's State Police. The Vichy Government had ordered that by 1 October all French Jews remaining in the unoccupied zone should be confined in prison camps. French resistance to the persecution of the Jews had continued to increase. 'This anti-Jewish campaign has caused a violent outburst of resentment everywhere in the last few days and there have been mass arrests in many places.' Under the sub-heading 'NATURALIZED FRENCHMEN' Morison correctly pointed out that the campaign to round-up and deport Jews was quite unique:

This anti-Jewish drive is quite distinct from the simultaneous campaign against non-Jewish foreigners other than Spaniards, including Poles, Czechs, Belgians, Dutch, Norwegians, Austrians, and emigre Germans, most of whom have lived in France for many years, and not a few have won distinction in the French Army. All have now been deported to Germany.

The News Chronicle's article on the Free French report was 30 lines in length and was placed in the middle of the fourth column on its front page. The paper's Special Correspondent, Henry Stone, concentrated mainly upon the reports of resistance by French policemen to the round-ups in Paris. 'Fifteen policemen', he said, 'of the Paris area were shot by the Gestapo during the recent pogrom because they either refused to participate in the maltreatment of the Jews they were ordered to arrest, or could not restrain their indignation at the Nazis' brutality towards women

and children victims, dragged from their homes and packed like cattle in lorries. Another 400 policemen were arrested.'<sup>132</sup>

News of the gathering protest by Catholic bishops was printed by the Daily Mail on 8 September in an small ten line article placed inconspicuously in the middle of the fifth column of the back page. The Mail's Special Correspondent in Madrid reported that Cardinal Gerlier, Archbishop of Lyons, had 'summoned a meeting of French Catholic dignitaries to Lyons to discuss drafting a letter of protest to the Vichy Government on the treatment of Jews in the unoccupied zone. He has already threatened to excommunicate people who buy property unjustly seized from Jewish families'. The next day the Mail carried another report, from Reuter, of resistance in Lyons. This, however, was accorded different treatment; it was placed at the top of the fourth column of its front page and a bold headline:

**Army Chief  
Sacked  
by Laval**

**Refused Troops to  
Round Up Jews**

It said that reports had reached the French headquarters in London that Laval had dismissed General de St. Vincent, the Military Governor of Lyons, for refusing to place his troops at the disposal of the authorities 'for use in mass arrests of Jews in the unoccupied zone'. These reports had also spoken of increased tension in the unoccupied zone as a result of anti-Jewish measures; many arrests had been made in Lyons over the past ten days following demonstrations which had resulted in clashes with the police. The report of General de St. Vincent's dismissal and fuller news of the tensions in the unoccupied zone were given greater prominence in the News Chronicle; its article was 82 lines in length and spanned columns three and four in the middle of its front page. Its headlines focused on the open resistance of the Catholic bishops to the deportations:

**Laval's Jew-Hunting Brings  
Clash With Roman Church  
By Henry Stone**

<sup>132</sup>Michael Marrus and R. Paxton, Vichy France and the Jews, (New York, 1981), p. 259, observe that 'although the prefects' reports indicate that French police and other officials followed orders virtually universally, there were many signs that they were not comfortable doing so.'

The dramatic effect of Stone's opening paragraph was heightened by the use of bold text:

**LAVAL and the Roman Catholic Church are at war as a result of the persecution of the Jews in non-occupied France, and the Vichy Government is encountering resistance by certain Army chiefs.**

Stone then gave a fuller account General de St. Vincent's dismissal. He said that on 28 August, Laval, 'obeying Nazi instructions', ordered the arrest of 3000 Jews in the Lyons area. Since Laval feared that the local populace might hide these Jews, he ordered General de St. Vincent to 'place his troops at the disposal of the police, to ensure the operation'. However, General de St. Vincent refused Laval's order and 'was immediately relieved of his command and dismissed from the army by Laval'. Under the sub-heading 'CLASHES FOR TEN DAYS', Stone gave a fuller account of the events which the Mail had simply described as 'tension', including accounts of the actions of Cardinal Gerlier and Monseigneur Saliere. The Vichy authorities, he said, had arrested a large number of Catholic priests who had hidden Jewish children:

To this declaration of war the Catholic Church has replied, through Cardinal Gerlier, Archbishop of Lyons and Primate of France, with a defiant refusal to authorise the surrender by priests and Catholics of the children of Jews deported to Germany or still in concentration camps in Vichy France.

Episcopal letters recommending French Catholics to give every possible assistance to the persecuted Jews have been read in churches all over non-occupied France.

The Laval Government has instructed the police to arrest priests reading this recommendation in their churches.

Last Sunday at the 8 o'clock Mass at the Cathedral of Toulouse the Bishop, Mgr. Saliere, in a special sermon said he regretted that the right of sanctuary no longer existed, other wise he would have allowed he hunted Jews to benefit by it in his cathedral and all the churches of his dioceses. The police prevented the bishop from repeating his sermon at the 10 o'clock Mass.

The Times, which obtained its information directly from the Free French Press Service, gave rather less coverage to this news; it placed its 33 line article in the middle of the fifth column of page three. Like the Mail, The Times focused primarily on the news of General de St. Vincent's dismissal, as is shown by its headlines:

MILITARY GOVERNOR OF  
LYONS DISMISSED

REFUSAL TO HELP IN  
ARRESTS OF JEWS

The paper spoke briefly, and in general terms, of the news of the resistance of the Catholic bishops. For instance, instead of giving specific details of Cardinal Gerlier's

refusal to allow the surrender of Jewish children, the paper said that 'the Roman Catholics have refused to give an order to their priests and to Catholic families to stop harbouring these children.' However, the article above this, by Walker, the correspondent in Lisbon, did report the specifics of some of the latest round-ups in the unoccupied zone. Walker said that according to the latest 'trustworthy' reports from France, 15,000 more Jews were to be deported from the unoccupied zone between 24 August and 20 September. This, he declared, showed quite clearly 'that in spite of protests from the Vatican Laval is determined to sell out his Jews to Germany'. The plight of the 5000-8000 homeless Jewish children in France remained desperate, and the number was continually being swollen by others crossing from the occupied zone. Walker said that other reports which had reached him described small-scale riots which had occurred in Lyons. There, the deportees had refused to board the train, but their baggage had been sent on, and they were told that the only hope of retrieving their belongings was to follow after them. Reports indicated, Walker concluded, that there was little hope of an improvement in the situation of the Jews, which was 'only serving steadily to increase the hatred of the French people against Laval'.

On pages five and eight of that same edition of The Times, the paper printed the full text of Churchill's first speech to the Commons since his return from his tour of the Russian Front and North Africa. Though Churchill had been out of the country reports of the deportation of the Jews of France had obviously still reached him, and, moved by their plight, at the end of his speech he promised retribution:

#### NAZI CRIMINALS' FATE

In a dozen countries Hitler's firing parties are at work every morning, and a dark stream of cold execution blood flows between the Germans and almost all their fellow men.

The cruelties, the massacres of hostages, the brutal persecutions in which the Germans have indulged in every land into which their armies have broken, have recently received an addition in the most bestial, the most squalid, and the most senseless of all their offences - namely, the mass deportation of the Jews from France, with the pitiful horrors attendant upon the calculated and final scattering of families. This tragedy fills one with astonishment as well as with indignation, and it illustrates, as nothing else can do, the utter degradation of all who lend themselves to its unnatural and perverted passions.  
(Cheers.)

When the hour of liberation strikes in Europe, as strike it will, it will also be the hour of retribution - (loud cheers) - and I wish most particularly to identify His Majesty's Government and the House of Commons with the solemn words which were used by the President of the United States - namely, that those who are guilty of the Nazi crimes will have to stand up before tribunals in every land where their atrocities have been committed in order that an indelible warning may be given to future ages, and that successive generations of men may say: "So perish all who do the like again." (Loud and prolonged cheers.)

On 11 September The Times further concentrated on reports of opposition to round-ups of Jews in Lyons. From the composition of the headline given to this, Morison's latest article, it is again apparent that the paper's primary interest in the situation in France lay in the news of further clerical resistance:

JESUITS ARRESTED IN  
LYONS  
—  
HIDING JEWISH CHILDREN

Morison reported that public indignation had been aroused by the arrest and imprisonment of eight Jesuit priests who had refused to hand over for deportation several hundred Jewish and non-Jewish foreign children whom they had hidden in buildings belonging to their religious order.<sup>133</sup> The arrests, Morison added, had moved the Papal Nuncio and Papal Secretary of State to protest, and the latter had reminded Marshal Pétain of the promises which he had made on induction, and of the religious feelings which he often invoked in his speeches.<sup>134</sup> The reading of pastoral letters from pulpits throughout France, he said, had produced an 'unprecedented response'. Long before church services were due to begin people were taking their seats. Mayors, in obedience to the order from Vichy, ordered priests not to read out the letter, but in their private capacity as persons they also demanded that the priests disregard the order and assured them that they would be present at the service to indicate their approval of the contents of the letter. Morison reported again on the next day, 12 September, that 'Priests and other Frenchmen who were arrested for opposing Vichy measures against Jews and other refugees have been sent to a concentration camp at Sisteron, in the Basses Alpes.'

The Times of 16 September contained an unusually high number of articles concerning the fate of the Jews in France. At the bottom of the fifth column of page two, the paper printed a 23 line article which gave details of the proceedings of a meeting of the British Board of Deputies. The Deputies, it said, had passed a resolution which recorded their deep sense of 'grief and horror at the unspeakable atrocities committed by the Germans, their allies, and vassals upon the Jews of Europe, which "constitutes a deliberate design to destroy in cold blood the entire Jewish population under their tyrannical slavery". ' The Board had also expressed its 'profound

<sup>133</sup>Raul Hilberg, Destruction of the European Jews Vol. II, (New York, 1985), p. 642, confirms the veracity of this information.

<sup>134</sup>This does not appear to have happened. For a discussion of the veracity of such rumours of a protest by the Papal Nuncio see Morley, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-70.

sorrow' over the behaviour of the Vichy regime, and had sent a message of sympathy to all Jewish victims of the Nazis. In its resolution, the Deputies had made a clear reference to the existence of a plan to exterminate all the Jews of Europe; this was echoed in an article on page three which reported the U.S. Secretary of State's condemnation of the Vichy role in the round-ups in France. This 46 line article was given a prominent position at the top of column five. Its headline declared:

U.S. SHOCKED BY  
VICHY

CRUEL TREATMENT  
OF JEWS

MR. HULL'S HARD WORDS

The paper's Washington correspondent, Lewis, reported that Cordell Hull had spoken in very strong terms against the forced labour decree recently issued by Vichy. He had declared that Vichy's behaviour in giving such succour to the Germans was wholly inconsistent with her obligations under international law. Lewis added that Mr. Hull was 'openly bitter in his condemnation of a policy which would deliver Jews and other refugees into the hands of the people who had announced, and in a considerable degree executed, their intention to enslave, maltreat, and eventually exterminate them under conditions of the most revolting cruelty'.

In the middle of column five the paper printed another, shorter, report of Cordell Hull's criticism of Vichy; it was entitled 'MR. HULL'S WARNING TO VICHY ENVOY.' According to this article, gleaned from an Associated Press bulletin, Hull had also communicated to Vichy 'the United States Government's unqualified condemnation of the recent mass deportation of Jews from unoccupied France'. Thus to the British Prime Minister's condemnation of the deportations of Jews from France had been added the U.S. Secretary of State's - such high level condemnations had not occurred in response to the Bund Report.

In its earlier editions of 16 September The Times printed an article which related further details of French Catholics' protests against the deportation, headed:

CARDINALS' PROTEST TO  
MARSHAL PETAIN

SUFFERINGS OF JEWS



It reported that French Cardinals and Archbishops of the occupied zone had protested in a letter to Pétain against the mass arrest and ill-treatment of Jews. The text of this letter, it added, had reached General de Gaulle's headquarters. The Bishops had declared that they could not stifle their consciences, and in the name of humanity and of the principles of Christianity that they protested on behalf of the rights of mankind. They fervently appealed for mercy for the suffering children and their mothers, and that justice and charity to be respected. Furthermore, the paper reported, the Bishop of Montauban had written a pastoral letter which was being read out in every pulpit in his diocese, from which it quoted the following:

"Painful and sometimes horrible scenes, for which France is not responsible, may be seen in our country to-day. In Paris tens of thousands of Jews have been treated with the utmost savagery. And now, in our district, we are seeing heart-breaking things. Whole families are broken up. Men and women are treated like herds of cattle and dispatched to an unknown destination under the threat of even greater perils.

"I voice the indignant protest of Christian conscience, and I proclaim that all men, Aryans or non-Aryans, are brothers because they have been created by the same God; that all men, whatever their race or creed, are entitled to the respect of the individual and the State; that the present anti-Jewish measures are taken in contempt of human dignity and in violation of the most sacred rights of man and family."

The only other newspaper to report the news of these protests was the News Chronicle, on 15 September, which gave its article a fairly prominent position at the top of the seventh column on its back page. It should be noted that the text of the Bishop of Montauban's pastoral letter, as quoted by both The Times and the News Chronicle, was accurate to the letter.

The news that Father Chaillet, Cardinal Gerlier's right hand man, had been placed under house arrest for refusing to surrender Jewish children hidden by the Jesuits in Lyons was broken by a British United Press cable from the 'French Frontier' on 16 September. However, it received little coverage in the Press. Only the News Chronicle and the Daily Telegraph (the latter breaking a prolonged silence over the fate of the Jews in France) mentioned it in their issues of 18 September. The News Chronicle placed its article in the middle of the fourth column on its front page. Its headlines concentrated on the other news contained in the B.U.P. cable that Laval had made clear his determination to continue to clear France of foreign Jews:

Anti-Jew Drive Will  
Go On, Says Laval

French Frontier, Thursday. -

Father Chaillet, a member of the staff of Cardinal Gerlier, Archbishop of Lyons, has been confined to a fixed residence at Privas, 70 miles south of Lyons, by Laval as a reprisal for Catholic opposition to the rounding up of foreign Jews.

Laval's determination to help the Germans in their drive to clear away foreign Jews from France was shown during the week-end when he addressed German and other foreign correspondents in Vichy, it is learned.

"No man, nothing, can sway me from my determination to rid France of foreign Jews," he said. "I will take no lessons in humanitarianism from any country."

The Daily Telegraph's article, positioned in the middle of the third column of page three, focused more specifically on the news of Father Chaillet's arrest, as evinced by its headlines:

LAVAL PUNISHES  
A PRIEST

HID JEW'S CHILDREN  
By E.B. Wareing, former Chief of  
Our Paris Staff.

However, clerical opposition to the deportations was not restricted to French Catholics. On 19 September only The Times reported the news, from a Reuter cable, that French Protestants had offered a protest against the deportations. According to information which had reached London from France, it said, the French Protestant Church had joined the Roman Catholic Church in protesting against the treatment of the Jews in France. Pastor Boegner, head of the French Protestants, it added, had addressed a letter of protest to Marshal Pétain.<sup>135</sup> Further reports of Pastor Boegner's protest against the deportations were printed by The Times and the Daily Telegraph on 22 September. The Times' article extended for 52 lines and was placed in the middle of the third column on page three. Its headline simply stated:

VICHY'S TREATMENT OF  
JEWS  
PASTOR BOEGNER'S PROTEST

<sup>135</sup>Pastor Boegner's letter of protest was sent, in co-ordination with Cardinal Gerlier, on 20 August - the day after Gerlier had sent his own protest to Pétain.

While the Daily Telegraph's 26 line article on this subject was much shorter and less informative than The Times' it was, nevertheless, positioned in the middle of column six on its front page.

French resistance to the deportations attracted the attention of the News of the World's regular columnist Leslie Hore-Belisha, M.P., in the course of an article on 20 September, in which he focused generally on the latest military situation in Europe. Under the sub-heading 'FRENCH HORRORS TO-DAY' Belisha, seeking some precedent in history to which he could compare the round-ups, observed that 'the latest outrages in Paris recall the age of Herod'. He added: 'Who thought to read in our time of distraught mothers throwing their babies from high windows to save them from their persecutors?' Thousands of families were being broken up and sent into captivity, he lamented, and the identity papers of the children were being deliberately confiscated so that they would never be reunited with their parents again. Belisha, like Churchill, forgetting the horrors revealed in the Bund report, declared that '*for vileness, horror and bestial cruelty the like has never been exceeded*'. What particularly galled him was that 'all the natural ties of family are being impiously broken'.

The bulk of Hore-Belisha's comments about the situation in France centred not on the fate of the victims, but on the reports of opposition to the deportation plan. For example, he said:

Laval had promised 10,000 Jews to Germany, and this is the kind of promise that he keeps. To make sure of his numbers, he has not only dragged victims from their homes, but patients out of hospitals.

His police and other executive officers have recoiled from the task imposed upon them. General de St. Vincent, Military Governor of Lyons, has been dismissed for refusing to place his troops at the disposal of the authorities for use in mass arrests. There have been demonstrations by the public and there have been riots.

However, what had impressed him most about resistance to the deportations were the 'majestic' protests of the Church. 'All ranks of the hierarchy', he continued, 'have performed a sacred duty. Not only from the pulpit have they denounced this racial and religious persecution, but they have hidden and succoured the hunted.' He singled out Cardinal Gerlier and the Bishop of Toulouse for special praise. He expressed thanks for the French Protestant Federation's letter 'condemning the deportations and proclaiming that Protestants in France are ready to defend their persecuted countrymen, arms in hand', and added:

It is not only the members of an ancient community who will recognise with reverent gratitude that it was the Church which unsheathed its spiritual sword when the armies of the Republic had crumbled.

Such courage shown by the clerical elements in the State has re-animated political leadership. Monsieur Herriot has vindicated a belief that the answer to Hitlerism could only be given by those who defended liberty because of their political convictions or their religious faith.

Hore-Belisha then went on to discuss the possibilities of revolt against the Nazis in other occupied nations.

The Daily Telegraph was similarly inspired, on 21 September, to print an editorial which focused on the reports of resistance and not on the predicament of the victims. The paper seized the opportunity for an attack on the Vichy regime. There was a time, it declared, when Pétain had roused himself to protest against the German oppression in France, and his colleagues had endeavoured to quieten him so as not to annoy the Germans. Now, however, 'not a sound' came from him. The paper denounced Laval as a 'Judas' who had undertaken to collaborate with the Nazis, stripped France of raw materials, and created unemployment in order to produce a natural migration of workers to Germany. Moreover: 'LAVAL undertook to assist by a decree of forced labour and by a hideous persecution of the Jews in France'. The ranks of the nation had closed in 'antagonism', it said, against both the Nazi domination and Vichy collaboration. 'The infamous treatment of the Jews called forth from the church protests by which Marshal PETAIN can hardly be unaffected. His most loyal supporters find intolerable the policy which he has abased himself to follow.' French spirit, the paper concluded, would not endure such enslavement to Germany, and was steeled to resist it, confident that 'time in its course will bring power to redeem the past'.

The fear of being deported led many thousands of Jews from France, hunted by Bousquet's police, to try to cross the mountainous borders into neutral Switzerland and Spain, or to escape to the Italian occupied zone of France. The first news of this traffic was printed by The Times on 18 September in an article headed 'REFUGEES FLOCK INTO SWITZERLAND.' The paper reported that 'the influx of foreign refugees, mostly Jews, from France and Holland, into Switzerland is continuing on such a scale that a special camp has been built outside Geneva to accommodate them.' The Daily Mail added on 21 September that 'special camps have had to be established on the Swiss side of the frontier near Geneva to accommodate the thousands of Jews and Frenchmen fleeing from France.'<sup>136</sup> In fact the Swiss border had been purposely closed since 13 August, and Swiss border guards had subsequently refused entry to hundreds

<sup>136</sup>The Daily Mail's article was headed 'SWISS AID TO FRENCH JEWS', and was placed in the middle of the first column of its back page.

of desperate Jews, most of whom were consequently arrested and deported (to the death camps in Poland).<sup>137</sup> Martin Gilbert has observed that the Swiss authorities were so strict in this matter that 'more than a thousand Jewish refugees who had managed to cross into Switzerland without permission were taken to the border and forced to cross back into France.'<sup>138</sup> News of the prospect of a tightening in the Swiss laws of entry of refugees formed the leading article on the Daily Telegraph's main inside news page (five) on 23 September. It covered two columns and extended for 80 lines:

SWISS MAY TIGHTEN LAWS  
AGAINST REFUGEES

"100,000 TRYING TO ESCAPE  
FROM FRANCE"

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT  
ZURICH, Tuesday.

The Telegraph's correspondent reported that the 'question whether the entry of clandestine refugees, mostly Jews escaping from Holland, Belgium and Vichy France, should be acquiesced in or whether they should be expelled as soon as caught', represented 'the keenest dispute in Swiss internal politics'. The Swiss Minister of Justice, Councillor von Steiger, had told the National Council that an estimated 100,000 people were trying to escape to Switzerland from France. 'It is impossible for us to accept them', he had declared. Von Steiger had referred to the emergency law of 17 October 1939, by which every person clandestinely crossing the frontier was to be expelled. For humanitarian reasons, von Steiger had explained, a wide view had been taken of the law, but the influx of refugees had continued so that on 4 August the Federal Council had decided to apply the law fully; refugees entering the country after 13 August had to reckon with expulsion. There had been days in September, he had said, when 50 or 60 and even more than 100 refugees had tried to find asylum in Switzerland, but, in the Government's opinion, Switzerland could not take in more than 6,000 to 7,000 emigrants, and there were already 5,800 in internment camps. Von Steiger had declared the mass entry of refugees to be a danger to inner security, and had added that the entry of refugees had to be combated because of the danger of infectious diseases. The Telegraph's correspondent concluded with the comment that public opinion in Switzerland 'has been strongly in favour of greater concessions to

<sup>137</sup>See for example the story of Jan and Ella Freidländer in Gilbert's, The Holocaust, pp. 470-471.

<sup>138</sup>Gilbert, Auschwitz and the Allies, p. 77. In The Holocaust, p. 469, Gilbert brings to light the recollections of a Swiss woman, a resident of the border village of Novel, concerning the forced return of two Czech Jews who had crossed over into Switzerland.

refugees, and von Steiger gave a warning against drawing a dividing line between people and Government'.

The Daily Mail's only contribution to the reporting of the situation on the Swiss border was a 16 line article of dubious character on 25 September. Its headlines declared: 'JEW REFUGEE HAD £50,000.' The Mail's Geneva Correspondent reported:

Jews escaping into Switzerland from German-occupied territory are trying to buy expensive passages to South America. One woman who arrived a few days ago had £50,000 hidden on her.

These refugees are astonished when they learn that Vichy has refused transit visas for Jews. The visit of 3,000 French peasants from the Savoy area to the annual fair at Lausanne to-morrow has been cancelled because it was found that many of them had sold their permits at high prices to refugees.

At best this article was born of ignorance, at worst of down-right anti-Semitism since it implicitly suggested that thousands of 'Shylocks' were fleeing with their ill-gotten gains; it played right into the hands of Nazi propaganda. On 2 October, however, The Times' Geneva correspondent, D'Areis, repeated the slur in an 8 line article at the bottom of page four, its main news page, which much more important articles on the extermination of European Jewry failed to reach! The Correspondent alleged that foreign refugees were 'flocking' into Switzerland at the rate of 100 a day with large sums of money and precious stones. The reality, which was quite a different picture, was alluded in only a single brief article. On 1 October the News Chronicle printed a short report on its front page headed: 'Fleeing Jews Found on Mont Blanc.' 'Twelve Jews fleeing from France to escape Laval's anti-Jewish drive', it said, 'have been discovered 11,000 ft. up on Mont Blanc, only a few thousand feet from the summit. A pitiful trail of French Jewish refugees is arriving daily at the Franco-Swiss frontier. A party of 15, including women and children, reached Martigny in an exhausted condition. Two died on the way and two others had frostbitten feet.'

British newspaper interest in the situation of the Jews of France remained largely limited to the resistance factor. On 24 September the News Chronicle printed a Vicky cartoon which showed a smiling Laval, seated on a barrel of gunpowder, juggling three flaming torches labelled: 'FORCED LABOUR', 'JEWISH DEPORTATIONS', and 'MORE COLLABORATION.' The explanatory caption underneath simply read: 'PLAYING WITH FIRE.' The Daily Mail reported on 25 September that the Archbishop of Paris, Monsignor Chattel, was wearing the Star of David as a protest against the measures being taken against the Jews in France, and that priests and nuns were following his example. The Daily Telegraph added on 29

September that 'two of Laval's Cabinet - Romier, Minister without Portfolio, and Barthelemy, Minister of Justice - have threatened to resign if the persecution of Jews in France continues.' It too spoke of how 'many priests and nuns have followed the example of Mgr. Chaptal, the suffragan Bishop of Paris, in wearing the Star of David the Jewish emblem, as a protest.' The Times' 200 line special feature article by David Thompson on 15 October, however, truly epitomized this approach to the crisis of the Jews of France. It was headed:

VICHY AND THE VATICAN  
RELATIONS OF CHURCH AND STATE  
IN FRANCE  
FROM CONCILIATION TO CONFLICT

The paper gorged itself on analysis of the conflict between the Vatican and the Vichy regime; the vicious round-ups and deportations of the Jews were therefore a secondary matter.

Once again, on 27 September, it was Piers England in The People who chose to communicate the depths of Jewish suffering. In 'The Last Tears of Esther' Piers England told the story of a Jewish woman and her baby, and how they had been caught up in the Parisian round-ups of 16 July. He began:

I CANNOT think of any destiny more dreadful than that of the Jews in occupied territory. He lives - if he lives - in the shadow of doom. His time is borrowed time. Every hour may be his last. He slinks in the shadows, menaced by a frightful concentration of two thousand years of hate.

To the Nazis all people but the Herrenvolk are born to be slaves; but the Jews are born to be exterminated. Since the very dawn of their power the Nazis have been systematically wiping out the Jews with club, gun, rope, privation and kicking jackboot.

Many have died of sheer misery and hopelessness. Many, driven beyond the limit of endurance, have killed themselves. Theirs is a bitter destiny.

'I am telling you, today, a story out of Paris,' he continued, 'the story of a woman called Esther Schneider. Remember it.' Under the sub-heading 'JUST A WOMAN' England observed that Esther was 'one of the ordinary mass of struggling Jews; a working woman who loved her family; timorous, humble, anxious to please - apart from her blood and her religion, much the same as any woman in the world who has to work for long hours for little pay, and needs that little for mouths other than her own.' Esther was born in Cracow, Poland, where her family 'lived...in perpetual threat of pogrom.' At the age of ten Esther began work as a tailoress. Her father died of pneumonia when she was fourteen. At fifteen she became engaged to a tailor, and they married a year

later. It had been their dream to reach Britain, France or America, and so to be free of the threat of pogrom. Working 'like slaves', Esther and her husband saved enough to leave the country, but then Esther's mother died and the cost of her funeral wiped out their savings. Esther became pregnant but the child was still-born, and he had to be buried too. After five more years of toil, however, they had saved enough money to leave the country; as they couldn't afford America they settled in Paris. They began to work towards another dream - to own a dress-shop. 'God knows how they did it, but they managed it; got a place off one of the outer boulevards, waited, hoped, prayed, starved, but survived, and in two years more built a connection which was enough to keep them alive without too much vexation of spirit.' After a year or two they moved to a better part of Paris. Esther gave birth to another child, Moses, but he too died - this time after only a year. 'The sorrows of that unhappy couple were dreadful.' They threw themselves into building up their business. In 1935, England recorded, 'just as it seemed that Nature was about to ordain everlasting sterility for Esther, she gave birth to another son. They called him Herschel. He lived....She and her husband heaped upon the child all the devotion of which their souls were capable - and that was a very great deal of devotion, for they came from a race which has managed to stay solid in adversity throughout twenty centuries by virtue of its capacity for devotion.' Abraham died soon after, however, and so Esther ran the business alone. 'Her love for the boy became almost terrifying, fanatical. She could speak of nothing else and think of nothing else. The war came. France fell....The Nazis came into Paris.' She lived in daily terror for two years. Then came the round-ups of 16 July 1942:

The news spread in a kind of chain of horrified screams. Young and healthy Jewesses were being rounded up and sent away, nobody knew where....The Nazis were collecting Jewish children [too]. They did not say what for. Young children were being gathered, like young animals; all marks of identification were removed from their clothing. They were being herded together and sent away.

Where? Nobody knew. For what? Nobody dared say. But what fate could Nazidom have plotted for the children of Jews whom it considered as baser than the beasts that perish? When Esther heard this she froze. She ran home. A letter was waiting for her; an official notification. They wanted her child...

She put up the shutters and locked the door; sat in the shop parlour talking to the little boy, pouring out with heaven knows what eloquence some soul-shaking tale of love and tenderness in broken French uttered in a broken voice. They came and beat upon the door. She lived on the ground floor of one of these great Parisian blocks of apartments. In the middle there was a square stone courtyard. A porter guarded an interminable dim stairway.

Hundreds of stone steps went up and up and round and round from floor to floor to the roof, seven storeys high.

The porter heard her talking to the boy. The Nazi police official stopped beating on the door. But before they went round through the back way, Esther, carrying the little boy, Herschel, pushed past and, running like a hunted doe, reached the staircase. She climbed.

The child, terrified, began to cry. As she ran she gasped little broken-up endearments. She passed the third floor, the fourth and the fifth.



She paused there to rest. Somebody heard her saying: "My little heart....my little king....my dove. You shall have sweets....chocolate eggs and almonds and raisins."

The little boy said, "When?"

She said: "Soon. Soon. Mama will take care of you and give you pretty things...."

Heavy boots pounded the stone stairs. Esther climbed higher, reached the seventh floor, let down the ladder that led to the roof. The police were only one floor below her now. She heard them shout: "Bring that kid down!"

She screamed "No." Then she was standing on the roof itself. The high, narrow street was like a great grey chasm. The courtyard was so far away that it looked like a dirty white handkerchief.

From the roof to the grey cobbles the walls rushed straight down. A Nazi shouted: "Bring that kid down here!"

Esther replied in a voice which was strangely level and calm: "To be one of your slaves? To be one of your dogs? Very well, I will bring him down. I am coming down with him immediately, quickly, now."

She was standing on the parapet. She took a step forward into space.

## Chapter 5

### 'Obstruction from high quarters'

Blanche Dugdale, 2 December 1942.

On 1 August Gerhart Riegner, the World Jewish Congress representative in Geneva, received information to the effect that the Nazis were discussing a plan to deport to the East and exterminate via prussic acid [Zyklon B] the Jews of Europe.<sup>139</sup> Riegner took fresh look at the recent reports of deportations and extermination, and concluded that: 'At first sight the affair sounds totally fantastic. But one cannot exclude the consideration that these measures are rooted in the inner logic of the regime and that these people have no scruples whatsoever.' He recalled Hitler's speech of 30 January 1939 when Hitler had 'prophesied' the extermination of European Jewry. 'The more he thought about it, the more likely the industrialist's report appeared to him...the information about deportations all across Europe strengthened the case.'<sup>140</sup> Therefore, on 8 August Riegner gave the following message to the British vice-consul in Geneva with the request that it be sent to Sydney Silverman, M.P., the World Jewish Congress representative in London:

Received alarming report that at the Führer's headquarters a plan has been discovered and is under consideration according to which all Jews in countries occupied or controlled by Germany, numbering 3½ to 4 millions, should, after deportation and concentration in the East, be at one blow exterminated in order to resolve once and for all the Jewish question in Europe. Action is reputed to be planned for the autumn. Ways of execution are still being discussed including the use of prussic acid. We transmit this information with all the necessary reservation as exactitude cannot be confirmed by us. Our informant is reported to have close connections with the highest German authorities and his reports are generally reliable. Please inform and consult New York.<sup>141</sup>

John Fox has observed that the Foreign Office reacted to this cable with 'extreme caution and reserve' and it hesitated about passing it on.<sup>142</sup> On 14 August, four days after the cable had arrived, Denis Allen of the Central Department commented that 'we have no confirmation of this report from other sources, although we have of course received numerous reports of large scale massacres of Jews,

<sup>139</sup>For the fullest account of the whole Riegner Telegram affair see Walter Laqueur & Richard Breitman, *Breaking the Silence*, (New York, 1986).

<sup>140</sup>*ibid.*, pp. 146-147.

<sup>141</sup>Quoted by Alex Easterman on page 222 of Emrys Hughes' biography *Sydney Silverman*, (London, 1969). Riegner also sent a copy to Rabbi Stephen Wise in New York but this was withheld by the State Department.

<sup>142</sup>John Fox, 'The Jewish Factor in British War Crimes Policy in 1942,' *English Historical Review*, Vol. XCII, 1977, p. 92.

particularly in Poland.' The next day Frank Kenyon Roberts, acknowledging the Foreign Office's obligation to pass on the cable to Silverman, neatly expressed the Foreign Office's deepest fear: 'I do not see how we can hold up this message much longer, although I fear it may provoke *embarrassing repercussions*'.<sup>143</sup> Accordingly, on 17 August the Riegner cable was forwarded to Silverman, together with the statement: 'We have no information bearing on or confirming this story.' Silverman immediately cabled a copy of the Riegner telegram to Rabbi Stephen Wise in New York, and asked for a meeting with the Foreign Office to decide what could be done. On 9 September Silverman met with Sir Brograve Beauchamp, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, at the Foreign Office. Silverman, aware of the Foreign Office's reservations, assured Beauchamp that Riegner was 'entirely trustworthy'. Indeed, he himself had received information relating to the deportation of Jews from the occupied territories and Germany to the East 'which might be a confirmation of this alleged plan'.<sup>144</sup> He requested permission to speak on the telephone with Rabbi Stephen Wise in New York, and enquired whether the Foreign Office thought any good would come by publicising the report, or by bringing pressure upon the Germans by other means, perhaps involving the Vatican. Beauchamp replied that these requests would be looked into. However, the Foreign Office, eager to play down the Riegner telegram, poured cold water on each of Silverman's suggestions. Responding on 10 September, Denis Allen commented that the Vatican had already been asked 'to take a more positive line in condemnation of German atrocities', and added that the situation would not be helped by Britain taking action on the basis of 'this rather wild story'.<sup>145</sup> To Silverman's query about publicity Allen replied that 'the most we could say to Mr. Silverman was that, if Jewish organisations themselves wished to give publicity to the story, the Foreign Office could see no objection, although we could take no responsibility for the story'. In Martin Gilbert's words: 'It was clear that the impact of Riegner's telegram had been lost....No one in the Foreign Office saw any link between the Bund Report of May 22, and Riegner's telegram eleven weeks later'.<sup>146</sup>

There is no doubt that the negative experience of the First World War was a major factor in the refusal of the British Government and Press to give credence to reports of atrocities against Jews. As we have already seen, the British Press, public and Government entered the Second World War with a deep scepticism of atrocity reports and were determined not to be so gullible again. Reports of atrocities against Jews appeared to be classic horror stories of 1914-18 vintage and were treated

<sup>143</sup>My italics.

<sup>144</sup>Fox, *op. cit.*, p. 93; Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies*, p. 59.

<sup>145</sup>Quoted by Gilbert, *Auschwitz and the Allies*, p. 60.

<sup>146</sup>*ibid.*

accordingly. In the first week of September 1942, for instance, a report reached the Foreign Office from the Orthodox Jewish organisation Agudas Yisroel, which stated that the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto was proceeding, and that 100,000 Jews had so far been exterminated. It added (in confirmation of the Riegner Telegram) that 'these mass murders are carried out also on Jews deported from other occupied countries. It is alleged that soap and artificial fertilizers are being produced from the bodies of the murdered persons'.<sup>147</sup> The report sounded so similar to the corpse factory story of 1917 that Alison David commented on 11 September: 'until corroborative evidence is forthcoming, I think it should be treated with the greatest reserve. (Almost a similar report has been quoted in books written about the last war!)'. On 12 September Frank Roberts remarked that 'the facts are quite bad enough without the addition of such an old story as the use of bodies for the manufacture of soap etc'.<sup>148</sup> Of course the veracity of reports of atrocities against Jews was further in doubt in the eyes of the Government and supporters of its policy in Palestine who supposed that Zionists were exaggerating or faking atrocity reports as part of their campaign for a Jewish state in Palestine. However, such scepticism was misplaced. As A.J.P. Taylor has noted: 'In the first World war nearly everyone believed the stories of German atrocities, though relatively few were true. In the second World war nearly everyone refused to believe the stories, though they were true, and German crimes the most atrocious ever committed by a civilized nation.'<sup>149</sup> Calls for a conference on or a declaration denouncing German atrocities against the Jews were motivated by the desire for the Allies to acknowledge the Jewish identity of the victims and put into operation a co-ordinated rescue policy to help save them.

Although the Riegner Telegram had been received by the British Government in August it was not until December that it officially acknowledged the existence of a German plan to exterminate European Jewry. In the meantime corroborative information continued to emerge but neither the Government nor Press perceived its significance. On 30 September, for example, Hitler, at the height of his power, gave a speech at the Sport Palast in Berlin. For most of his speech he spoke about the war situation, boasting of German successes and taunting the Allies. He also spoke about the Jews. His speech was reported the next day, 1 October, by the Daily Telegraph:

On September 1, 1939 I said that once this war had been forced upon us no power of arms nor yet power of time would ever overcome us. Secondly, I said that if Jewry started this war in order to overcome the Aryan people, then it would not be Aryans but the Jews who would be exterminated. [Hitler registered his first sign of

<sup>147</sup>Quoted by Fox, *op cit.*, p. 94. See also Wasserstein, *op cit.*, p. 169.

<sup>148</sup>Fox, *op cit.*, p. 92-93.

<sup>149</sup>A.J.P. Taylor, *English History 1914-1945*, (Oxford, 1985), p. 46 n. 3.

emotions, crashing his fist on the desk. Loud cheers greeted this statement.] The Jews laughed at my prophecies. I doubt if they are laughing now. I can assure them that they will lose all desire to laugh wherever they may be, and I shall be right in this prophecy too.<sup>150</sup>

It must be noted that of the other papers only The Times, in its later editions, printed this section of Hitler's speech. None of the papers researched made any editorial comment on these particular words, choosing instead to focus solely on his comments on the war situation. Twenty-six days later, however, the Manchester Guardian protested: 'It is easy to take such a passage when first read as just another wild and whirling threat, but that would be a mistake. Hitler means what he says. He aims literally at the 'Extermination' of the Jews in Europe so far as his hand can reach them, and for weeks past reports from country after country have shown that the policy is being carried out with every circumstance of cruelty.' It added a lamentably accurate estimate of the extent of the slaughter: 'When the war began there were perhaps six and a half million Jews in Europe. Half a million are so far safe in the countries free from Hitler. Between one and two millions are believed to have already been destroyed. Perhaps four and a half millions remain to be, if Hitler has his way, exterminated.'<sup>151</sup>

In its editorial of 9 October the Jewish Chronicle emphasised that Hitler's 'extermination threat' was in complete accord with a long lain and clearly pronounced policy to exterminate the Jews of Europe. Hitler was 'consistent in his anti-Semitism', it said. 'He recalled, last week, what he said about Jews on the day he invaded Poland....He boasts that he has almost exterminated the Jews of Germany and is on the way to exterminate their co-religionists everywhere. In this particular respect, his aim has not changed, and he is consistently consistent.' The paper spoke bitterly of the Allies' silence: 'It is well that he has proclaimed it unmistakably *once again*, in the ears of all men. Never has such a purpose been declared, at least since the days of Haman. On that occasion the appointed victims in Persia were allowed to stand to their own defence, and gave an excellent account of themselves. To-day the fate of all the 16 million Jews is in question. They are fobbed off with a few Jewish battalions hidden away in a Palestine Regiment; and carefully forbidden any Jewish identification of title or badge.'<sup>152</sup>

<sup>150</sup>The speech Hitler referred to here had not actually been made in September 1939, but in January 1939.

<sup>151</sup>Sharf, *op cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>152</sup>My italics.

However, the ears of some men, notable clergymen in particular, *had* begun to open. For instance, it was not by accident that the formation of the Council of Christians and Jews, in which William Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury, played a significant part, coincided with the climax of Press reports of the French deportations; it may well have been that British clergymen had been inspired by the opposition of the French clergy.<sup>153</sup> The Archbishop of Canterbury presided at a protest rally at the Royal Albert Hall, organised by the Board of Deputies, on 29 October. The rally was attended by ten thousand people, including 'representatives of foreign governments, embassies, and legations, distinguished leaders of the Churches, and members of the House of Commons and Lords, the Lord Chancellor, and Lord Mayors and Mayors of various boroughs in London and of provincial cities'.<sup>154</sup> The Archbishop declared that they were witnessing such an eruption of evil as the world had not seen for centuries. He spoke of the psychological barriers which made it difficult to accept the truth of Nazi atrocities against the Jews. What was now happening in Europe, he said, was so horrible that the imagination refused to picture it. 'There is a terrible line in Mark Anthony's speech over the body of Julius Caesar in Shakespeare's play - all pity choked with custom of fell deeds. We are in danger of sinking to that condition. Events which would have aroused consternation in the first decade of this century now pass almost unnoticed. The sufferings of 1914-1918, and much of the period between the two wars, led to a hardening of hearts. The drain upon sympathy began to be unbearable. We are in danger of becoming morally numb. For this reason alone it would be right that we should meet face to face the fact of monstrous evil and realise its meaning'.<sup>155</sup> He added that, although all peoples in Europe had suffered at the hand of the Nazis, the latter had in particular focused their 'destructive energy' against the Jews.

The Rt. Rev. David Mathew, Bishop Auxiliary of Westminster, speaking on behalf of Cardinal Hinsley, reiterated Pope Pius XI's declaration that no true Christian could be an anti-Semite, and the Rt. Rev. Dr. J.S. Whale, Moderator of the Free Churches denounced anti-Semitism as 'an abomination'.<sup>156</sup>

The highlight of the meeting was the reading, by the Archbishop of Canterbury, of a message from Churchill: 'I cannot refrain from sending, through you,' he said, 'to the audience which is assembling under your chairmanship at the Albert Hall to-day to protest against Nazi atrocities inflicted on the Jews, assurance of my warm sympathy

<sup>153</sup>The formation of the Council of Christians and Jews was publicly announced on 30 September 1942.

<sup>154</sup>*Jewish Chronicle*, 6 November 1942, page 5, columns 1-2.

<sup>155</sup>As reported in the *News Chronicle*, 30 October 1942, page 3, columns 1-3.

<sup>156</sup>*Jewish Chronicle*, 6 November 1942.

with the objects of the meeting. The systematic cruelties to which the Jewish people - men, women, and children - have been exposed under the Nazi regime are amongst the most terrible events of history, and place an indelible stain upon all who perpetrate and instigate them. Free men and women denounce these evil crimes and when this world's struggle ends with the enthronement of human rights, racial persecution will be ended.' Whereas Churchill, Monty Penkower notes, had disregarded 'the opposition of two War Cabinet ministers' so as to send his message, Anthony Eden, who had been invited by the organisers of the rally, declined to attend.<sup>157</sup> He sent a weak reply to the organisers' request that he might send a message of his own; as recorded by the Jewish Chronicle: 'In his reply he referred to the request of the organisers that he should send a message on this subject to be read at the meeting, and said: "It will be recalled that the Prime Minister sent a message on this subject both on the occasion of the Centenary of THE JEWISH CHRONICLE last year and on that of the demonstration organised by the American Jewish Congress in New York last July." In the circumstances, therefore, he continued, he was very sorry that he did not feel able to comply with the request.'<sup>158</sup> Eden clearly did not want to add to the growing pressure upon the Government for the issuing of a declaration directed specifically against German atrocities against the Jews. Moreover, Eden did not want to associate himself with the resolution passed at the meeting, with its reference to a deliberate Nazi plan of extermination. 'A resolution, moved by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and carried unanimously,' reported the Jewish Chronicle on 6 November, 'expressed profound indignation at the unparalleled atrocities committed by the German Government and its satellites, and horror at the deliberate Nazi policy of exterminating the Jews. It conveyed sympathy with the families of the unhappy victims of systematic terror, and expressed heartfelt admiration for the heroism and gallantry of the fighting forces of the United Nations.'

The speeches of both the Chief Rabbi and Professor Brodetsky were also recorded by the Jewish Chronicle. Professor Brodetsky commented on the difficulty of acknowledging something which had no precedent in history: '[he] said that civilised man forgot the possibility of things happening which were beyond his human imagination. Yet civilised man *must* deal with the situation created by the Nazi murderer'. The Chief Rabbi declared that the meeting 'was a burning protest against the deliberately planned extinction of the whole House of Israel', and added that 'words of loathing at such a diabolic policy came most appropriately, and effectively, from

<sup>157</sup>Penkower, The Jews Were Expendable, (Illinois, 1983), p. 76.

<sup>158</sup>Jewish Chronicle, 6 November 1942.

non-Jewish lips'. In this regard, he asserted, the silence of the British Press actually encouraged the Nazis in their extermination programme:

Would even that great meeting be the means of bringing home to the general public the appalling facts of the Jewish situation in Nazi-controlled lands? The British public did not seem to realise that - as Mr. Churchill reminded them - for every one execution which Hitler had ordered in the West, he had carried out at least 200, sometimes 1000, in Jewish populations. Of course, everyone occasionally heard statements to that effect on the wireless; but to the plain man, only seeing was believing; and he rarely saw, down in black and white, any attention-compelling information on these massacres. It was difficult to understand the reticence of the press on the matter. Such indifference encouraged the gorillas of Berlin to go on perfecting their technique of extermination. To-day the British people could not show its unborn undying hatred of all bestiality if so much of that bestiality was carelessly screened from public knowledge.

When a few weeks ago, due publicity *was* given to the case of the thousands of Jewish mothers throughout France whose little children were torn from them - many an Englishman for the first time fully realised the true nature of the evil thing they had been called upon to slay, and resolved never to rest till Nazism had totally passed away.

On the next day only the News Chronicle, Daily Telegraph and The Times reported the Albert Hall protest. It must be said that these papers, stung perhaps by the Chief Rabbi's rebuke, gave a *relatively* high degree of prominence (in terms of layout and length) to their reports of the protest rally. However, as we shall see, only the News Chronicle covered the critical comments made by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Chief Rabbi and Professor Brodetsky. Once again the Press gave the impression that all was rosy in the Allies' garden; while expressions of indignation were well reported, criticisms of the state of public awareness, Government policy and Press reporting were edited out.

The News Chronicle's article on the rally formed the leader on its third page on 30 October. It was well laid out, covering the first three columns and extending for 71 lines. The News Chronicle chose, in particular, to highlight the Archbishop of Canterbury's observations concerning the hard-heartedness of the British people in the face of the extermination of the Jews. Its headline read:

So Much Horror  
Making Us  
Morally Numb

A half of the article consisted of such quotations from the Archbishop's speech; the rest briefly summarised Churchill's message, and the speeches of General Sikorski and Lord Cecil.



The Daily Telegraph's article, written by its reporter H.J. Wilson, was also given prominence, but was radically different in approach. It formed the leader on page five, was spread over columns 1 and 2, and was accorded 88 lines. Wilson chose to focus initially upon the salutary effect that, he believed, reports of the rally would have upon the Jews of Europe. He began: 'Messages of hope for the tormented Jews in German-occupied Europe will pass from mouth to mouth through concentration camps and ghettos in the coming weeks. They were launched on their long journey through underground channels at the Albert Hall last night by spokesmen of the Governments of the United Nations and leaders of British Christendom.' Wilson summarised a large number of the speeches but, nevertheless, managed to avoid communicating any of the criticisms made. The 'upbeat' effect was added to by the article's bold headline:

MESSAGES OF HOPE SENT  
TO MARTYRED JEWS  

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MR. CHURCHILL PROMISES END  
OF RACIAL PERSECUTION

The Times also gave a significant amount of space to its report of the protest rally; it was 91 lines in length and was placed at the top of the fifth column on page two. Like the News Chronicle, The Times concentrated especially on the Archbishop of Canterbury's speech. However, even though the paper quoted a large section of the Archbishop's speech it made no reference whatsoever to his criticisms. Overall the paper gave the impression that the rally was a sort of unofficial protest by the United Nations, for while an extensive list of the speakers and a number of summaries of speeches were printed, the presence at the rally of the Chief Rabbi and Professor Brodetsky was not even noted.

For almost a whole month after the publication of these articles a silence prevailed in the Press with regard to reports of atrocities against the Jews of Europe. On 23 November, however, new information was released by the Jewish Agency Executive in Jerusalem which set in action a chain of events that lead to the issuing of the United Nations Declaration of 17 December 1942. The Jewish Agency published this announcement in the Palestinian Press:

The Jewish Agency Executive in Jerusalem has received from authoritative and reliable sources detailed information regarding the acts of murder and slaughter committed against the Jews of Poland and the Jews of central and western Europe deported to Poland.

According to this information, following the June visit to Warsaw of Gestapo Chief [Heinrich] Himmler, the Nazi authorities in Poland began the

systematic extermination of the Jewish population in Polish towns and cities. A specially appointed government committee travels around the country and directs extermination operations. Jewish children up to the age of twelve have been ruthlessly executed en masse. Elderly people have been killed as well.

Able-bodied Jewish men were registered and sent in groups to unknown destinations and have not been heard of since. In various places, Jewish women were assembled by the Nazi authorities and also sent away...

Information from the ghettos of Warsaw and Lodz points to an appalling reduction of the Jewish population there in recent months.

According to information from the same sources, there are mass deportations of Jews from the cities of central and western Europe. There are only 28,000 Jews left in Berlin.

The Jewish Agency Executive discussed this information at its meeting yesterday and decided on a series of activities and appeals abroad regarding the situation of the Jews of Europe. A special committee was elected to carry out these activities.<sup>159</sup>

Only two British newspapers, the Daily Telegraph and The Times, reported this new information. The Daily Telegraph gave the news much prominence, by printing its 75 line article of 24 November across columns 2 and 3 at the top of page three. Its bold headlines declared unequivocally:

**EUROPEAN JEWRY IS BEING  
EXTERMINATED**

**MASS BUTCHERY BY GESTAPO**  
FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT  
JERUSALEM, Monday.

'A special message', it began, 'from Geneva to the Palestine Post this morning suggests that it is time to drop speaking of the persecution of the Jews of Europe, since what is happening is systematic extermination. "The simple fact is," it says, "that Hitler is making good his promise to destroy European Jewry." ' Almost all the Jews of Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia had been removed 'and the survivors are being rapidly liquidated. A similar process is being applied to the Jews in France, Belgium and Holland'. The Jews of Switzerland, Italy and Hungary had so far been spared, but 'in Eastern and Central Europe, with the exception of Hungary, the mass of Jewry, numbering several millions, is in process of annihilation.' The Post's Geneva correspondent, it said, had cited instances of such mass extermination, including an account of the massacre of 24,000 Jews, men, women and children, from the Riga ghetto. The message from Geneva, it said, 'is supported by reports reaching the Jewish Agency executive here. These reports are appearing to-morrow morning [23 November] in the entire Hebrew Press in black-bordered columns'. It added:

<sup>159</sup>Quoted by Porat, *op cit.*, pp. 37-38.

The Jewish Agency's information concerned mainly the systematic extermination of the Jewish inhabitants of Polish towns after Himmler's visit to Warsaw last spring. He established a commission, which visits all parts of Poland and directs the wholesale wiping out of the surviving Jews. This commission is under the leadership of a commissar named Feu.

#### SLAUGHTER OF INNOCENTS

Among the unbelievable atrocities reported, Jewish children, including many below the age of 12, have been executed in their thousands and elderly people murdered wholesale.

An eye-witness report said that 27,000 of the 30,000 Jews in the town of Kielce were ordered for deportation, but 1,500 were killed on the spot. The remainder disappeared on the journey.

In Bialystok the authorities herded 1,500 Jews in the great synagogue, where they were burnt alive. Most of the Jews of the hamlet of Tickin were buried alive.

Basing itself on the official Polish Black Book that 200,000 Jews have been wiped out in Poland during the three years of war, the Palestine Post said editorially: "This matter goes to the very core of the moral position of the United Nations. An answer must be found if we are not to be accused of complacency."

The Times' article, written by Bridgeman and also printed on 24 November, was much more reserved in both layout and text. It was 49 lines in length and was placed in the bottom half of page three, in the seventh column adjacent to advertisements for 'Perspex' plastic and 'Roto' propellers, and just above an article headed 'BRITISH MUSIC IN SWEDEN.' While Bridgeman adequately communicated the facts of the Jewish Agency's statement, his article lacked the conviction apparent in the Daily Telegraph's.<sup>160</sup>

On 24 November Under Secretary of State Welles had given documents to Rabbi Stephen Wise which supported Riegner's telegram. Welles had added that 'I have reason to believe that everything in these documents is correct', and that 'there is no exaggeration. The documents are evidently correct.'<sup>161</sup> Wise was permitted to make their contents public provided that, Penkower notes, 'all newspapers receive the information at the same time and that the names appearing in the documents not be disclosed'. Wise hastily organised a Press conference for that evening. Penkower has provided an excellent account of this Press conference:

<sup>160</sup>For example, whereas the Jewish Agency had declared its sources to be 'authoritative and reliable' Bridgeman said that these sources were '*believed* to be reliable' - a small but significant difference. Whether intentionally or not a question mark was thus raised in the mind of the reader as to the trustworthiness of the Jewish Agency. The reader's acceptance of the veracity of the ensuing report therefore hangs upon this one question, his answer being in many cases determined by a whole host of sub-conscious prejudices and fears.

<sup>161</sup>Penkower, *op cit.*, p. 79.

Through sources confirmed by the State Department, the WJC chairman began, he had just learned that half of the estimated four million Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe had been slain in an "extermination campaign." Hitler had ordered the murder of the entire number by the end of the year; the Warsaw ghetto had already been reduced from 500,000 to about 100,000. When Nazi leaders speak of killing "Jews in Poland," Wise continued, they refer to four-fifths of the Jewish population in Hitler-ruled Europe, since that many either are in Poland or are on route there under a Nazi "grouping plan." The Nazis have established a price of 50 reichsmarks for each corpse (mostly Jews), and are reclaiming bodies of slain civilians to be "processed into such war-vital commodities as soap, fats and fertilizer." Hitler "is even exhuming the dead for the value of the corpses," Wise emphasized. Injecting air bubbles into the veins of the victims was one of the "simplest and the cheapest methods" in this campaign, one physician able to kill more than 100 men in an hour.

Most of this information, he noted, came from various sources other than the State Department, but State had confirmed the documents as authentic. In an allusion to his October 20 meeting with Myron Taylor, Wise also quoted "a representative of President Roosevelt recently returned from Europe" as saying that the "worst you [Dr. Wise] have thought is true." Wise attributed Hitler's campaign to "a last desperate effort - one of his last mad acts before he is destroyed, or called to his judgment." He estimated that some half of the five million Jews in the territories "had already been destroyed."

The new information received patchy coverage in the U.S. newspapers. As Deborah Lipstadt observes: 'Some of the major dailies - including the *Dallas News*, *Denver Post*, *Miami Herald*, *New York Herald Tribune*, *Los Angeles Examiner*, and *St. Louis Post Dispatch* ran news of Wise's announcement on their front pages. Most, however, carried it on page 2, the *San Francisco Examiner* on page 5, the *New York Journal American*, *New York World Telegram*, and *Baltimore Sun* on page 3, the *Chicago Tribune* on page 4, the *Washington Post* on page 6, the *Christian Science Monitor* on page 7, and the *New York Times* on page 10. The *Atlanta Constitution* put it on page 20 with the want ads and the train schedules, while the *Kansas City Star* and the *New Orleans Times Picayune* did not carry it at all.<sup>162</sup> Nevertheless this compared favourably with the record of the British Press, for only the *Daily Telegraph* made any reference to the new details. This was in spite of the fact that the Wise's Press conference had been fully covered by the main news agencies, including *Reuter* and *Associated Press*. The fact that the *Daily Telegraph*'s article was only 16 lines long and was positioned at the bottom of the third column of its front page meant that it would hardly have been noticed. Moreover, the report lacked any of the specific details concerning methods of execution and the industry of exploitation. It must therefore be concluded that the paper doubted the veracity of much of the information:

<sup>162</sup>Lipstadt, *op cit.*, p. 181.

HITLER'S "KILL  
ALL JEWS ORDER"

BY END OF 1942

WASHINGTON, Tuesday

Dr. Stephen Wise, the Jewish leader, said to-day that the State Department had substantiated reports which had reached American Jewish organisations that Hitler had ordered the extermination of all Jews in Occupied Europe by the end of 1942.

Dr. Wise said that the Jewish population concerned was more than 2,000,000. He added that the organisations he represented had been gathering reports for months, but had withheld any statement until confirmation had been obtained. - Reuter.

The rest of the British Press indicated their negative attitude to Wise's statement by their complete silence. The U.S. newspaper The Christian Century verbalised the unspoken doubts possessed equally by its American and British contemporaries over this new information. It was, it said, 'unpleasantly reminiscent of the "cadaver factory" lie which was one of the propaganda triumphs of the First World War'. Unfortunately, however, there was much truth in Wise's statement, for in the death camps the Germans had indeed developed a highly efficient process of extermination and exploitation. For example, in Sobibor, Konnilyn Feig says, 'following cremation, workers pulverised the bones with mallets, stuffed the powder into sacks, and sent them to Germany to be sold as fertilizer.' Here, too, victims' hair was utilised, and their belongings collected and sent to Germany. Similar accounts might also be given of the exploitation machinery operating in the other death camps.<sup>163</sup>

On 24 November the Polish Government in Exile released to the British Press further information which it had received from Jan Karski, a courier of the Polish Underground. Karski had entered Belzec disguised as an Estonian guard and brought to London an eye-witness report of the operation of the Final Solution throughout Poland, with particular reference to the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto and the extermination process in Belzec. The Polish Government had been so shocked by his report that it released the information to the Press before it had had time to inform either the World Jewish Congress or the British Government. Count Raczynski, the Polish Ambassador in London, who had hitherto entertained doubts about the veracity of reports of atrocities against the Jews, has since explained that 'there is no doubt that

<sup>163</sup>Feig, *op. cit.*, (New York, 1981), p. 287. For descriptions of the exploitation machinery at Chelmno, Auschwitz, Majdanek, Treblinka, see pages 272, 346-48, 322-329 and 300 respectively. See also Kurt Gerstein's eye-witness account of the exploitation machinery at Belzec in Yehuda Bauer's A History of the Holocaust, (New York, 1982), pp. 210-211.

his visit prompted us to act'.<sup>164</sup> The W.J.C. received a copy of the Karski report in the evening of 25 November, and, acting promptly, Easternman telephoned the British Foreign Office to arrange a meeting the following morning at which they could show the latter the report. It said that in March 1942 Hitler had ordered that half of Polish Jewry be exterminated by the end of the year. The initial pace of extermination had not been quick enough though for Himmler, and on the occasion of his visit to the General Government in July 1942 he had 'ordered new decrees personally, aiming at the total destruction of Polish Jewry'. It was as a part of this plan that the Germans had begun the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto. On 21 July, it said, German police cars suddenly entered the Ghetto, soldiers rushed into houses firing indiscriminately; the Jewish Council was arrested and held hostage. The next day the Council was charged, under pain of death, to carry out German orders to provide 6000 Jews a day, regardless of age or sex, for 'resettlement' in the Eastern part of Poland. 'By the next day, however, on July 23rd, the German police again appeared in the Jewish Municipal Council and demanded to see the Chairman, Mr. Czerniakow. After the police had left, Czerniakow committed suicide. From a note he had left for his wife, it became clear that he had received an order to deliver 10,000 people the next day and 7,000 daily on the following days, in spite of the fact that originally the quota had been fixed at 6,000. The victims to be delivered to the Germans are either dragged out of their homes or seized in the streets. As the zeal of the Jewish police to perform these duties against their own people was slight it did not guarantee efficiency, the Germans mobilised temporary security battalions for the manhunts, consisting of Ukrainians, Latvians, and Lithuanians.' However, Karski had made clear, those deported were not being 'resettled' but taken to extermination camps:

The Jews were cornered into a square. Old people and cripples were either singled out, or were taken to the cemetery and there shot. The remaining people are loaded into goods trucks at the rate of 150 people into space for 40. The floor of the truck is covered with a thick layer of lime and chlorine sprinkled with water the doors of the trucks are locked. Sometimes the train starts immediately on being loaded, sometimes they remain on the siding for a day, two days or even longer. The people are packed so tightly that those die who die of suffocation remain in the crowd side by side with the still living, those initially dying from the fumes of lime and chlorine, from lack of air, water and food. Wherever the trains arrive, half the people arrive dead. those surviving are sent to special camps at Treblinka, Belzec and Sobibor. Once there, the so-called "settlers" are mass murdered. Only young and relatively strong people are left alive, for their valuable slave labour for the Germans. However, the percentage of these is extremely small for out of a total of about 250,000 "re-settled" only about 4,000 have been sent to auxiliary work on the battlefronts.

<sup>164</sup>Count Raczynski, letter to Martin Gilbert, 18 September 1980. See Gilbert, Auschwitz and the Allies, p. 93.

Karski had underlined the fact that children and babies were being massacred too. From the above information he had concluded that 'under the guise of resettlement in the East a mass murder of the Jewish population is taking place.' He recapitulated:

It started on July 22nd 1942, it has been in progress ever since. By the end of September 1942 250,000 Jews had been eliminated. The extent of this action is best characterised by figures; in the Warsaw ghetto there lived, according to official German statistics in March 1942 about 433,000 people. In spite of the extremely high mortality caused by bad hygienic conditions, epidemics, starvation, executions, etc., the number of Jews in the ghetto remained more or less stable although to replace the dead, Jews from other parts of Europe, Austria, Holland, were sent to Warsaw. Current information leaked from the Arbeitsamt, up to 40,000 people remain in the Warsaw ghetto. Only highly skilled workers, to be employed in German war industry. The best indication of the dwindling numbers in the ghetto lies in the fact that in September 1942 120,000 ration cards were printed. For October the number was only 40,000. Simultaneously the extermination of Jews in the Warsaw ghetto, ghettos in the provinces and, Felenich Rembertow, Nowy Dwor, Kaluszyn and Minsk Mazowiecki are being liquidated....Similar news reaches us from cities in South Eastern Poland...

Karski had also described in detail the extermination process employed in Belzec:

The new methods applied in this mass extermination are, apart from execution by firing squad, electrocution and lethal gas chambers. An electrocuting station is installed at Belzec camp. Transports of "settlers" arrive at a siding, at a spot where the execution is to take place. The camp is policed by Ukrainians. The victims are ordered to strip naked, - to have a bath, ostensibly - and are then led to a barrack with a metal plate for floor. The door is then locked, and electric current passes through the victims, and their death is almost instantaneous. Bodies are loaded onto waggons and taken to a mass grave some distance from the camp. A large digging machine has been installed recently in Treblinka...it works ceaselessly to dig ditches - mass graves for Jews who are to meet their death there....What the Poles reactions to these unspeakable crimes are, is best proved by a pamphlet by the "Front for the Liberation of Poland", containing a strongly worded preface against the terrible extermination of the Jews. According to the pamphlet, the total number of Jews murdered in Poland since September 1939 exceeds one million.

Foreign Office reaction to this new information was cagey. The official who had received Silverman and Easterman, Richard Law, noted later on 26 November that to Silverman's statement that 'whatever our [the Foreign Office] view might be, the State Department accepted the substantial truth of these stories', he had replied that 'I did not think that the State Department had any more evidence than we had, and that probably on their knowledge of the German character and of Nazi ideology it seemed to them that there was nothing intrinsically improbable about the story. I said that we had no more evidence, that Mr. Norton [Minister in Berne] had seen Mr. Riegner, but had been unable to get from him the facts upon which his evidence was based.' Silverman called upon the British Government to initiate some rescue measures as well as to arrange for the issuing of a Four Power declaration which would condemn the

Nazi plan of extermination and promise retribution after the war. He had added that if the Foreign Office's attitude was that nothing useful could be done at that time then it meant that nothing could ever be done, and he asserted that even if the British Government passed a declaration promising retribution it would be 'in an impossible position' unless the Foreign Office took 'some steps to try and prevent this [the extermination of the Jews] happening'. In his minutes, Richard Law concurred with this: 'I doubt very much whether his proposals, if we were able to carry them out, would do very much good, and I think Mr. Silverman agrees. On the other hand I think that we would be in an appalling position if these stories should prove to have been true and we have done nothing whatever about them.' He added somewhat fearfully that 'Silverman and his friends have been very forebearing on the whole, but I am afraid that unless we can make them some kind of gesture they will cause a lot of trouble.'<sup>165</sup>

Internal discussion of the new evidence began immediately within the Foreign Office. On 27 November Denis Allen minuted: 'It is of course undeniable that large scale massacres of Jews are taking place, especially in Poland We have never denied this...Whether or not these massacres have been the result of a plan drawn up on a given date at Hitler's Headquarters is more doubtful but less important.' He thought that it would be very difficult to arrange a Four Power Declaration as Silverman had suggested (he assumed that Silverman was referring to Britain, U.S.A., U.S.S.R. and China), especially as the exiled Governments would want to be involved; he also feared tension between Poland and the U.S.S.R. Even so, Allen was extremely doubtful as to the truth of the allegation that Hitler was operating an extermination plan and thus, he suggested, any declaration should, 'in the absence of clearer evidence, avoid specific reference to the plan of extermination but concentrate on condemnation of the general German policy of getting rid of useless Jews'. He had no desire to go beyond the Government's previous declarations on this subject: 'The statement in fact would merely repeat our former declarations about German atrocities with specific reference to Jews.' As Allen's minute circulated through the Foreign Office, Mr. Grey wrote underneath that he agreed with 'Mr. Allen that a four power declaration on this subject is quite unsuitable. If, however, representative British and American Jews are in agreement then I think there might be a case for action similar to that taken in the case of the shooting of hostages in France last October, i.e. that President Roosevelt and the Prime Minister, acting independently, should issue simultaneously statements *in general terms* regarding these *reported atrocities* and saying that retribution should follow in accordance with the plans now being elaborated by the United Nations'.<sup>166</sup> It

<sup>165</sup>PRO FO 371/30923 piece 73.

<sup>166</sup>My italics.



was clear to him that 'a statement on the above lines would have to be somewhat vague, since we have no actual proof of these atrocities, although I think that their probability is sufficiently great to justify action of the above lines, *if* this is considered essential with a view to satisfying Parliamentary opinion here. The propagandists could then take statements on the above lines as their cue. Without such statements it would, I think, be dangerous to embark upon a propaganda campaign lacking a foundation of quotable and proved facts.' Anthony Eden added underneath this: 'I agree'.

It is clear that despite the new information the British Government had not been convinced of the reality of Hitler's plan of extermination. While it generally accepted much of Karski's report, the British Government, nevertheless, specifically doubted the veracity of his information concerning the death camps at Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka. As Frank Savery, the British Ambassador to Poland, wrote to Frank Roberts on 3 December: 'I am much impressed by this report, which is on the whole very "sachlich" ....I feel we may accept pretty well everything which is said in the report about the happenings in Warsaw and the neighbouring towns. I am however still uncertain exactly how we are to regard the three camps at Treblinka, Belzec and Sobibor. On the whole I think it is most likely that at least nine tenths of the Jews sent away from Warsaw do meet their deaths in those camps, but I do not regard Annex 1 [the section dealing with Belzec] as completely satisfactory evidence of what happens at Belzec. I do not put any cruelty beyond the Germans in Central Europe, and especially Poland and towards the Jews, but the evidence as evidence does not seem to me quite convincing.' Savery added in Annex 1: 'this is a report...of what is happening in the camp at Belzec: this is the only one of the reports...about which I feel some scepticism'.<sup>167</sup> The Foreign Office was thus anxious to avoid specific references to atrocities, especially the death camps, in any prospective declaration, and had no intention of doing anything more than issue a deliberately vague denunciation of Nazi crimes against the Jews. Indeed, this itself was a difficult enough step for the Foreign Office to take since (for reasons we have seen) it was loathe to take any action which made a special case of the Jews. Moreover, it must be noted that the Foreign Office had linked the issuing of a declaration to the perceived strength of Parliamentary pressure, (and thus obliquely to that of the Press and the general public); the ball was therefore in the court of the Jewish organisations and their sympathisers.

<sup>167</sup>PRO FO 371/31097 piece 191. In fact Karski's report concerning Belzec was mistaken in one respect: Jews were not being killed by electrocution but by gas. The effect was the same, however; Jews went into the building alive, and came out dead.

However, Press reaction to the Karski report was just as muted as to that of Wise's Press conference. Similarly, on 25 November, only the Daily Telegraph printed information from the Karski Report. It must be said that the Telegraph's treatment of the Karski report compares less favourably with that accorded to the Bund Report in June earlier that year. Whereas the Bund Report had formed the leader on page five, covering the first two columns and extending for 135 lines, the Karski Report was accorded 51 lines and placed at the top of the sixth column of its third page. That the paper was unsure of the accuracy of reports of the existence of a Nazi order for the extermination of the Jews is clear from its treatment of Wise's announcement, and from the headline to its article on the Karski report. It deliberately fudged the issue by placing the word 'exterminate' in parentheses:

MASS MURDER  
OF POLISH JEWS

HIMMLER ORDERS  
'EXTERMINATION'

By A DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The correspondent began: 'The Polish Government in London has received a report that Himmler has ordered the extermination of half of the Jewish population in Poland to be completed this year. As announced in THE DAILY TELEGRAPH yesterday a similar process is being applied to many countries in Europe.' He continued:

The reduction of the Jewish ghetto in Poland by 50 per cent. of its inhabitants is the first step towards its complete liquidation.

The victims, when caught, are driven to a square, where old people and cripples are selected to be taken to a cemetery and shot. The remainder are loaded into railway trucks, 150 to each truck. The floor is covered with a thick layer of lime or chlorine, sprinkled with water. The doors are sealed.

KILLED BY FUMES

When the train arrives at its destination usually half the occupants are dead from the fumes. The survivors are sent to special camps at Treblinka, Belzec and Sobibor. Once there, they are mass murdered.

Only young and relatively strong people are left alive, for they provide slave labour for the Germans. The percentage is extremely small.

A mass- murder of the Jewish population is thus taking place at this moment. By the end of September this year 250,000 Jews had been eliminated.

According to information leaking from the German Labour Office only 40,000 people are to remain in the Warsaw ghetto - highly skilled workers to be employed in the German war industry.

In his final paragraph the correspondent treated with scepticism Karski's assertion that the Germans were operating an electrocution station at Belzec: 'The report says that an electrocuting station has been installed at Belzec camp. Victims arriving at the

station are ordered to strip ostensibly to take a bath. They are led to a barracks with a metal floor, the current is switched on and the whole party is killed.<sup>168</sup> Once again the spectre of the inaccurate, exaggerated or fabricated atrocity reports of the First World War had been indirectly raised.

The *Jewish Chronicle*, as would be expected, gave greater prominence to its own rather fuller account (it included more of the details concerning the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto) of the Karski report, placing it at the top of the third column of its front page on 27 November. It was headlined:

DESTRUCTION OF  
POLISH JEWRY  
Mass Murder by Nazis  
250,000 DEAD IN 6 MONTHS

In its editorial on page eight, headlined 'GERMAN PSYCHOLOGY', the paper observed how the *New York* press had 'given prominence this week to the ghastly crescendo in Jew-slaughter which is going on in Eastern Europe at the hands of the Nazis'. The most immediate effect of the reports upon the *Jewish Chronicle* had been to bring it to a more terrifying realisation of the Jews' isolation and loneliness in the world; their brethren were being exterminated but the 'world in general cares very little':

Revolting details are accumulating of the methods employed by these German fiends in their process of butchery, and once again the story is circulating, with no little support from the events, that Hitler has ordered the extermination of all Jews under his control by the end of this year. It will be recalled that a long time ago the Nazis were declaring that should it ever occur that Germany was faced with defeat before the final collapse they and the German Army would slaughter every Jewish man, woman, and child, to be found under German rule. Is this some explanation of the revolting massacres which are now in progress? No one should imagine, however, that this unspeakable bestiality is merely the expression of fanatical, maniacal Jew-hatred, or an outburst of sub-human frenzied fear for the future. On the contrary, it is, like all German cruelty, carefully, coldly calculated and cunningly planned. Knowing that men and women, individually and in the bulk, can only react relatively, the Germans deliberately select the Jews, for whose fate the rest of the world in general cares very little, for the most spectacular and revolting cruelties. Then, when the day of reckoning comes, the sufferings of the other peoples, the Russians, the Poles, the Czechs, the Belgians, Norwegians, and Dutch, will by comparison seem insufficient to sustain a burning determination to exact justice. Thus the Hun will once more slink out of the consequences of his misdeeds to a chorus of clap-trap sentimentalists who will rise up in all countries to demand that these "innocent Germans" be spared. Yes, it's sound psychology, right enough; meanly, foully, disgustingly sound.

<sup>168</sup>My italics.

Whereas the recent reports had barely registered in Britain they had already gripped the Yishuv. For example, three days of 'alarm, protest, and outcry' were declared by Vaad Leumi and the Jewish Agency to begin on 30 November. A 131 line report of these events formed the Jewish Chronicle's leader on 4 December. It was headed:

YISHUV MOURNS THE  
SLAUGHTERED  
Jewish Martyrs of  
Europe

'The civilised nations of the world', the paper said, 'are being called upon to put an end to this dreadful scourging of innocent men, women, and children by the barbarous hordes of Central Europe.' On the first of the three days of mourning, it added, a conference 'of all Palestinian and refugee Rabbis was held in the Hurvah Synagogue, Jerusalem, to consider the present grave situation....An appeal was issued to all the nations and the heads of the Churches for succour for the persecuted Jews'. Furthermore, public meetings had been held at which 'a resolution was passed demanding the establishment of special Jewish air squadrons to carry out reprisal bombings of German cities, and the creation of a Jewish military force to participate in the invasion of Europe'. The Chief Rabbi, Dr. Herzog, 'upon hearing the latest reports' had submitted detailed information of the Nazi atrocities to the Papal Nuncio in Jerusalem and had obtained the latter's promise that these would be communicated immediately to the Pope himself. Dr. Herzog would also, it was understood, leave for Turkey and Egypt 'in order to meet high Christian clergy and diplomatic circles in those countries, with a view to starting a campaign to save European Jewry'. The paper also reported that a plan of rescue had been submitted to Baron Korsak, the Polish Consul-General in Jerusalem, by a joint delegation of the Aguda and the New Zionist Organisation. The Vaad Leumi had sent a cable, urging that 'immediate steps be taken to halt the mass extermination of the Jews', to Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin, Field Marshal Smuts, General Sikorski, and Benes. The paper also reported how the lack of reaction by the 'civilised' nations had been condemned at a special session of the National Assembly of Palestine Jewry:

An appeal to the democratic nations of the world to prove the sincerity of their solemn pledges to the oppressed and suffering was voiced at the special session of Assefat Hanivcharim (National Assembly of Palestine Jewry) meeting in Jerusalem on Sunday night to express the grief of the Yishuv. The speakers deeply reproached to the civilised nations of the world for their apathy and aloofness in the face of an unprecedented catastrophe and stressed the heavy responsibility which will fall upon those who, while for years having the power to rescue hundreds of thousands of human beings threatened with extermination, failed to act in time.

In an article on page seven, headed 'WAR ON POLAND'S PERSECUTORS', the paper reported on how, during the previous week, protests and proposals for rescue of European Jewry had begun to formulate in Britain. On 27 November, it said, the Polish National Council had held a special 'solemn' session 'to voice their condemnation of the new wave of persecution in Poland and of the mass extermination of Polish Jewry'. All the members of the Council had signed a unanimous resolution, 'moved by Dr. Schwarzbart, appealing to the Allies immediately to take all possible steps to protect the human rights and dignity, and to prevent the extermination of the Poles and the massacre of the Jewish population'. Zygielbojm, speaking on behalf of the Bund, 'proposed that all the Allies should take reprisals against Germans who were in their hands; that leaflets describing the horrors in Poland should be dropped over Germany to obviate professions of ignorance by the German people in the future; and that the Polish Government should consider steps to convene an Inter-Allied conference to consider measures to meet the situation'. The British Section of the W.J.C., it added, had 'approached the principal political parties in Britain, the leaders of the Churches of England, Scotland, and Wales, the Trades Union Congress, and the international co-operative organisations, calling upon them to raise their voices in denunciation of the horrors now being committed against Jews under the Nazi sway'.

However, the reaction of the British Press, the British Government and the general public remained very muted. On 2 December Blanche Dugdale wrote in her diary:

*December 2nd* To Zionist Office and then to see Bobbity, installed now in Lord Privy Seal's office, to ask his advice on various points about this atrocity affair. He was most kind and helpful, but it is hard to steer an efficient course, in face of so much indifference, and, I fear, on the part of the Foreign Office, of definite desire to damp down publicity. Jimmie [Sir James Fergusson] reports obstruction from high quarters, he is working manfully inside the B.B.C.,<sup>169</sup>

It is significant that Sir James Fergusson, working in the Ministry of Information as a liaison with the B.B.C., had noted high-level obstruction to the publication of the recent atrocity reports. On the morning of that same day, 2 December, officials of both the B.B.C. and the Foreign Office News Department contacted the Foreign Office for guidance with regard to the new reports. C.W. Harrison, the Foreign Office official who spoke to them, minuted later that day:

Both Mr. Cummings, B.B.C., and Sir J. Cameron, News Department, have rung me up this morning about a story emanating from the World Jewish Congress

<sup>169</sup>Baffy - *The Diaries of Blanche Dugdale 1936-1947*, Ed. N.A. Rose, (London, 1973), p. 198.

to the effect that an order was issued last July by the German Government for the extermination of Jews in Eastern Europe. I told Mr. Cummings and Sir J. Cameron that Messrs Silverman and Easternman had come to see Mr. Law at the end of last week and had told him that they were satisfied of the truth of their reports. They therefore wished H.M. Government to consider what action or statement they could make, alone or in conjunction with other powers, on the subject. I said that we were considering the question and that meanwhile it seemed desirable to *soft pedal the whole thing as much as possible* for the moment. We would not, however, wish the *impression* to be given that we were deliberately trying to kill the story. We would be sure to let Mr. Cummings and Sir J. Cameron know as soon as a decision had been reached.<sup>170</sup>

It must be said that just because the Foreign Office did not want to give the *impression* that it was trying to 'kill the story' does not mean that that was, in effect, what it was doing. The Press had not yet responded with any vigour to the new information, and the continued silence of the British Government could only have made a negative impression upon those who, harbouring their own personal doubts, were looking to the Government for some kind of official confirmation of the authenticity of these reports of an extermination plan.

On 30 November Hannen Swaffer raised a solitary voice of protest in the Daily Herald. He devoted the entire 82 lines of his regular column to the recent reports of an extermination plan:

#### MASS POGROMS

HISTORY'S greatest and most terrible massacre is now going on.

Over 7,000,000 Jews are on the verge of extermination in Europe. Already over half of the 3,500,000 living in Poland when the war began have been slaughtered, systematically and as part of a devilish plan.

This is in accordance with Hitler's oft-declared "final solution of the Jewish problem."

#### World Jewry Pleads

"IT'S only Jewish propaganda," said people, sitting cosily in the early days of Hitler's pogroms, and then, "It's only the Communists...only the Socialists...only the members of trade unions."

Now, at least, the facts of the wholesale slaughters are vouched for by the Polish Government in London.

World Jewry is appealing to "the conscience of mankind." It implores action by all the United Governments and all the political, religious, and cultural groups in Britain.

But - what can they do? Only the complete defeat of Hitlerism can stop the holocaust.

#### Murder Most Foul

THE massacres are occurring, not only in Poland.

<sup>170</sup>My italics. PRO FO 371/30923 piece 72.

They have spread to the Soviet areas occupied by the Nazis; there several hundred thousand Jews have been murdered.

Almost all the entire Jewish population of the Baltic States has been exterminated.

In Rumania, many scores of thousands of Jews have been deported for extermination.

The many thousands of others have been sent from Germany, France, Belgium, Holland, Czechoslovakia and Jugoslavia to Poland for mass slaughter.

#### Suicide In Vain

RATHER than obey the Nazi order that he should immediately hand over 10,000 Jews to the Nazis, and then 7,000 a day, Czerniakow, the heroic mayor of Warsaw, committed suicide.

His sacrifice was in vain. The Nazis began their murderous work almost over his dead body.

What some of the fiends did cannot be printed.

I must tell, with restraint, how elderly and crippled Jews were driven into a square in Warsaw and shot, how at the Treblinka camp a digging machine had to be installed, so numerous were the graves, and how neither children nor babies were spared.

Suicides of whole families have been frequent. People jump from houses in order to escape torture. Mothers go insane.

#### The Death Chamber

THEN the Nazis have invented a new form of death - mass electrocution. The victims are ordered to strip, ostensibly for a bath and then put into a room which has a metal plate for a floor.

The door is locked - and electric currents, passed through the plate, kills all those inside!

## Chapter 6

'We are so saturated with horrors  
that this Black Hole on a gigantic  
scale scarcely concerns us'

Harold Nicholson, M.P., 9 Dec. 1942.

On Tuesday, 1 December, the London office of the World Jewish Congress received a cable from Stephen Wise and Chaim Weizmann in New York, who gave personal confirmation of the veracity of the reports that Wise had released a few days earlier. The London branch responded immediately by compiling and distributing a three-page summary of these reports, headed: 'ANNIHILATION OF EUROPEAN JEWS - HITLER'S POLICY OF TOTAL DESTRUCTION.' This began with the dramatic statement: 'The Jews of Europe are being exterminated by the Nazis. It is not merely that atrocities are being committed against the Jews. They are being quite literally slaughtered...in pursuance of a systematic plan and in accordance with a deliberate policy.'<sup>171</sup> It explained that 'this is Hitler's "final solution of the Jewish question in Europe" ', and that 'he is now executing a policy with a diabolical fiendishness unseen in the whole history of anti-Jewish savagery.' '2,000,000,' it said, was 'the barest minimum number of Jews murdered, tortured and deliberately starved to death in Eastern Europe.' It was now apparent that 'the mass deportations of Jews from France, Belgium, Holland and other Western European countries, has been for the purpose of concentrating all the Jews in Nazi occupied Europe chiefly in Poland for the purpose of facilitating their mass massacre.' It gave a breakdown of the fate of Jews in certain areas of Europe. 'Several hundred thousand' Jews, it said, had been killed in occupied U.S.S.R. and the Ukraine. 'Almost the entire Jewish population of the Baltic States had been exterminated, while 'hundreds of thousands of Jews from Rumania have been deported to Transdeniестria and there massacred.' Moreover, 'scores of thousands of German, French, Belgian, Dutch, Czechoslovak and Yugoslav Jews have been deported to Poland and the occupied areas of the U.S.S.R. for mass slaughter'. The report said that the '*holocaust* had taken on a formal design under an explicit policy in March 1942', when Himmler gave orders for the destruction of 50% of the Jews of the Government General by the end of 1942.<sup>172</sup> Furthermore, it described in detail how the bulk of the Warsaw Ghetto had been liquidated, and, under the heading 'NAZI METHODS OF EXTERMINATION,' gave details of gassing and

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<sup>171</sup>Emphasis in original.

<sup>172</sup>My italics.



electrocution at Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka.<sup>173</sup> Later on 1 December, Silverman and Easterman arranged a Press conference at which the above document was read out. Ignacy Schwarzbart, who was also present, pleaded with the assembled Press representatives to 'believe the unbelievable!'.

However, on the next day only the Daily Telegraph printed a report based on this information. Thus, it is vividly apparent that the British Press still entertained grave doubts as to the veracity of the recent reports. This impression is strengthened by the Daily Telegraph's treatment of its article. This was only 29 lines in length, and was placed in the middle of the eighth column on page five above an article twice its size headed 'Taxi Limit For Men On Leave,' and immediately to the right of an article headed: 'REFUSED £10,000 FOR MARE - BUSINESS MAN'S STUD BARGAIN'. When read in this context the apparently dramatic headlines were robbed of all credibility:

NAZIS TO KILL  
2,000,000 JEWS

EXECUTION THIS YEAR  
Daily Telegraph Reporter

The negative effect was added to by the text itself since the reporter subtly distanced himself from the information:

Two million Jews had been exterminated by the end of September by the Nazis in occupied territories in Europe. Two million more are to die by the end of this month.

This *statement* was made to me last night by Mr. S.S. Silverman, M.P. chairman of the British section of the World Jewish Congress. He *said* that the Allied Governments were conferring on what action to take.

The facts of the massacres have been confirmed by the Governments of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and the United States. Mr. Silverman *said* the news had not been announced until full independent information had been obtained.

Yesterday a cable was received from the World Zionist Organisation in New York, *stating* that it had confirmation that Hitler had ordered the extermination of the Jews in Nazi-occupied countries by Dec. 31.

It is estimated that there are 6,000,000 to 7,000,000 Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. The plan for the massacres was drawn up by Hermann Backe, Nazi Secretary of State for Economics.<sup>174</sup>

Although the Jewish organisations had not yet succeeded in rousing the Press other measures which they had purposed to place pressure on the British Government were yielding more immediate results. Penkower writes that the WJC wrote to 'all

<sup>173</sup>There is a copy of this document in PRO FO 371/30923 piece 122.

<sup>174</sup>My emphasis.

Christian churches and political organizations requesting that they express their indignation, and see to it that "the whole civilized world" exert its influence upon the occupied countries to resist the Nazi example'.<sup>175</sup> Interviews were arranged with leading politicians and diplomats, such as Ivan Maisky the Russian Ambassador, John Winant the U.S. Ambassador and Benes the Czech President. On 27 November Easternman and Barou met with Raczynski and urged him to issue an official summary of the reports from Poland and to pressure for an Allied protest declaration. Consequently, on 1 December, the Polish Government in Exile issued its own special Press bulletin which reported in full the destruction of the Warsaw ghetto. None of this, however, appeared in the next day's papers. The Polish Government also pressed the British Government to act on the basis of these reports. Raczynski met with Anthony Eden on the morning of 1 December and 'drew [his] attention to the wholesale destruction of Jews in Poland which [Raczynski said] was causing great agitation among Jews all over the world'. Raczynski proposed that 'this persecution should form the object of a meeting of the occupied countries at St. James's Palace at which His Majesty's Government need only be represented as observers,' and that a warning might be issued to Laval over the continued deportation of Jews from France. Eden promised to give him 'an indication within 48 hours of our [HMG] views towards such a meeting'.<sup>176</sup>

The Foreign Office reaction to Raczynski's suggestions was negative. In a minute later that day Frank Roberts spoke somewhat bitterly of both the Jewish organisations and the Polish Government: 'It looks as though the Jewish organisations have also approached the Polish Government, who are always glad of an opportunity (1) to make a splash as a leader of the minor Allies and (2) to show that they are not anti-Semitic.' Roberts did not think that the present circumstances were 'suitable...for another meeting at St. James's Palace, even if H.M. Government and presumably other major Allies "need only be represented as observers" '. This was largely because, he explained, 'although atrocities are undoubtedly taking place, we have no reliable evidence'. Moreover, he feared that even the British Government's attendance at such a Conference as an observer would be construed as tacit acceptance of any declarations issued: 'Again, although we shall apparently only be present as observers, our experience of the St. James's Palace Conference last January has been that this inevitably leads to our being associated with the action of the participating Allies.' Underlying this attitude was probably the fear that the British Government might thus make the 'mistake' of becoming popularly identified with a declaration which would

<sup>175</sup>Penkower, *op cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>176</sup>PRO FO 371/30923 piece 68.

recognise the authenticity of the recent reports and call for rescue measures, creating difficulties with regard to Palestine. Roberts concluded:

It also occurs to me that this is not a very suitable moment to breathe fire and fury against the Germans in connexion with their treatment of the Jews, since Hitler now has in his power our former friends in France and in particular M. Reynaud, M. Mandel, M. Daladier and M. Blum. He also has in his power various Spanish and other left-wing refugees in France. In addition Hitler seems to be in a very difficult mood about prisoners of war. It therefore seem to me inadvisable to irritate him more than is necessary, particularly on a Jewish issue.

On the next day Ivan Maisky met with Eden and informed him that he, too, had been approached by a Jewish deputation, which had requested that the Soviet Union support a protest declaration. While Maisky told Eden that he had telegraphed Moscow for instructions he expressed his personal support for a three-power declaration which 'might give the unhappy Jews some comfort'.<sup>177</sup> Minuting on 3 December, Roberts began mordantly: 'M. Maisky has presumably also been approached by Mr. Silverman and his friends.' He then added, more positively, that he did not see 'anything inconsistent between M. Maisky's proposal...and the proposal we had in mind....We might therefore aim at a short joint statement issued by President Roosevelt, the Prime Minister and M. Stalin on the lines of the statements issued by the Prime Minister and President Roosevelt on October 25th, 1941 in connexion with the shooting of French hostages...'. While he discouraged the proposal for another St. James's Palace Conference, Roberts suggested that the minor Allies might be allowed to associate themselves with the statement issued by Britain, U.S., and U.S.S.R.

Thus Roberts concurred with Allen and Grey's proposals of 27 November for the simultaneous issuing in London, New York and Moscow of a declaration of protest which would, being deliberately vague, 'avoid specific reference to the plan of extermination [as revealed in the Riegner Telegram and other such subsequent reports] but concentrate on condemnation of the general German policy of getting rid of useless Jews'.<sup>178</sup> The Foreign Office was, in effect, engaged in a damage limitation exercise, trying to head off and redirect parliamentary and public pressure before it focused too keenly on the matter of possible rescue. This imperative was made all the more urgent by the fact that on 3 December Silverman, in his capacity as a Member of Parliament, made known his intention to question the Government in the House of Commons on Wednesday 9 December over what it intended to do in response to the latest atrocity

<sup>177</sup>Fox, *op cit.*, p. 101.

<sup>178</sup>Emphasis in original.

reports.<sup>179</sup> On 4 December, Eleanor Rathbone M.P. wrote to Crozier the editor of the Manchester Guardian:

...the evidence keeps accumulating and I think it may be worth sending you some of the latest documents about it. The Jewish organisations and some of the Allied Governments have been doing their best to stimulate our Government to further activity and to arouse public opinion....But I don't feel it is getting as much attention as it deserves, partly because the public mind is so saturated with horrors that it is becoming callous, and partly because those in official positions raise two questions: (1) the nature of the evidence, and (2) can anything done from here possibly affect it, or might it even do harm?...As to the evidence, I gather that the Political Warfare Dept. of the Foreign Office don't feel sufficiently satisfied that [following underlined by Crozier] Hitler has actually signed a decree for mass extermination by a given date...to feel it safe to assert that by radio &c.<sup>180</sup>

However, pressure upon Eden to make the proposed declaration increased when on either 2 or 3 December Winant, interceding on behalf of representatives of British Jewry, met with Eden in order bring the recent atrocity reports to the latter's attention. As Winant himself explained in a cable to the State Department on 7 December:

Two or three times I have been approached by committees of British Jews asking for intercession on their behalf because of information which has been received from their representative in Geneva in regard to a plan by Hitler to totally exterminate all Jews under his military control. Each time I have brought the matter to the attention of Mr Eden as I was requested to do.<sup>181</sup>

On 3 December, Eden, as a result of all this diplomatic pressure, gave the green light to the issuing of a declaration of protest along the lines of Allen and Grey's proposals. Denis Allen noted the next day:

As a result of the Secretary of State's conversations with the U.S. and Soviet Ambassadors, it has been agreed that we should pursue the idea of a three power declaration about the German massacres of Jews in Europe. Draft letters to Mr. Winant and M. Maisky are submitted, enclosing the draft of such a declaration.

Allen added:

In the draft letter it is suggested that we might issue the declaration on Wednesday, the 9th December. This is rather short notice but there are two reasons why speed

<sup>179</sup>Indeed, in summarising the contents of file F.O. 371/30923 Denis Allen noted: 'Records that following Mr. Eden's conversation with the United States and Soviet Ambassadors, letters were sent to Mr. Winant and M. Maisky suggesting that the 3 power declaration be made on Wednesday [9 December 1942] *thereby forestalling Mr. Silverman's question in the House, and also satisfying the public interest* [Emphasis mine].' This is piece no. 186 of PRO FO 371/30923.

<sup>180</sup>Rathbone to Crozier, 4 December 1942. Manchester Guardian Archives, 'Refugees' Box, 223/5/47.

<sup>181</sup>Winant to State Department., 7 Dec. 1942, USNA 740.00116 European War 1939/660. As quoted by Wasserstein, *op cit.*, p. 171.

seems desirable. In the first place Mr. Silverman has put down a question in the House on this subject for next Wednesday and it might be useful if our declaration could be made *before* his question has to be answered. In the second place the public interest which has been aroused in this question, as a result of the publicity which the Jewish bodies in this country have *succeeded* in organising, makes it desirable that the reactions of H.M. Government should not be too long delayed....If it is felt desirable to amend the drafts to provide for a postponement of our declaration after Wednesday next, it would presumably be as well to try to persuade Mr. Silverman to be patient and postpone his question.<sup>182</sup>

Two important points arise from the above text. Firstly, how fearful the F.O. were at the prospect of Silverman's questioning on the subject of the recent reports in the House of Commons! Secondly, the grudging and adversarial language which Allen used to comment on the 'Jewish bodies' apparent success in arousing public sympathy. Allen was probably referring here to articles which had appeared in the News Chronicle, the Daily Herald and The Times that morning. The News Chronicle printed details which had been given out at the W.J.C. Press Conference. But it is clear from both the layout and text of this article that the paper was still not entirely sure of the veracity of this information. Even though the article was placed at the top of the first column on the back page (usually the leader), surrounding articles received bolder and generally more eye-catching headlines. Indeed, it was totally dwarfed by an article immediately to its right which possessed a huge six(!) column wide headline. To demonstrate the resulting effect these two headers are juxtaposed below in the same proportions as they originally appeared:

## SEVEN SHIPS IN AXIS CONVOY TO TUNISIA IN MIDNIGHT BATTLE

Hitler Puts Time  
Limit on Lives  
Of the Jews

By VERNON BARTLETT

The headlines to the Jewish article clearly look anaemic by comparison.

According to Bartlett, the recent increase in the frequency and violence of atrocities against the Jews was a consequence of Hitler's rage at his military reverses in Russia and North Africa. 'RUNNING true to form,' he said, 'Hitler is avenging himself on the Jews for his military and political difficulties.' Bartlett's report was couched with uncertainties. He continued:

<sup>182</sup>PRO FO 371/30923 piece 188

According to cables from Dr. Stephen Wise, President of the World Jewish Congress, and Dr. Chaim Weizmann, President of the World Zionist Organisation, confirmation has now been received of an order issued by him for the extermination of all Jews in Nazi-occupied countries before the end of the present month.

This order *is said* to have been signed this summer, and to have met with some opposition from Nazi leaders on economic grounds.

#### POLAND'S LOSS

The number of Jews who have already died *cannot, of course, be estimated with great accuracy*. In the opinion of the World Jewish Congress roughly two million out of the three and a half million Jews in Poland have been murdered by the Nazis since the outbreak of the war.

*This opinion* is supported by details of mass murders in many Polish towns and villages.

Several Governments of countries in occupied Europe have received information confirming many details of this new atrocity campaign, and the Polish National Council in London has asked the Governments of the United Nations to take appropriate action.

Such action might include a declaration by all these Governments that anybody who participates in these massacres, even if acting on superior orders, will be held personally responsible and will be tried for murder as soon as the war is over.

#### SECRET DOCUMENT

The Governments or authorities controlling countries under German occupation could also be urged to take any measures they could to prevent the deportation of more Jews to Germany....<sup>183</sup>

The Daily Herald printed a similar article, by N.W. Ewer, to this in its 5 December edition, and, indeed, comparable reservations on the part of this Correspondent may be observed in both the layout and text of the article. The Herald's article, for instance, was placed in the middle of the fourth column of its back page; whereas the News Chronicle's article was 74 lines long, the Herald's extended for only 53 lines. Ewer, too, communicated uncertainty. 'THE British and other United Nations Governments,' he began, 'are now considering a report from the Polish National Council on the Nazi pogroms in Poland. It leaves no doubt that *something like* a deliberate campaign of extermination of Polish Jews has been going on. Estimates of the number of those who have been killed or died of hardship *cannot be made accurately*. But *it seems* certain that they run into hundreds of thousands.' Moreover, Ewer emphasised in conclusion that 'reports that Hitler has decreed that the whole Jewish race in Poland is to be exterminated by the end of the year *lack full confirmation*. But whether true or not, the facts themselves are horrible enough.'<sup>184</sup>

<sup>183</sup>Emphasis mine.

<sup>184</sup>All emphases mine.

These two articles may be usefully contrasted against another comparable article which was printed in the Manchester Guardian on the same day, 4 December. This was an impressive 111 lines in length and was placed at the top of the third column of one of its main news pages (8). The Guardian's Special Correspondent spoke with much more authority, and conveyed confidence in the veracity of his sources. 'In each of his last two speeches,' he began, 'Hitler proclaimed with defiant certainty that by the time the war was over, and whatever its outcome, Europe would be rid of its Jews. *This was no empty statement.*' He added that 'there is accumulating evidence that Hitler's public threats were preceded by the enforcement of a policy of unparalleled brutality towards European Jewry which *is* being continued day by day and week by week. The total extermination of the Jews has long been known to be one of Germany's major aims. It *is now certain* that a violent speeding up of this process has been decided upon in the course of the past few months.'<sup>185</sup> The Correspondent dispelled any lingering notions that Jews deported to the East were being employed as slave labour and then explained how the decision had (apparently) been made - in discussions between Frank (the Governor General of Poland), Backe (Minister for Agriculture) and Hitler - to proceed with the 'Final Solution'. He added that, as a result, 'their [the Jews] situation, desperate as it was, has now become virtually hopeless. Nor have the Germans stopped there, for the succeeding months have seen an increase of pressure by Germany on all her satellites over their Jewish populations.' The Correspondent then went on to give some of the details, according to a Reuter message, from the Karski report.

Notwithstanding the above articles, it was the fact that The Times, of all papers, had given prominence to these reports that created the most 'ripples' of concern within the Foreign Office. On 5 December Frank Roberts noted the ice-breaking role of The Times' articles: 'In any event publicity is *now* taking place (See article by the Diplomatic Correspondent of yesterday's "Times", Flag H, and the Archbishop of Canterbury's letter in "The Times" this morning, Flag I).'<sup>186</sup>

The first of these articles, Iverach McDonald's 90 line article of 4 December, formed the leader on page three. While its headlines were unequivocal

<sup>185</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>186</sup>PRO FO 371/30923 piece 189. Cut-outs of these articles were circulated within the Central Department. Emphasis mine.

NAZI WAR ON  
JEW  

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DELIBERATE PLAN FOR  
EXTERMINATION

it is clear from a close analysis of the text itself that The Times had not yet overcome its mistrust of the bulk of the most recent evidence - with its talk of gas and electrocution chambers, 'cadaver' utilisation, and of a plan drawn up in Hitler's headquarters. Indeed, McDonald avoided any reference to these, basing much of his argument on other reports which had appeared in foreign newspapers. Moreover, McDonald did not actually declare in clear terms that the Nazis were operating an official plan to exterminate the Jews of Europe; rather, he admitted that this was a strong *possibility*. 'Recent evidence from Berlin and from Poland,' he said, 'leaves no doubt that the German authorities are dealing with the Polish Jews more drastically and more savagely than ever before. For some weeks London has recognized, on the basis of independent evidence that the worst of Hitler's threats was being literally applied, and that quite apart from the widespread murders, the Polish Jews had been condemned to subsist in conditions which must steadily lead to their extermination.' McDonald then asked: 'The recent evidence raises a grave question: how far has the process been deliberately expedited?' To this he did not give a totally conclusive answer. He commented that 'the reports from Berlin give the bleakest possible picture,' *alluding* to the likelihood of the existence of an official plan of extermination. His carefully worded conclusion, which quoted evidence from the Karski report, did not openly declare the existence of such a plan, but, once again, admitted the strongest of possibilities:

According to a memorandum which has just reached the country from the underground labour groups in Poland - it was compiled there little more than a month ago - the Poles themselves believe that few of the Jews who are sent east in cattle trucks, crowded together without food, survive the journey. The memorandum states:-

One of the war aims of Hitler's regime, and one which has been publicly proclaimed by its highest authorities, is a complete extermination of Jews wherever the rapacious hand of German Fascism has made its way. All other war aims of Nazism will fail in the end - and the defeat of German Fascism is inevitable - but this particular aim, a complete extermination of Jews, is already being enforced.

On the Germans' own showing, indeed, according to their own boasts, terrible measures are now being applied. It appears that the veil across the whole truth is only now being drawn aside.



The publication of this article had immediate and dramatic effects. The Archbishop of Canterbury felt impelled to write to The Times, which published his letter in its correspondence column the very next day under the header:

NAZI WAR ON  
JEW  
—  
THE NEW BARBARISM  
—  
RESPONSE OF CIVILISED  
WORLD

He praised the paper for having given prominence to this issue. 'Sir, - You rightly give prominence in your issue to-day to the appalling facts now coming to light with regard to Hitler's project for the extermination of the Jews.' The Nazi extermination plan was without parallel, and constituted 'a horror beyond what imagination can grasp'. He expressed the Church's righteous anger on this matter. 'I am assured by Free Church friends that I may write in their name as well as in that of members of the Church of England to express our burning indignation at this atrocity, to which records of barbarous ages scarcely supply a parallel.' While the Archbishop admitted that the scale of the disaster which had befallen European Jewry far outstripped the Allies' ability to save, he nevertheless stressed that that fact should not stop them from attempting to rescue all those who might be saved:

It is hard to see what can be done. At least we might offer to receive here any Jews who are able to escape the clutches of the Nazis and make their way to our shores. In comparison with the monstrous evil confronting us the reasons for hesitation usually advanced by officials have an air of irrelevance. Further, it could be announced that any person proved directly or indirectly concerned in this outrage would be held responsible when the war is over. But, indeed, the matter seems to be beyond earthly resources. It should be the subject of our constant, united and most earnest prayer to Almighty God.

The Archbishop's letter created quite a stir in the Foreign Office. Later that day Frank Roberts minuted nervously: 'The Archbishop of Canterbury's letter in this morning's Times (already submitted) has still further increased the interest being shown in the recent reports of German atrocities against Jews in Eastern Europe. The News Department are taking the line that the Polish Government and Jewish organisations have approached the Foreign Office and that their communications are now under urgent consideration. I have told the News Department, for background information, but not for publication, that we are thinking in terms of a Three Power Declaration (H.M.G., the U.S. and Soviet Governments), possibly coupled with a similar declaration by the minor Allies, but that we cannot make any public statement pending

consultation with the other Governments concerned. This should hold the position for the next few days.'

On 5 December the News Chronicle printed a very impressive editorial on the Nazi extermination plan which stands in extreme contrast to Vernon Bartlett's article of the previous day. The editor spoke with great clarity and authority. Perhaps this contrast was simply the result of a difference in the opinions of Bartlett and the editor as to the truth of the recent reports. On the other hand it may well have been that the News Chronicle had been exceedingly encouraged by the fact that of all newspapers The Times had pronounced favourably on this subject. In any event this 114 line editorial represents a marked change in attitude on the part of the News Chronicle. It was simply but powerfully entitled: 'Holocaust.' In the first half of the article the editor stressed both the unparalleled nature of the Nazi extermination plan, and the distinctiveness of Nazi anti-Semitism:

HITLER has familiarised the world with brutality and horror. We have seen, throughout occupied Europe, a progressive deterioration in standards of conduct - standards which, even before the war, had been debased by the Nazi leaders to levels lower than those of the Middle Ages.

But nothing else in Hitler's record is comparable to his treatment of the Jews.

His attitude towards them stands apart from other elements in his policy. It has nothing to do with the waging of war or the attainment of political objectives. It is psychopathic: a dominant strand in that complex of repressed hatreds from which the Fuehrer's urge to world-domination derives.

It was by fomenting hatred against the Jews that Hitler first mounted to power. Every check he has met with has been made the excuse for a new outburst of savagery against this undefeatable race.

Now, when the tide is beginning to turn against him, he has whipped himself up to a further, and final, spasm of vindictiveness. The word has gone forth that, wherever the Fuehrer's writ runs, the Jewish peoples are to be exterminated.

Then he spoke of the veracity of the recent reports:

Evidence is accumulating that this monstrous order - to which, surely, there is no parallel in the whole history of Western civilisation - is being faithfully carried out.

According to reliable reports, more than half of Poland's three and a half million Jews have already been done to death. Hundreds of thousands have perished in the Baltic States, in Rumania, and in those Soviet territories now in Nazi occupation. Jews from Western Europe are being transported to Poland, where no doubt a similar awaits them.

These murders are carried out in circumstances of unspeakable cruelty. New lethal weapons have been devised to supplement the work of the firing-squads. Whole families have been driven to suicide. Scores of thousands are believed to have died of starvation.

Finally the editor touched on the question of what could be done to save the Jews of Europe. He thought that only an immediate declaration by the United Nations of their intention to punish after the war those involved in the extermination of the Jews might save some Jews:

Confronted by such crimes, carried out in cold blood and on so terrifying a scale, the conscience of humanity stands aghast. No words can be framed that do justice to them.

What practical steps can be taken to save such Jews as are still alive in Europe? Protests are of no avail. Reprisals are out of the question. There is only one thing we can do. We can make it plain, now, to the Nazi world that - whatever our attitude after the war to war criminals in general - those known to be responsible, even as accessories, for these cold-blooded, calculated mass murders will be brought strictly to account. The certainty of punishment will gain in strength as a deterrent with the growing certainty of Germany's defeat.

Action taken on these lines may achieve something. It should be taken in the name of the United Nations, without delay.

W.P. Crozier, the editor of the Manchester Guardian, went further than this in his editorial of 5 December, demanding that measures should be taken to rescue at least some of European Jewry. Speaking of the Final Solution he asserted that Hitler 'has said he will do it, and he is', adding that, 'the greatest destruction is in Poland, where there are most Jews, but others are being drafted eastwards to the ghettos and camps.' He asked 'Can nothing be done?' To this rhetorical question he gave the following answer:

Nothing, it is certain, will have much effect except military victory, and by that time there may be few Jews left alive in German-occupied Europe. But nothing that might save even a few Jews should be left undone. The Allied Governments have already made it known that those who carry out or organise or order "war crimes" will be punished. They should now issue a joint statement putting on record their knowledge, and the proofs, of this annihilation policy and saying formally that its fruits are included within the scope of those war crimes for which retribution will most surely be exacted. Such a statement might at least have some effect in countries like Italy where Hitler's policy has not yet been fully carried out; it might even, if we can but press our military advance, have some slight effect on the German butchery, though one must reckon that Hitler himself will be more and more ferocious to the Jews as the war goes against him. The other thing to be done is to lend all aid to the rescue of such Jews as somehow get away. A small number do escape and we, and all the States whom we can influence, should spring to their aid. But we must set the example.

On 6 December Piers England of The People, moved by the recent reports, devoted a huge 370 lines to a powerful story of the life and loves of two Jewish sisters, who had lived in Brussels until they were deported to 'an unknown destination' in the East. As ever, his aim was to communicate the human cost of the Nazi extermination plan by drawing his readers into every twist and turn of his subjects' lives - leaving them devastated by the fatal ending. He expressed his desire to convey the

reality that 'day in, day out, hour after hour, countless millions of inoffensive human beings are suffering the torments of the damned under the heel of the Nazis.' Deborah and Eva had always been inseparable. *'Then the Nazis came in.'*

AT first the Twins were scarcely aware of the change, they lived in such seclusion. Then their house was taken over. They moved to a flat.

Their money disappeared. The Nazis took it.

They moved to a room, in a poor part of the town. The little residue of their capital evaporated.

Then the people of the town were confronted by the pitiful spectacle of these two poor ladies applying for work - some kind of work to do together.

They had given away much in the past. People who had known them tried to help them now, with little gifts. They grew dingy, greyer, shabbier.

And so, at last, came the great round-up of Brussels Jews.

PATHETIC

PARTING

TWO thousand Jews, men, women and children, were corralled like cattle by the Nazis, separated, and then taken away to "An Unknown Destination."

I have no space to describe the miseries of those shattered families. Imagine that you were separated from your wife (or husband) and saw your children led away, crying, into an unknown hell....Imagine that.

It is a game the Nazis play every day in Occupied Europe.

And the Nazis - who do not spare the aged, either, or the infirm - decided, for fun, to send the Twins away to different places, in different trains. They "just wanted to see how they'd take it."

Deborah and Eva were pulled downstairs and out into the street. A silent, shocked crowd watched. A stillness seemed to have fallen on the town.

Eva reached out trembling hands for mercy. Deborah did exactly the same. They could not speak.

Perhaps, if they could have spoken, they would have found words pathetic enough to melt a drop of mercy out of even a Nazi heart.

Eva was pushed into one lorry, Deborah was pushed into another....

NOW, if this were a fiction story with a pitiful-happy ending, I could say that then and there and at the same moment these two poor ladies died.

But that would only be a story.

The truth was not like that.

With a thin, bird-like cry of anguish Eva saw her sister carried away. Then she felt the truck jolt. And she was taken to a different destination.

That is all....except that I hope God will comfort them, and am sure He will avenge them.

The People's coverage of 6 December compares very favourably to that of its great rival the News of the World, which, in fact, remained completely silent with regard to the recent reports of extermination, even until 20 December. The Observer obviously found the recent reports hard to accept since its only reference to them in its 6 December edition was the following cursory 20 line comment in its 'NOTES OF THE WEEK' column: 'The reports about the massacre of the deported Jews in Poland, which reached London last week from Polish underground sources, tell the most

horrible tale of the war. It appears that these unfortunate people are now being moved further to the East under conditions which amount to slow, cruel, calculated mass-murder. Men, women, and children, already emaciated by starvation in the Ghettos, are crammed into unheated cattle-trucks and sent without food on a journey of days or weeks, which few of them survive. More than a million of human beings have already perished in this way. More thousands are perishing daily, while Hitler, with truly devilish mockery, boasts in the Munich beer-cellar that many Jews, who once laughed over him, "are no longer laughing."

Nevertheless, the increased number of articles (since 4 December) appearing in the Press on the extermination reports had 'rattled' the Government. On 7 December Osbert Peake, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office, observed in a telegram to Halifax, the Ambassador in U.S.A., that 'Jewish organisations here have recently organised considerable publicity...'. Thus the swift issuing of the proposed Declaration was considered to be even more important. 'Please press the United States Government for an early reply,' Peake added, 'as there is considerable public interest here and early action is advisable.'<sup>187</sup>

However, the frequency of articles reporting the facts of the Final Solution and the diplomatic situation dropped significantly until 10 December - The Times, being an exception. On 7 December it printed another prominently placed article by its Diplomatic Correspondent headed:

TERROR AGAINST  
Jews

EUROPEAN POGROM

U.S. AND SOVIET IN  
LONDON TALKS

McDonald noted that Winant and Maisky had had meetings with Eden to discuss the 'fearful plight of the Jews throughout Europe'. Count Raczynski, he said, had placed before Eden 'some of the evidence out of Poland - evidence of a twin policy of murder on a mass scale and transference of whole communities to the bare eastern territories under conditions which, even at their best, show that the German authorities care nothing whether the people survive or die.' 'Jewish leaders in Britain,' he continued, 'have added their evidence to the stock which is fast growing at the Foreign Office.' However:

<sup>187</sup>PRO FO 371/30923 piece 98

It is only now that the German plans, long laid and carefully prepared, are seen in practice for what they are. In Poland the disaster that has befallen the Jews is seen at its worst. Since September, 1939, the Germans have boasted that Poland was their training ground; all peoples and all creeds of Poland have continually suffered under the worst of many forms of terror. During recent months the death roll among Polish Jews has been enormous, and it is growing. But only when the evidence is accumulated from all the occupied countries is the plan seen as a whole.

Each country has been given a date by which it must have cleared out its Jewish people and transported them to eastern Poland or Russia. The dates are freely given on the Axis wireless or in reports from Berlin. Western Poland had to be cleared by the beginning of this month. Quisling is already expelling the Norwegian Jews.

Berlin has told the Dutch that Holland must be clear by June, 1943. Rumania, with many more Jews, has been given until the end of 1943 - although, if the transportations go on at the present rate, the Rumanian Government will have fulfilled its orders before then....In all parts of Europe the Germans are calling meetings, or issuing orders, to bring about what they call "the final solution of the Jewish problem."

The Times followed this up on the next day by the publication of a letter from Eva Reading, President of the British Section of the W.J.C. who reiterated both the authenticity and the unparalleled nature of the recent reports. 'Sir,-The recent authenticated news of the ruthless plans for the extermination of the Jews in all European countries under the control of the Nazis is unparalleled even in the history of my sorely persecuted people.' The Marchioness took the opportunity to restate some of those facts:

The World Jewish Congress has received evidence that the Nazis have issued an order to exterminate all the Jews in occupied Europe. Neither the aged nor women and children are to be spared. This means no less than the annihilation of a people. The United States State Department and the Government of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia have confirmed that 2,000,000 Jews have already been massacred. The Nazis, apparently unwilling to put to the test the feelings of the population among whom the Jews were living and known, have arranged for wholesale deportations to Eastern Europe. Many die in the cattle-trucks in which they are jammed, without food or water; survivors are murdered on arrival at their destination.

She concluded with an appeal for a declaration of protest and the initiation of rescue measures: 'The voice of the civilized world should make it known that all who are concerned with the unspeakable barbarity, from the highest to the lowest, will be brought to justice. That, however, will not restore the dead, and there are still lives that can be saved if the neutral countries would open their frontiers to those who can escape from Nazi terror. Could not the United Nations stand as guarantors to those whom neutral countries would admit? The burden is greater than they can be expected to bear by themselves; but Spain in the West and Turkey in the East might, even at this late hour, save many lives. The systematic extermination of a people is proceeding day

by day, accompanied by every conceivable, or rather inconceivable, brutality. Each day claims its thousands of victims; only speedy action can be of any help. Can such help as might be given be withheld?

But, as C.A. Lambert, Diplomatic Correspondent of the Manchester Guardian, perceptively observed in a telegraph to Crozier on that same day: 'So far as I can make out the Government does not intend to do anything beyond making a strong protest against the attempt by the Germans to destroy the Jews in the occupied countries....No new measures to help the Jews are intended.... We [the British Government] say that if we started to attempt this the gate would be open to a large scale deportation of Jews by the Germans to this country. It is not a generous attitude.'<sup>188</sup> In a letter to Crozier, dated 7 December, Lewis Namier spoke of his grief and anger at the Foreign Office's mishandling of the crisis:

The most secret point is this: the Poles urge the calling of a special inter-Allied Conference to discuss the Nazi extermination policy against the Jews; Eden, for reasons best known to himself, seems unwilling to have such a conference. He has been exceptionally bad in this matter. You may have noticed that when we held the meeting at the Albert Hall, presided over by the Archbishop of Canterbury, at which Sikorski and Masaryk spoke, and all the Continental European Governments were officially represented, there was neither a representative nor a message from our Foreign Office. Even the message from the Prime Minister was only obtained through pressure from the Archbishop. I do not know what is behind it - does Eden's "Arab umbrella" throw so wide a shadow? - is he afraid that Nuri or Nahas might frown if he protested vigorously against the extermination of Jews who might some day wish to go to Palestine? Or is it a general fear of contaminating himself by pronouncing the name of Jew? Whichever it is, the behaviour of the Foreign Office is simply incomprehensible.

Moreover, Namier lamented that the real horror of the atrocities had not been communicated by the Press, and, feeling personally wounded by this slight, he endeavoured to personally assure Crozier of the truthfulness of the recent reports. He placed British Press performance in a negative light by contrasting it with that of the Polish Government. 'The atrocities in Poland are infinitely worse than anything which has yet appeared in the press, and the Poles have truly reliable material - I know it and its sources. They themselves are deeply shaken by it and are behaving very well in the matter.'<sup>189</sup> It is clear from the rest of Namier's letter that at that time the Jewish organisations, in consultation with the Polish Government were preparing to make a big 'splash' of the details of the extermination plan by the latter's publication of a

<sup>188</sup>Underlined by Crozier in original. Lambert to Crozier, 8 Dec. 1942, Manchester Guardian Archives, 'Refugees' Box, 223/5/51

<sup>189</sup>Namier to Crozier, 7 Dec. 1942, Manchester Guardian Archives, 'Refugees' Box, 223/5/49.

diplomatic Note. This was carefully stage-managed so as to create maximum Press and public interest and thus place pressure upon the main Allied Powers for action.

This concerted action began on Wednesday 9 December when the Polish Note was sent to the British and other Allied Governments. The Note summarised the recent reports (including Karski's) from Poland. It asserted that these reports presented a 'horrifying picture'. It was clear that new methods of slaughter had been applied during the last few months, and this confirmed the fact that German authorities were seeking, with 'systematic deliberation', the 'total extermination of the Jewish population in Poland and of the many thousands of Jews whom the German authorities deported to Poland from Western and Central European countries and from the German Reich itself. These reports, it hastened to add, had been 'fully authenticated'. The Note recounted how, after the fall of Poland in 1939, Polish Jewry had been forcibly ghettoised and reduced to starvation rations. It described how the outbreak of war between Germany and the Soviet Union had occasioned an increase in the frequency and extent of massacres of Jews by shooting. The Germans, however, were now applying new methods: 'such as poison gas, by means of which the Jewish population was exterminated in Chelm, or electrocution, for which a camp was organised in Belzec, where in the course of March and April 1942, the Jews in the provinces of Lublin, Lwow and Kielce to the number of tens of thousands were exterminated.' It reported the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto; the round-ups; deportation timetables; Czerniakow's suicide, and so on, and described the how the Jews were selected for deportation and packed into cattle-trucks 'to the number of 120 in each truck, which had room for 40'. Those that survived the terrible journey were exterminated by gas or electrocution at specially constructed 'extermination camps' at Sobibor, Belzec and Treblinka. So many were being killed that 'the internment of the dead is effected by means of machinery i.e. to produce graves'. The Note asserted that over a third of the pre-war Jewish population of Poland had been killed since the start of the war, and called for condemnation of these crimes, punishment for the criminals who committed them, and the 'finding of means offering the hope that Germany might be effectively restrained from continuing to apply her methods of mass extermination'.<sup>190</sup>

At the same time, in the House of Commons, according to the Lobby Correspondent of the Jewish Chronicle (11 December), 'a well-attended meeting including M.P.s of all parties took place...with Mr. S.S. Silverman presiding. It was addressed by Mr. A.L. Easterman, Political Secretary of the World Jewish Congress, Dr. I. Schwarzbart, Jewish member of the Polish National Council, and Professor S.

<sup>190</sup>Raczynski to Eden, 9 December 1942, PRO F.O. 371/3924 piece no. 109.



Brodetsky, President of the Deputies.' 'Statements were made,' the correspondent said, 'which established that the Nazis had adopted a systematic plan for the mass extermination of all Jews in occupied Europe by the end of this year. A report was given of contacts with all the Governments of the Allied Nations and hopes were expressed of early action by them.' The Correspondent added that he had spoken with Sir Henry Morris-Jones M.P. 'who said: "It is the most terrible thing I have ever heard of. The evidence is as clear as anything can be that it is the definite policy of Hitler to exterminate all the Jews in Europe this year and that out of the 40,000 Jews in the Warsaw ghetto in July, there are now only 30,000 left. Inured as we are in this House to tales of cruelty, I think nothing more shocking has ever been disclosed to a British Parliament. All those who were in the room pledge themselves to do what they could to arouse the Government's interest in the matter." '

Moreover, that same day the Polish Note was dramatically publicised by the Archbishop of York in the House of Lords, who, after recounting some of its details, called for the Government to state 'repeatedly and solemnly' that at the hour of victory there would be retribution for both the planners and perpetrators of the atrocities against the Jews. The Archbishop's speech, in particular his call for retribution, caught the general attention of the Press. On the next day most of the daily papers in our sample, with the notable exception of The Times, gave the matter great prominence.<sup>191</sup> The Daily Telegraph's report of the Archbishop's speech formed the bulk of the leader on page three, covering the first two columns, and extending for 167 lines.<sup>192</sup> It was headed:

#### ARCHBISHOP OF YORK CALLS FOR RETRIBUTION

Nazi Savagery in Europe: Massacre of  
Poles: Allies; Relief Plans

'The Archbishop of York,' the correspondent reported, 'said that there was a doubt as to how many people in the occupied countries would survive. "If the war goes on," he said, "there is a possibility that one nation, at any rate, may be exterminated. At the moment in Poland there is taking place one of the most appalling outrages that the whole history of the world has ever seen." ' 'Dr. Garbett,' he continued, 'leaning against the bench behind him, abandoned his notes and made this

<sup>191</sup>The Times limited its report on the Archbishop's speech to 21 lines. It was placed in the middle of the fifth column on page four (its main news page).

<sup>192</sup>The rest of the article reported on other sections of the debate in the Lords which touched on how the United Nations should manage Europe after the war.

deliberate utterance: "We are watching the cold-blooded massacre of a nation. It is doubtful how many people will survive the treatment they are now receiving. The extermination of the Jews in that country has been decided upon and is being carried out ruthlessly. It is horrible to think that these things are now happening and that men, women and children are being ruthlessly put to death by massacre, poison gas and electrocution, or being sent on long journeys to unknown destinations in bitterly cold weather without food or drink, and the dead children being cast from the open trucks on to the side of the railway." ' He had called for 'the Government to do everything in its power,' and was sure that, 'any action the Allied Governments take in this matter will have the warm enthusiastic support of the whole nation.'

In reporting the Archbishop's speech, the Daily Mail broke a prolonged fast with regard to the recent atrocity reports. Its article was 81 lines long and formed the leader on page three. Its bold headlines covered three columns:

### ARCHBISHOP WANTS 'RETRIBUTION'

The Mail's Parliamentary Correspondent, Percy Cater, observed: 'In a voice that shook with emotion, the 67-years-old Archbishop of York, Dr. Cyril Garbett, denounced in the House of Lords last night the Nazi attempt to annihilate the Poles and Polish Jews, and made this appeal: "I hope that the Government who must feel just as all of us who are private individuals feel, will state repeatedly and solemnly that when the hour of deliverance comes retribution will be dealt out not only on the cold-blooded and cowardly brutes who are ordering these massacres but also on the thousands of underlings who appear to be joyfully and gladly carrying out these cruelties." '

The Daily Herald's report of the Archbishop's speech formed the main part of a 77 line article which was placed at the top of column 7 on page three. Its headline covered two columns:

### ARCHBISHOP WANTS FULL RETRIBUTION ON NAZIS

The Herald's report was the shortest of all the papers studied, and quotations from the Archbishop's speech had been cut to a minimum, with the effect that the article was rather disjointed and lacked real impact. The following excerpt from the text should suffice to demonstrate:

"The extermination of the Jews in this country has been decided on, and is being carried out ruthlessly.

"It's horrible to think about.

"Men, women and children are being put to death by massacre, poison gas or electrocution. They are sent long journeys to unknown destinations in bitterly cold weather without food or drink."

The News Chronicle's report on the Archbishop's speech formed the main part of a 173 line article which covered columns three and four on its third page. Unlike the other papers, its headline did not focus on the fact that the Archbishop had called for retribution:

**Archbishop Tells of the Cold-  
Blooded Massacre of a Nation**

The paper's Parliamentary Correspondent, E. Clephan Palmer, declared that the 'Archbishop's speech was the most outspoken declaration made from the episcopal bench in the House of Lords for many years.' He added: 'The House was discussing plans for the relief of the occupied countries after the war. There was one preliminary question, said the Archbishop grimly, that had to be settled - how many people would survive?' After fully recounting the contents of the Archbishop's speech, Palmer noted, with not a little hint of criticism, that while 'their Lordships, who are seldom demonstrative, cheered loudly...Lord Cranborne (Leader of the House) made no reference to the speech and said nothing about retribution, but he assured the House that steps were being taken to see that survivors in the occupied countries had food when hostilities ceased.' This paper, moved by the recent reports, printed a cartoon by Vicky on page two which very much followed on from that of 7 August 1942. In the latest cartoon, however, the great crowd of people who had been praying at the foot of the wall labelled 'EUROPEAN GHETTO,' lay dead in a mangled and emaciated heap. In the foreground stood an elderly Jewish man and his family, praying. The caption underneath recorded their prayer: 'How long, O Lord, how long...'

The Jewish Chronicle expressed its devastation and grief on the next day by printing a bold, black border around its front page. The large headlines to its front page leader conveyed the unprecedented enormity and horror of the Final Solution:

**TWO MILLION JEWS  
SLAUGHTERED**

Most Terrible Massacre of All Time  
**APPALLING HORRORS OF NAZI MASS MURDERS**

The paper stressed the reliability of the recent reports. The evidence, it said, was 'unimpeachable,' and confirmed 'that the Germans have already proceeded far in their diabolical object of exterminating the seven million Jews on the Continent of Europe.' 'Ghastly details of mass murder and huge-scale slaughter of Jews, men, women, and little children, have now been confirmed by tested information received by a number of Allied Governments, revealing that the most terrible massacre which has ever been perpetrated on any people at any period of recorded time is now being enacted upon European Jewry.' Over two million Jews had been murdered, and the Germans were 'proceeding with their avowed intention of wiping out every one of the remaining five million Jews in the various countries under their control.'

The largest article on the front page was a 113 line report of the Chief Rabbi's reaction to the recent news, entitled: 'DAY OF FAST AND PRAYER - Sunday, December 13.' It quoted *in extenso* the text of a letter which the Chief Rabbi had sent to 'all Ministers and Synagogue Wardens coming within his jurisdiction'. The massacres, he said, filled Jews with 'horror and bewilderment', their grief was 'immeasurable,' and their woe as 'vast as the sea'. Their response should be to 'turn in penitence and prayer to our Father Who is in Heaven.' He called upon all Jews to 'join in weeping for the slain of our People, as well as for the millions of Jewish men, women, and children who have been doomed to extermination by the inhuman enemy', and for this purpose he had set aside 13 December as a Day of fasting and prayer, mourning and 'abstention from amusement and work'.

The front page also carried reports on the Archbishop of York's speech; the meeting in the House of Commons; a breakdown, country by country of the figures of Jewish dead; and an article on the activities of 'Himmler's Murder Squads'. In the middle of the fourth column the paper printed a small 5 line item which provided added confirmation of the Nazi war aims:

#### THEIR WAR AIM

Dr. Ley, the Nazi Labour chief, addressing a meeting in the Essen district last week, declared: "We shall go on waging this war until the Jews have been wiped off the face of the earth."

On page five the paper printed a report on a special meeting of the Board of Deputies which had been held on 9 December. A resolution which had been carried by the meeting was reprinted in full. This placed on record the Deputies' grief at the 'indescribable sufferings and martyrdom' of European Jewry, and, vowing to 'leave

nothing undone which it can do to help', appealed to 'all civilised Governments, both those in the United Nations and those in neutral countries, to assure asylum to all who can by any means escape.' Brodetsky, the President, had declared that 'the most important thing of all, if it could be done, was to enable Jews to escape.' He added that 'everything that could be done by the United Nations, by this country, by Palestine, and in every possible way by neutral countries, in order to enable Jews to escape must be done.'

The theme of rescue was continued in the article below this, which detailed the 'Activities of [the] World Jewish Congress.' This revealed that the W.J.C. was pursuing practical proposals for the rescue of European Jewry. 'Proposals have been made,' it said, 'by the World Jewish Congress to the Governments of the United Nations for joint action to deal, as a specific issue, with the Hitlerite extermination of the Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. The suggestions included diplomatic action and steps to rescue as many of the Jews as can escape.'

The paper's editorial on page eight was headed 'THE SLAUGHTER OF EUROPEAN JEWRY.' Ivan Greenberg said that the recent reports were a confirmation of the paper's long held and openly avowed belief that the Nazis were in the process of *physically* exterminating European Jewry; and he felt that the paper had thus been vindicated for its unwavering attention to reports of atrocities. He examined why the world had not believed until now, and to those who had criticised the Jewish Chronicle for persistently insisting that the Nazis were operating a plan to exterminate the Jews of Europe, Greenberg now felt justified to assert that he-had-told-them-so:

WEEK after week, during these many sad and weary months, this paper has striven to awaken the public mind to the facts of the Jew-extermination being carried on by the Nazi monsters in Europe. Again and again it has cried aloud that the oft-repeated Nazi threat of Jewish annihilation was seriously intended. Week after week, with what was regarded in some quarters as sickening iteration, THE JEWISH CHRONICLE has demonstrated from reliable reports that the gruesome plan had already passed beyond the region of threat and was in process of actual and ruthless execution. Many Jews and most non-Jews, except for the leaders of the Churches, were unconvinced. These were horrors, as the Primate said, beyond what imagination can grasp. It was not to their minds inconceivable that a whole people should not merely be indicted but coolly and calculatedly exterminated. As one Jewish commentator has put it, "the world was asked to believe in the unbelievable." When the more reliable newspapers lifted the veil on this raging gehenna, readers in several cases protested that they had already been sated to the point of nausea with accounts of Nazi savagery. Even Jewish stomachs rebelled - with equal naturalness perhaps but with far less justification in reason or conscience. Several Jewish Ministers found it necessary to rebuke those cowardly ones of their congregants who had complained that they could no longer read THE JEWISH CHRONICLE because the facts it recorded so harrowed their feelings.

Undeterred by these complaints - and many came from quarters which should have known better - this paper persisted. To-day the very worst of its reports are confirmed and its action is vindicated up to the hilt. Jews, harassed, maligned, and pursued for generations past, now stand in the presence of the most terrible calamity, be it carefully remembered, which the German perpetrators are determined to extend to every Jewish man, woman, and child everywhere, as they openly proclaim, should final victory rest with their arms.

To any that might *still* doubt, Greenberg emphasised that 'no one now doubts - certainly not official circles - the reality of the extermination plan, and its progress towards achievement.' Confirmation had 'poured in to Governments' offices'. Moreover, the Nazis were frankly avowing the revolting truth, and were boasting of it. 'They have even mapped out a long time-table of massacre which is openly announced on the Axis wireless and in other ways. Each of their slave States has been given date by which it must finally have got rid of its last Jews and "transported him to Eastern Poland or occupied Russia" - a euphemism for one of the established Nazi human slaughter-houses.' Greenberg declared that the 'extermination crime is not only the most colossal human massacre in all history,' but, 'unlike its predecessors it has been cunningly planned in cold-blood and is being carried out with the same diabolical and perverted ingenuity that has cheated, deluded, and overcome statesmen in all parts of the world.' Entire Jewish communities were either being mass murdered in their native countries or transferred to the east, 'where they either perish from suffocation, hunger and torture on the journey or are brutally destroyed at their destination.' The American Government had estimated that two million Jews had so far been exterminated, but the slaughter machine still went 'grinding on'. Greenberg added lamentably that 'the remaining millions of appointed victims have nothing to hope for from the demoniac ghoul of Berlin.'

Greenberg asked what could be done in the face of this 'unparalleled disaster'. His first suggestion concerned the British people. 'The masses here - those who don't yet know or won't believe - must, in their own interests, have the hideous truth hammered home to them. Those who shrink from the truth must be told, not merely by recital of revolting facts but by the gripping manner in which they are narrated, why it is an imperious duty to themselves and their own dearest interests to know these sickening facts.' 'Public opinion having thus been stimulated,' he added, 'much more remains to be done.' As the blood of Jewish martyrs called out for retribution he asked: 'Can the United Nations refrain from solemnly announcing that the assassins who participated in the slaughtering will be held to account and meet with a just punishment....If only one Nazi thug were deterred in this way from his bestial murders, the step would be worth while.' Greenberg pleaded for action to save those who could escape. 'Can nothing again, absolutely nothing, be done to succour the victims? The

Primate suggests that at least an offer might be made to receive here those Jews who might be able to escape the Nazi clutches. Must the doors of the Jewish homeland be closed, even if difficulties of transportation could be overcome? Can we not undertake to indemnify neutral countries affording haven to fugitives against the expenditure they would incur? If only a few were thus plucked from the holocaust, the Christian conscience could at any rate proclaim that it had tried, and done its best.'

Moreover, Greenberg suggested that a 'systematic broadcast campaign' be launched to equate anti-Nazi Germans with the facts, while Jews should be given the opportunity to confront the Nazis as Jews, 'sword in hand', by the creation of a Jewish Army. But Greenberg also foresaw potential problems. He was especially concerned that 'the conscience of the free nations having been somewhat aroused, its response should not be allowed to die away in a fleeting spasm of indignation and protest.' 'The extermination of the Jews,' he continued, 'is one of those promises which the Nazis will inflexibly pursue, and every day more and more victims pile up in their lethal chambers or fill the graves which their digging machines excavate.' He warned that the good name of the Christian peoples, and everything they had ever preached, was at stake. They had begun well, but they must throw themselves into a 'sustained campaign for the destruction of that particular manifestation of the Kingdom of Satan on earth, the anti-Semitic cult...[for in] this doing to death of 2,000,000 Jews the world can see the logical climax of the brutal anti-Jewish creed.'

The Polish Government's Note received patchy treatment from the national Press that same day. The Daily Telegraph for instance, presented the details of the Note in a 36 line article placed in the middle of column 5 on page five; this positioning clearly did not reflect the importance of the information. While the Note asserted that over one-third of the 3,130,000 pre-war Jewish population had been killed by the Nazis, the Telegraph rounded this figure down to a more believable size. Consequently the headline ran:

1,000,000 POLISH  
JEWS KILLED  
-----  
NAZI EXTERMINATION

'The Allied Governments,' the Diplomatic Correspondent began, 'now have the full facts of the German Government's policy of exterminating the Jews in Poland.' Count Raczynski had circulated this information in a diplomatic Note, which, he observed, expressed the 'belief that the Governments will find it necessary "not only to condemn the crimes and punish the criminals but also to find means of offering the hope that

Germany might be effectively restrained from continuing to apply the methods of mass extermination". The rest of the contents of the Note were inadequately summarised thus: 'The Note says that, despite the solemn warning given at the St. James's Palace conference in January, the German Government has not ceased its violence and terror. It adds: "It is not possible to estimate the exact number of Jews who have been exterminated in Poland since the occupation of the country. All the reports agree that the number runs into many hundreds of thousands - men, women and children." "Of the 3,130,000 Jews in Poland before the war more than a third have perished during the last three years." ' The Correspondent did not refer to the death camps, to Belzec, Treblinka and Sobibor, or to the reports of electrocution and gassing, the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto and so on. It is odd then that, having given the Note such little attention in its news pages, the paper particularly focused on it in its editorial columns! Here, under the heading of 'THE GERMAN SHAME,' the editor promised that 'to the exposure of the German murder of nations which the Polish Government has laid before the world there will be an answer of inexorable resolve.' Words were inadequate to describe the 'hideous brutality which Nazism has avowed and boasted which the German people have abased themselves to execute.' He added:

The Polish Government estimate that of the 3,130,000 Jews in Poland over a third have been butchered by the Herrenvolk, the master savages in the world's history. Jews from other countries have also suffered. At the beginning of October the Fuehrer broadcast his decree that all Jews he could reach should be exterminated. According to the calculations of the United States Government 2,000,000 have already suffered death, and death inflicted with ghastly cruelty. Old people, women and children have been jammed into cattle trucks without food or drink for long railway journeys to the desert which the Germans have made of Eastern Europe. If they do not perish of hunger and thirst and cold on the way "extermination camps" complete the work.

Although the Jews had not been the only victims of Germany, it had to be admitted, he said, that 'the intensified fury of the persecution of the Jews is the special work of HITLER'. According to the editor, Hitler's decision to exterminate the Jews had been made when, as a result of recent military reverses, he had realised the inevitability of Germany's defeat in the war. Thus 'fear was its motive, and in the grip of fear he became frantic to work all the ruin he could before his fall.' He suggested that a warning might be issued to the Germans that they would be held responsible for these crimes, and concluded by declaring that 'the free world will not lay down its arms till it has enforced the law.'

The Times' 99 line article on the Note formed its leader on page three, and was headed:



PERSECUTION OF  
THE JEWS

POLISH NOTE TO THE  
ALLIES

NAZI "MASS SLAUGHTER"

Although The Times recounted much more of the specific details of the Note than had the Telegraph, once again the paper stopped short of reporting the details of the death camps; the paper clearly still doubted the veracity of the information regarding Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka. This was not the case, however, with the Manchester Guardian, which, in contrast, printed the full text of the Polish Note and threw its full weight behind calls for a declaration of protest, promises of retribution, and the initiation of measures designed to rescue as many Jews as possible. The headline to Lambert's 100 line article on page five declared:

THE GERMAN MASSACRES OF  
JEWS IN POLAND

Allies Urged to Find Means of Help

*-Polish Note*

DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN BRITAIN, U.S.,  
AND RUSSIA

Lambert concurred with the Polish Government's request for rescue measures. The United Nations, he said, should take 'effective measures to help the Jews not only of Poland but of the whole of Europe, three to four millions of whom are in peril of ruthless extermination'. In a side-swipe at the British Government Lambert added that the situation obviously called for 'something more than a reaffirmation of the indescribable deeds being done in fulfilment of a predetermined policy'. 'There is a growing feeling,' he said, 'that in spite of all the difficulties involved practical measures of help must be sought and found.' He continued:

But it would seem that a change of outlook and approach to the problem must precede any undertaking of the kind. There should in the first place be a relaxation in the official methods which have hitherto impeded the work of rescue as to make it almost impossible. In the case of countries still liable to an illegal influx of Jewish refugees certain assurances should perhaps be considered. It should be made clear to these States that they will not be left responsible for chance immigrants indefinitely but that provision will be made for them in the general reconstruction after the war.

The German scheme for total extermination can only be combated by radical means, and any plan of rescue must be evolved on a really broad and constructive basis. It is clear, therefore, that whatever body may be chosen to put into practice decisions made by the United Nations must start with a generous mandate, unfettered by petty limitations.

In conclusion Lambert warned that time was of the essence. The situation as outlined in the Note, he said, was deteriorating every day.

W.P. Crozier, in his editorial of the same issue, also warned that the United Nations, and above all Britain, could not 'put off their responsibility by saying that only quick military victory can save the Jews'. 'That argument must be firmly rejected', he said. 'It is yet one more ground for speeding up our war effort, but the question is not how many Jews will be murdered but how many can be saved before Hitler is beaten and by what means we can save them.' He advised the United Nations to protest, 'announcing that they know what is being done and that they will punish those responsible'. They should, he counselled, hold a conference so as to 'pool their ideas about plans for rescue work'. Besides all this 'we need ourselves a much more generous spirit towards the refugee question than we have lately shown, a resolve to give help in more than words, a conviction that the worse this crime is and the harder it is to stop the more we must strive to help the sufferers. The voice of despair...is appropriate for victims only, not for those who sincerely mean by action to thwart the murderers'.

The Polish Note was given cursory treatment by the News Chronicle. Its article was only 33 lines long and was placed at the top of the seventh column on its back page. The article largely consisted of two quotations from the Note; the one which asserted that over a third of Polish Jewry had been murdered so far; the other which called for rescue measures. However, it made no mention of any of the other details. Even so, the Daily Herald did not cover the Note at all.

The Daily Mail alone concentrated on the death camps. Its article was 78 lines in length and formed the leader on its back page. Its headlines declared the fact of the use of poison gas in the Nazi extermination programme:

Massacres  
by Gas  
in Poland  
—  
Thousands Slain

The Mail's reporter observed that 'seven thousand men, women and children are carried off daily to the "extermination camps." ' Himmler, he said, had ordered that half of the Jewish population of Poland was to be exterminated before the end of December. He described the extermination process:

In the spring of this year the mass murder campaign became viciously thorough. The news came through that a new extermination camp had been opened at Sobibor in Wlodawa county and the daily deportations began. I quote from the report:

"The Germans cordoned off a whole block of houses and ordered everybody to leave their homes and assemble in the yard. Anyone who failed to get out quickly enough or who tried to hide was killed on the spot.

#### Sealed Trucks

"All infirm, old, and crippled people were also killed in their homes. No consideration was shown for families, wives were torn away from husbands, small children from their parents."

Then they were packed into goods trucks - 120 in a truck with space for 40. They choked for lack of air, but the trucks were sealed and the trains set out.

Deportees were carried off to three execution camps, Treblinka, Belzec, and Sobibor. Here the trains were unloaded, the condemned stripped and then killed either by poison gas or electrocution.

From two to ten thousand people have been killed in this manner in a few hours.

The reporter noted in conclusion that 'it was the facts in this report which led to the Archbishop of York's demand for "retribution" in the House of Lords this week.' He added that the Note expressed confident belief that the Allied Governments would 'share the Polish Government's opinion as to the necessity not only of condemning the crimes committed by the Germans and punishing the criminals but also of finding means of offering hope that Germany might be effectively restrained from continuing to apply her methods of mass extermination.'

The events of 9 to 11 December undoubtedly increased the pressure on the British Government to seek an early issuing of the joint declaration of protest. Indeed, that pressure was further increased on 12 December when The Times published an editorial (by J.H. Freeman) on the subject of the recent reports.<sup>193</sup> Freeman said that the Note had documented the 'shameful story of the systematic attempt to exterminate the Jewish people in Europe'. He observed that the desire to exterminate the Jewish people had always been uppermost in Hitler's heart, and that he had exploited every opportunity to bring his macabre vision into reality:

For HITLER the Jews were and are the first and principal victims of a frenzied malice manifested in his earliest outpourings as an irresponsible political agitator. The seizure of power in 1933 enabled him to enforce it within the Reich in extreme forms of expropriation, expulsion, or extermination. Next, his military conquest and enslavement of the major part of the European mainland gave him the chance to extend and intensify the scourge. Thus for a full decade the Jewish race has been on HITLER'S rack. He has boasted of his intention to eliminate every Jew in Europe

<sup>193</sup>The editorial was 162 lines in length and was headed: 'THE NEW BARBARISM.'

under his yoke. Evidence from many sources confirms only too surely that the long agony of the Jewish people is indeed approaching its climax.

Freeman acknowledged that the Final Solution marked a watershed in history. 'Pogroms there have been in the past,' he said, but 'a pogrom on this scale of cold and calculated horror cannot be matched in the history of persecution in Europe. The ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY has characterized it temperately as the new barbarism. It is a barbarism applied with all the instruments and resources which modern science has put at the disposal of tyranny.' He was certain that retribution would be meted out for these crimes, and, moreover, he argued that 'whenever and wherever it is possible to assist individual Jews, Jewish families, and, not least, Jewish children, the allied Governments must give their aid ungrudgingly. Where emigration is still possible from the lands of the terror, it must be encouraged and promoted.' However 'these measures - though that is not less reason for taking them - can only be palliative. The supreme act of relief will be victory. What is now happening in every land under the domination of HITLER provides another clear and categorical spur to the whole allied war effort. Time - used much too prodigally hitherto - presses....The prerequisite of real help is victory - and victory, to be effective, must be swift as well as complete.'

The next day, the Observer made its first editorial comment on the crisis.<sup>194</sup> It grappled with the enormity, the horror, and the uniqueness of the Final Solution:

#### THE ABYSS

IT is difficult not to be stunned into silence by the picture, now unveiling itself, of the brutal massacre of the Jewish race, which has been going on day in day out for five months. Nothing equal is recorded in the annals of inhumanity. Human conscience finds itself unprepared to face a crime of this enormity; it stands grasping and groping for an adequate reaction. Pity for the victims, wrath against the Nazi murderers, nausea at the unspeakable base cruelty - all this is inadequate.

It is evident that the paper now definitely believed in the truthfulness of the recent reports, and that on such realisation it had been exceedingly stunned. What was happening in Europe was, in its estimation, truly apocalyptic:

When we read that, almost as a matter of course, with smooth efficiency and amid general silence, millions of human beings are raked together from every end of Europe, to be finally delivered up, after hellish journeys, for machine-gunning, gassing or electrocution in specially erected extermination camps; when we learn

<sup>194</sup>This edition of the Observer also carried an extensive 123 line report on the contents of the Polish Note. It formed the leader on page five and, it should be noted, placed special emphasis on the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto and the Death Camps.

that it has become an act of mercy, to be paid for by the beneficiaries, to shoot a man on the spot or to throw a mother together with her baby from a sixth-floor window, so as to save them from what is waiting for them, then we feel that one of the planks on which rested not only civilisation, but human existence, has broken down, and that the abyss is opening under the feet of mankind.

The fundamental commandment "Thou shalt not kill," is being obliterated by the slaughter of the people who handed it down to humanity. Man is becoming a wolf again to man. No limits to slaughter can be discerned, now that science has given humanity the means of self-destruction, if religion and conscience lose their power. What is happening to the Jews to-day may happen to the Poles, Czechs, Frenchmen to-morrow. The twilight of man is at hand, unless the opening abyss is sealed.

When seen in this light, it said, the war against Germany represented a 'holy war against evil itself'. Law had to be 'asserted in all its awful majesty, even if this will mean the conviction as a murderer of every single member of that order of killers, the S.S.'. Indeed, the Allies had to steel themselves for the 'stern purge essential now to the survival of man'.

In conclusion the paper pledged its support for a declaration of protest and the initiation of rescue measures: 'There remains the immediate need to save those who can still be saved. Little about the methods to do it can be said in the hearing of the enemy. But the country would be relieved by a clear, if general, declaration of the Government that everything humanly possible will be done and is being done to wrest the victims from the butcher's grip and to provide sanctuary. We shall not be beaten in a contest of chivalry by smaller and weaker nations.'

It is as well, at this point, to re-emphasise that Press coverage of the crisis was patchy. The News of the World, for instance, possessing the largest circulation in Britain, had yet to publish a single article on the recent reports. But the patchiness of the newspaper coverage merely reflected the general indifference of the British Government and the public. Harold Nicholson M.P. observed this in his diary entry of 9 December:

We have a Committee meeting at which several representative Jews tell us of the extermination of their fellows by the Nazis. They have ringed off the Warsaw ghetto and transported two-thirds of the inhabitants in cattle-trucks to Russia. It is a horrible thing to feel that we are so saturated with horrors, that this Black Hole on a gigantic scale scarcely concerns us.<sup>195</sup>

Indeed, on 13 December, at the main Intercession Service of British Jewry's Day of Fasting, Mourning, and Prayer, the Chief Rabbi spoke of how he found the

<sup>195</sup>Nigel Nicholson, ed., Harold Nicholson: Diaries and Letters 1939-1945, (London, 1967), p. 266.

'indifference which a portion of the British Press and some of the Government circles display towards this the most appalling massacre in history...amazing, especially after the protests of the people and the Primate, Cardinals, and Archbishops'.<sup>196</sup> The Mosaic Law, he said, 'brands it to be an unforgivable sin for a man to stand by with folded hands, and look on unconcernedly when his fellow-man is drowning or is being torn to pieces by wild beasts....The sin does not become less, when it is not one man, but a whole people that is being devoured by human tigers before the whole world'. 'What are the United Nations prepared to do?', he asked. 'The American Ambassador recently reminded us of the decay of conscience that had taken place in the years before the war and had helped to build a moral climate favourable to the perpetration of Nazi atrocities. What practical atonement, we ask, are the Free Peoples willing to make for their share in building up that moral or, more truly, immoral climate? Will they, among other things open the gates of their countries to those few who, as if by miracle, escape from the Nazi inferno?' He continued:

On this question the Primate of All England rightly said: 'In comparison with the evil confronting us, the reasons for hesitation usually advanced by officials have an air of irrelevance.' Will Britain and her Allies encourage and help the few remaining neutral States to receive such refugees? Will at least the children be saved from mass-poisoning in the lethal chambers of Hitler, from being buried alive in thousands by his hell-hounds? Shame covers us, as Jews, as Englishmen, as human beings, that even to this question we are not sure of an affirmative answer. Public opinion must be roused to the eternal infamy that would be ours if we were to close our ears to its death-cries. We, therefore, turn to our beloved England, that has for so many centuries been the conscience of Europe; that has been the leader in so many humanitarian crusades; and we agonisingly exclaim, in the words of the poet:

'England, awake, awake,  
Jerusalem thy sister calls.  
Wilt thou sleep the sleep of death  
And close her from thy ancient walls?'<sup>197</sup>

Each of the daily papers in our sample carried a report of the Chief Rabbi's speech in their 14 December editions. The Daily Telegraph placed its 56 line article in the middle of the second column on its third page. It reported that the Chief Rabbi had 'appealed' to the United Nations and neutral countries to 'open their gates' to save 'at least the children' from the Nazis, and that he had declared that 'public opinion' had to be 'roused' against the great crime. However, the paper did not report his criticisms of the British Press or Government. The Times' 55 line article formed the leader on page two. Its report of the Chief Rabbi's speech was generally more detailed than the Telegraph's, but on the all-important criticisms it fudged the wording so that neither

<sup>196</sup>Daily Mail, 14 December 1942.

<sup>197</sup>Jewish Chronicle, 18 December 1942.

the Government nor the Press were seen to have been specifically reproached. Thus the 'indifference which a portion of the British Press and some of the Government circles display' became simply: 'the indifference displayed towards this most appalling massacre in history was amazing'. The News Chronicle placed its 49 line article at the top of its third page. It only noted the Chief Rabbi's appeal to the United Nations to open its gates to Jewish refugees; the rest of the article was taken up with reports of the other ways in which British Jewry had kept the Day.

Only the Daily Mail and the Daily Herald communicated the specifics of Dr. Hertz's criticisms. The Mail's 51 line article, positioned in the centre of page three, drew the eye with its triple-columned, bold headlines:

### 'Open Gates to Jews,' Chief Rabbi Appeals

But the Daily Herald's 100 line article was the more impressive of the two. This was placed in the middle of columns 5 and 6 on page two. It was headed:

### *Hannen Swaffer* JEWRY MOURNS

Swaffer declared that 'NEVER, even in the black history of Jewish persecution, was there an intercession service so solemn as that held yesterday in the Bevis Marks Synagogue, in the centre of the bombed City.' Hundreds of men had 'burst openly into tears, sobbing, rocking their bodies, bowing'. The Cantor had called on the 'God of Compassion', and 'ALMOST all the leaders of Jewry [had] listened while Dr. Hertz denounced, in his sermon, the deliberate killing of millions of defenceless men, women and children'. Dr. Hertz had asked whether at least the children might be saved by the Allies. Swaffer went on, drawing attention to the Chief Rabbi's reproach:

Whom Did He Mean?

THEY were covered with shame that even to that question they were not sure of an affirmative answer.

Despite the protests of the Pope and the Primate, Cardinals and Archbishops, declared Dr. Hertz, the indifference of a portion of the Press and "some Government circles" - I heard this could be taken as a veiled reference to influence in our Foreign Office - was amazing.

Indeed, it was becoming apparent to those in touch with diplomatic circles that the forthcoming Allied Joint Declaration would restrict itself to a condemnation of the atrocities. C.A. Lambert, for instance, telegraphed to Crozier on 16 December:

IT SEEMS CLEAR T[HA]T [THE] GOV[ERNMEN]T INTEND NOTHING  
BEYOND T[HE] MORAL CONDEMNATION O[F] T[HE] JEWISH  
PERSECUTION.<sup>198</sup>

At this point the News Chronicle began to pressure for positive relief measures. On 15 December, for instance, it printed a letter entitled: 'Saving the Jews.' William Richardson, its author, exclaimed that the 'most disquieting feature of the whole situation is the strange absence of any expression of horror or indignation on the part of the great democracies'. He added that 'in addition to the action you [the News Chronicle] suggest should be immediately taken in the name of the United Nations, the democratic Powers should make strenuous efforts to save the children, at least, from certain death by removing them from Nazi territory to Palestine and neutral countries.' The process of saving Jews would be 'facilitated,' he said, 'by the abrogation of the immigration clauses of the Palestine White Paper, thus permitting the entry of Jewish refugees up to the limit of the country's absorptive capacity'. And he concluded: 'It is pitiable that, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, such an obvious solution is not adopted by the British Government.'

The next day, 17 December, the News Chronicle went further. It published a very extensive 195 line feature article by Eleanor Rathbone in which she told 'what Britain can do to help the Jews who do manage to escape from Hitler's terror'. The headlines boldly pronounced:

### LET THE HUNTED COME IN

Rathbone declared that the refugee question had slipped into obscurity since the dark days of 1940, and that it 'should now be brought to the forefront, because it is closely related to perhaps the greatest single horror in all history, the wholesale massacre and the threatened total extermination of European Jewry'. 'Those who turn away their eyes from this horror,' she said, 'usually justify themselves by asking, "But what can we do?" ' There were, she added, several things that *could* be done. The 'hideous facts' of the slaughter might be broadcast to the 'peoples of all countries so that decent men and women everywhere, even where the Nazis rule, may resist and rescue and succour so

<sup>198</sup>Manchester Guardian Archives, Refugees Box, 223/5/67



far as they can'. Rewards might be promised to those who did this, and punishment might be meted out in the future on the murderers and 'all who help them'.

Rathbone attacked Britain's record on refugees. Britain's war-time contribution could only be small compared to 'what could have been made if our policy before the war had been less selfishly cautious and unimaginative'. While the millions who had subsequently died or were irretrievably doomed could in no way be saved, 'we could save thousands by our own action and by the effect of our example on other nations'. She advocated 'planned, concerted action'. Visas might be guaranteed to those who could escape, thus assuring neutral countries that they would not remain permanently in their territory, and encouraging them to receive more refugees. A really clear demonstration by Britain and the United Nations that they cared for these refugees might persuade some of Hitler's unwilling allies to seek conciliation on this matter. 'Hence we should show willingness to receive refugees in the British controlled-lands and should ask other nations to do the same. There is no danger that we or they will be flooded with refugees. The numbers likely to escape are too pitifully small.' Rathbone explained that few people understood just how rigid the Home Secretary's control of the entry of refugees into Britain was; in fact, the 'door is practically barred'. 'When asking other States to show generosity,' she continued, 'should we not follow the example of Chaucer's Priest: "Christ's law and that of His Apostles Twelve He taught, But first He followed it Himself." '

These regulations had to be revised, she said, so that refugees, 'for whom the only chance of escape from torture and death is a visa for a safe country shall no longer be met at every turn by the notice "You may not enter here" '. It was an error that the refugees issue was regarded as the principal concern of 'a Home Secretary, overburdened with other departmental duties and now a member of the War Cabinet, who apparently regards dealings with refugees as a tiresome extension of his previous duties concerning casual wards, prisons and other places of deterrent treatment for undesirables who must be kept from being a nuisance and got rid of as soon as possible'. No, the refugees question was too big for that. It deserved the undivided attention of an internationally minded Minister who could 'view the problem as a whole', and liaise with other Ministers so as to deal with current developments and plan for the future. Rathbone lamented: 'If that had been done several years ago it might have prevented incalculable suffering and saved tens of thousands of lives.'

The Allied Joint Declaration, issued simultaneously that same day in London, New York and Moscow, contained no promises of rescue. While the United Nations

acknowledged that the Germans were 'now carrying into effect Hitler's oft-repeated intention to exterminate the Jewish people in Europe', it is clear from a close analysis of the text of the Declaration that they still doubted the veracity of reports of the existence of the extermination camps and the methods of murder employed there. 'From all the occupied countries,' it said, 'Jews are being transported, in conditions of appalling horror and brutality, to Eastern Europe. In Poland, which has been made the principal Nazi slaughterhouse, the ghettos established by the German invaders are being systematically emptied of all Jews except a few highly skilled workers required for war industries.' 'None of those taken away,' it added, 'are ever heard of again.' As for the process of extermination, the 'able bodied are slowly worked to death in labour camps', while the 'infirm are left to die of exposure and starvation or are deliberately massacred in mass executions'. Now as the United Nations had no doubt that the strong were being slowly worked to death in 'labour camps', the existence of this type of camp was mentioned; but since they still had doubts about the reports of the death camps they were not specifically referred to. The phrase 'deliberately massacred in mass executions' affirmed the truth that the infirm were being exterminated *en masse*, but could not necessarily be construed as a substantiation of any single report of the death camps. Similarly, the Declaration left wide open the number of dead. 'The number of victims of these bloody cruelties,' it said, 'is reckoned in many hundreds of thousands of entirely innocent men, women and children.'

Nevertheless, the United Nations expressed their condemnation 'in the strongest possible terms this bestial policy of cold-blooded extermination', and declared that 'such events can only strengthen the resolve of all freedom loving peoples to overthrow the barbarous Hitlerite tyranny'. They reaffirmed their 'solemn resolution to ensure that those responsible for these crimes shall not escape retribution, and to press on with the necessary practical measures to this end'.

After the Declaration was read out in the House of Commons Sydney Silverman asked Eden whether 'those responsible' was to be understood as meaning both perpetrators and planners of the extermination programme. He also pressed the Government for the initiation of rescue measures. Eden assured Silverman that 'it is the intention that all persons who can properly be held responsible for these crimes, whether they are the ringleaders or the actual perpetrators of the outrages, should be treated alike, and brought to book'. But he poured cold water on the matter of rescue: 'As regards the second question, my hon. Friend knows the immense difficulties in the way of what he suggests, but he may be sure that we shall do all we can to alleviate these horrors, though I fear that what we can do at this stage must inevitably be slight.'

John McGovern, a Scottish left-wing M.P., also asked Eden about the possibility of rescue: 'May we take it from the right hon. Gentleman's statement that any persons who can escape from any of these territories will be welcomed and given every assistance in the territories of the United Nations?' But in his reply Eden again played down rescue. 'Certainly we should like to do all we possibly can,' he said. 'There are, obviously, certain security formalities which have to be considered. It would clearly be the desire of the United Nations to do everything they could to provide wherever possible an asylum for these people, but the House will understand that there are immense geographical and other difficulties in the matter.'

There occurred two outstanding moments of drama; the first when the Jewish Liberal M.P. James de Rothschild rose, and, breaking Parliamentary procedure (only questions could be asked), on behalf of British Jewry emotionally thanked His Majesty's Government for the Declaration. Many Jews in Britain might 'but for the grace of God' have been among the victims of the extermination programme, and he was sure of their gratitude for the Declaration. He trusted that the Declaration would be broadcast to Europe and that it would 'give some faint hope and courage to the unfortunate victims of torment and insult and degradation'. At the end of the question-time the Labour M.P. for South Islington, Mr. W. Cluse, asked the Speaker if it were permissible for the House to stand in silence for a few moments 'in support of this protest against disgusting barbarism'. The Speaker replied that 'that should be a spontaneous act by the House as a whole', and every M.P. stood to his feet.<sup>199</sup> Eden was much surprised by the emotional response to the Declaration. He later noted in his diary: 'It had a far greater dramatic effect than I had expected...Lloyd George said to me later: "I cannot recall a scene like that in all my years in Parliament."

<sup>200</sup> Sir Henry 'Chips' Channon wrote in his diary:

*17 December*

An extraordinary assembly today in the august Mother of Parliaments. It was sublime. Anthony read out a statement regarding the extermination of Jews in east Europe, whereupon Jimmy de Rothschild rose, and with immense dignity, and his voice vibrating with emotion, spoke for five minutes in moving tones on the plight of these peoples. There were tears in his eyes, and I feared that he might break down; the House caught his spirit and was deeply moved. Somebody suggested that we stand in silence to pay our respects to those suffering peoples, and the House as a whole rose and stood for a few frozen seconds. It was a fine moment, and my back tingled.<sup>201</sup>

<sup>199</sup>Hansard, House of Commons, 17 December 1942.

<sup>200</sup>The Earl of Avon (Sir Anthony Eden), *The Eden Memoirs: The Reckoning*, (London, 1965), p. 358.

<sup>201</sup>Robert Rhodes James, ed., *CHIPS: The Diaries of Sir Henry Channon*, (London, 1967), p. 347.

However, the moment did not last.

## Chapter 7

'Nobody but you seems to have realised that this is so great a tragedy that it deserves as much publicity as, say, the Beveridge Report.'

Eleanor Rathbone, M.P., to W.P. Crozier, 18 December 1942.

On 18 December the United Nations Declaration received an unprecedented degree of publicity in the Press. For instance, for the first time The Times printed an article relating to atrocities against Jews on its main news page (4). Its author, Craig, had been particularly gripped by the drama of the minute's silence.

There was a deeply impressive scene in the House of Commons to-day. Moved by the horror of Mr. Eden's recital of German atrocities against the Jews, and by the stern protest and warning of retribution which he uttered in the name of the British and allied Governments, the House, prompted by a suggestion from a Labour member, rose spontaneously and remained standing for a minute. Its silence was more eloquent than words of deep sympathy with the helpless victims of terrorism, and emphasized the Commons' fixed resolve that the fight against the barbarous regime overshadowing Europe shall be waged to a victorious end.

However, while Craig recounted the full text of the Declaration itself and noted De Rothschild's emotional speech, he did not report the questions regarding rescue which Silverman and others had put to Eden. Rather, by tagging Eden's reply to these questions onto the end of another of his statements, Craig gave the erroneous impression that it was Eden who had raised the matter of rescue:

...the House murmured its approval and sympathy when Mr. Lipson appealed to the Government that the German people should be made to know that they must be held in a measure responsible for the atrocities. Mr. Eden replied that that was the purpose of the joint allied declaration that he had just given and arrangements had been made to transmit the declaration to the Governments and peoples of Hitler's allies. The United Nations would wish to do everything possible to give asylum to the victims of Nazi persecution, but he asked the House to realize that immense geographical and other difficulties were involved.

Although a thorough reading of the Parliamentary columns on page eight, which gave a fuller account of the proceedings in both the House of Commons and Lords (where the Declaration was also read out), would have corrected this impression, the numbers of such readers must inevitably have been smaller. Indeed, the impression that the Government really was concerned with rescue, that it was doing and had in the past done everything in its power to rescue Jews from the Nazis, was compounded by the publication of a 58 line article on page three headed:

EMPIRE'S AID TO THE  
JEWS

NEW HOMES FOUND FOR  
REFUGEES

The author, Iverach McDonald, observed that when the Declaration had been read out in the Commons the question had been asked whether the Allied nations could receive refugees if the Germans let them go, which was by no means certain. Then he went on to heap praise on the British record on refugees, declaring that Britain had done more than any other country towards the resettling and reception of refugees since 1933. He continued:

For many years before the war, and during the war, the British people have offered their traditional hospitality to those who have fled, or have been driven, from their countries. Other countries have joined in the work - but the British figures alone show how great has been the need. For the British peoples the work, strictly speaking, has been twofold. There have been the refugees: foreigners who have been driven to British territories for protection. There have also been the evacuees: British subjects who have been driven out of their homes, particularly in the East, by the invader.

REFUGEES IN BRITAIN

Altogether, over 125,000 civilian refugees have been accommodated in Britain and in dependant British territories, quite apart from those accepted in the Dominions. ...Money is a secondary consideration in the work, but it may be said that nearly £10,000,000 has been devoted by Britain alone since 1933 to the direct relief of refugees.

There is no doubt that this article, a thinly veiled attempt both to pre-empt and to dampen any existing popular support for rescue in the aftermath of the Declaration, originated with the British Government.<sup>202</sup> This information also appeared in other papers. The Daily Telegraph printed it as part of a 27 line article on page three headed:

JEWS WELCOME  
DECLARATION  
"MAY STOP KILLINGS"

In the first half of the article the paper noted that a number of Jewish organisations, in particular the British Board of Deputies, had responded positively to the Allied Declaration. Underneath this the paper said:

<sup>202</sup>It should be noted that the article was written by The Times' Diplomatic Correspondent.

### Sanctuary Given

The British Empire and the United States have provided considerable sanctuary for refugees from Nazi oppression. Before 1938 nearly 250,000 had been established in permanent homes. Since then the British Government has provided something like £1,000,000 over and above private charity to aid refugees in establishing themselves in this country.

Whereas The Times formed a whole article out of this information, and the Telegraph printed it uncritically and without comment, Vernon Bartlett in the News Chronicle was not so impressed. His article was 109 lines in length and was placed prominently at the top of the fifth column on the paper's front page. He began by declaring that the words used in the Allied Declaration to describe the Nazi atrocities against the Jews 'are not in any way excessive'. That the reports of the existence of a Nazi extermination plan were true, he said, was backed up by the testimony of 'a thoroughly responsible Polish citizen [Jan Karski]'. He had twice visited 'the camp in which Jews are brought together before being dispatched in cattle trucks to their death...[and] has seen with his own eyes the methods applied by the Gestapo'. Bartlett added, as further confirmation, that 'this Pole is a member of a political party which formerly was considered definitely anti-Jewish'. Bartlett described how the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto had been packed into cattle-trucks and taken to 'their unknown destination with as many as twenty Jews lying on the heads of their standing compatriots'. 'As Mr. Eden said in the House of Commons, "none of those taken away is ever heard of again".' Bartlett placed the official information on refugees against this backdrop of terrible slaughter, with the result that the Government appeared to be self-satisfied and complacent. This appearance was emphasised by his accompanying comments:

It is *claimed* that, between January, 1940, and July, 1942, the British Treasury allocated the sum of £1,066,570 for all the refugees from Europe, apart from the sum of £4,000,000 voted by Parliament for the maintenance and settlement of refugees from Czechoslovakia. Help from private individuals and voluntary associations is estimated at £9,500,000 since Hitler came into power in 1933.

By the end of 1941 93,000 refugees of various nationalities had been accommodated in the United Kingdom and a further 32,000 have found or have been promised refuge in India or the British Colonies. To these must be added considerable numbers who have gone to the Dominions.

*Nevertheless, in face of the present German policy of extermination, the British Government will certainly be urged to adopt a more helpful attitude towards any Jews who may still have a chance of escaping from the slave camp of Europe. Neutral countries would be much more ready to grant them visas if it were known that they could come to Britain.*<sup>203</sup>

<sup>203</sup>Emphasis mine.

In its main report on the issuing of the Declaration, the News Chronicle, unlike The Times, particularly emphasised the subject of rescue. Just underneath its three-column headline, 'UNITED NATIONS' PLEDGE ON MASSACRE OF THE JEWS,' the paper printed a summary of the main details. It said that 'the United Nations, headed by Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union, yesterday issued a joint declaration condemning Germany's "bestial policy of cold-blooded extermination" of the Jews and pledging that those responsible "shall not escape retribution." Wholehearted support came from the Dominions. In the House of Commons members stood in silence as a gesture of sympathy. In Parliament and outside the need for action to save as many lives as possible was emphasised.' Moreover, after recounting the full text of the Declaration, the author, Parliamentary Correspondent, E. Clephan Palmer, observed:

#### **PRACTICAL AID WANTED**

Members were anxious to be assured that everything possible would be done to help the Jews to escape from Europe and to arrange for their reception in British-controlled and other territories. It was widely felt that a declaration of protest was not enough.

As Palmer continued, Eden's non-committal replies to questions about rescue were placed in a negative light:

Replying to Mr. S.S. Silverman (Lab. Nelson and Colne), who asked whether the British Government was conferring with the other Governments on what constructive measures of relief were immediately practicable, Mr. Eden said that it was a matter of immense difficulty. All that was possible would be done.

#### **"DIFFICULTIES"**

Mr. J. McGovern (I.L.P., Shettleston) asked whether any persons who could escape from the occupied countries would be welcomed and given every assistance in the territories of the United Nations.

Mr. Eden: "Certainly. We should like to do all we can. There are obviously certain security matters which will have to be considered, but it will be the desire of the United Nations to do everything they can to provide an asylum for these people. There are tremendous geographical and other difficulties."

After describing de Rothschild's emotional speech, Palmer turned once again to the issue of rescue:

#### **BISHOP'S PLEA**

In the Lords, where the declaration was read by Lord Simon (Lord Chancellor), Lord Samuel, after expressing gratitude, said that Jews throughout the world, and many others, were wondering whether some positive action could not still be taken for the rescue of these unhappy victims, particularly the children.



There were still some neutral countries and it was possible that with their co-operation something might be done. Would the United Nations, listening to the cries of people in agony, bring them that succour?

This appeal was supported by the **Bishop of London**. He hoped it would be made clear that we and our Allies would offer free asylum gladly for all those who could escape. He knew there were immense difficulties, but this was an occasion when difficulties must give way to the plain call, deep and moving, of common humanity.

The paper re-emphasised the theme of rescue by the publication, just underneath the above report, of a 41 line article entitled:

**OPEN THE DOORS OF PALESTINE, PLEAD  
THE JEWS OF BRITAIN**

It observed that while the British Board of Deputies and the Jewish Agency had expressed their gratitude for the Declaration they had also issued statements appealing for rescue measures:

**Board of Deputies:** We hope that the United Nations may be able to concert practical measures without delay to afford asylum in territories under their own control and secure the friendly good offices of neutral Governments.

Particular attention should be given to the saving of children, in which Palestine has already played so important a part.

**Jewish Agency:** We appeal to all the free nations to give refuge to the homeless people. We appeal to His Majesty's Government, as trustees of our national home.

Let the half million Jews in Palestine be enabled to fulfil their duty and their mission by receiving their brethren and sisters in the one place where Jewish refugees cease to be strangers.<sup>204</sup>

The paper added that these appeals had been reinforced at a demonstration, held in London the previous night, which had been organised by the Federation of Women Zionists of Great Britain. The meeting had adopted a resolution which urged that 'Palestine should become the sanctuary for all Jews and that children should be rescued, as far as possible from German clutches'. This resolution, it said in conclusion, was to be sent to the Governments of the United Nations.

The Daily Herald, however, did not give any special attention to the matter of rescue in its reports of the Declaration; rather, it was captivated by the great drama of the scenes in the Commons. The three-column headlines to its main article on the Declaration (written by H.R.S. Philpott and printed at the top of page two) read:

<sup>204</sup>It should be noted that the Daily Telegraph did not report these appeals in its article headed: 'JEWS WELCOME DECLARATION "MAY STOP KILLINGS".'

### A BESTIAL POLICY CONDEMNED

The paper printed the full text of the Declaration and, then, under the headline 'Rothschild Pleads,' Philpott declared: 'There has never been a scene like the one in the House of Commons yesterday after Mr. Eden had read the declaration condemning the Jewish massacres.' Philpott was excited about the fact that, in making his speech, James de Rothschild had broken Parliamentary procedure:

When Mr. Eden had ended his announcement, Mr. James de Rothschild, Liberal member for Ely, rose. He is a Jew, and he was so moved by the bloody brutalities that are being inflicted on his fellow Jews that for a moment or two he could hardly speak.

Then he broke all the rules of procedure. And nobody minded.

All he was allowed to do by the rules of the House was to ask a question. But he began making a speech. Halting at first, but gathering strength as he went along.

Thousands of times I have heard M.P.s who break this elementary rule called to order by the Speaker.

Nobody interrupted yesterday. Any interruption would have been howled down.

There was a grim and deadly silence as he pleaded the cause of the millions who are being hounded to the slaughterhouses.

The minute's silence had equally gripped Philpott:

### IN SILENCE

Presently Mr. Cluse, the Labour Member for Islington, asked the Speaker if it was possible for M.P.s to stand in protest against the barbarities.

The Speaker said it was a matter for the House itself.

And then, in a second or two all the M.P.s were on their feet. So were the Peers in their gallery, so were the Sergeant-at-Arms and the Speaker.

They stood for perhaps half a minute. There was no sound.

For once the Commons was still. A stillness that should strike a chill to the hearts of the murderers if they understand what the quietness meant.

Then, without comment, Philpott fully reported each of the questions, including rescue, that had been put to Eden. However, because Philpott had placed so much emphasis on the drama of the Declaration this side of the article was very much 'in the shade'.

The Herald briefly touched on the matter of rescue in its editorial column, but, similarly, this was *after* the editor had waxed eloquent about the dramatic aspect of the proceedings in the House of Commons. Under the simple headline 'TRIBUTE', the editor began:

THE House of Commons stood in silence yesterday to mourn members of the Jewish race - old and young, eminent and obscure - who are being murdered in the course of Hitler's greatest and ghastliest anti-Jewish campaign.

Not only did the House mourn the dead. Its brief silence was also tribute to the courage, the faith and the endurance of the Jewish race.

There has been no more vivid testimony to the sincerity of British war aims than this spontaneous gesture of sympathy and salutation.

The editor then pronounced somewhat negatively on the matter of rescue. He acknowledged that 'every member of Parliament and every citizen of the United Nations must now be asking: What practical steps can be taken to alleviate the lot of the Jews who are in Hitler's power?' But they should deceive themselves, for 'there is little, very little, that we can do to arrest at this stage the campaign of extermination.' The United Nations had issued their protests, and 'it was right and necessary that they should do so,' but he did not see much coming from that either. The threat of retribution was not likely to deter any of the 'Nazi slaughtermen', because 'the Nazi type is not afraid of death by any means that a civilised court would sanction. Nor can the Nazi type conceive the possibility of a Nazi defeat. We had better understand that'. He doubted that the United Nations would ever be able to decide, 'apart from obvious organisers and agents...upon a comprehensive list of those who can "properly be held responsible" '. There *should* be retribution, he added, but, 'let us not imagine that we shall help the Jews, or our United Cause, by the simple act of threatening homicidal maniacs with undefined punishment.' The United Nations should, he suggested, concentrate on telling that section of the Axis populations 'which is not yet completely inhabited by blood-lust; that section which still remembers that once upon a time Germany and Italy and Japan were leaders of Civilisation; that section which, we hope, will at the climax aid us in achieving the overthrow of Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo', the details of the infamies which were being committed in their name 'so that they may realise the awful responsibility they will bear if they do not seize the first opportunity of destroying their rulers'.

The Daily Telegraph, too, had been impressed by the scenes in the Commons. In its 183 line report on page three, for instance, it spoke with admiration of the 'surge of great emotion' that had swept through the House after the reading of the Declaration. Indeed, it too printed the text of the Declaration in full; but of the questions on rescue which had followed, it only reported Silverman's. Only in its 101 line editorial on page four was the paper's *attitude* to a rescue programme hinted at. It affirmed that the evidence for the massacres was 'beyond dispute and overwhelming'; in fact, it suggested that Hitler had intended to exterminate the Jews of Europe since at least January 1939. However, it believed that the Final Solution had only recently been

launched because Hitler had just realised, as a result of recent Allied victories, that the Axis would ultimately be defeated:

The Allies' declaration recalls that HITLER has often repeated his "intention to exterminate the Jewish people in Europe." He did scream it with more than usual frenzy under the fear of future which haunted his October speech; but five years ago he was threatening the annihilation of the Jews if Germany went to war. Fear and spite have only dictated the moment for monstrous infamy over which his morbid mind has always been gloating, though it is grimly true that the pathological passion for hate and cruelty, which is the inspiration of Nazis, must be expected to increase under frustration and fear.

But what about rescue? 'The Bishop of London,' the paper added, had 'asked in the House of Lords that all the Allies should offer free refuge to Jews who can escape from the terror and assist neutral countries to maintain any who reach their soil,' and it was his belief that 'such measures commend themselves to everyone'. It supported the Bishop of London's proposition, though it agreed with Eden that 'whatever we can do in such ways must...be only a slight alleviation of the agony'. Furthermore, the United Nations had to take measures to 'prove to the German people that the savage tyranny which they have set up and which they serve is doomed, make them understand that the persecution of the Jews, in which to their shame they are assisting, will reinforce the energy with which the United Nations strike at the Nazi Reich, array all mankind against it, and bring upon those guilty of the horrors - not only those who ordered but those who execute this infamy - such retribution as will never be forgotten'.

While The Times also printed an editorial on the Declaration it gave the subject much less attention than had the Telegraph. Unlike the Telegraph, The Times did not make the Declaration its principal editorial and placed it in the middle of the third column on its editorial page. Moreover, The Times' article was, at 57 lines, only half the size of the Telegraph's. The writer, D. Morrah, made no mention at all of the possibility of rescue, choosing instead to dwell solely on the 'memorable' scenes in the House of Commons. 'The emotion in the House had been 'so universal and profound,' he said, 'that the House rose and stood in silence for a while as a visible expression of its feelings. No one who was present will easily forget this salute to the martyrdom of Israel'. They had 'testified to the power of the deepest conviction,' he wrote, 'which steels the national resolve to endure all things that may be required in order to purge the earth of Nazi abomination'. The Declaration had been a 'brief but damning summary [of] the tale of crime that, under the orders of the German Government, has been committed against the helpless nation of the Jews'. The German plan to 'grind out the life out of that ancient and much-enduring race' was 'calculated', and the means by which the Germans were killing the Jews were 'diabolic'. Morrah said that the

'mounting horror of this unexampled career of murder has impelled the United Nations to put on record their solemn condemnation; and they have given their pledge to Jewry that they will persevere to the total overthrow of the barbarous Hitlerite tyranny, and thereafter will "ensure that those responsible for these crimes shall not escape retribution" '. Morrah seemed to implicitly accept that all the United Nations could do to help the Jews had now been done, and that the martyrdom of Israel was already an accomplished fact. The possibility that some at least of the Jews of Europe might be saved, it appears, just did not occur to him.

Of all the daily papers studied the Daily Mail accorded the least coverage to the Declaration. Its sole article was placed in the middle of the third page; indeed, the paper's report of a Commons debate on the zoning of fishing, which ran down column two (immediately to the left of the article on the Declaration (column three)), was accorded an equal amount of space and even positioned more prominently. The Parliamentary Correspondent, Percy Cater, paid exclusive attention to the drama of the scenes in the House and neglected to report any of the questions (not just those which had referred to rescue) which had been put to Eden. For Cater, the outstanding moment had been when the House had stood in silence. He began:

HE was an undramatic man, spectacled, hair grizzled a bit at the temple, the sort of man you see in hundreds in any London crowd, who was responsible yesterday for the most solemn moment anybody remembers in the House of Commons.

It was because of a few words he said, quietly, diffidently - you had to strain to hear him - that M.P.s stood in a hushed mass to record their sorrow for the Jews Germany is slaughtering and their loathing of history's most infamous act.

After Eden had read out the Declaration, Cater said, Rothschild had spoken. 'In accents which shook a little - how remarkable it was that he could muster so much calmness on such an occasion - Mr. de Rothschild spoke "with great emotion" of the grateful feelings which he was sure would permeate the Jewish subjects of the King throughout the Empire for the "eloquent and just denunciation which had just been made.' He added that M.P.s had then asked questions, 'in reply to which Mr. Eden made it clear that punishment, it was intended, should one day fall on all responsible for these crimes; whether ringleaders or actual perpetrators.' It was at that point,

when it seemed that there was no more that M.P.s could do, [that] the undramatic man - he was Mr. W.S. Cluse, Labour M.P. for South Islington and by trade a compositor - rose and suggested "Could not the House stand as a protest against this disgusting barbarism?"

The Speaker was understood to say that that was a matter for the House itself.

Sir Waldron Smithers (Con. Chislehurst) was foremost in rallying these good-hearted British men and women to do what Britons are always fearful of doing - to make a demonstration. He waved them up.

#### M.P.s' Silent Protest

One after another M.P. stood until all, in their hundreds, sombre-garbed and sombre-faced ranks, were on their feet. I can tell you that there were many eyes which were not dry and there was not, I dare swear, a throat without a lump in it.

The House remained standing for something like half a minute, which can seem quite a long time. It is a half minute which may well drag on the German record.

Mr. Lloyd George was one who took part in this historic occasion, his white hair giving a sense of patriarchal grief to the scene.

It was said last night that the House of Commons' tribute was without precedence. I have often seen M.P.s stand and cheer on stirring occasions. I have never seen anything like this silence, which was like the frown on the conscience of mankind.

The Sunday papers studied hardly registered the Declaration in their issues of 20 December. The Observer, for instance, did not make a single reference to the Declaration! The People, as usual, tried to draw attention to Nazi atrocities by printing an article headed: '10,000 POLES HAVE DIED UNDER HUN TORTURE - Secret Letter Revelations - SPECIAL TO "THE PEOPLE".' This article focused on atrocities committed at Oswiecim (Auschwitz), but since it was generally still understood to be a camp for Poles, Jews were barely referred to. Thus in the wake of the Declaration The People emphasised Polish as opposed to Jewish suffering!

Surprisingly, it was the News of the World (printing its first article on atrocities against Jews since 20 September) which provided the most coverage. Even so, its articles on the Jewish crisis did not receive any *special* attention. The first of its two articles was a 20 line report on Anglo-Jewry's day of mourning which was to be observed that day. This was placed at the bottom of the third column of page five, next to an advertisement for 'Puritan Soap' and the 'News in Brief' column. Its headlines ran:

#### SILENCE FOR DEAD

#### PETTICOAT-LANE TO MOURN MASSACRED JEWS

It announced that 'there will be silence in Petticoat-lane, London's famous and nosiest market, for five minutes to-day, when trade will stop as a token of sympathy for Jews massacred by the Germans in Poland.' In addition, 'all shops and stalls in East London will also be closed, as to-day has been proclaimed a fast day by the Chief Rabbi. The fast opens a week of mourning for Polish Jews, and the following edict issued by the Chief Rabbi will be observed: "The voice of merriment and jollity, the

sound of dancing and amusement will not this week be heard in any true Jewish home".'

As with so many of the daily papers, the News of the World's main article on the Declaration failed to report the questions which had been put to Eden about rescue in the debate in the Commons. The headlines to the article stressed that the 'Allies are Pledged to Avenge the Jews,' and the writer, the paper's political correspondent, emphasised throughout that 'the criminals will be brought to judgement as soon as the armistice comes. The death penalty awaits them.' *'The Allies will be ready to deal with the murderers,'* he added, *'for this purpose the lists of those responsible for inhumanities are being carefully prepared and the indictments drawn up.'*<sup>205</sup> It must be said that behind this (and that of most of the other papers we have seen) emphasis on promises of retribution on war criminals at the end of the war, lay an implicit acceptance that, apart from intensifying the war effort, nothing further could be done at present to save European Jewry. This view, as we shall see, was definitely not held by the Jewish organisations.

On 18 December, Eleanor Rathbone, writing to Crozier at the Manchester Guardian, criticised the British Press response to the Declaration. After thanking Crozier for his 'magnificent efforts over the Jewish massacre question', she added that he had 'done more than all the rest of the British press put together'; indeed, she had 'pointed that out in some of my many approaches to other Editors'. 'These efforts,' she continued, 'have seemed worth while as, whether by coincidence or not, the paper approached has usually published a leader and a few reports within a few days. *But it too often stops there. Nobody but you seems to have realised that this is so great a tragedy that it deserves as much publicity as, say, the Beveridge Report, though I cannot be supposed indifferent to that.*'<sup>206</sup>

Rathbone also expressed her disappointment at how the debate on the Declaration had been accorded a low priority:

I had arranged with the Speaker to raise the matter in the Debate on the Adjournment, especially with regard to the Home Secretary's unsatisfactory answer to my previous question regarding revision of his regulations concerning visas for such victims as escaped. "Peradventure if there be only ten", as you so well commented. Some dozen other members had also asked for time to be allotted to this subject. But the Speaker put it last of four subjects, saying frankly that "the zoning of fish" excited very general interest, so had precedence.

<sup>205</sup>Italics in original.

<sup>206</sup>Italics mine.

She added that 'after the Declaration, so many of the Jewish and other members specially interested thought it would be an anti-climax to raise the subject at the end that I reluctantly consented to let it drop, especially after I found that only Peake and Richard Law would be on the Treasury Bench to reply and that a specially pestilential Conservative M.P. (Petherick) intended to say nasty things about our having admitted enough Jews already &c.' However, she now regretted this:

But I am not sure whether I was right, because the whole atmosphere following the Declaration and *the ignoring by most of the press of all reference to rescue measures* fill me with deep uneasiness. I feel that the result may be that politicians and the public may feel that something substantial has been done by the Declaration and that they can relieve their consciences of the whole unpleasant business. There is nothing more dangerous than a relieved conscience. The danger of it affects not only the general public but the chief Ministers. Mr. Eden charged me with ingratitude for his efforts when I spoke to him about our wish for further reassurances as to what the Government was going to do about positive rescue measures. He said: "wasn't it better to do something for the whole of Jewry than for fifty or so escaped victims who might conceivably be got into safety?" As though the two were alternatives! Herbert Morrison was definitely unfriendly and almost hostile, admitting that he bitterly resented my criticisms of him.<sup>207</sup>

Rathbone urged that 'we must manage somehow to secure consideration by the War Cabinet and by other Allied Governments of the question of what further measures they are willing to undertake'. She herself was about to suggest that the British and other Governments might ask Hitler to 'let them [the Jews] go [and] we will take them over'. However, she had little hope that 'our own or the other Governments will actually do this', although 'it seems really the only means of possible rescue for any but those who escape over the frontiers or are in hiding and later escape - a few thousands at most'. Surely, if such an approach were successful, 'the whole of Christendom (including the Americas)' could share the burden of refugees 'between them without over strain'. The British Government, she observed, would be put in a dilemma by such a suggestion, and this would reveal 'the secret consciousness [struck out - 'their secret consciences'] of this dilemma which makes them so anxious to shirk or limit discussion of the whole business. The dilemma is: "Either Hitler would refuse or would accept such an offer. If he refuses, no harm done and the case against him strengthened. If you are afraid of his accepting, that means that you really prefer that these people should be tortured to death than that you should be faced with the inconvenience of providing for them, even for limited numbers of them" '.

<sup>207</sup>Emphasis mine.



Rathbone concluded gloomily: 'The difficulty about discussing all this with full frankness is that we may be presenting Goebbels with materials for the retort "these hypocrite Governments! They protest in solemn phrases, but when asked to do something themselves, they make it quite plain that they will do nothing." I am terribly afraid that that would be a justified retort.'

Ivan Greenberg, in the Jewish Chronicle's main editorial on 18 December, acknowledged that the issuing of the Declaration had done 'much to clear the Christian conscience in Britain and America of the reproach of apathy in the face of horror'. But he emphasised that swift action was necessary to save as many Jews as possible from the slaughter-house of Europe. 'In any event some attempt at salvaging as many as possible of the pre-destined Jewish victims must surely appeal, deeply and poignantly, to the humanity of all the Allied nations as well as to the civilised neutral States'. Eva Reading, in her letter to The Times the previous week, had 'urged the need for a joint offer by Britain, Russia, and the United States to give shelter to all Jews who are allowed to leave the Nazi-dominated Continent'. Reading had admitted, Greenberg said, 'that it is more than doubtful whether Hitler will let any Jews go. But if only some rescues could be effected, if only the Christian countries could rid themselves of the ugly appearance of being still, in face of all, unwilling to open their doors or fulfil their obligations in Palestine to the Jewish people, the Christian-minded peoples would all be able to say with unbowed heads that they had done all or nearly all that lies present within their power'. He added that 'we say nearly all, because there would remain the still unsatisfied yearning of the Jewish people to fight, as a people, their own battle. Future historians would stand in astonishment before the fact that a people selected as the first and foremost victims by a monster breathing fire and slaughter was not given the right by countries fighting in the name of justice, of the retort direct - the right to defend itself in its own name, the name which its enemy persistently reviles and holds up to universal hatred and contempt.'

On Sunday 20 December a public meeting was held at the Palace Theatre, Cambridge Circus, in London. It had been organised by the British Board of Deputies, the Jewish Agency, the World Jewish Congress, and the Agudas Israel, for the purpose of putting pressure on the Allied Governments to initiate rescue measures. The meeting was fully reported on 25 December by the Jewish Chronicle under the headline:

Professor Brodetsky, presiding, had said that 'they wanted to arouse the conscience of humanity, and to ask what the United Nations intended doing about this tragedy'. The Jews, he had added, 'were the one people for whom extermination was the German aim....Could they encourage neutral countries to allow the Jews to enter?'. Eleanor Rathbone, the paper reported, had 'urged that the British Government should set an example by doing what it could to revise the rigid regulations which at present impede the entry of refugees'. Professor A.V. Hill, M.P., told the meeting that 'when Mr. Eden began to read to the House of Commons the Allied declaration his neighbour in the House leant over and whispered to him "another bloody lie put about by the Jews" '. Professor Hill believed that his friend, who 'really was a fine fellow', had changed his mind as the Declaration was read out, for at the conclusion he had 'stood up with the rest of us'.<sup>208</sup> The story showed, he had added, 'how well Hitler's propaganda had worked'. 'What were they to do about it? If men, women, and children - particularly children - were able to escape from the terror, they must offer them shelter and support. The best they could do that way was pitifully small, but they might save a remnant and at least atone a little for the meanness and weakness of past neglect.' Professor Hill had spoken of the prevalence of anti-Semitic attitudes in Britain, declaring that, even after the Declaration, 'this is still the kind of attitude we have to face'. In fact, his wife had recently told a friend of how terrible the massacres of the Jews were, ' "Yes," was the reply, "but I hope they won't let them come here" '. He had explained that 'for the moment shame may prevent the outward expression of that attitude - except by very stupid people - but it would need a lot of re-education to get rid of it. Hitler's propaganda had worked very well.' Professor Hill had concluded in prophetic mode: 'The "bloody lie put about by the Jews" would some day be recognised as an understatement by the Gentiles.'

Sydney Silverman, the Jewish Chronicle reported, had also 'urged the British Government to open its doors to all who could escape from the Nazis'. Lord Nathan had suggested that Turkey, the only country left open to which Jews could find their way, 'should be encouraged to take Jews who could escape from Nazi-controlled territories, and be given the assurance that the Jews should not be a charge upon the Turkish people but that the United Nations would look after them for a while in transit through Turkey and Palestine.' The British Government, he had added, should say that

<sup>208</sup>Even after the previous three weeks of publicity, indeed after all the news reports of that year, there were still 'fine fellow[s]', M.P.s, and others who put atrocity reports down to Jewish propaganda. That this 'fellow' stood up with the rest of the M.P.s was not necessarily a sign of a change in his heart. Certainly it would have been uncomfortable for him to have remained seated while the other M.P.s stood, and his actions may be accounted for by such peer pressure. At any rate this episode reveals that the Press' eulogies of the scenes in the Commons did not tell the whole truth.

'for those who escape from Nazi savagery in Europe there would be no immigration schedule'. Berl Locker, the paper continued, had stressed that the most important thing was to get as many Jews as possible to escape anywhere. 'But they must not be deterred from using Palestine to help Jews.'

The Palace Theatre meeting received very patchy treatment in the next day's national daily papers. The Daily Telegraph, for instance, placed its small 19 line article on the meeting in an inconspicuous position at the bottom of the third column of page three - next to a cigarette advertisement. Moreover, its article noted only the main point of Eleanor Rathbone's speech and neglected the others:

JEWISH HORROR:  
CALL FOR ACTION

Action to follow the declaration of the United Nations condemning the Nazi policy of the extermination of the Jews was called for by speakers at a meeting convened by the Board of Deputies of British Jews at the Palace Theatre, Shaftesbury avenue, yesterday.

Miss Eleanor Rathbone M.P., said neutral countries should be asked to accept any refugees who could escape from Germany, with a guarantee that they would be relieved of them at the earliest moment.

A report compiled by the Inter-Allied Information Committee, published during the week-end revealed that 99 per cent. of the 86,000 Jews in Yugoslavia had been murdered.

While The Times did not mention the meeting at all, even the relatively sympathetic News Chronicle accorded only 35 lines to this event in the middle of page three, in its article headed:

M.P.s SUGGEST APPEAL TO GERMANY TO  
ALLOW JEWS TO LEAVE EUROPE

The best coverage came from the Daily Mail and the Daily Herald. The Mail's 76 line article on the Palace Theatre meeting was placed prominently in the upper half of the fourth column of its front page. Its dramatic headlines, lifted from Silverman's speech, proclaimed the widespread belief that Hitler was about to exterminate European Jewry 'at one blow':

'Ten Days  
to Live'  
for Jews

—  
*Final Massacre*

This was also stressed by the bold text of the first few lines:

**WITHIN the next few days the Germans may come near to their objective of exterminating the Jews who still remain in Nazi-dominated Europe.**

The paper added that 'this terrible ending to the campaign of mass murder was forecast yesterday at a gathering of 2,000 Jews of all nations in London'. The meeting had heard first, it said, Silverman's statement that 'the Nazis are going to bring their mass murders to a most tragic conclusion within the next ten days'. Then Lord Nathan had warned that 'the vast bulk of the Jews in Nazi-dominated Europe are doomed'. Eleanor Rathbone had revealed that a few days ago she had received a cable message from Chaim Weizmann which said that secret information confirmed that definite instructions had been given for the 'terrible work of extermination to be completed by December 30'. Many had wept, the paper said, 'as they listened to the tale of the sufferings of Jewry in Europe'.

As for rescue, the paper laid particular emphasis upon Lord Nathan's appeal that Turkey be encouraged to receive as many Jews as possible: 'the Jews thus received,' he had said, 'should be regarded as only in transit to Palestine. And let the British Government say that, so far as Palestine is concerned, there shall be no immigration schedule'. The paper noted in conclusion that 'there were excited cheers at this, as there were for Mr. Silverman when he suggested that the British Government should say to Hitler "We will take all the Jews you don't want".'

The Mail followed this article up by printing a photograph, at the top of page three, encaptioned 'Jews Plead "Aid Nazis' Victims"', which showed a section of the audience at the Palace Theatre.

The Daily Herald's article, positioned in the middle of column five on its back page, was not as prominently placed as the Mail's, but it drew particular attention to remarks made by Silverman about the British Government's reaction to the Riegner Telegram - an aspect that no other paper, not even the Jewish Chronicle, reported. Its bold, double-columned headlines asserted:

**GOVERNMENT AT FIRST DIDN'T BELIEVE HITLER'S  
EXTERMINATION PLAN, BUT, CONVINCED, MADE -  
A P O L O G Y T O J E W S**

'HITLER'S plan to exterminate Jews in all the occupied countries,' it said, 'was discredited by the British Government, who afterwards apologised to British Jewry, said Mr. S.S. Silverman, M.P., yesterday.' The paper continued: 'Mr. Silverman said

that when the news was brought from Geneva the Jewish authorities took it to the Government and asked it to investigate. The Government at first described it as Nazi technique, but after investigation said, "We are sorry. Your news was right".<sup>209</sup> *Ipsa facto*, Silverman had argued that the British Government should say to Germany 'we will take all the Jews you don't want'. The Herald also reported Lord Nathan's suggestions concerning Turkey.

The Foreign Office was alarmed when The Times, in its late edition of 21 and throughout those of 22 December, printed a letter by Major-General Neill Malcolm, a former High Commissioner for German Refugees, which pointed out that the British Government would make itself a hypocrite if, after the issuing of the Declaration, they did nothing to save Jewish lives. He chastised the Allied Powers for both the slowness and weakness of their response to Hitler's oft-repeated threat to exterminate the Jews:

That we should be shocked and horrified by recent revelations is very right, but our reactions have been very slow. The theory of racial purity is no new plank in the Nazi programme. It was expounded in "Mein Kampf" and put into practice as soon as Hitler came to power in 1933. Since then persecution has grown steadily in intensity, but it was not until the clouds of defeat began to appear above the horizon of Berlin that it burst into full flame. In February of this year Hitler announced that "the Jew will be exterminated," and in July Himmler, speaking for his master, added the words, "Jews are to die in torture."

Compared with these truly awful threats the declaration by the Powers sounds pitifully tame.

Malcolm also exposed the evasiveness of Eden's replies to those who, after the Declaration had been read out, had asked about the possibility of rescue:

When Mr. Eden sat down Mr. Silverman rose to ask: "Secondly, whether he is consulting the United Nations Governments and with his own colleagues as to what constructive measures of relief are immediately practicable." Then came the terrible anti-climax. Mr. Eden's answer: "My honourable friend knows the immense difficulties in the way of what he suggests," and later, "the House will understand that there are immense geographical and other difficulties in the matter." So unlike Hitler, we cannot convert words into deeds and must be content with promises which will not save one single life.

<sup>209</sup>As we have seen, the Foreign Office had been exceedingly concerned that Silverman, who, on 3 December, had tabled a question on the Government's response to the reports of a German extermination plan (to be asked in the Commons on the 9th), might embarrass the Government. On 4 December D. Allen had minuted: 'If it is felt necessary to amend the drafts to provide for a postponement of our declaration after Wednesday next, it would presumably be as well to try to persuade Mr. Silverman to be patient and postpone his question.' (PRO FO 371/30923/188). I presume that, because the declaration was not ready for issuing on Wednesday 9 December, such an approach was made to Silverman. It is likely that the Foreign Office placated Silverman by revealing that the Government was about to issue a declaration which recognised that German policy was directed towards the extermination of the Jews. Perhaps the 'apology' occurred at this time. Silverman did not question the Government on 9 December, but waited until 17 December when the Declaration was issued in response to a question from Silverman.

Next, he questioned whether the said difficulties were really as formidable as had been suggested:

But are these difficulties really so insuperable now that the sympathy of the world has been aroused by incredible suffering? It is well known that in this country there is a shortage of every class of labour. Could not we receive a considerable portion of the 4,000-5,000 Jewish refugees now in Spain and Portugal waiting for a chance to go overseas before Hitler's long arm is stretched out to reach them? Has appeal been made to Mr. de Valera on behalf of the children who have lost their parents, their homes, and even their names? Could not room be found in the military forces for a few thousand of these miserable people? Only a few thousand have now any hope of rescue. Is it really true that in the whole world no room can be found for them? At worst might they not be taken into reception camps and each one of us forgo one or two mouthfuls a day in order to provide the necessary food? A promise that at some future date both ring-leaders and actual perpetrators of the outrages will be brought to book is but cold-comfort for, as I have said, it saves no lives.

C.A. Lambert of the Manchester Guardian reported to Crozier on 21 December that he had been told by his Foreign Office informer that 'Eden is in great distress about the reactions to the declaration'. 'As I was told to-day,' he added, ' "he is nearly in tears about it." General Malcolm's letter in the "Times" to-day particularly upset him.'<sup>210</sup> The Foreign Office responded to Malcolm's letter by instructing its News Department to intervene with The Times, and other newspapers in order to 'persuade' them not to publish such pro-rescue material. As A.W.G. Randall minuted the next day: 'It is a pity Sir N. Malcolm wasn't persuaded not to send this letter....I understand the News Dept. is persuading "The Times" not to follow up this letter with others; in present circumstances *demands put forward in public are not only an embarrassment, but provide enemy propaganda with material.*'<sup>211</sup>

This intervention had a devastating effect upon a Press which, we have seen, had shown little apparent interest in the fate of the Jews and, if truth be told, found the whole subject of atrocities against Jews very uncomfortable. Two days later, another Foreign Office official minuted: 'For the present the Times do not propose to open their correspondence columns for further discussion of this subject. The points taken by Sir Neill Malcolm *have not been followed up actively by the press generally.* The Manchester Guardian is an exception. The points made by Mr. Randall have been put to the Manchester Guardian which has not since pursued the matter. But I think they will return to it *under prodding from the Jews.*'<sup>212</sup> Indeed, the Foreign Office felt the

<sup>210</sup>Lambert to Crozier, 21 December 1942, Manchester Guardian Archives, 'Refugees' Box, 223/5/81.

<sup>211</sup>Emphasis mine. PRO FO 371/32682 piece 188.

<sup>212</sup>Emphasis mine. 'Under prodding from the Jews' is another example of adversarial language. PRO FO 371/32682 piece 189.



matter to be so sensitive that they even tried to 'persuade' individuals not to make public demands for rescue measures. On 31 December, for example, A. Walker minuted: 'Sir W. Deedes proposed on behalf of some association of charitable societies to follow up Sir N. Malcolm's letter with another prodding epistle, but we have written a letter to discourage him on the ground that the whole business is under consideration.'<sup>213</sup> In fact, the Foreign Office's intervention succeeded; Wyndham Deedes wrote to Eden on 23 January 1943: 'As you know, my letter of December 23 was written on behalf of Voluntary Organisations, representing some 97 Social Service bodies. The work of these organisations is in the broad sense of the term, humanitarian, and they feel deeply stirred by the fate of the Jews in Germany and enemy-occupied territory, and anxious to be reassured that His Majesty's Government is doing everything possible to save a remnant. My colleagues have deferred to your wish not to publish a letter in The Times'.<sup>214</sup>

The Foreign Office's observation that 'the points taken by Sir Neill Malcolm have not been followed up actively by the press generally', was accurate. After 22 December the Press fell conspicuously silent. The Daily Telegraph, for example, did not print another article on the situation of the Jews until 6 January 1943; the Daily Mail, moreover, waited until 29 January 1943. The Times' coverage of the crisis became negligible; its articles were incredibly short and usually inconspicuously positioned on the page. On 24 December it printed a 16 line letter whose author made the mild suggestion that the Government might create an interest-free Jewish war bond so as to 'translate Jewish response to the Nazi atrocities into bombers etc, [thus] the Nazis might hesitate before each new persecution'. A 14 line piece, which reported that the previous week a deputation of British Jewry had thanked Eden for the Declaration, was printed at the bottom of the fourth column of page two on 29 December (and even then it was not printed in every edition). The next day, 30 December, the early editions carried an 18 line article (from the Press Association) at the bottom of the fifth column on page three. Moshe Shertok, it reported, had arrived in London, 'to discuss with the British Government plans for saving them [the Jews]'. He had suggested that the British Government might guarantee to neutral Governments the cost of maintenance of Jewish refugees until they could otherwise be accommodated. 'Palestine could in a very short period take another 50,000, he said. In addition to the people who could be absorbed into Palestine's economic life - which was almost identical with the war effort - the country could take many thousands.'

<sup>213</sup>PRO FO 371/32682 piece 190.

<sup>214</sup>PRO FO 371/36650.



The paper's most significant article between 22 December 1942 and 2 January 1943 was a 51 line letter from the Bishop of Chichester, printed on 28 December. He supported 'the appeal so strikingly made by Sir Neill Malcolm', and asserted that 'the incredible suffering of the Jews must call for something more than indignation and horror'. Only positive immediate action could now help those who had been condemned to certain destruction. In addition to Malcolm's suggestions, the Bishop proposed that Germany should be approached through the Protecting Power to allow the Jews to leave German-occupied Europe. Neutral Governments should also be approached to take in those Jews who might thus be released, and promised that the Allies would resettle them elsewhere after the end of the war. 'Could they not simultaneously appeal to all governments, allied and neutral to cooperate in a comprehensive treatment of the whole Jewish problem? Are there not still lands outside Europe which could receive the refugees, at least in reception camps, pending other plans for the complete saving of lives?' He concluded: 'The only answer now to the tragic cry of the Jews to be delivered from their oppressor is steps taken now, before it is too late, to effect deliverance.'<sup>215</sup>

The Daily Herald printed a 46 line report on Moshe Shertok's visit on 22 December, but then waited until 30 December before it printed another article on the subject of the Jews; its next article appeared over two weeks later in its 15 January 1943 issue. The paper's 30 December article was, however, very substantial; it formed a major feature article on page two and covered columns 3-6, extending for 260 lines. Its bold, four column, headlines declared:

**W E H A V E H A D a P e r o r a t i o n - N o w F o r a  
P r o g r a m m e F o r T h e J e w s  
s a y s H A R O L D L A S K I**

Laski, a Jewish member of the Labour National Executive and renowned Socialist thinker, expressed his sense of gratitude for the Declaration, but, under the sub-heading 'NO POLICY,' he added: 'What Mr. Eden uttered was a peroration, and not a programme. It registered a conviction of which the historian will take note, but it offers no policy by which man or woman, old or young, will be saved from the fate that awaits them.' He marvelled that even 'in the tenth year of this organised massacre there is no refuge prepared, no welcome offered either by belligerent or neutral Powers to the few thousands who might be snatched from this tragedy.' 'The United States,' he

<sup>215</sup>On 28 December Namier wrote to Crozier and commented: 'The letter from the Bishop of Chichester in to-day's "Times" is good and on the right lines, but he might usefully have mentioned Palestine.' Namier to Crozier, Manchester Guardian Archives, 'Refugees Box', 223/5/99.



said pessimistically, 'will not alter its immigration quotas, even when the President pleads with Congress for a larger compassion before this urgency. The British Government still thinks of its policy as the Mandatory Power for Palestine in terms of appeasing those Palestinian Arabs whose loyalty to the cause of the United Nations was demonstrated so notably when the Grand Mufti was received in audience by Hitler.' The British Government would not even place the 'special immigration certificates for refugees at the disposal of those who brave death and torture, like passengers on the Struma, only to be denied the right to hope as their vessel anchors in sight of the Promised Land'. The Dominions, moreover, 'with their vast areas and tiny populations', were only offering sympathy, not an asylum. The Home Secretary was refusing to allow Jewish refugees into Britain for fear of provoking an anti-Semitic backlash and jeopardising security, but, Laski commented, 'would five thousand children, would five thousand adults even, so threaten our security psychologically or on the plane of military defence the security of that island fortress which, for a whole year, stood alone in proud defiance of the enemies of civilisation'? Refraining from rescue because of such blatant fear of the anti-Semites in their own midst was akin to the pre-war policy of appeasement; 'can we afford to refrain from acts of mercy lest we evoke the anger of those who bid us be deaf and blind to its call'?

Expressions of indignation, he continued, were not enough, only deeds would do. Laski admitted that the problems associated with rescue were complex, and pursuing it would test 'both the courage and the patience, even of the United Nations'. He also recognised, however, 'that the easy road for them to take is that which rests satisfied with verbal indignation'. But risks *had* to be taken for the sake of the men, women and children of 'an alien race' for 'a nation which does not act against the commission of monstrous wrong becomes the accomplice in its infliction....A nation inactive in these conditions loses the power to know the difference between right and wrong'. To refuse to take such risks, he continued, 'is to deny the very purpose we seek by victory to serve....[and to] connive at the ends sought by the very barbarism we fight'. He concluded with these strong words:

In the long run no nation is unstained by connivance of this character. It means the lie in the soul, the refusal to be our brother's helper.

Not in this temper can a victory won in the name of freedom and justice long hope to have an enduring influence on the behaviour of nations.

Although, by the very act of printing this major article, the Herald had clearly indicated its support for significant rescue measures, its *overall* silence indicated deep-rooted indifference and apathy. The News Chronicle, too, signalled its support for such rescue measures, but, similarly, by the dearth and the general shortness of its articles, it

did not convey that it considered this issue to be of primary importance; between 24 December 1942 and 29 January 1943, for instance, the average length of the News Chronicle's articles was 24 lines. The paper's most significant contribution, (that is, in the first few weeks after the Declaration), occurred on 22 December. It printed a large cartoon by Vicky (covering columns 4-6 of page two), which showed crowds of Jews being pushed into a building labelled 'Extermination Camp'; a weeping Hitler stood in the foreground, while the caption underneath said: ' "I would be sorry if no more Jews were to remain in Germany, for then our younger generation would have no opportunity to learn through personal experience the Jewish danger for the German nation." - Hitler, March 26, 1936.' At the top of column eight on the same page, under the heading 'Refuge for the Hunted', the paper printed four letters. Josiah Wedgwood, the Managing Director of the famous porcelain firm 'Wedgwood and Sons', and author of the first letter, declared in his opening line: 'MISS RATHBONE has an unanswerable moral case.'<sup>216</sup> 'If her facts are correct,' he said, ' - and they have not been denied - if even a very few of Hitler's victims have a chance of escape but are refused sanctuary by us, then however we may protest or threaten retribution to their persecutors, their blood is on our hands also.' He concluded, somewhat caustically, that 'no amount of official whitewash will obscure that stain from eyes that are not blinded by prejudice or timidity. The parable of the Good Samaritan is a parable for Cabinet Ministers and officials as well as for private citizens. But it is something worse than un-Samaritan to turn back the hunted to their torturers and our enemies.'

Support for rescue measures was also expressed in the second letter. Its author demonstrated his deep impatience with the inertia of the United Nations in this matter:

NOW that the leaders of the Allied nations at long last have been moved to condemn the murder of the Jewish people in Europe and to promise retribution for these crimes, I trust that the matter will not be allowed to stop there. Fine words and promises must be supplemented by immediate action.

He advocated that centres, under the auspices of the Red Cross, should be established throughout Europe to which all Jews could be evacuated, cared for and eventually transported to 'Palestine and the neutral and Allied centres', an international fund being set up for their support. He concluded rather angrily: 'Let the Allied leaders prove their sincerity with deeds.'

<sup>216</sup>He was obviously writing in response to Eleanor Rathbone's article which the News Chronicle had printed in its issue of 17 December.

The writer of the third letter declared that the Allied Declaration was 'not enough', and would not 'cause any diminution in the suffering'. Could the Allies not 'make one spontaneous gesture by offering hospitality to them [the Jews]'? If the Home Secretary was so afraid of letting in quislings then let him, as a first step, send the refugees to the Isle of Man; but let it be known that 'life, the chance of life, is what these poor wanderers need, and somewhere to rest their heads without fear.'

Finally, on page three the paper printed a 39 line article headed: 'Palestine Needs Labour, Could Absorb 50,000 Hunted Jews.' Moshe Shertok, the paper reported, had revealed that 'plans to save Jews from Hitler's policy of extermination and send them to Palestine to alleviate the acute labour shortage there have been submitted to the British and United Nations Governments by the Jewish Agency for Palestine.' He had asserted that Palestine could *immediately* absorb 50,000 Jews in its war industries, and that there was room for thousands more children. 'It is imperative,' he had said, 'that every Jew who can possibly be saved from Europe should be brought to reinforce the bastion of democracy which Jewish Palestine constitutes today.'

On 27 December, the News of the World, printed an extensive 194 line feature article by Hore-Belisha M.P., entitled:

GESTAPO WILL PAY  
FOR THE GHETTO

Hanging Sword Over  
the Tyrant

In the first half of his article Hore-Belisha summarised the known details of the extermination of the Jews, '*acts [which had been] perpetrated coldly and after careful calculation, with the avowed purpose of exterminating a whole people*'.<sup>217</sup> 'No brutalities yet perpetrated,' he said, 'by those inhuman men equal in perversion and in scope the treatment now being applied to the Jews....*Day by day the process of liquidation goes on. Two millions have already perished. Five millions more have been warned to expect a like fate.*'<sup>218</sup>

However, Hore-Belisha did not respond to these acknowledged facts by calling upon Britain to rescue as many Jews as possible. Curiously, under the sub-heading 'HERE LIES OUR GREATNESS,' he devoted the second half of his article to praise of Britain and her Parliamentary institutions! The House of Commons' minute of

<sup>217</sup>Italics in original.

<sup>218</sup>*ibid.*

silence, he said, was an impressive expression of 'the spirit of Britain and her traditional hatred of wrong-doing', and it was this 'respect for human personality and dignity' which had made Britain pre-eminent 'among all other nations'. Britain's 'free institutions' had prevailed against Napoleon's tyranny and they would also prevail against Hitler. Through the Joint Allied Declaration, he concluded with romantic optimism, 'the United Nations are wielding with irresistible vigour the flaming sword of retribution', and they were certain 'to break the tyranny which Hitler has fastened upon Europe'.

Not until 28 February 1943 did the News of the World make any further mention of the crisis of European Jewry. Indeed, its great rival, The People, waited until 10 January 1943 to print its next article on the situation. The Observer, which on 13 December had dramatically declared that the Final Solution was evidence 'that the abyss is opening under the feet of mankind', printed a 34 line report on 3 January, 17 lines in its 10 January issue, two articles of 24 and 16 lines on 17 January and another 20 lines on 31 January 1943 - hardly the response of a newspaper which *really* believed, again in its own words of 13 December, that 'the twilight of man is at hand, unless the opening abyss is sealed'!

If the British Press had ever stood a chance of contributing effectively to the campaign which sought to wring practical proposals for rescue from the British Government it had been in the first two weeks after the Joint Allied Declaration. However, its general silence at this critical point in time literally crippled the campaign for rescue. All momentum in the Press coverage of the crisis of European Jewry was lost, and public concern was permitted to ebb away. The Press was simply not sufficiently concerned with the plight of the Jews, even after the 17 December Declaration, to provide consistently significant coverage of their situation. Although, ultimately, most of the blame for the Press' failure rests with the newspapers themselves, the British Government cannot avoid criticism for its actions; indeed, its interventions against the publication of 'demands put forward in public' had a significant, perhaps decisive, influence on a half-hearted Press. Thus on 8 January 1943, the Jewish Standard, in an article headed 'NINE DAYS' WONDER?', declared: 'PUBLIC interest in the situation of the Jews in Eastern Europe has died down. The "Manchester Guardian" alone has continued to focus attention on the problem. In an editorial it expresses the expectation that the Government will announce some sort of plan when Parliament reassembles. Nevertheless it remains true, unfortunately that nothing definite has been done...!'

## Chapter 8

'You can't come in, but when you're  
dead, we'll punish your murderers!'

Caption to News Chronicle cartoon by Vicky, 29 January, 1943.

After the Declaration of 17 December the British Government felt impelled to begin the exploration of the possibility of rescuing Jews from Europe. Accordingly a Cabinet Committee on the Reception and Accommodation of Jewish refugees was created. However, the Government had not changed its position on the issue of rescue. For example, in its first meeting on 31 December, chaired by Eden, Herbert Morrison, the Home Secretary, declared that he could not agree to the entry of more than 1,000 to 2,000 refugees to Britain. In the course of a discussion on the reception of refugees from Spain the Colonial Secretary, Oliver Stanley, asserted that 'there could be no question of Palestine accepting Jews either direct from Spain or through North Africa...[adding] that there was already an acute Jewish problem in North Africa which was giving the Americans some concern.' He also suggested, in Bernard Wasserstein's words, 'that no distinction should be made between Jewish and non-Jewish refugees: the word "Jewish" was consequently deleted from the name of the committee!' At the Committee's second meeting of 7 January 1943, the Dominions Secretary, Clement Attlee, 'reported that Canada had already taken five hundred refugees and could take no more; Australia and New Zealand were too far away to offer refuge; South Africa had already given shelter to Jewish and non-Jewish children from Poland, and in addition was accommodating prisoners of war; as for Eire, she was unable to feed refugees without British help "which it would be undesirable to give".' The Committee agreed to approach the U.S.A. 'in order to try to resolve by joint action the particularly pressing refugee problem in Spain.'<sup>219</sup>

A memorandum was accordingly prepared which set out the British attitude to the refugee problem, and invited the United States to consider 'the expediency of a private and informal United Nations conference'. It began by enumerating 'certain complicating factors', the first of which, it asserted, was that the refugee problem was not wholly a Jewish problem. Indeed, it said, 'there are so many non-Jewish refugees and there is so much acute suffering among non-Jews in Allied countries that Allied criticism would probably result if any marked preference was shown in removing Jews from territories in enemy occupation.' Moreover, there was also the danger of stimulating anti-Semitism in areas where 'an excessive number of foreign Jews are

<sup>219</sup>Wasserstein, *op cit.*, p. 183-184.

introduced', and the danger of raising of raising false hopes among refugees by 'suggesting or announcing alternative possible destinations in excess of shipping probabilities.'<sup>220</sup> Wasserstein has commented:

In several respects the 'complicating factors' and reservations thus stressed at the outset by the British delimited the scope and nature of Anglo-American efforts to resolve the problem in the course of the following year. Most notable was the ready acceptance of the British Government that there was no prospect of any modification of American immigration quotas; implicit was the expectation that the American Government would be no less complaisant regarding immigration to Britain and to Palestine; 'for the convenience of the Department of State' a copy of the 1939 White Paper on Palestine was helpfully enclosed with the British memorandum.<sup>221</sup>

The British memorandum was sent to the State Department on 20 January, which did not reply until the end of February. In the meantime the Jewish organisations and the pro-rescue lobby in Parliament and elsewhere aimed to put pressure on the Government (through questions in the Commons and Lords, personal deputations to Ministers, public meetings, letters to the Press, and so on) to announce the early implementation of practical measures designed to rescue Jews from Nazi occupied Europe. This Parliamentary pressure successfully disturbed the Government. On 20 February, a month after the British memorandum had been sent to the Americans, Richard Law informed the American Embassy that 'the temper of the House of Commons is such that the Government will be unable to postpone beyond next week some reply to the persistent demands to know what it is doing to help the Jews.'<sup>222</sup> Two days later Anthony Eden told the Cabinet that 'it was becoming difficult to hold the Parliamentary position on the basis that we were engaged in international negotiations when in fact the United States Government had shown no readiness to discuss the matter.'<sup>223</sup>

However, the Press generally showed little inclination to cover the activities (in Parliament and elsewhere) of the pro-rescuers, especially the protest meetings of Jewish organisations, in any degree of detail. The pages of the Jewish Chronicle were full every week of reports of such meetings which were not reported by its national contemporaries; indeed, it is incredible that even in the wake of the unprecedented 17 December declaration such meetings were not considered news-worthy (and if not then when would they be?). Moreover, there was very little unanimity in the Press in what

<sup>220</sup>See *ibid.*, pp. 184-185.

<sup>221</sup>*ibid.*, p. 185.

<sup>222</sup>Matthews (London) to State Dept., Washington, 20 Feb. 1943, USNA 840.48 Refugees 3609. Quoted by Wasserstein, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

<sup>223</sup>Cabinet minutes, 22 Feb. 1943, PRO CAB 95/15. Quoted by Wasserstein, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

was reported; and each of the papers studied left serious gaps in their coverage of events. For instance, on 25 January the Archbishops of Canterbury, York and Wales issued a joint statement in support of the initiation of practical measures to rescue Jews. The Archbishops acknowledged that Hitler intended to 'exterminate the Jewish people in Europe, which means in effect the extermination of some 6,000,000 persons', and that the 'number of victims of this policy of cold-blooded extermination is already reckoned in hundreds of thousands of entirely innocent men, women, and children'. They declared that 'the sufferings of these millions of Jews and their condemnation, failing immediate rescue, to a cruel and certain death, constitute an appeal to humanity which it is impossible to resist. They believe it is the duty of civilised nations, whether neutral or allied, to exert themselves to the utmost possible extent to provide a sanctuary for these victims.' Accordingly, the Archbishops urged the British Government 'to give a lead to the world by declaring its readiness, in consultation with the Dominion Governments, to co-operate with the Governments of the united and neutral nations in finding an immediate refuge in territories within the British Empire as well as elsewhere for all persons threatened with massacre who can escape from Axis lands, or for those who have already escaped to neighbouring neutral countries and can make room for other fugitives to take their place.' While The Times printed the Archbishops' full statement in a 43 line article that same day, the Daily Herald (also on 25 January) printed a cursory 13 line article at the bottom of the third column on page three - next to a Kellogg's 'All Bran' advertisement proclaiming 'Constipation Relieved by a Food':

SANCTUARY PLEA  
FOR JEWS

The three archbishops, in the name of the whole Anglican episcopate, urge the British Government to provide an immediate refuge in the British Empire and elsewhere for all Jewish refugees from the Axis.

"The Bishops believe," says the manifesto, "that it is the duty of civilised nations, whether neutral or Allied, to exert themselves to the utmost possible extent to provide a sanctuary for these victims."

Even so, none of the other newspapers studied printed a report on the Archbishops' statement.

While The Times refrained from giving an indication of its own attitude on the issue of rescue (most of its reports were short, factual and without comment) it did at least open its correspondence columns to those who supported it. On 26 January, for instance, the paper printed a letter from Dr. J.S. Whale, Moderator of the Free Churches, who wrote to associate himself with the Archbishops' statement and 'to

express the hope that His Majesty's Government will speedily announce measures of practical assistance'. The paper also published a letter from Cardinal Hinsley, the Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, who announced that the Catholic Hierarchy in England and Wales 'most urgently' supported whatever 'could be done to save or help the victims of Nazi persecution', principally the Jews who were being 'singled out for extermination'. On 27 January The Times printed another letter, from the Chief Rabbi, Dr. J.H. Hertz, who thanked the Archbishops, Dr. Whale and Cardinal Hinsley for their support for 'immediate action towards the rescue of at least the refugees from Axis lands'. 'These appeals', he said, 'of Britain's religious leaders are in line with the unforgettable token of sympathy for the victims shown by the House when Mr. Anthony Eden made his historic declaration on December 17. But nearly six weeks have since elapsed, and nothing seems as yet to have been attempted in the actual task of human salvage.' He added that 'it would be most reassuring to all whose minds are numbed by the unparalleled horror of this situation were they to know that someone in the councils of Government is charged with the direction of this task of human salvage....May His Majesty's Government speedily announce measures of practical assistance to all those, whether adults or children, who have the possibility of escaping from the Nazi inferno.' On 1 February The Times printed a letter from a General of the Salvation Army, who 'heartily' endorsed 'the appeal of the Archbishops' and expressed his hope that 'the British Government...may find a way speedily to use its good offices in favour of these unfortunate people'. On 9 February the paper printed a hard-hitting letter from Hugh Lyon, of School House, Rugby. 'During the past weeks two urgent and desperate evils have been discussed in your columns and elsewhere; the persecution of the Jews in Poland and the starvation of children in the occupied countries. The facts are clearly established in both cases, and practical and sensible suggestions have been made, and supported by a great weight of authoritative opinion, for some small measure of alleviation. Yet in both cases all attempts to help have been resolutely prevented by the Government with reasons which are so inadequate as to be almost contemptible. To say that the admission of a tiny proportion of the Jewish children who can escape the pogrom into this country will encourage anti-Semitism is an insult to our humanity.' 'I can only hope,' he concluded, 'that the pressure of public opinion will be felt so speedily and in such volume that the Government will no longer dare to rest content with Clough's version of the sixth commandment:- Thou shalt not kill; but need'st not strive officiously to keep alive.'

On 13 February The Times printed a letter from the Bishop of Chelmsford. 'The worst cruelties,' he said, 'are reserved for the Jews, who are threatened with wholesale destruction accompanied by nauseating cruelties.' Recalling how Britain had



been saved from impending invasion in 1940, the Bishop asked: 'as an act of thanksgiving for deliverance should we not exert ourselves in every way possible to help these unhappy people, particularly their children, in their sore need? It is now several weeks since the House of Commons stood in dramatic silence to register its sympathy, but meanwhile the torture and murder of the Jews still go on. Something more practical than sympathy is surely called for.' This letter was followed by another on 16 February, signed by several personalities including Sir Wyndham Deedes, E.M. Forster, Harold Nicolson, George Bernard Shaw, Beatrice Webb and Lord Wedgwood. While expressing their appreciation of the 17 December Declaration they declared their belief that 'present action to mitigate this barbarism now is even more essential than the assurance of penalties after Hitler's defeat' for those who had persecuted the Jews. 'We suggest,' they continued, 'that the nation is eager to see the British Government take the lead in attempting to rescue as many as possible of these, the most helpless of Hitler's victims, as they were also the first'. They made several suggestions as to what the Government could do, and added: 'we do not feel that the Government and nation can stand helplessly by while a whole people is ruthlessly butchered. Verbal sympathy is not enough. We must be prepared, whatever the action of other people, to act with resolution in our historic tradition.'

Yet another letter was printed by The Times on 25 February. James Parkes, Robert Acland and Tom Wintringham, of the Common Wealth Party, began forcefully: 'Sir, - If the British Government is ever again to claim to speak in the name of humanity it is essential that it should make an unmistakable declaration that, with or without the co-operation of others, the British Empire is prepared to receive and succour every Jew of any age who can escape from Hitler's clutches to any British frontier or any port where a British ship can call.' They concluded by asserting that 'moral indignation is itself a form of hypocrisy unless it is translated into an organised determination to make those political changes which are necessary if their claims on behalf of humanity and morality are not perpetually to be ignored'.

Several similar letters, mostly from ordinary members of the general public, were also printed by the News Chronicle in its correspondence columns during January and February. On 8 February, for example, the paper printed a letter from Mrs. Maude F. Barker of Bromley, Kent, who declared that 'it is indeed horrifying to read of the agony of persecuted Jews, but no less horrifying to think that the British Government has apparently no intention of taking any action in the matter.' Heather Tanner, of Kington Langley, Wiltshire, said, in her letter printed on 1 February, that 'difficulties there may well be, but in so desperate and unparalleled a situation this is no excuse;

failure to make even an attempt to help would leave an ineradicable stain in a country calling itself Christian and famed for its liberality'. D. Spencer, of Yeovil, said in her letter of the same issue: 'What sense is there in calling Hitler a madman if we do not open our doors to those he is trying to torture and kill? Our behaviour is at present both mad and cruel. It may be only a few we save, but that is surely worth while.'

However, although the News Chronicle was no more assiduous than The Times in reporting the activities of pro-rescuers, its own attitude on this issue was much more clearly pronounced. One of its columnists, A.J. Cummings, declared on 12 January, that 'a small measure of practical assistance to these unfortunate people would be of more value than columns of official denunciation. There is nothing yet to show that threats of post-war punishment have slowed down the Nazi atrocities in Poland and elsewhere. The urgent task now is to get as many prospective victims as possible out of the clutches of the Nazi murder gangs.' On 29 January the paper printed a cartoon by Vicky in which a group of refugees, labelled 'THE HUNTED OF EUROPE,' stood before a cast iron door upon which were painted the words: ' "THIS STRONG CITY OF REFUGE" - MR. CHURCHILL, JULY 14, 1940.' They were imploring a civil servant behind the door to be allowed in, but he was refusing them entry. Underneath the cartoon was the caption: "'You can't come in, but when you're dead, we'll punish your murderers!'"

The paper further declared its pro-rescue sympathies when it printed a special feature article by Eleanor Rathbone on 17 February. The article extended for 185 lines and its large three-column headlines ran:

### *The Massacres Go On*

Rathbone thanked the Government for its announcement in the Commons on 4 February that it was prepared to allow 4,000 Jewish children and 500 accompanying adults from Bulgaria into Palestine.<sup>224</sup> That was good, she said, but it did not go nearly far or fast enough towards the rescue of several millions. 'Government spokesmen have repeatedly said, or implied, that consultation is proceeding with other United Nations about measures of rescue....But, judging from the lack of publicity and results, the method is probably for the appropriate Minister (when he has time for it) to say to the representatives of some Allied States: "If we did so-and-so what could you do?"' 'But,' she asked, 'is not example better than precept? There is no evidence so far of any

<sup>224</sup> Negotiations to secure the release of these Jews eventually broke down. See Wasserstein, pp. 180-181.

change in the Home Secretary's regulations under which visas are refused even to refugees with sons in our Armed Forces....One despairs when one reflects that the problem concerns at least four Ministers...thirty Allies and five or six neutrals. Where is the master-mind wholly devoted to this problem - able to plan, travel, negotiate as emissary of the United Nations? Where is the modern Nansen?" She concluded:

MEANTIME the hunted cower in their ghettos or hiding places, waiting for death by torture or starvation. Their agonised relatives besiege us with piteous inquiries. "Any hope of a visa, for this or any country? We have friends in X who are sure they could get our mother, son, sister out of Y if only they had promise of a visa."

...Hope against hope! Yet what hope is there for the survivors unless the Governments concerned show greater energy than during the past two months; unless they are willing to provide places of refuge, transport, money and food? The contribution hitherto made is almost negligible. Must it always be a case of "too little and too late"?

The Daily Herald's coverage of the activities of the pro-rescuers in January and February 1943 was almost non-existent; apart from the aforementioned article on the Archbishops' statement on 25 January, the paper only printed another two reports of 42 and 11 lines on 4 February and 27 February respectively. The first of these two articles reported without comment Oliver Stanley's announcement in the Commons of the Government's decision to permit the entry of Bulgarian children into Palestine; the second reported the Archbishop of Canterbury's intention to move the following motion in the House of Lords: 'The Archbishop of Canterbury is to move in the House of Lords - That, in view of the massacre and starvation of Jews and others in enemy and enemy-occupied countries, the House assures the Government of its fullest support for immediate measures to provide help and asylum to persons in danger of massacre who are able to leave.'

Nevertheless, the Herald possessed pro-rescue sympathies, and these it displayed when it printed a major feature article by Sir William Beveridge in its 8 February issue.<sup>225</sup> The bold headline to this 295 line article ran:

### How Can We Rescue the Doomed Jews?

Beveridge welcomed the 17 December Declaration as 'necessary and inevitable', but, he added, 'retribution must wait on victory, and the threat of retribution will not of itself save any lives or any pain in Germany or in lands now under German

<sup>225</sup>As we shall see Beveridge's article appeared first in the Observer on 7 February 1943.

rule. No one can be content, no one is content, with threatening retribution'. He encouraged each of the signatories to the Declaration to take positive steps to rescue the Jews. They should, he suggested, revise their regulations for the entry of refugees 'so as to ensure that these cannot throw back into German hands any Jew who is able to escape'. The knowledge that the doors of the free-lands were not closed would, he argued, encourage other Jews to attempt escape. The United Nations had to take energetic action to ensure that the doors of the neutral countries such as Spain or Switzerland remained open. These neutrals, he counselled, should be given a binding assurance that all refugees they received would be taken off their hands and permanently resettled elsewhere at the first opportunity, and that until that time they would be supported at the expense of the United Nations. The making of such an assurance, he said, 'would be just' because 'in one sense the whole war is a war about the Jewish problem. Hitler describes the war as started by Jewry to overcome the Aryan peoples....[For the Allies] To win the war and leave the problem of Jewry unsettled for the future would be to fail in one of the objects of victory'.

Beveridge acknowledged that these measures could only save 'a tiny fraction of all those now under threat of destruction'. Accordingly, 'with a view to saving lives, not by the hundred, but by the hundred thousand', he gave his support to Eleanor Rathbone's memorandum of 7 January 1943: 'JEWISH MASSACRES: THE CASE FOR AN OFFER TO HITLER.' 'The United Nations,' he said, 'through the Protecting Powers should ask Germany, in place of exterminating Jews, to set them free to leave Germany and lands under German control'.<sup>226</sup> If such a request was refused then Germany's record would be 'blackier still' in the eyes of the world. But what if the request was accepted? Beveridge unknowingly anticipated a major fear of the British Government:

*Hitler might think he saw an advantage in throwing a large mass of people upon the resources of the Allies to use their food and their transport;*

*In place of sending the inhabitants of the ghettos to slaughter-houses in Poland and Germany, he might send them in train-loads to the borders of neutral countries and leave them there to the responsibility of the United Nations;*

*He might use the Jews in this stage of the war as his armies used the civilian refugees of invaded countries to impede their opponents, as a weapon to stave off defeat.*

Nevertheless, he declared, 'is that a reason for not making the request?....Only by making such a request can the United Nations hope to save any large numbers of those otherwise doomed.' 'The refugee problem', he concluded, 'is a test both of the humanity

<sup>226</sup>Manchester Guardian Archives, Refugees Box, 223/5/119.

of all the United Nations and of their capacity as a Grand Alliance to make up their minds upon the problems for whose solution the Alliance exists, and in hopes of whose solution it fights.'

If the Herald's overall coverage during January and February might be described as 'almost non-existent' it was, even so, more comprehensive than the Daily Mail's! The Mail printed a single 18 line article in the middle of the fourth column of the back page of its 29 January issue. This reported that 'strong appeals to the Government to take immediate action to rescue or relieve Jews in danger of extermination in Nazi-occupied countries were made last night by an all-party deputation representing both Houses of Parliament'. It concluded by noting that motions were to be 'tabled in both the Commons and the Lords outlining what might be done. They will be drawn up next week by M.P.s and peers'.

The Daily Telegraph's coverage during January and February certainly paled before The Times' modest effort. Perhaps the most substantial article to appear in its pages during this period was in fact a letter from Sir Andrew McFadyen, General Secretary to the Reparation Commission 1922-24 and of the Dawes Committee 1925, which it printed in its correspondence columns on 6 January. Sir Andrew's hard-hitting letter was given the headline:

Exterminating  
The Jews

What Are United  
Nations Doing?

He bemoaned the United Nations' delay in announcing rescue measures: 'It is more than a fortnight since the United Nations made their joint Declaration defining their attitude towards the barbarous treatment meted out to the Jews in Occupied-Europe by the Nazis, culminating in the threat, which is already being put into execution, of wholesale massacre. The Declaration was preceded and followed by the publication in the press of some of the less revolting details of the appalling cruelties perpetrated against the defenceless victims. What, if anything, has since been done to implement the Declaration and to make it something more than an emotional outlet, a piece of lip service to the cause of humanity and justice?' He asked whether 'we [are] once again going to satisfy ourselves with unavailing protests?', and proceeded to attack Herbert Morrison for his refusal to allow 2000 Jewish children from Vichy France to enter Britain 'on the ground that it might cause an "outburst" of anti-Semitism here'. 'That,' he said, 'is a slander on the British people.' Sir Andrew asserted that 'by following a

liberal policy and by offering through the protecting Power to receive or share responsibility for all whom the Germans can be persuaded to release, or who can manage to escape to neutral countries, we can still hope to save a remnant of the Jews in Europe.' He cautioned in conclusion that 'if, for any consideration whatever, we fail to do all we can we shall not escape the reproach with which the priest and the Levite were branded'.<sup>227</sup>

The only other letter on this subject to appear in the correspondence columns of the Telegraph was printed on 8 February. The Mayor of Chester, Anglican Bishop and Dean of Chester, President of the Chester Free Church Council, and Canon of St. Werburgh's Roman Catholic Church in Chester, wrote to associate themselves 'with the appeal to the British Government to find a sanctuary for the Jews, recently made by the Anglican Episcopate.' However, the paper gave no indication of any pro-rescue sympathies of its own in its articles, which were few, short and without comment - suggesting, on the contrary, indifference. On 29 January, for instance, the paper briefly reported, in an eleven line article, that 'a deputation of peers and M.P.s led by Mr. Arthur Greenwood, saw Mr. Attlee and other Ministers yesterday to urge the Government to relieve the persecuted Jews of occupied Europe.'<sup>228</sup> The deputation, it concluded, 'asked the Government to try to arrange for these Jews to be given asylum in the United Kingdom and the Empire overseas. The matter will be raised in debate'. This article was, in fact, the last in that edition; it was printed at the bottom of the last column on its back page (6) next to the crossword puzzle and various advertisements. Similarly, the first news of the discovery by Soviet troops of the massacre by the Nazis of 14,000 Jews and the starvation of tens of thousands of non-Jews in Kharkov received 15 lines in the middle of the third column on page six on 25 February; the article just below it headed 'Army Week on The Radio,' and the one above it headed 'Board Officials for War Firms - M.P.s Oppose Order' received the same amount of space.<sup>229</sup>

Of the Sunday papers studied both the Observer and The People clearly aligned themselves with the pro-rescuers. On 10 January, for instance, the Observer reported that the Government had permitted 5,000 Italian citizens to be removed from Abyssinia to Italy and asked why 'this permission [was] given without insisting on the release of Jews in at least similar numbers who wish to leave Axis countries? The appalling slaughter of Jewry continues, and the British official policy of protest and of threatened

<sup>227</sup>That is, passing by on-the-other-side from a Jew who had been attacked and left half-dead.

<sup>228</sup>The article was headed: 'GIVE JEWS ASYLUM.'

<sup>229</sup>However, eye-witness reports of these events were printed in much more detail by the Telegraph and many of the other newspapers at the beginning of March.

punishment remains ineffective....The thing is to get people out of the fires of hell; announcing future penalties for the stokers is not saving lives now.' Furthermore, as has been noted, on 7 February the paper printed Sir William Beveridge's article under the headline: 'THE MASSACRE OF THE JEWS.' On 17 January, Hannen Swaffer, in The People, asked: 'quite, frankly, are we fit for a New Social Order? Are we worthy? I doubt it.' He explained how, on 28 October 1942, an influential body of clerics, politicians from all parties and organisers from many relief organisations had met with Home Office officials to plead the cause of Jewish children destined for deportation from unoccupied France to Eastern Europe.

They made a modest appeal. While 5,000,000 Jews in Europe are on the verge of extermination, they asked for visas for a *maximum* of 2,000 Jewish children in hourly peril of deportation, stripped of all names and identification, from unoccupied France to Germany.

There was little hope, indeed, of getting them out. But these Christian leaders and social reformers hoped against hope. Yet - would you believe it? - the humane plea was turned down!

#### WHAT OUR SOLDIERS DO

ONLY a limited "category" - those with a close relation in this country - could be allowed in! That would bar all but 250 at the most!

"Granting the other visas," the deputation was told, "would cause anti-Semitism in the country. Besides, the more we help the more Hitler may torture."

Now it is too late! The little children have disappeared.

Soon after the United Nations issued a united "protest." What is the use of words?

Besides, if the saving of poor little children, whatever their race or creed or colour, will cause racial hatred in a so-called Christian land, the people who would spread it deserve to lose the war!

"Bill" Astor, I am told...tells friends how in the Middle East, where he has spent three years, our soldiers are feeding Greek refugee children from their own rations.

What would they think of our Home Office's rigid departmentalism in the face of untold suffering?

Here we are, asking the republics of South America to throw open their doors to Jews who may escape the Hell of Europe - and we bar our own gates!

Pro-rescue sentiment may be detected behind The People's forceful headline to its article of 24 January which printed the full text of the three Archbishops' statement:

#### "SAVE JEWS NOW!" - BISHOPS

Empire Refuge From  
Hitler's Hate

Throughout January and February the paper continued to print feature articles which highlighted the abominable situation of the Jews of Europe. On 10 January Piers

England told the story of how a German couple came to Warsaw and took up residence in a house previously owned by a old Jewish couple. On 17 January Piers England, in "YOU WILL HAVE WON THE WAR!", so as to emphasise the devastating effect which the Nazis and the war had had upon Europe's children, told the story of a German-Jewish couple, who, unable to have a child of their own, adopted a non-Jewish baby. When the Nazis came to power, he said, the child, by then nearly ten years old, was taken from them and placed with an 'Aryan' family - they did not see him again. The couple were chased out of Germany and sought refuge in Austria. However, when the Nazis marched into Austria in 1938 they recognised their own child - now a Nazi officer - orchestrating the persecution of Jews in Vienna.

On 7 February, The People printed a special feature article, by Willi Frischauer, which focused on Otto Globocnik, 'Gauleiter of Lublin. Hitler's master killer and scourge of Jewry. This is the creature who has reduced mass murder to a science'; it was boldly headed:

### HITLER'S MASTER KILLER

Frischauer presented Globocnik, in this early attempt to rationalise the Holocaust, as a sadistic bureaucrat; he clearly perceived that the successful implementation of Hitler's plan to exterminate European Jewry depended on the enthusiastic participation of civil servants and officials:

Globocnik himself sits at the huge mahogany desk with a rather bored expression on his plain face. But a flicker brightens his shifty eyes as one of his aides enters and reports the arrival of another train-load of Poles and Jews - sent to Lublin from other parts of Poland.

It means work for Globocnik....To get rid of the thousands, millions of hapless human beings who are sent to his district demands the mind of a scientific killer, of a man able to organise mass-murder.

And no other man in history has so much blood on his hands. Globocnik is already the murderer of millions. [At this point Frischauer dwelt on Globocnik's drink-related problems which had caused him to fall from Hitler's grace]....But Hitler soon decided that he would need Globocnik again. He had made a promise to wipe out the Jews from Poland, to exterminate all Poles who lived in the districts incorporated in the German Reich.

Globocnik has a definite suggestion to make on how to get rid of these wretches: "If you send me 300,000 of them I shall want food rations for 60,000 only," he said with a significant smile.

For over a year now trains have been pouring into Lublin.

They are cattle trucks, each loaded with a hundred victims. Globocnik rarely fails to be present when they arrive at their destination at Lublin. He likes to watch his orders being carried out rigorously.



CALLOUS AND  
CALCULATING

His friends say that he still drinks, but he has cut down his alcoholic consumption because his new job stimulates him even more than spirits. Visitors have seen him scribbling figures on big pads. All the time Globocnik counts and counts.

To him it is just a mathematical calculation. He figures that he can murder twenty thousand within a month and his grave diggers can still keep up with the job...

Two weeks later, on 21 February, Piers England spoke once again on the fate of the Jews of Europe. His purpose was to chastise those people who refused to accept the reality of the war and its horrors. He told how he had been exhausted by too much work and so a friend encouraged him to relax with an evening out. He went to a nightclub/restaurant and had a shocking experience. He drew a picture of inordinate waste. The people there, he said, had probably never done an honest day of work in their lives and were certainly not helping the war effort. In a split second his mind wandered:

I SAW before me, like a vision of hell seen through the smoke of a profiteer's cigar, an unendurably mournful desolation. It was in Poland. There was a railway siding by an interminable line, in a landscape that seemed endless and infinitely dreary under a skin of greyish snow.

The train was coming. It slowed down with a melancholy shrieking of brakes. It stopped. It was a grim and ugly train of cattle-trucks.

Some soldiers appeared, "good Nazi soldiers." Then the big truck doors rolled open. Something that looked, at first, like a cartload of rubble tumbled out.

But it was a mixed collection of living and dead Jews. They had been packed to suffocation. Half of them had died on the way. The survivors were half-mad with misery and helplessness.

A German officer looked at his watch. He yelled an order to hurry. The soldiers closed in, herded the Jews away from the line to a place where a pit was dug.

Then they bayoneted them and pushed them into the grave....It had all happened in two or three minutes. And the train went on, and the smoke blew back....

And it was cigar-smoke and I was again looking, like a man who is unable to believe his eyes, at the people in the Sucking Pig Dining Club.

Piers England's 'vision' is particularly interesting in that it complemented Frischauer's picture of the sadistic bureaucrat; it touched on that other ingredient which was essential to the successful implementation of the Final Solution - the 'good Nazi soldier' who carried out his orders regardless of his personal feelings.

The News of the World's coverage during January and February lay in stark contrast to that of its great rival - The People. The News of the World, as ever, displayed a complete indifference to the subject of the extermination of European Jewry. Its meagre comments on this subject were confined to the following two

articles, both printed on 28 February. Of a 56 line Reuter report on the massacres in Kharkov, which it printed in the middle of the eighth column on its front page, only a few lines referred to the fate of the Jews' in this city: 'According to Dr. Alexander Butrin, 15,000 Jews were butchered by German machine-gunners and their barracks burned to the ground.' The People, however, on that same day, printed a much more detailed 90 line version of the same Reuter message; its comments on the fate of the Jews were also more detailed:

"By the third day of occupation the Germans had hanged bodies from every building for a mile along the main street."

Mrs. Pukalova also told me something of the ghastly treatment meted out to Jews, of whom there were a large number in Kharkov.

"I watched tens of thousands of Jews march by when the Germans ordered them to assemble in barracks ten miles outside the town," she said.

*"They went past in families, dragging their few belongings on sledges or pushcarts, and I saw terror in their eyes."*

"According to Dr. Alexander Butrin, 15,000 Jews were butchered by German machine-gunners and their barracks burned to the ground."

In its other article which mentioned the Jews, the News of the World reported on the issue of the 'latest and most complete record of Europe's reign of terror' - a report by the Inter-Allied Information Committee - which showed that 'the "New Order" has brought death to well over 3,250,000 persons'. This extensive 127 line article mainly consisted of a breakdown, country by country, of the figures of dead enumerated in the report. Even so the Jews were mentioned in only two cases:

...Netherlands. - 200 executed and 2,000 taken as hostages up to June, 1942. Eight thousand more sent to concentration camps, of whom 2,000 have died. Sixty thousand Dutch Jews also in captivity.

...POLAND. - Number of Poles executed, or who have died in concentration camps, totals about 2,500,000, including 1,000,000 Jews...

Whereas The People endeavoured to communicate the enormity and horror of the massacre of European Jewry by *humanising* its victims and presenting testimony after testimony of personal suffering, the News of the World unwittingly reduced them to a meaningless *statistic*. And as Arthur Koestler said in 1944: 'a dog run over by a car upsets our emotional balance and digestion; 3,000,000 Jews killed in Poland cause but a moderate uneasiness. Statistics don't bleed; it is the details which counts. We are unable to embrace the total process with our awareness, we can only focus on little lumps of reality.'<sup>230</sup>

<sup>230</sup>Koestler A., The Yogi and the Commissar, (London, 1945), p. 97. Quoted by Richard Bolchover, British Jewry and the Holocaust, (Cambridge, 1993), p. 14.

## Chapter 9

### 'How not to hold a conference on refugees'

News Chronicle, 26 April 1943.

The American reply to the British Government's memorandum arrived at the Foreign Office at the end of February. Bernard Wasserstein reports that 'it dwelt at length on what the United States had already done for refugees'. The Americans 'suggested that existing machinery was adequate to tackle the refugee problem', but 'acceded to the British suggestion of a meeting to consider further action', proposing that an Anglo-American conference be convened at Ottawa for 'a preliminary exploration of the problem'.<sup>231</sup> Significantly, the U.S. Government concurred with the British that 'the refugee problem should not be considered as being confined to persons of any particular race or faith.' The British and U.S. Governments had turned their backs on the Joint Allied Declaration's specific recognition of crimes against the Jews; thus the Declaration had turned out to be an aberration rather than a precedent. Henceforth British Government spokesmen referred to the plight of the 'refugees' in Europe, subtly increasing the numbers of those victims of Nazism who needed immediate rescue (thus making it impossible), and once again relegating Jewish suffering to a point of parity with that of other European peoples. This process of denial reached its zenith with the Bermuda Conference on Refugees at the end of April, and as we shall see, the British Press was almost completely taken in by it - once again Hamlet was performed without the Prince.

The State Department released the text of its reply to the U.S. Press, thereby giving the impression that the original initiative in the negotiations had come from the U.S. Government. The U.S. note received wide publicity in the U.S. Press and was reported by most of the British newspapers via Reuter on 4 March. The Times' 11 line report, for instance, was printed at the bottom of the third column of its main inside news page (4) - a rare occurrence. Its headlines stressed the plight of 'political refugees':

#### PROPOSED CONFERENCE ON POLITICAL REFUGEES

WASHINGTON, March 3. - The United States has proposed in a note to Great Britain that an Anglo-American conference be held in Ottawa to discuss plans to

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<sup>231</sup>Wasserstein, *op. cit.*, p. 187; Gilbert Auschwitz and the Allies, p. 125.

alleviate the plight of political refugees and persecuted peoples. Mr. Sumner Welles, Assistant Secretary of State, announced this in making public to-day the text of a note sent to the British Government by Mr. Cordell Hull on February 25, setting out the measures already taken by the United States and suggesting a course of future international action. - Reuter.

The Daily Mail, in 'Anglo-U.S. Talks to Aid Jews', printed this news at the bottom of the fourth column on its front page; it slightly paraphrased the Reuter cable, reducing its length, but, nevertheless the essential point was made that the 'United States Government has proposed an Anglo-American conference in Ottawa to discuss plans to alleviate the plight of political refugees and persecuted peoples'. The Daily Herald also printed its version of the Reuter cable on its front page. The article, placed at the bottom of the fifth column, was headed 'U.S. WILL JOIN IN AID FOR JEWS', and extended for 20 lines. It was the News Chronicle, however, that gave the most space and prominence to this news. Its article, printed at the bottom of the first column on its front page, was 33 lines long and was headed: 'U.S. WILL AID EUROPE'S JEWS'. The News Chronicle's Washington correspondent specifically mentioned the Jews, whereas the Reuter report had referred only to 'political refugees and persecuted peoples'. 'The U.S.,' he said, 'in a note to Britain, has given an assurance of the willingness to take part in consultations for the immediate sufferings of the Jews in Europe.' He also noted details not included in the Reuter report:

Mr. Sumner Welles, Under-Secretary of State, made this announcement to correspondents here today, adding that fresh steps will now be taken to supplement existing plans. Mr. Welles was asked what stand the U.S. Government was taking upon the 11-point programme drawn up this week by the American Jewish Congress in New York.

The programme includes proposals for neutral intercession, for the release and emigration of Jews under Hitler's control, the establishment of sanctuaries, relaxation of U.S., British and South American immigration laws, the reopening of Palestine to Jewish immigration, provision of United Nations' financial guarantees and resources to bring the persecutors to justice.

Mr. Welles said all points in this document will receive immediate consideration.

The British Government was disconcerted by the publication of the American note and Sir Ronald Campbell, of the British Embassy in Washington, and Sumner Welles clashed on this issue during a telephone conversation. Consequently, the British Government took immediate steps to rectify the damage done to its image by issuing a statement to the British Press which appeared in a number of papers on 5 March. By far the most detailed article was printed by The Times; here the Government certainly won a propaganda victory, for whereas the original 'offending' article on the U.S. note had been accorded 11 lines and placed at the bottom of column three on page four, the British Government's statement was positioned at the top of column five on page three

and apportioned 117 lines. Once again The Times' headlines spoke of 'refugees' and not of Jews:

REFUGEES FROM  
THE NAZIS  
—  
BRITISH PROPOSAL TO  
AMERICA  
—  
NEED OF JOINT ACTION

It is easy to detect the official inspiration in Iverach McDonald's article which stressed throughout the British Government's deep concern and initiative in the area of rescue. 'The British Government's suggestion', he began, 'for more comprehensive handling of the difficult and heartrending problem of refugees from countries overrun by the Germans have been carried a stage farther.' 'It was on January 20 last', he continued, 'that the Government urged in an aide-memoire to the United States Government that the matter should now be dealt with "internationally instead as of hitherto by charity or by individual governments in isolation." The United States Government, replying in a Note on February 25, expressed sympathy, and suggested that British and United States representatives might meet in Ottawa for a preliminary survey. The American Note is now under consideration in London.' McDonald also included detailed summaries of the original British Note of 20 January and the U.S. reply of 25 February.

The Daily Mail's 21 line article was much shorter and less prominently placed than The Times', but it too spoke throughout of the plight of 'refugees', as exemplified by its headline: 'Refugee Talk Planned.' The Daily Herald's 26 line article was printed at the top of the second column of its back page. It noted that 'preparations are well advanced for an Anglo-American conference - in Ottawa or elsewhere - on plans to alleviate the plight of *refugees* from Europe.' It added that 'the initiative was taken in January by the British Government, which sent a memorandum to Washington suggesting that the problem of *religious, racial and political refugees* ought to be handled internationally instead of, as at present, by individual Governments or by private organisations.'<sup>232</sup> The Observer and The People also carried the report on 7 March. The Observer's 40 line article was printed in the middle of the fifth column on its front page. Here too the term 'refugees' was used exclusively throughout as did The People's 12 line article, headed 'REFUGEE PROBLEMS', which was placed in the middle of column six on page eight.

<sup>232</sup>My italics.

Only The Times reported, on Monday, 8 March, that the British Government had officially 'accepted the proposal for a preliminary Anglo-American discussion of the reception and care of refugees from Axis-occupied countries'. Its author, Iverach McDonald once again stressed that the original initiative for this measure had come from the British Government. 'No decision', he concluded, 'has yet been taken on the place of meeting, nor has the British delegation been chosen. These details are to be expected soon.'

While, in the meantime, pro-rescuers attempted to keep pressure exerted on the British Government, their activities received very patchy coverage in the Press. On 2 March The Times printed a letter by Professor A.V. Hill, M.P., who attacked the arguments of those who counselled against Britain taking in Jewish refugees for fear of being 'flooded'. 'The number, in fact,' he said, 'who will be able to get away is bound to be pitifully small....Those who imagine that an extra 0.02 per cent. (10,000), for example, will affect us must have a very poor idea of our national stability.' 'Too many words indeed are wasted', he lamented. 'Let us be reasonable....If we stop wasting words about it there will not be a Jewish problem at all; only a number of unhappy people whom we have the duty, and the privilege of trying to save.' On 9 and 11 March respectively, the Daily Herald and The Times reported that the heads of several Australian churches had demanded that parts of Australia be set aside for the settlement of Jewish refugees. Whereas The Times printed its 14 line article at the bottom of column five on page three, the Daily Herald printed its shorter 11 line article in a relatively more prominent position at the bottom of column three on its front page. On 9 March, the News Chronicle printed an eight line article, 'Sanctuary for Jews' Plea', in the middle of column five on page three, in which it reported that a resolution 'urging the Government to grant temporary asylum in territories under British control - including Palestine - to Jewish refugees from Nazi persecution' had been passed at a meeting organised by the Birmingham Liberal Association. Three days later, on 12 March, only the News Chronicle reported the details of significant questions that had been put to Herbert Morrison in the House of Commons on the issue of the entry of refugees into Britain. Its report was placed at the top of the eighth column on page three, extended for 56 lines, and was entitled: 'PLEA FOR REVISION OF VISA RULES.' Replying to questions from Eleanor Rathbone, Morrison had insisted 'it was not possible to issue a visa for a journey to this country to a person still in enemy-occupied territory', and that 'in deciding whether aliens who had escaped into neutral territory should be allowed to come here the general practice...was to give priority to those wishing to join one of the Allied forces or otherwise assist actively in the Allied war effort, whose applications for visas had been vouched for by their national

representatives in the country where they were'. The paper noted that 'Miss Rathbone was not satisfied with the reply, and said she would raise the matter again unless something was done.'

Indeed, Morrison's replies provoked the News Chronicle, which professed pro-rescue sympathies, to take up Professor Hill's theme of 'too many words' in an editorial on page two headed: 'Words Save Nobody.' 'Twelve weeks have elapsed', it lamented, 'since Mr. Eden read to the Commons the Declaration of the United Nations condemning Hitler's wholesale extermination of the Jews.' It remembered how the 'whole House' had risen in 'silence in support of this protest against barbarism, but', it added, 'what have we done towards implementing our brave words? Nothing.' 'The answers which Mr. Morrison gave yesterday to questions by Mr. T.E. Harvey and Miss Rathbone suggest that the Government's attitude is one of sheer inaction', it fumed. 'Meanwhile, the slaughter of the Jews goes on. Professor A.V. Hill estimates - in a recent letter to the "Times" - that Hitler's toll of victims averages 14,000 a day.' It concluded in forceful tone:

Sanctuary on any terms would be better than certain death. Such quibbles as Morrison puts forward are repugnant to the conscience of humanity. Does not Parliament care enough for its good name to do everything possible to give practical effect to its resolutions of sympathy?

Hannen Swaffer, in The People, on Sunday, 14 March, concurred with the News Chronicle's analysis: 'despite the repeated plea of Eleanor Rathbone in the House, the authorities here still refuse to grant visas to Jews who may be able to escape from the enslaved lands into neutral countries and who wish to join our forces. While the heads of all the Christian communities in Britain urge that everything possible should be done to encourage Jews to escape from Hitler's clutches, Whitehall's delays and "explanations" still make it almost impossible! In this hour of the most terrible of all Jewish tragedies, it is Christendom and not Jewry that is on its trial.'

The News Chronicle further vented its spleen against the Home Secretary on 16 March, by printing an eighty line article by Eleanor Rathbone which covered two columns on page two, entitled: 'Miss Rathbone Answers Herbert Morrison'. Eleanor Rathbone praised the News Chronicle for its editorial of 12 March, declaring: 'You rightly criticised Mr. Morrison's evasive replies to my question last Thursday concerning the admission of alien refugees to this country.' She added that 'though he is evidently unwilling to say so plainly, the present conditions for the granting of a visa to such refugees are, first, that the refugees must already have left enemy-controlled territory; secondly, that the refugee is a person - or the wife or child of a person - who

is wanted for our own or the Allied Armed Forces or for other important war work, i.e., utility is the sole test; pity for the refugee or his family does not enter into it'. She continued: 'Considering the frightful scale and character of the continuing massacres, the great volume of public support for generous measures of rescue, the offers of hospitality and money which keep pouring in, could not our Government give a lead to the world by at least opening our doors to the relatively small numbers for whom this country is the most accessible place of refuge?' 'Suppose the Germans invade Spain', she warned in conclusion, 'and there is a repetition of what happened in France - the deportation of thousands for death by torture or starvation - will Mr. Morrison and his colleagues be without responsibility?'<sup>233</sup>

On 14 March, at a protest meeting in Leeds, the Archbishop of York, Dr. C.F. Garbett, made a special appeal to the British Government and Allies to save Jews from Europe. His speech was reported on the next day by the Daily Telegraph, Daily Mail, The Times and Daily Herald. The Daily Telegraph placed its 62 line report at the top of the third column on page three. It was headed:

"PUNISH WAR  
CRIMINALS"

ARCHBISHOP'S PLEA  
FOR JEW REFUGEES

The Archbishop had denounced Nazi oppression and brutality, it said, and had asked 'for the broadcasting of the Allies' determination to punish in the hope that it may stay the hands of at any rate some of the criminals. Fear is sometimes effective when mercy makes no appeal'. 'The persecution of the Jews', he had added, 'is unique in its horror. They are doomed without trial, without crime, without possibility of defence. They are condemned to death to satisfy the blood lust of a cruel and wicked megalomaniac who, by fraud and violence, now holds the greater part of Europe in his grasp.' Under the sub-heading 'EUROPE'S SLAUGHTER-HOUSE', the paper continued: 'The sentence was being executed with speed and the utmost savagery by starvation, exportation in "trains of death," wholesale massacre by shooting and poison-gas. Poland has been made the slaughter-house of Europe. Women and children are included in the massacre.' Then, in conclusion, the paper reported that the Archbishop had made suggestions as to what could be done to 'counter this German "blood bath" ':

<sup>233</sup>In a letter to W.P. Crozier, 12 March 1943, Rathbone said: 'Almost nothing has actually been done to rescue victims....The Home Secretary's attitude, as shown by his replies to my parliamentary questions last Thursday, is as hard-fisted as ever and his replies were, in fact, really disingenuous; designed to disguise the fact of how extremely rigid his regulations actually are.' Rathbone to Crozier, 12 March 1943, Manchester Guardian Archives, Refugees Box, 223/5/205



- (1) Let the German people know what is being done in their name.
  - (2) Let the German people be told repeatedly that sure retribution awaits the master criminals who have ordered these horrors, and their brutal underlings who are carrying them out.
  - (3) Make it plain that refugees from this horror can find a refuge wherever the British flag flies, for the period of terror.
  - (4) Support the Government in efforts, with other Allied Powers and the neutrals, to help the Jews now in danger and to provide succour for their refugees.
- "We must do all we can in the name of Christianity and humanity to save at least a remnant from these foul murderers. Victory is the only sure road to their deliverance."

The Daily Mail's 70 line article was no less detailed but more prominently placed than the Telegraph's - at the top of the first column on page three. It was similarly entitled:

'WE MUST  
PUNISH  
KILLERS'

Warn Nazis, says  
Archbishop

'On the persecution of the Jews', the Mail reported, 'Dr. C.F. Garbett said: "It is a deliberate policy of extermination directed against not a nation but a whole race. This is a horror unprecedented in the whole history of the world; it is a blood-bath on a gigantic scale, to which no parallel can be found. Every law of mercy and pity, every instinct of humanity are outraged by this appalling massacre which continues without respite." ' Under the sub-heading ' "Give Them Refuge" ', the Mail printed the Archbishop's four points in almost exactly the same wording as the Telegraph.

At 26 and 34 lines respectively, The Times and Daily Herald's articles were much shorter than the Telegraph and Mail's; they were, moreover, placed less conspicuously than the other two papers. The Times placed its article at the bottom of the fourth column on page two, while the Daily Herald positioned its article in the middle of the fourth column on page three. Both these articles were solely summaries of the Archbishop's four points, and this was reflected in their headlines. The Daily Herald's article was entitled: 'FOUR WAYS TO AID JEWS', whilst The Times ran:

RETRIBUTION FOR NAZI  
CRIMINALS  
ARCHBISHOP'S FOUR-FOLD  
POLICY

The News Chronicle again showed itself to be the most openly pro-rescue of the daily Press when, on 17 March, it printed an editorial to mark the occasion of Eden's visit (for talks) to the United States, headed: 'Eden in Washington'. In its last paragraph it declared:

One other subject of the utmost urgency is the projected Ottawa conference on the refugee problem. Every day, in Nazi-occupied Europe, thousands of innocent persons are being done to death whom a concerted effort might do something to save.

There are many difficulties to be overcome - transport; food supplies; the provision of passports and visas - to say nothing of the initial difficulty of getting refugees across the frontiers. But, whatever the inconvenience involved, the plight of these victims of Nazis savagery lays upon us obligations which our conscience dare not reject. It is to be hoped that Mr. Eden will press for swift and united action.

The next day, the paper printed a cartoon by Vicky which showed row after row of graves. In the foreground stood a dark-cloaked figure, labelled 'HUMANITY', with his/her back turned toward the graves, and eyes covered. The caption underneath ran: ' "We are not opposed to the creation of a Jewish State....But the solution may be carried out by humanitarian methods." - GOEBBELS.' Was 'HUMANITY' weeping or deliberately closing his/her eyes to the slaughter? Berl Locker, of the Jewish Agency, would probably have chosen the latter interpretation. The Times printed the following letter from him on 19 March:

Sir, - I have to-day received from Jerusalem the following cable from Mr. Isaac Gruenbaum, once the most prominent Jewish member of the Polish Diet, and now on the executive of the Jewish Agency for Palestine: - "Received horrifying report recurrence massacres in Poland. Immediate action necessary. Sacred duty save what still possible. Only a few days remaining."

May I remind you that the first authentic news concerning the mass-extirmination of Jews in Poland by the Nazis reached this country early last November? On December 17 the House of Commons stood in silence. Apart from exchanges of diplomatic notes, up to now no action has followed. The sands are running out.

Indeed they were; but that very same day, only the Daily Telegraph and Daily Mail printed reports that the Germans were about to begin the final liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto. Neither the Telegraph or Mail gave much attention to the news. The Telegraph printed its fifteen line article, 'WARSAW GHETTO PLEA TO ALLIES', at the bottom of the fifth column on page five. Its article was printed directly above an advertisement for 'WEETABIX' cereal; an article next to it, headed 'RECORD FARM STOCK PRICES - 1,200 GNS FOR BULL', received 29 lines; the article directly above it, headed 'NEW STATUS OF NURSES - PUBLIC BENEFITS UNDER BILL', was three times larger. The text of the article read:

A plea from the occupants of the Warsaw Ghetto has reached the Jewish Labour representative on the Polish National Council in London, Mr. Zygielbojm. This plea states that the Germans intend to empty the Warsaw Ghetto and close it before the spring.

It adds: "You must petition the Pope to intervene officially and ask the Allies to treat German prisoners of war as hostages for our safety. Only 200,000 of us remain and we are threatened with annihilation."

The Mail's 21 line article, entitled 'WARSAW JEWS CRY FOR AID', was also printed in an inconspicuous position at the bottom of the fifth column on its back page; in fact, part of these 21 lines were taken up with reporting the imposition of further anti-Semitic decrees in Vichy France. Both the Telegraph and Mail had reduced the size of their reports on the cable to a bare minimum; however, the Jewish Chronicle printed a much fuller report of this cable on 26 March:

A few days ago an S.O.S. was received in London from the Warsaw ghetto dated February 7: "The liquidation of the ghetto by the Germans is being speeded up," it said. "It is intended to empty the ghetto altogether and to remove the remnants of the Jewish population by the middle of February. The methods used are brutal and inhuman. Here and there, the Jews have been trying to oppose the German intruders. When the German police proceeded to the forcible evacuation of a large block of densely populated houses, a struggle developed. Fifty Germans were killed. In reply the German police brought up machine-guns and several hundred Jews were murdered on the spot... The slaughter continued for three days, until the whole block was evacuated.

"Only 200,000 Left in Poland"

"A similar extermination," it added, "is going on all over Poland. You must rouse the whole world to action. Petition the Pope to intervene officially, and ask the Allies to treat German prisoners of war as hostages for our safety. Only 200,000 of us remain and we are threatened with annihilation. Our sufferings are appalling. You must save us, otherwise history will hold you responsible for our fate."

In the meantime, the pro-rescuers tried to keep pressure on the Government. A conference of representatives from each of the main political parties sent a cable to Eden in Washington; the text of their message was reported by the News Chronicle, Daily Telegraph and Daily Mail, on 23 March. Neither of these papers, however, gave the news much prominence. The Daily Telegraph printed its 21 line article in the middle of the seventh column on page five. It was entitled:

"BOLD MEASURES  
TO SAVE JEWS"

CABLE TO MR. EDEN

'A cable calling for "immediate and bold measures" for the rescue of Jews', it said, 'has been sent to Mr. Eden in Washington for the forthcoming Anglo-American conference on the massacre of Jews and others by the Nazis.' It added:

"We assure you of the fullest support of public opinion in this country for treating the problem as one of extreme urgency," it states.

"British conscience is so deeply stirred that the country is prepared for any sacrifice consistent with not delaying victory."

The message is signed by religious leaders, including the Primate and the Archbishop of York, peers and M.P.s, mayors, scientists, heads of colleges, trade union leaders, writers, musicians, actors and educationalists.

The article next to this, entitled 'WINES 6 TIMES PRE-WAR PRICE - CLARET AT £6 9s A BOTTLE', was three times larger. Both the News Chronicle and Daily Herald printed their reports of 20 and 24 lines respectively (with very little difference in their content) on their back pages - the News Chronicle in the middle of the sixth column, and the Herald in the middle of its first column.

However, the News Chronicle excelled itself on the next day, 24 March, when, of all the papers studied, it gave the most prominence to reporting the proceedings of a House of Lords debate on the possibility of rescue which had taken place on the previous day. Its 214 line article, covering three columns, formed the leader on page three. The paper's pro-rescue sympathies can be clearly perceived in its dramatic three-column headline:

DR. TEMPLE: WE STAND AT BAR  
OF HISTORY AND OF GOD  
Primate Outlines Plan To Aid Hitler's Victims

The paper began by elucidating its headlines. 'The Archbishop of Canterbury,' it said, 'after appealing to the Government in the Lords yesterday for more practical help for Hitler's victims, said to a hushed House: "We are standing at the bar of history, of humanity and of God." ' He had just moved a resolution, the paper reported, that:

In view of the massacres and starvation of Jews and others in enemy and enemy-occupied countries, the House of Lords desired to assure the Government of its fullest support for immediate measures, of the largest and most generous scale compatible with the requirements of military operations and security, for providing help and temporary asylum to persons in danger of massacre who are able to leave enemy and enemy-occupied countries.

The Archbishop had reiterated the awful truth that 'Hitler was now carrying out the threat that he made at the beginning of the war - that the war would lead to the extermination of either the Germans or the Jews, and it would not be the Germans.' In

view of this, the paper continued, the Archbishop had appealed that, although 'what we could do as it was could be little in comparison with the need', it would, nevertheless, 'whether what we do be much or little, it shall be at least all we can'. Under the sub-heading ' "REVISE VISA PLAN"', the paper reported how the Archbishop had criticised the British Government's slowness and rigidity in pursuing practical measures of relief for refugees. 'Some of the arguments hitherto advanced as justifying comparative inaction,' he had said, 'seem disproportionate to the scale of the evil.' He had urged a revision of the scheme of visas for entry into Britain, and had cited cases where there seemed to be an undue refusal of visas such as 'a Jewish couple who escaped into Spain where they were interned. Their four sons were in our armed forces and able and willing to maintain them. Visas were refused to them'.

The Archbishop had also, the paper reported, made further suggestions for the rescue of refugees. First of all he had suggested the 'granting of blocks of visas through the Consuls of Spain, Portugal and perhaps Turkey, to be used at their discretion'. 'We should open our doors', he had said, 'irrespective of whether the German door is open or shut, so that all who can may come.' He had also urged that neutral States be supported financially 'to encourage them to admit more refugees under the form of guarantees from the United Nations, to relieve them of a stipulated proportion of refugees after victory or if possible sooner, that we should offer facilities for obtaining food, clothing, navicerts and the like for those neutral countries and that we should offer direct financial aid'. The Archbishop had further asked whether it might be possible for the United Nations to charter ships from neutral countries which might be used as ferry boats between the ports of evacuation and the ports of refuge. Moreover, 'could not the ships that brought across the Atlantic this way troops, food and munitions, take back refugees to some ports on the American side either within the British Empire or, if the United States agreed, also to their own ports?' The Archbishop had also asked whether the United Nations would consider making an offer to Hitler for the release of the Jews under his control; and he had expressed his conviction that, since 'the whole matter was so big and other claims were so urgent' that 'there should be appointed someone of high standing, either within the Government itself or from the Civil Service, to make this refugee problem his first concern and responsibility'. The Archbishop had doubted whether the forthcoming Anglo-American conference on refugees would do much other than cause further delays, and asked 'that the conference should not only explore, but come to a decision to act'. At this point, the paper reported, other peers had expressed their support for the Archbishop's statements, and Lord Cranborne had replied for the Government.

Lord Cranborne, the paper reported, gave the impression that, although, in the Government's opinion little could be done by Britain alone, it was hopefully and energetically pursuing international action. But Lord Cranborne made no mention of the Jews in his speech. Rather, he spoke of the 'refugee question', of 'the question of the plight of oppressed and persecuted persons in Europe', and of 'persecuted peoples in Eastern Europe for a number of whom refuge in Palestine has already been offered'. Lord Cranborne clearly engaged in linguistic gymnastics in order to avoid mentioning the word 'Jew'. Moreover, although he had stressed that the Government was energetically pursuing a solution to this 'refugee' problem he spoke at length of Britain's 'traditional policy of helping the victims of persecution'; Britain was already maintaining tens of thousands of 'refugees' and 'already our resources are gravely strained. I do not say more can be taken in....Britain alone cannot find any solution to this terrible problem'.

The Daily Mail's 128 line article was half the size of the News Chronicle's and was placed in a relatively less prominent position at the top of the fifth column on its back page. Whereas the News Chronicle had demonstrated its pro-rescue sympathies by primarily focusing upon the Archbishop of Canterbury's speech, the Daily Mail, on the contrary, focused upon Lord Cranborne's words. Its headlines boldly proclaimed that the British Government was doing everything it could to find ways and means of rescuing 'refugees' from Europe:

#### BRITAIN, U.S. HAVE JOINT PLANS TO HELP REFUGEES

In its opening paragraphs the paper elucidated the position of the British Government, and echoed Lord Cranborne's linguistic treatment of the identity of the 'refugees'. 'Britain and America', it said, 'are to plan together for the relief of *refugees* from Nazi Europe, Lord Cranborne announced in the House of Lords yesterday. Mr. Hull and Mr. Eden had taken the question up as a matter of great urgency, he said, and a statement agreed between the two Governments had just been received.' It continued: 'This referred particularly to *persecuted people* in Eastern Europe, to a number of whom refuge in Palestine has been offered, and to those in Western Europe, for some of whom relief and evacuation have already been provided. The Governments, the statement said, have agreed upon the need for urgent and immediate action, have arrived at a programme they intend to implement, and will announce a place of meeting and names of representatives in the immediate future.'<sup>234</sup> Only after this explanation of

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<sup>234</sup>Italics mine.

the Government's case was the Archbishop of Canterbury's speech (heavily summarised) reported - then the paper turned back to reporting at length Lord Cranborne's apology for Government policy.

The Daily Telegraph's article was a much more lengthy 223 lines, and was printed at the top of the third column of page three; its headlines ran:

MORE AID FOR  
REFUGEES

WASHINGTON TALKS  
BY MR. EDEN

The Telegraph, like the Daily Mail, chose to begin by reporting part of Lord Cranborne's speech, placing much emphasis on his announcement that Hull and Eden had considered the plight of the refugees during their recent conversations in Washington. Then, after extensively and fairly reporting the Archbishop's speech, the paper also noted the comments of the peers who supported him. Lord Addison had said 'that the direction and assistance of refugees called for united effort. It could be achieved only by the appointment of a person or body of persons to deal with the matter'. Viscount Samuel, it added, 'thought that there was grave danger that action might be lost in the sands of diplomatic negotiations'. 'While Governments confer and prepare memoranda, exchange notes and hold conferences', he declared, 'week after week, month after month, the Nazis go on killing men, women and children. Protests do not seem to have stopped murders at all.' He had counselled that 'a programme of action...be put into effect without delay. There was a shortage of labour in Palestine, and, if political conditions allowed, a very much larger number of refugees could be absorbed with benefit to the Arab population. If the Government rule with regard to visas were relaxed some thousands might be able to escape from the holocaust'.<sup>235</sup> Lord Rochester had suggested that Britain should ask neutral and friendly countries, 'particularly Turkey, to do more to help the escape of Jews. They would do more if they were assured that refugees could be passed on to be evacuated elsewhere'. Viscount Cecil had added that Britain should announce its willingness to 'give asylum during the war to any genuine refugees who could reach our shores, without any question of visas'. At this point the paper returned to reporting extensively Lord Cranborne's speech.

<sup>235</sup> Another example of the use of the word 'holocaust' to describe the Nazi extermination of European Jewry.

The Telegraph made its attitude *vis-a-vis* the rescue of refugees more clear in its eighty line editorial on page four, headed: 'VICTIMS OF NAZISM'. The paper appeared embarrassed by the British Government's apparent inactivity since the Declaration of 17 December 1942. 'Since last December,' it said, 'when the House of Commons spontaneously stood to express in silence its horror at the Nazi reign of atrocity against the Jews, the problem of relief and rescue has grown daily more urgent....The most elementary sense of humanity bids that no succour which is within the power of the United Nations, individually or collectively, should be denied to the victims of a persecution unique in its cold-blooded ruthlessness. Last month the Colonial Secretary announced a scheme for admitting to Palestine some thousands of Jewish children and a few hundred accompanying adults from the Balkans. Otherwise, though conversations have been in progress, little effective has been achieved, and the disappointment voiced in the House of Lords yesterday is not confined to that quarter alone.' The Telegraph expressed the hope that the prospective Anglo-U.S. talks on 'refugees' would produce real fruit, adding that 'it is impossible not to share the belief of Viscount SAMUEL that there must be places in the world where the wretched suppliants can be accommodated', otherwise 'the public conscience will be shamed if any practicable extension of mercy is withheld'. However, the Telegraph's expression of sympathy for the case of the pro-rescuers was heavily qualified; for instance, the White Paper quota restricting Jewish immigration into Palestine, could not, in its opinion, be touched:

The difficulties are plain enough. There are the questions of transport and of food; the Palestine quota cannot be substantially altered without raising delicate political issues. In a word, Britain and the British Empire, while anxious to help, cannot achieve a great deal by unilateral action; it is a matter, as Lord CRANBORNE says, for concerted effort between the United Nations. Any succour that can be given to the trickle of refugees is a work of common humanity; but it has to be sadly recognised that it can make little appreciable difference to the major problem. There is but one source of salvation for the Jews - as indeed for the other victims of Nazi terror - and that is the victory of the Allies. We can but hope that it will be in time to forestall the fulfilment of this uniquely hideous programme of race annihilation.

The Times reported the events in the House of Lords in its Parliamentary column at the top of page eight. Its reporting was factual and perfectly balanced - covering equally, first the Archbishop of Canterbury's speech, then those peers that supported him, and finally, but at good length, Lord Cranborne's reply for the Government. At 54 lines, the Daily Herald's article was the shortest of all the papers, but it was placed prominently as the leading article on page three. The Herald made its pro-rescue sympathies clear in its headlines: 'FOUR SONS IN OUR ARMY, BUT VISAS REFUSED'. Indeed, the paper continued in this manner throughout the article; it concentrated almost exclusively in reporting the Archbishop of Canterbury's speech



and those made by the peers that supported him. The paper restricted its reporting of Lord Cranborne's reply to the following two sentences: 'Lord Cranborne, replying for the Government announced that immediate Anglo-United States action was planned....As for visas, we are now taking in over 800 refugees a month'.

While each of the newspapers (apart from The Times) had, in these articles, given indications of their positions with regard to the rescue of refugees, only the News Chronicle was sufficiently concerned to pursue the issue in any depth over the following two or three weeks. On 26 March, for instance, the paper printed an extensive 210 line feature article at the top of page two. Its large bold headlines ran:

IN a moving debate in the House of Lords on Tuesday the Archbishop of Canterbury, appealing for more practical help for Jewish refugees from the Hitler terror, said: "We are standing at the bar of history, of humanity, and of God." It was stated then that Mr. Eden and Mr. Cordell Hull had decided to call a conference in "the immediate future." What do the British people think about it? The results of a special Gallup Poll provide the answer

### **JEWISH REFUGEES: What The People Think**

**BY HENRY DURANT, PH.D.,**  
Director, British Institute of Public Opinion

'In December of last year', Durant began, 'evidence was published of the Nazis' systematic campaign to exterminate the Jews. That they actually intended to carry out their threat of eliminating millions of Jews in Europe became clear. The murder squads would spare neither old nor young, neither women nor children.' After this, he added, a demand had arisen in the United States and in Britain that 'these victims of the Nazis should be helped. Means should be found of rescuing them and bringing them from the Continent. But, it was asked, how would the public react to an increase in the total number of refugees already in Britain? Would the people approve of men and women being allowed to come here, straight from the Nazi dominated Continent?' Durant revealed that a special opinion poll had been taken by Gallup in February 1943 to answer these questions. The opinion poll had provided a 'clear answer', and the results proved that 'the vast majority of the public in Great Britain would willingly support any action taken to assist the victims of Nazi brutality'. They were, moreover, 'very ready to open this country as a temporary sanctuary', and, in the opinion of over half the people, Durant said, 'no limit should be placed on the numbers granted the right of entry'. Two thousand four hundred and fifty adults, all civilians, distributed throughout seventy-five different constituencies in England, Scotland and Wales, had been questioned. Durant stressed the Poll's accuracy, explaining that 'if not only this sample but every adult in the civilian population had been interviewed, the answers actually

obtained from the sample and the answers of the whole civil population would probably have differed by no more than three or four per cent.'

The first question which had been put to those interviewed had been: 'The House of Commons recently stood in silence to express their horror at the Nazis' "disgusting barbarism" towards the Jews. Do you think that the British Government should or should not help any refugees who can get away?' Durant said that 'no less than 78 per cent. replied that the refugees should be helped', which showed a 'marked degree of unanimity of opinion'. In fact, he added, 'on very few questions indeed, out of many hundreds asked in this country by the Gallup Poll, has such a high percentage of agreement been reached'. Most people supported action in favour of the refugees on the grounds that 'Britain, as a democratic, humanitarian country, should assist people whose existence is threatened by the Nazis. It was regarded as our duty, since we were fighting the Nazis, to succour all those who are opposed to the common enemy, some adding that, therefore, our assistance should not be limited only to Jews.' The reason most cited by the 13 per cent. who opposed the British Government helping the refugees was that Britain could not supply an increase of population. Less frequently, Durant added, 'the reason given was that enough Jews are already living here, or "Because I don't like Jews." ' The remaining 9 per cent. had not felt qualified to make a definite conclusion.

Those who had supported Government action to rescue refugees had been asked another question: 'Do you think that we should take into this country (a) as many refugees as can come, or (b) a strictly limited number, or (c) women and children only?' Forty-one per cent 'of the total population', Durant revealed, had answered 'as many as can come'; while one-quarter of the public 'considered that only a strictly limited number should be admitted: one reason advanced was that other countries should do their share of the rescue work'. The remaining thirteen per cent had 'wished to see only women and children admitted into Britain, some thinking that the men should remain to oppose the Nazis, others that we should not risk admitting possible enemy agents'. Finally, a third question had been put so as to ascertain 'the public's views on the conditions governing the refugees' stay in Britain':

*Which do you think the British Government should do: arrange to receive the refugees in Britain*

	<i>Answer</i>
<i>(a) Until they can be settled elsewhere....</i>	<i>40%</i>
<i>(b) Until the war ends....</i>	<i>28%</i>
<i>(c) Indefinitely....</i>	<i>10%</i>

'What is clear', said Durant in conclusion, 'is that the public conscience has been moved, and that there is a very general wish...that the Government should take all possible steps to rescue these victims of the Nazis'.

On 1 April, in its main feature article on page two, the News Chronicle again declared its sympathy for the predicament of the Jews of Europe by tackling the issue of rising anti-Semitism in Britain. At first glance these two issues - that is the rescue of and reception in Britain of Jews from the European continent, and the state of anti-Semitism in Britain - might appear to have little in common. However, at that time the two issues were very much connected in people's minds, since they were viewed together in the wider context of the 'Jewish problem'. Therefore, the important point to note from the News Chronicle's publication of this article is that the paper had chosen to make the 'Jewish problem' an issue and to campaign on behalf of the Jews in both Britain and Europe - it indicates that the revelation that the Nazis were exterminating the Jews of Europe had made some impact on the News Chronicle, for, as we have seen, the paper showed little such active concern during 1942.

'Let's face it', the paper declared, 'there has been recently a sudden growth in anti-Semitic propaganda in Britain.' The paper attacked the accusation that Jews dominated the Black Market and suggested that 'Next time you hear someone pointing out the Jewish names in the Black Market court cases, point out to him the Jewish names in the lists of awards and casualties in the Navy, Army, and R.A.F. That should make him ashamed'. The British Institute of Public Opinion, it added, had recently carried out a poll on anti-Semitism. Twenty-five per cent of those questioned had said that they thought anti-Semitism was increasing in Britain; sixteen per cent thought it was decreasing; forty-three per cent, it said, thought it was about the same; while sixteen per cent expressed no opinion. With regard to another question asked, twelve per cent thought that there were over 3 million Jews in Britain; three per cent more than 2 million; seven per cent more than 1 million; ten per cent over 800,000; two per cent more than 600,000; and eight per cent more than 400,000. 'Thus,' the paper explained, '42 per cent. of the people questioned over-estimated the Jewish population. For actually there are only between 300,000 and 400,000 Jews in Britain.' In conclusion, the paper demanded to know what was going to be done to combat the growth of anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism, it declared, was a 'menace to the good name and good sense of us all'.

The paper followed up this feature article on 5 April, when it devoted the space usually taken up by its main feature article on page two to letters it had received in

response to its feature on anti-Semitism. The paper said that it had printed a representative sample of the letters it had received; most condemned anti-Semitism, but two or three attacked Jews. Thus, one correspondent, signed 'ANTI-FASCIST', declared:

HAVE you nothing better to do than waste valuable newspaper space in defending a race of people whose one thought is to make money? This is taking a selfish advantage of the hospitality of a free country. One is almost tempted to ask what remuneration you received from the Chief Rabbi for your article.

On the next day, 6 April, the paper printed a 145 line editorial on page two headed: 'At the Bar of History'. The paper commented that 'the article published in the News Chronicle last Thursday [on anti-Semitism] has produced an astonishing volume of correspondence. More letters have reached us on this subject than on any other for several months, and they are still pouring in. They endorse, by an overwhelming majority, the standpoint of the writer of the article.' People obviously felt deeply, it said, about the 'growth in our midst of this degrading virus, anti-Semitism'. Those who deliberately fostered anti-Semitism in Britain, it continued, aimed to obstruct the efforts 'to alleviate the plight of the Jews in Europe. While we and our Allies are "exchanging views" and planning, with incredible dilatoriness, ways and means of "exploring" the problem, the mass murders in Europe go on. Hitler is still slaughtering thousands of victims daily for no other reason than to gratify that racial hatred which is the logical conclusion of anti-Semitic propaganda'. One thing was very plain from the article: 'that the Government need have no fear of offending public opinion if they press forward, with speed and energy, measures for succouring Hitler's victims. On the contrary. People are already deeply disturbed, and they may rightly become distrustful if the Government's efforts do not, before long, produce tangible results'. The results of the Gallup Poll, which the paper had printed on 26 March, confirmed this inference. 'This showed that no fewer than 78 per cent. of people in this country are anxious to see active measures taken to help Hitler's victims to escape. Very seldom indeed does a Gallup Poll show so great a consensus of opinion.' Therefore, the paper proclaimed:

on every ground...the Government should show that they really mean business. "My chief protest," said the Archbishop of Canterbury in the Lords (March 23), "is against procrastination of any kind." The proposed "exploratory Conference," originally planned for Ottawa, is now to be held in Bermuda. "Let us at least urge," said the Archbishop, "that when the Conference meets it should meet not only for exploration but for decision."

The Government must press for the most effective measures possible, to be put in force with a minimum of delay, and must give a lead to the Conference by announcing their own plans for taking refugees into Britain.

"We have upon us," declared the Archbishop, "a tremendous responsibility. We stand at the bar of history, of humanity, and of God."

The paper concluded with a burst of indignation: 'How dare we do less than our very utmost to mitigate the most appalling crime ever committed against our civilisation?'

In the meantime, while after 24 March the other daily newspapers fell temporarily silent, The People and the Observer (Sunday papers) began to raise their voices in protest against Government inaction. On 28 March, 'MAN O' THE PEOPLE', in The People declared: 'The outside world, and particularly the oppressed peoples, are not to be impressed by mere promises: they want performance.' 'They cannot burst into hymns of praise', he continued, 'because our Parliament rises solemnly in protest against the Nazi massacre of the Jews. They hold, with the Archbishop of Canterbury, that Britain and America "*stand at the bar of history and of God*" and that the test of their sincerity can only be measured by the number of victims they are ready to save *now* from murder, torture and degradation.' While 'Mr. Eden and Mr. Hull have agreed to "open conversations" on this subject' Lord Cranborne had held out little hope of 'immediate *action*', but, he asserted, 'nothing else is adequate to the present situation'. It was up to the people, he concluded, to 'press untiringly for "something on account" of all the promises which the politicians are so ready to make and refuse to be put off with large slices of "pie in the sky when we die." '

On the same day, 28 March, the Observer reported on its front page that 'the Governments of the United States of America and Great Britain have agreed to hold at Bermuda the forthcoming meeting on the refugee problem.' It said that the date of the Bermuda conference and the names of the representatives were to be announced shortly. On 11 April, the Observer appealed on behalf of the Jews of Europe in its editorial: 'RESCUE THE PERISHING.' The paper attacked the lukewarm response of both the British Government and society in general to the extermination of European Jewry. 'Among the saddest features of our age', it began, 'is the dulling of our reaction to cruelty and persecution. The persecution by the Nazis, first of their opponents in all Europe, equalled the worst that Europe saw during the religious conflicts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But it produced all too little sympathy in other countries. Now something else and even more abominable has happened. A whole human community has been condemned to death - not for political, religious, or national resistance, but for its mere existence.' 'What is our response?', the paper asked.

In July 1942, the systematic extermination of all men, women, and children of Jewish race in Europe began. In December, 1943, the full facts became known in this country. On December 17, 1942, the House of Commons rose to its feet in horror at this supreme crime of all times. On March 10, 1943, Mr. Eden stated in the House that available information pointed to the conclusion that the massacre was continuing. To-day, on April 11, 1943, it must be stated that the British Government has not so far found it within its power to rescue and shelter from cruel

death one single Jewish man, woman, or child. The doors of this country and its possessions have remained closed to them. An agreement to admit 4,500 children and 500 adults from Bulgaria, Rumania, and Hungary into Palestine has not been carried out. Against the most earnest pressure of the whole British public, led by Church and Parliament, the Government has set a stone wall of cold, quiet inactivity.

The paper launched an attack on the prospective Bermuda Conference. 'Instead,' it said, 'an agreement has now been reached with the U.S.A. to hold a conference in Bermuda for the "preliminary exploration of ways and means" to cope with "what may be an unlimited demand for accommodation on the part of refugees threatened by Germany's extermination policy." While the victims of this extermination policy are daily slaughtered by the thousand, to arrange for a conference with these terms of reference is only a cruel mockery.' The paper asserted that 'the trifling problem of providing sanctuary to the handful of hunted human beings who now manage to escape the butcher's blade needs no preliminary exploration at all. It needs immediate action, prompted by elementary humanity'. To be sure, the paper argued, 'pathetically little' could be done in any case; 'the avenues of escape for the persecuted' were 'few and perilous', and, thus, 'if the number of those who find their way out along these avenues surmounts ten thousand, this will be reason for rejoicing'. All the Allies could do was to ensure that at least those few that might escape 'are not thrown back to their tormentors and assassins'. Switzerland, Turkey and Spain had to be given assurances that all Jewish refugees would be taken off their hands as soon as possible. The paper concluded by reiterating that the destruction of European Jewry was without precedent and thus necessitated an unparalleled response from the free nations: 'The present murder of Europe's Jews is the greatest horror of all times. History will keep alive its memory for a thousand years to come, and history will record what the nations who witnessed it did or left undone to check it. We must not allow our Government to put such a stain on Britain's record.'

The news of the formation of the delegations for the Bermuda Conference did not 'grip' the Press. The Times, News Chronicle and Daily Telegraph reported this information on 13 April: The Times' article was 18 lines in length and placed at the bottom of the third column on page three; the News Chronicle's 16 line article was positioned at the bottom of the sixth column on its back page; the Daily Telegraph's article, however, was a more lengthy 47 lines and was printed in the middle of the fifth column on page five. The papers noted that the Conference was due to open in a week's time, and recorded the composition of the respective delegations: the British delegation was to be headed by Richard Law, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and the United States delegation by Harold Dodds, the President of

Princeton University.<sup>236</sup> The Telegraph's Diplomatic Correspondent observed with unfortunate phraseology that 'the meeting is intended to pave the way to a *final solution* of the refugee problem'.<sup>237</sup>

In its 43 line editorial on page four the Telegraph placed on record its views on the forthcoming Bermuda Conference. 'Refugees are by no means all Jews,' it said, 'but most of those whom persecution has rendered stateless are of the Jewish race, and since last July the Germans have intensified their systematic extermination of that race in Europe. Some already on, or trickling through to the fringes of German-occupied Europe still manage to get away, and the least that must emerge from the conversations are measures for their reception and relief.' The paper added that 'two measures in particular suggest themselves, the fulfilment of the promise to admit up to 29,000 children into Palestine, and the formation of camps in neutral countries pending return to the country of origin or settlement elsewhere.' Echoing the Archbishop of Canterbury's words of 23 March, the paper concluded: 'There is little enough anybody can do, but that little should be done.'

However, as Bernard Wasserstein has written, 'even before the conference opened the Foreign Office view was clear as to the limited scope of possible action.' A.W.G. Randall, he has added, wrote on 16 April: 'It is time that the idea of "measures of rescue"...was shown up as illusory.'<sup>238</sup> The Government wanted to give the impression that they were energetically pursuing a solution to the 'refugee' problem, even if, in fact, they were merely 'going through the motions'. For obvious reasons the Government did not want the public to know the tenor of the conversations themselves which were predestined to produce few practical results. Accordingly, the British Government was anxious that there should be as little Press presence at the conference as possible. Then, at its conclusion, the public might be told of how the conference had been a success but that, of necessity, the (supposed) practical measures had to remain secret - the public conscience would thus be satisfied and pressure taken off the Government. The Government was attempting a public relations coup.

The draft of a letter from A.W.G. Randall to Halifax, the British Ambassador in Washington, dated 6 April, is instructive as to the British attitude with regard to the Press. 'On the suggestion of the Colonial Office', he said, 'I am proposing to handle

<sup>236</sup>Representative Sol Bloom of the U.S. delegation was the only Jew present at the Conference, and even then only in his capacity as Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives.

<sup>237</sup>Italics mine.

<sup>238</sup>Randall minute, 16 April 1943, PRO FO 371/36658. Wasserstein, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

[added: such limited] publicity [deleted: matters] [added: as may be necessary] through the island's Information Officer.' 'As regards the American angle', he continued, 'I see no objection to the attachment by the State Department of a Press Officer to their delegation. I shall be grateful however if you [deleted: make clear] [added: confirm] to them our point of view [added: which I understand they share] that excessive publicity is to be deprecated as calculated to raise exaggerated hopes in the outcome of the meeting which must [deleted: perforce] be of a largely exploratory character, and that we therefore trust that they may see their way [deleted: discreetly] to discourage the Press from pressing for facilities.' Randall added in conclusion: 'There is the obvious danger, too, that if the Conference is in the limelight each side will exert itself to the utmost to pass the baby to the other. This wd. [sic] help neither the Refugees nor Anglo-American relations. A.W.G.R.'<sup>239</sup>

In his reply of 7 April, Halifax said that the situation in regard to Press arrangements had been 'somewhat complicated by a flurry here over publicity for the forthcoming food conference [at Hot Springs, Arkansas]. 'A suggestion by the President', he explained, 'that he would like latter conference to meet without benefit of press representatives aroused a violent controversy and United States have had to revise themselves.' 'They are therefore unwilling', Halifax continued, 'to do anything to suggest that they are trying to prevent press from covering the Bermuda conference. They have accordingly told American news agencies that while they should try to make their own arrangements for getting to Bermuda if they fail the Department will try to assist them.'<sup>240</sup> Osbert Peake, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office, and part of the British delegation to the Bermuda conference, replied to Halifax on 10 April. In his opening sentence Peake said: 'I infer...that in your view it will be difficult to prevent press and agencies from sending representatives.'<sup>241</sup> He added that he hoped Halifax would 'be able to persuade State Department to restrict numbers to reasonable limits.' If that were done, then the Foreign Office would not raise an objection, he said.<sup>242</sup>

The Government anticipated that the official Press Officer would play a critical part in the handling of the Press at the Conference. It did not consider that the Bermudan Press Officer was sufficiently experienced enough for the job, and so a special Press Officer was appointed. It was, as a cable from Peake to Halifax (dated 14

<sup>239</sup>A.W.G. Randall draft letter to Halifax (Washington), PRO FO 371/36657/72 W5284.

<sup>240</sup>Halifax to Foreign Office, 7 April 1943, PRO FO 371/36658 W5577.

<sup>241</sup>Clearly the British Government not only wanted, but had originally intended to keep Press representatives away from the Bermuda conference.

<sup>242</sup>Peake to Halifax, 10 April 1943, PRO FO 371/36658 W5577/49/48.



April) made clear, considered 'essential that someone who already knows the representatives of the press agencies personally should be in Bermuda for at least the opening stage of Conference in order to start things off on the right lines'. The Conference, Peake added, 'is bound to attract a good deal of attention in this country and elsewhere....We hope very much, therefore, that you will be able to spare someone who is expert in handling the press to visit Bermuda for the first few days of Conference and be prepared to stay longer if after consultation with Mr. Law and Acting Governor it seems necessary'. Peake concluded by pointing out that the appointment of a special Press Officer was not meant to reflect negatively on the current Bermudan man, 'but this is a job which calls for highly specialized qualifications and experience and it is important to avoid difficulties. Press are evidently apprehensive over censorship'.<sup>243</sup> The U.S. and British Governments agreed that all information concerning the progress of the Conference was, 'from time to time', to be distributed to the Press representatives in the form of 'controlled press "hand-out[s]"', 'otherwise they [the Press] would be certain to invent their own versions which would probably be distorted'.<sup>244</sup> It is hard to resist the conclusion that the British and U.S. Governments had decided to use the Press as a tool of propaganda, so as to give the world the impression that everything that could be done to solve the 'refugee' crisis was being done.

Holding the Refugees Conference in Bermuda was calculated to restrict Press coverage. According to Saul Friedman 'the British were extremely sensitive about untoward publicity and the prospect that unnamed pressure groups might descend on the conferees at Ottawa or any other site in North America. Thus, at the end of March they suggested shifting the conference to Hamilton, Bermuda, 1,500 miles out in the Atlantic. The State Department...readily agreed to the switch'. Bermuda, he has added, 'was definitely "hermetically sealed," as Representative Emanuel Celler charged later. There was no approach to the island, save by air, and then only by way of a closely guarded airstrip'.<sup>245</sup> Deborah Lipstadt asserts that 'this was not fortuitous, but had been carefully planned by the organisers....No one who might raise embarrassing questions or stymie the public relations goals of the conference was to be present.' The State Department denied the accusations of the U.S. Press that the conference was being held behind closed doors, but Lipstadt asserts, 'the Department's denials could not alter the fact that the doors *were* closed - the meeting was on an island in a military area into which entry was completely controlled - and with good reason. Officials correctly

<sup>243</sup>Foreign Office to Halifax, 14 April 1943, PRO FO 371/36658 W5769/49/48.

<sup>244</sup>Halifax to Foreign Office, 7 April 1943, PRO FO 371/36658 W5577; Foreign Office to Halifax, 10 April 1943, PRO FO 371/36658 W5577/49/48.

<sup>245</sup>Saul Friedman, No Haven for the Oppressed, (Detroit, 1973), p. 159.

feared that if the true nature of the proceedings was known, the criticism would be even more severe'. Yet although criticism of the decision to hold the conference in Bermuda abounded in the American Press, there was practically none in the pages of their British contemporaries.<sup>246</sup> Only the Observer in its editorial headed 'HONOUR OUR GUIDE', of 25 April commented on this aspect:

WHOEVER suggested the Bermudas as the most suitable place for Anglo-American talks about the rescue of Hitler's victims showed himself similarly lacking in sense of situation. Here are some ten thousand human beings, men, women, and children, already destined for extermination, already singled out, marked by the yellow star, forbidden to move or change their domiciles, only awaiting the freeing of transport to be huddled into the Polish slaughter camps, staring with fixed gaze of despair towards the Pyrenees and the Mediterranean, waiting for a haven beyond. And there are the leisurely beach hotels of the Atlantic luxury island, far away from stricken Europe, where well-dressed gentlemen assemble to assure each other in the best Geneva fashion that really nothing much can be done. Was the remote place chosen to keep importunate suppliants away? Or to escape the eye of public vigilance and the clamour of public wrath?

Indeed, the British Press generally printed very little information or comment during the period of the conference. There was, in fact, very little information for the newspapermen at the conference to report. 'Despite the obvious urgency in the situation [of the Jews]', Friedman comments, 'the handful of newspapermen present at Hamilton soon took to calling Bermuda "the no-news conference." The daily press briefings, for example, deteriorated into little more than exercises in platitude....The press was kept uninformed about the actual course of the negotiations'.<sup>247</sup> The Press were, however, allowed to be present at the opening ceremony on 19 April, and the speeches made were reported widely throughout the British Press on the next day; the word 'Jew' was not uttered in any of the speeches and this was reflected in the Press coverage. The most comprehensive account of the speeches was printed by The Times in a 165 line article at the top of the fifth column on page three. Its headlines spoke of 'refugees':

HELP FOR THE  
REFUGEES  
—  
ALLIES' DIFFICULT  
TASK  
—  
BERMUDA TALKS BEGUN

<sup>246</sup>For an assessment of the American Press response to the Bermuda Conference see Lipstadt, Beyond Belief, p. 205-216.

<sup>247</sup>Friedman, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

The paper printed the speeches of Dr. Harold Dodds and Richard Law (heads of the U.S. and British delegations respectively) *in extenso*. Dr. Dodds had asserted that it was 'no easy task' which confronted the conference. 'The magnitude of this problem and the difficulties attendant upon any completely satisfactory solution of it have, I believe, been under-estimated. One thing is certain; we approach this problem with the conviction that every possible effort must be made to find the best solution which can be presented to all of the United Nations for decisions.' Dr. Dodds, had stressed that victory in the war was the only real help for the 'refugees', and that beyond pursuing this victory Britain and America alone could do little. 'Complete and final victory', he had said, 'will afford a sure and final solution to the *refugee problem*.'<sup>248</sup> In conclusion, Dodds had paid tribute to the British Government's 'efforts to alleviate the lot of those who have fallen innocent victims to the cruel philosophy of Nazi Germany', even in 'the most difficult circumstances'. He added that the U.S. 'recognize with appreciation what has already been accomplished by this other great democracy, and realize fully that these accomplishments were effected during a period when the British Empire was faced with the alternative of total victory or total extinction'.

Under the sub-heading 'A POLICY OF EXTERMINATION', The Times reported the full text of Richard Law's speech. Like Dodds, Richard Law also endeavoured to avoid making references to the Jews. 'In recent months', he had begun, 'the situation has gravely deteriorated.' 'There is no doubt', he had added, 'that the German Government have embarked upon *a deliberate policy of extermination of minorities, political, religious, and racial*, which are conceived by the Nazis to stand in the way of their insane ambitions.'<sup>249</sup> Law had also stressed that only victory could really help the refugees. 'We are faced to-day', he had said, 'with an immense problem; there is, indeed, only one solution, and that is the victory of the United Nations. When that victory has been achieved, then this persecution will be ended and then those who have organised it and who have carried it out will be subjected to the punishment which they have earned and to the dire penalties which are waiting for them. In coded language Law had warned 'the persecuted peoples' [by which he meant the Jews] to 'understand' that little would or could be done for them beyond the pursuance of final victory so that 'they should not be betrayed, by false or premature hopes of what may be possible, into the belief that aid is coming to them, when in fact we are unable to give them immediate succour.' Law had continued:

We have to remember that we are fighting a grim and bitter war, of which the issue has yet to be decided. We have to remember that if we were to lose the war,

<sup>248</sup>Italics mine.

<sup>249</sup>Italics mine.

everything would be lost and that the persecution of the peoples of Europe would be intensified a thousandfold. We must take great care to see that we are not betrayed by our feelings of humanity and compassion into courses of action which at best would postpone the day of liberation, and at worst might make the liberation for ever impossible. There are no doubt a number of things which we might attempt to alleviate the condition of the persecuted peoples, but if any one of those things were to postpone by month the achievement of victory we should be doing an ill-service to those very people whom we wish to help. That is the governing factor in the situation to-day, and it is well that we should not forget it.

Under the sub-heading, 'HISTORIC LAND OF REFUGE', The Times reported how Law had heaped praise upon both the U.S. and British Government's record on 'refugees'. 'It is worth remembering', he had added, 'that there are to-day within the British and British mandated territories some hundreds of thousands of human beings who have been taken in, who have been fed and clothed and given protection during the past four or five years. It is worth remembering that this has been done at a time when we have been strained to the utmost in every sinew and every nerve, first, when we were fighting for our lives as we have never fought before, and when we were standing alone against the whole might and terror of Nazidom; then as an armed camp which now forms the base for offensive operations upon which victory against Germany depends.' Law, the paper reported, had concluded by again drawing attention to the obstacles to rescue and the limitations of the present conference, declaring that 'in present circumstances, while we are still fighting for our lives, any solution is bound to be limited.' Dodds and Law were clearly preparing public opinion in Britain and the U.S.A. for the fact that the Bermuda Conference would produce very little in the way of practical aid for the Jews of Europe.

In its editorial on page five, headed 'The Bermuda Meeting', The Times fully concurred with Dodds and Law, and like them also managed to avoid mentioning the word 'Jew'. 'Both Governments', it said, 'have full knowledge of the horrors of a policy prompted, in DR. DODDS'S words, "by Germany's ambitions under Nazi ideology"; and are fully aware of the magnitude of the problem that confronts them as well as of their own duty to do all that can be done to relieve an appalling volume of physical and moral torment and terror.' The paper supported their claims to have already achieved much in the field of providing succour to 'refugees'. 'Both delegates', it said, 'were in a position to show that their Governments had accomplished much. The United States has naturally been able to do more than the United Kingdom owing to its later entry into the war. But MR. DODDS at the close of his speech paid a warm tribute to what the British Government had accomplished during a period when the British Empire was faced with the alternative of total victory or total extinction.' Moreover, the paper fully approved Law and Dodds' stressing of the obstacles to rescue. 'At the same time', the

paper added, 'both made it abundantly clear that the measures which their Governments may immediately adopt can only be a palliative. Multitudes of the victims of oppression are beyond the reach of allied aid, and the new Pharaohs will not let them go. Shortages of shipping and supply still make the carrying out of certain unofficial schemes of relief incompatible with unrestricting and unremitting prosecution of a war, by the loss of which, as MR. LAW said, "the persecution of the peoples of Europe would be intensified a thousandfold." ' In conclusion, the paper expressed its complete agreement with the British and American Governments' contention that 'the full solution of the refugee problem in its major aspects can be accomplished only by a world restored to peace and co-operating under the new and humane order outlined in the Atlantic Charter.' 'That, however,' it said weakly, 'is one more reason for pressing to the utmost any and all measures that prove immediately practicable.' The Times, it is abundantly clear, had determined to support the Government, whatever the outcome of the Bermuda Conference.

The Daily Telegraph reported the opening day of the conference factually and without comment. Its 68 line article was placed at the top of the fifth column on its third page. It too spoke throughout of the plight of 'refugees' without mentioning the peculiar fate of the Jews. Its headline, for example, spoke of 'refugee talks':

REFUGEE TALKS'  
LIMITED SCOPE

"PROBLEM TOO BIG  
FOR 2 NATIONS"

It is also clear from the headlines that the Telegraph had understood that the Bermuda conference would not produce any outstanding results. Unlike The Times, the Telegraph's correspondent printed only very small portions from Dodds' and Law's speeches, and these served to illustrate his main point, that the Bermuda conference was limited in its scope:

The head of the British delegation, Mr. Richard Law, Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, said on the eve of the opening of the conference that his Government hoped that some conclusions would be reached which would provide a basis for future international action.

At the opening session to-day he cautioned the European peoples persecuted by the Nazis against "false or premature hopes of immediate succour" because of war-time exigencies.

Dr. Dodds said: "The problem is too great for solution by the two Governments here represented. Our task will be to point the way and offer such definite proposals as may be possible under war conditions, and in the light of what the war effort of the United Nations will permit."

The Daily Herald and News Chronicle also perceived that the Bermuda conference would not produce much in the way of practical measures of relief, but, unlike the Telegraph, they were openly critical of that fact. The Herald's article (much the shorter of the two papers) was 48 lines in length and was printed at the top of columns 7 and 8 on its back page. The paper's headlines made its point most succinctly:

**"GO SLOW" AT REFUGEE  
DISCUSSION  
By N.W. EWER**

Even so, as is indicated by the headline above, Ewer too entered into the temptation to use the word 'refugee' as opposed to 'Jew' - as did the News Chronicle. Its article was almost twice the size of the Herald's and was placed more prominently, forming the leader at the head of its back page. Its very bold three-column wide headlines similarly spoke of the 'refugee problem':

**VICTORY IS THE ONLY REAL  
SOLUTION OF THE REFUGEE  
PROBLEM: Say Bermuda  
Delegates**

The News Chronicle's article, like The Times, was strictly factual and without comment. The paper, using British United Press and Associated Press bulletins as its source, reported both Richard Law's and Harold Dodds' speeches in depth and without any obvious bias. However, the next day, in an editorial headed 'Rescue Now', the paper made its opinions clearer and defined the 'refugee problem' as being essentially Jewish. 'The Bermuda refugee conference', it said, 'is - at long last - under way. British and American representatives are "exploring" the problem of contriving to save from torture and death as many as possible of the millions of Jews for whom Hitler, in his insane hatred of the race, has decreed total extinction.' The paper acknowledged that this was a 'difficult problem', because 'its solution does not depend only on British and American exertions' - much also depended on the co-operation of other countries. Nevertheless, the paper asserted, 'Britain and America must give a lead by proving their determination to play their own part energetically, while putting forward a more widespread plan in which other countries can collaborate'. The paper then criticised what it saw as the nonchalant attitude of the conferees:

"Doomed millions call for rescue now," said Rabbi Dr. Mattuck yesterday at the Liberal Jewish Synagogue. "It is a sober statement of fact that only a day, or even an hour, measures for many Jews the distance between life and death."

Discussion is a necessary prelude to action, but discussion in itself will achieve nothing. The Bermuda conference seems to be setting about its business along lines which are altogether too leisurely. There have been eloquent speeches. Sub-committees are being organised to "study" various aspects of the problem. These speeches could have been made, these "studies" completed, long ago. What is wanted now is action - as swift, as decisive, as generous as possible.

"Hitler's mass executioners will not wait" (says the "Washington Post") "while the delegates at Bermuda carry on their exploratory consultations...pile up mountains of statistics, and do nothing."

A special responsibility rests upon this country. We have been foremost in our denunciation of Hitler's crimes against humanity, foremost in protesting our determination to do everything possible to avert the consequences. We must take the lead now in brushing aside purely technical difficulties; in offering money, organisation, and - above all - living space for Hitler's victims. Even if, in the upshot, we seemed to be shouldering more than our "fair share" of the burden, who would reproach us for that?

Indeed, these same opinions had also been graphically and powerfully expressed only five days before in a cartoon by Vicky, labelled: 'SOS'. Vicky contrasted the leisurely spirit of the diplomatic discussions on the island of Bermuda, with the immediacy of the needs of the refugees, drowning in an ocean labelled: 'Refugee Problem' [Appendix 6].

The News Chronicle further proclaimed its disappointment with the Bermuda Conference by printing a 43 line article at the top of columns 2-4 on its back page with the (three column wide) headlines:

### "Hitler's Execution Squads Will Not Wait for Bermuda"

U.S. IMPATIENT AT "EXPLORATORY" TALK

The paper's Washington Correspondent, Robert Waithman, reported how the American Press had criticised the Bermuda Conference. He said that 'signs of impatience at the emphasis that is being placed in Bermuda on the "exploratory" nature of the Anglo-American conference on refugees' had appeared in the U.S., and such criticisms had not been confined to 'Jewish and other interested quarters'. In its editorial of 20 April, the Washington Post, he reported, had declared that ' "Hitler's executioners will not wait while delegates at Bermuda carry on their exploratory consultations, arrange for committees and sub-committees, pile up mountains of statistics, and do nothing." ' The Post had pointed out, Waithman added, that it had been ten years since Hitler had begun 'his campaign', and this campaign against the Jews had become 'as bloody and brutal a campaign of extermination as the world ever

saw.' Under the sub-heading ' "STUPID POLICY" ', Waithman reported the Washington Post's specific criticism of British policy. The Post had declared that ' "upon the British rests the onus of having, as the result of a stupid White Paper policy, prevented a large number of refugees from getting to the one nearby place where they would have been welcome." ' Waithman reported in conclusion that a large advertisement had been published in the U.S., addressed to 'The Gentlemen at Bermuda', from the Committee for a Jewish Army of Stateless and Palestinian Jews, which had said: ' "Remember, as you sit in Bermuda every day and every hour in which you deliberate dooms living children, women, and men to helpless death in Europe. Action is called for - not pity, not exploratory words." '

Whilst The Times expressed its support of the British and American Government's position at Bermuda it nevertheless printed (on 22 April) a letter, from Victor Cazalet of the Executive Committee of the National Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror, which criticised the Bermuda Conference. 'The Bermuda conference on refugees', Cazalet began, 'is now in session. Normally this would put an end to comment until the results are known. But the opening speeches have been of a kind greatly to shock those who are interested in the problem.' 'These speeches', Cazalet continued, 'hold out no prospect of immediate decisions, they adumbrate nothing but "exploratory consultations" - "laying foundations," "working out tentatively some basis - with a view to," &c.' 'In phrase after phrase', he said, 'the Government spokesmen instead of showing a vigorous determination seemed mainly concerned to accentuate difficulties which have always been obvious and to emphasize that, after all, very little could be done.' 'Was it necessary', Cazalet asked, 'to send three Ministers to Bermuda only to repeat the well-worn phrases so familiar from the front bench when meeting Parliamentary pressure on this most urgent subject?' 'We are convinced', he warned in conclusion, ' - and we are not speaking without book - that if the conference breaks up without having initiated immediate measures of rescue on a scale not wholly inadequate to the need, there will be a mounting wave of indignation in Britain which may surprise those who have failed to appreciate how deeply the public conscience is stirred, and how determined our people are upon action.'

The Observer added another ripple of criticism of Bermuda in its editorial of 25 April. What was so terrible about the opening speeches, it said, 'is not only their utter insensitiveness to human suffering. It is the implied readiness of the two greatest Powers on earth to humiliate themselves, to declare themselves bankrupt and impotent, in order to evade the slight discomfort of charity.' 'The Bermuda speeches', it concluded, 'evoke the agonising memory of Geneva and Evian, of tedious, phrase-



making impotence and inactivity. We had thought that we had got beyond this. In recent years, in Mr. Churchill's words, we have made "honour our guide." Let not Bermuda word-spinning betray that noble claim.'

On the next day, 26 April, the News Chronicle again poured forth its indignation at the Bermuda Conference. Its main (148 line) feature article on page two, by Robert Waithman its Washington Correspondent, was given the following two column wide headlines:

How Not to Hold  
A Conference  
On Refugees

'Whether there is yet time to make the current Anglo-American Conference on Refugees mean something is a question which only the delegates and their respective Governments can answer', Waithman began. While he presumed that the Conference delegates would make some kind of statement concerning the fruits of the conference within the next week, Waithman declared that 'the statement will have to be pretty good if it is to dissipate the miserable impression which has now been allowed to take form in this country [U.S.A.] - and I should be surprised if the impression in Britain is very different.' The American impression of the Bermuda Conference, he said, 'is that a number of cautious gentlemen, well schooled in the doctrine of not giving much away, have conducted a series of formal meetings in an atmosphere which was defined in advance with the aid of such reliable political clichés as "exploratory conversations" and "the formulation of preliminary proposals." ' 'It has been explained in American newspapers and over American radio stations,' he added, 'that nothing much is going to be done. It has been pointed out that Hitler's persecutions began ten years ago and that now we have got round to exploratory conversations on them. It has been noted that the Nazis have annihilated thousands of Jews in Europe, but that everything is going to be all right now because Britain and America are formulating preliminary proposals.' Richard Law had warned, in his opening speech, against expecting too much from the conference, he said. Law was apparently 'anxious to ensure against too much building up of the conference: he did not want it to be put in the position of making promises which could not be fulfilled. So the conference at its first, and so far its only, public session was laboriously played down'. 'Anyone who knew a great deal about the intricacies and difficulties of refugee and relief problems', Waithman asserted, 'must have regarded this as an astute move. But anyone who knew or felt the gathering public reaction to the Bermuda Conference probably turned cold at the base of the spine when it came.' 'It was', he said, 'like a song heard in a past delirium; it was the

outline for a too familiar nightmare. It was business as usual. With a sudden and awful clarity it recalled other conferences at other times which began and ended with the solemn certainty that nothing was going to be done.'

The Bermuda Conference ended on 29 April. In an editorial that day, the News Chronicle passed its verdict on the Conference: 'The Refugees Conference only nibbled at its problem - in the upshot, it was very nearly a fiasco.' Meanwhile, an official announcement was issued by the Bermuda conferees which, according to The Times, stated that 'the problem had been examined in all its aspects, including the position of those potential refugees who were still in the grip of Axis Powers'. 'At the outset', the statement said, 'it was realized that any recommendations must pass two tests: (1) Would they interfere with or delay the war effort? (2) was the recommendation capable of accomplishment under war conditions?' 'The delegates felt bound', it added, 'to reject certain proposals which were incapable of meeting these tests.' Nevertheless, the statement went on, 'they were able to agree on a number of concrete recommendations which were being forwarded to their Governments, and these should lead to the substantial relief of a large number of refugees. The recommendations must remain confidential, since other Governments were involved. Questions of shipping and food were fully investigated.'<sup>250</sup>

This official statement gave the impression that the Conference had been a success as 'concrete recommendations' were agreed upon which, it prognosticated, would 'lead to the substantial relief of a large number of refugees'. However, this statement was designed to mask the fact that in fact very little 'concrete' had been agreed by the Conference. Indeed, the British delegates later privately informed Eden that 'so far as immediate relief to the refugees is concerned, the conference was able to achieve very little'.<sup>251</sup> As Arthur D. Morse has explained: 'The Bermuda Conference authorized only one definite action on refugees: twenty-one thousand refugees in Spain would be removed to North Africa. Fourteen thousand were French nationals, mostly of military age, who had escaped the German occupation. Three thousand were Poles and Czechs of military age, and four to five thousand were Jews who were regarded as stateless or of enemy nationality.'<sup>252</sup> Penkower calls it 'the greatest irony of all' that 'the Bermuda conferees limited their attention to the small number of refugees who had already found a precarious haven in neutral Spain'.<sup>253</sup> Whatever Press interest there had

<sup>250</sup>The Times, 30 April 1943, page 3.

<sup>251</sup>U.K. delegates to Eden, 28 June 1943, PRO PREM 4/51/3, quoted by Wasserstein, *op. cit.*, p.201.

<sup>252</sup>Arthur D. Morse, While Six Million Died, (New York, 1983), pp. 57-59.

<sup>253</sup>Penkower, *op. cit.*, p. 119. For a detailed account of the deliberations at the Conference see Wasserstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 188-205.

been in the 'refugees' issue (that is, in saving the Jews of Europe) rapidly disappeared at the end of the Bermuda Conference.

In one of those amazing ironies of history, the opening day of the Bermuda Conference (19 April) had coincided with the Eve of the Jewish festival of freedom - Passover. Also on 19 April the Germans began the final liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto. However, the Germans were met with determined resistance from the Jews, who held out against 2000 German troops (who used tanks, machine guns and artillery) for over a month. News of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising soon reached the Western Allies. As the Jewish Chronicle reported on 7 May: 'On the night of April 21, Stockholm listeners heard this broadcast from a secret Polish radio station: "The last 35,000 Jews in the Warsaw ghetto have been sentenced to death, and are now being murdered. The streets of Warsaw echoed with shots and shrieks of pain from the executed men, women, and children. Send us help." Then the broadcast suddenly stopped.' The text of this broadcast was immediately disseminated by the United Press and Reuter news agencies, and the following article appeared on the front page of the New York Times on 22 April:

#### SECRET POLISH RADIO ASKS AID, CUT OFF

Stockholm, Sweden, April 21 - The secret Polish radio appealed for help tonight in a broadcast from Poland and then suddenly the station went dead. The broadcast, as heard here, said: "The last 35,000 Jews in the ghetto at Warsaw have been condemned to execution. Warsaw again is echoing to musketry volleys.

"The people are murdered. Women and children defend themselves with their naked arms.

"Save us..."<sup>254</sup>

However, this news was not reported by any of the British newspapers studied.

The B.B.C. was kept fully informed by the Polish Government of what was happening in the ghetto. On 1 May, for instance, the Polish Ministry of Interior, Radio Section, sent the B.B.C. the following item in its news bulletin:

<sup>254</sup>A memorandum from Mr. Osborne to Colonel Sutton, PRO FO 898/57/307, (officials at the Political Warfare Executive), dated 22 April 1943, said: 'On 21st April a Reuter message from Stockholm reported that a secret radio station in Poland, the name of which was given as Swit, was heard saying that the last 35,000 Jews in the Warsaw ghetto had been sentenced to death and were being murdered'; New York Times, 22 April 1943, quoted by Lipstadt, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

### New Wave of Terror in the Warsaw Ghetto

The secret Polish wireless station 'Swit' (Dawn) gave on Friday night new information about the ghetto in Warsaw.

The Warsaw ghetto where the Germans have now launched a new wave of terror has been inhabited by 600,000 Jews at the beginning of the German occupation. 35,000 of them were people from Warsaw, the others have been brought there from other Polish towns. Last year the Germans have begun [*sic*] the extermination of the ghetto inhabitants, and gas chambers have been used for the purpose. In the place of murdered Polish Jews transports of Jews from all parts of Europe have been brought. During the last 15 months about half a million Jews have gone through the Warsaw ghetto. This week a new wave of horrible terror against the 35,000 Jews left in the ghetto has begun. The Jews are desperately defending themselves....<sup>255</sup>

And on 2 May, at 9.15-9.30 p.m., the B.B.C. broadcast the following in its Polish bulletin:

A broadcast from a secret Polish wireless station has revealed a German wave of terror against the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto. After three years of deportation and execution only about 35,000 Jews are left there. These are mostly young men reserved by the Germans for Forced Labour. The secret radio station declares that they are resisting the German attacks, that there is fierce shooting in the Ghetto, and even that the Germans have employed light tanks.<sup>256</sup>

However, only the previous day the B.B.C. had cut out all mention of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising in its English broadcast in the European Service. As an official of the Political Warfare Executive recorded a few days later:

On Saturday, 1st May 1943, the B.B.C. broadcast in its European Service in English, at 10.45 p.m. as follows:-

#### Polish Resistance

"Polish patriots have wrecked the MARTEN blast furnaces. It is disclosed that a new secret radio station named 'Swit' - (Dawn) is operating."

(The Ghetto story followed, but the Editor cut it out leaving only the 'Swit' story).  
6.5.43 <sup>257</sup>

Apparently this editor did not consider the news of the Warsaw uprising sufficiently important to merit even a few seconds of air time. Similarly, it appears that newspaper editors did not consider this information sufficiently news-worthy to consume precious column-space.

<sup>255</sup>PRO FO 898/57/319.

<sup>256</sup>*ibid.*

<sup>257</sup>*ibid.*

On 4 May, according to the Jewish Chronicle of 7 May, General Sikorski, in a broadcast to Poland, 'expressed his admiration for the heroic and desperate resistance to the Nazis of the Jews in the Warsaw ghetto. He spoke of gratification also, of the way in which the Polish population had aided the Warsaw Jews, and urged them to continue their resistance'. Even so, Sikorski's words also went unrecorded by the newspapers studied. This article in the Jewish Chronicle of 7 May formed its front page leader and carried the large, bold headlines:

**WARSAW GHETTO  
BATTLE  
Jews Went Down  
Fighting  
NAZIS USE TANKS**

In addition to the details mentioned above, the article also recounted the text of another report of the uprising which the Polish Government-in-exile had recently received. It said that 'an account of the Warsaw Jews' glorious fighting finish to their long martyrdom has been received by the Polish Government, in a message describing the Nazis' final "liquidation" of the ghetto.' It continued:

Only 35,000 Jews had remained after the massacres and deportation of the past year. They were mainly artisans and craftsmen employed in the Nazi war industry. The Germans, accusing the Jews of "going slow," proposed to transfer the larger workshops to two places considered by the Jews to be "execution camps." One of these camps is at Prawniki (the name of the second was mutilated in transmission).

But the Jews learned of the German plan and prepared to make a last stand. When the "liquidation" of the ghetto started on April 20, a pitched battle developed between the S.S. and young Jewish workers, who erected barricades and defended themselves with rifles and machine-guns supplied by the Polish underground movement. Their resistance was overcome only when tanks and armoured cars were brought up by the Nazis. One corner of the ghetto kept up resistance for three days. It is reported that there were considerable losses on both sides.

Under the sub-heading, 'Fighting to Save Their Honour', the paper also reported the details of another message to have come out of Warsaw:

Another message, signed by prominent leaders of the Zionist Labour movement. It said that the remaining Jews in the Warsaw ghetto were forcibly resisting the Nazis in order to "save the honour of the nation and the remnant that has been left." The message appealed for aid to obtain arms and food for the children. It concluded with greetings to the Jewish people throughout the world, and to the international Labour movement.

None of the newspapers in this study printed either of these two reports.

The earliest report on the Ghetto uprising to appear in the Press was printed by the News Chronicle on its back page on 13 May. The paper reported a speech made on the previous night by Eleanor Rathbone to a meeting of the National Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror in a private room at the House of Commons. 'Beating her hand on the table and speaking in a voice husky with feeling,' the paper said, 'Miss Eleanor Rathbone, M.P., last night pleaded for help for the Jews of Europe whom the Germans are threatening with extermination.' Miss Rathbone had called for a 'new Nansen to take hold of this problem and send help before it is too late'. 'Day and night', she had said, 'the killing is going on. Between 5,000 and 10,000 men, women and children are done to death daily, and 1½ millions have already perished.' 'Pointing to the latest messages from Poland,' the paper continued, 'Miss Rathbone said: "These are the cries of despair of people who know death is upon them and theirs." One April message from Warsaw read: "Save us before it is too late." Another was: "Move heaven and earth, save children." ' Under the sub-heading 'GHETTO FIGHT', the paper added:

On May 6 news came of the heroic fight inside the Warsaw ghetto by armed Jews against Germans equipped with light tanks and machine-guns. Fires in the ghetto were seen in Warsaw. The ghetto was liquidated.

The last message received reported the liquidation of the ghetto in Wilno. This brought the number of ghettos utterly destroyed, with the massacre of all inhabitants, to five....A 12-point programme for immediate rescue measures has been drawn up by the committee. "I am certain they offer a practical means of saving many lives, at least of children," Miss Rathbone declared.

The Observer gave the most prominence of all the papers to the Uprising in its article on 23 May. Its article was only 38 lines in length, but it was printed at the top of the eighth column on its front page. Its headlines ran:

GHETTO BATTLE  
IN WARSAW  
MASS MURDER TO  
CRUSH REVOLT

By A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

'Slowly the crushing force of German S.S. men and soldiers', it began, 'is winning the battle of the Warsaw ghetto, where the Polish Jews are in revolt.' 'For many days', it went on, 'the Jews, have been fighting and holding out, but last week showed that the struggle is nearly over. The first message was dated April 25. It says: "This is the ninth day that the ghetto fights back. The S.S. and Wehrmacht formations are laying siege. Artillery and flame-throwers are employed, and aeroplanes shower high-explosives and incendiary bombs on the 40,000 Jews who still remain in the ghetto. The Germans

mine and blast blocks of houses wherever there is resistance. Men, women, and children who are not burned alive are being murdered en masse." ' The last message to be received, the paper said, was dated 11 May and read: "The heroic resistance of the Ghetto continues with but few strongholds holding out. The few thousands remain underground and in the storehouses of the Ghetto. Their house defences are being overcome after stiff resistance. The Jewish centres in the provinces are being completely wiped out." ' The messages, the paper concluded, had been signed by the Central Jewish Labour Committee of the Jewish National Council in Poland.

Although The Observer's article constituted the most detailed report on the Ghetto uprising, it should be noted that it had edited out significant details from the messages it had referred to. The first message of 25 April had not ended with 'being murdered alive en masse', but had continued:

Mouths of drain pipes are blocked by German guards. The Jews fight back furiously and have killed and wounded about a thousand of the enemy. The burn factories and stores of German war industry. The Polish population marvel at the spirit of the Jewish defence. The reaction of the Germans is that of shame and rage. The Jewish Fighting Organisation addressed a proclamation to the people of Warsaw and the Polish Workers' Parties paid tribute to the fighters of the ghetto. *Only the power of the United Nations can offer immediate and effective help now. On behalf of the millions of Jews burnt and murdered and buried alive on behalf of those fighting back and all of us condemned to die we call to the whole world: it is imperative that the powerful retaliation of the United Nations shall fall upon the blood-thirsty enemy immediately and not in some distant future, in a way which will make it quite clear what the retaliation is for. Our closest allies must at last understand the degree of responsibility for such apathy in [the] face of an unparalleled crime committed by the Nazis against a whole nation, of which the tragic epilogue is being enacted now.*

*The heroic rising without precedent in history of the doomed sons of the ghetto should at last awake the world to deeds commensurate with the gravity of the hour.*<sup>258</sup>

What had been edited out of the first message, therefore, was the desperate plea for a United Nations rescue action and criticism of their apathy. This is also what had been edited out of the second message of 11 May. Compare the following with The Observer's version of the second message:

The heroic resistance of the ghetto of Warsaw continues with but a few strongholds holding out. The Jewish Fighting Organisation shows supreme agility and courage. Mr. Klepfisch, an engineer who was one of the pillars of the armed resistance, member of the Bund died like a hero. German cruelties are gruesome. Many are burnt alive, while thousands are being shot or taken away to camps. Members of the Presidency of the Jewish Communal Council were shot: They were: Lichtenbaum, Wielikowski, Sztolchman, Szereszewski, Stanislaw. A few thousands remained underground and in the store-houses of the ghetto. The store-house defences are

<sup>258</sup>PRO FO 371/34550 piece 110. Italics mine.

being overcome after stiff resistance. The same goes for the shelters. The Germans are shelling and setting on fire one block of houses after another. Explosions and fires everywhere. The ghetto is surrounded by police who block drain pipes. Those who flee the inferno are caught and shot. The Jewish Fighting Organisation remains in being in the ghetto, while the epic heroism is nearing its end and remnants of Jewish centres in the provinces are being completely wiped out. - *The Free World, the World of Justice remains silent and apathetic. It is amazing. Cable immediately what you have done. We expect help for the remnants who are saving themselves.*<sup>259</sup>

The Press found such strongly-worded criticisms and pleas for aid embarrassing, especially in the aftermath of Bermuda; so much so that even The Observer, a critic of the Bermuda Conference, cut out the above sections. Two days later, 25 May, The Times printed a 31 line article at the bottom of the third column on its third page. It was headed:

POGROM IN THE WARSAW  
GHETTO  
—  
JEWS' DESPERATE FIGHT

Although The Times' article on the uprising was placed in a less conspicuous position, its report of the first message (28 April) from Poland was slightly more detailed than the Observer's. In addition to the text of the 28 April message printed by the Observer two days earlier, The Times reported: 'Mouths of drain-pipes are blocked by German guards. The Jews fight back furiously and have killed and wounded about 1,000 of the enemy. They burn factories and stores of German war industry.' However, while it reported a little of the Jews' plea for rescue, it edited out the condemnation of United Nations apathy: 'It is imperative that the powerful retaliation of the United Nations shall fall upon the blood-thirsty enemy immediately and not in some distant future, in a way which will make it quite clear what the retaliation is for.' Moreover, The Times cut comment on the second message (11 May) down to the following: 'The second message, dated May 11, said that the resistance was nearing its end.'

On 5 June the Daily Telegraph printed an eleven line article on the Warsaw Ghetto uprising at the bottom of the third column on page three - in between the horse-racing selections and advertisements for an artificial fertiliser and a 'Pelmanism' mind training course (to combat anxiety); the article directly above, headed 'STRAWBERRIES NOW', reported that the first strawberries of the season were on sale in London. The article said:

<sup>259</sup>*ibid.*



## 2,700,000 MURDERED

The secret Polish radio station Swit states that in the battle of the Warsaw ghetto the Germans lost 300 killed and more than 1,000 wounded. They have murdered all but 300,000 of over 3,000,000 Polish Jews.

Swit also reports that trainloads of Jews from Bulgaria are being sent to the Treblinka death camp in Poland, where more than 7,000 can be executed in the gas chamber daily.

On May 12, Szymul Zygielbojm, one of the two Jewish members of the Polish National Council, grieved by the news of the final liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto and the silence of the Allies, committed suicide. The text of his suicide note was printed in full by the News Chronicle on 1 June in a 252 line article with the large three column-wide headline:

The Last Letter  
Of A Brave Man

Stanley Baron, the author of the article, began: 'This is the story of Szymul Mardechaj Zygielbojm, a leather worker from Poland. It is a story that will tear your heart, but I will tell it to you as deliberately and collectedly as I can because that is how Zygielbojm did. In a flat in Porchester Square early last month he gathered together the threads of his life which reached back to Lodz, to Warsaw, to the small town of Borowica, where he was born. He twisted them in his bitter hands and flung them in the face of the world. They found him unconscious and took him to St. Mary's Hospital and there he died. And then they found he had written a letter to President Raczkiewicz and General Sikorski. To that I shall come back.' At this point Baron described Zygielbojm's life in German-occupied Warsaw, and of how he had escaped to Britain. 'Why did Zygielbojm die?' he asked. Although he had recently learned that his wife and children had been murdered by the Nazis 'He did not die - not yet. But now, death was clear ahead.' Then Baron printed Zygielbojm's last letter. 'Here', he said, 'is that letter as though it had dropped through the letter-box with your paper - as though Zygielbojm had turned before he died and singled out you and me.' 'From the latest information received from Poland', Zygielbojm said, 'it is evident that the Germans, with full ruthless cruelty, are now murdering the few remaining Jews in Poland. Behind the walls of the ghettos the last act of a tragedy unprecedented in history is being performed.' Of course, the primary responsibility for the destruction of European Jewry lay with the Nazis, but, 'indirectly', he added, 'it also burdens the whole of humanity, the people and Governments of the Allied States, which, so far, have made no effort towards a concrete action for the purposes of curtailing this crime. By passive observation of the murder of defenceless millions and of maltreated

children, women and men, these countries have become accomplices of the criminals.' The Polish Government, he said, had 'in a high degree contributed to affect the opinion of the world, yet it has done so insufficiently. It did not do anything that could correspond to the magnitude of the drama now being enacted in Poland'. The murder of European Jewry was still going on 'incessantly', and he could 'not be silent' and could not 'live while the remnants of the Jewish people in Poland, of whom I am a representative, are perishing'. His 'comrades' in the Warsaw Ghetto 'perished with weapons in their hands in their last heroic impulse', but it had not been granted to him to die with them. Rather, by his death, he said, '[I wish to] express my strongest protest against the inactivity with which the world is looking on and permitting the extermination of the Jewish people. I know how little human life is worth today. But as I was unable to do anything during my life, perhaps by my death I shall contribute to the breaking of the indifference of those who are able to save now, maybe at the last moment, the rest of Polish Jews who are still alive, from certain annihilation'. His life, he added, belonged to the Jewish people in Poland, and therefore he gave it to them. He trusted, in conclusion, that 'the President and the Prime Minister will direct these, my words, to all those for whom they are destined, and that the Polish Government will immediately begin an appropriate action in the fields of diplomacy and propaganda in order to save from extermination the remains of the Polish Jews who are still alive.'

No other paper printed even excerpts from Zygielbojm's suicide note. The Daily Herald recorded Zygielbojm's death by printing a 102 line article by Hannen Swaffer on 18 May, which noted Zygielbojm's frustration with the Allies' inactivity over rescue. Swaffer recalled how in December 1942 Zygielbojm, speaking to Jewish leaders in London, declared: 'Your brethren and sisters with their children are crying for help from the edge of their mass graves....Their death cries are not being heard. No one seems to care. The democratic Governments are silent. The Jews are helpless. You have only one duty. You must die with your people and so rouse the conscience of the world.' Zygielbojm had ended, Swaffer said, by 'saying that they should go to Downing Street in a body and commit suicide on the steps of Number 10. "Then and only then will the world see what the slaughter of a people means," he concluded. "Perhaps then someone will act and save those who can be saved from the butchers of Hitler's Germany." 'The speech', Swaffer added, 'was received in an astounded silence, broken by sobs. But Whitehall's ban on immigration was not lifted.' The Commons, Swaffer went on, had risen and stood in silence in 'tribute to all stricken Jewry', 'but the Bermuda conference, just over, produced no plan to rescue the Jews from Hitler's mass-murder plot....Ziegelbojm, like many of his fellow Jews, was in despair. He saw his own race being exterminated but heard only "sympathy" and regret....The United

Nations had done nothing to save his people, he said. He found himself helpless and hopeless. And, as though his passing were a reply to the Bermuda Conference and a commentary in advance on the Commons debate, Shmuel Ziegelbojm was found dead.'

The only other paper to record Zygielbojm's death was The Times, on 19 May, which, in a short 35 line article on page three, neglected to note that he had committed suicide and totally avoided all reference to the reasons for Zygielbojm's death. On 9 June the paper printed an inconspicuous twelve line article at the bottom of column five on page two (next to an advertisement for gin and below a report of school cricket results), which reported the results of an inquest into Zygielbojm's death. The coroner, it said, had recorded a 'verdict of suicide while the balance of mind was disturbed'. In an understatement symbolic of the Press' response to the news of the extermination of European Jewry between January 1942 and June 1943, The Times concluded that Zygielbojm had been 'worried about the treatment of Polish Jews by the Germans and about his wife and two children in Poland'.

## Conclusion

It is clear from this study that although the British newspapers were in receipt of much accurate information concerning the extermination of European Jewry during the period 1942-43, the Press did *not* print accurately 'exactly' what was happening so that 'few facts...were left unstated'.<sup>260</sup> In fact, close analysis has revealed that there was a huge disparity between the information available to each newspaper and that which was finally printed in its pages. Perhaps if one read every edition of every newspaper on sale this disparity could have been somewhat reduced, but no ordinary reader did that, with the result that he/she could have read their paper for week after week, month after month, without coming across news of the extermination of European Jewry. Not that the Press could reasonably be expected to print *all* the information which was available to them on this subject. The shortage of newsprint had reduced the popular papers to four pages and the class papers to between six and eight pages, with the effect that newspaper editors were placed under great pressure when it came to selecting the items to be printed in each edition. The editors were therefore presented with the unenviable task of selecting what they regarded as the most important news from a mass of 'important' information, and their choice was naturally reflected in the size of headline, layout and positioning of an article within their newspaper. Naturally, the editors invariably selected news from the war fronts for the most preferential treatment, which meant that all other news of 'lesser' importance had to be slotted into any remaining space. However, the space which was spare was usually given over to items of direct interest to the British public, and reports of atrocities against Jews did not fit into this category. Even though Britain had gone to war with Germany over the issue of Poland, the nation was still very insular in its attitudes towards foreigners; an attitude which was given eloquent expression by Neville Chamberlain during the Czechoslovak crisis of 1938: 'How horrible, fantastic, incredible, it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas-masks here because of a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing.'<sup>261</sup> What made matters worse from the point of European Jewry, was that these foreigners were Jews, a people of whom the average Briton knew of, understood and liked even less than the Czechs, Poles and so on. Indeed, many Britons, including newspaper staff and government officials, had a peculiar ability to feel simultaneously both genuine outrage against Nazi anti-Semitism and personal antipathy towards Jews, while acquitting themselves of the same charge of anti-Semitism on the basis that they possessed many Jewish friends.

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<sup>260</sup>Sharf, *op. cit.*, p.113.

<sup>261</sup>Neville Chamberlain, 27 September, 1938, as reported by The Times of 28 September, 1938.

Thus Harold Nicholson M.P., an official in the Ministry of Information during the war, wrote in June 1945: 'Although I loathe anti-Semitism, I do dislike Jews.'<sup>262</sup> Similarly, Walter Layton, Chief-executive of the News Chronicle, writing on 15 January 1940 in reply to a Mr. Douglas Reed (who had accused the News Chronicle of being controlled by Jews), said:

My dear Reed,

I do not propose to publish your letter. This is not because the N.C. is pro-Jew. There is not the slightest truth in the Nazi claim that the News Chronicle is under Jewish influence. The ancestry of its owners and the chief executive is, from this point of view, beyond reproach, nor is there any kind of financial influence on policy or pressure from Jewish quarters.

I personally understand and to some extent share the prejudice which very many people feel with regard to Jews. But, on the other hand, I strongly deprecate anti-Jewish propaganda in this country as contrary to the Liberal outlook of the News Chronicle...<sup>263</sup>

Such attitudes influenced the newspapers (especially the popular newspapers) against making much of reports atrocities against Jews, especially when there was so much horror around anyway as a result of the war.

Indeed, it is a surprising fact that the increased publicity concerning the fate of the Jews in December 1942 actually produced a growth in levels of anti-Semitism in Britain, prompting the News Chronicle to publish the results of a specially commissioned British Institute of Public Opinion on 1 April 1943. Ian McLaine has observed:

After falling off between August and December 1942,...anti-Semitism appears to have been revived by the authoritative disclosures of the Nazis' systematic massacre of European Jews. Although there was 'extreme horror' and 'widespread indignation, anger and disgust' at the news, there took place a recrudescence of feeling against Jews in Britain and Home Intelligence came to the conclusion 'that "as a result of the publicity, people are more conscious of the Jews they do not like here" '<sup>264</sup>

The official acknowledgement of the German extermination plan only succeeded in widening still further the breach in many people's minds between anti-Semitism and their own 'legitimate' anti-Jewish attitudes. A Mass Observation report of 10 March 1943 recorded the following opinion:

It is a pity that the Jews have no homeland - no country of their own. In the tragic history of the Jews, ever insecure materially and so often treated with brutality, there

<sup>262</sup>Nigel Nicholson, *op. cit.*, p. 409.

<sup>263</sup>Walter Layton to Douglas Reed, 15/1/40, Layton 9:23, Walter Layton Papers, Trinity College Library, Cambridge University.

<sup>264</sup>Ian McLaine, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

may be an excuse for the behaviour of so many of them today. It is untrue of apologists for the Jews to explain away the widespread wave of anti-semitism in this country as being due to xenophobia - always, they say, so common in wartime. It may be one factor, just as Goebbel's propaganda may be another. But in L. which has been flooded with Jews since it was found to be one of the less vulnerable areas, one hears all sorts of people complain of their greed, sharp practice, and lack of the sense of 'playing cricket'. Hounded out of Europe and left with few sanctuaries except this country, it seems to me so stupid of an exceptionally intelligent people, as the Jews undoubtedly are, not to have seized the opportunity to show the world that they can rise above selfish motives, and set an example of that foresight which the Jews so notably possess. As it is, there is little doubt that large sections of the middle-classes would, if despoiled harshly by the war, be swung over to the banner of 'Down with the Jews'. It is deplorable to think about it, and I hate the idea. But one must admit that the behaviour of many Jews is making the ground more fertile for such ideas every day.

And again, this comment:

Personally, I always find individual Jews very pleasant people, and I normally get on well with them. I can treat them just as I would any Britisher. Yet I must admit that I have a certain repugnance to Jews as a whole; I think it is pure prejudice (I hate to call it instinct, though I have heard others describe their dislike of Jews by that word) and I can see no logical reason for it. For the Jews abroad I have nothing but sympathy and see no reason why we should not welcome them and offer them asylum as long as they need it or wish for it.

Indeed, a Mass Observation investigator in Manchester, the report stated, 'frequently heard' remarks such as this: ' "Well, there's no doubt that they (the Jews) have got too much power in England - they want restraining. It's not good for anybody to get control of too much, I think. Not that I believe in prosecuting them like Germany. I wouldn't have anybody hurt, but something could be done by the Government to keep them in their places a bit" '.<sup>265</sup>

The few Press archives which remain and the personal papers of newspapermen, such as Lords Beaverbrook and Astor, contain remarkably few references to the fate of European Jews during the war years; the Manchester Guardian archive, however, is a notable exception. It might actually be that the prevalence of the many internal minutes, memos, letters and other material relating to the annihilation of European Jewry during the war in the files of the Manchester Guardian archive reflects nothing more than accident, but I believe that to be unlikely. On the contrary, the prevalence of such material reflects the Manchester Guardian's well-documented, long-standing concern for the fate of European Jewry. By implication, therefore, the lack of such material in other archives and personal papers may thus also indicate a parallel long-standing lack of concern for the fate of European Jewry. Such overwhelming silence cannot be ignored; the fact that they contain virtually no references to the fate

<sup>265</sup> 'Recent Trends in Anti-Semitism', 10/3/43, Mass Observation Archive.

of the Jews during the war is in itself significant, and, as has been suggested above, anti-Semitism and indifference certainly played their parts in inspiring this silence. In any case there was so much else to worry about with regard to the progress of the war, and so many personal tragedies to come to terms with, that people felt that they had little time or energy left to be really concerned with the issue of the extermination of the Jews in a far away country. As Harold Nicholson lamented in December 1942: 'It is a horrible thing to feel that we are so saturated with horrors that this Black Hole on a gigantic scale scarcely concerns us.'<sup>266</sup> Thus the Press, public and Government put the suffering of the Jews on to one side and ignored it, much to the consternation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who warned in October 1942: 'There is a line in Mark Anthony's speech over the dead body of Julius Caesar in Shakespeare's play - all pity choked with custom of fell deeds. We are in danger of sinking to that condition. Events which would have aroused consternation in the first decade of this century now pass almost unnoticed. The sufferings of 1914-18, and much of the period between the two wars, led to a hardening of hearts. The drain upon sympathy began to be unbearable. We are in danger of becoming morally numb. For this reason it would be right that we should meet face to face the fact of monstrous evil and realise its meaning.'<sup>267</sup>

However, as we have seen, this 'hardening of hearts' was, more directly, the product of the discrediting of 1914-18 atrocity propaganda (in particular, the corpse factory story) during the 'period between the wars'. The knowledge that many similar reports of atrocities and 'events... [had] aroused consternation in the first decade of this century' and during the 1914-18 war, only to be exposed later as lies and exaggerations, appeared to the British Press, public and Government to be adequate justification for allowing reports of the extermination of European Jewry to 'pass almost unnoticed'. Since the Press, public and Government were each determined not to repeat the experience of the Great War each applied its own 'filter' of scepticism to the news of atrocities against Jews. This did not necessarily imply the absolute rejection of the information concerned, (though it often did), but resulted in the denial of certain specifics contained in a report, usually anything that seemed incredible, fanciful or exaggerated, such as large numbers of Jewish dead, or allegations of the utilisation of corpses for economic purposes, especially when the information came from 'unreliable' and 'politically motivated' Jewish sources. The assertion that the Germans were exterminating the whole of European Jewry according to a concerted plan was simply too incredible for the normal mind to assimilate. The death of tens and perhaps hundreds or a thousand was conceivable, but reports of massacres of Jews

<sup>266</sup>Nigel Nicholson, *op. cit.*, p. 266.

<sup>267</sup>*News Chronicle*, 30 October 1942.

often dealt with figures of tens and hundreds of thousands, while, overall the Nazis were said to have murdered one million (June 1942), then over two million Jews (December 1942). In the face of this much horror the imagination of Press, public, and Government failed, for only 'seeing was believing'; thus the appeals of Jewish organisations to 'believe the unbelievable' fell on stony ground.<sup>268</sup> When such material was passed along the line of transmission from Government to Press to public, it was communicated at each stage along with snowballing reservations concerning its ultimate accuracy. The Foreign Office might express its doubts to Press correspondents via its News Department, thus confirming the general fears of an editor who (if it reached such a stage) thus communicated it to the reader with the reservations expressed in the form of layout, headline size, page positioning and or the article's wording; the reader would then apply his own 'filter' of scepticism because he/she was also convinced of the fundamental inaccuracy of atrocity stories and wary of their publication in the Press.

Consequently, the news of the extermination of European Jewry was rarely presented in a manner commensurate with the gravity of the news itself. Articles were all too often 'hidden' in inconspicuous positions on the back pages of the popular papers, and on the inside pages of the class papers, while anaemic headlines underlined the general impression thereby given - that the news reported was not all that important, and could not really be relied upon for accuracy. The evidence shows that the newspapers were not so full of important war news that no place could have been found in the more prominent positions for news of the extermination of European Jewry. I have noted case after case where news of massacres received less attention than relatively less important domestic or foreign news. When, for example, in June 1942 the World Jewish Congress announced that over one million Jews had been annihilated by the Nazis since the beginning of the war, the News Chronicle did not deem this important enough to warrant an article by itself and placed it at the bottom of a report on how the Germans had ordered the deportation of 8000 Lorrainers to Poland as a reprisal for resistance.<sup>269</sup> On 6 April 1942 the News Chronicle accorded only seven lines to an article which reported the systematic massacre of over 100,000 Jews in the occupied Soviet Union. Moreover, it was printed next to an advertisement for 'Cherry Blossom Boot Polish' near the bottom of the last column on its back page, while the article directly above it, which reported that 'Vichy Now Has 1,000 Modern Warplanes', received much larger headlines and nineteen lines; the article immediately

<sup>268</sup>Ignacy Schwarzbart to Press representatives at World Jewish Congress Press Conference, 1 December 1942.

<sup>269</sup>News Chronicle, 8 June 1942.



to its left, which reported that 'MINERS REJECTED TERMS, SO £15-A-WEEK STRIKE GOES ON', was apportioned large, double-column headlines and twenty lines. On 5 June 1943, the Daily Telegraph placed an article on the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto at the bottom of its third column on page three, in between the horse-racing selections and a fertiliser advertisement; the article immediately above it reported on the availability of summer strawberries. The evidence of this study shows that all too often it was news of and comment on the extermination of European Jewry which was left out for articles arguably less important than itself. However, as W.P. Crozier wrote to Eleanor Rathbone on 14 October 1942: 'Journalists maintain - at least if they are good journalists - that if a thing is important enough there is always room for it, room being found by leaving something less important out.'<sup>270</sup>

The fact that the Nazis had 'prophesied' the destruction of European Jewry for over eleven years mitigated against both the Press and Government's earlier perception of the Nazis extermination plan during 1942. The annihilitic content of Nazi declarations was generally ignored by the Press. Only the Manchester Guardian, for instance, appeared to take seriously the anti-Jewish rhetoric in Hitler's speech of 30 September 1942, in which, referring to his speech of 20 January 1939, he declared: 'I said that if Jewry started this war in order to overcome the Aryan people, then it would not be Aryans but the Jews who would be exterminated. The Jews laughed at my prophecies. I doubt if they are laughing now. I can assure them that they will lose all desire to laugh wherever they may be, and I shall be right in this prophecy too.' 'It is easy to take such a passage when first read as just another wild and whirling threat, but that would be a mistake', said the Manchester Guardian on 26 October 1942. 'Hitler means what he says', it added, 'He aims literally at the 'Extermination' of the Jews in Europe.' However, the Press generally *did* make the mistake of reckoning such declarations to be just another 'wild and whirling threat'. The newspapers had reported such anti-Jewish speeches for years without there being any signs of sudden annihilation. There were, of course, atrocities being committed against Jews, that the Press did not doubt, but what it did doubt was, firstly, whether the reports of these atrocities which it received were accurate and, secondly, whether, as the Jewish organisations were asserting, these atrocities amounted to a concerted plan to exterminate European Jewry. For these reasons the Press found the subject of atrocities against Jews embarrassing, and since it never really resolved its doubts, not even after the 17 December Declaration, it continued to place such reports of atrocities in inconspicuous positions and so on. Moreover, the Press' uncertainty over the

<sup>270</sup>W.P. Crozier to Eleanor Rathbone, 14 October 1942, Manchester Guardian Archives, 'Refugees' Box, 223/5/24.

veracity of atrocity reports led it quite naturally to rely upon the British Government's judgement in this matter, and, as a corollary, its assessment of the situation of the Jews in Europe. Clearly, the Press thought, the British Government (with its intelligence networks and experts in various fields) was in a better position to discern the truth of what was going on in Europe than the Jewish organisations. The result was that the Press often refrained from printing information until (if at all) the British Government gave its un/official *imprimatur*. Thus when the news of the mass deportations from the Warsaw Ghetto reached the West in July 1942, the vast bulk of the Press remained silent, for the reports from Poland had clearly asserted that the inhabitants of the Ghetto were being liquidated on arrival at their destination; the British Government, and for that matter the Polish Government in exile, found that difficult to believe. Not only did the British Government use its influence with the Press to prevent the publication of reports of atrocities whose veracity it doubted, it also intervened, at least in the immediate aftermath of the Joint Allied Declaration of 17 December 1942, to prevent the publication of articles which pressed for the introduction of measures to rescue Jews from the Nazi maelstrom. The Press complied with the Government's request, thus denying 'pro-rescuers' a voice at the time when, shortly after the Declaration, while the public's emotions were (relatively speaking) still roused in indignation at the German extermination plan, significant pressure might have been brought to bear upon the Government. And, as has been seen, during the first few months of 1943 most newspapers significantly restricted reports and comment on the situation of the Jews in Europe.

Even in these circumstances 'pro-rescuers' were able to bring sufficient Parliamentary pressure to bear upon the British Government to impel it to convene (in association with the U.S. Government) the Bermuda Conference on Refugees. To be sure The Observer and News Chronicle became increasingly critical of Government policy, but their criticisms of Government policy on refugees and their demands that it take positive measures to relieve the Jews of Europe came too late. The fact that only The Observer protested against the restrictions placed on the Press at the Conference is indicative of how the Press had generally submitted its will to the Government on the issue of atrocities against Jews. The majority of newspapers, if they did not actively support the Government's position at Bermuda, remained silent, and enabled the Government to carry out a public relations coup - to impress upon the general public that all had been done that could be done to help the Jews. And so the whole issue was allowed to gradually fade out of Press and public consciousness. Szymul Zygielbojm's suicide was a last effort on his part to draw attention to the plight of the Jews, but his suicide note was generally ignored by the Press.

It is impossible to fully comprehend the general silence of the Press after the issuing of the Joint Allied Declaration in December 1942 without reference to the issue of Palestine. A study of Press attitudes with regard to the question of Palestine is vital because, as Andrew Sharf has declared: 'Palestine was the one place where British policy actually clashed with the efforts of those who were striving to save potential victims. And so Palestine became an interesting test of attitudes to refugees.'<sup>271</sup> This was so for both the British Press and Government. The extent to which both these institutions were willing to consider modification of their positions with regard to the 1939 White Paper provides us, therefore, with a good indication of the degree to which they had been moved by the 'revelations' of 17 December 1942, and the extent of their grasp of the desperate situation of the Jews of Europe. As Major-General Neill Malcolm said in a letter to *The Times* on 22 December 1942: 'Only a few thousand have now any hope of rescue. Is it really true that in the whole world no room can be found for them? ...A promise that at some future date both the ringleaders and actual perpetrators of the outrages will be brought to book is but cold comfort for, as I have said, it saves no lives.' The dilemma which thus faced the Press in December 1942 was whether they should begin a debate on and or encourage the British Government to override the perceived exigencies of established policy in order to save the lives of as many Jews as possible who might escape from Hitler's death camps.

Naturally, immediately after the issuing of the Joint Allied Declaration, Zionists stepped up calls for the opening up of Palestine for unrestricted Jewish immigration. They believed that Palestine was, both economically and geographically, the most logical place of reception for any escapees; thus, for example, immediately after the Declaration, Moshe Shertok, of the Jewish Agency in Palestine, travelled to Britain and submitted 'plans to save Jews from Hitler's policy of extermination and send them to Palestine to alleviate the acute labour shortage...to the British and United Nations Governments'. He asserted that Palestine could *immediately* absorb 50,000 Jews in its war industries, and that there was room for thousands more children. 'It is imperative', he said, 'that every Jew who can possibly be saved from Europe should be brought to reinforce the bastion of democracy which Jewish Palestine constitutes today.'<sup>272</sup> Indeed, as Bernard Wasserstein has declared: 'There [was] in reality nowhere else that refugees might have gone in substantial numbers.'<sup>273</sup> However, the British Press refused to consider any connection between the extermination of the Jews in Europe

<sup>271</sup>Sharf, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

<sup>272</sup>*News Chronicle*, 22 December 1942.

<sup>273</sup>Wasserstein, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

and British refugee policy in Palestine. 'From the beginning of the Nazi persecutions until the end of the war and after, there was a strong inclination [among the Press] either to deny the need to make any such connexion, or to say as little about it as possible. There were some [newspapers] who even managed to ignore it altogether.'<sup>274</sup> The majority of British newspapers had welcomed the introduction of the White Paper in 1939, and, as with the British Government, regarded it as an essential buttress of Britain's position in the Middle East. The Daily Telegraph, for example, unequivocally hailed the White Paper in 1939. It had long since championed the cause of disconnecting immigration policy in Palestine from the persecution of the Jews in Germany. For instance, on 17 November 1938, a week after *Kristallnacht*, the Telegraph's editorial insisted that 'the connection between persecution and Palestine, is sentimental and coincidental....At the risk of being accused of lack of humanitarian feeling, we say explicitly that British obligations in Palestine cannot forever or even temporarily be influenced by the malefactions of certain European States towards their Jews'.<sup>275</sup> Indeed, only two weeks previously, on 3 November 1938, The Times had also expressed its opinion that immigration policy in Palestine should not be influenced by the persecution of German Jews.<sup>276</sup> When the White Paper was published in May 1939 the Daily Telegraph declared that it provided 'FAIR MEASURE FOR JEW AND ARAB', and declared that even as it stood, its immigration provisions 'already exceeded the bounds of prudence'.<sup>277</sup> The Times also welcomed the White Paper, but almost ignored the immigration issue altogether, only commenting that the Zionists should not consider its provisions unjustified since a period of five years had been gracefully granted during which Jewish immigration to Palestine might continue. The Observer considered the White Paper to be 'logical'; the Daily Sketch thought it was 'sound'; while the Daily Express called it a 'supremely wise act of statesmanship'. Although less sure, the Sunday Times was prepared to give it a go.<sup>278</sup> Only a few papers criticised the White Paper: the Daily Mirror accused the British Government of unscrupulous appeasement; the Daily Herald condemned the White Paper as 'incredibly mean'; the Manchester Guardian criticised it as a betrayal of trust.<sup>279</sup> The News Chronicle, while sympathetic to the Jewish case, was more ambivalent with regard to the White Paper. The paper's policy conference on 19 May 1939 decided:

...we should keep to the attitude already put forward in a leader the previous week, i.e., that we recognised the Government was faced with an almost insoluble problem,

<sup>274</sup>Sharf, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

<sup>275</sup>*ibid.*, pp. 183-184.

<sup>276</sup>*ibid.*, p. 183.

<sup>277</sup>*ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>278</sup>*ibid.*, pp. 184-185.

<sup>279</sup>*ibid.*, p. 186.

that it was difficult to suggest any alternative policy and that the success of that policy depended on the use that was made of the ten-year truce. It was also agreed that since Jewish emigration was to be restricted it should be the Government's responsibility to provide alternative opportunities for the Jews in the other parts of the Empire. This was a good moment in which to press this point and if we could present it from the humanitarian point of view, it would help mitigate the adverse feeling that the White Paper was likely to create in the U.S.<sup>280</sup>

Thus the News Chronicle proclaimed on 18 May: 'A time when Jews are being hounded out of Central Europe in vast numbers is hardly the time to slam the door of what they have long regarded as their rightful home.'<sup>281</sup>

Little had changed by December 1942; indeed, if anything, support for the White Paper policy had become more entrenched due to the uncertainties of the war situation. Thus, in reacting to the revelations of December 1942, none of the papers studied made any connection between the extermination of the Jews of Europe and the possibility of rescue in Palestine. On 16 December, for example, the Daily Herald commented that 'Protest for the moment is all that we can do - except to work harder than ever to destroy the regime'. Two days later, the Herald asked: 'What practical steps can be taken to alleviate the lot of the Jews who are in Hitler's power?', only to answer: 'there is little very little that we can do'. Similarly, the News Chronicle, on 5 December, asked: 'What practical steps can be taken...? Protests are of no avail. Reprisals are out of the question....The certainty of punishment will gain in strength'. The Daily Mail and News of the World ignored the issue of the extermination of the Jews altogether in their leaders between December 1942 and June 1943. Other newspapers generally commended the principle of rescue without being specific. Thus the Observer, on 13 December, urged the Government to give a clear 'declaration...that everything humanly possible will be done and is being done to wrest the victims from the butcher's grip and to provide sanctuary'. The Daily Telegraph declared that measures of rescue 'commend themselves to everyone, but...must...be only a slight alleviation', while The Times asserted more strongly that the Allies had a moral responsibility to 'promote and encourage' Jewish emigration 'whenever and wherever it is possible'.<sup>282</sup>

It was several months again before The Times printed a leader on the subject of refugees. On 3 April its leader, 'A POLICY FOR REFUGEES', managed to examine the background to the 'refugee' problem which was soon to be examined by the

<sup>280</sup>'Notes on Policy Conference No. 22, Friday, May 19th, 1939', Layton 89:29, Walter Layton Papers, Trinity College Library, Cambridge University.

<sup>281</sup>Sharf, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

<sup>282</sup>Daily Telegraph, 18 December 1942; The Times, 12 December 1942.

Bermuda Conference without making any kind of reference to the Jews, thus avoiding the need to refer to Palestine at any length. On 20 April the paper printed a leader on 'The Bermuda Meeting', again managing to avoid mentioning the word Jew and making no reference to Palestine; while on 20 May, the leader, 'Victims of Nazi Terror', concurred with the Government statement in the House of Commons on the results of the Bermuda Conference. It was 'not lukewarmness', it said, 'but lack of means and opportunity' that 'sets the limit to action'. It appeared to be satisfied that the British Government was not withholding any 'practicable means of liberation' or aid which could reach Hitler's victims. Although reference was made to 'the systematic extermination of the Jews' there was no mention of Palestine or any other land as a possible sanctuary.

The Daily Telegraph was more candid in its treatment of the issue, invariably recognising that the refugees concerned were predominantly Jews and making plain its opposition to their settlement in Palestine. The crux of the Telegraph's position was made clear in its leader of 24 March, 'VICTIMS OF NAZISM.' The need to rescue the Jews was urgent, it said: 'No succour which is within the power of the United Nations, individually or collectively, should be denied.' It was genuinely dismayed that the British Government's promise to allow 4,500 Jewish children with 500 accompanying adults from Bulgaria to Palestine had not been carried out, and declared that 'there must be places in the world where the wretched suppliants can be accommodated'. However, it said, 'the Palestine quota cannot be substantially altered without raising delicate political issues...Britain...cannot achieve a great deal by unilateral action' - the White Paper, Britain's fatted calf, could not be slaughtered to feed the perishing children of Israel.

Even those papers which adopted a more critical line with regard to the British Government's policy on the rescue of Jews from Europe, steered clear of linking the situation of the Jews of Europe and Palestine. Both the News Chronicle and the Observer insisted that the Allies had a moral obligation to take positive immediate action to save at least some of the Jews of Europe, but their injunctions to rescue never specifically made reference to Palestine. Thus the News Chronicle in its leader of 12 March spoke of how 'sanctuary on any terms would be better than certain death', without even considering whether Palestine might possibly provide such a sanctuary. In 'Rescue Now', on 21 April, the News Chronicle asserted that as Britain lead the denunciation of the Nazi extermination plan and lead in promising the determination to do everything possible to save the Jews, she had a moral obligation to take a lead in 'brushing aside purely technical difficulties, in offering money, organisation, and -

above all - living space for Hitler's victims'. But the News Chronicle avoided mention of Palestine, the most obvious place where British money and organisation and the 'brushing aside [of] purely technical difficulties' might have provided Jewish refugees with 'living space'. Similarly, the Observer's leader, on 25 April, which spoke of the Bermuda Conference's 'utter insensitiveness to human suffering', declared that of all the great Powers only Britain and the United States had the power to save the Jews, but failed to make the logical connection with Palestine. Ironically, therefore, the News Chronicle's criticism of the British Government on 21 May, that it had 'neither the imagination nor the will to get to grips with the realities of this [Jewish refugee] problem', was true of both itself and the Observer with regard to the issue of Jewish immigration to Palestine.

Ultimately, the Press' continued refusal to even consider a linkage between the issues of Palestine and the situation of the Jews in Europe may be attributed to a failure to fully comprehend - to *believe* - the news of the extermination of European Jewry. Knowledge of the reality of the Final Solution came to the British Press in December 1942, but it is my conviction that they suspended *belief* until the liberation of the German concentration camps in April 1945. The evidence suggests that political persuasion had very little influence on the process of assimilation of the knowledge of the Final Solution; papers across the broad spectrum of political opinion found the news of the extermination of the Jews equally difficult to absorb. The Holocaust was so unprecedented and horrific, and the scale of the killings so enormous, that it defied assimilation. For this reason the phenomenon of unbelief in the news of the Holocaust was not restricted to the British Press, but affected individuals and institutions throughout the whole Free World. Thus, this 'denial' mirrored in its extent the vast scale of the killings themselves, its path aided and life-span protracted by the influence of First World War atrocity reports and the prevalence of anti-Semitism. The refutation of the corpse factory story of 1917 had such a profound effect, in Britain at least, that even after the reception of the Vrba-Wetzler report in July 1944, Victor Cavendish Bentinck, the Assistant Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, asserted: 'I think we weaken our case against the Germans by publicly giving credence to atrocity stories for which we have no evidence.' 'These mass executions in gas chambers', he added, 'remind me of the story of the employment of human corpses during the last war for the manufacture of fat, which was a grotesque lie and led to the true stories of German enormities being brushed aside as being mere propaganda.'<sup>283</sup> The charge that no solid evidence existed by which the reports of atrocities against Jews might be

<sup>283</sup>Stephen Ward, 'Why the BBC ignored the Holocaust', The Independent on Sunday, 22 August, 1993.

confirmed or disproved was persistently raised by Government officials, and no doubt by the Press, throughout the period 1942-43. In retrospect it seems incredible that even after the reception of the Bund Report in Summer 1942, the Riegner Telegram, Agudat Yisroel and gravediggers' report during Autumn 1942, and the Karski report and Polish Note in November 1942, that Foreign Office officials could maintain that 'we have no actual proof of these atrocities', and that there was a lack of 'quotable and proved facts'; at the beginning of December another official noted that 'although atrocities are undoubtedly taking place, we have no reliable evidence'.<sup>284</sup> The trauma of disenchantment with the atrocity propaganda of the Great War had had such an enduring effect that neither the British Government nor the Press were willing to accept that reports of atrocities against Jews were authentic, especially when communicated through Jewish channels such as the World Jewish Congress. They demanded a level of proof which was impossible to satisfy until Allied troops liberated the German camps in Spring 1945. As the placards at the Daily Express exhibition of April 1945 put it: 'SEEING IS BELIEVING'; but by then, European Jewry had already been annihilated.

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<sup>284</sup>PRO FO 371/30923 pieces 64 and 68.

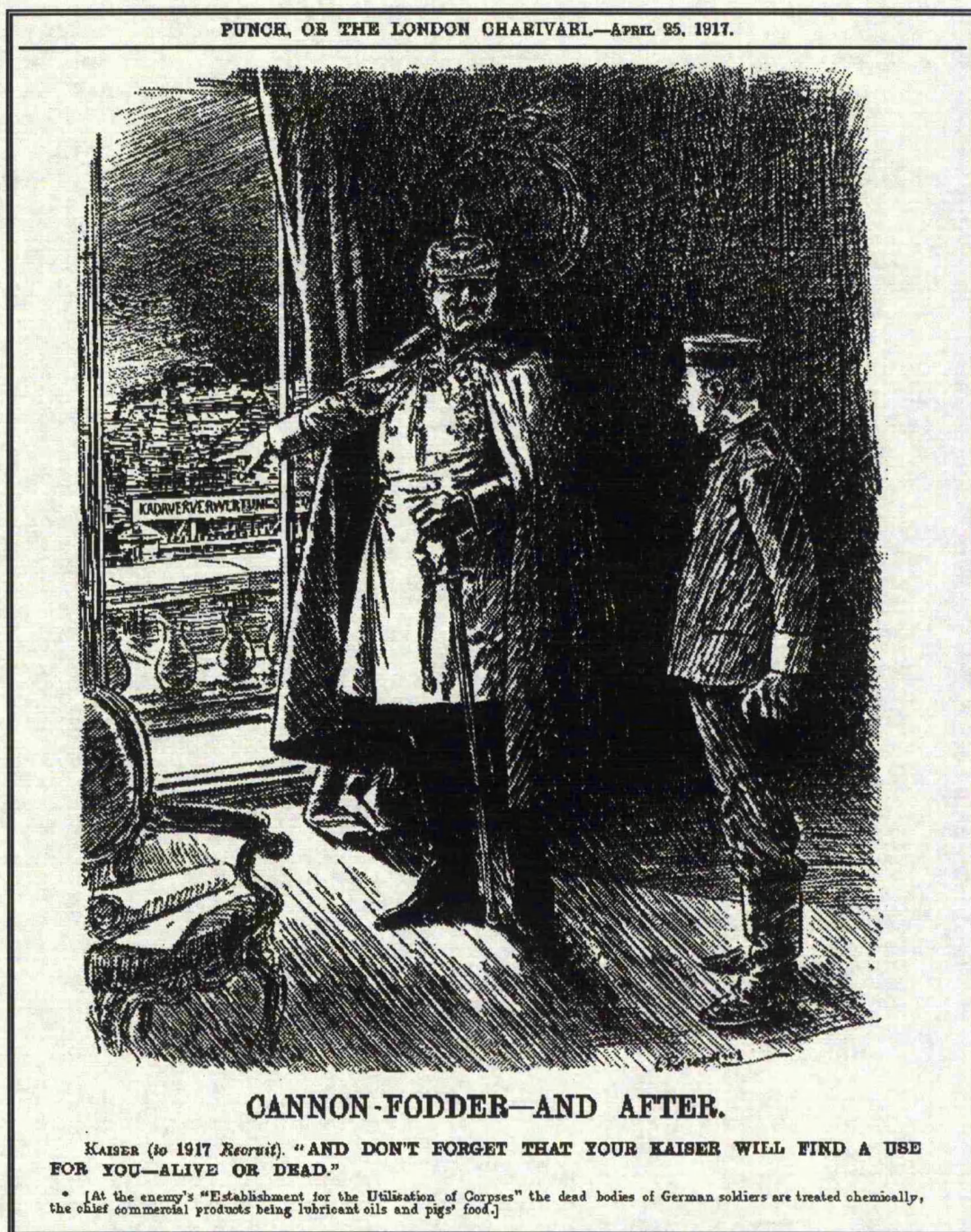






## APPENDIX 2:

Corpse Factory cartoon in Punch, 25 April, 1917.





## APPENDIX 3:

Report of the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Jews in Eastern Europe, the News Chronicle, 6 April, 1942.

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## May Have Base African Coast

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Vichy, Sunday.—A  
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and the United States  
consequently, the  
of the Department of  
State, as a result  
of the situation at  
Brazzaville.

## Shipyard Men Demand Removal of Admiralty Controller

Strong criticism of the Admiralty and of the appointment of Sir James Lithgow as  
controller of Merchant Shipbuilding was made at a shipyard workers' conference  
yesterday.

Nearly 200 delegates, representing 100,000 workers, attended from shipyards in  
London, Scotland and Wales.

A resolution demanding the removal of Sir James was passed after Mr. Robert

McLennan, of John Brown's  
yard, Clydebank, had said:

"The present method of ad-  
ministrative control is one of the  
most serious factors hindering  
production and the appointment  
of Sir James Lithgow, who  
knows nothing of shipbuilding,  
is a grave mistake."

He urged workers to support  
the removal of Sir James and  
the appointment of a controller  
who was a shipbuilder.

The vote was 100 to 10 in  
favor of the removal of Sir James  
and the appointment of a controller  
who was a shipbuilder.

PLANS HELD UP  
The alleged that Lithgow  
was planning to purchase  
ships for the Admiralty.

Plans drawn up by Sir  
James were held up by the  
Admiralty and the Navy.

A committee of the  
Admiralty was set up to  
investigate the matter.

The committee was  
headed by Sir James  
Lithgow.

The committee was  
set up to investigate  
the matter.

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## SECOND NIGHT RAID ON PARIS FACTORY

The picture below, one  
of several taken during  
the second night raid in  
succession on the Matford  
works at Puteaux, near  
Paris, shows how destruc-  
tive was the damage done  
by our bombers. The bril-  
liant moonlight helped  
the attack, which was  
premiered at 10.15.

A. The main building.  
B. One of the chimneys.  
C. The all served to let

our bombs at once. In a  
few minutes the place  
was ablaze. Smoke made  
it impossible to obtain an  
accurate photographic  
record of all the spots  
where the bombs fell.

B. Tracks of tracers  
coming up to our Wel-  
ingtons and Stirlings  
from the defending anti-  
aircraft guns.

C. Bursts of bombs  
which overtook the mark.

The Matford works  
had been sending 600 lorries  
a month to the Germans.

The picture below, one  
of several taken during  
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## Policeman Shot Dead in Battle With Armed Men

From Our Own Correspondent

DELFAST, Sunday.  
POLICE and armed men fought a battle in  
the Falls Road district of Delfast this afternoon  
and Constable Murphy was shot dead.

Police cars had been patrolling the streets in  
Nationalist areas to prevent I.R.A. parties com-  
memorating the Dublin rebellion of 1918.

When a shot struck one  
of the cars the police officers  
some of whom were in a  
bush on the side of the  
road, the shooting took place.

One of the men who was  
shot dead was Constable  
Murphy. He was shot in  
the back.

BACKFIRE SHOTS  
Bursting out of a house in  
the Falls Road, Delfast, Co. Tyrone,  
yesterday, the police officers  
were shot at from the back.

These immediately opened fire  
and Constable Thomas, Police  
officer of the Delfast, was  
shot in the back.

The police officers were  
shot in the back. The  
shooting was very close.

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## Burned Plane, Dined, Surrendered

From Our Own Correspondent

LONDON, Sunday.—After firing  
their planes, the German  
bombers were seen to  
burn and then to  
surrender.

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## MINERS REJECTED TERMS, SO £15-A-WEEK STRIKE GOES ON

Terms put forward by the owners to end the stoppage  
at Fawcett Pit, East Yorkshire Colliery, North Yorkshire,  
were rejected yesterday by a vote of 100 to 10.

Three hundred men are  
on strike because 27 miners want  
to work on less than 15 shillings  
a week.

Each day since March 25











## APPENDIX 6

'Vicky' cartoon, News Chronicle, 16 April, 1943.



S O S

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