

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 anticlimax,” 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.

THE CASE OF FRANCE

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 turn over

NOTE

With reference to Professor Laski's statement on p. 9, I print below part of a letter from Sir Andrew McFadyean which appeared in *The Daily Telegraph* of Wednesday 6th January, after the first edition of this pamphlet had gone to press.

Sir Andrew was General Secretary to the Reparations Commission, 1922-24, and of the Dawes Committee, 1925. This is what he says:

"A few weeks ago a deputation to the Home Secretary appealed for permission for the entry of 2,000 children from Vichy France. The request was unconditionally refused, partly on the ground that it might cause an 'outburst' of anti-Semitism here. That is a slander on the British people. News had just been received that of 2,000 children, from two years of age upwards, deported from Vichy France in cattle-trucks, half were dead on arrival at their destination and the rest were dying."