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## **CHAIRMAN'S NOTES**

Last year I reported on the opening of Beth Shalom, the first permanent Holocaust Memorial and Educational Centre in England, by the Smith family. Since then the Centre has become widely known both in the Jewish and non-Jewish communities. Those who have visited the Centre found the experience uplifting and inspiring. This year, in addition, a Memorial Garden was opened at Beth Shalom where Dr Elizabeth Maxwell spoke in the presence of a large audience. Her speech is included in this issue as well as an article by Paul Openheimer OBE, where he describes the activities of Beth Shalom and his association with Stephen Smith. It was a great privilege to honour the Smith family, Thomas and Marina and their sons, Stephen and Jim, at our Annual Reunion in May this year. The project was entirely due to their efforts. They did it without creating any fanfare or fuss and with limited resources. Humility is the hallmark of the Smith family; they represent what is best in humanity. Not only do they give of themselves physically, intellectually and spiritually but they also contribute their limited funds. Thomas and Marina have donated to the Centre from their savings. Stephen, a successful businessman as well as a great educator, donates the profits from his business to the Centre and Jim, a General Practitioner, took a six months sabbatical to devote himself fully in promoting the activities of Beth Shalom. How many people are capable of such dedication? They have gained a special place not only in our hearts but also in the hearts of the Jewish community. As a token of our appreciation our Society has donated £5,000 to Beth Shalom.

It is said that God works in mysterious ways and it is interesting to note that, having tried for so many years to establish a Holocaust Museum in the United Kingdom and failed, within a matter of a few months one Holocaust Memorial Centre was set up in Sherwood Forest and the start of another permanent Holocaust Exhibition was launched at the Imperial War Museum. What is even more significant, some might say providential, is that neither of these initiatives came about through Jewish efforts. I have already referred to the Smith family but in the case of the Imperial War Museum the Trustees of the Museum felt that the Holocaust constituted an integral part of the war and was therefore an essential element in the portrayal to what depth of depravity men can descend in time of war and the lessons one can learn from it. What is also very heartening is that the permanent Holocaust Exhibition is supported by the Prime Minister, the Rt.Hon. John Major and the Rt.Hon. Tony Blair, as well as the Rt.Hon. Paddy Ashdown. The National Heritage Memorial Fund has recently offered a lottery grant of £12,624 million and many donations, some very large ones, have been promised. Building work should begin in early summer of 1997, the construction is scheduled to be completed in 1999 and the opening of the Exhibition early in the year 2000.

I would like to draw your attention to the introduction of a new section in the Journal, "Boys in Retirement". Many of our members have now retired and have taken up interesting or exciting hobbies, whilst others are groping and looking for something to do. I have invited Michael Bandel, our Welfare Officer, who finds his work extremely rewarding, to write about his new vocation and how it evolved in the course of time. His article is, indeed, inspiring and admirable and I hope to receive from you similar contributions to be published in the future issue.

The dedication of the Sefer Torah written to the memory of our parents, which took place last year and the unveiling of the plaque in honour of our parents who perished in the Holocaust, which took place this year, was also a moving and memorable event for our members. The occasion is described in this issue.

The publication of the "Boys" by our President, Sir Martin Gilbert, and the launch of the book, was a momentous event in the history of our Society. I was delighted that many of our members responded to my Appeal and sent their testimonies to Sir Martin. However, I am saddened by the fact that many more failed to write their story and consequently are not mentioned in the book.

We are immensely grateful to Sir Martin for having written this book with such great understanding and sensitivity. The idea of writing this book stemmed from the hope that it will serve as a source of inspiration to those who find themselves in great difficulties, for there can be no greater injustice than what was inflicted upon us. Few people have endured as much hardship as we did and yet we have not allowed Hitler a posthumous victory. Let us hope that our return from hell and our triumph over adversity will stand as a shining example for those in despair. This is the lesson and the importance of this book and it is gratifying to see from the extracts printed in this issue that the reviewers see it in the same light.

Wishing you a Happy New Year.

Ben Helfgott

# PAST AND PRESENT

## A REPORTER AT LARGE

### A QUIET LIFE IN HAMPSHIRE

This article was written by Mollie Panter-Downes and appeared in the New Yorker on March 2nd 1946 soon after the second group of the 'Boys' arrived in England

The British government has up to now brought between four and five hundred Jewish children from the Nazi concentration camps over to England. The children are, as far as is known, mostly orphans between nine and sixteen; checking on ages has been difficult, since the youngsters have no papers and nothing more definite than a few hazy scraps of family history to help trace any relatives who may still be living. Bloomsbury House, in London, the headquarters of the Jewish Refugee Committee, made all arrangements for the children's journey - the R.A.F. brought them to England by air - to reception hostels at Windermere, in the Lake District, and at Durley, in Hampshire, and from there to smaller hostels in Manchester, Oxford, and elsewhere. One morning recently I went down to visit the hostel at Durley, a tiny hamlet in a part of Hampshire where you see nothing much but quiet, brown fields, an occasional thatched cottage, and a lot of windy sky. Wintershill Hall, where this particular hostel has been set up, is a large, rather gloomy-looking Georgian mansion whose conventional pattern of park, formal gardens, and greenhouses has been somewhat altered by a block of Army huts. A Star of David was chalked on a pillar of the portico, where an electric bell, its push button missing, invited one to *klinge*. Before I could do so, the door was opened by a young man in spectacles, who wore a beret and a dark blue lumberjacket, on one sleeve of which the Star was indistinctly chalked. I entered a hall decorated only with multicolored paper chains - I just had time to notice a lot of children milling about in the background - and he led me into the office of Dr Friedman, the head of the hostel, and his organizing secretary, Mrs Katz.

Dr Friedman is an eager, thickset, red-headed man with humorous eyes and the vitality of the successful youth leader. He got out of Germany himself four months before the war started, and has since been a professor of languages and history at a university in the Midlands. He speaks excellent, lively English, and his pronunciation is perfect except for an occasional confusion of the letters "v" and "w". The first group of children arrived at Wintershill Hall five weeks before, he said; there were a hundred and fifty-two, the majority of them Polish. Now there were just half that number. Most of the others had been sent to other hostels or to hospitals for medical treatment, and a few were living with recently discovered relatives. Ever since it had been announced that the children were coming, Bloomsbury House had been besieged by anxious callers, come to scan the lists of each fresh party of arrivals for the name of the Polish niece, the German grandson, the Czech cousin who had disappeared behind the iron curtain in 1939. Sixteen children had been reunited with relatives in the London area, and a few fathers who had gone to America before the Nazis took over in their home towns had turned up, wearing American uniforms, to collect what was left of their families. Usually it wasn't much. Dr Friedman said that the children were mostly eleven or older, and there were far fewer girls than boys - only twenty-eight girls out of the hundred and fifty-two children at Wintershill Hall. "The young ones and the girls died more easily," said Dr Friedman simply.

I asked what would happen to the children who did not find relatives or were not adopted, and Dr Friedman said that at the moment this was hard to answer. The British authorities had let them all in on a two-year-visa permit, provided they would agree not to take any jobs. The older ones would, however, be permitted to receive some sort of vocational training. The Australian Jewish community was willing to take a large number of children, but transportation for them was not yet obtainable. It was hoped that eventually most of the homeless children would be allowed to go in a group to Palestine, a hope which the present difficulties of that troubled land have not exactly simplified. "It is what the children themselves wish, naturally," Dr Friedman said. "While they were in Germany, Palestine appeared indeed a promised land. Some of them feel very bitter toward the British about it, though they will possibly change their minds when they have been here a while and have heard all sides of the question. But what appeals to them most is the idea that in Palestine they would all be together. They dread being parted from each other. Children who have been together in Belsen and Buchenwald, who have lost parents and relatives, cling pathetically to that shared experience because it is all the background they possess in the world." Dr Friedman's face brightened. "But in spite of all they have gone through," he went on, "these children have managed to retain their will to survive. They are anxious to succeed, they are hungry to learn. And they have no sense of being under obligation to anyone. No, the very reverse! They feel that is up to society to make the best deal it can for them. People say to me, 'But in this house, in this lovely country - for these children to come here from Belsen and Terezin and so on must be *heaven!*'" Dr Friedman flung up his hands and laughed delightedly. "Not in the least! They are highly critical! When we give them a coat, they will touch the cloth and say, 'Terribly poor quality.' or they may criticize the cut. It is not lack of gratitude, it is that they worry about their futures, you understand. How they look is extremely important to them. They are anxious, passionately anxious, to look well. The boys carry little combs in their pockets and comb their hair all the time. They do not want to be set apart from the rest of the world by what they have gone through. No, already they feel that they are individuals. You can understand why it is our aim to encourage that feeling."

The health of the children, Dr Friedman said, has been on the whole surprisingly good. The months of proper food since their liberation have worked a considerable change. "There was much tuberculosis, as you can imagine," he said, "but it was checked by all the affected children being immediately removed for treatment. For the rest, there were skin complaints, such as scabies, and a general low resistance to any small infection. The most noticeable defect was their teeth. Terrible! We have a dentist coming here twice a week, working as hard as he can, but he does not know how to get through all the jobs."

"None of the big boys - there are a few older ones - have started to shave, either," said Mrs Katz, a calm and pretty woman. "I suppose that's a sign of weakness. And when they get excited over anything, or exert themselves at all, the sweat literally pours down their faces." The telephone rang, and she got up and began an earnest conversation with what was obviously the village plumber about a jammed lavatory in one of the boys' dormitories.

"Emotionally, yes - that is where I would say they show their history," said Dr Friedman to me. "There is no delinquency among them. Their terrible sufferings have not made them vicious, as might have happened. For instance, one child here was thrown by the Nazis on a heap of bodies waiting to be burned. When the British arrived, they found him still alive, though unconscious. Another boy saw Kramer take a baby by the foot, throw it in the air, and bang! with his revolver. Pleasant things to remember in your childhood! But when they arrived here, we were surprised at their control, their willingness. For remember, they couldn't be sure that any new grownup wasn't someone to be feared, who could torture and make life hideous if he chose. At first they couldn't get used to the idea that there would always be enough food for all at regular hours. It was one of the Nazis' ideas of humour to break up bits of stale bread occasionally and throw it among these starving little wolves just to see them fight for it. So when our meal bell rang there was a rush, a mad stampede. I have seen boys jump clean over tables in their anxiety to get there first and grab the food before the others. When they understood, after a few days, that each had his *own* chair, his *own* share of food, which was to be respected by the others, they were perfectly

reasonable. But their emotions are still strong. They are up in the air one moment, down the next. Suddenly it will come over a child: I have no father or mother, I am alone, I do not know what will happen to me. And of course they are terribly restless. They would like a cinema each night, each day something new to happen. Imagine the life of violent, terrible happenings to which they were accustomed! Some, you know, were in hiding in the ghettos, down in the sewers, and were accustomed to jumping trains, to dodging S.S. guards on the frontier. And then the dreadful things all the time in the camps - shootings, beatings, cremations. Here in Hampshire it seems quiet after that. So they are mad for movement - bicycles. If I could get them some, I would, but it is difficult. What they suffer from is the old refugee malady of moving on, moving somewhere. It's easy to understand."

Dr Friedman paused and offered me a cigarette. I asked if the children were allowed to go outside the grounds. He said that they certainly were. They go down to the village when they want to do a bit of shopping or see a movie. Each child is given three shillings a week pocket money, which he can spend as he wants; many, said the Doctor proudly, had started little savings-bank accounts. (The whole scheme, I learned, is being financed by the Central British Fund for Jewish Relief and Rehabilitation, which appealed for help to the Jews of England.) Twice a week the village boys come up and there are what Dr Friedman called "the sport" - football games on the muddy playing field, between the Durley lads and the lads of Belsen, Buchenwald, and places east. Both sides apparently enjoy themselves. "In the afternoons there are handicrafts, too," Dr Friedman said. "Such work is valuable for calming the mind. Or we may have an informal discussion group on current affairs. You might hear one later. But our real work is in the morning. We have three periods: one English, one Hebrew, and the third on Palestinography - history and government, civic affairs, and so on. No boy or girl is forced to attend classes, but they are encouraged and persuaded by us to do so. And most of them have a thirst for learning; they wish to soak it up as fast as we can give it to them. Some find that they cannot keep up with the brighter ones, and then they have a tendency to stop trying, to give up all hope immediately. The habit of hope is still so new to them. In those cases, we have to coax them until their confidence in themselves slowly, slowly emerges."

Mrs Katz, who had settled things with the plumber, now rejoined the conversation. She said that she thought lack of confidence in anything or anybody was the chief mark left by the concentration camps. "Even though they like us now - perhaps they even love us - they still don't trust us completely," she said. "If you tell one to do something, you see him wondering what your motive is in telling him to do that. They don't trust humanity yet, and they have no idea of sharing or of the communal spirit, either. When it came to handing out clothing outfits, a boy would immediately be bitterly jealous and resentful if another boy got a pull-over or boots of a better quality. Even if it was his best friend, it made no difference. Because we guessed this would happen, we were very anxious to get all the children outfits exactly alike. But this turned out to be impossible; with clothing terribly short, we had to take what we could get. Even our determination not to give them any second-hand things failed. All their lives they had worn old, castoff rags, and it would have been so wonderful psychologically to start them out with a brand-new outfit that was theirs alone. Sad to say, we just couldn't manage it."

Dr Friedman said that the children had been astonished and horrified to hear that the English had a tight rationing of clothing and food. "When they talked in the camps, England always appeared as the golden land, the land of plenty," he said. "Now the boys say, 'Why, the *Germans* were better off than that!' I took them to see the bomb damage in Southampton one day and they could not get over that, either. They had not known that England had been so badly knocked about." He jumped up, tapped on the window, and called in German to two boys who were passing outside. "They are from Belsen, and I have told them to come in and meet you," he said, sitting down again. "You know, it's funny, the English press has called all these children who have come over here Belsen children, but many have never been to that camp. Belsen and Buchenwald have taken all the limelight, but there were others far worse, far more horrible, which no one seems to know about. Many of our boys have been in four or five camps, and if you ask them, they say Treblinka, in Poland, was the worst. They had a song about Treblinka which they used to sing in



all the camps. It went from camp to camp, and even down into the ghettos where the Jewish people lay hiding in the sewers, and it grew all the time as it went from mouth to mouth - like one of the old European folk songs, you know. I have a translation of it."

He was getting up to look for it when the two boys came in. One was small and swarthy, with lively black eyes and curly hair; the other was a taller, pin-faced boy with a shy, pleasant smile. They shook hands and said, "Hello, cheerio, thank you very much," all in one breath. Dr Friedman, coming back with the song, explained that the boys had picked up a bit of English since they had been liberated. He added that they were both about fifteen and had been in several camps before they fetched up in Belsen.

The translation of the song ran:

Not far from here, at the shunting yard,  
The people are crowding round the cattle trucks.  
The piteous cry of a child is heard calling to his mother,  
"Don't leave me here alone. You will never come back again!"

For Treblinka is a grave for every Jew.  
Whoever goes there remains there;  
From there, there is no return....

My heart breaks  
When I think of the good friends who there met a violent death.  
My heart breaks  
When I remember that there my brother and sisters perished.  
My heart breaks  
When I remember that there my mother and father were murdered,  
And I join the others at the shunting site,  
Sobbing bitterly with them and crying,  
"Don't leave me here alone!"

"You know that Treblinka song, don't you?" Dr Friedman asked the smaller boy. "Oh, sure, sure," the boy said matter-of-factly, as though he had been asked if he knew the latest swing number. "You often saw Kramer and the others at Belsen, Arthur?" Dr Friedman asked the older one. "Sure, sure," he said. "I was doing a painter's job, see, and I hear Kramer say to one of the S.S., 'The British here very soon, so you got to get the place better, or else bad for me, see?' So we must quick paint the barracks, and Kramer tries to kill many more by the glass, so that when the British come, not so many Jews in camp, see?"

"Powdered glass," explained Dr Friedman, and the bigger boy, smiling gently, said, "In the soup - a small piece each day. In two, t'ree week, you dead for sure. Many, many have died by the glass."

"But then the British come," said Arthur. "They come on April fifteen." The boys looked at each other, laughed, and chanted together, "T'ree p.m.!"

"And they made the Nazis bury all the bodies they had not had time to burn," said Arthur. "Look! I show you!" He pulled out of his pocket a little diary and flicked the pages, in which, he showed me, he had methodically noted, "April 22nd, 1,000 [bodies buried]," "April 23rd, 5,000," "April 24th, 5,000," and so on. In the middle of these entries was a normal, childish memo, in large, straggling capital letters: "MY BIRTHDAY." "There goes the dinner bell," said Dr Friedman. "Off you go." Arthur, who had plainly been warming to his subject, looked disappointed, but he and his companion obeyed promptly. As we followed them, Dr Friedman said, "They don't speak of such things to each other. It's only when there is someone new who they think is interested. Among themselves, they discuss the work, the sport, the future - they worry much about the future -but not the past."

As we went through the hall, I noticed that the handrail of the big, curving staircase was twisted around and around with cord. "To stop them sliding down and breaking their necks," Mrs Katz explained. In the dining room were five long tables, already lined with chattering children. Some grown-ups (teachers, I was told) were ladling out plates of soup at a side table. Nearly all the boys wore large cloth caps pulled down to their ears, which gave them a curiously Dead End Kid effect. A few wore black skullcaps or berets. "Orthodox Jews must be covered at table," explained Dr Friedman, as he fished a skullcap out of his pocket and placed it on his head.

At first glance, the children looked healthy enough, though some of them were small for their age, and skinny. But when I inspected them carefully, I got a disconcerting impression of something not quite right, like a drawing which is out of scale. A number of the older boys were big, strapping lads, but their weight seemed badly distributed. When I spoke of this, Mrs Katz said that a lot of the children had a queer, bloated look because of overeating after the years of starvation. "Some of the girls, in particular, are extremely odd shapes," she said. Their eyes weren't quite right, either, having an odd, remote, sardonic expression, as if they were always remembering, even though the rest of the children's bodies had accepted all the changes for the better since April, 1945. Everybody's table manners were excellent. I said as much to Mrs Katz, and she replied, "Not bad when you remember that they weren't used to knives or forks, or to sitting on chairs, or eating off anything but a filthy floor."

"They all smoke," said Dr Friedman deprecatingly. "Girls and boys, even the little ones. How can one stop them? After they were liberated, the soldiers paid them in cigarettes for doing odd jobs."

"If you suggest they cut down," Mrs Katz said, "they look at you and say, 'You'd smoke all day too if you'd seen your mother and father burned,' and that is difficult to answer."

After the soup came a hearty helping of boiled beef and carrots and then some highly spiced pudding. When the children had finished, a young woman passed along the tables carrying a bowl of vitamin pills (the children are required to take them), and then the young man who had opened the door for me began to chant grace in a loud, high voice. This took some time, but the children loudly and with great gusto sang the responses. When grace was over, they got up and cheerfully clattered out of the room. "They have kept their religion," said Dr Friedman. "In the camps, the Nazis would make them do all sorts of forbidden jobs on the Sabbath day, but when the work was over, they would immediately say their prayers." He pointed out two posters, bearing Hebrew inscriptions in red, on the walls. He translated one as "From slavery to liberty," and the other as "A new light will shine upon Zion."

Dr Friedman said that he was now going to hold one of the current-affairs discussions. While a group of children was being assembled, one of the boys came up to the Doctor and asked for a chit to the village barber, so that he could get a haircut. He was a big, blond, slow-moving, good-natured-looking fellow. Dr Friedman said that he was one of several hundred people who had been hastily evacuated by the Nazis from Dachau to a place in the Alps when the Americans got uncomfortably close, so that the camp would not have quite such a ghastly collection of emaciated humanity to give a bad impression to the liberators. Adults and children were loaded into cattle trucks, which were then nailed shut. They travelled four days without food or water. "Of the seventy in my truck, fifty were dead when we arrived," the boy said in German. With an innocent, happy smile, he recalled how the starving prisoners had raided the Alpine farms, killed cattle, and wolfed eggs and milk after the Nazis hastily decamped. "Many died immediately," he said, shrugging. "It's bad to eat so much when you are not used to eating." He laughed softly, as though remembering some childish indulgence at a Christmas party, and went off to get his hair cut.

Dr Friedman and I went into a big, bare classroom where about twenty boys and three or four girls were sitting on chairs they had dragged up in a semicircle around a sofa, on which he and I sat. The children looked bright and expectant. "I say everything in German and then repeat it in

English. They are supposed to reply in English," Dr Friedman said to me. He began by holding up a newspaper and calling out, "What is this in my hand?"

"A newspaper!" the children shouted.

"What is contained in the newspaper?" Dr Friedman asked in German, and then repeated it in English.

"*Politik!*" roared the children, and one boy, who was wearing American battle dress, got up and began a rambling political speech which made everybody laugh. "They're all ardent politicians," Dr Friedman said to me, and then added encouragingly to the speaker, "Good! But what else is in a paper?"

"News of the world," some of the children said. "Economic news," said a dark, handsome, intelligent-looking boy named Witold, who Dr Friedman said was the son of a Polish municipal engineer shot by the Nazis in 1939.

"Can you remember one piece of recent news that especially concerned us here in the hostel?" asked Dr Friedman.

"Belsen children arrive in England!" cried someone, and there was laughter.

"Less food for everybody in England!" cried another boy.

"Less food for everybody in England," said Dr Friedman. "Now, is that political news or economic news?"

"Both," said Witold.

"Not bad, eh?" said Dr Friedman proudly, in an undertone. The news item to which he was referring, however, turned out to be about Palestine. He then touched on the United States loan to Great Britain. "Is Britain a rich country?" he asked.

"Not now," said Arthur. "Was," he added politely.

"What do you think of England?" asked Dr Friedman. "Speak freely! Say what you think, no matter what it is."

The boys hesitated, grinning and uncertain. At last Arthur said, "The English are very kind - " He was flattened by Dr Friedman with a good-natured "That is no opinion. It means nothing - like saying someone is nice."

"They speak short," said another boy.

"He means the English are laconic," Dr Friedman said to me.

A curly-haired, pleasant-faced boy of about sixteen, who had evidently thought out what he wanted to say, began carefully to say it. Dr Friedman said that his name was Kurt and that an American newspaperman had taken a great fancy to him and was making arrangements to adopt him. "What I like best about England," Kurt said, "is that each man is free to speak what he thinks. Also, he can read what he likes. That is the democratic life, and it is good."

"A fine answer," said Dr Friedman. After a few more remarks on English traditions and characteristics, Dr Friedman mentioned the Nuremberg trials, and the group began to thaw out. They all started talking at once, and Dr Friedman had to hold up a hand to slow them down.

"The English are too soft!" shouted Arthur.

Kurt jumped to his feet, energetically protesting, but was stopped by Dr Friedman, who calmly said, "Didn't we just say that free speech was the best part of a democracy? Each can say what he will."

"All know the Nazis are murdering, bad men," said Arthur passionately. "Why have the English give them trial and try to save them? All the Germans laugh at the English and the Americans because they so soft. Is true," he added, glancing defiantly at Kurt.

Nearly all his companions nodded. "Kill every Nazi twice!" someone shouted. Kurt look distressed. Keeping his eyes cast down on the pencil he held in one hand, he said earnestly, "If the English kill them without trial, all the other Germans have felt, 'It is no good; they are no better than Nazis themselves.' Then they have given up hope, and maybe another Hitler finds it a good time to come into power."

"These children find it impossible to believe that people in England want to feed the starving Germans," Dr Friedman said to me. "I have told them that there is a movement in this country, headed by Victor Gollancz, an English publisher who is a Jew, like themselves, to send food to Germany, but it is incomprehensible to them."

At the end of the discussion, the Doctor asked the children what they wanted to be when they grow up. Lots of the boys, including Witold, said, "Technician." "Cook and pastry cook!" cried Arthur, smacking his lips pleurably, as though he saw a lifetime of *Apfelstrudel* before him. Several others said that they wanted to be cooks; possibly they felt they didn't want to take any chances in the future. One boy said that he wanted to be a gravedigger, and a boy with dimples got up and said shyly that he wanted to be a leather worker. "*Mein Vater*," he explained, "was a tanner." "I go to America!" shouted a merry-looking boy, and Dr Friedman murmured, "He has a father there, last heard of fighting in the Pacific. Who knows?" "Atlantic City!" the boy cried, looking knowledgeable and laughing.

Some of the children had not spoken at all throughout the session. The big, blond fellow who had been in Dachau was one. Most of the time he had listened, and he had laughed at some of the answers, but I noticed that he and some of the other children had occasionally sunk into a brown study and stopped paying any attention to what was going on. Maybe this was the self-protective knack of withdrawal which you must learn in order to survive in a concentration camp. Now one of the boys proudly showed me the ring on his left hand. It was a crude metal thing, made in Belsen, and he pointed out the dates 1941 and 1945 engraved on it. "When I come in and when I come out," he explained. Several of the children had similar little ornaments - two or three more rings, and a medallion engraved with the sad name "Treblinka." One boy rolled up a sleeve and exhibited his camp number tattooed in blue on his forearm. He did it quite calmly, but it was a relief when a jolly, freckled girl, showing me a bracelet made of threepenny bits, said happily, "From mine auntie in London." The other children looked at her respectfully.

Dr Friedman said that before I left I must take a look at the sick bay. Invalids are put in what was formerly the chauffeur's flat - several sunny, warm rooms, now in the charge of a bright-faced nurse. One patient, a boy, was sitting up in bed playing with a chemistry set. "He's one of the few children who have found relatives among other parties of refugees in this country," the nurse said. "One of the workers from the Windermere Reception Centre, where the first lot of Belsen children went, was here helping me get ready for a group. We had all the children's tooth mugs lined up, with each child's name on his own, and when this girl saw this boy's mug, she said, 'Why, that's the same name as two boys in our camp!' They turned out to be his brothers, who had been parted from him for years - the parents disappeared somewhere in the usual concentration-camp way - and now they're down here with him. He's just escaped pneumonia, but he's getting on fine. Thank goodness, we haven't had a ghost of an epidemic since the children arrived. We keep a careful lookout, naturally." There were two other children in the sick bay - a

girl who reared a startled head from a nest of blankets as we entered her room, and a dark-complexioned boy, dressed in American Army shirt, pants, and overseas cap, by the fire in the nurse's sitting room, laboriously tackling the critical first row of a newly cast-on bit of knitting. "There's nothing the matter with him any more, but he likes to drop back and see me," said the nurse. "All the children like it over here. It's cosy and more homelike, I suppose. I've been showing one of the girls how to knit, and he had to try, too." The boy had run into a snarl, and he confidently handed his knitting over to her to straighten out, as though he were a much younger child. His occupation and his soldierly kit made an odd contrast. When she had straightened out the snarl, the nurse passed the knitting back to him and said to me, "That little girl Margaret you saw lying down upstairs - she'll be down to tea in a moment. She was very ill with typhoid, but she's quite all right now. But she slips back to me whenever she can." She smiled warmly. "What Margaret needs is what they all need and have never had in their lives. A little mothering, that's all."

Next Dr Friedman took me to see the block of Army huts, which were warm and light. Some of them were dormitories, furnished with wooden bunks; others served as classrooms. The boys sleep in these dormitories; the girls and the staff sleep in the house. In one hut, a woman teacher was giving an English lesson to Kurt. As we came in, he looked up triumphantly from a dictionary and cried, "*Töpferware* is 'pottery'!" He acted as though he had just dug up a nugget. "The more advanced ones have private lessons," said Dr Friedman as we walked on. "They're quick linguists, most of them. Many of the children can speak Polish and Russian, and maybe Hungarian or Rumanian, as well as German of a kind, and now some English. As I have told you, they are eager to learn, not only from books but from the world. They know that they have missed so much and they are starving for experience of all kinds. The other evening a children's ballet from Southampton came to dance for them. They were entranced; they sat spellbound. No rude noises from the bigger boys! Nothing! We arrange similar little treats for them - trips to London to see a few sights, and so on. There is tremendous competition for these trips, but I take the children strictly in turn, and when I say to a boy, 'It will be your turn next time,' he goes away with a dark face, and I know that he does not believe me. They have no faith, no belief at all in a next time." Dr Friedman sighed and ran his hands over his hair. "That is perhaps the worst thing Belsen and Buchenwald have done to these children," he said. "But they will learn. I do not believe that it will ever leave their minds completely, but they will learn to be men and women who take pride in themselves, who can hope, who can look forward to tomorrow and know that it will come."

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## OUR CHILDREN

BY L.G.MONTEFIORE, O.B.E.

This article appeared in the Jewish Monthly, an AJA publication, in April 1947. Mr L G Montefiore's observations about us are very revealing. Had he been alive today he would have been pleasantly surprised at how well we integrated into the fabric of society despite our palpable disadvantages.

About 18 months ago, the first group of orphans from the Concentration Camps were brought to this country under the auspices of the Central British Fund. After the first three hundred from Theresienstadt, successive groups from other camps brought the total number up to about 700. To those who have been in close contact with these boys and girls, it has been a most interesting

experience. It began with a hurried readjustment of preconceived notions. We expected children, we had talked about children, and written about children. We had pictured under sixteens who could be sent to school or nursed back to health in the peace of an English countryside.

That was one picture in our minds. Another was the result of stories that had reached us of bandit children similar to those left to roam Russian cities after the Revolutions. Both expectations proved false. The boys and girls who arrived at the aerodromes were remarkably similar in appearance to those who stepped off some immigrant ship from Libau or Riga way back in 1907 or thereabouts. And the real children, the under sixteens, were not there. The very old and the very young had been exterminated. There were no young children left alive at Dachau or Mauthausen. The fires and the gas chambers at the killing camps of Auschwitz and Treblinka had destroyed them. Only those old enough to do forced labour and young enough to endure the harsh conditions had survived.

Looking back on the past 18 months it is easy to see some mistakes that were made. We should have from the very start tried to dispel the idea that England was a country where everything was to be had for the asking. Perhaps the orphans were treated a little too much like the prodigal son in the New Testament. Eighteen months later we must tell the prodigal son that the time for banqueting on the fatted calf is over and gone and that it is high time he should consider how to earn his living. But the future was veiled as the future always is.

We thought that in another two years at most, these trans-migrants would have left for Palestine or the U.S.A., or some other country of ultimate destination. And we felt like the father of the prodigal son who would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat. Probably in Nazi Germany the pigs had been fed very much better than these Jewish orphans. They had been starved and beaten and humiliated. They had escaped death by accident and by their own ready wit and courage. For whom should the fatted calf be killed, if not for them? They deserved and deserve anything and everything we can do for them. But perhaps the very best thing is to make them independent, and to try and teach them that pity is a transitory emotion and cannot be reckoned on as a permanent source of income.

For five years or thereabouts these boys and girls have lived in a very harsh and cruel world, uncared for, unbefriended, utterly alone except for companions in misfortune. The weakest went to the wall. The strongest, the toughest, the most ingenious in trick and subterfuge survived. It was not the well-mannered child who never told a lie that lived; on the contrary it was the most adroit liar. He who could steal and retain possession of some desirable article might live a few months longer than the rest.

Sometimes it seems a miracle that this group of charmingly mannered lads could have endured and witnessed the horrors and the bestialities of the camps.

But a prolonged stay at Dachau or a similar place leaves its mark. There are certain characteristics acquired, not by all ex-camp inmates but by many.

There is a tendency to extract the last ounce of advantage from any particular situation, and an extreme nervousness of any risk of coming off second best. After being for so many years pariahs, and worse than pariahs, there is a tendency to insist unduly on equal treatment, ignoring the fact that some concession made to a few, becomes impossible if it has to be extended to seven hundred.

Most of these orphans show an intense desire to learn. They prize both theoretic and practical knowledge. On the other hand, they have been deprived for years of any chance to compete on equal terms with other boys and girls of their own age.

Thus they are apt to consider any small talent they possess as the proof of a genius. They are disinclined to accept the fact that much seeming drudgery accompanies the first steps in any trade

or occupation. They lack the bluntly expressed advice of father or elder brother that he too had to learn, and the beginning is usually irksome and difficult. In the earlier stages, they were apt to be suspicious of advice and to harbour the wildest suspicions. One small group asked me, and I do not think the question was wholly rhetorical, how large a bribe I had received when I insisted on making an unpopular change in the administrative staff. Also we had to contend with the language difficulty. German was the *lingua franca*, the language of the camps, which all had been forced to learn. But 95% of them come from Poland or Czecho Slovakia or Carpatho Russia. Among themselves they still speak Polish, Yiddish, Czech or Magyar. Only the handful of young children have by this time forgotten any other language but English.

Perhaps in some ways the long enforced delay before emigration overseas has been beneficial. It has given a rather greater sense of stability. Hectic months had succeeded the days of liberation. Many of them had trekked eastwards to look for any survivors in their old homes, and then westwards again out of the Russian zone, with the idea that better living conditions could be found in territory controlled by the Western Allies.

Now for the past eighteen months they have been living in a settled community, kept fairly regular hours, and life has moved more tranquilly. As a result, boys, who, on their arrival, would have flown out in a passion at any rebuke, now accept a telling off with an engaging grin. They have become less fanatical, more balanced, more reasonable as it would seem to me.

But one cannot say how long this mood of patience will persist. Many of them have relatives, near or more distant, in many parts of the world. They would like, in theory at least, to be reunited.

Others without kith or kin would be well content to remain in this country if they were permitted, and thus provide a small additional quantity of manpower in British Industry. Only in rather exceptional cases do they seem inclined for agriculture, although a number have fitted in well at the Farm Schools organized by Zionist youth groups. An altogether disproportionate number wanted to go in to the diamond polishing industry. A relatively small minority belong to the extreme orthodox wing and like to find themselves back in a Yeshiva not so very different from the one with which they were familiar in Poland. Some of this group are showing themselves promising Talmudic scholars.

The Nazis made no distinction between Jews. All were alike vermin. So it is natural that among the survivors of the camps all classes, all shades of opinion and all varieties of upbringing are represented. During their stay in Great Britain, efforts have been made to keep together those who were similar in outlook and had similar plans for the future. It has meant frantic and not invariably successful efforts to find the square peg its appropriate place.

But at least it has been possible to treat each boy and each girl as an individual with his own or her own needs, hopes and fears. And they have been taken out of Germany, removed from camp life, and placed under something approaching normal conditions.

That has made rehabilitation possible and a long stride to betaken on the road towards razing out those rooted troubles of body and of mind left by five years of Concentration Camps.

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## A 'LIGHT-HEARTED' EPISODE FROM A DARK PERIOD

by Ruben Katz

Ruben arrived with the first Schonfeld transport of children from Warsaw in March 1946. He stayed for a while in the main Woodberry Down hostel under the assumed name of Adolf Bader, but that is another story....

I survived the latter part of the war on the 'Aryan' side with my older sister Fela in and around Warsaw, passing off as Polish Catholics with false papers. My sister was Walerja 'Wala' Matera and I went by the name of Stefan Teodor Wojs.

My sister did not look Jewish, she had blonde hair and blue eyes, but even so, on the 'Aryan' side, one had to be more on guard against certain Poles than Germans. Poles could easier detect any Jewish traits or mannerism which the Germans could not. In fact, it paid to appear to be friendly with Germans to help allay any suspicion by Poles.

On the 'Aryan' side one went in constant fear of Polish Schmaltzers, blackmailers and informers, who preyed on people with Jewish features on the streets of Warsaw. One only thought of living through the day and each day brought with it new dangers.

The following is a 'light-hearted' excerpt from a grim period based on my wartime testimony:-

One day my sister decided to visit a Jewish girlfriend from our home town of Ostrowiec, also living with forged papers in a Warsaw suburb, in an area unfamiliar to her. As Fela emerged from the station, a Polish "Blue" policeman noticed she was perhaps disorientated and a stranger to the neighbourhood. He came up to her and asked if he could help, but she declined any assistance, maintaining she knew exactly where she was going. He, nevertheless, walked alongside her and as she changed direction, he insisted he was going the same way. He kept pestering her and asking awkward questions and then, out of the blue, he accused her of being a *Zydowka* and asked her outright for 'schmaltz' (money). She strenuously denied she was Jewish and that he would get no money from her. In that case, he said, she would have to accompany him to the Police station, which was nearby, to verify her true identity. Fela readily agreed, but threatened to tell his superiors that he had asked her for a bribe. As they carried on walking in the direction of the Police station, he enquired what she had in the little parcel she was carrying. Fela instinctively realised that he may have given her an opportunity to shake him off. The more inquisitive he became, the more Fela held on tightly to the package. She later relented and offered to give him some money she had in her purse, but "definitely not the package", which she clutched closely to her chest. She bluntly refused to give up the parcel, which whetted his appetite even more. Eventually, after a lot of prodding and pestering, she agreed to hand it over to him but only if he let her go. They were, by then, in clear view of the Police station, outside which policemen were standing and milling around. He suggested, so as not to arouse suspicion of his fellow policemen, that they part in a friendly manner, in front of the Police station. As they said goodbye, Fela handed him the parcel and he bowed and kissed her hand whilst clicking his heels in the Polish courtly manner. She immediately left the area as quickly as possible without visiting her friend. Inside the parcel were a nightgown, hairbrush and a few other cosmetic items a young lady needs for spending a weekend with a friend!

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## THE 'THUNDERER' AND THE COMING OF THE SHOAH: 1933 - 1942 [Shortened presentation at Conference]

By Colin Shindler

Colin Shindler is a writer. Former editor of The Jewish Quarterly and currently editor of Judaism Today. His books include, *Ploughshares into Swords and Israel*, *Likud and the Zionist Dream*. He was very active in the campaign for Soviet Jewry.

In its two hundred years of existence, the Times has been perceived as the quintessence of 'Englishness' and well-connected to the ruling class in Britain by the world outside. The official history of the Times succinctly defined its role;

*'The Times, [diplomats in London] acknowledged, did not speak directly for the government; it spoke for itself, but its independent views, they noticed, generally corresponded with the thinking of influential groups in Westminster, Whitehall, the City and the older Universities. It therefore could be taken as the voice of the dominant minority in the country; sometimes in line with the government, sometimes in divergence; and where it was divergent, it was - these diplomats told themselves - especially worth noting, for then it showed what kind of pressures were likely very soon to be brought against the government from within the ruling circle in the attempt to bring about a change of policy.'*<sup>1</sup>

The editors of the Times during the period 1933 - 1945 were Geoffrey Dawson (1912 - 1919 and 1922 - 1941) and his close colleague, Robin Barrington-Ward (1941 - 1948). Dawson had been at Eton and Magdalen College, Oxford. He was a Fellow of All Souls, had served as Lord Milner's private secretary in South Africa and was 'an Empire-oriented, conventional English scholar-squire'.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, it was in South Africa at the turn of the century that Dawson first met Edward Wood, later Lord Halifax and Chamberlain's Foreign Secretary. It was a close friendship that continued into and through the era of appeasement. Dawson was also a friend of Chamberlain and came to see himself in a quasi-Ministerial capacity. R M Barrington-Ward similarly came from a privileged background. He was the son of a clergyman and was educated at Westminster and Balliol. Unlike the more conservative Dawson, Barrington-Ward was much more a Tory radical in the Disraeli mode. In one sense, both Dawson and Barrington-Ward were both products of their time and their class. Their approach to the election of Hitler in 1933 and their understanding of Nazi antisemitism reflected the approach of wide sectors of the British establishment.

During the 1930s, the Times distanced itself from the openly anti-Nazi approach of other sections of the British press, in particular, that of the liberal Manchester Guardian. Yet this did not mean that its senior figures were uninformed about developments inside Germany. Barrington-Ward believed that the printed word in the pages of the Times was avidly dissected by the Nazi hierarchy. He therefore felt that the influence of the Times in the ruling circles in Hitler's Germany would be severely diminished if he spoke out passionately and loudly.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the carnage during World War I had conditioned Barrington-Ward to exhibit a total hatred of war and he was thus loath to use his position to advocate too strong a policy against Germany for fear of antagonizing the Nazi leadership and thereby facilitating the movement towards war.<sup>4</sup> The infamous editorial which advocated the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia<sup>5</sup> had been written by the leader writer, Leo Kennedy and revised by Dawson. Yet for several weeks previously, Dawson had been primed by his old friend, the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax and even allowed to read

sensitive Foreign Office memoranda. Over lunch on the same day as the piece appeared, Halifax indicated that despite the formal protestations of the Foreign Office, he was not displeased with the Times' editorial.

Even in private correspondence, Barrington-Ward was at pains to rationalise this policy as late as April 1939:

*'It was an endeavour to discover even at the eleventh hour whether the Nazis were, according to their professions, out for reasonable change or whether they were out for mere domination. Chamberlain was ready to wait for the proofs and Churchill was not. The Churchill case completely ignored the admitted blunder of the settlement of 1919 and above all the failure to give Germany a say in the Versailles settlement. A policy (Churchill's) which could have been represented as one of mere frightened encirclement would have ranked every German behind the Fuhrer and left this country with an uneasy conscience and deeply divided.'*<sup>9</sup>

Up until 1938, reports of Nazi atrocities were, by and large, underplayed by the Times. Like other sections of the British press, the experience of the Times was not attuned to such bestialities. It was - even at the very beginning of Nazi rule - beyond their comprehension why Jews should be persecuted. Many newspaper correspondents in Germany toned down their articles because they knew that the full details would not be believed by their editors. When Norman Ebbutt, the senior Berlin correspondent of the Times discovered that his most detailed and critical material did not appear, he passed on 'his more damning information' to the American CBS correspondent, William Shirer.<sup>11</sup>

From the very beginning, disbelief pervaded the Times' approach to Nazi intentions - the extent that it underplayed the importance of antisemitism in Hitler's election manifesto in 1933.<sup>12</sup>

Although the Times had published an article on Oranienburg in September 1933,<sup>13</sup> the newspaper was averse to publicising conditions in the camps. This was indicated clearly when the Times spiked a detailed story on Dachau in December 1933 from its Bavarian correspondent, Stanley Simpson.

The belief in the Jew's ability to exaggerate and distort reality, to promote their own cause was widespread in the British establishment. As Philip Graves, a foreign correspondent with the Times since 1906 and exposé of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, exclaimed in a private letter to Barrington-Ward; 'why must Jews be so prolix?'<sup>23</sup>

In the monocultural world of the 1930s, Jews who did not assimilate and dissolve into the wider society were suspect. They manifested a distinct form of 'un-Englishness' by their insistence on maintaining their difference. Yet the very notion of Nazi antisemitism was similarly un-English. It was an affront against the liberal conscience and struck at the roots of a civilized behaviour which characterised the English way of life. It was a competition between these two dislikes which confused and characterised British understanding and response in the 1930s. As Neville Chamberlain, himself, pointed out after Kristallnacht 'No doubt, Jews aren't lovable people: I don't care about them myself, but that is not sufficient to explain the pogrom'.<sup>24</sup>

In addition, there was a profound inability to understand the ideological roots of Nazi antisemitism which was also prevalent amongst many British journalists. There must be, it was argued, more pragmatic, more rational, reasons for such a dire situation. It was easier psychologically to believe that the Jews had brought the persecution upon themselves because they were prominent in German society and that although they carried German passports, they had remained a people apart. Similarly, it was more convenient to believe that Hitler did not know what his minions were doing in his name - especially after the Nuremberg decrees.<sup>25</sup>

All this had profound consequences when news of the Shoah broke in the summer of 1942. The central point of contact for many journalists was the Foreign Office News Department. Sir William

Ridsdale was head of this unit between 1941 and 1954. His department was an essential source of information for the press from occupied Europe. Its job - at least on the surface - was to assist journalists by transmitting all available information. A more subterranean task was to ensure that only the news which the British government deemed to be fit to appear in the press should be published. Moreover, in wartime, the transmission of selective information could be rationalised in terms of national security. The Diplomatic correspondent of the Times believed that the Foreign Office passed on information factually without minimising it - and especially 'the terrible German atrocities in Russia'.<sup>31</sup>

The Foreign Office, moreover, had a vested interest in ensuring that reports in the Times in particular were aligned with government policy. The Foreign Office believed that regardless of the reality, reports in the Times were perceived differently from other sections of the British press by foreign powers. The possibility of erroneous signals - from the British Government's viewpoint - transmitted to the enemy through the vehicle of independent reporting in the Times was too risky.

After the outbreak of war in 1939, a certain subtlety of approach operated within the confines of the Foreign Office. There was a clear need to filter the news without the operation seeming too blatant, duplicitous and unjustifiable. As Andrew Cockett has pointed out,

*'Just as the service ministries operated their own private censorship by rigidly controlling the flow of news, so the Foreign Office did likewise - but it also exercised those effective methods of personal contact both at the level of the News Department with the specialist correspondents and at ambassadorial or national level with newspaper proprietors and editors. Those ambassadors and officials operating this form of 'silent censorship' could point to its success in order to appease the more repressive instincts of most of their colleagues'.<sup>32</sup>*

Indeed, Sir William Ridsdale himself argued against any censorship because it was unnecessary since 'there was a large measure of cooperation between the press and the Foreign Office News Department'.<sup>34</sup>

Information reached London from occupied Europe from a variety of sources. Much of it - and especially that derived from domestic intelligence operations in Europe - passed through the filter of the British Intelligence Services, SIS, SOE, MI5, MI9, MI19. Moreover, US Embassies remained open in Berlin, Budapest, Bucharest and Vichy until the end of 1941 and the beginning of 1942. In neutral countries, allied diplomats operated information gathering centres. The press in these countries further provided reports. There were also anti-Nazi Germans who tried to pass on vital information through neutral countries. Furthermore, fragments of information could be gleaned even from the highly controlled Soviet and German papers and broadcasts. Emigre groups domiciled in London also possessed their own networks in their home countries. Jewish and Zionist organisations operating out of neutral capitals as Geneva, Istanbul and Lisbon similarly transmitted information received.

After such information was clarified and vetted, it was cleared for transmission through a variety of channels. The Ministry of Information fed the BBC home services while British Intelligence and the Foreign Office catered for the European services. The Political Warfare Executive directed by Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart utilised material for propaganda purposes.

The Times had access to most of these sources. Indeed, the Diplomatic correspondent of the Times first learned about extermination techniques using the exhaust fumes of trucks and vans through Polish intelligence and the 'London' Poles. In 1943-4, he met 'several Polish agents who were flown out of Poland to report and were then flown back again'. This included Josef Retinger, a political aide to Sikorski. They told him that Jews from Poland and Germany - as well as ethnic Poles - were being killed in Auschwitz. No differentiation seems to have been made between the incarceration of Poles in Auschwitz and the extermination of Jews there.<sup>35</sup>

From the outbreak of war until May 1942, the Times picked up periodic stories about the Nazi persecution and massacres of the Jews. For example, the British White Paper on 'The Treatment of German Nationals in Germany',<sup>36</sup> the establishment of the Warsaw Ghetto,<sup>37</sup> the mass deportations of Jews,<sup>38</sup> the massacres perpetrated by the Einsatzgruppen<sup>39</sup> and the gassing of Dutch Jews at Mauthausen.<sup>40</sup>

Although there were indeed reports in the Times that Jews were being singled out for special treatment, official British policy was to subsume Jewish suffering within the general maelstrom of Nazi killings in Europe. When the Bund report which first revealed the totality of the extermination of Polish Jewry arrived in London at the end of May 1942, the Times did not pick it up directly. Instead, it reported Sikorski's interpretation of it, in a broadcast on the BBC which emphasised instead Polish suffering.<sup>42</sup> The Nazis, it was considered, had embarked on a series of periodic pogroms rather than the systematic extermination of the Jews. Both the Times and the BBC had missed the essential point that this was an organised programme of extermination, Szmul Zygielbojm therefore looked for other outlets for the Bund report. He gave it to the Daily Telegraph which published the essential details on its main news page on 25 May under the heading 'German murder 700,000 Jews in Poland' and 'Travelling Gas Chambers', almost a month after its arrival in London. The two column story describing 'the greatest massacre in the world's history' was bordered by other stories - '100 Airfields in Three Months: Australia's Feat' and 'Ice Cream's last Summer: Manufacture to end on September 3rd'.

At the end of June, the World Jewish Congress held a press conference at which the Bund report was promoted centrally and intensely.

Although the Times headlined the fact that 'Over One Million [Jews] Dead Since the War Began',<sup>46</sup> the newspaper covered the press conference hesitantly and was economical with the information provided. This contrasted with the Daily Telegraph which quoted Goebbels in Das Reich that 'the Jews of Europe... will pay with the extermination of their race in the whole of Europe and elsewhere too'.<sup>47</sup> The Guardian recorded that seven million were in concentration camps and it was now sufficiently clear that Eastern Europe had been turned into 'a vast slaughter house of Jews'.<sup>48</sup>

As further information seeped out - much of it appearing in the emigre Polish press in London - Jewish groups, the Polish and Czechoslovak National Councils and many others strongly promoted the need to publicise the fate of the Jews. This was not a course favoured by the Foreign Office who - amongst its other concerns - was also weary about upsetting the Arab nationalist cause in Mandatory Palestine.<sup>49</sup>

The problem for the Times was that influential circles in the British establishment were now speaking out on behalf of European Jews. Zygielbojm and Schwarzbart ensured that the Bund report reached all members of Parliament. Cardinal Hinsley, the Catholic Archbishop of Westminster denounced the atrocities against Jews on the BBC European service - adding that it was 'not British propaganda'.<sup>50</sup> The Times again devoted relatively little space to it compared to the Telegraph. On 9 July, the Government responded by organising a press conference with the London Poles under the chairmanship of Brendan Bracken, the Minister of Information. The report of the Times the following day once more merged Jews into the generality of Polish suffering despite the speeches of Zygielbojm and Schwarzbart.<sup>51</sup> The Daily Telegraph<sup>52</sup> and the Guardian<sup>53</sup> carried more details about the persecution of the Jews in their reports yet their editorials, which spoke so movingly about the victims of Nazi violence from Warsaw to Lidice, made no mention of the Jewish tragedy.

Between July and December 1942, there was a steady flow of reports - the round-ups in Paris, the mass deportations to Poland from all parts of Europe, eye witnesses in Chelmno, the Riegner telegram, the Karski testimony - all of which constructed the general picture that European Jewry was gradually being exterminated in fulfilment of the ideological demands of Nazism. Whilst Foreign Office officials cast doubt on the truth of such reports and refused to recognise the Jews

as a distinct nationality, the British press began to move to a position where - even in the absence of official confirmation - they at least began to entertain the possibility that terrible, unimaginable things were being carried out against the Jews of Europe.

In August and September 1942, the Times began to publish detailed reports from its correspondents in Switzerland and Portugal about the roundups of Jews in Britain's closest neighbour and ally, France. Although this growing willingness to publicise the facts differentiated the Times from the Foreign Office, it was not willing to accept Jewish criticism of British government policy and the broad attitude of the press. At a rally on 29 October at the Royal Albert Hall, the Chief Rabbi forcefully attacked the reticence of the British press and suggested that it encouraged the Nazis 'to go on perfecting their technique of extermination' and hid the truth from the British public. The Times, however, did not report the content of Chief Rabbi Hertz's speech but gave more emphasis to the statement of the Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>56</sup>

As the news of the mass extermination of Polish Jewry trickled out, the Foreign Office was still unable to confirm the facts to both BBC journalists and the Foreign Office News Department. Despite the deportations from the Warsaw and Lodz ghettos and the revelations of the Karski report, the Foreign Office did not alter its position. At the end of November 1942, the Foreign Office was still hesitant in giving any credence to the news from Poland to Sidney Silverman and Alex Easterman, representatives of the World Jewish Congress. A Foreign Office official briefed its News Department to softpedal the issue, but not abolish it altogether from the public domain.<sup>56</sup> On 1 December, Silverman and Easterman held a press conference to publicise the policy of genocide. Silverman further proposed to raise the issue in the House of Commons. On 4 December, the Times printed a lead story entitled 'Nazi War on the Jews: Deliberate Plan for Extermination'.

It commented that

*'for some weeks London has recognised 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 most steadily lead to their extermination'.<sup>57</sup>*

Although this went further than any previous Times article, it still stopped short of mentioning the actuality of mass extermination by design. Through the Berlin correspondents of Swedish newspapers, the Times commented that the entire Polish General-Government would be declared *judenrein* by 1 December. The Jews would be 'liquidated which means either transported eastwards in cattle trucks to an unknown destination or killed where they stood'.

Why did the Times suddenly change course? One reason was that the accumulating news from Poland could neither be ignored nor denied.

*'There was not a special policy to promote any single aspect [of the horrors of the German occupation of Europe]. News was news - that was the guiding principle... [Running the series of reports in December 1942] was a news decision essentially, based on the sure belief that news about the German atrocities was an asset, a weapon in the allied war effort.'<sup>58</sup>*

This reflected the widespread belief in government and in the media that the Jews could only be saved by a swift and total Allied victory.

*'A dominant British response to the question: How can we help the Jews and other occupied peoples?... the surest way to help and to save Jews and others from death and suffering is to do all we can to win the war and end the tyranny as soon as possible... that thought was in almost everyone's mind.'<sup>59</sup>*