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**'PROTEST AND PRAYER':**

**RABBI DR. SOLOMON SCHONFELD AND ORTHODOX  
JEWISH RESPONSES IN BRITAIN TO THE NAZI  
PERSECUTION OF EUROPE'S JEWS**

**1942-1945**

By

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the requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF ARTS  
HISTORY

Doctor of Philosophy

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Recent scholarship has researched the reactions and responses of Jews in the Free World to the Holocaust. Most historians have concentrated on the roles that secular leaders and institutions played in assisting refugees and the attempts that they made to persuade governments to assist the Jews. In the past two decades orthodox journalists and historians have written about the efforts of orthodox activists during the war. These two schools have produced differing and at times conflicting accounts of this aspect of the historiography of that time. The orthodox, or *Haredim*, for their part, claim that the activities of the orthodox have been consistently overlooked, or at least marginalized by secular historians. The secular camp has either ignored or downplayed the roles of the orthodox, with the claim that the orthodox communities in the Free World were insignificant and the efforts of their leaders' negligible.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the reactions of the Orthodox community and its leadership in Britain during the war. It is limited to the years 1942-1945, years that most would consider the apogee of the Holocaust and focuses on the efforts of Solomon Schonfeld, who was the leader of the *Haredi* community in Britain at the time and who was exceptionally devoted to assisting Europe's beleaguered Jews. It concentrates on the community's efforts on behalf of Jews on the Continent as opposed to the assistance of refugees in Britain, a subject that has already been well documented. It analyses the obstacles that were faced by both the orthodox and secular leaders, and evaluates their joint and individual responses both in isolation and in comparison to each other. It also analyses the responses of orthodox laymen in Britain and compares the opportunities available to them as opposed to their leaders.

This thesis is intended to convey and analyse the responses of orthodox Jews in Britain to the Holocaust as opposed to an analysis of the results that they achieved. Many of the difficulties and obstacles that they and their secular counterparts encountered were insurmountable and they should not be judged on their accomplishments as much as for their efforts.

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## INTRODUCTION

Research into the Holocaust has always been the domain of secular historians, the contributions of orthodox Jews being negligible if not virtually non-existent.<sup>1</sup> Few attempts have even been made to explain this phenomenon although some of the reasons why the orthodox have not made academic contributions to this subject are obvious. Orthodox circles in the years preceding the war, from the lay-sections of each community to its rabbinate had consistently shunned secular education and qualifications. This was with the noted exception of the communities of post-emancipatory Germany who valued advanced secular education, but solely as a means of combating *Haskala*, the threats posed by 'enlightened' Jews that eventually led to the Liberal and Reform Movements. German rabbis felt that they would be better suited to stand up against those who challenged their convictions if they were on par with their 'challenger's' academic qualifications. There was also a certain amount of credibility afforded to academic scholars in the tradition of '*Torah im derech erez*' i.e. 'Torah combined with worldly pursuits', a system of neo-orthodoxy developed by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch in the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Yet, rabbinic leaders in other parts of Europe, felt that secular education posed inherent threats to traditional Judaism, in addition to the fact that those who pursued such a field would inevitably have to leave the relative safety of the 'shtetl' for institutions that were built on foreign, dangerous influences.

An even more important aspect of this issue was that Orthodox Judaism has, and always will view the study of Torah and the 'Sea of Talmud' as the main objective in a Jew's life. Secular study was always considered superfluous in comparison to Torah study, and for those who were drawn to it, the Mishnaic dictum "*haphoch ba v'haphoch ba d'kula ba*", "*turn it (the Torah) over and then turn it over again, for everything is in it*" was invariably cited.<sup>3</sup> As a result, until the destruction of European Jewry during the Holocaust, very few orthodox scholars possessed academic know-how or qualifications, and being that the reasons for discouraging secular education remained, it continued to be discouraged after the war by rabbinic leaders in Israel and the United States.

The orthodox approach to secular education has changed somewhat in recent years, especially in areas relating to medical and psychological health. This is due, in no small part to the fact that the orthodox community is being forced to face the challenges of the rapidly changing faces of modern society in the same ways that every other devoutly religious society has to. Orthodox Jews can no longer rely solely on their rabbinic leaders to direct them in their religious duties (*halacha*) without the practical guidance of professionals in the fields of technology and health. Furthermore, their communities have little hope of keeping their youth within the fold without accessing mental health expertise and advice. To date, orthodox circles have not felt it necessary to utilise academic sources in their attempts to understand the Holocaust, although the recent publication of textbooks aimed at teaching this subject in

Israel and the United States have utilised current historical sources accurately when presenting its purely historical aspects.<sup>4</sup>

For academics, understanding the reactions of the orthodox in the years immediately after the war is a difficult exercise. Arguably, the ultra-orthodox were the segment of Jewry most devastated during the Holocaust, both in numbers and in the ways that the Nazi fury was unleashed upon them, especially in Poland and Russia. The synagogues, other houses of religious observance and ritual articles were the first targets of the occupying Germans, and people who were outwardly Jewish were always the first to suffer. Being that this was the case, the 'silence' of the orthodox has been difficult for most to understand. However, this very silence can be the only understandable reaction for someone, like the author, who views the Holocaust from a religious perspective as well. For the orthodox Jew, the admission that not everything, and in fact, very little can be understandable to the mortal eye, has been the tool that has ensured the survival of the Jews as a nation, since the Jews were dispersed in exile almost 2,000 years ago. With regard to the destruction of European Jewry, the response of 'unquestioning silence' becomes the only appropriate one considering the scope of the tragedy.<sup>5</sup> As Emil Fackenheim puts it in The Jewish Return Into History, "No purpose, religious or non-religious, will ever be found in Auschwitz. The very attempt to find one is blasphemous".<sup>6</sup> Historians who are removed from the intricacies of orthodox Jewish life and ideology will inevitably encounter difficulties in understanding and explaining orthodox reactions to the Holocaust. For the

believing Jew, the annihilation of European Jewry is essentially a religious matter.

This silent acquiescence to fate is the result of the traditional perception of G-D as being omnipresent but hidden, especially throughout the exile. The believing Jew surrenders his need to understand those aspects of his life that are incomprehensible because of his acceptance that G-D and His ways and designs are hidden and beyond the realm of human understanding.<sup>7</sup> According to Martin Buber, the challenge faced by Jews, especially in response to catastrophe, is to understand that “the living G-D is not only a self-revealing, but also a self-concealing G-D”.<sup>8</sup> G-D’s ‘silence’ does not contradict His presence, it in fact fills a true religious need by bringing man to an awareness of this silence. This awareness is a necessary component of true faith.<sup>9</sup>

On the whole, the *Haredi* community has taken this approach when confronting the ideological dilemmas presented by the Holocaust. These have included questions about the possibilities for the belief and trust in G-D after the ‘Age of Auschwitz’ and the conviction that everything is divinely ordained. However, this has not stopped individuals within the community from performing meaningful acts of remembrance and from recording their experiences during the Holocaust when they were ready to do so. These include the compilation of numerous “Yizkor” i.e. “Remembrance Books” that record the names of those murdered in specific communities, and personal memoirs that have been either published, or written primarily for the use of the



survivor for therapeutic reasons.<sup>10</sup> Many such memoirs have only been written in the past two decades because survivors found it too difficult and painful to face their experiences in the immediate aftermath of the war.<sup>11</sup> Admittedly, the *Haredi* community has recently generated a great amount of Holocaust related material, which, according to Kimmy Caplan, is a direct response to what they consider the efforts of the secular community to portray the Holocaust in ways that distort its religious dimensions and marginalize the part that orthodox Jews played in the catastrophe.<sup>12</sup>

Caplan suggests that members of the *Haredi* leadership have opposed a preoccupation with the Holocaust within *Haredi* society. He claims that Rabbi Isaac Hutner, (1907-1980), a major Rosh Yeshivah and *Haredi* thinker, objected to the use of the term *Shoah* in reference to the destruction of European Jewry on the grounds that the Holocaust was “not a unique event, but one more link in the lengthy chain of strictures, destructions, and persecutions that the Jews have experienced”. Accordingly, the term *Shoah*, a unique description for the destruction of European Jewry by the Nazis, is inappropriate, because “the conceptual framework has long existed and new categories are not needed”.<sup>13</sup> He also claims that Rabbi Abraham I. Karelitz, the “*Hazon Ish*” (1878-1953) refused to sanction special memorial days for Holocaust victims because he did not regard the Holocaust as a special event in Jewish history.<sup>14</sup> This is essentially a misunderstanding, if not a distortion of the approaches of these rabbinic figures to the Holocaust. The *Haredi* community and its leadership in no way minimize the Holocaust in terms of its scope and brutality. However, the fact that Hitler was bent on the total

annihilation of the Jewish people is not unique, insofar as according to Jewish tradition, he was not the first to plan genocide. The notion that the Laban, Amalek and Haman of old and their modern counterparts, in the form of Hitler and the Nazis, were bent upon the destruction of the Jews is a major feature in the *Haredi* perception of exile. Hutner, in fact, views the Holocaust as “an integral part” of Jewish history, and asserts that “we dare not isolate and deprive it of the monumental significance it has for us”.<sup>15</sup> Karelitz, as was the case with many of his colleagues, felt that the victims of the Holocaust were best remembered in the context of the established Jewish fast days, which conceptualise the gamut of persecutions that the Jews have endured during the exile and establish a continuum in the sufferings of one generation to the other.

In addition to the response of ‘unquestioning silence’, the main reaction of the orthodox leadership to the Holocaust was that of rebuilding their destroyed Jewish communities. In fact, the rapid and extensive rebuilding of Orthodox communities in Israel and the United States would have been all the more difficult if the orthodox rabbinate and leadership were preoccupied with finding ways to understand the Holocaust. One of the results of the purely religious act of not questioning the ways of G-D was the rebuilding of the remnant communities of pre-war Europe.

Many have taken issue with the fact that numerous rabbinic leaders abandoned their communities and escaped to the Free World during the war. The most notable amongst these were Rabbi Abraham Mordechai Alter of Gur

and Rabbi Aaron Rokach of Belz. This is a contentious issue, considering the fact that there were many less prominent rabbis that refused to escape, and chose to remain with their people instead.<sup>16</sup> However, in the context of rebuilding their destroyed communities, it is possible that the Rabbis of Gur and Belz felt that their martyrdom would do little to ensure the survival of their Hassidic courts.<sup>17</sup> According to Irving Greenberg, “Extraordinary catastrophes are not mastered by routine treatment or evasion. Only extraordinary outbursts of life or creativity can overcome them. To overwhelming death one must respond with overwhelming life”.<sup>18</sup> For many, these ‘extraordinary outbursts of life’ took form in the rebuilding of Jewish communal life along the same lines as the ‘shtetlach’ of pre-war Europe. Such ventures necessitated a tremendous amount of foresight and originality because these communities were based on value systems and codes of conduct that were the antitheses of post-war modernity. Emil Fackenheim comments on the establishment of the State of Israel in terms of being the only possible response to the Holocaust and, although he does not address this issue, the parallels with the re-establishment of the destroyed Hassidic communities are obvious. He writes “... to this unprecedented invitation to group suicide, Jews responded with an unexpected will to live – with, under the circumstances, an incredible commitment to Jewish group survival”.<sup>19</sup> In another place he states “For in the age of Auschwitz, a Jewish commitment to Jewish survival is in itself a monumental act of faithfulness, as well as a monumental, albeit as yet fragmentary, act of faith”.<sup>20</sup>

Historians and journalists who have attempted to understand contemporary orthodox thinking in relation to the Holocaust have consistently pointed to issues that are essentially irrelevant. Some claim that the orthodox are locked in a century old anti-Zionist ideology that maintains that secular Jews sinned by striving to establish a state before the Final Redemption.<sup>21</sup> The initial establishment of a Jewish State did, in fact contravene *halacha*, or Jewish law, according to some authorities.<sup>22</sup> Many of the rabbinic authorities active before and during the period of the establishment of the State of Israel supported this ruling and were against the wars fought to secure its independence. These views were upheld until the State became a reality. The main differences of opinion amongst orthodox leaders regarding Zionism, emerged only thereafter. Those associated with Agudat Israel felt that whenever possible and as a matter of necessity, they had to utilise the opportunities afforded to them and help direct affairs in the new State for the benefit of its *Haredi* citizens. Initially, these leaders cooperated with the irreligious parties in Israel for purely practical reasons. However, it must be noted that except for the Rebbe of Satmar, Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum, and his followers, these issues were always approached with subtlety, and the Zionist ideal, as a singular entity, was seldom blamed for the Holocaust.<sup>23</sup>

Although Rabbi Elazar Menachem Mann Shach (1897-2002), who was the leader of the Lithuanian style Yeshiva Movement until his passing, attributed the divine “reason” for the Holocaust to a “one-to-one reckoning” for the Jewish People’s sins, this simplistic approach is unique to Shach and is not the common understanding of religious thinkers.<sup>24</sup> Most of the post-war

rabbinic leaders, including Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Rebbe of Lubavitch, did not support this view, and at most approached the destruction of European Jewry as 'silent, unquestioning rebuilders'.

Some have also assumed that the fact that very few pre-war orthodox rabbis encouraged emigration presents a theological quandary to orthodox Jews vis-à-vis their belief in '*daat Torah*', or '*Torah wisdom*', according to which great rabbis speak with divine inspiration.<sup>25</sup> This presumption is essentially incorrect and stems from a basic misunderstanding of the concept of '*daat Torah*'. For the orthodox Jew, this does not present a challenge to his faith because a pre-cursor to belief in '*daat Torah*' for every orthodox Jew is a fundamental belief in man's destiny and that it is constantly directed by the will of G-d. The Holocaust was indeed the apogee in the history of Jewish suffering, but according to the believing Jew, every one of the 'six million' and the millions of others affected by the Holocaust had a unique part to play in this period of history. According to them, '*daat Torah*', in the context of the Holocaust determined what part in the drama each participant would play.<sup>26</sup>

Another misconception of those who attempt to understand many of the issues facing orthodox Jewry, including the Holocaust, is that orthodox Jewry can be regarded as one international community. The truth is, however, that orthodox Jewry is not, and has never been a single entity. In the same way that worldwide Jewry cannot be given the name 'World Jewry' and members of the Muslim faith cannot be termed as 'World Islam', orthodox Jewry cannot be regarded as a community with one single voice or ideology. Orthodox Jews

devote themselves to the Torah and its teachings and commandments, and are bound by this framework, but are separated by their countries of origin, customs, languages and outlooks. Every segment of the orthodox community has a different approach to Judaism itself, let alone to ways of adapting and coming to terms with modern society. It should also be noted that rabbis who are perfectly credible to every member of the orthodox community lead their own, particular segment of the community in its own direction. A blanket statement that orthodox Jewry or orthodox leaders did, or did not do enough to save their co-religionists in Europe is a distorting and inaccurate way of approaching the issues involved in orthodox responses to the Holocaust. This applies to the efforts of orthodox Jews worldwide, before, during and after the Second World War.<sup>27</sup>

Historians of the Holocaust have researched and speculated on many of the facets of the war that permitted the destruction of European Jewry. Many have examined the broader issues of pre-war European anti-Semitism in an attempt to understand the Holocaust.<sup>28</sup> In attempts to understand Nazi anti-Semitism and the German policies that eventually led to genocide, historians invariably have to assess the centrality of anti-Semitic feelings common to the general German populace from at least the emancipatory era until the years preceding and during the Holocaust.<sup>29</sup> In addition to German anti-Semitism, an overall understanding of the Holocaust must entail thorough studies of anti-Semitic feelings in the countries where Jews were persecuted, neutral states, and even those of the Allies who might have been in a position to do more than they did for the persecuted Jews.<sup>30</sup>

It must be noted, however, that for many *Haredim*, these issues are somewhat irrelevant. The believing Jew has always regarded the history of mankind in general, and that of the Jewish People in particular as being divinely planned and guided. This has remained their conviction throughout the tribulations of the twentieth century. The title of an article by Netty Gross in The Jerusalem Report regarding contemporary orthodox approaches to the Holocaust '*Why Did G-D Do this to Us?*' is to some extent poignantly appropriate.<sup>31</sup> Orthodox Jews view the final outcome of every facet of the Holocaust as being divinely ordained, however, the ways in which orthodox Jews are now confronting the Holocaust are not as a means of questioning or accusing G-D. The reasons for this are twofold. Mainstream orthodoxy views this period in history as '*ikvita d'Mshicha*', the time period immediately preceding the Final Redemption. For this reason, the Holocaust is viewed as one of the prerequisites to the coming of the Messiah, if not the prophesied War of Gog and Magog itself.<sup>32</sup> Hitler himself is perceived by many as a messenger of G-D, albeit a sadistically evil one, similar to the pharaoh in the story of the Exodus. He considered himself a prophet, made public statements to this effect and eventually proved his 'prophesy' to the world.<sup>33</sup> These 'prophesies' are viewed by many orthodox Jews in truly apocalyptic terms. The study of the Holocaust and attempts to make some sense of it is therefore gradually becoming something of a religious obligation to some.

In addition to this, the orthodox are currently being drawn to studies of the Holocaust in order to retain their ties with, and preserve some of the grandeur

of the pre-war European Jewish communities. Much of the glory of the Lithuanian yeshivot and Hassidic courts can be experienced in the communities that bear the names of those that were destroyed in the Holocaust. To a great extent, these communities have been romanticised, if not idolised in the contemporary orthodox perception of them. This is an example of a 'defence mechanism' utilised by post-war rabbis and orthodox survivors in order to rebuild their destroyed communities, insofar as it has become not only a religious duty, but indeed an honour to assist in rebuilding the glorious 'world that was'. The current proliferation of novels, biographies and autobiographies, written by *Haredim* and intended for the readership of the orthodox community, suggests that orthodox survivors, as they get older, are becoming more desperate to describe Jewish pre-war Europe and their sufferings during its destruction. The younger generation are eager to preserve their own unique sense of identity in the modern world by reading these accounts and identifying with them.<sup>34</sup>

According to some historians of the *Yishuv's* responses to the Holocaust, many of the Holocaust related books that were published between the 1950's and 1970's, such as those written by Granatstein, Prager and Schoenfeld, were meant to act as counter-histories to the heroics stressed by Israeli society regarding the actions of the *Yishuv* and the Zionist Movement leadership.<sup>35</sup> Although this may be somewhat true, this should be viewed in terms of establishing orthodox Jewry's point of view vis-à-vis heroism, in the context of modern Jewish history in general, and the Holocaust, in particular,



as opposed to a concerted effort by the orthodox to disqualify another point of view.

Many of the aforementioned misinterpretations and misconceptions common to contemporary historians regarding the responses of orthodox Jews to the Holocaust are understandable. Historical research and even the study of history cannot be accomplished in a balanced sense if the historian or student does not have a good grasp of the context and players of the period that they are studying. With regards to orthodox responses to the Holocaust, this would mean, an awareness of the religious convictions and basic attitudes of the orthodox leaders and lay-men of this period. Such an internalised perception of the orthodox Jewish or rabbinic 'way of thinking' only exists within the orthodox community and, as a result, only historians that are of a religious persuasion can effectively produce a balanced study of orthodox activities during the Holocaust.

This idea is obviously not exclusive to orthodox Jewish responses to the Holocaust. The study of every aspect of any historical period should be examined from the perspective of historians who are closest to the 'mind-set' of those being studied, in order to present a balanced analysis of the subject at hand. Although virtually any historian can examine the history of a particular period, such an analysis will be lacking if he or she is not closely 'in tune' with the social and religious attitudes, feelings and approaches of the players in the 'drama' that is being studied. With regard to the Holocaust it is therefore essential to examine orthodox responses and reactions to the

Holocaust from an orthodox viewpoint in order to fully understand these reactions in context. The only way to clarify many of these issues, and especially the many misconceptions regarding rabbinic approaches and attitudes to the Holocaust, is to examine and analyse these issues through an approach that is both historically sound and is based on religious/rabbinic thinking. This approach to understanding the responses of Anglo-orthodox Jewry to the Holocaust is utilised in this thesis and it is the author's intention to describe these reactions in the context of the obstacles that orthodox Jews faced and the ways that they reacted to them, taking into account their particular ways of thinking and their religious convictions. This work is based on concentrated archival research and analyses the activities of Solomon Schonfeld who was the main leader of *Haredi* Jewry in Britain during the war. Instead of concentrating on 'spiritual' responses to the Holocaust, Schonfeld was extremely pragmatic and practical in the ways that he attempted to assist Europe's Jews. Although such an approach may seem incongruent with popular conceptions of what rabbinic responses should have been, Schonfeld was, in fact, reacting to the Holocaust in ways that are understandable considering his own personal background and ways of thinking.

The purpose of historical research and study cannot be merely an academic exercise, although such an exercise may have inherent worth. Historians have the moral responsibility to learn from the rights and wrongs of the past and to convey these messages either through an academic forum, or for more practical reasons, to the public at large. This is especially the case with regards to the multifarious aspects of the Holocaust - the single episode that

should shake modern civilisation to its very core. Historians of the Holocaust should not be complacent after their theses are published if they have not contributed to the betterment of society. According to this line of thought, it becomes obvious that the study of the roles of the 'bystanders' to the Holocaust, especially with a direction to introspection, is as essential as understanding the causes and development of the 'war against the Jews'.<sup>36</sup>

A comprehensive account of the role played by 'bystanders' to the Holocaust did not appear until Arthur Morse's work, While Six Million Died, which was first published in 1967. He calls his book 'A Chronicle of American Apathy' and describes what he considers the deliberate obstructions placed in the way of attempts to save the European Jews by the war-time American Government. These include its neglect to utilise the services of the American Information and Propaganda Departments to encourage the granting of 'safe asylum' to Jews by the neutral states of Europe and the rigid immigration laws that the State Department was unwilling to bend. He also asserts that anti-Semitism prevailed in the State Department on the eve of the war, as it did in other areas of American life, such as certain professions, businesses, universities and social institutions. According to Morse, these forces of anti-Semitism hampered many efforts to assist the beleaguered Jews. His work is based on extensive research into detailed documentation from worldwide interviews with participants, archives around the world and classified and official papers that had not yet been published. Many historians concur with this depiction of America's response, or lack of response to the Holocaust, to lesser or greater extents.<sup>37</sup>

The response of the British Government to the plight of the Jews was not examined in any major way until A.J. Sherman published his work Island Refuge in 1973. It is based primarily on state archives that had been unavailable until then and concentrates on the government's efforts to assist Jewish refugees before the war. He points to the fact that over 50,000 Jewish refugees from the expanded Reich were admitted into Great Britain between 1933 and 1939, although he admits that the statistics for refugee immigration at the time were unreliable. On the whole, he finds the British response "comparatively compassionate, even generous" compared to those of America and other countries in the Free World.<sup>38</sup>

Bernard Wasserstein's book, Britain and the Jews of Europe, examines British policy towards the Jewish problem throughout the war. It explores the reasons for the near-total ban on Jewish refugee immigration into Britain after 1939 and the restrictive immigration policy to Palestine. He also appraises the British Government's failure to aid Jewish resistance in Europe and the rejection of the scheme for the allied bombing of Auschwitz. His research chronicles a lamentable account of bureaucratic complacency, inhumanity and blindness to the Jewish catastrophe in Europe.<sup>39</sup> With regards to the government's pre-war record, Wasserstein maintains that without the Jewish leadership's guarantee of maintenance for the refugees in 1933, "it is very doubtful if the British Government would have admitted such substantial numbers at a time of high unemployment and considerable public anti-Semitism".<sup>40</sup>

Whitehall and the Jews by Louise London, is the most comprehensive study to date of the British governmental response to the plight of European Jewry. It contains an exhaustively researched and definitive account of immigration controls on the admission of refugee Jews into Great Britain, and reveals the doubts and dissent that lay behind British policy. London claims that British self-interest consistently limited humanitarian aid to the Jews, refuge was severely restricted during the Holocaust and few attempts were made to save lives. Although she does not concentrate on a comparison between the efforts of the British Government and those of its American counterpart in her book, she is of the opinion that the British Government was at least as negligent, if not more so, than the Americans.<sup>41</sup> According to her findings, the British Government did help and save persecuted Jews, but on its own terms. The United Kingdom was cast in the role of a country of temporary refuge in the years preceding the war, but refugees received only a qualified welcome.<sup>42</sup>

London is consistently critical of the conditions and restrictions imposed on the refugees and the Jewish leaders who were forced to be in a position to guarantee their support; however, her technical, if not sanitized system of analysing the sources tends to neglect the human aspects of this drama. Aside from their political and leadership roles, those who were responsible for British refugee and foreign policy should also be appraised in the context of the many challenges that faced them. Historians who confront the issues of governmental reactions to the persecution of the Jews, especially in Britain, must come to terms with the fact that Britain was fighting a World War and not a Jewish one. As a matter of necessity, all elected members of Parliament

were responsible and answerable to their British constituents, and these responsibilities, whether actual or conceived, took precedence over any moral convictions that stood in their way. It should also be noted that although some members of Parliament, like Eleanor Rathbone, were 'champions of the Jewish cause', few, if any were openly against assisting the Jews if practical opportunities were to arise, and overt anti-Semitism within the Houses of Parliament and the Home Office, was extremely rare.<sup>43</sup>

The contention that the Allies, and specifically the British and Americans, could have done more to save Jewish lives during the Holocaust has been challenged by William D. Rubinstein in his book The Myth of Rescue, which he subtitles: *'Why the Democracies Could Not Have Saved More Jews from the Nazis'*. This work is a dramatic deviation from existing research into the responses of the 'bystanders'. Rubinstein claims that "no Jew who perished during the Nazi Holocaust could have been saved by any action which the Allies could have taken at the time, given what was actually known about the Holocaust, what was actually proposed at the time and what was realistically possible".<sup>44</sup> He further asserts that if there are any exceptions to this statement, their numbers may be measured in the dozens or hundreds rather than in some higher figure. In his introduction, he makes the sweeping statement that "all of the many studies which criticise the Allies for having failed to rescue Jews during the Holocaust are inaccurate and misleading, their arguments illogical and ahistorical".<sup>45</sup>

Although Rubinstein presents some logical arguments, it is unreasonable and irresponsible to disqualify all of the academic works on the subject until his book was published in 1997. Theoretically, if the democratic societies during the war had possessed an ingrained philosophy of defending morality and human rights worldwide and had systems in place to uphold such a philosophy, more could have been done to assist the persecuted masses in Europe because the purpose of the war would have taken on a different meaning. Although the Allies were severely restricted in many possibilities to assist the civilian populations in Nazi occupied Europe, many attempts were not even considered because of domestic anti-Semitism or the need to suppress it. In many cases, this was a superficial way for a government to dissolve itself of its moral responsibility to organise efforts on behalf of the Jews in Europe who were suffering the worst manifestations of anti-Semitism imaginable. Furthermore, there were opportunities to provide refuge for Jews who did attempt to escape. If the borders had been open to refugees, many more would have escaped, many would not have given in to desperation and may have attempted to escape themselves and the Nazis would not have felt so complacent about their efforts to destroy European Jewry. Rubinstein's lucidly practical approach to the issues presents an over-simplified picture of the facts. A sincere synthesis of his purely practical, approach, together with a critical analysis of the 'main players' in the drama of the Holocaust would perhaps be more plausible.

The Holocaust has contributed to a great amount of introspection throughout the Jewish world. It has become a feature of modern Jewish identity both in

an individual and collective sense for both the secular and the orthodox.<sup>46</sup> It has therefore become imperative for historians to examine the reactions and responses of the wartime Jewish communities in the Free World and their leaders, to the Holocaust. Many of the imprisoned leaders of European Jewry, including those of Warsaw and Slovakia, blamed the leadership of 'World Jewry' for inaction during the war and these criticisms were echoed by some of those Jews who were against the established Jewish leadership at that time, particularly in America.<sup>47</sup> Studies of the Jewish responses to the Holocaust initially concentrated on the American Jewish communities, and for the most part confirmed the popular conception that these communities did far too little to aid their European brethren. The general consensus is that because of communal disunity, personal interests and fears of anti-Semitism, the Jewish leaders lacked the necessary vision to prioritise and utilise the opportunities that were available to them.<sup>48</sup> This impression has since been challenged in the same way as the shift in opinion of some historians regarding the responses of the Anglo-Jewish communities to the Holocaust.<sup>49</sup>

Norman Bentwich addressed Anglo-Jewish responses when he wrote They Found Refuge in 1956, in honour of the tercentenary of the Jewish resettlement in England.<sup>50</sup> Bentwich, who was heavily involved in refugee work both during and after the war, praised Anglo-Jewish efforts especially in their assistance of refugees. The Central British Fund, which was devoted to the assistance of refugees, was the main object of his praise and he held its executive in the highest esteem. According to Bentwich, the Jewish community and its leadership did everything within its power to assist the



European Jews by conscientiously ensuring the maintenance of all of the refugees who reached British shores. It should be noted, however, that his book cannot be used as an unbiased document for research purposes because of its obvious elements of 'self-praise' and the fact that it was produced in order to congratulate Anglo-Jewry's accomplishments until then.

Although Bernard Wasserstein's, Britain and the Jews of Europe, concentrates on the responses of the British Government, he does delve into the reactions and assistance rendered by Jewish leaders in Britain. For the most part, he judges the leadership favourably, especially in context of the difficulties that they faced vis-à-vis governmental co-operation and assistance. His impression is, that in every case, efforts by Jewish leaders in Britain on behalf of their brethren in Europe were doomed to failure because of insurmountable difficulties right from the beginning. He also challenges the claims by historians such as John Marlowe and Christopher Skyes that the Zionists in Britain hampered many possibilities of rescuing European Jews because they concentrated solely on immigration to Palestine and were not prepared to support Jewish emigration elsewhere. According to these historians, the Anglo-Jewish leaders could have accomplished more if they had pursued every conceivable avenue of rescue as opposed to pressing for emigration to Palestine, which at that point was being blocked by the British Government, in no uncertain terms.<sup>51</sup> Wasserstein asserts, however, that " it was not in the power of the Zionist Organisation to decree that Jews be admitted to British colonies or the United Kingdom; that power resided in the British Government".<sup>52</sup>

The aforementioned historians are scathing in their criticism of the Zionist activists in Britain during the war. John Marlowe writes: "If the Zionists and their supporters had concentrated on the humanitarian, instead of on the political and propagandist aspect, and if they had in consequence asked His Majesty's Government to treat these people as refugees and not as prospective Palestine immigrants, there is no doubt that His Majesty's Government (which had a far better pre-war record than the U.S. Government over the relief of Jewish refugees) would have done everything possible to assist them."<sup>53</sup> Christopher Skyes writes: "The Jewish Agency were determined...not to budge an inch from their essential principal: the flow of refugees was to come into Palestine and was to be diverted nowhere else: better that they should die than be so used as to enfeeble Zionist resolve."<sup>54</sup> The embittered leader of Slovakian Jewry, Rabbi Michael Ber Weissmandl, echoes these feelings when he accuses the worldwide Zionist organisations in his book *Min Hameitzar*.<sup>55</sup>

Wasserstein counters these accusations by claiming that in reality there was nowhere else for Jews to go in substantial numbers. However, this point is irrelevant because considering the scope of the tragedy which was unfolding, Jewish organisations, including the Zionists, should have tried desperately to assist in the removal of as many Jews as possible to any place of refuge, regardless of Palestine as a priority. He does attempt to prove that the Zionists were prepared to countenance, and even co-operate in the diversion of Jewish refugees to safe destinations and cites claims by the Zionist

organisations that these offers were rejected by the British Government out of an anxiety “lest the Zionists might somehow gain political credit by such an arrangement”.<sup>56</sup> Although the Zionist leadership may have used this reasoning, it conveys a shallow attempt at justifying inaction.

Tony Kushner’s pioneering work The Persistence of Prejudice was the first to explore Anglo-Jewish responses to the Holocaust in depth.<sup>57</sup> This was also the first work to examine anti-Semitism in Britain during the war. In fact, Kushner explores the Jewish responses to the Holocaust mainly in the context of domestic anti-Semitism and the Jewish reactions to it. He charges that the Anglo-Jewish leaders failed to challenge the British Government’s reactions to the Holocaust because of their own insecurities and fears of domestic anti-Semitism. He also claims that the government’s restrictive immigration policy was a result of pervasive anti-Semitism in Britain.<sup>58</sup> In The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination, Kushner further examines the reactions of Britain, America and the Labour Movements to the Holocaust and surmises that an unbalanced approach to liberalism was the root of their inaction and that the cause of what we term anti-Semitism was the failure of the democratic states and societies to solve the contradictions and ambiguities of liberalism.<sup>59</sup> Although his evaluation of the causes of anti-Semitism feature in an ongoing historical and socio-political debate on the subject, his conclusions regarding British anti-Semitism and the role that it played in the Anglo-Jewish reactions to the Holocaust are widely accepted.

Richard Bolchover was also one of the first historians to examine Anglo-Jewish responses to the Holocaust in detail although many of his conclusions were derived from Kushner's research. He outlines what he terms the Anglo-Jewish community's socio-political philosophy and demonstrates how this shaped the community's responses to the Holocaust. Bolchover claims that although anti-Semitism and intolerance was a feature of British society, Anglo-Jewish leaders misinterpreted its pervasiveness and restricted their responses to the Holocaust as a result of their own perceptions of their history, their place in British society and, on a more fundamental level, their own Jewishness. He concludes that because of these constraints and the resulting exaggerated fear of anti-Semitism, their responses were minimal. In essence, Bolchover criticises Anglo-Jewry for depicting their own situation in such a way that it was impossible for them to react in any way that threatened their position in British society.<sup>60</sup> In Modern British Jewry, Geoffrey Alderman agrees with Bolchover's assertion that the Anglo-Jewish leaders were passive in their reactions to the happenings on the Continent. He criticises them for ignoring European Jewry in an attempt to buttress their own precarious positions in society and emphasises that: "communal policy resulted and was designed to result in the admission into Britain of a minimum number of Jews...from a particular social and economic background and of a particular age". These two historians do praise some of the efforts of activists who were not members of the 'aristocratic' Anglo-Jewish leadership such as those of the British members of the World Jewish Congress and Rabbi Dr. Solomon Schonfeld.<sup>61</sup>

Louise London admits that the Anglo-Jewish community played the key role in underwriting and facilitating the pre-war admission of Jews into Great Britain, but also criticises the limited ability of Britain's Jewish community to influence government policy. She claims that the leaders of British Jewry were inhibited from doing more to aid the European Jews because of their fears of domestic anti-Semitism. This perceived fear of anti-Semitism, the demands upon charitable funds and their own prejudices, caused Anglo-Jewish leaders to control the amount of refugees reaching the country and ensure that they were adequately equipped to adapt to British society and eventually support themselves. She claims that these personal inhibitions produced agonised debates about priorities within Britain's Jewish community.<sup>62</sup> Pamela Shatzkes counters this view in her thesis, by pointing out that London gives little credit to the fact that many thousands of refugees were supported by Jewish businesses that were on the brink of bankruptcy because of the war.<sup>63</sup>

Meier Sompolinsky's, The British Government and the Holocaust, examines Anglo-Jewish leaders vis-à-vis their relationship with the British Government and their attempts to influence governmental policy towards Europe's beleaguered Jews. Sompolinsky asserts that although the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the British Section of the World Jewish Congress and the Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council were in a position to reproach the government for its lack of action and force it to adopt a more humanitarian attitude towards the Jews, they did not face this challenge. He blames this on a lack of a unified approach, which he attributes, to a great extent, to the

notion that personal antagonisms and internal strife within the established leadership prevented such an approach.<sup>64</sup>

Notwithstanding Sompolinsky's Zionist leanings, he admits that the policy of Zionist leaders during the war was to use the spectre of Jewish annihilation in Europe to pressure the British Government to open the gates of Palestine to refugees and that this emphasis did not benefit the refugees' cause. He further suggests that Schonfeld and his colleagues in the orthodox camp were the only communal leaders that realised that the dire situation on the Continent necessitated a more direct and forceful approach towards rescue and relief efforts that had been taken until then. It was "only the rabbis" according to Sompolinsky, that "dared to deviate, by degrees, in words and actions from the norm".<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, according to Sompolinsky, Rabbis Schonfeld and Hertz were more realistic than the Zionists and opposed the mention of Palestine as a haven for the oppressed Jews because of consistent government opposition to Jewish emigration to Palestine. He asserts that because the secular leaders refused to see 'eye-to-eye' with their orthodox counterparts, the government was "saved from dealing with the problem on a different level".<sup>66</sup>

Amy Zahl Gottlieb's praise for the Central British Fund and its founders in Men of Vision, comes in sharp contrast to the charges levelled by historians like Bolchover, Alderman and London. According to Gottlieb, the Central British Fund, which was founded in 1933 by members of the most prominent Anglo-Jewish families to assist Jewish refugees in Britain, was "an example *par*

*excellence of constructive community endeavour*".<sup>67</sup> She notes that throughout the years preceding and during the war, the individuals who worked on behalf of the Central British Fund invested much time, effort and money in order to ensure the success of their organisation. As a result of their efforts, many thousands of adults, some ten thousand unaccompanied children, and many men and boys rescued from concentration camps in the months before the war, found sanctuary in Britain.<sup>68</sup> It should be noted, however, that Gottlieb's work is essentially uncritical, is based almost entirely on the documents of the Central British Fund, and takes very little of the contemporary academic studies of this period into account.

The efforts of the orthodox and their leaders to assist the European Jews was not studied in any significant way until David Kranzler and Gertrude Hirschler wrote Solomon Schonfeld: His place in History, in 1982 and Kranzler published Thy Brother's Blood in 1987.<sup>69</sup> After that, Kranzler and his colleague Eliezer Gevirtz published the two volumes of To Save a World: Profiles of Holocaust Rescue, in 1991.<sup>70</sup> This book is essentially a collection of essays that describe the leading orthodox activists in different parts of the world throughout the war. These include Weissmandl in Slovakia, Kalmanowitz, Kotler, Silver and Tress in America, Mantello and Sternbuch in Switzerland, Griffel in Turkey, Reichmann in Tangiers and Schonfeld and Grunfeld in England. It presents these activists to the reader in story form, does not include notes or sources and is by no means an academic volume, nor is it intended to be.<sup>71</sup> It portrays each of its subjects uncritically and is for all intents and purposes a list of each of their achievements, which were,

admittedly, many. The purpose of this book, and indeed many of the books related to the Holocaust that have recently been published and are generally aimed at orthodox readers, is for leisure and not academic pursuit.

With regards to the subjects of his book To Save a World, Kranzler writes, "Their great exploits have been neglected or distorted, wittingly and unwittingly, by secular historians, who cannot tolerate any disturbance of their preconceived and distorted stereotype of the real Torah Jew".<sup>72</sup> By making this statement, Kranzler is inferring that To Save a World serves the purpose of countering these conceptions. However, if this were the case, it should have been presented as an academic study and not a storybook. Furthermore, he portrays all secular historians as being 'anti-orthodox', which is clearly not the case. Orthodoxy in general, and orthodox leaders in particular, have been noticeably marginalized in general, and in studies of the Holocaust in particular, but this points to a certain lack of scope and originality common to many modern historians. In fact, Geoffrey Alderman is one of the only modern historians who does justice to the subject of orthodox Jewry in Great Britain.<sup>73</sup> Modern American orthodoxy has also been marginalized, but to a lesser extent because its bolstered growth in such a short time has rendered it a more formidable section of the American-Jewish community. However, it is irresponsible, if not, paranoiac to claim that all secular historians have a preconceived and distorted stereotype of the orthodox Jew. Such an attitude does little to promote an open understanding amongst historians or lay-people in both camps.



It is worthwhile considering the disadvantages of idolising anyone, including the orthodox Jewish leaders active during the Holocaust. A mature readership realises that no person is without his or her failings and those who were active in 'hatzala' during the Holocaust were no exception.<sup>74</sup> Each one had his or her own particular episode of misjudgement or miscalculation. It could be a healthy exercise for readers to be exposed to the challenges faced by these individuals, in order to be given the opportunity to analyse their reactions. Furthermore, the time will come when mature readers will question the veracity of 'one-sided' books and as a result, the good intentions of their authors may very well backfire.

The first scholar to study and report solely on the rescue efforts of the orthodox leadership during the Holocaust, on an academic basis, is Efraim Zuroff who examined the activities of the Vaad-Ha-Hatzala Rescue Committee in America throughout the war years in The Response of Orthodox Jewry in the United States to the Holocaust.<sup>75</sup> Zuroff presents a well-researched account of this organisation, which was practically the only one of its kind in America and initially focused exclusively on the rescue of rabbis and rabbinical students but eventually expanded its efforts to include all Jews.<sup>76</sup> He documents the successes and failures of the Vaad-Ha-Hatzala and discusses the ways that the Vaad dealt with secular organisations, and in particular the Joint Distribution Committee, with regards to the collection of funds.

Zuroff consistently points to the fact that the organisation was essentially separatist and was based on an ideology that gave priority to the rescue of rabbis and their students. The arguments given by its executive, who were the main rabbinic leaders in America at the time, were that by rescuing Torah leaders, they were securing the re-establishment and renewal of Orthodox Judaism after the war.<sup>77</sup> He surmises, however, that with regard to prioritisation “we should never lose sight of its pitfalls and the heavy price paid by others for its success”.<sup>78</sup> Regarding the Vaad’s lack of co-operation with the Joint, Zuroff claims that the overall results would have most likely proven to be more beneficial to the Jewish people on the whole, had the two organisations joined forces.<sup>79</sup>

It is indeed encouraging to finally encounter a qualified orthodox academic researching the potentially personal aspects of the Holocaust in a professional and critical way. However, not all members of the orthodox community are necessarily of the same opinion. The orthodox Jewish press published numerous articles condemning Zuroff shortly after his book was released in 2000. The basic criticism was, that although, in their opinion, Zuroff’s book was basically credible, he also gave numerous interviews around the time of the launch of his book, in which he “maliciously attacked the integrity and good name of *Gedolei Yisrael* (rabbinic leaders) who were at the head of the Vaad Hatzala”. The main object of this accusation was a quote in The Baltimore Sun, in which Zuroff allegedly accused the Vaad-Ha-Hatzala of “sending funds to Torah scholars, who were out of physical harm, to sit and learn Torah, rather than the money being sent to Europe to finance schemes

that could have saved the lives of Jews under Nazi occupation".<sup>80</sup> Zuroff's critics also took issue with his interpretation of the Vaad-Ha-Hatzala's relationship with the Joint Distribution Committee. It must be noted that these reactions in the orthodox press, although quite extensive, were not of an academic or even balanced nature. It is lamentable that some of his critics debased themselves to such an extent that they felt themselves in a position to comment on Zuroff's level of orthodoxy.<sup>81</sup> This is yet another example of orthodox journalists' attempts at romanticising about the past by sidestepping important issues and not confronting them responsibly.

Another academician to study orthodox attempts at rescue, is the aforementioned, Pamela Shatzkes, who discusses the efforts of Rabbi Dr. Solomon Schonfeld of the Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council and Harry Goodman of Agudat Israel in her work on Anglo-Jewish rescue and relief efforts during the war.<sup>82</sup> The main aim of Shatzkes' thesis is to disprove the major criticisms of historians such as Kushner, London, and Bolchover who have researched Anglo-Jewish reactions to the Holocaust. The main feature of her argument is that the British were fighting for their very existence and not a 'Jewish war' per se, and therefore Jewish issues on the Continent were low on the government's agenda. Anglo-Jewish leaders, on the other hand, lacked the diplomatic skills and experience necessary to sway government officials. For this reason, the Anglo-Jewish leadership tried its best to assist the European Jews under the circumstances but faced obstacles that were not of its making and were to a great extent insurmountable. She claims that the achievements of many of the Anglo-

Jewish activists and leaders such as Brodetsky and Schonfeld, and she points to many, are notable, regardless of their practical outcomes, by virtue of the fact that they were able to overcome many of the difficulties that faced them.

Shatzkes devotes a fair amount of her thesis to Schonfeld, the Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council, and, to a lesser extent Goodman. However, a more concise account of their efforts would do them more justice. Because she analyses all of the rescue and refugee organisations in Britain at the time, she is forced to minimise the attention that they each deserve. This is especially the case with regards to Schonfeld who has consistently been marginalized by every historian who has written about him. In her introduction, Shatzkes claims that her thesis "takes issue with the claim that marginal efforts such as Schonfeld's, impugn the integrity and effectiveness of the mainstream organisations, particularly the Board (of Deputies)".<sup>83</sup> I, in fact, take issue with the claim that his efforts were marginal. Schonfeld was a major Jewish leader at the time. He was the rabbi of Adath Yisroel, which was the main ultra-orthodox congregation at the time, the Presiding Rabbi of the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations and the Principal of the Jewish Secondary School Movement. The Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council was a mammoth undertaking and produced major achievements in the fields of relief and rescue, on par with the other relief organisations in Britain at the time – Schonfeld's efforts were clearly not marginal.

The purpose of this thesis is manifold. I have produced a scholarly work based for the most part on original material, that is rich in information but has

hitherto been neglected. As opposed to the approaches of Sompolinsky and Shatzkes that only touch upon various aspects of Anglo-orthodox efforts during the war, and as opposed to the works of Kranzler that are for the most part anecdotal, I present a systematic analysis of the ways that Anglo-orthodox Jewry reacted to the Holocaust considering the many obstacles that faced them. I also examine in detail the purpose and accomplishments of the Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council in Great Britain in ways that resemble Zuroff's analyses of the efforts of the Vaad Ha-Hatzala in the America. I greatly value the importance of historical research and the disciplines attached to it, and recognise my responsibility as a student of history to preserve the veracity of the 'drama and players' that I examine. I present a balanced picture of the evidence, notwithstanding, and as a result of the fact that I am a deeply religious, practicing Jew. I feel that by bringing these two factors together I can force historians to take a more honest, well-balanced look at the issues surrounding orthodox Jewish responses to the Holocaust in Great Britain, and throughout the Free World.

I have chosen to concentrate on the years 1942-1945, years that can be considered the apogee of the Holocaust, for two reasons. Firstly, one would assume that the verified horror stories emanating from Europe would galvanise the Jewish community and its leaders, if not the world at large, to action. I attempt to verify to what extent this was true in Britain, what was done, and if these reactions were sufficient or lacking. Secondly, the obstacles and limitations facing those who were in a position to help were most extreme during this time period, simply because the world had already

been ravaged by war for several years. It is important to examine how, and the extent to which these difficulties were overcome.

A great part of this thesis is devoted to the efforts of Rabbi Dr. Solomon Schonfeld. To a great extent, Schonfeld's activities and the accomplishments of the Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council which he directed, indicate the possibilities and limitations that all orthodox Jews in Britain faced in their attempts to assist Europe's Jews. This work is not meant to disqualify the efforts of the British branch of Agudat Israel, or of Harry Goodman, who was its political secretary. On the contrary, the Agudah's efforts, which were extensive, are mirrored in the work of Schonfeld and his colleagues. It would be necessary to produce a second thesis if one were to examine the work of the Agudah during the Holocaust in detail; I therefore attempt to give an overview of the state of affairs by analysing Schonfeld and his activities on behalf of the European Jews.

As a result of examining the responses of orthodox Jews in Britain to the Holocaust, I hope to shed a different light on wartime and post-war Anglo-orthodox Jewry to the common historical perceptions of them hitherto. The established orthodox community, founded by Rabbi Victor Schonfeld and perpetuated by his son Solomon, was one of the driving forces that made Anglo-Jewry and its institutions what it is today. Orthodox Jewry and its leaders took an active role in assisting their co-religionists in Europe during the war, a role at least on par with their more secular counterparts. The orthodox leadership was not constrained in the same ways that secular

leaders were, however, they realised that they were severely limited in the ways that they could potentially assist their brethren in Nazi-occupied Europe. This was due, in no small measure, to governmental policy, the state of war and their isolation from other activists in America and Europe. Although an atmosphere of active and continual co-operation between Schonfeld and his colleagues and the secular 'camp' did not exist, this was because secular leaders faced the same obstacles as the orthodox in addition to the fact that they were embroiled in communal politics, infighting over Zionism, and concerns over domestic anti-Semitism. Orthodox Jewry therefore devoted much time and effort in preparations for the reconstruction of European Jewry after the war in addition to the assistance that they could realistically render to the Jews in war-torn Europe. The scope and practical accomplishments of many of these efforts are discussed in this thesis.

## NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

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<sup>1</sup> For general historiographical works on the Holocaust see Yehuda Bauer, *The Holocaust in Historical Perspective* (University of Washington Press, Seattle 1978); David Cesarani ed., *The Final Solution: Origins and Implementation* (Routledge, London 1994); Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews 1933-1945* (Penguin, London 1990); Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Holmes & Meier, New York & London 1985); Guido Knopp, *Hitler's Holocaust*, (trans. Angus McGeoch) (Sutton Publishing, Sparkford 2001); Michael R. Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (Penguin, London 1993); David S. Wyman ed., *The World Reacts to the Holocaust* (The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore & London 1996)

<sup>2</sup> See Berel Wein, *Triumph of Survival: The Story of the Jews in the Modern Era 1650-1990* (Shaar Press, New York 1990), pp. 58-60

<sup>3</sup> *Mishna Avot* 5:25; According to this Mishna, the Torah is all-encompassing. Every pursuit, whether intellectual, religious, scientific or the like, can be found and delved into by studying it.

<sup>4</sup> Some examples of educational texts geared to orthodox students are those prepared by the Yad Vashem Education Department; Rabbi Yitzchak Kasnett, *'The Living Memorial'*, *The World That Was: Lithuania, The World That Was: Poland, The World That Was: Hungary/Romania* produced by The Hebrew Academy of Cleveland (Hebrew Academy of Cleveland, Cleveland Heights 1996); Shmuel Burstein, *The War Against G-D and His People: A Guide to the Holocaust for Young People* (Targum Press, Southfield, Michigan 2000)

See Kimmy Caplan, 'Have "Many Lies Accumulated in History Books"?: The Holocaust in Ashkenazi *Haredi* Historical Consciousness in Israel', *Yad Vashem Studies XXIX* (Jerusalem 2001), pp.336-365; Caplan devotes much of this paper to analysing the ways in which *Haredi* Holocaust writings, especially those that are produced for educational purposes, fall short of academic expectations. Caplan neglects to consider the fact that most members of the *Haredi* community, including its rabbinate, have a total disregard and indeed a mistrust of academia. As a result, *Haredi* writers present the Holocaust to readers and students alike, in ways that suit their purposes. Although these authors seldom misconstrue historically verifiable facts, they tend to concentrate on the ideological aspects of the Holocaust as opposed to historical detail. In general, the orthodox establishment depends on secular historians to analyse and record the purely historical aspects of the Holocaust. On page 340, Caplan does assert that with regard to *Haredi* historiography "concerns of the present override allegiance to the historical context of the Holocaust era" although he is more accusatory than understanding of *Haredi* approaches to the study of the Holocaust.

<sup>5</sup> See Dan Michman, 'The Impact of the Holocaust on Religious Jewry', Yisrael Gutman ed., Reprint from *Major Changes Within the Jewish People in the Wake of the Holocaust, Proceedings of the Ninth Yad Vashem International Historical Conference* (Jerusalem 1996), pp. 659-707; Netty C. Gross., 'Why Did G-D Do This to Us?: Ultra-Orthodox Jews Finally Grapple with the Holocaust', *The Jerusalem Report*, 8 May 2000; For orthodox ideological responses see Yoel Schwartz and Yitzchak Goldstein, *Shoah: A Jewish Perspective on Tragedy in the Context of the Holocaust* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1990)

<sup>6</sup> Emil L. Fackenheim, *The Jewish Return Into History: Reflections in the Age of Auschwitz and a New Jerusalem* (Schocken Books, New York 1978), p. 29

<sup>7</sup> See Yoel Schwartz, and Yitzchak Goldstein, *Shoah: A Jewish Perspective on Tragedy in the Context of the Holocaust* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1990), p. 36; In contrast to the view that 'silence' is the only response to the Holocaust, Rabbi Zvi Markovitch, the author of *B'ntivot Ha'emunah*, writes:

"Why, then, have we formed a conspiracy of silence, evading discussion and thought? Perhaps there is only one explanation: We are afraid. The tragedy is too enormous for man's feelings and powers of expression. It exceeds human comprehension, and its causes lie beyond the periphery of our understanding." Ibid p.23

<sup>8</sup> Martin Buber, *Eclipse of G-D*, p. 89, as cited in Bill Bruinooge, 'The Holocaust As A Challenge to Belief', *Yad Vashem Studies XV* (Jerusalem 1983), p.195

<sup>9</sup> Ibid; Elie Wiesel, on the other hand, continually probes the parameters of faith and doubt and does not find a point where "questioning can cease and a firm conviction take over, either in a rejection of faith or in capitulation to a pre-Auschwitz belief". (Ibid p. 197)

<sup>10</sup> A great number of "Yizkor Books" are kept in the Holocaust Museum on Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

<sup>11</sup> See Moshe Prager, *Sparks of Glory: Inspiring Episodes of Jewish Spiritual Resistance by Israel's Leading Chronicler of Holocaust Courage* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1985), Introduction by Rabbi Nosson Scherman, pp. xix-xx

<sup>12</sup> See Kimmy Caplan, 'Have "Many Lies Accumulated in History Books"?: The Holocaust in Ashkenazi *Haredi* Historical Consciousness in Israel', *Yad Vashem Studies XXIX* (Jerusalem 2001), pp. 321-375; On p. 322, he quotes Mordechai Neugershal who states:



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" 'And Aaron was silent'. [We should] sit on the ground, cry, rend our clothing, and be silent. But as long as there are people who will talk and attempt to explain that the events of the Holocaust contradict the faith and the Bible – we'll speak out, too. And when we'll speak, we'll have what to say". (Mordechai Neugershal, 'The Holocaust: Judaism from a Different Angle', undated videocassette, PRC, VT 439)

<sup>13</sup> Kimmy Caplan, 'Have "Many Lies Accumulated in History Books"?: The Holocaust in Ashkenazi *Haredi* Historical Consciousness in Israel', *Yad Vashem Studies XXIX* (Jerusalem 2001), p. 328; See also Yaffa Eliach, 'The Holocaust: A Response to Catastrophe Within a Traditional Jewish Framework', Gutman and Grief eds., *The Historiography of the Holocaust Period, Proceedings of the Fifth Yad Vashem International Historical Conference* (Jerusalem 1983), pp. 722-726 and Dan Michman, 'The Impact of the Holocaust on Religious Jewry', Yisrael Gutman, ed., *Major Changes Within the Jewish People in the Wake of the Holocaust, Proceedings of the Ninth Yad Vashem International Historical Conference* (Jerusalem 1996), pp. 699-701

<sup>14</sup> Kimmy Caplan, 'Have "Many Lies Accumulated in History Books"?: The Holocaust in Ashkenazi *Haredi* Historical Consciousness in Israel', *Yad Vashem Studies XXIX* (Jerusalem 2001), pp. 328-329

<sup>15</sup> See Yoel Schwartz and Yitzchak Goldstein, *Shoah: A Jewish Perspective on Tragedy in the Context of the Holocaust* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1990), pp.16-17; See also Chaim Feuerman and Yaakov Feitman, ' "Holocaust": A Rosh Yeshiva's Response [Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner]' in Nisson Wolpin ed., *A Path Through the Ashes: Penetrating Analyses and Inspiring Stories of the Holocaust from a Torah Perspective* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1986), pp. 39-55

<sup>16</sup> Leib Langfus, the rabbinical judge (dayan) of Makow-Mazowiecki, Poland, and a member of the Sonderkommando in Auschwitz, wrote about the rabbi's wife from Strapiwka who arrived at the gas chambers of Auschwitz from Koszo, Hungary, in May 1944. According to his account, she asked G-D to forgive the Rebbe of Belz who had reassured the Hungarian Jews regarding their fate, while he himself fled to Palestine. (Nathan Cohen, 'Diaries of the Sonderkommandos', *Yad Vashem Studies XX* (Jerusalem 1990), p. 290)

<sup>17</sup> It should also be noted that both the Rabbi of Ger, who left Poland in the spring of 1940 and the Rabbi of Belz, who left for Palestine via Rumania and Turkey in 1944, did not leave their communities intact. In fact, when these rabbis left war-torn Europe, their courts had been totally disbanded and their followers who were still alive maintained little formal connections with each other. The martyrdom of these two rabbis, as a case in point, would have served little material purpose.

<sup>18</sup> Irving Greenberg, *Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity and Modernity After the Holocaust in Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era?* as cited in Bill Bruinooge, 'The Holocaust As A Challenge to Belief', *Yad Vashem Studies XV* (Jerusalem 1983), p. 200

<sup>19</sup> Emil L. Fackenheim, *The Jewish Return Into History: Reflections in the Age of Auschwitz and a New Jerusalem* (Schocken Books, New York 1978), p. 30

<sup>20</sup> Ibid p. 31

<sup>21</sup> See Haim Nirel, *The Haredim and the Holocaust: Ultra-Orthodox Accusations of Zionist Responsibility for the Holocaust* (Hebrew) (Carmel Publications, Jerusalem 1997), pp. 72-108; Dina Porat, ' 'Amalek's Accomplices': Blaming Zionism for the Holocaust – Anti-Zionist Ultra-Orthodoxy in Israel During the 1980's', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 27 (Sage, London 1992), pp. 695-729; See also Meier Sompolinsky, 'Jewish Institutions in the World and the *Yishuv* as Reflected in the Holocaust Historiography of the Ultra-Orthodox', Yisrael Gutman and Gideon Grief eds., *The Historiography of the Holocaust Period, Proceedings of the Fifth Yad Vashem International Historical Conference* (Jerusalem 1988), pp. 609-631

<sup>22</sup> See Joel Teitelbaum, *Vayoel Moshe* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem Press, New York 1985); This ruling is based on a passage in *Talmud Ketubot* 111b

<sup>23</sup> See Amos Goldberg, 'The Holocaust in the Ultra Orthodox Press' (Hebrew), *Contemporary Jewry XI-XII* (Jerusalem 1988), pp. 182-194; See also Yoel Schwartz and Yitzchak Goldstein, *Shoah: A Jewish Perspective on Tragedy in the Context of the Holocaust* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1990), pp. 127-132, regarding Teitelbaum's theory and its antithesis as expounded by Rabbi Yissachar Shlomo Teichtal, the author of *Em Habanim S'meicha*,

<sup>24</sup> See 'A Whirling Storm: Lecture on Ethics by Our Master, Rabbi Elazar Menachem Shach', *Yated Ne'eman*, 26 December 1990

<sup>25</sup> See Netty C. Gross, 'Why Did G-D Do this to Us?: Ultra-Orthodox Jews Finally Grapple with the Holocaust', *The Jerusalem Report*, 8 May 2000

<sup>26</sup> See Kimmy Caplan, 'Have "Many Lies Accumulated in History Books"?: The Holocaust in Ashkenazi *Haredi* Historical Consciousness in Israel', *Yad Vashem Studies XXIX* (Jerusalem 2001), pp. 324-325

<sup>27</sup> Ibid p. 324

<sup>28</sup> See David S. Wyman ed., *The World Reacts to the Holocaust* (The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore & London 1996)

<sup>29</sup> See Peter Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Imperial Germany and Austria* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1988); Michael R. Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (Penguin, London 1993); Uriel Tal, *Christians and Jews in Germany: Religion, Politics and Ideology in the Second Reich 1870-1914* (trans. Noah Jacobs) (Ithaca, New York 1975); Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews 1933-1945* (Penguin, London 1990); Sarah Ann Gordon, *Hitler, Germans and the 'Jewish Question'* (Princeton University Press, Princeton Guildford 1984); Peter Merkl, *Political Violence Under the Swastika: 581 Early Nazis* (Princeton University Press, Princeton 1975); William Sheridan Allen, *The Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town 1930-1945* (Franklin Watts, New York & London 1984); Richard F. Hamilton, *Who Voted for Hitler?* (Princeton University Press, Princeton Guildford 1982)

<sup>30</sup> See David S. Wyman ed., *The World Reacts to the Holocaust* (The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore & London 1996), for an extensive review of all of the major pre-war European Jewish communities and how each of them fared during the Holocaust.

<sup>31</sup> Netty C. Gross, 'Why Did G-D Do This to Us?: Ultra-Orthodox Jews Finally Grapple with the Holocaust', *The Jerusalem Report*, 8 May 2000

<sup>32</sup> See Yoel Schwartz and Yitzchak Goldstein, *Shoah: A Jewish Perspective on Tragedy in the Context of the Holocaust* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1990), pp.92-99

<sup>33</sup> At a meeting of the Reichstag, on 30 January 1939, which was the anniversary of his ascension to power, Hitler stated:

"And one more thing I would like now to state on this day, memorable perhaps not only for us Germans. I have often been a prophet in my life and was generally laughed at. During my struggle for power, the Jews primarily received with laughter my prophecies that I would someday assume the leadership of the state and thereby of the entire *Voik* and then, among many other things, achieve a solution to the Jewish problem. I suppose that meanwhile the then resounding laughter of Jewry in Germany is now choking in their throats. Today I will be a prophet again: If international financial Jewry within Europe and abroad should succeed once more in plunging the peoples into a world war, then the consequences will be not the Bolshevisation of the world and therewith a victory of Jewry, but on the contrary, the destruction of the Jewish race in Europe." (*Documents on the Holocaust*, eds., Yitzchak Arad, Yisrael Gutman, Abraham Margalit (Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 1993), pp.132-135)

<sup>34</sup> See Ruth Lichtenstein, *Testimony: The Destruction of European Jewry* (Hebrew) (Rabbi Isaac Meir Levin Institute, Jerusalem 2000), p.14

<sup>35</sup> See Kimmy Caplan, 'Have "Many Lies Accumulated In History Books"?: The Holocaust in Ashkenazi *Haredi* Historical Consciousness in Israel', *Yad Vashem Studies XXIX* (Jerusalem 2001), pp.335-336

<sup>36</sup> For an overview of works that discuss the governmental and communal responses to the Holocaust from a *Haredi* point of view, see Joseph Elias, 'Heroic Efforts, Fatal Failings' in Nisson Wolpin ed., *A Path Through the Ashes: Penetrating Analyses and Inspiring Stories of the Holocaust from a Torah Perspective* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1986), pp. 258-267

<sup>37</sup> See also Richard Breitman and Alan M. Kraut, *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry 1933-1945* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1987); Henry L. Feingold, *Politics of Rescue: The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust 1938-1945* (New York Holocaust Library, New York 1970); Saul S. Friedman, *No Haven for the Oppressed: United States Policy Towards Jewish Refugees 1938-1945* (Wayne State University Press, Detroit 1973); M. Penkower, *The Jews Were Expendable: Free World Diplomacy and the Holocaust* (University of Illinois Press, Urbana 1983); David S. Wyman, *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis 1938-1941* (Pantheon, New York 1984); David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust 1941-1945* (Pantheon, New York 1984)

<sup>38</sup> A.J. Sherman, *Island Refuge: Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich 1933-1939* (Frank Cass Publishers, London 1994), pp. 264, 267, 269-272; See also Herbert A. Strauss, 'Jewish Emigration from Germany: Nazi Policies and Jewish Responses', *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book XXV* (London 1980), pp. 175-176

<sup>39</sup> Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* (Leicester University Press, London & New York 1999)

<sup>40</sup> Bernard Wasserstein, 'Patterns of Jewish Leadership in Great Britain During the Nazi Era' in Randolph L. Braham ed., *Jewish Leadership During the Nazi Era: Patterns of Behaviour in the Free World* (New York 1985), p.34

<sup>41</sup> This issue was discussed by Louise London at the launch of her book *Whitehall and the Jews 1933-1948* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000) at UCL, London, on 15 March 2000.

<sup>42</sup> Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933-1948: British Immigration and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000)

<sup>43</sup> Some examples of anti-Semitic sentiments and statements in government circles are:

PRO CO 733/444/75872/102/3 *Minutes* by Bennett, 18 April 1941, J.S. Bennett, one of the Colonial Office's Middle East experts, said regarding a statement by Rabbi Stephen Wise: "The Jews have done nothing but add to our

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difficulties by propaganda and deeds since the war began...The morally censorious attitude of the United States in general to other people's affairs has long attracted attention, but when it is coupled with unscrupulous Zionist 'sob-stuff' and misrepresentation, it is very hard to bear"; PRO CO 733/426/75872/16 *Minutes* by Shuckburgh, 27 April 1940, Sir John Shuckburgh, the Deputy Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, writing of the Jews in Palestine remarked: "I am convinced that in their hearts they hate us and have always hated us; they hate all Gentiles... So little do they care for Great Britain as compared with Zionism that they cannot even keep their hands off illegal immigration, which they must realise is a very serious embarrassment to us at a time when we are fighting for our very existence". As cited by Bernard Wasserstein in *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* (Leicester University Press, London & New York 1999), p. 45

<sup>44</sup> William D. Rubinstein, *The Myth of Rescue: Why the Democracies Could Not have Saved More Jews from the Nazis* (Routledge, London & New York 1997), p. x

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>46</sup> See Peter Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory* (Bloomsbury, London 2001)

<sup>47</sup> Michael Ber Weissmandl, *Min Hameitzar (From the Depths)* (Hebrew) (No date or place of publication given – reportedly published by the Nitra Yeshiva, Mount Kisco, New York); See also Abraham Fuchs, *The Unheeded Cry* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1984) which is essentially a biography of Weissmandl. For more information on Weissmandl see Chapter 3, p.124, Chapter 4, p. 197

<sup>48</sup> See Haskel Lookstein, *Were We Our Brother's Keepers?: The Public Response of American Jewry to the Holocaust 1938-1944* (Hartmore House, New York 1985); Raphael Medoff, *The Deafening Silence: American Jewish Leaders and the Holocaust* (Shapolsky Publishers, New York 1987); Monty Penkower, *The Jews Were Expendable: Free World Diplomacy and the Holocaust* (University of Illinois Press, Urbana 1983); David S. Wyman, *Paper Walls: America and the Refugee Crisis 1938-1941* (Pantheon, New York 1985); David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust 1941-1945* (Pantheon, New York 1984)

<sup>49</sup> See Pamela Joy Shatzkes, *Anglo-Jewish Rescue and Relief Efforts 1938-1944* (PhD Thesis, UCL-subsequently published as *Holocaust and Rescue: Impotent or Indifferent? Anglo-Jewry 1938-1945* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2002))

<sup>50</sup> Norman Bentwich, *They Found Refuge: An Account of British Jewry's Work for the Victims of Nazi Oppression* (Cresset Press, London 1956)

<sup>51</sup> See John Marlowe, *The Seat of Pilate: An Account of the Palestine Mandate* (Cresset Press, London 1959); Christopher Skyes, *Cross-Roads to Israel 1917-1948* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1973)

<sup>52</sup> Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* (Leicester University Press, London & New York 1999), p.313; See also Bernard Wasserstein, 'The Myth of 'Jewish Silence' ', *Midstream*, Vol. 26 (August-September 1980)

<sup>53</sup> John Marlowe, *The Seat of Pilate: An Account of the Palestine Mandate* (Cresset Press, London 1959), p.171

<sup>54</sup> Christopher Skyes, *Cross-Roads to Israel 1917-1948* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1973), pp. 271-272

<sup>55</sup> Michael Ber Weissmandl, *Min Hameitzar (From the Depths)* (Hebrew) No date or place of publication given – reportedly published by the Nitra Yeshiva, Mount Kisco, New York; This accusation is a major feature of this work.

<sup>56</sup> Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* (Leicester University Press, London & New York 1999), pp.312-313

<sup>57</sup> Tony Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice: Anti-Semitism in British Society During the Second World War* (Manchester University Press, Manchester 1989)

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid* pp.179-180

<sup>59</sup> Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination: A Social and Cultural History* (Blackwell, Oxford 1994) (see pp. 145, 191, 197-201)

<sup>60</sup> Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994)

<sup>61</sup> See Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1998), pp. 295-296, 302

<sup>62</sup> Louise London, 'Jewish Refugees and British Government Policy 1930-1940' in David Cesarani ed., *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1990), pp. 163-190; Louise London, 'British Immigration Control Procedures and Jewish Refugees 1933-1939' in W. E. Mosse co-ed., *Second Chance: Two Centuries of German Speaking Jews in the United Kingdom* (Tubingen 1991)

<sup>63</sup> Pamela Shatzkes, *Anglo-Jewish Rescue and Relief Efforts 1938-1944* (PhD Thesis, UCL), p. 12

<sup>64</sup> Meier Sompolsky, *The British Government and the Holocaust: The Failure of Anglo-Jewish Leadership?* (Sussex Academic Press, Brighton & Portland 1999)

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- <sup>65</sup> Ibid p. 4
- <sup>66</sup> Ibid pp. 3-5
- <sup>67</sup> Amy Zahl Gottlieb, *Men of Vision: Anglo-Jewry's Aid to Victims of the Nazi Regime 1933-1945* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1998), pp. 196-197
- <sup>68</sup> Ibid
- <sup>69</sup> David Kranzler and Gertrude Hirschler eds., *Solomon Schonfeld: His Page in History* (Judaica Press, New York 1982); David Kranzler, *Thy Brother's Blood: The Orthodox Jewish Response During the Holocaust* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1987)
- <sup>70</sup> David Kranzler and Eliezer Gevitz, *To Save a World: Profiles of Holocaust Rescue* (Vols. 1-2) (CIS Publishers, Lakewood 1991)
- <sup>71</sup> *Thy Brother's Blood* is a more thorough portrayal of orthodox rescue efforts during the war. It does include footnotes but not a list of sources. Kranzler also wrote *Japanese, Nazis and Jews: The Jewish Refugee Community of Shanghai 1938-1945* (Yeshiva University Press, New York 1976) and *Heroine of Rescue: The Incredible Story of Recha Sternbuch, who Saved Thousands from the Holocaust* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1984) which he produced as a joint effort with Joseph Friedenson. The first scholarly paper devoted to the role of orthodox activists during the war was Kranzler's paper entitled 'Orthodox Ends, Non-orthodox Means' in the Goldberg Commission Report titled *American Jewry During the Holocaust*, in 1983.
- <sup>72</sup> David Kranzler and Eliezer Gevitz, *To Save a World: Profiles of Holocaust Rescue* (CIS Publishers, Lakewood 1991), Vol. 1, p. 12
- <sup>73</sup> Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1998), pp. 364-369, 389-390, 391-392, 395, 404
- <sup>74</sup> *Hatzala*, the Hebrew for 'rescue', is the word used to describe the multifarious activities of orthodox Jews in the assistance and particularly rescue of their brethren in war-torn Europe (hence the American orthodox organisation for the rescue of Jews was called the Vaad Ha-Hatzala i.e. 'Rescue Committee').
- <sup>75</sup> Efraim Zuroff, *The Response of Orthodox Jewry in the United States to the Holocaust: The Activities of the Vaad-Ha-Hatzala Rescue Committee 1939-1945* (Yeshiva University Press, New York 2000)
- <sup>76</sup> The Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council also had a branch in New York run by Moses Schonfeld.
- <sup>77</sup> Efraim Zuroff, *The Response of Orthodox Jewry in the United States to the Holocaust: The Activities of the Vaad-Ha-Hatzala Rescue Committee 1939-1945* (Yeshiva University Press, New York 2000), p. 35; See Eli Lederhendler, 'Of Integrity, Rescue and Splinter Groups' (Review of Zuroff's *The Response of Orthodox Jewry in the United States to the Holocaust: The Activities of the Vaad-Ha-Hatzala Rescue Committee 1939-1945*), *Yad Vashem Studies XXVIII* (Jerusalem 2000), p. 385
- <sup>78</sup> Efraim Zuroff, *The Response of Orthodox Jewry to the Holocaust: The Activities of the Vaad-Ha-Hatzala Rescue Committee 1939-1945* (Yeshiva University Press, New York 2000), pp.285-287
- <sup>79</sup> Ibid p.287
- <sup>80</sup> *The Baltimore Sun*, 2 May 2000
- <sup>81</sup> See *Hamodia*, English, American editions, 23 June 2000; Rabbi Yosef Friedenson, the author of the article, writes:
- "The fact that Zuroff wears a *yarmulke* does not impress me. I never questioned Zuroff's level of Jewish observance. That is between him and his Maker. Both his *yarmulke* and his *Yiddishkeit* (Jewishness) are irrelevant to our discussion". In addition to these overtly sarcastic comments, he ends his article by stating: "In answer to the criticisms of his statements, Zuroff now tries to cover up his spreading of lies with articles and statements lecturing the Orthodox World on how to behave, how to think and how to act for the good of *Klal Yisrael* (The Jewish People). To this, let me say that there is very little in Zuroff's past that qualifies him to lead us. A PhD from Tel Aviv University and even a good book is far from enough to qualify him for this role he has taken upon himself".
- <sup>82</sup> Pamela Shatzkes, *Anglo-Jewish Rescue and Relief Efforts 1938-1944* (PhD Thesis, UCL)
- <sup>83</sup> Ibid pp. 14-15

## CHAPTER ONE

### ANGLO-JEWRY AND ANGLO-ORTHODOXY IN 1942

In order to analyse the responses of orthodox Jews in Britain to the Holocaust, it is necessary to examine the structure of the Anglo-Jewish communities in the run-up to and during the war. The Anglo-Jewish leadership has often been portrayed as being preoccupied with inner communal politics, debates about Zionism and fears of domestic anti-Semitism. It is therefore necessary to establish to what extent this was true and how this affected orthodox leaders and their relationships with their secular counterparts. It is even more essential that the extent of the connections between the orthodox and secular leaders be addressed. On the other end of the spectrum, lay-members of the community were perhaps most affected by 'street anti-Semitism'. The responses of the community on the whole were dictated by the Jews' own perception of Jewry in British society at the time, fears of anti-Semitism and the examples set by the Anglo-Jewish leadership.

#### COMMUNAL AFFILIATION

For the most part, the Anglo Jewish community in 1942, which was comprised of an estimated 300,000 persons, defined itself as a religious community, and affiliation within the community invariably took the form of synagogue

membership. This was voluntary, however most Jews felt obliged to be *synagogue members*.<sup>1</sup>

Culturally, worldwide Jewry was, and still is, divided into two distinct communities; the *Ashkenazim* who originate from Central and Eastern Europe and the *Sephardim* who consider themselves the descendents of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews who were expelled in 1492-3. Both of these communities were already established in Britain well before the period of our study, the Sephardic congregations being the forerunners of the Ashkenazic. The practical differences between these two groups are essentially socio-cultural and each community uses a different prayer rite. However for the most part, even the orthodox factions of these two groups were by then well integrated into British society. Although there were sizable Sephardic communities in Britain at the time, these were centred in London and only represented a minority of the overall community.

The largest number of Jews in Britain were of Eastern European origin, many of whom were participants in the exodus of millions who had left countries in Europe during the latter part of the nineteenth century, originally bound for the United States.<sup>2</sup> In fact, most of the Jews among the immigrants who travelled via British ports, paused in Britain only briefly before continuing on their journeys. An estimated 120,000 remained in Britain and made it their home, many of whom had initially planned on emigrating to the United States but were unable to because they lacked the funds. Others had lost contact with family members that had preceded them.<sup>3</sup> Although most of the Jewish immigrants in Britain were of Eastern European origin, those who hailed from Germany more

easily adapted to English culture and the Anglo-Jewish way of life, and therefore took a greater role in communal politics.

A majority of the immigrant Jews who made Britain their home, crowded into the existing Jewish quarter of Whitechapel, in the Borough of Stepney on the north bank of the River Thames, otherwise known as London's East End. There, they were in close proximity to each other and occupied themselves with their primary occupations of tailoring, cigar and cigarette making, boot and shoe making and the furniture industry.<sup>4</sup> During the period of our study, Jewish communities were also becoming well established in North London (Stamford Hill), Northwest London (Hampstead, Golders Green, Southgate and Edgware) and in East London (Ilford). Small numbers of the newcomers migrated to the Leylands District of Leeds, the Redbank District of Manchester, or to other towns in the Midlands and the north of England. Still others settled in Scotland and Wales, many following the pathways already cleared for them by friends and relatives.<sup>5</sup> London Jewry took a predominant role in the shaping of the affairs of Anglo-Jewry. This was due to the fact that, historically, London always had the largest Jewish community and its Jews enjoyed a relatively higher economic status than those living in the Provinces. However, at times, some provincial communities proved to be fiercely independent, precisely because they resented their co-religionists in London interfering in their affairs.<sup>6</sup>

With regards to religious observance, it was often difficult to differentiate between those who considered themselves orthodox because of their synagogal affiliation and those who were orthodox insofar as their adherence to the strict codes of Jewish law. The United Synagogue which considered itself

orthodox and whose constitution was based on *halacha*, or Jewish law, formed the base for Anglo-Jewish affiliation. This was unlike the Jewish communities in America, which were not centralized, and for the most part where each synagogue was an entity onto itself. Many United Synagogue members did not adhere to *halacha* but considered themselves orthodox solely because of their membership.

The Reform Congregation, founded in 1840-1, and the Liberal Movement, started by Claude G. Montefiore in 1902, viewed themselves as the progressive elements of British Jewry. These communities were relatively fledgling and represented only a very small minority of the community. Similarly, the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations, henceforth to be referred to as UOHC, which represented the ultra-orthodox community, was a relatively new organisation, first established by Rabbi Victor Schonfeld in 1926.<sup>7</sup> According to its manifesto, it was established to preserve traditional Judaism i.e. as opposed to its rival the United Synagogue, which, although being governed by *halacha*, was seen to be lax in certain aspects of orthodox observance.<sup>8</sup> During the time of our study, the Union comprised 54 affiliated synagogues, that served approximately 5000 families.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to the United Synagogue, the Federation of Synagogues was an umbrella organisation of synagogues, although it tended to be more traditionally orthodox in nature.<sup>10</sup> The Federation was established in 1887 by Samuel Montagu who amalgamated many of the numerous fraternities (*chevras*) that had been set up by Eastern European Jews in the East End of London. This was felt necessary in order to wean the Jewish working classes away from



these *chevras*, newly forming trade unions and anarchist meeting places, by providing them with small, orderly places of worship.<sup>11</sup> During World War II, 69 synagogues and approximately 64,000 Jews were affiliates of the Federation.<sup>12</sup> Membership in both the United Synagogue and the Federation of Synagogues combined, accounted for some forty percent of religious affiliation in London where the majority of Jews lived.<sup>13</sup>

Aside from the well established United Synagogue and the Federation of Synagogues, there were also a number of small prayer and study houses (*batei midrash*) that had been established by Eastern European immigrants from the turn of the century.<sup>14</sup> These *batei midrash* were often named after, and followed the customs of the towns and cities in Eastern Europe from which they originated. The majority of the members of these prayer houses were ultra-orthodox, however membership was not an established criteria for those who prayed in them. For the most part, they were informal, and regular members were only too pleased when the *halachically* required quorum of men was reached. Membership dues invariably became an issue only before the High Holidays when most Jews congregated in the synagogues where they were unofficially members and felt most comfortable.

Generally, members of the *batei midrash* felt an affinity to the synagogues and members of the Union of Orthodox Congregations. This was primarily due to the fact that they were strictly religious and shared a common outlook with regards to education. However, to a certain extent, the two communities were culturally very different. For the most part, members of the Union were of Western European origin and were, if not sought to be accepted members of

British society. *Batei midrash* members, on the other hand were of Eastern European origin and were generally satisfied, if not actively interested in preserving their “old world” customs and culture.

Most provincial synagogues operated independently and did not have a formal affiliation to any of the larger religious bodies. However, they were predominately orthodox in nature and often sought assistance and guidance from their counterparts in London. It should also be noted that during the period of our study, there was a sizable influx of Jews from London living temporarily in the provinces due to the ‘blitz’. Therefore, some who were active members of religious organisations based in London shared a pivotal role in the shaping of provincial synagogues and communities during their domicile in the provinces.

Charity and a sense of responsibility for one’s co-religionists is a basic precept in Judaism. For this reason, members of the well-established and financially successful families, informally known as the Cousinhood, created the London Jewish Board of Guardians as early as 1859. This organisation, with its attendant institutions, provided a measure of relief for destitute Jews. Its directors also built Jewish day schools in London’s East End and in other districts, and made religious and secular education available to large numbers of the immigrants’ children.<sup>15</sup> To some extent, the purpose of these schools was to guarantee the speedy anglicisation of the immigrant families. The Anglo-Jewish ‘aristocracy’ sought to anglicise the European Jews in order to minimise domestic anti-Jewish feeling, a phenomenon that they contributed to the fact that many of the immigrants were overtly ‘Jewish’ and did not fit into the ‘mould’ of their adoptive country. Some members of the Cousinhood were ashamed of

those Jews who were not yet fluent in English and were still too attached to the 'shtetl mentality' of Europe. It was felt that these Jews set a bad example for Judaism in general, and their own image as anglicised, prosperous Jews, in particular.<sup>16</sup>

By far, the United Synagogue dominated the Anglo-Jewish religious structure. For the most part, this was due to the size of its membership in comparison to the other religious bodies and Anglo-Jewry's tendency towards centralisation. This tendency gained its impetus from the more influential members of the community and to an extent mirrored British society's confidence in the central institutions of the monarchy and the Church of England.<sup>17</sup> The United Synagogue, or at least its lay-leaders were responsible for filling Anglo-Jewry's most prominent position, that of the Chief Rabbi.

The Chief Rabbi was the acknowledged representative of British and Commonwealth Jewry, at state, public and ceremonial functions. This role was undisputed amongst the varying factions of British Jewry. Many United Synagogue and provincial rabbis and lay-leaders sought his guidance with regards to the practical administration of their congregations. He was also the official head of the London Beth Din (Rabbinical Court) but was seldom consulted in matters of practical *halacha* (Jewish law).

The Chief Rabbi throughout the period of this study was Rabbi Dr. Joseph Herman Hertz.<sup>18</sup> Hertz was born in 1872 in Rebrin, which at that time was in Austro-Hungary but is now in Slovakia. His father, Simon Hertz, a well-known Hebrew writer and pedagogue, migrated with his sons to America and earned a

livelihood there as a teacher. Joseph Hertz received his secular education at the New York City College, where he obtained his B.A. in 1891, and at Columbia University where he graduated as a Doctor of Philosophy in 1894. In the same year, he received his Rabbinical Diploma, having studied for seven years at the Jewish Theological Seminary of New York, where he was, in fact, the first graduate.

His first ministerial appointment was in Syracuse, New York, in 1894, where he became the rabbi of Congregation Adath Jeshurun. Thereafter, in 1898, he accepted the post of rabbi at the Witerwatersrand Old Hebrew Congregation in Johannesburg where he served until 1899 when he was expelled for being anti-Boer.

Hertz returned after the Boer Republics were defeated and incorporated into the new colony of South Africa, but left again in 1911 when he took up an appointment as the rabbi of the Orach Chaim Congregation in New York. He was elected as the Chief Rabbi in February 1913 and took up the appointment in April.<sup>19</sup> He occupied this position until his death on 14 January 1946.

According to his obituary published in the Jewish Chronicle, Hertz earned himself the unchallenged title of "Jewry's Fighter-scholar" during his years in service.<sup>20</sup> This was due to his unflinching denunciation of the Boer Government, white slave trafficking in South Africa, the Jewish white slave trade and the "yellow ticket system". He was an accomplished orator, and, although diplomatic, as anyone in his position had to be, had fixed ideas with regards to religious observance and Zionism, which he promoted whenever

possible. He was invariably at odds with the lay-leadership of the United Synagogue with regards to its laxity in religious observance and with various members of the Board of Deputies and the Anglo-Jewish Association with regards to the Balfour Declaration and Zionism in general. He was a staunch believer in the Zionist ideal as long as it was firmly based on authentic Judaism and as a result, roundly indicted irreligion in Palestine.<sup>21</sup> He was also the president of the Mizrachi Organisation of Great Britain and Ireland.<sup>22</sup>

Rabbi Dr. Hertz published books that literally became communal institutions and even to this day symbolise Anglo-Jewry's religious institutions to a certain extent. These include Pentateuch and Haftorahs with Commentaries and The Chief Rabbi's Prayer Book. He also published the well-known Book of Jewish Thoughts, which was issued at first for the use of Jewish servicemen during the First World War but became extremely popular amongst Jews and non-Jews alike thereafter.<sup>23</sup>

The President of the United Synagogue, and Hertz's main adversary, was the eminently successful industrialist and managing director of the Shell Oil Company, Sir Robert Waley-Cohen.<sup>24</sup> Waley-Cohen was a communal leader of long standing who, although he was the president of an orthodox establishment, had ties with the Liberal and Reform movements in Britain at the time. In fact, part of the reason for his friction with the Chief Rabbi was due to the latter's denunciation of those congregations. Waley-Cohen also did not approve of the extent of the Chief Rabbi's authority and sought to constrain the Chief Rabbi's power whenever possible.<sup>25</sup>

The main secular representative institution of Anglo-Jewry was the Board of Deputies of British Jews, henceforth to be referred to as the BoD, which included members that represented synagogues, friendly societies and other communal organisations. Zionists and the children of European immigrants to Britain gradually dominated the BoD and its influence derived from its broad communal representation. This was unlike the Anglo-Jewish Association whose strength lay mainly in the considerable funds at its disposal and its elite membership.<sup>26</sup> The Board was founded in 1760 and gradually developed a committee structure to deal with all civil matters affecting Jewry. By 1942, the board had established separate committees that dealt with a wide spectrum of affairs including Law, Parliament and General Purposes, Foreign Affairs, Jewish Defence, Finance, Palestine, Aliens, Charities, Registration and Education.<sup>27</sup> The Board held plenary sessions each month and was presided over by a president who was elected for a four-year term. The President of the Board chaired the executive and plenary sessions and was its representative at public occasions.<sup>28</sup>

In 1940, the Board had 387 deputies representing 235 synagogues, twelve colonial communities and sixteen institutions (including the Anglo-Jewish Association, the Federation of Synagogues, the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations and the United Synagogue). By 1945, the Board had grown to include 459 deputies representing 241 synagogues, six colonial communities and twenty-seven institutions.<sup>29</sup> In 1939, the Board elected its first Zionist president, Selig Brodetsky, who was a prominent member of the World Zionist Executive Committee.<sup>30</sup> This, in essence ended the hegemony of the scions of

the veteran, non-Zionist families who generally had control over the Board's policies and decisions.<sup>31</sup>

Brodetsky, who was a professor of mathematics and aeronautics at Leeds University, succeeded Neville Laski who had recently left the post. Laski had enjoyed the support of the Rothschilds of New Court (the location of the Rothschild Bank), because of his non-Zionist stance.<sup>32</sup> In fact, before the Board of Deputy elections on 17 December 1939, Anthony de Rothschild, the Jewish community activist of the family, i.e. the Cousinhood, and the family's candidate to head the Board, had sought Weizmann's endorsement but was turned down because of his lack of support for the Zionist cause.<sup>33</sup>

The aforementioned Anglo-Jewish Association, was founded in 1871 and lay firmly in the tradition started by the French Alliance Israelite Universelle, namely of philanthropic help to Jews abroad. Its constitution stated its aims as firstly "to obtain protection for Jews abroad who may suffer in consequence of being Jews", and secondly "to advance the social, moral, and intellectual welfare of Jews in backward lands".<sup>34</sup> The Association had a distinguished membership which included most of the established wealthy families of Anglo-Jewry, and its prestige derived from this factor rather than the size of its membership, which was in fact relatively small.<sup>35</sup> In the early 1940's, Leonard Stein, a moderate Zionist, was the president of the Anglo-Jewish Association. Stein was active in British Jewish political life and during World War I, in his capacity as Chaim Weizmann's secretary, was involved in the events leading to the Balfour Declaration.<sup>36</sup>

The Anglo-Jewish Association worked in partnership with the BoD, first as the Conjoint Foreign Committee from 1878 until 1917 and then as the Joint Foreign Committee until 1943. Thereafter, the Joint Foreign Committee was renamed the Foreign Affairs Committee. In late 1939, an Executive Committee began convening on an ad hoc basis to deal with issues arising from the war, consisting of the President of the BoD as chairman, three co-opted members and former members of the Board. These included Sir Osmond d'Avigdor Goldshmid, Neville Laski, Lionel Cohen, Sir Robert Waley-Cohen, Anthony de Rothschild, Leonard Stein and Lord Swaythling.<sup>37</sup>

The Joint Foreign Committee of the BoD essentially dealt with the handling of the community's foreign affairs. In addition to the fact that Anglo-Jewish Association representatives worked together with the BoD on this committee, its president served as co-chairman. Thus, to a great extent, the community's foreign affairs were in the hands of Brodetsky and Stein. There were more BoD than Association members on the Joint Foreign Committee, but the Association's financial contributions were more significant.<sup>38</sup>

The British Section of the World Jewish Congress, henceforth to be referred to as BSWJC, enjoyed the representation of many of the Anglo-Jewish union and socialist groups. It also represented most of the Zionist affiliates in Britain, although it was not officially a Zionist organisation. In the 1930's, when the condition of Europe's Jews deteriorated drastically, Zionist leaders proposed the establishment of an organisation that would guarantee the continued existence of the Jewish People and foster its unity. The 19<sup>th</sup> Zionist Congress, which took place in 1935, issued a plea for all Zionist organisations to



participate in its establishment. In 1936 the World Jewish Congress was established under two veteran Zionist leaders, Nachum Goldmann in Europe and Rabbi Stephen Wise in the United States. Among the broad list of goals in its manifesto were those safeguarding the rights, status and interests of Jews and Jewish communities wherever threatened, representing Jewish organisations and intervening on their behalf with governments and international bodies.<sup>39</sup>

The BSWJC was established in London under Rabbi Maurice L. Perlzweig who was an active figure in the Zionist executive and the BoD. At the beginning of the war, Perlzweig was one of the first communal leaders to push for a united front that would present Jewish demands at a post-war peace conference and was active in combating anti-Semitism and assisting refugees through the aegis of his organisation. In fact, the BSWJC worked very much along the same lines as the BoD and this duplication was often criticised by activists in both organisations. For this reason Dr. Noah Barou, the BSWJC secretary-general, proposed the establishment of a faction of the World Jewish Congress in the BoD in order to encourage it to join the organisation.<sup>40</sup> During the war, the BSWJC assumed greater importance because of Britain's proximity to occupied Europe. London, thereafter became one of the three World Jewish Congress centres, the others being New York and Geneva.<sup>41</sup>

To some extent, the BSWJC duplicated areas that were being "handled" by other Anglo-Jewish organisations, and for this reason, the BSWJC was not supported, if not openly derided by many of the established Jewish institutions, right from the beginning. In the summer of 1940, the Jewish Chronicle

condemned Brodetsky for agreeing to accept one of the British Section vice-presidential posts in addition to his position as president of the BoD, rather than objecting to their competitive roles. The newspaper argued that the World Jewish Congress was an international organisation that received its direction and orders from abroad and as such undermined the authority of the BoD, which was the legal representative of British Jewry.<sup>42</sup> Brodetsky was not able to reconcile this conflict and eventually resigned his honorary World Jewish Congress post.

There had been differences of opinion between the BoD and the World Jewish Congress even before the war broke out, and despite frequent informal meetings during wartime, they could not reach an agreement on issues to be raised at a post-war peace conference. Perlzweig agreed that organisations such as the BoD, Anglo-Jewish Association and the Alliance Israelite Universelle had an advantage in that they could act independently, whereas an international organisation such as the World Jewish Congress might use their branches to pursue their overall agendas. He argued, however, that an international organisation had the advantage of making contacts in enemy controlled areas.

To this effect, a meeting was held on 28 December 1939, attended by Brodetsky, Perlzweig, Stein, Laski and Abraham G. Brotman, the BoD secretary, where it was proposed that the BSWJC change its name in order to blur its international character. It was also proposed that the national organisations should not be included in the BSWJC, that areas of co-operation should not be clearly defined but should remain informal, and that their work be

divided in an efficient manner. It was extremely important to all of the participants at this meeting that they avoid giving the impression that there was a lack of co-operation between Jewish agencies and organisations. The Jewish delegations at the 1919-20 Peace Conference and the Evian Conference on Refugees in July 1938 gave this impression, which was, in fact correct. At both of these gatherings, dozens of uncoordinated Jewish organisations had created confusion amongst the national delegations by submitting separate petitions.<sup>43</sup>

The British establishment had serious reservations regarding the international status of the BSWJC. In 1942, the Undersecretary of State, Richard Law, expressed these views at a meeting with Brodetsky, Stein and Brotman. He expressed an opposition, which he claimed was virtually unanimous in government circles, to an international Jewish body that would represent Jewish interests after the war. He asserted that it was "advisable to resist any attempt on the part of Jewry to secure a kind of super-national status...". Jewish nationalism was considered legitimate only in the context of Palestine and the Jewish Agency, ostensibly because world Jewish interests in Palestine were based on law and international agreements. The government was unwilling to extend recognition of this sort to any other Jewish organisation.<sup>44</sup> The Foreign Office struggled with the issue of the World Jewish Congress, but even as late as 1944 had not determined an official stand with regards to the organisation. Government officials were apprehensive about the growing influence of this international body which expressed its views, some of which were critical of the British Government, at international forums and because it projected the image of being the spokesman for 'international Jewry'.

In the years preceding the Second World War, organisations and committees were established with the aim of enabling Jews fleeing persecution in Germany to find refuge in Britain and to assist Jewish immigrants who had already arrived. For the most part, this involved guaranteeing a refugee's support for the duration of his or her stay in the country, keeping records of their whereabouts and providing employment when possible (i.e. in the case of domestic servants). These organisations included the Jewish Refugees Committee, the Central British Fund for German Jewry, the British Section of the Council for German Jewry, the Inter-aid Committee for Children from Germany and later in 1943 the Jewish Committee for Relief Abroad. These organisations were led for the most part by the prominent and wealthy men and women in the community, including Anthony and Lionel de Rothschild, Lord Bearsted, Lionel Cohen, Sir Robert Waley-Cohen, Otto Schiff, Osmond Elim d'Avigdor Goldshmid, Neville Laski, Leonard Montefiore and Harry Nathan.<sup>45</sup> As has been mentioned, many members of the Cousinhood who had achieved status in the community through their familial connections and financial standing felt an abiding responsibility to provide a network of relief for the impoverished and underprivileged co-religionists in their midst. Charity provided philanthropists with a general feeling of power over others, but the establishment of these organisations also stemmed from the fact that charity in general holds a high place in Jewish doctrine and practice, it furnished a connection with the community in a practical sense and because it provided these leaders with a feeling of control over the destiny of the community. In addition, some of the wealthy members of the community that did not share familial ties with the older, more established families of the Cousinhood,

became involved in these organisations. These 'newcomers' were predominately Zionists and gradually established familial ties amongst themselves. Members of this newly developing branch of the Anglo-Jewish 'aristocracy' included Sir Isaac Wolfson, Simon Marks, Israel Sieff and Harry Sacher.<sup>46</sup>

The British Section of Agudat Israel worked under the aegis of the Agudat Israel World Organisation, an orthodox-cum-political organisation that had branches worldwide. This organisation, which was initially established in Europe, officially set up offices "in exile" during the war, but for the most part, had little influence on orthodox Jewish communities until it was re-established in earnest after the war. The Agudat Israel Organisation of Great Britain had centres of activity in London, Manchester and Gateshead-upon-Tyne. Under the auspices of Agudat Israel were the Keren Hatorah Organisation, Agudist Youth Movement and the Agudist Women's group. Agudah's official representative in Great Britain was the English born businessman, Harry Goodman, who was its secretary in London. Goodman published and edited the Jewish Weekly, whose readership was drawn exclusively from the strictly orthodox, and during the war was responsible for weekly broadcasts via the BBC to Jews in occupied Europe.<sup>47</sup>

Relationships between the various institutions were often stormy, as they frequently felt challenged by one another. However, it would be incorrect to identify Anglo-Jewish history solely in terms of its leadership and institutions. Many members of the community were not necessarily members of any of the aforementioned organisations although, as has been mentioned, most held

synagogue membership. Furthermore, power and status within the community were often completely unrelated to the formal organisational structure of British Jewry. Wealth and position in the general society were much more likely determinants of one's communal authority and prestige, and many of the organisations sought to buttress their power by recruiting members of the Anglo-Jewish aristocracy as patrons and leaders. However, they were not always run or even guided by them.<sup>48</sup>

By far, the liveliest forum for debate available to the Jewish community was the Jewish Chronicle. The newspaper was owned by a limited company and its Board of Directors appointed the editor. The directors, apart from Leonard Stein, who was the president of the Anglo-Jewish Association, were mostly unconnected with the other central Jewish institutions in the community.<sup>49</sup> Although the paper did not always influence Jewish opinion, it certainly seemed to reflect it to a great extent.<sup>50</sup> News items covered all of the major Anglo-Jewish institutions and organisations, and there was substantial coverage of overseas news that was of Jewish interest. Its letters attracted a wide range of correspondents, notwithstanding disagreement with the editorial slants of the paper. The Jewish Chronicle provided the best picture of Jewish news and views at the time, although it catered for the general community and devoted little to the religious "far-right" or "far-left".<sup>51</sup>

The number of Jewish Peers and Members of Parliament throughout these years indicates that many Jews were comfortable members of the British establishment. The Jewish Year Book lists of 1940 and 1945-6 include many of

the names one comes across when studying the leadership of the major Jewish organisations of the time.<sup>52</sup>

## ZIONISM

Although the issue of Zionism had been a topic for discussion in Anglo-Jewish circles since the 1890's, the leaders of British Jewry first discussed it in earnest after the Balfour Declaration in 1917 and many viewed the new movement without enthusiasm.<sup>53</sup> The main reason for this was because for many, identification with a Jewish National Homeland conflicted with their identity as British citizens. For these Anglo-Jews, loyalty was owed, first and foremost to Britain, and they generally saw their identity as Jews, firmly, and solely within the framework of their position as loyal British citizens. According to Waley-Cohen, English Jews were "entirely British in thought, aspirations, interest and zeal".<sup>54</sup>

Before the Second World War, very few of the Jewish communal leaders were affirmed Zionists. The most notable was Simon Marks who was active in the Zionist camp and was the chairman and managing director of Marks & Spencer although he was not a communal leader per se.<sup>55</sup> In addition, other members of the 'new' Anglo-Jewish aristocracy, such as Israel Sieff, Harry Sacher and Isaac Wolfson became involved in the Zionist enterprise. Although such a stance might seem incongruous in view of the substantial investments made by

many of these leaders into the economic and industrial development of Palestine, this fact in itself is an indication of the way that they viewed themselves in society. Although they regarded Palestine as an area of settlement for Jews, they considered themselves first and foremost as emancipated British subjects who professed the Jewish religion. They did not envisage Palestine as a political entity and many were outspoken in their opposition of it becoming a Jewish homeland. In fact, it is clear that they were not swayed by the fact that Anglo-Jewry, more than any other community in the Diaspora was steadily becoming more involved in the establishment of Palestine as a Jewish State, or by the British Government's acceptance of the Mandate for Palestine from the League of Nations, in 1922.<sup>56</sup>

The resistance to political Zionism continued until Hitler's rise to power when the movement started to gain greater support. This change of attitude was confirmed when the BoD elected Brodetsky as its president in 1939. In fact, Brodetsky used his position on the Board to present the Zionist cause to the government on every possible occasion. Many Jews started to view Zionism more favourably when the *White Paper on Palestine* was published in May 1939. The implication that Britain had reneged on the Balfour Declaration by limiting Jewish immigration to Palestine, especially at a time of dire need for Europe's Jews, profoundly shook British Jewry, some of whom started to sincerely doubt their government's motives and question their position in British society.<sup>57</sup> Even avowed non-Zionists like Waley-Cohen and Laski started to see Zionism in a different light. Laski envisaged a Palestine shared by the Jews and Arabs, and felt that the new restrictions on immigration would "bring despair, if



not death, to the tens of thousands whose only hope in exile could [can] be the Jewish National Home".<sup>58</sup> However, many British Jews who were sympathetic to Zionism hoped that the new Jewish Homeland would somehow remain part of the British Empire. This was the prevalent attitude towards Palestine as late as 1944 when the BoD published its position and expressed the hope that Jews would "find an appropriate and legally secured place within the British Commonwealth of Nations".<sup>59</sup> To many, this seemed the only viable solution, for they felt that "a tiny little prosperous state such as Palestine...could not [cannot] hope to survive in isolation in the midst of a complex Mediterranean zone".<sup>60</sup>

## ANTI-SEMITISM

During the inter-war years, many Jews increasingly saw themselves as integrated members of British society, and believed that the only definitive difference between themselves and the general populace was their non-adherence to the established church. To a great extent, the bulk of Anglo-Jewry sought to be on par with the other non-conformists in British society such as the Catholic, Quaker and Methodist communities. In fact, to some extent, this period saw not only the integration of earlier Jewish immigrants and their offspring into British society, but also their Anglicisation vis-à-vis their general outlook and aspirations.<sup>61</sup> According to Laski, the successful integration of Anglo-Jewry into British communal life was made possible by "300 years of

harmonious integration”<sup>62</sup>. In his book, Jewish Rights and Jewish Wrongs he also insisted that “our duty as citizens must override our sentiments as Jews”.<sup>63</sup>

During a conference to discuss the new refugee crisis that followed the Munich Agreement in 1938, Laski re-enforced his conviction that Jews had to be loyal British citizens first and foremost, when he stated: “Above all [British Jews] primary obligation is their stern and unswerving allegiance to their citizenship”.<sup>64</sup> This does not necessarily indicate that Laski viewed British citizenship and loyalty to Britain as being more important than Jewishness in a general sense, although he obviously felt that it took precedence when he considered many of the situations facing his co-religionists. His position on this matter was clarified when he stated unequivocally at a meeting just a week later: “We seek no preferential treatment for the Jews, but that status of equality with his non-Jewish fellow-citizens, to which he is by every human law entitled.”<sup>65</sup> It becomes clear then, that Laski, as a case in point, was one of the community’s leaders that viewed the Jews as being equal with the general populace and demanded assistance for the refugees as a basic human right.

Of all of the domestic issues that concerned Jewish leaders, the most pressing was a preoccupation with potential, latent and actual anti-Semitism. To a great extent, Jewish leaders were far more concerned with British anti-Jewish feeling than with the deadly forms of it on the Continent. This intense anxiety over anti-Semitism was greatly due to the difficulties that the community had in understanding the phenomenon of anti-Semitism in general. Although there was a powerful strain of anti-Semitism in British life in the early twentieth century, British society, especially after the First World War was gradually

showing more tolerance towards its Jewish citizens.<sup>66</sup> British Jews did experience a considerable amount of anti-Semitic prejudice, however, physical attacks on Jews throughout Britain were rare, and if such attacks were reported, they were generally attributed to a lack of education specific to the lower classes.<sup>67</sup> This was certainly the case with regards to the reportage of the riots in Manchester, Leeds and London throughout 1935-1937. In fact, although Oswald Mosley, of the British Union of Fascists, and his supporters were gradually seen to be a serious threat after the BUF started incorporating anti-Semitism into its manifesto in 1934, they were initially regarded as fringe elements by the national and Jewish press.<sup>68</sup>

Although in the run-up to the war, Jews faced an element of discrimination, and there was powerful opposition throughout Britain to an influx of Jewish refugees, this paled in comparison to the situation in mainland Europe. Accordingly, some historians, such as Richard Bolchover, claim that the Anglo-Jewish perception of anti-Semitism was more imaginary than real.<sup>69</sup> It must be noted, however, that much of the Jewish preoccupation with anti-Semitism was fuelled by the British Government's insistence that it was a reality that constantly had to be taken into consideration. Both before, and during the war, Home Secretaries cited the need to contain the growth of political anti-Semitism. Whether these were actual or perceived fears, they obviously served as a self-evident argument for restrictions on the admission of Jewish refugees into Britain both before and during the war. Jewish leaders took these warnings at face value and to a great extent, the fears that they engendered helped produce many of the Jewish responses to the Holocaust.<sup>70</sup>

According to many contemporary historians, Jewish leaders during the inter-war years were uneasy with regards to their general standing vis-à-vis the non-Jewish populace and preoccupied with feelings of inadequacy when confronted with the critical issues that faced them.<sup>71</sup> The successful integration of British Jewry into nineteenth century social, political and economic life concealed a deep sense of insecurity that festered and came to the fore during the war. It has been claimed that liberalism bred its own distinctive form of hostility to Jews, which Bill Williams terms the “anti-Semitism of tolerance”. Liberalism, he claims, was hostile to Jewish distinctiveness and supported equal rights for Jews only insofar as they abandoned their distinctive cultural habits. Jews were not validated on the grounds of their Jewish identity but on the basis of their conformity to the values and manners of bourgeois English society.<sup>72</sup>

It is the view of these historians that Jewish acceptance into national life was implicitly conditional upon a high degree of integration and assimilation. When one considers the number of Jewish peers, members of parliament and the general aristocracy, it is evident that many Jews did indeed reach the ‘required’ level of integration and assimilation. However, Richard Bolchover maintains that to a great extent, the Jews had a confused perception of their acceptance into British society. Thus, he claims that immediately preceding, and during the war, the Jewish leadership feared a resurgence of anti-Semitism because of an imagined abrogation of Anglo-Jewry’s duty to fully assimilate into British society. This, in turn, forced Jewish leaders to maintain a low profile in their attempts to assist their suffering brethren in mainland Europe and, to an extent, the influx of refugees into Britain preceding the war.<sup>73</sup> Although this opinion

attempts to explain the reactions of the Jewish leaders vis-à-vis their responsibilities in the run-up to the war, very little has been said about the average “East-End” Jew who had little access to what was considered the overall view of the situation. It is possible that many were diametrically opposed to the positions taken by their leaders with regards to assisting their tortured brethren on the Continent but were not in a position to do anything about it.

Britain’s culture of liberal politics during the inter-war years was firmly based on several hundred years of evolving democracy and this fact should have created an atmosphere in which Jews could flourish both economically and socially. However, the aforementioned historians view the position of Jews in Britain vis-à-vis anti-Semitism in the same context as their co-religionists on the Continent even though the anti-Semitism on the Continent became manifest in its most deadly form. They claim that because the systems of government and the socio-economic situation in Britain were so fundamentally different from the countries on the Continent, and in particular those in Eastern Europe, anti-Semitism in Britain simply took on different forms. In other words, the absence of blood-libels, show trials and pogroms in the experience of British Jewry did not mean that institutionalised, but non-violent forms of anti-Semitism did not flourish at different levels of British society. According to Tony Kushner, the practical outcomes of this British style of anti-Semitism were the effects that it had on the consciousness of the Anglo-Jewish community and its sense of identity. It reinforced the perception that Jews were alien and consequently had to maintain a low profile.<sup>74</sup> He further asserts that “British society which prides itself on its liberalism, its decency and its humanitarianism, had [has] failed to

produce an environment for the healthy existence of a positive Jewish identity". However, it should be noted that the liberalism of British society may very well have been the main contributor to the problems that Jews had with their identity for purely logistical and not necessarily sinister reasons, in that their equal rights as citizens and their position in a liberal society encouraged their assimilation. This was certainly the case with the highly assimilated Jews of France who were gradually becoming incapable of reconciling their "Jewishness" with their position as loyal French citizens, precisely because of the lure of assimilation.<sup>75</sup>

It is also worth considering, that regardless of their degree of assimilation or political orientation, many Jews and their leaders fully accepted the perceptions of the general populace with regards to immigration before the war and the position of Britain and its armies during the war. This was the case, even when Britain's interests were in conflict with those of the Jewish communities in Britain and on the Continent. Laski, when pondering the "Jewish Question" stated "The Jews must not expect the Jewish problem to be given first consideration when the peace of Europe is at stake. For the statesmen of Europe, the peace of the Continent is the paramount consideration. For them, the Jewish question is only one of many problems".<sup>76</sup> In the same vein, Leonard Montefiore, as the Joint Chairman of the Joint Foreign Committee, stated that "In matters of foreign policy there are no sectional Jewish interests apart from and distinct from, the security, the strength and the abiding power of the British Empire. British vital interests are our concern just as much, no more but no less, than that of our fellow citizens."<sup>77</sup> Essentially, Chief Rabbi Hertz, shared

these perceptions, but was swayed by his son-in-law, Schonfeld's approach to external factors when it came to assisting European Jews. Schonfeld felt that nothing, including anti-Semitism and Britain's position in the war, should stand in the way of assisting the persecuted Jews.

According to many contemporary historians of the Holocaust and the British responses to it, the political leaders of British Jewry worked in an atmosphere of competition, overlapping functions and mutual interference, despite Anglo-Jewry's *organised communal structure*.<sup>78</sup> Many were preoccupied with internal conflict, particularly over Zionism and domestic problems, the most pressing of which, whether factual or exaggerated, was anti-Semitism. According to some, this lack of mutual cooperation was an obsession for many, and it often severely hampered attempts by these leaders to assist their brethren on the Continent.<sup>79</sup> Although this may certainly be the case with regards to communal leaders who were on the governing bodies of the major Jewish organisations, this was not necessarily the situation with regards to the average Jewish citizen or those who served purely religious functions for the community. However, most of these Jews, by virtue of their low standing in the community, were not in a position to initiate ways to assist the European Jews, in any case.

It was against this background of communal politics on the one hand, and threats of domestic anti-Semitism on the other, that the Anglo-Jewish community formed its responses to the persecution of the Jews on the Continent. There were numerous Jewish communities in Britain at the time that were relatively established, had developed their own approaches to religious observance and rarely came in open conflict with each other. However, many of

the stresses and strains of communal politics, including the conflicts over Zionism, were played out within the offices of the BoD, and to a lesser extent, the Chief Rabbi's Office, institutions that were, in fact, the very 'essence' of the Anglo-Jewish community. Invariably, its main players were the members of the community's leadership, which, as has been mentioned, stemmed for the most part, from the 'upper crust' of Anglo-Jewish society. These leaders, however well meaning, could not have been prepared for the challenges that they faced, as they confronted the constant reports emanating out of Europe regarding the steady destruction of its Jewish communities. The leaders of the orthodox sections of the community were equally ill equipped to deal with the unfolding tragedy, although they were not as embroiled in communal politics as their secular counterparts, and were therefore in a better position to formulate plans and utilise the resources at their disposal to assist Europe's Jews.



## NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

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- <sup>1</sup> The topic of this chapter has been the subject of previous research by Richard Bolchover, Amy Zahl Gottlieb, Louise London, Meier Sompolsky and Pamela Joy Shatzkes. Geoffrey Alderman's *Modern British Jewry* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1998), is at present, the primary text used for a comprehensive overview of the history of British Jewry.
- <sup>2</sup> Lloyd P. Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England 1870-1914* (Wayne State University Press, Detroit 1960), p.85
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid pp. 170-2; See also Theodore Norman, *An Outstretched Arm: A History of the Jewish Colonization Organisation* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1985), p. 219
- <sup>4</sup> See Aubrey Newman ed., *The Jewish East End 1840-1939* (Jewish Historical Society of England, London 1981)
- <sup>5</sup> See Amy Zahl Gottlieb, *Men of Vision: Anglo-Jewry's Aid to the Victims of the Nazi Regime 1933-1945* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1998), p. 2
- <sup>6</sup> Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1998), pp. 17-18
- <sup>7</sup> UOHC details as cited in 'Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations Calendar 1995-6'
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid; Ultra-orthodox members of the UOHC were uncomfortable with the United Synagogue's 'anglicisation' of the services and laxity with regards to the 'mingling of the sexes'. An even greater issue was the fact that a large number of members of the United Synagogue were not observant and were still permitted to take part in certain aspects of the services, which, according to some authorities, contravened orthodox Jewish law.
- <sup>9</sup> Pamela Shatzkes, *Anglo-Jewish Rescue and Relief Efforts 1938-1944* (PhD Thesis, UCL), p. 21
- <sup>10</sup> See Geoffrey Alderman, *The Federation of Synagogues* (Federation of Synagogues, London 1989)
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid
- <sup>12</sup> LMA ACC/3121 E1/43 Federation of Synagogues File; See Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), p. 24
- <sup>13</sup> See Aubrey Newman, *The United Synagogue 1870-1970* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1985)
- <sup>14</sup> Interview, Jeremy Schonfeld, 3 January 2001
- <sup>15</sup> See Vivian D. Lipman, *A Century of Social Service* (Watts & Co., London 1954), p.82; The London Board of Jewish Guardians was founded to enable the community as a whole to provide relief to persons in need instead of individual congregations carrying this burden.
- <sup>16</sup> See Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1998), pp. 152-160
- <sup>17</sup> See Aubrey Newman, *The United Synagogue 1870-1970* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1985), p.47; See also Miriam J. Freud-Kandel, *An Ideology Forsaken: Theological Developments in Anglo-Jewish Orthodoxy Since 1913* (unpublished MS), p. 51
- <sup>18</sup> See Miriam J. Freud-Kandel, *An Ideology Forsaken: Theological Developments in Anglo-Jewish Orthodoxy Since 1913* (unpublished MS), pp. 33-100
- <sup>19</sup> *JC*, Hertz *Obituary*, 18 January 1946
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid
- <sup>21</sup> See Hertz's letter to the editor of *The Times* of 28 May 1917, which was a response to an earlier letter to *The Times* on 24 May, written by David Lindo Alexander, President of the BoD and Claude Montefiore, President of the Anglo-Jewish Association regarding the Balfour Declaration; This point was also clarified in an interview with Jeremy Schonfeld on 3 January 2001.
- <sup>22</sup> *JC*, 18 January 1946

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- <sup>23</sup> Ibid
- <sup>24</sup> See R., Henriques, *Sir Robert Waley-Cohen 1877-1952* (Secker & Warburg, London 1966), pp. 244, 253, 305, 308, 337, 341, 345, 365, 379, 385, 390, 404 regarding Waley-Cohen's association with the United Synagogue and pp. 244, 246 n3, 264, 339-348, 381, 385 regarding his relationship with Hertz; See also Miriam J. Freud-Kandel, *An Ideology Forsaken: Theological Developments in Anglo-Jewish Orthodoxy Since 1913* (unpublished MS), p. 52
- <sup>25</sup> Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), p.24
- <sup>26</sup> See Meier Sompolsky, *The British Government and the Holocaust: The Failure of Anglo-Jewish Leadership?* (Sussex Academic Press, Brighton & Portland 1999), p.15
- <sup>27</sup> The Board's Joint Foreign Committee claimed to be the sole body with the authority to negotiate with the British Government on matters affecting Jews abroad.
- <sup>28</sup> See A.G. Brotman, 'Jewish Communal Organisations', Julius Gould and Shaul Esh eds., *Jewish Life in Modern Britain* (London 1964), pp.1-17
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid p.26
- <sup>30</sup> See Selig Brodetsky, *Memoirs: From the Ghetto to Israel* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1960); Gideon Shimoni, 'Non-Zionism in Anglo-Jewry 1937-1948', *Jewish Journal of Sociology XXVII-XXVIII* (1985-1986), pp. 89-116
- <sup>31</sup> See Gideon Shimoni, 'Non-Zionism in Anglo-Jewry 1937-1948', *Jewish Journal of Sociology XXVII-XXVIII* (1985-1986), pp. 89-116
- <sup>32</sup> See Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1998), p. 271
- <sup>33</sup> CZA A-82 Lavy Bakstansky's letter to Selig Brodetsky, 8 December 1939; See also Chaim Bermant, *The Cousinhood: The Anglo-Jewish Gentry* (Eyre & Spottiswoode, London 1971), pp. 398-9; See also Gideon Shimoni, 'Non-Zionism in Anglo-Jewry 1937-1948', *Jewish Journal of Sociology XXVII-XXVIII* (1985-1986), pp. 89-116
- <sup>34</sup> A.M. Hyamson, 'A Letter From London', *Contemporary Jewish Record VI*, p.482 as cited in Richard Bolchover's *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), p.26
- <sup>35</sup> Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), p. 26
- <sup>36</sup> See Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* (Magnes Press, Jewish Chronicle Publications, London 1983)
- <sup>37</sup> LMA ACC/3121 G01/01 September 1939, BoD *Minute Book, Annual Reports*
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid Board of Deputies of British Jews, *Annual Report 1939*; Board of Deputies of British Jews, *The Committee on Administration Report 1934*
- <sup>39</sup> LMA ACC/3121 G01/01 Board of Deputies of British Jews, *The Committee on Administration Report 1934*
- <sup>40</sup> JC, October 27, 1939; The BoD joined the World Jewish Congress in 1975.
- <sup>41</sup> CZA World Jewish Congress: The British Section, *Outline of Activities 1936-1946*, p.4; World Jewish Congress, *Reports of the World Executive and the British Section*, December 1940, p. 3
- <sup>42</sup> JC, July 19, 1940; JC, July 26, 1940
- <sup>43</sup> HL AJA AJ 37/34 Letter from Neville Laski to Cyrus Adler (Philadelphia), December 29, 1939
- <sup>44</sup> See PRO FO 371/32659 *Minutes* of 19 January 1942; See also PRO FO 371/30885, October 18, 1942, regarding the report of the discussions with Brodetsky, Stein and Brotman. Undersecretary of State, Richard Law expressed his opposition to an international body that would represent Jewish interests after the war. Law reported that "they (Brodetsky, Stein and Brotman) were reasonable" and did not seek "a super-national Jewish authority". All of the officials who participated in the discussions opposed the establishment of an international Jewish organisation and felt that each individual state represented its citizens, including its Jews. The same policy was expressed in the correspondence between Richard Law and Major T. L. Dugdale, Chairman of the Conservative Party. (PRO FO 371/32682 Dugdale's letter, December 12, 1942); See also PRO FO 371/36694 for the 12 December, 1942, *minutes* about Hertz's letter
- <sup>45</sup> See Amy Zahl Gottlieb, *Men of Vision: Anglo-Jewry's Aid to the Victims of the Nazi Regime 1933-1945* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1998), pp.24-29
- <sup>46</sup> See Amy Zahl Gottlieb, *Men of Vision: Anglo-Jewry's Aid to the Victims of the Nazi Regime 1933-1945* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1998), pp. 21-24, 26, 29, 32, 36, 43, 51-53, 55, 57, 73, 92, 96, 130, 138, 147, 149, 161-163

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<sup>47</sup> See Bernard Homa, *Orthodoxy in Anglo-Jewry 1880-1940: The Story of Machzike Adath* (Valentine & Co., London 1953); AIL Letter from Goodman to Kotler regarding BBC Broadcasts, 16 August 1943; AIL BBC Czechoslovakian Programme "The Voice of the Free Republic" (transcript), 9 February 1944 (8:45 AM)

<sup>48</sup> See Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), p.27

<sup>49</sup> Ibid p. 164 n4; David Kessler and Leonard Stein seem to have been important forces acting on the editor Ivan Greenberg. Greenberg was a Zionist Revisionist and Laski and Stein were both firmly in the Anglo-Jewish Association camp and were opposed to Zionism. According to Bolchover, the checks and balances inherent in the editor-board relationship thus ensured that the *JC* steered a steady course. After the war when Greenberg's revisionism became more apparent, Stein and Laski were among the first to have him dismissed.

<sup>50</sup> Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), p.29

<sup>51</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the importance and effect of the *JC*, see David Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry 1841-1991* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994)

<sup>52</sup> The publication of the *Jewish Yearbook* by the *JC* was suspended during the years 1941-44 due to the war.

The Jewish members of the House of Lords listed are: the Marquess of Reading, Viscounts Bearsted and Samuel (the latter was also a Privy Councillor and Leader of the Liberals in the Lords from December 1944 and the Deputy Leader before that), Barons Hirst, Jessel, Mancroft, Melchett, Rothschild, Southwood, Swaythling and Lord Nathan of Churt who was elevated to the Lords during the war and acted as the Leader of the Labour Party in the Upper House. Of these, the Year Book lists seven as holding some formal office within the organised Jewish community: Lords Reading, Bearsted, Samuel, Melchett, Rothschild, Swaythling and Nathan. Lord Melchett and his sister Eva, Marchioness of Reading, though brought up as Christians (their mother was not Jewish), converted to Judaism upon the rise of Hitler and played significant roles in the Zionist Movement.

The Jewish members of the House of Commons listed are: Daniel Frankel (Labour, Mile End), Col. L. H. Gluckstein (Conservative, East Nottingham), Sir Percy A. Harris Bart (Liberal, South-west Bethnal Green, Leader of the Liberals in the Commons and a Privy Councillor), Leslie Hore-Belisha (Liberal National, Devonport, Privy Councillor and Secretary of State for War 1940-41), Thomas Levy (Conservative, Elland), Daniel L. Lipson (Conservative, Cheltenham), A.M. Lyons KC (Conservative, East Leicester), Col. Harry L. Nathan (Labour, Wandsworth), James Armand de Rothschild (Liberal, Isle of Ely), M. R. A. Samuel (Conservative, Putney), Emanuel Shinwell (Labour, Seaham), Lewis Silkin (Labour, Peckham), S.S. Silverman (Labour, Nelson), George R. Strauss (Labour, North Lambeth), H.G. Strauss (Conservative, Norwich) and John David Mack (Labour, Newcastle-under-Lyne). Of these, the Jewish Yearbook lists eight as holding offices within the community: Gluckstein, Hore-Belisha, Lyons, Nathan, Rothschild, Samuel, Silverman and Mack. One non-parliamentary Jew, the athlete and Colonial Chief Justice Sir Sidney Abrahams joined the ranks of the Privy Councillors.

<sup>53</sup> For differing approaches to issues regarding Zionism in war-time Britain, see Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), pp. 31-39, 54-56, 80-81, 146, 149-150; David Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry 1841-1991* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), pp. 183-192; Meier Sompolinsky, *The British Government and the Holocaust: The Failure of Anglo-Jewish Leadership?* (Sussex Academic Press, Brighton & Portland 1999), pp. 3, 12-14, 16, 20-22, 36, 38 40, 42, 46, 72, 116, 119, 121, 156, 175; S..A. Cohen, 'Selig Brodetsky and the Ascendancy of Zionism in Anglo-Jewry: Another View of his Role and Achievements', *Jewish Journal of Sociology XXIV* (1982-1983); Gideon Shimoni, 'Non-Zionism in Anglo-Jewry 1937-1948', *Jewish Journal of Sociology XXVII-XXVIII* (1985-1986)

<sup>54</sup> As cited in Stephen Aris, *The Jews in Business* (Jonathan Cape, London 1970), p. 42; See also Gideon Shimoni, 'Non-Zionism in Anglo-Jewry 1937-1948', *Jewish Journal of Sociology XXVII-XXVIII* (1985-1986), pp.89-116

<sup>55</sup> See Amy Zahl Gottlieb, *Men of Vision: Anglo-Jewry's Aid to the Victims of the Nazi Regime 1933-1945* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1998), p.27

<sup>56</sup> See Stuart Cohen, *English Zionists and British Jews: The Communal Politics of Anglo-Jewry 1895-1920* (Princeton University Press, Princeton Guildford 1982) p. 267; David Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry 1841-1991* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), Ch. 4

<sup>57</sup> See Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1998), pp. 312, 315, 339

<sup>58</sup> Neville Laski, *Jewish Rights and Jewish Wrongs* (Soncino Press, London 1939), pp.147-148, 154

<sup>59</sup> LMA ACC/3121 G01/01 BoD Annual Report 1944

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- <sup>60</sup> Ibid; See also CZA A/289/65 Harry Sacher, 'The Jewish State and the Diaspora' (article), 23 February 1939; See also LMA ACC/3121 G01/01 BoD *Annual Report 1938*
- <sup>61</sup> See Lloyd Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England 1870-1914* (Wayne State University Press, Detroit 1960); See also Eugene C. Black, *The Social Politics of British Jewry 1880-1920* (Blackwell, Oxford 1988)
- <sup>62</sup> PRO FO 371/20825 E1590/506/31 Letter from Neville Laski to Sir Robert Vansittart, 4 March 1937
- <sup>63</sup> Neville Laski, *Jewish Rights and Jewish Wrongs* (Soncino Press, London 1939), p. 132
- <sup>64</sup> LMA ACC/3121 B4/CON 22 International Conference of Voluntary Organisations, 15 October 1938
- <sup>65</sup> LMA ACC/3121 A001 – A045 BoD, *Minutes*, 23 October 1938
- <sup>66</sup> For an analysis of the dynamics of anti-Semitism in Britain during the period of our study see Tony Kushner, 'The Impact of British Anti-Semitism 1939-1945' in David Cesarani, ed., *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1990), pp. 191-208; Tony Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice: Anti-Semitism in British Society During the Second World War* (Manchester University Press, Manchester 1989); G. C. Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism in England 1918-1939* (Macmillan, London 1978); See also Pamela Shatzkes, *Anglo-Jewish Rescue and Relief Efforts 1938-1944* (PhD Thesis, UCL), pp. 26-29
- <sup>67</sup> Pamela Shatzkes, *Anglo-Jewish Rescue and Relief Efforts 1938-1944* (PhD Thesis, UCL), p.43; See Chapter 5, pp. 214-216
- <sup>68</sup> See Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1998), pp. 282-284
- <sup>69</sup> Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), pp.42-53
- <sup>70</sup> See Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933-1948: British Immigration and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000), pp. 1-16; For contrasting opinions on the reality of anti-Semitism in Britain during the inter-war years see Tony Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice: Anti-Semitism in British Society During the Second World War* (Manchester University Press, Manchester 1989); Tony Kushner, 'The Paradox of Prejudice: The Impact of Organised Anti-Semitism in Britain During an Anti-Nazi War', in T. Kushner and K. Lunn eds., *Traditions of Intolerance: Historical Perspectives on Fascism and Race Discourse in Britain* (Manchester University Press, Manchester 1989), pp. 72-90; Tony Kushner, 'The Impact of British Anti-Semitism 1939-1945', in David Cesarani ed., *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1990), pp. 191-208; Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination: A Social and Cultural History* (Blackwell, Oxford 1994), pp. 34-36, 46-47, 63, 130, 132, 272-273; Tony Kushner, 'The Meaning of Auschwitz: Anglo-American Responses to the Hungarian Jewish Tragedy' in David Cesarani ed., *Genocide and Rescue: The Holocaust in Hungary 1944* (Berg Publishers Inc., Oxford 1997) , pp. 159-178
- <sup>71</sup> See Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994); Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1998); Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933-1948: British Immigration and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000); Meier Sompolinsky, *The British Government and the Holocaust: The Failure of Anglo-Jewish Leadership?* (Sussex Academic Press, Brighton and Portland 1999)
- <sup>72</sup> See Bill Williams, 'Anti-Semitism of Tolerance: Middle Class Manchester and the Jews 1870-1900', in A.J. Kidd and K.W. Roberts eds., *City, Class and Culture: Studies of Social Policy and Cultural Production in Victorian Manchester* (Manchester University Press, Manchester 1985), pp.74-102; Tony Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice: Anti-Semitism in British Society During the Second World War* (Manchester University Press, Manchester 1989), p. 10
- <sup>73</sup> Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994) p.10
- <sup>74</sup> Tony Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice: Anti-Semitism in British Society During the Second World War* (Manchester University Press, Manchester 1989), pp. 2, 10; See also G. Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism in England 1918-1939* (Macmillan, London 1978)
- <sup>75</sup> See Michael R. Marrus and Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (Basic Books Inc. Publishers, New York 1981), pp.42-43
- <sup>76</sup> Neville Laski, *Jewish Rights and Jewish Wrongs* (Soncino Press, London 1939), p.139
- <sup>77</sup> *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 11 April 1938

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<sup>78</sup> See Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), pp. 31-53; See also Meier Sopolinsky, *The British Government and the Holocaust: The Failure of Anglo-Jewish Leadership?* (Sussex Academic Press, Brighton & Portland 1999), p. 22

<sup>79</sup> See Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994); Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1998); Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933-1948: British Immigration and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000); Meier Sopolinsky, *The British Government and the Holocaust: The Failure of Anglo-Jewish Leadership?* (Sussex Academic Press, Brighton and Portland 1999)

## CHAPTER TWO

### KNOWLEDGE VERSUS ACTION

From 1942 onwards, the Free World was under no illusions as to the extent that Hitler was prepared to go, in order to put his ideology vis-à-vis the Jews into action. Throughout the war, the Allied Governments used little imagination towards methods of rescuing Jews and did little to bend their already restrictive immigration policies. Governments and their representatives gave numerous reasons for their persistent inaction, and it was against this backdrop of a lack of willingness to assist the beleaguered Jews that the Anglo-Jewish community and its leaders responded to the crisis.

#### THE BRITISH PRESS

Throughout the war, the main conduit of information to the public was the press and radio. The British press was well informed and dutifully reported the situation on the Continent with regards to the Jews as did many of the radio broadcasts throughout the war years.<sup>1</sup> The Jewish press in Britain, including the Jewish Chronicle and Agudat Israel's Jewish Weekly also carried extensive coverage of the atrocities being committed on the Continent. As early as the outbreak of the war in 1939, British newspapers reported on the

Nazis' murderous intentions. On 16 December of that year The Times published an article titled: 'A Slow Road to Extermination' that described the Nazi plan to establish 'a place for gradual extermination, and not what the Germans would describe as a *Lebensraum*, or living space'.<sup>2</sup> On 24 October 1939, the Jewish Chronicle reported that many thousands of Jews had been killed in pogroms in the Ukraine and on 7 November of the same year, it reported that one third of the Jews of Bessarabia had been killed.<sup>3</sup> On 17 December 1941, the Joint Foreign Committee of the Board of Deputies and the Anglo-Jewish Association released a report to the press regarding the infamous Babi-Yar massacre. It stated that the Germans had murdered 52,000 people after they occupied Kiev and was one of the first documented reports in the West about the activities of the *Einsatzgruppen* in the Soviet Union.<sup>4</sup>

By 1942, the British public, and indeed the Free World in general, was well informed about the Nazis' efforts to murder the Jews en masse. On 9 April 1942, an article was printed on the first page of the Jewish Chronicle that described poison gas experiments that had been conducted on Jews in the Mauthausen Concentration Camp.<sup>5</sup> This was its first article to describe the Nazis' use of poison gas to murder Jews, although poison gas had already been used to kill people judged 'unworthy of life' from the start of the 'Euthanasia Programme' in Germany, in January 1940. On 9 June 1942, the BBC European Services, broadcasted an announcement by the Polish Prime Minister in exile, General Sikorski, who stated: "The Jewish population in Poland is doomed to annihilation in accordance with the maxim: Slaughter all

the Jews of Europe regardless of how the war will end.” On 25 June of that year, the Daily Telegraph claimed that: “More than 700,000 Polish Jews have been slaughtered by the Germans in the greatest massacre in the world’s history” and that the Germans had “embarked on the physical extermination of the Jewish population”, this, the newspaper claimed was “wholly in keeping with Hitler’s many times avowed policy”. This article took into account the mass exterminations by shooting in Eastern Galicia and Lithuania, and described the gas vans used in the Chelmno Concentration Camp.<sup>6</sup> On 30 June 1942, the Daily Telegraph carried another article regarding the destruction of Europe’s Jews titled: ‘More than 1,000,000 Jews Killed in Europe’ in which it claimed that the Nazis intended to “wipe the (Jewish) race from the European Continent”.<sup>7</sup>

By the end of June 1942, the British press accepted the Nazis’ murderous intentions as a given fact. In addition to the Daily Telegraph’s article, most of the national newspapers printed similar pieces on 30 June. These included the Daily Mail’s article titled: ‘Great Pogrom: 1,000,000 Jews Die’, the Evening Standard’s: ‘1,000,000 Jews Die’, the Manchester Guardian’s: ‘Jewish War Victims: More Than 1,000,000 Dead’, the News Chronicle’s: ‘Million Jews Die’, the Scotsman’s: ‘Bondage in Eastern Europe: A Vast Slaughterhouse of Jews’ and The Times’s: ‘Massacre of Jews: Over 1,000,000 Jews Dead Since War Began’.<sup>8</sup> The weekly magazine News Review carried a report in July 1942 that described “large gas stations” that were set up in Poland to murder Jews.<sup>9</sup>



In response to a speech by Hitler in which he threatened to facilitate the annihilation of the Jews, the Manchester Guardian commented in an article on 27 October 1942 that his words should not be taken “as just another wild and whirling threat”. The article continued to assert that “Hitler aims literally at the extermination of the Jews in Europe so far as his hand can reach them, and for weeks past, reports from country after country have shown that the policy is being carried out with every circumstance of cruelty.”<sup>10</sup> As the year drew to an end, there was not a credible newspaper in the United Kingdom that expressed doubt as to Hitler’s sinister intentions. On 4 December, The Times printed an article titled: ‘Deliberate Policy for Extermination’ which claimed that a total of 1,700,000 Jews had been “liquidated”. This article asserted that: “all other war crimes of Nazism will fail in the end and the defeat of German Fascism is inevitable, but this particular aim, a complete extermination of Jews, is already being enforced”.<sup>11</sup> The Jewish Chronicle’s issue of 11 December carried the headline: ‘Two Million Slaughtered: Most Terrible Massacre of All Time: Appalling Horrors of Nazi Mass Murders’. The page was bordered in black and summarised the atrocities that had been perpetrated until then.<sup>12</sup>

Articles regarding the state of the Jews in Europe continued unabated throughout 1943. On 9 January 1943, an article appeared in the New Statesman and Nation titled: ‘Our Part in the Massacre’. In this article the writer observed “(Hitler) is engaged in exterminating the Jews of Europe, not metaphorically, not more or less, but with a literal totalitarian completeness, as farmers try to exterminate Californian beetles”.<sup>13</sup> On 22 April, The Times

reported on a 'Secret Polish Radio' despatch from Sweden, that contained the first news of the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto.<sup>14</sup> The uprising was reported in most British newspapers as it unfolded. On 23 May, the Manchester Sunday Chronicle printed an article titled: 'Warsaw Jews Defy Nazis – Might in Last Stand Against Mass Murder. Pitched Battle Rages in Ghetto' that carried details of the drama unfolding in the ghetto.<sup>15</sup> Towards the end of the year, The People set the number of Jews murdered at 3,000,000. In its article of 17 October titled: 'Hitler Has Murdered Three Million Jews in Europe', it attributed this estimate to a report issued by the Institute of Jewish Affairs in New York.<sup>16</sup> After the middle of 1944, as the fate of Hungarian Jewry became apparent, many reports appeared which discussed their plight. The Jewish Chronicle published an article on 14 June 1944 titled: 'Hungarian Jews Doomed: Planned Extermination'.<sup>17</sup>

The flow of information about the Holocaust as it unfolded on the Continent continued until the end of the war and thereafter. On 18 August 1944, the first photographic evidence of the mass killings was published in the Jewish Chronicle. These images included pictures of the crematoria and skeletons in the Majdanek Death Camp. Extensive reports continued throughout the Nuremberg trials until the sentencing of the major Nazi war criminals on 30 September 1946.<sup>18</sup>

## OFFICIAL SOURCES

From the outbreak of war in September 1939, the American and European Allied Governments received a steady trickle of information regarding the treatment of Jews in enemy occupied territory. On 18 February 1942, the British Consul-General in Basle, Switzerland, reported on a rumour that he had heard regarding 'young Jews taken to Germany for gas experiments'.<sup>19</sup> In June 1942, the Polish Government claimed that over 700,000 Jews had been murdered in Poland since the beginning of the war.<sup>20</sup> And on 3 October of the same year, the Polish Ambassador to the Vatican described wholesale massacres of Jews in Poland by means of poison gas.<sup>21</sup>

Many historians consider the receipt of the Riegner Telegram as the single source of information that substantially changed the British and American responses to the persecution of the Jews, in that it prompted more organised efforts on their behalf.<sup>22</sup> Riegner had been specifically chosen by Dr. Nahum Goldmann, one of the founders of the World Jewish Congress, to lead its branch in Switzerland for the express purpose of collecting information regarding the state of the Jewish communities in enemy territory. From before the outbreak of war, Riegner established contacts in all of the major European Jewish communities and after September 1939 maintained contact with them as much as possible. He relayed information to Congress affiliates throughout the world, including Rabbi Stephen Wise who headed the American branch in New York. He also developed a close relationship with Paul Chapin Squire,

the American Consul in Geneva, who permitted him to send messages to the United States using State Department cable facilities.

On 1 August, Riegner gained first hand information from a leading German industrialist that many months before, Hitler had ordered the extermination of all of Europe's Jews. He had ostensibly heard these directives in Hitler's headquarters.<sup>23</sup> This individual, who divulged the information at a risk to his life, even indicated that prussic acid, the lethal ingredient of Zyklon B gas, was to be the main instrument of murder. The fact that this report was received from such a bona fide informant, combined with the information that Riegner had gathered until then, coupled with reports of spiralling anti-Semitic measures in the Nazi occupied territories, forced him to view the situation in the starkest terms. As a result, he felt an urgent need to authenticate the report and transmit it to the United States, Britain and other branches of the World Jewish Congress in order to galvanise the Free World to action.

The telegram was sent to the State Department with a covering memorandum written by Howard Elting Jr., the American Vice-Consul, endorsing Riegner and confirming the credibility of the content of the telegram. He requested that a copy be sent to Rabbi Wise in New York and that the American and Allied Governments be informed of its contents. Riegner also sent a draft cable to Sydney Silverman MP in Britain. This copy was accompanied with the precaution "Inform and consult New York". Both of these communiqués were sent through diplomatic channels because of wartime censorship regulations and to ensure privacy. Although the American Government delayed the

publication of the information contained in the telegram, the British Foreign Office forwarded a copy to the London branch of the World Jewish Congress when they received it. In fact, Rabbi Stephen Wise received a copy through the London Branch on 28 August, and not from the State Department as requested.<sup>24</sup>

Throughout the war, messages of a personal, semi-official and official nature were sent from Jews trapped in Nazi occupied territory to the Free World, and as the war progressed, the reports and pleas for help became increasingly desperate. For example, on 20 September 1942, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency carried a dispatch from 'a point at the border of Axis-held territory'. The desperation expressed by this communiqué was obvious and it ended with "Pogroms on unprecedented scale in Poland. The Nazis have begun the extermination of Polish Jews. Save us."<sup>25</sup> A 'strictly confidential' meeting was called for 21 October 1943, in the home of Dr. Ignacy Schwartzbart, of the National Council of Poland, at which "a special envoy from Poland, a Jew, who after having lived for nearly three years in the Ghetto in Warsaw", would "share his impressions of the life of the Jews of Poland with a selected number of people."<sup>26</sup> Reports were also available to a select few from 'secret sources', which included large numbers of messages sent through German communications within enemy territory and intercepted and deciphered by the British Secret Services. From August 1941 onwards, many of these 'decrypts' included specific references and precise details of atrocities that were being committed by the *Einsatzgruppen* in the occupied areas of the Soviet Union.<sup>27</sup>

On 1 December 1942, the British Section of the World Jewish Congress produced a three-page bulletin regarding the situation, as a result of the reports coming out of mainland Europe. It presented the persecution of the Jews in stark terms and referred to it as the “annihilation of European Jewry”. It also stated that Hitler aimed at the “total destruction” of the Jews. It reported that at least two million Jews had been murdered but that the number was most likely “much greater”. This document was one of the first to refer to the destruction of the Jews as a *holocaust* when it pointed out that “the *holocaust* took on a formal design under an explicit policy”.<sup>28</sup>

On 4 September 1942, the American and British branches of the World Jewish Congress received a report from the Swiss branch of Agudat Israel about the deportation of the Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto and their *resettlement*, i.e. murder, in ‘the East’. It stated that “The corpses of the victims are used for the manufacture of soaps and artificial fertilisers”. Agudat Israel officials insisted that their sources were reliable and pleaded for the intervention of Rabbi Stephen Wise, Albert Einstein, Thomas Mann and Rabbi Eliezer Silver who was the president of Agudat Israel of America and one of the heads of Vaad-Ha-Hatzala.<sup>29</sup> The Jewish Agency Office in Switzerland sent messages to Jewish organisations around the world that corroborated the Agudat Israel report. The Polish Government-in-Exile also verified that the Nazis intended to destroy all of the Jews of Europe.<sup>30</sup>

After the dissemination of the Riegner Telegram, subsequent attempts to verify it and the continual information emanating from mainland Europe, the

British Government produced official documentation that indicated its perception of the situation in Europe. In a statement in the House of Lords on 7 October 1942, announcing the establishment of a United Nations Commission for the Investigation of War Crimes, the Lord Chancellor, Lord Simon, made a reference, albeit a brief one, to the persecution of the Jews.<sup>31</sup> In addition to this, the Lord Privy Seal, Sir Stafford Cripps, produced a Cabinet Memorandum on 3 November 1942, regarding 'Enemy Breaches of the Rules of Warfare', that referred to the persecution of the Jews. It should be noted that although the information provided was not given the prominence that it deserved, it did describe, in detail, some of the atrocities being committed on the Continent. This memorandum made note of "the execution of large numbers of Jews by poison gas and the slaughter of the Jewish populations in Kiev and other cities in the occupied areas of the Soviet Union."<sup>32</sup>

On 10 December 1942, the Foreign Office circulated a dispatch from the Polish Ambassador to Great Britain, Count Raczynski, that elaborated on the situation facing the Jews on the Continent. It stated that "fully authorised information received from Poland during recent weeks" indicated that "the German authorities aim with systematic deliberation at the total extermination of the Jewish population of Poland and of the many thousands of Jews whom the German authorities deported to Poland". It gave details of the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto and stated that it was impossible to estimate the number of Jews murdered, but that all reports agreed that "of the 3,130,000 Jews in Poland before the outbreak of the war, over a third had [have] perished during the last three years". The dispatch continued by stating that

the Polish Government urged the “necessity of not only condemning the crimes committed by the Germans and punishing the criminals, but also of finding means offering the hope that Germany might be effectively restrained from continuing to apply her methods of mass extermination”.<sup>33</sup>

## GOVERNMENTAL RESPONSES<sup>34</sup>

In January 1942, the British and American governments participated as observers in a conference attended by representatives of the allied powers to discuss German actions in occupied Europe. The conference was held in St. James’s Palace in London and was presided over by General Sikorski. The outcome of this gathering was the issuance of a declaration that enumerated Nazi atrocities against civilian populations, although it made no specific mention of the Jews or their sufferings. This omission was challenged by Jewish organisations, including the World Jewish Congress, and Sikorski provided the evasive explanation that “the enumeration in the preamble to this declaration was [is] only by way of example and in no respect bore [bears] a limitative character”. Sikorski argued that explicit reference to the Jews might “be equivalent to an implicit recognition of the racial theories which we all reject”.<sup>35</sup> Although the British Government representatives did not serve as signatories on this declaration, the Foreign Office approved of its terms and of the omission of any mention of the Jews.<sup>36</sup> F.K. Roberts of the Foreign Office, for example, wrote that Jan Masaryk, the Czech Foreign Minister, “whose



humanity is better than his judgement, mentioned to me...that he thought that the Jews should also have been represented". He also added that he was "glad to see that General Sikorski has behaved correctly in this matter".<sup>37</sup>

Even after the circulation of the Riegner Telegram, government officials both in Britain and America were sceptical as to the veracity of the reports coming out of Nazi occupied Europe. This was due either to the sheer macabre nature of the reports, the claim that Jews were 'inclined to magnify their persecutions', or anti-Semitic feelings that deflected empathy from the 'human tragedy' that was unfolding.<sup>38</sup> There is no evidence that government circles sought to suppress information and avoid a concrete reaction to the Holocaust on the grounds that it could affect the war effort. However, it was a persistent concern of government officials that the public not perceive the war being fought as being a 'Jewish war'. An example of this was the official reaction to the requests to bomb the railway lines to Auschwitz, an issue that will be discussed later in this study.<sup>39</sup>

The first official response to the persecution of the Jews was a declaration made on behalf of the British Government by Sir Anthony Eden in the House of Commons on 17 December 1942 in reply to a question by Sidney Silverman MP. It was issued in the name of eleven Allied Governments and the French National Committee and stated that the attention of these governments had been drawn to:

numerous reports from Europe that the German authorities, not content with denying to persons of Jewish race in all the territories over which their barbarous rule has been extended the most elementary rights, are now carrying into effect Hitler's oft-repeated intention to exterminate the Jewish People in Europe.

The declaration continued:

From all the occupied countries Jews are being transported in conditions of appalling horror and brutality to Eastern Europe. In Poland, which has been the principal Nazi slaughterhouse, the ghettos established by the German invader are being systematically emptied of all Jews except a few highly skilled workers required for war industries. None of those taken away are ever heard of again. The able-bodied are slowly worked to death in labour camps. The infirm are left to die of exposure and starvation or are deliberately massacred in mass executions. The number of victims of these bloody cruelties is reckoned in many hundreds of thousands of entirely innocent men, women and children.<sup>40</sup>

In a diplomatic sense, the content of this declaration was accurate considering the varying reports that had been coming out of Europe. In fact, that which it referred to the Nazi atrocities as "cold-blooded extermination" verified the Allies' acceptance that these crimes were tantamount to genocide. However, the most concrete outcome of this declaration was that it included a "solemn

resolution” of the United Nations Governments “to ensure that those responsible for these crimes would [shall] not escape retribution, and to press on with the practical measures to this end.”<sup>41</sup> It was also given wide publicity in the press and on the air. In fact, on the evening following its acceptance in Parliament, the Polish Prime Minister broadcast a ‘postscript’ of it on the BBC, after the nine o’clock news.

The declaration of 17 December prompted the Political Warfare Executive to issue a directive for the week beginning 24 December 1942, the significance of which was that the persecution of the Jews was to become a central theme in British war propaganda. It stated:

The sufferings of the Jews should now be merged in the wider picture of Nazi persecutions...We should bear in mind (i) the Jewish persecution has in all countries been the prelude to the persecution of other sections of the population; (ii) that apart from its physical brutality, it is a subtle form of political warfare aimed at breaking human ties between different individuals in all countries and destroying any feeling of common citizenship where persecution of the Jews is set on foot.

This directive was pre-empted by the directive for the week beginning 10 December that ordered that all leaflets and wireless broadcasts to occupied Europe “should coldly and factually establish Hitler’s plan to exterminate the Jews in Europe”. This directive continued, “Anti-Semitism was a potent

weapon of Nazi political warfare. The time has now come to use it against them".<sup>42</sup>

It should be noted that the British Government came to utilise the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis against the Jews for purposes of propaganda, and manipulated the information that they possessed to suit these purposes. As is evident from this, the first directive of the Political Warfare Executive regarding the Jews, the government did not appeal to the European public's sense of morality as much as it played upon their feelings of disdain for, and pledges for revenge from the Nazi aggressor. It is impossible to determine if the reasons for this are because of an overall disinterest in Europe's Jews except for the propagandist value of their sufferings, however it is worth noting the consistent detachment with which any empathy for them is expressed.

The 17 December House of Commons Declaration, left little doubt as to the murderous intentions of the Germans, however, it made no offer of concrete assistance to the beleaguered Jews. The pledge to exact retribution on the perpetrators after the war offered no solace to the Jews who were being slaughtered in their tens of thousands daily. It did prompt, however, deputations of religious and lay-leaders, both Jewish and non-Jewish who attempted to persuade government officials to assist the Jews by at least opening the borders to those who could still escape. These included concerted efforts by Eleanor Rathbone MP and a deputation of the newly formed Council of Christians and Jews including the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Moderator of the Free Churches. However, the Foreign Office was

consistently apprehensive about the admittance of an influx of refugees into the British Isles.<sup>43</sup> The recurring reasons given, were the impracticalities involved in absorbing vast numbers of refugees, the exacerbation of domestic anti-Semitism, and to a lesser extent, the strain on an already overburdened economy because of the war. However, for the most part, officials were evasive. For instance, after the acceptance of the declaration, when it was suggested in the House of Commons that something practical be done to assist the Jews, Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary, stated:

“Certainly we would like to do all we possibly can. There are, obviously, certain security formalities which have to be considered. It would clearly be the desire of the United Nations to do everything they could to provide wherever possible an asylum for these people, but the House will understand that there are immense geographical and other difficulties in the matter.”<sup>44</sup>

One example of the government's agreement to accept a substantial number of refugees onto British shores was the plan announced by Oliver Stanley, the Colonial Secretary, in the House of Commons on 3 February 1943, to accept 4,500 Bulgarian Jews into Britain and a further 500 Hungarian and Rumanian children into Palestine. He further announced that large numbers of children and accompanying adults, up to the 'White Paper' quota of 29,000, might be accepted into Palestine, providing that the considerable difficulties involved could be surmounted. Although this plan may have initially been genuine, it eventually amounted to nothing because after various logistical difficulties the

German Government intimated that it would only consider the release of Bulgarian Jews in exchange for German prisoners-of-war. Obviously, an exchange of prisoners-of-war for foreign civilians was inconceivable.<sup>45</sup>

Even as the horrors of the Holocaust intensified, the Foreign Office viewed the Allied Declaration of 17 December as both a misrepresentation of its traditional stance regarding the Jews and essentially as a failure with regards to its objectives. In order to limit responsibility vis-à-vis the Jews, the British Government invariably chose to view them as integral members of their countries of nationality and not as a separate entity.<sup>46</sup> As a result, each country was responsible for its 'own Jews'. Even though this approach was essentially tantamount to ignoring a murder in 'one's own backyard', the government ignored requests by Jewish and non-Jewish bodies to re-issue similar declarations in 1943 and 1944. The 1942 Declaration was often referred to, when government officials purposely omitted reference to the persecutions of the Jews in subsequent announcements and declarations. An example of this was the omission of a reference to the Jews in the declaration regarding German atrocities issued at the Moscow Conference, on 3 November 1943. When Harry Goodman of Agudat Israel lodged a complaint to Anthony Eden, the reply was, that it was "not, however, thought necessary to distinguish crimes against Jews as a separate category" because the "attitude of the United Nations to such crimes was made clear in the 17 December 1942 Declaration".<sup>47</sup> When, on 29 July 1943, Goodman requested that Eden intercede on behalf of the Jews facing deportation from the Balkans, and specifically Slovakia and Bulgaria, no action was forthcoming

because the issue of the European-Jewish persecutions was already included in the directives of the 17 December Declaration.<sup>48</sup>

Another concrete outcome of the declaration on 17 December, was the establishment of the Cabinet Committee on the Reception and Accommodation of Jewish Refugees, which held its first meeting on 31 December and was chaired by Anthony Eden. During this first meeting, the Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison stated that he could not agree to the admission of more than 1000-2000 refugees into Britain and that one had to bear in mind that most of the 100,000 refugees then in Britain were Jewish.<sup>49</sup> He stipulated that this was contingent upon “the firm understanding that the United States and the Dominions would accept proportionate numbers”. He also said that he “deprecated the tendency to regard the United Kingdom as the sole repository for refugees” and warned of an upsurge in domestic anti-Semitism if large numbers of Jews were to be admitted into Britain. Oliver Stanley, the Colonial Secretary, suggested that when referring to the refugee crisis no distinction should be made between Jews and non-Jews, and for this reason the word ‘Jews’ was deleted from the name of this committee.<sup>50</sup>

On 20 January 1943, the committee sent a memorandum to the American State Department with the intention of involving the United States in efforts to address the refugee crisis, especially in Spain. The significance of this memorandum is that it set out the British Government’s position regarding the refugee crisis and the difficulties that persistently surrounded the issue. These ‘complicating factors’ were enumerated in the beginning of the memorandum:

- (a) The refugee problem cannot be treated as though it were a wholly Jewish problem, which could be handled by Jewish agencies or by machinery only adapted for assisting Jews. There are so many non-Jewish refugees and there is so much acute suffering among non-Jews in Allied countries that Allied criticism would probably result if any marked preference were shown in removing Jews from territories in enemy occupation. There is also the distinct danger of stimulating anti-Semitism in areas where an excessive number of foreign Jews are introduced.
- (b) There is at present always a danger of raising false hopes among refugees by suggesting or announcing alternative possible destinations in excess of shipping probabilities.
- (c) There is a possibility that the Germans or their satellites may change over from the policy of extermination to one of extrusion, and aim as they did before the war at embarrassing other countries by flooding them with alien immigrants.<sup>51</sup>

The issue of potential foreign and domestic anti-Semitism was constantly offered as an excuse for inaction to those who campaigned for the admittance of refugees into Great Britain. The suggestion that logistical problems existed with regards to shipping may have been a real one, however, even if in some instances they were to prove surmountable, the beleaguered Jews would surely have always preferred a glimmer of hope to no hope at all. Article (c) would seem to suggest that the Home Office would have rather left the



situation regarding the extermination of the Jews at the status quo rather than confronting the possibility of a change in Nazi policy by permitting the Jews to escape.

To a great extent, this memorandum and the subsequent (but very much belated, end of February) reply from the American State Department, led to the Bermuda Conference on Refugees which convened on 19 April 1943. Jewish and non-Jewish lobbyists for the Jewish cause hoped that this conference, which was attended by delegates from America and Britain with the express purpose of discussing the refugee crisis, would bear fruit. However, one of the most tragic responses of the 'bystanders' to the Holocaust was the Bermuda Conference, the outcome of which essentially amounted to nothing. The British delegates, headed by Richard Law, admitted in their report to the Home Office that "so far as immediate relief to refugees is concerned, the conference was able to achieve very little". They continued by explaining that "Limiting factors are bound to be serious and disappointments frequent, as long as the war continues and shipping and food supply present such difficulties, so long as too, we might add, the present combination, in so many countries, of pity for Jews under German control and extreme reluctance to admit further Jews into their borders persists".<sup>52</sup> On 7 May, when the conference had ended, the Jewish Chronicle lamented "And so the greatest tragedy in modern history must go on...Already, even under the stress of the present emotion, the ghost of Evian walks abroad. A distressing *non possumus* is being uttered with almost indecent haste in country after country".<sup>53</sup>

Many concerned Members of Parliament and other prominent members of the British establishment worked to the best of their ability, if not selflessly, in their efforts to provide some assistance to the Jews on the Continent. These included Sir William Beveridge, Sir Richard Acland, Eleanor Rathbone, Commander Locker-Lampson and the Archbishops of Canterbury, York and Wales, to name but a few. However, very little could be done to influence the British Government to bend its 'well thought out' policies regarding the Jews. For the most part, immigration policy to both Great Britain and Palestine changed very little throughout the war. Admittedly, a small number of Jewish refugees were accepted into Great Britain between 1940 and 1942, however, after the 'Final Solution' became known in 1942 only 4000 new refugees arrived, many of whom were Allied nationals or were useful to the war effort and very few of these were Jews.<sup>54</sup> Any other Jews who might possibly have been able to escape to Britain were left to their fate.

#### RESPONSES OF THE ANGLO-JEWISH LEADERSHIP

The Board of Deputies was the main institutional representative of British Jewry during the time of our study, and in a general sense, it saw its function mainly in terms of fighting for the interests of the Anglo-Jewish citizens of Britain. However, due to various inner-communal conflicts and animosities, the Board often devoted a great deal of time to issues that not only did

nothing for the Jews of Europe, but even had little to with the interests of the Jewish community during the war years. One of these issues was the conflict over Zionism.<sup>56</sup>

On 12 September 1943, after a third monthly debate devoted to the conflict over Zionism that lasted many hours, Selig Brodetsky commented:

“The work of the Board and of the community as a whole had in the last couple of months been pushed to a very low level by considerations, which were based upon all sorts of interests, most of which had nothing to do with the interest of the community. As far as they were concerned in the offices of the Board, it was impossible to get on with any job. Their time was taken up with irrelevant matters which had nothing to do with the interest of Jewry in this country or outside...This was how the energy of the community was being used up at the present moment at a time when they were told, on the evidence of Washington, that something like 4,000,000 Jews had been exterminated in Europe.”<sup>56</sup>

Although the three main Jewish organisations in Britain, the BoD, the Anglo-Jewish Association and the BSWJC included the amelioration of the condition of Jewries abroad in their constitutions, every attempt at organising a unified approach towards this end proved unsuccessful.

At the end of March 1943, Israel Feldman, Vice President of the BoD, reflected in a speech that he delivered at Maidenhead:

"In connection with the present tragedy of European Jewry a consultative committee was set up by the Joint Foreign Committee of the Board. I myself, I have to say this in all sincerity and with deep regret, am still looking for evidence of that mutual unqualified reciprocal confidence amongst the four bodies there represented which must constitute the basis of any fruitful results ensuing."<sup>57</sup>

To further accentuate this point, Norman Bentwich wrote in his autobiography:

...consultative committees and joint deputations were initiated. But they served to accentuate differences rather than unify action...for six months I took part in ... meetings, but they had a monotony of unreality. We got nowhere, we wasted hours protesting, and composing and criticising memoranda which had no hope of serious attention by the governments.<sup>58</sup>

In May 1944, the Chief Rabbi also bemoaned the Anglo-Jewish leadership's inactivity throughout the war. During a sermon at a memorial gathering for the Warsaw Ghetto, Hertz questioned:

"What has Anglo-Jewry done to arouse world opinion in regard to a moral cataclysm that threatens to engulf half the Jewish race? ...

Although the Nazi killing of thousands daily began early in 1941, it was the 29<sup>th</sup> October 1942 before the lay-leaders of Anglo-Jewry arranged a public protest meeting. Some of these leaders were distressed even over the Day of Mourning and Prayer I proclaimed in the December following. I need not now comment on such Olympic calm, reticence and indifference. Suffice it to say that they were not calculated to stir the men at the helm of the political universe to speedy action in human salvage, so that dismay seized many a one at the procrastination and inertia of those who alone had the power to save."<sup>59</sup>

Although an atmosphere of conflict existed within the leadership of the Jewish community, it cannot be said that some concerted efforts on behalf of the European Jews were not organised. On 12 January 1942, the Joint Foreign Committee of the Anglo-Jewish Association and the BoD, appealed to the signatories of the Nine-Power Declaration on Nazi War Crimes, which was to be issued on 13 January, to recognise the destruction of European Jewry. The same deputation made representations to the Foreign Office.<sup>60</sup> On 18 February of the same year, the BSWJC forwarded a 160 page documented account of the persecutions of the Jews titled Jews in Nazi Europe: February 1933 to November 1941, to the Home Office.<sup>61</sup> On 29 October 1942, the BoD held a protest meeting at the Albert Hall in London, that was attended by the Polish Prime Minister Sikorski, the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister, Jan Masaryk, Jacques Soustelle who represented the Catholic Primate, the heads of the Free Churches, Viscount Cecil and Walter Elliot MP.<sup>62</sup> And on 26 November, the day after the BSWJC received a document from the Polish

Government detailing the continuing annihilation of Polish Jewry, Sidney Silverman and Alex Easterman presented it to the Home Office.<sup>63</sup>

On 3 December 1942, the Joint Foreign Committee convened a meeting to discuss the best way forward. It was attended by representatives from the Jewish Agency, the World Jewish Congress, Agudat Israel, Chief Rabbi Hertz, and Jewish members of the Polish and Czechoslovak Governments. It was decided that the time was ripe to intensify pressure on the government to issue a declaration with a specific condemnation of the extermination of the Jews in Europe.<sup>64</sup> Following this decision, there were a series of individual approaches and organised deputations to government officials. In addition to these, public meetings were arranged, letters were sent and many tens of thousands of pounds were raised. At times, prominent non-Jewish personages and members of the clergy were included in these deputations.<sup>65</sup> As late as July 1944, the BSWJC petitioned the government to conduct air sallies against concentration camps in Poland and two months later they appealed for air attacks against the gas chambers and SS barracks in Auschwitz.<sup>66</sup> On 12 October of the same year, A.G. Brodman of the BoD asked whether the government had considered joint bombings of these installations with the Soviets.<sup>67</sup>

However, the fact that these attempts were disjointed and at times lacked co-ordination accentuated the disunity that became a hallmark of the Anglo-Jewish leadership of the time. This lack of unity was not overlooked and all too often made an unfavourable impression on those approached. It must be

noted that none of the minimal efforts of the British government on behalf of the European Jews can be directly attributed to any of the pressures that the Jewish lobbies exerted upon them. It is also impossible to know how much could have been accomplished if the Jewish leaders and their organisations had amalgamated their efforts, although it is unlikely that they could have influenced the British government, which was consistent in its refusal to assist the European Jews in a meaningful way.

By 1942, there could have been no doubt as to the murderous intentions of the Nazis. That the Germans were bent on the extermination of Europe's Jews had been confirmed through official and semi-official sources numerous times and the atrocities had received responsible and accurate reportage until then. However, for many, the sheer magnitude and macabre details of the reports coming out of Europe made the unfolding 'Holocaust' so incomprehensible that it became a drama that they could not relate to. This must have been accentuated by the fact that innocent men, women and children were being systematically murdered purely because of their race. This was a fact that could not be viewed, by any stretch of the imagination as an extension of wartime hostilities.<sup>68</sup>

It is obvious that many non-Jewish Britons, especially those who had no contact or association with Jews, shared a lack of identification with the happenings on the Continent. Britain was absorbed in a battle for what it considered its very existence and to many, the destruction of the Jewish communities of Europe was just another example of the enemy's infamy and

not as a matter to be considered in isolation. Those non-Jews who did empathise with the Jews' plight to an extent that warranted their personal action, did so, either in co-ordinated responses with Jewish organisations or individually, and those who were either too far removed or generally uninterested, paid little attention to it.<sup>69</sup> To varying extents, members of the Jewish community as well, including its leaders, shared a lack of identification with the happenings on the Continent, although they were forced, by nature of their religious affiliation to face the issues with less detachment. According to Yehuda Bauer, this discrepancy between knowledge and internalisation was the result of a natural lack of imaginary skill that was necessary to enable people to evaluate and grasp the full meaning of what was happening.<sup>70</sup>

The grim reports coming out of Europe presented a clear account of the 'Holocaust' as it unfolded. However, it would have been difficult for all but the most sensitive and introspective lay-members of the community to empathise with the sufferings of their brethren on the Continent to an extent that would have changed their responses considering the state of war and the many obstacles that faced them. However, in contrast to the assumptions of Rubinstein and Shatzkes, who claim that the reactions of the Jewish leadership, both in America and Britain were a natural result of the challenges that faced them, these leaders might have accomplished more in their deputations to the officialdom and possibly even in their collections of funds, if they had been able to identify with and internalise the sufferings of the Jews more.<sup>71</sup> It is an established fact that the heartfelt pleas of Rabbi Abraham Kalmanowitz, of the American Vaad Ha-Hatzala, on behalf of the European



Jews had a profound effect on those who were in a position to give him financial donations and that he was able to influence the U.S. Treasury Secretary, Henry Morgenthau, because of his sincerity.<sup>72</sup> Admittedly, Rabbi Kalmanowitz possessed a rare combination of compassion and regal bearing, and was in a position to campaign on behalf of the Jews in ways that others could not, however, Jewish leaders who themselves were not totally convinced of their cause could not have been expected to exert much influence on those who were not affected by the destruction of the Jews at all.<sup>73</sup>

## NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

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<sup>1</sup> See Andrew Sharf, *The British Press and Jews Under Nazi Rule* (Oxford University Press, London 1964) and Andrew Sharf, 'The British Press and the Holocaust', *Yad Vashem Studies V* (Jerusalem 1963); On page 113 of *The British Press and Jews Under Nazi Rule*, Sharf asserts unequivocally that "on the whole question of atrocity and extermination, the press knew well and printed accurately exactly what was happening...few facts of Nazi anti-Semitism were left unstated by the British press."; See also L. McLaine, *Ministry of Morale: Home Front Morale and the Ministry of Information During World War II* (Allen & Unwin, London 1979)

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 16 December 1939 as cited in Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), p.8

<sup>3</sup> *JC*, 24 October 1941; *JC*, 7 November 1941

<sup>4</sup> LMA ACC/3121 E03/159 – G02 001/036 Joint Foreign Committee Report, 17 December 1941

<sup>5</sup> *JC*, 9 April 1942

<sup>6</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 25 June 1942 as cited in Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), p.8

<sup>7</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 30 June 1942 as cited in Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), p.8

<sup>8</sup> *Daily Mail*, 30 June 1942; *Evening Standard*, 30 June 1942; *Manchester Guardian*, 30 June 1942; *News Chronicle*, 30 June 1942; *Scotsman*, 30 June 1942; *The Times*, 30 June 1942 all as cited in Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), p.9

<sup>9</sup> *News Review*, July 1942 as cited in Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), p.9

<sup>10</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 27 October 1942 as cited in Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), p.10

<sup>11</sup> *The Times*, 4 December 1942 as cited in Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), p.10

<sup>12</sup> *JC*, 11 December 1942 (front page)

<sup>13</sup> *New Statesman and Nation*, 9 January 1943 as cited in Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), p.11

<sup>14</sup> *The Times*, 22 April 1943

<sup>15</sup> *Manchester Sunday Chronicle*, 23 May 1943 as cited in Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), p.11

<sup>16</sup> *People*, 17 October 1943 as cited in Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), p.11

<sup>17</sup> *JC*, 14 June 1944

<sup>18</sup> See Ann Tusa and John Tusa, *The Nuremberg Trial* (BBC Books, London 1995)

<sup>19</sup> PRO FO 371/30898 (C2345/29/28) Basle to Foreign Office, 18 February 1942

<sup>20</sup> As reported in the *JC*, 3 July 1942

<sup>21</sup> 'Notes de l'ambassade de Pologne', *Actes et Documents du Saint Siege Relatifs a la Seconde Guerre Mondiale*, Vol. 8, Doc. no. 4973, October 1942, as cited in Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* (Leicester University Press, London & New York 1999), p.150

<sup>22</sup> See Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), p.9; Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Holmes & Meier, New York & London 1985), pp. 313-316; Arthur D. Morse, *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy* (The Overlook Press, Woodstock & New York 1998), Chapter 1; Meier Sompolinsky, *The British Government and the Holocaust: The Failure of Anglo-Jewish Leadership?* (Sussex Academic Press, Brighton & Portland 1999) p.54; Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* (Leicester University Press, London & New York 1999), p. 151

<sup>23</sup> See Walter Laqueur and Richard Breitman, *Breaking the Silence* (Simon & Schuster, New York 1986), pp. 143-163, 261-262, 264, 265, 271; According to Laqueur and Breitman, the source of Riegner's information was the German industrialist, 'Eduard Schulte.

<sup>24</sup> SD 862.4016/2234 Text of Riegner's cable to Rabbi Stephen Wise and Howard Elting's memo of his meeting with Riegner (attached to State Department memo from Atherton to Reams, 26 August 1942); SD 740.00116 EW 1939/553 Text of Riegner cable also included in telegram from Sydney Silverman MP, Liverpool, via War Department to State Department for transmittal to Rabbi Wise, 28 August 1942, as cited in Arthur D. Morse, *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy* (The Overlook Press, Woodstock & New York 1998), p. 388

<sup>25</sup> Walter Laqueur, *The Terrible Secret: Suppression of the Truth About Hitler's 'Final Solution'* (Little, Brown & Co., Boston & Toronto 1980), p.118

<sup>26</sup> HL MS183 175 139/1 Invitation from Ignacy Schwartzbart to Hertz, 21 October 1943

<sup>27</sup> PRO HW1 Government Code and Cypher School: German Police Section: Decrypts of German Police Communications During Second World War 1939-1945 as cited in Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* (Leicester University Press, London & New York 1999), p. 149; See also Richard Breitman, *Official Secrets: What the Nazis Planned, What the British and Americans Knew* (Hill & Wang, New York 1999)

<sup>28</sup> PRO FO 371/30923, C11923, folios 122-124 BSWJC *Bulletin*, 1 December 1942

<sup>29</sup> CZA WJCL, Cable from Agudat Israel, Switzerland to World Jewish Congress, London, 4 September 1942

<sup>30</sup> Meier Sompolinsky, *The British Government and the Holocaust: The Failure of Anglo-Jewish Leadership?* (Sussex Academic Press, Brighton & Portland 1999), p.8

<sup>31</sup> *House of Lords Debates* (Hansard), Vol.124, cols. 577-587, 7 October 1942

<sup>32</sup> PRO CAB 21/1509 Sir Stafford Cripps to Cabinet, 3 November 1942

<sup>33</sup> PRO FO 371/30924/121 (C 12313/61/18) Count Raczynski to Sir Anthony Eden, 9 December 1942

<sup>34</sup> For the purposes of this study I examine the reactions and responses of the British Government from the beginning of 1942, but more specifically from the time of the dissemination of the Riegner Telegram in August. For the most part, there were few significant responses before this, and, as mentioned, the Riegner Telegram is viewed as a turning point in the responses of both the British and American Governments. I do not examine the issues of immigration before this time to either Great Britain or Palestine because they are already well researched and documented, and do not essentially pertain to the topic of this study. (See Amy Zahl Gottlieb, *Men of Vision: Anglo-Jewry's Aid to the Victims of the Nazi Regime 1933-1945* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1998); B. Leverton & S. Lowensohn, *I Came Alone: The Story of the Kindertransport* (Lewes Book Guild, Sussex 1990); Louise London, *Whitehall and the Jews 1933-1948: British Immigration and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000); Austin Stevens, *The Dispossessed: German Refugees in Britain* (Barrie & Jenkins, London 1975); Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* (Leicester University Press, London & New York 1999); Martin Gilbert, 'British Government Policy Towards Jewish Refugees (November 1938-September 1939)', *Yad Vashem Studies XIII* (Jerusalem 1979); See also Richard Breitman, *Official Secrets: What the Nazis Planned, What the British and Americans Knew* (Hill & Wang, New York 1999); Breitman contends that British and American Intelligence was well informed of the Nazis' plans quite early in the war but consistently suppressed the information.

<sup>35</sup> WJCL, Wladyslaw Sikorski to World Jewish Congress, 9 May 1942 as cited in Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* (Leicester University Press, London & New York 1999), p. 148; For a study of the Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews see David Engel, *Facing the Holocaust: The Polish Government-in-Exile and the Jews 1943-1945* (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill London 1993)

<sup>36</sup> Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* (Leicester University Press, London & New York 1999), p. 148

<sup>37</sup> The *minute* by F.K. Roberts, 16 August 1942 is cited in E. Eppler, 'The Rescue Work of the World Jewish Congress During the Nazi Period: Rescue Attempts During the Holocaust', *Proceedings of the Second Yad Vashem International Conference* (Jerusalem 1977), pp. 47-70

<sup>38</sup> PRO FO 371/24472/11 (C 5471/116/55) See *minute* dated 8 April 1940 in which Reginald Leeper commented on an October 1939 Press Report regarding the treatment of the Jews in Poland: "As a general rule Jews are inclined to magnify their persecutions. I remember the exaggerated stories of Jewish pogroms in Poland after the last war which, when fully examined, were found to have little substance."

<sup>39</sup> See Chapter 4, p. 197

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- <sup>40</sup> *House of Commons Debates* (Hansard), Vol. 385, cols. 2082-2083, 17 December 1942
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid
- <sup>42</sup> PRO FO 898/289 Political Warfare Executive, Central Directives, 10 December 1942
- <sup>43</sup> Amongst other sources, the Home Office's stance can be confirmed by PRO FO 371/32682 (W 17401/4555/48) which is a note by Richard Law in which he comments on the aforementioned deputation, 16 December 1942
- <sup>44</sup> *House of Commons Debates* (Hansard), Vol. 385, cols. 2082-2083, 17 December 1942
- <sup>45</sup> PRO CAB 95/15, PRO FO 195/2478, PRO FO 371/36680 (W 9840/G), PRO FO 371/36712 (W9966/1499/48) *House of Commons Notes* referring to Oliver Stanley's plan regarding the Bulgarian Jews, February 1943; See also Frederick B. Chary, *The Bulgarian Jews and the Final Solution 1940-1944* (Pittsburgh University Press, Pittsburgh 1972)
- <sup>46</sup> PRO FO 371/34374 (C 12031/31/62) In October 1943, J.D. Greenway of the Foreign Office wrote the following to the Office of the High Commissioner of South Africa: "...it is desirable as a general practice to regard Jews primarily as being nationals of the countries to which they belong, and not to treat them as a separate category. The Allied Declaration of 17 December 1942 about German crimes against Jews in Europe was to some extent an exception to this general practice, which we felt to be justified by the special circumstances."
- <sup>47</sup> AIL Letter from E.W. Harrison (Eden's secretary) to Harry Goodman, 13 November 1943; *Manchester Guardian*, 6 November 1943
- <sup>48</sup> AIL Letter from Harry Goodman to Sir Anthony Eden, 29 July 1943; AIL Letter from A. Walker (Eden's secretary) to Harry Goodman, 12 August 1943
- <sup>49</sup> Herbert Morrison's statement was an exaggeration. The figures quoted were for war-refugees, only a small percent of whom were Jewish.
- <sup>50</sup> PRO CAB 95/15 *Minutes*, 31 December 1942
- <sup>51</sup> As cited in Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* (Leicester University Press, London & New York 1999), p. 165
- <sup>52</sup> PRO PREM 4/51/3 U.K. delegates to Anthony Eden, 28 June 1943
- <sup>53</sup> *JC*, 7 May 1943
- <sup>54</sup> *House of Commons Debates* (Hansard), Vol. 389, col. 1127, 1942-1943
- <sup>55</sup> See Chapter 1, pp. 59-61
- <sup>56</sup> As reported in the *JC*, 17 September 1943; See also LMA ACC/3121 E1/111 *Notes*, September 1943
- <sup>57</sup> *JC*, 2 April 1943; The fourth body referred to by Feldman was Agudat Israel.
- <sup>58</sup> Norman Bentwich, *My Seventy-Seven Years: An Account of My Life and Times 1883-1960* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1962), p.191
- <sup>59</sup> *JC*, 26 May 1944
- <sup>60</sup> PRO FO 371/30914/487 Joint Foreign Committee delegation to Home office, January 1942
- <sup>61</sup> PRO FO 371/30915/2263 BSWJC Document: *Jews in Nazi Europe: February 1933 to November 1941*
- <sup>62</sup> Selig Brodetsky, *Memoirs: From the Ghetto to Israel* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1960), pp. 219-220
- <sup>63</sup> PRO FO 371/30923 *Notes*, 26 November 1942
- <sup>64</sup> LMA ACC/3121 A001 – A045 *Minutes*, 3 December 1942
- <sup>65</sup> See Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), pp.67-68
- <sup>66</sup> M. Penkower, *The Jews Were Expendable: Free World Diplomacy and the Holocaust* (University of Illinois Press, Urbana 1983), p.197, 205; See Chapter 4, pp. 197
- <sup>67</sup> M. Penkower, *The Jews Were Expendable: Free World Diplomacy and the Holocaust* (University of Illinois Press, Urbana 1983), p. 206

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<sup>68</sup> See Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), pp.12-20; See also Yehuda Bauer, *The Holocaust in Historical Perspective* (University of Washington Press, Seattle 1978), p.19

<sup>69</sup> Interview, Jack Davis, 2 May 2002

<sup>70</sup> See Yehuda Bauer, *The Holocaust in Historical Perspective* (University of Washington Press, Seattle 1978), p.19; See also Yehuda Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust: The American Joint Distribution Committee 1939-1945* (Wayne State University Press, Detroit 1981), p.190

<sup>71</sup> William D. Rubinstein, *The Myth Of Rescue: Why the Democracies Could Not have Saved More Jews from the Nazis* (Routledge, London & New York 1997); Pamela Shatzkes, *Anglo-Jewish Rescue and Relief Efforts 1938-1944* (PhD Thesis, UCL); See the introduction to this work for the author's comments on the works of Shatzkes and Rubinstein.

<sup>72</sup> See David Kranzler and Eliezer Gevirtz, *To Save A World: Profiles in Holocaust Rescue* (CIS Publishers, Lakewood 1991) Vol.1, pp. 83-118

<sup>73</sup> Selig Brodetsky, *Memoirs: From the Ghetto to Israel* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1960), p.218; In 1954, Brodetsky wrote: "We still did not realise the terrible extent of the annihilation of the Jewish populations of Europe carried out systematically and in cold blood by the Nazis till it all came out at the Nuremberg Trials...The world was shocked by the revelation."

## CHAPTER THREE

### HATZALA: THE CHIEF RABBI'S RELIGIOUS EMERGENCY

#### COUNCIL

#### AND RABBI DR. SOLOMON SCHONFELD

#### CHIEF RABBI'S RELIGIOUS EMERGENCY COUNCIL

The Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council, henceforth to be referred to as the CRREC, was the largest organisation in Britain that promoted the efforts of Anglo-orthodox Jews on behalf of the beleaguered Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. Chief Rabbi Joseph Herman Hertz acted as the Chairman of the CRREC until his passing in 1946 and Rabbi Dr. Solomon Schonfeld, who was the driving force behind it, was its Executive Director until it was disbanded in 1950.<sup>1</sup> According to the rules and regulations of the Council from the time that its name was changed from the Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Fund in early 1939, its main object was 'religious reconstruction' but its aims and accomplishments steadily changed throughout the war years. Initially, 'religious reconstruction' was to include the provision of religious facilities for Jews in Britain and the maintenance and care of needy religious 'officers' and their dependants. It was intended that the Executive Committee would meet once every six months and that they would 'invite' leading personalities from orthodox congregations in Great Britain to form the Council.

The Council was to meet with the Executive Committee once a year and advise them on matters of finance, administration and general activities.<sup>2</sup> In reality the CRREC did not function along these organisational structures right from the beginning.<sup>3</sup> It ran more along the lines of the stipulation in Number 10 of the *Rules and Regulations* that stated: “ The administration of the routine affairs of the fund shall be carried out by the Director” (Schonfeld).<sup>4</sup>

Funds for the CRREC were to be raised by voluntary contributions and subscriptions, and appeals were to be issued to Jewish communities and individuals, as the need would arise. The capital raised would be applied to the activities of the Council and the Executive Committee would have the power to entrust orthodox Jewish organisations with carrying out parts of its programme and to defray their costs. The members of the Executive Committee at the time of the adoption of the initial rules and regulations were the Chief Rabbi, Dayan Lazarus, Oscar Phillip and Dr. J. Grunfeld.<sup>5</sup>

From the beginning of the war and as the war progressed, the functions of the CRREC changed fundamentally and at a steady pace.<sup>6</sup> Its activities in 1942 included assistance to Jews in the Armed Forces, needy clergy, war victims, refugees and internees. It provided hostels, welfare and youth activities for refugee children and assisted in the evacuation of children from London. Part of its manifesto was to provide assistance to Jews in the British Empire, including Palestine and the Continent, although in practice this was not the case because of the services that it was forced to render because of the war.

In fact, the purpose and functions of the CRREC were largely dictated by the new requirements that constantly arose as a result of the war.

In spite of the appointment of a number of ministers as Chaplains to the Forces, observant Jews had few facilities for maintaining their observances while on service. This fact was tending to detract from the enthusiasm of orthodox Jews to join the Forces and caused the gradual estrangement of many religious Jews who had enlisted. It was felt in many quarters that the community was not interested in the welfare of its members who were serving in the Forces. The CRREC, therefore established a welfare department that worked in close co-operation with the Senior Chaplain's Office. Dayan H.M. Gollop, the Senior Jewish Chaplain to the Forces, presided at a conference of synagogue representatives, convened by the Council, at which the Jewish Soldiers' Kosher Food Service was inaugurated. This service, administered by the Council, provided many thousands of serving men with *matzot*, food and *Haggadot* (Passover *seder* prayer books) during Passover, and maintained a fortnightly parcel service to all observant Jews serving in the Forces. During the war years, 130,000 tins of kosher food and 50,000 lbs. of kosher meat were distributed, and the service extended assistance to the Allied Forces stationed in Britain, Europe and India, except the Americans.<sup>7</sup> The Council also participated in the provision of books and religious requisites to Jews in the Forces. These included prayer books, *chumashim* (bibles) and *machzorim* (festival prayer books). The Council also assisted in the distribution of Jewish books through the Chief Rabbi's Literature Fund.<sup>8</sup>



In 1942, the Chief Rabbi issued an appeal through the CRREC on behalf of the needy clergy and their families living in Britain. It read as follows:

There are today, in our community, a number of rabbis and ministers who are reduced to virtual starvation because of circumstances arising out of the war. Synagogues, especially in the East End of London, have been destroyed by enemy action, congregations have been dispersed, and devoted servants and religious teachers have thus been deprived of their meagre pittance.

Together with lay communal leaders, I have explored without success every possible avenue to avoid the necessity of appealing for funds for this purpose. But I have no alternative to asking every generous-hearted member of Anglo-Jewry to subscribe towards this cause. About £3,000 is required to enable regular grants to be made to these unfortunate scholars and their families, during the present emergency.<sup>9</sup>

With regards to refugees, 985 individuals of Polish, Russian, German and Austrian origin were entirely dependent upon the Council. Ten welfare and religious centres for refugees in London and the Provinces were opened and maintained with the financial assistance of the Council. The CRREC dealt with many appeals for general help in pressing cases and obtained employment and provided accommodation for those who were in need. In cases where religious requisites were needed by groups or individuals, they turned to the CRREC and most requests were reasonably fulfilled. The Council took a

share in the foundation, support and maintenance of two kosher canteens in London. In addition, it established a 'clothes centre' from which many used garments were distributed. A furniture storage department proved to be a great help to many refugees who were forced to live in small or temporary lodgings, or who had been evacuated to the country.<sup>10</sup>

Apart from official representations on welfare questions by internees, and periodic visits by Schonfeld to the internment camps in the British Isles, the Council undertook a number of activities in the interests of the internees. It organised Kashrut and Passover arrangements and provided the internees with books of Jewish and general interest. It supplied pocket money to a number of destitute individuals, expedited urgent emigration cases, delivered important messages and rendered much individual help and advice.

The CRREC arranged for a suitable rabbi to serve in each camp and appointed a Resident Minister in the camp on the Isle of Man. The Council consecrated and undertook the maintenance of the first Jewish cemetery on the island in November 1940. It also undertook to obtain the release of bona-fide refugees. In fact, from the categories made eligible for release on the general representations of the Council, close to 1,000 internees were released through its sponsorship.<sup>11</sup>

The Council assisted in the formation of a number of refugees' hostels in Cardiff, Clapton, Croydon, Glasgow, Manchester, Northampton, Nottingham, Shefford, Whitechapel and Willesden. Many of the children brought over to

England through the *'kindertransports'* were housed in these hostels as well as in the Tyler Green Hostel in London where their physical and spiritual needs were well cared for. Eventually, many of the children were placed in private homes, but the Council regularly monitored their care.<sup>12</sup>

From the first week of the war, the CRREC dealt with problems arising out of the evacuation of Jewish children to the safer country areas. It was realised that unless the Jewish children were evacuated together or at least in groups within each larger evacuation party, the means of maintaining religious life among them would be both arduous and expensive. All of the well-founded fears that were entertained concerning the Jewish upbringing of those refugee children placed in non-Jewish homes throughout the country during 1938-1939, now applied to tens of thousands of Anglo-Jewish children, as well as the thousands of new refugee children evacuated with them. The categories of Jewish children could not be dealt with separately and the whole problem presented an unprecedented emergency in the religious life of the community.

As a result, the Council decided upon what seemed the only practical step to address the situation, namely, the establishment of 'kosher canteens' in evacuation centres. The intention was that the premises of these canteens would form the centre around which Jewish life would be rebuilt. It was felt that the existence of a room dedicated to Jewish needs was the elementary sine qua non of all religious organisation, and the provision of kosher food an indispensable requirement in the development of Jewish life and practice. The Council sponsored the evacuation of a large party of Jewish children, 550



strong, under the auspices of the Jewish Secondary Schools. An appeal was made and many donors gave generously towards the establishment, equipment and maintenance of three canteens to serve these children. In fact, the first three canteens in the country were established within a fortnight of the evacuation. In addition to the canteens, the Council supported four 'evacuation hostels' and it sponsored the formation of a general committee to carry out the necessary work involved, throughout the country.<sup>13</sup>

The CRREC deputed many of the rabbis and teachers under its care to the various centres where their guidance would help to maintain the religious life of the evacuees, including adults and children.<sup>14</sup> The Jewish education of children evacuated and billeted under the government-billeting scheme was especially developed in the District of Shefford where the Jewish Secondary Schools, with the support of the Council, was able to create and maintain a model Jewish evacuation colony under the leadership of Dr. Judith Grunfeld. The Council also supported the evacuation classes of the Keren Hatorah Organisation, which was based in London. Schonfeld held a vigorous campaign against the 'child estranging' activities of some communal leaders who he felt were purposely placing children in environments that were hostile to orthodoxy and were therefore cutting these children off from their Jewish roots and any chances of a Jewish upbringing. Notwithstanding this, the Council co-operated with the Refugee Children's Movement and the Jewish Refugees' Committee, with whom they were not officially affiliated, in arranging for the religious education of evacuated refugee children in a number of individual cases.<sup>15</sup> New communities that had been formed in

evacuation centres were helped by the CRREC with advice, personnel, religious requisites and finances. In many cases, prayer books, synagogue appurtenances, bibles and *matzot* were supplied.<sup>16</sup>

The Council assisted the Chief Rabbi in his efforts to improve the standards of Jewish religious education, especially of children dispersed in the counties, by the formation of the National Council for Religious Education. This body was successful in obtaining the support of the Ministry of Health in schemes for re-billeting isolated Jewish children and for procuring club premises for evacuated Jewish groups.

In March 1942, the Chief Rabbi addressed the following appeal letter on behalf of the National Council for Jewish Religious Education, to the Jewish communities in the United Kingdom:

We all recall with pride the great effort made by Anglo-Jewry to provide hospitality for thousands of Jewish children fleeing from Nazi persecution. The success, which attended that effort three years ago, was largely due to local communities who undertook, jointly or severally, to establish homes and hostels for the refugees.

Our own children are now in somewhat a similar plight. In their evacuation, many of them are away from home and far from organised Jewish life. Their leisure is all too frequently spent in the streets, where

they are often exposed to undesirable influences. We must, and can, do something for these religiously abandoned children.

The National Council for Jewish Religious Education is providing five portable buildings to serve as centres in evacuation areas. And I am writing that you and your co-workers join in a countrywide drive for the purchase of such halls. The buildings provided by local communities can be allocated to any specified place desired, and could be administered by the said Committees. I look forward to your helpful collaboration in this undertaking.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to overseas broadcasting arrangements, the Council maintained regular contact with most of the communities and welfare organisations throughout the Empire. It had a representative in Canada and maintained its interest in the welfare of internees who were transported there in July 1940. The religious leaders of Palestine, most notably Chief Rabbi Herzog, repeatedly turned to the Chief Rabbi under the aegis of the CRREC for assistance throughout the war and the Council was able to assist in the immigration and maintenance of yeshiva students there. Most of the charitable and religious institutions in Palestine were finding it nearly impossible to manage during the war because of the cessation of support from Continental Jewry. In response to urgent appeals on behalf of these institutions the Council organised the Palestine Aid Department, which raised funds on their behalf.<sup>18</sup> When Herzog was unable to arrange for the entry of Jewish refugees stranded in Japan and Portugal into Palestine, Hertz

attempted to secure their entry into Canada with the assistance of the colonial secretary. In the spring of 1941, he succeeded in obtaining 80 visas for these Jews and made further attempts to secure 370 Canadian visas for Jewish refugees stranded in Shanghai. Although he enlisted the help of the BoD in this venture, he was not successful in procuring the required visas.<sup>19</sup>

According to The CRREC Report for the year ending 31 December 1942, the annual budget for the Council was approximately £20,300. The refugee work of the Council, which was eligible for government grants, covered about half of this amount, the rest having to be raised through public and private appeals. Lord Wedgwood of Barlaston issued a general appeal on behalf of the charities under the auspices of the CRREC and a charity function in support of this appeal was held at the Stoll Theatre, London, on 8 March 1942. Apart from joint appeals with other refugee and relief organisations and general appeals on behalf of the CRREC, the representatives of the various activities of the Council appealed directly to the community for support. For example, the Chief Rabbi, Dayan H.M. Lazarus, Dayan H. M. Gollop and Oscar Phillip issued appeals on behalf of the Servicemen's Kosher Food Service and the Needy Clergy's War Fund. The Council was also able to carry out some essential religious emergency activities through the Jewish War Fund, which was put at the disposal of the Chief Rabbi by overseas communities.<sup>20</sup> The CRREC was registered with the London County Council under the War Charities Act (1940) and audited accounts were available to subscribers.<sup>21</sup>

During the second half of the war, the Council made efforts to afford protection to Jews who were in Nazi occupied lands and threatened with extermination. On the recommendation of the Council, the British Foreign and Colonial Offices issued approximately 400 visas for Mauritius, to rabbis and their families, theological students and religious leaders.<sup>22</sup> These visas were transmitted by the Foreign Office to British representatives in Turkey, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland and were issued on the basis of the Council's acceptance to guarantee their maintenance. The Mauritius visas afforded a measure of protection to those who held them, although none of the visa holders actually reached Mauritius.<sup>23</sup> The Council also maintained regular contact with the Foreign Office and the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, regarding the fate of the Jews in the Dodecanese Islands and of those deported from Vittel, France.<sup>24</sup>

When Count Folke Bernadotte of the Swedish Red Cross, was in London, representatives of the CRREC requested that he issue passports or travelling papers to a number of Hungarian Jews on the Mauritius rescue list. As a result of these negotiations, Swedish Protection Papers were issued to those on a list provided by the Council.<sup>25</sup> The CRREC was also heavily involved in raising funds for, and attempts to arrange the evacuation of 900 rabbinical teachers and their students who were stranded in Shanghai.<sup>26</sup> As a constituent of the United Jewish Relief appeal, it assisted in financing the dispatch of food parcels to Terezin and other camps. Its welfare activities for internees were maintained both in Mauritius and the Isle of Man and it



assisted refugees, religious officers and institutions in Great Britain and Palestine.<sup>27</sup>

The functions of the Council changed substantially as the war drew to a close in 1945. In fact, aside from the Needy Clergy and War Victims Fund, even the names of the various departments had changed by that time. According to the *Report of Activities* for the period ending 1 August 1945, the Council included the following departments: Refugees and Relief Maintenance, Department of Post-War Religious Reconstruction (Mobile Synagogue Ambulance Fund), Jewish Soldier's Religious Welfare Committee (Jewish Servicemen's Passover Service), Assistance of Needy Clergy and War Victims, Office for Jewish Rededication and Religious Propaganda and the Religious Department for Jewish Refugees. The Council also maintained the Passover activities of the Chief Rabbi's Kosher Canteens Committee. By then, it had an established American Chapter, based in New York which was run by Moses Schonfeld, and Canadian Chapters based in Toronto and Montreal, which were run by several volunteers but on a more ad-hoc basis than the American one. The Council was associated with the United Jewish Relief Appeal and with the Jewish Committee for Relief Abroad.<sup>28</sup> It was also a member of the Standing Conference of the Council of British Societies for Relief Abroad (COBSRA).<sup>29</sup>

During the period immediately following the war, the Council was called upon to assist in the maintenance and rehabilitation of surviving rabbinical colleges and their alumni. This included the payment of salaries to rabbis and other

clergy who were willing and able to continue to officiate in European communities and to act as leaders in the re-establishment of Jewish communal life on the Continent. Maintenance grants were given to rabbis who were too old or ill to undertake active work and assistance in arranging their emigration was offered. Payments were made to students who were studying to obtain qualification as religious officials by following a course of study under a rabbinical authority in Europe.<sup>30</sup> Grants were also given to communities that needed funds to repair their damaged synagogues and to restart their religious and educational activities.<sup>31</sup>

The Council, with the co-operation of the Jewish Committee for Relief Abroad and the United Jewish Relief Appeal, supported the establishment of Kosher Canteens and children's hostels in Belgium, France and Holland. It also co-operated in the formation and work of the Commission on the Status of Jewish War-Orphans in Europe, which was established by the Chief Rabbi. The purpose of this organisation was to rescue as many Jewish refugee children from the risk of their estrangement from their roots by assisting in their removal from the non-Jewish homes and convents that had harboured them.<sup>32</sup> It co-operated in schemes for bringing children from German D.P. Camps to Great Britain and set up hostels for their accommodation. A specially appointed staff under the direction of Rabbi A. Babad handled this work as well as arrangements for the delivery of relief supplies to rabbis in the camps.<sup>33</sup>

The CRREC had been laying plans for the religious reconstruction of the Jewish communities in Europe from as early as 1943. It had initiated a Food Collection Scheme in September 1943 that set as its purpose to collect and store unperishable foodstuffs to be distributed to Jews in Europe after their liberation. At first, this scheme was not fully appreciated by the community but it was taken up with enthusiasm in its later stages. The total collections resulted in 150,000 packages, and arrangements were made with the Ministry of Food, the various Allied Governments and the Red Cross Organisations for their dispatch.<sup>34</sup> The Council enjoyed the enthusiastic co-operation of many orthodox Jewish youth groups in the collection of foodstuffs. It also received some financial assistance for this venture from the United Jewish Relief Appeal and the Jewish Committee for Relief Abroad. Gifts of food were also received from Melbourne (25,000 tins) and New Zealand (2.5 tons). An accessory to the Food Collection Scheme was the collection of garments on a considerable scale (30,000 garments) and clothing reached the liberated areas and camps in individual parcels, bulk consignments, and through the Mobile-Synagogue Ambulances.<sup>35</sup>

The Council aimed at producing 50 Mobile-Synagogue Ambulances, although in 1945 only 18 were ready for dispatch to the Continent. These included seven Synagogue-Ambulances 'Junior' i.e. 30 cwt. and two Synagogue Canteens. Each Synagogue-Ambulance/Canteen contained food, clothing, religious requisites and medical supplies weighing at least one ton. They were intended to assist the Jewish liberated populations with their communal re-organisation and to make contact with dispersed groups. Immediately upon

the end of hostilities, large vehicles, weighing 5 tons each, were sent to the Continent. Three were sent with the military, one to Italy and two to serve as troop welfare centres and relief vehicles in the civilian work undertaken by the Military Government. One was sent to North-west Germany and one each to Czechoslovakia, France, Greece and Holland. The French vehicle operated in the whole area from Paris to Bregenz, Austria.<sup>36</sup>

The Ministry of Food authorised COBSRA affiliated societies to purchase a total of 1,000 tons of food for the supplementary feeding of priority groups in war-ravaged Europe. This included invalids, the aged, infants and nursing mothers. The CRREC purchased 200 tons of this allocation in addition to the 75 tons that it had already collected and sent these foodstuffs to the Continent. Consignments were sent to the liberated concentration camps by means of channels specially provided by the military authorities and further shipments were arranged through existing export facilities.<sup>37</sup> The Council worked together with the United Jewish Relief Appeal in the dispatch of large consignments of clothing and medicaments to Poland and to those regions of Russia where Jewish refugees were mainly concentrated. Contact was maintained between the Council and the Soviet Red Cross and it assisted them in establishing the machinery for tracing missing relatives.<sup>38</sup>

Already in 1943, rabbis and ministers throughout the country were invited to volunteer for short-term service abroad. In June 1945, it became possible to utilise these offers of help, and with the assistance of the War Office, the Council was able to arrange for four rabbis to proceed by air to the camps.

Rabbis S. Baumgarten and J. Vilensky were dispatched to the Belsen Camp, Rabbi Dr. E. Munk was sent to Celle and Rev. A. Y. Greenbaum was sent to Diepholz. One further minister, the Rev. S. Marcovitch was sponsored by the Council and led a Jewish Relief Unit into Holland and Germany. These five individuals met with ready help from army authorities, including Captain Bruno Marmorstein who was attached to the Military Government in Belsen. Upon arrival, they organised synagogue-based communities and many group activities. They were able to telephone London for urgent supplies, and arrangements were made by the Council, through them, for consignments of food and religious requisites to be sent to the camps. In addition to hands-on assistance to Jews on the Continent, a message from the Chief Rabbi to European Jewry in English, Hebrew and Yiddish, was published and distributed by representatives of the Council throughout Europe.<sup>39</sup>

The Council maintained the Religious Reconstruction Department of the Jewish Committee for Relief Abroad. This department succeeded in collecting quantities of *Sifrei Torah* (Torah scrolls), *shechita* knives (*chalafim*) for ritual slaughter, circumcision instruments, *mezuzot*, prayer books, bibles, phylacteries and prayer shawls. Many of these items were donated, but large quantities were also purchased, mainly from Palestine. The Central British Fund for Jewish Relief and Rehabilitation provided funds for these items and large consignments were sent to Belgium, France, Greece, Holland, and the camps in Germany.<sup>40</sup> By August 1945, over 4,000 prayer books, 3,000 bibles, 1,000 pairs of phylacteries, 200 prayer shawls, 1,000 *mezuzot* and thousands of *tzitzit* (fringes) were sent to Jews on the Continent.<sup>41</sup> At the request of the

Ministry of Food, the Council also undertook the distribution of *lulavim* (palm branches) and *etrogim* (citron) for use on *Succot* (Tabernacles), in order to minimise the wastage of valuable shipping space. Arrangements for preventing financial loss to previous importers, both organisations and individuals, were also made. As a result of the Council's efforts, free sets of these religious necessities were distributed to servicemen in the United Kingdom, Jews in the liberated territories and to overseas communities.<sup>42</sup>

### SCHONFELD: A BIOGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW

The fledgling ultra-orthodox community in the years preceding and during the Second World War, can best be described by examining the figure of Rabbi Dr. Solomon Schonfeld, who led the community throughout those turbulent and sorrowful years. Schonfeld, who took over the reign of leadership from his father, was the impetus behind his community's reactions and responses to the Holocaust. His persona reflects the approaches of many of the ultra-orthodox activists in different countries during the war. However, Schonfeld, by virtue of his base in England, faced many more obstacles than his counterparts in other countries. As a result, he was forced to limit many of his activities to the assistance of those Jews that had already managed to escape the hangman's noose and found themselves in the British Isles during the war.

Solomon Schonfeld was born to Victor and Rachael Leah Schoenfeld in Stoke Newington, London, on 21 February 1912 and was the second of seven children.<sup>43</sup> His parents, who were born in Hungary, immigrated to England in the early 1900's and took an active role in re-organising the Orthodox Jewish community to run along similar lines as the Orthodox '*Gemeinde*' in Western Europe. Rabbi Victor Schoenfeld was the founder and Presiding Rabbi of the Adath Yisroel Congregation, henceforth to be referred to as the Adath, which was essentially the organised ultra-orthodox community in London at the time. This community, which later developed into the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations, was formed in addition to, and not officially opposed to the well established United Synagogue and the Chief Rabbi remained the representative of the entire Jewish community at official and public functions. Although there remained unaffiliated orthodox congregations, especially in London's East End, these would eventually join the Union, as would most of the orthodox provincial congregations. In fact in the years after World War II, because of a small, albeit significant influx of Holocaust survivors to the country, many members of the affiliate congregations of the Adath were of Eastern European, Hassidic origin. As time progressed, these congregations changed the direction of the UOHC from the Western European '*Gemeinde*' style community envisioned by Rabbi Victor Schoenfeld to the more '*shtetl*', or 'old world' Eastern European type of community that it is today.

Schonfeld received his formative secular education at the Highbury County School in London and later studied law at the University of London. He spent 1926-1927 and part of 1929 studying under Rabbi Samuel David Ungar in the

Nitra Yeshiva, which was in Trnava, Slovakia. He continued studying in Nitra after his father's death in 1930 with the intention of receiving *semicha*, rabbinic ordination, in order to take over his father's position in London. During this time he also studied in the Yeshiva of Slabodka in Lithuania and worked on a doctorate at the Universities of Vienna and Königsberg. By the time he returned to London in 1933 at the age of 21 he had been granted rabbinic diplomas by Rabbis Abraham Shapiro of Kovno, Samuel David Ungar of Nitra, Boruch Horowitz of Aleksot and Abraham Grodzinski of Slabodka. He had also graduated as a Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Königsberg after taking courses in English literature, pedagogies and oriental languages.<sup>44</sup>

Throughout the period of Schonfeld's studies in the Nitra Yeshiva his study partner was Michael Ber Weissmandl, who was Rabbi Samuel David Ungar's son-in-law and who later became one of the most famous and outspoken orthodox activists both during the war in Slovakia and after the war in America.<sup>45</sup> The two developed an extremely close relationship, which was to last until Weissmandl's death in 1957. It is without doubt that Weissmandl had a profound impact on Schonfeld's "world view".<sup>46</sup> Weissmandl's uncompromising forthrightness was to become one of Schonfeld's most pronounced characteristics.

In September 1933, upon his return to Great Britain, he assumed his father's position as Rabbi of the Adath and later that year became the Presiding Rabbi of the UOHC.<sup>47</sup> He also became the principal of the Jewish Secondary School



which was also founded by his father. Schonfeld assumed what must have been considered the most prestigious position in the ultra-orthodox Jewish community, at a very young age. This was by no means automatic, and the process which led to his election is indicative of his own nature and the pressures exerted upon him.<sup>48</sup> After his father's death in 1930 it was generally understood that his position was to be filled by the German born Rabbi Dr. Elie Munk who was an accomplished pedagogue and scholar and was well suited to lead the Adath. Many of the community's leaders including Harry Goodman of the Agudah supported Munk's election.<sup>49</sup> However, a certain Mr. Kestenbaum who was the self-appointed representative of Schonfeld took a personal disliking to Munk and rallied the East End congregations against Munk and the Adath board members who elected him.<sup>50</sup> He claimed that Munk was not suitable for the position and that his supporters were 'against' Schonfeld. There was also a general misunderstanding as to whether Munk's election was to be permanent or temporary and whether he was elected to lead the Union or just to become Rabbi of the Adath. Schonfeld's family, including his mother, became heavily involved in this controversy, and it seems that they viewed it with displeasure. Although Mrs. Schonfeld wanted to see her son Solomon following in her husband's footsteps, she did not want his position to be built upon communal controversy and disunity.

At the height of the controversy, Mrs. Schonfeld succeeded in arranging an informal meeting at her home with Goodman, Kestenbaum and another community leader, Mr. Fleischman. It was confirmed that Munk had only been elected to the position of Rabbi of the Adath until Schonfeld returned from

Europe and had acquired the necessary certification to take up the post. The election of the Rabbi of the Union was to be postponed for three months and it was understood that Schonfeld would be elected to the post. Kestenbaum promised that he would not interfere with Munk's election as temporary rabbi but would not support it publicly either because of his stand against him until then.<sup>51</sup>

Around this time, the *JC* published an article that originated with Kestenbaum to the effect that Schonfeld had been elected to the post and that the position would take effect upon his return to England. It further stated that a temporary rabbi i.e. Munk, would be elected in the meantime.<sup>52</sup> Although he acceded to the eventuality that Schonfeld would assume his father's role as Rabbi of the Union, Goodman who was a supporter of Munk took great exception to the reference to Munk as a 'temporary rabbi' by Kestenbaum. He also blamed Schonfeld for taking part in a conspiracy to discredit Munk and usurp the position for himself. He claimed that a report had appeared in Vienna's Judischer Presse, an organ of Agudat Israel, which was a transcript of Munk's *Yom Kippur* address in which he was alleged to have said that he would carry on Rabbi Victor Schonfeld's work until his son Solomon was ready to take over, although in reality he said no such a thing. Goodman claimed that this article appeared the same week that Schonfeld was in Vienna and that he was, in fact, behind it.

A report of the controversy surrounding Schonfeld's election and the charges levelled against him was forwarded to him in a letter from his brother Moses,

dated 20 November 1930.<sup>53</sup> In his reply of 25 November 1930, he emphatically denied any connection to the article in the Judische Presse although he did admit being in the Vienna Agudah offices during the week that the article appeared. He also admitted that he was aware of the misquote after it was published and although he found it amusing, claimed to have challenged Dr. Polak, who wrote the article, about its lack of authenticity. His summation of this episode is indicative of a mature, level headed approach to opposition and relationships with people in general.

Regarding Goodman and his accusations he writes:

The whole matter is extremely petty and I would not have troubled to give you the above facts had the accusation not formed a stain upon my character. Nevertheless, I am convinced that it was uttered in a moment of excitement and is therefore not worthwhile getting excited about. Mr. Goodman is not the man who changes his real i.e. cool mind so easily and if he thought me suited for a rabbinical career, the essence of which is truth and veracity, he would not consider me as dishonest. I hope that this trivial affair will soon be dead and buried.<sup>54</sup>

It is clear that Schonfeld aspired to fill his father's position as Rabbi of the Union. It is for this express purpose that he sought to attain rabbinic ordination from Europe's most prominent rabbis. Schonfeld pursued his doctorate in order to achieve the same prominence in secular education as his father. However, his approach to the impending responsibilities of his position and

the obstacles that he would inevitably have to surmount indicate a rare nobility of character.

This is evident in his letter of 25 November 1930, when, with regards to his position on the rabbinate he writes:

It appears from what you write that factless and ungentlemanly acts are being carried out in my name. I wish that you would somehow see to it that I am not identified with such methods. I maintain that it is quite possible to safeguard our interests without causing any controversy whatsoever, for dispute can only do harm to our cause.

With regards to Munk he writes:

(Besides), I gather the impression from Mamma's letters that Dr. Munk is a very decent and agreeable man, in which case it would be foolish on our part to put obstacles in his way, for the more work he does the better for us.<sup>55</sup>

Accounts of Schonfeld's personality change with reference to different situations and time periods, and it has been said that in his later years, some found him extremely difficult to deal with. However, recollections of him after his return to London when he assumed the position of Rabbi of the Adath in September 1933 and later that year of Presiding Rabbi of the Union, reflect admiration and confidence in his abilities, despite his young age.

In her *obituary*, Dr. Judith Grunfeld, who ran his school in Shefford during the war years, wrote about Schonfeld:

When I first met Rabbi Dr. Solomon Schonfeld in December 1933, he was 21 years of age – youth glimmering right through him. Courage, cheer, enterprise and authority were the sparks that ignited the atmosphere around him. He was then the ‘fatherly brother’ of the five younger orphaned Schonfeld children, and at the same time the rabbinical leader of a mature, cultured congregation, a young man combining charismatic charm with rabbinical authority.<sup>56</sup>

In 1938, when the situation of the Jews on the continent was becoming steadily more critical, Schonfeld founded the Chief Rabbi’s Religious Emergency Fund for German and Austrian Jewry together with the Chief Rabbi Dr. Joseph Herman Hertz.<sup>57</sup> Subsequently, the Fund became known as the Chief Rabbi’s Religious Emergency Council.<sup>58</sup> Schonfeld directed the CRREC throughout its existence until it was disbanded in 1950. On 27 December 1939, Schonfeld married the Chief Rabbi’s daughter Judith Helen and together they had three sons.<sup>59</sup> His working base was in the Stamford Hill section of London and to a lesser degree Golders Green, he therefore took up residence in Highgate in order to be in close proximity to both. The family also spent time at Walnut Tree Cottage in Matching, Essex.

Between 1945 and 1950 he founded and established seven Jewish day schools in London and extended the original Jewish Secondary School, founded by his father, into the Jewish Secondary Schools Movement which had in the region of 2000 pupils. He established twenty synagogues in the new Jewish districts that were developing in the suburbs of London and turned the UOHC into a widespread organisation. Eventually, the UOHC incorporated forty associated communities in Great Britain and the Commonwealth, a permanent *Beth Din*, or Religious Jewish Court, independent *shechita* (ritual slaughter), three *mikvaot* (ritual baths) and a variety of *kashrut* (kosher food) facilities. In 1957, he founded the European Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, which enjoyed the membership of twenty associated communities throughout Western Europe by the 1960's.

Schonfeld was a prolific writer and wrote several books on Jewish thought in addition to various school textbooks and short articles. For the most part, these books set out his outlook vis-à-vis Judaism in modern times in general, and orthodox Anglo-Judaism in particular. Schonfeld maintained that the purpose of Orthodox Judaism throughout the ages, and especially in modern times was to act as a moral basis for contemporary society, in addition to serving as a precise 'guide to life' for its adherents. He was also convinced that not only was orthodox observance compatible with the 'English' way of life, but it had much to contribute to and learn from English society.<sup>60</sup> His first book was Judaism as Life's Purpose which he published in 1931. In 1943, he published Jewish Religious Education. These were followed by The Universal Bible in 1955, Message to Jewry in 1958, Why Judaism? in 1963 and A New-

Old Rendering of the Psalms in 1980. He was also the founder of numerous lesser known organisations and committees. These included: The Needy Clergy War Fund, Jewish Soldier's Services, Jewish Internee's Welfare Organisation, Post-War Religious Reconstruction Fund, Committee for Proclaiming Jewish Ethics and the Community Centres for Israel Organisation.<sup>61</sup>

### SCHONFELD AND HATZALA

The Torah dictates that the saving of life takes precedence over virtually all other activities. This precept, termed *pikuach nefesh*, is intimated in the Scriptures, elaborated upon in the Talmud and is codified in Jewish law<sup>62</sup>. As a result, the practice of ransoming captives, or *pidyon shevuim*, became commonplace throughout the exile, even when no immediate danger was present.<sup>63</sup> For the Jew, the sanctity of life should take precedence over all else including the observance of every other commandment, except for certain restrictions involving idolatry, murder and forbidden sexual relationships.<sup>64</sup> In fact, according to Jewish law if an action involves saving a life, the transgression of any divine or rabbinic law is not only permitted, but is commanded by the Torah which states "You shall keep My statutes and My ordinances, which if a man does, he shall live by them".<sup>65</sup> This verse is explained by the Talmud to mean that G-D's commandments are designed to

'live by' and not to 'die by'.<sup>66</sup> In other words, virtually nothing stands in the way of *pikuach nefesh*, the preservation of life.

The halachic obligation to redeem captives is reinforced by another obligation, *arevut*, which stipulates that all Jews are responsible for one another. This 'brother-keeper' concept has always been as much a part of Jewish identity as the Sabbath, *Yom Kippur* (The Day of Atonement) and the dietary laws, and has given great strength to Jews throughout their history in the Diaspora.<sup>67</sup> This devotion did not only stem from the moral-halachic obligation of *arevut*. Jews felt an affinity to one another because they viewed each other as extended family and shared a religion that dictated every facet of their lives in an individual and collective sense. They felt comfortable together and trusted each other. Throughout the centuries, this sense of trust and comradeship became part and parcel of the Jewish experience and Jewish destiny, and was noticed if not envied by many of the Gentiles with whom they had contact.<sup>68</sup>

The *shtadlan*, or intercessor, who was usually a noted lay or rabbinic leader and often an important financier, was historically at the centre of 'Jewish rescue'. He had to be a man of great persuasiveness and resources who had to work with outside authorities to reverse anti-Jewish policies on behalf of individuals, communities and even entire regions. As such, the *shtadlan* was the Jewish community's 'foreign minister', one who bargained under difficult circumstances and from a position of considerable weakness. While many *shtadlanim* used a variety of methods to achieve their ends, virtually all of



them considered ransom and bribery their most affective weapons. During the Holocaust, the orthodox Jewish leadership, whether in Poland, Palestine, the United States or, to a lesser extent, Great Britain, maintained their traditional sense of diplomacy. Therefore, they never relinquished their weapons of bribery, ransom, or the use of illegal methods as a means of assuring the survival of the Jewish people.

Some of the leaders of the more secular segments of the community may have been diplomatic by nature, but they were not traditionally imbued with the same sense of uncompromising urgency with regards to *hatzala* as their orthodox counterparts. It is understandable that these leaders seldom saw illegal methods as a means to rescue their co-religionists in Europe. Even the notion of ransom and bribery were antithetical to their 'world views'. This was particularly the case with regards to members of the 'Cousinhood', Parliament and the nobility who sought to preserve their good names at all costs. Many may have felt that they had to preserve their standing in British society and in the Jewish community in order to be in a position to do whatever was possible, however negligible.

In addition to this, many of the prominent secular leaders of Anglo-Jewry were preoccupied with various domestic controversies, not the least of which was the battle waged by the Zionists to win hegemony at the Board of Deputies.<sup>69</sup> This is not to say that they did not react to the catastrophe in meaningful ways. The organised community sent delegations to government officials, and leaders who had access to governmental circles made approaches to them on

an individual basis. Many were involved in extensive philanthropic efforts to support Jewish refugees in Great Britain. However, these efforts were often secondary to the conflict between the Zionists and non-Zionists and the political manoeuvres that they employed to bolster their positions. Very seldom was the destruction of European Jewry mentioned during debates about Zionism amongst the Anglo-Jewish leadership throughout the war. When the issue was raised, it was invariably mentioned to prove a point with regards to the speaker's particular stance. At times, the more zealous Zionists blamed the destruction of European Jewry on the fact that the Zionist ideal of a Jewish State had not yet been realised.<sup>70</sup> Some non-Zionists, on the other hand claimed that Nazism was a by-product of Zionism in that Jewish nationalism and particularism fed the fires of anti-Semitism.<sup>71</sup>

Solomon Schonfeld was already settled into his position as Rabbi and head of the UHOC when the war started in September 1939. He was proving to be a born leader and was rapidly gaining the respect and confidence of those in the community who shared his religious convictions. To a great extent, this success must have been due to the fact that he had no political convictions, although he later became a fervent anti-Zionist. He was not a member of Agudat Israel, although the Agudah ideology should have been compatible with his particular mindset. Although some of his associates claim that he leaned towards Mizrachi, he was not a member of that organisation either.<sup>72</sup> All claim, and this is evident from his writings, diaries and activities, that Schonfeld 'had no time' for politics as such. He was a forward thinker with regards to the future of orthodoxy and saw the assurance of Anglo-orthodoxy

as a vibrant community as his main purpose in life.<sup>73</sup> He also knew that his position in the community afforded him unique possibilities to assist Jewish refugees in Britain and to rescue those who could be rescued, before, during and after the war. He was driven, and would not let precious opportunities slip through his hands, even if this involved desecrating the Sabbath, which he did time and again, or if he had to place his life in danger, which he did as well.<sup>74</sup>

Schonfeld's father-in-law, the Chief Rabbi did not tire in his efforts to assist Jewish refugees in Great Britain and abroad, and made every attempt to assist his co-religionists in Europe. He was sincerely devoted to the CRREC, attended most of its meetings and composed dozens of letters in its support. However, although the council's main credibility lay in the fact that it was the Chief Rabbi's Council, Schonfeld was the main driving force behind it.<sup>75</sup> When he was not involved in activities outside of the CRREC offices, he was the one who was there, on hand, to oversee and direct its workings.<sup>76</sup> Schonfeld's duties as the leader of his community kept him extremely busy in the best of times and in the years preceding and during the war, this was compounded by his efforts on behalf of the adult refugees and refugee students under his charge. He maintained a rigorous schedule of delivering Torah classes (*shiurim*), officiated at weddings and funerals and met with the Chief Rabbi on a daily basis. Every week during the war, he attempted to visit the evacuated pupils of the Jewish Secondary Schools in Shefford, Clifton, Henlow & Stotford and Bedfordshire. He also made weekly visits to the other evacuation centres in the areas surrounding Maidenhead, Reading, Slough & Iver, Bishops Stortford and Cambridge. With regards to communal matters, he

made periodic visits to the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Information, Ministry of Food, Scotland House, New Scotland Yard, Edinburgh House, Eaton Gate and Stoke Newington Town Hall. He also had to attend meetings of the affiliate congregations of the UOHC in the East, West and North-West of London.<sup>77</sup> Schonfeld's management of the CRREC, which was a mammoth undertaking in itself, was only a small part of his activities during and after the war.

It has been claimed that Schonfeld concentrated his efforts on assisting orthodox Jews and viewed assistance to secular Jews as secondary. To an extent, this observation is true. However, a distinction should be made between his approach before, during, and after the war.<sup>78</sup> Before the war started, and at its beginning, Schonfeld concentrated his efforts on the rescue of orthodox Jews. This was in keeping with the Talmudic dictum: "The needy of your city take precedence".<sup>79</sup> In religious thought, this was taken to mean that one was responsible for those who were closest to him before those who were not. In this case, Schonfeld, and his 'colleagues in rescue' throughout the Free World sought to assist and rescue their orthodox brethren on the Continent first. Efforts were consistently directed towards the rescue of rabbis and Talmudic teachers and scholars in keeping with Maimonides' ruling that 'whoever is greater in wisdom takes precedence over his colleagues'.<sup>80</sup> In addition to this, orthodox activists viewed the *hatzala*, or rescue of the Jews in Europe as the *hatzala* of Judaism itself.<sup>81</sup> Throughout the war, he fought relentlessly to ensure the religious education of at least the orthodox children that he brought over on the 'kindertransports' and sought to ensure their

continued devotion to Jewish orthodoxy. These activities took up much of his time and energy, time and energy that could possibly have been directed elsewhere. But Schonfeld was not a communal activist as such, he was not a product of the general, secular community, and by virtue of his position as the leader of the orthodox segments of the community, was responsible, chiefly for their welfare.<sup>82</sup>

As the war progressed, non-religious Jews also turned to Schonfeld for assistance because of the official 'Anglo-Jewish bureaucracy' that they often encountered. Many found it easier to relate to his forthrightness and knew that if Schonfeld was in a position to help, he would, with expedience. At this point, the saving of every Jewish life became the important thing. After the war had finished, and Schonfeld travelled to Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia on various rescue missions, the boundaries between orthodox and non-orthodox Jews had been removed and he devoted himself to all Jews regardless of their affiliation. In fact, his rescue work during and after the war earned him the appellation of 'the Anglo-Jewish Scarlet Pimpernel'.<sup>83</sup>

#### ORTHODOX JEWISH RESPONSES<sup>84</sup>

Orthodox Jewish leaders were at a distinct advantage compared to their secular counterparts in that they were not entangled in the infrastructure of the organised secular community.<sup>85</sup> As a result, for orthodox leaders, many of the conflicts and personal animosities that plagued members of the

Cousinhood, the BoD and the Anglo-Jewish Association did not exist. Although the orthodox community and its leadership had its share of intrigue, there is no evidence that this became a preoccupation before or during the war years.<sup>86</sup> Traditionally, domestic politics was not an issue that interested the orthodox community or its leaders in Britain or elsewhere. Once the rabbinate in a district decided that a certain political party would serve the best interests of the community, the overwhelming majority of the community would vote for that party. At times, members of a community would specifically not be offered guidance or would be advised to abstain from voting, although such a stance was uncommon.<sup>87</sup> Schonfeld and the members of his community, for example, were predominantly supporters of the Labour Party because Labour, and its candidates running in the Jewish residential areas at the time, were seen to be the best option for the community on the whole. In addition to this, Schonfeld encountered more support for his activities from Labour representatives than from the Conservatives and had personality conflicts with the Conservative MP, Quintin Hogg, even though he was a firm supporter of the European-Jewish cause.<sup>88</sup> Although the 'Jewish politics' of Zionism captured the imagination and aspirations of some orthodox individuals, and opposition to it obsessed others, it was not at all a major topic on the agendas of the *Haredi* leaders in Britain during the war. Gradually, Schonfeld became an ardent anti-Zionist, but it never became his life's ambition to promulgate these convictions.

Without a doubt, Schonfeld's efforts on behalf of European Jewry throughout the war were manifest in the activities of the CRREC, to which he devoted

many of his organisational and imaginative skills. In fact, it is evident from his appointment books and private papers that the CRREC, the activities connected to it and the maintenance and education of refugees, took precedence over his rabbinic duties during, and immediately after the war. Matters of education were foremost on Schonfeld's mind well after the war, and the flourishing Secondary School Movement was one of his primary interests until the end of his life. Schonfeld, had an enormous number of duties that were either self-imposed or pertained to his rabbinic position. It should be noted, however, that he was able to perform extra activities precisely because of his position as the head of the UOHC through which he was essentially unanswerable to an employer. Although the UOHC and the Adath Yisroel Congregation were run by a board and a constitution, these bodies invested great power and flexibility in the hands of Schonfeld, who was essentially the embodiment of these institutions. The power vested in Schonfeld by his congregation was in sharp contrast to the relationship between the United Synagogue and the Chief Rabbi, who was very much considered its employee. However, it must be noted that the trust placed in Schonfeld by his congregation was not because of an orthodox tradition of subservience to rabbinic authority. It was more a result of the fact that Victor Schonfeld and, to a greater extent, his son Solomon, were the architects of the orthodox community as it was.

Schonfeld had an extremely powerful personality, and, although at times this worked to his disadvantage with regards to his dealings with government officials and members of the aristocracy and Christian clergy, it very often did

the opposite.<sup>89</sup> Many individuals, such as the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Chichester and Eleanor Rathbone were taken by his forthrightness and strength of character.<sup>90</sup> Schonfeld did not seek to impress others unless a good impression could bear fruit. Many members of the established Anglo-Jewish families, on the other hand, were preoccupied with status, formality and protocol. An example of this was the behaviour of the Jewish Lord Mayor of London, Sir Samuel G. Joseph who refused to issue an appeal for Jewish causes in 1943.<sup>91</sup> After numerous approaches by both the Chief Rabbi and Schonfeld, in which he was assured that all of his “conditions of conduct and administration would be faithfully adhered to”, the Lord Mayor’s reply of 3 February was that “Earlier on I gave very careful consideration to the matter, and approached a number of gentlemen to learn their views. From all, I received the same reply, that in their opinion it would be quite wrong for me to take such an action. It could not be a National appeal and the principal has always been that the Lord Mayor will only launch an appeal when it is a National one.”<sup>92</sup> It is difficult to know if protocol, in this instance, could have been overcome. It is obvious, however, that the Lord Mayor’s name would have lent great credibility to an appeal for Jewish causes. Whereas others, though well meaning, carried on with their own preoccupations and, when possible, fit communal matters into their schedules, Schonfeld was able to arrange things in such a way that his ‘life’ revolved around his communal pursuits.<sup>93</sup>

In addition to Schonfeld’s activities on behalf of refugees and the ‘*Kindertransports*’, which have already been well documented, and the



accomplishments of the CRREC, Schonfeld and his colleagues in his Amhurst Park office in North London were involved in other efforts on behalf of the European Jews.<sup>94</sup> Schonfeld presented requests and ideas vis-à-vis the European Jews to government officials in the same ways that many of his secular counterparts did, and for the most part faced the same obstacles. To many, Schonfeld, and even his father-in-law, the Chief Rabbi, were viewed as just another of the many Jewish supplicants who came to plead on behalf of their brethren. Hertz, who should have carried the most weight vis-à-vis the British establishment and government was loath to approach the country's leaders, and procrastinated over an appeal to Churchill until the middle of 1944. In a letter from the Chief Rabbi to Churchill dated as late as 11 April 1944, he implored: "In the midst of your great preoccupations you have probably not noticed that I have refrained from troubling you with our Jewish problems. The tragedy is, however, too great for me to be able to spare you completely."<sup>95</sup> It should be noted, however, that, as opposed to many of the secular leaders, who usually made general representations on behalf of the European Jews, Schonfeld and Hertz became entangled in detailed negotiations regarding specific and individual cases. An example of this are the December 1943 negotiations between Schonfeld and Sir Herbert Emerson, of the Inter-Governmental Department for Refugees, regarding the rescue of hundreds of Jewish refugees with Paraguayan passports in Vittel and other camps in France, from deportation to Poland. After the Paraguayan Government notified Spain that it would not recognise the passports issued by its consul, Schonfeld requested that Emerson intervene.<sup>96</sup> This intervention was successful, and prompted a new request from Schonfeld that Emerson

intercede, yet again, on behalf of a similar group of between 3-4000 refugees with South American passports, interned in Bergen Belsen.<sup>97</sup>

In a letter from Schonfeld to Anthony Eden, dated 10 September 1942, he suggested that "a neutral power be asked to intervene with the Hungarian authorities asking them to grant at least a right of asylum" to the Jewish refugees in Hungary. He continued: "They could remain interned or imprisoned but they ought not to be sent back as mercilessly as is the case at present."<sup>98</sup> Eden's reply of 17 September was that he felt that it "would not be practicable" to take action along the lines proposed by Schonfeld. His explanation was, that: "Intervention...unfortunately carries with it no degree of success; on the contrary, even should it be possible to persuade a neutral state to take the action suggested, it would certainly come to the notice of the German Government. In this event, experience has shown that pressure would be exerted by them upon the Hungarian Government to mete out even harsher treatment to the Jews."<sup>99</sup> The claim that the Jews would receive harsher treatment if the Allies were to intervene was a common, and convenient excuse used by the British Government throughout the war. However, they seldom experimented to determine if this was indeed the case.

Chief Rabbi Hertz was extremely devoted to the CRREC and to all of the issues affecting European Jewry. However it is unclear as to how much of his correspondence and how many of his appeals originated from himself or from Schonfeld. It has already been mentioned that Schonfeld was the moving force behind the council and used the Chief Rabbi's name to bolster its

credibility.<sup>100</sup> He became very close to his father-in-law and had his full trust, especially regarding issues pertaining to the CRREC.<sup>101</sup> It had even been suggested that after the death of Hertz's wife, Schonfeld gradually became Hertz's 'right hand man', although the Chief Rabbi vehemently denied this.<sup>102</sup> A case in point is an exchange of correspondences between Hertz and Sir Alexander Maxwell of the Home Office, regarding the admission of Jewish refugee children from France into Great Britain.<sup>103</sup> In a letter dated 30 September 1942, the Chief Rabbi requested: "I understand, however, that the decision is to consider only such children that have parents in this country. I venture to express the hope that it will become possible to extend this facility to children who have near relatives, such as uncles, aunts or grandparents here, as many of the parents have been deported..." These correspondences were found amongst Schonfeld's papers and would appear to emanate from the CRREC. The Chief Rabbi's letter is unsigned, as are many of those found in the Schonfeld files. This would suggest that Schonfeld actually composed the letters himself. In this case, the reply from the Home Office of 7 October, confirmed that Britain would be prepared to accept the French children if they had 'near' relatives residing in the country.<sup>104</sup>

Government officials were generally impartial when it came to petitions on behalf of Europe's Jews. In a reply from Lord Cranbourne of the Colonial Office to the Chief Rabbi's suggestion that asylum be granted to Jewish children in the Colonies, and specifically Cyprus, he reiterated the government's position regarding Jewish refugees in general. The letter dated 22 October 1942, enumerated the logistical problems involved, such as

transport and accommodation, and continued: "I find, moreover, that it would be contrary to His Majesty's Government's policy to treat Jewish children in occupied territories any differently from other children...Moreover, in practice, His Majesty's Government regards the Allied Governments in London as responsible for their nationals, Jews and non-Jews alike. In these circumstances, I am afraid that His Majesty's Government would not feel able to take any steps with a view to the removal of Jewish children only."<sup>105</sup> It becomes clear from the requests and responses found in these and many other of Hertz and Schonfeld's files, that in government circles, Schonfeld, the Chief Rabbi, and indeed the CRREC, were treated in very much the same ways as their secular counterparts.

From October 1942, the CRREC became involved again in attempts to secure the transfer of approximately 400 Yeshiva students and their rabbis stranded in Shanghai. Most of these scholars hailed from the famous Yeshiva of Mir in Russo-Poland and were principally maintained by the Vaad-Ha-Hatzala, which was based in New York. Much of the Vaad-Ha-Hatzala's efforts were devoted to the upkeep and eventual transfer of the Shanghai refugees.<sup>106</sup> In a letter from Chief Rabbi Hertz to Lord Cranbourne, dated 30 October 1942, in which he solicited assistance for them, he referred to cables that he had received "from important American organisations" i.e. Vaad Ha-Hatzala who "were ready to undertake the full maintenance of these people, if they could be transferred elsewhere".<sup>107</sup> Cranbourne replied, in his letter of 9 November, that he had already been contacted by Agudat Israel of America regarding the Shanghai refugees and had reiterated to them the, by then, classic response

of the British Government, that all refugees were charges of their own countries of nationality.<sup>108</sup> The CRREC was also involved, and, in fact, provided some of the names on the 40-person list of the 1942 German-Palestinian exchange that was agreed by the Colonial Office.<sup>109</sup>

Schonfeld spent a great deal of time during the first few months of 1943 rallying the support of members of both the Lower and Upper Houses of Parliament for a Motion that assured practical support for Europe's Jews.<sup>110</sup> The Motion was Schonfeld's initiative, and although it received tremendous support by members of both Houses, Schonfeld and 'his' Motion faced fierce opposition from some members of the secular Jewish camp.<sup>111</sup> By 10 February, 213 MP's had already signed the Motion, which was actually a reworded version of an earlier, more forceful one.<sup>112</sup> By mid-May, when the Parliamentary debate took place, it had 280 signatures.<sup>113</sup> It stated:

That in view of the massacres and starvation of Jews and others in enemy and enemy-occupied countries, this House desires to assure H.M. Government of its fullest support for immediate measures, on the largest and most generous scale compatible with the requirements of military operations and security, for providing help and temporary asylum to persons in danger of massacre who are able to leave enemy and enemy-occupied countries.<sup>114</sup>

Unfortunately, the Motion was not tabled, and even if it had been, it is doubtful that it would have had the desired effects, because of the aforementioned

logistical problems involved in saving and providing for refugees, although it may have encouraged satellite countries, such as Rumania and Hungary, to afford a measure of greater protection to their Jews.<sup>115</sup> The main concrete results of Schonfeld's efforts to rally Parliament were that the rescue of the European Jews became a more noticeable part of the governmental agenda and that his initiative forced influential circles to take a firmer stand than they had until then. It also helped pave the way for the establishment of the 'National Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror' in March 1943, that was led by the indefatigable Eleanor Rathbone MP. Schonfeld's initiative and perseverance in assuring that it be presented in Parliament, are indicative of both his forcefulness of character and devotion to the cause of European Jewry in a practical sense. Although he was not successful in pushing for the acceptance of the Motion in Parliament, Schonfeld did succeed in persuading the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. William Temple, to introduce a resolution in the House of Lords condemning Nazi atrocities against Jews. The March 1943 Resolution also demanded government action to: "provide help and temporary asylum to persons in danger...who were able to leave".<sup>116</sup>

Another indication of Schonfeld's resourcefulness and his non-political, 'no nonsense' approach, were his dealings with the Ethiopian authorities. Although the BSWJC had been exploring the possibility of Ethiopia as a refuge for European Jews without success from the end of 1942, Schonfeld was not convinced that every stone had remained unturned.<sup>117</sup> On 6 May 1943, Schonfeld consulted with the Royal Ethiopian Legation with a view to securing a refuge for those Jews who could still escape from the Nazis.

Schonfeld was under the impression that Ethiopia “being well disposed towards all suffering peoples, and, no doubt, also the Jews of Europe, who were [are] being treated so inhumanly, would [will] be prepared to do whatever lay [lies] within its power to offer succour to the victims.”<sup>118</sup> As a result, Schonfeld made two proposals. First, that a declaration be made by Ethiopia to the effect that it was prepared to accept a certain number of Jewish refugees who could reach its borders safely. Schonfeld presented the Ethiopians with a list of Polish and Slovakian rabbis and their families who could be rescued this way.<sup>119</sup> Secondly, in a more ambitious proposition, he suggested that Ethiopia grant the Jews “a certain area within the Ethiopian Empire, for use as a refuge for persecuted Jews”. Schonfeld’s vision was, that: “Jewish bodies would be ready to pay an agreed sum for the purchase of such considerable tracts of land, this area designated a self-governing Jewish Dominion under the authority of the Ethiopian Emperor”.<sup>120</sup> Although the British Government was prepared to entertain the possibility of Ethiopia as a haven for European Jews, Schonfeld’s suggestions to the Ethiopian Legation did not bear fruit because the Ethiopians were not amenable to a concrete plan for a significant Jewish settlement in their country.<sup>121</sup> Another example of Schonfeld’s ingenuity was his purchase of the Bahamian island ‘Strangers Key’ for ten thousand pounds, with the intention of using it as an avenue to provide protective papers for Jews in Europe.<sup>122</sup> His aim was to provide Jews with implied British protection by offering them an ‘end destination’ on this island, which was then under British rule. In addition, he hoped that the possibility of such an ‘end visa’ to a British possession might induce consular officials of countries on the way to the island, such as Portugal, Canada and

the United States, to issue transit visas to the refugees. These countries would thereby provide additional temporary asylum for many thousands of Jews. His hopes for this island haven remained unfulfilled because, although initially the Home Office entertained the idea, it was speedily rejected by other Government agencies.<sup>123</sup>

Schonfeld's own record of the rescue work of the CRREC indicates the Council's untiring efforts on behalf of Europe's Jews, as well as its accomplishments, which were minor in the context of the magnitude of the Holocaust.<sup>124</sup> In his report on the activities of the CRREC between 1940 and 1944, he claims that: "Continuous efforts were made to devise means of rescuing people from Nazi-occupied territories, or at least to save them from deportation to the Polish slaughterhouses", although he does not specify what these efforts were. He also states that: "Close contact and co-operation was maintained with the Refugee Department of the Foreign Office, the Intergovernmental Committee for Refugees and the National Committee for Rescue from Nazi Terror, in order to help as far as war conditions permitted". He continues by describing its success at enlisting the support of 280 Members of Parliament for the resolution that "offered refuge to Jews under Nazi terror". Although the Parliamentary Resolution was solely Schonfeld's initiative, and he saw it through from beginning to end, he describes it as a function of the CRREC because it was an accepted fact that he was the main driving force behind the Council. His own activities, and those of the CRREC were synonymous to both himself, and to those who were in tune with its workings.



Schonfeld continues this report by claiming that the CRREC obtained 340 Mauritius visas and transit visas from Turkey, Spain and Portugal. These documents “saved the lives of many of those to whom these visas were allocated”. Although this may have been the case, it cannot be verified. He also notes that at a later stage, the CRREC did much to facilitate the transfer of Mauritius refugees to Palestine. In addition to the Mauritius visas, the CRREC obtained permission for some 30 Polish rabbis and their families who had fled from Poland to Siberia before the war, to leave Russia via Teheran and to proceed to Palestine. It also intervened successfully with South American governments on behalf of large groups of European Jews. These governments were persuaded to recognise passports and visas issued by their ambassadors in Europe, and as a result, “many hundreds were saved from extermination”. He continues by describing the CRREC’s efforts on behalf of the refugees in Shanghai and on the Dodecanese Islands, its contacts with the Nitra group and its request, through Weissmandl, that the British authorities bomb the railway lines leading to Auschwitz.<sup>125</sup>

Historians, such as Sompolinsky dwell on the CRREC’s innovative ‘Rabbis to Mauritius’ scheme, through which, Hertz and Schonfeld sought to include lists of Rabbis and their families on the Home Office lists of those eligible to receive Mauritius visas.<sup>126</sup> This scheme does, in fact, show Hertz and Schonfeld’s resourcefulness with regards to the rescue of rabbinic scholars from the Nazis. However, the ‘Rabbis to Mauritius’ scheme formed only a small part of Schonfeld’s activities on behalf of Europe’s Jews. The same can

be said about Schonfeld's desperate attempts, throughout the war, to rescue his beloved teacher, Rabbi Unger of Nitra, Slovakia, his family, and a group of his students.<sup>127</sup> The Mauritius scheme and the attempts to rescue the Rabbi of Nitra, should in no way be misconstrued as Schonfeld's central aims during the Holocaust. The Nitra group were constantly on Schonfeld's mind, and if there were possibilities of saving them, he explored those possibilities. But, Schonfeld was entitled to campaign, when he could, for those who were especially close to him. The aforementioned 'Bernadotte Scheme', the CRREC's efforts on behalf of the Shanghai refugees, Schonfeld's proposed Motion and the resulting Parliamentary Resolution, and the gamut of the CRREC's other activities, should be devoted at least the same attention as the 'Rabbis to Mauritius' scheme and the attempts to rescue the Nitra group.<sup>128</sup>

In the context of the activities of those who worked on behalf of the European Jews, an analysis of their efforts is far more essential than a list of their accomplishments because of the difficulties that they encountered. The Orthodox leaders in Britain during the time-scale of this study faced the same obstacles from 'the outside' as their secular counterparts. Activists, such as Schonfeld did not face the same challenges from 'the inside' and this rendered him in a better position to use the resources and resourcefulness that he had at his disposal. Very often, however, the results proved to be all too similar.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

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<sup>1</sup> WT, Felicia Selton, London, 26 November 2001

<sup>2</sup> HL MS183 132/3 *Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council: Rules and Regulations*, c January 1939

<sup>3</sup> HL MS183 3/4 CRREC *Minutes*, 27 February 1939

<sup>4</sup> WT, Felicia Selton, London, 26 November 2001

<sup>5</sup> HL MS183 132/3 *Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council: Rules and Regulations*, c January 1939; Although Dr. J Grunfeld's name appears at the end of the first list of *Rules and Regulations*, it does not appear again in connection with the CRREC.

<sup>6</sup> For the purposes of this study, I have given an overview of the activities of the CRREC at three stages of its existence:

1. Its inception as the CRREC in January 1939
2. March 1942 i.e. the middle of World War II-the apogee of the Holocaust
3. August 1945 i.e. the end of the war

<sup>7</sup> HL MS183 736/4 CRREC *Report*, March 1942

<sup>8</sup> HL MS183 87 CRREC *Souvenir Booklet*, March 1942

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid* Section IV, p. 5

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid* Section V, pp. 5, 7

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid* Section VI, pp. 7-8

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>14</sup> These included: Bedford, Blackburn, Bletchley, Cambridge, Cardiff, Chesham, Dorking, Edgware, Epsom, Hove, Leeds, Leicester, Letchworth, Luton, Maidenhead, Nottingham, Shefford and Stortford.

<sup>15</sup> See Paula Hill, *Anglo-Jewry and the Refugee Children 1938-1945* (PhD Thesis, UCL)

<sup>16</sup> HL MS183 87 CRREC *Souvenir Booklet*, March 1942, Section VII, pp. 8-9; The Refugee Children's Movement was originally the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany. It was formed in December 1938 and arranged for the immigration of nearly ten thousand children (ninety percent of whom were Jewish) before September 1939. Most of these children were lodged with foster parents, many of whom were non-Jews. The Jewish Refugees' Committee was founded in 1933 by Otto M. Schiff and worked throughout the war to help promote the integration of Jewish refugees in Britain; See Hill, Paula, *Anglo-Jewry and the Refugee Children 1938-1945* (PhD Thesis, UCL)

<sup>17</sup> HL MS183 87 CRREC *Souvenir Booklet*, March 1942; Although it would appear that this letter was addressed to communal activists, it was actually addressed to members of the community who were in the position to raise funds for this cause and was published in the CRREC *Souvenir Booklet* of March 1942.

<sup>18</sup> HL MS183 87 CRREC *Souvenir Booklet*, March 1942, Section VIII, p. 10

<sup>19</sup> See Chapter 4, pp. 159-160

<sup>20</sup> HL MS183 132/3 CRREC *Report for the Year Ending 31 December 1942*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid* Section XI, p.6

<sup>22</sup> PRO FO 371/42859 Letter from Colonel Oliver Stanley to Hertz, 19 July 1944; Although the CRREC report for the period ending 1 August 1945 stated that the number of Mauritius visas issued was "approximately 400", the number was actually 1000. The reason for this discrepancy is unclear; See Chapter 3, pp. 149-150

<sup>23</sup> PRO FO 371/36707 Telegram, Sir C. Wooley, Cyprus, to Foreign Office, 16 August 1943; PRO FO 371/36735 Letter from the Colonial Office to the Foreign Office, 26 June 1943; PRO FO 371/36704 All files including letter from S. Ripke to British Ambassador to Czechoslovakia, 3 July 1943; PRO FO 371/42777 Letters from Schonfeld to George W. Randall, 26 April 1944, Hertz to Colonel Oliver Stanley, 4 May 1944; Foreign Office cable to Ankara, 5 June 1944; HL MS183 651 CRREC *Minutes*, 16 November 1944

<sup>24</sup> HL MS183 736/4 CRREC *Report of Activities for the Period Ending 1 August 1945*, Section II, pp. 2-3

<sup>25</sup> HL MS183 651 CRREC *Minutes*, 16 November 1944: "Count Bernadotte of the Swedish Red Cross was in London and had been approached to give passports or travelling papers to holders of Mauritius visas. A full list of those concerned had been taken to Sweden and Count Bernadotte promised to arrange protection through his government."; HL MS183 234 F1 CRREC *Report of Activities for the Period Ending 1 November 1945*: "...Count Folke Bernadotte of the Swedish Red Cross was interviewed in London and arrangements were made for the issue of Swedish protection papers to a number of Hungarian Jews on the Mauritius rescue list."; WT, Felicia Selton, London, 7 November 2001, 26 November 2001; It was also suggested that Bernadotte facilitate an exchange of Jews in concentration camps for German prisoners of war, however, this suggestion did not materialise. Schonfeld was heavily involved in this scheme and worked frantically to compile the necessary lists of candidates for these papers; See Chapter 3, pp. 116, 150, Chapter 4, p.162

<sup>26</sup> Most of these refugees hailed from the famous yeshiva in Mir, Lithuania; See Chapter 3, pp. 144-145, Chapter 4, pp. 159-160

<sup>27</sup> HL MS183 736/4 CRREC *Report of Activities for the Period Ending 1 August 1945*, Section II, pp. 2-3

<sup>28</sup> Ibid Section I, pp. 1-2; The United Jewish Relief Appeal, whose president was the Chief Rabbi was established for the relief of 'Polish-Jewish and other Jewish refugees in Soviet Russia and elsewhere'. Its initial target was £50,000 and the appeal chairman was Viscount Cecil of Chelwood. It was under the auspices of the Federation of Jewish Relief Organisations, Polish Jewish Refugee Fund, Federation of Czechoslovakian Jews, CRREC and the Keren Hatorah Fund; According to the Jewish Committee for Relief Abroad *Minute Book*, February 1943-November 1944, the Executive Committee of the Central British Fund founded the 'Jewish Committee for Relief Abroad for German Jewry' in 1943. Its chairman was Dr. Redcliffe N. Salaman and the members of its Board were: Sir Max Bonn, Norman Bentwich, Selig Brodetsky, F. Lichtenstein, Marjorie Raphael, Lady Eva Reading, Marie Louise Rothschild (widow of Lionel de Rothschild), Miriam Sacher, Hilda Schlesinger, Shlomo Adler Rudel, Leonard Stein and Rabbi E. Munk. Its stated purpose was "to recruit qualified people who would volunteer their services to travel overseas and assist survivors after their liberation"; See also Amy Zahl Gottlieb, *Men of Vision: Anglo-Jewry's Aid to the Victims of the Nazi Regime 1933-1945* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1998) pp. 177-183

<sup>29</sup> COBSRA *First Annual Report* (1947), p 7; COBSRA was constituted as "the central co-ordinating agency for British voluntary relief abroad".

<sup>30</sup> This included those studying for qualifications in *mila* (circumcision), *shechita* (ritual slaughter) and *sofrut* (scribal arts).

<sup>31</sup> HL MS183 736/4 CRREC *Report of Activities for the Period Ending 1 August 1945*, Section II, pp. 2-3

<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Schonfeld spent much time and effort on removing children from non-Jewish homes on his trips to the Continent after the war.

<sup>33</sup> HL MS183 736/4 CRREC *Report of Activities for the Period Ending 1 August 1945*, Section II, pp. 2-3

<sup>34</sup> 150,000 packages were sent: 20,000 to France, 20,000 to Belgium, 10,000 to Holland, 40,000 to Czechoslovakia, 35,000 to Terezin, 5,000 to Greece and 2,000 to Italy. Other consignments were allocated to liberated concentration camps.

<sup>35</sup> HL MS183 736/4 CRREC *Report of Activities for Period Ending 1 August 1945*, Section III, pp. 3-8

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> AIL Letter from Raphael Springer to Mr. Deutsch, 23 November 1944; Agudat Israel of Great Britain was also involved in the distribution of 'food parcels' to liberated Jews.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> The Central British Fund for Jewish Relief and Rehabilitation was formed in 1933 and raised substantial sums for the relief of Jewish refugees in Great Britain and abroad. It eschewed political agitation and often worked in close co-operation with government departments; See Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* (Leicester University Press, London & New York 1999), pp. 34, 75, 214-215, 292

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- <sup>41</sup> HL MS183 736/4 CRREC *Report of Activities for Period Ending 1 August 1945*, Section III, pp. 3-8
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid Section VI, p. 10
- <sup>43</sup> HL MS183 11/3 Birth Certificate; Schonfeld's Birth Certificate indicates that his family name was originally Schoenfeld and was subsequently changed to Schonfeld; Rachael Leah Schoenfeld nee Sternberg
- <sup>44</sup> HL MS183 241/1 Community Centres for Israel, *Biographical Sketch of Rabbi Dr. S. Schonfeld* (undated); HL MS183/848/2 *Rabbi Dr. S. Schonfeld Biographical Notes* (undated); Interview, Jeremy Schonfeld, 3 January 2001
- <sup>45</sup> Interview, Jonathan Schonfeld, 2 June 2000; See David Kranzler and Eliezer Gevitz, *To Save a World: Profiles in Holocaust Rescue* (CIS Publishers, Lakewood 1991) Vol II, pp. 31-80; During the war, Rabbi Michael Ber Weissmandl served as the Rosh Yeshiva (Dean) of an "underground yeshiva" and at the same time headed the Jewish underground in Slovakia. He devised many plans to rescue Jews from the Nazis and forewarned the Jewish world of the impending destruction of Slovakian and Hungarian Jewry. He was the first to warn the leaders of world Jewry and the Free World of the horrors of Auschwitz and attempted to convince them to bomb the railway lines leading to it; See also David Kranzler, *Thy Brother's Blood: The Orthodox Jewish Response During the Holocaust* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1987), pp. 264-284; Abraham Fuchs, *The Unheeded Cry* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1984); See Chapter 4, pp. 196-197
- <sup>46</sup> Interview, Jonathan Schonfeld, 2 June 2000
- <sup>47</sup> HL MS183 241/1 Community Centres for Israel, *Biographical Sketch of Rabbi Dr. S. Schonfeld* (undated); HL MS183/848/2 *Rabbi Dr. S. Schonfeld Biographical Notes* (undated)
- <sup>48</sup> HL MS183 127 F2 Letter from Moses Schonfeld, London, to Solomon Schonfeld, Trnava, 20 November 1930
- <sup>49</sup> Ibid i.e. Messrs. Homa, Fleischman, Lunzer and Schternbuch
- <sup>50</sup> Schonfeld was studying on the Continent at the time.
- <sup>51</sup> HL MS183 127 F2 Letter from Moses Schonfeld, London, to Solomon Schonfeld, Trnava, 20 November 1930
- <sup>52</sup> JC beg. November 1933
- <sup>53</sup> HL MS183 127 F2 Letter from Moses Schonfeld, London, to Solomon Schonfeld, Trnava, 20 November 1930
- <sup>54</sup> HL MS183 127 12/3 Letter from Solomon Schonfeld, Trnava, to Moses Schonfeld, London, 25 November 1930
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid
- <sup>56</sup> *Jewish Tribune*, 9 March 1984
- <sup>57</sup> HL MS183 576/1 Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Fund *Minutes*, 21 July 1938
- <sup>58</sup> HL MS183 132/3 Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Fund, *Rules and Regulations*, 1938
- <sup>59</sup> HL MS183 11/3 Schonfeld marriage certificate; HL MS183 11/3 On 11 March 1937, Schonfeld was engaged to marry Berta Halpern who was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Marcus Halpern of Cluj, Romania. Shortly thereafter they had a civil marriage but not a religious one. The marriage was not consummated and they divorced on 13 August 1937; HL MS183 11/3 Letters in this file written by Judith Hertz to Schonfeld even before their engagement indicate that she was thoroughly infatuated by him. His replies to these letters were less enthusiastic. It has been suggested that Schonfeld's Marriage to Hertz was one of convenience and was agreed to by Schonfeld in order to bolster his position and standing in the community. Although this may have initially been the case, there is no evidence that their marriage was ever unsound. Although Schonfeld gradually became extremely busy with his multifarious activities and his wife had little or nothing to do with communal affairs, his sons claim that it was always understood that their father's communal activities remained his burden and were not to be shared. Throughout their marriage, Schonfeld had little time to devote to his wife and children, but it seems that the respect that they had for him, his position in the community and his devotion to it helped maintain the family unit. (Interview, Jonathan Schonfeld, 2 June 2000; Interview, Jeremy Schonfeld, 3 January 2001)
- <sup>60</sup> Interview, Jonathan Schonfeld, 2 June 2000
- <sup>61</sup> HL MS183 241/1, HL MS183 848/2 *Solomon Schonfeld Biographical Sketches* (undated)
- <sup>62</sup> *Exodus* 31; *Midrash Tanhuma*, Sedra Masai; *Talmud Shabbat* 132a; *Talmud Yoma* 85a; Maimonides, *Mishna Torah*, *Forbidden Relationships* 15:26; *Tur Shukchan Aruch*, *Even Haezer* 4:34
- <sup>63</sup> *Talmud Baba Batra* 8b
- <sup>64</sup> *Talmud Sanhedrin* 37a

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<sup>65</sup> *Leviticus* 18:5

<sup>66</sup> *Talmud Yoma* 85b

<sup>67</sup> Irving Angus, *The Heroic Age of Franco German Jewry* (Yeshiva University Press, New York 1969); According to Angus, a historian of the Middle Ages "A Jew was never alone, never friendless or abandoned, never without the full active protection of all the Jews living within a considerable radius of whatever place he happened to be in at that time. Even when he was hundreds of miles from his hometown, he was practically surrounded by his devoted brothers." As a result, Jewish merchants always had a broad social infrastructure, which enabled them to travel long and dangerous routes even in the early Middle Ages, a time when most Europeans lived and died within a few square miles; See also Elkan N. Adler, *Jewish Travellers* (Sepher-Hermon Press, New York 1966), Ch. 1

<sup>68</sup> See Elkan N. Adler, *Jewish Travellers* (Sepher-Hermon Press, New York 1966), Ch. 1

<sup>69</sup> Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), pp.54-75

<sup>70</sup> *Zionist Review*, 3 November 1944; In a speech at the 1944 Zionist Conference in Manchester, Lavy Bakstansky said of the non-Zionists: "Jewish history will never forgive you. Your fathers in 1917 did not succeed in killing the Balfour Declaration, but they may have helped in whittling down its original terms and it is not unreasonable to argue that, had the original declaration been allowed to prevail, many hundreds of thousands of Jews who have since perished at the hand of Hitler, would have been citizens of a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine." as cited by Richard Bolchover in *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), p. 55

<sup>71</sup> In 1937, the non-Zionist, Claude G. Montefiore wrote: "Weizman is abler than all the other Jews in the world put together. He is a Jewish Parnell but even abler...It is appalling beyond words. But Hitlerism is, at least partially, Weizman's creation." as cited by Richard Bolchover in *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), p. 55

<sup>72</sup> Interview, Ilse Mannes, 28 January 2001

<sup>73</sup> See Solomon Schonfeld, *Message to Jewry* (Jewish Secondary School Movement, London 1950)

<sup>74</sup> Interview, Jeremy Schonfeld, 9 September 2000; See *AJR Information*, April 1984, Felicia Selton's *obituary* of Rabbi Dr Solomon Schonfeld; WT, Emanuel Fischer, Jerusalem, 11 August 2000; An example of Schonfeld's numerous desecrations of the Sabbath was the state of affairs that led up to his first 'Kindertransport' that arrived on 24 December 1938. The approximately 300 children on the transport were told to be ready to leave on three different occasions but each journey was cancelled at the last minute. On each occasion, Schonfeld was sent away by the Home Office because of either a 'mistake' that had been discovered on a list, or problems that had been found with the proposed accommodation for the children. The last time that this happened was on Friday 17 December 1938. Schonfeld realised that the up-coming holiday season would most likely delay or disrupt the transport. He therefore sat with a group of volunteers until late Friday night (Sabbath eve) to ensure that the lists were in order. Very early on Saturday morning, Schonfeld drove to the Home Office and as soon as the first officials arrived, made sure that the forms were attended to with the necessary instructions given to the British visa section in Vienna. The reason for this was to ensure that the visas would be ready for the Agudah leaders in Vienna when the office opened on Monday morning so that the transport could leave before the holidays. Schonfeld then walked from Whitehall to the Adath Yisroel Synagogue in Stamford Hill for morning prayers; WT, Emanuel Fischer, Jerusalem, 11 August 2000; According to Fischer, immediately after the war, Schonfeld went on a dangerous mission to Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary to remove Jewish children from the monasteries and Gentile homes where they had been hidden. In contrast to many others, he was quite successful, so much so, that during one of his later trips to Poland, he was ambushed and shot at. Luckily, he was uninjured. (This is a famous incident but it is not historically verifiable)

<sup>75</sup> Interview, Jeremy Schonfeld, 3 January 2001

<sup>76</sup> Interview, Felicia Selton, 26 November 2001

<sup>77</sup> HL MS183 368 Schonfeld, 'Statement of Journeys' (undated)

<sup>78</sup> WT, Emanuel Fischer, Jerusalem, 11 August 2000

<sup>79</sup> *Talmud Baba Metzia* 71a

<sup>80</sup> Maimonides, *Mishna Torah, Gifts to the Poor* 8:18

<sup>81</sup> See ISA GL 8586/6, *Zorach Warhaftig Papers*, 'The Jewish Religion in Axis Europe: The War Against Religion'

<sup>82</sup> Interview, Jonathan Schonfeld, 2 June 2000

<sup>83</sup> WT, Emanuel Fischer, Jerusalem, 11 August 2000

<sup>84</sup> This section is, for the most part, devoted to the efforts of Solomon Schonfeld who was the main leader of the organised orthodox community at the time. It is not meant, in any way, to demean the efforts of other prominent figures, such as Harry Goodman the political secretary of Agudat Israel in Britain. According to the *JC* (October 1961), he was known for his "selfless vigour" and "statesmanship" (as cited by Pamela Shatzkes in *Anglo-Jewish Rescue and Relief Efforts 1938-1944* (PhD Thesis, UCL) p. 329). He was the publisher and editor of Agudah's

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*Jewish Weekly* and made weekly broadcasts to Jews on the Continent via the BBC, on behalf of the Ministry of Information. In this capacity, he was a major figure who should be accounted for in studies of the orthodox responses to the Holocaust. Many of his efforts are already documented in the works of Sompolinsky and Shatzkes. These include his activities on behalf of the Jews stranded in Shanghai and the utilisation of Ireland as a refuge for Jews. (Meier Sompolinsky, *The British Government and the Holocaust: The Failure of Anglo-Jewish Leadership?* (Sussex Academic Press, Brighton & Portland 1999), pp. 20, 29, 33, 66, 82, 83, 97, 107, 119, 141, 186, 212; Pamela Joy Shatzkes, *Anglo-Jewish Rescue and Relief Efforts 1938-1944* (PhD Thesis, UCL), pp. 222, 227, 250, 251, 254, 257-259, 271-279, 329)

<sup>85</sup> The terms 'orthodox Jewish leaders' and 'leadership' in this study refer for the most part to Schonfeld and his colleagues and to a lesser extent, Goodman, but not to Hertz, although he headed the CRREC. Hertz, by virtue of his position, was obviously heavily entangled in the infrastructure of the secular community.

<sup>86</sup> After speaking to acquaintances of Schonfeld (see the list of those interviewed in the bibliography), my overall impression is that although he did not particularly appreciate the efforts of Goodman, for example, this did not occupy a significant amount of his time. Schonfeld was a man of action and had little time for squabbles or disputes. (See Chapter 4, pp. 189-193)

<sup>87</sup> The previous Bobover Rebbe, Rabbi Solomon Halberstam, when asked by his followers for guidance regarding elections in Israel, would invariably remain silent. This was a clear indication that the matter was up to each individual's choice.

<sup>88</sup> HL MS183/11/3 Schonfeld *Biographical Sketch*, Jewish Secondary Schools Movement, September 1964; HL MS183 11/3 Letter from Victor Hochausser to Chuter Ede requesting that Schonfeld be elevated to the Lords, 19 October 1964; In the first of these documents, Hogg is referred to as an "opponent" of Schonfeld. In the second, Hochausser states that "Dr. Schonfeld had some unpleasant collisions with Quintin Hogg". It is unclear as to the nature of these differences but it would seem that they were of a personal nature; That which the orthodox community has not pledged its unswerving allegiance to a single party is evident from the fact that at present, the community in London, as a case in point, overwhelmingly votes Conservative. Before every election, each community seeks clear guidance from its leadership. This, itself, indicates that domestic politics is low on the communal agenda, because the community on the whole, seldom has a unified opinion regarding issues that affect them and seldom agrees to accept clear direction, even from the rabbinate, regarding such issues; PRO CO 733/446/13 (76021/45) See note regarding Hogg's participation in a delegation to the Home Office deploring Government inaction with regard to Europe's Jews, 1 July 1943

<sup>89</sup> Interview, Jonathan Schonfeld, 2 June 2000

<sup>90</sup> HL MS183 3/4 Letters from Schonfeld to Bishop of Chichester, 17 January 1943, Bishop of Chichester to Schonfeld, 15 February 1943; The Bishop of Chichester obtained the support of the Archbishop of Canterbury for the Parliamentary Motion proposed by Schonfeld and his support was very forthcoming. These letters were written in a tone of mutual friendship and support.

<sup>91</sup> HL MS183 87/1 Letter from Schonfeld to Sir Samuel G. Joseph, 1 February 1943

<sup>92</sup> HL MS183 113/2 Letter from Sir Samuel G. Joseph to Schonfeld, 3 February 1943

<sup>93</sup> OT, Abba Dunner, London 2000; Interview, Ilse Mannes, 28 January 2001

<sup>94</sup> See David Kranzler and Gertrude Hirschler eds., *Solomon Schonfeld: His Page in History* (Judaica Press, New York 1982); David Kranzler and Eliezer Gevirtz, *To Save a World: Profiles in Holocaust Rescue* (CIS Publishers, Lakewood 1991), Vol. II, pp. 143-172; David Kranzler, *Thy Brother's Blood: The Orthodox Jewish Response During the Holocaust* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1987), pp. 176-184

<sup>95</sup> HL MS183 981/1 Letter from Hertz to Churchill, 11 April 1944

<sup>96</sup> HL MS183 427 Letter from Schonfeld to Sir Herbert Emerson, 16 December 1943

<sup>97</sup> HL MS183 427 Letter from Schonfeld to Sir Herbert Emerson, 16 February 1944

<sup>98</sup> HL MS183 290/1 Letter from Schonfeld to Sir Anthony Eden, 10 September 1942

<sup>99</sup> HL MS183 290/1 Letter from Sir Anthony Eden to Schonfeld, 17 September 1942

<sup>100</sup> WT, Felicia Selton, London, 26 November 2001

<sup>101</sup> Interview, Jeremy Schonfeld, 3 January 2001

<sup>102</sup> See Miriam J. Freud-Kandel, *An Ideology Forsaken: Theological Developments in Anglo-Jewish Orthodoxy Since 1913* (MS unpublished), pp. 109-111

<sup>103</sup> HL MS183 290/1 Letter from Hertz to Sir Alexander Maxwell, 30 September 1942

<sup>104</sup> HL MS183 290/1 Letter from Sir Alexander Maxwell to Hertz, 7 October 1942

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- <sup>105</sup> HL MS183 290/1 Letter from Lord Cranbourne to Hertz, 22 October 1942
- <sup>106</sup> See Efraim Zuroff, *The Response of Orthodox Jewry in the United States to the Holocaust: The Activities of the Vaad Ha-Hatzala Rescue Committee 1939-1945* (Yeshiva University Press, New York 2000), pp. 145-169, 191-218
- <sup>107</sup> HL MS183 290/1 Letter from Hertz to Lord Cranbourne, 30 October 1942
- <sup>108</sup> Ibid Letter from Lord Cranbourne to Hertz, 9 November 1942; See also MS183 3/4 Letter from Wladyslaw Sikorski to Hertz, 18 May 1943
- <sup>109</sup> HL MS183 290/1 Letter from Lord Cranbourne to Hertz, 9 November 1942
- <sup>110</sup> See Meier Sompolsky, *The British Government and the Holocaust: The Failure of Anglo-Jewish Leadership?* (Sussex Academic Press, Brighton & Portland 1999), pp.94-99
- <sup>111</sup> Opposition to the 1943 Parliamentary Motion is discussed in Chapter 4, pp. 184-189
- <sup>112</sup> HL MS183 113/2 Letter from Schonfeld to Selig Brodetsky, 10 February 1943
- <sup>113</sup> HL MS183 87/1 Draft letter from Schonfeld to the editor of *The Times*, 16 May 1943
- <sup>114</sup> HL MS183 3/4 Parliamentary Motion: *Rescue from Nazi Massacres*, 4 February 1943
- <sup>115</sup> The reasons why 'Schonfeld's Motion' was not tabled in Parliament are discussed in Chapter 4, pp.184-189
- <sup>116</sup> *House of Lords Debates* (Hansard), Vol. 26, cols. 82723, March 1943
- <sup>117</sup> See Meier Sompolsky, *The British Government and the Holocaust: The Failure of Anglo-Jewish Leadership?* (Sussex Academic Press, Brighton & Portland 1999), pp.155-160
- <sup>118</sup> HL MS183 113/3 'Notes On Consultation With The Royal Ethiopian Legation', 6 May 1943; HL MS183 113/3 *Notes*, 17 August 1943; PRO FO 371/36711 Letters from the Foreign Office to Schonfeld, 14 February 1943, Schonfeld to Foreign Office, 18 February 1943, George W. Randall to Schonfeld, 15 April 1943, Foreign Office to Schonfeld, 15 April 1943; Schonfeld, being a realist, knew that Palestine, at that point in time, was not a viable refuge for the Jews. He was perfectly satisfied that Ethiopia could serve this purpose; For more information on Schonfeld's attitude to Palestine and the 'Jewish State', see Meier Sompolsky, *The British Government and the Holocaust: The Failure of Anglo-Jewish Leadership?* (Sussex Academic Press, Brighton & Portland 1999), p.175 (and endnotes)
- <sup>119</sup> As has been mentioned, orthodox activists in the Free World, such as the members of the Vaad-Ha-Hatzala in America and those who were within the sphere of conflict, such as Weissmandl in Slovakia, invariably focused on the rescue of prominent rabbis and their families. Schonfeld, whose opportunities to save European Jews were extremely limited, was not an exception. It was generally felt that by rescuing members of the rabbinate, activists were also securing the survival of the Jewish People on the whole. In general, Schonfeld was not in the possession of extensive lists of Jews who could be saved. However, he did receive appeals on behalf of prominent rabbinic families throughout the war and was also constantly thinking of ways to rescue his colleagues in Nitra, Slovakia. (See HL MS 183/290/1 Lists of rabbis and their families)
- <sup>120</sup> HL MS183 113/3 'Notes On Consultation With The Royal Ethiopian Legation', 6 May 1943; HL MS183 113/3 *Notes*, 17 August 1943; PRO FO 371/36711 Letters from the Foreign Office to Schonfeld, 14 February 1943, Schonfeld to Foreign Office, 18 February 1943, George W. Randall to Schonfeld, 15 April 1943, Foreign Office to Schonfeld, 15 April 1943
- <sup>121</sup> PRO FO 371/35040 Letter from the Minister in Addis Ababa, 25 October 1943 and Randall's *minutes*; PRO CAB 95/14 *Memorandum*, Secretary of State for the Middle East, 1 November 1943, p. 3
- <sup>122</sup> Interview, Jonathan Schonfeld, 2 June 2000
- <sup>123</sup> See David Kranzler and Gertrude Hirschler eds., *Solomon Schonfeld: His Page in History* (Judaica Press, New York 1982), pp. 29, 52
- <sup>124</sup> HL MS183 593 CRREC 1938-1948: 'Rabbi Dr. Schonfeld Reports on 10 Years of Activities on Behalf of Our Jewish Brethren'
- <sup>125</sup> Ibid
- <sup>126</sup> See Meier Sompolsky, *The British Government and the Holocaust: The Failure of Anglo-Jewish Leadership?* (Sussex Academic Press, Brighton & Portland 1999), pp.161-171
- <sup>127</sup> Ibid pp.171-173
- <sup>128</sup> HL MS183 651 CRREC *Minutes*, 16 November 1944; Also WT, Felicia Selton, London, 26 November 2001; See also Chapter 3, pp. 115, 144-145,149-150, Chapter 4, pp. 159-160, 162



## CHAPTER FOUR

### ORTHODOX JEWRY AND ANGLO-JEWRY: CO-OPERATION OR STRUGGLE?

Although the Anglo-Jewish community during the war was relatively small, it comprised all of the different factions of Jewry at the time. These included the reform and liberal communities on the Left and the orthodox and ultra-orthodox communities on the right. Although the Jewish leadership had been divided on the issue of Zionism for quite some time, it was slowly becoming an accepted ideal within the general community precisely as a result of the terrifying reports emanating out of Europe. Many Jews felt that a Jewish homeland was the only way of securing the future of the Jewish People. In addition to the conflicts over Zionism and fears of domestic anti-Semitism, inner communal politics played a great role in the ways that the Anglo-Jewish leadership reacted to the Holocaust.

#### CO-OPERATION

Many orthodox Jewish leaders in Britain at the time of this study pursued attempts at assisting the European Jews on their own, and, as has been mentioned, utilised the connections that they had with various Anglo-Jewish organisations only when they felt that it would place them at a better advantage. Schonfeld, for example, was known in most circles for his

involvement in the CRREC, however, he did not always solicit assistance in his capacity as its executive director. In fact, the 'stationery file', which was kept at his Stamford Hill offices, contained dozens of pieces of stationery with all of the letterheads of the organisations that he was associated with.<sup>1</sup> In his correspondences, Schonfeld used the stationery that best suited the purpose that it was meant for.<sup>2</sup> Admittedly, Harry Goodman, who represented Agudat Israel in Britain at the time, usually utilised his position when he dealt with the officialdom regarding Europe's Jews. Undoubtedly, the reason for this was that Agudat Israel was a major organisation that claimed to represent orthodox Jewry worldwide. This lent credibility to Goodman in his position as a petitioner for the entrapped Jews. In addition to this, Goodman was not as prominent as Schonfeld and was not personally involved in as many ventures as he was. The assistance that Goodman rendered to the European Jews was invariably conducted under the aegis of Agudat Israel of Great Britain.<sup>3</sup> Being that he was the publisher of the Agudist newspaper, the Jewish Weekly, he also had to maintain his reputation as the Agudah's representative in Britain.<sup>4</sup>

Even when Schonfeld made representations in the name of one of his affiliate organisations, he was seldom answerable to, or had to confer with a committee or board, as such. The reasons for this, were that his co-members seldom challenged Schonfeld, who was usually the impetus for many of these organisations and was invariably the 'driving force' behind them. In addition to this, members had tremendous confidence in Schonfeld and deferred to him because of his rabbinic position.<sup>5</sup> As a result of this flexibility, he was also

able to determine which secular Jewish organisations would be in a position to assist him in his activities. For the most part, Schonfeld disassociated himself from many of these organisations because he either felt that the support that they could offer was negligible, or that it was not worthwhile becoming involved in organisations that were too authoritative or restrictive. Although the CRREC was under the auspices of the Chief Rabbi, it was in no way connected to the United Synagogue, and although it was represented on the BoD, this was mainly for reasons of communal protocol.<sup>6</sup> Schonfeld, by virtue of his position and his relationship with the Chief Rabbi, was well aware of the workings of the BoD and was in tune with many of the intrigues that plagued it. As a result, it is likely that he made a conscious effort to distance himself from it because he felt that the Board might work to his disadvantage.

There are, however, some examples of the CRREC soliciting the BoD's assistance. These include the Chief Rabbi's request of 25 November 1941 that Brodetsky appeal to the Prime Minister of Canada on behalf of 370 refugee rabbinic students stranded in Shanghai.<sup>7</sup> At the beginning of 1941, hundreds of Polish Jews from Lithuania had obtained Japanese transit visas on the basis of fictitious visas to Curacao and other South American countries. These Jews had little hope of procuring 'end visas' and this new influx of refugees threatened the security of the Jewish refugee community already residing in Japan. As a result, many of these Jews, including the entire Rabbinical College of Mir, found refuge in the International Settlement of Shanghai.<sup>8</sup> The CRREC urged Brotman to request that the Canadian Prime Minister grant immigration permits for the 370 rabbinical students and to

ensure him that their maintenance would be guaranteed by the Federation of Polish Jews in Montreal.<sup>9</sup> Schonfeld presented another request in the name of the Chief Rabbi to the BoD on behalf of the Shanghai refugees on 30 September 1942, with regard to the potential exchange of refugees for Japanese nationals. In his letter, he states: "The Chief Rabbi would be pleased to hear what steps you have undertaken with the Polish authorities here to ensure equal and sympathetic consideration for Jewish refugees in Shanghai in making arrangements for exchange with Japanese nationals."<sup>10</sup> The Shanghai Jews were never accepted into Canada, nor were they exchanged for Japanese nationals, but these correspondences do indicate that a working relationship existed between the CRREC and the BoD.

Agudat Israel also had some, albeit few direct dealings with the BoD in their efforts to provide assistance to the beleaguered Jews. An example of this was the interaction between the two organisations regarding Agudat Israel's delegation to the Apostolic Delegate in Britain, Archbishop William Godfrey, during the second week of February 1943.<sup>11</sup> The BoD was kept fully abreast of the discussions regarding three proposals made by Agudat Israel to the Vatican, through its delegate in Great Britain. The meeting was attended by Harry Goodman, Meir Springer, and Rabbis Ochs and Babad, and their main requests were that the Vatican enquire of the Slovak and Rumanian Ministers of the Holy See if they would be prepared to assist Jews in their countries, that the Polish Primate be urged to issue a message or broadcast against anti-Semitism and that the Vatican suggest that the Italian Government respect visas issued by British and American ministers of the Catholic Church.

An Agudah delegation approached Archbishop Godfrey again, in February 1944, when deportations from Slovakia were imminent.<sup>12</sup> Undoubtedly, Agudat Israel under Goodman's direction had a clear picture of the ways that they could possibly assist Europe's Jews. For many activists, the Catholic Church and its representatives was the most obvious avenue for assistance. This was certainly the case with regards to the orthodox activists Jacob Griffel in Istanbul, and Recha Sternbuch in Montreux. Both of these indefatigable activists developed close relationships with the Papal Nuncios in their respective countries and these Catholic leaders became eager supporters of their rescue efforts.<sup>13</sup> Although Godfrey was well meaning and was consistent in his attempts to forward appeals from Jewish leaders to the Holy See throughout the war, Rome was characteristically unforthcoming and invariably claimed to be 'doing what it could'. As a result, these appeals went largely unnoticed and formed just a small part of the many requests on behalf of the Jews that challenged the Vatican's 'neutrality' throughout the war.<sup>14</sup>

On 23 July 1942, the BoD enlisted the CRREC's assistance in compiling lists of potential recipients of a limited amount of food parcels to be sent to Poland.<sup>15</sup> In June 1944, the BoD and the CRREC worked together again in their efforts to send food parcels to Jews in Hungary.<sup>16</sup> Schonfeld also enjoyed the co-operation of the Board in the re-billeting of children from non-Jewish to Jewish surroundings at different times during the war. Jewish education and the billeting of Jewish children were activities that were firmly within the remit of the BoD, and Schonfeld could therefore expect its active co-operation in his ventures to secure a religious environment for evacuated

children.<sup>17</sup> These joint efforts indicate that the organised orthodox and secular leadership of the community co-operated closely with each other when they had clear aims and were working towards what they considered 'tangible results'. However, Schonfeld seldom worked in close conjunction with his secular counterparts on his more ambitious or complicated activities. These include the aforementioned 1943 Parliamentary Motion, the 'Rabbis to Mauritius' scheme and the CRREC's arrangement with Count Folke Bernadotte of the Swedish Red Cross to issue Swedish protection papers to Hungarian Jews on the Mauritius list.<sup>18</sup>

As early as February 1941, Harry Goodman of Agudat Israel, suggested that the Joint Foreign Committee appoint a sub-committee to co-ordinate the activities that the European crisis demanded. Although Brodetsky agreed that the situation warranted a coordinative framework to liaise with bodies beyond Britain's borders, he was against the idea of a sub-committee, because he believed that the different organisations would continue to adopt operative decisions independently.<sup>19</sup> An attempt at co-ordinating rescue efforts was repeated on 7 September 1942, when Raphael Springer of Agudat Israel, suggested that a committee be formed with representatives of Agudat Israel, the Joint Foreign Committee, the BSWJC and the Revisionists.<sup>20</sup> The BoD agreed that the Jewish Agency be included in the framework of such an organisation and that the Joint Foreign Committee would serve as the umbrella organisation but insisted that the Revisionists be excluded.<sup>21</sup> These proposals did not result in the formation of an official committee, and joint efforts did not take the form of anything except informal meetings until the

formation of the Consultative Emergency Committee, which included representatives of the Joint Foreign Committee, the Jewish Agency, the BSWJC and Agudat Israel, in December 1942.<sup>22</sup>

As the war progressed, the Anglo-Jewish leadership became keenly aware of its limitations with regards to assisting the European Jews. The state of war and Britain's proximity to the Continent rendered communication with the beleaguered Jews in occupied territory and with other Jewish activists practically impossible. As a result, many efforts from the middle of the war until its end were directed towards plans for the reconstruction of the destroyed European communities upon the cessation of hostilities. For this reason, the BoD and the CRREC jointly formed the Post-war Reconstruction Committee, in August 1943. After negotiations between Schonfeld, on behalf of the CRREC, and Norman Bentwich and Dr. Redcliffe Salaman of the BoD's Relief Committee, it was decided that the new organisation would include a 25% representation of the CRREC. It was agreed that all religious matters, including the distribution of kosher food, delegations of religious authorities to the Continent and the re-establishment of 'synagogue communities', would remain completely within the sphere of the CRREC representatives on the committee.<sup>23</sup> This arrangement suited both the BoD, which was not essentially a religious body and was not in a position, nor was interested in getting overly involved in religious affairs, and obviously the CRREC and its directors, who were greatly concerned with the rebuilding of religious life in Europe after the war.

The organisers of the Post-war Reconstruction Committee also agreed that there would be 'constant consultation between the Executive of the BoD's 'Relief Committee' and the representatives of the CRREC on all matters of mutual interest'. It was further agreed that the issues affecting post-war reconstruction would be discussed at a conference of representatives of all of the Anglo-Jewish communities, that would be called jointly by the BoD and the CRREC, and that they would issue a joint appeal to raise the funds necessary for the implementation of their plans.<sup>24</sup> The CRREC also accepted to allocate 10% of its proceeds to the religious functions of the committee and that the united committee would pay the salaries of the religious authorities sent to the Continent on the same basis as other professional relief workers.<sup>25</sup> The Post-war Reconstruction Committee, met numerous times throughout the latter half of the war and played a major part in attempts at reconstructing Europe's Jewish communities after the war. These included the distribution of 150,000 food packages and 30,000 garments to liberated Jews, the dispatch of trained rabbis and relief workers to Europe and the distribution of religious requisites through the Mobile-Synagogue Scheme.<sup>26</sup>

Another example of a major effort that was under the direction of both secular and orthodox members of the community was the Jewish Committee for Relief Abroad, that was established on 24 January 1943. It was set up by the Joint Foreign Committee of the BoD and the Anglo-Jewish Association, and had the representation of a broad spectrum of the community on its Board. These included such famous personages as Redcliffe Salaman, Harry Sacher, Selig Brodetsky, Mrs. Lionel de Rothschild, Leonard Stein, Rabbi Dr.



E. Munk and Schonfeld. The basic aim of this committee was to assist the government in its efforts to provide material relief such as food and clothing to the European Jews after their liberation. Although it was assumed that the bulk of this work and the funds and materials needed would be provided by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), this committee saw its task as a provider of trained and skilled workers who would bring a 'personal touch' into the distribution of material help. It would also assist in the care of children and the ill, and would help those who were in a position to start useful and meaningful occupations in Europe.

The Jewish Committee for Relief Abroad was a member of The Council of British Societies for Relief Abroad (COBSRA) and included a Training Subcommittee, European Advisory Committee and a Selection Committee. It also had a Medical Board and employed a psychologist that assisted in vetting potential volunteers. In addition to intensive training camps, volunteers were offered courses in the 'Background of the Jewish Communities in Europe', 'The Yiddish Language', 'Nutrition', 'The Psychological Aspects of Relief Work', 'The Experiences of a Relief Worker', 'Camping', 'Survey of Relief Work' and 'Medical Relief'.<sup>27</sup>

Schonfeld was not in a position to direct the practical organisation of an army of volunteers for post-war relief efforts, considering the responsibilities that he already had and the duties that he had undertaken, both personally, and under the aegis of the CRREC. However, in order to achieve his aims of 'religious reconstruction' he agreed to incorporate the Department for Post-

war Religious Reconstruction of the CRREC into the Jewish Committee for Relief Abroad. As a result, his representation on the committee was given the task of ensuring the availability of kosher food, the provision of ministers and the re-establishment of synagogues. It was agreed that ministers nominated by the Religious Reconstruction Department, which was essentially the CRREC representation on the committee, would, after a medical examination, receive their final appointment from the Selection Board of the Committee and would thereafter take their place as relief workers under its auspices.<sup>28</sup>

Although, Schonfeld was frequently at odds with some members of the secular Jewish leadership, he did enjoy the support of others. Otto Schiff, for example, worked together with Schonfeld despite his dismay at some of his 'methods'. An example of Schonfeld's tactics vis-à-vis those of Schiff's is an episode that took place during a meeting of the Woburn House Refugee Committee, shortly after the start of the war, at which both Schonfeld and Schiff were present. When Schonfeld made a certain suggestion, Schiff retorted that he could not accept his propositions because he had once lied to him.

The discussion that ensued went as follows:

Schonfeld: "What occasion was this?"

Schiff: "You asked me once, just a short time before the war, to apply to the Home Office, with which I had especially good relations, to

approve the entry of 200 families of German *Rabbanim* (rabbis), teachers and community workers, involving approximately 1000-2000 persons. I asked you if you had financial guarantees for these people and you answered 'yes'. When the time came and these people arrived in England, you brought me only 90 guarantees."

Schonfeld: "I brought 30 or 40 more guarantees later."

Schiff: "Yes, that is true, but 130 is not the necessary 200. My good relations with the Home Office are based on their confidence in what I ask. If they learned, even once as in this case, that I had not told them the truth, this might affect our good relations and their subsequent behaviour about refugees."

Schonfeld: "What would you have done if I had said I have only 90?"

Schiff: "I would have applied just for 90 families."

Schonfeld: "Then you must see for yourself that it was necessary to lie to you because otherwise 110 families, which you say were saved through a lie, would have lost their lives."<sup>29</sup>

Despite this apparent difference of opinions, it would seem that Schiff still admired Schonfeld's approach. Correspondence between the two, thereafter, continued on a cordial note and they continued to assist each other whenever

possible.<sup>30</sup> This recognition and justification of Schonfeld's 'methods' is echoed in the comments of Norman Jacobs, who was a member of the Manchester Branch of the Jewish Refugees Committee, and stated on 30 March 1943: "These are just Rabbi Schonfeld's methods – only the result counts and the methods and means employed to achieve it can be as unscrupulous as anything, so long as the intention and result are in accordance with what is correct."<sup>31</sup>

As the situation on the Continent became more desperate, some secular organisations sought Schonfeld's active participation in order to broaden their representation and bolster their efforts. This was the case with the United Jewish Committee: To Answer the Appeal of Soviet Jewry and Promote Mutual Cultural Relations, which sought Schonfeld's membership on the committee in September 1942. The patrons of this committee were predominately secular, as were its members, however, as Joseph Leftwich pointed out in his letter to Schonfeld dated 16 September 1942: "Let us remember that the fewer we remain, the greater is our responsibility, the responsibility of each one of us for the existence of the Jewish people."<sup>32</sup>

## STRUGGLE

Most accounts of Schonfeld describe him as a man with little patience when it came to achieving his aims.<sup>33</sup> As a result, he found it difficult to deal with

those members of the community that he considered 'time wasters' and had little patience for those who detracted from matters of priority for issues of less importance. To some extent, this is one of the reasons that Schonfeld developed such an aversion to Zionism, which was an issue that, in his eyes, paled in comparison to the happenings on the Continent. Schonfeld was keenly aware of the British Government's apprehension regarding the admittance of Jews into Palestine and felt that the time was not ripe to even address the issue. Hence, his omission of a reference to Palestine in the 1943 Parliamentary Motion. As a religious Jew, he had an abiding love for the Land of Israel and for those who lived there, but this was a love that showed no manifestation in political enterprise. According to Schonfeld, those leaders who actively subscribed to the Zionist agenda during the war, were wasting precious time and effort, time and effort that could be directed at relieving the plight of at least some of Europe's Jews.

Because of Schonfeld's opportunities to act on his own, he chose to steer as clear as possible from the secular leadership. However, this was only possible to a certain extent. In some cases, the BoD, which was the main representative body of Anglo-Jewry had to be co-opted into Schonfeld's personal projects and some of the objectives of the CRREC. However, perhaps the greatest consideration in maintaining, and indeed nurturing relationships with the secular establishment, was the need to constantly raise funds. Schonfeld and his colleagues could not afford to be at odds with the secular community or its leaders because many of those who were in a position to support the CRREC and Schonfeld's other projects, were members

of that section of the community. It should also be noted that the divisions that unfortunately exist currently between the orthodox and non-orthodox communities were far less accentuated during the time of this study, for several reasons. Firstly, the debate over Zionism was not yet a formal dividing factor between the orthodox and secular, and a fierce competition between the religious and 'anti-religious' in Palestine did not exist. Secondly, many of the even more secular members of the community were not totally assimilated and maintained an attachment to the old-world 'charm' of traditional Judaism. Furthermore, the state of war, and the deprivations that came with it, contributed to a sense of camaraderie and co-operation amongst Britain's Jews, especially those living through the 'Blitz' in London.

Although Schonfeld and his colleagues were never seen to be at odds with the secular community as a whole, and when the CRREC dealt with the BoD there was usually an amount of amicable co-operation, Schonfeld did have a fair share of disquieting episodes with various secular leaders. However, it is important to note that these conflicts seldom, if ever, were for ideological reasons, in a religious sense. It was not Schonfeld's habit to proselytise, and he invariably concentrated on the matters at hand, without involving his personal religious sentiments. This was even the case when Schonfeld was addressing religious issues such as the religious education of refugee children, which Schonfeld understood was the privilege of orthodox children, but could not be forced upon those who were irreligious.<sup>34</sup>

An exception to this was when a situation arose whereby Schonfeld was in a position to work together with the then fledgling British Liberal and Reform communities. Schonfeld was generally a pragmatist, but became an idealist when it came to any interaction with organisations that sought to alter or 'water down' traditional Judaism. An indication of this was Schonfeld's resignation from the Religious Sub-Committee of the Refugee Children's Movement in August 1941.

In a letter to Mrs. Norman Laski, dated 26 August 1941, Schonfeld writes:

My hope in joining the committee, was that Anglo-Jewry which is 99% orthodox, would be given an opportunity of giving special care to the upbringing of the refugee children, and that in view of the absence of parental influences, an effective drive would be undertaken to further the interests of these charges of Anglo-Jewry. I find that correspondence courses of a minority group, the West London Reform Synagogue, are considered in some measure sufficient...

He continues by enumerating the provisions that were lacking, and, instead of suggesting ways of either excluding the Reform members of the committee, thwarting their efforts, or working together with them, Schonfeld resigns from the Sub-Committee altogether.

He concludes his letter by stating:

In view of all this, I feel that my continued membership of the Committee may be misinterpreted as an indication of my concurrence with the present state of affairs. I therefore beg to tender my resignation from the Sub-Committee. I shall of course, continue to be at your disposal for any individual cases, or advise you if you need it.<sup>35</sup>

With regards to the religious education of refugees, Schonfeld also faced challenges to his religious convictions in his position as the UOHC representative on the Joint Committee on the Religious Education and Welfare of Jewish Refugee Children. In a letter dated 5 December 1943, from Schonfeld to Mrs. Hardisty, who was a member of the Committee he expressed his, and the Union's displeasure at the retention of Dr. Van Der Zyl on the Committee after he became an official of the Reform Congregation. According to Schonfeld, this posed an administrative problem because Van Der Zyl would be forced to devote less time to refugee work because, by virtue of his association with the Reform Movement, his services would not be used by the orthodox. In addition, Schonfeld felt that as a matter of principal, an official of a minority section of the Jewish community might not be fit to be a representative on the committee, especially in educational matters, because the committee might "tend towards sectarianism".

Schonfeld ends this letter with a request and an ultimatum:

On the above grounds, our Union feels constrained to insist that at least one responsible member of the staff shall be persona grata with



the orthodox community. The feeling on this matter is so strong that it has been decided to draw public attention to the present unsatisfactory state of affairs. I join with you in wishing to avoid scandal. I should therefore be deeply grateful if this matter could receive the earnest reconsideration of your Executive and an early decision taken.<sup>36</sup>

Schonfeld's sense of idealism was not limited to his dealings with the 'progressive' sections of the community. His principles affected his efforts at fundraising as well. This is reflected in his refusal to accept a donation of \$1000 from the Philadelphian Friends of Israel Missionary and Relief Society in 1943, when the funds had already reached Great Britain and the need for funding was immense. Schonfeld would not consider associating with, or using funds donated by an organisation whose purpose was to convert Jews to Christianity. The letter from the secretariat of the CRREC dated 25 August 1943 states: "We regret to have to inform you that the appeal, and our accompanying letter, was addressed to you under a misapprehension as to the nature of your organisation. In the circumstances, we are unable to accept your proffered donation. With apologies for having troubled you..."<sup>37</sup>

One of the more vociferous opponents of Schonfeld, the Chief Rabbi and, in essence the CRREC was Sir Robert Waley-Cohen. As has been mentioned, there had always been a personal animosity between the Chief Rabbi and Waley-Cohen because of the latter's support of the Liberal and Reform Movements in Britain at the time. It is understandable that the Chief Rabbi was bothered by these associations because Waley-Cohen, by virtue of his

position on the executive of the United Synagogue, should have, in Hertz's eyes, been totally devoted to the orthodox camp. Waley-Cohen, on the other hand, frequently took issue with the power of the Chief Rabbi, which he saw as being incongruent with the affiliation and organisation of the United Synagogue. At times, Waley-Cohen's essentially personal animosity towards the Chief Rabbi led him to find fault, if not scandalise some of Hertz's activities, including the CRREC.<sup>38</sup>

On 13 November 1942, the United Synagogue Offices circulated a 'warning' that emanated from Waley-Cohen against the American Chapter of the CRREC, in the publication American Hebrew. It stated:

We have received a cable from the secretary of the United Synagogue, London, informing us that appeals have been made in America on paper headed 'American Chapter, Religious Emergency Council of the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain' inviting contributions to rebuild the Great Synagogue of London. The cable stated, "should be grateful if you would use your influence to make it known that no such appeal has any authority from the Chief Rabbi or the Great Synagogue or the United Synagogue.

The American Hebrew, without investigating the matter, added:

Evidently, even the horrors of the war have not prompted certain dishonest persons to drop their private rackets if only for the duration.<sup>39</sup>

The claim that the American Chapter of the CRREC was soliciting funds for the rebuilding of the Great Synagogue was clearly an untruth. The facts surrounding this matter were clarified in various correspondences after this scandal came to light. It became clear that the 'solicitation' in question merely had a picture of the destroyed Great Synagogue printed on its cover and did not include an appeal to rebuild it except for the hope that the CRREC in London would: "consider it one of its duties to answer the call of Dr. Hertz that the shrine of Anglo-Jewry should rise again". Arthur Le Vine, who was the President of the Beth David Hospital and Joint Treasurer of the American Chapter of the CRREC, had been asked by the 'British Library of Information' to assist in the publication of the British War Blue Book and the White Paper on the Treatment of German Nationals in Germany. Le Vine undertook to underwrite the full costs of the publication when he was assured that the proceeds would go to the American Chapter of the CRREC. At the same time that this drive was launched, the Chief Rabbi delivered an important address in the ruins of the Great Synagogue, and Le Vine and his associates were encouraged by the British Press Service in America to use the pictures of the bombed out synagogue in their releases to the American Press. The British Press Service supplied Le Vine with the mats, free of charge, because they were well aware that the publication of the photographs throughout the United States would win many new friends to the British cause.<sup>40</sup>

In April 1942, the American Chapter received a cable from the CRREC in London, requesting that they avoid creating the impression, through their

literature, that the Council was charged with the duty of rebuilding the Great Synagogue. On 28 April, the American Chapter telegraphed their confirmation that they regretted the misunderstanding and would discontinue the inclusion of the photographs in their leaflets.<sup>41</sup> The article in the American Hebrew was published a full eight months after the discontinuation of the leaflets in question, and the Chief Rabbi and the CRREC were not consulted by either the United Synagogue secretariat or the American Hebrew before the complaint was published.

Waley-Cohen and the Council of the United Synagogue were asked by both Le Vine and Herman Appelman, an associate of his, to issue a formal apology and retract on their accusations.<sup>42</sup> The American Hebrew did, in fact, print a full apology in its 24 January issue, but Waley-Cohen's replies to both Le Vine and Appelman were evasive. Moses Schonfeld then threatened to publish the facts regarding this scandal in a letter to the Jewish Chronicle that would be signed by Le Vine and Appelman, but Solomon Schonfeld did not advise his brother Moses to pursue the matter in his way.<sup>43</sup> His letter of 23 April 1943 indicates that he felt that such an action would be a waste of efforts and at the same time reminded Moses of another conflict with Waley-Cohen in which he was embroiled.

In his letter he writes:

Waley-Cohen's reply to Mr. Levene (Le Vine) is in his usual style. I do not know what serious steps you can take from there and I would not

like to bother you with prolonging useless recriminations. As I probably indicated to you in a previous letter, I, personally am having a legal arbitration with Waley-Cohen over his defamatory implications in the United Synagogue's letter to the Home Office. If, however, you think that you can threaten legal steps in your matter, we should have no objection. The relations between us and the Honorary Officers are practically non-existent, the same applies to the Chief Rabbi, and therefore we have no compunction in giving them as much trouble as we can.<sup>44</sup>

A greater scandal surrounding the relations between Schonfeld and Waley-Cohen was the aforementioned 'legal arbitration' between the two. This issue involved the publication and dissemination of a letter by Waley-Cohen suggesting that Schonfeld purposely misled people by claiming to be the Deputy Chief Rabbi. This letter was sent to the Under Secretary of State at the Home Office by the United Synagogue secretary Philip Goldberg, through Waley-Cohen's instructions, on, or around 26 January 1943. It was also read by Waley-Cohen to all those present at a meeting of the United Synagogue Council at Woburn House, London, on 2 February 1943. These included invited members of the press.<sup>45</sup>

The letter was dated 26 January 1943 and stated:

This body (United Synagogue) constituted by Act of Parliament (33 and 34 Vict. cap. 116) which is the main organisation of synagogues in the

United Kingdom, among whose duties is the main responsibility for the appointment and maintenance of the office of the Chief Rabbi, has been much concerned to see, in a letter under reference S.18014/2 from the Aliens Department of the Home Office to the Chief Rabbi (a copy of which has been furnished to us by the Jewish Refugees Committee) a reference to a person described as the Deputy Chief Rabbi.

I am instructed to inform you that no such office exists nor is anyone so to describe himself. It is understood that the Chief Rabbi's son-in-law Dr. Schonfeld accompanied him in a discussion relating to the matter dealt with in the Home Office letter. This was an arrangement of private and personal convenience to the Chief Rabbi, but we think it important that you should be made aware that Dr. Schonfeld holds no office under the United Synagogue and is not connected with any synagogal organisation which participates in the maintenance of the office of the Chief Rabbi or which recognises its authority.

Schonfeld, who invariably sought to settle issues amicably and with speed, described his position when he appealed for Brodetsky's assistance in this matter in a letter dated 16 November 1943.

In this letter, he writes:

After my initial threat to issue a writ, Sir Robert agreed, in principal, to submit the matter to arbitration. This, he later withdrew...

I do not see how I can allow justice to be undermined because Sir Robert makes use of my unwillingness to air Jewish scandal in public. Once such a reluctance is taken advantage of, any grievance can be committed within the community and the offenders go free. Such a state of affairs would clearly be contrary to our loyalty to law and order.

In these circumstances I am being forced into open court. Before doing so, I appeal to you and your colleagues of the Deputies Defence Committee and T.A.C., all of whose objects include the settlement of Jewish disputes by arbitration, to use your influence with Sir R. W. Cohen, to adhere to his original promise to submit the matter to legal arbitration. Should you fail in this, I wonder whether you are prepared to take any action within the community.<sup>46</sup>

The situation was clarified by the Chief Rabbi in a letter to the editor of the Jewish Chronicle on 12 February 1943. Hertz explained that after a meeting with Home Office representatives regarding the threatened closure of a North London rabbinical college, he and Schonfeld were 'startled' when the Home Office referred to Schonfeld as the 'Deputy Chief Rabbi' in their report on the meeting, dated 15 December 1943. The official who made this mistake, was a supporter of Jewish causes, and the Chief Rabbi chose to correct his mistake by implication rather than directly. In his letter, Hertz also asserted that he had

consistently been against the notion of a Deputy Chief Rabbi and that Schonfeld had never made any insinuation to the effect of his occupying such a position.<sup>47</sup>

Before 1938, Schonfeld's relations with Waley-Cohen were cordial. Waley-Cohen even sponsored an appeal in aid of Schonfeld's Jewish Secondary School in 1934 and made recommendations for his scheme to 'Proclaim Jewish Ethics' through synagogue notice boards in 1936. Waley-Cohen's attitude towards Schonfeld changed around the time that the Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Fund was established in 1938. Thereafter, Waley-Cohen became aggrieved when Schonfeld refused to join the Committees for Spiritual Judaism and Religious Education for Refugee Children that he was forming. Schonfeld chose to decline the invitation to join these committees because the Chief Rabbi had not been offered a position on them. In 1941, Waley-Cohen and his colleagues on the United Synagogue Council, excluded the UOHC from an educational body that was being constituted as the representative of the entire orthodox community and the London Board of Shechita (ritual slaughter). In 1942, Waley-Cohen protested against an appeal on behalf of the Jewish Secondary School, withdrew his name from its list of patrons and made insidious comments regarding its finances to Barnett Janner, who was a signatory on the appeal. He also opposed Schonfeld's election to the executive of a conference of synagogal representatives concerning education and publicly resigned from his own position upon Schonfeld's election. At a United Synagogue council meeting, in the same



year, Waley-Cohen asked rabbis and ministers not to associate themselves with the CRREC because Schonfeld led it.<sup>48</sup>

A clear indication of Waley-Cohen's disdain for Schonfeld is his letter of 1 September 1942, in which he suggested that Schonfeld consider applying for a commission as a Jewish Chaplain to the Forces. This was an obvious affront to Schonfeld, who was the Presiding Rabbi of the UOHC and was a communal leader of note. In a note of obvious sarcasm, Waley-Cohen writes: "There is an immense need for young men that have the necessary qualifications and there is an immense field for really valuable work." As an addendum to this letter, he added: "P.S. If you would like to be considered for a commission, and would care to send in your name to the Jewish War-Services Committee at Woburn House, I am sure they would welcome that."<sup>49</sup>

Schonfeld was clearly aware of Waley-Cohen's malicious intent.<sup>50</sup> The sarcasm inherent in this letter was basically challenging the worth of all of Schonfeld's activities. Waley-Cohen was also implying that his colleagues on the Council of the United Synagogue concurred with his opinions. However, Schonfeld, who would not put his own honour before his duties, sidestepped the sarcastic comments in Waley-Cohen's letter and solicited his assistance in yet another one of his activities instead.

In his reply, dated 2 September 1942, he states:

I thank you for your kind suggestion concerning a Jewish chaplaincy. If I could fit in this work in addition to my other essential activities, I would be only too glad. Unfortunately, the day has only twenty-four hours.

He continued with a request, which, in his eyes, superseded upholding his own respect. He presented it in couching terms although it did include the subtle hint that it was actually the CRREC that produced results with regards to the War-Services Committee.

His letter continued:

*Might I on this occasion draw your attention to the absolute lack of funds which evidently hamper the War-Services Committee in undertaking any effective welfare work among the soldiers. Every little request has to be dealt with by our Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council, and I also know that cases arise where soldiers on leave should receive some financial help in addition to the spiritual guidance which is being provided. If you would be prepared to sign an appeal for such a welfare fund, I should be glad to work in arranging these activities.*<sup>51</sup>

Schonfeld summed up his grievances with Waley-Cohen in a letter dated 19 December 1943. He asserted that Waley-Cohen's dissatisfaction with the BoD, the Office of the Chief Rabbi and his personal conflicts with Hertz, coupled with his prominent position in the United Synagogue, was proof of his

being “unable to keep in touch with popular Jewish sentiments and attitudes”.<sup>52</sup> Schonfeld did not deny that Waley-Cohen was devoted to his communal work. However, he questioned the worth of these efforts when he added: “The question is whether all the good you (Waley-Cohen) offer is not offset by the accompanying evils which your administration of affairs brings with it.”<sup>53</sup>

On a more ideological note, Schonfeld continued his letter by blaming Waley-Cohen for using his influence and directing his activities against efforts and persons working for the rebuilding of the Jewish Homeland. In this context, Schonfeld was referring to practical efforts at assisting members of the Jewish settlement (*Yishuv*) in Palestine. This should not be confused with Zionism or the ‘Zionist ideal’, an ideal that Schonfeld did not support. He could have also been bothered by Waley-Cohen’s anti-Zionist stance because he considered it a covert way of working against the establishment instead of devoting efforts to more vital issues. He also accused Waley-Cohen of “frowning upon attempts to bring back our people to orthodox Jewish living”, acting as the United Synagogue Adviser on Kosher Food, when he, himself was not observant of *kashrut*, and for his refusal to “recognise the inherent untruth (in) uniting Orthodoxy and Liberalism, maintaining, as they do, opposite doctrines in fundamentals”. Some of Schonfeld’s other complaints were that Waley-Cohen consistently attempted to create an indifferent educational programme for religious instruction that would “suit everybody and mean little to anybody”, and that he constantly showed little respect for independent orthodox representatives, rabbis and ministers within the United Synagogue.<sup>54</sup>

Schonfeld ends his letter on a more congenial note when he adds:

Dear Sir Robert, the olive leaf is outstretched – do the right thing. Asseverations are unnecessary. I am sure the saintly soul of your late mother would not wish otherwise.<sup>55</sup> Upright, courageous and charitable acts will but add to your personality, and I am sure that they would agree better with your personal health than the present line of annoyance and aggravation.<sup>56</sup>

By far, the greatest scandal surrounding Schonfeld's activities during the war years was the opposition that he faced when he rallied the support of members of both the Lower and Upper Houses of Parliament for a motion that assured practical support for Europe's Jews.<sup>57</sup> Schonfeld made an official complaint regarding the difficulties that he encountered in a letter to the editor of the Jewish Chronicle, dated 5 February 1943. This letter essentially encapsulated Schonfeld's frustration with the secular and Zionist leaders who were the cause of what he termed a "deplorable situation" and gave some of the details that led to it.

In the letter, Schonfeld explains:

At the last meeting of the Deputies, it was admitted that little practical progress had been achieved in steps of rescue for the tens of thousands of our brethren who are daily being slaughtered in Central

Europe. And a month has elapsed since the United Nations Declaration.

In face of such a calamitous situation, together with a few leading Churchmen and Parliamentarians, I undertook to rouse and organise wide support for a Motion to be tabled in both Houses of Parliament asking His Majesty's Government "...to declare its readiness to find temporary refuge in its own territories, or in territories under its control, for endangered persons who are able to leave those countries..." Support for the Motion was widespread. Within ten days, two Archbishops, eight peers, four Bishops and forty-eight members of all parties had signed notice of a meeting to consider the Motion.

This effort was met by persistent attempts on the part of Professor Brodetsky and some of his colleagues to sabotage the entire move. Without even full knowledge of the details, he and his collaborators asked Members of the House to desist from supporting the new effort. What makes such action indefensible is the fact that an offer was made to the Deputies' Consultative Committee, in the early stages, inviting them to co-operate or to carry on the action. To do nothing themselves and to prevent others from doing, is strange statesmanship.<sup>58</sup>

Schonfeld ends his letter with a note of hope for the success of the Motion, but despair of the sectarian infighting in the community. He concludes:

Notwithstanding all the opposition, the Episcopate of England and Wales has supported the Motion. The Parliamentary Meeting will be held, and we hope the Motion will receive the widest possible support. But the efforts of some communal Jewish leaders to stop it have left an unfortunate impression. More than one M.P. has expressed a feeling of becoming wearied of trying to help the victims in face of such sectarian Jewish opposition.<sup>59</sup>

According to Geoffrey Alderman, one of the main reasons that the Motion was resisted by Zionist Anglo-Jewish leaders was because Schonfeld omitted Palestine from the list of British-controlled territories suggested as potential places of refuge for the Jews. Although this omission was for purely practical and not political reasons, it “incurred the uncompromising wrath of the Board’s Zionist lobby”.<sup>60</sup> However, there is no evidence that this was the case.<sup>61</sup> In truth, the opposition to Schonfeld’s approaches to officials, with a view to forming a Parliamentary Committee and supporting his proposed Motion, was more a result of several misunderstandings and a lack of concerted co-operation than acts of sectarian ‘backstabbing’.

In a letter to the Chief Rabbi, dated 3 February 1943, Selig Brodetsky set out his position vis-à-vis this issue. By examining the sequence of events, it becomes clear that Brodetsky acted nobly throughout. It was, perhaps, a mixture of Schonfeld’s zealotry and Brodetsky’s straightforwardness that led to this rift in the community.

In Brodetsky's letter, he reminded the Chief Rabbi of the efforts of the Consultative Committee that was established by the BoD Joint Foreign Committee in December 1942. The purpose of this committee was to consult and, as far as possible, co-operate with the Jewish international organisations, namely the Jewish Agency for Palestine, the BSWJC and Agudat Israel, in efforts to alleviate the plight of Europe's Jews. According to Brodetsky, the Committee took every possible step towards these ends, although it unanimously lamented its lack of success. He also explained that at one of the Committee meetings, it was suggested that a "special parliamentary committee" be set up to deal with the European Jews. This suggestion was discarded because the Committee was told, presumably by the Home Office, that the Refugees' Committee of the House would serve that purpose. However, an all-party parliamentary deputation to the Government was being prepared during this time, and during the following parliamentary vacation, a meeting was called by representatives of both Houses to discuss the proposals that such a deputation might present. It was around this time, that Brodetsky first heard of Schonfeld's approaches to officials with regards to his proposed Motion, and he immediately contacted the Chief Rabbi for clarification. At the meeting of the Parliamentary representatives, he also mentioned privately to one member that unless the Parliamentary representatives who were already acting desired it, a committee, such as the one that Schonfeld was suggesting to create, would not be advisable.

Thereafter, Brodetsky met with Schonfeld, at the suggestion of the Chief Rabbi, to discuss their differing points of view. Brodetsky explained to

Schonfeld that, in essence, he supported the idea of a Motion, but felt that the time was not yet ripe to engage in arranging it. He felt that it might not be advisable to raise such a Motion before the Parliamentary deputation had seen the Government. He was concerned that the Government might commit itself unfavourably in a premature discussion. During this meeting, when Brodetsky suggested that Schonfeld should have consulted with the Consultative Committee before taking action, Schonfeld claimed that "he did not consider it his duty to consult with those who were, at any rate for the time being, the leaders taking action". He said that "as a citizen of a free country he could do anything he thought fit, and it was his duty as a rabbi to take action when, in his view, the leaders of the community were not doing so". At this point, Schonfeld offered to hand the matter over to the Consultative Committee, but Brodetsky felt that he had spoken on its behalf and the issue was too far gone to salvage.

After this meeting, Brodetsky decided to actively support Schonfeld in his efforts, because he was intent on seeing them through, regardless of any obstacles that he might encounter. He therefore wrote to the aforementioned M.P. and indicated that if the other Parliamentary representatives desired it, he would not oppose the action envisaged by Schonfeld. Schonfeld saw no overt opposition from the Consultative Committee thereafter, but the fact that he had consistently made it clear that he intended to see the matter through, with, or without their support, disenfranchised him from the committee.<sup>62</sup>



According to Schonfeld's account of the events, Eleanor Rathbone M.P., who was the liaison between the Jewish organisations and the Parliamentary Committee on Refugees, actually supported his Motion and did not feel that the Parliamentary deputation and Schonfeld's proposal would be in conflict with each other. He also claimed that Brodetsky was far more vociferous in his opposition to the Motion than he claimed, although this assumption could have been because of any number of misunderstandings. According to Schonfeld, Sir George Jones, withdrew his support of the Motion on 6 January 1943, because he was assured by Brodetsky that: "he, the Chief Rabbi, Sir Robert Waley-Cohen, the Deputies, Zionist Federation and the whole community were 'dead against it'". However, it is possible that Brodetsky was far less adamant than Schonfeld assumed. He also claimed that the Parliamentary deputation was not a reality and that only a request to the Prime Minister to receive a deputation had been made.<sup>63</sup> This point is similarly unverifiable.

Although Schonfeld occupied a prominent public position and possessed the necessary diplomatic skills to achieve many of his aims, some of his acquaintances found him very difficult to relate to. Recollections of Schonfeld's personality differ greatly, and this is evident from various attempts by his admirers to honour him after the war in the 1950's and 1960's.<sup>64</sup> On 6 October, 1958, the committee that was arranging a celebration to mark the 'Silver Jubilee of Schonfeld's Public Office', approached R.A. Butler M.P. with the request that Schonfeld be conferred an 'Honour' by the government in recognition of his communal work. The committee made the request of Butler

because he had always been a great admirer of Schonfeld, and Schonfeld was the principal Jewish advisor on matters connected with a Motion that Butler had proposed called the 'Butler Education Act'. A cover-letter was sent, accompanied with some excerpts of the book, Message to Jewry, that the committee was publishing in honour of the occasion, a brief rundown of his accomplishments in the fields of relief and welfare in "matters that were of interest to the Home Office" and of his educational activities through the Jewish Secondary Schools Movement.<sup>65</sup>

This request was unsuccessful and on 19 October 1964, Victor Hochhauser, one of Schonfeld's staunchest supporters, made a similar request of the Labour Minister, J. Chuter Ede. Hochhauser's initial idea was that Schonfeld be included in the Queen's 'Honours List', but he even went so far as to suggest that he be awarded a life peerage.<sup>66</sup> This attempt was similarly unsuccessful. According to some of those who knew Schonfeld intimately, the reason for the lack of recognition that Schonfeld received from government circles was because his forceful character gained him more enemies than admirers.<sup>67</sup> In any case, they claim that Schonfeld never wanted to "blow his horn" and was not interested in public recognition. A proof of this was that after the war, Schonfeld never spoke about his accomplishments in the fields of rescue or refugee work.<sup>68</sup>

While the notion that Schonfeld had more enemies than supporters may very well have been the case with regards to government officials, this was most likely because many of them did not appreciate a 'stranger' making things

more difficult than they needed to be. Schonfeld's forcefulness and insistent nature could only be fully appreciated by those who were sincere supporters of the causes that he rallied for. There is every indication that Schonfeld was highly admired within the Anglo-Jewish community, notwithstanding what some considered his 'volatile' nature, and precisely because of his dedication and forthrightness.<sup>69</sup> He was simply adored by the children of the *kindertransports*, not only because he took a great part in saving their lives and assuring them of a brighter future, but because of the love and care that he exuded.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, those who worked together with him greatly admired the untiring efforts and ingenuity that Schonfeld devoted to what he felt was right.<sup>71</sup>

To a great extent, the relationships that Schonfeld developed with his co-religionists in the 'secular camp' mirrored his inner convictions. He was firmly devoted to his activities and projects, both individual and under the aegis of the CRREC. As has been mentioned, Schonfeld did not actively seek to impress others. There were those who were 'taken' by his personality, and invariably tried to render him their assistance whenever possible. Those who did not identify with him, kept their distance. Schonfeld had no time for what he considered nonsense or 'time-wasting', and therefore endeared himself to those who shared his particular mindset when it came to 'getting things done'. He did not pay more than 'lip-service' to those who were not 'useful' to his various projects, for either practical or financial reasons.

Admittedly, Schonfeld was against the institutionalised forms of Jewish modernism that the Liberal and Reform movements represented. In Schonfeld's eyes, these movements were actively seeking to destroy traditional Judaism, and communal leaders who supported them were indefensible. However, he felt no personal animosity towards those Jews who did not share his religious convictions. He was well aware of the backgrounds of the Anglo-Jewish leaders that were less religious than he was. These were not people who 'turned their backs' on Judaism, they were the products of a slow process of Anglicisation that forced them to reassess their Judaism vis-à-vis modern British society. These were people who, to an extent, were proud of their Jewishness, and Schonfeld appreciated this fact, even when it was primarily manifest in a commitment to Zionism, an ideology that he did not identify with. Schonfeld was comfortable working with members of the Anglo-Jewish leadership, as long as they contained themselves firmly within the essentially orthodox framework of the United Synagogue, but not with those who possessed other, or dual religious loyalties in public.

Schonfeld's relationships with Waley-Cohen and Brodetsky are cases in point. According to Schonfeld, Waley-Cohen was a hypocrite. On the one hand he was the President of the United Synagogue and on the other, he maintained ties with the Liberal and Reform communities. According to the United Synagogue constitution and indeed Government legislation, the Chief Rabbi was the head of the United Synagogue and the official representative of British Jewry, Waley-Cohen, however could never reconcile himself with the position of the Chief Rabbi and was a virulent opponent of Hertz and what he

stood for. Although Schonfeld sought to make a measure of amends with Waley-Cohen for the sake of the community in December 1943, the two remained 'sworn enemies' throughout their lives.<sup>72</sup>

However, Schonfeld always maintained a cordial relationship with Brodetsky and they usually worked together in an atmosphere of co-operation and understanding. This was the case even after the differences that they had with regards to Schonfeld's proposed Motion in the Houses of Parliament. Schonfeld spent a good part of 1943 gathering signatures and working towards this concerted effort at a unified response to the European-Jewish crises. To an extent, the 1943 Motion was Schonfeld's magnum opus when it came to attempts at assisting European Jewry. Aside from the fact that Schonfeld could not afford to be at odds with Brodetsky because of his position on the BoD, the reasons why Schonfeld remained Brodetsky's ally, and even appealed for his help in his conflict with Waley-Cohen were twofold.<sup>73</sup> Regardless of Brodetsky's religious convictions on a personal level and in private, he was a confirmed member of the United Synagogue and he did not share his loyalties. In addition to this, Brodetsky had an amiable manner about him and was clearly sincere in his devotion to the causes that he supported. Schonfeld, who was a good judge of character, appreciated these points and felt that he could work together with Brodetsky when necessary, regardless of any differences that came between them.

## INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS

Although orthodox activists and rescue workers in different parts of the world worked tirelessly throughout the war, there was no international rescue infrastructure in place, per se. The main orthodox rescue organisation during the war was the Vaad Ha-Hatzala that was based in New York. It was founded in 1939 by leading American rabbinic figures upon the request of the world-renowned leader of orthodox Jewry and leading rabbinic figure in Vilna, Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinski. The committee was initially named the Emergency Committee for War-Torn Yeshivoth and focused exclusively on the rescue of rabbis and rabbinical students. Later, it expanded its efforts to include all Jews threatened by the Nazis, regardless of their religious persuasions or affiliation. It was headed by a long list of rabbis, but on a practical level, the forces behind it were Rabbi Eliezer Silver of Cincinnati, Mr. Irving Bunim and later the European refugee Rabbis Aharon Kotler and Abraham Kalmanowitz.

During the war, the Vaad Ha-Hatzala was able to help rescue hundreds of refugee Torah scholars, most of whom escaped to safety via the Far East, as well as thousands of Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. The assistance provided by the Committee also enabled hundreds of refugee rabbis and their students stranded in Shanghai to continue intensive Torah studies and maintain their unique lifestyle in their new, unfamiliar surroundings.<sup>74</sup>

Zeirei Agudat Israel, led by Elimelech Tress and a group of young volunteers, worked alongside, and to a great extent under the direction of the leaders of the Vaad Ha-Hatzala. This organisation worked tirelessly to assist the European Jews in any way possible and secured hundreds, if not thousands of visas and affidavits to save Jews. Being that Zeirei Agudat Israel was officially a 'youth group', its volunteers were in a position to canvass for funds door-to-door. They also took advantage of every opportunity to spread the terrible truth about the relentless destruction of European Jewry. Tress and his workers ensured that refugees that did manage to reach American shores were provided with their needs and that they be advised and assisted in ways of establishing themselves.<sup>75</sup>

Orthodox activists living closer to the arena of conflict had more practical opportunities to assist the European Jews than those living in the United States. These included Yitzchok and Recha Sternbuch, Yisroel Chaim Eis, Julius Kuhl and George Mantello in neutral Switzerland, Yaakov Griffel in Istanbul and the Reichmanns in Tangier.<sup>76</sup> Rabbi Yitzchok Isaac Halevi Herzog, the Chief Rabbi of Palestine should also be included in the list of orthodox individuals devoted to the rescue of European Jews. Rabbi Michael Ber Weissmandl was active with his 'Working Group' in Slovakia until the tragic failure of the Slovak uprising in the fall of 1944.

It is not an object of this study to evaluate the efforts or accomplishments of these rescue activists. Orthodox writers and historians have described their

work in numerous books and articles that are intended give them the recognition that they rightly deserve.<sup>77</sup> Although these activists were only a tiny percent of the Orthodox Jewish community in the Free World during the war, and it might be argued, represent a lack of activism amongst other orthodox Jews, their accomplishments were many, considering the obstacles that they constantly encountered. It has been well documented that Recha Sternbuch risked her safety and devoted her 'life and soul' to rescue efforts during the war, at the expense of her family and its livelihood.<sup>78</sup> Weissmandl risked his life countless times during the war to save Jews in Slovakia and Hungary, as did Griffel in Communist Poland after the war. Only individuals with a tremendous amount of resolve and fortitude could be driven to work on behalf of the beleaguered Jews considering the circumstances, and candidates for this work had to be tenacious, forceful and persuasive by nature. Above all, they had to be at the right place at the right time. Very seldom did all these qualities and conditions come together, but when they did, they produced sterling examples of selflessness such as Sternbuch, Griffel and indeed Schonfeld.

Evidence suggests that there was considerable co-operation and assistance between Schonfeld and other orthodox activists in the run-up to the war. This included his work with the Viennese branch of Agudat Israel that resulted in the '*kindertransports*' to England. In the three years following the '*Anschluss*' in March 1938, nearly 9,000 Jews managed to emigrate to 30 countries through the assistance of the Austrian Agudat Israel, which helped secure 'end visas' from nearly every country in the world whose consuls could be convinced or



bribed to issue them. Julius Steinfeld, the head of the Agudah, worked closely with Schonfeld on these fronts and was his main partner in arranging the transports of children to England.<sup>79</sup>

Weissmandl, Schonfeld's mentor, acted as one of the primary forces that influenced his drive to work for European Jewry. After the establishment of the CRREC, Schonfeld and Weissmandl even devised a plan to relocate the entire Nitra Yeshivah to Canada.<sup>80</sup> This plan did not materialise, but Schonfeld and Weissmandl continued to be in close contact in the years preceding the war and also during the war, whenever possible. In 1944, Weissmandl supplied the CRREC with plans of the railway lines and junctions along which the death trains travelled to Auschwitz. These plans, and the attached plea to bomb the railway lines, included detailed maps and sketches of the concentration camp.<sup>81</sup> This document later became known as the 'Auschwitz Protocols'.<sup>82</sup> The CRREC and Harry Goodman conveyed the urgent request to bomb the Auschwitz communications to the British authorities in addition to, and probably before Chaim Weizmann.<sup>83</sup> The decision of the Allies not to entertain this plan is one of the most perturbing and disheartening chapters in the history of attempts to assist the European Jews.<sup>84</sup>

When war was declared in September 1939, many of the connections that had existed between orthodox activists were severed. This was due to the fact that Britain was virtually cut off from occupied Europe because of the state of war and because the British Government was consistently opposed to any

dealings on behalf of civilians in enemy territory that were not sanctioned by the Home Office outright. As a result of these disadvantages, activists in America, including the members of the Vaad Ha-Hatzala could receive little assistance from their British counterparts and therefore maintained little contact with them throughout the war.

The Vaad Ha-Hatzala did attempt to utilise the services of the CRREC and British Agudat Israel at times, such as their request in July 1943 that the Chief Rabbi and Goodman intercede on behalf of 500 rabbis and their students with Mexican visas who were stranded in the U.S.S.R. because of a lack of transit visas.<sup>85</sup> Hertz did approach the Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, on behalf of these refugees with the request that the British Government recommend the granting of exit visas via Iran by the Government of the U.S.S.R. However in a predictable sequence of events, the request was not honoured and assistance for this group of Jews did not come from the British. Often, these organisations worked in conjunction with each other in their attempts to rescue prominent European rabbis. These included Rabbi Aaron Rokach of Belz and Rabbi Baruch Rabinowitz of Munkacs.<sup>86</sup> It should be noted, however, that dealings between the CRREC and Agudat Israel in Britain and the Vaad Ha- Hatzala and the Agudat Israel World Organisation, based in New York were negligible throughout the war because the Vaad realised that assistance could not be forthcoming from British activists because of the obstacles that they faced.<sup>87</sup>

The same can be said for the connections maintained between orthodox British activists and their counterparts in Switzerland and Turkey. The British authorities were most reticent to allow dealings between Jewish activists in Britain and those active in Turkey, because the government was consistent in its efforts to block all illegal emigration to Palestine, and Turkey, and the Jewish Agency activists there were heavily involved in Aliya Bet and other efforts to settle Jewish refugees in Palestine.<sup>88</sup> However, notwithstanding all of these obstacles, activists sought each other's assistance whenever it was possible and deemed practical.<sup>89</sup> In fact, Schonfeld applied to the Home Office for permission to travel to Turkey numerous times from the end of 1942 until April 1943, with the intention of assisting in the rescue operations there. He was turned down by the Home office and told that the activities of the Jewish Agency would have to suffice.<sup>90</sup>

An atmosphere of close co-operation with activists in other countries resumed in earnest after the war, when Schonfeld and the Vaad Ha-Hatzala worked together in attempts to reunite family members that had been torn apart through the ravages of the war.<sup>91</sup> This atmosphere of co-operation was confirmed when both organisations agreed to the recommendations made at the Conference on European Religious Reconstruction, held in London on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of August 1945, that they amalgamate in their efforts to supply relief to the European Jews.<sup>92</sup> The two organisations did suffer a breakdown in relations when they encountered major differences with regards to financial matters in the summer of 1947.<sup>93</sup>

Schonfeld consistently worked upon his own impulses and on his own terms. This was the case with regards to his rabbinic position, his work in the field of Jewish education, the *'kindertransports'*, assistance to refugees and rescue efforts during the war. Schonfeld only made himself appear to be working with others when it was necessary to do so in order to achieve a specific aim. Even in his dealings with government officials, he purposely developed relationships with those who could assist him and avoided those who he considered to be of 'no use'. Although he rarely reproached those who did not support him, this was because Schonfeld was a realist and did not want to 'burn his bridges'. This was the way that he approached his dealings with secular and orthodox leaders throughout his career as well. Schonfeld's forceful nature necessitated that he always had to be in charge and in control. It was precisely this attitude of fierce independence combined with calculated diplomacy that enabled Schonfeld to accomplish as much as he did.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

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<sup>1</sup> HL MS183 241/1, HL MS183 848/2 *Solomon Schonfeld Biographical Sketches*; Schonfeld was the founder of the following organisations: The Needy Clergy War Fund, Jewish Soldiers Services, Jewish Internees' Welfare Organisation, National Council for Rescue from Nazi Terror (founding member), Post-war Religious Reconstruction Fund, Committee for Proclaiming Jewish Ethics and the Community Centres for Israel Organisation, amongst others.

<sup>2</sup> Interview, Jonathan Schonfeld, 2 June 2000

<sup>3</sup> AIL Telegram from Ludwig Kastner to Agudat Israel, London, 1 November 1944; AIL Letter from Dr. Jacob Griffel to Agudat Israel (Springer), London, 18 June 1944; AIL Letter from Agudat Israel, London (Springer), to Dr. Jacob Griffel and Ludwig Kastner, 4 April 1944

<sup>4</sup> Agudat Israel's political activities during the war were negligible, although the organisation did aim to be the unofficial representative of orthodox Jewry, worldwide. Agudat Israel of Great Britain reflected this by claiming to be more influential than it actually was. The *Jewish Weekly*, which was the organ of Agudat Israel in Great Britain, was not politically orientated and reported on orthodox current affairs in general and the activities of Agudat Israel in particular.

<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Harry Goodman was the uncontested leader of Agudat Israel in Britain and enjoyed a good measure of flexibility in this position.

<sup>6</sup> Although the UOHC was also represented on the BoD, some of its members, including Harry Goodman, were dissatisfied with the fact that it was only generally represented and did not have individual representation on the many different committees that constituted the BoD. As a result, Goodman proposed that the Union form a 'Representation of Orthodox Jewry in Great Britain' at the UOHC Council meeting in mid-February 1944. (*JC*, 18 February 1944)

<sup>7</sup> HL MS183 151 Letter from CRREC (secretary) to BoD (Brotman), 25 November 1941

<sup>8</sup> See Efraim Zuroff, *The Response of Orthodox Jewry in the United States to the Holocaust: The Activities of the Vaad Ha-Hatzala Rescue Committee 1939-1945* (Yeshiva University Press, New York 2000), pp. 145-170; David Kranzler, *Thy Brother's Blood: The Orthodox Jewish Response During the Holocaust* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1987), pp. 222-223; Yechezkel Leitner, *Operation Torah Rescue: The Escape of the Mirrer Yeshiva from War-torn Poland to Shanghai, China* (Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem 1987); David Kranzler and Joseph Friedenson, *Heroine of Rescue: The Incredible Story of Recha Sternbuch, who Saved Thousands from the Holocaust* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1984), pp. 44-49, 57-77

<sup>9</sup> HL MS183 151 Letter from CRREC (secretary) to BoD (Brotman), 25 November 1941; LMA ACC/3121 Letter from Abraham Brotman to Selig Brodetsky, 27 November 1941 as cited by Meier Sompolinsky in *The British Government and the Holocaust: The Failure of Anglo-Jewish Leadership?* (Sussex Academic Press, Brighton & Portland 1999), p. 230 n36

<sup>10</sup> HL MS183 151 Letter from Schonfeld to Abraham Brotman, 30 September 1942

<sup>11</sup> HL MS183 87/1 F2 Letter from Harry Goodman to Abraham Brotman, 11 February 1943

<sup>12</sup> AIL Letter from Agudat Israel to Archbishop Godfrey, 13 February 1944; See Abraham Fuchs, *The Unheeded Cry* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1984)

<sup>13</sup> See Joseph Friedenson, *Dateline Istanbul: Dr. Jacob Griffel's Lone Odyssey Through a Sea of Indifference* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1993), p. 45; David Kranzler and Joseph Friedenson, *Heroine of Rescue: The Incredible Story of Recha Sternbuch, who Rescued Thousands from the Holocaust* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1984), pp. 68-76

<sup>14</sup> See John F. Morley, *Vatican Diplomacy and the Jews During the Holocaust 1939-1943* (Ktav Publishing House, New York 1980), pp. 139, 158, 162, 175-177, 263-264; John Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII* (Viking Penguin, New York 1999), p. 224

<sup>15</sup> HL MS183 151 Letter from BoD (Brotman) to CRREC, end July 1942 (undated)

<sup>16</sup> HL MS183 151 Letters from BoD (Brotman) to Schonfeld, 2 June 1944, 19 June 1944, 17 August 1944; HL MS183 151 Letter from Schonfeld to BoD (Brotman), 15 August 1944; LMA ACC/3121/538 Letters from Abraham Brotman to Schonfeld, 2 June 1944, Abraham Brotman to Sir Herbert Emerson, 8 June 1944; For studies on the Holocaust in Hungary see Randolph L. Braham, *The Holocaust in Hungary: A Selected and Annotated Bibliography 1984-2000* (Columbia University Press, New York 2001)

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- <sup>17</sup> HL MS183 368 Letter from Schonfeld to BoD (Brotman), 29 May 1941; HL MS183 368 Refugee Children's Movement Ltd. - Religious Teaching Special Committee, *Minutes*, 14 July 1941
- <sup>18</sup> See Chapter 3
- <sup>19</sup> LMA ACC/3121 E03/159 – G02 001/036 Joint Foreign Committee *Report*, 19 February 1941
- <sup>20</sup> LMA ACC/3121/510, Report of conversation between Abraham Brotman and Raphael Springer, 7 September 1942
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>22</sup> LMA ACC/3121 E03/159 – G02 001/036 Joint Foreign Committee *Report*, 30 November 1942
- <sup>23</sup> HL MS183 576/1 Joint meeting of CRREC Executive and the Commission for Post-war Religious Reconstruction, *Minutes* 4a, 4b, 18 August 1943
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid* 4c, 4d
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid* 4f
- <sup>26</sup> HL MS183 736/4 CRREC *Report of Activities for the Period Ending 1<sup>st</sup> August 1945-5705*; See Chapter 3, pp. 117-122
- <sup>27</sup> HL MS183 234 Jewish Committee for Relief Abroad, *Minutes*, 10 September 1943
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>29</sup> HL MS183 464/4 Edwin Feist, *Some Memories About Rabbis Avigdor and Solomon Schonfeld*, 9 February 1982; Feist's son married a daughter of one of the 200 families rescued; Schonfeld possessed a copy of this article.
- <sup>30</sup> HL MS183 87/1 Schonfeld/Schiff correspondences, 20, 21 June 1939; An example of the close relationship and co-operation between Schonfeld and Schiff are these correspondences which were written shortly after the aforementioned meeting, when Schonfeld congratulates Schiff on his inclusion in the King's 'Honours List' and they discuss the proposed visit of Rabbi Zalmanas Melceris of Lithuania to discuss Lithuanian religious and refugee problems.
- <sup>31</sup> HL MS183 87/1 Letter from Keren Hatorah Relief Fund, Manchester Branch, to Schonfeld, 30 March 1943
- <sup>32</sup> HL MS183 469/2 Letter from Joseph Leftwich to Schonfeld; Leftwich also requested that Schonfeld approach the Chief Rabbi with the request that he become the vice-president of the 'United Jewish Committee' and that he ask Goodman and his 'other associates' to become members.
- <sup>33</sup> OH, Abba Dunner, London 2000; Abba Dunner said of him: "You had to know Dr. Schonfeld. This was a maverick, this was somebody who was impatient." With regards to Schonfeld's involvement in the *Kindertransports*, he states: "Whatever the *Kindertransport* was doing, wasn't fast enough for him – he felt that every boy or girl, man or woman on the Continent that could be rescued had to be, immediately, because he saw the 'writing on the wall'. He knew what was about to happen...when it did break out, he knew that no-one could escape."
- <sup>34</sup> HL MS183 368 F2 Letter from Schonfeld to Mrs. Norman Laski, 26 August 1941
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid*; See also HL MS183 368 F1 Letter from Schonfeld to Harry Goodman, 24 June 1941, regarding the Liberal representative on the committee of the Refugee Children's Movement
- <sup>36</sup> HL MS183 43/1 F1 Letter from Schonfeld to Mrs. Hardisty, 5 December 1943
- <sup>37</sup> HL MS183 730 F1 Letter from CRREC secretary to Reverend P. L. Berman of the Friends of Israel Missionary and Relief Society, 25 August 1943; See also related correspondences in file dated 26 July 1943, 20, 21 August 1943
- <sup>38</sup> See R. Henriques, *Sir Robert Waley-Cohen 1877-1952* (Secker & Warburg, London 1966), pp. 244, 246 n3, 264, 339-348, 381, 385; Miriam J. Freud-Kandel, *An Ideology Forsaken: Theological Developments in Anglo-Jewish Orthodoxy* (unpublished MS), pp. 92-94, 102
- <sup>39</sup> HL MS183 175 88/1 *American Hebrew*, 13 November 1942; See also reference to *American Hebrew*, 13 November 1942, as quoted in HL MS183 883 Letter from Herman Appelman to Philip Goldberg and Henry Isaac, Joint Secretaries of the United Synagogue Council, 17 January 1943
- <sup>40</sup> HL MS183 883 F3 Letter from Arthur Le Vine to Waley-Cohen, 11 January 1943
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, HL MS183 883 Letter from Herman Appelman to Philip Goldberg and Henry Isaac, Joint Secretaries of the United Synagogue Council, 17 January 1943

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- <sup>43</sup> HL MS183 883 Letter from Herman Appelman to Philip Goldberg and Henry Isaac, Joint Secretaries of the United Synagogue Council, 17 January 1943; HL MS183 87/1 Letter from Moses Schonfeld to Solomon Schonfeld, 29 March 1943
- <sup>44</sup> HL MS183 883 F3 Letter from Solomon Schonfeld to Moses Schonfeld, 23 April 1943
- <sup>45</sup> HL MS183 43/1 High Court of Justice, King's Bench Division, 'Writ between Schonfeld and Waley-Cohen', November 1943
- <sup>46</sup> HL MS183 43/1 Letter from Schonfeld to Selig Brodetsky, 16 November 1943; The outcome of this arbitration is unknown.
- <sup>47</sup> *JC*, 12 February 1943
- <sup>48</sup> HL MS183 113/2 'Statement by Rabbi Dr. S. Schonfeld on his relations with Sir Robert Waley-Cohen, bearing on the latter's act of slander' (undated)
- <sup>49</sup> HL MS183 555 Letter from Waley-Cohen to Schonfeld, 1 September 1942
- <sup>50</sup> HL MS183 113/2 'Statement by Rabbi Dr. S. Schonfeld on his relations with Sir Robert Waley-Cohen, bearing on the latter's act of slander' (undated)
- <sup>51</sup> HL MS183 555 Letter from Schonfeld to Waley-Cohen, 2 September 1942
- <sup>52</sup> HL MS183 43/1 Letter from Schonfeld to Waley-Cohen, 19 December 1943
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>54</sup> HL MS183 43/1 Letter from Schonfeld to Waley-Cohen, 19 December 1943
- <sup>55</sup> Waley-Cohen's mother was deeply religious.
- <sup>56</sup> HL MS183 43/1 Letter from Schonfeld to Waley-Cohen, 19 December 1943; There is no indication that Waley-Cohen and Schonfeld developed better relations after this.
- <sup>57</sup> See Chapter 3, pp. 145-146
- <sup>58</sup> *JC*, Letter from Schonfeld to the editor, 5 February 1943; See also the *Jewish Standard*, issue of the first week in February 1943, article titled: 'Intolerable Situation', regarding communal infighting with regards to the Schonfeld Motion; See also HL MS183 113/2 *Zionist Review*, Letter from Schonfeld to the editor, 21 February 1943
- <sup>59</sup> *JC*, Letter from Schonfeld to the editor, 5 February 1943
- <sup>60</sup> Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1998), p. 305
- <sup>61</sup> See Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination: A Social and Cultural History* (Blackwell, Oxford 1994), pp. 178-180
- <sup>62</sup> HL MS183 3/4 Letter from Selig Brodetsky to Hertz, 3 February 1943
- <sup>63</sup> HL MS183 3/4 Letter from Schonfeld to Hertz, 5 February 1943
- <sup>64</sup> See Chapter 3, pp. 122-131
- <sup>65</sup> HL MS183 11/3 Letter from 'Schonfeld Silver Jubilee Committee' (President) to R. A. Butler MP, 6 October 1958
- <sup>66</sup> HL MS183 11/3 Letter from Victor Hochauer to J. Chuter Ede, 19 October 1964
- <sup>67</sup> Interview, Jonathan Schonfeld, 2 June 2000
- <sup>68</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>69</sup> WT, Felicia Selton, London, 4 September 2001; WT, Immanuel Fischer, Jerusalem, 11 August 2000; See David Kranzler and Gertrude Hirschler eds., *Solomon Schonfeld: His Page in History* (Judaica Press, New York 1982); This volume is replete with fond personal recollections of Schonfeld.
- <sup>70</sup> WT, Immanuel Fischer, Jerusalem, 11 August 2000; See David Kranzler and Gertrude Hirschler eds., *Solomon Schonfeld: His Page in History* (Judaica Press, New York 1982); See also David Kranzler and Eliezer Gevirtz, *To Save a World: Profiles in Holocaust Rescue* (CIS Publishers, Lakewood 1991), Vol. II, pp. 143-164
- <sup>71</sup> Interview, Ilse Mannes, 28 January 2002; WT, Felicia Selton, London, 4 September 2001; OH Harry Pels, 18 April 1966; OH Abba Dunner, 2000
- <sup>72</sup> HL MS183 43/1 Letter from Schonfeld to Waley-Cohen, 19 December 1943

- <sup>73</sup> HL MS183 43/1 Letter from Schonfeld to Selig Brodetsky, 16 November 1943
- <sup>74</sup> See Efraim Zuroff, *The Response of Orthodox Jewry in the United States to the Holocaust: The Activities of the Vaad Ha-Hatzala Rescue Committee 1939-1945* (Yeshiva University Press, New York 2000)
- <sup>75</sup> David Kranzler, *Thy Brother's Blood: The Orthodox Jewish Response During the Holocaust* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1987), pp. 154-159 and footnotes; See also Yonason Rosenblum, *They Called Him Mike: Reb Elimelech Tress, His Era, Hatzala, and the Building of an American Orthodoxy* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1995)
- <sup>76</sup> See David Kranzler, *Thy Brother's Blood: The Orthodox Jewish Response During the Holocaust* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1987), pp. 84-166, 186-216, 230-247, 271-281 and footnotes; David Kranzler and Eliezer Gevitz, *To Save a World: Profiles in Holocaust Rescue* (CIS Publishers, Lakewood 1991), Vol. I, pp. 31-80, 119-151, 155-249, Vol. II, pp. 41-139, 175-201; David Kranzler and Joseph Friedenson, *Heroine of Rescue: The Incredible Story of Recha Sternbuch, who Saved Thousands from the Holocaust* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1984); Joseph Friedenson, *Dateline Istanbul: Dr. Jacob Griffel's Lone Odyssey Through a Sea of Indifference* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1993); Abraham Fuchs, *The Unheeded Cry* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1984); Weissmandl, Michael Ber, *Min Hameitzar (From the Depths)* (Hebrew) (No date or place of publication given – reportedly published by the Nitra Yeshiva, Mount Kisco, New York)
- <sup>77</sup> See above
- <sup>78</sup> See David Kranzler and Joseph Friedenson, *Heroine of Rescue: The Incredible Story of Recha Sternbuch, who Saved Thousands from the Holocaust* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1984)
- <sup>79</sup> David Kranzler, *Thy Brother's Blood: The Orthodox Jewish Response During the Holocaust* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1987), pp. 176-179 and footnotes
- <sup>80</sup> Michael Ber Weissmandl, *Min Hameitzar (From the Depths)* (Hebrew) (No date or place of publication given – reportedly published by the Nitra Yeshiva, Mount Kisco, New York), p. 31
- <sup>81</sup> HL MS183 593 CRREC Report 1938-1948; See David Kranzler, *Thy Brother's Blood: The Orthodox Jewish Response During the Holocaust* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1987), p. 172 and footnotes; See also David Kranzler and Gertrude Hirschler eds., *Solomon Schonfeld: His Page in History* (Judaica Press, New York 1982), p.29
- <sup>82</sup> See Abraham Fuchs, *The Unheeded Cry* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1984), pp.167-172
- <sup>83</sup> HL MS183 593 CRREC Report 1938-1948
- <sup>84</sup> See Michael J. Neufeld and Michael Berenbaum eds., *The Bombing of Auschwitz: Should the Allies Have Attempted It* (St. Martin's Press, New York 2000); William D. Rubinstein, *The Myth of Rescue: Why the Democracies Could Not Have Saved More Jews from the Nazis* (Routledge, London & New York 1997); David S. Wyman ed., *Bombing Auschwitz and the Auschwitz Escapees' Report* (Taylor & Francis Inc., London & New York 1990)
- <sup>85</sup> AIL Telegram from Rabbi Aaron Kotler and Rabbi Yisrael ha-Levi Rosenberg to Harry Goodman, 23 July 1943; See Nathan Eck, 'The Rescue of Jews with the Aid of Passports and Citizenship Papers of Latin-American States', *Yad Vashem Studies I* (Jerusalem 1957), pp. 135,138, 145, 147; The Swiss Agudah and the activists connected to it were the first to endeavour to transmit foreign passports to the German-occupied countries as a means of protection against anti-Jewish measures.
- <sup>86</sup> AIL Cable from Harry Goodman to Ludwig Kastner regarding the Rebbe of Belz, 31 January 1944; AIL Telegram from Yisroel Chaim Eiss to Raphael Springer regarding the Rebbe of Munkacs, 2 May 1942
- <sup>87</sup> For other examples of the connections that these organisations maintained during the war see HL MS183 883 F2 Letters from Moreinu Jacob Rosenheim to Moses Schonfeld, 28 September 1944, Moses Schonfeld to Solomon Schonfeld, 4 October 1944; HL MS183 297 Telegram from Moreinu Jacob Rosenheim to Schonfeld regarding Weissmandl Rescue, 8 October 1944; HL MS183 297 F3 Telegram from Moreinu Jacob Rosenheim to Schonfeld, 11 October 1944; HL MS183 659 Copy of telegram from Vaad Ha-Hatzala to Hertz, 26 November 1944; AIL Letter from Harry Goodman to Rabbi Aaron Kotler, 16 August 1943
- <sup>88</sup> See Joseph Friedenson, *Dateline Istanbul: Dr. Jacob Griffel's Lone Odyssey Through a Sea of Indifference* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1993), pp.120-126; See also Martin Gilbert, 'British Government Policy Towards Jewish Refugees (November 1937 – September 1939)', *Yad Vashem Studies XIII* (Jerusalem 1979), pp. 127-167
- <sup>89</sup> HL MS183 883 Letter from Solomon Schonfeld to Moses Schonfeld, 10 May 1944; HL MS183 113/2 Letter from Schonfeld to Harry Goodman, 25 March 1943; HL MS183 427 F1 Copy of telegram from Sternbuch (Montreaux) to Dr. Rottenberg (Manchester), 14 December 1943; HL MS183 297 F2 Cable from Dr. Jacob Griffel to Schonfeld (undated 1944); HL MS183 651 F3 Cable from CRREC to Mosaiska Forsamlingen Wahrendorffsgatan (Sweden), 1 July 1945; HL MS183 297 Letter from Moreinu Jacob Rosenheim to CRREC (Pels), 15 June 1944
- <sup>90</sup> PRO FO 371/36711 Letters from Schonfeld to Foreign Office, 18 February 1943 and *minute*, George W. Randall to Schonfeld, 6, 15 March 1943, Schonfeld to George W. Randall, 17 March 1943, Jewish Agency (Linton) to Foreign Office, 3 March 1943; *ibid* Cable from British Embassy, Ankara, 23 March 1943



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<sup>91</sup> Vaad Ha-Hatzala Papers 39/179, 39/180, 39/ 181, 40/182, 40/183, 40/184, 40/185, 40/186; These files are replete with correspondences regarding the reuniting and rehabilitation of Europe's Jews after the war; HL MS183 883 F1 Letter from Moses Schonfeld to Solomon Schonfeld, 13 July 1945; Ibid Letter from Moses Schonfeld to Solomon Schonfeld, 6 December 1945; HL MS183 730 Appeal letter from Menachem Perr (New York) to Schonfeld, (dated 1 Av 5706); AIL Letter from Dr. Jacob Griffel to Raphael Springer, 18 June 1944; AIL Letter from Raphael Springer to Dr. Jacob Griffel and Ludwig Kastner, 4 April 1944

<sup>92</sup> HL MS183 659 Agreement between the Vaad Ha-Hatzala and the CRREC, 12 September 1945; HL MS183 659 F2 Letter from Schonfeld to Rabbi Abraham Kalmanowitz, 12 September 1945

<sup>93</sup> HL MS183 298/2 Letter from Schonfeld to the Vaad Ha-Hatzala (Steinfeld), 16 June 1947; Ibid Letter from Schonfeld to Irving Bunim, 16 June 1947

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ORTHODOX ACTIVISTS AND ACTIVITY: PHILANTHROPY,

### PROTEST AND PRAYER

The Jewish lay-community in Britain worked on two fronts to assist European Jewry during the war. In a practical sense, many Jews who were able to, contributed generously to the many charities that had been established to aid Jewish refugees in Britain, to afford assistance to those who might still be rescued and to set up an infrastructure for the reconstruction of the Jewish communities in Europe after the war.<sup>1</sup> There were many who gave of their time and energy to collect funds for these purposes. Yet others collected foodstuffs and clothing to be distributed to the Jews as the Allies liberated the Nazi occupied lands. However, aside from charitable donations, there is no indication that the community showed any aggressive display of protest against the treatment the European Jews. To a great extent the British communal reaction to the atrocities being committed by Nazi Germany, mirrored those of the other Jewish communities in the Free World during the war.

On the spiritual front, Anglo-Jews, under the auspices of Chief Rabbi Hertz, participated in numerous displays of worship directed specifically to the crisis, both privately and communally. To a certain extent, special days of prayer and fasting served to unite the community in its response to the annihilation of

Europe's Jews. However, in some ways, these attempts to unify Anglo-Jewry exacerbated some of the serious ideological differences that separated them. The institution of the Chief Rabbinate was an essential element in securing the successes that these displays of faith enjoyed. The absence of a central rabbinate in America, for example, made a unified religious response to the happenings in Europe impossible.

## GENERAL

There are no statistics available that distinguish between the efforts of the ultra-orthodox and secular communities on behalf of the European Jews during the war. It is therefore very difficult to examine and fully appreciate the orthodox community's work on their behalf.<sup>2</sup> However, it must be noted that the established orthodox community which was small and somewhat insignificant, faced at least the same obstacles vis-à-vis relief work and overt displays of solidarity with its European counterparts as the secular community did. On a domestic level, these included fears of anti-Semitism and downright poverty. In a broader sense, the state of war and the constant threat of bombings, especially in London, took its toll on the Jewish community in the same way as it did on the community at large. In general, most of the communal activities that took place to assist the European Jews were invariably a joint effort of the orthodox and secular, and were directed by unaffiliated bodies. For the most part, these activities took the form of the

collection of funds, food, and articles of clothing to be sent to the Continent, either during the war or after the cessation of hostilities.

According to Geoffrey Alderman, it is important to note that no pressure of any significance was exerted upon the British Government with regards to the amelioration of the sufferings of the European Jews. He acknowledges that there were numerous appeals to the government to admit more refugees into Britain and Palestine, and to grant a measure of protection to Jewish refugees in neutral countries, and that there was an impressive gathering at the Albert Hall in London, on 29 October 1942, that was a general protest against the Nazi persecution of the Jews. He also correctly points out, however, that in relation to the failure of the British Government to take active steps to rescue European Jewry, there was never a mass lobby, or a public demonstration. According to Alderman, "It was never suggested, at least in any public forum, that the British Government might actually not care very much about the fate of European Jewry". He continues in his criticism of British Jewry by claiming that, "What was suggested was that the patriotic duty of British Jews was to support the war effort, and the priorities associated therewith as laid down by the government, and that to challenge these priorities was to endanger the good name of the community".<sup>3</sup>

The downtrodden Jews of Europe found solace in the imaginary conception that their co-religionists living outside of the Nazis' grip were doing everything in their power to save them. Dr. Hillel Seidman, the Director of the Archives of the Warsaw Jewish Community during the war, wrote: "Jewish hearts are like

seismographs. When it quakes in one part of the Jewish world it immediately registers with other Jews across the globe". Seidman was confident that, "Surely they will not remain silent. But will their protests be as loud as our pain and destruction? Can they possibly save us? Surely our brothers will not rest, will scale every obstacle, will storm the heavens, to rescue us".<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere, Seidman wrote: "...public opinion would be shocked, horrified and stampeded into action. Could anybody with a spark of humanity remain silent after hearing of these atrocities? ...were there not abroad enough Jewish organisations, activists, jurists, diplomats, and statesmen with the stature of Morgenthau, Baruch, Roseman and Hore-Belisha...these were intelligent and capable enough to act on their own initiative."<sup>5</sup> Alas, Seidman and the rest of the European Jews who had put their last remnants of trust in the efforts of the Jews in the Free World were sadly mistaken. But the extent of their inaction, for essentially selfish reasons, challenges our understanding.

In an article in the Jewish Chronicle, dated 19 February 1943, titled: 'The Nazi Massacres: Nation-wide Protests', no mention is made of a Jewish show of solidarity with Europe's Jews.<sup>6</sup> The article begins with what seems like a show of pride, although the British Jews are not implicated, when it states that: "Throughout the country, meetings of protest against the Nazi massacres of Jews in occupied Europe continue to be held, and the Government has been called upon in the strongest terms to take immediate action to aid the victims". It continues to enumerate the organisations that staged protests and passed resolutions "condemning the Nazi massacres, and urging the Government to take immediate steps to provide sanctuary for Hitler's Jewish victims". These

included the Leeds and Manchester Universities' Unions, Child's Hill Baptist Church, 'Christianity Calling', the Churches of the Eastern Valley of South Wales, the Society of Friends (Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Northumberland, Durham and North Riding of Yorkshire), the Bristol Council of Refugees, the Weston-super-Mare local Labour Party and the West Bromwich Trades Council and Labour Party, the Hull Chapter of Clergy, the Leeds and District Baptist Minister's Fraternal and the North West Area of the National Association of Master Monumental Masons. This article ends with a list of letters to both the national and international press deploring the Nazi atrocities written by Christian ecclesiastical leaders and other famous British personages.<sup>7</sup>

British Jewry had organised political mass protests in the past, the most prominent one in the recollections of war-time Anglo-Jewry, being the public protest that was staged against the Labour Government's 'White Paper' on Palestine, in July 1930. The BoD's President, Osmond d'Avigdor Goldshmid, Chief Rabbi Hertz, Nettie Adler and Brodetsky, addressed the meeting that was held at the Kingsway Theatre in London.<sup>8</sup> The public indignation against the 'White Paper' culminated in another major rally, addressed by Chaim Weizmann at the Pavilion Theatre, Whitechapel, in October 1930.<sup>9</sup> It is therefore difficult to understand why the Jewish community organised so few protests against the Nazi atrocities in Europe and that the only major rally was the one held in the Albert Hall. However, this question can only be raised and answered in the context of the responses of the Anglo-Jewish leadership,

including the orthodox, to the Holocaust. Average Anglo-Jewish citizens were not in a position to organise mass rallies or the like.

It is likely, that the same reasons that caused the secular leadership to produce, what some consider, inadequate responses to the Holocaust, were the reasons that impeded their organisation of rallies and meetings on behalf of Europe's Jews.<sup>10</sup> These included the prevalence of infighting amongst the community's leaders and their preoccupation with the issue of Zionism. Some leaders actively sought excuses to dissuade their colleagues from arranging mass demonstrations, including the claim that the reports emanating from Europe were still not verifiable. Brotman, of the BoD, was concerned that "adding despair to what they were already suffering mentally would affect the emotional well-being of the hundreds of thousands of British Jews with relatives in Poland".<sup>11</sup> At times, the Foreign Office exerted pressure on Jewish leaders to refrain from public displays of solidarity with Europe's Jews, claiming that activities on their behalf should be solely in the sphere of foreign affairs. An example of this was the reaction of Alex Easterman, the Political secretary of the BSWJC, to the pressures that he faced from the Foreign Office when the fate of Hungarian Jewry was sealed with the German occupation of Hungary on 19 March 1944. The BSWJC was urged not to hold demonstrations and to refrain from making public statements and the Jewish leaders acquiesced in this matter. As a result, the BoD rejected the Vaad Leumi's appeal to hold a mass march of Jews and non-Jews on the streets of London.<sup>12</sup>

It is indeed surprising, however, that Schonfeld and his colleagues did not pursue this avenue even if it would have been contrary to the responses of the other segments of Anglo-Jewry, considering his knack for ingenuity and his persuasive nature. Without a doubt, Schonfeld was well aware of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada's 'March to the Capitol' in Washington D.C. on 6 October 1943, to appeal on behalf of European Jewry.<sup>13</sup> Although he must have realised that the march of some 500 rabbis produced few practical results, he must have similarly been aware of the publicity that it generated and the fact that it shed the American rabbinate in a more prominent light vis-à-vis the organised responses to the happenings on the Continent.<sup>14</sup>

Although there is no evidence to this effect, it is reasonable to assume that Schonfeld considered a more overt display of solidarity with Europe's Jews, in the form of a mass meeting or rally, but ruled out such an action for calculated reasons. In fact, suggestions along these lines had been put to him at different times during the war. On 9 December 1942, Schonfeld received a letter from S. Newman, a confidant of his, who thought that "The Jewish people in England and U.S.A. would be able to accomplish and influence the British and American Governments more effectively, if each and every one would make a demonstration, personally, by congregating round Downing Street and remain there without food or sleep, until some attempt was (is) made by the powers in the White House and Downing Street to stop this massacre." Newman ends this letter by making the suggestion that: "You can propose it as being your own suggestion to Dr. Hertz."<sup>15</sup> For all intents and



purposes, Newman's idea seems like a sound one. A public 'hunger strike' with a significant number of participants, would have generated much publicity in Britain and worldwide. Such publicity would have most likely had some effect on government circles. It is a shame that Jews in the Free World did not afflict themselves in a show of solidarity with their brethren in Europe who were suffering unimaginable deprivations. It is possible that Schonfeld was not comfortable in suggesting such an action because he himself was not in a position to participate in a 'hunger strike' or the like. Schonfeld was a 'man of action' in a purely practical sense; he was not outwardly sentimental and usually approached problems with directed 'clear-headedness'. A 'hunger strike' was just not his way of dealing with things. In addition to this, the activities in which he was involved would have made such an action extremely difficult, although admittedly, his participation would have had a major effect on both the community and the government.

With regards to a public display of protest, it may be reasonable to assume that Schonfeld felt that Britain's proximity to mainland Europe, the state of war and Britain's resulting censorship regulations, and threats of domestic anti-Semitism, combined with the fact that the British public and the Anglo-Jewish community were generally more reserved than their American counterparts, did not warrant such an action.<sup>16</sup> It might also be reasonable to assume that Schonfeld realised that he would need the active participation of the secular establishment in such a venture. He may have been loath to spend time and effort on a mass demonstration that might not materialise because of a lack of co-operation precisely because of the aforementioned reasons. He must have

also been convinced that the multifarious activities that he was already involved in were the best that could be done under the circumstances. It is impossible to know if more public displays of protest would have achieved any practical results. However, considering the government's reluctance to change its policies regarding Europe's Jews and a general feeling amongst much of the populace, possibly generated by latent anti-Semitism, that enough was already being done, it is doubtful that they would have.

The efforts of the Anglo-Jewish community on behalf of Europe's Jews were relatively subtle because of numerous reasons, not the least of which was the threat of, what Alderman terms, 'street anti-Semitism'. This form of anti-Semitism was commonplace, especially in the run-up to the war and was mainly manifest in the East End of London and other areas of Jewish, and particularly Jewish immigrant, settlement. According to Alderman, a degree of middle and upper class prejudice against Jews also existed. This type of anti-Semitism could take the form of restrictive admission policies to public schools or golf clubs, and even a reluctance to admit Jews to medical schools, to name but a few.<sup>17</sup> However, as has been mentioned in the first chapter, the number of Jewish members of the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament and the prominence of many members of the 'Jewish aristocracy' in non-Jewish circles, indicates that anti-Semitism did not play a major role in the aspirations of most members of 'Jewish high society' in Britain.<sup>18</sup>

'Street anti-Semitism', on the other hand was a real problem that the general Anglo-Jewish populace had to face and it was exacerbated by the presence of

those refugees that had been admitted to Britain in the run-up to the war. This was especially the case when they concentrated in certain areas, such as the East End of London and became a noticeable group that agitated some elements of the non-Jewish populace. In London, this agitation reached a climax in Hampstead, which was a more affluent neighbourhood with a much smaller Jewish community than the East End, where over 2,000 inhabitants signed a petition that was directed against Jewish refugees. The petition, which was organised in October 1945, but was the result of a build-up of quite some time, asked that “aliens...be repatriated and that, meanwhile, they...be housed in army or prisoner-of-war camps”.<sup>19</sup> The petition, which received national publicity, even carried the signature of the mayor but was eventually repudiated by Hampstead Borough Council.<sup>20</sup>

According to Tony Kushner, anti-Jewish stereotypes abounded in popular novels and in the press. Some blamed the Jews for the outbreak of the war and they were also accused of shirking wartime service. The opinion was even expressed in some ‘respectable quarters’ that a justification might be offered for at least some of Germany’s anti-Semitic policies.<sup>21</sup> Alderman asserts that the official Jewish response to developments such as these was weak and defensive. He cites a handbook, in both English and German, issued jointly by the BoD and the German Jewish Aid Committee in January 1939, that warned refugees not to be conspicuous, not to talk in a ‘loud voice’, especially in German, and not to take part in any political activities.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, notices were posted in the orthodox Jewish Secondary School instructing refugee children not to speak German in public.<sup>23</sup> Jewish leaders, and even

those who worked tirelessly on behalf of the refugees, invariably saw these refugees as an embarrassment and as one of the major contributors to 'street anti-Semitism'. The Anglo-Jewish leadership, therefore sought to suppress their conspicuousness in the British public eye as much as possible.

Against this backdrop, it is not difficult to understand why the average middle and lower class Jews were not in a position to initiate efforts on behalf of the European Jews when such efforts were not under the auspices of the established leadership. The atmosphere of different forms of anti-Semitism and the real poverty that faced many Jews living in Britain during the war, forced the average Jew to maintain a low profile vis-à-vis the happenings on the Continent.

Evidence suggests that those in the Jewish community who were in a position to contribute towards the many relief and refugee organisations operating in Britain did so admirably.<sup>24</sup> In addition to these contributions, substantial funds were donated to activities and organisations in Palestine. In 1944, for example, British Jewry contributed £238,000 to the Jewish Agency, which amounted to 12.5% of the Agency's budget. Altogether, including WIZO and Youth Aliya, the British community donated £740,640 to Palestine.<sup>25</sup> Only 10% of this amount was earmarked for the rescue of the European Jews, however, many of those who made these contributions, were not consciously supporting the Zionist efforts in Palestine as opposed to the rescue of Europe's Jews.<sup>26</sup> Britain's Jews were continually being asked to donate to one organisation or another and solicitations on behalf of the Zionist organisations

formed a significant part of these requests. Furthermore, none of the appeals made, were solely for the rescue of Europe's Jews because such activities on a broad or significant scale were impossible. Usually, the funds required for the rescue of Jews were allocated from the coffers of the existing organisations, such as the CRREC, except when individuals, such as Schonfeld appealed on behalf of personal projects that he had undertaken to support.<sup>27</sup>

According to the accounts of the CRREC prepared for the year ending 31 December 1942, personal donations amounted to £15,919. This total included the proceeds from the Wedgwood Appeal, the Jewish War Fund for Religious Reconstruction Appeal, the Needy Clergy Appeal, the Soldier's Welfare Passover Appeal, the Soldier's Welfare Appeal, the CRREC's share of the United Jewish Relief Appeal and the Religious Reconstruction Appeal for the Rescue of Refugees. It also included the proceeds of a film that was presented in aid of the CRREC at the Stoll Theatre in London, and the sale of Prayer Books in aid of the National Council for Jewish Religious Education. £1280 of this total were donations that were earmarked towards individual cases. This sum, in addition to a government grant to the Central Council for Refugees offset the CRREC's budget for 1942.<sup>28</sup> The CRREC expenditure for 1943 of approximately £24,500 was offset by collections and donations from Great Britain and overseas, in addition to a government grant of £7,500.<sup>29</sup> The budget for 1944 showed that there was a shortfall of approximately £6,000, but the Council had raised £34,500 from grants and appeals throughout the year.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to the major charitable organisations in the United Kingdom, the Anglo-Jewish community contributed to lesser-known charities that were actually established and run by refugees and their children. These included the appeals of the *Council of Polish Jews in Great Britain on behalf of Polish refugees in Soviet Russia*, the appeals of the *Federation of Czechoslovakian Jews* and those of the *Polish Refugee Fund*.<sup>31</sup> Various major charities, such as the *United Jewish Relief Appeal*, and some of those that enjoyed the active interest of the Chief Rabbi, such as the *Jewish Fund for Soviet Russia*, were promoted through the medium of appeals in synagogues, especially during the High Holidays, when there was always a greater spirit of giving and the donations were likely to be higher.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Schonfeld periodically requested that the ministers of synagogues affiliated with the UOHC make appeals from their pulpits on behalf of charities that he took a special interest in, such as the *Mifal Lemaan Yalde Yisroel Appeal*, in September 1943 and the appeal towards “helping the tasks of rebuilding the shattered Houses of Israel on the European Continent”, in August 1945.<sup>33</sup>

Many individuals who wished to have their own share in a particular charity, took upon themselves to collect on its behalf. Members of the orthodox community naturally took a special interest in the CRREC and the other activities initiated by Schonfeld. As a result, many made their own collections on behalf of these charities.<sup>34</sup> The CRREC itself was indefatigable in its quest for funds and appealed to Jews in the far-flung Jewish communities of the world such as those in Australia, Iraq and India.<sup>35</sup> In addition to charitable

donations, the Jewish community, both orthodox and secular, had been involved in the accommodation of refugee children in the years preceding and during the war.<sup>36</sup> Schonfeld took an unrelenting personal interest in the welfare of those that he had personally brought over to England in the '*kindertransports*'.<sup>37</sup> After the evacuation of the civilian populations from London, orthodox educationalists were involved in the religious education of evacuated children and Schonfeld had a group of emissaries who travelled the countryside to ensure that orthodox children were being provided with their religious needs. Many were also involved in the organisation and running of 'Kosher Canteens' that acted as religious centres for Jews in evacuation centres.<sup>38</sup>

As has been mentioned, the purpose of the Food Collection Scheme, initiated in September 1943, was to collect and store imperishable kosher foodstuffs to be distributed to the surviving Jews in Europe after the cessation of hostilities.<sup>39</sup> These collections were taken up with enthusiasm in the scheme's later stages and the volunteers for this activity managed to collect 150,000 packages. Arrangements were made with the Ministry of Food, the various Allied Governments and the Red Cross Organisations for their dispatch. The CRREC enjoyed the enthusiastic co-operation of many orthodox Jewish youth groups in the collection of these foodstuffs, including Bachad, Ben Zakkai, Beth Jacob, B'nei Akiba, Ezra Noar Agudati, Torah Va'avodah and Zeirei Agudat Israel.<sup>40</sup> An accessory to the Food Collection Scheme was the collection of garments for distribution to the Jews of Europe after the war.<sup>41</sup> In addition to the campaigns for the collection of foodstuffs and garments, the

Federation of Polish Jews in Great Britain initiated a collection scheme on a much smaller scale, in 1944. This was essentially an appeal for funds to provide parcels for Jewish soldiers in the Polish army, Polish Jewish prisoners-of-war and refugees.<sup>42</sup>

In addition to the many funds donated by both the secular and orthodox in the Jewish community, many Anglo-Jews were frustrated by their lack of ability to assist the European Jews and shared these frustrations with one another. However, most Anglo-Jewish lay-people realised that they were not in a position to do anything major or imaginative on behalf of Europe's Jews without the active assistance of their leaders. Schonfeld, as the Presiding Rabbi of the UOHC, and in his position as the Executive Director of the CRREC, was frequently contacted by his fellow Jews with suggestions that might help alleviate their plight. In a letter from S. Sassoon, of Letchworth, to Schonfeld, dated 27 May 1942, in which he pleads on behalf of the Slovakian Jews, he says of Schonfeld that: "if anybody could help, it would be your good self".<sup>43</sup> Similarly, in a letter from the aforementioned Newman to Schonfeld, dated 27 November 1942, he expresses his confidence in Schonfeld, when he suggests that he apply pressure upon the American Jewish leadership to appeal to President Roosevelt on behalf of the European Jews, and suggest that he "take up the matter with the Nazis on the basis of hostages of the various Germans scattered over the world as against our people in Europe".<sup>44</sup> Invariably, Schonfeld's replies to personal suggestions on behalf of the European Jews were conciliatory and reassuring. In one of his replies to Newman, he adds: "For your confidential information, a deputation will be



seeing either the Prime Minister or the Foreign Secretary during the next few days.” He continues by reassuring Newman that: “Other activities are also being undertaken in various quarters. We fully agree that the matter cannot go by default and we are not resting until everything possible has been attempted”.<sup>45</sup>

## PRAYER

Prayer is an essential aspect of the human experience that should not be overlooked, especially in the context of crises or tragedy. Human beings, of all races, creeds and persuasions experience times in their lives when they consciously commit their situation to a force that is beyond them. For some, this is a committal to a divine or superior force that, although undefined, provides a sense of trust in an ultimate purpose and direction to life. For others, this is a committal to what they might consider the forces of nature. These forms of trust are in essence a form of communication with another ‘force’ and should be regarded as a form of prayer in the same ways as the standardised prayers of the world’s religions. According to the Jewish Chronicle on 28 August 1942, some of the deepest and finest thinkers “realise all that prayer has accomplished, what it means to troubled souls, and in particular the comfort, the refreshment of spirit, and the fortification of the will that come of the communion with the ultimate”.<sup>46</sup>

Throughout the Second World War, and indeed every other conflict and crisis, each citizen of every nation involved directly or indirectly, offered 'prayers' of one kind or the other as a way of directing their thoughts towards a specific outcome of the conflict. Just as families living in the Allied countries prayed for their sons serving on the front, so did German families pray for their soldiers. The tortured Gentile civilian populations in the Nazi occupied lands prayed for their personal redemption just as the Jews did.<sup>47</sup> And Jewish communities in the Free World prayed for the successes of the Allied armies and an end to the suffering of their brethren in Europe in the same varying ways that Gentiles prayed for an end to the madness that had engulfed the world.

Religious congregations of every faith organised gatherings to pray for the end of hostilities, throughout the war. Supplications usually formed part of the organised congregational services, although special services, such as the 'National Days of Prayer' that were designated by the British King, were organised and orchestrated by many denominations, especially for this purpose. Some proponents of organised prayer felt that not enough was being done and that the 'very heavens had to be stormed'. One of these was Mrs. C. M. Beach of Surrey who, in her letter to the editor of the Jewish Chronicle during the summer of 1942, called for "continuous prayer and intercession for help and guidance for the Allies". According to Beach, countless thousands "would be glad to render this important service, if it could be arranged for one group of people to replace another so that a continuous chain of prayer should take place in every church and synagogue in the land". She ends her letter questioning if the Free World was not neglecting the most important

thing in the crusade against the evils of Nazism being “the humble acknowledgement that we of our own selves can do nothing without the support, protection, and guidance of G-D in the greatest crises in the world’s history”.<sup>48</sup> Large-scale arrangements for continuous prayer sessions were not organised at any stage during the war by any sections of the Anglo-Jewish community. However, if the religious authorities would have taken the bold step of organising such displays of faith, their effect on unifying the community and projecting its desperation, could have been immeasurable.

Prayer plays a major part in every day of an observant Jew’s life. In fact, according to *halacha*, religious Jewish law, the day is structured according to prayers that must be said within a specific time period. In addition to the three daily prayers, which are said in the morning, afternoon and night, there is a short prayer that is recited immediately upon waking up in the morning and another that is said before retiring at night. An extra ‘core’ prayer (*Musaf*) is recited on the Sabbath and Festivals, and yet a fifth (*Neila*) is added on Yom Kippur, which is the holiest day in the Jewish calendar. The recital of the established prayers should be said with a quorum of ten men, and are optional for women because of their domestic responsibilities, although women are required to pray daily. In practice, strictly observant males attend synagogue services three times a day, including the Sabbath and Festivals and women usually attend on the Sabbath, and especially Festival mornings. Those who are less observant, but are nevertheless active members of a synagogue, usually attend on the Sabbath and Festivals and always make an effort to attend during the High Holidays and especially on Yom Kippur. The

same can be said of members of the progressive segments of the community. Those Jews who are irreligious and unaffiliated to a congregation attend synagogue sporadically, if ever, however, many Jews, of all persuasions, attend synagogue services at least once during the High Holidays in September and October each year.

During the war, the United Synagogue enjoyed record attendances, especially during the High Holidays. An article in the Jewish Chronicle, dated 15 October 1943, reported on the different services offered by the United Synagogue throughout that year's High Holidays, including 'over-flow services' and special services for children. The article concludes by claiming that: "The total number of congregations for whose religious needs on the Holy days this year the United Synagogue provided wholly or in part, reached the record figure of 130.<sup>49</sup> The High Holidays, which for Jews are days of repentance and introspection, obviously served this purpose for Britain's Jews during the war. Although the average laymen of the Jewish community did not initiate or participate in overt demonstrations against the atrocities in Europe, many saw synagogue attendance as a way of showing solidarity at a time of war and as a way of identifying with Europe's Jews in a religious sense. The Jewish tribulations on the Continent were naturally the main theme of most of the High Holiday sermons preached during the war years, and, as has been mentioned, appeals for many of the activities on behalf of the refugees and post-war relief took place during these times.

The recital of special prayers during a time of crisis has been an accepted tradition since Talmudic times.<sup>50</sup> As a continuation of this tradition, the Chief Rabbi composed various special prayers on behalf of the European Jews to be recited at key points during the year, in addition to the standardised prayers that formed the basis of the common Prayer Book. Included in these, were two 'Special Prayers for the Seder Night', composed by the Chief Rabbi in 1943, to be recited at the familial 'Seder' meals on the first and second nights of Passover. The text of this prayer is indicative of the way that the Chief Rabbi sought to utilise different holidays, including Passover, which is also called the 'Festival of Freedom' and commemorates the Israelites' deliverance from Egyptian bondage, to help British Jews direct their thoughts and prayers towards deliverance for their brethren in Europe. In his preface to the prayer, published in the Jewish Chronicle on 16 April 1943, Hertz writes: "This year, the Jews of Europe have been reduced to worse than Egyptian slavery; and we are filled with dismay at the little that has been attempted so far towards rescuing them from torture and butchery. It is our sacred duty to remember them on our Festival of Freedom, as well as solemnly call to mind the million and more of our flesh and blood who have been done to death with appalling cruelty at the behest of the fiendish tyrant".<sup>51</sup>

The full text of the first 1943 Passover prayer is as follows:

May it be the will of our Father Who is in heaven that tidings of salvation and consolation be soon heard announcing security and rest

to our brethren dispersed to the four corners of the Earth and let us say Amen.<sup>52</sup>

May our Father in heaven have mercy upon our brethren of the House of Israel wherever they are, given over to captivity and woe, and may He speedily lead them forth from suffering to deliverance, from darkness to light, from bondage to freedom, and let us say Amen.

This prayer is actually a common prayer that is recited in every synagogue on Mondays and Thursdays after the 'Reading of the Law'. It is also recited communally when prayers are offered for Jews in danger. However, the Chief Rabbi's translation is inexact and does not follow the wording of the Singer Prayer Book that was used in the United Synagogues at the time. The part of the prayer that Hertz translates as "announcing security and rest to our brethren dispersed to the four corners of the earth" should be translated as "and that He may gather our banished ones from the four corners of the earth". According to one observer, "The undesirable practice of giving ancient Jewish prayers in the Hebrew original alongside an English paraphrase containing radically different sentiments had (has) long flourished in America, and was...first introduced to this country by the editor of the *Liberal Jewish Prayer Book*".<sup>53</sup> It is doubtful that Hertz, who was a sincere traditionalist, changed the translation because of liberal leanings. It is also unlikely that he was concerned that the populace, either Jewish or Gentile would associate a reference to the 'incoming of the exiles' to nationalist Zionism because it is a prominent Jewish precept in the Scriptures, Talmud and daily prayers. It

would seem that Hertz was generally negligent when he translated popular prayers and used 'poetic license' when he could have adhered to a literal translation of the text.

The second prayer, which Hertz calls the "Memorial Prayer for the Victims of the Mass Massacres" is more poignant in that it refers directly to the atrocities on the Continent. A free translation of this prayer reads as follows:

O G-D Who art full of compassion, Who dwellest on high, grant perfect rest beneath the shelter of Thy Divine Presence, in the exalted places among the holy and pure who shine as the brightness of the firmament, to our brethren who have been murdered, butchered and strangled in their multitudes in the lands under the heel of arrogant iniquity. We beseech Thee, Lord of Compassion, shelter them for evermore under the shadow of Thy wings, and let their souls be bound up in the bond of eternal life. The Lord is their inheritance; and let us say Amen.<sup>54</sup>

It is interesting to note that the translation of the second prayer that appears under the text is actually less graphic than the original Hebrew, in that it omits the words "murdered, butchered and strangled". This phrase is 'officially' translated as: "shelter Thy Divine Presence...to the men, women and children who have been slain in their multitudes".<sup>55</sup> It may have been felt that these words were too 'barbaric' for the sensitivities of English supplicants even though they were fully aware of the happenings on the Continent. However, little can be said in support of efforts to downplay the tragedy unfolding in

Europe, and it would have perhaps been helpful if the full extent of the disaster was incorporated into these 'special prayers'.

Hertz was extremely unimaginative when it came to composing prayers on behalf of the European Jews or other aspects of the war, and, as has been mentioned, usually utilised and subtly revised existing prayers to suit a particular supplication. Schonfeld composed no prayers at all to be used by his congregations and depended solely on the revisions and directives of the Chief Rabbi. As a result of his pragmatic nature, he viewed the unfolding tragedy solely in terms of the facts being reported. He was therefore intent on assisting Europe's Jews in practical ways. Although he was obviously deeply religious, he did not view the Holocaust, at that point at least, in apocalyptic, religious terms and felt that his particular 'calling' during the war was to make every attempt to assist Europe's Jews in concrete ways.<sup>56</sup>

This apparent lack of imagination and scope when it came to composing prayers was in stark contrast to the many medieval and seventeenth century Ashkenazic composers of commemorative prayers who are some of the subjects of Roskies' book, *Against the Apocalypse*.<sup>57</sup> These composers artfully conceptualised tragedy into original prayers or lamentations in order to facilitate the reciter's identification with a particular event. The few prayers that were composed by Jews in the camps and ghettos of Europe obviously lacked nothing in originality and feeling. This was similarly the case with the lamentations composed by some rabbinic figures after the war.<sup>58</sup> However, as opposed to the more original and imaginative composers of prayers and



lamentations relating to the Holocaust, Hertz did not experience the horrors in war-torn Europe first hand and was therefore less emotionally attached to the happenings on the Continent. It would not be fair to say that he was insensitive to the European tragedy because all evidence suggests that he worked tirelessly to ensure that the European Jews were constantly on the hearts and minds of Anglo-Jewry. It is possible that both Hertz and Schonfeld underestimated the worth of original and linguistically artistic prayers in the context of supplications on behalf of the European Jews. Hertz may have felt that many members of the United Synagogue were so detached from daily prayer, that the 'quality' and originality of these prayers made little difference. Schonfeld, on the other hand, may have felt that his members, who were obviously aware of the happenings on the Continent and were deeply religious, automatically directed all of their prayers towards the salvation of their European brethren. As a result, the composition of these prayers was irrelevant because as the Psalmist says "The L-rd is close to the broken-hearted and those crushed in spirit He saves".<sup>59</sup> However, an element of the Anglo-Jewish community might have related to and utilised these acts of worship more effectively if they had felt that their rabbinic leaders had concentrated more on their composition with a view at imbuing them with genuine feeling and commiseration with the downtrodden Jews of Europe.

At different times during the war, the Chief Rabbi directed that the ministers in each synagogue prepare a sermon that specified a particularly crucial aspect of the war and that special prayers be offered on these occasions. An example of this was Hertz's request that the Sabbath of 12 December 1942

be dedicated to the 'Polish victims of tyranny'. This decision came ostensibly as the result of a request by the Polish authorities that "the Jewish communities, like the other religious denominations in this country" remember the Polish Gentile victims of the war.<sup>60</sup> Hertz also stated that it would be "fitting that the preacher, in his sermon, make reference to the tragedy of the land which has been a home of Jewish learning and a centre of Jewish life for nine hundred years".<sup>61</sup>

In October 1944, the Chief Rabbi also requested that all United Synagogue congregants, under the direction of their ministers, "respond to the request of the Prime Minister of Holland that they, like the other religious denominations, pray for the Dutch Nation to be saved from (the) destruction and famine now threatening its very existence". The Chief Rabbi, therefore designated the Sabbath of 28 October for supplication on behalf of the Dutch and requested that the central sentence in the "Memorial Prayer for those Fallen in Battle and for Civilian Victims of the War" be: (trans.) "and the souls of the inhabitants of Holland who have been murdered through the fury of the enemy, may the Master of Compassion keep them..."<sup>62</sup>

The extra prayer to be recited on behalf of the Dutch was exactly the same as the prayer for the Poles that was recited on 12 December 1942, but referred to the inhabitants of Holland. The reason that the various prayers on behalf of different nations were invariably identical was because any extra prayers that were attached to the standard Sabbath prayers carried special significance by virtue of their extraneous nature. As opposed to certain aspects of Christian

worship, which changed on a weekly basis, synagogue services were rigid in their conventionality and any change to them, however minimal, always carried special meaning.

It is interesting to note that the directives of the Chief Rabbi to designate specific Sabbaths as days of prayer for different victims of Nazi oppression were not his original ideas and it was, in fact, always made clear that these directives were a result of a request being made by representatives of the oppressed countries themselves. By doing so, Hertz attributed credence and respectability to the Jewish people and their efforts at prayer. This sense of worth was sorely missing in a community that had to watch helplessly as their brethren in Europe were being annihilated. On the other hand, many Jews doubtlessly saw little point in concentrating efforts on prayers and sermons on behalf of those who were not 'of their own' and were increasingly seeing the Nazi oppression on the Continent as being directed exclusively towards the Jews. Hertz qualified the need to show public displays of sympathy with other oppressed peoples by presenting it as a reply to a request of the oppressed nations themselves. The Churches in Britain also showed their solidarity with the oppressed peoples of Europe, including the Jews, throughout the war, and the Jewish community had to show that it empathised with the tragedy that was encompassing the whole of the European Continent.<sup>63</sup>

It is similarly interesting to note that the Chief Rabbi justified the need for a prayer on behalf of the Poles in December 1942, because it had "been a home of Jewish learning and a centre of Jewish life for nine hundred years".<sup>64</sup>

Hertz also legitimated the need to pray on behalf of the Dutch in 1944, being that it was the nation that was “the pioneer of religious freedom and toleration in Western Europe”.<sup>65</sup> These examples of Jewish ‘self-interest’ are a common feature in the Jewish psyche. It was not enough for the Jewish congregations to pray on behalf of the Poles or the Dutch along the lines of ‘Christian love’, there had to be a reason to justify a change to the standard prayers. It might be said that exclusivism was the subconscious result of centuries of separatism, either chosen by, or forced upon the Jews by their Gentile neighbours. It is doubtful that Hertz, who was an avowed universalist, realised that by explaining the reasons why these nations ‘merited’ Jewish prayers, he was inadvertently disassociating Jews from the overall cause of a ‘brotherhood of humanity’.

World War Two was a conflict between good and evil and the future of civilisation itself was at stake. This was a recurring theme in many, if not all of the written, oral or broadcasted messages given by the Chief Rabbi during the war. The same can be said about Schonfeld and his rabbinic colleagues in the UOHC. It is interesting to note the ways that the Chief Rabbi, especially in his ‘New Year Messages’ invariably intertwined the sufferings of the Jews and the Nazi threat to civilisation. In his message for the Jewish New Year 5703 (1943), Hertz begins with a graphic account of the persecutions on the Continent. He laments: “The tyrant has resolved to blot out the name of Israel from the memory of man...the Nazis have murdered – by machine gun and lethal chamber, by torture and hunger – one million Jewish men, women and children; and for some weeks, seven thousand victims were daily deported

from (the) Warsaw Ghetto alone for mass shooting or mass poisoning". He continues by asserting British Jewry's helplessness in view of the calamity and then states that it "represents a spiritual catastrophe that augurs ill for the peace of the next generation." The savageries, according to Hertz, indicated "a collapse of human decency, as of every vestige of true religion, among the dominating groups and their deluded followers in Europe today. And there can be no safety for our children, unless the re-education of these groups back to humanity is recognised to be one of the urgent tasks that will confront the United Nations".<sup>66</sup>

In the next paragraph, Hertz denounces the rejection of the "coffin-ships" from the shores of Palestine, which Hertz, a staunch Zionist, refers to as the "Jewish National Homeland". On a domestic level, he hints about the accusations that Jews were heavily involved in 'black-market' trading and efforts to destabilize the trade unions, and counters these claims by stating that "little was said of the hundred times greater number of non-Jews guilty of war-time offences".<sup>67</sup> This was actually quite a bold statement considering the efforts of the leadership of the BoD to bring Jewish businessmen in line with what they considered acceptable behaviour. According to Geoffrey Alderman, the main thrust of the BoD's 'defence literature' vis-à-vis anti-Semitism was aimed "not so much at protecting Jews from their detractors, as at shielding the detractors from the Jews".<sup>68</sup> With regards to charges of Jewish malpractice in business, Hertz refers to these claims as blatant racism and challenges the Gentile community's moral conscience by countering that: "...the powerful sanity of British men and women cannot but condemn such

exhibitions of injustice and racial hatred, which corrode a people's will and disintegrate its public life".<sup>69</sup>

The Jewish community also fully participated in the 'Days of Prayer' that were declared by the King on one specific day, each year of the war.<sup>70</sup> Although it became customary that the 'Days of Prayer' took place on Sunday, the date announced for the one to take place in 1942, 9 September and the third anniversary of the war, was an ordinary weekday. According to the Jewish Chronicle, dated 28 August 1942, this change accentuated "the spiritual significance of the occasion". In explanation, the newspaper declared that: "the prayers for Divine help and guidance are not intended to be part of a normal and customary religious service. Instead, the people are to be withdrawn abruptly from their daily tasks and preoccupations, and brought face to face with their maker."

The author of this article continues by describing the efficacy of prayer and sternly rebukes those who make little of it. He states emphatically that, "Either we are for the Kingdom of G-D or for blackest Hell". He ends by saying that,

We hold on in ever strengthening faith. For Jews, that may seem to call for exceptional, almost supernatural reserves of fortitude. European Jewry has been devastated. Jews have the cruel distinction of having suffered the third largest number of casualties. The Jewish people have bled and are bleeding at a million pores...But they know too that their survival from a tragic past is a miracle. They know, above all else,

that this fight in which the nations are locked is a fight for all the religious and ethical values they have proclaimed in G-D's commands to men, and which, in turn, have given them their primacy in the spiritual world. This is a truth they cannot and will not evade.<sup>71</sup>

In addition to the 'National Days of Prayer', the Chief Rabbi proclaimed special 'Days of Prayer' specifically for the Jewish community. The main feature of these days were special synagogue services dictated by the Chief Rabbinate and held in United Synagogues throughout the country. These culminated with 'National Days of Thanksgiving' that took place on, or immediately after VE-Day.<sup>72</sup> At times, Hertz's confidantes assisted him in the timing of these 'Days of Prayer' and advised him on ways that they could achieve their central, practical aim of unifying the community in its identification with the suffering Jews on the Continent. For example, Brodetsky took issue with the Chief Rabbi's reluctance to proclaim a Jewish 'Day of Prayer' on the Fast of Gedalia, a few weeks after the 'National Day of Prayer', designated for 7 September 1941. In Brodetsky's letter to the Chief Rabbi, dated 14 August 1941, he leaves this decision to Hertz, but does confirm his support for the idea of a Jewish 'Day of Prayer' and states that merely making the tribulations of the Jews in Europe a theme in Yom Kippur synagogue sermons would be insufficient.<sup>73</sup>

It is indeed interesting that lay-leaders such as Brodetsky were involved in making decisions regarding issues that were essentially of a religious nature. However, Hertz had to consider many issues that could affect the community

both internally and externally. An example of this was the decision taken by Hertz that the Jewish community would not participate in the 'National Day of Prayer' in 1942 that was designated for 29 March, which was Palm Sunday, but would substitute it for a Jewish one on Passover, a few days later. This decision was inevitable for *halachic* reasons, as Jews could not associate a special day of prayer with a Christian Festival.<sup>74</sup> However, the implications of such a decision were obvious, and as a result of it, the Chief Rabbi faced accusations of disassociating the Jewish community from the British people and of being "discourteous to the King's desire". He was also threatened by a member of the public, that the issue might be taken up with the press, which could result in a scandal that could affect the whole Jewish community.<sup>75</sup> Hertz obviously needed the support of the community's leadership when he had to make decisions that could have had an adverse affect on the community and his own position.<sup>76</sup>

It is important to note that most of the extra prayers on behalf of the European Jews, Allied countries and the war effort were composed and initiated by the Chief Rabbi. Similarly, the special 'Days of Prayer' were initiated either by the Sovereign or the Chief Rabbi. Schonfeld and the community that he represented followed the directives of the Chief Rabbinate with regards to these extra prayers or days of supplication for various reasons, not the least of which was the age-old dictum of '*al tifrosh min hatzibur*', 'do not separate yourself from the congregation'.<sup>77</sup> This meant that when the community was engaged in a specific activity, there was a *halachic* obligation for every individual to participate in it. In this case, any communal efforts in the region



of prayer, especially if the Chief Rabbi, who was the official representative of Anglo-Jewry, initiated them, were adopted by the rabbinate and members of the Adath and the UOHC. However, aside from the simple *halachic* obligation to participate in the Chief Rabbi's initiatives in these areas, the ultra-orthodox community felt a need to work together with the rest of the Jewish community, especially in the realm of prayer. After the establishment of the organised orthodox community, and during the war years, the divisions between members of the UOHC and members of the United Synagogue were negligible. As a result, even the more anti-secular members of the ultra-orthodox camp sought to maintain good relations with their secular counterparts and made an effort to co-operate with them as much as possible. This was especially the case with regard to prayer, which acted as a unifying force within the Jewish community.<sup>78</sup>

As opposed to many United Synagogue members, the ultra-orthodox attended synagogue services three times daily. As a result, prayer, and, in essence, direct communication with the Creator, was an integral part of their lives. The extra prayers and days of supplication must have had a profound impact on the more introspective and sensitive members of the United Synagogue. However, although as the war progressed, these special services became part of the regular order of the synagogue calendar, they must have had an even greater affect on the ultra-orthodox, who, as has been mentioned, regarded standardised prayer as an essential part of their daily living.

The Chief Rabbinate designated Sunday, 13 December 1942, as a communal Fast Day that was meant to be the first day of a 'Week of Mourning' ending on Friday, 18 December, which was the Tenth of Teveth, one of the six official yearly Fast Days.<sup>79</sup> Hertz ruled that during this week, no entertainments were to be held and individual members of the community were to "arrange all their activities in keeping with the solemnity of the period of intercession".<sup>80</sup> The idea of a Fast Day and a 'Week of Mourning' was a marked shift in approach to the various 'Days of Prayer' that had taken place until then, and was proclaimed as a result of the irrefutable information constantly coming out of Europe throughout 1942 and the verification of this information by the Government. In keeping with the tradition of participating in communal endeavours, the UOHC directed its members to observe this 'Day of Mourning' in the fullest sense. It was also publicly endorsed by Agudat Israel of Great Britain.<sup>81</sup> Those who were unable to fast for health reasons, were directed to seek the advice of their rabbis and no entertainment or amusements were to be organised or attended on that day. Weddings could take place, but with limited festivities and congregants were encouraged to donate extra charity on the day.

The synagogue services on the Fast Day were also designed to provide an atmosphere of mourning. At the beginning of the Fast Day, which according to Jewish law began on Saturday evening, the congregations were instructed to recite some of the 'lamentations' that were generally reserved for the ninth of Av, sitting on the floor or on low benches as a sign of mourning. On Sunday,

special '*selichot*' prayers were to be recited and the order of the daily prayers was to take the form of the other yearly *Fast Days*.

The Chief Rabbi also issued what he called "A Solemn Warning" to all Jewish shopkeepers and stallholders that they abstain from work and business on the day of the Fast.

It stated:

The Chief Rabbi, the Beth Din, and the Board of Deputies of British Jews most earnestly plead that all Jewish places of business, shops, stalls etc. be CLOSED on the Fast Day on Sunday.

Any disregard of this solemn obligation upon Jews would be an act of wanton and heartless contempt towards Jews and Jewish feeling, an inexcusable betrayal of our tortured brethren in Europe who are at this very hour being butchered in their thousands by the Nazis, and a treacherous deed of sabotage of the community's endeavour to express before G-D and man their grief at the unutterable sufferings of their fellow Jews.

According to Hertz, the reason for this 'Day of Fast and Prayer', aside from being a general call to repentance, was for "...every son and daughter of the House of Israel to join in weeping for the slain of our people, as well as for the millions of Jewish men, women and children who have been doomed to

extermination by the inhuman enemy". The catastrophic condition of the Jews in Europe called for "meditation, prayer and self denial".<sup>82</sup> However, it seems that the shopkeepers and businessmen needed an extra forceful 'plea' by the Chief Rabbinate to keep their shops closed in order to preserve an atmosphere of communal unity on the day of the Fast. The need to enforce this impression was as important for the public at large, many of whom had their misgivings about the Jewish community and Jews in general, as it was for the sake of the Jewish community itself. It is possible that the BoD was included with the Chief Rabbinate in this warning because much of the anti-Semitism at the time was fuelled by an exaggerated conception of poor business practices amongst the Jews, especially of those living in the East End of London. The BoD itself was convinced of many of these allegations and spent much time and effort convincing 'wayward' businessmen to improve their behaviour.<sup>83</sup> As a result of the fact that many in the community disapproved of the behaviour of these businessmen, it was necessary to ensure that they participate fully in this communal endeavour.<sup>84</sup>

The 'Day of Mourning and Prayer' was a success insofar as it unified the community in its efforts to assist the European Jews in a meaningful way. For many, it was the only concrete way through which they could show their solidarity aside from a periodic donation. Services were held in every Jewish community in Great Britain, and two major ones, which had overflow attendances, were held in the Bevis Marks and the Spitalfields Great Synagogues in London. The Liberal Synagogue in St. John's Wood, London, also held a service that was attended by more congregants than the

sanctuary could hold. Many of the sermons delivered were graphic in their descriptions of the atrocities committed and insisted that the United Nations work towards saving at least the Jewish children in Nazi occupied Europe. Such sermons included the ones delivered by Dayan Abramsky in the Spitalfields Great Synagogue and Rabbi Dr. I. Mattuck in the Liberal Synagogue. During Chief Rabbi Hertz's sermon in Bevis Marks, he implored the United Nations to take practical steps to save as many Jews as possible and also charged Britain and the Allies with the responsibility of securing safe havens for those who could escape.<sup>85</sup> The Chief Rabbi himself worked tirelessly to ensure that the Fast and the 'Week of Mourning' produce the optimal results and was actually indisposed because of these exertions for some days after.<sup>86</sup>

The observance of a day of abstinence from food and drink, especially when it took the form of an official 'Day of Mourning', was a far more radical religious response than the special 'Days of Prayer' and extra supplications that had been observed until then. According to Jewish law, there are six Fast Days throughout the yearly calendar. Three of these, Tzom Gedalia, which usually falls in September, the tenth of Teveth, which usually falls in January and the Fast of Esther in March, commemorate either tragic or historical events and are considered minor Fast Days. The ninth of Av, which takes place in July or August, commemorates the destruction of the First and Second Temples and is considered more major, and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement in September is obligatory. In addition to these established, yearly Fasts, rabbinical courts were sanctioned *halachically* to proclaim Fast Days

during times of crises and especially during a drought, although such Fasts were only designated in the most critical of times.<sup>87</sup> The established yearly Fast Days, with the exception of Yom Kippur were rabbinically ordained and each one invariably commemorated more than one historical tragedy or more than one aspect of a particular historical event.<sup>88</sup> According to Roskies, the rabbis of the Mishna 'clustered catastrophes' around one particular Fast Day to ensure against the proliferation of commemorative Fast Days. In other words, one day could preserve multiple meanings.<sup>89</sup>

The proclamation of a Fast in modern times was extremely rare and the fact that such a day was designated by the Chief Rabbi had a profound impact on the whole Jewish community, including those who were unable to participate because of health reasons. Those who participated in the organised services of the day and especially those who did fast, performed an act of solidarity with their European brethren in a more concrete way than had been performed regularly until then. In describing the purpose of the three-week mourning period from the seventeenth of Tammuz until the ninth of Av, Roskies cites Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik's explanation that this period is designed to "bring the individual into collective memory".<sup>90</sup> Similarly, the 'Day of Mourning and Prayer' was meant to serve as a tool for Anglo-Jewry to concentrate its emotional energies, in a collective sense, towards the destruction of European Jewry.

There were orthodox Jews, however, who did not feel that days of mourning and prayer were enough. These shows of introspection and penitence were

for many, nothing less than a waste of time. According to Dov Spitzer, in a letter to the Jewish Chronicle, “fasting alone” would not help the Jews, “Firstly Sabbath observance, ‘*taharas hamishpacha*’ (the laws of family purity), (the) precept of ‘*tefillin*’ (phylacteries), then fasting...”<sup>91</sup> Reverend Dr. Aron Cohen of Yeshivah Toras Emes, did not take issue with the Fast per se, but did comment on what he considered another hypocritical feature of the times. In his letter to the editor of the Jewish Chronicle on the week following the Fast, he quoted the verse in Ecclesiastes “To everything there is a season... a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance” when he deplored the fact that there was relatively little curtailment of merriment and festivity in the community at a time of such great sorrow. He claimed that he had witnessed Bar Mitzvah and wedding celebrations in London that were “veritable feasts of merriment”. Cohen continued with the practical suggestion that although “We have no power to stop people throwing private parties, we can, however, refuse to hire our communal halls and clubs for such purposes which are not ‘*l’shem shomayim*’ (for the sake of Heaven)”.<sup>92</sup>

Restrictions on the use of communal halls were not instituted at any time during the war and hirers were at the liberty to celebrate in whichever way they wished. This was just one aspect of a segment of the community’s behaviour during the war that disturbed others, both orthodox and secular.<sup>93</sup> The fact that many of those who sincerely observed the ‘Days of Prayer’ and ‘Day of Mourning and Prayer’ were essentially irreligious was an issue that was difficult for many of the more zealous in the religious community to understand. According to Harry Binstock of London, there were so many

Jews, “alas – Jews, in name only! – profaning the Sabbath Day, violating the dietary laws, blaspheming everything that is sacred and holy, in spite of the terrible tragedies taking place, almost before their very eyes.” He continues by asking, “What good is their crying to the L-rd to spare the oppressed Jews of Nazi Europe today if they themselves disregard His commandments?”<sup>94</sup>

Orthodox Jews were not bothered by the participation of secular Jews in organised prayer because they felt that they were being hypocritical; religious Jews had to be practical and accepted the secular Jews ‘as they were’. As has been mentioned, this was especially the case during the war when there was a pervasive atmosphere of communal co-operation whenever possible. Some religious Jews, however, questioned the efficacy of the prayers of Jews who, according to orthodox beliefs, transgressed the will of the Creator. Such feelings were unfounded, because according to the Scriptures, “The L-rd is close to the broken-hearted; and those crushed in spirit He saves”, regardless of their adherence to His commandments, and according to the Midrash, “The prayers of a congregation never go completely unanswered”.<sup>95</sup> According to the Scriptures, all prayer, including those offered by Gentiles have great value, as it says in Isaiah, “...for My House will be called a house of prayer, for all nations”.<sup>96</sup> However, orthodox Jews were wont to associate the disaster facing the Jewish People with sin, and many found it difficult to appreciate the usefulness of the prayers of those, who according to them, were inadvertently prolonging the tragedy.



The 19 February 1943 issue of the Jewish Chronicle, raised yet another question surrounding the efforts on behalf of the churches and synagogues to organise communal prayer for the success of the Allied armies and the defeat of Nazism. The 'Sermon of the Week' pointed to the fact that the vast majority of the British nation did not pray at all. The author's perception of the British public with regard to communion with G-D was: "Give them something special to pray for, and they may pray. But prayer arising from faith in G-D and a desire to approach G-D, and with no other purpose, is very rare indeed".<sup>97</sup> Although the author's "much-needed reminder" carried some truth, and he doubtlessly sought to encourage his readers to pray with less self interest and more devotion, he was minimising the worth and effect of all prayer, regardless of its intentions. If people prayed during the war, they were acknowledging the existence of the Creator. They were also confirming their belief and trust that such prayers could make a difference. It is, and always has been the nature of man to attach practical meaning to his beliefs, whether they are firm or dormant, especially at a time of crises. It is precisely prayers that are uttered during these times of despair that are the most effective because they are the most heartfelt.

Dayan Yechezkel Abramsky, of the London Beth Din, who was a Talmudic genius and himself a victim of Stalinist oppression, similarly felt that the situation on the Continent vis-à-vis the Jews was inextricably linked with the lack of religious observance amongst many of the world's Jews.<sup>98</sup> However his ideas about saving Jews from the Nazis were novel in that he concentrated on the need to strengthen the religious observance of the

leaders of Jewry, as opposed to world Jewry in general. In 1943, Abramsky suggested that a 'Rescue Committee' be immediately formed of "outstanding Jews who would act as true and staunch agents for the Jewish people". This committee would "have the confidence of being able to work with genuine self-denial, and with the thought and belief that Israel, the Torah, and the Holy Land are not merely objects for party programmes".

Abramsky is not clear as to what the aims of such a committee would be, but he was convinced that such outstanding personalities could be found in the "Land of Israel, England or (and) America", that the whole of the rescue work should be entrusted into the hands of this committee and that there were no technical difficulties for the appointment of such a committee. Undoubtedly, the key to Abramsky's suggestion was that, "having the support of every Jew, wherever he be, would, with Divine help, alleviate our frightful tragedy".

Abramsky's suggestion, although brave and forthright was uncharacteristically naïve. He begins this article with the admission that, "Go where you may, you will hear the oft-made criticism that our greatest misfortune in our present 'time of trouble' is our lack of unity; that our sufferings would not have reached so appalling a degree if those who represented Jewry were united, working with devotion and self-sacrifice to alleviate our tragic plight". He blames this lack of unity on the fact that the Jews did not possess an "apparatus for governing". He then points to the fact that even the League of Nations was unable to avert a world war because it was not one unifying force. In Abramsky's words, "whoever attempts to please everybody, pleases nobody".

<sup>99</sup> If, as Abramsky admitted, the Jews lacked unity because they were not in a position to govern themselves, it would have been outright impossible to appoint a committee that would be accepted by either the Jews or Gentiles as the representatives of 'world Jewry'. Moreover, if the League of Nations, that was essentially a governing body lacked the unity necessary to avert the war, how were the Jews to develop the necessary unity to afford assistance to their brethren in Europe?

It is probable that Abramsky's suggestion, although he does not admit it, was more philosophical than practical, and that his view was that the only way of securing Divine assistance in averting the terrible decree facing the Jewish nation would be to appoint a united leadership of Torah observers. To a certain extent, Abramsky was realistic because he did not suggest that all of the Jews strengthen their religious observance overnight. In a religious sense, it would have been tremendously beneficial if the representatives of Jewry were Torah observers. However, to get all of the Jews worldwide, to agree to the appointment of such a body would have been nothing short of a miracle worthy of the 'Divine help' that Abramsky was referring to.

Although the beleaguered European Jews pinned many of their hopes on the Jews in the Free World, they were under the illusion that these Jews did not face obstacles of their own. In Britain, these included forms of anti-Semitism and a government that was consistently obstinate in its approach to assisting the Jews of Europe. The fact that there were few overt Jewish displays of solidarity with them, although there were non-Jewish ones, points to the fact

that the Anglo-Jewish perception of itself was one of the main reasons that their responses were inadequate.

Anglo-Jews were generous in their charitable donations throughout the war considering its deprivations, and many lay-people took part in charitable endeavours such as food and clothing collections. These were 'part and parcel' of the Jewish community's attempts to assist the European Jews. Only the leadership of the community were in a position, albeit a limited one, to make approaches to government officials and carry out relatively high-level negotiations on their behalf, but many did not face the challenge and let opportunities slip out of their hands.<sup>100</sup>

All segments of the Anglo-Jewish community hearkened to the Chief Rabbi's call and participated in services and other acts of worship on behalf of the European Jews at different stages of the war. These shows of solidarity through faith served to unite the community to a certain extent and to focus their thoughts on their European brethren. However, although Hertz was a champion of Anglo-Jewry and sought to achieve these aims through prayer, he put little thought into the new prayers that he introduced. Schonfeld, who was in a position to introduce different prayers and services to be followed in the synagogues of the UOHC, followed the Chief Rabbi's directives implicitly. This apparent lack of depth suggests that Hertz, and possibly Schonfeld, underestimated the power that prayer could have exerted on their congregants and that they developed this response simply because it was the

natural thing to do and not because of their own deeply held religious convictions.

Another effect of the renewed efforts at prayer during the war was the accentuation of some of the differences between the religious and secular sections of the community. For the most part, these differences did not become the subject of an open debate. Generally, both the secular and orthodox Jewish communities in Britain gained from these displays of faith *and solidarity according to the aims towards which they were intended.*

## NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

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<sup>1</sup> Although during the war there was a persistent lack of funds, this was due to the never-ending need for funds and not because Anglo-Jews were not forthcoming in their contributions; See Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* (Leicester University Press, London & New York 1999), pp. 74-75; Amy Zahl Gottlieb, *Men of Vision: Anglo-Jewry's Aid to the Victims of the Nazi Regime 1933-1945* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1998), pp. 13-19, 30-31, 55-59, 119-124, 148-152, 161-163; Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), pp.70-73

<sup>2</sup> The CRREC was essentially a rabbinic organisation and did not incorporate representation from the orthodox lay-community as such. The same observation has been made of the Vaad Ha-Hatzala Rescue Committee in the United States; See Eli Lederhendler, 'Of Integrity, Rescue, and Splinter Groups', *Yad Vashem Studies XXVIII* (Jerusalem 2000), p. 388

<sup>3</sup> Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1998), p. 302; See *JC*, 6 November 1942; LMA ACC/3121 C03/03/002 Circular letter from 'The Federation of Czechoslovakian Jews', May 1942; The Federation of Czechoslovakian Jews organised a public demonstration to protest the pending mass expulsion of Jews from Slovakia in June 1942. It was addressed by the Bishop of London, the Czechoslovak Interior and Rehabilitation Ministers, Christian MP's and Harry Goodman of Agudat Israel. Anthony Eden and Cardinal Hinsley, the Catholic Primate, sent statements to be read at the rally, however the BoD did not support it. After the rally, the Federation published a pamphlet titled: *The Persecution of the Jews in Nazi Slovakia* with a dedication by President Benes and a foreword by Goodman.

<sup>4</sup> Hillel Seidman, *The Warsaw Ghetto Diaries* (trans. Yosef Israel) (Targum/Feldheim, Jerusalem 1997), pp.242-243 (entry on 15 January 1943)

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid* p. 287

<sup>6</sup> *JC*, 19 February 1943

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>8</sup> *JC*, 25 July 1930

<sup>9</sup> *JC*, 24 October 1930; *JC*, 31 October 1930

<sup>10</sup> Samuel Zygelbojm, the Bund representative on the Polish National Council in London, was accused, although not personally, by his colleague Mr. Feiner in Warsaw, of not doing enough to save Poland's Jews. According to Feiner, Polish Jewry's representatives in the Free World were obliged to "lay down their lives in order to stir the conscience of Western leaders". Jan Karski, the Polish courier who relayed this message to Zygelbojm, recounted his reaction as follows:

"At first he sat and argued: "It's impossible! If I do that (stage a hunger strike in front of the British Prime Minister's office, in line with Feiner's demands), they would dispatch two policemen who would arrest me for disturbing the public peace. Then they would have certainly taken me to some institution and made me undergo a psychiatric examination. I mean this is impossible." (As quoted by Daniel Blatman in 'On a Mission Against All Odds: Samuel Zygelbojm in London (April 1942-May 1943)', *Yad Vashem Studies XX* (Jerusalem 1990), p. 261); Zygelbojm did seriously consider staging a hunger strike in May 1943 but was dissuaded (on the eve of his suicide) by his close friend Isaac Deutscher. According to Deutscher, such a protest would have been ineffective because "The police would remove him from the site and censorship would prevent such an act from gaining publicity". (*Ibid* p. 269)

<sup>11</sup> LMA ACC/3121 Letter from Abraham Brotman to Selig Brodetsky, 8 October 1942 as cited by Meier Sompolinsky in *The British Government and the Holocaust: The Failure of Anglo-Jewish Leadership?* (Sussex Academic Press, Brighton & Portland 1999), p. 73

<sup>12</sup> Meier Sompolinsky, 'Anglo-Jewish Leadership and the British Government: Attempts at Rescue 1944-1945', *Yad Vashem Studies XIII* (Jerusalem 1979), p. 213

<sup>13</sup> *JC*, 15 October 1943; See Efraim Zuroff, *The Response of Orthodox Jewry in the United States to the Holocaust: The Activities of the Vaad Ha-Hatzala Rescue Committee 1939-1945* (Yeshiva University Press, New York 2000), pp. 257-264

<sup>14</sup> Efraim Zuroff, *The Response of Orthodox Jewry in the United States to the Holocaust: The Activities of the Vaad Ha-Hatzala Rescue Committee 1939-1945* (Yeshiva University Press, New York 2000), pp.257-264; See also Eli Lederhendler, 'Of Integrity, Rescue, and Splinter Groups', *Yad Vashem Studies XXVIII* (Jerusalem 2000), p. 384; The 'Rabbis March on Washington' was one of the only major demonstrations organised by orthodox American Jewry during the war and was certainly the most effective. This lack of pro-activity by American Jewry has been bemoaned by some orthodox leaders, including Rabbi Joseph Dov Soloveitchik who is quoted as saying:

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"Why didn't the Jews of America act like Mordechai the Jew in his time, who, when he heard of the decree (to annihilate the Jews), went out "into the city and raised a great and bitter alarm" (*Esther* 4:1)? Why didn't they hold mass demonstrations, tearing their garments as Mordechai did, to shake the complacency of the Jewish leadership and awaken the conscience of Christian America? If our reaction had been like Mordechai's, would President Roosevelt have acted with such hard-heartedness? Perhaps we are commanded to add another line to the '*Al Chef*' confession of Yom Kippur: "For the sin that we sinned when we ignored the outcry of our brothers, *Bnei Yisroel*, in Europe, when they were being slaughtered by a cruel hand." (As quoted by Yoel Schwartz and Yitzchak Goldstein in *Shoah: A Jewish Perspective on Tragedy in the Context of the Holocaust* (Mesorah Publications, New York 1990), p. 247)

<sup>15</sup> HL MS183 469/2 Letter from S. Newman to Schonfeld, 9 December 1942

<sup>16</sup> See Daniel Blatman, 'On a Mission Against all Odds: Samuel Zygelbojm in London (April 1942-May1943)', *Yad Vashem Studies XX* (Jerusalem 1990), p. 269

<sup>17</sup> Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1998), pp.283-284

<sup>18</sup> Chapter 1, pp. 61-67; An obvious exception to this was the enforced resignation of the Minister of War, Sir Leslie Hore-Belisha (1893-1957) in January 1940. (See A. R. Trythell, 'The Downfall of Leslie Hore-Belisha', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 16 (1981), pp. 391-411; See Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1998), p.297

<sup>19</sup> *Hampstead and Highgate Express*, 12 October 1945, 2 November 1945 as cited in Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1998), p. 296

<sup>20</sup> Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1998), p. 296

<sup>21</sup> Tony Kushner, *The Persistence of Prejudice: Anti-Semitism in British Society During the Second World War* (Manchester University Press, Manchester 1989), pp. 65-77

<sup>22</sup> Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1998), pp. 297-300

<sup>23</sup> David Kranzler and Gertrude Hirschler eds., *Solomon Schonfeld: His Page in History* (Judaica Press, New York 1982), pp. 111-112; See Paula Hill, *Anglo-Jewry and the Refugee Children 1938-1945* (PhD Thesis, UCL)

<sup>24</sup> See Amy Zahl Gottlieb, *Men of Vision: Anglo-Jewry's Aid to the Victims of the Nazi Regime 1933-1945* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London 1998), pp.30-32, 55, 146, 161, 177 regarding the funds contributed to the Central British Fund for German Jewry, the Council for German Jewry, the Jewish Refugee's Committee and the Jewish Committee for Relief Abroad; See also Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945* (Leicester University Press, London & New York 1999), pp.73-74; Wasserstein cites Norman Bentwich in *They Found Refuge* (p. 41) and A.J. Sherman in *Island Refuge* (p. 271) that claim that the British community donated more than £3,000,000 towards the upkeep of the refugees that had settled in Britain before 1939; See also Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), pp.71-73, regarding the funds contributed to the Central Council for Jewish Refugees and the Central British Fund for Jewish Relief and Rehabilitation.

<sup>25</sup> *JC*, 4 February 1944

<sup>26</sup> See Richard Bolchover, *British Jewry and the Holocaust* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), pp. 70-73; According to Bolchover: "Philanthropy was a well-established avenue to communal prestige and was well integrated into Anglo-Jewish culture. However, the act of giving had become, to some extent, ritualistic and the reasons behind the donation did not seem to penetrate deeply into the minds of the donors". *Ibid* p.72

<sup>27</sup> For example, Schonfeld made numerous personal appeals on behalf of the Nitra Jews throughout the war. (HL MS183 469/2 Letters from Schonfeld to S. Newman, 11 October 1942; Rev. R. Rabinowitz to Schonfeld, 16 October 1942; Schonfeld to J. Freudman, 19 October, 1942; Schonfeld to Sir Edward Baron, 19 October 1942; Schonfeld to W. Greville, 19 November 1942); Also HL MS183 234 List of letters sent in connection with the rescue of rabbis, 30 June 1943

<sup>28</sup> HL MS183 576/1 CRREC *Accounts for Year Ending 31 December 1942*

<sup>29</sup> HL MS183 234 'Report to the members of the Council on items dealt with at a recent meeting of the Executive Committee of the Commission on Post-war Rehabilitation' (undated) 1943

<sup>30</sup> HL MS183 576/1 CRREC *Minutes*, 20 June 1944

<sup>31</sup> HL MS183 982/1 Appeal letter from Messrs. Margulies and Merkin of the Council of Polish Jews in Great Britain (undated); HL MS183 555 Federation of Czechoslovakian Jews: Receipts and Payments from 1 January 1942 to 30 June 1942; HL MS183 730 Polish Jewish Refugee Fund: *Summary of Activities in Great Britain*, 1943

<sup>32</sup> HL MS183 234 F2 United Jewish Relief Appeal letter to Mr. Quate (undated); HL MS183 333/4 Letter from Hertz to the Ministers of Synagogues. 14 February 1944

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<sup>33</sup> HL MS183 43/1 F2 Letter from K. Leitner to Schonfeld, 21 September 1943; HL MS183 230/2 Adath Yisroel Synagogues: 'Appeal for the Central British Fund for Jewish Relief and Rehabilitation', 10 August 1945

<sup>34</sup> HL MS183 469/2 List of private collections on behalf of the CRREC totalling £981.17 (undated)

<sup>35</sup> HL MS183 441/2 CRREC Appeal to Shaoul Menashi Meir Shashoua, Baghdad, Iraq, 29 September 1942; MS183 427 F3 Letter from Jewish Relief Association, Bombay, India, to Schonfeld, 19 May 1943

<sup>36</sup> See Paula Hill, *Anglo-Jewry and the Refugee Children 1938-1945* (PhD Thesis, UoL)

<sup>37</sup> See B. Leverton and S. Lowensohn, *I Came Alone: The Story of the Kindertransport* (Lewes Book Guild, Sussex 1990); A. J. Sherman, *Island of Refuge: Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich 1933-1939* (Frank Cass Publishers, London 1994); David Kranzler and Gertrude Hirschler eds., *Solomon Schonfeld: His Page in History* (Judaica Press, New York 1982)

<sup>38</sup> See Chapter 3, pp.110-114

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> HL MS183 736/4 CRREC *Report of Activities for Period Ending 1 August 1945*, Article II, pp. 2-3; HL MS183 234 F2 CRREC 'Feeding European Jewry' Appeal to the Ministers, Presidents and Wardens of Synagogues in the United Kingdom, 2 July 1943; HL MS183 87/1 Letter from Schonfeld to Philip Goldberg, 15 July 1943; HL MS183 234 F1 Appeal letter from Henry Pels (CRREC Secretary) (undated); HL MS183 444/2 *Report* on CRREC Meeting, 9 January 1944; HL MS183 444/2 Letter from Henry Pels to Leaders of 'Food Packet Collection Centres', 17 July 1944; HL MS183 444/2 Letter from Henry Pels to 'Food Packet Collectors', 28 December 1944

<sup>41</sup> HL MS183 736/4 CRREC *Report of Activities for Period Ending 1 August 1945*, Article II, pp. 2-3; HL MS183 444/2 Letter from Henry Pels to participants in the 'Food Collection Scheme', 26 October 1944

<sup>42</sup> HL MS183 444/2 'Parcel Appeal' by the Federation of Polish Jews in Great Britain, 21 August 1944

<sup>43</sup> HL MS183 555 Letter from S. Sassoon to Schonfeld, 27 May 1942

<sup>44</sup> HL MS183 469/2 Letter from S. Newman to Schonfeld, 27 November 1942

<sup>45</sup> HL MS183 469/2 Letter from Schonfeld to S. Newman, 7 December 1942

<sup>46</sup> *JC*, 28 August 1942 ; See also *JC*, 19 February 1943, 'Sermon for the Week: The Present-day Need of Prayer'

<sup>47</sup> According to Seidman's perception of prayer in the Warsaw Ghetto: "Everyone wrestles with his Maker, so to speak, trying to fathom the reasons why we have been brought to such a pass. We puzzle over the eternal riddle: How can the wicked thrive while the righteous suffer? Now this riddle has taken on worldwide dimensions. What pen can portray the cries of men unto Heaven when they reach the depths of despair, when they experience the seven furnaces of Hell, the unanswered cry of thousands drowning in their lifeblood, the groans of the dying" (Hillel Seidman, *The Warsaw Ghetto Diaries* (trans. Yosef Israel) (Targum/Feldman, Jerusalem 1997), p. 247 (entry for 17 January 1943))

<sup>48</sup> *JC*, July 1942

<sup>49</sup> *JC*, 15 October 1943

<sup>50</sup> *Talmud Taanit* is replete with the extra prayers recited at such times.

<sup>51</sup> *JC*, 16 April 1943

<sup>52</sup> The term 'Our Father who is in heaven' has been used in Jewish prayer since Talmudic times. It was gradually adapted into Christian liturgy and is the opening phrase of 'The Lord's Prayer'.

<sup>53</sup> *JC*, Letter from a 'Provincial Jew' to the editor, 23 April 1943

<sup>54</sup> *JC*, 16 April 1943; Hertz also instructed that the 'Memorial Prayer for Victims of Mass Massacres' be recited on the morning and afternoon of the ninth of Av.

<sup>55</sup> HL MS183 333/4 'Supplication For Our Surviving Brethren In And From Nazi Lands' (undated c 1943)

<sup>56</sup> *Exodus* 14:15; According to the medieval commentator *Rashi's* explanation of this verse, before the splitting of the Red Sea, when the Israelites were surrounded by the sea and the Egyptians, Moses cried out to G-D for the Nation's deliverance. He was rebuked by G-D, who told him: "Now, when Israel is in peril, is not the time to say prolonged prayers". This is generally understood to mean that according to Jewish tradition, certain situations call for action and not prayer. Schonfeld, who was the epitome of the 'man of action' may have internalised this idea and therefore utilised his time to the fullest by assisting Jews in a physical rather than spiritual sense.

<sup>57</sup> David G. Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts), pp. 43-52



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<sup>58</sup> Rabbi S. Schwab of Washington Heights, New York composed a series of '*kinot*', or lamentations after the war as did Rabbi Solomon Halberstam of Bobov, although the latter's lacked some originality in that it was adapted from an 'unused' lamentation from a previous generation. Both were to be, and still are recited in many synagogues on the ninth of Av, which for the orthodox is the traditional day of Jewish mourning. In addition to these, lamentations were composed by Rabbi Michael Ber Weissmandl, Rabbi Shmuel Halevi Wosner and Rabbi Yochanan Sofer, although these are less well known than those composed by Schwab and Halberstam. (See Dan Michman, 'The Impact of the Holocaust on Religious Jewry', Yisrael Gutman ed., Reprint from *Major Changes Within the Jewish People In the Wake of the Holocaust, Proceedings of the Ninth Yad Vashem International Conference* (Jerusalem 1996), pp. 673-679)

<sup>59</sup> *Psalms* 34:19

<sup>60</sup> HL MS183 469/2 Letter from Hertz to the Ministers of Synagogues, 2 December 1942

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>62</sup> HL MS183 333/14 Letter from Hertz (Office of the Chief Rabbi) to the Ministers of Synagogues, 18 October 1944; *JC*, 19 February 1943; Similarly, the Chief Rabbi called for special prayers to be recited for the success of the Russian Armies on 21 February 1943.

<sup>63</sup> *JC*, 19 February 1943; In the article titled: 'Pray for Russia's Success', that records the Chief Rabbi's directive to the Ministers of Synagogues to offer prayers on behalf of the soldiers fighting on the Russian front, on Sunday 21 February 1943, Hertz is quoted as saying: "The religious heads in this country have suggested to their Churches that prayers be offered next Sunday for the continued success of our Russian Allies..." (The Chief Rabbinate was not concerned with the issue of offering special prayers on an 'ordinary' Sunday, although services could not be held on Palm Sunday, 29 March 1942, which was considered a bona fide Christian Festival. However, Sunday 21 February 1943 was to be utilised only for the recital of the standard 'War Prayer', and the services and sermons on the preceding Sabbath were to be more fully devoted to the battles on the Russian front.); It is possible that Hertz felt an extra need to legitimise organised prayers on behalf of the Russians because the Russian authorities had ruthlessly persecuted Jews and Judaism for many years.

<sup>64</sup> HL MS183 469/2 Letter from Hertz to the Ministers of Synagogues, 2 December 1942

<sup>65</sup> HL MS183 333/14 Letter from Hertz (Office of the Chief Rabbi) to the Ministers of Synagogues, 18 October 1944

<sup>66</sup> HL MS183 469/2 'The Chief Rabbi's Message for the Jewish New Year 5703', 11 September 1942

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>68</sup> See Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1998), pp. 285-290

<sup>69</sup> HL MS183 469/2 'The Chief Rabbi's Message for the Jewish New Year 5703', 11 September 1942

<sup>70</sup> Services were usually held in the synagogues of the Orthodox, Reform and Liberal communities. At times inter-faith (Christian-Jewish) services, such as the one held in Bloomsbury House, London, in September 1943 were also conducted. (*JC*, 10 September 1943)

<sup>71</sup> *JC*, 28 August 1942

<sup>72</sup> HL MS183 333/4 Letter from Hertz (Office of the Chief Rabbinate) to the Ministers and Wardens of the United Synagogue Congregations regarding the 'National Day of Thanksgiving', 11 April 1945

<sup>73</sup> HL MS183 368 F1 Letter from Selig Brodetsky to Hertz, 14 August 1941

<sup>74</sup> HL MS183 175 137/1 Letter from Hertz's secretary to Mrs. Simmons, 25 March 1942

<sup>75</sup> HL MS183 175 137/1 Letter from Mrs. Simmons to Hertz, 21 March 1942

<sup>76</sup> HL MS183 175 137/1 Letter from Mrs. Simmons to Hertz, 28 March 1942; The Liberal and Progressive Synagogues did observe the 1942 'National Day of Prayer' on Palm Sunday and were therefore considered by some to be more 'patriotic'.

<sup>77</sup> *Mishna Avot* 2:4; *Talmud Taanit* 11a

<sup>78</sup> *JC*, 19 March 1943; At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the UOHC during the week ending 19 March 1943, Schonfeld spoke "on the Union's harmonious relations with the Chief Rabbi. The Union, as an autonomous synagogal body... was participating fully in all communal religious activities under the leadership of the Chief Rabbi".

<sup>79</sup> HL MS183 460/2 Letter from Schonfeld to the Ministers of the UOHC, 8 December 1942; *JC*, 11 December 1942

<sup>80</sup> *JC*, 11 December 1942

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<sup>81</sup> HL MS183 460/2 Letter from Schonfeld to the Ministers of the UOHC, 8 December 1942; *JC*, 11 December 1942, Letter from R. W. Oppenheimer, secretary of Agudat Israel of Great Britain, to the editor

<sup>82</sup> *JC*, 11 December 1942

<sup>83</sup> See Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994), pp.287-295

<sup>84</sup> HL MS183 113/2 Letter from Schonfeld to Sir Henry Macnaughten, 3 May 1943; In his letter, Schonfeld states: "I know that a number of Jews conduct themselves in an unbecoming manner. The Jewish leaders are fully conscious of the shortcomings of some of their people. Apart from the use of the pulpit, the press and public lectures by Jewish communal leaders to urge all recalcitrants to raise their standard of ethical conduct, special publications are issued in order to foster this cause in our midst".

<sup>85</sup> *JC*, 18 December 1942

<sup>86</sup> HL MS183 175 137/1 Letter from Chief Rabbi's secretary to Woolf Saunders, 31 December 1942

<sup>87</sup> *Talmud Taanit* is essentially devoted to the laws regarding the Fast Days proclaimed during a period of drought.

<sup>88</sup> The fast of Esther, for example, is a re-enactment of the three-day Fast declared by Queen Esther before she requested that King Ahasuerus annul Haman's decree to annihilate the Jews in circa. 540 BCE. However, in a broader sense, it recalls the general 'mourning and sackcloth' and sincere penitence that gripped the Jews from the date that the decree was announced. According to tradition, it was this sincere repentance that ensured the annulment of the decree.

<sup>89</sup> David G. Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts & London 1984), p.37

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>91</sup> *JC*, 18 December 1942, Letter from Dov Spitzer to the editor

<sup>92</sup> *JC*, 18 December 1942, Letter from Rev. Dr. Aron Cohen to the editor; See also *JC*, 3 December 1943, Letter from Rabbi M. Cohen to the editor; See also *JC*, 17 March 1944, Letter from Marcus Shloimovitz to the editor and the editor's reply

<sup>93</sup> See *JC*, 10 December 1943, Letter from David Brotmacher to the editor and the editor's reply

<sup>94</sup> *JC*, 5 March 1943, Letter from Harry Binstock to the editor

<sup>95</sup> *Psalms* 34:19; *Midrash Devarim Rabba* 2:7

<sup>96</sup> *Isaiah* 56:7

<sup>97</sup> *JC*, 19 February 1943

<sup>98</sup> See Miriam J. Freud-Kandel, *An Ideology Foraken: Theological Developments in Anglo-Jewish Orthodoxy Since 1913* (unpublished MS), pp.107-108

<sup>99</sup> *JC*, 2 April 1943, Letter from Dayan Yechezkel Abramsky to the editor

<sup>100</sup> See Chapter 2, pp. 94-101

## CONCLUSION

By mid-1942, there could have been no reasonable doubt that the Nazis were bent on annihilating European Jewry. The British press throughout the war had consistently reported this fact and although some members of the Jewish community in Britain chose to either disbelieve or play down the unfolding tragedy, most, including the community's leaders did not. As a result, British Jews were, as were their brethren in other countries in the Free World, faced with an unparalleled challenge: that of assisting their co-religionists faced with genocide.

Only the leaders of the community, both secular and orthodox, were in a real position to attempt to rescue European Jews and they were ill equipped to deal with this challenge. Aside from a general lack of experience, Anglo-Jewish leaders, who were generally members of the 'upper-crust' of the community, were pre-occupied with communal politics and the issue of Zionism. The threats of domestic anti-Semitism forced many leaders to be less aggressive and vociferous in their efforts because they feared exacerbating the perception of many, that the Allies were fighting a 'Jewish War'. In essence, the Anglo-Jewish leadership's perception of the community and its position in British society hampered their responses to the persecutions in Europe. The main obstacle facing the Anglo-Jewish leadership was the British Government, which was generally obstinate and uncompromising when it came to any efforts to assist the Jews, and in

particular those initiated by lay-members of British society. This was especially the case when mention was made of utilising the 'Jewish Homeland' as a refuge for Jews because of the government's restrictions on *Palestine emigration*.

For the most part, orthodox leaders faced the same difficulties as their secular counterparts except for the fact that they were less embroiled in inter-communal politics. As a result of this, they were in a better position to act on *their own*. *This flexibility enabled them to develop relationships and make approaches in ways that others could not*. However, the leaders of the small orthodox community, including Schonfeld and Goodman were realists and accepted that they would be able to achieve very little in the sphere of rescue considering the obstacles that they faced. Schonfeld also accepted that the state of war and Britain's proximity to the theatre of conflict isolated him and his colleagues from other activists in neutral countries. As a result of these realities, orthodox activists in Britain limited their main responses to activities within the British Isles and preparations for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of European Jewry after the war.

Schonfeld, the undisputed leader of the orthodox community, devoted himself to the activities of the CRREC, an organisation that incorporated the maintenance, assistance and religious education of refugees in Britain, religious assistance to the Armed Forces, preparations for rehabilitation and reconstruction and attempts to rescue those who could possibly be rescued. Schonfeld sought to assist orthodox Jews and especially rabbis and talmudic

scholars as opposed to actively seeking to rescue all Jews regardless of their religious convictions. However, this was only his approach during the years preceding the war and at its beginning, when the full extent of the Nazis' objectives were not yet fully established. It made sense to Schonfeld, at that point, to work on behalf of his co-believers. In the latter stages of the war, Schonfeld and his colleagues were no longer selective in their rescue efforts. Throughout the war, he persistently made every attempt to save his mentors, Rabbis Ungar and Weissmandl from Nazi occupied Slovakia, however, it was only natural that he longed to rescue those who were closest to him.

Schonfeld was an individualist. He was a natural leader and had an extremely powerful and forceful personality. As a result, he was one who always had to be in control. He was also an opportunist and developed and nurtured relationships with leading members of the community, both secular and orthodox, when he felt that such relationships could potentially benefit his activities. He was equally manipulative in his dealings with government officials. However, notwithstanding his obstinate nature, he was extremely sincere, and this sincerity gained him admirers in all of the sections of British society that he dealt with.

Throughout the war, orthodox activists made attempts to rescue their European brethren in the same ways that secular ones did. Schonfeld, by virtue of his forceful, impulsive nature and his respected position in the community, was perhaps more imaginative and persuasive than his secular counterparts. He was certainly more driven. However, he was very much in

the same position as they were and they all encountered the same obstacles vis-à-vis opportunities to rescue Jews. It was the obstinacy of the British Government that persistently impeded rescue efforts and Britain's isolation during the war that rendered the results of these efforts so negligible.

The orthodox lay-community assisted Europe's Jews by helping to support the existing *refugee and relief organisations in Britain, in particular the CRREC*. Many contributed food and clothing during the CRREC collections towards the end of the war and a great number of volunteers, especially members of the youth groups, assisted in these efforts. Members of the community, both religious and secular found solace and inspiration in the 'Days of Prayer', Fast Days and other religious activities that were proclaimed by the Chief Rabbi. Although these events and the special prayers that were recited were not arranged in an exceptionally thoughtful way and Schonfeld never initiated them, they did serve to galvanise the community to introspection. This, in turn, motivated the lay-community to do more for their beleaguered brethren on the Continent. *To an extent, these religious events accentuated some of the differences that existed between the orthodox and secular Jews in Britain at the time.* However, overall they served as a unifying factor for a community that was rendered helpless in the face of indescribable evil.

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