

**BRITISH SOCIETY AND THE JEWS: A STUDY INTO  
THE IMPACT OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR ERA  
AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ISRAEL, 1938-1948.**

Submitted by Nicholas Mark Burkitt to the University of Exeter  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The thesis examines the relationship between Britain's Jews, both established and refugee, with the host community from 1938 to 1948. The relationship is studied in the light of events in Europe and the Near East from the 1938 *Anschluss* to the 1948 founding of Israel and the ways they impacted upon Jews in Britain. The work shows a positive reaction towards Jews in Britain, with few, but specific exceptions. Existing academic work has often concentrated on those exceptions, particularly in the East End of London. This study looks at the wider Jewish experience to show a more peaceful and tolerant coexistence than has formally been presented, especially to recently arrived Jews. The focus of the thesis is on the different personal experiences of Jews in Britain, against the more familiar high political context of the period.

The thesis does not dispute the existence of anti-Semitism, but shows that it was limited to traditional geographical areas and has been in many cases confused with a more general xenophobia towards any 'outsider' or 'foreigner'. It also deals with what the study refers to as 'pragmatic' government decisions regarding Jews and highlights some non-Jewish reactions which have been seen as discriminatory, but in fact were often born out of naive ignorance or having no realistic alternative. Using different approaches to examine a wide and fragmented cross section of Jews, the thesis shows the internal struggle many faced when dealing with the issues of what it meant to be British, a Jew and for some, a desire to have a safe homeland in Palestine. Overall, it is a study in the transformation of Jewish society in Britain from being deferential and submissive to one of assertiveness and self-reliance born out of necessity.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I should like to give particular thanks to Professor Richard Overy for his advice as my principal Supervisor, along with Professor Jeremy Black and Dr. Jane Whittle. Of special note in their assistance and encouragement were the staff of the Wiener Library, the London Metropolitan Archive, Glamorgan Archive (Cardiff) and David Morris at the West Glamorgan Archive. I am grateful to the Office of the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain for allowing access to their records held at the London Metropolitan Archive. Special thanks for their help and providing information must be given to Kevin Mularski and Jennifer Zorek-Pressman regarding family details, photographs and permission for their use. I am also appreciative to those people I spoke to personally, who through interviews were able to give me an insight into the lives of Jews and non-Jews during the 1930s and 1940s, namely Joan Dare, Edith 'Eva' Jones and Chanie Rosenberg. Additionally, my appreciation extends to those who were helpful in providing information relating to specific areas or persons, such as Howard Beck. Finally, I must also thank the editing skills and patience of Tina and Manjit, whose efforts with this work have been invaluable and often essential.

## **CONTENTS**

|                  |     |
|------------------|-----|
| Title            | 1   |
| Abstract         | 2   |
| Acknowledgements | 3   |
| Contents         | 4   |
| Abbreviations    | 5   |
| Introduction     | 6   |
| Chapter One      | 42  |
| Chapter Two      | 123 |
| Chapter Three    | 190 |
| Chapter Four     | 264 |
| Conclusion       | 336 |
| Appendices       | 346 |
| Bibliography     | 372 |

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

- AAC.....Academic Assistance Council.
- AJEX.....Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women.
- AJR.....Association of Jewish Refugees.
- BBL.....British Brothers' League.
- BCRC.....British Committee for Refugees from Czechoslovakia.
- CBF.....Central British Fund for German Jewry (1933-1935).
- CBF.....Central British Fund for Jewish Relief and Rehabilitation (1944-1978).
- CCAC....Churchill College Archive Centre (University of Cambridge).
- CCJR.....Central Council for Jewish Refugees (1939-1944).
- CGJ.....Council for German Jewry (1936-1939).
- CPGB....Communist Party of Great Britain.
- FCRA....Friends Committee for Refugees and Aliens.
- GAAR....Gloucestershire Association for Aiding Refugees.
- GCA.....Gloucestershire County Archive, Gloucester.
- JRC.....Jewish Refugees Committee.
- LSE.....London School of Economics and Political Science.
- MRA.....Moral Re-Armament (otherwise known as the Oxford Movement/Group).
- RCM.....Refugee Children's Movement.
- SPSL.....Society for the Protection of Science and Learning.
- TNA.....The National Archive, Kew, London.
- UM.....Union Movement.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The central aim of the thesis is to form an understanding of Great Britain's relationship with its Jewish population between 1938 and 1948 and how this was influenced by events in Europe and the Near East at a time that saw an escalation in the persecution of continental European Jewry. The Second World War, Holocaust, the emergence of the state of Israel and the beginnings of the Cold War had a direct impact and consequence for Anglo-Jewry and its relationship with British host communities. The importance of the study lies in seeing the ten year period as a unique experience for Anglo-Jewry and the rest of the British people. The thesis examines a country under the unprecedented pressures of an economic depression, a total war effort, with a socially and politically divided Jewish community. It is these consequences of events from outside of Britain, which impact upon it and the people, that are the focus for the study. The ideology and foreign policy of Nazi Germany and later on, the pressure of world opinion over the fate of Jews and Palestine, had profound effects upon British community relations for both Jew and non-Jew.

The *Anschluss* and *Kristallnacht* of 1938 brought about a rapid and large scale influx of Jews into Britain, which resulted in a variety of responses from both British society and an already pressurised indigenous Jewish population. How the former dealt with its Jewish population varied considerably, often depending upon the context of the events between 1938 and 1948, which included the Second World War, the Holocaust

and the ‘dirty war’ in the establishment of the State of Israel.<sup>1</sup> The starting point for the thesis comes at a time when Jewish immigration into Great Britain significantly increased because of two key actions by Germany’s Third Reich. The first event was the *Anschluss* (March 1938) or union between Germany and Austria, whereby the latter was amalgamated into the ‘Greater German Reich’ and consequently unleashed a wave of Austrian anti-Semitic activity.<sup>2</sup> Later in the year, there followed *Kristallnacht* (November 1938), the name given to the imprisonment, violence and murder of Jews by German/Austrian citizens and encouraged by the government.<sup>3</sup> The conclusion for the thesis is the establishment of the State of Israel (May 1948). This not only relieved much of the pressure being applied to British Jewry concerning its

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<sup>1</sup> Prior to 1948, events in continental Europe have always produced a flow of Jewish immigrants to Great Britain. The pogroms and emancipation of Jews of eastern Europe at the end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth centuries resulted in the population rising from 75,000 in 1880 to approximately 300,000 by 1914. Assimilated and ‘respectable’ Jewry was overwhelmed. The numbers would have been greater but for restrictive government legislation such as the 1905 Alien Immigration Act. The next significant influx of Jews came with the rise to power of the Nazis and another 11,000 came to Britain up to 1938 and *Anschluss*. From mid-1938 to September 1939, a further 44,000 arrived. The highpoint came just after the Second World War, when there were approximately 425,000 Jews in Britain. T. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain 1656 to 2000* (Los Angeles, 2002), pp.3, 127, 215. R. Winder, *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain* (London, 2005), p.169.

<sup>2</sup> For a variety of perspectives written or translated into English on the events surrounding *Anschluss* and its consequences, a number of recent publications range from E. Orsten, *From Anschluss to Albion: Memoirs of a Refugee Girl 1938-40* (Cambridge, 1998), looking at a Jewish ten year old girl and her brother rescued by the Quakers and sent to Britain, to the more cultural and social impacts detailed in D. Daviau (Ed.), *Austrian Writers and the Anschluss: Understanding the Past, Overcoming the Past* (Ariadne, 1991), W. Wright (Ed.), *Austria, 1938-1988: Anschluss and Fifty Years* (Ariadne, 1995) and D. Lehr, *Austria: Before and After the Anschluss: Personal Experiences, Observations and Comments* (Pittsburgh, 2001). Also of particular interest from a personal and reflective perspective is Kurt von Schuschnigg’s *The Brutal Takeover: The Austrian Ex-Chancellor’s Account of the Anschluss of Austria by Hitler* (London, 1971).

<sup>3</sup> Within such general accounts of the Holocaust, there are useful commentaries on *Kristallnacht* to be found in D. Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (London, 1997), K. Reuband and E. Johnson, *What We Knew: Terror, Mass Murder, and Everyday Life in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge Ma., 2003) and I. Kershaw, *Hitler, the Germans, and the Final Solution* (Yale, 2008). For a more in-depth analysis of events surrounding *Kristallnacht*, important contributions have been made by A. Read and D. Fisher, *Kristallnacht: The Beginning of the Holocaust* (London, 1991), M. Bard, *48 Hours of Kristallnacht: Night of Destruction / Dawn of the Holocaust: An Oral History* (Connecticut, 2008), M. Gilbert, *Kristallnacht: Prelude to Destruction* (London, 2006) and A. Steinweiss, *Kristallnacht 1938* (Harvard University Press, 2009). For a ‘Revisionist’ viewpoint, that suggests that the Jews were trying to discredit the Nazi regime by creating the destruction of property themselves, see I. Weckert, *Flashpoint: Kristallnacht 1938: Instigators, Victims and Beneficiaries* (Institute for Historical Review, 1991). It is worth noting that Ingrid Weckert is one of the few historians consistently cited by David Irving in support of his arguments.

loyalty to the host country after three years of terrorism in Palestine, but also contributed to a slow decline in the size of their population.<sup>4</sup>

For the purposes of clarity, this study understands the term ‘anti-Semitism’ in its 1930s to 1940s context and not by its current definition. In that way, one tries to avoid seeing the presence of anti-Semitism in the everyday banter of British society, the personal grudges against neighbours at times of severe stress such as during the war and the austerity of post-war conditions, plus the ambivalence of some people who only dislike particular Jews, whilst getting on with others. Indeed, there were many Jews in Britain, whose families had fully assimilated into society, but were at best suspicious of the newly arrived Jewish refugees or who were against them coming to this country and staying here. Therefore, the thesis understands ‘anti-Semitism’ to be an intentionally harmful act, word or deed towards the Jews. This includes those who had a clear prejudice expressed in the tone of their language. It is not seen in simply taking an opposing view or being culturally naïve. The focus of the study is related to what William Brustein refers to as ‘popular anti-Semitism’ in the actions, words or deeds of the general public as opposed to the elites of British society.<sup>5</sup>

Racism, intentional or not, crossed both ethnic and class barriers, which certainly before the Second World War, were more solidified than in present day society. Anti-Semitic attitudes, expressions, actions or policies were found across the class divide of the 1930s and 40s, ranging from its traditional breeding ground of London’s working class East End to the wealthy commuter belt of the Home Counties and

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<sup>4</sup> For a range of views on British rule in Palestine, two insightful works are Nicholas Bethell’s *The Palestine Triangle: The Struggle for the HolyLand, 1935-48* (New York, 1979) and Tom Segev’s *One Palestine Complete: Jews and Arabs Under the British Mandate* (New York, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> W. Brustein, *Roots of Hate: Anti-Semitism in Europe before the Holocaust* (CUP, 2003), p.4.



affluent suburbs of Manchester and Glasgow. Although Jewish communities could be found throughout Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 80% of Anglo-Jewry was found in just three cities; London (180,000), Manchester (30,000) and Leeds (20,000). These major centres of Jewry were supplemented by sizable numbers in Liverpool (8,000), Glasgow (7,500) and Birmingham (6,000).<sup>6</sup> Expressions of anti-Semitism varied from government policies specifically targeting Jews, gangs beating up Jews, to the more subtle forms of ‘off the cuff’ remarks concerning ‘Jew boys’ made in Mass Observation reports or in interviews.<sup>7</sup> It is this understanding and variable defining of the term ‘anti-Semitic’ which has caused historians such as David Cesarani and Tony Kushner to emerge with differing conclusions and is another central theme to the thesis. There have been many historians and socio-political commentators who have neglected to differentiate between the terms ‘intentional’ and ‘unintentional’, which has led them to label people pro or anti-Semitic. Thus, we have the perceptions of Winston Churchill being ‘pro-Semitic’, whilst Ernest Bevin has been seen as ‘anti-Semitic’. In this particular case, the simple encouragement or discouragement of Jewish immigration to Palestine should not be the basis to label a person or administration, pro or anti-Semitic.

The era of the Second World War and the establishment of the State of Israel stand out in British history as a period of time when the government and the public had the issues of Jewry and its relationship with this country brought to the forefront of political and social agendas. Prior to this period and particularly since their

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<sup>6</sup> T. Endelman, *Jews of Britain*, p.130.

<sup>7</sup> University of Sussex Mass Observation Archive; Diary collection. Quote taken from Mrs Crawford, ambulance driver in central London, November, 1940. Diarist 5427, 1939-65. The word ‘Jewboys’ was used by one interviewee, Joan Dare (interview 16 October 2009), when referring to dentists in the immediate post-war period. However, as the respondent commented, using the word ‘Jewboys’ was often used by people in the 1940s, without any negative connotation and therefore should not be seen in a more modern pejorative sense.

persecution in the Middle Ages, Jews in Britain had had a relatively peaceful coexistence with the host community which may be viewed in stark contrast to many other European countries.<sup>8</sup> This can be attributed to their successful assimilation into British society between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. The level of tolerance was demonstrated in the appointment Benjamin Disraeli as Prime Minister (1868, 1874-1880). This was not an isolated case of a Jew achieving power and influence in society as witnessed by the economic, media and political brokers and their dealings within government, such as Moses Montefiore and the extensive Rothschild dynasty. The latter were at the apex of a European banking dynasty which also included many other Jewish finance families below them, such as the Sassons, Henriques and Mocattas. The Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 led the way to the eventual emancipation of the Jews in 1858. In 1837, Moses Haim Montefiore had been knighted by Queen Victoria and in 1855, Sir David Salomons was elected the first Jewish Lord Mayor of London. In the newspaper industry, the Sasson family owned the *Sunday Times* at the turn of the century, Harry Oppenheim was a major shareholder in the *Daily News*, whilst the Levy-Lawson family ran the *Daily Telegraph*. Jews also controlled the international press agency, *Reuters*, based in London. Although on the eve of the First World War, British Jews comprised less than 1% of the total population, they represented 16% of the country's millionaires.<sup>9</sup> Taking out the non-Jewish landed classes, then the number of Jewish millionaires rose to 25% of the total according to one source.<sup>10</sup> Certainly one cannot ignore the more

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<sup>8</sup> Although the process of European emancipation had started with France in 1791, Great Britain was still one of the earlier states to follow on in 1856. The Habsburg Empire, Second German Reich and Russian Empire respectively followed on in 1867, 1871 and 1917.

<sup>9</sup> C. Holmes, 'Anti-Semitism in British Society, 1876-1939' in H. Strauss (Ed.), *Hostages of Modernization: Studies on Modern Antisemitism 1870-1933/39 Germany-Great Britain-France*, Vol.3/1 (New York, 1993), p.109.

<sup>10</sup> W. Brustein, *Roots of Hate*, p.227. Brustein cites the figure of 25% from Albert Lindemann's *Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews* (New York, 1991), p.241.

lurid and at times sensational ‘popular’ images of Shylock, Isaac of York and Fagin characters in the public’s imagination, but these literary and stereotypical images did not result in the death and destruction of Jews and their property as witnessed elsewhere in Europe, notably in the east.<sup>11</sup> These literary characters were by no means the only figures portrayed to supplant a ‘medieval image’ onto nineteenth and twentieth century Jewry. Novelists such as Marie Corelli and Frank Harris joined the serial writers for newspapers such as the *Daily Mail*, including Edgar Joyce and Pierre Costello.<sup>12</sup> Disturbances tended to occur when towards the end of the nineteenth century with the government, public and media focussed on the issue of large scale immigration to Britain from Europe, particularly the poor and oppressed, who congregated in densely populated areas of the ever expanding industrial cities. Even when trouble did occur, it could just as often be centred on the issue of immigration and migrant communities such as the Irish, Chinese or Arab.

In the late Victorian era, it was the convergence of traditional religious antipathy towards Judaism, with the emerging ideas of eugenics, socialism and strident nationalism/imperialism that formed the basis for modern European anti-Semitism. In Britain’s case, there were added constituents of a controversial foreign policy and mass Jewish immigration from the Russian Empire. For some critics of Disraeli and his foreign policy in support of the Ottoman Empire against Russia during the

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<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to note that the British actor, Alec Guinness, and his portrayal of Fagin in the 1948 film, ‘Oliver Twist’, coming as it did at the end of a bloody campaign to rid Palestine of British control, was deemed to be so stereotypically anti-Semitic, that it was banned in Israel and resulted in large scale demonstrations in the United States of America and the film’s eventual, but delayed release, in 1951. Alec Guinness’s physical portrayal was based on the original George Cruikshank illustrations for the 1838 novel.

<sup>12</sup> See A. Federico, *Idol of Suburbia: Marie Corelli and Late Victorian Literary Culture* (Virginia, 2000), B. Cheyette, ‘Jewish Stereotyping and English Literature 1875-1920: Towards a Political Analysis’ in T. Kushner & K. Lunn (Eds.), *Traditions of Intolerance: Historical perspectives on Fascism and Race Discourse in Britain* (Manchester, 1989), pp.26-27, and P. Brantlinger, ‘Anti-Semitism and British Gothic Literature (review), *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, Vol.24, No.4, summer 2006, pp.162-164.

‘Eastern Crisis’ (1876-1878), his religious background overcame his support for a fellow Christian nation and took no account of the massacres of Bulgarian Christians. Goldwin Smith (1823-1910), an Oxford Regius Professor of Modern History and later on, Cornell University, argued that neither Disraeli nor Anglo-Jewry could be considered British patriots by virtue of their Jewish origins. For Smith, Jews were different by race and therefore by character and with echoes of Medieval Christianity, by blood as well. The Jews, as he thought, unfortunately brought persecution upon themselves.<sup>13</sup> In later years, as an opponent of the Second Boer War (1899-1902), Smith accused Anglo-Jewish capitalists of organising Britain’s involvement in the war.<sup>14</sup> Similarly when considering ‘The Jewish Question’, the liberal economist John Hobson wrote in his 1900 publication, *The War in South Africa: Its Causes and Effects*, claiming that Jewish financiers had manipulated British imperialist policy in South Africa.<sup>15</sup> These included London born Jewish pauper, Barney Barnato (1851-1897), who had become a millionaire from the Cape Colony diamond mines. Forty years later, similar accusations were levelled at Jews in that they had dragged the country into the Second World War and it had been fought on their behalf.

It was in this anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant atmosphere, with publications such as Arnold White’s *The Modern Jew* (1899) and Joseph Bannister’s *England Under the Jews* (1901) which alleged Jewish control over the English race, that the former should be ‘removed’ and that the first organised movements against Jews started.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See G. Tulchinsky, ‘Goldwin Smith: Victorian Canadian antisemite’ in A. Davies (Ed.), *Antisemitism in Canada: History and Interpretation* (Ontario, 1992), pp.67-91.

<sup>14</sup> W. Brustein, *Roots of Hate*, pp.145-146.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.148. C. Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society* (London, 1979), pp.67-68.

<sup>16</sup> G. Lebzelter, ‘Anti-Semitism – A Focal Point for the British Radical Right’ in P. Kennedy and A. Nicholls (Eds.), *Nationalist and Racist Movements in Britain and Germany Before 1914* (London, 1981), pp.93, 95-96. For an account of Arnold White’s investigation of Russian Jewry, see M. Perlmann, ‘Arnold White, Baron Hirsch’s Emissary’ in *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, Vol.46/47 (1979-1980), pp.473-489.

The first movement was the British Brothers' League (BBL), founded in 1901 by Major Sir William Evans-Gordon (1857-1913), Conservative MP for Stepney (1900-1907). It had a following of 45,000 drawn from London's East End and referred to Russian immigrant Jews as 'refuse'. Their pressure, although not a national movement, nevertheless helped ensure that the British Government passed the 1905 Aliens Act. Whilst it is true to say that it and the subsequent 1919 Aliens Act did not specifically mention Jews, many historians including Tony Kushner, have come to see it as evidence of British anti-Semitism.<sup>17</sup> If Britain was anti-Semitic, then the 1905 Aliens Act came after twenty five years of large scale immigration and it begs the question as to why it was not enacted earlier. The act is also in response to a localised movement, the BBL, and not a national one across the country that might further support the notion that 'Britain' was anti-Semitic. In terms of accuracy, the 1905 Aliens Act should not just be seen as anti-Semitic, but encompassing a number of factors as recognised by Winston Churchill at the time. For Churchill, the act appealed to the 'insular prejudice against the foreigners, to racial prejudice against the Jews, and to labour prejudice against competition'. In many ways, historians have limited their interpretation of the act and should see it as British xenophobia rather than simply anti-Semitism.<sup>18</sup>

To some non-Jewish Britons, Jews were not making enough effort to assimilate into the host society. Whilst the former had given the latter legal equality and technically the ability to rise in status in the middle of the nineteenth century, the situation had been complicated by the arrival of increasing number of eastern European Ashkenazi,

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<sup>17</sup> T. Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice: Antisemitism in British Society during the Second World War* (Manchester, 1989), pp.10-11.

<sup>18</sup> J. Garrad, *The English and Immigration: A Comparative Study of the Jewish Influx 1880-1910* (London, 1971), p.142.

poor, working class and just as likely to be radicalised politically as to be Orthodox. Often transplanting the mentality of the Polish/Russian ghetto to a new setting, they were seen as being 'alien' even by their Western Sephardic counterparts. It was the maintenance of Jewish religious and cultural practices that created at best misunderstanding and at worst, anti-Semitic activity. Against late nineteenth and early twentieth century Christianity, the Hebrew Old Testament stood as an anti-social anachronism. Even to Britain's secular left wing, Judaism represented involvement in capitalist expansion and imperialistic adventure and was therefore additionally condemned.<sup>19</sup> In a time of war, with its accompanying shortages and personal demands, the image of the Jew, particularly the *Ost Juden*, could easily take on additional qualities of 'profiteer', 'hoarder' and 'draft dodger'.

From a Jewish historiographical perspective, both at the time of mass immigration and until recently, anti-Semitism and British Jewry respectively, have been largely ignored. The Jewish Historical Society of England (founded in 1893) concentrated its writings and research on the more positive aspects of the Jewish community, emphasising the establishment of synagogues and charities, the rise of banking and merchant families, and the success of toleration. This Whiggish, apologetic and triumphalist version of communal history, barely acknowledged the majority of the Jewish population who were involved in street trading or in the textiles/clothing industry. Their understanding of a harmonious relationship between 'Jewishness' and 'Englishness' was rooted in the established elite of society and not in the base elements of their faith involved as pawnbrokers, tailors, furniture makers, property developers and speculators. This relatively peaceful coexistence, one of assimilation

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<sup>19</sup> W.D. Rubinstein, *A History of the Jews in the English Speaking World: Great Britain* (New York, 1996), pp.219-220.

and tolerance, may also explain why modern Jewish historians such as Jacob Katz in his account of the transformation of European Jewry, *Out of the Ghetto*, largely ignores Britain in favour of a more dynamic, nationalist and socialist central and eastern Europe.<sup>20</sup> Whilst Anglo-Jewry evolved in its own particular manner, it has perhaps been a mistake by Jewish historians to see the British Jewish experience as a somewhat peripheral subject as compared to other European countries. In Cecil Roth's *History of the Jews in England*, he wrote that in England the Jews, 'Have attained a measure of freedom.....which has been the case in scarcely any other [land]'. This was due, 'In no slight measure to the process of Anglo-Jewish history – a gradual acceptance based on common sense rather than doctrine, consolidating itself slowly but surely, and never outstripping public opinion.'<sup>21</sup> That the Anglo-Jewish experience was a relatively peaceful and harmonious one should not be the basis or reason as to why Jewish historians and until recently, non-Jewish British historians have largely ignored both the contributions made by Jews in Britain (as opposed to Britons who happened to be Jews) and the experiences of the majority of Jews, who did not come from wealthy privileged backgrounds, established in Britain over a number of decades if not centuries. It is debateable as to whether one can say that this 'exclusion' from British history is a deliberate act or simply arising from a lack of understanding by historians until recent years as to where to place Anglo-Jewry; successful non-conformists, marginalised immigrants/aliens, or for the Marxist historian, a rising bourgeoisie or a persecuted and downtrodden proletariat?

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<sup>20</sup> T. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain*, p.3. Since their reintroduction into Britain in 1656, there have been few violent large scale actions against Jews. Most notably in 1753 in reaction to the Jewish Naturalisation Act (so called 'Jews Bill'), the Tredegar Riots of 1911, anti-German/Austrian riots of the First World War, the 1936 'Battle of Cable Street' and the 1947 riots in reaction to the murder of two British soldiers in Palestine. The latter was the only event which could be said to be solely an anti-Semitic action, as the others all involved other groups, be they Huguenots in 1753 or in the case of Tredegar, against avaricious landlords/shopkeepers, both Jewish and Gentile. J. Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770-1870* (Harvard, 1973).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4. C. Roth, *History of the Jews in England* (OUP, 1941).

The period under examination, 1938 to 1948, was naturally one of strong nationalistic feelings, emphasised by government, of a nation supposedly united against a common enemy and threat. This could polarise society into a ‘them’ and ‘us’ mentality and as such, is a focus of the thesis looking at the extent of national division, running counter to ‘the Spirit of the Blitz’. In that basic understanding, Britain was no different from other European nation states. Race, nation, class and to an extent, religion, defined elements of ‘natural’ superiority both in the mother country and in the various European empires. Prior to the post-1945 revelations concerning the Holocaust, Social Darwinism and the science of eugenics as expressed by Francis Galton and Herbert Spencer, were attractive to British academia, the artistic community and influential sections of society across the political spectrum. The consequence of unrestricted immigration to an essentially Anglo-Saxon Britain in the last third of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, weakened the racial strength of the country to the point where large numbers of British Army recruits were rejected on health grounds at the start of the Boer War and the First World War. This was ‘proof’ to those that believed in eugenics of the need for tight immigration laws and sometimes pushed people into supporting the ideas of the extreme political right. Many of the urban poor and unhealthy came from areas of high Jewish immigration. At the more extreme end of eugenics, an article in the journal, *Plan*, called for compulsory sterilization ‘as a punishment’ for parents who had children in pauperized circumstances.<sup>22</sup> The eugenics movement of the early twentieth century was not specifically anti-Semitic, although the ideas from leading eugenicists in Britain and the U.S.A. were readily accepted and developed by racial theorists in continental Europe. Whilst the science

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<sup>22</sup> L. Fearn, ‘A Eugenist Runs Amok’, *Plan*, 3 (1936), p.15. Cited in R.Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain Between the Wars* (London, 2009), p.117.



of eugenics underpinned Nazi persecution and policies concerning inferior races by its admittance into mainstream politics, it was only on the fringes of political belief in Britain.<sup>23</sup> However, the belief in a sense of ‘superiority’ of the ‘British’ nation was almost universally felt by people up until the era of the Second World War. Here lies the difficulty in distinguishing between patriotism and racism, particularly in how one interprets the latter by the standards of the time. A theme that was recurrent during wartime amongst host communities, particularly the ordinary public, was to question the loyalty of the Jews to the state, whilst taking it almost for granted that all ‘British’ citizens were totally behind the war effort. Non-Christians and those popularly associated with communism could be suspected of not being wholeheartedly supportive in the war measures. Britain’s ‘Jewish Question’ was as vexing as any other European country.

A charge levelled at the Jewish community in Britain was that they were in some way partly responsible for anti-Semitic feelings and prejudice by either their actions or just by their appearance. In a historiography of anti-Semitism, this has been a rather moot point and one that is only being gradually acknowledged by historians. Those such as Jakob Katz’s *From Prejudice to Destruction* and Peter Pulzer’s *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria* touch on this controversial interpretation with all its sensitivities.<sup>24</sup> By showing peoples’ concerns in the 1930s and 40s about Jewish refugees in particular and their foreign character, including an alarmed Board of Jewish Deputies, fearful of an anti-Semitic backlash, they were not siding with British

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<sup>23</sup> It was the German, Alfred Ploetz, at the end of the nineteenth century, who had developed ideas on ‘race hygiene’ and racial degeneration, that were later picked up by Nazism and some British eugenicists in the 1930s. See C. Hodson, *Human Sterilization To-day: A Survey of the Present Position* (London, 1934) and C. Blackler, *Voluntary Sterilization* (Oxford University Press, 1934).

<sup>24</sup> J. Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism, 1700-1933* (Harvard University Press, 1980), P. Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria*, revised edition (London, 1988).

fascism as the historian Robert Wistrich might argue, but merely grasping the reality of the unnatural wartime context.<sup>25</sup> The fact that in Britain, Jews had successfully integrated into an urban modernist society in terms of business, professionally and academically, meant that they sometimes attracted envious attention. Ironically, it was their success at integrating into society, particularly in trade and business, that could result in a dislike of the Jews.

It was also a time when elements in society were attempting to turn their backs on a modernist society, with its characteristics of mass production, profit, urban sprawl poverty and social inequality. These elements were represented by some in the figure of the Jew, alien to the English village, with its toiling of the soil. Synonymous with ‘a back to the land’ movement were an eclectic mix ranging from writers such as G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc to a number of right wing political groups such as Viscount Lynton/Earl of Portsmouth’s ‘English Array’ that included the likes of A. K. Chesterton, Major-General J. Fuller and Anthony Ludovici.<sup>26</sup>

From the beginning of the twentieth century up until the late 1930s and the starting point for the thesis, there was a marked a period of increased anti-Semitism in Britain and the rest of Europe. Late nineteenth century anti-Semitic ideology, ‘substantiated’ by the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (c.1897), developed into a variety of manifestations ranging from political policy, rabid popularist scaremongering, to that

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<sup>25</sup> R. Wistrich, *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred* (New York, 1991).

<sup>26</sup> For contemporary publications on ‘the back to the land’ movement, see Viscount Lynton, ‘Folly or Fertility: An Essay on Agriculture and National Independence’, *English Review* 64 (1937), *Famine in England* (London, 1938) and the Earl of Portsmouth, *Alternative to Death: The Relationship between Soil, Family and Community* (London, 1943). For a secondary overview, see R. J. Moore-Colyer, ‘Back to Basics: Rolf Gardiner, H. J. Massingham and “A Kinship in Husbandry”’, *Rural History* 12 (2001) pp.85-108, and D. Stone, *Responses to Nazism in Britain, 1933-1939: Before War and Holocaust* (Basingstoke, 2003), pp.148-165.

of tacit acknowledgement of 'separateness'. Interestingly, one can also see the internal Jewish divide over Zionist issues coming to the fore, especially as a response to Britain's 1917 Balfour Declaration, the increasingly obvious failure of continental Jewish assimilation and the effects of left wing politics upon a radicalised younger generation. Ironically, it was often the latter, more assimilated, frequently middle class living in the suburbs that pushed forward Zionist ideals and divided the Jewish community. Whilst the traditional leadership of the Board of Jewish Deputies, coming from the elite of established conservative families, attempted to show their community as 'English as the rest of the country', it was largely down to a politically aware and often vocal if not militant younger generation who defended themselves against the increasing post First World War menace of fascism. A leading example being Philip Piratin, a Communist Jew and eventually, M.P. for Mile End in the 1945 General Election.<sup>27</sup>

The social and economic problems that arose in the 1920s and 1930s as a result of the First World War and the appeal or attractiveness of polarised politics caused an upsurge in anti-Semitism. The First World War caused both directly and indirectly, a bringing together of several different factors that focused attention on the Jewish community. These were namely Zionism and the issue of immigration to the British Mandate of Palestine, its long term future and an increasingly socially mobile and often assimilated Jewish community, politicised and frequently secular. As with other Western and industrialised European countries, the pre-war political and social status quo failed to answer the challenges posed by post-1918 economic hardship, social deprivation and impotence of existing political structures experienced by frequently

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<sup>27</sup> As a local study on the connection between Jews and the Communist Party of Great Britain, Henry Srebrnik has produced a highly detailed and analytical study for the borough of Stepney in the book, *London Jews and British Communism 1935-1945* (Ilford, 1995).

disillusioned sections of society. The fears and prejudices of some elements of pre-war British society, coupled with the need seemingly to find solutions or explanations to post-1918 problems, resulted in an escalation of anti-Semitism. The Jewish community was an area for this activity no matter what they did. Unassimilated Jews and those perhaps still living in their traditional working class neighbourhoods, remained a focus of historical mistrust and were easily recognisable. Assimilated Jews, who were frequently socially mobile with second generation, well educated, children, often generated resentment, envy and subtle anti-Semitic responses. The latter came from quite possibly those non-Jews who had also moved up the social scale. By increasingly being involved in political or civic activities, often as a consequence of assimilation and overall higher standards of education, they caused attention to be drawn to themselves, particularly in the fight against Fascism. The situation was compounded by the success of fascism abroad as in Italy and Spain, and the admiration often given to it by the upper echelons of British society. The British 'establishment' and its various institutions that supported fascist principles and were anti-Semitic, included an elite and influential pre-war social gathering. Whilst Sir Oswald Mosley and Lady Diana Guinness (nee Mitford) were the public front, those that courted less publicity included Arthur Wellesley, 5<sup>th</sup> Duke of Wellington, Hastings Russell, 12<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford, Major-General John Fuller and Admiral Barry Domville, along with organisations such as the Anglo-German Fellowship.<sup>28</sup>

The Jewish community in Britain, like those of other Western nations, was always a small minority, but through influence and personal political friendships could make a

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<sup>28</sup> Useful overviews of the extent of aristocratic involvement with fascism may be found in R. Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers of the Right: British Enthusiasts for Nazi Germany, 1933-39* (London, 1980) and S. Dorril, *Blackshirt: Sir Oswald Mosley and British Fascism* (London, 2007). Of a more specific focus, is Julie Gottlieb's *Feminine Fascism; Women in Britain's Fascist Movement* (London, 2003).

significant difference. Very few British people were fanatically and ideologically anti-Semitic, even amongst Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists, yet at times of national anxiety, they had an undue influence over susceptible members of the public. However, there were numbers of the public in select areas, who either excused, overlooked, avoided the issue or who bore some perceived grudge and therefore went along with anti-Semitic activities, if only for a limited period of time in some cases.

Added to the popularity of Fascism, were the British Government and public's concerns about immigrants/refugees from Germany and other countries. Fear of an influx of Jews, who in the imaginations of many at the time including Home Secretary Sir Samuel Hoare (May 1937-September 1939), may or may not have been Communist, resulted in a sometimes hostile, if not a deeply concerned response from different government departments, the established Jewish community in Britain and the media.<sup>29</sup> A Jewish Bolshevik 'invasion' or 'invasive cancer on British society' was the line peddled by numerous anti-Semites who played upon people's fears. Certainly, many of the immigrants who had come to Britain from the end of the nineteenth century onwards had been socialist. However, they were just as likely, being products of the *Haskalah* or 'Jewish Enlightenment', to be Zionists, communists, anarchists and variations thereof. Indeed, they may have been secular or Orthodox, with no political agenda whatsoever. In the case of the East End, where a strong communist presence met a strong Jewish population, one saw a synthesis of the two, not to produce communist ideals, but to combat anti-Semitism, protect the Jewish working class and fight social injustice so often found in the slum housing and tenement blocks. So although Marxism was not ideologically compatible with Judaism, secular Jews found a

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<sup>29</sup> L. London, *Whitehall and the Jews* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp.38-39.

way to embrace it and to produce a unique variety of political/social thought. At a time when traditional allegiance to the Liberal Party was wavering, not least by the disturbing pictures of David Lloyd George being greeted by Adolf Hitler in 1936, and the Labour Party often associated with Catholic Irish, the Communist Party of Great Britain was tempting for many Jews. Not only did it stand up for Jewish social and trade union rights, but it was the only political party to organise resistance to fascist marches and meetings held in Jewish areas.

The year 1938, as a starting point for the thesis, is important as it marks a significant change in both the context of Jews in Britain and by the very fact that their numbers rapidly increased in a short space of time. Britain experienced the start of a refugee crisis and the Jewish community itself became divided in its response to the problem. There was also the fact that unlike most other Jews already in Britain, the new arrivals were not immigrants, but refugees, spoke little or no English and arrived often with a reasonable or high level of education. The latter were often helped in their passage to Britain and found university positions through the Academic Assistance Council (AAC).<sup>30</sup> Although not always appreciated at the time, Britain gained some of central Europe's most prestigious academics in science and the arts, along with future business leaders and politicians, for the next sixty years. Frequently, they brought with them European Zionist ideals and/or had no intention or desire to assimilate into British society at that time. Whilst Germany's Nuremberg Laws of 1935 produced a small, but

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<sup>30</sup> In 1933, the Academic Assistance Council (from 1936 known as the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning, SPSL) was founded, with Lord Rutherford as its first president. It rescued mostly Jewish scientists and academics who had either been dismissed from or forced to leave their universities. Partly established by the then Director of the London School of Economics, Sir (later Lord) William Beveridge, it rescued and helped to find work for over 2,500 people. In the sixty years after its founding, those refugees and their children included 16 Nobel Laureates, 18 Knighthoods, 74 Fellows and 6 Foreign Members of the Royal Society and 34 Fellows and 18 Corresponding Members of the Royal Academy. *Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR)* journal, February 2009, p.1.

steady flow of people wanting to come to Britain or from there go onto Palestine, the annexation of Austria and savagery of *Kristallnacht* and its aftermath in 1938, produced by comparison, a torrent of people. This was swelled by Hitler's occupation of the Sudetenland, also in 1938 and subsequent invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1939. Ironically, the failure of Chamberlain's policy of appeasement and Germany's increasingly tough stance against the Jews brought a generally more sympathetic response from the British public and from some sections of the government. Images of the *Kindertransport* in cinemas as parentless children, packed into trains with few possessions and fleeing oppression, produced a great deal of sympathy for the Jewish cause. The thesis shows that the British public of the late 1930s, warmed or were more prepared to accept helping children, rather than adults, if they had to come to this country. However, the Board of Jewish Deputies continued to be worried over a possible public backlash against not only recently arrived Jews, but the community as a whole. The government was also concerned by the cost implications, which if not anti-Semitic in origin, impacted nevertheless upon Jewish people.<sup>31</sup>

The Second World War brought another series of mixed although largely sympathetic responses towards the Jewish population in Britain, despite a rise in their numbers and the problems of everyday life and survival in wartime. Although the British Government became gradually aware from 1942 onwards of what would become known as 'The Holocaust' or '*Shoah*', it was not until the end of the war that ordinary members of the public were shown details of Germany's 'Final Solution'. Therefore, in the context of the Holocaust and widespread continental persecution, one might

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<sup>31</sup> Louise London, in her account, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933-1948* (CUP, 2003), has focussed on how the British Government and in particular, the Treasury, played a prominent role in restricting the flow of Jewish refugees into Britain based upon cost implications and the usefulness of those refugees to the economy.

describe Britain as a safe and tolerant bastion of democracy and a sanctuary for both British and refugee Jews, even if that meant being temporarily interned. However, by comparing Britain to such an extreme series of continental actions or events, one could say that most countries would appear in a good light when examining the extent of anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria, as Tony Kushner has argued. Whilst this is a valid argument, if one were to compare Britain to any other European nation, this country would still be seen as one of the most tolerant.

At both a governmental and a popular level, the Second World War was not fought to save Jewish lives. For most people the war was fought firstly to save Britain from a German invasion and secondly, to save Europe, Africa and the Far East from occupation. By the very fact that the organised murder of European Jewry did not start until 1942 and this was not fully understood until 1944 or possibly after the Nuremberg Trials in 1945/46, suggests that Jews and their future were a low priority for the British Government and did not figure in the equation for most the British population. In recent years, historians and Jewish bodies have criticised Churchill's Government for not doing more to help Europe's Jews in both the concentration camps and ghettos.<sup>32</sup> However, whilst accusations of institutionalised anti-Semitism or at least indifference have been levelled at the British Government, they ignore pressing strategic, economic and foreign policy considerations, particularly with the latter in the Near and Middle East. By introducing the issue of morality and consequently charges of anti-Semitism, critics of the British Government make the mistake of applying modern humanitarian principles and strategic judgements to a

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<sup>32</sup> A number of historians have criticised both the British Government (as well as the American Government) and the Board of Jewish Deputies for not doing more to help those Jews in continental Europe. These include Geoffrey Alderman in *Modern British Jewry* (OUP, 1992), Tony Kushner in *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination: A Social and Cultural History* (OUP, 1994), Louise London in *Whitehall and the Jews* (CUP, 2000).



desperate wartime situation over sixty five years ago.<sup>33</sup> The failure of the British Government to enter into negotiations with the Nazis to free Jews, restrictions on entering Palestine and the courting of Arab groups in order to secure oil supplies, do not in themselves make the British Government anti-Semitic. Indeed, the thesis shows that the government did all it could to protect Jews in Britain from the effects of anti-Semitic sympathies or expressions displayed by a wartime British public.

The stress and pressures of wartime survival along with the loss of life frequently produced emotions and actions in people that could be described as anti-Semitic. Shortages of food, the blackmarket and a lack of space in air raid shelters were all blamed on the Jews. These accusations tapped into the long held beliefs about Jews that certain sections of British society had held about 'foreigners' in their midst. In the minds of many British people their attitudes were confirmed by the fact that court pronouncements from magistrates and judges made reference to the ways and insidious habits of Jews, particularly when dealing with cases involving the blackmarket and rationing restrictions. However, although court records show that the Jewish community was not over represented in criminal proceedings, nor did they have higher rates of survival from German bombing, the important point is that sections of the British public perceived that Jews were gaining unfair advantages and that this was in some way down to their very character or nature. In this regard, the

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<sup>33</sup> Notable in this conflict are Martin Gilbert's *Auschwitz and the Allies: A Devastating Account of how the Allies Responded to the News of Hitler's Mass Murder* (London, 1990) and William Rubenstein's counterpoint in *Why the Democracies Could Not Have Saved More Jews from the Nazis* (London, 1997). Whilst the former blames Allied Governments for a lack of political, military and morale willpower in saving the Jews, the latter relies on evidence that shows they did not have the military capability to successfully bomb Auschwitz. Rubenstein also points to the fact that the Allies believed the best way to save the Jews was to defeat Germany and concludes by stating that many Jews did not want to leave the Reich or were caught up in the occupation of neighbouring states like France and the Low Countries. The alternative point of view, as expressed by Meier Sompolinsky in *The British Government and the Holocaust: The Failure of Anglo-Jewish Leadership?* (Sussex Academic Press, 1999), is that Jews themselves could have tried harder and with a more united front, to push the government into action.

thesis hopes to challenge the way modern British historians have applied a blanket interpretation of anti-Semitism. In one of the most serious civilian disasters of the war in March 1943 when 173 people died in the Bethnal Green Underground shelter, it caused widespread rumours of Jewish complicity. The extent and serious nature of these rumours resulted in public statements from the House of Commons to quell the stories and protect the innocent Jewish community from a backlash. In the aftermath, it is fair to say that fringe anti-Semitism became more mainstream as the numbers of people who according to government figures distrusted Jews, rose rapidly in some quarters. Despite the fact that during the war Britain was host to a large number of different Allied nation's servicemen and women, public xenophobia and fears of a 'Fifth Column' could easily be displayed due to a significant collection of German and other central European Jews in the country. Fortunately, even elements within the government could eventually see the irony of German/Austrian internment to places such as the Isle of Man, with confirmed Nazis being placed next to German Jewish refugees.

Whilst overt anti-Semitism was largely confined to the traditional areas of the East End and other working class areas of cities, it could express itself in more careful or subtle ways with classes or groups of people other than the working class. This could range from those like George Orwell who thought that in some way the Jews brought problems upon themselves simply by looking Jewish to elements within the War Ministry that believed Jews to lack the moral fibre, strength, if not ability, to be allowed to join the Armed Forces or rise to prominent positions of authority. In an article from 1945, Orwell recounted his own experiences of listening to the remarks

of others to himself. These could include seemingly contradictory points as one ‘Young intellectual, Communist or near-Communist’ explained:

No, I do *not* like Jews. I’ve never made any secret of that. I can’t stick them.

Mind you, I’m not antisemitic, of course.<sup>34</sup>

The removal of Leslie Hore-Belisha as Secretary of State for War in 1940 possibly came as a result of anti-Semitic attitudes within the Conservative Party, Foreign Office and key members of the Imperial General Staff, namely Field Marshals John Dill and John Gort.<sup>35</sup> With either an indifferent or at worst anti-Semitic attitude, the military could also blight the careers of those who espoused support for Jewish causes. Captain Orde Wingate (later to rise to Major General) was removed from his posting to Palestine in 1939 for working closely with the Jewish community and establishing Special Night Squads to protect the Jews from Arab attacks.<sup>36</sup> Wingate, who became a supporter of Zionism, was also a friend of Israel’s first President, Chaim Weizmann. From these attitudes, one should not be surprised by the military’s rejection of offers from foreign Jewish refugees to serve, once they had been released from internment, in the front line Armed Forces. It was only after much behind the scenes campaigning that they were eventually allowed to join the Pioneer Corps and then after a further delay, formed units involved in ‘Special Operations’ behind

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<sup>34</sup> G. Orwell, ‘Antisemitism in Britain’, *Contemporary Jewish Record*, April 1945.

<sup>35</sup> Hore Belisha’s private papers relating to the period as Secretary of State for War (1937-1940) are kept at the Churchill Archive, Churchill College, University of Cambridge (Ref. File – GBR/0014/HOBE). Additionally, the papers of Leopold Amery (Ref. File – AMEL 2/2/14) contain material relating to this period. R. J. Minney’s *The Private Papers of Hore Belisha* (London, 1960) are largely based on the former archive papers, whilst I. Grimwood’s *A Little Chit of a Fellow: A Biography of the Right Hon. Leslie Hore-Belisha* (Lewes, 2006) offers a highly detailed and comprehensive account using a wide variety of material.

<sup>36</sup> Two of Israel’s future leaders, Moshe Dayan and Yitzhak Rabin, were members of Wingate’s Special Night Squads. Whilst most accounts of Orde Wingate focus on his achievements with the Chindits in Burma during the Second World War, his early military career may be found in John Bierman and Colin Smith’s *Fire in the Night: Wingate in Burma, Ethiopia and Zion* (London, 2000) and Trevor Royle’s *Orde Wingate: Irregular Officer* (London, 1998).

enemy lines or in occupied Europe. A specifically all Jewish military unit, the Jewish Brigade, was only allowed to be established towards the end of 1944 despite the willingness of thousands of Jewish volunteers, serving in Italy until the end of the war.<sup>37</sup> Anti-Semitism was also present in the number of European military formations that came under the command of the British Army. Nowhere was this more prevalent than in Polish units based in Britain, as old prejudices migrated with these soldiers in exile. However, there were also the factors of traditional Catholicism and its antagonism towards Communism, the latter of which, many secular Jews espoused.

At the end of the war, as the British public became more aware of the conditions of European Jewry, especially when films were shown of concentration camps being liberated, the Jewish community received more of a sympathetic approach from the public. The Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, became even more convinced of the need for a Jewish homeland in Palestine. However, for Britain's Jewish community there remained divisions principally between the long established and assimilated Jews lead by the Board of Jewish Deputies and those who had either recently arrived to the country or those involved in the promotion of Zionism. Uppermost in Jewish minds and gradually in the minds and policies of the British Government and the Armed Forces, was what would be the exact future and division of the Palestine Mandate. It was this very matter of a Jewish homeland with British soldiers caught between Palestinian Jews and Arabs that caused severe hostility towards Jewry from sections of the British public, aided by severe rationing, a subjective media and a re-emergence of Fascist groups after 1945, up until Israel was created in 1948.

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<sup>37</sup> An all Jewish unit within the British Army was not a new idea as three battalions of Jewish volunteers in the Royal Fusiliers had been raised in the First World War. This is in addition to the Zion Mule Corps (Z.M.C.) recruited from Palestinian Jews, then coming from what was the Ottoman Empire and therefore not British or Imperial subjects.

The post-war period from 1945 to 1948 could be categorised as both the high and low point of British Jewry under Attlee's Labour Government and against the backdrop of the Nuremberg Trials and Holocaust revelations. Actions by extreme elements of the Jewish underground movement against British Forces resulted in a significant wave of anti-Semitic activity in Britain's cities, whilst further dividing Jewish opinion in this country. Even before the war had ended, Jewish extremists had attempted to force the issue of an early British withdrawal from Palestine using terrorist tactics as displayed by the assassination in Cairo of Lord Moyne in November 1944. Other infamous actions after the war included the blowing up of the King David Hotel in 1946 and the lynching of two British Army Sergeants in 1947 by the *Irgun* and Stern Gang. The Jewish community in Britain was caught in the middle of this 'dirty war' and partly through the media coverage, made to pay for these outrages with a rise in anti-Semitic attacks and mass riots in the cities containing large numbers of Jews. Mass Observation reports show significant numbers of people were at this time prepared to voice fascist, racist or anti-Jewish comments or sympathies as a result of events in the Middle East. The thesis will show however, that whilst the core of anti-Semitic followers was small indeed, it was able to temporarily influence disproportionate numbers. Importantly, it also resulted in a re-emergence of fascist or neo-Nazi groups in Britain and as a result, the extension of Jewish self-defence bodies, notably the 43 Group.<sup>38</sup> As was often the case in the late 1940s, it was the 43 Group with its members of ex-Jewish Servicemen that violently broke up Fascist meetings, rather than the Metropolitan or other police forces.

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<sup>38</sup> Apart from the occasional passing reference in books on the British post-war period and some articles in the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen (A.J.E.X.) magazines, the only book written so far on the 43 Group has been by Morris Beckman, *The 43 Group: Untold Story of Their Fight Against Fascism* (London, 1993). He has also written one of the few books available on *The Jewish Brigade: An Army with Two Masters* (Stroud, 1998). He is a former veteran of both organisations.

Although the 1945 General Election had resulted in an increase in the number of Jews in government, it did not mean they achieved their political ambitions, either in domestic issues or most significantly, in the area of Foreign Policy. The latter was controlled by the Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, who still insisted on strict immigration guidelines (as set out in the Palestine White Paper, 1939) and was therefore deemed by many to be anti-Semitic if not pro-Arab. If as recently released National Archive files indicate, Jewish extremists had succeeded in assassinating Bevin, it is doubtful that foreign policy would have been changed and more than likely, there would have been a large scale violent reaction against the Jewish community as a whole.<sup>39</sup> Arguably, Jewish terrorism in Britain would have placed the community in the same situation as the Irish has been up until the 1990s and the Muslim communities are at the present.

The year 1948 and the establishment of Israel coincided with the Nationalities Act, which with the arrival of immigrants on the *SS Empire Windrush* from the West Indies, started the era of mass black and later on, Asian immigration. As these recent immigrants of the late 1940s onwards attracted the attention of extremist white groups, so Jewish communities suffered relatively fewer anti-Semitic attacks. In addition, as Britain's Jews moved out from their traditional and poorer working class areas, so they were replaced by the new black and Asian poor. Therefore, they in turn became the new focus for the rabble rousing of the extreme right, whose own heartlands were these poor urban districts.

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<sup>39</sup> The National Archive (TNA): The Security Service – Organisation Files; KV5/29 (1941-1946), KV5/30 (1946). These files examine the activities of the 'Stern Group', including the planned assassination of Ernest Bevin.

What makes the Second World War stand out from these previous periods is the racial dimension to the conflict and in many instances, the contradictions shown in people's views of why the war was being fought, alongside anti-Semitic characterisations of Britain's Jewish community. Both Harold Smith and Tony Kushner believe that anti-Semitic activity rose during the Second World War, based respectively on wartime surveys and the fact that pre-1939 racism continued through the war due to the persistent activities of right wing extreme parties and most significantly, 'as part of daily discourse, literature and the press.'<sup>40</sup> It is the latter, rather than the presence of extremists that caused Tony Kushner to believe that Britain was essentially an anti-Semitic society during the war. Whilst it is not disputed that anti-Semitism existed in Britain, what is contentious is the extent to which it was found in the country.<sup>41</sup>

The extent and nature of anti-Semitism, whether real or perceived, must be examined in the context of how the war affected the public as a whole and in particular those experiences that were shared. These include the evacuation of children from areas likely to be bombed, the rationing of food and vital supplies, the rise in criminal activities and the effects on people of mass bombing. Associated with the latter is an examination of one of the war's worst civilian disasters that took place in the Bethnal Green Underground shelter in 1943. All of these areas were the subject of popular rumour and speculation to varying degrees by the general public concerning the Jewish population and their involvement. Again, one is faced with popular stereotypes, misconceptions, gossip and the agitation of right wing/nationalist

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<sup>40</sup>Harold Smith based his findings on a February 1943 British Institute of Public Opinion survey. Harold Smith (Ed.), *Britain in the Second World War: A Social History* (Manchester University Press, 1996), pp.59-60. Tony Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice*, p.11.

<sup>41</sup>An historical analysis that contests the extent of anti-Semitism in Britain and its significance for British Jewry may be found in W. D. Rubenstein, *A History of the Jews in the English-Speaking World: Great Britain* (London, 1996).

elements in society at the time. Of importance is the distinction to be made between those people in society who either actively or aggressively attacked Jews either by their actions or by word. Those people must be highlighted against what one may consider to be passive or sub-conscious actions or remarks, which in the context of the 1940s could be seen as normal behaviour or expressions and not necessarily anti-Semitic *per se*. In the same way that whilst the country rallied behind government efforts to gather support for the war effort amongst the public, there were instances of friction between Britain's regional communities, town and country, working and middle class, unions and management.<sup>42</sup> However, most social studies of Britain during the war still maintain 'a united people's war', which was expressed in overwhelmingly patriotic terms.<sup>43</sup> When in a Liverpool queue for the distribution of gas masks, people hoped the masks were disinfected after noting that there were Jews in the line.<sup>44</sup> By the standards of the time, one can see this as 'normal' and symptomatic of the normal prejudices of the day in a similar way to the prejudiced views held by the English to other nations, be they Scots, French or American.

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<sup>42</sup> The persistence of anti-Semitism during the Second World War was not the only facet to run contrary to the idea of a united war effort. As workers were shifted around the country meeting the demands of the war economy, so old antagonisms and stereotypes arose demonstrated by friction between different regional nationalities i.e. the mixing of Scottish and English. There was also at times a feeling of resentment towards elements of the middle and upper classes that were perceived not to be fully involved in the war effort. Although illegal during the war, industry continued to suffer from strike action, mostly in the form of factory walkouts. An informative introduction to the problems of class and industrial divisions is provided by Sonya Rose, *Which People's War? National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain 1939-1945* (OUP, 2006), pp.29-44.

<sup>43</sup> Although somewhat beyond the remit of this thesis, the issue of the 'Home Front', morale and the extent of 'the spirit of the Blitz' has been extensively looked at by historians from the 1970s onwards. This generation of historians born after 1939 have largely dismantled the early post-war consensus of a whole nation pulling together in what was 'their finest hour' as exemplified by historians such as A.J.P. Taylor in *English History 1914-1945* (Oxford, 1965). Whilst not debunking the whole notion and orthodoxy of wartime solidarity, to varying degrees the likes of Angus Calder, Harold Smith and Nick Tiratsoo *et al*, have emphasised the negative aspects of the war such as looting, crime and social conflict. However, Calder's views as expressed in *The People's War: Britain 1939-1945* (London, 1969) and *The Myth of the Blitz* (London, 1990) have been more recently tempered to redress the balance with Robert Mackay's *Half the Battle: Civilian Morale in Britain During the Second World War* (Manchester, 2002).

<sup>44</sup> D. Sheridan (Ed.), *Wartime Women: An Anthology of Women's Wartime Writing for Mass-Observation 1937-45* (London, 1991), p.36. Cited in P. Ward, *Britishness since 1870* (London, 2004) p.49.



However, the fact that ‘passive’ anti-Semitism existed at times in British society during a patriotic ‘Total War’ is not indicative of an anti-Semitic society as a whole, contrary to the views of Tony Kushner and David Cesarani. Judgements on whether anti-Semitism is present have to be based on the values and context of the period and not from the perspective of the present day. To date, very little has been written by historians on anti-Semitism in Britain during the time of the Second World War from a public perspective, as opposed to a governmental perspective. There is a great wealth of both contemporary accounts and subsequently in the last thirty to forty years, historical analysis of the Jewish refugee experience prior to the outbreak of war. Alongside this has been an increasingly critical examination of the British Government’s refugee policy (or lack of it to be more precise) both before and during the war. An area that has been relatively overlooked to date has been how the British public related to their Jewish neighbours during the war. It is perhaps a combination of the growing interest in the Jewish experience, a revisionist stance on the ‘Blitz Myth’ and the rescue for historical research of the Mass Observation archive by Asa Briggs for the University of Sussex in the early 1970s, that brought forth the idea that the British public was prone to anti-Semitic beliefs, influences and occasional violence. As previously mentioned, historians have tended to concentrate either on the pre-war period or at government level during the war, with an increasing commentary for the latter on its lack of effort to rescue Jews from the Holocaust. The exceptions to this have been few in number, but notably Bernard Wasserstein’s *Britain and the Jews of Europe* (OUP, 1979), Marion Berghahn’s *Continental Britons* (London, 1984) and Tony Kushner’s *Persistence of Prejudice: Antisemitism in British Society During the Second World War* (Manchester, 1989). The latter is important due to the fact that unlike the other publications, it concentrates on the theme of anti-Semitism at both

governmental and general public levels, concluding with a damning opinion of both the British public and Government. Whilst the thesis does not dispute the fact that anti-Semitism existed in Britain at the time, it varies with Kushner's interpretation of what constitutes anti-Semitism and therefore his all embracing conclusions. In the opinion of the thesis, the scale of British anti-Semitism during the war was much smaller in scale than that interpreted by Tony Kushner and by associated arguments, David Cesarani. Rightly, Kushner acknowledges the need to establish for the reader the interpretation he is using. After analysing several variants of interpretation and then dismissing them or not coming up with a 'satisfactory' conclusion, as with an examination of Minister of War, Hore Belisha's resignation in 1940, Kushner picked on two.<sup>45</sup>

As his starting point for a definition of anti-Semitism, Kushner refers to Wilhelm Marr's 1879 attack on the Jewish domination of Germany as a consequence of their emancipation.<sup>46</sup> Given the contextual differences between Germany and the Bismarck era of the Second Reich and Britain of the late 1930s/early 1940s, there seems to be little shared ground. This is Kushner's, 'starting point in defining the term', anti-Semitism. This is followed up by his reference to James Robb's psychological study of working class anti-Semitism in Bethnal Green during the early 1950s and that the author defines this as hatred being associated with the fact that a person is a Jew.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> T. Kushner, *Persistence of Prejudice*, pp.2-8.

<sup>46</sup> Wilhelm Marr (1819-1904), regarded by many as 'the father of modern anti-Semitism'. His ideas and particularly his definition of the term, anti-Semitism, may be found in *Der Sieg des Judenthums über das Germanenthum von nicht confessionellen Standpunkt* ('The Victory of Judaism over Germanism: From a Non-Denominational Point of View', 12<sup>th</sup> edition, 1879).

<sup>47</sup> James Robb, *Working-Class Anti-Semite: A Psychological Study in a London Borough* (London, 1954). The study was conducted in the East End borough of Bethnal Green and interviewed those who he divided into two groups; extreme and tolerant. From his findings, certain characteristics manifest themselves. The extreme group suffered from a lack of social contacts which was displayed in an objection to and envy of Jewish 'clannishness'. They were also prone to anxiety and feelings of inferiority, plus suffered from poor family relationships.

Whilst the latter is a somewhat all embracing idea with all its inherent flaws, one must also question a definition based upon a study conducted twenty five years prior to Kushner's *Persistence of Prejudice*. The thesis must also highlight the problem of applying a definition of anti-Semitism based upon the findings from just one East End borough and then applying it to the whole of Great Britain. The historical, social and cultural context of Bethnal Green cannot be superimposed upon every other community in the country. Robb himself only applies the term anti-Semitic to what he refers to as an extreme group. Given that this was a psychological study, one must also question its validity or appropriateness for an historical analysis as he conducted. Kushner concludes with his reference to E. H. Carr who believed in, 'the need for historians to generalise, and as a generic term, anti-Semitism – defined as a hostility to Jews as Jews – will be a useful tool in analysing the various forms of reactions to Jews in the 1939-45 era in Britain.'<sup>48</sup> By using such a wide definition and one perhaps more suited to, or taken up in the present time, one again overlooks the contextual dimension of British society in the first half of the twentieth century. For example, the use and acceptance of words to refer to ethnic or racial groups has changed over the years. Whilst a person or institution today would be branded as being racist or specifically anti-Semitic for using such terms as 'negro', 'gypsy' and 'Yid', they lacked those definitive negative connotations in the 1930s, 40s and 50s. One can understand why Ernest Bevin, Attlee's post-war Foreign Secretary, was seen as being anti-Semitic by some Jewish critics, who like Kushner, utilise such a wide interpretation as to see any action, deed or word against the Jews or their interests as being evidence of anti-Semitism.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> E. H. Carr, *What is History* (London, 1980), pp.62-66. Cited in T. Kushner, *Persistence of Prejudice*, p.8

<sup>49</sup> Zionist historians or those who supported such a cause have seen Ernest Bevin as being obstructive if not anti-Semitic in nature due either to the fact that he was against wholesale Jewish immigration to

One of the most important arguments put forward by the ‘revisionist’ historians such as Bill Williams, Tony Kushner and Richard Bolchover, that emerged in the 1980s was called the ‘Anti-Semitism of Tolerance’. British liberalism, it was argued, far from creating a tolerant society that endorsed the distinctiveness of Judaism, actually pressurised the latter. In what has been seen as a ‘social contract’, in exchange for their emancipation, Jews were expected by society to assimilate into the host community. The consequential fear of not adhering to the ‘contract’, the terms of which were only privy to the Jews themselves according to Richard Bolchover, lead them to, ‘maintain a low profile political strategy.’<sup>50</sup>

The belief in some form a ‘contract’ suffers from several problems, some of which are noted by Pamela Shatzkes. A major problem must be that although several historians give credence to the idea that assimilation is some form of peculiarly British anti-Semitism and that Jews were pressurised to give up their distinctiveness, especially when under the propaganda of wartime unity, they fail to give any evidence for what are in effect, just theories. As noted earlier in the introduction and in this chapter, as well as by Shatzkes, these revisionist historians have not only looked at the problem from a solely Jewish perspective, but more importantly, from a late twentieth, early twenty first century position in understanding anti-Semitism. It is only in more recent times that cultural diversity, minority rights and protection from the law have

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Palestine after the war or in the case of Howard Sacher in *A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to our Time* (London, 1996), p.296, they have used somewhat biased witnesses such as the Labour M.P., Richard Crossman, to comment.

<sup>50</sup> Richard Bolchover’s concept of an ‘Emancipation Contract’ or ‘Social Contract’ may be found in *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (CUP, 1993), pp.42, 77-120, 181. This concept may also be found in Bill Williams, ‘The Anti-Semitism of Tolerance’ in A. Kidd and K. Roberts (Eds.), *City, Class and Culture* (Manchester, 1985), pp.74-102, as well as in T. Kushner, *Persistence of Prejudice*, p.10, and is repeated in Louise London’s *Whitehall and the Jews*, p.6.

produced a multi-faith Britain. Likewise, their arguments concerning Jewish insecurity being a consequence of liberal pressure fails to acknowledge that being a member of a minority group in a host society is, as Shatzkes notes, ‘a psychological function of membership of a minority culture.’<sup>51</sup> As will be seen in the last chapter of the thesis, assimilation and the resultant decline of anti-Semitism come from a diverse number of factors. These included greater social mobility after the first waves of immigrant settlement, increasing numbers of secular Jews, inter-faith marriage and Jewish children attending non-Jewish schools. Since the 1960s, assimilation has developed into ‘multi-culturalism’, with different faith communities existing on an equal par. The revisionist historians are a product of that society that has existed in Britain for the last fifty years. Kushner’s complaint that, ‘British society, which prides itself on its liberalism, its decency and its humanitarianism, has failed to produce an environment for the healthy existence of a positive Jewish identity’, does not acknowledge the context of the 1930s and 40s.<sup>52</sup>

The post-1945 period of Anglo-Jewish relations and how they were affected by events in Palestine/Israel has largely been ignored by historians, together with the re-emergence of Fascist/right-wing groups. Besides articles and stories in newspapers and journals such as those produced by the *Jewish Chronicle* and Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women (AJEX), the Jewish decline or transition can be examined in Marlana Schmool and Francis Cohen’s *A Profile of British Jewry: Patterns and Trends at the Turn of the Century* (London, 1998) and Todd Endelman’s *The Jews of Britain 1656 to 2000* (California, 2002). There have also been a number of local studies, which reflect the growing importance of local history. These include

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<sup>51</sup> P. Shatzkes, *Holocaust and Rescue*, p.18.

<sup>52</sup> K. Kushner, ‘The Impact of British Anti-Semitism, 1918-1945’, in D. Cesarani (Ed.), *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry* (Oxford, 1990), p.208.

Mervyn Goodman, 'The Jewish Community of Liverpool', in *Jewish Journal of Sociology* 38 (1996) and Ernest Krausz, *Leeds Jewry: Its History and Social Structure* (Cambridge, 1964). It is interesting to note that besides a brief mention in the accounts of post-war Britain, the most widespread race riots in the country between 1945 and the those of the early 1980s, have only one more detailed examination. This being the account of the anti-Semitic riots of 1947 by Tony Kushner in 'Anti-Semitism and Austerity: The August 1947 Riots in Britain', in Panikos Panayi's *Racial Violence in Britain, 1840-1950* (Leicester, 1993). In terms of fascism or right-wing groups, whilst there are a number of studies that concentrate on the pre-war period, some will look at the perceived prejudices of the time like Louise London's *Whitehall and the Jews 1933-1948* and Harry Defries *Conservative Party Attitudes to Jews 1900-1950* (London, 2001), which overlap into the early post-war period. Others such as Stephen Dorril's *Blackshirt: Sir Oswald Mosley and British Fascism* (London, 2007) start in the 1920s and conclude in 1980 with Mosley's death. The latter, therefore, is able to contrast the different periods, styles and approaches to anti-Semitism before, during and after the war.

Besides examining current secondary sources and evaluating the validity and strength of their arguments, particularly in relation to the extent of anti-Semitism in Great Britain, the thesis aims to look at a range of primary sources, both published and unpublished. The latter includes newspapers, national and regional, besides those publications which may be termed political or racial in nature. These include Jewish papers such as the *Jewish Chronicle*, *Jewish Year Book* and AJEX publications. In addition there are a range of right-wing publications to be looked at including *Action*, *Britain Defiant*, *British League Review*, *Gothic Ripple* and *People's Post*, to name but

a small selection. These papers can be found online as well as in a number of archives. The latter includes a number of special collections held by universities and museums, with the former often noted for their Jewish studies being a national centre for excellence. These include Manchester and Southampton universities. The University of Sussex is noted for its Mass Observation archive, whose records form an important avenue of research for this thesis. London contains a number of archive repositories, including Museum of London, London Metropolitan Archives (holding The Board of Jewish Deputies records) and the National Archives at Kew for governmental records. The Wiener Library holds files on Jewish refugees in Britain, the activities of Fascist groups and an extensive source of published works. The London School of Economics and Political Science contains a significant number of the few existing records of the '43 Group'. Two extensive collections of recorded testimonies from Jews and refugees are held at the British Library and the Imperial War Museum. As one of the key aims of the thesis is to look at regional differences in the levels of anti-Semitic violence, certain regional archives hold substantial Jewish collections for their area. Therefore, the local archives of Manchester and Cardiff, both with major Jewish populations and their local history collections, were consulted. Although not noted for its Jewish population, the county archives in Gloucester contain a complete set of records for a hostel established in the city, to house Jewish teenage boys who had fled central Europe shortly before the outbreak of war in 1939. The key importance of looking at regional archives and examples of Anglo-Jewish relationships with its neighbours from across the country, is to break away from the convention of previous studies of largely relying upon London based examples and superimposing the lessons learnt from the capital onto the more widespread Jewish communities across the rest of Great Britain.

As the thesis looks at ‘perceptions’ of Jews, it is important to gather recollections from those people who lived through the period being studied. Therefore, the thesis contains interviews from both Jews and non-Jews, with the latter having a connection to the Jewish community. This may include having grown up in Jewish areas, had business with Jews or associated with them in some form or other. It is hoped that these interviews can be supplemented with oral testimonies and accounts held by archives in the different regions of the country, such as those held in Manchester and Leeds. Those are in addition to the extensive oral histories held by the Imperial War Museum and The British Library in London.

The thesis attempts to shed new light on Anglo-Jewish community and how it was affected by significant events outside of Britain. Its aim is to show how the case, as stated by a revisionist school of historians today, for British society being anti-Semitic is both overinflated in extent and interpreted from the wrong contextual position. It also attempts to show how peoples’ perceptions about Jews were not just factually incorrect, but taken advantage of by Fascist groups. For the first time, the thesis looks at a significant period of time, whereas previously, historians have just studied one segment or aspect of Anglo-Jewry during the years 1938 to 1948. It is not exclusively a study of the British Government, nor that of the British people, but a study of how they interacted and were influenced by each other. In this way, it approaches the study of the Jewish community and its relationship to the rest of British society from a novel angle and it is hoped, further the understanding of a partly assimilated and partly newly arrived community within Britain. Finally, the thesis attempts to show Britain as a tolerant country and that because of the strains of economic depression, war and a



difficult foreign policy, it was forced to take a pragmatic and not anti-Semitic, approach to issues that concerned the Anglo-Jewish community.

The thesis follows a chronological format, progressing from 1938 to 1948 in four main chapters, each having appropriate sub-sections. The first chapter concentrates on the dominant theme for 1938 and 1939, that being the issue of the *Kindertransport*, how this upsurge of refugees arose and the British response to it. The second and third chapters look at the period of the Second World War and deal with the two sides of the Anglo-Jewry debate relating to British society. The second chapter examines how the Jewish population was perceived by non-Jews against the testing background of bombing, evacuation and wartime regulations. The third chapter looks at the establishment of a refugee hostel for teenage Jews and how the boys exemplified the 'patriotic duty' of citizens once they left the hostel, including how their experiences mirrored the Jewish population at large. The fourth chapter, covering the period of 1945 to 1948, concentrates on Anglo-Jewry's reaction to the re-emergence of fascism in the light of the Holocaust and how the former coped with the consequences of Jewish acts of terrorism against the British Administration in Palestine. Although Anglo-Jewry achieved a measure of political success in the 1945 General Election, segments of the Jewish community felt it necessary to take direct action on British streets to protect a new era of democracy.

## **CHAPTER ONE: THE REFUGEE CRISIS, 1938-1939.**

The central theme that dominated Anglo-Jewish relations in the last twelve to eighteen months of peace, prior to the start of the Second World War, was the growing crisis of ever increasing numbers of central-European Jews attempting to flee persecution within the expanding borders of the Third Reich. Given that Great Britain was going to be an important destination for these refugees, the chapter looks at the varied responses by the public to relatively large numbers of Jews entering the country and how this affected the existing Jewish and non-Jewish relationship in communities across the country. The overall aim is to gauge the level of responses to incoming Jews from both non-Jews and those Jews already established in Britain. It is also important to establish how Jewish immigrants/refugees themselves felt about their reception in Britain.

In order to understand the nature of Anglo-Jewish society and the relationship between Jews and non-Jews prior to the outbreak of war, it is important to appreciate something of the presence the Jewish community had in the country in the 1920/30s and the popular feelings towards them. Crucially, one must be able to explain why the year 1938 was such a pivotal point in the history of Anglo-Jewry and therefore the starting point for the thesis.

The aftermath of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, with its potential for a Jewish homeland, and the two inter-war decades that followed, marked a transformation of British Jewry that lasted until the end of the 1940s. The traditional leadership of the Jewish community, the Board of Deputies with its old established families, was

repeatedly challenged in its views on Zionism, religious observance and how to deal with the problems of domestic anti-Semitism, continental Fascism, refugee Jews, as well as the issue of immigration to Palestine. Added to this was the challenge that Jewish society was changing at a rapid pace in Britain; upward social mobility was transforming the older social, religious, economic and geographic structure of the British Jewish community. It must be remembered that due to the upward mobility of working class Jews and the tight immigration controls imposed by the Home Office, particularly the 1905 Aliens Act and 1914 Aliens Restriction Act, there were fewer Jews to replace those that had moved out of the traditional ghetto areas, in parts of London's East End and in districts of the industrial Midlands and the North.<sup>53</sup> As a consequence, Jewish areas were changing even before the war in 1939.

An improving economic trend just before the First World War, which was accelerated by the military contracts given to the traditional businesses of Jewish society, resulted in a more affluent generation following on from the original immigrants. They began to move up from the lower or working classes to that of lower middle and middle class workers, taking where possible, white collar jobs. In London, while a substantial part of the Jewish economy remained in the old East End trades such as tailoring, cobbling and furniture making, more prosperous Jews were moving to the less congested and more salubrious neighbouring areas of Hackney, Stoke Newington, Stamford Hill and West Ham. Younger Jews, both male and female, increasingly took positions in white collar environments such as shop assistants, secretaries, taxi drivers, hairdressing, accountancy and estate agency. A comparison of the membership of Jewish friendly societies in East London shows that whilst in 1913

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<sup>53</sup> L. London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, pp.16-20.

there were 70% from the clothing and furniture industries, the figure declined to 50% by 1930. At the same time, 30% of boys and 40% of girls were office or shop workers and commercial travellers.<sup>54</sup>

The loss of approximately 50% of the Jewish population from the East End in the twenty to thirty years up to 1930 to neighbouring districts or, for the most fortunate, to the affluent areas of Hampstead, Golders Green, Finchley and Hendon, caused an important transformation in Jewish demographics. As younger, second or third generation families moved out of the original areas of immigrant settlement, so they left behind areas that were disproportionately occupied by the elderly, poor and the working class. This in turn affected attendance at synagogues and at schools, which represented the heart of the Jewish community. The impact can clearly be seen by the fact that seven of the eleven elementary schools in predominantly Jewish areas of London had closed by the early 1930s, whilst the attendance at Jews' Free School was reduced by 50% from that at the turn of the century. By 1930, the north west London suburbs housed 10% of London's Jews. In the boroughs of Stoke Newington and Hackney, there were almost twice as many middle class Jewish families (those whose income was over £250 p.a.) as working class families.<sup>55</sup> Using tourism as an indicator of social mobility, the appearance of large numbers of kosher hotels/boarding houses in seaside resorts, regularly advertising in the Jewish press of the early 1930s, suggests that British Jewry was not only financially successful, but also increasingly integrated into Gentile culture of the period. Although overall few Jews compared

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<sup>54</sup> H. Pollins, *Economic History of the Jews in England* (New Jersey, 1982), pp.186-189.

<sup>55</sup> V. Lipman, 'Jewish Settlement in the East End, 1840-1940' and 'The Booth and New London Surveys as Source Material for East London Jewry (1880-1930)', in A. Newman (Ed.), *The Jewish East End, 1840-1939* (London,1981), pp. 37, 47. V. Lipman, *A History of the Jews in Britain since 1858* (New York, 1990), p. 207. H. Adler, 'Jewish Life and Labour in East London' in H. Llewellyn Smith (Ed.), *The New Survey of London Life and Labour*, Vol. 6 (London, 1930), pp. 269-271.

with non-Jews went on to Grammar school, they were overrepresented for the size of population at university, with two thirds of students studying medicine (apart from those at Oxford and Cambridge). In the 1930s, when the Jewish population represented about 1% of the total population, Jews made up 2% of the student numbers at Oxford and Cambridge Universities, with 4% at Manchester and 7% at Leeds, a clear sign of rising mobility and expectations.<sup>56</sup>

This upward social mobility of the inter-war years was not confined to London, but repeated elsewhere in the country where Jews in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had settled in poor immigrant areas, such as Butte Town, Cardiff and the Gorbals, Glasgow. Increased wealth and social mobility, while resulting in the slow decline of the traditional and original Jewish immigrant areas, also had other far reaching consequences. The most important one being the increased contact between Jews and non-Jews in traditional middle class areas, which could produce its own distinctive form of anti-Semitism or xenophobia. Whereas the latter could often produce a violent reaction in working class areas (these were the key recruiting areas for fascist extremists), middle class areas tended to produce a more 'passive' and insidious form of reaction. However, xenophobia should not be confused with anti-Semitism. In many ways, the working classes of poorer areas were often more accepting of people's 'differences', because those areas had a history of receiving foreigners, exiles or the dispossessed. Likewise, it would be incorrect to view Orthodoxy or 'High Church' Anglicanism as being insular, especially with the progression of younger generations. In an interview, Edith Jones recollected how as a working class member of the Anglican Church community, she had met an Orthodox

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<sup>56</sup> G. Blok and H. Schwab, *A Survey of Jewish Students at the British Universities* (London, 1938), pp. 3, 6-9, 11.

Jew and converted to Judaism in order to marry him in 1936.<sup>57</sup> Belonging to one of Birmingham's wealthy Orthodox families, Norman Ritterband, had been expected to marry a person of similar standing, both socially and religiously. He and his bride became members of Birmingham's Liberal Jewish community, complete with the blessing of both families, though not of either clergy. Religious and social barriers were falling even before the upheaval of the war years. In middle class areas, status and a 'middle England' outlook, often required people to be more conformist with the majority. This could manifest itself as a genteel disdain or as a 'civilised' intolerance towards the Jews. Alternatively, it could simply be a remark produced by jealousy at the upwardly mobile. With the likely exception of white British Commonwealth citizens, the local golf club and Masonic Lodge were just as prone to exclude membership to those regarded as foreign, including Jews as a whole.

The social unrest and gradual transformation should not be seen in isolation. Feeding into this inter-war trend were a number of other aggravating factors that raised the public's consciousness of Jews. These included Arab and Jewish unrest in Palestine, the rise of Fascism and the persecution of Jewish communities abroad, together with the rise of Oswald Mosley and the British Union of Fascists (the largest of many right wing groups between the wars in Britain). There was also some limited acceptance of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* as a legitimate expression of Jewish conspiracy.<sup>58</sup>

Whether one was hostile, indifferent or sympathetic to Britain's Jewish community, a

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<sup>57</sup> Interview with the author, 25 February 2008.

<sup>58</sup> See [www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?Module=10007058](http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?Module=10007058). This is a concise and yet detailed account from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum of the alleged 'Protocols'. *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* first appeared publically in Russia in 1903 and supposedly revealed a worldwide Jewish conspiracy for global domination. Particularly after the First World War and under slightly varying titles, translations were produced in the West and were often linked to the events of the October 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. The first translation in Britain came in 1920, with a private commission to the London printers, Eyre and Spottiswoode Ltd., by the anti-Semite, George Shanks, using the title, *The Jewish Peril: Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*. Despite *The Times* showing it to be a forgery the following year, many extremists still believed in a world Jewish conspiracy.

common feature of the way people approached Jews in any context was to see the Jewish race as a 'homogenous entity' or 'single nation'. This approach was most keenly felt by the Jews themselves. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in the period of pre-war Nazi persecution of the Jews, during which Britain became a destination, if only temporarily, for large numbers of Jewish refugees.

The first five years of Nazi dictatorship in Germany resulted in approximately 52,000 Jewish refugees coming to Britain, though not all by any means intended to stay permanently in the country, seeing it as a temporary staging post before perhaps going onto the U.S.A. or Palestine, particularly the earlier one looks. The increasing persecution in Germany of Jews and other racial or political opponents by the Nazis created ever growing waves of refugees wanting to leave the country between 1933 and 1939, with Britain being just one of many eventual destinations.<sup>59</sup> Within the first three months of Hitler becoming Chancellor, at least 2,000 mostly Jews had arrived in Great Britain.<sup>60</sup> By April 1939, the country had taken in 20,300 adult and 4,800 children from 'Greater Germany', with those numbers doubling five months later in September when war was declared.<sup>61</sup> In total, it has been estimated that Britain accepted between 10 and 15% of all 'Greater Germany's' refugees, with the vast majority being Jewish or of Jewish origin.<sup>62</sup> These refugees were not the Jewish caricatures portrayed in fascist propaganda, nor the poor who had fled from Polish and Russian persecution forty or fifty years earlier and provoked the panic of the 1905 Aliens Act. The majority of the Jewish refugees came from Germany's middle and upper classes, among the intelligentsia and the scientific and business communities.

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<sup>59</sup> See A. Sherman, *Island Refuge: Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich, 1933-1939* (London, 1994) for a general history of academics, artists and the *Kindertransport*.

<sup>60</sup> G. Hirschfeld, *Exile in Great Britain: Refugees from Hitler's Germany* (London, 1984), p.69.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

This was also the same for Austria in March 1938 and what remained of Czechoslovakia a year later. Typical were three generations of the Freud family, whose careers spanned psychoanalysis, art and politics.<sup>63</sup> Another was neurosurgeon Ludwig Guttmann (1899-1980), who arrived from Breslau in March 1939 and went on to establish the spinal injuries centre at Stoke Mandeville, Buckinghamshire in 1944, and found the first Paralympics in Rome in 1960. These often highly educated professionals, already established in their own fields of expertise, contrasted sharply with the poorer indigenous Jewish population. Whilst the latter were still living in the deprived city areas that their parents or grandparents had arrived in as immigrants, the refugees of 1933 to 1938 were more often than not found in the affluent suburbs of north London, such as Swiss Cottage. If not of independent financial means (and this became increasingly so with greater Nazi restrictions), many academics or professionals gained entry into Britain by being placed in the employment of wealthy British families, for instance working as domestic servants.

In Britain, some of the earliest responses to an exodus of Jewish professionals from Germany and later on the annexed/incorporated territories such as Austria and Czechoslovakia came from counterpart organisations in Britain. Foremost in Britain, was the Academic Assistance Council (AAC), established in May 1933 by Sir William Beveridge, Director of the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), 'to aid refugee scholars ousted from employment in Germany because they were Jews, non-Aryans or held political opinions inimical to the German State.'<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Grandfather, Sigmund (1856-1939), daughter Anna (1895-1982) and grandsons, Lucien (b.1922) and Clement (1924—2009), respectively. The family moved from Vienna to Hampstead, London, in June 1938.

<sup>64</sup> A. Gottlieb, *Men of Vision: Anglo-Jewry's Aid to Victims of the Nazi Regime 1933-1945* (London, 1998), p. 42. The AAC contained some of the country's most prominent academics including the physicist and Nobel Prize winner, Lord Rutherford, as its first president. Others included Professor



For the most part, the liberal academic community attracted large monetary donations, for example from the Central British Fund for German Jewry (CBF) and Haendler Charity, or from professors and doctors who regularly donated part of their salaries. The Nobel Prize winner, Professor Albert Einstein, who having resigned from the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute, visited London to speak and help raise funds at a rally held at the Royal Albert Hall in October 1933.<sup>65</sup> The money raised helped to fund posts or research projects for refugee academics, the majority of whom were Jewish, in British universities. Although the AAC was not established to help only Jews, it was primarily the latter who benefited. At a meeting in June 1933 of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors, this was an aspect or perception not lost on the representative from the University of Sheffield, who suggested many ‘rich men of the Jewish religion’ had more funds than his entire university and it was they who should be asked for money first of all.<sup>66</sup> The benefits were not just for the refugees. Typical of the two-way benefit was the case of the University of Oxford’s Clarendon Laboratory, which established a worldwide reputation for research after having taken in a number of highly regarded refugee academics.<sup>67</sup> Perhaps the body to gain the most from receiving the elite of the Third Reich’s academic community was the British Government and at no cost to itself. This was manifestly evident once the war had started with scientists such as Max Born, Hans Krebs, Wilhelm Feldberg, Max Perutz

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A.V. Hill, physiologist and another Nobel Prize winner, Sir Frederick Kenyon, Director of the British Museum and the economist John Maynard Keynes. After Rutherford’s death in 1937, William Temple, Archbishop of York, became the president of the newly renamed Society for the Protection of Science and Learning (SPSL). Of particular note, looking at the early years of the AAC/SPSL and its work, are N. Bentwich, *The Rescue and Achievement of Refugee Scholars* (The Hague, 1953), W. Beveridge, *A Defence of Free Learning* (OUP, 1959), J. Seabrook, *The Refugee and the Fortress: Britain and the Flight from the Tyranny* (London, 2008) and D. Zimmerman, ‘The Society for the Protection of Science and Learning and the Politicization of British Science in the 1930s’, *Minerva-International Association for Cultural Freedom*, 2006, 44, pp.25-45.

<sup>65</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 13 October 1933.

<sup>66</sup> Bodleian Library, Oxford: SPSL Papers, 51/1, digest of replies from vice-chancellors. Cited in R. Overy, *The Morbid Age*, p.280.

<sup>67</sup> As the work of the Academic Assistance Council grew in scope with developing crises such as in Spain, it was absorbed in 1936 into a larger organisation called the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning (SPSL), which continues in the same role today.

and Edith Bulbring.<sup>68</sup> Yet there is also a case for saying that had the government not restricted the employment of refugees and made it a condition of their entry that they re-emigrate soon afterwards, Britain would have gained further, instead of the many individuals going onto the USA or the rest of the British Empire.<sup>69</sup>

Besides the CBE giving donations to the AAC, it also funded the associated area of post-graduate studentships, so that immigrant students could finish their studies at university or complete their medical qualifications in Britain. An example of the latter and an indication of how the country gained is that of biochemist Ernest Chain, who in later years shared the Nobel prize with Alexander Fleming and Howard Florey for their work on penicillin.

Britain's academic body acted faster than any other major organisation in responding to the threat and persecution posed by the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor in January 1933 with the subsequent ousting of Jews from official positions in April. Over the course of the next six and a half years, the AAC and later on the SPSL, recognised their humanitarian obligations to the academic elite and to save at least two generations of central Europe's finest minds. This was perceived, as Richard Overy has put it, as part of the struggle between the survival of civilisation and the menace of Hitlerite barbarism.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, it is interesting to note the actions of the British Medical Association (BMA), which were in total contrast to those of the AAC. The President of the Royal College of Physicians, Lord Dawson of Penn, told the Home Secretary, Sir John Gilmour, that although the country might take in a few

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<sup>68</sup> See N. Greenspan, *The End of the Certain World: The Life and Science of Max Born, the Nobel Physicist Who Ignited the Quantum Revolution* (Chichester, 2005) and J. Medawar and D. Pyke, *Hitler's Gift: Scientists Who Fled Nazi Germany* (London, 2001).

<sup>69</sup> 'Refugees and Industry', *Engineering Journal*, 10 July 1942.

<sup>70</sup> R. Overy, *The Morbid Age*, pp.270-273.

distinguished doctors, he believed that, ‘The number that could usefully be absorbed or teach us anything could be counted on the fingers of one hand, and these could quite well be accommodated at research posts at universities, etc.’. He concluded by stating that he believed, ‘That most of the persons whose admission was sought on the ground of their special qualifications were quite ordinary people who wished to earn a living by practice here.’<sup>71</sup> A later Home Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, noted in his post-war biography that he had received similar comments from the medical profession when he attempted to allow Austrian doctors into Britain in the aftermath of the *Anschluss*.<sup>72</sup> Although he was of the opinion that Britain should have admitted the Austrian medical schools wholesale into Britain, the medical profession of this country seemed unimpressed by the worldwide reputation of the Viennese medical community and argued that nothing would be gained from them. Viscount Templewood’s biography noted not only how much Britain gained from their professional expertise during the war, but also, ‘How much greater it might have been if professional interests had not restricted their scope.’<sup>73</sup> German and Austrian doctors were required to retrain before being allowed to practise in Britain, unlike their fellow practitioners, dentists.<sup>74</sup>

Typical of the British organisations that sought to get as many Jews out of Germany and the ‘occupied’ countries before September 1939 was the Cambridge Refugee Committee. Committee founder, Margareta Burkill, a German Quaker and wife to a

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<sup>71</sup> The National Archive (TNA): HO 45/20428 - Lord Dawson of Penn interview with Secretary of State on expatriated German doctors and students coming to the United Kingdom, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1933. Lord Dawson, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount of Penn (1864-1945), was a doctor to the royal family from Edward VII to George VI and President of the Royal College of Physicians, 1931-1938. Sir John Gilmour Bt. (1876-1940) was Home Secretary, 1932-1935, under Ramsay MacDonald.

<sup>72</sup> Sir Samuel Hoare (1880-1959) was Home Secretary, 1937-1939, under Stanley Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain. He was created 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Templewood in 1944.

<sup>73</sup> Viscount Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years* (London, 1954), p.200.

<sup>74</sup> A. Sherman, *Island Refuge*, p.48.

university academic, believed the group was able to rescue approximately five hundred women, using domestic service permits. From her observations, the majority of the women came from respectable middle class families, possibly two or three generations distanced from their ghetto origins. The somewhat regressive step of becoming a domestic servant was, as Margareta Burkill observed,

A terrible insult. They really couldn't take it. They suffered very much under having to be a servant when they had a degree or when they had had a profession or when they were an opera singer....and to cope with that was very difficult for us because we couldn't do anything more for them. We had to keep to what we were allowed to do.<sup>75</sup>

An information booklet was produced by the Domestic Bureau of the Central Office for Refugees, called *Domestic Service: Some Suggestions for Employers and Employees*.<sup>76</sup> Divided into two sections, one for the 'Employers' and one for 'Employees', the booklet was meant to help both sides of the work divide to have a greater understanding of each other's ways, customs, expectations and cultural differences. Despite the often patronising textual tone to modern ears, the booklet was an attempt to integrate foreign born Jews into British society, at a time when many Jews had little choice but to 'adapt' to the rigours of a sudden decline in their social status, financial circumstances and disruption to what may have been previously a privileged, educated, comfortable and respected upper middle class life. For the British employer, the booklet offered points which 'may help to clear away the difficulties of "settling in" foreign maids.', under such headings as 'English Homes

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<sup>75</sup> Imperial War Museum, Sound Archive: Interview with Margareta Burkill, 26/01/1980, Catalogue Number 4588. Margareta Burkill was a German born civilian who worked for the Cambridge Refugee Committee, 1935-1945.

<sup>76</sup> Gloucestershire County Archive, Gloucester (GCA): File D7501/3/5 (no title). The file contains an original and complete copy of the booklet.

are Different from German ones’, ‘English Food is Different’ and ‘For most of the Maids this is a New Career.’<sup>77</sup> For the first heading, one reads of the telling comment that ‘the maids have to learn to deal with open fires, kitchen ranges, etc., when they have only been used to central heating and stoves’, whilst under the last one, we read of a much more pertinent situation as earlier noted by Margareta Burkill.

Some of these maids come from the “servant class” but for the most part they are taking up a new vocation and have to learn to adjust themselves. Some who may have been very efficient in their own homes and even been training schools, will lack practical experience of “service.”<sup>78</sup>

For those Jewish refugees taking up posts in domestic service, the ‘General Remarks’ section was composed of admittedly useful points, such as those concerning wages and savings accounts. However, there were also parts of it that made large assumptions regarding the characteristics of both foreign born Jews, the English (there is no mention of the Scots, Welsh or Irish) and the countryside of England. Apart from the fact that the booklet was issued by the Central Office for Refugees, there is no indication as to the authorship.

Immigrants who come into domestic service should remember that, in the first instance, they are received into English households through friendliness and good will and it behoves them to be a credit to their people and to their religion, as the public are apt to judge all from one.

English people like quiet movements and voices. It is well, therefore, to be as quiet as possible in moving about the house.<sup>79</sup>

This clearly shows the power and the vulnerability of the master and servant relationship at a time when the latter were potentially and in some cases actually were,

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid. p.3.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. p.7.

open to abuse, including by their own co-religionists. The statement also contains an undertone of slight menace, in that they are all responsible for one another's actions, which in turn, was reminiscent of the atmosphere in their home countries. The last statement played upon the stereotypes of both the English (or a proportion of them in the popular imagination) and 'all foreigners' in the minds of the English/British, in that the latter were loud, brash, gesticulated a lot and at best, could politely be referred to as 'exotic'. Other paragraphs of what might loosely be termed as 'general advice' had the resonance of characters and scenes from an Agatha Christie or P.G. Wodehouse novel, including a familiar fixation on the subject of central heating and the lack of it in English homes.

Immigrants must be prepared to find things different and, though it may seem difficult at first, they can be sure that they will soon get used to new conditions. They will probably, for example, find the houses colder as there is not often central heating, but they can wear thicker underclothes or even a woollen coat indoors.<sup>80</sup>

This must surely have been comforting advice for those wives and daughters coming from the upper middle class apartments of cosmopolitan Berlin and Vienna for instance, as well as sad indication as to the accuracy of Margareta Burkill's comments on those arriving in Cambridge.

Many maids try and stipulate that they shall have posts in London, but this is not possible for everyone as the Home Office is anxious that immigrants should be distributed over the country. The English countryside is very beautiful and country towns are very attractive, also the country is cleaner and healthier than London.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

Towards the end of the 1930s, there was a feeling amongst some in society that parts of north London such as the NW3 district that included Hampstead, Belsize Park, Swiss Cottage, Primrose Hill and Chalk Farm were becoming enclaves of continental Jewry. Naturally, foreign born Jews tended to congregate where they found similar people, particularly when not working. For the British to criticise Jews for coming together and not integrating one has only to look across to Europe at places such as Cannes and the French Riviera, Estoril and Rome to see the hypocrisy. Given that London had the largest number of British and foreign born Jews, one can only speculate as to how isolated German/Austrian Jews adapted to life in small rural communities, no matter how attractive or beautiful the landscape.

For those who could endure the fall in their social standing, many in time regained their self-respect. Given their dire circumstances, it would be reasonable to expect some host families to take advantage of the newly acquired domestic help. This could be sometimes witnessed when Polish Jews were in charge of German/Austrian Jews, as the latter had traditionally considered themselves to be superior to the *Ostjuden*. This central and eastern European friction was experienced even in the younger generation, when Benzyon ('Benno') Gocman, a thirteen year old German *Kinder* from Halberstadt, along with fifteen year old Bertha Leverton from Munich, were preparing to come to England in April and July 1939 respectively.<sup>82</sup> This friction between German and Polish Jews, or as Bertha Leverton expressed it, 'elitist attitude

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> British Library, Sound Archive, Holocaust Survivors' Centre Collection: Interview with Benzyon Gocman, August/September 2005, Catalogue Number C830/149/01, tape 1, side A. Imperial War Museum, Sound Archive: Interview with Bertha Leverton, 13/02/1997, Catalogue Number 17310, reel 2. Bertha Leverton was a German Jewish civilian child in Munich, 1925-1939 and on the *Kindertransport* to Britain in 1939. For children without pre-arranged foster parents to stay with, they were placed mainly in two former holiday camps on the East Anglian coast, at Dovercourt, Essex, and at Pakefield, Suffolk. Older refugees, aged 18 to 40, were sent to a former army camp, Kitchener Camp, Richborough, Kent, between February and September 1939.

towards Jews of Polish origin', was transported with the refugees to Britain as Benzyon Gocman noted how a German boy 'despised him for his Polish ancestry.'<sup>83</sup>

In addition to the 52,000 German Jews, Austria provided nearly 31,000 further Jewish refugees, who in turn were added to by Czechoslovakian Jews. A measure of the rate of their exodus may be judged by the fact that in the six and a half years of Nazi rule in Germany up until the war started, 61% of Jews had left the country. In an eighteen month period, 68% of Austria's Jews left, but with only six months in the case of Czechoslovakia, only 34% escaped.<sup>84</sup> The ever increasing rate at which Jews were escaping Nazi rule and finding safety in other countries caused unease and in some cases unrest for the governments of their final destinations. The consequence was a conference, called by President Roosevelt, at Evian in France in July 1938 in which little was achieved, beyond a statement of sympathy for the Jewish plight, a reluctance to accept any more refugees and a lack of any condemnation of German persecution.<sup>85</sup>

President Roosevelt had invited thirty two countries, including Britain and its Dominions, to find a way of helping the 'political' refugees from Germany and

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<sup>83</sup> For an understanding of the relationship between German Jews and ethnic Polish Jews living in Germany, see Yfaat Weiss, 'Polish and German Jews Between Hitler's Rise to Power and the Outbreak of the Second World War', *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* (London, 1999) 44 (1): 205-223.

<sup>84</sup> M. Gilbert, *A History of the Holocaust* (London, 2000). p.40.

<sup>85</sup> Notable articles and books that look at the Evian Conference include S. Adler-Rudel, 'The Evian Conference and the Refugee Problem', *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 13 (London, 1968), B. Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe, 1939-1945* (OUP, 1979), R. Hilberg, *The Holocaust: The Destruction of the European Jews Vol.2* (New York, 1985) and L. London, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933-1948* (CUP, 2003). The British delegation was led by a lacklustre and afterwards increasingly marginalised, Edward Turnour, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, assisted by his secretary, Captain Victor Cazalet.



Austria.<sup>86</sup> Given the limited number of countries invited and the fact that no country would be asked to receive a greater number of immigrants than was permitted under their existing legislation, it is difficult to see what progress was going to be made. The lead could not have been taken by Roosevelt without breaking his own country's laws, nor would it have proved popular given that the USA still had high levels of unemployment and that it was suffering, according to Leonard Dinnerstein, 'An explosion of unprecedented anti-semitic fervor.'<sup>87</sup> The chances of success were further diminished by the stipulation by Roosevelt that only the private organisations would be required to carry the burden of costs incurred in the rescue of the refugees and a British insistence that Palestine was not to be figured in the political equation. There was also the fear that if immigration to safer countries was encouraged, then it might provoke or encourage some eastern European countries, such as Poland or Romania, to intensify persecution in order to resolve their own racial conflicts. At a time of high unemployment in the Western world, few countries wanted to accept poor Jews and those that had money or assets, were forced to leave most of their wealth behind and had to rely upon the financial assistance offered by national Jewish organisations as a guarantee demanded by governments in return for accepting refugees. The overall result was one predicted two years earlier by Chaim Weizmann in the *Manchester Guardian*, when he wrote, 'The world seemed to be divided into two parts – those places where Jews could not live and those where they could not enter.'<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> A. Gottlieb, *Men of Vision*, p.85. Not only had Italy and South Africa declined the invitation, but some key European countries with large Jewish populations such as Hungary, Poland and Romania had not been invited, although they did send observers to the conference.

<sup>87</sup> L. Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America*, (OUP, 1994), p.105.

<sup>88</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 23 May 1936.

The Western countries that bordered Germany, such as Denmark, Holland and France, were already coping with large numbers of refugees; France alone had accepted 200,000.<sup>89</sup> These were states no longer in a position to accept a further large influx. In the case of the USA, which had agreed to meet their legislative quota for refugees, Department of State officials were ‘unsympathetic’ to visa applicants and quotas were only met as the war was about to start. The Australian authorities pointed out, ‘As we have no real racial problem, we are not desirous of importing one.’<sup>90</sup> The Canadians agreed to accepting ‘wealthy’ farmers, of which there were relatively few in Germany and Austria to take up the offer. The most ‘magnanimous’ offer of help came from the Dominican Republic, which offered up to 100,000 places for those refugees interested in farming in the Caribbean (approximately 750 places were taken up by German and Austrian Jews in 1940).<sup>91</sup> The historian, Louise London, summed up Britain and the rest of the world’s attitude to the Jews:

The extraordinary circumstances of the plight of the Jews called for a response that was also out of the ordinary. But countries around the globe resisted the pressure to take special measures to relieve Jewish suffering. The United Kingdom was no exception. It opted for caution and pragmatism, subordinating humanitarianism to Britain’s national interest.<sup>92</sup>

However, this is to ignore the point that Britain had been accepting German Jews since 1933, as well as refugees from the Spanish Civil War. By comparison to the

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<sup>89</sup> A. Gottlieb, *Men of Vision*, p.87.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p.86.

<sup>91</sup> R. Crassweller, *Trujillo: The Life and Times of a Caribbean Dictator* (New York, 1966), pp199-200. Two recent publications regarding General Rafael Trujillo (‘El Jefe’), military dictator of the Dominican Republic, and his offer of help to Europe’s Jews in 1938, are by M. Kaplan, *Dominican Haven: The Jewish Refugee Settlement of Sosua* (New York, 2008) and A. Wells, *Tropical Zion: General Trujillo, FDR and the Jews of Sosua* (Duke University Press, 2009). His motives seem to have been more politically inspired rather than altruistic. Following the October 1937 massacre of 15-30,000 Haitian immigrants by his soldiers, General Trujillo was keen to restore his image in world political circles.

<sup>92</sup> L. London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, p.1.

‘persecution’ of Jews in the Third Reich, large numbers of Republican Spanish POWs and civilians were being massacred by General Franco’s Nationalist soldiers and militias.<sup>93</sup> The year before the Evian Conference, a Basque children’s relief committee in Britain had agreed to accept and look after 4000 children at a camp in Stoneham, Lincolnshire.<sup>94</sup> Humanitarianism was balanced within the economic and social constraints of the period, with Britain being an important haven for those fleeing conflict in Europe.

The lack of progress in accepting Jewish refugees by Britain and the rest of the West was exploited by Germany and often exploited in the newspapers of the former. The *New York Times* carried a commentary from the German Foreign Office which accurately observed official government opinions of those gathered at Evian, along with a stinging indictment of Western humanitarianism, stating, ‘Since in many foreign countries it was recently regarded as wholly incomprehensible why Germans did not wish to preserve in its population an element like the Jews.....it appears astounding that countries seem in no way particularly anxious to make use of these elements themselves, now that the opportunity offers.’<sup>95</sup> The failure of the Evian Conference not only encouraged Nazi anti-Semitism in Europe, but also showed a lack of Western understanding about the dangers Jews increasingly faced. For Martin Gilbert, the whole conference was one of indecisiveness in its outcome. He summed up the meeting at Evian as being, ‘A neutral stance, not a hostile one, but this neutral

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<sup>93</sup> For accounts of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), including British involvement, see Hugh Thomas’s *The Spanish Civil War* (London, 1961), Anthony Beevor’s *The Spanish Civil War* (London, 1999) and Paul Preston’s *The Spanish Civil War* (London, 2006). Thomas estimates that 40,000 Republicans had been massacred by 1939 (p.631).

<sup>94</sup> H. Thomas, *Spanish Civil War*, p.438. See [www.basquechildren.org](http://www.basquechildren.org) for an extensive bibliography on all aspects regarding Britain’s efforts to help Basque/Spanish refugees, but particularly from the children’s perspective. For a contemporary record, see Y. Cloud, *The Basque Children in England: An Account of their Life at North Stoneham Camp* (London, 1937).

<sup>95</sup> *New York Times*, 12 July 1938.

stance was to cost a multitude of lives.’<sup>96</sup> As Salomon Adler-Rudel points out, ‘The Germans soon realised that no matter how they behaved it did not prevent foreign statesmen from shaking hands or dining with Nazi leaders.’<sup>97</sup>

It was the events of four months later, *Kristallnacht*, in November 1938, that merited at last a sense of urgency to evacuate those Jews who were in most immediate danger, from Germany, Austria and later on, Czechoslovakia.<sup>98</sup> It was the rescue mission of the *Kinder* during the last year of peace before the Second World War broke out, that illustrated the extent of help, sympathy and effort made by the British public and to a lesser extent, the government, towards the Jews. As William Rubinstein’s *The Myth of Rescue* indicates, the British Government never was in a position, either before or during the war, to save any significant number of Jews. In 1933, there were approximately 525,000 Jews in Germany and in 1938, there was an additional 185,000 Jews from Austria to contend with.<sup>99</sup> It was estimated that there were a further 500,000 non-Aryan Christians (Christians with some Jewish ancestry) within ‘Greater Germany’ after the *Anschluss*.<sup>100</sup> Besides the other ‘undesirables’ within Greater Germany (not yet including the Sudetenland and the rest of Czechoslovakia) such as trade unionists, communists, social democrats etc., it is difficult to understand where over 1.2 million ‘Jews’ could escape to, without those host countries being affected in a negative way. Anglo-Jewry stood at approximately 300,000 in the early 1930’s.

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<sup>96</sup> M. Gilbert, *The Holocaust: The Jewish Tragedy* (London, 1986), p.65.

<sup>97</sup> S. Adler-Rudel, ‘The Evian Conference and the Refugee Problem’, *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* (London, 1968) 13, p.235.

<sup>98</sup> In addition, small numbers of Jews were also rescued from Poland, Danzig and after March 1939, Slovakia.

<sup>99</sup> V. Fast, *Children’s Exodus: A History of the Kindertransport* (London, 2011), pp.3,8.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8.

The contrast in the British media towards the plight of European Jews between the Evian Conference in July 1938 and *Kristallnacht* in November 1938 was clearly shown in the tone of many of the newspapers. According to the historian Andrew Sharf, ‘It can never be emphasised too often that the dominant note struck by the British Press in the presence of Nazi anti-Semitism was one of genuine moral outrage.’<sup>101</sup> A majority of newspapers, certainly those papers that leant towards the left politically, showed the sympathies of their readership. The *Daily Herald* stated that, ‘Until emigration of whole families on a large scale is arranged, humanity – and particularly, the British Empire – will not have done its duty by the German Jews.’<sup>102</sup> The *Manchester Guardian*, with a large Jewish readership, quoted the German paper, *Das Schwarze Korps* of the 24 November 1938, which openly forecast on how to accomplish the destruction of Jewry. In its riposte, the *Manchester Guardian* alerted the British Government to the significance of *Kristallnacht* in the development of anti-Semitic persecution. It stated, ‘To these threats, which are not in vain, there is only one answer. The Jews in Germany must be rescued from that country and rescued quickly. A thin trickle of emigrants through the narrow, normal channels is no way of meeting this challenge thrown to the world to save a defenceless and innocent people’. It concluded by suggesting that, ‘If Governments can but regard themselves as the executors of their people’s consciences they will show greater energy and give greater help than are now doing to the Jews who seek to escape a country whose rules are determined to destroy them.’<sup>103</sup> The problem with viewing evidence from the period and a mistake made by many historians and social commentators of the present is to judge the actions, or in this case, inactions of Western Governments to the crisis facing European Jewry. There was no precedent for the Holocaust in either scale or

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<sup>101</sup> A. Sharf, *The British Press and the Jews Under Nazi Rule* (O.U.P., 1964), p.58.

<sup>102</sup> *Daily Herald*, 22 November 1938.

<sup>103</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 29 November 1938.

organisation in European history. For many people of the time, including Jews, it would be inconceivable to suggest what would start to happen to the European Jewish community from September 1939 onwards. Therefore, there was no imperative by governments to move quickly to save Jews on a large scale. In addition, from the perspective of late 1938, the Munich Agreement had ‘guaranteed’, with Hitler’s assurance, that there would be peace in Europe. German and Austrian Jews were not part of that agreement, but also Western politicians were looking at a much larger picture at stake than just the central European Jewry Peace across the whole of Europe.

Among the British public, there were also some reservations. The liberal *News Chronicle* held an opinion poll for its readers in the summer of 1939, at a point where war seemed highly likely after Hitler’s invasion of Czechoslovakia in March 1939 – and therefore nowhere for the Jews to escape to once war was declared. The paper asked its readers, ‘Should refugees be allowed to enter Great Britain? If ‘Yes’, should they be allowed to enter freely or with restrictions designed to safeguard British workers and taxpayers?’<sup>104</sup> A 70% ‘Yes’ to the first question was followed by an 80% vote on the placing of restrictions. The British public should not be seen as anti-Semitic or even xenophobic (the paper had used the term ‘refugees’ and not ‘Jews’), but as justifiably still concerned about high levels of unemployment and an unlimited pressure on the country’s finances. In an era before a publically funded, all embracing social security system, humanitarianism though an ideal, still came at a price and had financial limits. Refugees, or in this case Jews, were not intended to be a burden on the state and therefore the rescue of the Jews came down to a plethora of Jewish and

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<sup>104</sup> *News Chronicle*, 31 July 1939. Gallup Poll conducted by British Institute of Public Opinion.

non-Jewish charitable and religious organisations. Typical of these responses was the Bible College of Wales, Swansea. In November 1938, between the annexation of the Sudetenland and *Kristallnacht*, the college applied to the Home Office to receive twenty Jewish refugees, including four doctors. The College Principal, the Reverend Rees Howells, wanted the city council to lease them a house that had formally been used for Spanish Republican refugees (Howell was also planning on buying a college, hospital and land in Palestine).<sup>105</sup>

Prior to late 1938, the majority of Jewish refugees arriving in Britain had been the financially better off, people of note such as academics, professionals or those with artistic talents. They were either adults or family groups. That pattern changed from November 1938 to August 1939, when the dominant group of Jewish refugees were children and teenagers, popularly known as either the *Kinder* or *Kindertransport* children.<sup>106</sup> Certainly, by August 1939, central European Judaism was reeling from the increased Nazi persecution. Unexpectedly however, in the words of Aurel Kolnai, it had also made the Jews, ‘The symbol of persecuted Liberty, Reason and Justice.’<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 7 November 1938.

<sup>106</sup> Particularly over the past twenty years, there has been a significant number of autobiographies, biographies and accounts by the *Kinder* and about the *Kindertransports* from Great Britain, Israel and USA. Besides those directly used in the text, other examples include K. Gershon (Ed.), *We Came as Children: A Collective Autobiography* (London, 1989), B. Turner, *And the Policeman Smiled* (London, 1990), O. Drucker, *Kindertransport* (New York, 1992), B. Leverton and S. Lowensohn (Eds.), *I Came Alone: The Stories of the Kindertransports* (Sussex, 1993), I. Reti and V. Chase (Eds.), *A Transported Life: Memories of Kindertransport. The Oral History of Thea Feliks Eden* (California, 1995), M. Harris and D. Oppenheimer, *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport* (London, 2000), A. Fox and E. Abraham-Podietz, *Ten Thousand Children: True Stories told by Children who Escaped the Holocaust on the Kindertransport* (California, 2008). Importantly, a key source of evidence comes from the Association of Jewish Refugees’ journal (AJR) published in Britain that incorporates stories of the *Kinder*.

<sup>107</sup> A. Kolnai, *The War Against the West* (London, 1938), p.511. Kolnai was a Hungarian born writer, born a Jew, but converted to Catholicism. The book suggests that Nazi Fascism is against the West’s ideals of capitalism, liberal thought and democracy, being a form of secular religion with ‘Nazism being a unique evilness’. D. Stone, *Responses to Nazism in Britain*, p.34. Kolnai produced one of the first and most detailed accounts in English on Nazi philosophy, published before the war. Similar examinations of the nature of Nazism and its ideology that supported the ideas of Kolnai were found in Karl Polanyi’s ‘The Essence of Fascism’, in J. Lewis, K. Polanyi, D.K. Kitchin (Eds.), *Christianity and the Social Revolution* (London, 1935), Franz Borkenau’s *The New German Empire* (New York, 1939)

It was this symbolism, together with a greater understanding of the realities of Nazi ideology, that persuaded many British people throughout society to help the Jews in any way possible. Religious differences were far from peoples' minds, a view that challenges Richard Rubenstein's assertion that as a 'Chosen people' by God, their pleas for help fell on deaf Christian ears.<sup>108</sup> Indeed, it was the sum reason as to why many Jews were supported by the community at large; British churches and religious charities acted in a humanitarian manner with only a minority, Catholic in outlook and persuasion, thinking in terms of a 'Chosen People'.

*Kristallnacht* on the 10/11 November 1938 marked a turning point for all concerned when viewing the treatment of the Jews and confirmed in some peoples' minds a new low, with possibly worse to come, in the fortunes of European Jewry. This was clearly recognised by British Embassy staff in Berlin, who in their correspondence, vividly detailed their thoughts and opinions concerning Germany. Shortly before *Kristallnacht*, the British diplomat Sir George Ogilvie-Forbes accused the Germans of being, 'Unfit for decent international society' as a consequence of the way Jews were being treated in society and in the concentration camps.<sup>109</sup> Five days after *Kristallnacht*, Ogilvie-Forbes sent a detailed despatch to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Viscount Halifax, giving his observations of those events and the measures taken against the Jews.<sup>110</sup> The Foreign Secretary, who was clearly in a position to influence whether or not Jews were allowed into Britain and the quota

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and Frederick Voight's *Unto Caesar* (London, 1938). Voight, in particular, stressed the hatred that was within Nazism and the anti-Semitic dimension.

<sup>108</sup> R. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz: History, Theology, and Contemporary Judaism* (Baltimore, 1992), p.13.

<sup>109</sup> Cited in M. Gilbert, *The Holocaust*, p.55. Letter to diplomat and Foreign Office Civil Servant, Oliver Harvey, 25 October 1938

<sup>110</sup> TNA: FO 371/21637 – Despatch No.1224 from Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes, HM Minister in Berlin, 16 November 1938.



measures regarding Palestine and Jewish immigration, was informed that, ‘...the police who had studiously shut their eyes to the pillage of the day, were arresting hundreds of male Jews on charges unspecified. It is believed that they have been sent to concentration camps.’ Ogilvie-Forbes concludes with an analytical summary of the situation and an estimation of what was to happen to Germany’s Jews in the future. His analysis not only shows a frank outlook on Nazi racial policy, which would have left Viscount Halifax in no mistake as to the future of Germany’s Jews, but also comments on the lack of advancement in terms of modern humanity and civilisation. The first point comes through when he states that, ‘I think that the murder of Herr von Rath by a German born Polish Jew has only accelerated the process of elimination of the Jews which has for long been planned.....Grynszpan’s criminal act has let loose forces of mediaeval [sic] barbarism’. The second point is alluded to further by its hints at an underlying Christian fanaticism reminiscent of the Middle Ages, which has failed to advance intellectually or rationally, when he says, ‘Modern civilisation has certainly not changed human nature’. The British Ambassador in Berlin, Sir Neville Henderson, referred to the events as ‘the barbarism of the Middle Ages’ and an ‘orgy of violent ill-treatment’.<sup>111</sup> The historical comparison would not have been lost on Viscount Halifax, a devout leader of the English Church Union. Tellingly, Ogilvie-Forbes highlighted the impending catastrophe and showed that despite modern historical criticism of the British Government and Foreign Office of the day, there would have been little they could have done given the shortage of time and the huge numbers involved. The Berlin diplomat pointed out that by November 1938,

.....the civilised world is confronted with the sight of over 500,000 people deliberately excluded from all trades and professions and consequently unable

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<sup>111</sup> N. Henderson, *Failure of a Mission* (London, 1940), p.172.

to earn a living. They dwell in the grip and at the mercy of a brutal oligarchy, which fiercely resents all humanitarian foreign intervention. Misery and despair are already there and when their resources are either denied to them or exhausted, their end will be starvation. The Jews of Germany are indeed not a national but a world problem which if neglected contains the seeds of a terrible vengeance.<sup>112</sup>

The seriousness of the problem was put forward by the *Jewish Chronicle* in a prophetic article five weeks after *Kristallnacht*, when the first of the *Kindertransports* were arriving in Britain: ‘Lord Rothschild expressed his belief that unless the victims of Nazi persecution could escape within two years, an immense proportion of them would be dead.’<sup>113</sup> The ‘Personal Column’ of the same newspaper edition reinforced Lord Rothschild’s fears for amongst the many requests for British sponsors to take German children, one advertisement stated, ‘.....a mother begs good-hearted people to get a permit for two charming girls, 11 and 12 years of age. Father in Dachau.’<sup>114</sup>

Whilst the political response to *Kristallnacht* is not the focus for this study, it is worth noting the speed of the British Government’s response to the event. On the 15<sup>th</sup> November 1938, Neville Chamberlain met leaders of the Jewish community including Viscount Samuel, Lord Bearstead, the Chief Rabbi Dr. Hertz and Dr. Chaim Weizmann. It was at this meeting, with its cross section of political and religious Jewry, that the scheme was originated that would become known as the

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<sup>112</sup> TNA: FO 371/21637 – Despatch No.1224 from Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes, HM Minister in Berlin, 16 November 1938.

<sup>113</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 16 December 1938.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

*Kindertransport*.<sup>115</sup> Weizmann correctly identified those Jews who were most vulnerable to Nazi persecution and critically, which the British Government would feel most ‘comfortable’ in accepting into Britain. Teenagers and children would be ‘temporarily’ allowed to reside in Britain, before re-emigrating. For Weizmann, the latter meant Palestine.

There were two areas of concern in political circles. Firstly, the Colonial Office, ever mindful of Arab opinion and coming after the recent Arab Revolt in Palestine, refused the request for the entry of 10,000 children into the Mandate.<sup>116</sup> There was also concern shown by the Secretary of State for India, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marquis of Zetland, if 10,000 children were let into Palestine, in case Indian Muslims rioted or worse.<sup>117</sup> The second area, raised by the Home Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, focused on British public opinion and the possibility of a backlash of anti-Semitism at a time of economic hardship. After a Cabinet meeting on the 16 November to work out a solution to present to the House of Commons, in which it was decided no formal limit on numbers was to be announced, Lord Halifax, believed that this British gesture would put pressure on the Americans to increase their quota system.<sup>118</sup> It had been

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<sup>115</sup> H. Samuel, *Memoirs* (London, 1945), pp.254-256, 276-279. A. Gottlieb, *Men of Vision*, pp.104-105. V. Fast, *Children's Exodus*, p.18.

<sup>116</sup> TNA: CAB 23/96/256 - Cabinet Meeting, 22 November 1938. Although a definite number of children had not been mentioned, the Jewish refugee agencies had believed that a figure of 5,000 was realistic. The figure of 10,000 mentioned by the Colonial Office was therefore informally adopted as the number to be hopefully realised for the *Kindertransport*. See also B. Turner, *And The Policeman Smiled*, p.33 and A. Gottlieb, *Men of Vision*, p.106.

<sup>117</sup> TNA: CAB 23/93 - Cabinet Committee Meeting, 14 December 1938. This document also quotes a figure of 10,000 children.

<sup>118</sup> TNA: CAB 23/96 - Cabinet Conclusions; Minutes and Papers, 16 November 1938. For the pre-eminence of political, rather than humanitarian, considerations in America and its Jewish community, see D. Wyman, *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis, 1938-1941* (Massachusetts, 1968) and H. Feingold, *The Politics of Rescue: The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust, 1938-1945* (Rutgers, 1970). See also Y. Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1939-1945* (Detroit, 1981) and J. Baumel, *Unfulfilled Promise: Rescue and Resettlement of Jewish Refugee Children in the United States 1934-1945* (Alaska, 1990).

hoped that America might take 20,000 children.<sup>119</sup> Under pressure after a meeting with representatives from the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany on the 21 November, Sir Samuel Hoare achieved the backing of the House of Commons to allow the children into Britain. The children would be allowed to stay temporarily and come with financial backing in the form of a £50 guarantee.<sup>120</sup> The transport of the children came under the auspices of the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany, which as the crisis worsened, changed its name to the Refugee Children's Movement (RCM). This was an inter-faith and denominational grouping of Christian and Jewish aid organisations, such as the Society of Friends/Quakers and the Christian body, Inter-Aid.<sup>121</sup>

By the standards or results of the Evian Conference, the British Government can be seen to have acted with a prudent humanitarian way. However, this has not prevented it from attracting criticism from historians for doing too little and too late. The main problem with this argument is that not only is the government judged with the hindsight of seventy years and the knowledge of what took place during the Second World War, but it also ignores the very real problem of the inevitable exploitation by political right wing anti-Semitic elements in British society in the 1930s. It may well have turned a number of very marginal and poorly supported groups into movements supported by an economically depressed section of the population, which at that time, included much of the country outside of the South-East. There was also Palestine to

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<sup>119</sup> B. Turner, *And The Policeman Smiled*, p.33. The bill put forward to Congress by Senator Robert Wagner and Representative Edith Rogers in 1939 to increase Jewish children quotas was defeated, with one argument being, 'that accepting children without their parents was contrary to the laws of God.'

<sup>120</sup> TNA: CAB 23/96/392 - Cabinet Meeting, 14 December 1938.

<sup>121</sup> It should be noted that the Society of Friends and Catholic Church charities were already under pressure from rescuing nearly four thousand Basque children fleeing the Spanish Civil War, which contributed to the housing shortage when the *Kinder* began to arrive. For an overview, see N. Benjamin (Ed.), *Recuerdos: The Basque Children Refugees in Great Britain* (Norwich, 2007), H. Davies, *Fleeing Franco: How Wales Gave Shelter to Refugee Children from the Basque Country During the Spanish Civil War* (Cardiff, 2011).

consider, with the Arab Revolt coming to an end and negotiations in London on-going for an agreed partition of the Mandate. Whilst the British looked favourably upon the economic benefits of allowing more Jews into Palestine, British Cabinet minutes from November 1938 indicate that in the view of Malcolm MacDonald, Secretary of state for the Dominions and Colonies, ‘the major consideration must be to do nothing which would prejudice the London discussions.’<sup>122</sup> Therefore, Evian should perhaps be seen as a pragmatic British response to an increasingly desperate European problem, and not as a clear sign of apathy or worse, endemic anti-Semitism of the British establishment.

The initial logistical organisation of setting up offices and putting in place workers to deal with the transport of thousands of children was quickly established in Germany and Austria, often building upon existing bodies. Dating back to 1933, British Jew, philanthropist and stockbroker, Otto Schiff, had worked with Berlin Rabbi Dr. Leo Baeck, to create a means by which Jews could escape Germany and come to Britain; *Die Reichsvertretung der Deutschen Juden*. In the same year, Schiff had been instrumental in creating its British opposite organisation, the Jewish Refugees Committee (JRC), assisting those Jews to come to Britain.<sup>123</sup> Part of the latter, the Central British Fund for German Jewry (CBF), was established by the most important and powerful members of the Anglo-Jewish community in order to take care of the social and economic welfare demands of the refugees, along with bringing a cohesive structure to the various elements of Jewish philanthropy; Lionel Cohen, Sir Robert Waley Cohen, Sir Osmond Goldschid, Chief Rabbi Dr. Joseph Hertz, Simon Marks,

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<sup>122</sup> TNA: CAB 23/96 – Cabinet Conclusions: Minutes and Conclusions, Jewish Immigration into Palestine, 22 November 1938.

<sup>123</sup> N. Bentwich, *They Found Refuge: An Account of British Jewry's Work for Victims of Nazi Oppression* (London, 1956), pp.9-21. A. Gottlieb, *Men of Vision*, pp.8-10.

Leonard Montefiore, Harry Nathan, Anthony de Rothschild, Lionel de Rothschild and Dr. Chaim Weizmann.<sup>124</sup> Whilst their positions, heritage and religious differences have brought them criticism, such as being out of touch with ordinary Anglo-Jewry, the rescue of Europe's Jews needed people of great wealth and political/social connections to be effective.<sup>125</sup> It was from these first efforts, that Anglo-Jewry was in a good position to develop and expand quickly in 1938, often in co-operation with non-Jewish groups. The Movement for the Care of Children from Germany was one of those groups founded after *Kristallnacht*, which when faced with the scale of the problem, changed its name to the Refugee Children's Movement (RCM).<sup>126</sup>

Similarly, non-Jewish groups had been quick to respond to Nazi persecution, with the Society of Friends (Quakers) leading the way by establishing the German Emergency Committee, in 1933.<sup>127</sup> Although it later changed its name to more accurately reflect its work, to that of the Friends Committee for Refugees and Aliens, it was still controlled by the highly respected Miss Bertha Bracey.<sup>128</sup> The Inter-Aid Committee for Children and the linked Save the Children Fund had been working in Germany ever since the end of the First World War.<sup>129</sup> By *Kristallnacht*, they were already moving children out of Germany, to be placed in private homes or directly into schools. It was at that point, in November 1938, that both organisations joined with the recently formed Movement for the Care of Children from Germany. The latter and its subsequent incarnation, the RCM, with Mrs. Dorothy Hardisty as one of its leaders, oversaw the *Kindertransport* programme with the Christian Council for

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<sup>124</sup> B. Turner, *And The Policeman Smiled*, pp.8-10, A. Gottlieb, *Men of Vision*, pp.23-26, 213-214.

<sup>125</sup> See B. Turner, *The Long Horizon: Sixty Years of CBF World Jewish Relief* (London, no date) for the relevant biographical details of the CBF's leadership.

<sup>126</sup> See J. Presland, *A Great Adventure: The Story of the Refugee Children's Movement* (London, 1944).

<sup>127</sup> See E. Blond, *Marks of Distinction* (London, 1988).

<sup>128</sup> See J.O. Greenwood, *Quaker Encounters: Friends and Relief Work*, Vol.1 (York, 1975).

<sup>129</sup> See K. Freeman, *If any Man Build: The History of the Save the Children Fund* (London, 1965).

Refugees from Germany and Central Europe.<sup>130</sup> Besides the formal refugee organisations, it should also be remembered that synagogues throughout the country, as the foundation level of the Anglo-Jewish community, collected money to help their co-religionists within the borders of the Third Reich and those that suffered in Poland.<sup>131</sup>

The Society of Friends provided the link to the multitude of non-Jewish religious organisations that responded to the crises, such as the Church of England Committee for Non-Aryan Christians and the Catholic Committee for Refugees from Germany (they, in turn, had sub-divisions that catered for children as opposed to adults). As with the plethora of Jewish groups, the churches (Anglican, Roman Catholic and Non-Conformist) needed an umbrella group to co-ordinate their work and this came shortly before *Kristallnacht* with the establishment of the Christian Council for Refugees from Germany and Central Europe.

Besides the individuals already mentioned, there were others that were key to the future success of the *Kindertransport*, who had often been working independently up to this point, but gradually became incorporated into the greater scheme. Examples included the wealthy Anglo-German, Wilfred Israel, who up to this point had been assisting with the Zionist Movement's Youth Aliyah scheme that trained teenage German Jews in agriculture, before sending them to farms in Palestine.<sup>132</sup> Frank Foley, working as a Passport Control Officer (and member of MI6) at the British Embassy in Berlin, had been busy obtaining false passports for Jews to get to Britain,

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<sup>130</sup> V. Fast, *Children's Exodus*, p.14.

<sup>131</sup> See N. Bentwich, *They Found Refuge: An Account of British Jewry's Work for Victims of Nazi Oppression* (London, 1956) for an overview.

<sup>132</sup> See N. Shepherd, *Wilfred Israel: German Jewry's Secret Ambassador* (London, 1984).

in addition to hiding them in his own home.<sup>133</sup> Similarly, in Vienna, the British Passport Officer, Captain Kendrick, liberally issued visas for Jews to temporarily stay in Britain. An eighteen year old George Weidenfeld recalled that at the end of an interview with Kendrick, ‘my mother broke down and sobbed’, and that he ‘relented and gave me the flimsiest of all visas – the right to enter England for a period of three months in transit to a final destination.’<sup>134</sup> In Prague, Nicholas Winton, a British stockbroker, helped to rescue hundreds of Jewish Children when Czechoslovakia was invaded by Germany in March 1939.<sup>135</sup>

Apart from these examples of individual initiative, there were numerous cases of British Christians, who on the basis of their religious convictions were instrumental in saving Jewish lives, both adults and children. Unsurprisingly, given their reputation in times of conflict, members of the Society of Friends were at the forefront of the British rescue effort. These included Jean Hoare, a cousin of the then Home Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, who with money donated by the Royal Institute of British Architects took forty six Czech children back to Britain in 1939.<sup>136</sup> Many of the Winton children went to Quaker families or were funded by them, including the Jewish film director, Karel Reisz, who along with his brother, were sent to Leighton

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<sup>133</sup> Although there are a number of publications that look at Foley’s work for MI6, Michael Smith’s *Foley: The Spy who saved 10,000 Jews* (London, 1999) has more of a focus on his activities saving Jewish lives and the context of Nazi persecution.

<sup>134</sup> G. Weidenfeld, *Remembering My Good Friends: An Autobiography* (London, 1995), p.76. Weidenfeld went on to work for the BBC, became a prominent publisher and entered the House of Lords.

<sup>135</sup> See M. Emanuel and V. Gissing, *Nicholas Winton and the Rescued Generation: Save One Life and Save the World* (London, 2001). Nicholas Winton was attached to the British Committee for Refugees from Czechoslovakia (B.C.R.C.). Up until the arrival of Winton in Prague in January 1939, the B.C.R.C. had been mostly dealing with vulnerable adults since the previous September and was led by Doreen Warriner (a former lecturer at the London School of Economics and relief worker for the Save the Children Fund). Therefore, Winton took on the job of saving endangered children as well as having to deal with a number of competing refugee committees, lack of finance (apart from the Lord Mayor of London Fund) and difficulties thrown up by the Refugee Children’s Movement.

<sup>136</sup> [www.kindertransport.org](http://www.kindertransport.org)



Park School, Reading (an independent Quaker boarding school).<sup>137</sup> Another Quaker, German born, Margareta Burkill, was instrumental in persuading local independent schools in accepting either for free or at a reduced rate, refugee children in the Cambridge area. Vera Coppard-Leibovic, born in 1926, Berlin, was typical of those Jewish *Kinder* helped by the Quakers. She was initially found accommodation on arriving in England and then sent to attend St. Christopher School, Letchworth, a progressive boarding school.<sup>138</sup> Alan Overton, a shopkeeper from Rugby and a Christadelphian, not only lobbied Members of Parliament to help the Jews, but also helped to set up a network of hostels and foster homes amongst the members of the religious community. His son, Bruce, later recollected,

Our home became virtually a transit house. Often late at night, my father would arrive after meeting the boat train in London, his car packed with children, some feeling very unwell after a long journey, besides the trauma of leaving their parents. How my mother coped, with her own four children plus the house full to overflowing, I shall never know.<sup>139</sup>

Whilst there is a growing awareness of the efforts made by the Society of Friends, the Christadelphians have been somewhat unrecognised by historians and the public at large. Like the Quakers, they were at the forefront of getting Jews out of Greater Germany to the safety of Britain and then helping them to establish new lives in Palestine. Although a Christian faith, the Christadelphians had a long and close

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<sup>137</sup> *The Guardian*, 28 November 2002. After leaving school, Karel Reisz joined the R.A.F., followed by study at Emmanuel College, Cambridge. He then went on to become one of Britain's leading film directors from the 1950s to the 1990s. He died in 2002, whilst both his parents were killed in Auschwitz.

<sup>138</sup> British Library, Sound Archive, London Museum of Jewish Life Oral History Interviews: Interview of Vera Coppard, 17/09/1987. Catalogue Number C525/95/01. Both parents survived the war, but her brother was killed in the Allied bombing of Germany. Although St. Christopher School was 'progressive' by the standards of the day, this did not stop Vera Coppard-Leibovic from being a victim of anti-German sentiment.

<sup>139</sup> M. Emanuel, V. Gising, *Nicholas Winton*, p.113.

association with Judaism, being sympathetic to Jewish orthodoxy. They established or funded hostels such as Little Thorn, Bilton Road, Rugby, and Elpis Lodge, 117 Gough Road, Edgebaston. These hostels were homes, places to socialise, that encouraged training for future work such as tailoring, engineering and joinery.<sup>140</sup>

At the other end of the spectrum, there were many British youth and political associations that became involved with trying to get vulnerable people out of Germany and other annexed or occupied countries. One notable group that shared an interest with other groups mentioned so far was the Woodcraft Folk.<sup>141</sup> Whilst not specifically attempting to save Jews, its left-wing, socialist and anti-Fascist stance meant that it's National Organiser, Henry Fair (known as 'Koodoo' to the membership), saved the lives of non-religious/socialist teenage Jews.<sup>142</sup> The level of cooperation and interaction can be judged by a national circular to branch leaders from 'Koodoo: to Woodcraft Folk members, on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1938. In his plea for help for the refugees, 'Koodoo' stated that,

The Society of Friends are willing to take up any offers of help from Folk....

Now, comrades, here is our chance to show our solidarity with our Czech comrades. Can you take a boy or girl or perhaps two boys or girls?<sup>143</sup>

This was followed up by an appeal to the membership as a whole in the Woodcraft Folk magazine, *New Pioneer*, that captured the international leftist slant to the

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<sup>140</sup> B. Turner, *And The Policeman Smiled*, pp.163-164.

<sup>141</sup> It was founded in 1925 as an alternative to the 'militaristic' and 'imperialist' Scout and Girl Guides Movement and is therefore strongly associated with the ideals of pacifism, international youth cooperation and education. It had (and still does) strong links to the Labour Party and Cooperative Movement in Britain. It was a member of the International Falcon Movement and Socialist Educational International.

<sup>142</sup> *The Independent*, 10 March 1999. In 1937, Henry Fair organised the Woodcraft Folk's first major international camp in Brighton, with an attendance of 2000, of which 800 were Czechs. It was from this meeting and the subsequent friendships that prompted the Czechs to ask for help from the Woodcraft Folk in 1938 and 1939. A conscientious objector in the Second World War, he received the Labour Party Certificate of Merit from Neil Kinnock in 1984.

<sup>143</sup> LSE Archive: Woodcraft Folk Papers fh – 078-02: Koodoo Appeal, 1938.

organisation. One can also appreciate the feeling that these were British children and teenagers helping those of the same age when the magazine states,

Your pals, boys and girls of that sad country, need our help. They are co-operative and socialist children. So are you. Well get together and help each other.....Don't forget, I'm waiting for those halfpennies, the price of a lollipop, from you.<sup>144</sup>

Along with the help of Nicholas Winton, Henry Fair was able to secure a group of twenty teenagers as part of a large *Kindertransport* bound for Britain in July 1939 (this was besides assisting other Czech teenagers to reach the safety of Belgium, that year). One of those teenagers, Sue Pearson who was interviewed many years later, recalled, 'I well remember Koodoo meeting us, a bewildered little group, at Liverpool Street Station. His broad and winning smile – which remained with him to the end of his life (he died in 1999, aged 91) – and his pure cockney voice were reassuring, even if not always understood by us.'<sup>145</sup>

The speed of events and thus an impression of the sense of urgency at the time may be judged from the fact that on 25 November 1938, Viscount Samuel was allowed by the B.B.C. Home Service to broadcast an appeal for British people to offer foster homes for Jewish children. As the offers of help were received, so the Refugee Children's Movement (the name change reflecting the fact that children were not just coming from Germany) visited homes to ascertain the suitability to receive the children. By the 1 December, the first train left Berlin, whilst on the 10 December, the first train from Vienna departed, making their way as all subsequent trains would do, to the Hook of Holland and then by ferry to either Harwich or Southampton. Besides these

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<sup>144</sup> LSE: Woodcraft Folk: *New Pioneer* Vol.VI, No.4, December 1938. File number fh-009-11.

<sup>145</sup> M. Emanuel, V. Gising, *Nicholas Winton*, p.116.

trains, the following year also saw Jews coming from Czechoslovakia (renamed the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia after March 1939) that included not just those Jews from Prague, but also those from refugee camps established for Jews that had fled the Sudetenland<sup>146</sup>. In addition, several trainloads of children came from the refugee camp at Zbaszyn, Poland, home to thousands of Polish Jews expelled from Germany, plus a small number of Jews from the Free City of Danzig. Very quickly, the number of children coming into the country outstripped the number of individual foster homes available at any one time, so children were often initially placed in the former holiday camp at Dovercourt, near Harwich (another former holiday camp at Pakefield, near Lowestoft, was closed shortly after opening due to flooding). The children would then either be picked out by foster parents, be placed in hostels or on occasion, join a Youth Aliyah project (usually on a communal farm, training to be a farmer, before going onto Palestine). Those children that had already organised foster parents, whilst still in Germany, were taken directly by train from Harwich to Liverpool Street Station, London, to meet their new guardians.

The whole *Kindertransport* programme faced a number of difficulties that, given the pressure of time, could not be easily resolved. The British response was not perfect, certainly by the standards of today's relief efforts. However, if judged by the standards of 1938/39, it achieved more than could be hoped for and compares very favourably when looking at other countries' less than satisfactory response to an international emergency, particularly America.

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<sup>146</sup> See the *Kindertransport* Association website, [www.kindertransport.org](http://www.kindertransport.org). Additionally, the website [www.wintons-children.org.uk](http://www.wintons-children.org.uk) contains not only many pertinent details and memories of the *Kinder*, but also a database of information regarding names, birthdates, guarantors and locations of the children. Nicholas Winton's first group of twenty children left Prague on the 14 March 1939, the day before Germany invaded Czechoslovakia. Winton was responsible for saving 669 mostly Jewish children.

The speed of establishing an evacuation programme resulted in having a multitude of agencies or individuals, often working independently of each other, who were both religious and secular in origin. Those that were religious included both Jewish and Christian faiths, with sometimes the former looking upon the latter with some suspicion. Even within Jewish efforts, there was potential for friction. The Chief Rabbi, Dr. Hertz, along with his son-in-law, Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld, ran their own Emergency Committee that rescued Orthodox Jews. Schonfeld established two London hostels; Avigdor House, Bedford Row, for boys and Northfield, Stamford Hill, for girls. The children's lives were orthodox in every particular; 'there was to be no compromise with liberalism or free thinking.'<sup>147</sup> The Youth Aliyah scheme was based upon Zionist ideals. The Christadelphians, like the Society of Friends, the Plymouth Brethren, Methodists and Unitarian Church, fully accepted the Jews for what they were and therefore respected the Jewish faith. The same could not be said of the Christian Jewish Alliance, nor the Barbican Mission to the Jews, whose aim was to convert Jews to Christianity.

The Barbican Mission, operating from Prague, flew out a group of Jewish children to Croydon Airport in January 1939. As early as April 1939, the Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council was complaining about the treatment of the children, stating, 'It is their intention to baptise them.'<sup>148</sup> The Barbican Mission made no secret of its position, stating, 'It is our first and foremost intention to give these children a true Christian home.....and give them an opportunity to know the Lord Jesus as their

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<sup>147</sup> B. Turner, *And The Policeman Smiled*, p.23, and V. Fast, *Children's Exodus*, p.42. See D. Kranzler, *Holocaust Hero: The Untold Biography and Stories of Solomon Schonfeld* (New Jersey, 2004) and D. Taylor, *Holocaust Hero: A Purpose in Life* (London, 2009).

<sup>148</sup> B. Turner, *And The Policeman Smiled*, p.248.

Saviour.’<sup>149</sup> Strict Christian beliefs and attitudes were imbued into the children by the Reverend and Mrs. Davidson, with the ‘consent’, allegedly, of distraught parents wanting their children to escape persecution. Throughout the war, there was a growing ‘acceptance’ with regard to the conversion of Jewish children, with the RCM, Home Office and Christian churches either lacking the will power or effort to correct the problem.<sup>150</sup> Even if there was a determination to investigate cases of conversion, it was only with the 1944 Guardianship (Refugee Children) Act that the RCM could inspect homes and question children. In March 1945, when Mrs. Dorothy Hardisty of the RCM inspected the Barbican Mission’s Craddock House, Uffculme, in Devon, although the house was in a poor state of repair and conditions spartan, so were many other hostels in the country. She found that the children were physically well, confident, friendly and educated at Tiverton Grammar School and the University College of the South West of England, Exeter.<sup>151</sup> As was often the case, there were no grounds on which to take the children away from the mission. Six years in Britain, amongst committed missionaries or foster parents with similar ideas did produce converts. However, it was not all one way, as there were some instances of Orthodox Rabbis indoctrinating and converting liberal Jewish children. Both the Barbican Mission and the Cambridge Refugee Committee reported instances that ‘orthodox Jews kidnapped children who were in Christian homes.’<sup>152</sup> Despite the ‘fears that refugee children were being converted to Christianity’, it was ‘stated that fewer than one half of one percent had been converted, in 50 cases out of 100 with the consent of

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<sup>149</sup> Barbican Mission to the Jews, *Emanuel’s Witness* Vol.XV, No.10, January 1939, pp.184-185.

<sup>150</sup> B. Turner, *And The Policeman Smiled.*, pp.248-249.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.249-250. Craddock House was the location the Reverend and Mrs. Davidson evacuated their Kent based hostel occupants to once the war started. See L. Davidson, *For a Future and a Hope. The Story of the Houses of Refuge in Chislehurst* (Chislehurst, 1989) and ‘Houses of Refuge in Chislehurst’ in *The Cockpit* (A Publication of the Chislehurst Society), No.90 Winter 2008.

<sup>152</sup> Imperial War Museum, Sound Archive: Interview with Margareta Burkill, 26/01/1980, Catalogue Number 4588 Margareta Burkill was a German born civilian who worked for the Cambridge Refugee Committee, 1933-1945.

their parents.’<sup>153</sup> Inquiries at the time by the Chief Rabbi met with generalisations, partial data or a refusal to give information by the RCM.

The lack of a coordinated effort to rescue and house the *Kinder* was demonstrated by those wealthy enough, such as Lord Sainsbury and Baron James de Rothschild, to open up parts of private estates to house large numbers of children.<sup>154</sup> Although in the latter’s case they were not competing for funds, the remaining Jewish and Christian groups were, often being assisted by funds from Earl Baldwin (the former Prime Minister), who regularly appealed to the public to give money. In December 1938, Stanley Baldwin had issued the following radio appeal, ‘I ask you to come to the aid of victims not of any catastrophe in the natural world, not of earthquake, not of flood, not of famine, but of an explosion of Man’s inhumanity to Man.’<sup>155</sup> The Earl Baldwin Fund for Refugees was extremely successful at quickly gaining £522,000, gifts of clothing and offers of accommodation and properties from both Jewish and non-Jewish sources.<sup>156</sup> In addition, there were a multitude of different funding efforts that were either church, or town and city based, like the Lord Mayor of London’s Mansion House Czech Relief Fund, spread throughout the country.<sup>157</sup> A nationwide ‘Mother’s Day’ appeal in May 1939 raised £23,000.<sup>158</sup> Lord Victor Rothschild auctioned Joshua Reynolds’ *The Braddyll Family* and gave the proceeds to the Baldwin Fund.<sup>159</sup> Even

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<sup>153</sup> H. Schneiderman (Ed.), *American Jewish Year Book 5704* (1944/45) Vol.46 (Philadelphia, 1945), p.190.

<sup>154</sup> B. Turner, *And The Policeman Smiled*, p.162. Lord Sainsbury took in twenty five *Kinder* and paid for their education.

<sup>155</sup> M. Emanuel, V. Gising, *Nicholas Winton*, p. 65.

<sup>156</sup> L.London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, p.122. V. Fast, *Children’s Exodus*, p.48.

<sup>157</sup> P. Shatzkes, *Holocaust and Rescue*, p.61. Due to the lack of funds available to Jewish refugee organisations, whose main efforts were concentrated on helping Jews in Germany and Austria, non-Jewish relief agencies attempted to fill the gap, particularly in the last few months of peace. The Lord Mayor’s Fund, Save the Children and the Society of Friends helped to look after the 15-18,000 refugee children in Czechoslovakia, many of whom were ‘stateless’.

<sup>158</sup> *The Times*, 28 September 1939.

<sup>159</sup> V. Cowles, *A Family of Fortune* (London, 1973), p.304.

with such large sums being raised at the time, the then Council for German Jewry (CGJ) was always short of money.<sup>160</sup>

As indicated earlier, many Orthodox Jews were concerned for the spiritual welfare and religious observance of the children once they had arrived in Britain. This was not a priority for those organising the movement and relocation of the *Kinder*, the Refugee Children's Movement. There were too few Orthodox families able to take in the children and too few workers, apart from those associated with Dr. Hertz, who were either Orthodox or Jewish for that matter, to be aware of the specific religious needs. If kosher food was overlooked at Dovercourt, it should not be surprising that many foster families had not the slightest idea about the rules and regulations of Judaism. Fifteen year old Bertha Engelhard later recounted that, 'A lot of us had to go to non-Jewish homes. I never thought it could happen to me....People who are not brought up in Orthodox families don't realize the trauma for a child to be taken completely out of its Jewish environment and having to adjust to a Christian home.'<sup>161</sup> One again comes back to the point that this was not deliberately done, but too often an act of ignorance or quite simply the result of it being a low priority. Nicholas Winton supported this view when he explained, 'I am not religious. I didn't mind whether the children were Jewish, Communist, Catholic or whatever and I didn't mind who they went to.'<sup>162</sup> As regards the latter, Winton had little option. Due to his efforts starting much later than refugee work already being done in Germany and Austria, most offers

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<sup>160</sup> Originally established in 1933 as the Central British Fund for German Jewry (CBF), it changed its name as its role altered. From 1936 to 1939, it was known as the Council for German Jewry (CGJ). In 1939, it became the Central Council for Jewish Refugees (CCJR), changing once again in 1944 to the Central British Fund for Jewish Relief and Rehabilitation (CBF). The organisation's archives are held in the London Metropolitan Museum (Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief, 1933-1960: File – ACC/2793), with a microfilm copy at the Wiener Library, London (File – MF Doc 27).

<sup>161</sup> M. Harris, D. Oppenheimer, *Into the Arms of Strangers*, pp.146-147.

<sup>162</sup> E. Manuel, V. Gising, *Nicholas Winton*. p.81.



from Jewish foster parents in Britain had already been taken up. Winton was equally forthright when faced with understandable criticism from Orthodox rabbis for his cooperation with the Barbican Mission. Winton recalled that in one personal confrontation with some rabbis, ‘I took no notice of their objections. It may seem terrible from the Jewish point of view but, on the other hand, the children are alive! I was after saving lives, not souls. I told them: ‘I’ve got my work to do, you’ve got yours. If you prefer a dead Jew to a proselytised one, that’s your business.’<sup>163</sup>

A more serious problem was that of cultural differences and those Jewish and non-Jewish families who had ulterior designs on the refugee children and exploited them. Wealthier middle class children from Germany and Austria could be shocked by the ‘primitive’ or basic living standards of their foster homes, which might have lacked indoor toilets, central heating or a phone. As most of Britain’s Jews had either come from Poland or Russia and still lived in working class urban districts, the shock to an educated and formerly wealthy German Jew for instance, was considerably magnified. The overwhelming number of refugees also spoke little or no English and therefore they were in every sense of the word isolated in a foreign country. Another key criticism of those organising the *Kindertransport* was that they allowed the splitting up of families in Britain and so added to the sense of isolation. In reply to the latter, Nicholas Winton was typical in his pragmatic outlook and at a time when there were no social workers to check foster homes. He comments, ‘Remember, there was a recession in Britain; people were short of cash. Those who offered homes were mainly the lower middle-class. Taking one child was a phenomenal undertaking. Had I waited for families willing to take two or more, most of those children would not

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid. p.83.

have got away.’<sup>164</sup> This point was agreed with by two *Kindertransport* sisters from Czechoslovakia, Vera and Eva Gissing, with the latter going to a boarding school in the South, the Headmistress acting as ‘guardian’, whilst the former was fostered out to a devout Methodist family in the North. which although poor, also contained, ‘A big generous heart.’<sup>165</sup>

The experiences of the *Kinder* in foster homes prior to September 1939 were no different to the experiences of evacuee children as a whole, at the start of the war. The older children were always more difficult to find homes for, plus there was the consideration of never having enough Jewish Orthodox families willing to take in those children of a similar disposition. However, the recollections of *Kinder* show an overwhelmingly positive experience, with relatively few examples of their situation being taken advantage of. An exception to this was the fact that unlike the later evacuees, the majority of the foreign refugees initially spoke little or no English. In many of the *Kinder* accounts, there is a sense of isolation, even if placed with Jewish families. Gisela Eisner arrived as a young teenager from Berlin in December 1938 to stay with her aunt and uncle in Edgware.<sup>166</sup> Her Jewish relatives, who made her feel unwelcome, quick fostered her out to a kindly non-Jewish family called Gwinnett. Soon after, with the onset of bombing in 1940, the family moved from Wolverhampton to the safer location of Chesterfield. The lack of other *Kinder* in the area, to relate to, lead to feelings of being cut off and feeling lonely. Similarly, Bertha Leverton from Munich, who arrived in Britain aged sixteen in January 1939, noted the

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid. p.81.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid. p.81.

<sup>166</sup> Imperial War Museum, Sound Archive: Interview of Gisela Eisner, October 1994. Catalogue Number 14763. German Jewish child living in Berlin, 1933-1938. Both of her parents were killed in the war.

lack of contact with other *Kinder* in the village of Delph, near Oldham.<sup>167</sup> In recounting her experiences, Bertha Leverton also touches on similar experiences to other Jewish and non-Jewish evacuees during the war. There was the financial exploitation of teenagers by foster parents, in this particular case, when Bertha was working in the local textile mill in Delph (although she does also comment on the kindness towards her from fellow mill girls). In addition, there was the sexual harassment that occurred towards foster children. Bertha comments on the attempted seduction of her younger sister, Inge, by the foster father, Bill Sharp, and how the sisters and their brother, Leon, made an agreement not to inform their parents about the events that took place. Whilst this not by any means a unique experience, it is unusual whether one looks at *Kinder* or evacuee accounts. However, one may surmise that it was a consequence of the less stringent vetting procedures of the day, combined with the urgency to get children out of Europe or away from the bombing. Fortunately, unlike the adult refugees who had fled to Britain to work as domestic servants, the children seem to have been more adept at learning English, as well as being more ‘accepted’ by the host communities. Although one may speculate as to the reasons why British society was more willing to accept Jewish children rather than Jewish adults, both groups were in the country on the understanding that their stay was temporary, not permanent.

An examination of the *Kindertransport* accounts of life in British society reveals certain commonalities. Namely these are a mixture of excitement (the journey was often recalled as being akin to a holiday by the youngest children) and trepidation, particularly if they were to be placed with families or in hostels outside of London. If

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<sup>167</sup> Imperial War Museum, Sound Archive: Interview of Bertha Leverton, 13/02/1997. Catalogue Number 17310, reels 2 and 3. German Jewish teenager living in Munich, 1923-1939.

the children were old enough to understand their circumstances, none of them had any knowledge of Britain beyond the fact that London was the capital. Another common feature of accounts concentrates on the relationship the children had with new 'parents', the immediate family and the wider social community they had been placed in. The third aspect that comes from accounts is the sense of either loss or not knowing when they might see their real families again. This is often followed up by the discovery at the end of the war of wholesale family loss, with very few instances of parents making it to Britain in the footsteps of their children. Unlike the children, many of the parents were well aware of the possible outcome of persecution and separation, as one boy's luggage, when opened in Britain, was found to contain earth from his home.<sup>168</sup> Variations in these findings arise with the differences in age of the children arriving in Britain. As will be seen in Chapter Three, for the eldest *Kinder*, their experience of British society during the war could include the threat of being interned as an enemy alien and possibly having the opportunity to join the British Armed Forces.

The sense of the unknown was illustrated by Lore Sulzbacher who in an interview stated, 'On the journey to England what I remember very clearly is that everybody I spoke to on that train knew where they were going.....I had no idea where I was going. Not a thought. Nobody had told me. My parents didn't know either.'<sup>169</sup> No doubt her sense of isolation was increased twofold by the fact that her Lincoln

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<sup>168</sup> London Metropolitan Archive: File – ACC 3121/E/03/286; Board of Deputies-General Correspondence, Refugees 1938-39.

<sup>169</sup> M. Harris, D. Oppenheimer, *Into the Arms of Strangers*, p. 123. Lore Sulzbacher, aged 14, came from Germany. Later joined Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), aged 18. Her parents died in Auschwitz. p.277.

guardians didn't speak German, nor she English. As regards to her destination of Lincoln, she continued, 'That could have been anywhere. Never heard of the place.'<sup>170</sup> Herbert Holzinger, who was responsible for his ten year old sister, also recalled the sense of isolation felt by many.

Our first day in Birmingham was hell. It suddenly hit me that we were in a foreign country without knowing the language, without relatives or friends, and I was trying desperately to be brave as a thirteen year old boy was expected to behave. I spent most of that day in and out of the toilet so that no one could see the tears rolling down my cheeks.<sup>171</sup>

By the expectations of the present age, many of the foster parents of the 1930s and 40s fell short in terms of the emotional bonds that were forged between the families and the children. There were a number of foster parents that showed their disappointment on seeing the child for the first time at the train station, which despite the language barrier, could be sensed by the latter.<sup>172</sup> On her first night in England, fourteen year old Lore Sulzbacher went to put her arms around her new foster mother, only to be pushed away. She later recalled the phrase, 'That's sissy', being used. Although the family are remembered as being kind to her, the lack of emotional attachment to her was perhaps a result of what she regarded as an unhappy marriage between the foster parents, whose motive in offering a home to her was the possibility of a future marriage to their Jewish son.<sup>173</sup> Twelve year old Inge Polloch and sister Lieselotte stayed with the Robyns family in Falmouth and benefitted from a private tutor. Despite the lovely surroundings, Inge felt Mrs. Robyns to be cold, lacking in

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., p.123.

<sup>171</sup> B. Turner, *And The Policeman Smiled*, p.112.

<sup>172</sup> E. Blond, *Marks of Distinction*, p.70.

<sup>173</sup> M. Harris, D. Oppenheimer, *Into the Arms of Strangers*, p.123.

emotion and resented being forbidden to speak German to her sister. The situation was not helped by the anger felt by Inge towards Mr. Robyns in a matter of unrequited love for him.<sup>174</sup> Older foster parents, as well as being perhaps reserved in their manner, just as often could not relate to the needs and ideas of teenagers or had too little money to adequately look after their charges. The latter being the case of a Brighton widow who looked after Ursula, aged fourteen, and Hella Simon, aged fifteen, from Germany, but gave them no pocket money or bought them clothes.<sup>175</sup>

Jewish families in Britain were the ideal for placing the *Kinder*. The other aim was to place children from Orthodox, Reform and Liberal backgrounds with the religiously relevant families, with those who were Polish in origin most likely to go to Orthodox families and German/Austrian *Kinder* to Reform/Liberal families. The particular shortage of Orthodox British families prompted the leaders of the different refugee agencies to use the *Jewish Chronicle* in May 1939 to request that more families offer help, saying that it is ‘almost impossible to bring over Orthodox children because of the acute shortage of hospitality for them.’<sup>176</sup> However, their relative small number was further depleted by the fact that as most Jews came from poorer working class families and therefore were financially unable to bear the burden. So it was often left to wealthy and middle class Jews to act. This was to change though as the situation became more desperate in the summer of 1939, when anyone would be considered, even single women. At a public meeting in Norwich, Jewish couple Percy and

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<sup>174</sup> B. Turner, *And The Policeman Smiled*, p.115.

<sup>175</sup> M. Harris, D. Oppenheimer, *Into the Arms of Strangers*, p.279. The girls were born in Quackenbruck, Germany. Their father was arrested after *Kristallnacht* and died in Buchenwald Concentration Camp. The children were then placed in a Hamburg orphanage and from there, as part of the Kindertransport programme, sent to Brighton in 1939. The mother also died in the war. After the war, Ursula followed a familiar trend amongst the refugees and married a fellow *Kinder*, in this case, Peter Rosenfeld.

<sup>176</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 12 May 1939.

Mariam Cohen, along with other family members were shown photographs of children in order to choose ones to foster. Prior to this, the Jewish community in Norwich had been alerted to the predicament of Viennese Jews by a visiting shoe salesman, who had garnered support for the fostering of children. In an interview, Mariam recalled that after being unable to afford to take in boy twins, they chose Kurt Fuchel, a seven year old from Vienna, who arrived in Britain in February 1939.<sup>177</sup> Typical of the responses was, ‘You wanted to do something. My sister took a little girl, Erika, and my mother took a little girl, Lizabeth. We didn’t choose really. We just took as they were handed out.’<sup>178</sup>

The need by the local non-Jewish population to help the refugee children was recalled by fifteen year old Jew, Bertha Leverton, when staying at Dovercourt. She recounted that they were made to feel very welcome and that, ‘People used to come from neighbouring houses to teach us English and to entertain us. In the evenings we had concerts.’<sup>179</sup> A further illustration came from the premature closure of Dovercourt’s sister camp at Pakefield, Lowestoft, in December 1938, due to flooding, just as large numbers of refugee *Kinder* were arriving in Britain. Staff from St.Felix Girls’ School, Southwold, gave up their Christmas holiday in order to accommodate 250 children from the flooded camp. Afterwards, besides the majority being found space at Dovercourt, fifty boys were taken in by the Salvation Army in Harwich, whilst some girls went to the Cliff Hotel and various hostels.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> M. Harris, D. Oppenheimer, *Into the Arms of Strangers*, p.278. Kurt Fuchel, born in 1931, Vienna, stayed with Percy and Mariam Cohen until the age of sixteen. He was reunited with his parents in 1947, who had escaped to France. Kurt Fuchel went on to live in the USA and became a President of ‘The *Kinder* Association’.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, p.124.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, p.145.

<sup>180</sup> *Harwich and Dovercourt Newsman*, 24 December 1938. See also E. Blond, *The Memoirs of Elaine Blond* (London, 1988), p.72, and B. Turner, *And The Policeman Smiled*, p.59.

The adaptability of the Jewish children to their new surroundings, particularly those who came to Britain at a young age, was another feature or aspect that comes through in the reminiscences of former *Kinder*. Kurt Fuchel, who had initially cried for his parents at the age of seven, learnt not to think about them and although he was able to write to them at the start of the war, had to be forced to do so by his foster parents.<sup>181</sup> Like many other young children, they quickly learnt English and as a consequence, forgot how to speak their native language. This was a factor noticed by ten year old Vera Diamant in the first few days of being in Britain, when talking to a fellow Czech girl who had arrived a year earlier.<sup>182</sup> In essence, the children's assimilation into British society was often rapid and essential, particularly during the war. It is interesting to speculate that whilst previous generations of Jewish immigrants had perhaps taken decades to integrate into British society, those children that were received by middle class and often secular, Jewish families, were transformed into being 'model' citizens in appearance in a matter of months.

Besides the humanitarian aspect of taking in a child, some foster parents internalised the wider political situation of Europe in 1938 and 1939 as to why they fostered children. Vera Diamant recalled her foster father, Mr. Rainford, being asked as to why he had volunteered to accept a child. His reply was that, 'I knew I could not save the world. I knew I could not stop the war from starting. But I knew I could save one human life. And as Chamberlain broke his pledge to Czechoslovakia, and as Jews

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<sup>181</sup> M. Harris, D. Oppenheimer, *Into the Arms of Strangers*, p.127.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.* p.278. Vera Diamant was born in 1929, Celakovice, Czechoslovakia. Both parents died in the Holocaust. Her sister, Eva, born 1924, was separated from her and sent to a boarding school, where she was looked after by the Headmistress and the fees were waived by the school owners.



were in the greatest danger, I decided it must be a Czech Jewish child.’<sup>183</sup> Without the intervention and help from British non-Jews, far fewer Jews would have survived.

Robert Sugar, who arrived in Britain from Vienna in January 1939, aged eight, was unusual in that his mother, Greta, was already in domestic service in London.<sup>184</sup> By the nature of her employment, she was not allowed to keep her child with her and so the boy eventually ended up in a Jewish refugee hostel in Clifton Park Avenue, Belfast.<sup>185</sup> Due to wartime events, the hostel effectively became an orphanage. In an interview, Robert Sugar highlighted the ambiguous and at times hurtful situation found by many refugee children. How should they react to having had their lives saved? For some host families and organisations this seems to have meant that the children should just be grateful they were alive and therefore not to complain about anything. This point could equally apply to those adult refugees, who had found themselves in domestic service and were then exploited by their employers. In an experience similar to Lori Sulzbacher in Lincoln, Robert Sugar recalled that his friend’s older sister had written in her diary, ‘I would give a kingdom for a kind word’ and went on to say, ‘We were not able to articulate this, that we were treated in such an unkind way.’<sup>186</sup> He also felt that there was a sense of ‘self-congratulation’ every time the anonymous hostel committee members came to visit the refugees. Again, by the standards of the day, the hostel appears to be a model institution in its physical treatment of the children. However, the common complaint of the children, when

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid., p.130.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., p.280. After initially going to a hostel in Belfast, the children were transferred to a farm, Millisle, County Down, in June 1939. The farm operated between May 1938 and 1948. Those that worked there included Zionist *Chalutzim*, pioneer members of Youth Aliyah. Both his parents survived the war.

<sup>185</sup> This was close by to the Cliftonville Road School in north Belfast that had been opened in 1907 for the education of local Jews.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., p.136.

looking back with an adult's perspective, was that there was no consideration of their emotional needs.

Robert Sugar gave a damning indictment of the internal divisions within Anglo-Jewry, when the hostel's children were invited to the Chief Rabbi of Belfast's home. With an expectation of some act of 'kindness', they received a lecture that suggested it was their own fault that Hitler had come to Vienna, due to the there being an organ in the city's synagogue. The Jews of Vienna had been reformist in their ways and therefore, by the standards of Orthodox Jewry, had brought misfortune upon themselves.<sup>187</sup> A consistent factor in Anglo-Jewry has been the division within that community between the various religious affiliations which may be categorised as Liberal, Reform and Orthodox. Two figures consistently at the centre of 'difficulties', both within the Jewish community and in their dealings with the refugee agencies, were the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Hertz, and his son-in-law, Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld. Unquestionably, they saved many Jewish lives before, during and after the Second World War and are held in high esteem by many Jews around the world for their achievements. Yet it was their strict observance of Jewish religious law and the desire to preserve Orthodoxy that brought them into conflict with others who believed in adopting a more practical solution to problems. Although they were correct in being fearful of groups such as the Barbican Mission, it tainted their view of all the Christian faiths and foster families. An example of the way in which the Chief Rabbi thought and acted is illustrated by the letter of complaint written by Dr. Hertz to Lord Samuel on learning that the second *Kindertransport* was to leave Berlin on Saturday,

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid., p.137.

10 December 1938.<sup>188</sup> Travel was not permitted on the Sabbath and so, despite the urgency of the situation in Germany, the Movement tried to avoid transporting orthodox Jews on a Saturday.

A lack of focus, determination and the failure to prioritise the real threat to Judaism might be levelled at those within Anglo-Jewry who led their national, regional and local communities. A prophetic and succinct point on the divisions within the Jewish faith was made in 1939 by Martha Dodd, daughter of the American Ambassador to Germany. She wrote,

I fully believe that eventually there will be no Jews in Germany ..... the Jews should recognize, once and for all time, that Fascism, no matter what its colour or brand, is bent on the extermination of their people. They must join, rich and poor alike, in fierce and uncompromising action, against its continued existence and future conquests.<sup>189</sup>

The thesis has so far looked at the ways in which under ever increasing pressure from the Nazi authorities, Jews had been escaping the Third Reich. There was, however, one scheme that had been operating before Hitler took power in 1933. The 'Youth Aliyah' (along with other previous incarnations dating back to the turn of the century) had been preparing European Jews to be self-sufficient farmers, ready to be sent out to Palestine and cultivate the land. Once Nazi persecution got underway, Youth Aliyah offered young Jews a means of escape and Britain played a vital part in that process, both before and during the early years of the war.

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<sup>188</sup> A. Gottlieb, *Men of Vision*, p.113.

<sup>189</sup> M. Dodd, *My Years in Germany* (London, 1939), pp. 261, 273.

### Case Study: Youth Aliyah in Britain.

Youth Aliyah or as it known in Hebrew, *Aliyat Hanoar*, was a Jewish organisation founded in 1932 in Germany by Recha Freier, a Berlin Rabbi's wife.<sup>190</sup> It was in effect the youth wing of seventeen year olds and under for the *Halutz* movement (meaning 'pioneer'), which was an umbrella organisation for a number of 'back to the land' groups of men and women up to the age of twenty five. At a time of large scale unemployment, it sought to give teenagers training in agriculture, combined with a general education, including Hebrew, and specifically imbue them with Zionist ideals and values. They would then be sent to work on kibbutzim in the Palestine Mandate, where they were not counted against the official British quota of Jewish immigrants. It was hoped that a proliferation of sustainable agricultural settlements would become a foundation for a new state of Israel and a defence against a hostile Middle East.

Originally, Recha Freier supervised the organisation's activities in Germany and Henrietta Szold coordinated the work from offices in Jerusalem, all with the support of the World Zionist Organisation. Persecution from the Nazi authorities, the Nuremberg Laws and the worsening events of 1938, in particular *Kristallnacht*, forced changes to be implemented to the scheme. Instead of being trained in Germany, teenagers were sent abroad, but still with the intention of being placed in kibbutzim. Britain was one of the favoured countries, with various centres funded by the British Council of the Young Pioneer Movement for Palestine (*Hachsharath Hanoar*). A non-Jewish partner in training young Jews about agriculture were the Society of

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<sup>190</sup> B. Turner, *And The Policeman Smiled* (London, 1990), pp.14-16. See R. Freier, *Let the Children Come: the Early History of Youth Aliyah* (London, 1961). Youth Aliyah went on to help resettle orphaned Jewish children found in 'Displacement Camps' at the end of the war, ending up in kibbutzim in the Palestine Mandate and then the newly formed state of Israel after 1948.

Friends, though without the Hebrew cultural underpinning of the scheme demanded by *Halutz* and Youth Aliyah. In the opinion of Norman Bentwich, a former Attorney General for the Palestine Mandate (1920-1931) and University of Jerusalem professor (1931-1951), the purpose of the agricultural training was to persuade, ‘a large part of an urban and middle class population to change their outlook in life, to re-educate them for occupations they had never known, to organise the centres and institutions for the training of sixty thousand young men and women.’<sup>191</sup> Although Bentwich and others could see the value in the Youth Aliyah scheme in the light of fascist persecution, as shown in his 1944 account, *Jewish Youth Comes Home*, it was only in the long term that its benefits were fully realised. Not only had they been saved from the Holocaust, with its full details being revealed after 1945, but they would also form the core of a new Jewish nation that needed to be economically exploited and defended.<sup>192</sup>

One of the training centres opened prior to the war, in June 1939, was at Great Engeham Farm, Kent, and received a total of 134 children and 30 *chalutzim* (‘pioneer’ instructors). It also served as a transit camp for a further 300 to 350 children aged thirteen to sixteen, with the last group arriving at the start of September 1939. Given their age, they were also the most difficult to place anywhere else apart from a Youth Aliyah scheme. The camp remained open until its closure in November 1939, when this area of the country was declared out of bounds to aliens. The children were then transferred to other camps that had been set up around the country such as at Bydown

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<sup>191</sup> N. Bentwich, *They Found Refuge*, p.86.

<sup>192</sup> N. Bentwich, *Jewish Youth Comes Home: The Story of Youth Aliyah, 1933-1943* (London, 1944).

House, near Barnstaple, Devon.<sup>193</sup> An Orthodox *Bachad* group went on to Gwrych Castle in north Wales.

Great Engeham Farm in Kent was donated rent free to the Youth Aliyah movement and was divided into two parts, with one section being for orthodox teenagers. Due to the large numbers of people staying there, the living conditions were spartan and must have seemed primitive to many of the formally urbanised and sophisticated teenagers. Correspondence by Fred Dunston to Youth Aliyah's headquarters in Bloomsbury House, London, make it clear they had many difficulties to overcome. Besides the poor weather, especially noteworthy when many of the teenagers were living in tents (the lucky ones lived in cramped farm cottages or in old converted railway carriages), is the fact that the children had either poor or unsuitable clothing for farm life. There was also a serious shortage of money to operate the scheme on, with letters frequently requesting reimbursement for monies spent by staff.<sup>194</sup> A measure of the conditions endured by the teenagers may be gathered from a letter written by Fritz Terkel to his parents in Vienna in August 1939. He records that for breakfast they were given, 'Two slices of old bread and mouldy marmalade on top, also tea', whilst lunch was 'soup or some vegetables' and 'Dinner is about the same as breakfast'. As for the living conditions, he notes that the tents leak and three teenagers have to share two beds, water is hard to obtain and that they have to rise at 6am and go to sleep at 10.30pm. There was also a lack of current newspapers to read. Terkel concludes by saying to his parents, 'To cut it short, I am in a very bad way, as you can see from this

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<sup>193</sup> The majority of records for the Youth Aliyah centres of Great Engeham Farm, Kent, and those in north Devon at Braunton and Bydown House, are located at the Wiener Library, London; File 1372. The depositor was Fred Dunston (formally Fritz Deutsch), who worked at the Youth Aliyah offices and later the *Palastina-Amt* (part of the Jewish Agency) in Vienna. Afterwards, he worked at both the Kent and Devon locations. He was a member of the *Elternschaft* or youth training management.

<sup>194</sup> Wiener Library, London: File 1372/1/6 – Fred Dunston: Papers Re. Youth Aliyah 1939-2002. Letter sent by Fred Dunston to Youth Aliyah, Bloombury, London, dated 8 August 1939.

letter.<sup>195</sup> His remarks are supported by a number of other teenage accounts, but most damningly by one of the *Madrichim* (youth leaders), Erwin Seligman, in a letter two days after the one from Terkel, to the head of the Youth Aliyah in Europe, *Marduk* (leader) Schattner. Seligman informed Schattner that, ‘The conditions here are very primitive.’<sup>196</sup> In between these two letters being sent off, *Marduk* Schattner gave voice to some of his own misgivings as well as possible solutions in a letter addressed to the *Madrichim* at Great Engeham Farm. Whilst acknowledging some of the difficulties integrating Jewish teenagers from different countries and ironically, given Fritz Terkel’s remarks on how harsh the conditions were at the camp, suggesting they have less ‘free time’, he highlighted a point that was frequently commented on by the Jewish leadership. Religious and particularly in this case, Zionist ideals and values of ‘*Eretz Israel*’, were not being emphasised enough. Given the teenagers’ diverse backgrounds, the long hours working on the farm and their English language classes, one can understand how the original ideas of Youth Aliyah were affected.

Importantly, especially when understanding the levels of persecution of the Jews under Nazi control in the last few months of peace, Shattner indicated, ‘A further difficulty was caused by the fact that a number of children were sent, especially from Vienna, who had from the first no intention to go to Palestine.’<sup>197</sup> This not only indicates the level of anti-Semitism, particularly in Vienna as compared perhaps to Berlin or elsewhere, but also the desperation shown by parents in finding a means of escape for their children and thereby ignoring the key purpose of Youth Aliyah.

Typical of the requests from parents to the Youth Aliyah movement, just before the

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<sup>195</sup> Wiener Library, London: File 1372/132 – Fred Dunston: Papers Re. Youth Aliyah 1939-2002. Letter sent by Fritz Terkel to his parents in Vienna, dated 21 August 1939.

<sup>196</sup> Wiener Library London: File 1372/34 – Fred Dunston: Papers Re. Youth Aliyah 1939-2002. Letter sent by Erwin Seligman to *Marduke* Schattner, dated 23 August 1939..

<sup>197</sup> Wiener Library, London: File 1372/1/33 – Fred Dunston: Papers Re. Youth Aliyah 1939-2002. Letter sent by *Marduk* Shattner to the *Madrichim* at Great Engeham Farm, Kent, dated 22 August 1939.

start of the war was a letter written by Sigmund Bergmann concerning his fourteen year old daughter, Vita (the letter having been forwarded on from Berlin to London and then to Kent). In his letter of the 27<sup>th</sup> August 1939 and sent from Buczacz, eastern Poland, Bergmann describes his daughter as ‘very intelligent, well educated, healthy and good looking, but delicate and not suitable for hard work on the land’. He continues that he does not agree with his daughter being sent to Palestine and that it is too far away as he hopes to be reunited with his family, who are spread between Kent, Paris, Vienna and himself in Poland. He concludes his letter by saying, ‘Therefore I appeal to you, you good people. Do look after my child. Please send my child to a hostel to be educated, or to foster-parents. May God reward you for your good deeds’. In an accompanying letter from the London office to Great Engeham Farm, dated the 19<sup>th</sup> September 1939, a report on the girl is requested before sending back a reply.<sup>198</sup> Even those who had already arrived at the farm, some either did not know what was going on or who were resentful of the situation they found themselves in. In later years, Fred Dunston recalled,

Many children did not understand why they were there. They were certainly Not expecting to spend up to two years training for a life on a kibbutz. Not surprisingly, they were very unhappy and unsettled when they found out. It was a difficult task for us to calm them down. They said they had been sent by the *Kultusgemeinde*, Vienna and not by the Palestine office. They had been promised they would go to foster homes.....<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Wiener Library. London: File 1372/1/44 – Fred Dunston : Papers Re. Youth Aliyah 1939-2002. Letter sent by Sigmund Bergmann to Youth Aliyah, Berlin, 27 August 1939, with letter from A. Hofstaetter to *Chaverim*, Erich Lucas, 19 September 1939. File 1372/1/44. By the time of the second letter, the Soviet Red Army had already invaded eastern Poland. Nearly all of Buczacz’s Jews were either killed by local Ukrainians, the *Einsatzgruppen* or at Belzec Concentration Camp.

<sup>199</sup> B.Turner, *And The Policeman Smiled*, pp.172-173.



In effect, the Youth Aliyah movement came to serve the same purpose as that of the *Kindertransport*, a means of escape from persecution to a safe country. Similarly, due to the young age of the participants and the notional intention that their stay in Britain was only temporary, they were not seen as a racial, ethnic or religious threat to the host community. Nor were they an economic burden, as they were self-funded. The result was that they did not experience any anti-Semitic response from the different host communities. However, like their *Kindertransport* compatriots and co-religionist evacuees, that does not mean they were not exploited at times as a source of cheap labour.

When Great Engham Farm was closed down by the authorities due to its vulnerable geographical location in Kent, many of its occupants, along with *Kindertransport* teenagers and some of the youngsters rescued by the British diplomat in Prague, Nicholas Winton, were sent to north Devon. Two agricultural training centres were established in properties rented by the Jewish Refugee Committee, one being Bydown House, near Barnstaple, and the other, 62 South Street, Braunton.<sup>200</sup> They were a joint project run by three of the main Zionist pioneering movements; Youth Aliyah, *Hechaluz* and the British Council for the Young Pioneer Movement for Palestine (*Hachsharath Noar*)<sup>201</sup>. In the November of 1939, sixty five young teenagers and twenty six adults moved into Bydown House. Once again, an English rural community was exposed to a significant number of non-English speaking (at least at

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<sup>200</sup> The previously mentioned Fred Dunston was the leader of the Braunton Youth Aliyah Training Centre and it is his records that are deposited in the Wiener Library. File 1372/3/1-19. Bydown House was just one of dozens of training centres (*Hachsharot*) established around the countryside, that were used in conjunction with other Jewish organisations. These centres, like Bydown, were typically run down or derelict country houses, for instance, Lord Balfour's Whittinghame Farm, near Edinburgh, or on occasion, castles such as the Earl of Dundonald's Gwrych Castle, Abergele, north Wales.

<sup>201</sup> Within the control of the Youth Aliyah Movement and *Hechaluz*, were the smaller organisations of *Hashomer Hatzair*, *Habonim*, *Maccabi Hatzair* and *Blau-Weiss*.

first) German, Austrian and Czech Jews. Events in Europe, such as the persecution of the Jews, had a substantial impact on rural or remote communities in Britain. These were communities, which if they were exposed to an influx of people, it tended to be those whose incomes allowed them to stay as tourists by the coast and were most certainly British in nationality. In the case of north Devon, foreign Jews were to be just the start of an ‘invasion’ of evacuees and Armed Forces from Britain, the Commonwealth, troops from occupied Europe such as the Poles, plus later on, the Americans. Considering the nationality of the majority of the Jewish teenagers and staff, they received one of the warmest of welcomes from the host community. A key factor in this harmonious relationship was surely, as stated in an interview with the *North Devon Journal*, ‘It is our aim to make ourselves as nearly self-supporting as is practicable.’<sup>202</sup> The significance of this public statement to non-Jews was to reassure the latter that Jewish people in Britain just wanted a temporary place to stay, not be a Burden to anyone and forge an acceptance into the local community.

Through collections of money from the Anglo-Jewish community and the philanthropic activities of key individuals such as Rebecca Sieff and American singer/comedian Eddie Cantor (he raised £100,000 from a sixteen day British tour), many farms were either leased or bought on the behalf of those teenagers who wanted to learn about agriculture and then move onto Palestine.<sup>203</sup> Besides Great Engham in Kent, dozens were established around the country before and during the war, such as Thaxted in Essex or Llandough Castle, Cardiff. *Hachshara(h)* set up a training farm at Manor Farm, Tingrith, Bletchley, Buckinghamshire in 1928. Anglo-Jew, David Eder (1865-1936), a wealthy Zionist, Labour Party member and medical practitioner,

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<sup>202</sup> *North Devon Journal*, 14 December 1939.

<sup>203</sup> B. Turner, *And The Policeman Smiled*, p.77.

helped to establish a farm that eventually was named after himself in Ringelstone, Kent.<sup>204</sup> If some refugees regarded the hostels as lacking in comfort, then the Youth Aliyah farms were minimalist by comparison. Kathe Fischel, who was at the David Eder farm during the winter of 1939, recalled,

We were in barracks with no no floors, just earth stamped down. We washed in jugs and ewers and the water was always frozen. We crawled into each other's beds for warmth. The food was terrible – no-one knew how to cook.<sup>205</sup>

As a consequence of the persecution in Germany, Jewish teenagers were spread throughout Britain. Therefore, many non-Jews were able to meet for the first time, a totally alien group of people. From the perspective of the formally urban German or Austrian Jew staying at some of the more remote locations in Britain, far from home and with minimal contact with their parents, their situation must have seemed desperate and lonely. The conditions in which many of the teenagers found themselves in were harsh, even by the standards of the day. However, the Youth Aliyah scheme was another avenue in which refugee agencies could save the lives of Jews, who would go on to make a significant impact in establishing and defending the Jewish State of Israel. Overwhelmingly, British communities made the teenagers as welcome as possible and that warm relationship was reciprocated with their efforts to integrate with local families and the host areas they stayed in.

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The Youth Aliyah scheme was hard and physically demanding upon those that chose that route of escape and was therefore not for all young Jews coming to Britain. The

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<sup>204</sup> See J. Hobman (Ed.), *David Eder: Memoirs of a Modern Pioneer* (London, 1945).

<sup>205</sup> B. Turner, *And The Policeman Smiled*, p.164.

archive of one local Jewish Refugee Committee reveal the many facets involved in Britain's acceptance of Jews in their late teenage years or in their twenties, ie those not accepted for the *Kindertransport*, but who could begin work in apprenticeships.<sup>206</sup> In 1933, under the leadership of Otto Schiff, the Central British Fund had set up the Jewish Refugee Committee, which in turn, established a number of provincial committees.<sup>207</sup> Amongst the latter's many functions, the trainee or apprenticeship sections sought out positions in local or regional companies in which to place Jewish refugees, accompanied by a £100 bond per person. In February 1939, in an effort to reduce its costs, the Council for German Jewry authorised 1,500 fully guaranteed children to be brought to Britain on the understanding that those aged sixteen would become trade apprentices. The teenagers would then become the financial and administrative responsibility of the German Jewish Aid Committee's (formally the JRC) Training Department, until they either immigrated or reached the age of eighteen.<sup>208</sup> In the case of Leeds, a major centre for the manufacture of clothes, David Makovski was responsible for organising work apprenticeships for often desperate young Jews fleeing persecution that was escalating particularly after *Kristallnacht*. In contrast to the *Kinder*, where the British public overwhelmingly supported by the idea of rescuing children, the influx of teenagers and those in their twenties, elicited a mixed reaction in some cases.

David Makovski's correspondence shows that he built up a network of 128 businesses in the Leeds area, who were willing to take on Jewish refugee apprentices.

Apprenticeships came under the title of 'Category II. Trainee Posts – 16 to 35 years'

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<sup>206</sup> Wiener Library, London: File 599 – Jewish Refugee Committee, Leeds: Correspondence and papers, 1938-1939 (MF Doc 54/Reel 35-36).

<sup>207</sup> See A.J. Sherman and Pamela Shatzkes, 'Otto Schiff (1875-1952), Unsung Rescuer', in the *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* (2009), Vol.54, Issue 1, pp.243-271.

<sup>208</sup> A. Gottlieb, *Men of Vision*, p.120.

for those refugees who wished to enter and stay/work in Great Britain.<sup>209</sup> For this category, the regulations stated, ‘Training for one year for a definite trade, e.g. automobile engineering, cabinet-making etc., etc., followed by emigration’. In order to avoid the exploitation that might have taken place considering the vulnerable position these Jewish refugees found themselves in, ‘The trainee must be paid at least 30/- per week, or in the cases where board and lodging is provided, a minimum amount of 15/- per week.’<sup>210</sup> The fixing of a minimum wage was an issue that caused particular concern for the employers as it appears to have skewed the differential pay rates between the different jobs performed that was already in place with many local workers. *Alexandre Limited* (‘Makers of Fine Clothes’) wrote to Committee member Ellis Hurwitz in April 1939, complaining,

First of all since signing for this Applicant the question of wages has changed, and we did not know that these people would come under the Board of Trade rate. Secondly, we already have four in place and there is an objection amongst our workpeople to having any more in.

Apart from that, these people are not only a very great expense, but when you have men of this type and try to put them in a position, and you cannot make anything of them, instead of being a slight help they are just a hindrance.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Wiener Library, London: File 599 – Jewish Refugee Committee, Leeds. There were seven categories in total, each with their own particular requirements and restrictions; ‘I. Temporary stay in Great Britain with a view to future emigration’. ‘II. Trainee Posts – 16 to 35 years’. ‘III. Skilled Workers’. ‘IV. Business Propositions’. ‘V. Women (unmarried, widowed or divorced, with no dependent children)’. ‘VI. Children up to 18 years’. ‘VII. Permanent stay in England’. Details taken from ‘British Committee for Refugees from Czecho-Slovakia (5 Meeklenburgh Square, London WC1): Conditions for entering Great Britain’. The restrictions indicate that the British Government and Home Office were mindful that no refugees should be in any way a burden to the country’s finances or in competition as far as possible with British citizens seeking work.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid. The other area where it was considered that Jews could apply to go was in farming. It was in the latter area, with its notorious low rates of pay, that could see exploitation of young refugees. The farming conditions stated, ‘Three months keep and pocket-money – after that, standard rates of pay obtaining in the particular district’.

<sup>211</sup> Wiener Library, London: File 599 – Jewish Refugee Committee, Leeds. Letter from S.H. Lyons, Chairman and Managing Director, *Alexandre Limited*, Lyons Works, Templar Street, Leeds 2, to Ellis Hurwitz, Jewish Refugee Committee, 5 Bentscliffe Grove, Leeds 7, dated 18 April 1939.

One can understand, particularly at the end of the 1930s, the possible resentment felt by local workers at foreigners, no matter what their circumstances, being given both apprenticeships and being paid more than the going rate for the work being done. This is a point brought to Makovski's attention by George Whitehead, proprietor of a wholesale bookbinding and paper company, when referring to trainee, Josef Stern. In a letter from June 1939, he states,

The trade union wage for these boys and girls is 9/- per week with only a few coppers for insurance. I offered to pay 1/- more and then I find that I have to pay state insurance which is 3/8 per week, the whole of which I am paying. So he is costing 50% more than learners doing the same work. I have also paid him for all holidays and this week and also last week. He has unfortunately been away from work sick (3 and a half days in all) for which I can do no other than pay.<sup>212</sup>

One is also left with the possibility that some potential refugees had perhaps overstated their qualifications in order to gain an escape from the Third Reich and get a position in one of the factories. It would be wrong to judge these refugees by the standards of the present day, where there is a completely different context and set of values. The letter concludes by stating that,

While one feels that one wants to help and make a sacrifice, at the same time must be a limit, and under the circumstances therefore, at the moment, we cannot possibly increase the number. There should be no difficulty for either you or Mr. Makovfski to place this man elsewhere.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Wiener Library, London: File 599 – Jewish Refugee Committee, Leeds. Letter from George Whitehead, *George Whitehead*, 26 Dock Street, Leeds 10, to David Makovski, dated 22 June 1939.

<sup>213</sup> Wiener Library, London: File 599 – Jewish Refugee Committee, Leeds. Letter from *Alexandre Limited*, Lyons Works, Templar Street, Leeds 2, to Ellis Huwitz, 5 Bentcliffe Grove, Leeds 7, dated 18 April 1939.

Later that year, in June 1939, the German Jewish Aid Committee wrote to Mr. Makofski concerning the case of 'Heinz Baumgarter, son of Artur', at *Alexandre Limited.*, stating that the boy should not join the company as the firm will not pay 30/- per week.<sup>214</sup> However, local firms felt that they needed to pay the appropriate rate of pay for the area.

Correspondence from 1939 shows the lengths Jewish refugees would adopt in order to come to Britain, as well as in some cases, the measure of desperation. A Mr. Davidson from the German Jewish Aid Committee wrote to David Makovski in June 1939, stating that they had received a request from an apprentice called Lischner, working at the *kosher* food manufacturer, *Rakusins*, a large Jewish owned factory in Leeds. The request had sought the entry into Britain of Josef Spindler, at that time in an orphanage in Fuerth, which according to Mr. Davidson would not be a problem once the paperwork had been completed. It was at this point that there is the implication of pressure being applied. Davidson explained that,

We have had some sort of message to say that the people who are interested are friendly with the Press in Leeds. If these people think they are going to frighten us into altering our rules and conditions you can tell them they make a grave mistake.

This Committee works under laws laid down by His Majesty's Government and disposes of such money as is available to it from the Jewish community, and this we propose to continue to do.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Wiener Library, London: File 599 – Jewish Refugee Committee, Leeds. Letter from German Jewish Aid Committee to David Makofski (sic.), dated 19 June 1939.

<sup>215</sup> Wiener Library, London: File 599 – Jewish Refugee Committee, Leeds. Letter from German Jewish Aid Committee to David Makofski (sic), dated 27 June 1939.

No doubt the Jewish founder and chairman of *Rakusins*, Lazarus Lloyd Rakusin, as an influential businessman in the Leeds area knew and had many contacts in the media and elsewhere. This would suggest that pressure could be brought on refugee agencies to obtain a desired result. Given the date of June 1939, it would be difficult to argue against people using whatever means possible to escape the Third Reich.

The above case of Josef Spindler (1921-1982), along with his family, illustrate the variety of outcomes that were experienced by young Jews attempting to gain entry to Britain. The seventeen year old Josef managed to leave the orphanage in Fuerth, Germany, arrived in Britain on 30 July 1939 and went on to Leeds to live and work. Like many former Jewish refugees, he settled down in Leeds, married a local Catholic of Polish descent, Mary Grabouski (1924-2003), in 1951 and had two children, Margaret in 1953, and John in 1961<sup>216</sup>. Josef, also of Polish parentage and having no living close relatives left alive in Germany after the war, married outside of his faith. The post-war years in Britain saw a continuation of a process that had arguably begun in the 1920s, that of closer integration with non-Jews. Judaism, as an insular faith was in decline as Jews increasingly married non-Jews and therefore in the eyes of the Orthodox, Josef's children could not be seen as being Jewish. This inevitably contributed to the overall decline in the formally tight knit Anglo-Jewish communities in the traditionally poor working class districts.

Josef's father, Benno Spindler (1895-1932) and mother, Rosalie 'Rosa' Lauber (1893-1941) were similar to many Jews in Germany, having moved from their native Poland

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<sup>216</sup> Marriage and births respectively registered; Leeds Oct.-Dec. 1951 vol.no.2c p.715, Leeds Jan-March 1953 vol.no.2c p.328, Leeds July-Sept. 1961 vol.no.2c p.486. Mary Grabouski, born in Bramley, Yorkshire, was the daughter of Albert Lewis Grabouski and Winifred Nutter. In records, she appears to have often anglicised her name to Mary Lewis, which was common for many families with Jewish/foreign names. Josef is also variously known as Joseph or Jozef.



(he was born in Ustrzyki, she in Chrzanow and marrying in December 1919 in Eger, Hungary) to find a better life in another country. Although Benno Spindler died in February 1932, his widow and the rest of the family witnessed the increasing persecution by the Nazi regime and the splitting up, as with many Jewish families, of both themselves and the town's community. All three children, Anna (born 1920), Josef (born 1921) and Jakob (born 1928), entered the Fuerth orphanage after their father's death. Fortunately, both Josef and Jakob were able to gain entry to Britain, whilst Anna left in 1938 for Nurnberg and died in 1942, possibly in the Warsaw Ghetto. Their peers in the Fuerth orphanage were deported in March 1942 to the Izbica Ghetto, Poland, which in itself was a transfer point to Belzec and Sobibor Extermination Camps.<sup>217</sup> Josef's mother, Rosalie, committed suicide in November 1941 in Fuerth, two days before she was due to be deported to the Riga Ghetto, Latvia.<sup>218</sup>

One can see that in the case of Leeds and on a wider scale, the country, was trying to take in as many Jewish refugees as was 'practical' in the late 1930s and, unlike the rest of the population, guarantee them a minimum wage. 'Practicality' must not be confused with resistance to help Jewish refugees or indeed, the accusation of anti-Semitism, restrictions on entry to the country and more could have been done for those fleeing persecution. 'Practicality' should be seen in the understanding of the late 1930s context of northern unemployment and social reality of people's living/working

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<sup>217</sup> See [www.rijo.homepage.t-online.de/pdf](http://www.rijo.homepage.t-online.de/pdf) for a concise history of Fuerth's Jewish community during the Nazi years.

<sup>218</sup> In correspondence with the author, much of the information has been supplied by Howard Beck, a relative of Josef Spindler's wife, Mary Grabouski. Gisela Blume, an historian of the Jewish community in Fuerth, Bavaria, has also provided information to the author, either in correspondence or through the website, [www.juedische-fuerther.de/](http://www.juedische-fuerther.de/). It should be noted that the Shoah database for Yad Vashem contains details for the Spindler family which do not correlate with other information supplied eg. Rosalie Spindler dying in 1942 as opposed to 1941, although the day and month are exactly the same, along with Jakob Spindler dying in 1942 or 1943, despite contrary statements stating his survival to reach Britain.

conditions. Inevitably there were problems when the demand for apprenticeships outstripped supply, the clash or highlighting of cultural differences and expectations of many Jews once they had been found work. David Makovski found himself caught in the middle of appeals for help from various Jewish agencies, a time of difficult union/company management relations and being subjected to receiving letters from Jews on the continent who were increasingly desperate to escape worsening persecution.

The problems that David Makovski experienced might be gauged from a number of the letters that both he and the Committee received from employers they relied upon to accept Jewish refugees. *Montague Burton Limited*, one of the largest clothing manufacturers in the area, with 18,000 employees at its Leeds factory, wrote to Makovski, stating, ‘.....and regret I am unable to do anything for the party you sent up, as I daren’t put on any more Trainees in our factory, for reasons of which you are well aware.’<sup>219</sup> This letter from April 1939, suggests that a saturation point had been reached in terms of the number of Jewish refugees they were able to accept, perhaps due to union agreements or friction in the workplace. This was also not a situation that had suddenly developed.

The idea that the situation was becoming serious by April 1939 is further supported by David Makovski writing to Miss. Samuel of the Jewish Refugee Committee in London. In a report on several of the trainees that had been sent to him from London, he concluded by stating that, ‘Some of the employers are not taking the boys now, and I have some difficulty in replacing them, and as I wrote to Mr. Joseph yesterday, do

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<sup>219</sup> Wiener Library, London: File 599 – Jewish Refugee Committee, Leeds. Letter from *Montague Burton Limited*, Hudson Road Mills, Leeds 9, to David Makovski (sic.), Excelsior Buildings, Lands Lane, Leeds, dated 24 April 1939.

not send any Trainee forms into the Home Office until you get the o.k. from me, in case I have to change their employers'<sup>220</sup>. The records do not indicate the rate at which Jewish refugees were arriving in Leeds, though the inference from the letter is that a tipping point had been reached. Elsewhere in the letter one also gains an insight into some of the personal feelings of those involved in the 'rescuing' of Jews and bringing them to Britain. The contrast could not have been wider when in the same letter, Makovski described Werner Saalfeld in that, 'He is such a nice boy it seems to make you forget all the nasty things the other boys' do, when you get boys' of this description ever'. Opposed to this and as an addendum to the letter, Makovski aired a common feeling by some who worked with refugees. Referring to Viktor Springer, .....he is one of those people who is never satisfied. He is learning to be a Tailor, but, of course, this is not good enough for him. This is a modern factory, and he is working with five other German boys, and they have a teacher to teach them the work. In my opinion he would like to go to London to get another place, but if you take my advice, you will make him stay here, where he will learn something, and not take things so easy.<sup>221</sup>

He concludes with an uncompromising note of advice for Miss Samuel about the Jewish refugees, namely, 'When they are in Germany they write very pathetic letters saying what they will do if only we will get them out, but when they are here, they would like to earn ten pounds per week. I should not let complaints of this description worry you at all, as I am getting hardened to them myself.' It is perhaps inevitable that with so many letters being received, those responsible for the refugees became somewhat desensitised to the realities of Jewish existence in the Third Reich. Also,

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<sup>220</sup> Wiener Library, London: File 599 – Jewish Refugee Committee, Leeds. Letter from David Makovski to Miss. Samuel, Jewish Refugee Committee, Bloomsbury House, London, dated 15 April 1939.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

one must conclude that factory life did not suit every refugee, but was seen as a means to an end, where the priority was escape from the German authorities.

A significant number of letters sent to David Makovski and the Leeds Committee showed the desperation of the Jewish refugees to escape their ordeal at the hands of the Nazi authorities. One such letter was from the German Jewish Aid Committee in London to Makovski regarding Richard Paltenhofer, who was on his way to lodge (with Mr. G.W. Thompson, 9 Brunswick Terrace, Leeds 2) and start his apprenticeship in Leeds. Makovski received news of his arrival in London and was informed that, 'He has been in a concentration camp for eleven months, and as a result his legs are covered with bayonet stabs. He needs radiant heat treatment.....we would ask you if you could arrange for this boy to receive treatment at a Jewish Hospital.....our Committee will meet the required cost.'<sup>222</sup> The boy, Richard Paltenhofer, insisted on getting to Leeds as quickly as possible to start his apprenticeship and indicated that a friend would be able to pay the hospital bill, rather than it be charged to the German Jewish Aid Committee.

Often the letters came from third party agencies or on occasion, directly from the young refugees themselves. Typical of the former, was a letter in May 1939 from the Society of Friends' Germany Emergency Committee to Makovski, regarding the case of Leo Baucher, stating,

This man is at present in Buchenwald where he has been for the past eleven months.

He is an expert dressmaker and tailor with the most wonderful testimonials. He is

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<sup>222</sup> Wiener Library, London: File 599 – Jewish Refugee Committee, Leeds. Letter from A.R. Samuel, Trainee Dept., German Jewish Aid Committee, Bloomsbury House, London, to David Makovski (sic), dated 25 May 1939.

a Master Tailor, and has certificates to show to this effect.

I should be very glad to know whether your Committee feel that there is any likelihood of their being able to find any work for him. We understand that once an English visa is obtained, this man would be let out of the concentration camp within two days. This being so, you will appreciate how very anxious we are to obtain some offer of employment for him in this country.<sup>223</sup>

Even such a pressing case, with a high degree of skills involved, could not be guaranteed a placement in Leeds (presuming that the Quakers had already investigated the many tailoring opportunities available closer to home, in London).

Mr.Makovski replied,

As you know, under the new regulations, £100 must be deposited with our Committee before application can be made for a permit. Also, a position which will enable him to work must be sent on with the Trainee Form.

I am afraid I cannot help you in that respect just now, as I have so many people asking for the same thing, it is impossible to get situations, which is so much harder than receiving cheques.

If you will send me on your cheque, with this man's full particulars, etc., when a position is found, I may be able to do something for you.<sup>224</sup>

In many instances, the set criteria and procedure for the forms and permits to be completed appears either to be ignored or not known, thus creating further delays in the processing of the applications. As Leo Baucher was in Buchenwald Concentration Camp, with Europe gearing itself steadily towards the outbreak of war, three and a

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<sup>223</sup> Wiener Library, London: File 599 – Jewish Refugee Committee, Leeds. Letter from Eileen Trouton, Germany Emergency Committee, Bloomsbury House, London, to B. Makoski (sic.), Leeds Jewish Refugee Committee, 98 Chapeltown Road, Leeds 7, dated 8 May 1939 (Germany Emergency Committee ref. 14469 POW/S ET/FS).

<sup>224</sup> Wiener Library, London: File 599 – Jewish Refugee Committee, Leeds. Letter from D. Makofski (sic.), Leeds Jewish Refugee Committee, to Miss. E. Trouton, German (sic.) Emergency Committee, Bloomsbury House, London, dated 19 May 1939.

half months away, the delays incurred did not bode well for those needing to leave the Third Reich quickly. Makovski's reply also indicates the pressure both he is under and presumably the country as a whole to take in refugees (not just Jewish ones). Even if one had the money for the mandatory bond/guarantee, the reply points to the fact that there are few if any positions open to refugees by the start of summer 1939. Therefore, it would seem difficult or unrealistic to suggest that Britain could have done more to help those fleeing the Nazis. As for other countries besides Britain, their position had been made clear at the Evian Conference, ten months earlier.

Other letters from the refugee committee in Leeds show how Jews abroad used whatever connections they had with the Anglo-Jewish community, either in the form of influence or by way of introduction so as to obtain a workplace permit or facilitate some part of the application process. A George Hecht of Bradford wrote to David Makovski in May 1939 to follow up on a recent visit, where he had asked for consideration concerning a friend's wife's husband stuck in Moravia, along with a sixteen year old boy, Francis Peter Knopfelmacher, of Brunn (Brno), also in Moravia.<sup>225</sup> The boy had thoughtfully provided a resume of his school life and his abilities to show, as he believed, his suitability to come to Britain. Knopfelmacher concluded his account by stating,

I have been also attending the English institute in Brunn, the headmaster of which is Mr. L.C. Struthers. I am a healthy , strong boy, speak perfectly German, Czech, English and fluently enough French. In case of studies in England being impossible to me, I am willing to train for a handicraft as a trainee.

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<sup>225</sup> Wiener Library, London: File 599 – Jewish Refugee Committee, Leeds. Letter from George Hecht, 6 Oak Avenue, Bradford, Yorkshire, to David Makovski, dated 5 May 1939.

With many thanks for the successful performance of my request.....'<sup>226</sup>

Due to his age, Francis Knopfelmacher may have been better off getting George Hecht to approach one of the organisations involved with the *Kindertransport*.

The 'personal' connection was used by an eighteen year old Gunther Dukacz from Germany in July 1939, when writing directly to Mr. Labovitch, the Chairman of the Committee for the Care of German Jewish Refugee Children in Leeds. Dukacz states that as Mr. Labovitch has helped his sister, Lieselotte, reach the safety of Harrogate, then he also hopes to be brought to England, plus eventually his widowed mother. In common with many letters, Dukacz highlighted his personal ambitions and qualities, including a command of the English language in order to strengthen his case. He states that,

I am learning since February 1937 the profession of locksmith in Berlin, but it is my great wish, to come to England already now. If it is possible I should finish my course in that profession in England, but I am ready to work there in every other profession, for I am very strong and powerful.....I learn the English language since six years and I have English lessons every day.<sup>227</sup>

A further common feature, not unnaturally for the time and context, were the many difficult and emotional stories that each refugee carried with them and officials in

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid. The boy's resume is not addressed to anyone, nor dated, but is clearly connected to the George Hecht letter. Francis (Frank) Knopfelmacher (1923-1995) escaped Moravia in November 1939 and managed to get to Palestine to work on a Youth Aliyah kibbutz. In 1942, he joined the Communist Party and fought with a British Army Free Czech regiment in North Africa, France and Belgium. Studying at universities in Prague, Bristol and London, he settled in Australia in the mid 1950s. Working at Melbourne and Sydney universities, and disillusioned with communism, he rose to become one of Australia's foremost and controversial academics of the 1960s, 70s and 80s, involved in philosophy, psychology and the nature of totalitarian regimes. Most of his family from Brunn and Vienna were killed in the Holocaust.

<sup>227</sup> Wiener Library, London: File 599 – Jewish Refugee Committee, Leeds. Letter from Gunther Dukacz, Schwerin an der Warthe, Adolf – Hitler - Strasse 57, to Mr Labowicz (sic), Chairman of the the General Committee to the Committee for the Care of German Jewish Refugee Children, Darlay House, Leeds 1, dated 6 July 1939.

Britain had to take in, to accept or reject, according to the regulations. Towards the end of his letter, Dukacz finishes with,

I lost my father in 1932 who died on the successions of great wounds of war, and all my relatives are emigrated already, so that I am alone myself.

Therefore I beg you instantly to help me and to try all for my immigration to England.

By way of comparison, thirty seven year old Viennese Ludwig Winkler, was no different to the many that appealed, in that he used a number of similar technics when writing to David Makovski in July 1939, apart from the fact that he was located not in Germany, but in Belgium. His plight becomes obvious from the start of the letter and then he moves onto the urgency to get to England and the alternatives if he fails.

Winkler comments,

I am at present living in Brussels where I am however only allowed [sic] to stay temporarily [sic] and I shall have to leave Belgium within short .

I have been interned from November 14<sup>th</sup> 1938 till March 13<sup>th</sup> 1939 in the concentration camp of Oranienburg near Berlin, as I have been arrested on November 10<sup>th</sup> 1938, the day when a general arrest of the most Jews was ordered in Germany.

Liberation from the concentration camps occurred only when papers proving the emigration of the prisoner were shown. It was absolutely necessary to bring the emigration papers in order to free me from the concentration camp, and I was so happy as to be able to get a temporary permit for a sojourn in Belgium.

As said before my sojourn here is only still valid for a short while and after that I am meeting an uncertain future, where moreover I am faced with the danger of



being sent back to Germany.

In this terrible situation I take the liberty to pray for your help and assistance and I ask you to try to obtain a landing permit in England for me.<sup>228</sup>

As with Gunther Dukacz, Winkler stressed his qualities, when he closed with, . . . .I am ready to do whatever work, the more so as I have a great power of adaption, and besides I speak very correctly English.

Although many former middle class teenagers who were now working class apprentices must have felt that they were ‘a social inferior’, it was never intended to be similar to the loss of status deliberately inflicted upon them in Germany.<sup>229</sup> It was consequence of coming to a still largely class divided society and given the alternative, ‘better this than Germany.’<sup>230</sup>

Understandably, as can be seen by the many statements, there was an increasing desperation by continental Jews wanting to leave ‘Greater Germany’ as 1939 wore on. Their recognition of where Nazi persecution was leading was at first only fully understood by church/religious groups in Britain such as the Society of Friends who had been active since 1933, or by sections of the academic world for instance. It was only in the aftermath of *Kristallnacht* that the British Government started to comprehend the scale of the tragedy unfolding. Again, it would be easy to criticise the government for not doing enough or failing to foresee what was happening in Germany, particularly with the hindsight of seventy years as many historians have done. What is often overlooked by those historians is the question of what would be

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<sup>228</sup> Wiener Library, London: File 599 – Jewish Refugee Committee, Leeds. Letter from Ludwig Winkler, 34 Rue Berekmans, Brussels, Belgium, to David Mokofski (sic), Excelsior Buildings, Lands Lane, Leeds, dated 29 July 1939.

<sup>229</sup> D. Whiteman, *The Uprooted: A Hitler Legacy: Voices of those who Escaped before the ‘Final Solution’* (New York, 1993), p.224.

<sup>230</sup> K. Gershon (Ed.), *We Came as Children: A Collective Autobiography* (London, 1989), p.39.

the consequences of having unrestricted immigration into Britain and Palestine for the 750,000 Jews and those people ‘classified’ as being of Jewish origin or Christians married to Jews (this is besides all of the other religious, political or social enemies of the Nazi State)? Who then, according to those same historians, would have been to blame for the resultant violence in Britain and Palestine? Charities and religious groups could only do so much to help the situation, but a large number of foreign governments, who could have made a difference, missed that opportunity at the Evian Conference. As the late Australian historian and Zionist, Benzion Patkin, pointed out, ‘The many ‘good’ countries, so proud of their respect for human rights, had closed their doors to German-Jewish refugees.’<sup>231</sup>

Under pressure from refugee bodies such as the Council for German Jewry, the only solution that the British Government could take in early 1939 was to allow the ‘temporary’ residency of more Jews, before they would move onto another country. These ‘transmigrants’ still came with financial guarantees, but would be contained in Britain until their permits to enter other countries became valid. This meant that they did not have to wait in Germany and could be released from concentration camps if already held. In peacetime, this was a viable solution and was to be the genesis for one of the largest refugee camps to date, in Britain; Kitchener Camp, Richborough, Kent.<sup>232</sup> Formerly a First World War British Army camp, it was used to house up to 5,000 Jews (mostly men), aged between eighteen and forty, holding emigration visas and in danger if they stayed in the Third Reich. From February 1939 until its closure

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<sup>231</sup> B. Patkin, *The Dunera Internees* (Stanmore, NSW, 1979), p.11.

<sup>232</sup> See Wiener Library, London: File 644/1-9 – Kitchener Camp, Richborough, Kent: Records, 1939-1988, A. Grenville, ‘Saved by a Transit Visa’, *Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR)* journal, May 2009, pp.1-2, H. Keen, ‘A Sandwich Resident Remembers the Kitchener Camp’, *AJR* journal, January 2010, pp.4-5, C. Ungerson, ‘The Kitchener Camp: The Sandwich Response’, *AJR* journal, February 2010, p.5.

in the summer of 1940, it became a 'self-governing' Jewish settlement, providing language classes, a cinema, orchestra, jazz band, camp magazine and workers for nearby farms. As domestic servants, many of the men's wives worked in Sandwich in order to be close to their husbands. The camp even provided a float for the summer 1939 Ramsgate Carnival, with a message thanking England for their safety. Due to the poor state of the camp when the first Jews arrived, its infrastructure had to be virtually rebuilt by the inmates. Norman Bentwich, a leading figure at the time in helping Jewish refugees, commented,

It was unwittingly a useful preparation for the work before them that the men made concrete roads in the camps, laid pipes, constructed water towers, built huts and wash-houses, and installed electric light and a drainage system.....It was another feature that the policing was done by the inmates. The experience in the camp with its communal life was also a valuable transition for the army discipline to come.<sup>233</sup>

At the start of the war in September 1939, refugee men started to volunteer for service in the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps ( Nos.69 and 74 Companies), whose duties involved exactly what they had been doing in the camp.<sup>234</sup>

Kitchener Camp closed due to the declining numbers from the start of the war onwards as firstly many went to volunteer their services for the Armed Forces and the in the summer of 1940, large numbers were interned, with the threat of invasion imminent. It should be noted that opinions are divided as to the overall experience of the Kitchener Camp inmates. Having a shared experience, one might have expected the Jewish refugees to have developed a common and unified spirit. Unfortunately,

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<sup>233</sup> N. Bentwich, *They Found Refuge*, p.28.

<sup>234</sup> See Chapter Three for Jews in the British Armed Forces.

even in the position they found themselves in, with many having spent time in concentration camps, ‘the animosity between different groups and sects was strong and made the situation irritable and offensive.’<sup>235</sup> The religious divisions and quarrels between the various forms of Judaism that so often divided that community in peacetime, seem, in the words of Benzion Patkin, to have been mirrored at a time of unparalleled disaster for continental Jewry. For Norman Bentwich, his conclusion was that, ‘The place, brimming with good will, was a model for camps which in the grim years to come were to be habitations of millions of men and women deprived of a home.’<sup>236</sup> The more positive feeling by inmates to Kitchener camp life is also reflected in the studies by historian, Clare Ungerson, who from the perspective of the local non-Jewish neighbours comments that,

....life in the Kitchener camp was no bed of roses and there could be intense loneliness in a crowd. But my evidence from sandwich indicates that many ordinary people in Sandwich recognised the hardships endured there and understood something of the awful circumstances surrounding the arrival of so many refugees on the edge of town. There was no local upsurge in anti-Semitism – quite the reverse Indeed, the Kitchener camp seems to me to be really worthy of celebration.....<sup>237</sup>

If one might equate lives saved to the cost, it was calculated that for the eighteen months the camp existed, the cost of £100,000 raised by British and American Jewry, along with the Society of Friends, resulted in ‘5,000 men, and in many cases their families’, being saved.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> B. Patkin, *Dunera Internees*, p.13.

<sup>236</sup> N. Bentwich, *They Found Refuge*, p.29.

<sup>237</sup> C. Ungerson, ‘The Kitchener Camp: The Sandwich Response’, *Association of Jewish Refugees* journal, February 2010, p.5.

<sup>238</sup> N. Bentwich, *They Found Refuge*, p.103.

If as the journalist and later, civil servant, Bruce Lockhart, commented in 1938, 'Hate is always unreasonable, but it is rarely groundless, even if the grounds themselves are mean and despicable', were accurate, then the British public would have been greatly opposed to the large influx of Jews arriving if not actively demonstrating in the streets.<sup>239</sup> There were any number of people and political parties who could be described as anti-Semitic to varying degrees as attested to by the historian, Tony Kushner. Many of the Jewish refugees could not speak English, were Orthodox or had ways and manners at odds with British society and therefore did not fit into the 'assimilationist liberal contract' of accepting British society. Kushner's 'unwritten emancipation contract' presupposes that in return for full assimilation, Jews would be tolerated and protected from anti-Semitism. Jewish 'distinctiveness' would be removed. If there was still anti-Semitism, then in some way, it was the responsibility of the Jews themselves.<sup>240</sup> This study, like the historian Todd Endelman, criticises Kushner's theory and argues that anti-Semitism has little to do with Britain's liberal values, but more with ingrained cultural habits. From the study's point of view, particularly so in poorer, overcrowded urban areas, it was the latter where extreme anti-Semitism came from, whilst in more affluent middle class areas, prejudice was of the 'passive' variety. What is harder to define is the degree of anti-Semitism, which can often be illogical or contradictory and prevalent amongst professional, middle class people. Victor Gollancz remarked on hearing a wealthy Jew exclaim, 'I am not against Fascism. I am against the anti-Semitic side of Fascism.'<sup>241</sup> This complexity

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<sup>239</sup> R.H.B. Lockhart, *Guns or Butter: War Countries and Peace Countries of Europe Revisited* (London, 1938), p. 342. Prior to the war, Lockhart worked for the *Evening Standard*. He then went onto being the Undersecretary of State in the Foreign Office and Leader of the Political Warfare Executive.

<sup>240</sup> T. Kushner, 'Beyond the Pale? British Reactions to Nazi Anti-Semitism, 1933-39', *Immigrants and Minorities*, Vol.8 1/2 (1989), pp. 143, 145.

<sup>241</sup> University of Warwick, Gollancz Archive: File MSS 157/3/JE/2/28 – Victor Gollancz correspondence to Lord Bearstead, 4<sup>th</sup> April 1938.

can be seen for instance in 1945, by Harold Nicolson's self-description when he says, 'Although I loathe anti-Semitism I do dislike Jews' and by George Orwell's assertion that whilst anti-Semitism was never respectable, 'It was accepted more or less as a law of nature that a Jew was a figure of fun.'<sup>242</sup> The fact that so many Jews were 'welcomed' into Britain, without a massive negative reaction, tells us that the levels of anti-Semitism were less than perhaps judged to be so by both commentators at the time and by subsequent historians. Conversely, there is the argument put forward by Richard Griffiths, who noted, 'The Nazi measures in Germany shocked many people who were otherwise fairly anti-Semitic.'<sup>243</sup> This suggests that it was not specifically the treatment of the Jews in Germany that influenced people, but also the possible fate of Communists, Social Democrats, trade union officials, Freemasons, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc. and that the Jews were peripheral. Although one could claim to support Nazi policies throughout the 1930s, the real problem came when looking at 1939 and the abandonment of 'appeasement', with Britain increasingly looking as if she was about to go to war. British Nazi sympathisers found it ever more difficult to be seen as patriotic and yet side with Germany's actions.

### Conclusion:

One can see that it was a combination of the effects of *Kristallnacht*, a certain element of panic at the realisation as to how a Jewish future could unfold, coupled with a lack of appreciation from sections of the British public, that resulted in not all Jews being allowed into Britain. As to how many Jews were 'condemned' it is impossible to say.

Could Britain have done any more to help the Jewish refugees? Probably not, without

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<sup>242</sup> H. Nicolson (Ed.), *Diaries and Letters 1939-45* (London, 1967), p.469 (13<sup>th</sup> June 1945). G. Orwell, Anti-Semitism in Britain, *Contemporary Jewish Record* (April 1945), reprinted in S. Orwell, I. Angus (Eds.), *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, Volume 3: As I Please, 1943-1945* (London, 1970), pp. 378-388.

<sup>243</sup> R. Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers of the Right*, p. 65.

causing some major social and economic repercussions, with fascist groups gaining a measure of credibility. What one can say is that proportionally, to her size and circumstances, Britain did everything that was possible to help Jewish refugees. There was a willingness to help where one could and a realisation of Britain's moral responsibility. Victor Cazalet, Conservative MP for Chippenham and part of the British delegation to the Evian Conference, had publically stated in May 1938 that, 'Unless some action is taken soon, a proportion of the shame may legitimately be felt by those outside the boundaries of the Greater Reich.'<sup>244</sup> A major and ultimately fatal problem for continental Jewry and those attempting to help them was that much of the Western world was still suffering from the effects of 'The Great Depression', a facet of which was the proliferation of extremist political parties and the fragility of liberal democracy to assist in a humanitarian venture. However, it should be noted that it was estimated that the 11,000 refugees who had come to Britain up to 1938 had created 15,000 jobs for British workmen.<sup>245</sup> The Treforest Trading Estate near Pontypridd was notable for the number of refugee Jews for example, the Czech Jews, Dr. Roth and E. Lux, who established companies in an area of high unemployment, in this instance, *Metal Alloys (South Wales) Ltd.*<sup>246</sup> Could Britain have helped more Jews to settle in Palestine after Hitler took power? Again, one can say probably not. The violence of the Arab Revolt from 1936 to 1938 showed that a responsible government could not allow immigration to the Palestine Mandate to go unchecked. In September 1938, from a British perspective, peace was assured in Europe and although life could be

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<sup>244</sup> *The Times*, 6 May 1938.

<sup>245</sup> L. London, *Whitehall and the Jews*, p.104.

<sup>246</sup> Glamorgan Record Office, Cardiff: GB 0214 DX90 – Papers for *Metal Alloys (South Wales) Ltd.* A further example includes Viennese Jew, Paul Schoenmann, who set up the *General Paper and Box Manufacturing Co. Ltd.* at Treforest, notably producing cigarette papers. See also W. Bellany, 'Personal Encounters: The Jews of Merthyr Tydfil', [www.jewishgen.org/jcr-uk/community/merth/personal1.htm](http://www.jewishgen.org/jcr-uk/community/merth/personal1.htm) for a general account of Jews living in the Rhondda valley area, including Treforest.

dangerous for Jews and other enemies of the state, it would have seemed reckless to let the Zionists have their way and initiate unrestricted immigration to Palestine. A civil war in Palestine may easily have spread to neighbouring countries and territories to produce massacres of Jewish communities throughout the Middle East.

To Britain's credit, the country took in an unprecedented number of refugees in a very short space of time. 1938 was the critical year when it became clear that not just Britain, but the rest of the civilised and democratic world had to act to avoid a disaster for continental Jewry. Harold Macmillan later recalled the effects of *Kristallnacht* on the public, saying, 'The natural decency of the British people was deeply shocked.'<sup>247</sup> Anti-Semitism ran counter to British values. The fact that Britain could act at this point shows the extent to which organised fascism had declined and therefore there was less of a chance that social unrest could ensue. More might have been done to help the refugees if the various Jewish factions had united against a common threat of fascism. For Rabbi Schonfeld and Harry Goodman of the Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council (CRREEC), the latter's attack on the RCM in February 1939 concerning the primacy of Orthodoxy and its perceived crisis with Christian foster parents, certainly hindered efforts to rescue Jewish lives at the expense of faith. Similarly, although the RCM had a better relationship with the Youth Aliyah scheme, Zionism was the driving force for the latter and took precedent with its resultant consequences. David Ben-Gurion is quoted as saying,

If I knew that it would be possible to save all the children in Germany by bringing them over to England and only half of them by transporting them to Palestine, then I would choose the second alternative. Against the lives of

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<sup>247</sup> H. Macmillan, *Winds of Change, 1914-1939* (London, 1966), p.587.



these children we must weigh the history of the people of Israel.<sup>248</sup>

However, the same argument might also be applied to the Western nations at various points during the 1930s in combating either fascism or specifically Nazi Germany, such as dealing with the invasion of Abyssinia or at the Munich Agreement in September 1938. In both arguments, one can say that a more robust and combined effort was needed, but again that is with the benefit of hindsight. Too often in the past thirty years, historians have been scathing of both Anglo-Jewry and the British Government in not doing enough to help continental Jews, but that is because they already know what would happen to the latter during the war.

If one examines the reaction of the general public to hosting a large number of refugee Jews, one can say that the overwhelming majority of both groups had a very positive experience, certainly up to the fall of France and the invasion scare in the summer of 1940. Statistically given the numbers involved and the worsening circumstances of the persecution in 'Greater Germany', there were going to be those who came to Britain and would have a poor reception or endure terrible circumstances. Xenia Kirschner, a Latvian Jew who had lived in London since the early 1920s, commented that whilst working for the Agricultural Committee (a section of the Jewish Refugee Committee), 'We kept our refugees in absolute penury. That's the only word I can say. We were always trying to collect money, but it was absolute minimum standard.'<sup>249</sup> However, this should not detract from the majority of positive experiences and comments from both Jews and non-Jews. The money raised during the last year of peace by two of the largest non-Jewish refugee bodies, the Lord

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<sup>248</sup> B. Turner, *And The Policeman Smiled*, p.76.

<sup>249</sup> British Library, Sound Archive, The Living Memory of the Jewish Community: Interview with Xenia Kahan (nee Kirschner), February/March 1990, Catalogue Number C0410/075.

Mayor of London's Czech Refugee Fund and the Lord Baldwin Fund, produced a sum of over £1million from the public.<sup>250</sup> The British people showed the extent to which those such as Oswald Mosley, Captain Archibald Ramsay and the Right Club, had become marginalised in the country. If one was fortunate, a refugee might end up in one of the homes/hostels given over by the Rothschild family, Lord Sainsbury, Harry and Julius Salmon (of *J. Lyons* fame) or Harry Jacobs (Chairman of *Times Furnishing*), who accommodated ten young children in a wing of his Surrey home and were looked after by a cook, nurse and maid.<sup>251</sup> Non -Jewish benefactors were also in evidence, with Harold Macmillan taking in forty mostly Jewish refugees to stay at his Sussex residence.<sup>252</sup> They might even have been educated at schools such as St. Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey and Winchester College. No doubt many refugees who came to Britain to work in agriculture had a very hard and difficult time, but by their sacrifice and by Xenia Kahan's reasoning, there would be more money available to save greater numbers of vulnerable Jews. A limited amount of money to act as a 'guarantee' produced hard consequences, but ultimately saved lives.

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<sup>250</sup> According to *The Times* (14 July 1939), the Lord Mayor of London's Czech Refugee Fund had raised £528,510 between September 1938 and July 1939. The Lord Baldwin Fund received £522,651 between December 1938 and September 1939, also reported in *The Times*, 28 September 1939.

<sup>251</sup> B. Turner, *And The Policeman Smiled*, pp.162-163, B. Leverton, L. Lowensohn (Eds.), *I Came Alone*, pp.168,174, and V. Fast, *Children's Exodus*, p.48.

<sup>252</sup> H. Macmillan, *Winds of Change*, p.587.

**CHAPTER TWO: THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND**  
**THE PERCEPTION OF JEWS BY THE BRITISH**  
**PUBLIC, 1939-1945.**

During the war and for the following thirty years, the government and succeeding historians maintained that there was a harmonious relationship in wartime civilian life, although unofficially, people such as George Orwell commented on the rise in anti-Semitism in Britain. Since the 1970s, as noted in the introduction, historians have highlighted the high degree of anti-Semitism in Britain during the war, thereby countering the ‘Spirit of the Blitz’ image propagated since 1945. The chapter shows that whilst acknowledging anti-Semitism did exist, it was very much limited in scale and geographical spread during the war.

The Jewish community was not significantly worse or better off compared with other wartime minority communities living in similar areas, such as the Irish, Afro-Caribbeans, Indians, Chinese, Lascars etc., particularly in terms of the impact of wartime bombing. Given their demographics and location, they all lived in areas that were targets for German bombing. After the Irish, Jews were the second largest minority. Their prominence came from the fact that they were not Christian, came to be associated with left wing politics and became a major focus of European persecution. However, the reality of suffering was accentuated by those who traditionally disliked Jews or those guided by the Board of Jewish Deputies, who listened to anti-Jewish rumours and worried about the consequences.

In terms of how the war impacted upon the Jewish community in Britain, the most useful areas to look at are those where they share common experiences with the rest of the population. This will enable a more accurate comparison to be made. Virtually everyone had some connection with the evacuation of vulnerable adults and young children, either as a participant, parent or those designated to receive evacuees. Everyone was affected by the rationing system's increasingly restrictive measures. Even without the 'help' of the newspapers, much was also made of the rise in crime, especially as the war progressed. This in many ways affected nearly everyone directly, through shortages or with rising prices. Lastly, the vast majority of the population lived with the threat or actuality of German bombing and its consequences. All of these issues lent themselves to anti-Semitic rumour and accusation, which are the focus of this chapter. The contention of the thesis is that anti-Jewish feeling was limited in extent, part of a wider xenophobia and the irrationality of wartime conditions, and that Jews were no different than their non-Jewish neighbours. It does not seek to investigate the often fractious relationship between the Jewish governing bodies, or to examine the British government's dealings with those groups. Instead, the chapter concentrates on the common popular experiences of ordinary Jewish communities in Britain.

'Anti-Semitism' came in three forms, one form being against the Jews as a whole, seeing them as one amorphous mass. This was perhaps more traditional in nature, with Sephardi, Ashkenazi, assimilated, unassimilated, orthodox and Zionist, being perceived as a single body of people. Those that followed this line of thought could vary from the 'passive' negativity towards Jews to those people who believed in a 'world Jewish Bolshevik conspiracy' and the 'truth' of the *Protocols of the Elders of*

*Zion*. The second form can relate closely to that of ‘passive’ negativity, whose exponents were likely to be generally xenophobic towards any ‘foreigner’. For some, all Jews were seen as ‘foreigners’, but for others the latter term could be restricted to those Jews who had only recently arrived in Britain after 1933 from central and eastern Europe. British Jewry itself was also concerned by the ‘foreignness’ of newly arrived Jews, who frequently had different values, spoke a different language and allegedly lacked the British quality of ‘reserve’. For assimilated British Jews, the most important quality to possess was that of blending into the host community and not standing out. It was this very point of not causing trouble or not being noticed that divided Jewish society and opinion during the war.

The third form of anti-Semitism was a peculiar dichotomy of ideas, where racism was variable in its focus and attention. A Mass Observation diarist, Mrs. Edith Dawson of Springwell, near Gateshead, recorded the family’s activities and thoughts at the start of the war.<sup>253</sup> Her entry for 6 January 1940 shows her ambivalence to a noted Jewish Liberal politician of the day, Leslie Hore-Belisha, the Minister for War until 5 January 1940, when replaced by the Conservative, Oliver Stanley. The record states,

Hore-Belisha? Jew? Never mind what race if get things done ----- Tom says  
Stanley has been a failure up to now ----- Conservatism!

She continues two days later, 8 January,

Papers speak plainly on H.B.’s side. Only Tc Evening Chron. Speaks for govt.

By the 9 January, Mrs. Dawson has shifted from her ambivalent position, due it seems to German propaganda.

Haw-Haw speaks much truth re. Jews! Jolly clever are the Germans.

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<sup>253</sup> Mass Observation Archive, University of Sussex: Diarist 5296 – Mrs. Edith Dawson, Lindley House, Springwell, Gateshead 9. ‘Tom’ was her husband, a clerk. Tc stands for Tyneside.

Haw-Haw must be good propaganda for socialism here. I like the man.

The entry for the day ends with her comparing ‘Lord Haw-Haw’ with another broadcaster from Germany (preferring the former), suggesting that she was a frequent listener to German radio and had been influenced by it. Germany was also in alliance with the Soviet Union at this point, which has relevance to later entries. On the 16 January, she had turned against Hore-Belisha, for under the section ‘Parliament’, she notes, ‘leaves me sure H. Belisha has been sat on peace for wars sake only.’ From other entries, we get the impression that she was a supporter of the Soviet Union in its fight against Finland at this juncture of the war. By the summer of 1940, her ideological position has become clearer, stating for 1 July,

Easy to see how Tories have the wind up in fear of Socialism and fear capitalism will lose its hold here and in France etc. Capitalism caused the war indirectly, Jewish grabs [possibly the author meant to write ‘grabbers’] are capitalists always even the ‘poor’ ones.

At the end of 1940, amidst the commentaries on the bombing of the north-east, one can see the lack of logic with their more explicit attitudes towards Jews. The lengthy entry for 11 December contains the following comments, often in the form of a running conversation, from Mrs. Dawson and one of several family members, including her brother, Jack. The author asked, ‘What of the Jews Jack?’, to which he replied,

I detest the whole lot of them. Hitler had to get rid of them.

He then went on to explain that there were not different types of Jews, but ‘only Jews’. He concludes this section for the day by exclaiming, ‘I believe that Jews only care for Jews and try to get each country’s cash and power into Jewish paws.’

Although these ideas were often expressed in anti-Semitic circles and some examples

of wealthy and powerful Jews could be named, the logic behind it was often difficult to understand. Later on, that same afternoon, Jack stated,

The joke is, the simples stand up for the Jews until I say “Now personally do you like Jews.” Usually they reply no I hate the whole boiler.

This was chased up by the author, saying,

Well that’s my experience. I’ve never met to and like them. Even Tom started by standing up for the well to do and science, and musical and ? Jews, till he began to think.

Issues of race and anti-Semitism, with no logical thought to them, clearly influenced this family, who appear to be Socialist/Communist from different diary entries.

However, it illustrates how quickly a family could be influenced and move their political views as the war progressed.

The division within British Jewry as to how to respond to Fascism and anti-Semitic activity, both at home and abroad, was a feature before the war had started and continued to dominate until 1948. Prior to this date, many Jews asked the question that if anti-Semitism was stirred up in Britain to the proportions seen in some countries on the continent, where could they escape to as a last resort? The Board of Jewish Deputies and other essentially conservative and assimilated supporters did not want to upset the British public and government by seeming to acknowledge there were more than minor instances of anti-Semitic activity. Nor did they seek any specific measures, particularly legal, to either protect British Jewry or crack down on those that spread anti-Jewish propaganda, as this would have singled themselves out as a special case. Although with the benefit of hindsight, it is easy for some historians to criticise the lack of commitment or determination by the Board of Jewish Deputies

in their efforts to help fellow Jews in Europe during the war, it is likewise easy to defend their position in being unable significantly to alter strategic Allied military policy in Europe. Shifting substantial military resources and altering long term strategic plans to save Europe's Jews was both beyond the powers of the Board of British Deputies and ultimately would not have defeated Nazi Germany. As William Rubinstein has argued, only the defeat of Nazi Germany would save Europe's Jews:

Those excuses which are sometimes offered for the lack of a rescue policy – ignorance of genocide, Jewish community powerlessness, anti-semitism and anti-Zionism in the democracies, and so on – were, even if true, essentially irrelevant to the basic fact that rescue was impossible.<sup>254</sup>

Where one may legitimately criticise the conservative Board of Jewish Deputies is in a lack of forcefulness combating British Fascism and anti-Semitic activities on the streets. They gradually lost their control over Anglo-Jewry as it was felt there had been a 'failure of communal leaders to wage a real fight against Mosleyites' activities'.<sup>255</sup> That position, as defender of British Jewry, was more adequately filled by either local Jewish groups or Jews in local 'grass roots' organisations that were not specifically Jewish, such as the Communist Party (CPGB). Even here though, there were differences of opinion as illustrated by the Stepney branch of the CPGB. Local activist Joe Jacobs favoured a direct approach to tackling the BUF and other right-wing parties, namely that the CPGB should 'drive Mosley out of East London' using 'the maximum force available'.<sup>256</sup> Others, under the leadership of Phil Piratin, such as Ruby Silkoff, 'Ginger' Greenblatt, Morrie and 'Chick' Segal, and Alf Finkelstein,

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<sup>254</sup> W. Rubinstein, *The Myth of Rescue*, p.216.

<sup>255</sup> L. Samuels, 'The Jewish Labour Movement', *Jewish Quarterly* 3 (winter 1956), p.35.

<sup>256</sup> J. Jacobs, *Out of the Ghetto: My Youth in the East End. Communism and Fascism, 1913-1939* (London, 1978), p.205.



believed that instead of using violence against ordinary people, the latter should be won over using propaganda and reasoned argument. The voice of moderation prevailed until after the war, but with the understanding that it was poverty that fascism exploited and it was this that needed to be dealt with.<sup>257</sup> Politicised, secular Jews, living in Piratin's neighbourhood of Stepney, often combined their key objectives, in dealing with unscrupulous landlords (some of whom were Jewish) and tackling fascism. The arrival of the war did not change this set of objectives, but added new ones, again to do with exploitation, such as price controls, rationing and a worsening housing shortage due to the bombing.

The start of the war in September 1939 brought the Jewish community in Britain sharply into the focus of both the public and the government, in particular, those Jews of German and Austrian extraction who had only recently arrived in Britain.<sup>258</sup> Society's spotlight did not just emanate from Britain's Gentiles. The Jews who had lived in Britain for many generations or who had fully integrated into British society also looked more closely at members of their faith who had just arrived in Britain, such as the many radicals, Zionists and ultra-orthodox from eastern Europe. Whilst the Jews who had recently come to Britain might have been looked at nervously by some of their established co-religionists, just as likely, provincial non-Jews could be accepting or be just curious about people they had never met before. This was the case

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<sup>257</sup> H. Srebrnik, *London Jews and British Communism 1935-1945* (Ilford, 1995), p.55.

<sup>258</sup> Although large numbers of visas were issued by the British authorities between *Kristallnacht* November 1939 and the end of August 1939 allowing refugees to enter the country, only a minority were actually used. This points to the fact that government officials were, by the last few months of peace in Europe, broadly sympathetic to the plight of mainly Jewish refugees. It also indicates that whilst certainly many Jews were unable to extricate themselves from their home countries, there were many who were reluctant to leave their native countries unless absolutely necessary and had the visa as 'a last option'. An example of this is that from January to June 1939, whilst almost 13,000 visas had been issued, only 5,500 refugees had arrived in Britain. Whilst the statistics didn't allay peoples' fears, nor anti-Semitic propaganda, it should be noted that only half of pre-war refugees registered with Jewish aid agencies and therefore cause large discrepancies with statistical analysis. Pamela Shatzkes in *Holocaust and Survival*, pp.79-82, gives a detailed analysis for these variations in the statistics.

in Exeter with the arrival of German and Austrian refugees before and during the war.

For example, Mrs. Thomas of Maryfield, Pennsylvania, Exeter, wrote,

Trude Ehrenberg, a Jewish refugee from Hitler's Austria, came to live with us and to help me as one of the family. Short, stout, spectacled and nearly always cheerful, how welcome this homely Austrian girl! We tried to help her build her new life by giving her a pleasant room where she could entertain her fellow exiles and her English was so fluent that it was easy to feel her as one of us.<sup>259</sup>

The closeness expressed, especially in the last few words, is an example of how non-Jews, at least outside the large cities, could both welcome and encourage Jews facing persecution from a country Britain was at war with. The host family's acceptance of the girl could also have been down to a sharing of common class values due to the fact that many of the Austrians were from middle class intellectual families and Trude Ehrenberg was going to an affluent suburb of Exeter. Others in the city, when commenting on how many of the German and Austrian Jews were intellectuals commented, 'I think they were accepted by the population.....My mother went to Music Appreciation Lectures and was very fond of her teacher who was Austrian.'<sup>260</sup> From the national media and public lectures such as the one at St. Stephen's Church in February 1940, where it was reported that Jews 'were being slaughtered wholesale for no other reason other than that they happened to be Jews', one may get the impression that the city of Exeter was welcoming to Jews and others such as the Poles, Czechs and Americans when they arrived during the war. However, the situation was more ambiguous, as shown by the city records for October 1943. In

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<sup>259</sup> D. Thomas, *Fragments That Remain* (Hitchin, 1998), p.77.

<sup>260</sup> T. Gray, *Exeter Remembers the War: Life on the Home Front* (Exeter, 2005), p.135.

accommodating American troops in Exeter, it was stated by the city authorities that no ‘coloured’ soldiers were to be billeted there.<sup>261</sup>

Consciously or sub-consciously, the pre-war prejudices of some elements in British society evolved in many instances alongside the emerging conditions of a country at war. What would be a ‘Total War’, created if not heightened pre-existing stereotypical images and attributes associated with being Jewish. At its worst, British society’s xenophobia was expressed in the forcible detention in camps of German and Austrian refugees, many of whom were Jewish.

The story of the internment of enemy nationals, which included a large number of German/Austrian Jews, is well known and served by numerous testimonies, publications and documentaries as shown by an extensive bibliography. Typical of the accounts that convey the mixture of indignation and surprise felt by someone interned was given by a teenage girl, saying,

I was interned as an enemy alien in 1940, a thing which was a great shock to me as, naturally, there was nothing ‘enemy’ about my feelings for this country, and it was a pretty awful moment when I, a girl of 17, was fetched by two policemen and shipped to an ‘unknown’ destination.<sup>262</sup>

According to refugee records, one thousand *Kinder* were interned (mostly on the Isle of Man), whilst two hundred and one were ‘shipped’ to Australia and Canada.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> T. Gray, *Exeter in the 1940s* (Exeter, 2004), p.93.

<sup>262</sup> K. Gershon, *We Came as Children*, p.91.

<sup>263</sup> Wiener Library, London: MF DOC 27/28/153 - Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief, 1933-1960; Refugee Children’s Movement, Annual Reports 1938-1942.

For the reason of familiarity with much of the internment issue, the thesis does not look in detail at what is still a highly charged event in Britain's relationship with the Jewish community. The material written at the time, for example Francois Lafitte's *The Internment of Aliens* and Yvonne Kapp and Margaret Mynatt's *British Policy and the Refugees 1933-1941*, demonstrates the strongly held feelings that Home Office actions were simply wrong, if only from a humanitarian or moral point of view.<sup>264</sup>

From the late 1970s onwards, with the gradual release of government records including those from the Cabinet and Home Offices, Joint Intelligence Committee and eventually, the Security Services, historians have been able to put Churchill's remark of 'Collar the Lot' into its proper perspective and context. Thus, we have had a number of emotive titles ranging from Peter and Leni Gillman's *Collar the Lot: How Britain Interned and Expelled its Wartime Refugees*, Ronald Stent's *A Bespattered Page? The Internment of His Majesty's 'Most Loyal Enemy Aliens'*, through to David Cesarani and Tony Kushner's *The Internment of Aliens in Twentieth Century Britain* and Brian Simpson's *In the Highest Degree Odious: Detention Without Trial in Wartime Britain*.<sup>265</sup> More recently and again with the benefit of recently released documents from Kew's National Archive, we have Connery Chappell's *Island of Barbed Wire: The Remarkable Story of World War Two Internment on the Isle of Man* and Richard Dove's *Totally Un-English? Britain's Internment of Enemy Aliens in Two World Wars*.<sup>266</sup> These historians have been highly critical of the British

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<sup>264</sup> F. Lafitte, *The Internment of Aliens* (London, 1940). Y. Kapp and M. Mynatt, *British Policy and the Refugees 1933-1941* (London, 1997), published nearly sixty years after it was originally written.

<sup>265</sup> P. and L. Gillman, *Collar the Lot: How Britain Interned and Expelled its Wartime Refugees* (London, 1980), R. Stent, *A Bespattered Page? The Internment of His Majesty's 'Most Loyal Enemy Aliens'* (London, 1980), B. Simpson, *In the Highest Degree Odious: Detention Without Trial in Wartime Britain* (OUP, 1992) and D. Cesarani and T. Kushner, *The Internment of Aliens in Twentieth Century Britain* (London, 1993).

<sup>266</sup> C. Chappell, *Island of Barbed Wire: The Remarkable Story of World War Two Internment on the Isle of Man* (London, 2005), R. Dove (Ed.), *Totally Un-English? Britain's Internment of Enemy Aliens in Two World Wars*, Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies, Vol.7 (2007), pp.11-28, 101-204.

Government's handling of the pre-war refugee crisis and more specifically how it reacted to Jewish refugees of German/Austrian origin (in addition to those long term German and Italian residents also interned) during the early part of the war. By association, this criticism has also extended to the Dominions such as Australia, where Britain sent some of the Jewish refugees and which resulted in the infamous 'Dunera Scandal' involving the mistreatment of passenger internees in 1940.<sup>267</sup>

In the haste to condemn in particular Churchill's Government, historians, writers and others have offered little in the way of an alternative course of action. As with Franklin Roosevelt's internment of Japanese Americans, it is possible to argue that democratic governments made mistakes to the point of carrying out illogical and crass decisions. However, this overlooks the urgency and peril Britain faced in 1940/41, with the genuine (if at times fanciful) belief by the population in a 'fifth column', along with a desire by the majority of people for the government to be seen to be safeguarding the nation. The government could not afford to take a logical, measured and humanitarian response in 1940. Far from being anti-Semitic or anti-Jewish, the government and its departments saw their actions as being anti-German and anti-Italian – a decision based on nationality rather than religion. The immediate need for the internment of a 'potential' internal threat with all its inherent problems, was reversed and corrected over a relatively short period of time and resulted in the release of genuine refugees.

Although the patriotic jingoism of 1899 and 1914 was absent in 1939, British society still believed in the virtues and power of being British, a belief in democracy (or a

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<sup>267</sup> See K. Kwiet, 'Be Patient and Reasonable!' The Internment of German-Jewish Refugees in Australia, *Australian Journal of Politics and History* Vol.31, Issue 1 (April 1985), pp.61-77. P. Bartrop, *The Dunera Affair* (Melbourne, 1990).

version thereof), commanding a powerful empire and fighting for ‘King and Country’. The popular view and one supported by the government was that British virtues such as fairness, resoluteness in the face of the enemy and ‘doing one’s bit for the war effort’, which later on in 1940 transpired into ‘the spirit of the Blitz’, were self-evident by the very fact that one was British. ‘Foreigners’ on the other hand, were felt to be lacking in these attributes to varying degrees, certainly in the Britain of 1939 and much of 1940.<sup>268</sup> For many British, the word ‘foreigner’ implied those who had recently arrived from Europe, those that came from a non-Christian background and obviously those of German and Austrian origin. This clear division of people was then distorted by government propaganda, general rumour and the stirrings of British fascist/nationalist right wing groups (prior to the latter’s detention in 1940) concerning ‘Fifth Columnists’ and the ‘enemy within’, undermining the war effort.

During the ‘Phoney War’ (September 1939-May 1940), the government worked hard to overcome society’s differences and divisions which had been so prominent during the Depression of the 1930s. Their degree of success at a time when there was a lack of bombing and therefore pulling together of the nation, was limited as testified by the findings of Mass Observation. The two government posters that exposed the general feeling of society’s socio-economic differences and therefore drew much public scorn were,

Freedom is in Peril

Defend it with all your Might

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<sup>268</sup> The ‘Phoney War’ period and its resultant problems including public boredom and the propaganda of a still active fascist right wing coincided with a linking of being ‘foreign’ and the stereotypes associated with anti-Semitism. The linking of concepts such as ‘alien’ and anti-Semitism can be found in David Cesarani, ‘An Alien Concept? The Continuity of Anti-Alienism in British Society before 1940’, in David Cesarani and Tony Kushner (Eds.), *The Internment of Aliens in Twentieth Century Britain* (London, 1993), pp.25-52, and also in Paul Ward, *Britishness since 1870* (Abingdon, 2004), pp.113-141.

and secondly,

Your Courage

Your Cheerfulness

Your Resolution

Will Bring

Us Victory

As the CPGB and the left wing of the Labour Party could make great capital out of the Conservative Party's use of 'Your' and 'Us', so did the extreme right wing. The latter changed the word 'Us' to the word 'Jew'.<sup>269</sup>

Whether they were British, German or Austrian born, Jews were frequently the target of public rumour and perception as being either lacking in support for a united war effort, looking after their own interests, lacking courage or, despite being Jewish, actually working for the enemy. Particularly after the surrender of France in the summer of 1940, Jews were seen by some as being suspects for 'fifth column' activity. According to the *Birkenhead Advertiser*, a Czech Jew was fined £4 and his maps confiscated after he was arrested for being in possession of guides for London, Chester and Europe.<sup>270</sup> This 'irrationality' as Paul Ward describes it, is used as an example to suggest that the war failed to promote tolerance even though Britain fought against German intolerance.<sup>271</sup> When observing the anti-Italian riots in Soho in June 1940, a middle aged working class woman declared:

After they've cleared out the Italians, they'll clear out the Jews...You'll

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<sup>269</sup> C. Madge, T. Harrison, *War Begins at Home* (London, 1940), pp. 80-97.

<sup>270</sup> *Birkenhead Advertiser* 27 June 1940.

<sup>271</sup> P. Ward, *Britishness since 1870*, p.122. However, it should be noted that in the Birkenhead area, the Mersey docks, Cammell Laird shipyard and Port Sunlight soap factory were all subsequently bombed.

see – and a good job too. I ask you why these foreigners be here, why should they be employed, and so many English out of work. It isn't right, is it?..... we're going to win this war, after that it's going to be England for the English.<sup>272</sup>

One key impact of the war upon the Jewish community in Britain was the way it divided Jews over their response to the large number of Jewish refugees who had either recently arrived just before the war started or those that came here as western Europe was conquered by Germany in 1940. Many of these refugees were originally German and Austrian subjects and thus from an enemy nation. There was a divide between those Jews who were fully assimilated and those who were foreign even to the former, let alone the rest of the population. The great fear of those Jews who had successfully integrated into the different local communities was that these latest Jewish arrivals, given their substantial numbers, would provoke a wave of anti-Semitic activity in Britain. Their fears were also shared by both the Chamberlain and Churchill Governments, because they were unable to pass on these refugees to other countries, or to Palestine, under the strict terms of the 1939 White Paper and the restrictions of war. There was also a less than enthusiastic response from Anglo-Jewry in the early part of the war to large numbers of continental Jews residing in Britain, if only as a temporary measure. Indeed, it represented just one of the many fissures in the Anglo-Jewish community of the late 1930s and 1940s. Britain's Jews, whether 'anglicised' or not, resident or refugee, secular, reform or orthodox, Zionist or anti-Zionist, were mindful that they lived as a minority amongst a host community and the possibility that anti-Semitism could be taken up by those not just on the

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<sup>272</sup> University of Sussex, Mass Observation File Report 184, 'Anti-Italian riots in Soho', 11<sup>th</sup> June 1940.



fringes of British society. Therefore during the war, the overwhelming majority of Jews sought to show British society that they were loyal and patriotic citizens, fighting for a common cause against Fascism. In many ways, particularly amongst those who had assimilated well into British society represented by the Board of Jewish Deputies and its supporters, it seemed they wanted to be more British than the British themselves with their frequent exclamations in support of the war, monarchy, and the concept of empire and their extolling of British culture and fair play. However, despite varying opinion on its composition and how to achieve it, nearly all Jews supported the idea of a Jewish 'homeland'. This feeling was particularly strong amongst those Jews who had arrived in Britain since 1933, many of whom had little or no intention of remaining in Britain, preferring to either move on to America or the British Mandate of Palestine.

The civilian population felt the impact of war between the summer and September 1939 in the 'official' evacuation, when up to 3,750,000 people moved from what were thought to be areas vulnerable to bombing to locations felt to be safe.<sup>273</sup> It was anticipated that from the outbreak of war, there would be large scale bombing of civilian areas and consequently, many people, government organisations and private firms moved to what were perceived to be safe locations. This was the first in a series of official and unofficial evacuations during the course of the war. As peoples' anticipated belief in mass German bombings from the outset failed to materialise and the 'Phoney War' set in, so many people returned to the cities. However, the majority of poor Jewish adults (and non-Jews), never left their homes, nor would they for the whole of the war, while some, having returned home during the Phoney War, once

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<sup>273</sup> R. M. Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy* (HMSO, 1950), pp.102, 137.

again moved out of the cities during the Blitz of 1940/41, the 'Little Blitz' of 1944 and during the period of the V1/V2 flying bomb and rocket attacks of 1944/45.<sup>274</sup>

As the Jewish community was overwhelmingly an urban phenomenon with a sizable number based in London, it is fair to say that proportionally, Jewish children may have been affected more so than other communities by the evacuation. So whilst one can say that Jewish children and Gentile children could all experience the same variety of responses from host families ie. ranging from an ideal 'surrogate' family to that of blatant abuse of the child, the critical difference is one of religion and a way of life. It is important to examine how host families and communities understood, accommodated, or related to the specifics of Jewish requirements, particularly those children who came from orthodox families. For children who came from more secular backgrounds, host families could be more obliging, but there were other possible problems to overcome. Ideally, the Jewish community would have liked to have placed their children with Jewish families and so preserve their religious identity, an extension of the *Kindertransport* ideals. However, there were never enough Jewish families to accommodate the thousands of British Jews, plus newly arrived refugees or *Kinder*.<sup>275</sup> Therefore, whilst all evacuee children and their hosts had barriers to overcome or negotiate, Jewish children had potentially more problems than most. In Exeter, for example, some of the Jewish evacuees were labelled 'refu-Jews'.<sup>276</sup> In the first evacuation, it has been estimated that there were 827,000 school children, 524,000 mothers and children under school age going together, nearly 13,000 pregnant mothers, 7,000 blind or handicapped people and 103,000 teachers and

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<sup>274</sup> See R. Inglis, *The Children's War: Evacuation 1939-1945* (London, 1989) for details of the successive waves of evacuating school children during the war.

<sup>275</sup> See J. Baumel, *Twice a Refugee: The Jewish Refugee Children in Great Britain during Evacuation, 1939-1943* (Indiana, 1983)

<sup>276</sup> T. Grey, *Exeter Remembers the War*, p.119.

assistants.<sup>277</sup> Consequently, it would not be unreasonable to assume that although the authorities for their part attempted to look after the needs of everyone, there were problems that occurred in the host or reception areas, such as preferences for particular types of children and establishing new buildings/facilities for evacuated schools. The fact that the majority of the countryside population had never come across Jewish people may have added to the unease or trepidation of all concerned. The novelty of the situation was repeated on many occasions during the war as rural areas and small market towns witnessed the establishment of military bases for many nations' armed forces that included a wide variety of faiths, customs, languages and colours.

One mixed Infants/Juniors East End school in Cephas Street, Stepney, was evacuated to a village near Bury St. Edmunds. The Headmaster was Alfred Kershaw, a socialist Jew, who kept a diary of the evacuation and subsequent establishment and running of the school.<sup>278</sup> The contrast between Stepney and rural Bury St. Edmunds had its own challenges to be bridged, one of which was the religious education, whilst another was getting used to a socialist Headmaster who took the *News Chronicle*, *People on Sunday* and *Jewish Chronicle*. It was only two weeks after relocating that he organised the first in a series of Jewish religious festivals for those pupils and teachers who were of the faith. Starting with *Rosh Hashanah* and progressing onto *Yom Kippur*, it appears the community quickly came to terms with Mr. Kershaw and the evacuated school, including the loan of buildings. One boy's *Bar Mitzvah* united those in attendance, namely the village's vicar, squire and Baptist lay preacher. On visiting

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<sup>277</sup> R. M. Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*, p.103.

<sup>278</sup> The account of Mr. Kershaw and his school was the subject of a talk given at the Jewish Museum in Camden during an exhibition entitled 'Faith in Education: the story of the Jews' Free School'. A written account is given by the daughter of Mr. Kershaw, Dr. Daphne Glick, at [www.movinghere.org.uk/stories](http://www.movinghere.org.uk/stories).

some *Kindertransport* refugees in Stowmarket, he discovered a common error made by Jews born in Britain, who initially tried speaking Yiddish to the refugees. The German children had never heard Yiddish before. Whilst this school-based evacuation was a success in such unlikely initial circumstances, this was not always the case.

A key problem with the official evacuation scheme and one that was particularly pertinent to Britain's Jewish community, was the social and economic mismatching between host and evacuee. Large numbers of evacuees came from socially deprived areas of cities that were thought to be at risk from bombing. These poorer urban districts, such as those in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds and Glasgow contained the vast majority of Britain's Jews. Additionally, social surveys of the time showed that whilst twelve to fifteen percent of families in the 1930s lived below the poverty line, the poorer groups including large numbers of Jews. This accounted for 22% to 30% of the children, living in poverty, due to a higher birth rate in poorer areas than wealthy ones. In terms of evacuation, smaller families with only one or two children tended to either stay together or if separated, return together much more quickly as soon as the immediate threat was over.<sup>279</sup> The negative consequences of evacuation tended to be compounded upon poorer Jewish working class families, with larger numbers of children. Not only were the latter more likely to be evacuated, but were also more likely to remain separated from their parents for longer. Furthermore, a group of children from the same family were almost certainly to be split up from one another, such as dividing the boys from the girls or separating them by age. Proportionally, one can say that Jewish families, with their preponderance for coming

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<sup>279</sup> Women's Group on Public Welfare, *Our Towns* (O.U.P., 1943), p.xv.

from poorer, urban areas, were unfairly affected by the government's evacuation scheme.

The extended Jewish family, like others from poorer areas, was broken up by the British Government's evacuation measures. This outcome was made more likely because of a recognised housing shortage in both the towns and the countryside. Those host families that had more than one spare room tended to come from wealthier areas or social classes. A survey in Scotland showed that only forty percent of industrial Clydebank's evacuees went to working class families, whilst a third arrived at homes assessed as 'wealthy'.<sup>280</sup> It was the government's evacuation programme that showed clearly the social and economic differences in how people lived. As the urban middle classes were informed by their children about host billets that might have been agricultural labourers or crofters' cottages, with possibly no electricity, indoor water supply or sanitation, equally horrified were middle and upper class host families with the urban poor. The economic divide resulted in an often total lack of knowledge, understanding and comprehension of each others lives, manners, customs and outlook on life. Typical of the reaction from an evacuee was that of thirteen year old Bernard Kops, a Jew from Stepney, who was billeted with his sister, in Denham, Buckinghamshire. In contrast to his former East End surroundings, he commented, 'Everything is so clean in the room. We were even given flannels and toothbrushes. We'd never cleaned our teeth up till then. And hot water came from the tap. And there was a lavatory upstairs. And carpets. And something called an eiderdown. And clean sheets'. His incomprehension is summed up by his remark, 'This was all very odd.

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<sup>280</sup> William Boyd (Ed.), *Evacuation in Scotland* (London, 1944), pp.92-93.

And rather scaring.<sup>281</sup> The comments and summing up were typical of both the Jewish and non-Jewish evacuee experience. For the evacuees, their state of poverty and family circumstances could be a source of embarrassment if not shame. Added to this was the general contrast between many evacuee reception areas, in this case a wealthy part of Buckinghamshire, with that of one of the most overcrowded and Jewish parts of the East End, where it was said, ‘Stepney was Israel.’<sup>282</sup>

Many rural, middle class hosts, along with the newspapers of the day which carried horror stories about the appalling manners and state of the evacuees, failed to realise that the consequences of urban poverty were rife. Pyjamas were not a high priority to purchase for poorer families, but could be seen as verging on child neglect by host families and authorities. The frequent reports of headlice, fleas, scabies, impetigo, sores and various skin infections that accompanied the children, along with almost universal comments on bed wetting, were a product of unsanitary conditions and being left alone in a totally alien environment.<sup>283</sup> Bernard Kops, was among the nine tenths of Stepney families had no bathroom. Nor was this poor and mainly Jewish area an exception. In two other cities with sizable Jewish populations, Birmingham

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<sup>281</sup> Bernard Kops, *The World is a Wedding* (London, 1963), p.54. Born in 1926 to poor Jewish Dutch immigrants, Kops is a leading dramatist, poet and novelist, who has written extensively on his own life and the Jewish East End he grew up in. See his autobiography, *Shalom Bomb* (London, 2000). The comments regarding being given ‘flannels and toothbrushes’ were an aspect frequently mentioned by host families. Evacuees were meant to have with them or be sent, all necessary items of clothing, toiletries etc. The reality of the limitations of poor families was often evident to wealthier host families, when the latter, out of their own pockets, paid for these additional and much needed items. Whilst some hosts were happy to do this, others complained bitterly to the authorities. For many evacuees, their state of poverty and their families circumstances were a source of embarrassment if not shame.

<sup>282</sup> P. Dudgeon, *Our East End: Memories of Life in Disappearing Britain* (London, 2008), p.136.

<sup>283</sup> One of many reports, *Town Children Through Country Eyes A Survey on Evacuation, 1940*, concerning the state of evacuee children and adults was collated and published in 1940, based upon the findings of seventeen hundred Women’s Institutes. Its middle class tones catalogued a damning indictment of child poverty and disease, plus a thinly veiled criticism of many of the mothers concerning a lack of parental responsibility.

and Glasgow, one third and one half respectively of the houses did not have bathrooms.<sup>284</sup> In the tenement block of flats that Bernard Kops came from in Stepney, There was no bathroom. They had a communal wash house on the end of a block. There was a lavatory and a zinc bath, one living room and two bedrooms, and most of the children slept in one bedroom, seven to two beds.<sup>285</sup>

The dispersal and breakup of Jewish families through evacuation resulted in a serious concern for Rabbis and the Jewish orthodox leadership, namely spiritual welfare and religious observance being maintained to an approved standard. As has been seen, the Jewish community in Britain, including those recently arrived from continental Europe, covered a vast panorama of views on Judaism, ranging from being secular, or Communist/Trotskyist, to being strictly orthodox in manner, deed and thought. For the latter, there was the very real (and as it turned out justified) fear for the religious and spiritual survival of the faith. There were never going to be sufficient numbers of orthodox families, with enough room and living in rural areas or small provincial towns to accommodate what represented almost an entire generation of British Jewish youth. The consequence was that most Jewish evacuees experienced a range of secular and religious attitudes which ranged from being philo-Semitic, secular, hostile to simply ignorant. Typical of the latter, one Jewish refugee who was evacuated to the countryside recalled,

.....a rural vicar, who went out of his way to make two Jewish refugees feel at home by recruiting them to his church choir.....a farmer's wife who persuaded her husband to kill the fatter pig so that the family and their Jewish

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<sup>284</sup> R.M. Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy*, pp.131-132.

<sup>285</sup> P. Dudgeon, *Our East End*, p.131.

guests could enjoy a slap-up roast.<sup>286</sup>

As with non-Jews, those Jewish evacuees left over after the rest had been found families, must have felt emotionally traumatised.<sup>287</sup> The situation could be made worse for Orthodox Jews, as billeting officers might place them either in a Christian institution or with someone with no concept of Judaism and its doctrines.<sup>288</sup> Whether Orthodox, British or foreign-born, Jewish children tended to come from urban environments and therefore rural placements were highly problematic on many occasions. Again, one must understand that the experience of Jewish evacuees was by no means unique. In the well meaning, but often chaotic initial evacuation, the most important aspect of the evacuation was to locate homes for millions of people in safe areas. Whilst by current standards and attitudes towards child welfare the billeting officers of 1939 may be seen as uncaring, unsympathetic or lacking in judgement, one can see a certain pragmatic attitude being taken in many instances, driven by a sense of urgency, given the common beliefs in 1939 about the intensity and immediacy of mass civilian bombing. The lack of synagogues, for instance, in much of Wales for Jewish evacuees was only perhaps surpassed by the lack of Roman Catholic churches for Catholic evacuees from Liverpool or Manchester. Ironically, while absent from the rural areas of Wales, the Jewish community and its synagogues, were firmly established in the industrial south and had very understanding and peaceful relations with their chapel neighbours, with their brands of Calvinism, Methodism, Wesleyanism and Baptism. As with the rest of Great Britain, the majority of Welsh synagogues had been founded between 1870 and 1914, when immigrants had flocked

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<sup>286</sup> E. Blond, *Marks of Distinction* (London, 1988), p.87.

<sup>287</sup> J. Baumel, *Twice a Refugee: The Jewish Refugee Children in Great Britain during Evacuation, 1939-1943* (Indiana, 1983), p.175.

<sup>288</sup> V. Fast, *Children's Exodus*, p.63.



to the coal mining valley towns, such as Brynmawr, Ebbw Vale, Merthyr Tydfil, Pontypridd and Tredegar. The same could not be said of Welsh attitudes to Catholics, particularly in areas of Irish immigration, where there was a history of sectarian trouble, if not rioting.

The lack of bombing in September 1939 and in the following months of the Phoney War resulted in most mothers and children evacuees returning home with a desire to reunite the family unit. In addition, relations between host and evacuee families had not always been amicable, often due to social and cultural clashes, plus the associated costs involved in being an evacuee. It was cheaper for families to stay together at home. 'I have seen an unemployed father in tears', wrote one social worker, 'because of his son's letter saying that, while he knew his father could not send the ten shillings demanded by the hostess for clothing, he would rather come home than endure the situation any longer.'<sup>289</sup> This situation had been anticipated by the government who set a maximum contribution of six shillings, although with means testing, the average amount collected at the start of the war was only two shillings and three pence. A quarter of all parents were required to pay nothing due to their income being so low or they relied on public assistance to survive.<sup>290</sup> From this, one can deduce that most likely, it was the children from those parents who caused the greatest uproar and shock in the evacuation reception areas. These were children from the poorest boroughs and districts from London's East End and the slums of industrial cities in the Midlands, the North and Scotland, areas that contained the majority of the Jewish population. The one instance that might delay the return of a child was if they had

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<sup>289</sup> R. Padley & M. Cole, *Evacuation Survey: A Report to the Fabian Society* (London, 1940), p.160.

<sup>290</sup> R.M. Titmus, *Problems of Social Policy*, pp. 159-161.

been awarded a place at a selective school, with all the future opportunities that it offered, and that the school had evacuated itself to a safe area.

State provision for education in the cities in the 1930s was generally of a better quality than that found in the countryside, though with the former there was a great disparity when comparing the different socio-economic areas. Thanks to the secrecy prior to the relocation of schools, it is surprising that arrangements were not more chaotic than they turned out to be. Hard pressed local education authorities, who had frequently lost school or educational buildings to the requisitioning demands of Civil Defence, had to find room in the remaining schools for millions of evacuated children and accompanying teachers. Private or Independent schools had to make their own arrangements, either through personal contacts or through the limited auspices of the local authorities.

Typical of this was the 'progressive' Bunce Court School (also known as New Herrlingen School), Otterden, near Faversham in Kent, run by Miss Anna Essinger (1879-1960), a German Jew.<sup>291</sup> A follower of new progressive ideas on teaching, Essinger had evacuated her school from Herrlingen, near Ulm, in Germany and transferred it to Kent in 1933. The invasion scare of 1940 forced her to relocate to Trench Hall in Wem, Shropshire, returning to Otterden in 1946 until the school closed in 1948. In the short life of the school (originally leased, its future was secured with

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<sup>291</sup> Further details of Anna Essinger and the New Herrlingen School at Bunce Court can be found at the Wiener Library, London, where deposited is Miss Essinger's unpublished report, *Bunce Court School* (London, 1944), Alan Major, 'Bunce Court, Anna Essinger and Her New Herrlingen School, Otterden – Parts One, Two and Three' in *Bygone Kent*, 1989, Leslie Brent, 'The Legacy of Anna Essinger', *AJR* journal, October 2007, p.11, and A. Hammel, 'Integration and Formation of Identity: Exile Schools in Great Britain' in *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, Vol.23, No.1, Fall 2004, pp.71-84. Internet sources include [www.northdowns.plus.com/otterden/essinger](http://www.northdowns.plus.com/otterden/essinger) and [www.quaker.org.uk/walter-block-anna-essinger-and-bunce-court-school](http://www.quaker.org.uk/walter-block-anna-essinger-and-bunce-court-school).

its purchase by the Society of Friends), initially made up of predominantly pre-war Jewish refugees followed by post-war concentration camp inmates, and despite many teachers and older pupils being interned, it managed to produce several notable alumni. These included Frank Auerbach (painter), Leslie Brent (originally Lothar Baruch, immunologist), Gerard Hoffnung (originally Gerhard, cartoonist and broadcaster), Frank Marcus (playwright) and Helmut Sonnenfeldt (American foreign policy advisor/diplomat).<sup>292</sup>

Anna Essinger was not the only Jewish refugee educationalist from Nazi Germany to benefit Britain. Other notables included Kurt Hahn (1886-1974), who like Essinger, came to Britain in 1933.<sup>293</sup> Amongst his remarkable achievements, Hahn promoted and established 'progressive' education and the founding of Gordonstoun School, where he was Headmaster from 1934 to 1953.<sup>294</sup> Hahn was also instrumental in establishing the Outward Bound Organisation in 1941, when Gordonstoun was relocated to Plas Dinam, Montgomeryshire, Wales. In later years, he helped to establish the United World Colleges and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme (Prince Philip of Greece had been one of Hahn's first pupils at Gordonstoun).

Elisabeth Blochmann (1892-1972) was another German Jewish educationalist who left her home country to settle in Britain in 1933, working at Lady Margaret Hall, University of Oxford, during the wartime era. Similarly, one of the world's most renowned sinologists, Dr. Bruno Schindler (1882-1964), left Germany in 1933 to establish, with his wife, Alma, the Regent's Park School at 5, Maresfield Gardens,

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<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

<sup>293</sup> See H. Rohrs, *Kurt Hahn: A Life Span in Education and Politics* (London, 1970) and M. Flavin, *Kurt Hahn's Schools and Legacy: To Discover You Can Be More and Do More Than You Believe* (Wilmington, Del., 2004).

<sup>294</sup> See H. Brereton, *Gordonstoun* (Aberdeen, 1950), J. Hollis, *Gordonstoun: An Enduring Vision* (London, 2011).

Hampstead NW3.<sup>295</sup> The school was set up mainly to cater for Jewish refugee children and had a reputation for reinforcing an appreciation of Jewish history and culture. Like many other London based schools or those in sensitive coastal areas, it was evacuated during the war years to the safety of Slough, before returning to London.

Whilst the Board of Deputies and 'the Establishment' of Anglo-Jewry have received criticism for not doing enough to help continental Jews, it should be pointed out that James de Rothschild (1878-1957), Liberal MP for the Isle of Ely (1929-1945) and cousin to Lord Rothschild, gave The Cedars mansion house on the Waddesdon Manor Estate, Buckinghamshire, as a home to Hugo and Lilli Steinhardt and eventually thirty one *Kinder* in March 1939.<sup>296</sup> Hugo Steinhardt, who was freed from Buchenwald concentration camp by the intervention of James de Rothschild, taught and looked after the children, whilst they either attended the local village schools or worked on the estate. He also prepared some of the children in his care for their emigration onto places such as the USA and Palestine, to join relatives. Of the thirty one boys at the home, fourteen had lost close relatives/immediate family by the end of the war.<sup>297</sup>

The initial evacuation of schools to Oxford from London's East End, with a large number of Jewish pupils, shows a variety of consequences. One school kept together in cramped premises by employing a double shift pattern of teaching, while another school almost collapsed when given unsuitable buildings. Two other schools made a successful transition to a country mansion and a former holiday camp, whilst the rest

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<sup>295</sup> See Wiener Library, London: File 855/1-11; Regent's Park School.

<sup>296</sup> Wiener Library, London: Helga Brown, *The Cedar Boys* (1989), an unpublished report from a daughter of Hugo Steinhardt, who grew up at the Cedars and was one of those rescued by James de Rothschild.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.* p.16.

merged with the surrounding village schools.<sup>298</sup> The Jewish experience, in this instance, was no different from the Gentile one. Even if the relocation went well, another feature of this initial evacuation caused immense problems, namely the slow drift back to the cities of evacuated school children. They had no school to go to and so often took jobs, based upon the education they had received up to that point. Even if they had wanted to go to school, two thirds of London's and Manchester's schools had been closed down and taken over for Civil Defence services.<sup>299</sup> It was frequently remarked upon by social commentators and in the newspapers that children resorted to low level crime and vandalism, such as petty theft and smashing up public air raid shelters. For the poorest children, not only did they lose their education and possibly gain a criminal record, but they also lost their entitlement to free milk and free meals by not being at school.

The failure of the education system for this initial evacuation was effectively acknowledged on 1 November 1939, when the Conservative led National Government announced that evacuation area schools that 'could' be reopened would be made available 'for the education of the children of parents who desire them to attend'. However, those schools in the most dangerous areas and those without air raid shelters could 'not' be reopened.<sup>300</sup> The majority of Britain's Jews living in the areas most likely to be bombed by the Luftwaffe, such as Haringay, Poplar, Stepney and Whitechapel in London, or Salford, Manchester, or Ladywood, Birmingham, areas that contained some of country's poorest people, had little or no educational provision. They were however, not traditional Conservative constituencies, with the exception of Ladywood. In January 1940, statistical analysis showed that in

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<sup>298</sup> Barnett House Study Group, *London Children in Wartime Oxford* (O.U.P., 1947), pp.47-52.

<sup>299</sup> R. Padley & M. Cole, *Evacuation Survey*, pp.200, 211.

<sup>300</sup> A. Calder, *The People's War*, pp. 49-50.

evacuation areas a quarter of children were getting full-time education, half were receiving variable part-time provision, but a quarter received no education at all. The consequences for the long term were obvious and so from April 1940, the government instructed all local authorities that education was compulsory. This coincided with the end of the Phoney War and the replacement of Neville Chamberlain by Winston Churchill at the head of a National Government in May 1940. As schools across the country's perceived most vulnerable areas struggled to regain lost educational time with their children, there then began the widespread and intense bombing of Britain during the Blitz. Thus, vulnerable Jewish children restarted the process of evacuation and disrupted schooling.

The situation was no better for foreign-born Jews coming to Britain after 1933. Whilst British Jews had an uninterrupted education up to 1939, those foreign born Jewish children who had arrived in Britain faced further disruption once the war started depending upon their age once internment started or from evacuation based upon their initial location. No foreign born aliens, obviously including the *Kinder*, could remain in what were termed 'Protected Areas' ie. those areas likely to be invaded or attacked.<sup>301</sup> For many foreign Jews, this was traumatic as they were suddenly moved to unknown destinations (for the second time in recent months), often having little grasp of English. For one boy it seemed as if 'Czechoslovakia was happening all over again.....just as I was getting used to my new home, I was shipped off again.'<sup>302</sup> As the first of the wartime evacuations took place on a Saturday, there arose the problem of the Sabbath for Orthodox children and the labour involved in carrying and potentially putting on a gas mask. Fortunately, it was decided that there

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<sup>301</sup> Wiener Library, London: MF DOC 27/68/310 - Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief, 1933-1960; Central Committee for Refugees, 1940-1941.

<sup>302</sup> J. Schlesinger, *Time Zones: A Journalist in the World* (Toronto, 1990), p.31.

was no doctrinal or theological impediment and it was permitted under Jewish law.<sup>303</sup>

While some *Kinder* relocated with their newly acquired foster parents, most went collectively with their schools. A few, the more unfortunate ones, were moved and ended up isolated in the countryside, where villagers simply saw them as being German. An exception to the latter was Kurt Weinburg, who was fostered by the Headmaster of a school in Burgess Hill, West Sussex, which then relocated to the far west of Cornwall. As a boarder, he thrived and matured in the open countryside that surrounded the school. As he later wrote,

I joined the Boy Scout troop and soon became patrol leader, and that gave me a lot of responsibility for the first time. I took my patrol camping and I organised the salvage collections of waste paper, tins and boxes. At the end I had the whole of West Cornwall under my control.....<sup>304</sup>

Others like Peter Morgan, were less fortunate. He was evacuated to the Isle of Wight, which by 1940 had become a target for bombing. As he remembered,

Whatever the Germans had left after bombing London, we got the lot. We were actually machine-gunned one Saturday afternoon walking along the front at Ventnor.<sup>305</sup>

As previously shown, the Society of Friends played a significant and yet uncelebrated role in the rescue of both Jewish adults and children from persecution in 'Greater Germany'. This was in part due to their extensive worldwide network of co-religionists and a genuine understanding of what persecution entailed through their own history. Once the refugees had arrived in Britain, Quaker families and associated schools housed and educated them, with the latter including St. Christopher's,

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<sup>303</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 22 September 1939.

<sup>304</sup> B. Turner, *And The Policeman Smiled*, pp.141-142.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*, p.142.

Letchworth, and the Quaker financed Bunce Court, near Faversham. Another prominent Quaker financed boarding school, established in 1934 and administered by German Jewish refugee, Dr. Hilde Lion (1893-1970), was Stroatley Rough School, Haslemere, Surrey.<sup>306</sup> They also set up residential homes for adult rehabilitation and training, plus agricultural projects. One such centre that incorporated all of these facets was Holwell Hyde, near Hatfield, established in March 1940 by the Friends Committee for Refugees and Aliens (FCRA). Although many of its residents were interned after only a few months, it survived as a successful project until 1942.<sup>307</sup> Bunce Court, which also provided agricultural training, also suffered for a time when some teachers and pupils were interned and a number transported to Australia.

As the war got underway, the Society of Friends adapted themselves to cater for the variety of needs beyond that of just education for children and the treatment of those whose experiences had left them traumatised. The Quaker centre in Battle, Sussex, which had initially been a horticultural training centre, moved on to the teaching of domestic service skills and ended up looking after mothers and their children. Another Society of Friends' location was Lavender Court, near Hitchin in Hertfordshire.

Initially looking after refugee families in 1940, it went on to caring for the elderly, with the inherent challenges this presented among refugees who were slower than the

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<sup>306</sup> Deposited at the Wiener Library, London, is the school produced pamphlet, K. Whitaker, M. Johnson, C. Townson, *Stroatley Rough School 1934-1960: A Short History* (1994) for the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary reunion in 1994. The London School of Economics and Political Science holds a large and extensive collection of records for the school covering much of its history from before, during and after Jewish refugees were located there: File GB0097– Stroatley Rough School 1923-2000. See also B. Wolfenden, *Little Holocaust Survivors: And the English School That Saved Them* (California, 2008) and M. Berger, 'Hilde Lion – Founder of a Boarding School in Exile in England' in *Journal of Experiential Education*, 24, 2004, p.49 ff.

<sup>307</sup> A full account of the work done by the Society of Friends at Holwell Hyde (as well as its other centres) may be found in Lawrence Darton's *An Account of the Work of the Friends Committee for Refugees and Aliens, First Known as the Germany Emergency Committee of the Society of Friends 1933-1950* (London, 1954), pp.97-101. Lawrence Darton (1914-2008), a Quaker, came from a long established publishing family. During the war, as a conscientious objector, he worked with the Friends' Ambulance Unit and later became Secretary to the Friends Relief Service.



children to adapt to their circumstances and to start life afresh. Arguably, the work carried out by the Society of Friends for persecuted Jews not just in Britain, but worldwide, was the most important out of any of the British based organisations helping continental Jewish refugees, starting its work in 1933 and continuing long after 1945.

In the area of education, the persecution of continental Jewry after 1933 increasingly disrupted children's schooling as measures against them intensified. Britain offered them a secure future physically, but could offer little in the way of mental stability to children who were often traumatised. The war and internment for some was certainly disruptive, but unlike their parents, for many children there still remained a sense of normality, as much as conditions in wartime Britain would allow. For British-born Jewish children, who originally lived in city areas that were heavily bombed, physical welfare and education were no worse than for their non-Jewish peers. Where all Jews suffered was if they were evacuated and educated in areas or places that were not used to the demands of Judaism and, usually through ignorance of the host community, could be insensitively treated. In December 1943, the CBF noted that, 'we are up against problems of psychological difficulty and breakdowns, and in some cases, suicide.'<sup>308</sup> By this date, there was also the realisation amongst many of the *Kinder* that in all likelihood, their families were dead.

Whilst teenagers were expected to leave school at fourteen, the key difference between British-born Jews and those who had come to the country as refugees was that the latter often lacked parental guidance and could be discriminated against when

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<sup>308</sup> Wiener Library, London: MF DOC 27/71/323 – Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief, 1933-1960; Central Office for Refugees 1940-1948.

seeking employment. Therefore, often they received low paid menial and repetitive jobs despite their middle class aspirations. Intelligence and initiative were often 'mistaken' for conceit and arrogance. Refugees were also expected to be grateful for the work that they were offered. The biggest problem lay with boredom and debt in the first few years after leaving school. The RCM at Bloomsbury House fielded many complaints from property landlords and employers, but could effectively do very little.<sup>309</sup> However, whilst there is a connection between the quality of education a child receives, along with parental guidance, and involvement with crime, it would be both unfair and inaccurate to suggest that Jewish children had a propensity to criminal activity. Jews were no worse than any other ethnic/racial group in Britain.

Crime, as an area of investigation by historians of the Second World War, has followed the general trend of increased interest in the effects of war on civilians in order to question the popular history/understanding developed since 1945. The first twenty five years after the war's end saw little in the way of objective analysis of crime, relying on a number of memoirs from former senior policemen. These included Robert Fabian's *London After Dark* (London, 1954) and *Fabian of the Yard* (Norwich, 1955), Harold Scott, *Scotland Yard* (London, 1957), Robert Higgins, *In the Name of the Law: Ex-Detective Superintendent Robert Higgins of Scotland Yard* (London, 1958) and Edward Greeno, *War on the Underworld* (London, 1959).

Alongside these there was a public interest in fictional accounts in literature and film of the war years and the immediate post-war years of austerity, with its often clichéd images of 'spivs', 'racketeers' and pencil moustached 'foreigners'. Notable British cinematic *film noir* titles included *Brighton Rock* (1947), *Dancing with Crime* (1947),

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<sup>309</sup> See B. Turner, *And The Policeman Smiled*, ff.216.

*Noose* (1948), *The Blue Lamp* (1950) and in a lighter vein, *The Lavender Hill Mob* (1951). These films and in some cases, associated novels, showed a popular understanding of the criminal underclasses from the late 1930s to the early 1950s.<sup>310</sup> Given an alleged propensity for Jews to be involved in crime, in all its various guises from pickpocket, to gangster, to that of embezzler, Jews did not feature in any of the given examples.<sup>311</sup> A noticeable aspect though of criminal fiction were gangland characters of Italian origin, namely Colleoni in *Brighton Rock* and ‘Knucksie’ Sugiani in *Noose*. These fictional characters bore a close resemblance to the real life personalities of respectively, Anglo-Italian gang leader, Charles ‘Darby’ Sabini, and the Sicilian/Maltese Messina brothers. Up until internment, Sabini had controlled racecourses across southern England and ‘protected’ Jewish bookmakers, whilst the Messina brothers vied with other families to take over lucrative areas such as Mayfair and Soho, dealing in illegal gambling (‘spieling’), clubs and prostitution.<sup>312</sup> These were also areas, with fierce gang competition, where there were high levels of violence both among the gangsters and with their naive victims, such as off-duty soldiers walking through or using the ‘facilities’.<sup>313</sup> The reality of the situation for London and the south-east during the wartime era was that there were certainly Anglo-Jews involved in crime that fitted some preconceptions, like Jack ‘Spot’ Comer

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<sup>310</sup> Graham Greene’s *Brighton Rock* was originally published as a novel in 1938, becoming a stage play in 1942 and finally a film in 1947.

<sup>311</sup> It may also have helped that at Ealing Studios during the period under investigation, Producer Michael Balcon (1896-1977), was Jewish.

<sup>312</sup> Brighton was the location for ‘Darby’ Sabini when he retired from crime, whilst Soho was the power base for both the Messina brothers and the *Noose* film character, ‘Knucksie’ Sugiani.

<sup>313</sup> *The Times*, 5 July 1941. See also A. Tietjen, *Soho: London’s Vicious Circle* (London, 1956), pp. 133-137 and D. Thomas, *An Underworld at War: Spivs, Deserters, Racketeers and Civilians in the Second World War* (London, 2004), p. 271. On 1 May 1941, Antonio ‘Babe’ Mancini, ‘Manager’ of the *Palm Beach Bottle Party* night club, located in the basement of 37 Wardour Street, Soho, had wounded Eddie Fleisher and killed Harry ‘Scarface’ Distleman in a fight on the premises. On 4 July, Mancini was found guilty by the Judge, Macnaghten, and sentenced to hang for murder, although the defendant had expected a charge of manslaughter. It is thought that a murder charge was brought, with a consequent death sentence, in order to send a message to the lawless elements fighting over Soho (there may also have been some anti-Italian feeling in the court). Given the ethnic origin betrayed by the surnames of those involved in the gangland violence, it is easy to understand a general xenophobia in society, rather than just an anti-Jewish feeling.

and the ‘Yiddishers’ of Whitechapel.<sup>314</sup> However, they were but one group amongst many non-Jewish ones, with gangs like the ‘Birmingham Boys’, the Cortese family and Whites. Each had their own centres of power as with the latter in King’s Cross and Islington, and ‘Darby’ Sabini in Clerkenwell.

While in the public image, ‘the spirit of the Blitz’ and other ‘myths’ remained solidly entrenched, there also remained the image of a handful of British criminals and dubious foreigners who had undermined the war effort. The importance lies in the fact that the criminal spotlight rested on ‘foreigners’, still something of the ‘exotic’ in the post-war austerity of late 1940s and 1950s Britain. Foreign criminals crossed class barriers, while most Britons still came from the working classes. However, Jews as a stereotype for criminality did not have the prominence seen in the literature of the inter-war period, nor certainly at the turn of the century. The catalyst for this may well have been an increasing understanding of Hitler’s racial laws and their consequences, along with the eventual revelation of the Holocaust. The anti-Semitism conveyed in the pre-1933 works of John Buchan, H.C. McNeile and G.K. Chesterton, was replaced by a more enlightened authorship, not influenced by eugenics and racial superiority.

It was Angus Calder who started to highlight a more accurate interpretation of the Home front with *The People’s War* (London, 1969). Crime, social division and anti-Semitic activity were just some of the points Calder examined. Since the late 1960s, the historiography of crime in the wartime era has included such examples as Edward Smithies, *Crime in Wartime* (London, 1982), Philip Ziegler, *London at War* (London, 1995), Donald Thomas, *An Underworld War: Spivs, Deserters, Racketeers and*

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<sup>314</sup> See J. Morton, *Gangland Bosses: The lives of Jack Spot and Billy Hill* (London, 2004). Jack ‘Spot’ Comer (1912-1996) was born Jacob Comacho, son of Jewish immigrants from Poland. Billy Hill (1911-1984) was a fellow gangster and criminal associate of Jack ‘Spot’ Comer.

*Civilians in the Second World War* (London, 2003), Juliet Gardiner, *Wartime Britain 1939-1945* (London, 2004), Felicity Goodall, *Voices from the Home Front: Personal Experiences of Wartime Britain 1939-45* (Cincinnati, 2006) and Todd Grey, *Looting in Wartime Britain* (Exeter, 2009).<sup>315</sup> All have developed, to varying degrees depending upon their specific focus, Calder's initial points concerning the criminal opportunities (or ease by which a criminal record could be gained) offered by the war.

Whilst the evacuation of children and some adults did not affect everyone, the same could not be said of the 'blackout'. It came into effect at the start of the war and lasted until the very end of the conflict in May 1945 and 'transformed conditions of life more thoroughly than any other single feature of the war'.<sup>316</sup> The blackout and other associated regulations impinged upon the whole of society from the sealing off of all light escaping the home, to severely restricted lighting on cars, trains and in the streets. To ensure compliance, Civil Defence Air Raid Precaution (A.R.P.) wardens and the police warned and arrested those who broke the regulations. Although most people recognised the importance of the blackout to hinder German bombing efforts and thereby doing one's patriotic duty, the Phoney War period with its associated hysteria and rumour mongering, had an unwelcome consequence, both for society as a whole and the Jewish community specifically. The lack of actual bombing only added to the absurdity and chagrin felt by those targeted.

The legal prosecution of those who broke the blackout regulations created a hitherto unknown class of criminal. During the war, 925,000 people (approximately one

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<sup>315</sup> Whilst useful bibliographies may be found in Stuart Hylton, *Their Darkest Hour: The Hidden History of the Home Front 1939-1945* (Stroud, 2001) and M.J. Trow, *War Crimes: Underworld Britain in the Second World War* (Barnsley, 2008), it should be noted that the former lacks footnotes, whilst the latter does contain some factual errors.

<sup>316</sup> T.H. O'Brien, *Civil Defence*, (H.M.S.O., 1955), p.319.

person in fifty) were hauled before the courts, charged with blackout regulation offences, with the peak year of 1940, resulting in 300,000 successful prosecutions.<sup>317</sup> People, who before the war had never been in any form of trouble, now became technically criminals or even worse in some eyes, a sort of 'Fifth Columnist', aiding the enemy. The fact that an accused might also be Jewish, particularly, a foreign born one such as a refugee, played into the hands of those who were anti-Semitic. The evidence of statistics and geographical spread of those convicted for blackout offences showed that despite attempts to link Jews to the charge of being unpatriotic or in some way 'un-British', it would be more accurate to say that much of the population were caught out by overzealous A.R.P. wardens and magistrates. The number of those put on trial was at least twice the size of the entire Jewish population in Britain. Many of those who were prosecuted could be seen as middle class and therefore going against the stereotypical views on criminality and the lower classes. Given the cost of totally blacking out a house or flat, the burden of it fell disproportionately on the poorer working classes, which included the majority of the Jewish community.

A further feature of the war that affected most people to varying degrees was that of rationing and the rise in prices and inflation. Again, those worst off were the urban poor, which included a sizable section of the Jewish community. While it is reasonable to say that ration coupons ensured a degree of fairness in how much people were 'legally' allowed to purchase at designated shops, it does not take into account the rise in prices of some goods, nor the inevitable profiteering and so called 'black market' economy. Even with the growing of food on surplus land and parks in the 'Dig for Victory' campaign, the overcrowded Jewish areas of London's East End or

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<sup>317</sup> A. Calder, *The People's War*, p.337. E. Smithies, *Crime in Wartime: A Social History of Crime in World War II*, (London, 1982), pp.8-9.

Glasgow's Gorbals district were at a disadvantage. However, they could take advantage of their faith and be able to trade their bacon ration for some other item.<sup>318</sup> As demand for goods outstripped supply, so rumours spread amongst a minority of people which included invoking the stereotypical image of the profiteering Jew. This, in turn, added to the image of the Jew being on the fringes of 'normal' society, if not being part of the criminal underworld, involved in anti-social and unpatriotic activities. This extreme right-wing diatribe received credence from those who were either Fascist themselves or who were susceptible to these messages, even before the war started.

Edward Smithies in *Crime in Wartime* commented that London was the crime capital of the country, especially for 'professional' criminals.<sup>319</sup> The emphasis was magnified by the extensive newspaper coverage in London of court cases, unlike the situation in provincial cities where there was a preference for stories concerning military events at home and abroad. The most extensive police records come from the Metropolitan Police and those who wrote their memoirs/accounts from either side of the law, tended to come from London. As the capital contained both the largest community of Jews in the country and contained pockets of the strongest supporters of fascism and anti-Semitism, it is possible for historians to obtain a skewed and incorrect impression of Anglo-Jewry across the nation.

It has been said that the war produced its own particular type of anti-Jewish feeling, with Jews being accused of starting the war, being defeatist, cowardly and taking advantage of the situation. However, one could just as easily make the case for saying

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<sup>318</sup> T. Grey, *Exeter Remembers the War: Life on the Home Front* (Exeter, 2005), p.46.

<sup>319</sup> E. Smithies, *Crime in Wartime*, p.5.

that non-Jews were regarded as equally guilty of these accusations and that the British public readily attacked or stereotyped the multitude of foreigners that came to Britain during the war. Evidence shows that Canadians, Americans, Free French, Poles etc. were just as likely to be abused or involved in criminal activity as local or foreign born Jews. Mass Observation suggested that attitudes to American Servicemen were, 'often close to those shown towards Jews by anti-semites, who will specifically excuse from their antagonism Jews they know (and like) as *individuals*.'<sup>320</sup> There was a similarity of attitudes and perceptions shown towards both Jews and Americans in Britain during the war era, particularly where there were significant concentrations of them in parts of the country. However, although the American Forces made up approximately 7% of Great Britain's pre-war population towards the end of the war as opposed to 1% for Jews, the former's numbers quickly reduced from 1945 onwards unlike the latter.<sup>321</sup> Occasionally, one finds a convergence of attitudes, in this instance, a report from the *New Statesman* concerning the views of 'a grand English lady' wishing to help the war effort. Writing to the commander of a local American unit, the lady wrote to invite six men for Sunday lunch, adding, 'No Jews please'. On opening the door to those invited for lunch, she was faced with six black soldiers and exclaimed that some mistake had occurred. 'Oh no ma'am', one of the soldiers replied, 'Colonel Cohen no make any mistake.'<sup>322</sup>

A high priority for surveillance by the British government right from the start of the war was the fascist right wing. The prosecution, through the courts, of groups such as Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists and people with similar views, arguably

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<sup>320</sup> D. Reynolds, *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain 1942-1945* (London, 2000), p.435.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, p.432.

<sup>322</sup> J. Gardiner, *'Over Here': The GIs in Wartime Britain* (London, 1992), p.155.



showed the government's determination to preserve national unity and at the same time protect a significant minority, the Jews. The *Hackney Gazette* reported the case of a Londoner speaking to a 2,000 strong audience in August 1939, commenting,

The German people are led by a German, the British are led by a Jew, fed by a Jew, Clothed by a Jew, pushed by a Jew.....Look at our Army! Look at its leader – Hore-Belisha!.....Don't blame Hitler; blame the people who have brought us to this state of affairs.<sup>323</sup>

The speaker received a three month gaol sentence for a charge of threatening a breach of the peace. In January 1940 at Finsbury Square, BUF chief ideologist and editor of *Action*, Alexander Raven Thomson(1899-1955), the 'Alfred Rosenberg of British fascism', made the often repeated link between the government, its involvement in the war and Jews.<sup>324</sup> To a gathering of 400 people, he stated,

The British Government is rotten throughout.....the sooner we Englishmen rid ourselves of the filthy corrupt practices and the alien influences of the Jewish financiers, the sooner the War will end and England will be a better place to live in.<sup>325</sup>

Besides the obvious socio-political problem of speaking for England alone or that England represented the whole of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Thomson may have hoped to build upon public disquiet during the 'Phoney War', namely increasing shortages, restrictions and a lacklustre promotion of an aggressive war effort by Hore Belisha. Finsbury Square, located just to the west of Bethnal Green and east of the City, was also an area likely to give support to the BUF and therefore the size of the

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<sup>323</sup> *Hackney Gazette*, 6 September 1939.

<sup>324</sup> R. Benewick, *Political Violence and Public Order*, (London, 1969), p.117. Ironically, for the former communist, it was his German wife who in 1931 had set the Anglo-German Servants Agency that brought to Britain many Jews fleeing German hostility and later on, persecution. S. Dorril, *Blackshirt: Sir Oswald Mosley & British Fascism* (London, 2007), p.230.

<sup>325</sup> *West London Press*, 12 April 1940.

crowd would not be unexpected.<sup>326</sup> Thomson was fined £25 for using ‘insulting words’, which could in turn, lead to a breach of the peace. In May 1940, he was interned (Defence Regulation 18B) in Brixton Prison until 1944.

It should be noted that whilst this is yet another example of the persistence of anti-Semitism, it also highlights the limited geographical extent of it in Britain. Fascism and in particular anti-Semitism was largely an English phenomenon, although there were sizable Jewish communities in Glasgow and Cardiff. More precisely, fascism and anti-Semitism was an east and north London movement/ideology, with rare and short lived outbursts in the industrial north of Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham.

Smithies highlights the often contradictory nature of anti-Semitism with the example of the prosecution of a clerk in 1940 for putting up anti-Semitic posters in east London. In an exchange between the defendant and the judge, the former stated that, ‘We were just publishing the names of those people who were trying to dodge conscription’ (all the names being Jewish). The magistrate replied, ‘Then why isn’t your own name on it, you’ve dodged conscription’, to which the defendant retorted, ‘No, I haven’t, I’ve registered as a conscientious objector’. The police had saved him from a potential lynch mob by arresting him, whilst the magistrate sentenced him to three months in prison with hard labour.<sup>327</sup> Smithies concludes that whilst the judiciary was seen to be imposing national unity, it was the government’s use of internment (Defence Regulation 18B) that was better suited to imprisoning fascists, not for racially motivated remarks, but for weakening the war effort and aiding the enemy. It is noticeable that this only occurred once Britain was on the brink of being

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<sup>326</sup> Thomson had stood as a BUF candidate in the 1937 council elections in Bethnal Green and won just over 23% of the vote, ahead of the Liberal Party. R. Benwick, *Political Violence*, p.279-282.

<sup>327</sup> *East London Advertiser*, 15 June 1940, in E. Smithies, *Crime in Wartime*, pp.10-11.

invaded in the summer of 1940. The result was to make the 18B internees appear as 'patriotic martyrs' to their followers and to drive the latter underground in small disparate groups for the remainder of the war. It did not eliminate anti-Semitism nor stop the rumours, but made fascism less public and openly noticeable in the war years.

War and criminality were closely linked because of the unique opportunities the former presented to a variety of people or the position they found themselves in. Defence Regulation 18B resulted in the incarceration of thousands of Jews and non-Jews, either because of their nationality or because of their political views. The blackout caused many former law abiding citizens to gain a criminal record, often because of simple carelessness or an overzealous ARP official or policeman.

However, it was those in the 'traditional' areas of crime such as theft, gambling, prostitution etc. who benefited the most from the war years. Added to this were the new crimes related to the inevitable shortages and rising prices, namely rationing, forging of coupons and profiteering. The bombing and resultant damaged buildings added looting to the list. Police, Court and newspaper records show that all sections of society were involved in illegal activities.

The locations where theft was most prevalent were dockyards, warehouses, railway depots and manufacturing companies. Apart from the last area, these were not areas noted for having large numbers of Jewish employees. Even in the area of manufacturing, most Jewish businesses were either small scale or family concerns. Theft, pilfering or larceny was therefore most likely to be committed by non-Jews. In 1940, one shipping company estimated it was losing £800 per month, whilst in 1941,

another shipping firm put its losses through theft at £1,850 every month.<sup>328</sup> Railway companies estimated that theft of goods rose from a value of £360,000 in 1941 to £700,000 in 1942.<sup>329</sup> In a 1947 newspaper article, it was highlighted by the police that ‘clothing and material are favoured because gangs get a high price from receivers who can sell at greatly inflated prices without coupons.’<sup>330</sup> Admittedly, tailoring was a mainstay of the Jewish economy and a business that many Jews were involved in, but one cannot say that Jews were linked to all thefts of clothing. Theft was endemic in Britain and rose continually in extent and volume through the war and immediate post-war period. However, there is no evidence to suggest that theft was an aspect especially linked to a particular faith or race or nationality, whatever fascist groups suggested or ‘rumour’ maintained.

In keeping with the ‘popular’ post-war view of the Home Front, the 1950s recollections of the former Minister for Food (1940-1943) Lord Woolton (1883-1964) scarcely acknowledged the existence of what was known as ‘the Black Market’. The latter, according to rumours during the war was an area of business associated with the Jewish community. Lord Woolton’s account of black markets was coupled to this misconception when he stated,

What mattered was to be sure that there could not be a ‘market’. Now and again a combination of people – very often people who had hailed from other countries and not got accustomed to the British way of life – made such efforts.....there was little or no black market in Britain.....the British public disapproves of black markets.<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>328</sup> *Birkenhead Advertiser* 25 January 1941.

<sup>329</sup> *Islington Gazette* 19 January 1943.

<sup>330</sup> *Evening Standard* 7 January 1947.

<sup>331</sup> Lord Woolton, *The Memoirs of the Rt. Hon. The Earl of Woolton* (London, 1959), pp.230-231.

During the war, 114,000 people were found guilty of black market offences (30,000 in the peak year of 1943).<sup>332</sup> From cases reported in the newspapers, there is no evidence that black market activity was dominated by or controlled by Jews, unless one makes the assumption that they had all evaded detection. The figure of 114,000, not including those who were either not caught or who were acquitted, suggests that the black market was widespread across the whole population and was responding to a demand at a time of increasing shortages. This is not to say that Jews or any other group/minority was completely innocent or was not involved somewhere in the supply and purchase of goods. The *Essex Chronicle* reported the case of a Chelmsford butcher, who, in 1943, was given a six months prison sentence and fined £120 for black market activities. In a conversation with an undercover Ministry of Food Inspector, he was reported as saying, ‘ I can get rid of as many eggs as I like to East End Jews at 7/- a dozen.’<sup>333</sup> The official price for a dozen eggs was to charge no more than 1/3d. Jews clearly took part in the black market, but in much the same way as non-Jews. Nor can one say that Jews as a whole were the ones who profited from the black market.

The people controlling the various black market deals and outlets initially were those who had been pre-war criminals. Towards the second half of the war, the professional criminals were joined by others on the margins of society, such as American soldiers with easy access to goods and British Forces deserters, who numbered 20,000 by 1947.<sup>334</sup> Of course once the war was over, many former soldiers turned to crime. Money made from the black market and a host of illegal activities found its way to large criminal gangs, often via highly profitable gambling establishments or ‘social

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<sup>332</sup> E. Smithies, *Crime in Wartime*, p.73.

<sup>333</sup> *Essex Chronicle*, 19 February 1943.

<sup>334</sup> E. Smithies, *Crime in Wartime* p.51.

clubs' (which may include prostitution rackets controlled by the criminal gangs). The *Evening Standard* quoted a senior Policeman saying that, 'Night after night in so called social clubs, you can see as much money on the gambling tables as you would normally see in peace-time Cannes, Le Touquet and Monte Carlo.'<sup>335</sup> Again, statistically, it would be wrong to say that Jews profited from the black market as there is no evidence to support an 'exclusive' claim. However, one can say that of any one group of people to benefit it would be organised criminal gangs, such as the Hoxton Gang, the St. Pancras Boys and the female Forty Elephants Gang, who specialised in shoplifting. Arguably, the most powerful of these, who operated between the 1930s and 1950s, were the Sicilian/Maltese Messina brothers, who were not Jewish.<sup>336</sup> The four Messina brothers were deeply involved in the trafficking of women and prostitution (known at the time as 'white slavery'), an activity often popularly associated with Jews.

Contrary to the wealthier and landed classes' perceptions of crime, the lower classes and Jewish people, the law was applied equally across the social spectrum during the war. In the case of wealthier Jews, the alleged financiers of conspiracies and perpetrators of various unpatriotic activities, it must have been satisfying to see a very public redressing of the balance. Both Lord Donegall and Noel Coward were convicted and given substantial fines for breaking currency regulations in 1941.<sup>337</sup>

The Countess of Mayo was fined for rationing offences in 1942, whilst both Ivor Novello and Victor Silvester were found guilty respectively of using a car for personal

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<sup>335</sup> *Evening Standard*, 4 January 1945.

<sup>336</sup> The majority of their proceeds came from organised vice, involving brothels and prostitution in the Mayfair and Soho districts. Soho prostitution was often linked to Italians or Maltese (latter known as 'Malts' or 'Epsom salts').

<sup>337</sup> Lord Donegall, *West London Press*, 7 March 1941. Noel Coward, *Westminster and Pimlico News*, 7 and 14 November 1941.

use and for the smuggling of goods from the continent in 1944.<sup>338</sup> In terms of high profile crime, wealthy Jews did not lead the way. As Smithies identifies, so called ‘white-collar’ crime committed by the more respectable members of society was most prevalent in professions not associated with Jews, namely management in the building industry or authority civil servants and local government officials.<sup>339</sup>

One area, in both a geographical and criminal sense, where Jewish people do figure is in the working/lower middle class gambling clubs and betting rackets of east London. Jews were to be found among the shopkeepers and small time business men in what was an area with a significant Jewish population. As reported in one of the area’s newspapers, the *Hackney Gazette*, after a number of men in 1944 were convicted of illegally betting at a Stoke Newington boxing match, the magistrate noted,

You, all of you, ought to know that every spare pound ought to go either to war Savings or be put into the bank.....I cannot help noticing that nearly all the defendants took the oath in the Jewish fashion, and cannot help remembering what people of that race and creed have gone through during these years. I think it is disgusting that people of the same race and creed who have not had the bad time they have had should behave themselves in this way, instead of doing what they can to finish off the war.<sup>340</sup>

Although it may be an overstatement to say that this was a case of anti-Semitism in the courts, it can perhaps be contrasted with another magistrate’s comments in 1941, when twenty people were arrested playing roulette at an illegal ‘casino’ at Prince of Wales Terrace, Kensington. The magistrate observed,

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<sup>338</sup> Countess of Mayo, *West London Press*, 21 August 1942. Ivor Novello, 25 April 1944. Victor Silvester, *Kensington Post*, 16 September 1944.

<sup>339</sup> E. Smithies, *Crime in Wartime*, p.96.

<sup>340</sup> *Hackney Gazette*, 28 March 1944.

It is not one of the gambling hells run to lure young people and fleece them of their money. It seems to be admitted that those who took part were responsible people who knew what they were doing and were prepared to risk their money for the sake of the game. Doubtless in normal times they would have gone abroad..... to indulge their gambling propensities without any infringement of the law.<sup>341</sup>

As noted, whilst one could be tempted to highlight this as an example of anti-Semitic judicial prejudice, one may equally say that a social rather than racial distinction was being made between the clientele of a Stoke Newington N16 address with that of a London W8 address, close to Kensington Palace.

Although one can see that the judiciary was prepared to make an example of the social elite and celebrities of the day for the sake of national unity, there still remained preconceived ideas concerning social classes. Additionally, the Stoke Newington case presumed some racial/religious obligation on Jewish people to be more 'patriotic' than non-Jews given what was known in early 1944 regarding the state of continental Jewry. One may equally say that the gamblers of November 1941 should also have been aware of the events twelve months earlier in Coventry, the raids on Plymouth in March of that year, not to mention the devastation surrounding them in London. In what ways were these gamblers helping to 'finish off the war' that those in Stoke Newington were not? It must also be noted that apart from those with fascist beliefs and Jews who were sympathetic to a Zionist agenda, the war was not seen as being fought in terms a 'racial' war. From an official standpoint and one promoted publically, the Second World War was fought from an ideological perspective of 'democracy' versus 'fascism' or 'totalitarian tyranny'. In fact, the Board of Jewish

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<sup>341</sup> *Kensington Gazette*, 7 November 1941.



Deputies and the British Government were keen to avoid any idea that the war could be seen as being fought as a Jewish war, with non-Jews dragged into it and dying on their behalf, or a conflict fought on racial grounds.

One of the more insidious rumours levelled at Britain's Jewish population was that they were only too ready to flee the towns and cities at the threat of bombing. Jewish people were also meant to be prone to panic at the least sign of danger. Associated with these suggestions of unpatriotic behaviour and cowardice, were the accusations of getting to the air raid shelters before others and consequently getting the best positions for themselves. As with the previous popular rumours concerning the so called 'characteristics' of the Jewish population, the ones regarding bombing were groundless and without evidence apart from one respect. The majority of German bombing was aimed at industrial and economic targets, which by their very nature, were nearly always located in poor working class districts of towns and cities. Given the predictability of likely targets even before September 1939, and the anticipated intensity of bombing, it is to the credit of those populations as a whole, both Jew and non-Jew, that they developed what the government referred to as 'the spirit of the Blitz' once the bombing started. As most Jews voted for parties other than the Conservative Party, particularly the Labour Party, Jewish people had a vested interest in what was referred to as 'the deep shelter debate' that raged in 1938-1940.<sup>342</sup> In the early stages of the 1940/1941 Blitz, without adequate protection, it would be more accurate to say that people from working class districts displayed allegedly unpatriotic traits in the bombing, rather than reduce the argument to terms of whether they were a Jew or non-Jew. Therefore, if one examined areas of extensive bombing such as the

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<sup>342</sup> A. Calder, *The People's War*, pp.179-187.

East End of London, Manchester, Plymouth, Southampton, and Coventry, from government and Mass Observation reports one can observe people leaving their homes and aspects of panic, low morale and a 'shelter mentality'. A typical example followed the November 1940 raid on Coventry, when Mass Observation noted of the population, 'There were more open signs of hysteria, terror, neurosis observed in one evening than during the whole of the past two months, together, in all areas. Women were seen to cry, to scream, to tremble all over, to faint in the street, to attack a fireman and so on.'<sup>343</sup> Coventry's lack of a Jewish community emphasises the fact that what were perceived to be negative reactions to bombing cut across the religious/ethnic divide and should more appropriately be looked at in terms of a social class and political perspective.

Far from fleeing the cities, Jewish communities or at least the adults stayed where they lived, unless forced to live with relatives due to the loss of their homes through bombing. As with non-Jews, it tended to be those with money who could afford to rent somewhere else who left the cities. However, the heaviest concentrations of Jews still lived in the poorer, industrial areas of cities and therefore had to endure the German bombing. Traditional communal life continued as best it could, despite the bombing and the other difficulties of war. The war's impact did not stop the continuation of a vibrant Jewish theatre scene either at the Pavilion Theatre, Whitechapel or at its rival, the Grand Palais, Commercial Road.<sup>344</sup> In the first half of 1944, until the V-1 flying bomb attacks, the Grand Palais had record audiences of both Jews and non-Jews to see *The King of Lampedusa* following critically favourable

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<sup>343</sup> TNA, London: File HO 199/442 – Home Security (1941), Mass Observation Report on Coventry.

<sup>344</sup> See [www.jewish-theatre.com](http://www.jewish-theatre.com) and David Mazower's *Yiddish Theatre in London 1880-1987* (London, 1987) for a history of London's East End Yiddish theatres.

reviews.<sup>345</sup> The musical was inspired by the exploits of an East End Jewish RAF pilot, Sidney Cohen, who took the surrender of the Italian island, Lampedusa. The East End's famous Jewish boxing and sporting clubs still drew young Jewish boys, despite the loss in numbers due to evacuation and conscription. Harry Mizler (1913-1990), British Lightweight Champion (1934-1936), helped coach the boys at the Oxford and St. George's Clubs and Settlement, Berner Street (renamed Henriques Street after Basil Henriques, the founder of the club in 1913).<sup>346</sup>

It is interesting to note the wartime effects on the Jewish community in Wales, where there appears to be a lack of hostility from non-Jews or perceived ideas about Jews, as compared to some areas in England. Synagogues and Jewish communities were spread throughout the industrial south, whilst smaller groups resided in the towns of the more rural north. Taking Swansea as an example, with a Jewish population of 565 in 1939, its economic position of docks and coal, made it a likely area for anti-Jewish hostility with a social composition not dissimilar to London's docklands, and yet the reality shows that there was little if any trouble.<sup>347</sup> In response to Nazi actions against Jews in Germany, 'all sections of society gathered at Central Hall to protest against Nazi persecution' on 27 April 1933 (and again in 1935).<sup>348</sup> In February 1941, the Goat Street synagogue was destroyed by German bombing and in response, other churches came to their aid, such as the Unitarian Chapel, the Henrietta Street Chapel and the Presbyterian St. Andrew's Church.<sup>349</sup> This shows perhaps an affinity towards the

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<sup>345</sup> *Daily Express*, 12 January 1944. Headline – 'All the East End Flocks to see The King of Lampedusa – an Airman becomes Whitechapel Hero'.

<sup>346</sup> P. Dudgeon, *Our East End: Memories of Life in a Disappearing Britain* (London, 2008), p.143.

<sup>347</sup> N. Saunders, *Swansea Hebrew Congregation 1730-1980* (Private publication, 1980), p.61. Pamphlet held at the West Glamorgan Archives, Swansea.

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.* p.60.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.* p.61.

Jewish community in Wales, with its long history of non-conformism and dis-established churches, unlike England.

The relative harmony between Jews and non-Jews in Wales as compared with England during the Second World War has been attributed to the fact that the former did not compete for jobs, such as at sea or in the mines, or if they did so, it was only temporary employment or they joined a union and thus helped to maintain wage levels.<sup>350</sup> There were also no large areas of Jewish housing or ‘sweat shops’ in Wales, which unlike London’s East End and in Leeds, never invited accusations of being a menace to public health.<sup>351</sup> Although some Jewish landlords and pawnbrokers had a poor image (unlike the rest of Great Britain, nearly all pawnbrokers in Wales were Jewish), it was conceded that the latter did provide a service in hard times. Additionally, in an area of the country that was overwhelmingly non-conformist and Protestant, Jews were not affected by the religion, culture and politics of the Irish community in the slums and dock areas of Cardiff and other ports.<sup>352</sup> Aside from the contentious 1911 riots in Tredegar, one can say that the general goodwill that existed prior to the war continued through it, despite similar privations to those experienced elsewhere in Britain during the war.<sup>353</sup>

#### Case Study: ‘The Bethnal Green Tube Shelter Disaster’

‘The Bethnal Green Tube Shelter Disaster’ of March 1943 illustrated both the extent to which Jews could be targeted in response to the question of why the event occurred

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<sup>350</sup> U. Henriques (Ed.), *The Jews of South Wales* (Cardiff, 1993), p.6.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid. p.20.

<sup>353</sup> Besides Ursula Henriques’ *The Jews of South Wales*, there remains a large void in published material for this important immigrant community in either general and specific histories of Wales for the pre-1939 and war eras.

and the fears of the government over what that response may be. In essence, there was a need to know why 173 people had lost their lives in a matter of ten minutes in the absence of direct enemy action. For some people, the answer lay in popular prejudices about the Jewish character which, as historians have commented, encouraged rumours to spread across the country alleging Jewish responsibility for the deaths. As a result, a nervous government sought to quash these rumours and thus avoid an anti-Semitic backlash at a time of supposed national unity in the face of the enemy.

The newly built, but only partially complete, Bethnal Green Tube station had been converted into a deep shelter in October 1940, with bunk space for 5,000 and an additional 5,000 if needed. It had one entrance, plus an emergency exit half a mile away. At the height of the 1940/41 Blitz, it was often full to capacity, but subsequently, as Luftwaffe raids decreased in intensity, people using the shelter numbered in their hundreds (even when there were no air raids). The situation changed following an R.A.F. raid on Berlin, the first in over a year, on 17 January 1943. Londoners were clearly aware that the Luftwaffe was likely to make a major reprisal raid and as a consequence, the population using the air raid shelters rose, as they did at Bethnal Green. The numbers rose from 587 on 1 March to 850 the following night. As there had been another large R.A.F. attack on Berlin on the 1 March, people gauged that a major retaliatory attack would take place on 3 March.<sup>354</sup> At 8.17pm on the 3 March the air raid sirens started in anticipation and approximately 1,500 people rushed to get into the Bethnal Green Tube shelter to join an estimated 500 to 600 people already inside. At almost the same time, in Victoria Park, a new experimental anti-aircraft weapon called a 'Z' rocket battery was let loose with

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<sup>354</sup> W. Ramsey (Ed.), *The Blitz: Then and Now* Vol.3 (London, 1990), pp.221-222.

launchers firing off over 100 rockets up into the sky in a single burst. The result was mass panic at the sound of the new weapon which the people took to be the start of the bombing, causing 173 people to be crushed to death in a matter of minutes.<sup>355</sup> The fatalities accounted for over a third of Bethnal Green's wartime dead and was one of the worst single civilian disasters of the war, although the tube station was, 'believed to be, and probably was, the only one hundred percent safe place in the borough.'<sup>356</sup>

The following evening, the 4 March, the first official confirmation of the tragedy came from a statement issued by the Ministry of Home Security.<sup>357</sup> The statement included what was believed to have taken place such as the initial cause of a woman tripping over and gave some implicit comments as to additional contributory factors such as a lack of light at the shelter entrance. The statement concluded with Herbert Morrison's promise to hold, 'the fullest enquiries to establish in greater detail what took place and to see whether any structural or administrative weaknesses have been brought to light.' Besides the irony of the last point (the 25-watt bulb that would be considered totally inadequate for its purpose by the subsequent inquest), the initial statement was at variance with the actual events. The Ministry's statement reported that according to a large number of eye witnesses and members of the police and Civil Defences, there was no sign of panic, but rather a mass pile-up caused by a woman, who was holding a baby and a bundle, tripping over near the bottom of the stairs. The statement continued that it was, 'the blackout and adverse weather conditions that caused an elderly man to fall over her and within a few seconds, hundreds of people

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<sup>355</sup> The figures concerning attendance and casualties come from the official inquiry conducted by L. Dunne, 11<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> March 1943. A full transcript of the inquiry findings may be found in *Tragedy at Bethnal Green* (HMSO, 1999).

<sup>356</sup> G. Vale, *Bethnal Green's Ordeal 1939-1945* (London, 1946), p.13.

<sup>357</sup> TNA: File HO 205/235 – Ministry of Home Security; O Division – Bethnal Green tube shelter disaster; papers and memoranda compiled for Mr. Dunne.

were crushed together and lying on top of each other.’<sup>358</sup> It did not mention anything concerning the testing of new anti-aircraft ‘Z’ weapon batteries in a built up area, apart from the word, ‘barrage’. Significantly, in this initial investigation conducted at Bethnal Green Town Hall, amongst the various national and local government representatives and Civil Defence personnel, J.P. Thomas of the London Public Transport Board (LPTB), suggested that a ‘foreign element’ might have been in the crowd that surged into the shelter and caused a panic. Although some other Emergency Committee members denied the presence of a significantly sized ‘foreign element’, quite possibly this was all that was needed for right wing elements in the borough to seize upon and start rumours about Jewish involvement in the disaster.<sup>359</sup> This was supported in the closing statements made by W. Heddy, the Coroner for the only inquiry out of three conducted which was held under the public gaze.

When the Coroner’s inquest closed on 26 March, Heddy issued a statement that contradicted other inquiry findings and witness statements by pointing out that, ‘There is nothing to suggest any stampede or panic or anything of any kind.’ In an acknowledgement perhaps of rumours already spreading, he went further by adding, ‘There was nothing to suggest that any particular section of the populace became victims of the disaster. Taking names as a whole they represented a cross section of the people of the East End.’<sup>360</sup> Very few Jews used the Bethnal Green Tube Shelter and the names of the deceased indicate that hardly any were, if at all, caught up in the panic and subsequent crush on the stairway. These rumours and the possible consequences were not lost on another later inquiry conducted by Bow Street

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<sup>358</sup> S. Dettman, *The Bethnal Green Tube Shelter Disaster of 1943* (London, 2010), pp.59-60.

<sup>359</sup> TNA: File HO 205/235.

<sup>360</sup> TNA: File MEPO 3/1942 – Metropolitan Police: Office of the Commissioner: Correspondence and Papers, Special Series.

Magistrate, Lawrence Dunne, who reported back to Herbert Morrison his own independent findings.<sup>361</sup> Unfortunately for Bethnal Green's Jewish population and indeed for those further afield, Dunne's 'closed' report was suppressed for nearly two years due to security and enemy propaganda implications. It was finally published in January 1945.

The report from the Emergency Committee was ready for the newspapers on 5 March and so over the next few days newspaper reporters disclosed not only more explicit details of what had happened, but also commented on the catalogue of actual causes responsible for the disaster. The *Daily Telegraph* commented on, 'the press of hurrying people' going into the shelter and the difficulties faced by rescue workers in getting through the crowds of people wanting to enter the shelter.<sup>362</sup> The *Daily Mail* stated that, 'Gun flashes from Wednesday night's terrific barrage were the immediate cause' of so many deaths.<sup>363</sup> A damning indictment was given by the *News Chronicle* that pointed the finger of blame onto both the civic authorities, Civil Defence organisations and the public in general.<sup>364</sup> Grieving families quickly wanted or demanded a 'public' inquiry. The government response was to hold a 'closed' inquiry.

Cabinet records from the 8 March 1943 show that Herbert Morrison had already informed his colleagues about the circumstances of the tube station disaster and that these would be transmitted to the House of Commons, two days later.<sup>365</sup> Referring to the 'incident', he said that, '180 people had been crushed to death, in the entrance to a shelter.' Significantly he pointed out that, 'It would seem that this disaster had not

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<sup>361</sup> *Tragedy at Bethnal Green* (London/HMSO, 1999), pp.29-30.

<sup>362</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 5 March 1943.

<sup>363</sup> *Daily Mail*, 5 March 1943.

<sup>364</sup> *News Chronicle*, 5 March 1943.

<sup>365</sup> TNA: CAB 65/33/38 Cabinet Meeting Conclusion, 8 March 1943.



been started by panic, but simply by one or two people having fallen down the steps and others having fallen on them in the dark.’ His parliamentary colleagues were deceived as to the real reasons, as Morrison had decided before his own private enquiry the cause of the accident.

Given the nature of the evidence and its criticisms, either by witness statements or via the magistrate, it is unsurprising that the inquiry was suppressed for nearly two years. There was also the matter of security regarding the use or trial of new anti-aircraft weapons in the vicinity, which were obviously unknown to the local population. However, the weapon had been designed to operate in that type of location. There was also the question concerning a lack of police in the area at the start of the raid and their failure initially to handle the crowd effectively. A suppression of the report would allow public confidence in the police to continue. Lastly, the concealment of the report’s findings from public scrutiny was necessary as witnesses confirmed the crowd’s terror and the selfish acts committed by men desperate to survive, at the expense of women and children – a contrast to the almost mythical ‘spirit of the Blitz’ and idea of everyone pulling together. In other words, there were logical and rational reasons to explain why the disaster happened and why the report needed to be suppressed. As to blame for the disaster, the Chairman of the official inquiry, Lawrence Dunne, made it clear in his report that panic - ‘a number of people losing their self-control at a particularly unfortunate place and time’ - was the prime cause for the deaths. Additionally, the entrance design of the tube station needed to be greatly improved. Given that this was a common feature for other shelters, Dunne recommended that they also be looked at and improved. However, he concluded by commenting, ‘No forethought in the matter of structural design or practicable police

supervision can be any real safeguard against the effect of a loss of self-control by a crowd.<sup>366</sup>

Possibly as either a reaction to or diversion from personal guilt, rumours emerged as to the root cause of the disaster and threatened to take hold in the public's consciousness. For a paranoid civilian population, fifth columnists were held to be responsible, but by the time the inquiry report had been completed, they had been ruled out. Shortly after the actual disaster, many national newspapers had highlighted problems concerning the shelter's physical defects, such as a lack of a handrail, but had stopped short of naming groups. The only newspaper that did offer a suggestion was the London based *Evening Standard*, who believed the tragedy to be caused by Jewish panic. It is debatable, given the fact that this was a newspaper which diverged from the rest, whether this was an opinion of the Editor or whether he had been fed the story by one of the fascist groups operating at that time in London's East End. Lawrence Dunne recognised the serious implications of allowing rumours to spread and in section 38 of his report he made the very firm and very specific point:

Before going on to deal with the rain and contributory causes of the disaster I should like at this point to deal with two specific allegations which have received some publicity, and which are without any foundation whatsoever. Each may be dismissed with a very few words:-

a) That this was a panic induced by Fascists or criminal persons for nefarious purposes. There were some deaths among men with criminal records. They and their relatives are as much entitled to sympathy as any

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<sup>366</sup> *Tragedy at Bethnal Green* (London/HMSO, 1999), p.60.

of the other victims. This story had some local, and I hope limited, circulation. It is an absurdity.

b) That this was a Jewish panic. This canard had a much wider circulation and was, I understand, endorsed by the broadcast utterances of a renegade traitor from Germany. Not only is it without foundation, it is demonstrably false. The Jewish attendance at this shelter was, and is, so small as to constitute a hardly calculable percentage.<sup>367</sup>

In points a) and b), the magistrate did not exclude fascist complicity for the disaster, but criminal or Jewish responsibility is specifically denied. The forcefulness of this denial suggests how important it was to the magistrate to get the point across to the general public, who would naturally be looking for a single and easy to understand cause. However, what the magistrate could not have anticipated was not only that the report would be suppressed, but that it would be censored for so long. This undoubtedly played into the hands of those that sought to exploit the situation, such as the fascists, and played upon the fears of an angry and paranoid public. The successful suing for compensation by victim's relatives from the borough council should have indicated to the public that neither Jews nor anyone else were at the root cause of the disaster. The list of victims, which should have given credence to the popular assumption that Jews lacked courage and rushed to be first into the shelter, showed that there were few Jews present.

Dunne went to great lengths in his questioning of witnesses regarding the alleged involvement of what Thomas, the LTPB representative on the Emergency Committee, had referred to as a 'foreign element'. The police representative for the borough,

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<sup>367</sup> Ibid., pp.29-30.

Superintendent Hill, had described this ‘foreign element’ as prone to become more ‘excitable’ compared to the ‘good old Cockney.’<sup>368</sup> It is not difficult to see how fascist groups were able to exploit the words of a senior policeman, who might well have been reflecting the general thoughts of many in the borough. Although one finds the word ‘foreign’ being used during this period as a euphemism to describe British born Jews, it can also be understood in a more literal sense. Another member of the Emergency Committee, E. Jolly, the Controller who coordinated all the emergency services in Bethnal Green, was asked by Dunne if he had observed any differences between the various nationalities residing in the borough. In an affirmative reply, Jolly stated, ‘I think the Jewish and probably the Polish or Czecho-Slovakian whoever they are, are far more excitable.’<sup>369</sup> Therefore, the stereotypical labelling of characteristics has moved from what might be seen as mildly anti-Semitic by implication to that of being generally xenophobic.

Despite generalisations made about Bethnal Green’s Jews, there were some more pertinent and specific comments given at the inquest regarding the disaster at the tube station. J. Bridger, Bethnal Green Councillor and the tube shelter’s Chief Air Raid Warden testified that only about one hundred Jewish people used the shelter.<sup>370</sup> The small number of Jewish people was confirmed by Mr. Hastings, a fellow Councillor and the tube shelter’s Deputy Air Raid Warden. Furthermore, when asked if there was any substance to the rumours that the disaster had been caused by Jewish people panicking, Hastings believed not as on the evening in question, there had only been

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<sup>368</sup> TNA: File 205/235.

<sup>369</sup> TNA: File HO 205/379 – Ministry of Home Security: O Division: Correspondence and Papers; Bethnal Green tube shelter disaster-transcript of evidence given at the enquiry, 11 to 17 March.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid.

one or two Jews present.<sup>371</sup> Against this rebuttal of anti-Semitic assertions, the fascists profited from the number of letters sent to the inquest from concerned members of the public. One such letter, when referring to the Bethnal Green ARP wardens believed, ‘all of which happen to to be Jews, and they are 100 percent Communists.’<sup>372</sup> An apparent eyewitness, felt that the disaster was caused by, ‘the cowardly display of fear by the foreign born Jews’, adding that, ‘they lost their heads in their desire to get under shelter.’<sup>373</sup>

The extent of the rumours of Jewish responsibility for the disaster may be judged by the direct intervention in the inquest by two representative organisations, the Board of Jewish Deputies and the Council for Christians and Jews.<sup>374</sup> The Chairman of the Board’s Defence Committee, Gordon Liverman, informed Dunne that Bethnal Green was not a so-called Jewish borough, but was actually a ‘centre of Fascist activity and many members of the British Union of Fascists were residents there.’<sup>375</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Jews tended to avoid the borough’s largest shelter due to the anti-Semitic activity and Liverman wanted this, and a rebuttal of the rumours, reflected in Dunne’s report. This was also the desire of the Council’s Methodist Secretary, the Reverend W. Simpson, who requested the inquest to investigate the rumours, ‘and if, as we have every reason to believe, that these rumours are utterly without foundation,

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<sup>371</sup> Ibid.

<sup>372</sup> TNA: File HO 205/236 – Ministry of Home Security: O Division: Correspondence and Papers; Bethnal Green tube shelter disaster – Letters from the public.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid.

<sup>374</sup> The Council for Christians and Jews had been established by the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple (1881-1944), and the Chief Rabbi, Joseph Hertz (1872-1946), in 1942 so as to combat anti-Semitism and give a united voice against what would later be called the Holocaust. The archival papers of the Council for Christians and Jews are held at the University of Southampton. See [www.ccj.org.uk](http://www.ccj.org.uk) for history overview.

<sup>375</sup> TNA: File HO 205/231 – Ministry of Home Security: O Division: Correspondence and Papers; Bethnal Green tube shelter disaster – Letters from the public.

that the Commission will make reference to this in the report.<sup>376</sup> Dunne's report was most explicit in its condemnation of these rumours by stating that not only do they have no foundation, but they are 'demonstrably false' and that, 'The Jewish attendance at this shelter was, and is, so small as to constitute a hardly calculable percentage.'<sup>377</sup> This in itself is supportive of the earlier point raised by Gordon Liverman, who noted not only the low numbers of Jews in the borough, but also that Bethnal Green was a fascist/right wing area. The fact that Bethnal Green was a centre of fascist support before the war, would also indicate that it was likely to remain so during the war, if not continue to be so after 1945.

The decision by the Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison, to prevent the public from knowing the full details of Dunne's inquiry resulted in widespread criticism and condemnation in many quarters, particularly from the survivors and relatives of the dead. Those who did know, such as the Emergency Committee for Bethnal Green, were silenced by the fact that they had to sign the Official Secrets Act (section 2) and were therefore prevented from making any public statement. It had been Herbert Morrison's hope, with the support of the War Cabinet, that by making a brief and guarded statement in the House of Commons, the subject could be laid to rest.<sup>378</sup> However, one of the points that would be mentioned was the fact that there was no evidence to suggest that either Jews or fascists were responsible for the disaster. On the 8 April 1943, the Home Secretary addressed the House of Commons stating that 'modifications' were currently being made to similar shelters and, 'Mr. Dunne, I may add, dismisses as without foundation the rumours that the accident was caused by a

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<sup>376</sup> Ibid.

<sup>377</sup> *Tragedy at Bethnal Green* (London/HMSO, 1999), p.30.

<sup>378</sup> TNA: File CAB 65/34/2 Cabinet Conclusion: Papers and Minutes, 5 April 1943.

Jewish panic or indeed by Fascists or criminals for nefarious purposes.’<sup>379</sup> The vagueness and the concealment of evidence by the Home Secretary drew a predictable amount of anger from those listening. One MP, Eleanor Rathbone, came back at the Home Secretary by asking him,

Seeing that a number of completely unfounded rumours have been going round, would it not be possible to produce what might be called a negative report definitely eliminating rumours about certain alleged causes that were found not to be causes? For example, my right hon. Friend himself referred to a rumour that spread like wildfire all over London that the accident was caused by the Jewish inhabitants of the shelter. Cannot he do something to make it widely known that there was no panic?<sup>380</sup>

Jewish MPs, along with the rest of the Anglo-Jewish community (especially those that lived in fascist areas of the East End), must have been somewhat disappointed by Herbert Morrison’s reply.

‘I do not think I ought to be drawn into further discussion. I think the hon. Lady will agree that I have made a very handsome observation on that point in order to destroy the rumour.’<sup>381</sup>

In many respects it is not surprising that insidious rumours about Jews started in Bethnal Green, as opposed to other areas, because of its long standing association with anti-Semitism and fascism. A mid-1930s description of Bethnal Green and the fractious race relations suggested that the Jews

.....have spread like a creeping flood from Aldgate, Commercial Road, and Whitechapel; and it is not pleasant to an Englishman to know that his own people have been pushed out of their ancient and historic places, mean though

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<sup>379</sup> Hansard – HC Deb. 8 April 1943, vol.388, cc. 786-788.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid. p.788.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid.

they are, by this unprepossessing invasion. For they are not pleasing to the eye, with their predatory noses, and features which the word 'alien' describes with such peculiar felicity. One seems to be in a hostile tribal encampment, and it makes one afraid, not of them personally, but of the obvious tenacity, the leech-like grip, of a people who, one feels in one's English bones, flourish best on the decay of their hosts, like a malignant bacilli in the blood.<sup>382</sup>

If, as fascist rumours purported, Jews were responsible for the deaths of so many civilians, then one could expect German propaganda to take advantage of the situation. The broadcast by 'Lord Haw Haw' on 8 March 1943, when speaking about the tube shelter disaster, stated,

As a result of panic during an air raid,....In his report about the accident the British Home Secretary added that there had been no panic and no bombs dropped in the vicinity of the shelter.

That sort of fairy tale can only be told to a child or an Englishman. It is plain that as far as air raids are concerned, the nerves of Londoners seem to be on edge.<sup>383</sup>

It is clear, that from a German perspective, Britain's Jews played no part in the tube shelter disaster and that the loss of life was down to 'panic' by a nervous civilian population.

The aftermath of the Bethnal Green Tube Shelter disaster was just one episode in a long history of anti-immigrant xenophobia that has not been limited to anti-Jewish prejudice, but extends to the present day. When recalling Bethnal Green of the 1930s

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<sup>382</sup> H. Thorogood, *East of Aldgate* (London, 1935), pp.83-84.

<sup>383</sup> TNA: File HO 199/114 – BBC Daily Digest, World Broadcasts No.1329, 8 March 1943.



and the persistent anti-Semitism, Sam Vincent saw it as part of a wider social problem, with violence being endemic. 'Bethnal Green was a tough neighbourhood and one had to be tough to survive.'<sup>384</sup>

### Conclusion

Over the past forty years, historians of Anglo-Jewry have increasingly made a case for anti-Semitism being rife during the war years and as such, have been part of a movement that attacked the traditionalist 'spirit of the Blitz' with its images of a united and patriotic country pulling together. However, this is to ignore certain other arguments which counter this assertion. Firstly, the thesis has shown that Britain's non-Jews showed a great deal of goodwill in helping both locally and foreign born Jews. Britain did not stop helping Jews in September 1939. Having taken in Jewish adults and *Kinder*, non-Jews continued to house evacuees and facilitate the relocation of vulnerable Jewish schools. Where there was animosity towards Jews from the rest of the British population, the latter, being predominantly white Protestant/Christian and of Anglo-Saxon origin, were just as likely to be hostile to other minority groups living in Britain during the war.

In an interview with the author, Joan Dare stated that her father, born in 1899 in Lambeth and who was in the Royal Army Service Corps during World War Two, disliked both the Irish and the Jews. However, this did not stop her from making friends with a fellow teenage Jewish girl from London, Trudie Pasternak. The latter having moved with her wealthy family to the Home Counties to avoid the bombing of London, frequently went to London from Slough on the train with Joan Dare to the

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<sup>384</sup> S. Vincent, 'A Bethnal Green Childhood', *East London Record*, 1989 (12), p.22.

cinema. The fact that these trips and the friendship were kept secret by Joan Dare indicate (besides the concern of ever present bombing of the capital by the father) that once out of areas where minorities were concentrated, family or paternal prejudices could be shaken off by a younger generation. In part, it was perhaps the disruption caused by the war era and exposure to 'different people' that made many more open minded. Prior to this, and at the start of the war before her father had been posted to Slough, Joan Dare was living in Putney, but had come across and socialised with similar aged *Kinder* at a hostel in Wandsworth.<sup>385</sup>

Those who characterised Jews in a negative fashion were just as likely to do the same with the host of 'exotic' British Empire troops, particularly from the Caribbean and African colonies, along with the multitude of foreign soldiers from occupied countries in Europe such as Poland and France. As the largest contributor of foreign Allied troops, American white and black soldiers were subjected to arguably some of the harshest characterisations and hostile comments from the British public and media. Thus, the war years, with its often called 'friendly invasion' of foreign troops, joined the existing list of other resident minorities of Jews, Irish Catholics, Punjabi Sikhs and Muslims, Indians, Lascars and Chinese, who could be negatively stereotyped by some Britons.

An area that had been problematic since before the war and continued to be throughout the conflict concerned the lack of 'suitable' foster parents for Jewish children. Whilst Dr. Schonfeld did his best to keep Jewish children with Jewish

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<sup>385</sup> Joan Dare, interview with the author, 16 October 2009.

couples, certainly with Orthodox youngsters, it was always going to be inevitable that the Gentile population was going to have to make up the shortfall in required foster parents. As a mathematical exercise, the number of hostels testify to the fact that there were not enough homes, Jewish and non-Jewish, to cater for the number of children, both British and foreign born. One can also say that there was going to be a percentage of children who would lose their faith, if they had any sincere belief to begin with. Could Britain's Jewish community have done more to preserve the faith of the next generation? Certainly appeals went out to the community to take in members of their own faith, but as has been seen, many more foreign born children would have died in the Holocaust. A process of secularisation and upward social mobility was already underway before the war started and coupled with the physical destruction of traditional Jewish areas, Orthodoxy if not the faith as a whole was under pressure. Yet there are signs that the community could have done more and this was recognised at the time. In a commentary shortly before war broke out, but which could equally apply during the war, the *Jewish Chronicle* accusingly stated,

Have the Jews of this country.....nothing to reproach themselves for this sad business? Again and again have appeals been made for homes in which these children could be reared in the traditions of their creed. If these appeals are to be ignored, at least part of the blame for what will follow will lie on the heads of those who could help, but who refuse.<sup>386</sup>

A further area that courted controversy was the evacuation process and its long term effects. From the perspective of the 1939 evacuation, it made sense to evacuate the

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<sup>386</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 28 July 1939.

most vulnerable members of society, including those Jews who had only recently arrived in Britain, to the safety of the countryside or rural towns. The expectations of mass civilian bombing and use of gas, meant that Jews and non-Jews had to be evacuated. The psychological effects were, in the short term, of secondary importance. Certainly, for the majority of children, both Jewish and non-Jewish, there were no long term negative effects, with many testimonies as to the positive and enjoyable times experienced. As with any operation on the scale of Operation 'Pied Piper', there were 'casualties' that often only emerged many years later. For psychiatrists such as Anna Freud, the children would have had a more stable experience by staying with their parents or foster parents and facing the bombing as opposed to family separation. If nothing else, the evacuees' experience proved invaluable for the future of post-war childcare and the 'Welfare State'.<sup>387</sup>

As has been shown, Britain's Jewish population during the war was neither better, nor worse in terms of its qualities than most other people in the country during wartime. Crime, as defined by wartime conditions, was not the preserve of Anglo-Jewry. In terms of organised crime, those who led the gangs were non-Jews, but with significant numbers of Italians and Maltese being involved. Nor were Jewish people lacking in courage, either when facing German bombing or in joining the Armed Forces. Most Jewish people did not have the means to flee the cities and had to stay put. After particularly heavy air raids, defeatism could strike at any section of society and again, was not the preserve of the Jewish faith.

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<sup>387</sup> R. Inglis, *The Children's War: Evacuation 1939-1945* (London, 1990), pp.154-157.

To get an accurate picture of Anglo-Jewish relations during the war, it is important to look beyond the traditional setting for historians, in London's East End. In the next chapter, an examination, for the first time, of a complete set of Jewish refugee records from the city of Gloucester, will show the significant extent to which non-Jews formed a relationship with Jews from an 'enemy' country and the lack of anti-Semitism outside London. It will also demonstrate how one segment of Jewish society coped with wartime life and how in general, they attempted to prove their patriotism.

## **CHAPTER THREE: A COUNTY EXPERIENCE AND**

### **JEWISH PATRIOTISM, 1939-1945.**

While there have been a number of studies concerning the Jewish wartime experience based upon the situation in London and in particular the East End, there has been little written about Jews living outside the major cities. The chapter explores the impact of a small group of Jewish refugee boys on the city of Gloucester, using previously unpublished files from the county archive. From these files, one can see both the typicality and uniqueness of the boys' personal experiences against the backdrop of the Second World War and how the latter influenced their lives after having fled persecution. The Jewish experience of Gloucester, as well as non-Jews integrating with the boys, is an important representation of what took place across the country. It does not embrace the whole Jewish experience during wartime, but seeks to give an alternative viewpoint dealing with integration and Jewish patriotism in a provincial setting.

There were many small Jewish communities throughout the country, located in county market towns with a rural hinterland as opposed to the 'typical' poor inner-city setting. Some of these communities had been established for significant periods of time such as at Bristol since at least 1756 and Merthyr Tydfil since 1848. Others had only come about because of those Jews who had fled eastern Europe in the last third of the nineteenth century, examples being York since 1892 and Greenock since 1894. There were also congregations who owed their brief existence solely to the Second World War, such as Tilehurst United Synagogue, Reading, and at Minehead, Somerset, which were created and then disbanded during the war as a result of

significant numbers of Jews amongst those being evacuated from the cities to escape the bombing.<sup>388</sup> In Cheltenham, the synagogue closed in 1903, but was reopened in 1939 due to the number of evacuees and later, Jewish Servicemen in the American Armed Forces based in the county.<sup>389</sup> Similarly, Bristol's Jewish community compensated for a declining population with German/Austrian refugees in the late 1930s and American Servicemen based around the city in the 1940s.<sup>390</sup>

Gloucestershire's archives show that the city of Gloucester's non-Jewish population established a hostel to welcome a small number of German/Austrian Jewish teenage boys from the *Kindertransport* in the summer of 1939. The boys were educated and when old enough, given work. The welcome given to the Jewish boys by the public was only the start of a series of experiences shared by other refugee Jews: the eldest faced internment, while others went on to support the war effort by joining the Armed Forces. Thanks to the survival of a complete set of records for the Jewish refugee hostel, the chapter shows a distinct contrast to those histories of Jews in certain London boroughs which are often focused on by historians in order to highlight such aspects as continuing anti-Semitism or the physical, mental and spiritual neglect of *Kindertransport* refugees.<sup>391</sup>

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<sup>388</sup> For a brief history of Great Britain's synagogues on an individual basis, the Jewish genealogical website, [www.jewishgen.org/JCR-UK/Community](http://www.jewishgen.org/JCR-UK/Community), provides details to varying degrees as well as links to further information. Cecil Roth's *The Rise of Provincial Jewry* (London, 1950), although dated, is the standard work particularly on the establishment of regional synagogues and their history.

<sup>389</sup> Gloucestershire County Archives holds two boxes of as yet uncatalogued books and documents from the Cheltenham synagogue. See also Brian Torode, *The Hebrew Community of Cheltenham, Gloucester and Stroud* (Privately published, 1999).

<sup>390</sup> J. Samuel, *Jews in Bristol* (Bristol, 1997), pp.177,180.

<sup>391</sup> File D7501: Gloucester Association for Aiding Refugees (GAAR), is held by Gloucestershire County Archives, Alvin Road, Gloucester. It contains the complete records for the hostel, extensive details pertaining to their subsequent employment, correspondence with Jewish relief agencies and directives from London to all provincial refugee groups. The file was deposited in 1996 and apart from a local exhibition, it appears to have remained unused in any publications to date.

The Gloucestershire Association for Aiding Refugees (GAAR) was established in February 1939 as a response to the increased levels of persecution faced by Jews in Europe following *Kristallnacht*. In that sense, it was no different to a host of voluntary and charitable bodies established across the country that got together in response to fascism to work with the largest of the coordinating refugee groups, the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany. The founding of GAAR and the decision to help children was therefore typical of the country's generosity. Where it differed and offered a different profile to some other refugee bodies was the fact that it accepted older children who, by the summer of 1939, were unlikely to find a 'foster' family quickly; a situation that Nicholas Winton had found himself in Prague, that summer. A local newspaper, *The Citizen*, illustrated in its description of the inauguration of the appeal, the aims and emotional character of the project, writing,

Moving appeals to the citizens of Gloucester to give generously to the Lord Baldwin Fund for refugees from Czechoslovakia, Austria and Germany were made at a public meeting held at the Guildhall last night. ....It was resolved that the Gloucester Branch of the National Council of Women should form the nucleus of the committee. .... Miss E.M. Hartland, on behalf of the National Council of Women, appealed for the support of every organisation in the city interested in the welfare of children.<sup>392</sup>

The use of emotive language, with its almost universal appeal regarding 'children' as opposed to just saying 'refugees', paved the way for a key objective at this meeting.

The report continued with:

A great deal of money would, therefore be needed. "I know what Gloucester will do for suffering children", said Miss Hartland, "and their efforts will be

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<sup>392</sup> Gloucestershire County Archive, Gloucester (GCA): File D7501/1/1 – Minute Book. Newspaper cutting from the *Citizen*, 2 February 1939.



well worth while.’<sup>393</sup>

Besides stressing the emotional and humanitarian nature of the cause, the newspaper recorded the realistic situation facing those organisations that took in refugees, that this was not going to be a short term exercise. Having rescued the refugees, something would have to be done with them. This point was brought up by the Reverend Henry Carter, Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Lord Baldwin Fund, a principal speaker at the meeting who ‘stressed the point that if they had child refugees coming into their midst the committee must consider an obligation which would not be exhausted in a year or two, and they must budget accordingly.’<sup>394</sup> It was perhaps this long term obligation that meant the committee could only take on ten children, a realisation that was quickly understood and is shown early on in the committee’s Minute Book when estimating the costs involved in establishing a hostel.<sup>395</sup> In a message from the Bishop of Gloucester, Dr. A.C. Headlam, read out by the Mayor of Gloucester, Trevor Wellington, the former concluded the meeting with a comparison of the fortunate position the audience was in as opposed to those abroad who had lost those basic rights,

It seems to me that as long as we are allowed to enjoy our liberty, our home life, our ordered freedom, we should do what we can to help those who are deprived of all these things.<sup>396</sup>

Other organisations were represented at the meeting and by publicising their actions, they hoped to inspire others to get behind the initiative. Typical was a letter from Miss Whitaker, Principal of the Training College for Domestic Science in Gloucester, that

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<sup>393</sup> Ibid.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid.

<sup>395</sup> GCA: File D7501/1/1 Minute Book, page 11. Committee meeting, 22 February 1939.

<sup>396</sup> GCA: File D7501/1/1 Minute Book. *The Citizen*, 2 February 1939.

was read to the audience in order to show by example what could be done to help. The letter stated that the governing body of the college had authorised the Principal to offer two ‘practically free places to refugee students’. The college had, ‘also been able to provide them with clothes, she said, holidays, and pocket money through gifts from the students and others, and from the benevolent fund of the College’. “This is the kind of practical help I like to hear of”, commented the Mayor.<sup>397</sup> Whilst the local newspaper reported favourably on the event and gave it extensive coverage in both the article and editorial, it also highlighted the fact that members of the British Union of Fascists (BUF) were present, who objected to money being raised for refugees whilst there were high levels of unemployment in the country. In a letter read out by the Mayor, Trevor Wellington, the BUF maintained that he should not be a spokesman on behalf of the Lord Baldwin Refugee Fund. Furthermore, the BUF considered that, “owing to the appalling condition in which our own unemployed live, and the terrible struggle they have against poverty, that the time is highly inappropriate for a representative of the City of Gloucester to represent a Fund not for them or on behalf of them, but directly against them.”<sup>398</sup> The *Citizen*’s political leanings may be gathered from its criticism of the Mayor of Gloucester for spending too much time specifically rebuffing the BUF’s arguments one by one. However, the success of the meeting can be judged by the lack of any trouble from the BUF in the Guildhall.

It is interesting to note that whilst many references are made concerning either children or use the word refugee, the article does not mention the word ‘Jew’ as being the specific beneficiary for the fundraising. This in itself raises the question of whether or not it was a deliberate omission. The files give no indication as to the

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<sup>397</sup> Ibid.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid.

answer. However, one can speculate that with a BUF presence in the crowd it was prudent at this stage not to mention the word 'Jew'. Alternatively, the committee had genuinely not yet thought of a specific group to receive their help.

The GAAR minutes for the start of March 1939 show how a sub-committee came to the decision, after much debate, to establish a hostel for Jewish teenage boys as opposed to any other option, such as creating a network of foster homes or helping a mixture of children and adults. A Mr. Prichard reported to other members of his visit to Oxford to observe how their various efforts at helping refugees were managed. The scale of the refugee operation he saw in Oxford was much larger than anything contemplated by Gloucester. However, it did provide useful information about the costs involved in running a hostel, which came to be the final choice for GAAR. The minutes provide us with interesting details not just about the scale of help being offered, but also something of the conditions refugees experienced.

Oxford, like its counterpart Cambridge, appears to have had a well established refugee population by March 1939, in addition to its host Jewish community. Being an 'academic' city, it had had some experience of the refugee problem since 1933, involving not only professors, but also the whole gamut of families, adults, children, domestic servants etc. (besides agricultural projects in the surrounding countryside). When Mr. Prichard visited the city, he found one refugee organiser, helped by three voluntary assistants, to look after three existing projects, with another one just being established. The latter included a hostel with ten Czech girls (aged 15/16), involved in

‘domestic training’ and overseen by a Czech couple.<sup>399</sup> A subsequent visit to Oxford revealed that all of its furniture and the children’s clothes had been donated and that the Warden couple were paid no money. Food costs were kept to a minimum of £4.5.0 per week for the hostel and consisted of;

Breakfast – Porridge, cocoa, bread, butter, marmalade.

Lunch – meat and vegetables and pudding.

Tea – as usual.

Supper – cocoa and bread and cheese.<sup>400</sup>

One can only surmise as to the changes made to the meals once the war started and rationing was introduced, and how continental tastes took to bland English cooking. Mr. Prichard was told by the Oxford refugee organiser (this was relayed on to the sub-committee), ‘that it is better to have the children in a hostel than to have them in private homes.: he thinks the latter presents too many difficulties.’<sup>401</sup> It was from these figures that the GAAR sub-committee came up with its own set of financial estimates for their own hostel, supervising couple and ten children;

Rent and Rates - £60

Food - £260

Heating and Lighting - £15

Medical Allowance - £5

Clothing – £25

Superintendents - £12

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<sup>399</sup> GCA: File D7501/1/1 Minute Book, pp.12-13. GAAR sub-committee meeting, 6 March 1939. In addition to the hostel for the Czech girls, the refugee organisation was responsible for eleven boys, all aged about 16, in private homes. Five of the boys were studying at Technical College and six were placed at an engineering works. Similarly, they were responsible for thirty children aged about 5/6, who were also in private homes. They were in the process of establishing a hostel for thirty German boys, looked after by a German couple and Warden, and were ‘to be trained in science or by a voluntary panel of university Dons.’

<sup>400</sup> GCA: File D7501/1/1 Minute Book, p.15. GAAR sub-committee meeting, 11 March 1939.

<sup>401</sup> GCA: File D7501/1/1 Minute Book, p.13. GAAR sub-committee meeting, 6 March 1939.

A total of £377<sup>402</sup>

In late March 1939, GAAR had written to the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany with their appraisal that, ‘We realise that the case of the larger boys is urgent, and we are willing to take 10 boys of 13 years old or so.’<sup>403</sup> Whilst these boys did not require a monetary guarantee of £50 each, thus saving GAAR an immediate cost of £500, they were able to offer additional help on an individual basis for children being sent by themselves to Gloucestershire. In the same letter and responding to an earlier request from the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany, GAAR was able to confirm that it could vet potential guarantors. As GAAR represented such a diverse number of organisations, it was able to look at such guarantors and report back to the Movement that, for example, ‘Miss Baker, of Badminton School, is vouched for by the organising secretary of the Rural Community Council.’<sup>404</sup>

The ten children that GAAR had asked for were classified as ‘unguaranteed’, as were the ones that it hoped to find individual homes for. As a rule, most ‘foster’ families had a preference, in that they ‘wanted a small child – a blue-eyed, fair-haired boy or girl, under ten years of age.’<sup>405</sup> The older boys that had been specifically asked for, were the most difficult to place even amongst orthodox or liberal Jewish families.<sup>406</sup>

The lucky few might find themselves, as a group, being looked after on a large landed

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<sup>402</sup> GCA: File 7501/1/1 Minutes Book, p.15. GAAR sub-committee meeting, 11 March 1939. Figures for annual expenditure.

<sup>403</sup> Gloucestershire County Archive, Gloucester: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Mrs. Hall, GAAR, to Major G.H. Langdon, Hon. Organising Secretary, Movement for the Care of Children from Germany, dated 22 March 1939.

<sup>404</sup> For a list of the original representatives to GAAR that exemplify its wide ranging nature in the county, please refer to the Appendices, Figure 1.

<sup>405</sup> E. Reading, *For the Record: The Memoirs of Eva, Marchioness of Reading* (London, 1973), p.116.

<sup>406</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.166-167.

family estate or at a Quaker boarding school. Others might go to JRC hostels, looked after by the orthodox *B'nai Brith* or *Agudath Israel*. In the case of the ten boys, common to many teenagers, they became the responsibility of a regional refugee committee, namely Gloucester.<sup>407</sup>

GAAR, having made its initial contact with the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany, was quickly made aware of the extent of the persecution of continental Jews by the spring of 1939. In a series of requests to accept and find homes for hundreds of Jewish refugees at very short notice, the GAAR archive provides us with an important example of why it was not always possible for the provincial aid agencies and organisations to accommodate them all. In early April, GAAR received a request from the Co-ordinating Committee for Refugees in Bloomsbury stating that four hundred Czech Jewish refugees had unexpectedly arrived and asking them what temporary hospitality they could mobilise.<sup>408</sup> Just ten days later, GAAR's services were once again called upon to find homes for forty Jewish children from Danzig. The tone and presentation of the letter make it clear how desperate the situation was for the London based Movement for the Care of Children from Germany.

We can bring a number of children over from Danzig in the near future without guarantees if we are able to collect offers of homes for them before they come as we have no space in our Clearing Camps for them to stay.

There will be about 25 girls between the ages of 10 and 15. There are also 15 boys between the ages of 12 and 15. They are all non-Orthodox Jewish, and come from middle class or lower middle class homes. Unfortunately we are

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<sup>407</sup> A. Gottlieb, *Men of Vision*, pp.118-119.

<sup>408</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/5. Telegram from Co-ordinating Committee for Refugees, Bloomsbury, London to Mrs. Hall, GAAR, dated 4 April 1939.

not able to obtain any further details of the children. Should foster parents who take these children into their homes find them unsuitable, we will move them to homes in other parts of the country as soon as possible.<sup>409</sup>

It is worth noting the number of times refugee agencies such as the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany state that their charges are ‘non-Orthodox’, indicating that they would be more ‘acceptable’ or easier to place with families. The social class that the child comes from is also another factor frequently stated, which may indicate that there was a perceived idea concerning the more likely host families who would foster a child. The letter continued, but with increasing emotion and sense of urgency,

These children are living under very miserable conditions in Danzig and we want to make a special effort to find homes for them here. If your Committee is able to help in any way, please let us know immediately and head your reply ‘Danzig Children’.

We are not able to bring over any of these children until all are placed as they must travel in one transport.

In view of the urgency of the situation we should be most glad for your help.<sup>410</sup>

The letter’s conclusion indicates that yet further requests for help were a distinct possibility, though perhaps more realistically, on an individual basis for finding homes for children, rather than en bloc.

We should be grateful if at the same time you could send a list of all offers of hospitality to children still open in your area.<sup>411</sup>

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<sup>409</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/5. Letter from I.D. Morley, Committees, British Inter-Aid Committee, Movement for the Care of Children from Germany (Ref. DH/MM 14439 A) to Secretary, GAAR, dated 14 April 1939.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid.

This area had already been investigated during the time of the request to help with four hundred Czech Jewish refugees, when Diana Hambro, Secretary for Provincial Relations of the Co-ordinating Committee for Refugees had written to GAAR to find individuals willing to take refugee Jews. From the reply giving the names and addresses of three people in Gloucestershire who could immediately take in refugees, Diana Hambro's following letter indicated an acceptance of all three and indicated the types of refugees they had to offer. Whilst the majority of the letter is typed, there is a telling hand written note saying that besides single men and married couples that need accommodation, these people were professionals, who 'don't look like Jews.'<sup>412</sup> This raises many questions, including whether they had become aware of some underlying tension in the country at this time in response to ever increasing numbers of Jewish refugee immigrants or they were aware of the 'potential' for future difficulties.

The three offers of help from Gloucestershire individuals mentioned in the above letter show the preferences the refugee agencies had for the foster homes. While the Co-ordinating Committee for Refugees accepted offers from a Mrs. Kemp of a 'girl or woman of good standing' and Mr. Bruce Swanwick, J.P., who wanted 'a woman for a week', Mr. Wynne's need of 'a lad of 15 or slightly over' was considered of greater benefit to the refugees.<sup>413</sup> The reason that his offer was considered to be of such importance was that besides not having any children of his own, Mr. Wynne could offer a boy a 'permanent' position at the farm and make him 'one of the family, if he were suitable for farming, and would like to take it up.'<sup>414</sup> To their credit, the refugee

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<sup>412</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/5. Letter from Diana Hambro, Secretary for Provincial Relations, Co-ordinating Committee for Refugees, London, to Mrs. Hall, GAAR, dated 4 April 1939.

<sup>413</sup> Ibid. The three offers came from Mrs. Kemp, Upper Wells, Brockworth, Mr. Bruce Swanwick, The Road House, nr. Stroud, and Mr. Wynne, a farmer from Bunnage Farm, Miserden.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid.



agencies were not always looking for a quick solution to a problem, but also recognised the importance of ‘permanency’ or stability in the lives of the refugees.

Mrs. Hall as Secretary to GAAR, was responsible for dealing with the day to day matters or requests asked of the association and the county’s resources. Besides those already noted, once children had been accommodated around the country and placed in schools, the organisation’s archive reveals that she was also asked by London to help with pupils during their holidays. Also in April 1939, Mrs. Hall was requested to find temporary Easter accommodation for Miss Essinger’s school girls from the New Herrlingen School, Otterden, Kent.<sup>415</sup> Coming at the same time as possibly hundreds of Czechs, a party of Danzigers and other pleas from organisations and individuals, it is hard to imagine where in Gloucestershire they could all be located.

An example of the pressures placed on regional refugee agencies came in September 1939, with a letter to Mrs. Hall from a Mrs. Jessie M. Harrington in Warminster, Wiltshire, who was attempting to find alternative employment for her German Jewish domestic servant. The girl, aged twenty three, had arrived in Britain three months earlier on the understanding that if war broke out, she could not stay with Mrs. Harrington (the latter mistakenly believed the government or aid agencies would deal with the situation). Once the war started with all the problems that entailed, the situation became untenable as Mrs. Harrington made clear in her plea to Mrs. Hall.

....as I have had to leave my London house where she was employed and I am here in a small cottage with evacuated children (school age) also a mother and baby. The girl is not required for help here and we are full up. At present

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<sup>415</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/5. Letter from Movement for the Care of Children from Germany to Mrs. Hall, GAAR, dated 5 April 1939.

she is sleeping in the loft, and I am giving her food and shelter till she can find somewhere else to go.<sup>416</sup>

Having explained the problems in getting hold of fuel, cooking and not being able to pay her, she continued by stating an often heard difficulty with the newly arrived domestic servants, already noted in Chapter One.

I have to oversee all cooking and fires as the girl does not understand our ways and in any case is not trained as a servant.

She is not of the usual servant class, but a German Jewish lawyer's daughter, and is pleasant and willing, and very fond of children of all ages. She is a Froebel kindergarten trained, and would be excellent with small Jewish children.<sup>417</sup>

The outcome for this request is not stated, although it is known that the girl had a Home Office permit to stay in Britain indefinitely, until she was able to emigrate to America, for which she was on a list to go at some time. However, from later correspondence in November 1939 with the Central Office for Refugees on the matter of domestic servants, Mrs. Hall states that she had nothing to do with their employment, commenting,

It seems to me that there is less demand for refugee domestics now, the reason being chiefly that the feeling is they are no good. Several times employers have said to me "She is very nice, but not much else".<sup>418</sup>

The outcome was even less promising when one takes into account that in September 1939, GAAR was well aware of the fact that Gloucester was a central reception hub for thousands of British children being evacuated from key bombing targets such as Birmingham and that all of them would have to be found homes. The practical

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<sup>416</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/5. Letter from Mrs. Jessie M. Harrington, Turnpike Cottage, Warminster, Wiltshire, to Mrs. Hall, GAAR, dated 22 September 1939.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid.

<sup>418</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/5. Letter from Mrs. Hall, GAAR, to Ruth Tomlinson, Director, Central Office for Refugees, Domestic Bureau, Bloomsbury House, London, dated 23 November 1939.

realities and logistics of placing large numbers of displaced children in available homes meant that that not all demands could be met, despite criticism from historians in later years.

Having formed a committee to administer the association, GAAR and in particular, Mrs. Hall, was responsible for the collection of funds, the purchase of a suitable children's home and furniture, the hiring of staff, the children's education and their religious upbringing. Companies, businesses, organisations, charities and individuals were encouraged to give either of their time or services. In the case of the local *Co-operative Society*, they freely gave butter to the hostel both before and during the war.<sup>419</sup> There was also the question of how to treat the boys and integrate them into the wider community. Within the context of the situation they found themselves in, the boys were to be treated the same as any other boys of their age. The GAAR Committee quickly recognised the importance of some sense of 'normality'. This included each boy receiving pocket money from the committee of up to 6d per week, 'each boy to write to his parents once a week' and that, 'nothing should be done which might tend to separate the boys from their parents or religion.'<sup>420</sup> All of this was achieved between the formation of GAAR in February and the arrival of ten boys in June 1939, and was coordinated by the Honorary Secretary, Mrs T.G. Hall.

GAAR had applied to the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany to send them ten suitable boys. The Movement sent the boys from their temporary home, Barham House, Claydon, nr. Ipswich (a former Georgian workhouse), having come first from Dovercourt Camp. They were;

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<sup>419</sup> GCA: File D7501/1/1 – Minute Book, p.118. Entry dated 27 November 1939.

<sup>420</sup> GCA: File D7501/1/1 – Minute Book, pp.78,93. Entries dated 2 and 15 June 1939.

Walter Kolpack (born 17/6/1927), Vienna

Guenther Meyer (26/8/1924), Bochum

Iwan/Ivan Mularski/Mularsky (16/2/1925), Lubeck<sup>421</sup>

Julius Mularski/Mularsky (4/10/1926, Lubeck

Peter Nebenzahl (27/9/1925), Hamburg

Kurt Reimann (30/6/1925), Danzig

Robert Suschitzki (10/10/1926), Vienna

Arnold Ullmann (23/11/1925), Berlin

Harry Vorgang (18/1/1926), Vienna

Werner Zorek (14/10/1925), Breslau<sup>422</sup>

The selection of children was likely to have been less than rigorous by comparison with modern standards, particularly given the heightening tension of events in central/eastern Europe in the spring of 1939 and the urgency to move the vulnerable to Britain. The briefness of the children's personal details logged on information cards sent to GAAR suggests that speed was of the essence.<sup>423</sup> There are useful comments given for the successful transfer such as noting that Peter Nebenzahl is an orphan, but had a brother in England already. The assessment of their ability to speak English would also have proven useful, along with noting who were 'liberal' Jews. What is more debatable concerning their value, are the comments such as 'a decent boy', 'splendid little worker', 'tall and rather good appearance' and 'a very decent type of

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<sup>421</sup> The names 'Iwan' and 'Mularsky' are the spellings used by Barham House on their information cards. In subsequent papers, GAAR has altered the spellings to 'Ivan' and 'Mularski'. After the war, the spelling 'Iwan' is used by the subject.

<sup>422</sup> Guenther Meyer, Kurt Reimann and Arnold Ullmann were not on the original list of refugees to be sent to Gloucester. They replaced Willi Schneider (Barham House no.2371), Bruno Veis (2111) and Hugo Wolff (3190), who were able to be found foster homes.

<sup>423</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). File contains background and personal details for the boys. See Appendix C for boy's details as given by the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany.

boy'. All of the information cards regarding the boys refer to their manners and their degree of obedience. This may be indicative of British concerns regarding the behaviour of 'exotic foreigners'. However, perhaps as an acknowledgement of the religious concerns experienced particularly by Orthodox Jewry, the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany did try to ensure not only the children's economic future wellbeing, but also their spiritual needs.

It appears that from descriptions of Barham House, which had accommodation for up to two hundred boys and partly run along Youth Aliyah lines, it had a mixed reputation. Opened in the winter of 1938, the ruinous building was meant to be self-sufficient by the following summer, whilst the boys learnt English and various trades, with the belief, 'that young people thrived on fresh air, early morning runs and cold showers.'<sup>424</sup> Comments on the initial regime at Barham House during the winter of 1938/39 were not encouraging. Ernst Sicher reported,

Our headmaster, Mr.Percival, fixed our windows so that they could not be shut at night. In that cold winter I got sciatica and one morning I couldn't move my legs.

Other boys remembered cases of diphtheria, scarlet fever, scabies and rats that 'tore away the bottoms from the boys' trousers and at night you could hear their squeaking very clearly.' Damp rooms and a poor diet resulted in a change of staff during the spring, provoking an ungracious comment from one former employee.

Whoever's behind this can count himself lucky. If there was a war on, I'd shoot him.<sup>425</sup>

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<sup>424</sup> B.Turner, *And The Policeman Smiled*, p.165.

<sup>425</sup> *Ibid.*, p.166.

The improvement in conditions and management up to the outbreak of war, would have coincided with the time during the summer that the ten boys left for Gloucester.<sup>426</sup>

In Chapter One, it was noted that the ill feeling felt between Jews from Germany of German and Polish origin continued in Britain and for all ages. The antagonism was most noticeable amongst the older boys held at Dovercourt and at Barham House. The enmity felt between the refugees also extended into issues of nationality, where former national rivalries flared between the boys from Germany and Austria. One former inmate of Dovercourt recalled,

I remember being amazed at the enmity between the Austrian boys and the boys from Berlin – they hated each others’ guts! There was evidently some enmity between Austria and Germany and the Jewish boys were part and parcel of this; they had accepted this.<sup>427</sup>

Another inmate, Henry Schwartz, remembered,

The Germans still thought of themselves as Germans and the Austrians still thought of themselves as Austrians; they didn’t think of themselves as Jews primarily.<sup>428</sup>

Despite the predicament of their situation (made worse by the boredom of inactivity at Dovercourt), the disunity of the teenagers illustrates the fallacy held by many in right wing circles, that all Jews looked after one another. Given the social mix and ethnic origins of the boys going to Gloucester and having a Czech couple look after them, potentially one might anticipate that this was going to be a difficult time. Although

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<sup>426</sup> Ibid., p.167. Barham House was taken over by the army at the end of 1940, once the last boys had moved out.

<sup>427</sup> Ibid., p.67

<sup>428</sup> Ibid.

there are some comments made suggesting that at first all had not gone smoothly, the archive contains no explicit references to fights or hostility at the hostel.

Even before the boys arrived in Gloucester, the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany was keen to emphasise in a letter to GAAR the importance of educating the boys in some sort of trade or vocational area.

Although we appreciate that you will be able to educate the boys for a year or so until they reach school leaving age, we should be very glad to know whether there will be facilities in Gloucester for technical training, as it is essential that these boys should be prepared to earn their own living overseas when they are eighteen.<sup>429</sup>

This shows that the crisis in Europe was anticipated to last at least until 1940 if not longer. There was also the continuing concern as to how Jews, even teenagers, might be viewed by the host nation and that they should not be seen as a burden to the British taxpayer. The Jews needed to be self-reliant.

A hostel was established at 18 Alexandra Road, Gloucester, and was staffed by Dr. and Mrs. Paul Arnstein, two Czech Jews from Prague who were allowed into Britain thanks to the need for hostel wardens.<sup>430</sup> Mrs. Hall, the Wardens and the wider community did their utmost to make the boys' experience and integration into British society as easy as possible. This was a significant responsibility to take on, even just in terms of a financial cost, despite being eventually subsidised by the Movement for

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<sup>429</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany to Mrs. Hall, GAAR, dated 23 March 1939.

<sup>430</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/11 (no title). The hostel cost £750 to purchase and was sold two and a half years later for £800. As the hostel received many donations of furniture, linen etc., so they, in the wartime spirit, donated the items when the hostel was wound up. The chief beneficiary was the Salvation Army hostel at St. Mary's Lodge, 16 Alexandra Road, Gloucester.

the Care of Children from Germany. In reply to the latter's request later on in the year to provide information on costings, Mrs. Hall replied,

We have 10 boys, aged 12-15, for whom we are entirely responsible, and we employ a refugee couple as wardens in our hostel. The weekly cost per head for food, laundry, etc., is about 8/- to 9/-. We then have salaries, rent, rates, light, heat etc., so far we have had many gifts in kind, so we cannot give anything like an exact figure.<sup>431</sup>

This gives an indication as to why no single or even a small number of existing charities and churches could take on the financial burden and that it required a large group of organisations to cater for the needs of the Jewish refugees (besides non-Jewish refugees that were already in Britain and would continue to arrive as Germany expanded its borders).

The boys arrived in the week of 12 June 1939 and were enrolled in Archdeacon Street Senior Boys School the same week. The school was located in a notably deprived area of the city and catered for those with more vocational than academic talents. It might also be assumed that presumptions were made concerning the boys' command of English and therefore Archdeacon School was considered a suitable place. Due to the city's plans to amalgamate the boys' school and Kingsholm Senior Girls School, the refugees were then transferred in September to Kingsholm Senior Mixed School. According to Mrs. Hall, 'While they were at school, we received good reports

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<sup>431</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Mrs Hall, GAAR, to Central Office for Refugees, Bloomsbury House, London, dated 23 November 1939. This was in response to a circular sent out by the latter to 'all Caseworking and Provincial Committees', dated 17 November 1939, to provide number and costs for refugees they were responsible for.





Illustration 3a: *The Citizen*, 22 June 1939. The photograph displays the sort of scene that the refugee agencies wanted to convey to the British public. In that the boys were well treated, given a home and in return, the boys would show gratitude, act in civilised manner, be well presented and accept what was generously given to them. Werner Zorek is on the extreme right of the picture.

of them and their development has been very satisfactory indeed.<sup>432</sup> At the start of the war, it was fortunate that Gloucester was located outside what was termed a 'Protected Area' as foreign born aliens, which included the ten boys, they would have

<sup>432</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/11 (no title). Report given by Mrs. Hall to GAAR General Meeting, 2 December 1941.

had to be relocated.<sup>433</sup> For many *Kinder*, this was both upsetting, given the circumstances of their arrival in Britain and for those yet to grasp the English language, totally mystifying. When the boys reached fourteen years of age, they went onto Gloucester Junior Technical College (Brunswick Street) to learn a trade. At the same time, the boys went straight into apprenticeships with local firms. Once the last of the boys was fourteen, Dr. and Mrs. Arnstein resigned their positions and the hostel was closed in December 1941. Mrs. Hall found both employment for the boys and families to act as ‘foster’ parents, although GAAR insisted on being ultimately responsible for the boys until they reached the age of eighteen.

Initially, the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany kept in contact with the boys and GAAR. As soon as the boys had arrived at the hostel and started school, they had written ‘a very happy letter’ to Barham House with news. In a reply to Mrs. Hall, the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany was reassured that, ‘They seem to like everything in the place: the house, the people, the school, and last not least the food.’<sup>434</sup> A measure of Barham House’s gratitude to GAAR, especially with a shortage of places available to Jewish children and the deteriorating European situation, may be gathered from their sense of relief: ‘I am so glad that they do realise the privilege they are enjoying; they are so grateful that we sent them to Gloucester’. Presumably, never having been in Britain before, it is difficult to see how they could have compared Gloucester to anywhere else in the country. There is also the insinuation that all had not gone well on previous occasions with refugee children. The writer was concerned with ‘trouble’ having already been caused by one of the

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<sup>433</sup> Wiener Library, London: MF DOC 27/68/310 Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief, 1933-1960; Central Committee for Refugees, 1940-1941.

<sup>434</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Movement for the Care of Children from Germany (Haybrook) to Mrs. Hall, GAAR, dated 17 June 1939.

boys, Mularsky (spelling as given), and concluded, 'Let us hope that this will be the only sort of trouble that they will cause'. From the lack of any critical comments towards the boys, either from GAAR, the 'foster' families and the wider community, it appears that the boys settled in well to their new life. The 'trouble' mentioned in the letter referred to Julius Mularski, who no sooner having arrived in Gloucester was admitted to the city's Royal Infirmary with appendicitis. In her correspondence with the hospital, mostly concerning the payment for the boy's treatment, Mrs. Hall recognised the feelings shown to Julius Mularski by the staff.<sup>435</sup> On stating how surprised GAAR was at the low cost of the treatment, Mrs. Hall thanked the staff 'for their kindness to Julius'. She further reveals what must have been experienced by many of the *Kinder* in those early days, having recently left Germany. Referring to his stay in hospital, she goes on, 'He was very happy there, through what must have been a rather terrifying experience for a boy among complete strangers, in a strange land, and parted from his parents in such tragic circumstances'. Mrs. Hall ends with a remark that would have been all too familiar to many of the children as parents were often prevented from going onto the railway station platforms to say goodbye. The situation in Mularski's case was worse still by the fact that, 'When he left Germany, he could not say "Good-bye" to his father, as Herr Mularski was in a concentration camp.'<sup>436</sup>

GAAR was just one part of a county wide refugee organisation, Gloucestershire Rural

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<sup>435</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Olive Dyke, Provincial After Care Dept., Movement for the Care of Children from Germany, Bloomsbury House, London to Mrs. Hall, GAAR, dated 29 June 1939. Olive Dyke and the Movement were well aware of the potential for a negative reaction to the *Kinder* when she comments, 'For major operations our children are insured up to £10, as we are responsible to the Home Office for seeing that these children do not become a burden on the rate-payers'.

<sup>436</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Mrs. Hall, GAAR to F. Symons, Secretary, Gloucestershire Royal Infirmary and Eye Institution, dated 14 July 1939.



Illustration 3b: GCA: D7501/4/4 Leaflets. Issued by the

Christian Council for Refugees from Germany (not dated).

Community Council: County Co-Ordinating Committee for Aiding Refugees, within which the various town refugee groups from across the county met every three months. They in turn were part of a much larger regional refugee body for the south-west of England, namely the Regional Council for Refugees, No.7 Defence Region. The country was divided up into regions that were answerable to the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany, London, up until 1939, when co-ordination and responsibility was devolved to the different defence regions.

The minutes recorded during 1939 for the County Co-Ordinating Committee for Aiding Refugees, which GAAR attended, showed the initial efforts to house and welcome Jewish refugees. They also show that Mrs. Hall was not alone with the problems she had to overcome. In the first meeting after GAAR was trying to establish its hostel, the April 1939 minutes record that in Cirencester they were

**Leo Mularski**

Erstklassige Maßschneiderei

für  
Damen- u. Herrengarderoben

Für jeden gewünschten Schnitt, sowie für Ia Sitz  
gebe ich schriftliche Garantie.

Durch eigene Kunststoffererei garantiere ich, zu  
wendende Garderobe erstklassig zu erneuern.

Hamburg 13, d. 19. Juni 1939  
Heinrich Barthstraße 1  
Fernruf .....

Mu

Gloucester Association for Bedding Refugees  
25 Barton Street  
Gloucester (England)

Sehr geehrtes Fr. Hall!

Wir bestätigen dankend den Empfang Ihres Briefes vom  
16. ds. Mts. und waren hier erschüttert über die Nachricht.  
Gott sei Dank, dass die Operation gut verlaufen ist und  
so hoffen wir, dass es unserem lb. Sohne Julius mit Gottes  
Hilfe weiter gut gehen wird.

Wir bitten Sie höflichst, uns laufend über den  
Gesundheitszustand zu unterrichten, da wir sehr  
besorgt sind und danken Ihnen hierfür sehr  
im voraus.

Mit vorzüglicher Hochachtung  
Herr Leo Mularski und Frau Lilly

Illustration 3c: GCA D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Leo Mularski to Mrs. Hall, dated 19 June 1939, thanking her for looking after Julius. This is the only example within the records of a letter written by the parents to GAAR.

struggling to find long term accommodation. Their representative, the Reverend E.C. Wearne stated that a house had been temporarily offered for nineteen refugee men to stay at. He continued that,

Among them was the most eminent child specialist from Vienna, a lawyer of international reputation and other distinguished refugees.



The problem which arose was a familiar one regarding short term 'solutions'.

The owner of the house would be returning in July and although further accommodation had been found for three of the men his association was unable to conceive how the other 16 could be provided for. The men were nearly all over 50 and no country would accept refugees of this age.<sup>437</sup>

As Gloucestershire was a large and predominantly rural county, a number of the positions open to refugees were in agriculture. At another county meeting of refugee associations in July 1939, the minutes highlight the fact that although the associations were receiving offers of help from farmers, there were problems in obtaining refugees from the Agricultural Department at Bloomsbury House. This point had also been noted in the previous meeting in April and was typical of the sometimes fractious relations between London and the provinces. Part of the problem was that the small volunteer staff at Bloomsbury House were receiving about 20,000 letters a week and therefore organisational arrangements for refugees were under severe strain.<sup>438</sup> So although it was reported in July 1939 that three married couples, twelve boys, with a further three boys immediately on the way, had been found agricultural placements, the county as a whole could have absorbed more refugees for farming.<sup>439</sup>

Religious elements within both Anglo and continental Jewry were concerned for the spiritual welfare of a faith disrupted by persecution and war. No doubt there were thoughts that without spiritual and moral direction, unruly Jewish children might spark an unwelcome reaction from host communities, not to mention adverse publicity for the Jewish community as a whole. The *Jewish Chronicle* expressed such

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<sup>437</sup> GCA: File D7501/1/3 'Committees'. Minutes of Gloucestershire Rural Community Council: County Co-Ordinating Committee for Aiding Refugees, Community House, Gloucester, 1 April 1939.

<sup>438</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 July 1939.

<sup>439</sup> GCA: File D7501/1/3 'Committees'. Minutes of Gloucestershire Rural Community Council: County Co-Ordinating Committee for Aiding Refugees, Community House, Gloucester, 21 July 1939.

fears at the end of 1940, asking the question, ‘.....do you want thousands of Jewish children to run wild in various parts of the country and to grow up ignorant heathens, bringing reproach and hatred to the name of Jew?’<sup>440</sup> Throughout the time GAAR was responsible for the boys, their religious education was of concern to Mrs. Hall and other bodies linked them. Both Mrs. Hall and the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany took a pragmatic view. For the latter, this is illustrated in a letter to GAAR as soon as the boys had arrived in Gloucester, a city with no synagogue or organised congregation since the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>441</sup> It was pointed out to Mrs. Hall that none of the boys ‘has had anything like an orthodox home’. The teenage boys could have no say on the matter of religious education, but ‘we should like them to be brought up with a good knowledge of the Bible; I am sure the Rabbi from Bristol will assist you in this matter.’<sup>442</sup> GAAR and other bodies were in a delicate position regarding the Jewish faith. On the one side were those Jews who were totally secular and brought their children up that way, while there were those who expected a modicum of ‘Religious Instruction’, as with many Anglican/Church of England families. Additionally, there were families who would have wanted a more Orthodox or fundamentalist approach to the education of their children. The route chosen by both the Barham House and Mrs. Hall may be judged from the conclusion to the letter which advises, ‘If this Rabbi should be an orthodox Rabbi and thus cause any inconvenience to you through demanding any ritual regulations I should be grateful if you would let us know about it’. Clearly, there is an indication that there had been friction in the past over religious differences.

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<sup>440</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 20 December 1940.

<sup>441</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Movement for the Care of Children (Haybrook) to Mrs. Hall, GAAR, dated 17 June 1939.

<sup>442</sup> Besides [www.jewishgen.org/JCR-UK/Community](http://www.jewishgen.org/JCR-UK/Community) for the history of the different Jewish congregations in the city, also read Judith Samuel, *Jews in Bristol: The History of the Jewish Community in Bristol from the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (Bristol, 1997).

No progress seems to have been made with the boys' Jewish religious education until January 1940, when GAAR was contacted by the Reverend Raphael Levine of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue in London.<sup>443</sup> Mrs. Hall's reply illustrates the haphazard and arbitrary nature of what could happen in the aftermath of so many people moving about the country, when she informed the Reverend Levine, 'We have been concerned about the question of our boys' religion ever since we have had them, and have several times written to Bloomsbury House, and also to the Rabbi at Bristol, for advice and help, but nothing has come of it till you wrote.'<sup>444</sup> The date of the correspondence shows that there had been a gap of seven months between the boys arriving in Gloucester and when their circumstances alerted the Liberal Jewish Synagogue. There was also a lack of support from the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany. Although the boys would have received some religious education from their school and attendance at Sunday school, any specific Jewish contact or input was limited as made clear to the Reverend Raphael Levine, 'There is no Jewish community here, and they have not been asked to attend any other place of worship, though we did send them to Cheltenham for one of your Feasts'. The fact that the Cheltenham Synagogue was Orthodox, might explain why the boys only attended once.<sup>445</sup> In the February of 1940, the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany belatedly got involved once more, in what would prove to be an

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<sup>443</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Reverend Raphael Levine, Liberal Jewish Synagogue, 28 St. John's Wood Road, London to Mrs. Hall, GAAR, dated 17 January 1940.

<sup>444</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Mrs. Hall, GAAR, to Reverend Raphael Levine, Liberal Jewish Synagogue, dated 24 January 1940.

<sup>445</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Information cards from Barham House, Movement for the Care of Children from Germany. These state that the children were 'liberal' Jews in their family background. However, even this description might be misleading given the boys' subsequent lack of interest in religious matters.



ongoing problem for Mrs Hall and GAAR.<sup>446</sup> By March, a suggestion for having a religious instruction correspondence course run by the Liberal Jewish Synagogue (which was often the only option in places with no established Jewish community) had given way to the proposal for sending a Rabbi from Birmingham to visit the boys. This in turn presented problems both with travel from Birmingham and with the availability of the boys to attend classes.<sup>447</sup> In the case of the former, problems with travel occurred once the Blitz had started, and with the latter, as the boys got jobs/apprenticeships.

Initially, the Birmingham Reverend, Dr. S. Rappaport, and the refugee boys seem to have had a successful relationship if his correspondence to Mrs Hall is to be believed. By his own estimation, 'I am getting on very well with them.'<sup>448</sup> The feeling of Anglo-Jewry towards their co-religionists was also highlighted by the Minister, as his congregation had collected money in order that the boys travel to Birmingham, in one instance, to celebrate Pentecost.<sup>449</sup> Given the country's feelings and fears during the summer of 1940 and that the boys were technically 'enemy aliens', Rappaport wisely checked the situation with the Birmingham Police. Mrs. Hill must have been aware through the media of the recently introduced enemy internment laws and the 'enemy within' feeling prevalent at this time. So although the boys were legally allowed to travel to Birmingham according to the city's police, there must still have been concerns for their safety in a period of widespread xenophobia.

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<sup>446</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Olive Dyke, After Care Dept., Movement for the Care of Children from Germany, The Grange, Hindhead, Surrey, to Mrs Hall, GAAR, dated February 1940.

<sup>447</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Mrs. Hall, GAAR to Reverend Raphael Levine, Liberal Jewish Synagogue, London, dated 7 March 1940.

<sup>448</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Dr. S. Rappaport, Liberal Jewish Synagogue, 4 Sheepcote Street, Birmingham to Mrs. Hall, GAAR, dated 1 June 1940.

<sup>449</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Dr. S. Rappaport to Mrs. Hall, GAAR, dated 15 June 1940.

Once the boys had left the hostel to stay with their 'foster' families and were working, the problem of trying to maintain any sense of religious education worsened.<sup>450</sup>

However, Mrs Hall attempted to do her best, acting as a coordinator between the boys and the Reverend, Dr. Rappaport, as well as offering space in her flat for them all to meet. It is to be imagined that, in keeping with many boys of between fifteen and seventeen years of age by 1942, they were becoming reluctant to give up their free time and had perhaps become distant from a faith that was not practised in Gloucester, unlike the pre-war situation in their home cities. Having passed on a request from the Minister to meet the boys on the 6<sup>th</sup> June for religious instruction, she informed the him,

I have asked them all with, I am afraid, little success. Harry Vorgang will have left Gloucester by then to live with his mother in Manchester. Gunter Meyer, Kurt Reimann and Ivan Mularski will all be working and I am afraid the others are very unwilling to give up their free afternoon to Religious Instruction, though Walter Kolpak and Arnold Ullmann did say they would come if others were doing so.

I am sorry about this; I cannot seem to make any impression upon them.<sup>451</sup>

The situation was the same for both Anglo-Jews and recently arrived Jews, as they were forced to move away from their traditional centres and forced by circumstances to integrate with non-Jews, so they became increasingly detached from the roots of their faith. This, in the long term, produced a generation of non-practising or secular Jews that had, in any case, been a trend since after the First World War as Jews

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<sup>450</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Mrs. Hall, GAAR, to Dr. S. Rappaport, Liberal Jewish Synagogue, 7a, St. Augustine's Road, Edgebaston, Birmingham, dated 12 March 1942.

<sup>451</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Mrs. Hall, GAAR, to Dr. S. Rappaport, Liberal Jewish Synagogue, dated 3 June 1942.

moved to more middle class or wealthier areas of towns and cities. The Second World War accelerated that process through the circumstances of the refugees, evacuation and bombing of traditional Jewish neighbourhoods to displace the population. In the case of the Gloucester refugee boys and their parents' wishes for the children's religious upbringing, there is only one surviving letter from Mrs Helene Suschitzki, the mother of Robert, to GAAR (probably Mrs. Hall). In reply to an earlier letter from GAAR, Mrs Suschitzki writes,

I should very much like Robert to be given religious instruction in our Jewish faith and I am sure the parents of the other boys would be very happy if they know theyr [sic] boys religious teaching was being continued.<sup>452</sup>

Within the GAAR files there is no evidence to suggest that any of the parents had contact with each other, nor is there any indication of whether the teenagers came from secular, Liberal or Orthodox Jewish homes. Although the information cards received by GAAR from the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany at Barham House state the word 'liberal', one gets a sense that this was a 'catch all' term used by them to placate the Jewish religious authorities. Many of the German, Austrian and Czech *Kinder* were only loosely connected to their faith and were frequently surprised by the pedantic strictness of British Jewish households. However, the disruption caused by Nazi persecution to the refugees' religious continuity was a significant contributor to the continuing impact of secularisation.

Anglo-Jewry and the various central refugee agencies recognised the consequences of a disrupted community. They attempted to maintain some cohesive Jewish identity

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<sup>452</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Mrs H. Suschitzki, Radley Green, Blackmore, Essex, to GAAR, dated 1 April 1940.

and get through this period by suggesting to the provincial coordinating bodies ways in which this could be achieved. However, they were careful, particularly during the war, not to give the impression of separateness from the rest of the non-Jewish community. Not for the first time, nor the last, Jews had to balance their faith with the issue of being temporarily British or more commonly defined as 'English'. In January 1940, these points were transmitted by the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany (which contained representatives from the Council for German Jewry) to the provincial refugee coordinating bodies, which included GAAR.<sup>453</sup> The isolation experienced by Jewish refugees and their place in an adoptive country was clearly put to its provincial committees.

Some of the children have found kind homes in Christian households and others, though in Jewish households, are living in the country or in towns where it is well nigh impossible for them to receive instruction in the Jewish religion, to attend synagogue or to take part in any Jewish communal life.

It is right and proper that these little guests of England should be absorbed into English life, but at the same time we feel that they should be given a firm foundation as Jews, knowledge of the Jewish faith and of Jewish history, so that they may be justly proud of their Jewish birth.<sup>454</sup>

This was an optimistic aim given that those responsible for placing children in homes did not have the luxury of choosing the geographical location of 'foster' homes, that there were insufficient numbers of Rabbis in Britain and that those there were, tended to be located in traditional Jewish areas of immigration. There must also have been

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<sup>453</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). *Instructions for the Guidance of Regional and Local Committees*. GAAR came within Civil Defence Region No.7 (Regional Committee Secretary, Mr. W. Bryce Gibson, Community House, Gloucester) that encompassed Gloucestershire, Somersetshire, Wiltshire, Dorsetshire, Devonshire and Cornwall.

<sup>454</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany to Regional and Local Committees, dated January 1940.

the issue of Jewish children coming from secular homes and having no religious background, nor wishing to have one. The suggestions made in the same letter about how a sense of community could be maintained were also largely applicable to already established Jewish areas. Older children should find *Maccabi* sports clubs and by joining the Jewish Youth Movement (*Habonim*), they could form groups to study Jewish history. Regional Committees were encouraged to get in touch with the Liberal Synagogue in St. John's Wood, London, to arrange correspondence classes.<sup>455</sup> Overlooking the differences in the children's backgrounds, this was still not going to overcome that sense of isolation from the rest of their faith. Additionally, as noted in the previous chapter, it could not be taken for granted that ethnically divided Jews would necessarily integrate with each other, particularly those born in Germany but of Polish origin.

The question of isolation, loneliness and refugee welfare is shown in two contrasting sets of minutes from October 1939 and May 1942. The former came from the Gloucestershire Co-Ordinating Committee for Aiding Refugees, whilst the latter came from its parent Regional Council for Refugees. The minutes of the meeting in 1939 contain a section under the heading of 'Unsatisfactory Worker', and refer to those refugees who obtained entry into Britain to take up positions as domestic servants, often having come from middle or upper middle class homes in Germany or Austria. As shown in Chapter One and earlier in this chapter, they were quite often 'unprepared' for the tasks they were required to undertake., either mentally or

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<sup>455</sup> It is interesting to note that, not for the first time, the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany favoured the Liberal Synagogue as opposed to the Orthodox Synagogue. The latter was represented at the Movement by the Joint Committee for Religious Education of Jewish Refugee Children, Woburn House, Upper Woburn Place, London.

physically. This was picked up by a committee member and interpreted as the following from the Minute book:

It was generally agreed that a few domestic Workers were causing anxiety by constantly moving from one situation to another and making no effort to settle, in fact, were useless and just didn't care.

Mr. Gibson read a long letter he had written to Bloomsbury House suggesting that some action be taken to stop these people as the few do so much harm to the many.

He proposed a scheme something on these lines;

A concentration camp where unsatisfactory worker[s] could be sent and compelled to stay for a month under the strictest discipline. Then to be sent to a completely new area and given another chance to make good.

Bloomsbury House had replied that they had a similar scheme under consideration.

The Committee endorsed Mr. Gibson's action, agreeing that the idea was a good one.<sup>456</sup>

While one can understand the frustrations of those responsible for the refugees, particularly in wartime, the choice of the words 'concentration camp' should even by the standards of the day have seemed crass if not offensive. As Bloomsbury House should have realised, the last thing that the refugees needed was being put into a camp with a 'robust' regime to it. It also showed a lack of understanding of how to deal with refugees, even after several years' experience in bringing them into the country and assessing what their needs were. Although the refugee bodies understood that children/teenagers needed some form of contact with others in the same position as

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<sup>456</sup> GCA: File D7501/1/3 'Committees'. Minutes of Gloucestershire Rural Community Council: County Co-Ordinating Committee for Aiding Refugees, Community House, Gloucester, 24 October 1939.

themselves and/or from the same country in order to negate that feeling of isolation, so the same was true of adults, ie. domestic servants. Additionally, like all people, they needed to feel valued and to be able to use their talents after having lost so much.

Lady Ware, Chairwoman of the Regional Council for Refugees in the south-west of England, opened the annual meeting in May 1942, and addressed the matter of refugees using their skills in order to feel valued. It showed that some thought and development of understanding had been achieved in the intervening years. It also answered some of the criticisms levelled at the refugees by British people and their expectations of the former once in this country. After initially commenting on the progress made over the last year with 'the material welfare of the refugees' by all those involved, Lady Ware addressed the more implicit, but nevertheless, important issues:

In the course of her efforts in this direction during this period she had been rather disquieted by some of the remarks made and questions put to her.

Probably many of those present had heard it said quite often of refugees that were of course anti-Nazi, but that they were not by any means all pro-British, despite the fact that we had given them food and shelter and a free democracy to live under, instead of tyranny. On thinking it over we might ask ourselves whether they had in fact been greeted immediately by a free democracy.

Lady Ware then made the point that although in wartime everyone lived under certain restrictions such as the blackout and rationing, these 'did not really in most cases affect our background of intimate associations, whereas these people had in some cases been deprived of every sort of human contact.' For those refugees who had previously spent time in a German concentration camp, followed by a 'reception

camp' and then an 'internment camp', this could have amounted to many years behind barbed wire, not to mention the restrictions once out of a camp regarding travel and possessions. In answer to the accusation 'that the refugees were not grateful', Lady Ware gave the example of an eminent scientist or artist who had been given the job of washing up bottles.

Could we expect him to be overwhelmed with gratitude? We might have done much more, Lady Ware felt, to make up to him for what he had lost, and to enrich our own national life.

On the subject of Jews not being patriotic, she replied that the 'patriotism of the British Jew was apparent when one saw the frequency of the Star of David on headstones in war cemeteries.'<sup>457</sup> As will be addressed at the end of this chapter, it was not for a lack of will or enthusiasm that refugee Jews were not present in British Army infantry and armoured regiments. British born Jews were over-represented as a minority in the British Armed Forces.

The continuation of 'religious instruction' and Jewish communal life that centred around either a meeting place or a synagogue, was in theory possible for groups that found themselves in the same situation as those refugees in Gloucester. The reality of the Jewish faith was that it was split and fragmented into different strands, which were frequently attacking each other and continuing arguments dating from long before the war started. Just as it would be incorrect to generalise about the Protestant faith as if it were an entity, it would be wrong to do so with Judaism in Britain. British Jewish congregations covered a wide field of views and traditions that could be classified as Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Liberal, Progressive or Independent, each coming

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<sup>457</sup> GCA: File D7501/1/3 'Committees'. Minutes of Regional Council for Refugees No.7 Defence Region, Friends' Meeting House, Broad Weir, Bristol, 5 May 1942.



under umbrella organisations such as the more traditional United Synagogue. The matter was further complicated when one added a political dimension to Judaism, such as Zionism, which leant more to the liberal wing of the faith, if any faith whatsoever. Although the *Instructions for the Guidance of Regional and Local Committees* produced by the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany gave out the addresses/contacts for both the Orthodox and Liberal Jewish faiths, as has been seen, there were those at the refugee agency who favoured the Liberal Jewish Synagogue and made those views known to provincial committees.<sup>458</sup> The position of GAAR and other similar bodies around the country left them with little choice but to accept the Movement's recommendations, which in turn could prove to be a disadvantage to the refugees and the survival of the faith. There were many synagogues/congregations surrounding Gloucester that were nearer than Birmingham and therefore would have suffered less disruption in their travel arrangements from the effects of the war. Cheltenham, Coventry, Newport, Oxford, Swindon and Worcester are all nearer to Gloucester than Birmingham, but during the war years they were all Ashkenazi Orthodox in direction.<sup>459</sup>

GAAR and in particular, Mrs Hall, did their best to make the boys' lives as normal as possible while in Gloucester, including giving them the opportunity to mix with other boys of their own age and to have what may be termed 'holiday breaks'. GAAR received many offers of help from concerned citizens and bodies, starting shortly after the boys had arrived in the city. On receipt of an offer from a school to include some

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<sup>458</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). *Instructions for the Guidance of Regional and Local Committees*, p.25. In the Appendix, under the category of Orthodox Jews, there are two references to firstly, Joint Committee for Religious Education of Jewish Refugee Children, Woburn House, Upper Woburn Place, London WC1, and Rabbi Berkowitz, 47 Leaside Crescent, London NW11.

<sup>459</sup> See [www.jewishgen.org/JCR-UK/Community](http://www.jewishgen.org/JCR-UK/Community), along with C. Roth, *The Rise of Provincial Jewry* (London, 1950).

of the refugee boys on a scout camp trip, Mrs Hall took not only the opportunity to inform the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany about Julius Mularski's health, but also that, 'He with two others, is going to a scout camp' and that, 'They have been invited by the Scout Master of a Preparatory School at Cirencester.'<sup>460</sup> Mrs Hall had the difficult task of balancing the wishes and well being of the boys with the many generous offers of holidays for them. In fact, the boys took up invitations to go camping with Crypt School, Catholic and 5<sup>th</sup> Gloucester Scout Troops. In 1940, although some boys had started work, others went on a holiday given by the Gloucester Rotary Club at their holiday home in Weston-super-Mare.<sup>461</sup> A Mrs. Brint of Sandhurst, who had offered holidays to other refugees, volunteered to take in Kurt Reimann at the same time as the scout camp. The measure of diplomacy and insightfulness regarding the boy may be gathered from Mrs Hall's correspondence to both Mrs. Brint and an intermediary friend, Mrs Hartland. To the former, she wrote,

This particular boy, Kurt Reimann, is rather shy, and was nervous of joining a camp full of boys. However, we now hear that the German boy you had with you has left, so he feels that there will be no-one to speak his language at your farm, and he would rather be with his own friends.<sup>462</sup>

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<sup>460</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Mrs Hall to Olive Dyke, Provincial After Care Dept., Movement for the Care of Children from Germany, Bloomsbury House, London, dated 14 July 1939. The offer was made by Captain F. Danby-Hunter (Cop Close, Long Crendon, Buckinghamshire), Scout Master and Senior Master of Oakley Hall Preparatory School, Cirencester. The proposal was to camp at Reddings Lodge, Highmeadow Woods, Staunton, in the Forest of Dean. The school regularly took foreign scouts to camp and in 1939 had asked the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany to suggest any suitable places in the area to contact. They were then directed to GAAR After having camped, Captain Danby-Hunter was in the habit of inviting those foreign boys (and their sisters, if applicable) to stay at his home in Buckinghamshire.

<sup>461</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/11 (no title). Report from Mrs Hall to GAAR General Meeting, 2 December 1941.

<sup>462</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Mrs Hall, GAAR, to Mrs. Brint, Barrow Farm, Sandhurst, dated 28 July 1939.

While the letter to Mrs. Hartland is similar in content, it also adds that Kurt Reimann ‘was very appreciative of Miss Hartland’s kindness in arranging the alternative holiday for him, and very anxious that she should not think him ungrateful.’<sup>463</sup>

Although the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany had considered the refugees’ educational and spiritual welfare, it was made clear by Mrs. Hall that there were other aspects to take into account. The school holidays were an immediate worry, along with the organisation of the boys’ time. Her frustration is evident from a letter written on behalf of GAAR to Miss McClelland, stating, ‘We cannot understand your remark “we did not realise there was any question of holidays”. They must do something while the schools are closed.’<sup>464</sup> Mrs. Hall also took the opportunity to complain about the lack of contact from Mrs. Vorgang in Manchester, regarding her request to have Harry stay with her. GAAR was only too pleased that both Harry Vorgang and Robert Suschitzki could go and see their mothers, but it was not prepared to let the boys go off without feeling confident everything was well organised and safe for the temporary transfer of responsibility. As it was, Mrs. Vorgang appears to have been a consistent problem for both GAAR and the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany.<sup>465</sup>

Peter Nebenzahl was a special case for Mrs. Hall, being an orphan. His only family connection was a brother, Hans, who in August 1939 was working on a farm in Cornwall. With just over a week left of the summer holiday, Mrs. Hall suggested to the farmer looking after Hans that it would be a good idea for the brothers to meet. A

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<sup>463</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Mrs. Hall, GAAR, to Mrs. Hartland, dated 28 July 1939.

<sup>464</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Mrs. Hall, GAAR, to Miss McClelland, Hospitality Dept., Movement for the Care of Children from Germany, dated 28 July 1939.

<sup>465</sup> Events transpired that Oakley Hall, Cirencester, was forced to cancel the scout camp on the 1 August 1939 due to bad weather. Instead, the boys were able to go on another scout camp organised by Crypt School, Gloucester, going to Weymouth, Dorset.

measure of her commitment is shown by stating that she would drive him to the farm near Liskeard, stay in the area and then take the fourteen year old back to the hostel in Gloucester.<sup>466</sup>

So as not to upset the religious elements of the Jewish community and realise their fears of conversion, GAAR along with many other refugee aid agencies had to take a religiously neutral stance. Once again, the diplomatic skills of Mrs. Hall were called into play when she received an invitation, shortly after the arrival of the refugees, from the Young Men's Union of Southgate Church for the boys to attend 'a private social.'<sup>467</sup> Whilst not giving an outright rejection, but asking for a postponement, Mrs. Hall replied that although they did not know the extent of their faith,

We have, however, agreed that while under our care, they shall not change their denomination. We are writing to the boys parents, asking their wishes...  
... Meanwhile, the Executive Committee has decided that the boys shall not go to any Club connected with a place of worship till we have heard from their parents.<sup>468</sup>

It had been the Barbican Mission's policy to convert Jewish *Kinder* to Christianity, but the result was that Orthodox Rabbis had persuaded some parents to take their children off the *Kindertransport* railway trains.

Beside scouting holidays and invitations to clubs, the community offered the boys many other opportunities for their free time. 'During their first winter here 6 of the

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<sup>466</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Mrs. Hall, GAAR, to Mr. Hocking, Menheniot Tregill, Liskeard, Cornwall, dated 20 August 1939.

<sup>467</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Dennis Drew, Secretary, Young Men's Union of Southgate Church, 5 Clifton Road, Gloucester, to Mrs. Hall, GAAR, dated 25 June 1939.

<sup>468</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Mrs Hall, GAAR, to Dennis Drew, Secretary, Young Men's Union of Southgate Church, dated 26 June 1939.

elder boys attended evening classes, and Mr. Hill, of Community House, taught the others woodwork', reported Mrs. Hall.<sup>469</sup> She continued that, 'Through Dr. Cookson an allotment was obtained, so they have been growing vegetables for their own consumption'. There were other ways, besides growing extra vegetables, that the boys showed their commitment to the war effort. They were used as 'Fire Watchers'.

Whilst Gloucester did not have the military importance of nearby Bristol and Birmingham, it was on the flight path to the latter. The main industrial targets in the Gloucester area were the Gloster Aircraft Company, which built the Meteor using Frank Whittle's jet engine, and Dowty Aviation. Therefore, bombing of the Gloucester area was sporadic, but doubtless terrifying for those involved on the ground and somewhat ironic for the refugee boys given their status as 'enemy aliens' and being relied on to protect the city.

The issue of communication between Jewish family members separated by the intensity of persecution and the advent of war in September 1939 was a constant source of anxiety. It was a situation faced by all of the continental refugees in Britain and many members of the Anglo-Jewish community. Through the day to day contact with the boys, the hostel's Warden, Dr. Arnstein, must have realised the value of contact between the teenagers and their parents. In March 1940, he wrote to Mrs. Hall with his concerns that, 'Some of our boys are without any contact with their parents, since the war broke out and I would suggest, if you would agree, zo (sic) give reports on every boy to their parents.'<sup>470</sup> He concluded by stating, 'I am sure that the parents of the boys would be very glad to get official reports on them. The mothers of Harry

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<sup>469</sup> GCA: File 7501/3/11 (no title). Report from Mrs. Hall to GAAR General Meeting, 2 December 1941.

<sup>470</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Dr. Arnstein to Mrs. Hall, GAAR, dated 18 March 1940.

Vorgang and Suschitzky are in England, Peter Nebenzahl is an orphan, but his grandmother is still living in Germany.’ Whilst agreeing with Dr. Arnstein and that, ‘It would relieve the minds of both parents and boys’, Mrs. Hall did issue a caveat regarding communication.<sup>471</sup> Using the International Red Cross, it would be GAAR that would contact the parents once every quarter. In Mrs. Hall’s opinion, ‘It is certainly better than the boys writing letters. It is well to be discreet just now.’ Given the date of March 1940 and the fact that Mrs. Hall did not elaborate on her remark, it is only possible to speculate about the significance of the comment. It might be in reference to Enemy Alien Tribunals being established in Britain from February 1940 onwards, the activities of Oswald Mosley and British fascists or the fact that since the previous October, some Jews in ‘Greater Germany’ had been deported to the newly established ghettos in Poland. David Low’s cartoon in the *Evening Standard* on 20 January 1940 had depicted Germans being deported to the Lublin district, though their numbers were small compared to later deportations of German Jews from the end of 1941 onwards. The fact that at this stage of the war the numbers of Jews being deported were small and then temporarily suspended was unlikely to have allayed the boys’ fears of what was common knowledge in Britain.

An important aim for the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany was that all of the refugee children should have the ability to be self-sufficient and be able to ‘pay their way’ in British society. The great fear for the refugee agencies and Anglo-Jewry in general was that Jews would be seen as a burden on the country’s resources and therefore attract the attention of right-wing elements of the public. It was therefore necessary, in the case of the Gloucester refugee boys, to train them in some

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<sup>471</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Mrs. Hall, GAAR, to Dr. Arnstein, dated 19 March 1940.

form of employment once they had reached school leaving age. This point had been raised early on by GAAR as shown in the committee's minutes, when it was noted (not unreasonably for a rural county), 'The question of agricultural training for refugee boys was discussed and it was reported that this was not viewed favourably by the farmers, who did not wish to train a boy whom they would lose when he was eighteen.'<sup>472</sup> For GAAR, the only other option was to look to city employers. Between October 1939 and August 1941, the ten boys at the Gloucester hostel obtained work locally, including apprenticeship schemes in trades. These trades included leather manufacturing, building, mechanics and cabinet making. Once they were in employment, the boys contributed part of their wages to the hostel to cover expenses, which in turn lessened the hostel's dependence on money coming from the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany. This situation continued until the last of the boys had obtained employment, whereupon the hostel's Wardens, Dr. and Mrs. Arnstein put in their resignation. As the boys were now semi-independent (although GAAR insisted that they were still responsible for the boys until they were eighteen years of age), it was assumed that the teenagers were old enough to be taken in by 'foster' families. The 'foster' families would receive part of the boys' wages and a subsidy from GAAR for their upkeep, with the former gradually increasing their share of the money as their earnings rose. The hostel closed at the start of December 1941, when the last of the boys had left and been found a place to live.

The records do not state whether the new foster families were Jewish, but given the location, they were likely to have been at least nominally Christian. It has been noted that approximately one third of the RCM's Jewish children were placed in Christian

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<sup>472</sup> GCA: File D7501/1/1 – Minute Book, p.30. Entry for 27 March 1939.

homes prior to the outbreak of war, but this figure dramatically rose once the war started and the evacuation process began.<sup>473</sup> However, as with many decisions taken regarding Jewish people during the war, GAAR had little option but to place the ten boys with Christian families.

As has been seen, GAAR was keen to look after the various needs of the boys at the hostel in whatever way they could, within the limitations of their circumstances and the context of the time. It would be wrong to compare the standards of childcare of the 1930s and 1940s with that of the present day. The Nazi persecution of the Jews and Britain's reception of so many refugees, including specifically large numbers of children was almost unprecedented up to that point, apart from the recent operation to rescue Basque children fleeing the Spanish Civil War. Therefore, although historians and some surviving Jews have criticised British efforts in the reception and care of Jewish refugees, this ignores the practical realities of late 1930s and wartime Britain. The care taken to look after the Gloucester boys (and the Hostel Warden, Dr. Arnstein, and his family) is clearly visible in the GAAR Committee Minute Book that records their meeting every couple of months between February 1939 and December 1941. Within the records, there are specific sections entitled 'Welfare Reports' that give appraisals regarding the boys' health, education, progress etc. From these regular reports, one can build up a picture of how the hostel community developed and interacted with the local population. For instance, in November 1939, five months after the boys' arrival, Committee member, Mr. Jukes, writes,

The boys are generally in good health, and are very happy and contented. They are making full use of their leisure time in profitable occupations and activities.

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<sup>473</sup> V. Last, *Children's Exodus*, p.65.



Six boys have been admitted to Evening School and are enjoying the experience. The others are attending a wood work class conducted by Mr. Hill on Tuesday evenings in a room in the basement of Capt. Evereds house. all have joined the Childrens' Library and are making full use of it.

There week-ends have been devoted to sport and walks in the country.<sup>474</sup>

Thus we have the impression that GAAR intended to keep the young teenage boys as busy as possible, with a definite focus on their future employment prospects given the nature of the activities. As has already been noted, any activity that had connections with the church, was a matter of concern for GAAR, particularly in the light of very public problems with the Barbican Mission and its religious conversion of Jewish children to Christianity. Mr. Jukes continued,

The question of the Boys' attendance at the Cathedral has been discussed with them, but they have expressed no desire to attend, in fact, rather the reverse. Attendance at St. Mark's Boys' Club, or any other Boys Club, has been left to the discretion of Dr. Arnstein and some boys have occasionally visited St. Mark's but only twos and threes.<sup>475</sup>

However, it should be noted that in the case of their first Christmas in Britain in 1939, the teenage Jewish boys were prepared to accept presents and gifts donated by the local community.<sup>476</sup>

After having given generalised overviews of the boys and their state of progress, the committee's records highlighted specific boys regarding any particular concerns. This shows the high level of supervision given to the boys, as well as the care and concern

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<sup>474</sup> GCA: File D7501/1/1 – Minute Book, pp.120-121. Entry for 27 November 1939.

<sup>475</sup> GCA: File D7501/1/1 – Minute Book, p.121. Entry for 27 November 1939.

<sup>476</sup> GCA: File D7501/1/1 – Minute Book, p.126. Entry for 11 January 1940.

shown for their individual needs. For example, in the case of orphan, Peter Nebenzahl and presumably acting on information from his school, it was noted that,

The Committee will be pleased to hear that this boy is making such satisfactory progress at school, that it might be wise to explore the possibilities of providing further educational opportunities for him.<sup>477</sup>

This indicates that GAAR not only looked after the children, but were also willing to promote whatever talent or promise shown by the boys. In contrast to many children of that era, the Jewish boys who attended what would be regarded today as a low achieving school in a highly deprived part of the city, were encouraged to develop their potential and realise the opportunities a new life offered.

In the case of Kurt Reimann, the GAAR Minute Book presents the image of a caring and compassionate body that with foresight looked after the best interests of the boy, when for many of his refugee contemporaries, their prospects may have been very different. Referring to Reimann, the Committee learnt that,

Someone has approached the Child Guidance Clinic to conduct a Psychological examination of Reimann. Both Dr. Arnstein and I [the writer was Mr. Jukes] agree that this course is not necessary and perhaps unwise in this case. It might be pointed out that to conduct such an examination, without the ability to speak very fluent German on the part of the Doctor, might easily prejudice the result, that intelligence tests, never very reliable under the best circumstances, might under the conditions obtaining, be very mis-leading.<sup>478</sup>

Even by the standards of the day, let alone modern clinical assessment procedures, the committee could see the absurdity of testing the boy under such conditions and the

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<sup>477</sup> GCA: File D7501/1/1 – Minute Book, p.121. Entry for 27 November 1939.

<sup>478</sup> GCA: File D7501/1/1 – Minute Book, pp.121-122. Entry for 27 November 1939.

very likely chance of incorrect conclusions being formulated. Although Kurt Reimann may well have had psychological and behavioural problems associated with his past experiences and separation from his parents as a young teenager, this area of medicine was still in its infancy. Given the number of children affected by the violence in pre-war 'Greater Germany', separation and the consequences of aerial warfare such as bombing, it would be surprising if children were not affected in some mental capacity.

Although the original point of an assessment is not mentioned, it continues,

'We are satisfied that Reimann is not abnormal and fear that association with abnormal children might have results that would be regretted later'.

The only clue that there was an issue concerning his health comes when advice is given, stating,

It is hoped that no-one will encourage this boy to regard himself as one who is to be pitied or to receive special privileges. He has already shown a readiness to react to such treatment in a way that may lead to undesirable habits of action.<sup>479</sup>

Two months later, at the next committee meeting, the 'Welfare Report' only briefly mentioned Reimann, but there is enough to suggest that he, at least out of the group, did have some health issues.

Reimann is showing ability to use his hands and probably encouragement will lead to greater confidence in other directions.<sup>480</sup>

In a letter from GAAR to the Mayor of Gloucester in November 1941, it is clear that the boys had made a good impression upon the local population when it states that, 'Homes were found for eight through friends and personal contacts of the boys and

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<sup>479</sup> GCA: File D7501/1/1 – Minute Book, pp.122-123. Entry for 27 November 1939.

<sup>480</sup> GCA: File D7501/1/1 – Minute Book, p.127. Entry for 11 January 1940.

the remaining two have been found accommodation through Alderman Colborn's appeal to the Billeting Officer.<sup>481</sup> There was also a reliance upon the GAAR network of contacts, which appear to have been extensive, when looking for 'foster' families. For their part, GAAR agreed to help the new families with such essentials as 'adequate clothing'. The minutes record that, 'Mr. F.A. Morgan of the Golden Anchor Clothing Co. (a member of the Executive Committee) has promised his personal attention to this matter and has very kindly offered a discount of seven and a half percent on the purchases'. The wartime dimension of rationing and shortages was also recognised: 'Mrs Hall and I have given permission for the loan of beds and bedding to some of the people who offered homes as these things are difficult to obtain.' A recipient of items and one clearly in need of help, being a Jewish refugee herself, was the mother of Robert Suschitzki, who had recently arrived in Gloucester to look after her son. In the arrangements for Robert, Mrs. Hall informed his mother, '...that we should lend you as much furniture and bedding as you require for Robert's room.'<sup>482</sup> Mrs. Hall had also arranged with the local police to notify them for the changes of address along with alterations to the boys' registration cards.

The terms by which GAAR passed on the boys to their 'foster' families may be gauged from a letter written by Mrs. Hall in November 1941 to Mr. Davies in Quedgeley, at the time they received Kurt Reimann.

We propose to pay 22/6 a week, for board, lodging, and laundry, for each of

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<sup>481</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from GAAR to the Mayor of Gloucester, dated 29 October 1941.

<sup>482</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Mrs. Hall, GAAR, to Mrs. Suschitzki, 17 Oxford Street, Gloucester, dated 27 November 1941. At the time, Mrs. Suschitzki was employed by *Dentons* in Gloucester.

our boys, and we hope this will suit you.<sup>483</sup> We shall still be responsible for their clothes and other expenses, and for their general welfare.<sup>484</sup>

We hope you will feel you can consult us at any time you wish, and we shall always be glad to be of any help we can.

With thanks to you for all your kindness to Kurt since he has been at the Golden Anchor, and especially for going with him to the Tribunal at Bristol.<sup>485</sup>

This indicates that although there may have been some British families that took in Jewish children for the money they received (much like those with the evacuee children), there were others who formed a genuine attachment to them or in this case, sixteen year old Reimann. Internment tribunals for some children were an experience reminiscent of their time shortly before leaving Germany and Austria.<sup>486</sup>

The unsatisfactory nature of the tribunal process had been commented on by the County Co-Ordinating Committee for Aiding Refugees, early on in the war, in October 1939. One of the committee members, Mr. Castle, stated that, ‘He was disappointed with the procedure in the Court during the first three days as the judge appeared to have little conception of the refugee’s problems and difficulties.’<sup>487</sup> Kurt Reimann was lucky that he had not appeared before the tribunal earlier than he did

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<sup>483</sup> Wiener Library: Microfilm – MF DOC 27 72/333-Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief: Archives, 1933-1960. Across the country, besides the weekly allowance rate which varied from place to place (average of about 17/6 pw), refugee committees provided for holidays and clothing.

<sup>484</sup> GCA: File D7501/2/11 ‘Boys accounts’. Each boy was loaned various useful domestic items when they went to live with their ‘foster’ homes. For instance, Iwan Mularski was lent ‘1 chest of drawers, 3 blankets, 2 sheets (1 old), 2 towels, 2 pillow slips’, whilst Werner Zorek received ‘4 blankets, 2 sheets, 2 pillows, 2 pillow cases, 2 towels’. This in itself was a comment on how ordinary households were suffering due to wartime shortages of most ordinary household items, even by the end of 1941. Yet, they were prepared to help those less well off, namely the ten Jewish boys.

<sup>485</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Mrs Hall, GAAR, to Mr. W. Davies, Russell Road, Quedgeley, dated 27 November 1941. The spelling of the name and the address for the latter varies with other references.

<sup>486</sup> Z. Josephs, *Survivors: Jewish Refugees in Birmingham 1933-1945* (London, 1988), pp.48-50.

<sup>487</sup> GCA: File D7501/1/3 ‘Committees’. Minutes of Gloucestershire Rural Community Council: County Co-Ordinating Committee for Aiding Refugees, Community House, Gloucester, 24 October 1939.

during the war, as figures show that a chaotic situation arose across the country with large scale inconsistencies in applying judgements and classifications of ‘enemy aliens’<sup>488</sup>. However, as Reimann came originally from Danzig, a city outside Germany’s pre-war frontier, he was technically not classified in the same way as Germans and Austrians. In total, during the war, one thousand *Kinder* were interned out of approximately ten thousand who had arrived in Britain between 1938 and 1940.<sup>489</sup>

In December 1941, GAAR held only its second and final General Meeting to inform members about the closure of the hostel and to give a summary of its activities since just before the hostel opened in June 1939. The Secretary’s report given by Mrs. Hall gives a potted history of the highlights concerning the boys and the hostel, including how the former had fared. Most strikingly the report stresses the key role played by a number of individuals and organisations which came together to make the whole experience for the boys a success, including their integration into local society, which up to that point had had no exposure to Jewish people, particularly those that came from what became an enemy country. One senses the coming together and development of a community spirit, while not unique to Gloucester, which shows the level of feeling experienced towards the disaster facing European Jews. The community’s help was not limited to the boys, but also extended to the two hostel Wardens, Dr. and Mrs. Arnstein, who were themselves Jewish Czech refugees, and

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<sup>488</sup> P. and L. Gillman, ‘Collar the Lot!’ *How Britain Interned and Expelled Wartime Refugees* (London, 1980), pp.42-46.

<sup>489</sup> Wiener Library, London: MF DOC 27/28/153 – Central British Fund for World Jewish Relief, 1933-1960; Refugee Children’s Movement, Annual Reports 1938-1942.

their sons, one of whom was found a banking position in Cheltenham.<sup>490</sup> The report states that,

For the first few months, while she was settling down, Miss. Kirton and Miss. Logan went regularly to help Mrs. Arnstein with the housework and from the first week till the beginning of this year, a party of ladies of the Free Church Council, under Mrs. Colborn, went weekly to help with the mending.<sup>491</sup>

It is likely, given Mrs. Arnstein's background, that she was not familiar with the necessary menial work required in looking after ten teenage boys. However, the offer of work in England gave many adult, middle class Jews a means of escape from the increasing levels of persecution. Their lack of experience was further indicated in the report when it was stated that Mr. Jukes was to supervise the boys' welfare and Mrs. Cullis to, '...advise Mrs Arnstein with the housekeeping'. This indication of a less than smooth start to the hostel and subsequent progress, comes through in the GAAR Committee minutes for December 1941. Two of the Committee members, Mrs. Cullis and Mr. Jukes, gave brief appraisals of the hostel and how the boys had been cared for and adapted to their new lives. For example, Mrs. Cullis states,

When the boys first came, they were most difficult and not easy to manage and tended at times to take charge of the Hostel. Dr. and Mrs. Arnstein had done a wonderful work with the boys, training them in loyalty and had brought about a marked change in them. The boys had all been received into the city life in a wonderful way and had now found homes in which they were welcomed as members of the family.<sup>492</sup>

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<sup>490</sup> GCA: File D7501/1/1 – Minute Book, pp.135-136. Entry for 26 July 1940.

<sup>491</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/11 (no title). Report given by Mrs. Hall to GAAR General Meeting, 2 December 1941.

<sup>492</sup> GCA: File D7501/1/1 – Minute Book, p. 143. Entry for 2 December 1941.

Supporting comments made by Mrs. Cullis, Mr. Jukes also reflected upon possible past mistakes made by GAAR and others in their attempts to welcome and look after the boys. This is indicated in Mr. Jukes's final comment referring to the boys moving to their foster homes, when he says that, 'The boys are now facing a new experience and would probably benefit by the change. Somewhat spoilt and indulged in the past, they would now become more aware of the realities of life.'<sup>493</sup>

The historian, Jacob Newman, has asserted that of all the different destinations for the *Kindertransport* refugees, those that were happiest tended to be those sent to hostels.<sup>494</sup> This is supported by RCM Treasurer, Elaine Blond, who also believed that for older children, hostels provided more independence than private homes. In a hostel, the *Kinder* never had to face the awkward situation of whether or not to call the couple in charge of them, 'mutti und vati'.<sup>495</sup>

Besides the opening of the boys' hostel, GAAR was also responsible for the establishment of a social club for adult refugees at no. 2 King Street, Gloucester. Mrs Hall's report does not specify as to the nationality or faith of the users, but that it was opened at the same time as the boys' hostel. Therefore, given the approximate date of June 1939, one can assume that some of the customers were Jewish and that as some were interned later on, they were German, Austrian or Italian. The club was closed down in the summer of 1940 due to emigration and the internment of many members who had been responsible for the running of the club. The report also gives a feeling

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<sup>493</sup> Ibid.

<sup>494</sup> R. Gopfert, *Der jüdische Kindertransport von Deutschland nach England, 1938-39* (Frankfurt, 1997), p.126, cited in V. Fast, *Children's Exodus*, p.42.

<sup>495</sup> V. Fast, *Children's Exodus*, p.42.



of community spirit due to the number of local people mentioned as with, 'Mr Castle provided chairs, Mrs Jukes a piano' and during the winter of 1939/40, 'Mr Corson allowed us the use of the Electricity Showroom.'<sup>496</sup>

Throughout the period from June 1939 to December 1941, GAAR had had responsibility for the same ten Jewish boys at the hostel and this continued in terms of their welfare, even when they left to go and live at their 'foster' homes. Although most of them had left behind their immediate families, there was the possibility that in time they might have some semblance of living in a family situation with blood relatives. The GAAR records show that a number of the boys had hoped to use Britain as a staging post on their way to live with relatives abroad or failing that, be sent on to 'foster' families in other countries. In a scheme administered by the Refugee Children's Movement, based at Bloomsbury House, they would contact the various provincial refugee committees to help organise passage to countries of choice such as America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. From the records, one can see that Walter Kolpak, Julius Mularsky, Kurt Reimann and Arnold Ullmann all indicated America as their first choice of country and that some of them already had relatives there<sup>497</sup>. Mularsky, who was classified as stateless, had unnamed relatives living in New York. Ullmann, who despite being born in Berlin was classified as Polish (for the purposes of countries' national refugee quotas), declared that he wanted to live with Jacob Ullmann of Pennsylvania (relationship unknown). Walter Kolpak, who was born in Vienna, was also classified as Polish. He is listed as having

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<sup>496</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/11 (no title). Report given by Mrs Hall to GAAR General Meeting, 2 December 1939.

<sup>497</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Children's Overseas Reception Board forms. Passage would be booked through their agents, *Thomas Cook & Sons Ltd.*, Berkley Street, London W1. The forms request preference of country, whether the children have friends or relatives in that country, their religion and their nationality.

two relatives in the USA; Meyer Blitz of Philadelphia and Jacob Weissberg of New York.<sup>498</sup> Interestingly, there is also a mention of Harry Vorgang's father being in New York in the summer of 1940 (noting that his wife, daughter and Harry were in Britain) and that 'steps were being taken to get in touch with him.'<sup>499</sup> Of these boys, it appears that Kolpak was the one who came closest to going onto America. In October 1940, the Refugee Children's Movement informed Mr Bryce Gibson and Mrs Hall of its arrangements to send thirteen year old Walter Kolpak and another refugee from Dursley, sixteen year old Klaere Loeb, to Liverpool to catch a Cunard ship to America.<sup>500</sup> From Mrs. Hall's report to the GAAR Committee in December 1941, one learns that, 'but for the submarine menace, Walter Kolpak would have joined his mother in the USA.'<sup>501</sup> In the months prior to Kolpak's anticipated departure for America, two British passenger ships carrying civilians had been torpedoed; *SS Arandora Star* (2 July 1940) and the *SS City of Benares* (17 September 1940). The first had been carrying Italian and German internees, whilst the second ship had been carrying evacuees, which included a large number of children, many of whom drowned. It was the sinking of the *SS City of Benares* that heavily influenced the ending of the scheme to send children abroad by the Children's Overseas Reception Board, which is why Walter Kolpak stayed in Gloucester.<sup>502</sup> 'This deed will shock the world', said a Dominion's Minister regarding the sinking of the *SS City of Benares* and the loss of 248 people out of 406, including 77 children from a complement of

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<sup>498</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). The relatives are listed as Meyer Blitz, an uncle, from 5711 N 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Philadelphia and Jacob Weissberg, 1260 Ocean Parkway, Brooklyn, New York.

<sup>499</sup> GCA: File D7501/1/1 Minute Book, p.134. Welfare report from Mr. Jukes, 26 July 1940.

<sup>500</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Refugee Children's Movement (probably Mrs Lorna Phipps, Room72) to Mr W. Bryce Gibson, Community House, Gloucester, dated 24 October 1940.

<sup>501</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/11 (no title). Report given by Mrs. Hall to GAAR General Meeting, 2 December 1941.

<sup>502</sup> For a children's eyewitness account of the sinking of the *SS City of Benares*, see Lyn Smith's *Young Voices: British Children Remember the Second World War* (London, 2007), pp. 129-156. A more generalised account of the scheme as a whole to evacuate children can be found in Jessica Mann's *Out of Harm's Way: The Wartime Evacuation of Children from Britain* (London, 2006).

90.<sup>503</sup> It not only signalled a new low point in the Battle of the Atlantic, but also meant that Walter Kolpak had to wait until after the war had ended to see his mother again. He sailed to America in May 1945, among the first of many *Kinder* who would continue their extended journey from Europe to Britain and in most cases on to either America or Israel.<sup>504</sup> However, the majority stayed in Britain.

Once the boys had left the hostel and were living with their ‘foster’ families, the records indicate that they gradually wanted to pursue different career pathways and ambitions. They also appear, as they got older, to have a widening social life. An example of the former may be seen with the case of Kurt Reimann, who after two years working in the tailoring business, wanted to join the Merchant Navy towards the end of 1942. Non-British citizens were not liable for compulsory military service, although many Jewish refugees volunteered to take an active part in the war effort, including the ‘front line’. The Battle of the Atlantic and elsewhere, such as in the Arctic, was not an enviable option to volunteer for in 1942 and therefore one can only surmise as to the reasons why Reimann wanted to leave a promising apprenticeship in tailoring.<sup>505</sup> The war resulted in the loss of 30,246 Merchant Seamen and 2,603 Merchant Navy vessels sunk.<sup>506</sup> Jews from ‘enemy alien’ countries found it very difficult to join such a sensitive and vulnerable branch of the services. The other

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<sup>503</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 28 September 1940. Quote from Geoffrey Shakespeare, Liberal MP. Under Secretary for Dominion Affairs (1940-1942) and Chairman of Children’s Overseas Reception Board (1940 -1942).

<sup>504</sup> GCA: D7501/2/5 Accounts.

<sup>505</sup> In June/July 1942, the Merchant Navy had suffered one of its most disastrous experiences of the war in the Arctic Sea with an attack on convoy PQ17. See Paul Kemp’s *Convoy: Drama in Arctic Waters* (London, 2000) for an account of the convoy’s destruction.

<sup>506</sup> P. Kaplan & J. Currie, *Wolfpack: U-Boats at War 1939-1945* (London, 1997), p.220. For this often overlooked field of naval warfare, see also The Ministry of War Transport’s *Merchantmen at War: The Official Story of the Merchant Navy, 1939-1944* (London HMSO, 1944), P. Elphick, *Life Line: The Merchant Navy at War, 1939-45* (London, 1999), T. Lane, *The Merchant Seamen’s War* (Manchester, 1990) and J. Slader, *The Fourth Service: Merchantmen at War, 1939-1945* (London, 1994). For an analysis of the largest individual Atlantic convoy of the war and subsequent battle, see Martin Middlebrook’s *Convoy: The Greatest U-Boat Battle of the War* (London, 1976), in which over 300 Merchant Navy seamen lost their lives in March 1943.

aspect to a projected move was recognised by the Regional Secretary of the Refugee Children's Movement for the West Country, Mr. Bryce Gibson. Tailoring was not a 'reserved occupation' or one that was vital to the war effort and so in a letter to Mrs Hall, he wrote, 'I will add to poor Mr. Morgan's distress about a lack of staff.'<sup>507</sup> The lengths to which this 'patriotic' Jewish teenager (having lived in Britain for three years by this time) would have to go to join the Merchant Navy may be judged by the remainder of the letter to Mrs. Hall.

It is possible for refugee boys to obtain permission to join the Merchant navy, and I know of one or two cases where it has been successful. But I also know that these successes have been the result of long and hard struggles. If you would like me to proceed, I will put the case before Headquarters, since they are the only people who can make the sort of approaches that are any good.

The degree of difficulty for Reimann can be seen by the number of previous successes and the level of authority required. Given that in 1942 there were unprecedented Merchant Navy shipping losses and consequently a manpower shortage, Mr Bryce Gibson concludes, 'One of the Bauchwitz boys has, I believe, permission to join the Merchant Navy via "Conway", but I know that in this case Parliamentary influence was necessary.'<sup>508</sup> The records do not state how far he got with his application to join the Merchant Navy, but do show that Reimann ended up by joining the Army. The Army unit is not mentioned, but as will be seen later, was most likely to have been the Pioneer Corps.

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<sup>507</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/11 (no title). Letter from Mr W. Bryce Gibson, Regional Secretary, Refugee Children's Movement (No.7) to Mrs. Hall, GAAR, dated 4 November 1942. Mr Morgan is presumably the proprietor of the tailors, *Golden Anchor*, in Southgate Street, Gloucester, where Kurt Reimann had been an apprentice since January 1941.

<sup>508</sup>This refers to HMS *Conway* of the Merchant Navy Cadet School, established in 1859 off the River Mersey and due to bombing, moved to the Menai Straits in 1941. It was a training establishment for teenage boys hoping to become officers in the Merchant Navy.

There were other problems for both GAAR and the other refugee agencies such as the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany that caused many to get frustrated at times with the refugees in Britain. In one particular case, the issue concerned the Vorgang family and whether Harry was to be reunited with his mother and sister. The importance of the issue lies in the judgements made by British refugee agencies on the subjects that were in their care and the circumstances families found themselves in. The Vorgang experience of fleeing Vienna, permanent separation of the parents, possible loss of social/class status for the mother as a 'domestic servant' in England and being interned by the authorities, mirrored many Jewish refugee lives. The GAAR archive shows that while there were successes in looking after the boys, family circumstances could be of secondary consideration in the bureaucracy of the refugee agencies. There is at least circumstantial evidence to show that agencies could be subjective in their appraisal of people and at worst, obstructive to family wishes at a time of vulnerability.

The Vorgang family of mother, Irma, daughter, Ilse, and son, Harry, appear to have come to Britain separately from their home in Vienna. The children came as the responsibility of the Movement for the Care of children from Germany, whilst the mother is likely to have been accepted as a 'domestic servant' due to there being no mention of a professional status and associated help. The records make one mention of a father, living in New York in the summer of 1940. We do not know if any family members were left behind in Vienna as there is no Vorgang family member from the city listed on the Yad Vashem Shoah database.

Problems in dealing with Mrs. Vorgang appear early on in her relationship with GAAR, during the summer of 1939. After an initial request via the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany to Mrs. Hall, to have her son to stay with her in Manchester for a summer holiday, Mrs. Vorgang seems not to have responded to requests for details such as where the boy was going to stay and where he was to be met.<sup>509</sup> Mrs. Hall appears to have taken a very responsible attitude for the safety of the boys and is in stark contrast to those who accused some of either exploiting their charges or neglecting them.

In September 1941 there was a flourish of letters passing between individuals and refugee agencies concerning the Vorgang family. The Manchester Jewish Refugees Committee contacted the Coordinating Committee for Refugees in Gloucester to say that they had had a request from Ilse Vorgang (location unknown) to spend her holiday in Manchester and for her brother to come and join them.<sup>510</sup> The former committee had no objection and said that Harry could stay at their hostel, Kershaw House, 34 Alexandra Road (south), Moss Side, Manchester. After correspondence between the Gloucestershire authorities and Mrs. Hall, she passed on the decision about whether Harry would go to Manchester or not to the GAAR Committee. However, Mrs. Hall did make the telling comment concerning the situation, stating, ‘I think I am right in saying that Harry Vorgang’s family are considered in many respects unsatisfactory and your Committee may not think it prudent to grant this

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<sup>509</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Mrs. Hall, GAAR, to Miss. McClelland, Hospitality Dept., Movement for the Care of Children from Germany, dated 28 July 1939.

<sup>510</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from L. Philip, Manchester Jewish Refugees Committee, to Graham Castle, Secretary Coordinating Committee for Refugees, Community House, Gloucester, dated 17 September 1941.

request. I leave it however to them.’<sup>511</sup> The antagonism shown in correspondence between Mrs. Vorgang and the authorities such as Mrs. Hall had clearly coloured the situation. In a further letter, Mrs. Hall informs Mr. Graham Castle of the agency authorities in Gloucester, ‘We were glad to receive the latter (referring the letter) as we had already given Harry permission (which we felt we could not very well refuse, as his mother is in hospital), to go to Manchester if and when such a letter arrived.’<sup>512</sup> This may well allude to the lack of communication experienced in 1939 between Mrs. Vorgang and Mrs. Hall.

The following month, October 1941, the Vorgang family attempted to reunite permanently, no doubt encouraged by Harry’s visit to his mother. Mrs. Hall received a letter from the Manchester branch of the Jewish Refugees Committee (JRC), who were looking after the mother Irma Vorgang and her daughter, Ilse. It appears that at this stage, according to the JRC, ‘Mrs. Vorgang is ailing and unable to do heavy work.’<sup>513</sup> Mrs. Hall was also informed, though she is likely to have already known that,

Prior to internment she and her daughter Ilse who is a “Movement child” lived together in London.....and she is naturally very anxious that the family should be re-united.

The JRC continued with,

The London Committee has agreed to pay a storage account and the expense of moving Mrs. Vorgang’s furniture and luggage to where ever she decides to settle

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<sup>511</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Graham Castle, Gloucester Rural Community Council, to Mrs. Hall, GAAR, dated 18 September 1941.

<sup>512</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Mrs. Hall to Graham Castle, Gloucestershire Rural Community Council, dated 24 September 1941.

<sup>513</sup> GCA: File D7501/311 (no title). Letter from Mrs. R. Barash, Manchester Branch Secretary, Jewish Refugees Committee, to Mrs. Hall, GAAR, dated 28 October 1941.

and the question now arises whether it would be possible for her to go to live in the Gloucester neighbourhood so that she could have a home together with her daughter and son.

It appears to us here that there could be no objection, as it can make no difference to the Central Committee where she lives, as she would be in receipt of maintenance in any case and we should like to know whether you think it would be possible to find suitable rooms for her and the two children in the near future.<sup>514</sup>

This time, thanks to the wartime conditions of Gloucester, Mrs. Hall was able to thwart both the wishes of Mrs. Vorgang and her support from the JRC. Mrs. Hall replied that,

While sympathising with Mrs. Vorgang's desire to be with her son, my committee instructs me to say that we cannot hope to find any rooms here for her. Gloucester is no longer a reception area; all of the existing accommodation (and a good deal more), is required for essential war workers, and the authorities would certainly not allow us to bring Mrs. Vorgang here.<sup>515</sup>

It is not known how accurate Mrs. Hall's claim was concerning the city's overcrowding. However, Gloucester was not a centre of heavy labour-intensive industry and this stage of the war, prior to the arrival of American forces in the county. Given the likelihood of bombing, then Manchester rather than Gloucester was a more obvious target. The organisational membership of GAAR was also very extensive and through their various contacts it would seem probable that some rooms might have been found, particularly with the guarantee of the rent being paid.

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<sup>514</sup> Ibid.

<sup>515</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/11 (no title). Letter from Mrs. Hall, GAAR, to Mrs. Barash, Manchester Branch Secretary, Jewish Refugees Committee, dated 18 November 1941.



Six months later, Mrs. Vorgang made one final attempt at reuniting her family in the summer of 1942. That May, she wrote to Mrs. Hall from her hostel accommodation in Manchester, yet again setting out her intentions in the light of the earlier rejection.

Excuse me for troubling you in this matter. I would very much like my children to be together with me, that's why I have found him [referring to Harry] a very good job as a Trainee in a Radio-Shop, and arranged for him to start his training on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June. He will be earning £1-10- a week, and I am sure that I will be able to make a living with my children. I wonder if you would be so kind and provide him with a Summer vest because he needs it badly.

I wanted to tell you how grateful I am to you, what you have done all the time for my son, and I am sure that Harry will never forget the good time he spend [sic] in Gloucester.<sup>516</sup>

The last paragraph showed a certain amount of confidence on the part of Mrs. Vorgang in reuniting her family and an attempt to show how grateful she was to GAAR and in particular, Mrs. Hall, in looking after her son. Given Mrs. Vorgang's reputation by this point with the various refugee agencies, it is debatable as to whether they had the same opinion.

In a letter dated the same day as the one received from Mrs. Vorgang, Mrs. Hall contacted Mrs. Barash, the JRC Secretary in Manchester to inform her that Harry wanted to join his mother, who was moving into a new house. She wrote that, Mrs. Vorgang had not yet contacted her, but said that Harry could join her when contact had been made. Interestingly, according to Mrs. Hall, the son gave a different job that he would be going onto, compared to that stated in Mrs. Vorgang's letter; *Messrs.*

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<sup>516</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/11 (no title). Letter from Mrs. Vorgang, Kershaw House, 34 Alexandra Road (south), Moss Side, Manchester, to Mrs. Hall, GAAR, dated 25 May 1942.

*Parkend Boilers*, Great Western Street, Manchester 16. The past actions of Mrs. Vorgang caused Mrs. Hall to request that all of Harry's points and 'facts' were verified by the JCR. Mrs. Hall took a tactful yet cautious line in her correspondence by stating, 'We, naturally, do not wish to prevent the re-union of this family, but feel we cannot be responsible for him at such a distance.'<sup>517</sup> She concludes her letter with somewhat less diplomacy, which could betray her true feelings towards Mrs. Vorgang and be the consequence of dealing with her for such a long time.

I wrote to Mrs. Vorgang several times, but she did not even answer my letters.

I was not surprised, as Bloomsbury House had told us what she was like.

Initially, both Mrs. Hall and Mrs. Barash were in agreement that Harry would stay in Gloucester as indicated in letters and references to phone conversations over the succeeding days.<sup>518</sup> There was, however, a complete turnaround by the 3 June 1942 as a letter from Mrs. Hall, which referred to a phone call two days previously, stated that Harry was going to Manchester, '.....especially as she is not likely to be with them much longer.'<sup>519</sup>

The archive records do not state the nature of Mrs. Vorgang's ill health, nor do they indicate exactly why the antagonism and bad feeling escalated from the summer of 1939 onwards. In the absence of anti-Semitism and during the trying war years, the only clues elicited from the correspondence refer to a lack of contact from Mrs.

Vorgang with GAAR, her times in hospital and continued illness. The mother had

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<sup>517</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/11 (no title). Letter from Mrs. Hall, GAAR, to Mrs. Barash, Manchester Branch Secretary, Jewish Refugees Committee, dated 25 May 1942.

<sup>518</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/11 (no title). Letter from Mrs. Barash, Manchester Branch Secretary, Jewish Refugees Committee, to Mrs. Hall, GAAR, dated 29 May 1942.

<sup>519</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/11 (no title). Letter from Mrs. Hall, GAAR, to Mrs. Barash, Manchester Branch Secretary, Jewish Refugees Committee, dated 3 June 1942.

attempted to see her family once they were in Britain and then reunite them. Harry joined his mother and sister in June 1942.<sup>520</sup> Mrs. Irma Vorgang died the following year.<sup>521</sup>

After the boys had attended Kingsholm Senior Mixed School, where Mrs Hall remarked that, 'we received good reports of them and their development has been very satisfactory indeed', they went onto Gloucester Junior Technical College in Brunswick Street.<sup>522</sup> Their college courses were part of their apprenticeship schemes. The war had severely disrupted the country's education system due to the bombing of schools, their evacuation to reception areas and the shortage of teachers and materials to teach with. As Kingsholm was located in one of the city's most deprived pre-war areas and Gloucester was the central hub for Birmingham's evacuated children, the Jewish refugees had a difficult start to life in a new country. In September 1943, Mrs. Hall received a college report on the progress of Julius Mularski and Arnold Ullmann for the previous academic year of 1942/43. They were both described as having 'variable success' in their course involving carpentry, joinery, maths and geometry and whilst Julius was 'ok' at exams, Arnold was 'poor'.<sup>523</sup> Since September 1941, both boys had been working for the building company, *W.J.B. Halls*, Barton Gates, Gloucester.<sup>524</sup> Arnold Ullmann's lack of success as a builder or carpenter was perhaps the reason why he joined the army. However, given the shortage of builders and the

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<sup>520</sup> GCA: File D7501/2/11 'Boys accounts'. Mrs. Vorgang's address for the 5 June 1942, when Harry moved to Manchester, is given as 34 Yarburgh Street, Manchester 16. This is in the same Moss Side district as her previous address, the Jewish hostel in Alexandra Road.

<sup>521</sup> Manchester Record Office: Death registered, Vol.8d, page 229. Irma Vorgang died in the April-June quarter of 1943.

<sup>522</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/11 (no title). Report given by Mrs. Hall to GAAR General Meeting, 2 December 1941.

<sup>523</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/11 (no title). Telegram from Gloucester Technical College, to GAAR, c/o Mrs. Hall, 25-27 Barton Street, Gloucester, dated 24 September 1943.

<sup>524</sup> GCA: Details of the boys' apprenticeships, employment and wages are held in files D7501/3/1, D7501/3/10 and D7501/3/11 – no title to any file.

fact that he was not liable for military conscription, it is highly possible that he would have been under pressure to have stayed where he was and complete his apprenticeship. Whether or not the teenagers had the academic potential to continue at school or even onto university is not known. As most teenagers left school at fourteen years of age, that was the general expectation of the ten boys, unlike those refugees that had ended up at Quaker and private schools or residing at wealthy homes, such as on the Rothschild's Waddesden Manor estate in Buckinghamshire. For most children, funds were not available to send them to Grammar school or university, even if they had the ability.

Having left the hostel, the Jewish boys were still subject to the strict rules imposed on 'enemy aliens (friendly)'. GAAR conveyed its wishes and advice to the host families, whilst also outlining the government regulations that each boy had to adhere to.<sup>525</sup> The teenagers were not allowed out after 10.30pm without Police permission, despite the fact that they had been used as 'Firewatchers' for the city in case of bombing. They were not allowed to leave the city without Police permission and yet Julius Mularski, Arnold Ullmann and Werner Zorek were involved in the building/carpentry business, presumably within the confines of Gloucester. Nor were they allowed to possess or handle firearms, cameras or wireless sets, though Harry Vorgang was engaged through his work in repairing and delivering wireless sets. It is interesting to observe the extent to which the British Government understood or interpreted the word 'friendly' in the context of 'enemy alien' and how far that trust, as Firewatchers for example, went.

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<sup>525</sup> GCA: File D7501/3/11 (no title). Letter from GAAR Welfare Office to 'Guardians' of the boys, dated 4 December 1941.

The advice given by GAAR to the families was not just about restrictions. It also wanted the families to ensure attendance by the boys at their evening classes. If the boys fell ill, the families were reassured by the knowledge that any costs were covered by National Health Insurance Acts, plus there was a Selected Panel Doctor (Dr Hunt, 144 London Road, Gloucester). Finally, GAAR would pay the families 22/6 per week for each boy to cover their board and lodging costs. As the families had been chosen by GAAR, there is less reason to believe that the families took the boys in so as to exploit them in any way. Therefore, compared with the experiences of other *Kinder* and the bulk of the September 1939 evacuees, the Gloucester Jewish boys had some modicum of comfort and safety in the safe knowledge that the families they were going to live with had been 'vetted' by GAAR.

Despite the restrictions on the boys, the archive does indicate that they were, as teenagers, able to enjoy a social life in Gloucester which reflected both their background and the context of wartime Britain. The Gloucester and District Refugee Club, based at the Friends Mission Hall, was open two evenings a week. The boys, along with others, as the club name suggests, who might share a similar background, attended social evenings, games such as table tennis and listened to speakers who were fellow refugees. It is recorded that besides the RAF, it was the Pioneer Corps in particular who were the main providers or organisers in the running of the club.<sup>526</sup> This was unsurprising given the multi-national nature of the Pioneer Corps.

The two Pioneer Corps graves in the Cheltenham Synagogue cemetery give testament to the Jewish contribution to the Armed Forces, particularly to an army unit that was

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<sup>526</sup> GCA: File 7501/3/11 (no title).

the only opening initially for foreign nationals to volunteer for.<sup>527</sup> Both H. Fogel and M. Lobl (names changed to Harry Foster and Martin Laughton respectively) drowned on a training exercise at Tewkesbury on the 11<sup>th</sup> August 1943.<sup>528</sup> The GAAR archive records lack specific detail as to what happened to the refugee boys after they had been fostered out to families, apart from to say that Peter Nebenzahl, Kurt Reimann and Arnold Ullmann joined the army and to give their enlistment dates; January 1944, August 1943 and June 1945 respectively.<sup>529</sup> All three reached eighteen years of age in 1943 and therefore could volunteer for the Armed Forces (non-British citizens could not be conscripted). Although the GAAR records do not state the unit they signed up to, it was still likely to be the case even by 1943, that for the majority of foreign born Jews, the destination was the Pioneer Corps.<sup>530</sup> However, they would have had the opportunity in the last two years of the war to transfer to other front line regiments and units. The AJEX 'Record of Honour', in association with the Jewish Military Museum in Hendon, London, contains some details relating to the a number of the Gloucester refugee boys.<sup>531</sup> Julius Mularski is recorded as having been in the 'Lumber Group' (serial number 14471576), whilst Peter Nebenzahl entered the Army's

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<sup>527</sup> Whilst the synagogue is off St. James Square, the cemetery is in Elm Street. Details of the gravestones for 13051610 Private H. Fogel and 13116600 Private M. Lobl are available from both the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the Gloucester based, Gloucestershire Family History Centre, with the latter's *Survey of Memorial Inscriptions in Gloucestershire*.

<sup>528</sup> It was common for German/Austrian refugees, both Jewish and non-Jewish, to anglicise their names in case of capture.

<sup>529</sup> GCA: D7501/2/5 Accounts.

<sup>530</sup> For a general history of the Pioneer Corps see Major E. Rhodes Wood, *A War History of the Royal Pioneer Corps 1939-1945* (Aldershot, 1960), For those that deal specifically with refugee German/Austrian (both Jewish and non-Jewish) involvement in both the Pioneer Corps and other regiments, including 'Special Forces', see N. Bentwich, *I Understand the Risks: The Story of the Refugees from Nazi Oppression who Fought in the British Forces in the World War* (London, 1950), H. Fry, *Jews in North Devon* (Tiverton, 2005) and *The King's Most Loyal Enemy Aliens: Germans who Fought for Britain in the Second World War* (Stroud, 2007), P. Leighton-Langer, *The King's Own Loyal Enemy Aliens: German and Austrian Refugees in Britain's Armed forces, 1939-45* (London, 2006), P. Masters, *Striking Back: A Jewish Commando's War Against the Nazis* (California, 1997) and M. Sugarman, *Fighting Back: British Jewry's Military Contribution During the Second World War* (London, 2010). Besides the Imperial War Museum, London, there are a large number of unpublished memoirs of Jewish ex-Armed Forces personnel held by the Jewish Military Museum, London. The latter is closely linked to the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women (AJEX).

<sup>531</sup> [www.thejmm.org.uk](http://www.thejmm.org.uk).

Intelligence Corps (serial number 14442389) and the troubled Harry Vorgang enrolled in the Pioneer Corps (serial number 13807391). As regards to the British Army's Intelligence Corps and linked 'clandestine' units, it was only in the second half of the war that German and Austrian refugees were able to use their native language skills to best effect after having often transferred from the Pioneer Corps. They continued to serve Britain after the war had finished, often as part of the occupying forces, in the effort to track down war criminals and in the 'De-Nazification' programme.

The general public's lack of knowledge or unwillingness to acknowledge the Jewish war effort in Britain's Armed Forces and Civil Defence has been an issue since 1939. These two positions have been noted by amongst others, British authors Roald Dahl (former RAF fighter pilot 'ace') and Alan Fenton (whose older Jewish brothers were both killed serving in RAF Bomber Command).<sup>532</sup> Whilst the former slated a lack of Jewish involvement in the fighting, juxtaposed to Israeli military actions in the 1980s, the latter was enraged by widespread ignorance of Jewish sacrifice, coupled with personal loss. This is all the more amazing given the large number of publications over the past twenty years that have highlighted the role played by Britain's Jewish community. A possible explanation for this is that British born Jews did not consciously flag up their faith to those around them (supposing that they were practising Jews), in the same way that Protestant, Roman Catholic, Methodist etc. members of HM Forces have not done. In neither wartime nor peacetime, did the majority of the British Armed Forces make a distinction between the faiths or ethnic origin of its forces. However, the handful of slurs directed at the Jewish war record might be said to have forced Jews into publically highlighting their achievements.

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<sup>532</sup> J. Treglowan, *Roald Dahl: A Biography*, (New York, 1994), pp. 255-256, and A. Fenton, 'My Tragic Brothers: Heroes of the RAF' in the *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 July 2010, and 'My Brothers were Heroes' in the *Guardian*, 25 September 2010.

Foreign born refugee Jews who volunteered for the forces were initially only allowed into the distinctly unglamorous Pioneer Corps. Only later on during the war were they involved in a wide variety of ‘Special Forces’ operations and clandestine activities such as the Special Operations Executive (SOE).<sup>533</sup> The fact that these men and women were ‘enemy aliens’, involved with non-frontline units or highly secretive operations, whose details have only been released in recent years, may well have obscured their true worth to the country. Adding to the lack of public profile may also have been the significant numbers of Jews who changed and anglicised their names (particularly those born abroad) and officially registered as ‘Church of England’. Jewish people were fully aware of the consequences of what was likely to happen to them if they were captured by the Germans, especially those refugees from ‘Greater Germany’ and the occupied countries/territories. Therefore, given a historiography that stretches back to the war years with such admittedly self-serving publications as Rabbi L. Rabinowitz’s (senior Jewish Chaplain to MEF and British 8<sup>th</sup> Army) *Soldiers from Judea: Palestinian Jewish Units in the Middle East, 1941-1943* (London, 1944) and the Jewish Agency’s *Jewish Palestine Fights Back* (London, 1945), there has been a failure by non-Jews to recognise, even to the present time, the contribution played by Jews in His Majesty’s Forces and Civil Defence.

In the lead up to the start of the Second World War during the ‘Munich Crisis’, the British Government made plans for the introduction of compulsory military service for the male population. Alongside this, Air Raid Protection (A.R.P.) services and military reserve forces, such as the Territorial Army (T.A.) and R.A.F. Volunteer Reserve (R.A.F.V.R.), were being expanded. In November 1938, in order to avoid the

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<sup>533</sup> Helen Fry, Peter Leighton-Langer and Martin Sugarman have typically broken down their publications (see footnote 143) into sections that deal with the Services separately, along with Civil Defence and work at Bletchley Park.



problems that had been experienced in 1914 and 1915 with the unregulated mass volunteering, a Schedule of Reserved Occupations was published. This was part of a plan to preserve workers in skilled civilian jobs and together with other publications, direct the public into the most appropriate positions to aid the possible forthcoming war effort. By the summer of 1939, over 300,000 had volunteered for the Armed Forces, while the Civil Defence had recruited a further 500,000.<sup>534</sup> The Military Training Act of May 1939 and the National Service (Armed Forces) Act of September 1939 brought the country onto a war footing with conscription for those men aged between eighteen and forty one. In November 1939, due to the effects of conscription, employers were allowed to ask for the deferment of 'called up' employees if they were considered essential to a business. This was eventually applicable to both reserved and non-reserved occupations, and by the end of 1940, over 200,000 men had been granted deferment. In addition, individuals could apply for a postponement of their call up on grounds of severe personal hardship and over 200,000 applications were granted by 1945.<sup>535</sup> Therefore, when the Jewish community in Britain was accused of lacking a patriotic and fighting spirit, and avoiding being conscripted, it would be more accurate to say that Jews were just as committed if not more so than their non-Jewish neighbours.

During the war era, when the numbers of Jews in Britain were at their highest, reaching approximately 350,000, they represented about 0.5% of the total population. Between 60,000 and 70,000 Jews served in the British Armed Forces, making up around 20% of their population. A further 30,000 were accepted into British Commonwealth units from Palestine. The Jewish commitment to the war effort is

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<sup>534</sup> A. Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939-45* (London, 1969), p.51.

<sup>535</sup> H. Parker, *Manpower* (H.M.S.O., 1957), pp.150-160.

further demonstrated by the statistics that 3000 Anglo-Jews were killed, representing a little under 1% of the total population, whilst 700 Palestinian Jews were killed, equating to just over 2% of their volunteers.<sup>536</sup>

In addition, one must also consider that of an estimated 72,000 refugees (approximately 10,000 being *Kinder*) who had fled the Nazis and arrived in Britain by September 1939, 7000 Germans and 3000 Austrians volunteered to serve in the British Armed Forces.<sup>537</sup> Representing approximately 10% of the entire refugee number, many of the volunteers, not conscripts, were in their thirties and forties. The majority of these volunteers were Jewish and had been interned at some stage during 1940/1941. For those of German and Austrian origin who swore an oath of allegiance to the British Crown to fight their against fellow countrymen, they had to wait until after the war had finished in order to receive their naturalisation papers.

Given that many Jews lived in some of the poorest urban areas in the country, with high rates of unemployment, conscription gave single men some security in terms of food and housing. For the married man in employment and perhaps with children, conscription hit both Jewish and non-Jewish men alike. Pay for ordinary soldiers in the Forces was notoriously low, which after deductions for his family, could leave him with only one shilling per day to spend or save. Government allowances to married women with children fell short of the money that prior to the war had been brought in by the husband and therefore it was often more beneficial in monetary terms, to send the children away as part of the evacuation scheme. One can say that due to the Jewish demographic pattern, conscription had a greater impact on that

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<sup>536</sup> M. Sugarman, *Fighting Back* (London, 2010), p.xiv.

<sup>537</sup> P. Leighton-Langer, *Kings Own Loyal Enemy Aliens* (London, 2006), pp. xii, 1.

community than most other socio-economic groups. The indigenous Jewish community of Britain, being part of the wider general community, were subject to the legal obligations required of everyone else during the war. Their faith did not entitle them to any privileges, unlike pacifist groups such as the Quakers, who were recognised as being exempt from front-line service. Being Jewish meant that they were keenly aware of what would happen to them if the Axis Powers had won the war. The Jewish community had more reason than any other group to get involved in the war and help achieve victory. The stories and experiences of Jewish refugees from the continent arriving in Britain since 1933 and the information released in the British media about the fate of Jews during the war, should have indicated to most that Anglo-Jewry would do anything in order to defeat Nazism.

Only gradually did the barest of details concerning what became known as the Holocaust start to filter through to the British public in the second half of the war. It was only in the last few weeks of the European war that some inkling of what the term 'Holocaust' meant in practical terms began to emerge through the liberation of concentration and work camps, followed by the detailed procedures being outlined in the reports of the Nuremberg Trials. Yet during the war, there was a lack of understanding over the connection between the Nazis and Fascism with that of anti-Semitism. It seemed as if one could be both anti-Semitic and violently against Nazism. If in the Sheffield bus depots people were overheard to say that the 'Jews were blamed for the war, black markets, high prices and most other universal ills', then conversely as bus conductoress, Zelma Katin, pointed out, 'When a group of us

went round collecting signatures for the re-internment of Sir Oswald Mosley, we had no difficulty in obtaining a roll of nearly a hundred percent.<sup>538</sup>

The illogicality of some members of the public was also picked up by George Orwell who in 1945 wrote, ‘That anti-Semitism is on the increase, that it has been greatly exacerbated by the war, and that humane and enlightened people are not immune to it.’<sup>539</sup> Orwell indicated the causes as coming from the fact that the Jewish community was largely concentrated and were engaged in professions that rivalled those of many non-Jews. This may account for London, but the argument is less convincing when applied elsewhere in the country. If the anti-Semitism comes from the fact that most ‘enemy aliens’ were Jewish, then one must be careful to distinguish between anti-Jew and anti-foreigner. Xenophobia does not necessarily equal anti-Semitism. This point can likewise be applied to the hostility handed out to those children who were evacuated from London. What may be regarded as hostility to Jewish people using the parameters or standards of today, could using the values and context of the 1940s be acknowledged as simply ignorance of Jewish customs by an unfamiliar audience or host. However, the leadership of the Jewish community was only too aware of how its actions could be interpreted and used by those with an interest in manipulating the opinions of the general public.

British society’s perception of Jews as a single entity was a significant error and one that had increasing repercussions with the rise in anti-British violence in the Near East by Jewish extremists from 1944 onwards. At a time when the British public became, through the media, increasingly aware of Jewish sufferings in continental Europe and

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<sup>538</sup> Z. Katin, *Clippie: The Autobiography of a War Time Conductress* (London, 1944), p. 72.

<sup>539</sup> G. Orwell, ‘Anti-Semitism in Britain’, *Collected Essays* (London, 1961), p.288.

therefore garnered both public support and sympathy, the assassination of Lord Moyne (a close friend of Churchill) in November 1944 by the Stern Gang had serious consequences for British Jewry.<sup>540</sup> The negative effect it had on one of Zionism's staunchest British supporters, Winston Churchill, can be gauged from his statement to the House of Commons.<sup>541</sup> It is clear that his position shifted away from the cause as he concluded:

This shameful crime has shocked the world. It has affected none more strongly than those, like myself, who, in the past, have been consistent friends of the Jews and constant architects of their future. If our dreams for Zionism are to end in the smoke of assassins' pistols and our labours for its future to produce only a new set of gangsters worthy of Nazi Germany, many like myself will have to reconsider the position we have maintained so consistently and so long in the past..... We must wait to see that, not only the leaders, but every man, woman and child of the Jewish community does his or her best to bring this terrorism to a speedy end.'<sup>542</sup>

The mistaken belief of seeing the Jewish community as a single entity, led to a feeling by some that British Jewry was 'guilty' by association, when in fact, the opposite was true for all the Jews in Britain, not to mention the vast majority of Jews elsewhere in the world. This point was realised by the Jewish MP for Cheltenham, Daniel Lipson, who, in the same Commons debate, followed up Churchill's statement by saying, 'Is my right hon. Friend aware that every Jew worthy of the name will wholeheartedly

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<sup>540</sup> M. Gilbert, *Churchill and the Jews* (London, 2007), p.225. Lord Moyne, a close friend of the Prime Minister, Churchill, was the Minister responsible for the Middle East, including enforcing government immigration policy in Palestine. He was assassinated in Cairo by Stern Gang members, Eliahu Bet-Zouri and Eliahu Hakim.

<sup>541</sup> Both Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe, 1939-1945* (Oxford, 1988), p.337 and Nicholas Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle: The Struggle between the British, the Jews and the Arabs 1935-1948* (London, 1979), p.186, have maintained that the assassination of Lord Moyne resulted in Churchill becoming less forthright in his support for the Zionist cause.

<sup>542</sup> Hansard, House of Commons Debate, 17 November 1944, vol.404, cc.2242-2244.

and worthily support the statement which he has just made, and will pray that the efforts to eradicate speedily and completely this murderous gang and their associates will be successful?’<sup>543</sup> Events outside Britain, such as the murder of Lord Moyne and in subsequent years, of British officials and soldiers, helped temporarily to increase British public support for the extreme right wing groups. Without this impetus, anti-Semitism would have remained a marginalised aspect of British society, both in terms of numbers and geographically. Furthermore, anti-Semitism in as much as it existed as opposed to a feeling of xenophobia, would have remained discredited by the war record of the Jewish community both on the ‘Home Front’ and on the front line in the Armed Forces.

At the time as the Warsaw Uprising in 1943, the Allies held the Bermuda Conference to look at what could be done to help refugees (not specifically Jews) and was slated for their inactivity. Even the Church of England weighed in and attacked the British Government’s lack of action, when Bishop Bell spoke in the House of Lords.<sup>544</sup> The newspapers’ effectiveness in ‘credibly’ informing the public of, as Archbishop Temple described the genocide, ‘the most appalling horror in recorded history’, was hindered by a somewhat cynical audience.<sup>545</sup> The worse the stories, in a sense, the less credible they might have seemed, because of the multitude of alleged falsehoods put out by the British Government in the First World War concerning German actions. The British public of the Second World War, unlike the previous war, felt itself to be more aware of reality and less prone to be too accepting of what they were told either

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<sup>543</sup> Ibid.

<sup>544</sup> George Bell, Bishop of Chichester, was a leading theologian, friend of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and advocate of refugee and Jewish affairs. He was also an opponent of mass civilian bombing and as such, was disliked by Winston Churchill. Cited in A. Calder, *The People’s War*, p.500.

<sup>545</sup> William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury (1942-1944), worked with Chief Rabbi, Dr. Hertz, to found the Council of Christians and Jews in order to combat anti-Semitism. Ibid. p.500.

by the government or by the newspapers. It was only with the liberation of the camps and the subsequent Nuremberg Trials that most people realised what exactly had happened to European Jewry. Given the strains of war on everyday life, one can understand that with limited information available and people's predisposition to propaganda, the general public may seem unsympathetic to the Jews. However, this does not equate to anti-Semitism.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: JEWRY DIVIDED AND THE BRITISH**

### **BACKLASH, 1945-1948.**

The three years from May 1945, the end of the war in Europe, until May 1948 and the creation of the State of Israel, marked one of the most formative and yet destructive periods in the history of British Jewry. The socially elite leadership of the Board of Jewish Deputies with its belief in assimilation and a passive response to anti-Semitism was challenged, if not swept aside, by a more strident, assertive and often Zionist element of Anglo-Jewry. The chapter focuses on the response of the Jewish community to the resurrection of British fascism. It also examines how Jewish terrorism in the Palestine Mandate and the emerging details of the *Shoah* had an impact upon race relations in Britain and the extent to which Anglo-Jews could be both loyal citizens and sympathetic Zionists at the same time.

It is important to remember that many in Britain's Jewish community sought a balance between supporting their Palestine co-religionists and yet distancing themselves from terrorism. The chapter looks at what it meant to be a 'patriotic' Jew in a country that had fought for democracy and still, at least in the popular mind, considered itself an imperial and leading world power. Yet as the controlling authority in Palestine and therefore the focus of Anglo-Jewry's pressure concerning immigration, Britain's pre-war world authority, monetary power and the ability to determine geo-political outcomes had been eroded by the Second World War. The chapter will show that in the three years up to 1948, although certain anti-Semitic elements in Britain survived the war, indigenous Jews were increasingly successful at integration and assimilation. However, those Jews who had arrived in Britain more



recently both threatened the former and yet protected them by taking direct action against fascism. As the frustration increased in Palestine, particularly amongst Jewish extremists, so elements of the British right-wing used terrorism in Palestine to garner support in Britain. The main focus of the chapter concerns how the Jewish population responded to fascism, the extent of the latter and the importance of a Jewish homeland to Anglo-Jewry.

The historiography of the period has so far concentrated on three aspects: the events that unfolded in Palestine itself, the influence of the USA and American Jewry, the Palestine crisis as part of the process of British decolonisation post-1945. The fact that Palestine was a British Mandate and that Britain in 1945 had the largest number of resident Jews in its history, there is a significant gap in academic research into both the reaction to and influence on events in the Near East by Britain's Jewish community. Given the openness and large extent of archive material today, two recent publications on post-war Britain by Peter Hennessy and David Kynaston devote only one sentence and one page respectively to events that affected the second largest minority in the country (the Irish being the largest minority).<sup>546</sup> On the 1945-1948 period, Michael J. Cohen's *Palestine, Retreat from the Mandate: The Making of British Policy 1936-1948* (London, 1978) concentrates on the arguments between government departments and the military, rather than on any social aspects, and did not have full access to the archive sources. Most recently, David Cesarani's *Major Farran's Hat: Murder, Scandal and Britain's war against Jewish Terrorism, 1945-1948* (London, 2009) looks at the extra-judicial activities of the British in Palestine, the government cover up and the subsequent failed revenge attempts by Jewish

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<sup>546</sup> P. Hennessy, *Never Again: Britain 1945-51* (London, 2006), p. 241. D. Kynaston, *Austerity Britain 1945-51* (London, 2007), p. 270.

extremists in Britain. In a similar vein, Paul Bagon's MPhil. Thesis, *The Impact of the Jewish Underground upon Anglo-Jewry 1945-1947* (St. Anthony's College, University of Oxford, 2003) has started to explore how events in Palestine affected Britain's Jewish community, especially when dealing with the Board of Jewish Deputies and its efforts to support co-religionists, but to avoid provoking an anti-Semitic response. Another relevant, but different perspective, is Tony Kushner's chapter 'Anti-semitism and austerity: the August 1947 riots in Britain' in Panayi Panikos's *Racial Violence in Britain, 1840-1950* (Leicester, 1993). This deals with fascist exploitation of violence in Palestine to stir up anti-Semitic activity and is very much the first, if tentative, commentary on the last anti-Jewish riots in Britain. One of the very few Jewish perspectives of the time is given by Morris Beckman in *The 43 Group* (London, 1992), which rather than being an academic history in its strictest sense, is a personal account by a founder member of this aggressively anti-fascist group of Jewish ex-soldiers. The fact that it was a secretive organisation and temporary in existence, means that there are few archive records apart from one file held by the London School of Economics. Some of the narrative has been reconstructed using interviews with surviving members of the 43 Group.

Over the past thirty years, many publications have looked at the history of the Palestine Mandate as a whole or focused on the Jewish campaign to push the British out of the Mandate in its last years. Notable are A. J. Sherman's *Mandate Days: British Lives in Palestine, 1918-1948*, Tom Segev's *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs Under the British Mandate* and Saul Zadka's *Blood in Zion: How the*

*Jewish Guerrillas Drove the British Out of Palestine.*<sup>547</sup> Since their main concerns are people or events in Palestine, these and other books have made only passing references to the effects on Britain and in particular, on popular attitudes. Similarly, books on British decolonisation have tended to concern themselves with its impact on national government and Cold War politics, individual government departments such as the Colonial Office, or the Armed Forces, rather than ordinary British citizens. The events in Palestine are most commonly scrutinised as part of a much bigger picture of British withdrawal, the first failure for Clement Attlee's government, or totally overshadowed by larger events in India. This is clearly illustrated by the general historiography of British decolonisation, where the events in wartime Palestine and the subsequent evacuation or abandonment by British Forces are given scant consideration by historians.<sup>548</sup> An exception to this is Peter Clarke's *The Last Thousand Days of the British Empire: Churchill, Roosevelt and the Birth of Pax Americana* (London, 2008), though the focus is political rather than social. Clarke in his comparison of India and Palestine focuses chiefly on the period up to August 1947, which fails to do justice to the full Palestine story.

In 1945, Palestine was intended to replace Egypt as the post-war centre of Britain's Middle East Command. Over the next three years, in a reversal of British fortunes, the

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<sup>547</sup> A. J. Sherman, *Mandate Days: British Lives in Palestine, 1918-1948* (Baltimore, 1997), Ch.5, pp.174-245. T. Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs Under the British Mandate* (New York, 1999), Chs. 21-23, pp.447-520. S. Zadka, *Blood in Zion: How the Jewish Guerrillas Drove the British Out of Palestine* (London, 2003), Ch. 9, pp. 169-183. The chapters and page references refer to the c. 1939-1948 period.

<sup>548</sup> L. James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (New York, 1997). The relevant time period of the wartime and following three years up to 1948 and the end of the mandate may be found on pages 562-563 (Part 5, Ch.3, pp.559-572) in this 704 page book. In L.J. Butler, *Britain and Empire: Adjusting to a Post-Imperial World* (London, 2002), the relevant references to Palestine are pp.63, 65, 67, 72, 76-80 (Ch.3, pp. 63-96) of this 249 page history. Similarly, in R. Hyam's *Britain's Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation* (CUP, 2006), the relevant events are located on pages 49-58 (Ch.1, pp.30-93) and 123-129 (Ch.2, pp.94-167) in this 464 page account. P. Brendon's *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire* (New York, 2008) devotes even less space to Palestine, where the events are found on pages 475-484 (Ch.16, pp.466-486) in his 786 page account.

colonial withdrawal from Palestine was accompanied by an organised terrorist campaign which extended to Britain. It is possible to argue that terrorist activities in Palestine divided the opinions of Jewish co-religionists in Britain and endangered race relations in an unprecedented manner, with the possible exceptions of the IRA and the Catholic Irish and Al Queda with Muslim communities. However, neither the IRA nor Al Queda forced withdrawal from a British possession/occupation. Therefore, it is even more remarkable that no British historian has addressed this area of social impact. In exploring how post-war events within Palestine affected a society outside of the Mandate, one must look to America's Jewish community and government where there is extensive research to date by historians such as William Louis and Ritchie Ovendale.<sup>549</sup> The difference in approaches over the impact of Palestine and its interaction with a Jewish minority in America and Great Britain is shown clearly in the importance given to Zionism. American, Jewish American and Israeli historians, unlike those in Britain, have frequently concentrated on the American link to the eventual creation of Israel and the role of Zionism. Historians such as Ben Halpern, Allon Gal, Aaron Klieman, Melvin Urofsky and Ariel Kochavi have all understood the important link with Zionism and the impact that events in Palestine had on the American public and vice versa.<sup>550</sup> This is in stark contrast to the more relevant impact upon Jews in Britain as Palestine was a British Mandate.<sup>551</sup>

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<sup>549</sup> W.R. Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East 1945-1951: Arab Nationalism, the United States, and Postwar Imperialism* (OUP, 1984), R. Ovendale, *Britain, the United States, and the End of the Palestine Mandate, 1942-1948* (London, 1989).

<sup>550</sup> B. Halpern, *A Clash of Heroes: Brandeis, Weizmann* (OUP, 1987), A. Gal, *David Ben-Gurion and the American Alignment for a Jewish State* (Indiana, 1991), A. Klieman, *Palestine in Postwar United States and World Affairs* (New York, 1991) and *U.S. reactions to the British Mandate* (New York, 1991), M. Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust* (New York, 1975) and A. Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics: Britain, the United States, and Jewish Refugees, 1945-1948* (North Carolina, 2001).

<sup>551</sup> N. Adrian, *Britain, Israel and Anglo-Jewry 1949-1957* (London, 2004), p.2. Adrian makes the point that except for the work of David Cesarani and Geoffrey Alderman, there is a lack of research conducted by historians on this post-war period.

As seen in the previous chapter, the response to the persecution and murder of continental European Jewry became even more pertinent for the post-war British government. The genocide gave substantial weight to the Zionist argument by suggesting, at the very least, a relaxing of the 1939 White Paper quota on immigration to Palestine. As Winston Churchill became sidelined by the General Election of 1945, Clement Attlee's Labour Government and in particular, the Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, came under pressure from all quarters to deal with the vexing problem of Palestine's future. As a League of Nations Mandate (and that of its successor, the United Nations Organisation), Britain was responsible for the governance and eventual independence of Palestine. This in turn meant it was the focus of attention, subject to pressure from the United Nations Organisation, the USA (along with a powerful Jewish lobby) and an increasingly agitated and economically powerful Muslim Near and Middle East.<sup>552</sup> Added political, ideological and the not insignificant moral weight of arguments, come from the World Jewish Congress, the Jewish Agency, along with the impatience of Jewish insurgent groups such as the *Haganah*, *Irgun Zvai Leumi* and *Lohamei HaHerut b'Yisrael* (more commonly known as the Stern Gang). As an Allied occupying power, Britain also had a legal and moral responsibility for the hundreds of thousands of surviving Jews in Europe located in either Displaced Persons (D.P.) camps in Germany and Austria or those fleeing to the West from continuing persecution in eastern Europe.<sup>553</sup> In the media spotlight, these

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<sup>552</sup> The political pressure and subsequent irritation between Britain and the United States is clearly exemplified in Alan Bullock's *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary 1945-1951* (London, 1983) and Chatani Youseff's *Dissension among the Allies: Ernest Bevin's Palestine Policy between Whitehall and the White House, 1945-1947* (London, 2002).

<sup>553</sup> There are extensive bibliographies particularly concerning Jewish refugees and their experiences in DP camps in M. Feinstein, *Holocaust Survivors in Postwar Germany, 1945-1957* (CUP, 2010) and A. Konigseder, J. Wetzel, *Waiting for Hope: Jewish Displaced Persons in Post-World War II Germany* (Evanston, 2001). For a Jewish perspective on the largest DP camp in the British Occupied Zone in Germany, see E. Somers, R. Kok, *Jewish Displaced Persons in Camp Bergen-Belsen 1945-1950* (Washington, 2004). The extent to which Polish people were involved in anti-Semitic violence and murder against Jews both during and after the war, with specific reference to events in Jedwabne

refugees placed further pressure on Britain because many of them wanted to reach the ‘safety’ of Palestine and a Jewish homeland, while the Royal Navy attempted to prevent their entry.

Through the course of the war, the British population, both Jew and non-Jew, came to know the plight of continental Jewry through the emerging picture of their mass murder as reported in the newspapers. Due to eyewitness testimonies and the work done at Bletchley Park, all levels of society from the man in the street to the Prime Minister knew how persecution had evolved into the fullness of the Holocaust.<sup>554</sup> Just thirteen months after *Kristallnacht*, in December 1939, the British public read in the *Times* of ‘A Slow Road to Extermination’; a new phase in the persecution of the Jews had been entered.<sup>555</sup> Needless to say, the *Jewish Chronicle* archive illustrates the increasingly explicit circumstances of European Jewry’s fate, many of whom were related to Jews in Britain. In January 1942, the *Jewish Chronicle* had published two typically ominous stories that summed up two of the main methods being employed by the Nazis to eliminate European Jewry. Firstly, the experimental use of gas at Mauthausen Concentration Camp and secondly, a Soviet report stating that 52,000 Jews had been killed in the Ukraine at Kiev.<sup>556</sup> Later, in April of that year, the same paper revealed that 1,200 Jews had been sent to Mauthausen and gassed to death.<sup>557</sup>

By the summer, the *Jewish Chronicle* commented that, ‘News is filtering through of

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(1941) and Kielce (1946), have been examined by Polish American historian Jan Gross in *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton, 2001) and *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland After Auschwitz* (New York, 2006).

<sup>554</sup> Richard Breitman’s book, *Official Secrets: What the Nazis Planned, What the British and Americans Knew* (New York, 1998), argues that due to low-level code interceptions from SS police units in the Soviet Union, Bletchley Park and the British Government knew of the systematic genocide of the Jews from as early as 1941, and subsequently failed to act on that information. This is in contrast to other historians views who have suggested a much later date, such as Martin Gilbert and the year 1944, before the government fully appreciated the nature and extent of the genocide.

<sup>555</sup> *Times*, 16 December 1939.

<sup>556</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 January and 16 January 1942 respectively.

<sup>557</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 April 1942.

recent ghastly massacres of Jews in Nazi Europe. Some 85,000 men, women and children are mentioned in reports to hand.<sup>558</sup> For the wider readership at that time, Jew and non-Jew alike, the *Daily Telegraph* carried stories reporting on the deaths of 50,000 in Vilnius, Germans using mobile gas chambers to wipe out the Jews and that they had ‘embarked on the physical extermination of the Jewish population.’<sup>559</sup> Although from a military viewpoint, December 1942 might be seen as the date on which the Allied Armies were on the cusp of a breakthrough and a reversal of fortunes after El Alamein, Operation Torch and the continued grinding down of the German 6<sup>th</sup> Army at Stalingrad, Jews in Britain were faced with the headline of ‘Two Million Jews Slaughtered’ and ‘Most Terrible Massacre of All Time.’<sup>560</sup> The year concluded with Parliament being left in no doubt about the scale of the Holocaust. Sydney Silverman (1895-1968), the Jewish Labour MP for Nelson and Colne, Liverpool, asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Anthony Eden, ‘whether he has any statement to make regarding the plan of the German Government to deport all Jews from the occupied countries to Eastern Europe and there put them to death before the end of the year.’<sup>561</sup> Upon receiving a detailed and explicit reply that included the progression of the Jewish extermination up to that point, the House of Commons rose in silence.

Jews in Britain could for the most part remain detached from the future of Palestine up until the end of the war, with the exception of those Jews who had recently arrived

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<sup>558</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 June 1942.

<sup>559</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 25 June 1942.

<sup>560</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 11 December 1942.

<sup>561</sup> *Hansard*, House of Commons Debate 17 December 1942, Vol.385, cc.2082-2087. Sydney Silverman’s parents were Romanian refugees. Like many of his generation, with a Jewish background, he rose from very poor circumstances to senior positions within the Labour Party eg. National Executive member 1956-1968, and supported the Zionist cause. He was imprisoned in the First World War for being a conscientious objector, supported illegally striking workers in the Second World War, became a founding member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and helped to abolish the death penalty. See Emrys Hughes, *Sydney Silverman: Rebel in Parliament* (London, 1969).

from the continental Europe. It was the liberation of the concentration camps and subsequent details of the Holocaust that emerged from the Nuremberg Trials that inclined them to listen to the Zionist argument, particularly when Jews in the British Army were demobbed and fascism in Britain began to re-form. Chanie Gluckstein (nee Rosenberg), a Jewish Trotskyist, who had immigrated from Palestine to Britain after the war, recalled that,

The Jews, before the Second World War, never supported Zionism. It was after the war that the Jews became Zionist because of what happened in the Holocaust.

It was the Holocaust that turned Jews worldwide to Zionism.<sup>562</sup>

Expectations of Jews in Britain concerning where their loyalty lay and the future of Palestine became inevitable once a terrorist campaign began in the Mandate.

Although events in Europe and the Near East were beyond the control of Jews in Britain, they nevertheless had a profound and lasting impact upon them.

Great Britain's position in the world had changed dramatically since 1939. From the July 1945 General Election victory, the Labour Government had to contend with an emerging Cold War in a nuclear age, a growing dependence on American financial support and an increasingly anachronistic empire. Domestically, the situation for Labour was no better, with fascism making a reappearance, increased rationing, housing and coal shortages and the worst winter of the century (1946/1947).<sup>563</sup> While Zionism was effectively a side issue for Churchill in the run up to the election, Zionist

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<sup>562</sup> Interview with the author, 6/7 November 2008.

<sup>563</sup> The Attlee administration and in particular the Prime Minister himself, has in recent years received greater attention from historians, most notably from T. Burrige, *Clement Attlee* (London, 1985), D. Howell, *Attlee* (London, 2006) and F. Beckett, *Clem Attlee* (London, 2007). More general works and those that look at the conflicting personalities within government can be found in K. Morgan, *Labour in Power, 1945-51* (OUP, 2002) and G. Radice, *The Tortoise and the Hares: Attlee, Bevin, Cripps, Dalton, Morrison* (London, 2008). From an early age, Attlee was aware of Jewish issues, having done charitable work in Limehouse before the First World War and as Mayor of Stepney just after the war.



aims , Jewish terrorism and the future of Palestine quickly dominated Attlee's foreign affairs, including the Prime Minister's often irritable relationship with President Truman. However, it was believed by many Jews that the end of the war would bring an end to anti-Semitic fascism and the fulfilment of Churchill's hopes for a Jewish 'homeland'.

For the British Government and Churchill in particular, the reality of the 'Final Solution' to the Jewish problem came when the Prime Minister was phoned on the 18 April 1945 by the Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Forces, General Eisenhower. Ever since taking office in 1940, Winston Churchill had received information on the mass shootings, starvation and gassing of Jews (and other groups such as Polish and Soviet POWs and civilians) in Europe. In November 1941, the *Jewish Chronicle* had carried Churchill's words that, 'None has suffered more cruelly than the Jew, the unspeakable evils wrought on their bodies and spirits of men by Hitler and his vile regime.'<sup>564</sup> The photographs of the liberation of Majdanek extermination and labour camp printed in the newspapers in August 1944, complete with bodies and crematoria, were a foretaste for both the public and the government of what was to come.<sup>565</sup> As American and British Armies pushed into Germany, they had started to come across increasing numbers of concentration/labour camps. The unprecedented scenes of horror and death witnessed by American troops prompted Eisenhower to request that Churchill send a Parliamentary delegation to Germany to see for itself what had taken place. It was on the 27 April that the delegation reached Buchenwald and wrote in their report to Parliament, 'One half-naked skeleton tottering painfully along the passage as though on stilts, drew himself up when he saw

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<sup>564</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 November 1941.

<sup>565</sup> *Ibid.*, 18 August 1944.

our party, smiled, and saluted.’<sup>566</sup> In a telephone message to Churchill in the week before their visit, Eisenhower’s Chief of Staff, General Bedell Smith, had given some warning as to what to expect, when he described Buchenwald as, ‘The acme of atrocity.’<sup>567</sup>

The testimonies of victims and the accused, as used in films and photographs of the Holocaust brought an overwhelming moral pressure to bear upon Great Britain to settle the question over the future of Palestine in favour of Jewish aspirations for a safe homeland. While the war continued, this problem could be put to one side as the priority was the defeat of Nazi Germany, liberate occupied Europe and restore democracy. Once the war was won, Jewish leaders, on behalf of their communities in Britain and from the newly liberated camps, wanted Churchill to resolve their problems, particularly concerning access to Palestine. However, the recommendations of the 1939 White Paper remained in force, with its restrictive quotas on the number of Jews allowed to settle in Palestine. Initially, Jewish leaders had had high hopes for a favourable outcome from the Prime Minister and whilst the war was being fought, had been a key reason why the majority of Jews had supported Britain’s war effort. It was also the means by which Jewish leaders had been able to influence and unite the various factions including the *Haganah* and *Irgun*.<sup>568</sup>

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<sup>566</sup> Churchill College, University of Cambridge: Churchill Archive - CHAR 20/193B/206, letter from WSC to Lord Stanhope referring to *Buchenwald Camp: The Report of a Parliamentary Delegation*, 27 April 1945. Its contents were also made available to the public through a HMSO publication in 1945.

<sup>567</sup> M. Gilbert, *Churchill and the Jews*, p.240.

<sup>568</sup> The one Jewish group that always refused to cooperate with the British was *Lohamei Herut Israel* (the Stern Gang), which broke away from the *Irgun Tsvai Leumi* in 1940 and was commanded by Avraham ‘Yair’ Stern. For Stern, the 1939 White Paper restrictions meant ‘No difference existed between Hitler and Chamberlain, between Dachau or Buchenwald and sealing the gates of Eretz Israel’, C. Shindler, *The Land Beyond Promise: Israel, Likud and the Zionist Dream* (London, 1995), p. 22.

Shortly after V.E. Day, Chaim Weizmann wrote to the Prime Minister on behalf of the Jewish Agency requesting an end to all restrictions on Jewish entry to Palestine i.e. the ‘injustice’ of the 1939 White Paper. Besides noting Churchill’s reluctance to accept the White Paper and the prolonged suffering of the Jewish people which had resulted, Weizmann indicated that he was finding it difficult as President of the World Zionist Organization to restrain those elements who demanded more direct action against Britain because of the unfairness of restrictive emigration to Palestine. Weizmann concluded, ‘This is the hour to eliminate the White Paper, to open the doors of Palestine, and to proclaim the Jewish State.’<sup>569</sup> The naivety of Weizmann’s call for ‘immediate action’ and the beliefs of the Jewish community in the power of Winston Churchill in May 1945 was clearly demonstrated when only the day after the letter was written, the wartime coalition government was dissolved. Churchill now headed a ‘caretaker’ government, which was in charge only until a General Election was held and the results known in July.

However supportive Churchill was for the establishment of a Jewish state, Jewish leaders were idealistic in their belief that Churchill could overcome a largely, though not entirely, unsympathetic Conservative Party, to promote the Zionist cause. The Prime Minister himself realised that Britain was not totally independent in matters relating to Palestine, given the new world order of 1945 and the inability to act unilaterally. Churchill’s only response to Weizmann’s earlier letter was to tell him to wait until the forthcoming Potsdam Conference and a following specific Middle East peace conference for a decision to be made.<sup>570</sup> It had only been six years earlier when

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<sup>569</sup> Churchill College, University of Cambridge: Churchill Archive (hereafter, CCAC: Churchill College Archive Centre) - CHAR 20/234/41, letter of 22 May 1945 from Chaim Weizmann to WSC, accompanying memorandum from Jewish Agency for Palestine (CHAR 20/234/42-47).

<sup>570</sup> CCAC: CHAR 20/234/30, letter of 9 June 1945 from WSC to Chaim Weizmann.

Churchill had attacked the 1939 White Paper proposals for Jewish immigration quotas to Palestine and the betrayal of the Balfour Declaration. On that occasion, Churchill had declared to the British Parliament, ‘.....that by committing themselves to this lamentable act of default, they [the Conservative Party] will cast our country, and all that it stands for, one more step downward in its fortunes.’<sup>571</sup> The Prime Minister’s Private Secretary, John Martin, sought to reassure a furious Weizmann that Churchill had not changed his mind concerning the future of a Jewish State and that the two of them would meet after the General Election .<sup>572</sup>

British procrastination caused David Ben-Gurion (leader of the Jewish Agency for Palestine) to exclaim that Churchill’s letter to Weizmann was the ‘greatest blow they had received.’ Although he considered the Prime Minister still ‘as a friend to Zionism’, he thought it was ‘most evil to deceive people.’<sup>573</sup> The unrealistic understanding of the British domestic and world political position for Churchill was further highlighted in Weizmann’s letter to the Prime Minister of the 15 June 1945. He suggested that continuing the 1939 White Paper was to condemn to death the remnants of European Jewry attempting to get to Palestine and abandon those already there to live in appallingly overcrowded conditions within a fixed area or ‘territorial ghetto’.<sup>574</sup> The bitterness and sense of despair felt by Weizmann to the seemingly endless stalling on the issue of when a Jewish homeland might be created was expressed at a meeting of the Zionist Political Committee on 27 June. He clearly felt betrayed by Churchill, the late President Roosevelt and presumably by the newly established Truman, for not robustly carrying out their earlier intentions on

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<sup>571</sup> *Hansard*, House of Commons Debate, 23 May 1939, Vol.347, cc.2129-2197.

<sup>572</sup> M. Gilbert, *Churchill and the Jews*, p.244

<sup>573</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>574</sup> CCAC: CHAR 20/234/23, letter of 15 June 1945 from Chaim Weizmann to WSC.

establishing a safe area/homeland for the Jews. Weizmann, who had been working towards a fulfilment of the Balfour Declaration (1917), had reached the end of a personal and national aspiration. As he stated, ‘He had no confidence in the meeting of the Big Three. Nobody cared what happened to the Jews. Nobody had raised a finger to stop them being slaughtered. They did not even bother about the remnant which had survived.’<sup>575</sup> The sense of betrayal felt by Weizmann was also shared by many of those that had originally fought against the passing of the 1939 White Paper, which at the time had been referred to as a ‘Middle Eastern Munich.’<sup>576</sup> However, this did not take into account the strategic military demands of the war and Britain’s relationship with the Arab territories and nations of the Middle East. It also demonstrates the differences of opinion and aims of Anglo-Jewry. Only six months earlier, Britain’s Chief Rabbi, Joseph Hertz, had said of Churchill on the latter’s 70th birthday, ‘But for your wisdom and courage there would have been a Vichy England lying prostrate before an all-powerful Satanism that spelled slavery to the western peoples, death to Israel, and night to the sacred heritage of man. May Heaven grant you many more years of brilliant leadership in the rebuilding of a ruined world.’<sup>577</sup>

Churchill knew there was little chance of convincing his political party to either amend or abandon the 1939 White Paper. However, from the amount of pro-Zionist criticism Britain was receiving from the American press, he both rightly and realistically judged that Weizmann’s best hope for the creation of a State of Israel lay with support from President Truman and the United States of America. In a letter to Weizmann, Churchill believed it was the strength of Zionism in America and an

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<sup>575</sup> M. Gilbert, *Churchill and the Jews*, p. 245. Notes from Zionist Political Committee meeting, London, 27<sup>th</sup> June 1945: Central Zionist Archives.

<sup>576</sup> H. Macmillan, *Tides of Fortune: 1945-1955* (London, 1969), p.142.

<sup>577</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 December 1944.

emerging United Nations, that would achieve success. Churchill concluded if somewhat prophetically, given the General Election taking place, ‘Even the Labour Party now seem to have lost all zeal.’<sup>578</sup> As Britain sought to extricate itself from ‘the painful and thankless task’ as Churchill called it, of controlling the Palestine Mandate, Jewish extremists continued to see Britain as an occupying force, whose government had reneged on the Balfour Declaration and in the view of many Jews, sided with the Arabs. The years between 1945 and 1948 witnessed ever greater acts of violence in Palestine on the British/Jewish/Arab divide that frustrated Churchill, ‘conservative’ Jewish leaders, and later on, a Labour Government. Although some Jews of the time and Jewish historians in later years have come to see Labour’s Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, as anti-Semitic, it would be more accurate to see him as being at worst, anti-Zionist or at best, simply lacking an understanding of the complexity involved with obtaining a universally acceptable solution to the problem of Palestine’s future.<sup>579</sup> The two labels of ‘anti-Semitic’ and ‘anti-Zionist’ are not the same thing, though some have come to see them as that. Whilst it can be acknowledged that Bevin did make errors of judgement at times as Foreign Secretary, he did not set out to ‘persecute’, ‘harass’ or deny basic Jewish aspirations, unless they were detrimental to other ethnic groups.<sup>580</sup> As will be seen, if Bevin was anti-Zionist, then there were

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<sup>578</sup> CCAC: CHAR 20/234/21-22 letter of 29 June 1945 from WSC to Chaim Weizmann. Copy also sent with minute CHAR 20/234/20 to Secretary of State for the Colonies, Oliver Stanley, suggesting the latter not reply to Weizmann’s letter of 15 June 1945 (CHAR 20/234/23). CHAR 20/234/20 has been annotated by Winston Churchill’s two Private Secretaries, Sir Leslie Rowan and John Colville. There are further copies of the original letter from WSC to Weizmann, CHAR 20/234/26-27 and CHAR 20/234/28-29, along with a further copy of the minute to Oliver Stanley, CHAR 20/234/25.

<sup>579</sup> Being on the right-wing of the Labour Party, Ernest Bevin was the target for his political opponents on the left-wing, including Aneurin Bevan and those sympathetic to the Zionist cause, such as Richard Crossman. The latter’s book, *A Nation Reborn: The Israel of Weizmann, Bevin and Ben-Gurion* (London, 1960), which all but accuses Bevin of being anti-Semitic and believing in a ‘world Jewish conspiracy’ can be contrasted with Alan Bullock’s more objective analysis, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary 1945-1951* (London, 1983).

<sup>580</sup> This was not the opinion of the different terrorist/underground groups as shown in the files of the British Security/Intelligence Services. The National Archives, London, holds file KV2/3428 which contains details concerning the likelihood of the Foreign Secretary being assassinated by Jewish extremists on a visit to Egypt in 1946. There are also details of other possible targets, namely senior

many Jews who would have supported him. It was also unclear whether a Zionist state meant a 'shared' territory or an 'exclusively' Jewish territory.

The result of the General Election, announced on 26 July 1945, was a landslide victory for Clement Attlee and the Labour Party, who secured almost twelve million votes, 48% of those cast.<sup>581</sup> The war had a major impact on the country and more pertinently, the Jewish community, confirming the latter as being sympathetic to the left wing of British politics. The largest number of Jewish MPs (mostly Labour) were elected to the House of Commons in 1945. This overcompensated for the loss of Jewish MPs since the last General Election in 1935 either through death, such as Dudley Joel (Conservative, Dudley) and Isidore Salmon (Conservative, Harrow) in 1941 or by being voted out of power like Leslie Hore-Belisha (Liberal, Plymouth Devonport) and James de Rothschild (Liberal, Isle of Ely) in 1945. There were no Conservative or Liberal Jewish MPs left after the 1945 General Election.<sup>582</sup> However, joining the four surviving Labour Jewish MPs were twenty three others, most coming into the Commons for the first time.<sup>583</sup> Although only three of the Jewish MPs, Herschell Austin (Stretford), Ian Mikardo (Reading) and Emanuel 'Manny' Shinwell (Seaham) had a traditional working class background, social mobility and higher education ensured that Anglo-Jewry was represented by a significant number of men

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politicians. The KV5 file series is also useful in charting the activities of Jewish extremists as monitored by MI5/MI6, for example, the *Irgun*, KV5/34-41.

<sup>581</sup> Statistics taken from *UK Election Statistics 1945-2000*, Research Paper 01/37 March 2001, Social and General Statistics Section, House of Commons Library, p.8. [www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/rp2001/rp01-037.pdf](http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/rp2001/rp01-037.pdf)

<sup>582</sup> Daniel Lipson (1886-1963) stood as an 'Independent' for the safe Conservative Party seat of Cheltenham in the 1937 by-election. As a Cambridge educated, Conservative supporting, former Mayor of Cheltenham, it was expected for him to succeed the sitting member, Sir Walter Preston. However, in the wake of an anti-Semitic campaign, Cheltenham Conservative Party refused to endorse him due to the fact that he was a Jew. Having won the by-election, he held the seat until 1950, effectively as a Tory, but officially as an Independent. See N. Crowson, 'The British Conservative Party and the Jews During the Late 1930s', *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol.29 Issue 2, April 1995, pp.15-32 and H. Defries, *Conservative Party attitudes to Jews 1900-1950* (London, 2001), pp.208-209.

<sup>583</sup> The four surviving MPs were John Mack (Newcastle-under-Lyme), Emanuel 'Manny' Shinwell (Seaham), Lewis Silkin (Peckham) and Sidney Silverman (Nelson and Colne).

from Oxbridge and professions such as the law, accountancy and medicine.<sup>584</sup> Men such as Louis Comyns (1904-1962), a graduate of the University of Glasgow who became a doctor and worked in the London's East End docks during the Blitz, was elected the MP for West Ham Silvertown (1945-1950) with 91.3% of the vote.<sup>585</sup> Because of the war, there was a severe shortage of housing in the docklands area. The slow pace of rebuilding the housing stock resulted in Dr. Comyns seeking allies in the form of Philip Piratin (1907-1995), the Jewish Communist MP for the similar neighbourhood of Mile End (1945-1950) in Stepney, so as to campaign and attack his own party.<sup>586</sup> Therefore, due to the number of Jewish MPs and the public's expectations in the war's aftermath, the Jewish community assumed that there would be no return to the conditions of the 1920s and 30s. The assumption was supported by the fact that Emanuel 'Manny' Shinwell had helped to put together the 1942 Beveridge Report and that its aims struck at the heart of Jewish urban deprivation. The 1944 Labour Party Conference had also made firm commitments to the establishment of a Jewish 'Homeland' in Palestine.

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<sup>584</sup> Herschell Austin (1911-1974) had left school at eleven years of age to become a carpenter. A Zionist, he served as an MP from 1945 to 1950, achieving positions on Committees for Defence and the Armed Forces. Mikardo (1908-1993), son of Polish and Ukrainian immigrants, came from a tailoring background. A 'Bevanite' and member of Poale Zion and the Tribune Group, he was an MP for Reading (1945-1959), Poplar/Bethnal Green/Bow (1964-1987). He rose to become a member of Labour's NEC (1950-1978) and briefly, Chairman of the Labour Party (1970-1971). Shinwell (1884-1986), son of Polish immigrants, started in tailoring and then went on to be involved in the Trade Union movement. An MP for Linlithgowshire (1922-1924, 1928-1931) and Seaham/Easington (1935-1970), he held ministerial posts under Ramsay MacDonald and Clement Attlee, oversaw the nationalisation of mines and was Minister of Defence (1950-1951), Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party (1964-1967), before becoming Baron Shinwell in 1970.

<sup>585</sup> Dr. Comyns received 9,358 votes, with the Conservative coming in second place with 494 votes (4.8%). He was one of thirteen doctors out of thirty seven who had stood in the General Election. Of the thirteen, nine represented the Labour Party. See Medical Members of the New Parliament, *British Medical Journal*, 4<sup>th</sup> August 1945, p.164.

<sup>586</sup> Philip Piratin took over from Labour's Daniel Frankel (1900-1988), another Jewish MP. The latter had, like so many other Jews, grown up in the tailoring business in Stepney and gone on to become Mayor of the borough and serve on London County Council (LCC).



From the start of the wartime coalition in May 1940, all three leaders of the main political parties, Churchill, Attlee and Sinclair, had felt the 1939 White Paper to be unjust. However, there was agreement that the summer of 1940 was not the appropriate time to amend the quota of Jews wanting to move to Palestine. As the war progressed, the Cabinet increasingly saw the need to consider not only a partition of Palestine, but also alternative areas for Jewish emigration (besides encouraging Jews to remain in Europe) such as parts of Libya. There was also a recognition by both Churchill and Attlee that the Americans would need to be involved in any long term solution to the Palestine Mandate. Another potential problem for the post-war Labour Party was the growing division in the party between its senior members and the rank and file membership. As the party's leadership was seen by many to be increasingly hardline towards Zionist wishes, so sections of the party became more in tune with Zionist aims, particularly in response to the emerging details of the Holocaust.

The Jewish Socialist Labour Party (Poale Zion) persuaded the 1943 Labour Party's annual conference to accept a resolution that Palestine would become a national home for Jews. The following year's party conference went further, when in an NEC statement entitled, *The International Post-War Settlement*, the party encouraged Jewish immigration to Palestine to a point when Jews would be a majority. The uproar continued:

Let the Arabs be encouraged to move out as the Jews move in . . . The Arabs have many wide territories of their own: they must not claim to exclude the Jews from this small area of Palestine . . . Indeed, we should re-examine also the possibility of extending the present Palestinian boundaries, by agreement with Egypt, Syria or Transjordan. Moreover, we should seek to win the full sympathy and support both

of the American and Russian Governments for the execution of this Palestine policy.<sup>587</sup>

Hugh Dalton, the architect of *The International Post-War Settlement*, had defended ‘his vision’ of Labour policy from left wing elements, such as Philip Noel-Baker and Aneurin Bevan, who had wanted certain changes made, particularly to the section that dealt with the genocide of European Jewry<sup>588</sup>. Harold Laski also objected to parts of the document, though on the matter of a Jewish ‘Homeland’ and the condemning of German anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, he supported Dalton<sup>589</sup>. Although the conference voted to support the policy resolution, it was at odds with the War Cabinet’s Palestine Committee chaired by Herbert Morrison, who was ‘passionately pro-Zionist’. Essentially, Morrison was at odds with his own committee over the future of Palestine. The Palestine Committee favoured partition of the territory similar to that recommended by the 1937 Peel Commission’s Report and in itself, supported by most in the Cabinet. This was not what the left-wing of the Labour Party, with its pro-Zionist stance was advocating. The 1939 White Paper would be scrapped once the war was over. The 1944 re-election campaign by President Franklin Roosevelt also implied, with his pro-Zionist rhetoric, that the Americans would have some input into the post-war solution to the problem of Palestine. From the British perspective of 1944, the Allied Powers would resolve the issue of the Palestine Mandate once Germany was defeated, with no need to pursue the challenging operation of negotiating with either the Jews or the Arabs.

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<sup>587</sup> *Report of the Forty Third Annual Conference of the Labour Party, London* (London, 1944), p. 9.

<sup>588</sup> Both Philip Noel-Baker (1889-1982) and Aneurin Bevan (1897-1960) objected to Dalton stating it had been a ‘German’ plan to kill all the Jews in Europe. They preferred the word ‘Nazi’, as this implied that not all Germans were responsible for the Holocaust.

<sup>589</sup> For an account of how *The International Post-War Settlement* came to be in its final form and the internal Labour politics surrounding it, see H. Dalton, *Memoirs 1931-1945* (London, 1957), pp. 423-427 and J. Grantham, ‘Hugh Dalton and “The International Post-War Settlement”: Labour Party Foreign Policy Formulation, 1943-1944’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.14 No.4 (October 1979), pp. 713-729.

The window of opportunity for the least damaging scenario for the British Government came in May 1945. At this point, Germany was defeated and Churchill was supported by the overwhelming majority of Jews and their leaders, including Chaim Weizmann. By tempering French ambitions in Syria, Churchill was also held in high regard by Palestine's Arab neighbours. The Prime Minister and Attlee, as Deputy Prime Minister and Labour Party leader, might also have continued their wartime coalition until the war with Japan had been concluded. In that way, Churchill would also have had Parliamentary support for a resolution of the Mandate and help for the large numbers of Jews in European DP camps. This would have avoided a number of situations that exacerbated the Palestine problem: the distraction of a General Election, the weakness of British representation at Potsdam, President Truman's antagonism and the rapid loss of Jewish and Arab goodwill, which resulted in an outbreak of wholesale terrorism by the Jewish underground. However, it would be reasonable to assume that whatever the timing of dealing with Palestine, there was always the prospect of trouble coming from up to 100 million Muslims under British rule. In the case of India, as a former Secretary of State for India, Lord Zetland, had pointed out to the rest of the Cabinet concerning Arab expectations of the White Paper Jewish quotas, 'We have already enough trouble on our hands with the Hindus.'<sup>590</sup> This was a point emphasised by Field Marshal Lord Wavell, Viceroy of India, in May 1945, stating: 'India contains 90 million Muslims who would deeply, perhaps actively, resent a solution of the Palestine problem which was against the interests of the Arabs. Agitation on an external Muslim grievance of this kind can quickly become formidable and can easily be exploited by anti-British Hindus for their own

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<sup>590</sup> TNA: CAB 23/97 – Conclusion, 8 March 1939.

purposes.<sup>591</sup> It showed that Palestine was not a situation that could not be considered in isolation and that the consequences of actions in the Mandate potentially could affect much more important areas of the British Empire.

As Zionism went from being a British pre-war minority view to that of a dominant post-war view, the means by which a Jewish homeland was to be achieved raised questions concerning loyalty to the host country, policy on quotas to Palestine and condemning or agreeing with the attacks on British soldiers and officials by Jewish extremists. Starting with the assassination of Lord Moyne in November 1944, Anglo-Jewry was increasingly divided as to how to respond. Meanwhile, the remnants of pre-war fascism that had survived the war, took advantage of the terrorism in Palestine, to return to street politics and attack Jewish people and institutions. One historian goes so far as to assert that the events in Palestine actually ‘galvanised’ British fascism and renewed it as a force.<sup>592</sup> As will be shown, although there was a rise in anti-Semitic activity immediately after the war, the Jewish community was not the same as before the war. Post-1945, Anglo-Jewry was far better prepared to protect itself offensively and using intelligence, physically combat fascism on the streets. This was perhaps one of the most important lessons learnt by Jews in Britain from what had been witnessed from the continental persecution and Holocaust.

Many of those that supported fascism in September 1939, continued to do so throughout the war and were still present in May 1945. As one Jewish resident of Hackney put it,

They were always fascist and would continue to be fascist. The fascist groups

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<sup>591</sup> TNA: FO 371/45377 – Palestine and Transjordan, 4 May 1945.

<sup>592</sup> D. Renton, *Fascism, Anti-Fascism and Britain in the 1940s* (Basingstoke, 2000), p.30.

didn't die because Hitler died. They simply continued.<sup>593</sup>

The extremists, mostly known as the '18B Detainees' (a reference to the legal mechanism for their incarceration), still subscribed to a range of radical right-wing views with a common theme of anti-Semitism. The newspaper pictures and cinema newsreels depicting concentration camps such as Bergen-Belsen, Dachau, Buchenwald and Auschwitz-Birkenau were, for this amorphous group, part of a government sponsored propaganda campaign and/or evidence that the Second World War had been fought on behalf of the Jews. Post-war fascist groups were as diverse as they had been prior to 1939, even if many of the leading figures were the same and were active in the same poor London neighbourhoods such as Dalston, Hoxton and Bethnal Green. Similarly, the Jews, Jewish organisations, the communists and those non-Jews moved by the knowledge of the Nazi persecution, fought to defeat fascism as they had done prior to 1939. The key difference, post-1945, was that Jewish intelligence, surveillance and combative methods were much more organised and effective. However, it was the use of physical violence to fight fascism that divided Anglo-Jewry as conservative elements felt that this method played into the hands of their enemies and be turned against them in the propaganda war.

Although much has been written by historians on British fascism before the war and on the life of Sir Oswald Mosley in particular, including ground breaking accounts by Robert Benewick and Colin Holmes, there has remained significant scope for the war and post-1945 periods to be examined.<sup>594</sup> This has partly been addressed by historians

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<sup>593</sup> Chanie Gluckstein (nee Rosenberg). Interview with the author, 6/7 November 2008.

<sup>594</sup> A literature review of British fascism is outside the remit of the thesis, but is extensive in length. The following are, in the opinion of the author, the first analytical texts in our understanding of the nature and development of fascism in this country and are not intended to be a finite list. R. Benewick, *The Fascist Movement in Britain* (London, 1972) and C. Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society, 1876-1939* (New York, 1979) led the way for historians of British fascism.

such as Roger Griffin who have examined fascism in its theoretical and international contexts, whilst Richard Thurlow has adopted a more overarching approach by investigating fascism across the twentieth century.<sup>595</sup> More recently, there has been an appreciation of both the post-war period and the fact that there was an ‘anti-fascist’ movement, with professional historians and writers, namely Dave Renton, Graham Macklin, Nigel Copsey and David Baker beginning to investigate the post-1945 period.<sup>596</sup> Only very recently has the Jewish contribution to the fight against the post-1945 fascist revival been tentatively touched upon. There is to date only one account solely devoted to the activities of the anti-fascist 43 Group, an autobiographical account of its history by Morris Beckman.<sup>597</sup>

As noted earlier, fascism in its various forms was quick to re-establish itself in the open on British streets. Some of the pre-war aristocratic supporters vanished after 1945, but its main supporters of post-war fascism were ex-soldiers who failed to adapt to civilian life, those who felt marginalised and without future prospects or those who believed in a different and better world order. The key figures who had been prominent before 1939 and who re-emerged after the war had finished, included John Beckett (1894-1964), A. K. (Arthur Kenneth) Chesterton (1896-1973), Arnold Leese (1878-1956) and Sir Oswald Mosley (1896-1980). All four quickly re-established either their parties or their political reputations, such as they were, along with accompanying newspapers. Beckett set up the British Peoples Party (BPP) in

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<sup>595</sup> R. Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London, 1993) and R. Thurlow’s *Fascism in Britain: From Oswald Mosley’s Blackshirts to the National Front* (London, 1998) and *Fascism in Modern Britain* (Stroud, 2000).

<sup>596</sup> D. Renton, *Fascism, Anti-Fascism and Britain in the 1940s* (Basingstoke, 2000), G. Macklin, *Very Deeply Dyed in Black: Sir Oswald Mosley and the Postwar Reconstruction of British Fascism* (London, 2007), N. Copsey, A. Olechnowicz (Eds.), *Varieties of Anti-Fascism: Britain in the Inter-War Period* (Basingstoke, 2010) and D. Baker, *Ideology of Obsession: A. K. Chesterton and British Fascism* (London, 1996).

<sup>597</sup> M. Beckman, *The 43 Group* (London, 1993).

December 1945 and was helped financially and politically by Lord Tavistock (1888-1953), 12<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford (after 1940). The party folded after the Duke died and financial support stopped, although it had for a long time been successfully infiltrated and fought against by Jewish activists. A. K. Chesterton (a cousin of G. K. Chesterton) formed the National Front after Victory in 1944, whose weekly journal was called *Truth*. Although the political party was short lived (due to the success of Jewish infiltration), he along with Mosley, went on to become major influences on British right wing politics up until the 1960s. Leese, who was arguably the most extreme of the four, started publishing *Gothic Ripples* in 1944. In 1953, his journal commented on the murder of Jews during the war: ‘we believe that as long as the extermination was done in a humane manner, it was done to the advantage of everyone.’<sup>598</sup> Between 1948 and 1951, Leese controlled the National Workers Movement with the help of a friend, former Scottish Unionist MP for Peebles and South Midlothian and 18B detainee, Captain Archibald Ramsay (1894-1955). While suffering from ill health after 1945, Sir Oswald Mosley used small scale ‘book clubs’ to get his ideas across until February 1948, when he founded the Union Movement (UM). The UM was a planned amalgamation of various fascist groups which agreed to come together under one umbrella organisation, and included the 18B Detainees Aid Fund and Jeffrey Hamm’s British League of Ex-Servicemen and Women.<sup>599</sup> Jewish communities and organisations were, on many different accounts, both fearful and angry with their situation in 1945 for although it had cost an immense loss of life to defeat the Nazis, fascism had survived in Britain.

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<sup>598</sup> *Gothic Ripples*, No.96, 14 January 1953.

<sup>599</sup> D. Renton, *Fascism, Anti-Fascism and Britain in the 1940s*, p.28. Jeffrey Hamm (1915-1994) was like many of those that joined the Union Movement, former members of Mosley’s pre-war British Union of Fascists. Although the Union Movement formally ended in 1973, it appeared in various incarnations under different names in subsequent years, still with Hamm as a leading official until his death.

While a long term response for some was to fulfil Zionist aspirations for a Jewish state and emigrate there, for others, Britain was their home and they were prepared to defend it. Chanie Gluckstein, who lived in Hackney where some of the most intense street fights occurred, recalled, 'I went to all the demonstrations against Mosley.' The Sunday morning battles at Dalston's Ridley Road market produced a sense of communal outrage from its Jewish population, whenever the fascists arrived. 'All of us in Hackney were throwing things at his [Mosley] lorry that came in. . . . and in the end he was sort of hiding inside his lorry.' As a member of the Revolutionary Communist Party, Chanie Gluckstein, a Trotskyite, remembers 'collecting piles of money' from Jewish shopkeepers to fund their struggle against fascism. 'All the Jews in Hackney were against Mosley.' The comradeship of a common purpose is also recalled when recollecting the 43 Group, in that, 'They were with us. We supported one another in case there was any physical stuff.'<sup>600</sup> While this illustrates how many Jews responded to fascism, it also highlights how isolated they were in terms of active resistance. Few other political parties were out on the streets facing up to fascist marches. One of member of the 43 Group acknowledged that 'the only people who were there to stand with us and fight the fascists and the police were Common Wealth, the ILP, the Anarchists and the Trots.'<sup>601</sup> This is supported by a member of the Common Wealth Party, who noted that in the fighting for Hackney and Stoke Newington, 'the Communists were nowhere to be seen.'<sup>602</sup> The problem of how to tackle post-war fascism was answered in two ways, which once again split Anglo-Jewry as it had done prior to 1945. The Board of Deputies wanted an unobtrusive monitoring response to fascism, working with the government and they looked on

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<sup>600</sup> Interview with the author, 6/7 November 2008.

<sup>601</sup> S. Dorril, *Blackshirt*, p.570.

<sup>602</sup> *Ibid.*



disapprovingly as more radical elements favoured direct action. It was from the latter that the 43 Group was created in 1946.

The fascists, the 43 Group and the public at large, both Jew and non-Jew, had believed or at least hoped that there would be no return to the poverty and squalor of the 1930s once the war was won, and that life would improve. The election of the Labour Party in 1945 with promises contained in the 1942 Beveridge Report, were expected to ensure that there would be no repeat of the post-1918 situation. It is possible with hindsight to argue that these public expectations of rapid change may have been unrealistic and this is why there was a re-emergence of fascism and growth of communism in the poorer areas of towns and cities. The war had led to worse conditions in the poorer neighbourhoods, with communities disrupted by the evacuation, a shortage of housing because of the bombing (and the remainder in poor condition), ever worsening rationing and few funds from central and local government to improve areas. For the people under the Labour Government of 1945 to 1951, change did come, but more slowly than expected and it was this that allowed discontented groups, in this case fascists, to reform and take to the streets.<sup>603</sup>

The 43 Group was formed in March 1946 at Maccabi House, a sports club in Compayne Gardens, West Hampstead, and named as such for the unremarkable reason that there were forty three Jewish ex-Servicemen at the original meeting. Within a month, it had attracted just over three hundred members that included ‘officers and privates, men and women from every walk of life, trade, profession and

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<sup>603</sup> See D. Kynaston, *Austerity Britain 1945-51* (London, 2007) for the social context of the period.

political belief.’<sup>604</sup> Although often smeared as communists by right wing extremists, the 43 Group was at pains to stress its diverse and patriotic following. This may be contrasted with the strong political allegiances of anti-fascist groups prior to 1939, often communist in persuasion. The organisation was founded to actively and physically combat the number of fascist groups, fascist public speakers and a large volume of fascist literature that steadily emerged after the war, when it seemed as if nothing was or could be done to prevent it. Ironically, fascism used the right of free speech to put across their ideas, with the police able to protect them from objectors using the Public Order Act 1936 to arrest people. Ultimately, James Chuter Ede (1882-1965), the Home Secretary from 1945 to 1951, must bear a key responsibility for a lack of action in allowing fascism to reform and for not putting forward a parliamentary bill to outlaw incitement of racial and/or religious hatred.<sup>605</sup> Had Attlee’s Home Secretary acted (and it was not for a lack of pressure from petitions such as from the trade unions and MPs), then there would have been no need for the establishment of the 43 Group. After an early encounter between the 43 Group and fascists, one London newspaper, the *Edgware Local*, summarised the former in its headline as ‘The 43 Group is the Jewish answer to fascists.’<sup>606</sup> A statement greatly disputed by the Board of Jewish Deputies.

A programme for a 43 Group Charity Ball from February 1948, outlined its key aims and points to take note of, along with what the group was like two years after its foundation. Its aims were thus,

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<sup>604</sup> M. Beckman, *43 Group*, p.27.

<sup>605</sup> Protection under the law for groups such as the Jewish community came with the Public Order Act 1986 and the Race and Religious Hatred Act 2006.

<sup>606</sup> *Edgware Local*, 26 March 1946.

1. To advocate the immediate passing of legislation to make Fascist and Anti-Semitic Organisations illegal.
2. To combat actively all Fascist and Anti-Semitic Organisations.
3. To awaken and unite all sections of the public against the menace of Fascism.
4. To develop an organisation capable of communal defence.
5. To work and co-operate with all other bodies combating Fascism and anti-Semitism.<sup>607</sup>

Whilst one can say that the group was unsuccessful with its first aim, it was the second aim, being taken literally, that defined the 43 Group. Due to that stance, there was some friction within the Anglo-Jewish community, with more moderate Jewish bodies fearing a greater backlash enhanced by the events in Palestine. Jewish Trotskyite activist, Chanie Rosenberg, felt that methods used by the 43 Group were justified. She maintained, 'If we had left them alone, Mosley would have had some brief blossoming of sorts, and he would have kept a nucleus there.....The anti-fascist activity more or less eliminated any possibilities they had.'<sup>608</sup> However, it was the violence shown by Jewish activists towards fascists that made the fifth point difficult to achieve. Anglo-Jewry, divided at the best of times with its internal divisions and wrangles, was further split by what course of action it should take against a re-emergent threat. The 43 Group was well aware of the position it was in as regards to the terrorism in Palestine, which is why it was keen to stress that it had no links with Zionism or its aspirations. There was also the fact that many members of the 43 Group had served in the war with members of the British Armed Forces who were now based in Palestine.

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<sup>607</sup> London school of Economics and Political Science Archive: File – COLL MISC 1068; Programme for 43 Group Charity Ball, Grosvenor House Hotel, Park Lane, London, 28 February 1948.

<sup>608</sup> S. Dorril, *Blackshirt*, p.569.

In the programme, under a section entitled, 'Why the Group was Formed', one can see the frustration, built up over two years, by some Jews towards others in what the former may have regarded as being a return to the situation of the mid 1930s, when it was the Communist Party that had bothered to fight fascism on the streets. This time, however, the Holocaust had taken place and it had taught the Jews of the necessity to fight back against communal threats, such as at the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943.

Referring to the original forty three Jewish ex-Servicemen,

They searched in vain, within the community, for signs of a definite plan to meet this new-style Fascist activity. They discovered lack of preparedness, apathy, and at best – talk.

They realised that new methods would have to be introduced and that the only answer to fascism was a planned and active campaign of attack. As there was no existing body prepared to undertake such action, they decided it was up to them to organise an effective anti-Fascist machine.

At first it was an uphill struggle, not only against the fascists, but also against the indifference of the community and the sneers and insults of the very people for whose security they were fighting. Ignoring this petty enmity, the 43 Group concentrated on the struggle against the real enemy.<sup>609</sup>

Forty years later, there was still a level of resentment towards bodies like the Board of Deputies' Jewish Defence Committee from 43 Group member Morris Beckman in the way in which more radical Jewish groups, such as those in Manchester had been brought under 'control.'<sup>610</sup> Beckman, towards the end of his account of the group's activities, concludes with both a resolute defence of the group's reputation and a justification for their actions.

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<sup>609</sup> London School of Economics and Political Science Archive: File – COLL MISC 1068; Programme for 43 Group Charity Ball, Grosvenor House Hotel, Park Lane, London, 28 February 1948.

<sup>610</sup> M. Beckman, *43 Group*, p.197.

By letter to the Jewish press primarily, it was put about that the 43 Group were a bunch of heavies seeking their kicks in going out and having violent punch-ups. These detractions came from members of the Jewish establishment mostly during the Group's operations. Nothing was further from the truth. When, in Autumn 1949, we knew that the Union Movement had been completely defeated and that Oswald Mosley was living abroad in exile, those members who had spent some ten years fighting Nazism overseas and at home left the Group en masse.<sup>611</sup>

Beckman's defence of their reputation comes with a tinged rebuke of other groups at the time when the latter supposedly accused them of believing that they had defeated fascism single-handed. '

This was never said, nor felt. We appreciated that the JDC, AJEX, and others like the National Council for Civil Liberties, were all doing their bit to spotlight and condemn the post-war return of fascism. But none of them could contemplate or condone breaking the law. The fascists had to be stopped in their tracks and there was only one way to do it and ensure complete success. The 43 Group took that road.<sup>612</sup>

The 43 Group eventually disbanded in 1950, with a membership of perhaps up to one thousand, mostly Jews and mostly ex-Armed Forces. A number of historians of this post-war period, including many Jewish commentators, have seemingly overlooked the 43 Group, along with their contribution to successfully fighting fascism. Part of the reason may lie with the fact that they left next to nothing in the way of records. Technically, their activities in fighting fascists were breaking the law and as Morris

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<sup>611</sup> Ibid. p.203.

<sup>612</sup> Ibid. pp.203-204.

Beckman, one of the 43 Group founders, stated when deciding to write the unofficial history of the group,

I decided to tackle the task, but the start was slow and the initial quest for material utterly dispiriting. There were no 43 Group records. They had always been kept to a minimum and upon disbanding what remained had been burnt. Dalston Lane police station, where so many of the arrested had been taken, was now closed down. And when I applied at Stoke Newington station, to examine their record of arrests and other incidents from 1945 to 1950, I was told they had destroyed everything more than ten years old, to save space.<sup>613</sup>

Besides Morris Beckman's book originally published in 1992, the Museum of Jewish Life in Finchley has a number of items of memorabilia from the 43 Group, along with stories of the group's exploits in the *Jewish Chronicle* and local newspapers covering Camden, Haringey, Tower Hamlets etc. Historian Dave Renton in his book, *Fascism, Anti-Fascism and Britain in the 1940s*, has when investigating the 43 Group gained a lot of material from personal interviews with former members of the group. However, Renton and others have overlooked a significant file archived at the London School of Economics and Political Science, which besides containing many examples of post-war fascist propaganda from various groups, also holds important documents from the 43 Group, including names of informants who infiltrated fascist organisations.<sup>614</sup>

The handwritten notations to suspect lists of fascists date from 1957 at the latest, though the last typed comment comes from July 1949. So although the 43 Group disbanded in April 1950, as it felt there was no further need for its existence, an

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<sup>613</sup> Ibid. p.201.

<sup>614</sup> London School of Economics and Political Science Archive: File COLL MISC 1068 – 43 Group. The file is not broken down in any order, but is a very large collection of documents from the 43 Group and their fascist opponents, assembled in no particular sequence.

individual member has had some connection with the surveillance of suspect fascists or those with links to them. However, there is a possibility that the file was handed over to the Jewish Defence Committee set up by the Board of Deputies, as they also had their own surveillance operation of suspects. This is a possibility as Beckman states that when the more militant 43 Group was disbanding, its last committee minutes spoke of a meeting with representatives of its 'rival' and that,

The Group assured him [a representative from the Jewish Defence Committee] that they were ready to disband and come into the Ex-Servicemen's organisation on an individual basis. They claimed to have material that would be of use to a national organisation.<sup>615</sup>

The list of names extends to sixty seven sides of typed notes (and occasional handwritten updates), with on average fourteen names per side, resulting in approximately 950 people who had been watched and deemed worthy of listing their details. This would have been of use to the Board of Deputies, who together with their own information, could take action against both fascist leaders and those beneath or who worked alongside them, such as distributors of propaganda, members of the Police etc. The list contains the entire hierarchy from Oswald Mosley to the names of young teenagers simply handing out leaflets. There are also names and addresses of key witnesses in various court cases and those that expressed any form of support for fascism by perhaps writing to the local paper to suggest that Mosley was what the country needed for instance. Names such as the military historian Basil Liddell Hart appear on the list due to the fact that some of his books were advertised in a fascist publication. Therefore there are names of people who whilst not being fascist

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<sup>615</sup> M. Beckman, *43 Group* p.197.

suspects, do have an indirect connection to the extreme right wing, which could easily be unbeknown to them.

The file with its lists of names and personal details, publishers and organisations, along with their addresses, is important for what it reveals about how Jews in Britain reacted to this reoccurring menace against a backdrop of increasing terrorism in Palestine. A sample of the names (see Appendix B, figure 4) shows not only the widespread nature of fascist leaders and sympathisers, or those with an indirect connection to them, but also their varying influence in all walks of life. The leadership was unsurprisingly the same figures as had been seen before the war, the likes of the Duke of Bedford, A.K. Chesterton, Rear Admiral Domville, Oswald Mosley and Alexander Raven Thomson *et al.* These pre-war fascists and appeasers of Hitler did not have the same influence post-1945 as they had done before 1939. The war had done much to discredit their wider public appeal, though not to the committed fascist supporter, who was always in a minority. A sample of fascist party workers and officials, again shows them to be either those that had supported fascism for a long time in senior positions or those in their late teenage years who simply handed out leaflets at rallies and on street corners. Nevertheless, all were meticulously investigated, no matter that one boy being described as ‘an imbecile’.

One can see that the fascist organisations often attracted people who were used to violence, former soldiers, or who had connections with the police or Palestine or both. Len Adams, Union Movement speaker and former 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne veteran, an army division that served in Palestine during the terrorist war of 1946 to 1948, was typical of those attracted to fascism and the violence that came with it. Given the number of



police casualties in Palestine, it is unsurprising that R.T. Mann, the Honourable Secretary of the Palestine Police Comrades Association, was also being watched by the 43 Group. So many former British policemen went to serve in Palestine and therefore through professional links they would have had an influence on colleagues back home. It is perhaps no coincidence that Ridley Road in Dalston, the scene of so much violence between Jewish groups and the fascists, came into the operational area control of Superintendent Satterthwaite, another of the 43 Group's suspects.

Although many publishers of fascist material were very small scale and obscure operations, the addition of Sir Ernest Benn (1875-1954) and his company as a voice for anti-Semitic material was a major benefit in spreading ideas.<sup>616</sup> It had been noted that his publishing house had produced a number of books that made what were regarded as anti-Semitic overtones and therefore as a Chairman of the company, it is his name that has been included on the list, regardless of whether he was aware or not of what was being published. As a person with a generally pro-Zionist sympathy, two of Winston Churchill's close colleagues, Viscount Cherwell (1886-1957) and Lord Lloyd of Dolobran (1879-1941) may seem surprising names to appear on the list. Lord Cherwell, Churchill's scientific advisor, whose maverick career was only matched in extent by the number of people he antagonised, came from a Jewish background. He was known for his hardline attitude towards Germany as demonstrated by his support for the post-war Morgenthau Plan.<sup>617</sup> One can presume that as a member of Oxford University's right wing Corporate Club (many of those listed are club members) qualified him for the list. The fact that he would have been known as being virulently anti-Nazi, though not entirely without racial prejudices, and

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<sup>616</sup> See Deryck Abel's *Ernest Benn: Counsel for Liberty* (London, 1960) for a sympathetic biography. Sir Ernest Benn was the uncle to former 1960s/70s Labour Party Minister, Anthony Wedgwood Benn.

<sup>617</sup> See Thomas Wilson's *Churchill and the Prof* (London, 1995).

a Jew by birth, was negated by his club membership and what that club stood for in the eyes of some Jews. Lord Lloyd of Dolobran, the Secretary of State for the Colonies from 1940 until his death in 1941, was like Churchill, very much against any relinquishing of imperial power in India. He also saw the British Empire in terms of a natural and to an extent, racial, world order.<sup>618</sup> The inclusion of people who were deceased when the list was typed must presumably be for the sake of reference. The likes of the 9<sup>th</sup> Earl of Portsmouth (formally known as Viscount Lymington), Lord Queenborough and the ‘eccentric’ socialite Lady Clare Annesley (daughter of the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl Annesley), were very much of the privileged pre-war generation, but whose influence in the post-1945 Attlee era must seriously be called into question.<sup>619</sup> The war had changed the political relationship between the social classes. Few of the younger generation aristocracy shared either a similar agenda or that level of fanaticism often born out of frustration and lack of opportunity endured by ordinary people that had been prevalent prior to 1939. They may have still lent an air of respectability to extreme right wing leaders and senior middle class officials, but it is doubtful as to whether the rank and file membership who fought on the streets of the East End related to them. However, as with the Duke of Bedford, they did contribute funds for the various organisations in hiring halls for speeches and producing literature.

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<sup>618</sup> See John Charmley’s *Lord Lloyd and the Decline of the British Empire* (New York, 1987). His private papers/correspondence, GBR/0014/GLLD, are held at the Churchill Archive, Churchill College, University of Cambridge.

<sup>619</sup> For the Earl of Portsmouth (1898-1984), see T. Kushner and K. Knox, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide: Global, National and Local Perspectives* (London, 1999), pp.148-149, and T. Linehan, *British Fascism 1918-1939: Parties, Ideology and Culture* (Manchester U P, 2000), pp.140-141. For Lord Queenborough (1869-1949) and other Peers, see R. Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers of the Right: British Enthusiasts for Nazi Germany, 1933-39* (Oxford, 1983) and D. Renton, *Fascism, Anti-Fascism and Britain in the 1940s* (London, 2000), pp.56-60.

One of the more intriguing figures on the list is Arthur ‘Charles’ Waterman, a former Chairman of the Woodford Green Conservative Association and therefore a person with a close link to the incumbent MP, Winston Churchill.<sup>620</sup> These points in themselves do not seemingly merit being placed on the list. However, what does are the friends and associates of his. He was linked to three key people involved in one of the most controversial legal cases of the period, not to mention low points in the policing of Palestine. David Cesarani’s book, *Major Farran’s Hat*, details the attempt by the Palestine Administration to use former tough war veterans from the SAS and other ‘Special Forces’ to break the insurgency conducted by the *Haganah*, *Irgun* and Stern Gang (LEHI).<sup>621</sup> Major Roy Farran was arrested for the disappearance and murder of a Jewish suspect. Public opinion was polarised in both Britain and Palestine, particularly after a court martial in the autumn of 1947 acquitted him and he was spirited back to Britain with the Stern Gang in pursuit. 43 Group notes indicate that Waterman was friends with Major Farran’s superior and head of the counter-terrorism offensive in Palestine, Lieutenant-Colonel Bernard Fergusson and the Judge Advocate General in charge of the trial, Aubrey Melford Stevenson KC.<sup>622</sup> Whilst they only know Stevenson’s Christian name, they have mistakenly indicated that he represented the Defence Council in court. Waterman had also served with Farran, although the list does not state whether this was in Palestine or during the Second World War and that Farran had stayed with him, presumably at the same time as the

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<sup>620</sup> Winston Churchill was MP for Epping from 1924 to 1945 and then in the constituency reorganisation, roughly the same area, but now called Woodford. He was MP for Woodford from 1945 to 1964.

<sup>621</sup> D. Cesarani, *Major Farran’s Hat: Murder, Scandal and Britain’s War Against Jewish Terrorism 1945-1948* (London, 2009).

<sup>622</sup> Brigadier Bernard Fergusson (1911-1980) had a distinguished military career serving in the Middle East and with the Chindits in Burma. After Palestine, he was appointed Governor General of New Zealand. Sir Aubrey Melford Stevenson (1902-1987) had a long and controversial legal career between 1925 and 1979, involving cases at the Nuremberg Trials, Jomo Kenyatta, Ruth Ellis, the Kray brothers and the IRA.

Stern Gang were trying to track him in England in order to kill him.<sup>623</sup> Therefore, it seems odd that Cesarani has overlooked to mention Waterman in his account concerning Major Farran and his controversial exploits.

Of greater concern to the Jewish community would be the number of MPs, party constituency officials and those party members in local government with links to fascist bodies, who could have a direct influence on peoples' everyday lives. From the sample of list names, one can see people such as Sir Graham Little, one of the country's leading dermatologists and Independent MP for London University (1924-1950), Major Roger Conant, Conservative MP for Bewdley (1937-1950) and Henry Brooke, Conservative MP for Lewisham West (1938-1945), Hampstead (1950-1966) and leader of the party on the London County Council when not an MP.<sup>624</sup> There were clearly links being highlighted between members of the Conservative Party and the extreme right wing, particularly at a constituency level. However, the list is not always explicit in indicating whether those links pre or post-date the war. It may be assumed that for some members of the 43 Group, including those compiling the list, the date of association with extremism was immaterial and those persons were forever tainted.

The complete list, with the sample showing some examples, throws up another stark group of people in that they might be regarded as living on the fringes of society.

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<sup>623</sup> Major Roy Farran (1921-2006) was a highly decorated member of the SAS, having served in Greece, North Africa, Italy and France in the Second World War. After Palestine and a failed attempt to be elected a Conservative MP, he moved to Canada where he became involved in local politics. In a case of mistaken identity, Major Farran's brother was blown up and killed at the family home near Wolverhampton by a parcel bomb sent by the Stern Gang in May 1948. D. Cesarani, *Major Farran's Hat* pp.192-195.

<sup>624</sup> Henry Brooke held a series of ministerial positions in the 1950s and 1960s, rising to become Home Secretary, 1962-1964. In regard to the latter, he was at the centre of the infamous legal dispute involving the proposed deportation of Jamaican immigrant, Miss Carmen Bryan (*Hansard* HC Deb. 20 July 1962, vol.663 cc815-7).

Fascist groups included a preponderance of violent criminals, some of whom were former soldiers, including ex-British and German POWs, the latter never having returned home after the war. There also appears to be certain ‘professional’ criminals, often of foreign origin.<sup>625</sup> The sample list includes two Maltese half brothers, Guisepe Marguerat and ‘George’ Semini.<sup>626</sup> As seen in Chapter Two, much of central London, particularly Soho, was fought over by rival criminal gangs of Italians and Maltese. Fascist organisations needed tough street fighters because some Jewish groups were uncompromisingly violent towards them with the latter’s attempts to break up marches and speeches. This shows both the success of Jewish direct action against fascism and its failure to an extent, because fascist numbers increased whilst there were funds available.

The level of detail for many of the entries on the list of names shows how well the 43 Group infiltrated fascist organisations and was able to gather information. The file documents peoples’ movements, where they frequent, home and business addresses, shareholdings, medical details, criminal convictions and in some cases, sexual orientation. At a time when homosexuality was a criminal offence punishable by imprisonment with hard labour, it can be assumed that these references against peoples’ names might be used by the 43 Group to publically embarrass or harm an opponent’s reputation. This level of detail is continued when examining the various ‘Fascist Organisations’ and ‘Fascist Publishers’.<sup>627</sup> From the addresses one can see that their organisational hub was in the West End and central London, not in the areas where they were fighting or marching through. Given the locations of party

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<sup>625</sup> S. Dorril, *Blackshirt*, p.569. Dorril states that in Romford, a gang of Maltese was hired to fight off the 43 Group.

<sup>626</sup> George Semini, aged 24, was hanged on 27 January 1949 at Walton Gaol, Liverpool, for the stabbing to death of Joseph Gibbons in Newcastle-under-Lyme, 10 October 1948.

<sup>627</sup> See Appendix H and I respectively.

headquarters and publishing houses, such as in Cadogan Square, Eaton Place/Square, Lower Sloane Street and Westminster Palace Gardens, it would be fair to say that substantial sums of money were needed to keep the parties operative. There is also some crossover of addresses, with for instance, the Union of British Freedom sharing the same location as the *Unity Publishing Company* in Westbourne Grove, Notting Hill. This particular location was at that time somewhat rundown and became the centre of former Polish Jew Peter Rachman's 'slum' property empire of the 1950s and early 1960s. As with some of the people on the 43 Group's list, it is suspected that a number of the publishing houses were not fascist as such, but that some of their publications had included offensive material concerning Jews. However, the list of 'Fascist Organisations' contains a sizable number of groups with links to the Middle East and Arabs, for instance, Anglo-Arab Friendship Society, Arab Legion and Palestine Police Old Comrades Association. Through a terrorist campaign from 1944 to 1948, involving large numbers of Palestine police being killed and injured, and a successful 1948 to 1949 war against their Arab neighbours, it is likely that the Jewish 43 Group was going to be correct in its concerns about those organisations.

The 43 Group file contains a list of car models, types and registration number plates of fascist suspects, along with occasional extra details.<sup>628</sup> From the list of car details and their occupants, one can say that the surveillance was comprehensive, particularly so for the fascist leadership. The full list shows the extensive number of cars used by Oswald Mosley, possibly to cover his movements. Another striking feature is the large number of county council vehicles used by fascists or attending fascist meetings. At the other end of the social scale perhaps, it is noticeable from the list both the

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<sup>628</sup> See Appendix G.

range of expensive cars for their day, and those that are chauffeur driven. In the late 1940s, there was still petrol rationing and brand new cars, of whatever type, were beyond the financial means of most people.<sup>629</sup> This, combined with the other sources of information on nearly a thousand people, would suggest some degree of organised intelligence network. The size of the 43 Group as a whole was in veteran Morris Beckman's words, 'Estimates of members varied from 600 up to a 1,000, but no one ever really knew the precise membership at any given time.'<sup>630</sup> In 'A Message from the Chairman of the 43 Group Social Committee from 1949, Jack Myers states in the section entitled, 'The Group To-Day', 'many hundreds of enthusiastic young men and women have joined the original Group, the majority, ex-Servicemen.'<sup>631</sup> In the space of three years the group had built up a substantial body of highly detailed information. Whilst there is some evidence to link fascist groups to the British Security Services, no one has yet established any link between MI5/MI6 and Jewish groups. From the file, there is one mention of a link to Special Branch Police, who were interested in a joint suspect with that of the 43 Group.<sup>632</sup> One has to ask the question that with such small numbers in the 43 Group, could they have amassed all this information by themselves or did they have help from sympathisers or personal wartime contacts? It is known that many former pre-war Jewish refugees ended their war service in the British Army's Intelligence Corps or finished up in Europe assisting in the hunting down of Nazi war criminals and therefore having connections with the Security Services/Special Branch.

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<sup>629</sup> Petrol rationing was in force from September 1939 to May 1950.

<sup>630</sup> M. Beckman, *43 Group*, p.177.

<sup>631</sup> LSE Archive: File – COLL MISC 1068: 43 Group; Invitation card to a social function at the Grosvenor House Hotel, Park Lane, London. 28 February 1948.

<sup>632</sup> See Appendix G; suspect car registrations. Mr. George Bracket Smith

The propaganda war fought between the Jewish activists of the 43 Group and the various fascist factions is illustrated by the extensive range of posters, newsletters and leaflets contained within the file. As indicated earlier, the 43 Group was keen to stress that it was working on behalf of the whole of Anglo-Jewry and that the re-emergence of fascism was not going to be the legacy of the Second World War, after having defeated Nazism. Whilst fascist literature liked to paint the 43 Group in terms of being lawless, violent, disorganised and obviously, being Jewish, ‘foreign’ or ‘alien’, the Group itself stressed the war record of many of its members and supporters, coming from all social groups and working with the authorities. This is seen in its public literature, with messages such as the one from 1948. ‘To-day many hundreds of enthusiastic young men and women have joined the original Group, the majority, ex-Servicemen – some with distinguished war records – the group has in its midst a V.C., D.S.O.s, D.F.C.s, D.S.C.s, D.S.M.s and M.M.s, officers and privates, men and women of every class, of all professions and trades, and of every political creed – loyally united in an unsurpassed comradeship.’<sup>633</sup> Besides the specific aims mentioned earlier in the chapter, the overall declared aim was to, ‘strip the façade from the undeclared Fascist organisations, to expose their highly-placed sympathisers and their underground Fifth Column’ and that, ‘A truly alive organisation is now in existence – well disciplined and organised. Men and women who join the Group dedicate themselves to play their part in this vital struggle.’<sup>634</sup> Its choice of words such as

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<sup>633</sup> LSE Archive: File – COLL MISC 1068: 43 Group; Invitation card to a social function at the Grosvenor House Hotel, Park Lane, London. 28 February 1948. The Jewish VC holder was ‘Tommy’ Gould (1914-2001). Petty Officer Thomas Gould disposed of two German bombs on board the submarine, *Thrasher*, off the coast of Crete in February 1942. He was a leading opponent of the British Government’s policy towards Palestine. See *Guardian* obituary, 7 January 2002.

<sup>634</sup> LSE Archive: File – COLL MISC 1068: 43 Group. Invitation card to a social function at the Grosvenor House Hotel, Park Lane, London. 28 February 1948.



‘sympathisers’ and ‘Fifth Column’ have echoes of the wartime and the implication that ‘the enemy’ was not just those high profile leaders of fascism, but also those who were less obvious, hidden in society.

The links made by the 43 Group between the extreme right wing of the late 1940s with pre-war groups and the reason why the war was fought, to destroy German and Italian brands of fascism, is clearly shown in their literature. Both ‘Illustration 4a’ and



Illustration 4a: Front and back pages of a 43 Group leaflet. LSE Archive: File – COLL MISC 1068: 43 Group.

‘4b’ show the design techniques of font size and colour (black and red) to emphasise the points that the current battle is no different from that of the Second World War and that there must be a common sense of unity against a common foe. The analogy follows through with references to ‘fellows who fought in Egypt and on the

Normandy Beaches’, ‘mothers who stood up to the Blitz and rockets’. Direct links are made between post-war fascists and the Nazis, using the former’s speeches and the use of words such as ‘Gauleiters’. The claim by the 43 Group to be non-partisan in its party politics can be seen in the way it (4b) refers to both Churchill’s victory over Nazism and its ideology that every decent person had supported, and highlighting the fascist accusation that Attlee was a ‘stinking traitor’, having won the 1945 Labour election landslide and overseen victory over Japanese ‘fascism’.

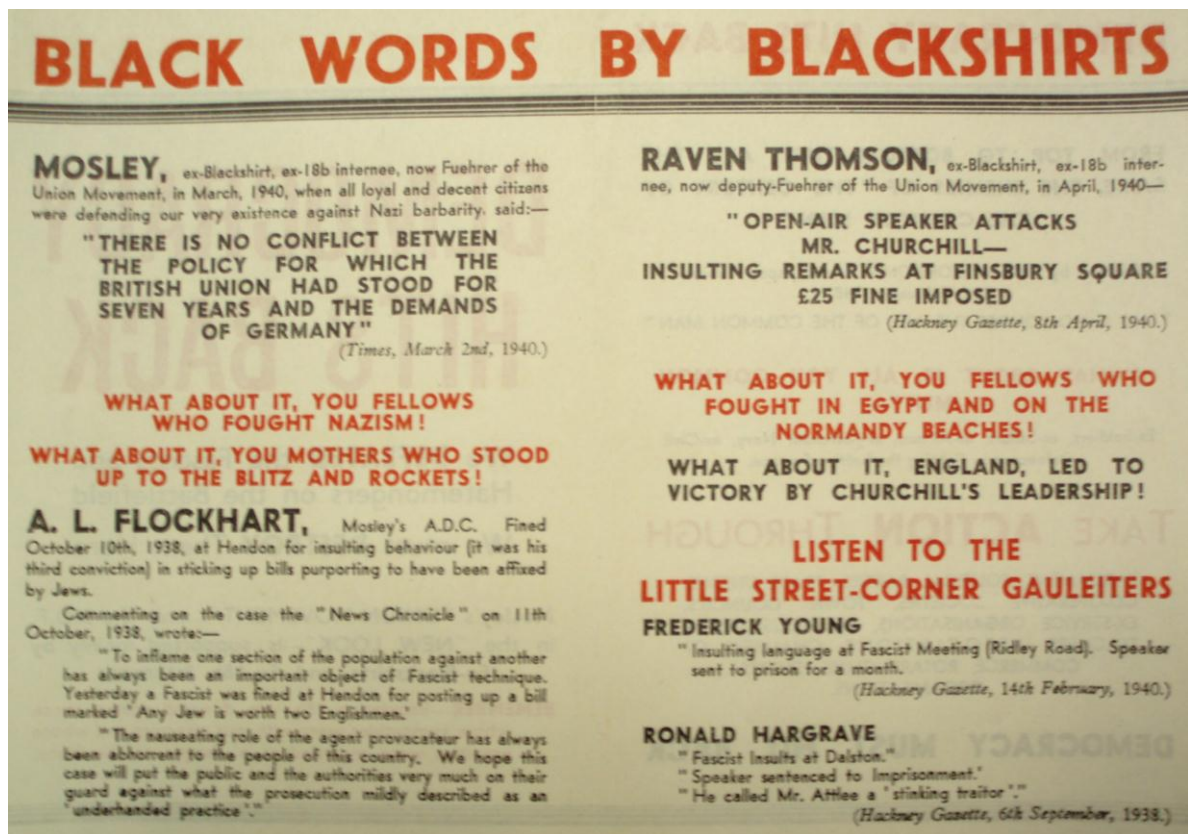


Illustration 4b: Central pages of Illustration 4a.

As 43 Group leaflets and posters to the general public did not advertise the fact that the group was behind them, presumably to avoid the charge that this was a purely Jewish issue, so fascist groups tended to avoid making links with the Nazis and the pre-war British Union of Fascists (BUF). Therefore, much of the propaganda war for



the 43 Group was making the public aware that although the names of fascist groups had changed after the war, they were in essence the same as before 1939, with the same leading figures. To the 43 Group, the British Union of Fascists had simply been 'revived'. The Second World War had not killed off British fascism.

**LOOK WHAT'S CRAWLING OUT AGAIN !**



*Reproduced by permission of "The Daily Mirror"*

What is  
Mosley's Union Movement?  
It is the British Union of Fascists  
revived

**IF YOU VALUE DEMOCRACY**  
**AND IF YOUR SACRIFICES**  
**HAVE NOT BEEN IN VAIN**  
**FIGHT IT NOW!**

London Caledonian Press Ltd. (T.U. all depts.), 74 Swinton St., London, W.C.1—80231

Illustration 4c: 43 Group leaflet. LSE Archive: File – COLL MISC 1068: 43 Group. Cartoon was drawn by Philip Zec, who worked with David Low at *The Daily Mirror*.

It was also important to make the link that those same leaders had in most cases been gaoled during the war, under Defence Regulation 18B, for being a danger to the security of the country. From a Jewish point of view, despite a war, fascism had not changed over time nor had it gone away, it had simply become more insidious and therefore harder to detect in some instances. This is shown in a 43 Group leaflet (Illustration 4c), with fascism crawling out from underneath a stone and again the reference to the war and personal sacrifice to make the peace a better place than before. The cartoon having been drawn by one of the war's most important artists, Philip Zec, it has a resonance and is reminiscent with his earlier famous cartoon produced for VE – Day of a wounded soldier handing back the hard fought laurel with the words 'Peace and Victory in Europe', saying, 'Here you are! - Don't lose it again.'<sup>635</sup> The 43 Group was trying to make the general public be aware of not throwing away their hard fought gains.

The theme of associating post-war fascists with those from before and during the war was also aided by organisations closely working with the 43 Group such as the politically left of centre, National Council for Civil Liberties.<sup>636</sup> In one of their leaflets, contained within the file, the cover has a simple title of 'British Fascists and the War – A Record of Infamy.'<sup>637</sup> The centre of the leaflet contains the names of six men and women, their details of betrayal and links with the BUF, followed by the sentencing by the British courts of hanging for the first two and 'Penal Servitude' for

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<sup>635</sup> *The Daily Mirror*, 8 May 1945. See D. Zec, *Don't Lose it Again! The Life and Wartime Cartoons of Philip Zec* (London, 2005).

<sup>636</sup> Founded in 1934, The National Council for Civil Liberties worked closely with the Board of Jewish Deputies' Jewish Defence Committee against fascism and anti-Semitism, along with issues involving rights for Servicemen/women, conscientious objectors and abuses of power by the police and judiciary. Their archive is held by Hull University. See also M. Lilly, *The National Council for Civil Liberties: the first fifty years* (London, 1984), S. Scaffardi, *Fire Under the Carpet: working for civil liberties in the thirties* (London, 1986) and B. Dyson, *Liberty in Britain 1934-1994: a diamond jubilee history of the National Council for Civil Liberties* (London, 1994).

<sup>637</sup> LSE Archive: File – COLL MISC 1068: 43 Group; National Council for Civil Liberties leaflet.

the rest; William Joyce, Theodore Schurch, Francis McLardy, Thomas Cooper, Walter Purdy, Elise Orrin and Joseph Thumwood. The back page reinforces the familiar messages of not letting the wartime's sacrifices be in vain and linking the post-war fascists with Hitler. Where it is different from other leaflets in the file, those produced by the 43 Group, is the fact that it specifically mentions that fascists are 'the advocates of racial hatred and anti-Semitism', no doubt helped by a national organisation, namely the National Council for Civil Liberties. It is also of interest to note that one of the points raised by the leaflet concerns the fascists taking 'advantage of post-war difficulties to spread unhappiness and ill-will.'<sup>638</sup> The leaflet is not dated, but as the rest of the material in the file comes from the 1947-1950 period, it would be reasonable to assume came from the end of the 1940s. The four year period encompassed not only declining prestige as the British Empire shrank, but also a time of extreme difficulty for poorer households in terms of housing, rent, lack of coal, unprecedented levels of rationing (worse than in wartime), industrial disputes and the severest winter the country had ever experienced from January to March 1947. The 'difficulties' from a Jewish point of view were compounded as the Minister for Fuel and Power, who had had to shut down some of the power stations during the winter, was Emanuel Shinwell, and the death toll in Palestine was reaching a climax with the King David Hotel bombing, with no solution in sight.

The examples of fascist propaganda contained in the 43 Group file show that it had very little in the way of anything new to say as regards to Britain's Jewish community, despite the war and the events in Palestine, apart from the fact that the war had been engineered by Jews for their own benefit. The Cold War gave fascists

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<sup>638</sup> Ibid.

the excuse to further link Judaism with Communism, a theme that had been popular in some quarters since 1917. Connected to this and yet another attribute pedalled by anti-Semites was the linking of Jews to ‘international finance’ and a form of global domination. Whilst Oswald Mosley pushed his ideas of a ‘united Europe’ as a way to avoid future conflict, even if many of his followers were still stuck in a 1930s mentality, Arnold Leese was still pre-eminent in his vitriolic and stereotypical parodies of Jews. Illustration 4d of a hook nosed, pin striped banker with cigar, speaking with a foreign Jewish accent, was no different to that seen in Nazi caricatures in *Lustige Blatter* and *Der Sturmer*. The reverse of the leaflet (Illustration 4d) gives the many titles that were either produced by Arnold Leese himself or by his publishers, *Carmac Press*, of 57 Fellows Street, London E.2. Under the heading, ‘Literature for Patriots’, fascists could purchase titles such as *Bolshevism is Jewish* (3d.), *Legalised Cruelty of Jewish Cattle-Slaughter* (4d.), *It Might have Happened to You (Imprisonment for years without charge or trial, for being Anti-Jewish)* (1/2) and his latest book, at that point, *The Jewish War of Survival* (5/6).<sup>639</sup> If any of the fascist leaders could be said to be fanatically anti-Semitic, as opposed to what might be called xenophobic, it was Arnold Leese ( one-time acquaintance of Third Reich Nazi, Julius Streicher), who favoured a policy of extermination as opposed to Mosley’s exclusion from the country. When in late 1948 and early 1949, Mosley’s Union Movement shifted its focus away from anti-Semitism, it provided Leese’s Imperial Fascist League with new recruits who defected from the former. Due to these defections, Mosley was forced by circumstances to return to the familiar anti-Semitic tirade for one of the largest confrontations between the 43 Group and fascism on 31 January 1949 at Kensington Town Hall. An estimated one thousand Union Movement

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<sup>639</sup> The leaflet gives two reviews of the *Jewish War of Survival*, with it proudly stating for one, that of the *Sunday Pictorial*, 10 March 1946, “The most pernicious poison that has ever appeared in the English language”.

supporters were faced with a demonstration by approximately three thousand people, with many members of the 43 Group having infiltrated the fascist meeting.<sup>640</sup> The meeting ended in chaos after demonstrators threw tear gas grenades into the audience.



Illustration 4d: Leese leaflet. LSE Archive: File – COLL MISC 1068: 43 Group

Leaflet for Arnold Leese, who produced the post-war fascist newsletter *Gothic Ripples*. Leader of the pre-war Imperial Fascist League and 18b internee, Leese was imprisoned again after the war for attempting to free German POWs. He formed the National-Worker's Movement in 1948.

<sup>640</sup> M. Beckman, *43 Group*, p.178. Lower estimates of seven hundred fascists and two thousand protesters are given in Stephen Dorril's *Blackshirt*, p.580.

Just as it would be a mistake to view Jews as a homogenous group, the same applies to fascists. A comparison of two leading fascist newsletters from 1949, Arnold Leese's *Gothic Ripples* and Oswald Mosley's *Union* show a distinct contrast in the focus of their attacks.<sup>641</sup> An examination of the sub-headings in *Gothic Ripples* shows how narrowly focused Leese's attacks were. Under the heading, 'Now it is Your Turn' and giving a long list of prominent names in British society, the newsletter asks readers for information 'on the racial composition of.....'; Sir R.T.D. Acland, Bart., Lord Beaverbrook, Ernest Bevin, Cazalet family, Sir E.J. Forsdyke of British Museum, Herbert Morrison, Viscount (Montagu C) Norman, Profumo family, Vansittart family and Sir Oswald Mosley, Bart., to name just a few on the extensive list.<sup>642</sup> Other headings included 'Half-Caste Love' (reference to Stalin's son marrying Molotov's daughter) and 'The Way to Kill Freemasonry'. The majority of the newsletter concerns itself with a succession of different sections on Jews. 'Jews Not in the News' is dealt with concisely, for instance,

The Royal Commission on the Press issued its report on 29<sup>th</sup> June. Its verdict is "No hidden influences". Its members are either mental, Masonic or suffering from Moral Cowardice.<sup>643</sup>

However, under 'Secret Jews', two pages are given over to a plethora of historical and diverse figures who were Jews in disguise, along with a vestige of justification. These included the Borgia family, Perkin Warbeck, David Rizzio, Marshal Soult, Napoleon III, Col. Joseph Beck ('Polish Foreign Minister, who caused the outbreak of hostilities in 1939'), General Graziani and Franklin D. Roosevelt, naming just a few in a long

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<sup>641</sup> LSE Archive: File – COLL MISC 1068: 43 Group; *Gothic Ripples* 20 July 1949, *Union* 4 October 1949.

<sup>642</sup> Arnold Leese had since before the war, regarded Oswald Mosley as being too lenient towards the Jews.

<sup>643</sup> LSE Archive: File – COLL MISC 1068: 43 Group; *Gothic Ripples* 20 July 1949, p.2.



list. The newsletter concludes with stories referring to anti-Jewish activities in France, deaths of Masons, attacks on Chaim Weizmann and 'Jews in the News'.

The contrast with Mosley's *Union* newsletter is stark and important for the Jewish community. The main heading for the paper is 'Communist and Labour Conspiracy to Ban Union Movement Marches', with sub-headings of 'Is this a Labour Government Conspiracy?' and 'Red Lies and Labour Ban'. The focus of the information is an attack on the Labour Government and how they 'capitulate before the threats of Stalin's "Fifth Column" in this country.'<sup>644</sup> Particular attention was paid to the Home Secretary, Chuter Ede and connivance of the local police, the *Daily Herald* and the *Daily Worker*. Only once does the newsletter indirectly mention the Jews, when referring to a report from the *Daily Worker* about a Union Movement (UM) march 'through the heart of Stepney whose residents are predominantly Jewish and Communist.' However, the underlying sub-text alluding to Jews in using the word 'alien' is clear when talking about a Union Movement meeting next to Bethnal Green Underground Station, in Victoria Park Square. The condemnation is enhanced by linking the Jews with the communists, as the article states, '.....when the local people expressed their sympathy for British Union and their disgust at the hooliganism of Communist and alien elements,.....'<sup>645</sup>

In many ways, Oswald Mosley and his Union Movement was a much more dangerous enemy than Arnold Leese, John Beckett's People's Party, Jeffrey Hamm's British League of Ex-Servicemen and Women, or any of the other multitude of extreme right wing parties. Although under observation by the government's Security Services both

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<sup>644</sup> LSE Archive: File – COLL MISC 1068: 43 Group; *Union* 4 October 1949, p.2.

<sup>645</sup> *Ibid.* p.1.

during and after the war, the core of BUF supporters remained intact whilst their leaders were at first interned for the majority of the war and then released to reform in different guises after 1945. The majority of fascists looked to Mosley to lead them after the war. Arnold Leese failed to make a significant breakthrough because his political appeal was too narrow in focus and found favour only with those who were committed to a solely extreme anti-Semitism. Beckett's People's Party failed, despite a wide political appeal with anti-Semitic elements played down, because of being infiltrated by the 43 Group and having a poor financial base that relied upon one man, the Duke of Bedford. Jeffrey Hamm kept fascism alive after the war, before Mosley created the Union Movement in 1948. By playing on the troubles in Palestine between 1944 and 1948, Hamm used and developed the British League of Ex-Servicemen and Women to become a dangerous opponent of the 43 Group and the rest of Anglo-Jewry, despite the former's infiltration of the League. The British withdrawal from Palestine in 1948 took away that focus on Britain's Jews and therefore would probably have resulted in the gradual withering of the League. By merging the League in 1948 with Mosley's newly created Union Movement, Hamm significantly strengthened fascism. Mosley and his party was much more than just a one issue movement involving either anti-Semitism or Palestine. In the context of the Cold War, Mosley attacked alleged links between the Labour Party and communism, whilst at the same time playing down the anti-Semitism that had become so prevalent in the BUF of the late 1930s. However, it must be stressed that despite many extreme anti-Semites leaving the Union Movement to form their own breakaway groups, Mosley never achieved large numbers of supporters to gain political power even at a local government level. The 43 Group did not defeat fascism, but curtailed its early momentum and disrupted its activities to an extent that by 1950, it felt that its original

*raison d'être* no longer applied and that the Jewish Defence Committees could be entrusted to keep fascism in check.

Whilst the 43 Group was active in the post-war period, the Board of Deputies had established 'Defence Committees' in the mid-1930s to monitor and combat fascism. Like the 43 Group, the Jewish Defence Committees collected information regarding suspected fascists and then either used it as part of an overall propaganda campaign or presented it to the Home Office or police to take appropriate action. Compared to the 'direct action' of the 43 Group, this was 'passive resistance' that was designed to work within the existing judicial/legal system, without upsetting non-Jews. As such, it caused a large rift in Britain's Jewish community in its 'soft' response to fascism and at a time of struggle in Palestine.

David Spector was typical of those British Jews caught up in the internal quarrels that divided the Jewish community. Initially serving in the Royal Artillery in the Middle East during the Second World War, he transferred to the British Army's Jewish Brigade to fight in Italy during the closing stages of the campaign. With the ending of the war, like many others of the Brigade, Major Spector assisted Holocaust survivors illegally enter Palestine and helped to train future soldiers of the Israeli Defence Force. On return to Britain, he joined AJEX (becoming its national vice-chairman) and became a member of the Board of Deputies' Defence Committee. It was the lack of action by the Board of Deputies to openly fight fascism that led to his resignation from the Defence Committee. However, it did not stop him from amassing substantial evidence and files on fascist activities, now kept by the Wiener Library, covering the period from the early 1930s to the 1990s.<sup>646</sup> As with the 43 Group files, much of what

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<sup>646</sup> Wiener Library, London: File 610 – David Spector: Miscellaneous Papers, 1936-1992.

is contained within the David Spector files is in the form of newspaper cuttings, anti-fascist propaganda, examples of fascist publications and intelligence/surveillance reports.

Once more, one can see an impressive degree of intelligence concerning the Board of Deputies knowledge concerning fascist activities and connections throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Typical of the material from the immediate post-war period was an ‘open letter to the Jewish people’ from the Britons’ Vigilantes Action League that played upon the difficult economic circumstances of the time, made worse by the returning demobbed troops. The alleged link between the hardships that returning soldiers found and the Jewish situation were spelt out:

The British People are dis-satisfied. The returning soldier finds himself homeless. Food is scarce, clothing still rationed, fuel inadequate. He asks himself the cause and can find no answer. Why are conditions worse in so many directions than they were during the War itself? He can find no explanation, till at length some one tells him it is owing to the Jews.<sup>647</sup>

An issue of *British League Review* from 1947 shows how fascist groups thinly disguised an anti-Semitic agenda with references to ‘the ever-growing alien influence in British public life.’<sup>648</sup> Even advertisements were tailored to a political and racial message, such as one suggesting the purchase of a subscription of *British League*

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<sup>647</sup> Wiener Library, London: File 610/1 (no title) – Britons’ Vigilantes Action League open letter, no date. See in the Appendices, number four, the 43 Group list of people connected to fascist organisations, name ‘John Charles Preen’.

<sup>648</sup> *British League Review*, November-December 1947, Vol.1 No.7. This publication represented the British League of Ex-Servicemen and Women. Having been established as a rival to the British Legion in the 1930s, Jeffrey Hamm and Victor Burgess took it over in 1944 until it disbanded in 1948 to merge with other groups into Mosley’s Union Movement. The date of November 1947 coincides with a meeting at the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Road, Clerkenwell, by different fascist groups to propose that merging of parties to form the Union Movement.

*Review* for Christmas, with the concluding line reading, ‘Buy your Christmas presents from those who keep Christmas.’<sup>649</sup>

Apart from the more fanatical fascist groups, post-war literature often used the word ‘alien’, because it wanted to avoid connections with either the pre-war era or the recent events of the Holocaust. In the same issue and under the ironic heading of ‘Organised Violence in E. London’, one sees the links fascists wanted to make between Jews and other factors or elements.

As our meetings in Bethnal Green’s Hereford Street became more and more successful, so did the fury of the alien black-marketeers and petty thieves increase in volume. As soon as our meetings opened a demand for questions was voiced in alien accents and guttural tones. We are curious to know what action the police would take if British Nationalists behaved in such a fashion at meetings organised by Communists, or by any other Jewish faction.<sup>650</sup>

It was one of the aims of both the Board of Deputies and the 43 Group to expose the connection between anti-alien and anti-Semitic. However, whilst avoiding the discredited German overtones, the language at times was similar to that found in Nazi publications; Jews were Bolsheviks/Communists, pornographers, commercial exploiters and wanted to take over the country. In many ways, by associating Judaism with Communism, it exploited the growing fears over the emerging ‘Cold War’. Nor was the Labour Government exempt from the attention of the British League, as the latter highlighted the number of Jews in Parliament, under the title of ‘The Workers’ Government’. It aimed to show, with a sarcastic intonation, how Jewish corporate

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<sup>649</sup> Ibid.

<sup>650</sup> Ibid.

interests represented the workers of Britain, as with the example of newly elected MP, Ian Mikardo.

Mr. Mikardo is a “business consultant and office adviser”— a typical “working class” occupation. He is President of the Jewish Federation in Reading.<sup>651</sup>

Surveillance reports were not restricted to detailing the activities of overtly fascist parties, but also on those that made any public criticism of Jews. One such report concerns the British Housewives’ League rally at the Albert Hall in June 1947.<sup>652</sup> The report noted that anti-Semitic remarks had been made both inside and outside of the hall and that,

One of the main speakers at the meeting, Miss Dorothy Crisp, Chairman of the League, has an article in this month’s issue of the rabidly anti-Jewish monthly *Tomorrow*, whose racial outpourings have already been referred to in the *Jewish Chronicle*.

The two page report then goes on to detail how the publication attacked the Labour Minister, Mr. Shinwell, a ‘man of foreign extraction’ and a ‘follower of the faith of Judah which has nothing in common with Britain.’ The convergence of ideas came with the attacks on the Labour Government and Party, with the latter being described by *Tomorrow* as having become ‘infested with Jews’ and that the present ‘ British Cabinet is composed in part of the sons of the scum of the Polish Ghetto.’ The report by Spector concludes with a quote from the fascist publication that links in with the grievances held by the Housewives’ League, namely the increased restrictions and rationing of everyday foods and items needed for day-to-day living.

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<sup>651</sup> Ibid.

<sup>652</sup> Wiener Library, London: File 610/1 (no specific title). See also Elizabeth Wilson’s *Only Halfway to Paradise. Women in Postwar Britain: 1945-1968*. (London, 1980), pp.167-169. Elizabeth Wilson asserts that Dorothy Crisp was anti-Semitic.

Britain is shortly to import 14,000 varied pieces of scum and riff-raff monthly. Certainly they will be mostly Jews [who will] eat fresh Kosher meat whilst our rations will certainly be reduced.

David Spector had also put together a number of reviews of fascist publications, usually in the form of looking back over the course of a year at the different issues that had come out. Not only do they note the language being used, but also the people being attacked and those who have contributed articles. In one entry, for the publication *Tomorrow*, it is noted that in the August issue (no year is given, but from the content it appears to be 1946) Sir Simon Marks was denounced, adding,

We, of course, are at fault in tolerating the knighting or ennobling of any person of alien blood.

In the same issue were articles by Sqn/Ldr Christopher Hollis, Conservative MP for Devizes; Mr. H. Norman Smith, Labour MP for S. Nottingham; and Mr. W.J. Brown, Independent MP for Rugby.<sup>653</sup>

Inevitably, for the early post-war period, much is made of the events in Palestine and is reflected in a number of articles collated by David Spector. The May issue of *Tomorrow*, 'advocated the confiscation of *I.C.I., Marks and Spencers, Montague Burtons and J. Lyons and Co.* in retaliation for the landing of illegal Jewish immigrants in Palestine.'<sup>654</sup>

Possibly the most interesting aspect of David Spector's papers are those that deal with his surveillance of fascist groups or those with connections to them. The files contain an extensive essay which appears to have been written over a number of years itself,

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<sup>653</sup> Wiener Library, London: File 610/7.

<sup>654</sup> Ibid.

concerning the activities of American Dr. Frank Buchman and his organisation known variously as the ‘Oxford Movement/Group’ or ‘Moral Re-Armament’ (MRA), from its founding in the early 1930s up to the start of the 1950s.<sup>655</sup> Of particular importance to Spector were the links between this ‘evangelical’ and ‘spiritual regeneration’ movement and the Nazi administration and by association, with members of British society. The MRA, which had followers around the world, believed in a new world order, guided by God, that would harmonise social and working relations, to produce an efficient and ideologically spiritual state.

Early on, in Spector’s assessment of the MRA, one can appreciate why the Board of Jewish Deputies wanted to keep some form about the group, considering who was linked to it. Buchman was in Berlin for the 1936 Olympics, whereupon Spector notes,

Kenneth Lindsay, M.P. stated that when he was in Berlin during the Olympic Games that year.....he met Dr. Buchman in the Adlon Hotel. Dr. Buchman (William Hickey quoted this account in the “Daily Express”) greeted him with his usual high pressure affability: how was he, where was he staying, did he know everybody he ought to know?

Lindsay said he thought so.

“D’you know Heinrich Himmler?” said Buchman. “No? Say, you ought to know Heinrich. He’s a great lad.”

Lindsay excused himself. He knew that Himmler was head of the Gestapo.<sup>656</sup>

On another occasion at the same time, Buchman gave a quote that has been brought up time and again by those interested in the organisation.

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<sup>655</sup> Wiener Library, London: Files 610/3 and 610/4 (no specific title). For more recent accounts of Frank Buchman and MRA, see Tom Driberg’s somewhat critical *The Mystery of Moral Re-Armament: A Study of Frank Buchman and His Movement* (London, 1964)

<sup>656</sup> Ibid.



Frank Buchman was interviewed by the World Telegram on August 26, 1936, about the world situation he said: “I thank heaven for a man like Adolf Hitler, who built a line of defense against the Anti-Christ of Communism.”

Two years later, one can see why Anglo-Jewry was concerned by MRA and its establishment in Britain.

At the time of Munich, Buchman’s followers were tremendous among the British upper classes, particularly in the Cliveden Set. So accurately did the policy of appeasement reflect the teachings of Buchman that he took substantial credit to himself for saving world peace in the Munich crisis.

The family of the Duke of Hamilton, on whose estate Rudolf Hess landed in his great “peace mission”, was intimately associated with Buchman and the M.R.A. Movement. There were rumors [sic], never verified, that Hess was the leader of the movement in Germany.<sup>657</sup>

The report gives the names of many members of the House of Lords and other political or celebrity figures of the day and during the war, both British and European, that were linked by their support for Frank Buchman and MRA. These included such diverse figures as Vidkun Quisling of Norway and Henry ‘Bunny’ Austin, Britain’s Wimbledon champion. There is also the insinuation that Rudolf Hess’s May 1941 mission to Britain was part of a plan formulated by Buchman and MRA.<sup>658</sup> David Spector was still monitoring MRA in the early 1950s as evidenced by a newspaper clipping reporting on an MRA conference at the Royal Festival Hall, London, that promoted religion as the bulwark against Communism. It also gave details of Buchman being feted by the French and the Germans, in particular Konrad Adenaur,

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<sup>657</sup> Ibid

<sup>658</sup> Ibid.

for his services to Franco-German relations. As might be expected from the *Daily Worker*, it did not let Buchman's association with Hitler go unnoticed and gave significant coverage to those attending the conference such as Polish General Bor Komorowski, German Baron von Fritsch and British Major-General Kirby.<sup>659</sup>

A significant factor in David Spector's surveillance analysis, like that of the 43 Group, is the high level of detail contained in his reports on those connected to fascist organisations. There is no indication as to how he obtained the material, which includes conversations at private addresses. However, it is known that at various periods of time, those people named, had been scrutinised by Special Branch and the Security Services. The historian, Stephen Dorril, maintains that the negotiations were infiltrated by a Board of Jewish Deputies 'mole'<sup>660</sup> A report entitled 'Fascist "National Front" ' (otherwise known as the National Front After Victory), looks at the negotiations between two fascist parties, the National Front and the British People's Party, to merge at some point in the middle of 1945.<sup>661</sup> Although the negotiations did not materialise into a new party due to a speech in the House of Lords by Lord Vansittart that revealed the details, it is interesting to see the names of prominent members of the Lords and contemporary 'Society'. Meetings were recorded at 39 Store Street, off Tottenham Court Road, involving either directly or indirectly, familiar fascist personalities such as Captain Archibald Ramsay, Admiral Barry Domville, A.K. Chesterton, Arnold Leese, Jeffrey Hamm and Major-General Fuller. Also implicated in the meetings, was the Duke of Bedford, Duke of Hamilton, Duke of Portsmouth, Marquis of Bute, the Earl of Airlie, Lady Pearson (wife of the

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<sup>659</sup> *Daily Worker*, 9 June 1952.

<sup>660</sup> S. Dorril, *Blackshirt: Sir Oswald Mosley and British Fascism* (London, 2007), p.547.

<sup>661</sup> Wiener Library, London: File 610/1 (no title).

publisher, Arthur Pearson Bt.) and Major-General W. Evered Poole.<sup>662</sup> Spector also wrote that A.K. Chesterton was, ‘seeing Admiral Wolkoff (father of Anna Wolkoff, sentenced in the Tyler Kent Affair).’ This in itself should have alerted those taking part in the meetings, as the ‘Tyler Kent Affair’ involved the arrest and sentencing for espionage of this American diplomat in 1940.<sup>663</sup> Tyler Kent had certainly passed on Anglo-American secrets to Germany via Anna Wolkoff (and as a friend of Captain Ramsay, kept the membership list of the infamous ‘The Right Club’) and may even have been working for the Soviet Union. As part of the ‘Tyler Kent Affair, Anna Wolkoff had been the subject of intense investigation by MI5, MI6 and MI8. The revelations of this proposed merger and those involved, effectively destroyed potentially the largest non-Mosleyite fascist grouping.

The extent and quality of the information held by both the 43 Group and the Board of Jewish Deputies shows that Anglo-Jewry was able to keep watch on fascism, its officials and sympathisers – with or without the help of Britain’s Security Services. Prior to Mosley’s formation of the Union Movement in 1948, British fascism was too fragmented to cause serious trouble for the Jewish community, but combined with events in Palestine, it had the potential and therefore required a robust response. However, it did have enough financial support from peers such as the Duke of Bedford to launch propaganda campaigns and members to cause or stir up trouble on the streets. The situation was made worse by the media and by the poor economic situation facing much of the population, particularly in the poorer, bombed out

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<sup>662</sup> The report also includes a number of aliases and code names for different figures eg ‘Canute’ is Admiral Barry Domville.

<sup>663</sup> See R. Bearse and A. Read, *Conspirator: The Untold Story of Tyler Kent* (New York, 1991), B. Clough, *State Secrets: The Kent-Wolkoff Affair* (Hove, 2005) and W. Kimball and B. Bartlett, ‘Roosevelt and Prewar Commitments to Churchill: The Tyler Kent Affair’ in *Diplomatic History*, Vol.5 No.4 (Fall 1981), pp.291- 311.

neighbourhoods that traditionally supplied fascist recruits. The addresses of those involved with fascism show that they recruited mostly in east and north east London, suggesting that fascism was limited geographically, although not in intensity for those specific areas. The one factor that was beyond the control of British Jews, apart from debatably those in Parliament, was increasing terrorism in Palestine by the *Haganah* and others such as the *Irgun*.

The attacks by the Jewish underground movement in Palestine against the military and police forces between 1945 and 1948 caused the British public as a whole to judge the loyalty of the Anglo-Jewish community. Equally the events in Palestine such as the blowing up of the King David Hotel and the lynching of two British Army sergeants in 1946 and 1947 respectively, caused Jews in Britain to ask themselves as to whether they should support those who fought against their home country. The war had made Zionism a mainstream political ideology in Britain and even many conservative Jews had sympathy with the idea of a Jewish 'homeland'. For those Jews in London, as has been seen, the war had not eliminated fascism in Britain, to which the latter exploited events in Palestine. However, the overwhelming majority of the British public rejected fascism and made a distinction between Anglo-Jewry and those such as the *Irgun*. Some historians, while briefly quoting the 'anti-Jewish' race riots of 1947 as an example of anti-Semitic attitudes in Britain, then fail to explain in what way they were emblematic of the latter.<sup>664</sup> The evidence shows that there was no popular, long lasting or large scale media anti-Jewish backlash in Britain from the events in Palestine. Instead, it may be said that there was much anger directed at those

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<sup>664</sup> H. Defries, *Conservative Party Attitudes to Jews*, p.190. D. Kynaston, *Austerity Britain*, p.270.

in ‘terrorist’ organisations in Palestine, Zionism (in its various shades) and the revived opinion that Judaism was connected to communism in this early Cold War period.

Often, in response to Jewish terrorist activities, the British press could be critical of the British Government as well as those that initiated the bombings, robberies, murders etc. Although the blowing up of the King David Hotel in 1946 was compared to the actions of the Nazis (many civilians, as well as military personnel were killed) by *The Times* and the *Daily Mail*, they were equally scathing of the British government’s lack of a political initiative and its reliance upon a draconian rule of law.<sup>665</sup> The following year, in the aftermath of the kidnapping and hanging of two British Army sergeants, Clifford Martin and Mervyn Paice, by the *Irgun*, the media again did not direct its attacks at Anglo-Jewry, but at those who were actually responsible. However, *The Times* indicated that although Anglo-Jewry and other Jewish communities and organisations condemned the atrocity, they and their ambitions for Palestine would suffer in the form of a collective response.<sup>666</sup> There was also the feeling that Jewish communities should not just denounce the terrorists, but might have done more to prevent the murders.<sup>667</sup> It is difficult to see how this could have been achieved as the *Irgun* were regarded as being extremist even by the main underground movement, the *Haganah*. The Liverpool branch of AJEX, on the first day of rioting in the city, drew parallels in the different communities’ situations. It urged the city’s population to disassociate themselves from those who caused the trouble, ‘which sullies their good name just as terrorism sullies the name of Jewry.’<sup>668</sup>

The areas that most of the mainstream newspapers agreed on were their criticisms of

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<sup>665</sup> *The Times*, 23 July 1946, *Daily Mail*, 24 July 1946.

<sup>666</sup> *The Times*, 1 August 1947.

<sup>667</sup> *Daily Express*, 1 August 1947, *Daily Telegraph*, 1 August 1947.

<sup>668</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 1 August 1947.

the Labour Government's handling of the crisis, the timely need to withdraw from Palestine and an increasingly hostile attitude to Jewish terrorism.<sup>669</sup> By implication, the latter manifested itself in a sympathetic stance for the Arabs. Another consequence was that some British people did not make the distinction between Jewish extremists in Palestine and the wider Jewish community, including that in Great Britain.

One of the few voices in Britain that attempted to justify the 'terrorism' was the Hungarian left-wing writer, Arthur Koestler, in the form of an imaginary letter to the parent of a British soldier, published in the *New Statesman*.<sup>670</sup> The letter is a justification for the actions taken by members of the *Irgun* and Stern Gang and includes the reasons why they have no other choice of action. Through a long argument that includes the Holocaust and the consequences of turning back refugee ships, the Balfour Declaration, economic prosperity brought to Palestine by Jews and the purpose or objective of the Mandate, it ends with an attack on Ernest Bevin and what he can do to end the violence. The letter additionally and pertinently ends with a view of Britain's moral and political situation in 1947:

For the Jews of Palestine fight for one thing only, the oldest slogan in their history: Let My People Go. There were six million of them in Europe; only one of ten is left. Your countrymen are very fond of the word decency; if you have any left, let them go.

A great Empire which rules the seven seas can afford to flaunt the world's opinion. But you are no longer that; you cannot afford to put might before right; and you have already antagonised on this issue public opinion in just the two countries you need most: the USA and France. The future of a country which is on the downward grade in terms of power depends more than on anything else

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<sup>669</sup> *Daily Express*, 1 August 1947, 2 December 1947. *The Times*, 22 and 28 November 1947.

<sup>670</sup> *New Statesman*, 16 August 1947. Koestler was at that time living in Britain and was later made a British citizen in 1949.

on its moral integrity. Palestine is a test for your integrity; and in more than one sense your fate is linked with hers.

Koestler made a reference in his letter concerning the two British soldiers hanged, when commenting, ‘And it is always the innocents who foot the bill, like Sergeants Martin and Paice, like your boys, who have to carry out a loathsome and immoral policy;.....’ While many would have undoubtedly seen the latter to be the case over this period, it had not prevented a series of riots and civil disturbances in British cities with sizable Jewish communities, starting in the first week of August 1947, which for historian David Leitch, ‘earned a squalid niche in post-war history.’<sup>671</sup>

Anti-Jewish riots and disturbances lasted for up to two weeks throughout the country, but most seriously in Liverpool, Manchester and Glasgow.<sup>672</sup> One historian, David Cesarani, believes that tension had been present before the riots, which took place during a time when much of northern England and Scotland went on holiday, because of ‘continued food shortages and the perceived association of Jews with the black market.’<sup>673</sup> He concludes with the fact that ‘the connection with Palestine was tangible,’ and that Liverpool was at the centre of the hostility, which was to linger on there long after it had died down in other cities.<sup>674</sup>

There are several important issues and questions raised in relation to the ‘anti-Semitic’ riots of 1947. If, as has been maintained by historians, anti-Semitism was a prominent feature of post-war Britain, why were the riots restricted to this one occasion and predominantly feature in intensity in the northern half of the country?

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<sup>671</sup> D. Leitch, ‘Explosion at the King David Hotel’ in M. Sissons, P. French (Eds.), *The Age of Austerity 1945-1951* (Oxford, 1986), p.59.

<sup>672</sup> Incidents were also reported as far afield as Plymouth, Hull, Newcastle, Swansea and London.

<sup>673</sup> D. Cesarani, *Major Farran’s Hat*, p.149.

<sup>674</sup> *Ibid.* p.149, 179. See also the *Daily Express*, 4 August 1947, and *The Times*, 5 August 1947.

The kidnapping and lynching (along with the planting of an explosive device next to or near the bodies) was seen as going beyond the acceptable boundaries of warfare, even in a terrorist context, unlike the shooting and blowing up of soldiers, police and government officials in events seen at the British Embassy in Rome and the King David Hotel. The latter was all part of the understood moral and ethical constraints, such as they were, of the struggle for Palestine. One can speculate that there might have been less of a violent reaction in Britain had the two soldiers been shot dead in the first instance, rather than slowly choked to death by lynching. There was a general revulsion felt by the British public, including the Anglo-Jewish community, for these specific murders, which could account for the fact that the violence shown to Jewish lives and property is exceptional in this one instance.

Religious and socio-economic divisions were accentuated in northern England and in Scotland in this post-war period of austerity and shortages. The towns and cities of these areas had not fully recovered from the poverty and economic decline of the inter-war period and therefore proportionally suffered more so than those in southern and south-eastern England. For Plymouth in the south west, it would have been surprising if there had not been some reaction to events in Palestine, given the fact that this was a city with a large military presence. Liverpool, the centre of the anti-Jewish activity, had a large Roman Catholic population, which was often located next to Jewish communities in some of the poorer neighbourhoods of the city. The history of friction between Catholic communities of Irish origin and Anglo-Jewry as found in Liverpool and London is well documented. The murder of the two British soldiers gave some the economic opportunity to loot Jewish business premises and for others an outlet to express their own frustrations at the situation they found themselves in.



For Cesarani, ‘The disturbances there [Liverpool] had been more serious and prolonged than anywhere else.’<sup>675</sup> As news of the murders appeared in the newspapers at the start of the August Bank Holiday (a factor in the length of time and number of people involved in the rioting), Jewish businesses were set alight, vandalised and looted, with much of the violence centred on Myrtle Street in the heart of the city. However, there were also many non-Jewish properties looted or destroyed.

Manchester, another city with large Roman Catholic and Jewish populations, also witnessed rioting on a large scale. Brunswick Street was ‘a seething mass of people’ that attacked not only Jewish businesses, but also the police.<sup>676</sup> Cheetham Hill, the centre of Anglo-Jewry in Manchester, was a prime target for rioters, with both Jewish and non-Jewish businesses being attacked.<sup>677</sup> The indiscriminate nature of the violence in nearby Salford was commented on by the *Bolton Evening News* as non-Jewish shopkeepers attempted to prevent damage by placing notices in their windows stating: ‘These premises are 100 per cent British owned, managed and staffed.’<sup>678</sup> In contrast to the anarchic disturbances in neighbouring towns and cities, the magistrates in Eccles identified some form of leadership for the rioters (mostly teenagers), namely John Sweatman.<sup>679</sup> Another alleged leader was former soldier John Regan of Patricroft, an area adjacent to Eccles, who was ‘undoubtedly the leader of the whole anti-Jewish demonstration in Eccles.’<sup>680</sup> The police presented evidence that Regan had shouted:

Hitler was right. Exterminate every Jew – every man, woman and child. What

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<sup>675</sup> D. Cesarani, *Major Farran’s Hat*, p.179.

<sup>676</sup> *Bolton Evening News*, 5 August 1947.

<sup>677</sup> *Manchester Evening News*, 4 August 1947.

<sup>678</sup> *Bolton Evening News*, 6 August 1947.

<sup>679</sup> *Eccles Journal*, 8 August 1947.

<sup>680</sup> *Manchester Evening News*, 6 August 1947.

are you afraid of? There's only a handful of police.<sup>681</sup>

If this suggested that Regan was a member of an extreme right wing political party, then this was denied by the defendant, who maintained: 'I am no leader of any party. I have never belonged to any party.'<sup>682</sup> While the small number of Jewish owned properties in Eccles were attacked, the fact that many non-Jewish shops were also vandalised by a crowd of seven hundred people, without some form of fascist political party orchestration, strongly implies that rioting was as much opportunist as it was anti-Semitic.

Arguably, the poor economic circumstances for many people in the country played a part in the disturbances and riots of August 1947. The brief uplift in the country's morale at the royal engagement and wedding of Princess Elizabeth and Lieutenant Philip Mountbatten in that year did not mask the underlying discontent of people. In the autumn of 1947, butter and meat rations had been cut, and the bacon ration halved. Potatoes were rationed for the first time. Complaints were frequent and could be summarised by one Wembley housewife: 'We could be worse – but should be a lot better considering we won the war.' It was a year, according to David Kynaston, 'depressing in all ways except the weather.'<sup>683</sup> Another noted, 'The food in England is worse than during the war, dry and tasteless,.....'<sup>684</sup> To compensate for food shortages, the government imported large amounts of the South African fish, snoek, with the Ministry of Food producing recipes for the family to try such as *snoek piquante*. This highly unpopular fish, recipes for whale meat and the fact that cigarettes stayed off the ration (although increasingly expensive), did not detract from

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<sup>681</sup> *Eccles Journal*, 8 August 1947.

<sup>682</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>683</sup> D. Kynaston, *Austerity Britain*, pp.246-247.

<sup>684</sup> *Ibid.*, p.247.

the shortage of coal, housing and what were regarded as the bare necessities of day to day living. People had expectations of a better life after the war and made comparisons with the actual hardships they faced. A Gallup poll of spring 1948 showed that 42% of the people wanted to emigrate as compared to 19% after the war's end.<sup>685</sup> It was only in the summer of 1948 that people's lives started to improve with an easing of rationing, such as bread, and the creation of a National Health System. Therefore, the case for the riots being 'anti-Semitic' addresses only one part of the question as to why the violence occurred in August 1947. There are more complex socio-economic reasons, not least a year of great hardship and poverty for families that may have felt compelled to loot shops and businesses, Jewish or otherwise.

Although many present day historians see the events of August 1947 as the result of British anti-Semitism, opinion at the time was divided as to the cause of the riots. The Home Secretary, Chuter Ede, understandably from a political position, highlighted the random nature of the violence:

The damage was done mostly after dark by young people in groups of two or three, some of them not quite sober.....and it is clear that there was no organised movement.<sup>686</sup>

Countering this assertion, which critically omitted fascist involvement or leadership, the *Jewish Chronicle* believed 'that in every case in Liverpool, Manchester, Hull and London the riots were instigated and cleverly organised by Fascist cells which were at first undercover but have now quite openly undertaken anti-Jewish agitation.'<sup>687</sup> From newspaper reports of the rioting and the subsequent court cases there is nothing to

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<sup>685</sup> Ibid., p.249.

<sup>686</sup> *The Times*, 14 August 1947.

<sup>687</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 30 August 1947.

indicate that the events of August 1947 were part of a fascist plan or led by extremist groups. Those brought to trial were largely young men in their early twenties and could be described as working class involved in manual jobs. Less open to speculation is the fact that the graphic photograph in the *Daily Express* of the two murdered soldiers was given as a reason by defendants for their violence.<sup>688</sup> Attacks on Jewish institutions, businesses and people appear to be spontaneous or quickly embarked upon in the light of seeing the photograph. It can be seen as an outpouring of general revulsion at what had happened, rather than a pre-meditated fascist plan or deeply embedded anti-Semitism. A combination of alcohol and a holiday period probably contributed to many taking advantage of the violence to simply loot shops, whether they were Jewish or not. Although the Home Secretary claimed, when referring to fascist groups, that ‘their influence is negligible’, there was still a perception that fascist elements must have had some connection to the riots.<sup>689</sup> It is this ‘perception’ that has been picked up by modern historians to show that anti-Semitism was still a significant force in post-war Britain. However, actual evidence would suggest that British fascism failed to capitalise on the events of August 1947 as they happened, but gained temporary ground in the longer term with the establishment of the primarily London based BUF in 1948. Although the Home Secretary failed to recognise that large crowds were involved in the violence, which indicated the scale of rioting, a lack of further anti-Jewish activity or disturbances in the Manchester / Salford area shows that Chuter Ede was correct in his analysis of Fascism’s influence, at least in the north-west of England. While the second city of Anglo-Jewry saw anti-Semitic violence as a momentary aberration, the same could not be said of London, as witnessed by the 43 Group and its struggle until 1950.

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<sup>688</sup> *Daily Express*, 1 August 1947. *The Times*, 5 August 1947, *Manchester Evening News*, 11 August 1947.

<sup>689</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 August 1947.

## Conclusion

For Anglo-Jewry, as well as the Jewish community as a whole, the Holocaust and the Second World War did not put an end to anti-Semitism as might have been assumed in 1945. However, for the Jewish community in Britain, the post-war era showed that fascism, whilst surviving the war, had declined to a point where it was no longer a serious threat. Those who had attacked the Jews prior to 1939 and who were interned during the war, continued their activities after 1945 and beyond 1948. This is not to say that because their numbers were too small to make a political impact, ordinary Jewish people felt any less threatened by them. In this case, part of the Jewish community uncharacteristically went on the offensive. In a swiping comment at the older traditional leadership of Anglo-Jewry, one member of the 43 Group commented, ‘The Defence Committee will have to realise that, however eminent they think they are, it’s what they do that counts. And that what they do has to be visible, otherwise nobody will believe they’re doing anything at all.’<sup>690</sup> The Anglo-Jewish community was evolving and casting aside the reservations, practices and deference of the past. It was felt by many that the sacrifices made in the Second World War would count for a safer society, both in Britain and in a Palestine ‘homeland’.

Although it can be said that the 43 Group attracted negative publicity for the level of violence used against fascists, not least from the Board of Jewish Deputies, it was effective in driving fascism from British streets. Whether this would have been the case had it existed prior to the war is debatable, as both Mosley and the BUF were more powerful, better organised and widespread than the post-war UM. Mosley was a

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<sup>690</sup> M. Beckman, *43 Group*, p.163.

shadow of his former self after his imprisonment during the war and many of his followers recognised this, looking to new and younger leaders for inspiration. This is not to take away from any of the 43 Group's achievements. While the local and national newspapers reported on the 43 Group's regular battles with fascists in Dalston's Ridley Road, it was the former's infiltrators (along with a network of taxi and delivery drivers, street vendors and local media) that were supplying it with intelligence on fascist members, meetings, activities and plans as evidenced by the significant amounts of data collected.<sup>691</sup> Infiltrators were also successful at turning fascists against their former organisations such as Michael Maclean, UM organiser for Birmingham, in June 1948. Abandoning the UM, claiming it to be a 'gangster organisation', he established the Anti-Fascist League that in turn recruited many former Mosleyites.<sup>692</sup>

The years between 1945 and 1948 were arguably the most important of the twentieth century for Jews in Britain. In population terms, they were at their peak. Yet, although assimilation and integration had been the traditional watchwords of the Jewish leadership, Zionism was now the dominant political aspiration. The war and latent post-war anti-Semitism in eastern Europe had accelerated the demands by Weizmann for Britain to fulfil the promises made in the Balfour Declaration. The passing of Churchill from political power in 1945 and the continued implementation by the Labour Government of the 1939 White Paper meant that militant Zionism went to war against a British occupation.

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<sup>691</sup> See Appendix F to I.

<sup>692</sup> S. Dorril, *Blackshirt*, p.577.

The Jewish underground's war put unprecedented pressure on the Anglo-Jewish community at a time of fascist resurgence and severe economic pressure on the British population. Fascism failed to capitalise on popular discontent with the Labour Government which set in after VJ Day. Attlee faced many difficulties abroad and at home, with Anglo-Jewry caught in the middle and increasingly fractured in its response to fascism. However, the Jewish community remained loyal to the host country, despite perceptions of split allegiances by some of the general public. In some ways, they were in a similar position to that of the Irish during the various campaigns by the IRA. The difference was that the pressure on Anglo-Jewry only lasted until the summer of 1948. It was a social and economic turning point for Britain as peoples' lives began to slowly improve and British deaths in Palestine stopped as the Mandate ended and the state of Israel was created. The most organised and dangerous of the fascist parties, Mosley's Union Movement, was established in 1948 and therefore unable to take full advantage when the Jewish community was at its weakest in relation to its non-Jewish neighbours. This is not to say that once Israel had been established, Anglo-Jewry was free from attack or accusation. Jews could still be linked to Communism/Marxism and at times, a worsening Cold War situation for the West. On a positive note and despite a decline in Anglo-Jewish numbers, Israel developed relations with the West, resulting in Jews being less often targeted by the British right-wing. The year 1948 was also significant as far more visible 'foreign' element arrived in Britain aboard the *Empire Windrush* with the start of non-white immigration from the Commonwealth.

## CONCLUSION

The evidence given so far has shown that over a ten year period from 1938 to 1948, events in Europe and the Near East in many ways changed the relationship between Jews and non-Jews in Britain. For those non-Jews living outside of the large industrial and commercial cities, this was often their first contact with Jews, including those not born in Britain. Persecution, war and evacuation spread the Jewish population in unprecedented numbers, across the country. In the vast majority of cases, certainly outside of their traditional areas, Jews of all ages and often of ‘enemy’ nationality were well received. Just as the ‘Spirit of the Blitz’ in the histories of the Home Front during the Second World War holds true, even with certain revisions over the past forty years, the same can be said of a welcoming and tolerant Britain towards the Jews. The lack of success in fermenting ‘popular anti-Semitism’ by the right wing after the war during the troubles in the Palestine Mandate indicates, racially speaking, a more tolerant Britain despite the provocations of Jewish extremists. The thesis contends that the war era did not eliminate anti-Semitism or as has been more accurately shown, general xenophobia, but it was significantly reduced in intensity.<sup>693</sup> Where it still lingered, it tended to be in the areas where it had always been, the poorest and most socially deprived areas of cities.

One area not affected for the better by this momentous decade of events was the relationship between the different sections of the Jewish population. When one might have expected some form of unity in the Jewish community to combat fascism and its effects, the divisions remained between Orthodox, Liberal/Reform, secular, integrated

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<sup>693</sup> In an interview with the author (25 February 2008), Edith Ritterband’s daughter, Diana (born 1940), recalled being referred to as ‘Jesus killer’ by other pupils in her post-war Bradford primary school.



and non-assimilated, those Zionists in favour of a Jewish state and those British elite families who saw the dangers of separateness. A key figure in the disunity of Judaism was Rabbi Schonfeld, whose passionate and heartfelt views were matched by methods that had no time 'for committees or budgets or precedents or permission or red tape.'<sup>694</sup> The forthright views and actions of Schonfeld led Elaine Blond to write that he 'gave us more trouble and occupied more precious time with petty fogging complaints than all our other critics put together.'<sup>695</sup> Disunity and internal arguments that had existed a long time before 1938, continued throughout the period and beyond, so weakening the influence of the Jewish community. The *Jewish Chronicle* of December 1938, one month after *Kristallnacht*, commented,

"Long live domestic strife!" is the Community's motto! "Let us eat, drink and quarrel, for tomorrow we die!" A queer motto for any community of rational men. God help us!<sup>696</sup>

A little over ten years later in 1949, it was reported that in a meeting between Orthodox and Reform Jews concerning the authorising of certification for Marriage Secretaries, the President of the Board of Deputies, 'had to rebuke a distinguished Orthodox deputy who denied that Liberal Judaism was Judaism at all.'<sup>697</sup> Possibly for public consumption, the article concluded: 'Prof. Brodetsky felt that the Board was essentially a meeting of *all* Jews.' Despite the events of the past ten years, Anglo-Jewry was no nearer to resolving its differences.

However, two points can be highlighted that in some way partially mitigate this weakness. Firstly, the increasing ability of sections of the Jewish community to stand up and defend their interests. This was evolving before 1938 in a response to threats

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<sup>694</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 19 February 1982.

<sup>695</sup> E. Blond, *Marks of Distinction*, p.74.

<sup>696</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 23 December 1938.

<sup>697</sup> 'Anglo-Judaica', *AJR* journal, Vol.IV No.5, May 1949.

from the British Union of Fascists as Jews joined Communist and Socialist organisations to defend their communities, as with the ‘Battle for Cable Street’ in 1936.<sup>698</sup> They were also highly active in local politics and in helping alleviate problems associated with inner city social deprivation.<sup>699</sup> Even the conservative minded Board of Jewish Deputies established ‘self-defence’ committees to protect their neighbourhoods. These were not created by events in Europe during the period in question, but became more highly organised or politicised by those events. What did change dramatically though was the leadership of Anglo-Jewry which transformed itself during the period to more accurately reflect the concerns and issues facing a more cosmopolitan community, which reached its largest in size by 1948. The removal of Hore-Belisha as Secretary of State for War in January 1940 had as much to do with the fact he was ‘an ordinary person not of their own caste’, who did not come from the same social elite as many on the Board of Jewish Deputies, as it did with anti-Jewish prejudices.<sup>700</sup> Another facet of typical pre-war Jewish introspection, the belief that one is to blame for one’s own problems, also became less prevalent after 1945. Nathan Laski (1863-1941), a prominent leader of Anglo-Jewry and father of Neville and Harold, was typical of the older generation of Jews. He was pleased that Hore-Belisha had been replaced at the War Office and concluded: ‘It was all right as long as things were going well, but if things began to go wrong with the army Hore Belisha would have been blamed and the Jews would have been made the scapegoat.’<sup>701</sup> This typified the difference between the older and younger generations

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<sup>698</sup> See The Cable Street Group, *The Battle of Cable Street 1936* (Nottingham, 1995), T. Kushner and N. Valman (Eds.), *Remembering Cable Street: Fascism and Anti-Fascism in British Society* (Ilford, 1999).

<sup>699</sup> See G. Alderman, *London Jewry and London Politics 1889-1986* (London, 1989) and H. Srebrnik, *London Jews and British Communism 1935-1945* (Ilford, 1995).

<sup>700</sup> W. Crozier, *Off the Record: Political Interviews 1933-1943*, 20 January 1940, p.132. Cited in H. Defries, *Conservative Party attitudes to Jews 1900-1950*, p.181.

<sup>701</sup> *Ibid*, 8 January 1940, p.120.

of Jews, with the latter rejecting the possibility that they could be victims of their own making and that they should assert their right to be free from prejudice.

The second point concerns the emergency, unparalleled up to that point in time, of non-Jewish individuals and organisations helping central and eastern European Jews threatened by the Nazis. At a time before the establishment of a domestic welfare system and the United Nations with its various relief and refugee agencies, universities, the British public and in particular, the Churches, launched an enormous humanitarian effort in a very short time. British universities, as opposed to American institutions, saw the refugee academics ‘as human beings to be saved, not as an investment to be harvested.’ Esther Simpson, the day-to-day administrator of the AAC/SPSL, never approached those academics fleeing persecution, it has been said, in the spirit of the president of an American university who declared: “Hitler is my best friend. He shakes the tree and I collect the apples.”<sup>702</sup> The events of 1938 and early 1939 were crucial in marshalling popular middle ground opinion among non-Jews to get behind the efforts to help Jews from abroad effectively. The failure of ‘Appeasement’ with Germany’s occupation of Czechoslovakia in March 1939 convinced the majority of British people to stand up and resist Nazi ideology once they could see what it meant in practice. However, a forthcoming war would not be fought on behalf of the Jews by Britain, nor really on behalf of Poland. The war produced a feeling of fighting for what one could call ‘British values’; democracy, freedom of speech, equality and, in the language of the day, ideas of decency and fair play, and this by extension, included helping the Jewish refugees as well as British born Jews, especially during the evacuation. These ‘British values’ were alluded to by

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<sup>702</sup> Anthony Grenville, ‘The Rescue of Refugee Scholars’ in *AJR* journal February 2009, pp.1-2.

a London Magistrate, Mr. Basil Watson KC, when rebuking the actions of a BUF member,

We do not like this sort of thing in England at all. If you are trying to make Jews unpopular in this country, the only effect of doing this sort of thing is to make everyone extremely sorry for them. It is very stupid, very un-English and very unfair.<sup>703</sup>

The commonality of a national effort through unity of purpose to defeat Nazi ideology and sustain British values had to be forged. The Chamberlain Government failed to achieve this, partly due to its discredited association with ‘appeasement’ and the continued existence of extreme British right wing groups. Despite Churchill’s previous political record, it was he and the Coalition Government of 1940 to 1945 that united the country and indeed the Empire behind common values, across class and social division. Jews in Britain were part of that national bonding process, whether they were indigenous to the country or recently arrived. An overwhelming majority of people believed in these core values in varying degrees. There would, however, always be exceptions, exemplified by the persistence of a limited anti-Semitism. Some historians have perhaps overstated the extent of anti-Semitism in their enthusiasm to debunk the popular Churchillian ‘Spirit of the Blitz’ image. There always was a certain ‘them’ and ‘us’ during the war as shown by those involved for instance in the blackmarket, but it should not be overstated. Once again, this does not alter the point that Britain was effectively a nation with a common purpose, with Jews a part of it. It was nationally recognised that Britain’s Jewish population had more reason than many others to support the war effort, even if a minority temporarily

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<sup>703</sup> *Hackney Gazette*, 29 January 1936.

endured internment, to achieve victory over fascism. Against the charge by the extreme right wing that this was a 'Jews' War', fought on their behalf, the experience of the non-Jews in the Channel Islands shows that it was in almost every British person's interest to fight against fascism and its ideology. The Second World War was a 'People's War' and that included both Jews and non-Jews.

The ten year period of 1938 to 1948 witnessed momentous changes to the fabric of British society which were shared by Jewish communities as well. The war and the establishment of Israel changed Anglo-Jewry in virtually every respect and had many long term consequences ranging from its geographical distribution, community leadership, religious and political outlook, down to the structure of family life.

The influx of continental Jews into Britain, primarily before and after the war, had resulted in the numbers of Jews being at an all time high in the history of the country. However, after 1948, that number started a steady decline in the total population which continued for the next fifty years before a further change. As details of the Holocaust began to emerge and Zionism moved from being a pre-war minority movement to becoming a mainstream force after 1945, Jews started gradually to emigrate to Israel. While this included Jews who in their later years were retiring to the newly created Jewish state, it critically also included a younger generation looking for better opportunities in life. In much the same way as countries like Australia advertised for British families to emigrate there after the war, so the same was true for Israel who wanted Jewish families to settle in the country and secure its long term future. Even those Anglo-Jews who didn't emigrate, lent moral, political and above all

financial support to the new country of Israel which contributed to its survival through the crises of 1948/49, 1956, 1967 and 1973.

Increasing secularisation, together with upward social mobility, had been features that pre-dated the period concentrated upon by the thesis. These two factors had begun to weaken the social cohesion of both the traditional Jewish immigrant areas and the tightknit nature of traditional extended families, with their accompanying religious and social values. It was the evacuation particularly of the youngest generation and the redistribution of families from traditional areas as a result of German bombing that accelerated this process. The breakup of families, their support networks and after the bombing, the post-war redevelopment of poor Jewish neighbourhoods, all contributed to the secularisation of Jewish family life and loss of core values. Although these factors, such as municipal programmes of slum clearance and the transfer of communities into new social housing, affected more than Anglo-Jewry, it can be argued that the latter experienced the most profound effect. The movement of families not only loosened the tradition of the extended family, but also put strains on the relationship between the generations, especially if the younger generation had spent the war years in a non-Jewish environment. Young Jews were increasingly marrying outside their faith and this in turn weakened the traditional family/synagogue bonds and customs. Typical of this process was Edith Ritterband, who together with her newly born daughter, Diane, fled the bombing of Birmingham for the safety of Aberdovey, Wales (their Midlands house was damaged by German bombing). The family moved to Bradford at the conclusion of the war and away from the traditional ties of the Orthodox community in Birmingham.<sup>704</sup> The situation was not helped by

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<sup>704</sup> Interview with the author, 25 February 2008.

the significant numbers of continental Jews who stayed in Britain after the war instead of going to America or Israel, whose backgrounds were already secularised and in some cases already radicalised in politics. A woman from Exeter's Jewish community spoke for many when as early as 1947 she expressed her concerns about the younger generation. According to the minutes of the Hebrew congregation she 'spoke on social life and the necessity to instil, particularly amongst the younger members, Religious Tradition and suggested social meetings and discussions to take place frequently at some significant dates on the Hebrew calendar.'<sup>705</sup> It was understood that a faith needs its younger generation in order to survive. This point was not lost on Gerhart Riegner, General Secretary at the 1946 World Jewish Congress. He commented that, 'after the wholesale murder of European Jews together with their children, all these children who have been spared are of vital importance to the Jewish community and its reconstruction.'<sup>706</sup>

Controversially, Lampeter University's Rabbi Professor Cohn-Sherbok, has suggested in his book, *The Paradox of Anti-Semitism*, that it was the very existence of aggressive anti-Semitism in the 1930s and 40s, that maintained traditional Judaism and prevented its decline through secularisation and assimilation.<sup>707</sup> However, this ignores certain factors. It would be more accurate to say that a lack of social mobility from poor education and a lack of opportunities which kept Jewish people in their traditional areas were the reasons for a maintenance of Jewish culture. That position was gradually changing from at least the 1920s onwards, prior to organised fascism and the formation of the BUF. It can be argued that the greatest threat to 'traditional

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<sup>705</sup> Exeter Record Office: File D6723 Exeter Hebrew Congregation Minutes. Meeting held on 12 October 1947 at 17 Penleonard Close, Exeter.

<sup>706</sup> Lambeth Palace Library: Geoffrey Fisher Papers, vol.115, cited in V. Fast, *Children's Exodus*, p.81.

<sup>707</sup> D. Cohn-Sherbok, *The Paradox of Anti-Semitism* (London, 2006).

Judaism' came from the effects of German bombing. The latter's threat and the loss of housing dispersed dense and close knit Jewish communities, either through evacuation or by re-housing and re-development. Even when anti-Semitism was at its height and at its most aggressive in the early 1930s and up to 1936, traditional Judaism and the Orthodox tradition were in decline as the younger generation progressively moved from London's East End to the more affluent areas of Hendon and Finchley. Young Jews did not fall back on their traditional customs in Britain, but took advantage of the opportunities offered, which went beyond conventional Jewish activities and trades.

The thesis has shown the experiences of Jews at a personal level to show what many historians regard inconsequential, but to the people themselves, of significance to remember decades later. It is just as important to recognise the Viennese *Kinder's* dislike of tea with milk, a lack of duvets and the peculiarity of cricket, when looking at the *Kindertransport* experience, as it is to note the intransigence of the Treasury Department to provide funds for the refugees. The personal experiences, for instance the refugee boys in Gloucester, have shown that while there were difficulties and understandably host fears concerning Jews and immigration, Britain lead the way in welcoming them. Certainly mistakes were made, but this should not be an excuse by historians to condemn the country or entire segments of the population in an era that produced unique pressures on the people.

The use of original archives (on those seeking work in Leeds, the establishment of a hostel in Gloucester or the fight against fascism by the 43 Group in London) have shown that our understanding of the Jewish experience between the late 1930s and



1940s, requires further analysis. This is particularly important in the area of provincial Jewry, which has been ignored by current historians who have almost exclusively concentrated on London's East End. This approach has also included the immediate post-war period, which has been ignored by historians of Anglo-Jewry to the point of being little more than a postscript in the histories of the Jewish community. The Second World War was pivotal in the changing face and attitudes of the Jewish community in Britain. The thesis has demonstrated that in order to understand the relationship between Britain's Jews and non-Jews, it is crucial to include the key time periods either side of the war, which cannot be seen in isolation. Just as the establishment of Israel was a landmark in Britain's withdrawal from her empire, it was equally important for Jewry worldwide, though obviously placing British Jews in a unique position. In conclusion, despite a short term and temporary upsurge in hostility during the conflict in Palestine, one can say that the European persecution of the Jews favourably altered British society's perception of Anglo-Jewry in the long term. The adversity of war had strengthened the position of the British Jewish community.

## Appendix A

### Iwan Mularski and Werner Zorek: a family testimony.

The ten boys who were taken in by the people of Gloucester from 1939 onwards represented only a fraction of a much bigger picture of the *Kinder* experience. This in turn was a part of the Jewish experience as a whole during the war period in Britain and obviously for the people in question, a key part of their lives; a defining period that would dominate both personal relationships and future outcomes. Taking two of the Jewish boys as examples, Iwan Mularski and Werner Zorek, one can see how the Second World War and the creation of Israel shaped many Jewish lives of that generation.<sup>708</sup>

Iwan Mularski, older brother of Julius, survived the war, having trained as a mechanic in a Gloucester garage and therefore had been given a trade in which he could be independent and not a burden to the British taxpayer (a fear of many in the country regarding Jewish refugees). Being of ‘no nationality’, he was granted British citizenship in September 1948, staying in this country for the rest of his life.<sup>709</sup>

Untypically, he married a non-Jew who was also not a refugee and settled to live in nearby Cheltenham, having one son in 1958 and one daughter in 1960. Whilst Iwan fits the pattern of being reticent to speak about his life in Germany and the wartime era, most former *Kinder* went on to marry fellow Jewish refugees, possibly due to a feeling of isolation. The majority of the *Kindertransport* refugees never saw their parents after leaving them behind. From Yad Vashem’s *Shoah* database of victims,

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<sup>708</sup> Much of the following information and photographs have kindly been provided by Iwan Mularski’s son, Kevin (residing in the Czech Republic), and Werner Zorek’s daughter, Jennifer Zorek-Pressman (residing in the USA).

<sup>709</sup> *The London Gazette*, 12 November 1948, p.5949. He was by then stated as living at 27 Rycroft Street, Gloucester, with his occupation as ‘motor mechanic’.

one can see that Iwan and Julius's family in Lubeck did not survive the Holocaust.<sup>710</sup> As so often has happened, the children of those who fled 'Greater Germany' are left with only fragments of their parents' disrupted early lives. In Iwan Mularski's case, informing his son how much he enjoyed listening to his mother's playing of the piano as a child. What is striking for Iwan's son was the fact that his father made a conscious decision to go to the cinema, after an absence of many years, to see Steven Spielberg's 1993 film, *Schindler's List*. His son noted,

He came home visibly shaken and moved, and could hardly speak a word for several days. He must have felt so alone, and that no one in his world could possibly have understood what he and his brother went through.<sup>711</sup>

This is, perhaps, an indication of the psychological inheritance taken on by the following generation. A wish to understand, but lacking the ability to understand the unimaginable.

Illustration 3c: Iwan Mularski, number 31, aged nine/ten in 1935, *Judischen Religionsschule*, Lubeck. ([www.stolpersteine-luebeck.de](http://www.stolpersteine-luebeck.de)).



<sup>710</sup> The Central Database of *Shoah* Victims' Names, [www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org)

<sup>711</sup> Correspondence with the author from Kevin Mularski.



Illustration 3d: Iwan Mularski c.1990, aged in his mid-sixties (courtesy of Kevin Mularski).

Iwan Mularski passed away in 1997. His brother, Julius, appears to have left Great Britain to travel to America. The reason for the subsequent estrangement between the brothers is not known, nor why there was no contact from the younger brother with his nephew. The only possible indicator that there might have been a problem between Iwan and Julius comes from the fact that they were ‘fostered’ out to different families. The GAAR archive shows that foster families were able to take in two boys at the same time and therefore, presumably the Mularski boys had the opportunity to stay together if they wished.

Iwan and Julius Mularski’s family in Lubeck and tailoring business in Hamburg came to an end in 1941. The family, originally from Lodz in Poland, were deported/resettled back to Poland. Yad Vashem records that the father, Leo, was sent to Auschwitz, where he died in 1941.<sup>712</sup> Leo’s wife, Lilly, the mother of Iwan and Julius, was sent either to Auschwitz or to the Lodz Ghetto, where she died in 1941.<sup>713</sup>

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<sup>712</sup> Ibid. Leo’s first name is also recorded as Leibish and Yehuda. He was born in 1894 in Lodz, Poland. The testament to Leo Mularski’s death was given by his son, Yehoshua.

<sup>713</sup> Ibid. Her first name is also given as Tzvia and Ziwje. She was born to the Finkelberg family in 1899/1900, in Brzeziny, near Lodz, Poland. The Yad Vashem database contains two testaments to her death, but with some details contradicting each other.

The records also show that another son, Siegfried (born 1930), and a daughter, Gisela (born 1920), died in either Auschwitz or the Lodz Ghetto.<sup>714</sup> Therefore, by the immediate post-war period, the war had caused the deaths of most of the Mularski family left behind in Germany, with three sons located in three countries; Iwan in Britain, Julius in the USA and Yehoshua in Israel. It is not known how the latter arrived in Israel, having survived the Holocaust in Auschwitz for at least part of the war, based on the fact that he provided the witness statement to his father's death.

Another of the Gloucester boys, Werner Zorek, equally illustrates the circumstances that many of Britain's *Kinder* found themselves in by the end of the war. Undoubtedly there were problems between the *Kinder* and their foster families, as there were with some non-Jewish evacuee children, but in Werner's case, he remained friends with the Thew family from Gloucester for the rest of his life.



Illustration 3e: Werner Zorek with the Thew family son and former school friend, Jim, c. mid-1940s (courtesy of Jennifer Zorek-Pressman).

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<sup>714</sup> Ibid. Similarly, there are contradicting testament statements that vary on the date and location of death. However, it is known that Gisela was married by the time of her death to Heinz Kargauer (born 1913), who also died in the Lodz Ghetto. Another internet site, [www.uni-hamburg.de](http://www.uni-hamburg.de), records the names of Siegfried and Gisela, living at the same address in Hamburg, No.1Heinrich-Barth-Strasse, when on the 25 November 1941, they were deported to the Lodz Ghetto. Those Jews of Polish origin were the first to be transported from Hamburg to Poland.

As with the example of Iwan Mularski, Werner's family in Breslau did not survive the Holocaust. It is uncertain as to when he heard that his family had perished, though he was for many years in contact with a former employee at his father's clothier shop in Breslau, Charlotte Buchwald, who may have been able to supply some information. Details held at Yad Vashem record that Werner's sister, Erna, who was two and a half years older than him, was living in Unna, near Arnsberg, Westphalia, when she was sent to Auschwitz and killed there.<sup>715</sup> Werner's parents, Alfred and Freida, also died at Auschwitz, although the exact details are not known.

It was in 1947, that Werner successfully applied to live in America and work at his cousin Herman and Elsie Lane's cigarette factory on East 87<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan, New York. In keeping with many Jews of the period and before, Werner changed his name to the more English sounding, Warren, as a sign of integrating into the host society, though some wanted to expediently cut any links with Germany. In what may be regarded as the fulfilment of the 'American dream', the by now orphaned Warren Zorek, who had trained in Britain as a joiner for the building trade, married and had two children. Over the course of approximately fifty years, Warren rose to become a senior manager at *Bloomingdale's* of New York, a representative of the American Red Cross and, as part of the latter, manage in his later years to track down surviving members of his extended family who had survived the Holocaust. As with countless numbers of those that experienced the traumas of Nazi Germany, it was only in the last month of his life that he began to tell his family about those traumatic times. As with Iwan Mularski, Warren Zorek appears to have kept his thoughts and memories to

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<sup>715</sup> The Central Database of *Shoah* Victims' Names, [www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org). Erna was born 22 March 1923.

himself, or at least from his family, for the majority of his life. Warren Zorek passed away in December 2006.



Illustration 3f: Erna and Werner Zorek outside their father's shop/apartment in Breslau, c.mid-1930s (courtesy of Jennifer Zorek-Pressman).



Illustration 3g: 'Warren' Zorek outside the same shop/apartment in Wrocław, Poland, 1987 (courtesy of Jennifer Zorek-Pressman).



Illustration 3h: Werner Zorek on his arrival to America in 1947 (courtesy of Jennifer Zorek-Pressman).



Illustration 3i: Warren and Jane Zorek's marriage in 1950s New York. They went on to have two children, Michael and Jennifer (courtesy of Jennifer Zorek-Pressman).



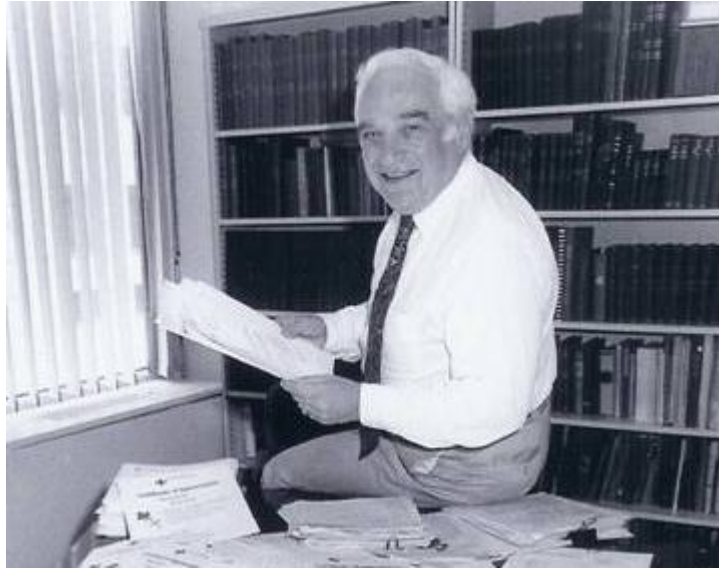


Illustration 3j: Warren Zorek, senior manager at *Bloomingdale's*, New York (courtesy of Jennifer Zorek-Pressman).



Illustration 3k: Werner Zorek, Breslau, c.1926.

The *Kinder* were able to retain very few precious memories of their former lives, due in part to what they could physically bring into Britain. This and their reluctance to speak to their own children about painful memories has resulted in a lack of family history being passed down to the second and third generations brought up by the *Kinder* after the war. There is a palpable gap between the *Kinder* and the succeeding generations. When the *Kinder* went on to have families, they have commented on their perception that their children did not appear to be interested in their parents' continental and religious heritage and on occasion, 'ashamed' of a parent's accent.<sup>716</sup> Yet, for the generation born in the host country, they have often maintained that it was their parents who said very little about their early lives in Germany or Austria.<sup>717</sup>

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<sup>716</sup> M. Berghahn, *Continental Britons: German-Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany* (New York, 2007), pp.231-232.

<sup>717</sup> This point was made by both Kevin Mularski and Jennifer Zorek-Pressman when initially questioned by the author.

## **Appendix B**

List of original representatives to GAAR at its formation in February 1939.

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| Rotary Club                  | Gloucester Teachers Association          |
| Free Church Council          | Federation of University Women           |
| Catholic Women's League      | League of Nations Union                  |
| Rural Community Council      | Peace Pledge Union                       |
| Society of Friends           | Fellowship of Reconciliation             |
| Society of Artists           | Co-operative Society                     |
| Architectural Association    | Liberal Women's Association              |
| Inner Wheel                  | Order of Crusaders                       |
| Soroptimists                 | Girl Guides                              |
| Toc H Women's Section        | Boy Scouts                               |
| Labour Party                 | Church of England Men's Society          |
| Labour Party Women's Section | National Council of Women <sup>718</sup> |

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<sup>718</sup> Information from Gloucestershire County Archive, Gloucester: File 7501/3/10 (no title). Letter from Mrs.Hall, Honorary Secretary, Gloucester Association for Aiding Refugees to Major G.H.Langdon, Honorary Organising Secretary, Movement for the Care of Children from Germany, dated 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1939.

## Appendix C

Refugee information cards sent to Gloucester Association for Aiding Refugees by the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany. Some cards are dated 30<sup>th</sup> May 1939.

### Kolpak, Walter

116-Barham House

Born: 17.6.27 Vienna

Liberal

Father small shopkeeper. Parents intend emigrating to U.S.A. Will take the boy.

5 years Elementary, 1 year Secondary School.

Fair English. To be farmer.

Strong, rather small for his age; splendid little worker;

Wants to farm later. Good manners. Bright and cheerful. Speaks fair English.

### Meyer, Guenther

Born: 26.8.24 Bochum

Liberal

Father traveller for uncle who had factory. Only son.

7 years Elementary School. A little English.

Wants to learn a trade with preference for motor mechanic. Bright and alert boy of average intelligence. Very good worker and should make the most of his opportunities. Good appearance and good manners and general conduct.

### Mularsky, Iwan

2081-Barham House

Born: 16.2.25 Luebeck

Liberal

Father is tailor. 1 brother and 1 sister in Germany, 1 brother in camp.

8 years Jewish Elementary School. 1 years English.

Splendid boy; very keen on work; can do electric fitting; can work alone. Very unselfish. Excellent gymnast. Good at all ball games. Strong, healthy.

Mularsky, Julius

23-Barham House

Born: 4.10.26 Luebeck

Liberal

Father was employee of tailor. 2 brothers and 1 sister in Germany.

6 years Elementary School. A little English.

A very decent type of boy, bright and a very good worker. Average intelligence, good manners and general behaviour. Wants to be an auto-mechanic and is a boy who should show good results if given any sort of chance.

Nebenzahl, Peter

2086-Barham House

Born: 27.9.25 Hamburg

Liberal

Orphan. Father died 1931, mother 1932. 1 brother in England. Has been in an orphanage in Germany.

4 years Elementary School, 3 years Secondary School. Fairly good English.

Small, quiet and very well behaved boy. Quite intelligent and industrious. Would like to be trained in a trade.

Reimann, Kurt

Born: 30.6.25 Danzig

Liberal

Father a baker. Only son.

4 years Elementary School. No English.

A kind little boy and quite a good worker. Too young to know much about his future. Polite and nice manners. Very clean boy, but small and thin and looks and is younger than his age. Seems a little backward.

Suschitzki, Robert

Barham House

Born: 10.10.26 Vienna

Liberal

Parents divorced. Mother tailoress, at present in England.

7 years Elementary School. A little English.

Good manners and general conduct. Tall and rather good appearance. Average intelligence.

Ullmann, Arnold

Born: 23.11.25 Berlin

Father: shoemaker. Mother in Rubber Works. Only child.

7 years Elementary School. No English.

Has been in camp only for a short time.

A decent boy, cheerful, although probably has not had too easy a time. Quiet. Nothing to comment on at all except that one can always ask him to do anything.

Vorgang, Harry

Barham House

Born: 18.1.26 Vienna

Liberal

Father Dental mechanic. Mother and 1 brother in England.

7 years Elementary School. A little English.

A nice looking boy with good manners and generally good conduct, but keeps to himself quite a lot and is inclined to be somewhat selfish. Quite intelligent. Really very interested in everything connected with machinery.

Zorek, Werner

3188-Barham House

Born; 14.10.25 Breslau

Liberal

Father had a Clothier's Shop. 1 sister in Breslau.

4 years Elementary, 4 years Secondary School. Good English.

A very good boy. Obedient and alert and a very good worker. Very unselfish.<sup>719</sup>

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<sup>719</sup> Gloucestershire County Archive, Gloucester: File 7501/3/10 (no title).

## Appendix D

### Boys' employment history on leaving school up to December 1941.

| <u>Boys' Names</u>  | <u>Employment</u>  |
|---------------------|--|
| W.Kolpak            | Started work 11/6/1941 for <i>Gardiner Bros.</i> (Leather Manufacturers), Alvin Street, Gloucester. General work. Wage 15/- pw.  |
| G.Meyer             | Started work 28/10/1939 for <i>Wm.T.Nicholls Ltd.</i> , Builders, St.Paul's Road, Gloucester. Worked in saw mill for six months, then transferred to shop to learn carpentry. Before Christmas 1940, transferred to firm's yards in Hempstead to build British Army huts. Transferred to saw mill. Wage 19/- pw. |
| I.Mularski/Mularsky | Started work 23/3/1940 for <i>St.Aldgate Garage</i> , Northgate Street, Gloucester. Learning auto-mechanics (garage under control of Ministry of Supply by October 1941). Wage 24/- pw.  |
| J.Mularski/Mularsky | Started work 11/8/1941 for <i>W.J.B.Halls</i> , Builders, Barton Gates, Gloucester. Wage 17/- pw.  |
| P.Nebenzahl         | Started work 29/29/7/1940 for <i>W.Judd</i> , Printer and Stationer, St.John's Lane, Gloucester. Compositor. Wage 15/- pw.   |

- K.Reimann Started work 1/1941 for *Golden Anchor*, Tailors, Southgate Street, Gloucester. Learning to make buttonholes, sleeves and vests. Wage 17/- pw.
- R.Suschitzki Started work 11/8/1941 for *W.Judd*, Printer and Stationer, St.John's Lane, Gloucester. Wage 13/- pw.
- A.Ullmann Started work 19/1/1941 for Dean and Chapter of Gloucester Cathedral. Carpenter, doing general woodwork and stone repairs. Wage 5/- pw. Moved to *W.J.B.Halls*, Builders, Barton Gates, Gloucester. Wage 17/- pw.
- H.Vorgang Started work 22/12/1940 for *Anderson's Garage*, Longlevens. Learning auto-mechanics. Left through ill health, 3/1941. Started work 23/6/1941 for *Blinkhorn's* wireless department. Involved in repairs and delivery of wireless sets and other electrical goods. Wage 17/- pw.
- W.Zorek Started work 29/7/1941 for *Wm.T.Nicholls Ltd.*, Builders and Decorators, St.Paul's Road, Gloucester. Working in the saw mill until the age of sixteen, when he will start his apprenticeship as a cabinetmaker. Wage 15/- pw.<sup>720</sup>

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<sup>720</sup> Gloucestershire County Archive, Gloucester: File 7501/3/10 (no title).



## Appendix E

List of boys' 'foster' families (December 1941) after leaving the refugee hostel at 18 Alexandra Road, Gloucester, and their known destination, during and after the war.

| <u>Boys' Names</u>  | <u>'Foster' Family</u>                                       | <u>Known Destination</u>   |
|---------------------|--|----------------------------|
| W.Kolpak            | Mrs.Gardiner, 66 Worcester Street,<br>Gloucester.            | USA, to join<br>relative.  |
| G.Meyer             | Mrs.Jackson, 27 Sinope Street,<br>Gloucester.                |                            |
| I.Mularski/Mularsky | Mrs.Jones, 12 Alexandra Road,<br>Gloucester.                 |                            |
| J.Mularski/Mularsky | Mrs.Wardley, 34 The Oval, Gloucester.                        |                            |
| P.Nebenzahl         | Mrs.Parker, 190 Southgate Street,<br>Gloucester.             | British Army.              |
| K.Reimann           | Mrs.Davis, 4 Russell Cottage, Sims Lane,<br>Quedgeley, Glos. | British Army.              |
| R.Suschitzki        | Mrs.Suschitzki, 17 Oxford Street,<br>Gloucester.             |                            |
| A.Ullmann           | Mrs.Jewell, 7 Parkend Road, Gloucester.                      | British Army.              |
| H.Vorgang           | Mrs.Jewell, 7 Parkend Road, Gloucester.                      | British Army.              |
| W.Zorek             | Mrs.Thew, 'Kantara', Barnwood Road,                          | USA, 1947 <sup>721</sup> . |

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<sup>721</sup> Gloucestershire County Archive, Gloucester: File 7501/3/10 (no title). Werner Zorek's 'known destination' information comes from [www.missing-you.net/browse/Gloucestershire-s41.php](http://www.missing-you.net/browse/Gloucestershire-s41.php). The request for information concerning her father was placed there by Jennifer Zorek-Pressman.

## Appendix F

### Sample list of 43 Group names linked to fascist organisations.

A selection of the approximately 950 names that appear on the 43 Group's file concerning fascists, current and former, their associates and sympathisers, informants within fascist groups, and those who have been opposed them or who could be helpful to the 43 Group. It should be noted and clearly recognised that criteria for the list of names (as with Appendices F to I) was entirely decided by the 43 Group at the time of their operation and with the exception of high profile names, the accuracy of the details cannot be verified by the thesis author. Spelling and punctuation are as they appear in the file. Given the variations in presentation from one entry to another, it is likely that there were two or more people compiling these records. References to 'Inf' or 'inf' show there to be an informant who has passed on information eg. 'inf. Mustafa 25.6.49.' The sub-divisions are for the purposes of the thesis and do not appear in the original.

### Fascist Party Leadership/Notable Followers

**ALLEN, Commandant Mary C.B.E.** – 414, Oliver Court, Maida Vale, W.9. Cunningham 1223. Speaking at Central Hall Westminster with Duke of Bedford. Written in Peoples Post. Co-opted National Council British Peoples Party, August 1947.

**BECKETT John** – 29 Chenies, Rickmansworth, Herts. Tel. Chorley Wood 413. See: - Peoples Post. General Secretary B.P.P. See – C.O.R. See: - P.45. See: - The Woburn Trust. History: - Ex I.L.P. Joined B.U.F. 1934 Director Publicity editor of Action. Broke with B.U.F. pre-war. Interned [handwritten from this point] 18b. Intelligent, educated, virulently anti-semitic. Expelled B.U.F. Founded National Socialist League with William Joyce.

**BEDFORD, Duke of** – Froxfield House, Crowholt, Woburn, Bletchley, Bucks. Founder: BRITISH PEOPLE'S PARTY. Writer of Books and Pamphlets, see ads. Etc. in Peoples Post. Writes in The Word. See: - Pages 43,44,53. See: - Woburn Trust. Elected to Bedfordshire County Council see May/June issue of Peoples Post. 1949.

**BROOKE, Henry M.P.** – 28 Hollycroft Avenue, Hampstead, N.W.3. Leader of the Conservative Party in the L.C.C. Shareholder in the Truth Publishing Co. M.P. See

Truth Folder. (Mrs. Henry Brooke – Conservative Councillor, Kilburn Ward of Hampstead Borough Council.)

**CHESTERTON A.K.** – 15 Elmhurst Court, South Croyden. Tel. Croyden 2907. Once editor “Action”. Associate of William Joyce. Once editor “Blackshirt”. Asst. editor of Truth. Author of Menace of Money Power. Advertised in People’s Post. Books advt. in Tomorrow. Pre-war B.U.F. Director Publicity and Propaganda See P.3. Author jointly with Joseph Leftwich of “The Tragedy of Anti-semitism.”

**DOMVILLE Sir Barry (Rear Admiral K.B.E., C.B.E., C.M.G.)** – Robins Tree, Roehampton Vale S.W.15. Putney 3830. Born 1878. Entered navy 1922. Director Naval Intelligence 1927-30. One time Chief of Staff R.N. Mediterranean. President of R.N. College Greenwich. Retired from R.N. 1946. Member of the Royal Yacht Squadron, Cowes. Description; white hair, florid complexion, upright and active. Written following books: “By and large” 1936, “Look to your Moat” 1937, “From Admiral to Cabin Boy” 1947. Wrote foreword to H.T. Mills’ “Is it too late”. Founder of “The Link” with Capt. Ramsey. Wrote article in “Tomorrow” April 1948. See Patriot. Pen name “Canute”.

**FULLER J.F.C. Major General C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O.** If the O.M. dies a successor will immediately take his place, probably the above. Several articles in pre-war copies of Action (see copy No.172, June 10<sup>th</sup> 1939).

**LEESE Arnold Spencer** – 20 Pewley Hill, Guildford, Surrey. See Gothic Ripples for further information see dossier in file. Was connected with North-West Task Group. Distributes and publishes anti-semitic books. See “Little Sir Echo” in March 1948 “On Guard”. Author of “Jewish Ritual Murder”. 1/- booklet (see file). Information received unconfirmed to date 22.6.49. that Leese is resigning leadership of Imperial Fascist League on grounds of age and ill-health, and handing over to man named Greene.

**MOSLEY Sir Oswald (Bart)** – Crowood house, Ramsbury, Wilts. Town address: 706 Hood House, Dolphin Square, S.W.1. Could be Victoria 3800 (Ext. 706) May go to U.S.A. this year on lecture tour. O/M has moved to 21 Chapel Street, Belgrave Square. May be new H/Q of Union movement. Address reported: 6 Park Crescent, Regents Park N.W.1. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION SEE PERSONAL FILE.

**MOSLEY Nicholas M.C.** – Eldest son of Sir O. Mosley. Born 1923. 6<sup>th</sup> Bart. Educated at Eton and Balliol. Married in 1947 to Rosemary Laura, daughter of Field Marshal of the R.A.F. Sir John Maitland Salmond, G.C.N., C.M.G., etc. etc., - 1942-1946 Captain in Rifle Brigade – Heir to the Baronetcy of Ravensdale. (Information Who’s Who 1949).

**MOSLEY Miss Vivian Elizabeth** – Now married to Desmond Francis Forbes-Adam. Marriage reception was given by Baroness Ravensdale at Londonderry House. Mr. Philip Noel-Baker, Minister for Commonwealth Relations was present. (inf. taken from magazine “Cavalcade” 12.2.49.)

**RAVEN THOMSON Alexander** – 17 Chelsea Park Gardens, S.W.3. 36 Acfold Road, S.W.6 Owns car No. FLU 228 (Ford 8 fawn). Was connected with U.B.F. Sons of St. George (Derby). B.L. Was Publicity Officer L.A.M.S. Wrote in Mosley News Letter. Wife Mrs. Elizabeth Raven Thomson. R.T. Was formerly Director of Policy, B.U.F. Interned 18b Mosley’s right-hand man, U.M. editor of Union. Suffers from coronary thrombosis.

Fascist Party Officials/Workers

**ATTRIDGE Francis (Freddie)** – 133 Sumatra Road, N.W.6. Was local organiser British League. Member of Arab Legion. East Willesden organiser for Mosley. Was witness in court for Burgess 13/4/48. Had plans on armed attack at former Group H.Q. (54 Bayswater Road). Admits he commits perjury. Was responsible for wrecking Group shooting-brake. Now (June 1949) member of Arnold Leese's new party. (For further information see dossier in file).

**CARTHEW Albert Curt** – 55a, Arran Road, Catford S.E.6. Branch Leader East Lewisham. Foreman in engineering works, was with I.G. Farbenindustrie in Germany pre-war, and is a fanatical Nazi. Has two children, Max and Mariene. Owns a gun. Works No. CAN 3264 (Works Foreman) Inf. R. 30.8.48.

**CHARD** – Speaker for British league – Sells chicken in Brick Lane. Brother expelled from Police – Pre-war fascist.

**COOK** – Nicknamed “Arbor”. Frequents Victory and Imperial cafes on Wimbledon bridge near Barnes Station. Is thought to be one of Union Movements backroom boys. Is a homosexual.

**GREEN G.F.** – 56 Gloucester Road, New Barnet, Herts. See Independent Nationalist Party. Quoted in Gothic Ripples 10<sup>th</sup> May 1949. Publishes translation of letter written by Goering to Churchill 5 days before his suicide. Quoted Gothic Ripples 20<sup>th</sup> July 1949, author of “The International Jew”. He may succeed Leese, who may resign through old age and illness. (Inf. F. French. 25.7.49.)

**MORGAN Mrs. Betty (known as Irma Grese)**. Brixton branch leader.

**MORRIS Victor Stanley** – 25 Lower Clapton Road, E.5. (Calls himself Len) Age 22 – builder's labourer – fined 1.12.47. £2.0.0d. P.T. instructor for U.M. Lives above Jewish owned shop – owner cannot get him evicted. Reported to be very handsome and of good physique. Rumoured was given lead in “Blue Lagoon” at first (has own story as to why he did'nt) tall – film star type. Member U.M. Works at Stamford Metal Co. 54a Newington Green, Clissold 4802 (Jewish firm see L. Rolnick). Used to work at 8 Percy St. Alec Davis – November 1942 – March 1947. Blind in one eye. Believed to be a deserter from the Navy. Working without cards. JU-JITSU instructor at Budokwai Club.

**PREEN John Charles** – 59 Elgin Avenue, Maida Vale W.9. Tel: CUN 6603 (Bus.) 14 Tamplin Mews, Warlock Road,, W.9. Tel: CUN 8272. (Home) Stood for Britons Action Party in Council election for Harrow Road Ward of Paddington Borough May 1947. Committee Rooms: 49 Chippenham Road, W.9. Mr Hearn was election agent. Born 1910. House agent ex 18b. Now organiser “British Vigilantes Action League”. Lost Court action against 2 Comms. Cost £600. Solicitors Harold Brown. Area agent for “United British insurance Co; Ltd.” Car – Green Wolseley J.175. Inf. received Dec. 6<sup>th</sup> 1948: Interfered with girl who works at his shop. Preen is living with a woman now, who is having a baby, but his legal wife is not living with him. She has four children by him, including one deaf and dumb daughter. Preen took a woman and move her lock, stock and barrel into his home. The woman living with him known as Mrs. Preen came into the bedroom found the other woman and threw her out. The Mews where Preen garages his car is known locally as “Preen's Stud”. Several of Preen's old sweethearts are living in the flats which he owns in the Mews. Preen it is believed, has been warned several times for taking liberties with young girls. Inf. received June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1949: (unconfirmed to date). Preen's organisation reported to be about to become active in politics again – to hold street meetings. This mob linked with Briton's Pub. Co. of Gt. Ormonde St. (which employs Quentin Joyce – William Joyce's brother). See West London Chronicle July 29<sup>th</sup> 1949. Preen applies for membership of North Paddington Conservatives and is rejected.

**PRICE Miss** – British Women Chess Champion. Member of Kensington Branch U.M. supporter pre-war. Formerly proprietress of The Gambit. Famous coffee house in the city.

**STEWART Desmond** – Trinity College, Oxford. Leader Corporate Club, Oxford. For other members see Corp. Club folder. Living with cousin at 75 Kennilworth Court, Putney. Moved motion in Oxford Union “That this house would deplore legislation to cure fascist activity in this country”. (Motion carried by 172 votes) Conscientious objector during the war. Age approx. 25. Member of the British peoples party – pre-war. Joint Editor – Printer and Publisher. Avant Garde. Contributor on May, 1948. Friendly terms with A. Raven Thompson (Mod. Thts. B.C.)

### Titled People

**ANNERSLEY, Lady Clare** – 10 Ashley Court, Morpeth Terrace, S.W.1. Victoria 7411. See: - National Council British Peoples. See: - P.49. Sold 100 Copies Peoples Post.

**BENN, Sir Ernest** – See Truth. Chairman of Benn’s Pub. Co. Publications, many of which contain anti-semitic chapters, include: - Confessions of a Capitalist; If I were a Labour Leader; Trade; Letters of an Individualist; Return to Laissez-Faire; Producer v. Consumer; Unemployment and Work; About Russia; Account Rendered; Honest Doubt, This Soft Age; Modern Government; Debt; Murmurings of an Individualist; Benn’s Protest; Happier Days.

**CHERWELL Lord** – Christ Church College. Member of the Corp. Club, Oxford.

**DOLOBRAN Lord Lloyd of** – Speaking for Union of Freedom.

**GRAHAM-LITTLE Sir E.** – Prominently anti-semitic.

**PORTSMOUTH Earl of** – Author of Alternative to Death. Ad. In Peoples Post and Tomorrow.

**QUEENBOROUGH Lord,** - See Truth.

### Military People

**CONANT R.J.E. Major** – M.P. Bendley [should actually be ‘Bewdley’, former seat of Stanley Baldwin]. Anti-semitic speech Malvern College in July.

**STEPHEN-PHILLIPS Wing Commander** – Lives in Kensington. Mentioned by R.J. Hamer in course of speech, Notting Hill, 18.6.49. concerning the following: Hamer told a story about Belsen D.P. Camp (late Concentration Camp): and stated that whilst camp was under British command during day it came under Jewish control at night: and that Jews used direct ‘phone line to London to place Stock Exchange and Black Market dealings. Hamer said that Stephen-Phillips told him this story, and also the following That he (S.P.) had been Judge Advocate deputy in Control Commission in Germany and had resigned because the Jewish girl in Hamburg who was in charge of confirmation of sentences of imprisonment had always confirmed sentences on Germans but had quashed those on Jews – and that he was willing to sell the story to any newspaper which would pay £500 for it, the money to go to the R.A.F. Benevolent Fund.

## The Police

**BOWLER W.E.** (Detective Sergeant) 213 Whitchurch Lane, Edgware. Tel. Edgware 4975. Det. Sergeant A Division Met. Police. See Mr. X. report dated 14<sup>th</sup> March, 1947. Gordon Bowler's father.

**MANN R.T.** – Hon. Sec. Palestine Police Comrades Assn. 2 Warwick Mansions, Lower Richard Road, Putney, S.W.15 Putney 6370.

**McCABLE “Jock”** – Big shot Mod. Thts. B.C. Ex-policeman, assisting Britons Publishing Co. Hefty, red-faced, bull-necked. (inf. Mustafa 25.6.49.)

**SATTERTHWAITE** Superintendent “G” Division (Dalston Police Station) Has shown anti-Jewish tendencies, particularly in treatment of anti-fascists demonstrators in Dalston area. Giving evidence in court after May-day 1949, he stated that the Fascists had over 1000 supports at Ridley Road for Rally – actual number was about 400.

## Convicted for Crimes

**ADAMS Len** – Union Speaker – ex 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne. Bound over at Old Street for two years in sum of £25 for using threatening behaviour at meeting of British Soviet Society 13.11.48. Wears 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Badge. Tough guy. Served in Palestine.

**BURWOOD Richard Henry** – 18 Nelson Gardens, Bethnal Green, E.2. Occupation: leather worker. Age: 41 year (1946). (nicknamed “Dicky Bird”). Charged with creating a disturbance at Dalston 17.9.47. Fined £20 or two months imprisonment. Refused time to pay. 10.10.48. he assaulted a member of AJEX at meeting in West Green Road, Tottenham (no conviction). Also 3.10.48, he assaulted a woman member of the 43 Group in Hyde Park (Miss J. Sloggen). Appeared before N. London Mag. Court 20.5.49. on summons from Hackney Borough Council for causing damage to Town Hall (for further details see dossier in file). Shortly after his acquittal on above case, Burwood attacked elderly Jew 65 living opposite him. Leader of Bethnal Green Strong Arm.

**McCAMBRIDGE Joseph** – Age 46, medical practitioner. Is stated to have thrown a brick wrapped in petrol soaked gauze at a shop window and to have attempted to set light to it: shop owned by a Jew. Bail granted in £50. Fined £100, costs £100. Bound over in personal recognisances of £250. Two sureties of £100. (Inf. B. Diamond).

## Miscellaneous

**AUSTIN Peter** – 15 Saville Row (Basement) W.1. Left Union Movement. Complained of too much homo-sexuality. Apparently he wishes to join the Group (Unconfirmed).

**BOWMAN Frederick** – ex 18b self styled Sir Frederick H.U. Bowman (he was knighted by King Wladislaw V of Poland) stood as candidate in Little Woolton, Merseyside, received 21 votes, November 1947. Editor of the Liverpool Examiner.

141 Duke Street, Liverpool, 1. England and also of Suite 18b. 290 Westbourne Park Road, London W.2.

**COOPER Thomas Haller** – Ex-B.U.F. In Germany 1939 – joined Waffen S.S. Helped raise British Free Corps. Penal Servitude for Life 12.1.46.

**MARGUERAT Guiseppe Grech (alias Guiseppe Grech)** – 18 Trebovir Road, Earls Court. S.W.5. Age 26. Born Malta. Fought for Spain during the Spanish Civil war. Was a platoon commander at the age of 13 in Franco army. Was in concentration camp in Africa during the War. Leader of Maltese Gang. Letter signed Guiseppe Grech Union, 15.5.48. A new Maltese has been enrolled in Kensington Branch, Christian name “George” (probably Grech) carries razor blade in spring holder. Short, thick-set. Is employed as a chef somewhere in Earls Court. Boastful. See petition in files for reprieve – under Semini. Known as Maltese Joe. For handwriting see files. Left. Now around Earls Court again: may be returning to Malta in October (Inf. S. 9.8.49.)

**PURDY Walter** – ex B.U.F. – Junior engineer R.N. – Captured at Narvik – Penal servitude for life 21.9.46.

**SCHMACHER Guenther** – Travers Road, See D.W. cutting. Arrested at Lewisham Union meeting, Saturday escaped P.O.W. Builder. Carrying German Commando dagger, used threatening behaviour. Remanded for a week.

**SEMINI “George” (Grech?)** – Maltese – enrolled in Kensington Branch, carried razor blade in spring holder. Short, thick-set. Is employed as a chef somewhere in earls court. Boastful. Half-brother of Guiseppe Margurate. Sentenced to death for murder. To be executed 29<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1949. Union membership No. believed to be K58. Is brother-in-law to Margueratos. See petition in files for reprieve – under Semini.

**WATERMAN Arthur George (‘Charles’)** – 23 Princes Avenue, Woodford Green. Buckhurst 4369. Nevil Long & Co., Timber Company, Nicholas Lane. Mansion House 5565. Born May 13<sup>th</sup>, about 36 Years old. Former chairman of Woodford Green Conservative Assoc. Churchill’s borough. Friendly Bernard Ferguson, Maharajah of Kashmir, Aubrey (?) defence for Farran. Served with Farran who stayed with him after he returned to England. Wife German – born, son age – at Oundle daughter, age – at Hemel Hempstead. Income app. £5000 a year.<sup>722</sup>

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<sup>722</sup> LSE, London: File – COLL MISC 1068: 43 Group.

## Appendix G

Sample of car registration details obtained by the 43 Group.

There is no title nor date for the data. All notes are typed and are reproduced as they appear in the originals.

FLU 228 Ford 8 – fawn – Raven Thomson.

FUF 914 1946/7 Wolsey 12. Chauffeur driven – typical thug.

CY 4975 Black Rolls. Chauffeur driven.

HKA 581 Special branch have also been making enquiries about this car. Belongs to Mr. George Bracket Smith.

LUX 262 Shooting Brake belongs to British League. Registered at Essex County Council.

BGP 37 Fascist car. Mrs. Evans. Member of Conservative Party.

EMD 336 (Cream yellow colour) Packard. Mosley's car. Maybe Hammer's car.

EMN 155 Fraser – Nash. Believed Becketts car.

YK 9614 1933 4.5 Bentley tourer green. Man, plus fours, tweed cap, RAF type.

Produced invitation, police saluted, and walked through.<sup>723</sup>

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<sup>723</sup> LSE, London: File – COLL MISC 1068: 43 Group.



## Appendix H

Sample of fascist organisations held in 43 Group files.

Spelling and punctuation are as they appear in the file. The date is hand written, but the remainder is typed.

1.4.49

### Fascist Organisations

ANGLO-ARAB FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY .....62A, Cadogan Square. S.W.1.  
ANGLO-ARAB RELIEF FUND.....164, St.Stephen's House, Westminster.  
ANGLO-GERMAN YOUTH CONTACT CLUB.....Gerald Seager, Eaton Square,  
London.  
ARAB DEFENCE LEAGUE.....53 Brisbane Avenue, South Wimbledon.  
ARAB FRIENDSHIP LEAGUE..... [as above]  
ARAB FRIENDSHIP COMMITTEE.....30 Hermitage Lane. N.W.2  
ARAB LEGION.....92 Eaton Place. S.W.1.  
THE BRITISH WORKERS INFORMATION BUREAU.....25 Station Road. N.W.10  
[as above] 22 East Dulwich Road. S.E.22  
BRITISH YOUTH FOR CHRIST.....119 Victoria Street, S.W.1  
BRITONS ACTION PARTY.....49 Chippenham Road. W.9  
BRITONS PUBLISHING SOCIETY.....40 Great Ormond Street. S.W.3  
CHELSEA (MODERN THOUGHT B.C. & DISCUSSION GROUP).....17 Chelsea  
Park Gardens. S.W.3  
COMMON MAN'S CHARTER.....288 Earls court Road. S.W.5

EAST LONDON (HOME CORRESPONDENCE SOC. & B.C.).....189 Shakespeare  
Crescent, E.2

ECONOMIC REFORM CLUB & INSTITUTION.....32, Queens Ave. N.10.

18b PUBLICITY COUNCIL.....15 Woburn Square. W.C.1.

FACE-THE-FACTS-ASSOCIATION.....6 Lower Sloane Street. S.W.1.

INDEPENDENT NATIONALIST PARTY.....2A, Allen Road, N.16.

THE NATIONALIST ASSOCIATION.....172 Roslyn Road. N.15

NORTH-WEST TASK GROUP.....10 ? Station Road Edgware

ORDER OF THE ROSE CROSS.....35Cranley Gardens, S.W.7

PALESTINE POLICE OLD COMRADES ASSOCIATION.....2 Warwick Mansions,  
S.W.15

SOCIETY OF INDIVIDUALISTS & NATIONAL LEAGUE FOR FREEDOM... 147  
Victoria Street, S.W.1.

SOCIAL CREDIT PARTY.....33 Craven Street. W.2

UNION OF BRITISH FREEDOM.....189 Westbourne  
GroveW.11.<sup>724</sup>

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<sup>724</sup> LSE, London: File – COLL MISC 1068: 43 Group.

## Appendix I

Sample of fascist publishers held in 43 Group files.

Spelling and punctuation are as they appear in the file. The date, heading and comment (all on top line) are hand written, but the remainder is typed.

| 1.4.49                   | Fasc. Publishers                                  | out of date? |
|--------------------------|---|--------------|
| Angles News Service.     | Troth House, 56 Crogsland Road, N.W.1.            |              |
| At Random.               | 17 Chelsea Park Gardens, S.W.3.                   |              |
| Britain Awake.           | The B.A.P. Publishing Co., 49 Chippenham Rd. W.9. |              |
| Catholic News Letter.    | 58 Chesson Road. W.14.                            |              |
| Christocracy.            | 26 Bina Gardens, Kensington. S.W.5.               |              |
| Fleet Street Preview.    | Tudor House, Princeton Street, W.C1.              |              |
| London Tidings.          | 7 Montpellier Street. S.W.7.                      |              |
| Review of World Affairs. | 11 Eaton Place, S.W.1.                            |              |
| King Littlewood & King.  | 8 Sicillian Avenue. W.C.1.                        |              |
| Truth Publishing Co.     | 10 Carteret Street. Queen Anne's Gate. S.W.1.     |              |
| Unity Publishing Co.,    | 189 Westbourne Grove. W11. <sup>725</sup>         |              |

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<sup>725</sup> LSE, London: File – LSE, London: File – COLL MISC 1068: 43 Group.

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Cat. No. 14763 Gisela Eisner.

Cat. No. 17310 Bertha Leverton.

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Joan Dare (b.1926): Non-Jewish. Father in the Royal Army Service Corps. Moved back to Britain from Egypt in 1938 and living in Putney at the start of the war. Moved to Slough. Briefly worked on Slough Trading Estate (manufacture of Hurricane wings), before going to *Caley's*, Windsor. Firewatcher. Married Italian/American soldier in 1945 and emigrated to Chicago in 1947. Returned to Britain in 1960.

Edith 'Eva' Jones (b.1912 – d.2009): Non-Jew, converted to Judaism in 1936. Youngest of seven children and brought up in Dudley. Met future husband, an Orthodox Jew, Norman Ritterband, in 1932. Worked in factory until 1936. After four years of converting to Judaism, married in 1936 at Sheepecote Street Liberal Synagogue. Worked in family pawnbrokers until 1940, before moving to Aberdovey, Wales. Husband became fireman and stayed in Birmingham. After the war, family moved to the Bradford area (lived next door to Mira Kagan, survivor of Kaunas Ghetto and father of Joseph Kagan).

Chanie Rosenberg (b.1922): Jewish. Family of Lithuanian extraction, running a clothing company in Cape Town, South Africa. Zionist family, joined *Hashomer Hatzair* (socialist youth wing) in 1937. Sent to Palestine kibbutz in 1944, where she later married Ygael Gluckstein. As Trotskyists, both were involved in the struggle to free Palestine from British rule (for which both were arrested and he imprisoned) and create a unified Jewish/Arab state. Moved to Britain in 1946, but as her husband was banned from most Western countries, he was accepted by the Republic of Ireland. Following Attlee's defeat in the 1951 election, Ygael was allowed to join his wife in Britain. Under the name, Tony Cliff, he and Chanie went on to found International Socialists and the Socialist Workers Party.

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