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# “LET MY PEOPLE GO”

*Some practical proposals  
for dealing with Hitler's*

## **MASSACRE OF THE JEWS**

*and an appeal to*

## **THE BRITISH PUBLIC**

*By* **VICTOR GOLLANCZ**



NOTE

THE PRACTICAL PROPOSALS made in this pamphlet are not original: they have been variously worked out by several individuals and organisations with special knowledge of the subject, to whom my thanks are due. But I take sole responsibility for everything here written.

V. G.

I

SUMMARY: WHAT IS HAPPENING AND WHAT YOU CAN DO

I am told that many of the people who buy a pamphlet do not read it through, and that therefore it is desirable to begin, rather than to end, with a summary. Very well.

(1) Of the six million Jews or so who were living at the outbreak of the war in what is at present Nazi-occupied Europe, a high proportion—say between one and two million—have been deliberately murdered by the Nazis and their satellites.

(2) No discrimination has been made in favour of pregnant women, babies, children, the sick, or the very old. On the contrary, discrimination, such as it is, has been in favour of men from whom an adequate last ounce can be got in German war factories.

(3) The murders have taken the form of random shootings, mass shootings, mass electrocutions, mass poison-gassing, and transportation in conditions which inevitably involve death during the journey. This is over and above slow starvation by the allotment of hopelessly inadequate rations, or no rations at all.

(4) This treatment has been carried out with the greatest conceivable inhumanity, and has involved the maximum of hopelessness and despair. In particular, helpless children have had to face the fear of a torturing death without the strengthening sympathy of their parents, and their parents have had to know that they were doing so.

(5) All this is part, not of war, but of a quite deliberate policy, openly proclaimed, of exterminating the Jewish population of Europe.

(6) This policy, which has been pursued since the outbreak of the war, has been greatly speeded up during the last few months. It is now reaching its climax. *Unless something effective is done*, within a very few months these six million Jews will all be dead, except the fifty thousand or so in the countries at present neutral, and perhaps a few tens of thousands whom

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Hitler may find it convenient to work to the last ounce of their strength in his own war factories.

(7) *What, then, is being done?*

(8) Until a month or so ago—until, that is to say, a million or two had already been murdered—little of what was happening reached the general public. Governments and even experts, I presume, questioned the evidence: waited till it became irrefutable. A few humanitarians did what they could behind the scenes: and that was all. Then at last, during December, the facts were widely published, and on December 17th Mr. Eden made a statement of policy in the House of Commons.

(9) This is the Government's policy, as stated by Mr. Eden: that, when the war is over, "those responsible for these crimes shall not escape retribution." Just that, and nothing more. In response to a question, Mr. Eden added that vengeance (or retribution, as it is called) would be exacted against "all persons who can properly be held responsible for these crimes, whether they are the ringleaders or the actual perpetrators of the outrages."

(10) No one could doubt the genuineness and warmth of Mr. Eden's sympathy; but this "policy," it must be plainly said, will not save a single Jewish life. Will the death, after the war, of a Latvian or Lithuanian criminal, or of a Nazi youth who for ten years has been specially and deliberately trained to lose his humanity—will the death of these reduce by one jot or tittle the agony of a Jewish child who perhaps at this very moment at which I write on Christmas day, three hours after the sweet childish carol, 'O come, all ye faithful,' was broadcast before the seven o'clock news, is going to her death in a sealed coach, her lungs poisoned with the unslaked lime with which the floor is strewn, and with the dead standing upright about her, because there is no room for them to fall? In what scale will Almighty God weigh the future death against the present, and hold that the one 'compensates' for the other? And, if there is a judgment—and, surely, every man's act is its own judgment—what must be the judgment against any who may satisfy themselves with cries of future retribution, but do almost nothing to prevent, as they might prevent, present fear and torture and death?

(11) I shall be told that "the best way to save these people is to win the war." Of course: but what chance is there of winning it in time to save them? There are practical things that might be done *now*, though very soon it may be too late—things

which would not interfere with the winning of the war, and might perhaps even hasten it by showing oppressed people all over the earth that we do desperately loathe cruelty and oppression and are willing to do our very utmost to prevent it even when it affects "only foreigners." What are these things that might be done?

(12) What follows is the barest summary of proposals. Some of them will be dealt with at greater length in later sections. The aim throughout is simply *the saving of life now*. If all these proposals were adopted and succeeded, a great many lives would be saved; if even one of these proposals were adopted, *some* lives would be saved. And think of yourself for a moment, and consider whether it is not worth while to save even a single life from the extremities of fear and pain and despair, which are far worse than death.

(a) The United Nations should at once confer, in order to work out a concerted plan of rescue. In working out the plan, all the points mentioned below should be taken into consideration: what is possible in the case of each country, neutral or allied, should be considered, how the plan for one country may dovetail into the plan for another, what *quid pro quo's* are necessary in each case, and so on.

(b) The United Nations should approach Germany and other enemy countries through the Protecting Power or Powers,\* or other appropriate intermediaries, to allow Jews—and particularly parents and children—to emigrate, to grant them exit visas, and give them transportation facilities to points at frontiers whence the emigrants could be taken to places of refuge. Negotiations were conducted with the enemy through the Protecting Powers about the shackling of prisoners: isn't the saving of millions of lives even more important? What is the case for this proposal? As Miss Eleanor Rathbone has pointed out, the offer would be either refused or accepted. If refused, that would strip Hitler of the excuse that he cannot afford to fill useless mouths, and would so strengthen the resistance of all decent people in enemy-occupied countries. If accepted, it would not frustrate the economic blockade, because Hitler's alternative is not feeding but

\* A friend who has kindly read this pamphlet in proof suggests that the approach would more effectively be made, not by the United Nations acting officially through the Protecting Powers, but unofficially by the neutrals at the request of the United Nations, and against indemnification of costs.



extermination. The greatest difficulty is that of providing transport, shipping and places of refuge for large numbers. But the pace could be regulated and the resources of Christendom, if mustered, should surely suffice. Of course the danger of bringing in possible spies and fifth columnists in the guise of refugees would have to be guarded against. But this could be done, as at present, by interning all about whom there was any doubt until their cases had been investigated.

(c) Every possibility should be explored for the exchange of Jews in enemy-occupied territories against similar categories of enemy nationals. This would not alter the balance of effective man-power on either side; but in any event there could be no valid objection to the proposal so far as the categories of young children and old people were concerned.

(d) Whether or not proposals (b) and (c) succeeded, what follows is of the utmost urgency, in view of the fact that some Jews are still managing to escape.

(e) Of the European neutrals, some are at present allowing a limited number of refugees to pass through their territories, while others, it is understood, would allow a further number to enter if, but only if, those at present interned in their territories were got away. The United Nations, accordingly,

(1) Should make arrangements to evacuate at the earliest possible moment the refugees at present in these neutral countries;

(2) Should encourage these neutrals to allow the entry of as many more refugees as possible by guaranteeing that they would be evacuated at the earliest practicable moment, and at any rate after the war;

(3) Should further encourage these neutrals by guaranteeing food and money for the maintenance of the refugees.

(f) There should be an approach, in a systematic and planned fashion, to the South American States, in order to discover how many refugees, evacuated through the European neutrals, they would be willing to receive, either for the period of the war or permanently: and what arrangements, financial or otherwise, it would be necessary to make. Such an approach is particularly important in the case of the larger States with substantial Jewish communities, which would undertake to bear the responsibility for the refugees.

(g) Temporary camps should be immediately established in North Africa, Cyprus, Kenya, etc., so that, pending evacuation

to a more permanent home, the flow of refugees through the European neutrals should not be impeded. To such camps might be sent, especially, refugees who might be considered unsafe for unconditional release, until they had been "vetted."

(h) The International Red Cross should be approached to undertake the supervision of the work of evacuating the refugees, and suitable assistance should be given by way of additional and qualified personnel especially fitted for this kind of work.

(i) It is clear that, for geographical reasons, many escaping refugees could reach Palestine far more easily than any other haven. Moreover, the Jewish population there is prepared to take the fullest responsibility for the largest number. Many of the refugees could find work immediately in agriculture and industry. Palestine has considerable experience in the reception of children from European countries and of their training in agriculture and other occupations. The machinery of the Youth Aliyah organisation could be used for this purpose. As regards invalids and people above working age—in so far as they had no relatives in Palestine who could look after them—the Palestine Jewish Community and the Jewish Agency for Palestine would be prepared to carry the burden involved in maintaining them.

*But except to an extent quite insignificant in proportion to the need, the doors of Palestine are closed to these despairing men, women and children. They must be opened. The policy of treating Jewish refugees to Palestine as illegal immigrants who may not be admitted must immediately be reversed. This is an act at once within our power, without the necessity for any previous conference or discussion with other countries. It may very soon be too late. Then those who did nothing while there was yet time will bear a share of the responsibility for the murder of Jewish children, just as they bear a share of the responsibility for the murder of Jews now being sent East from formerly 'unoccupied' France, who were not rescued when they still might have been rescued.*

(j) It is particularly important that shipping should be provided at Lisbon, in so far as war exigencies permit, as a considerable volume of evacuation from France, Italy, Belgium and Holland could be directed through Spain and Portugal. It is still far easier to escape from Western Europe than from Poland, but time is terribly short, for every day Jews are being sent from the West by the thousands to the slaughter camps in Poland.

(k) I have left the simplest, the most urgent, the most immediately practicable proposal to the end; and now I hardly dare to set it down, for fear that the accusation it involves will not be



believed by the generous British public. Quite clearly, everything already suggested depends, both psychologically and practically, on the United Nations themselves providing for these hunted people every bit of sanctuary that they can. How, for instance, can the United Nations appeal to the South American States to take a quota of refugees: how can they beg the European neutrals to provide transit facilities: if they, the United Nations, keep their own doors locked, bolted, and barred? And I want to come down to brass tacks and to speak, not of the United Nations, but of Great Britain. For listen to the fact: listen to what we were doing, or not doing, at the very moment when Mr. Eden was announcing the "policy" of retribution against the Nazi criminals. Let me quote Miss Rathbone's words in the *News Chronicle* of December 17th, the day of Mr. Eden's statement:

"Few people realise the rigidity of the regulations by which the Home Secretary now controls the entry of refugees to this country and the corresponding regulations affecting the Colonies. Except for Allied nationals specially asked for by their Governments and a few children who cannot in effect be brought here, the door is practically barred. . . . *The first step, therefore, is to demand the revision of these regulations, 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.'* The whole matter has larger implications. The settlement during and after the war of refugees, especially the Jews, concerns not only the Home Office, but also the Foreign Office, the Dominions and the Colonies.

"It should not be regarded as the principal concern of a Home Secretary, over-burdened with other departmental duties and now a member of the War Cabinet. . . . The refugee question is too big for that. It deserves the undivided attention of an internationally minded Minister who could view the problem as a whole, deal with its present developments in co-operation with the other relevant Ministers and plan for its future. If that had been done several years ago it might have prevented incalculable suffering and saved tens of thousands of lives."

I add an extract from a letter of Major-General Sir Neill Malcolm to *The Times* of December 22nd:

"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 oversea 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 the worst might they not be taken into reception camps, and each one of us forego one or two mouthfuls a day in order to provide the necessary food? A promise that at some future date both 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."

It should be added that the present rigidity is all the more to be deplored because before the war, whatever may be thought of our official policy, the attitude of the public was one of the most open-hearted generosity. It should also be added that, if the British Government alone is here indicted, that is because Englishmen, to whom this pamphlet is addressed, are not responsible for other Governments. But there is little doubt that an at least equally strong case might be made out against the Government of the U.S.A., which has been—and is—as rigid as our own in its restrictions on the entry of refugees during wartime, though it can plead neither crowded territory nor limited food supplies.

\* \* \*

I want to say a word before I close this section, a word which may sound personal but has far wider implications. I already hear one or two people saying, "Your ancestors were freely admitted to this country; they, and you, have lived here with no disabilities and with little, if any, discrimination. It would become you to show gratitude. Leave any attack or agitation, necessary or otherwise, to others; as a Jew, be silent."

Let me make the position clear on behalf, not only of myself, but of all self-respecting Jewry. There can be no one in this island who loves it more than I do; it is my country, and I know no other. But before I am either an Englishman or a Jew I am a man, with the rights and dignity of a man. Few people now seem to believe in the Rights of Man, that doctrine or truth which flamed like a torch, with its great message of hope, through the eighteenth century, and is now all but extinguished in a murk of horror and despair. And yet it is the only doctrine that can save the world. So I do not show gratitude for being treated as a human



being ; for to do so would be to insult humanity. Nor do I keep silent ; for, even if I did not believe, as I do believe, that I must speak as a Jew, the duty to speak as a man would still be absolute. And it is as a man also that you, reader, are asked to listen.

## II

### AN APPEAL

Will you wash your hands of responsibility for all this, as Pilate did ? Will you pass by on the other side ? I cannot believe you will, because that would be contrary to the very essence of the British character. But if you will, it can only be because you do not use your imagination : because you fail to put yourself in the other man's place : because you do not ask yourself, " What should *I* be thinking and suffering if it were happening to *me* ? " If you saw a child playing in your own street, and knew that, unless you took some action within your power, it would be sent to a torturing death before the day was out, would you fail to act ? No : then will you fail to act *now* ? Does a little child in Warsaw suffer less and, God forgive us, *fear* less than a child in London, or Leeds, or whatever your town or village may be ?

In the next section some detail will be given of the horror to which no more than a reference has so far been made. As you read it do something, I beg you, which is as painful as it is necessary. You will read that ten thousand Jews are being sent every day from Warsaw to the slaughter camps further east : you will read that one hundred and fifty men, women and children are being packed into a sealed coach just big enough to hold forty, so that when they arrive the living, the dying, and the dead fall out together, and the peasants fly from the stench. Forget ' ten thousand ' : forget ' one hundred and fifty ' : or rather, remember them only for purposes of multiplication, and in order to grasp the magnitude of the horror. For a few brief moments, *be* just one of those human beings, whose body, with its nerves that can suffer so, and whose mind and soul, with all their resources of terror and despair, are concealed by the cold abstraction of ' one hundred and fifty ' and ' ten thousand ' and ' six million. ' And then be another, and another. Be the mother flinging her baby

from a sixth-story window : be a girl of nine, torn from her parents and standing in the dark of a moving truck with two corpses pressed close against her : be an old Jew at the door of the electrocution chamber. And only then, when you have been each of these for a few short moments, do the multiplication.

You will then say, you will surely say, " What can I do ? " Well, the practical measures by which some of these people may still be saved have already been set down, and two of them will be discussed more fully in later sections. Now the one thing you *cannot* think is " That is a matter for the Government. " We are a democracy : I had almost said ' We are *still* a democracy ' : for this is certain, that we shall not remain a democracy unless we act like one. And in a democracy no Government can act in flat defiance of the public wish, provided that it is sufficiently widespread, vocal, and determined. So what you have to do is, in Miss Rathbone's words, to ask yourself " What can *I* do to influence the Government, the Press, my M.P., my political party, Church, Trade Union or other organisation to make it plain that the Democracy, much as it cares for its own social security, cares even more immediately for the immediate problem of how many of these innocent men, women and children can be rescued from torture and death ? "

How can you do it ? By writing letters to your M.P. (House of Commons, S.W.1), to the Home Secretary, the Foreign Secretary (Whitehall, S.W.1), and your local paper, by organising meetings, passing resolutions—all the usual methods of democracy—urging particularly that our own regulations for the admission of refugees should be relaxed and the boldest possible measures of rescue adopted. In this way you will put to shame any doubts, if doubts there can really be, about your humanity. For, as I pass these pages for press, I find Professor Laski writing in *The Daily Herald* : " It is even whispered that a Minister of the Crown lectured a deputation of men like Cardinal Hinsley . . . who thought that Britain might provide a refuge for children for whom, otherwise, there is little hope or none. He warned them that these victims might, if British generosity were to save them, provoke an outburst of anti-Semitism in Britain. "

Dare you refuse to do everything you humanly can ? Dare you take upon yourself the responsibility of murder ? For that is what it comes to. " A country, " writes Mrs. Blanche Dugdale in the *Spectator*, " that does not open its doors to those who are hunted by murderers participates in the crime " ; and *you* are the country.



## III

## THE FACTS

Nothing is baser than 'atrocities mongering' for its own sake or, worse, for the sake of stirring up hatred against the enemy. War is, in its own nature, one vast atrocity: and it is *that* about which we should be thinking during the course of it, lest, when it is over, we should devote our attention, not to the creation of an international society which will make war impossible, but to punishing the enemy—which usually means in effect preparation for the next war, and then the next, and the next, and so on to an infinity of degradation.

Only one motive can excuse insistence on horrible acts committed by an enemy Government: namely, the desire to save, here and now, innocent people who might and would, if we were silent, be the next batch of victims.

It is for that reason, and for that alone, that the reader is asked to give the most careful attention to the Polish White Paper which, after a few paragraphs, will be printed almost in full. And he is asked to read it in the constructive spirit of "what can I do to help?" and not with a mood of mere fruitless revenge. For, indeed, we all have much on our consciences. While Hitler was persecuting the Jews from 1933 to 1939—not indeed on the present scale, but hardly less horribly—did not the Government of the day preserve complete silence? And yet it knew exactly what was happening, for almost immediately after war had been declared it issued a White Paper giving all the horrible details which it had been collecting, month after month, during the period of its silence. Yes, it knew what was happening; but it *used* what was happening, not to save the victims when it might have done so, but to stir up hatred of the enemy after war had been declared.

One further word. We all know that, in war, there is a great deal of lying propaganda on both sides: at this very moment both Germany and Italy are accusing *us* of atrocities, with a good deal of circumstantial detail and with an indignation which is probably quite convincing to their own people. May it not be,

therefore, that this alleged Polish horror is just another example of wartime propaganda? Should we not scrutinise every detail with the utmost care?

The point is well taken: but, for all that, it is not valid. I do not mean that every word of the Polish White Paper, and of the even more terrible supplementary documents issued by the Polish Ministry of Information (not printed in this pamphlet) is unquestionably true: indeed, given human nature and the difficulty of sifting evidence in war-time, any such thing would be most unlikely. I will go further: there is one story that has gained considerable currency which I quite flatly disbelieve. But as to the main facts—not only the extermination, but the general manner of the extermination—there cannot now be a shadow of doubt.

For, apart altogether from the immense mass of evidence, not only from Poland but from every European country, consider the following. Anyone who has studied Hitler's mind, as revealed both in his acts and in his utterances, cannot fail to be aware that for this pitiful paranoiac there is one supreme *idée fixe*: namely, that the Jews are a sub-race, that they are the cause of all the ills of Germany and Europe, and that it is his, Hitler's, literally divine mission to exterminate them. This is his belief: it is an absolutely genuine belief, in so far as a madman's belief can be called genuine: and perhaps the greatest of all the mistakes that have been made in dealing with Hitler is not to understand that when he says that he believes something, and that he intends to do something, however incredible, he *does* believe it and he *will* do it if he can. When, therefore, Hitler announced in February of this year that "the Jew will be exterminated," and when on November 8th 1942 he said:

"On September 1st 1939 I said . . . that if Jewry started this war in order to overcome the Aryan people, then it would not be the Germans who would be exterminated. The Jews laughed at my prophecies in Germany. 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."

—when he said this he was not "making propaganda": he was stating a plain intention which, in his certainty of being right, he was determined to carry out with all the force of his demonic will.

And, given this determination: given the determination to seize the opportunity of war and the occupation of Europe to



exterminate six million Jews; does not all the rest follow? Killing on this scale is not a nice business: it cannot be entrusted to ordinary people. Will you not, therefore, over a long period of years, train up a special corps to undertake the work? Will you not carefully select just the individuals who may be most easily perverted—often young men with special potentialities both for good and for evil—so that, when they have been brutalised year after year, by being made to commit brutal acts, they may at last be ready to do your bidding? (These are the special squads of the S.S.) And because there will not be enough of them, will you not recruit, for your murder squads, the very scum of the criminal classes in other countries? So we read, in the Polish Ministry of Information Bulletin of December 1st:

“From Monday July 20th onward, the task of guarding the ghetto bounds was entrusted to strong cordons of *junaks*, i.e., security battalions consisting of Lithuanians, Latvians, Ukrainians . . .”

and

“ . . . Gestapo men, of whom there are only ten or so in the ghetto areas, and ‘white guards’ [*i.e.*, non-Germans], of whom there are fifty. Outside the ghetto the walls are guarded by Ukrainians, Latvians, Estonians and Lithuanians, who fire at the windows of Jewish houses if anyone shows himself.”

And, having determined upon this vast extermination, will you be nice about how you do it? Will you provide comfortable and roomy coaches to take the condemned to the place of execution? Will you be careful to keep families together? Will you spare the young, the old, the sick? No: that would be grotesquely inconsistent: for simply to kill, to get rid of, to annihilate the sub-race—anyhow, and as quickly as possible—that is your sacred duty.

Here, then, is the major part of the

#### POLISH GOVERNMENT NOTE

handed by the Polish Foreign Minister to the Allied Governments, and reproduced in full in *The Manchester Guardian* of December 11th:

“ . . . Most recent reports present a horrifying picture of the position to which the Jews in Poland have been reduced. The new methods of mass slaughter applied during the last few months confirm the fact that the German authorities aim with systematic

deliberation at the total extermination of the Jewish population of 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. . . .

“The initial steps leading to the present policy of extermination of the Jews were taken already in October, 1940, when the German authorities established the Warsaw Ghetto. All the Jewish inhabitants of the capital were at that time ordered to move into the Jewish quarter assigned to them not later than November 1st, 1940, while all the non-Jews domiciled within the new boundaries of what was to become the ghetto were ordered to move out of this quarter. The Jews were allowed to take only personal effects with them, while all their remaining properties were confiscated. All Jewish shops and businesses outside the new ghetto boundaries were closed down and sealed.

“The original date for these transfers was subsequently postponed to November 15th, 1940. After that date the ghetto was completely closed, and its entire area was surrounded by a brick wall, and the right of entry and exit was reserved only to the holders of special passes issued by the German authorities. All those who left the ghetto without such a pass became liable to be sentenced to death, and it is known that German courts passed such sentences in a large number of cases. . . .

“The food rations for the inhabitants of the ghetto amounted to about a pound of bread per person weekly with practically nothing else. As a result prices in the ghetto were on the average ten times higher than outside, and mortality due to exhaustion, starvation and disease, particularly during the last two winters, increased on an unprecedented scale. During the winter 1941–42 the death-rate calculated on an annual base had risen to 13 per cent., and during the first quarter of 1942 increased still further. Scores of corpses were found in the streets of the ghetto every day.

“The population of the ghetto was officially stated to amount to 433,000 at the time the ghetto was established, and in spite of the appalling death-rate it was being maintained at this figure by importations of Jews from Germany and from the occupied countries, as well as from other parts of Poland.

“The outbreak of war between Germany and Soviet Russia and the occupation of the eastern areas of Poland by German troops considerably increased the number of Jews in Germany’s power. At the same time the mass murders of Jews reached such dimensions that at first people refused to give credence to the reports



reaching Warsaw from the eastern provinces. The reports, however, were confirmed again and again by reliable witnesses.

" During the winter 1941-1942 several tens of thousands of Jews were murdered. In the city of Vilna over 50,000 Jews were reported to have been massacred and only 12,000 of them remain in the local ghetto.

" In the city of Lwow 40,000 were reported murdered, in Rovno 14,000, in Kowel 10,000, and unknown numbers in Stanislawow, Tarnopol, Stryj, Drohobycz, and many other smaller towns.

" At first the executions were carried out by means of shooting. Subsequently, however, it is reported that the Germans applied new methods, such as poison gas, by means of which the Jewish population was exterminated in Cheim ; or by electrocution, for which a camp was organised in Belzec, where in the course of March and April, 1942, the Jews from the provinces of Lublin, Lwow, and Kielce, to the number of tens of thousands, were exterminated. Of Lublin's 30,000 Jewish inhabitants, only 2,500 still survive in the city.

" It has been reliably reported that on the occasion of his visit to the General Government of Poland in March, 1942, Himmler issued an order for the extermination of 50 per cent. of the Jews in Poland by the end of 1942. After Himmler's departure the Germans spread the rumour that the Warsaw Ghetto would be liquidated as from April, 1942. This date was subsequently altered to June. Himmler's second visit to Warsaw in the middle of July, 1942, became the signal for the commencement of the process of liquidation, the horror of which surpasses anything known in the annals of history.

" The liquidation of the ghetto was preceded on July 17th, 1942, by the registration of all foreign Jews confined to the ghetto, who were then removed to the Pawiak Prison. As from July 20th, 1942, the guarding of the ghetto was entrusted to special security battalions, formed from the scum of several Eastern European countries, while large forces of German police, armed with machine-guns and commanded by S.S. officers, were posted at all the gates leading into the ghetto. Mobile German police detachments patrolled all the boundaries of the ghetto day and night.

" On July 21st, at 11 a.m., German police cars drove up to the building of the Jewish Council of the Ghetto in Grzybowska Street. The S.S. officers ordered the chairman of the Jewish Council, Mr. Czerniakow, to summon the members of the council, who were all arrested on arrival and removed in the police cars to

the Pawiak Prison. After a few hours' detention the majority of them were allowed to return to the ghetto.

" About the same time flying squads of German police entered the ghetto, breaking into the houses in search of Jewish intellectuals. The better-dressed Jews found were killed on the spot, without the police troubling even to identify them. . . .

" In the morning of the following day, July 22nd, 1942, the German police again visited the office of the Jewish Council and summoned all the members who had been released from the Pawiak Prison the previous day. On their assembly, they were informed that an order had been issued for the removal of the entire Jewish population of the Warsaw Ghetto, and printed instructions to that effect were issued in the form of posters, the contents of which are reproduced in annex 2 to this Note. Additional instructions were issued verbally.

" The number of people to be removed was first fixed at 6,000 daily. The persons concerned were to assemble in the hospital wards and grounds in Stawki Street, the patients of which were evacuated forthwith. The hospital was close to the railway siding. Persons subject to deportation were to be delivered by the Jewish police not later than 4 p.m. each day. Members of the council and other hostages were to answer for the strict fulfilment of the order. In conformity with German orders, all inmates of Jewish prisons, old-age pensioners, and inmates of other charitable institutions were to be included in the first contingent.

" On July 23rd, 1942, at 7 p.m., two German police officers again visited the offices of the Jewish Council and saw the chairman, Mr. Czerniakow. After they left him he committed suicide. It is reported that Mr. Czerniakow committed suicide because the Germans increased the contingent of the first day to 10,000 persons, to be followed by 7,000 persons on each subsequent day. Mr. Czerniakow was succeeded in his office by Mr. Lichtenbaum, and on the following day 10,000 persons were in fact assembled for deportation, followed by 7,000 persons on each subsequent day. The people affected were either rounded up haphazardly in the streets or were taken from their homes.

" According to the German order of July 22nd, 1942, all Jews employed in German-owned undertakings, together with their families, were to be exempt from deportation. This produced an acute competition among the inhabitants of the ghetto to secure employment in such undertakings or, failing employment, bogus certificates to this effect. . . .



"The actual process of deportation was carried out with appalling brutality. At the appointed hour on each day the German police cordoned off a block of houses selected for being cleared of all Jews, entered the backyards, and fired their guns at random as a signal for all to leave their homes and to assemble in the yard. Anyone attempting to escape or to hide was killed on the spot. No attempt was made by the Germans to keep families together. Wives were torn from their husbands and children from their parents. Those who appeared frail or infirm were carried straight to the Jewish cemetery to be killed and buried there.

"After the contingent was assembled, the people were forcibly packed into cattle trucks to the number of 120 in each truck, which had room for 40. The trucks were then locked and sealed. The floors of the trucks were covered with quicklime and chlorine. As far as is known the trains were dispatched to three localities—Treblinka, Belzoc, and Sobibor—into what the report describes as 'extermination camps.'

"The very method of transport was deliberately calculated to cause the largest possible number of casualties among the condemned Jews. It is reported that on arrival in camp the survivors were stripped naked and killed by various means, including poison gas and electrocution. The interment of the dead was effected by means of machinery in mass-produced graves.

"According to all available information, of the 250,000 Jews deported from the Warsaw Ghetto up to September 1st, 1942, only two small transports, numbering about 4,000 people, are known to have been sent eastwards in the direction of Brest-Litovsk and Malachowicze, allegedly to be employed on work behind the front line. It has not been possible to ascertain whether any other of the Jews deported from the Warsaw Ghetto still survive, and it must be feared that they have all been put to death.

"The Jews deported from the Warsaw Ghetto so far included, in the first instance, all the aged and infirm, while a number of the physically strong have escaped so far because of their utility as labour power. All the children from Jewish schools, orphanages and children's homes were deported. . . .

"According to most recent reports, 120,000 ration cards were distributed in the Warsaw Ghetto for the month of September, 1942, while the report also mentions that only 40,000 such cards were to be distributed for the month of October, 1942. The latter figure is corroborated by information emanating from the German Employment Office (Arbeitsamt), which mentioned the number of 40,000 skilled workmen as those who were to be

allowed to remain in a part of the ghetto confined to barracks and employed on German war production.

"The deportations from the Warsaw ghetto were interrupted during five days between August 20th–25th. The German machinery for the mass slaughter of the Jews was during this interval employed on the liquidation of other ghettos in Central Poland, including the towns of Falenice, Rembertw, Nowydwor, Kaluszyn, and Minsk Mazowiecki.

"It is not possible to estimate the exact numbers of Jews who have been exterminated in Poland since the occupation of the country by the armed forces of the German Reich. But all the reports agree that the total number of killed runs into many hundreds of thousands of innocent victims—men, women and children—and that of the 3,130,000 Jews in Poland before the outbreak of war, over a third have perished during the last three years. . . .

#### ADDENDA

"For the purpose of burying the bodies a great bulldozer has been taken to Treblinka, and this machine works without stopping. The stench of the decomposing bodies has nauseated all the peasants for three miles around and forced them to flight."—*From a document issued by the Polish Ministry of Information.*

"Railway trucks wait at the siding. The executioners thrust up to 150 condemned persons into each. A thick layer of lime and chlorine, over which water has been poured, is spread over the floors. The truck doors are sealed. Sometimes the train sets off immediately it is loaded, sometimes it stands in a siding for a couple of days. . . . That is of no matter to anyone now. Of the people packed in so tightly that the dead cannot fall and continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with the living, of the people slowly dying in the fumes of lime and chlorine, deprived of air, a drop of water, food. . . ."—*From a report of a Polish Underground Group, published by the Polish Ministry of Information.*

#### IV

#### OTHER COUNTRIES

The following information is taken from the report of the Inter-Allied Information Committee, representative of the Allied Governments in London.



## BELGIUM

The first deportations started in July, when the Jews, summarily called up, were herded together in stations and sent to unknown destinations, probably in Silesia or Poland. They were seen leaving Liège, then Charleroi, convoy after convoy. Men, women and children were arbitrarily separated.

According to a German newspaper, 25,000 of the 52,000 Jews living in Belgium in 1941 had been accounted for in this way up to the end of November 1942. The statistics are German.

## CZECHOSLOVAKIA

There were 90,000 Jews in Bohemia and Moravia and about 95,000 in Slovakia on the day of the German occupation.

In December last year a central Jewish home for old people was established in Terezin, in Central Bohemia. By the end of July this year 40,000 men and women aged between 65 and 80 were there, 10,000 of Czechoslovak origin.

In June this year the mass deportation of Czech Jews to Poland set in. Up to the end of October more than 72,000 Jews left Bohemia and Moravia (including 10,000 in Terezin).

In Slovakia on May 15th this year, a constitutional law was passed by the totalitarian Slovak Parliament providing for the expatriation and deportation of all Jews. 65,000 Jews, men, women and children were deported to the Polish ghettos up to the end of October.

A special commission was set up at the Slovak Ministry of the Interior on November 10th to consider the final solution of the Jewish problem: the deportation of the remaining 20,000.

## FRANCE

The great round-up of Jews in France began on the night of July 12th this year, and in Paris reached its height on July 15th and the following day.

The Vichy Government agreed to surrender to Germany all "foreign" Jews in the Occupied Zone as it then was, and, in addition, 10,000 Jews from the Unoccupied Zone. The number of arrests greatly exceeded that figure, and by September 1942 it was estimated that 10,000 had already been deported to Germany.

## THE NETHERLANDS

On July 13th a start was made with a scheme which will in time clear the Netherlands of Jews. Jews between the ages of 18 and 40, numbering 60,000, were to be deported at the rate of 600 a day, each one being allowed to take only 33 lbs. of luggage. Their destination was Eastern Europe, where, under the usual indescribable conditions, they will labour for the Germans.

It is the avowed intention of the Germans to see to it that by the end of 1943 there will not be a single Jew left in the Netherlands.

## NORWAY

According to the last pre-war census, there were 1,400 professing Jews in Norway, out of a total Norwegian population of approximately 2,900,000.

In Trondheim, between October 6th and 12th, all male Jews over 16 were arrested.

On October 28th all male Jews over 15 were arrested in Oslo. In the following days these arrests were extended to the whole of Norway.

On November 26th the remaining Jews in Oslo—mostly women, children and old men—were arrested. They were dragged at 4.30 a.m. from their beds and driven to Oslo docks, where they were stowed on board a ship together with about 500 Jews who had been brought from the concentration camp at Toensberg. These Jews were thought to be on their way to Poland.

## YUGOSLAVIA

Before April 6th last year, the date of the German armed attack on Yugoslavia, Yugoslav Jewry numbered about 80,000 persons, together with upwards of 6,000 Jewish refugees from Czechoslovakia, Poland and Germany.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jews have suffered not only because they are Jews, but also for their traditional loyalty to the Yugoslav cause. But in other parts of "independent" Croatia the extermination has been just as thorough. It was in the hands of a special section of the Croatian Ustasha or Fascist guards. That special section closed down on June 15th last year, its task completed.

Apart from those who escaped to the forests and hills, and a handful who for special reasons were granted "honorary Aryan status," the Jews of Croatia had been annihilated.



In Serbia the Jews were dealt with by a special section of the Gestapo. In February this year this organisation carried out its last task by exterminating the few score remaining Jewish women and children kept in the Sajmiste camp.

The committee's report records similar steps to exterminate Jews taken in Luxembourg and Greece.

## V

### WHAT ARE WE DOING ?

I have stated that the Government, declaring that it will exact retribution after the war (how precisely will it catch, for instance, the scum of the Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian underworld?), has so far given no indication, at least publicly, of willingness to do anything more. Has it any plans? Are they on an adequate scale? If yes, pressure from the public will give help and encouragement. If no, it may stir the Government to greater boldness and activity by showing what the public expects. But I fear that the answer is No. As I go to press, I read in *The New Statesman* "A fortnight has passed since the Commons stood in silence to mourn the million Jews Hitler has massacred. But so far as we can learn no single step forward has been taken either by the Foreign Office or the Home Office to rescue the surviving Jews of Europe, who may all be doomed."

Meantime, consider the present published indication of their attitude.

Miss Rathbone's statement about the unrelaxed rigidity of our regulations for admitting refugees has already been quoted, and so has Sir Neill Malcolm's letter to *The Times*. Now read these examples, also given by Miss Rathbone in the *News Chronicle* of December 17th, of the kind of case at present ineligible for British visas :

"An elderly widow is in hiding in France, but her whereabouts are known to a refugee organisation. Her eldest son was recently deported to Poland for extermination. Her two surviving sons are members of our Pioneer Corps, able and anxious to support her.

"A boy of 16, also hidden in France, without means of support; has well-to-do parents in this country. For over a year they have been beseeching permission to bring him into safety.

"A family of four, one a grandmother of over 80, since last spring have been in a small motor-boat with no means of heating, off a Spanish port. One member of the party is permitted to land daily to buy food and to post pitiful letters to one country after another imploring visas. Two have been granted by a certain American government, but the party still awaits the other two. They have been recently ordered to quit Spanish waters, and their position as the weather grows colder becomes daily more impossible. They have relatives over here who are willing and anxious to support them."

Miss Rathbone comments :

"When asking other States to show generosity 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."*?

And here is an extract from Hansard of December 10th :

"MISS RATHBONE asked the Home Secretary whether, in view of the situation brought about by the mass deportation and massacres of Jews in Poland and other Axis-occupied countries, he will revise the Regulations which have hitherto restricted the issue of visas and transit visas to certain very small and rigidly defined categories of refugees, so as to facilitate the rescue of the few who do have a chance of escaping massacre ?

"MR. H. MORRISON : I am afraid my hon. friend is under some misapprehension in thinking that an alteration of the policy with regard to the issue of visas would have any substantial effect in achieving the purpose which she has in mind, but she has been good enough to write to me on the subject, and I have suggested that she should confer with my Department on the points raised in her letter.

"MISS RATHBONE : In view of the unsatisfactory nature of the reply, I beg to give notice that I propose to raise this matter on the Adjournment at the earliest possible moment."

Consider for a moment the three words "any substantial effect." Is there 'substance,' or is there not, in *one* baby, *one* child, *one* man, *one* woman, with bodies and souls and nerves and feelings just like yours and mine? Then is not *one* worth saving? You do not refuse a starving man a piece of bread, and let him starve, because you can't give him a banquet. In any case, the implication is clear : in a desperately urgent crisis, when every second is of importance, and long after the facts have become known, the Government, to put the matter most hopefully, has at



any rate *not yet* consented to alter the regulations by which it virtually bars our doors to refugees. The hunt is up: the hunted—say, if you like, *one* hunted—appeals for help: and the answer is “No: be killed. We will kill the huntsman at the end of the war.”

Consider again what Mr. Eden said *after* his ‘statement of policy’—retribution—on December 17th: the “terrible anti-climax,” as Sir Neill Malcolm called it in his letter to *The Times*. Mr. Silverman asked “whether he is consulting with the United Nations Governments and with his own colleagues as to what constructive measures of relief are immediately practicable?” Mr. Eden replied: “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.” As Sir Neill Malcolm comments “So, unlike Hitler, we cannot convert words into deeds and must be content with promises which will not save one single life.”

Then Mr. Sorensen asked “could attempts not be made to explore the possibility of co-operation with non-belligerent and neutral Governments to secure the emigration of Jews, say, to Sweden or to some other neutral country?” Mr. Eden replied “Naturally, I should be only too glad to see anything of the kind, but the hon. Member will understand the circumstances.” But Mr. Sorensen pressed for a straight “Yes” or “No”: “Am I to understand,” he asked, “that the right hon. Gentleman is exploring the possibility?” *There was no reply*: in other words, “No.” And this was the closing interchange:

“MR. MCGOVERN: May we take it from the right hon. Gentleman’s statement that any persons who can escape from any of these occupied territories will be welcomed and given every assistance in the territories of the United Nations?”

“MR. EDEN: Certainly we should like to do all we possibly can. 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.”

I find in this reply a mixture of goodwill and embarrassment: what I fail to find is that unqualified determination which alone will overcome the obstacles and solve every difficulty.

You can point the moral of this section for yourself by considering our recent policy in the case of France. “Ancient history,” you may say: “why bring up the past?” Because, in the words of Mr. Winston Churchill, “the use of re-criminating about the past is to enforce effective action at the present.”

As at the end of September, the position of the foreign Jews in France was as follows:

Since early in August, Laval had been deporting to Occupied France great numbers of foreign Jewish refugees from Vichy Internment Camps, believed to be certainly destined for further deportation to the Ghetto in Polish Galicia; possibly some to Germany. Over 3,500 were first sent off; 15,000 more were ordered for deportation within the next three weeks. It was Laval’s obvious intention thus to dispose of all foreign Jewish refugees.

The deportations were carried out with sadistic cruelty: packed 60 to a truck, with only a little straw and one pail for excrement; grossly insufficient food.

At first, children and other named categories were exempted, unless the parents chose to take their children. Usually they chose to leave them, well knowing it was for ever. Later, even the children were ordered to go.

The French and foreign refugee organisations, religious leaders of all denominations and the French populace made splendid resistance. A French Cardinal and a Protestant pastor remonstrated unavailingly with Laval and Maréchal Pétain. Thousands of adults and children were hidden away by French peasants. Every help and comfort possible was given. Individual exemptions of people with special claims, even where occasionally granted, only resulted in the substitution of other names.

The condemned internees are said to have behaved as a whole with magnificent dignity and courage. But the scenes, especially the farewells between parents and children, moved one French police officer to exclaim: “I have witnessed war, massacre and famine, but never have I seen anything so horrible as this.”

The only chance of permanent rescue lay in getting the refugees out of France, with or without Laval’s permission. Our own and several other Governments offered to take defined numbers of children—but children only. And our own offer was restricted to children with near relatives in this country willing to maintain



them. How many such could there be? Negotiations with Laval took place. But before any, or only a negligible number, had been got away, the Nazis walked into Unoccupied France and it was too late even for the children. And now these foreign Jews who had found a home in France are on their way to the Polish slaughter camps, if not already arrived there and exterminated.

## VI

### PALESTINE

No Zionist with any sense of responsibility would use the present desperate situation for political, that is to say for Zionist, purposes. But equally no one, whether Zionist or not, could leave Palestine out of the picture as a means of dealing with the immediate crisis, just because Palestine is a centre of political difficulties. If political difficulties of one kind or another are to be a barrier, then the refugee question cannot be dealt with at all in any country in the world. The whole question is "political."

As already stated, it is quite clear that Palestine offers the largest immediate possibilities for dealing with the problem. Because:

(1) For the whole of Europe East of Germany and Italy, Palestine is geographically the easiest refuge.

(2) Many potential refugees have relatives in Palestine who would provide for them; as for the rest, the Jewish population generally is willing and eager, meanwhile, to give them care.

(3) Palestine could absorb 50,000 Jews in its war industries immediately, to the great benefit of the Allied war effort. There would also be room for thousands of children. The country and the Allied war machinery are, indeed, crying out for more men. The military authorities need 30,000 unskilled and 5,000 skilled workers. Agricultural production in Palestine is gravely curtailed for lack of labour.

\* \* \*

In view of all this, what possible reason can there be, in common sense or humanity, for the present policy? What is that policy?

In the Government White Paper of May 1939 it was laid down that during the five years beginning April 1939 75,000 Jewish

immigrants should be admitted into the country, and that thereafter Jewish immigration should cease permanently. This is not the place to discuss whether this restriction was compatible with the terms of the Balfour Declaration, which declared the intention of setting up a Jewish National Home in Palestine, or with the terms of the Mandate based on it. Those who read the White Paper will perhaps feel in the very uneasiness of its phraseology the confession that, 'for political reasons,' a trust was being broken.

However that may be, 75,000 by April 1944 was the number to be admitted. The number so far admitted is less than 40,000. That is to say, according to the terms of the White Paper itself more than 35,000 immigration certificates are still outstanding during the next fifteen months. Is it conceivable that the Government can refuse to grant them *now*, more especially in view of the economic needs of the country which have been mentioned above? Apparently it is conceivable. But if the refusal is persisted in, then the Government cannot be held blameless for the fate of men, women and children who might otherwise have been saved:

#### THE 'STRUMA'

Let me, in this connection, recall the case of the 'Struma.' "Past and done with" you may again object. Yes: and something which, *in that precise form*, will, I hope and believe, never be allowed to happen again. But, once more, "the use of recriminating about the past is to enforce effective action at the present."

When life was made completely impossible for Jews in Rumania in the autumn of 1941, when all Jews were forced to wear the Yellow Badge to distinguish them, when all Jewish men between 18 and 50 were drafted for forced labour, when the "Winter Fund" wrung from the Jews their clothing and other property, when villages and towns began the mass expulsion of Jews, the individual Jew was prepared to undergo any agony if by doing so he could escape from the country.

In this atmosphere the news that the 'Struma,' a 180-ton cattle boat, was to sail found swift currency. But only a few could find the price demanded for the voyage.

The Rumanian Ministry of Labour put obstacles in the way of the sailing, but eventually the 'Struma' left Constanza on Friday, December 12th, 1941. Customs officials stripped the passengers of most of their clothes and bedding, and of all foodstuffs which the refugees had brought with them. None of the passengers was



allowed to take more than 20 kilograms of luggage, and there were no medical supplies on board. A Rumanian boat piloted the 'Struma' through the mine-strewn harbour.

Very soon it became clear that the engine was old; had, in fact, been taken from a boat that had been sunk in the Danube and had spent several years in the water. The ship's mechanic was incompetent, with practically no experience, and the boat made frequent halts. Neither the wireless nor the projector were in order, and both failed to work. There were no lifeboats and only a handful of lifebelts.

After repairs the vessel groped along the Rumanian coast until it reached another Rumanian port, where the captain of a Rumanian boat worked on the engine—against payment of any possessions left to the passengers. The next day, in the Bosphorus, the engine failed again, and the boat was unable to make any further progress.

The boat carried 769 passengers, including 70 children under 13 and 250 women.

On board there was not even enough room to move freely during the day, let alone to sleep at night. The passengers were given quarters in cages built along the ship's sides, each of the cages, which were 1.60 metre in width and 60 centimetres in height, being occupied by five persons. There was no room aboard for any water supply. There were no sanitary arrangements except for one water-closet on the deck. There was neither electricity nor heating. The 30 doctors on board had between them not even a bottle of disinfectant.

The space below decks was foul with suffocating coal fumes, while on the deck was just enough space for some of the passengers to stand motionless, which they did by turn. Only the intense cold prevented an epidemic, threatened by the insects which swarmed on board. Dysentery ravaged the passengers. Several lost their reason.

The trip from Constanza took four days instead of 14 hours. Only the hope that somewhere on the Turkish coast they would be mercifully welcomed sustained the refugees.

Arrived at Istanbul, neither the crew nor the passengers were allowed to come in contact with anyone outside the boat. The representative of the agents notified the passengers that he had no money either to repair the engines or to supply food for the passengers. For eight days the boat was anchored at Istanbul, after which the passengers managed to obtain a daily ration of

food. It was impossible to get any fuel in Turkey, and the passengers could consequently not cook any food.

The refugees soon learned that they would not be permitted to disembark so as to make their way overland to Palestine, and that the engine must therefore be repaired, but when this was begun it became apparent that it would be impossible to finish the job before the end of January. The Turkish authorities permitted only restricted purchases of foodstuffs. Without air, without light, without the means of wash, or eat, or rest, passengers were constantly ill, and the doctors worked tirelessly.

The rest may be told in the words of a statement by the Executive of the Jewish Agency:

"The Jewish Agency has learned with grief and horror of the sinking in the Black Sea of the ss. 'Struma' with 750 Jewish men, women and children aboard, refugees from Rumania. The boat had been lying at Istanbul since December 15th, and the conditions as regards food and sanitation were described as 'desperate.' Every effort was made by the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem to persuade the Palestine Administration to admit these victims of persecution. The Agency proposed that they should be put to the account of the immigration schedule which permits 3,000 Jews to enter Palestine during the current six months. The matter was also taken up with the Colonial Office in London. The only concession obtained was in respect of children under 16 who were to be allowed to enter Palestine. Two sets of arguments were put forward by the British authorities against granting the request of the Agency to make adult refugees on the 'Struma' also eligible for certificates under the current schedule:

- (1) That these people had been under the Nazis, and they might therefore include some enemy agents.
- (2) Shortage of supplies in Palestine.

"As regards (1) the Agency has repeatedly urged that such refugees should be placed in internment camps and not released until and unless their characters were established to the full satisfaction of the Palestine Administration.

"As regards (2) more than two-thirds of the 'Struma' refugees were people fit and willing to work and to fight. To use the argument of 'short supplies' against admitting some two hundred elderly people flying from torture and death reflects on the intelligence, as well as on the heart, of those who advise it.



Moreover, as these people would come under the schedule already granted, the problem of supplies did not arise. . . ."

The reader will have inferred, if he does not already know, what happened. The ship, turned back towards Rumania owing to the refusal of the Palestine authorities to admit those on board, blew up—by the act, it is believed, of the passengers, who preferred death to return. It may be mentioned that the concession permitting the children under 16 to enter Palestine arrived too late—after the ship had gone down.

## VII

### THE ALTERNATIVES

We may sum up the whole matter by saying that there are two ways of reacting to what is now happening to the Jews of Europe. The one way is mercy — immediate aid to the persecuted: the other is hatred — retribution for the persecutors. And while it is theoretically possible, perhaps, to combine the two, in practice they are mutually exclusive. If your whole mind is filled with an agonised pity for the victims: if you are ceaselessly thinking, devising, planning how even one more child may still be saved; then there is no room in you for hatred and retribution, for your whole being is occupied by charity. But if you fill your mind with hatred and the determination to do evil for evil, they poison you at the very source, and drive out the charity which might bring balm, here and now, to the suffering.

The reader may reject this view, and see nothing inconsistent between determination to help the victims now and determination to punish the executioners after the war. Very well; I will not insist, for my whole aim is to secure the immediate help. But I must be forgiven for suggesting the following. Does not the insistence on 'retribution' fulfil more than a merely negative function in this matter? Is it not more than a mere barrier to the present exercise of mercy? Surely it fulfils also a positive function: in the unconscious or semi-conscious, it is often an *excuse* for doing nothing. When for whatever reason, whether from laziness or not caring enough or finding the whole thing a bother or thinking first of our own immediate interests, we withhold the help we might and ought to give, it is easy to

pretend that we are doing something by luxuriating in hatred, especially in its more righteous form of retribution. That is why, if you look at every statement that has recently been made on the subject, you will find that the loudest cry for retribution is invariably accompanied by the strongest insistence that 'we can do very little' or 'we can do practically nothing.'

Does it benefit the Jew, as he stands at the door of the execution chamber, that, after his body has begun to pass into the dust from which it came, his executioner also will be sent to the grave? Even if he knew it, would it mitigate his suffering? If the mother bereft of her child were told that vengeance would be executed in due course on its murderer, would *that* bring peace to her soul? I cannot think so. Whatever they may have been in early Biblical times, the Jews are not now a revengeful people: they have suffered too deeply and too continuously, and the most unbearable suffering brings not desire for someone else's suffering, but desire that suffering may cease.

No, the proclamation of vengeance will bring back no single Jew from his nameless grave. What then *will* it achieve? Will it *prevent* a single murder? I should be glad to be told precisely how. For I do not understand, to begin with, by what means you are to get the proclamation to the ears of the S.S. squads in Poland, and to the Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians and the rest who are assisting them. But if they *should* come to hear of it, what would be the result? If you tell them that they will be shot after the war, will they forthwith revolt against their masters, and be shot at once? Isn't it far more likely that they will intensify their brutalities and re-double their energies to win the war, so as to escape vengeance?

But, it may be said, the proclamation may have some effect on the German home front. It may; but, if so, then the opposite of that intended. Try to visualise the situation in Germany, and both the material and psychological factors involved. First, the German people as a whole do not know what is being done in their name; and if they did know, the overwhelming majority would disapprove. If you doubt this latter assertion, read the testimony of someone who does not, I think, take my view of the German problem—Mr. Harold Nicolson, M.P., in the *Spectator* of December 25th: "Yet the German people as a whole do not, and will never, approve of such extreme cruelty." When open anti-Jewish outrages were being committed in Germany before the war, there were innumerable instances of succour being given to the victims by German men and women at the risk of their own lives. As to



German knowledge of what is happening, it has taken a long time for information to reach the British public: is it likely that it has reached the German public, when the whole terribly efficient German propaganda machine is in gear precisely to *prevent* the Germans from knowing? For day after day, as everyone who listens to the German wireless knows, the German people have been told and are being told that the Jews are being sent to Poland, not for slaughter, but to "colonise" the country, to form self-sufficient Jewish territories. A speech or two of Hitler, referring to extermination, can have little effect compared with that ceaseless iteration.

It is imperative, therefore, that the German people should learn what is happening. But everything depends on *how*. It is very difficult to persuade the ordinary masses in any country at war that wicked acts are being committed by their own Government, particularly when the informant is the enemy: every instinct of the herd, every prompting of solidarity, fights against belief. Crude broadcasts, based on retribution, could have the result only of producing unbelief, coupled with a determination to support the Government until what is called "final victory," lest worse should befall. For consider how well this line of vengeance fits in with the campaign which Goebbels has been conducting for many months now on the German home front. He has been telling the Germans that the Allies are determined to destroy them utterly, that nothing but victory can save them from this fate, and that therefore every German must, in self-defence, support the Government. Any British propaganda to Germany, therefore, which can form a basis, however flimsy, for such a campaign, can only play into Goebbels' hands and lengthen the war. Already he is 'interpreting' what we are saying as a threat to shoot every member of the Nazi party. If you think it incredible that that should be believed, you do not understand the power of totalitarian propaganda.

The Germans should be told—that is imperative; they should be told day by day and hour by hour, by broadcast and by leaflet; but they should be told in such a way as to *persuade*, and not so as to cause psychological resistance. The appeal must be, not to their fear, which will produce precisely that resistance, but to their humanity. And if anyone feels inclined to sneer at the idea of appealing to a German mother's humanity, let him first ask himself whether he has done everything possible to show *his* humanity in this matter.

I wish to do no single writer or speaker an injustice. But this must be said. Nothing could be baser than to use the anti-Jewish

horror, not to bring relief to the victims, but to stir up hatred against the German people as a whole. We started out with the high resolve to free them, as well as others, from the Nazi rule; we proclaimed that the war was not against them, but against their masters. There is always degeneration as war goes on; but let us not utterly forget our first great purpose now, just because the Nazi philosophy is working itself out in action to its vile and logical conclusion. Irrelevant to ask, "Why don't the Germans revolt?" As well ask, "Why don't the French prevent Laval from committing equally vile atrocities against the Jews?" People can't *effectively* revolt against the modern totalitarian machine and the unexampled reign of terror which it implies; they can do so only when the machine has been broken from without. It is for us to hasten that day, and meanwhile to encourage, hour by hour, every movement—and there are many—of German disaffection. If you should be thinking "But the S.S. men *are* the German people," remember that they and the Gestapo number perhaps a million, who have been deliberately perverted to serve Hitler's vile purposes since he came to power and before, whereas the population in pre-war Germany numbered some sixty-five million souls. At the very moment of writing (December 27th) *Reynolds* publishes details of a manifesto issued by a conference of all anti-Fascist groups in Germany, which recently met secretly, and which declares that peace will be possible only after complete destruction of the Hitler régime, that all concentration camps must be closed, that all anti-Jewish and race laws must be annulled, that religious, economic, political and Press freedom must be re-established, and that there must be a foreign policy based on peace and international co-operation. The manifesto is being broadcast by the secret German Freedom Radio, at the risk of death or torture for everyone involved, and is being directed to the German Army as well as to the Home Front.

One final suggestion. A great deal could be done by the Vatican in this matter of informing the German people. If the Pope would broadcast to the many millions of German Catholics, not once but repeatedly; if he would give the plain facts, and describe them for what they are, an outrage against the God of Mercy and Compassion; then the effect would be as unquestionable as his authority is unique. Have we approached him at all? If so, have we exhausted all the possibilities of persuasion?



Amid the peace, to-day, of the Berkshire countryside, it is difficult not to feel that there is something about Britain—whether it be her fortunate history, with its long record of democracy, however imperfect, or whether it be that peculiar combination of gentleness and unsentimentality which is characteristic of her people—that specially fits her to play a most noble part in rebuilding our shattered world. But history does not forgive lost opportunities, whether in the moulding of national character or in the determination of events. If now, in this moment of agony for millions of fellow human beings, the British people, feeling its responsibility as a democracy, chooses the positive path of mercy for the persecuted rather than the merely negative one of retribution for the persecutors, then it will be bringing nearer the day when, in the words of Milton's hymn On The Morning of Christ's Nativity :

“ Yea, truth and justice then  
 Will down return to men,  
 Orbed in a rainbow ; and, like glories wearing,  
 Mercy will sit between,  
 Throned in celestial sheen,  
 With radiant feet and tissued clouds down steering ;  
 And Heaven, as at some festival,  
 Will open wide the gates of her high palace hall.”

*Please immediately take the  
 action suggested on page 9 ;  
 and then pass this pamphlet  
 on to someone else.*



Please immediately take the  
action suggested on page 2  
and then pass this pamphlet  
on to someone else.