

# The Massacre of the Jews

**T**HERE ARE some things so horrible that decent men and women find them impossible to believe, so monstrous that the civilized world recoils incredulous before them. The recent reports of the systematic extermination of the Jews in Nazi Europe are of this order.

We are accustomed to horrors in the historical past, and accept them as a matter of course. The persecution of the Jews in Egypt and the Roman Empire, the slaughters of Genghis Khan, the religious mania which swept Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Indian massacres in America, and the equally brutal retaliations of the white men—all these we credit without question, as phenomena of ages less enlightened than our own. When such things occur in our own times, like the Armenian massacres, we put them down to the account of still half-barbarous peoples. But that such things could be done by contemporary western Europeans, heirs of the humanist tradition, seems hardly possible.

Our skepticism has been fortified by our experience with "atrocious stories" during the last war. We were treated, during that war, to many accounts of German atrocities. We were told of the rape of nuns, the forced prostitution of young Belgian girls, of German soldiers spearing infants on their bayonets, or deliberately and wantonly cutting off their hands. Later, when the bitterness of war had subsided, and Allied investigators were able to interview the populations of the formerly occupied countries, and scholars were let loose on the documents, most of these atrocities were found to have been invented. The natural reaction was to label all atrocity stories "propaganda" and refuse to believe them.

That habit of thought has lasted down to the present day. The Nazis have given us many reasons to change our thinking habits since they assumed power, but we have been slow to learn the new lesson. I remember how skeptical I was myself the first time a Nazi official told me that Hitler and Goebbels were bent on the physical annihilation of the Jews. On July 15, 1935, the S. A. staged its first pogrom in Berlin. I was in Berlin at the time and witnessed the whole thing. I saw the S. A. men, unmistakable despite their mufti, throwing chairs and tables through the plate-glass windows of Jewish-owned cafés, dragging Jewish men and women out of buses and chasing them up the streets, or knocking them down and kicking them in the face and belly as they lay prostrate on the sidewalk. And I heard them chanting their terrible song:

Wenn Judenblut vom Messer spritzt,  
Dann geht es nochmal so gut!<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "When Jewish blood spurts from the knife,  
Then everything will be fine again."

The next day, in a state of high indignation, I went to see "Putzi" Hanfstaengl, then chief of the Foreign Press Division of the Propaganda Ministry. On my way to his office, I learned that one of the victims of the previous night's bestiality had already died of his injuries. Yet, when Hanfstaengl told me, in his cultured Harvard accent, that the "radicals" among the Nazi Party leaders intended to "solve" the "Jewish problem" by the physical extermination of the Jews, I only half believed him. It was not much more than a year after the Blood Bath of June 30, 1934; yet even then I could not believe that there were men in positions of power and authority in western Europe in the twentieth century who could seriously entertain such a monstrous idea.

I learned better in November, 1938, when the Nazi leaders openly encouraged the burning of synagogues, the pillage of Jewish homes and the murder of their inhabitants.

One reason the Western world failed to rouse itself more promptly to the Nazi menace was surely this tendency to dismiss as impossible fantasy the many warnings the Nazis themselves gave us. We made the terrible mistake of judging the Nazis by our own standards, failing even after the war had begun to realize how completely they had renounced, if indeed they had ever espoused, those standards. Even today, after more than three years of the Nazi kind of war in Europe, and more than one year of direct experience with it ourselves, there are still far too many among us who do not understand the nature of the enemy—an enemy who will stop at literally nothing to achieve his ends. And his ends are the enslavement or annihilation not only of the Jews but, after them, of all the non-German peoples of Europe and, if possible, the entire world.

The program is already far advanced. According to a report to the President by leaders of American Jewish groups, nearly 2,000,000 European Jews have already been slain since the war began, and the remaining 5,000,000 now living under Nazi control are scheduled to be destroyed as soon as Hitler's blond butchers can get around to them. Of the 275,000 Jews who were living in Germany and Austria at the outbreak of the war, only 52,000 to 55,000 remain. The 170,000 Jews in Czecho-Slovakia have been reduced to 35,000. The figures for Poland, where the Nazi program has been pushed very rapidly, are uncertain. There were 3,300,000 Jews in Poland at the beginning of the war, but some 500,000 fled to Russia, leaving approximately 2,800,000 behind. By the beginning of the summer of 1942, this number had already been reduced to 2,200,000, and deportations and massacres since that time

have been on an ever increasing scale. In the ghetto of Warsaw, in which 550,000 Jews once dwelt, there are today fewer than 50,000. In the city of Riga, Latvia, 8,000 Jews were killed in a single night. A week later 16,000 more were led into a woods, stripped and machine-gunned.

It is not merely central and eastern Europe which are being "purged," or rendered "Judenrein," as the Nazis like to say. The Netherlands has already given up 60,000 of its 180,000 Jews. Of the 85,000 who once lived in Belgium only 8,000 remain today, while of the 340,000 Jews of France, more than 65,000 have been deported. Even Norway has begun to ship her Jewish citizens eastward to the Nazi slaughter houses and starvation pens.

The methods employed by the Nazis are many. There is starvation: Jews all over Europe are kept on rations often only one-third or one-fourth what is allowed to non-Jews. Slow death is the inevitable consequence. There is deportation: Jews by the hundreds of thousands have been packed into cattle cars, without food, water or sanitary conveniences of any sort, and shipped the whole breadth of Europe. When the cars arrive at their destination, about a third of the passengers are already dead. There are the extermination centers, where Jews are destroyed by poison gas or electricity. There are specially constructed trucks, in which Jews are asphyxiated by carbon monoxide from the exhausts, on their way to burial trenches. There are the mines, in which they are worked to death, or poisoned by fumes of metals. There is burning alive, in crematoria, or buildings deliberately set on fire. There is the method of injecting air-bubbles into the blood stream: it is cheap, clean and efficient, producing clots, embolisms and death within a few hours. And there is the good old-fashioned system of standing the victims up, very often naked, and machine-gunning them, preferably beside the graves they themselves have been forced to dig. It saves time, labor and transportation.

A few weeks ago a letter reached me from Paris. It had been smuggled over the demarcation line and two international borders and mailed in Lisbon. It told of the deportation of the Jews of Paris, which occurred in July. All Polish, Czech, German, Austrian and Russian Jews between the ages of two and fifty-five were arrested. The women and children, to the number of 15,000, were herded into the notorious Vélodrome d'Hiver, where they were kept for a week, without any bedding but straw, with very inadequate food, and with virtually no sanitary facilities. Then they were packed into cattle cars and shipped to an unknown destination in eastern Europe. My informant, a member of the trade-union underground, tells me that some days later a French railway worker picked up a scrap of paper on the tracks. On it was written this message: "There are

more than fifty women in this cattle car, some of them ill, and for days we have been refused even the most elementary conveniences."

Another letter, from a French Red Cross nurse who worked in the Vélodrome, tells exactly the same story, describing it as "something horrible, fiendish, something which takes hold of your throat and prevents you from crying out."

A German Social Democrat whom I know well sent me a long report on the deportations, written at the beginning of September. "I am an incorrigible optimist," he concluded, "but this time I see dark things ahead. . . . I am afraid not many of us will live to see the end of this war."

And a Frenchman, not himself a Jew, wrote a long report on the deportations and had it brought to me in a toothpaste tube. "We were at the Camp des Milles [near Marseilles] the day the last train left," he says. "The spectacle was indescribably painful to behold. All the internees had been lined up with their pitifully battered valises tied together with bits of string. Most of them were in rags, pale, thin, worn out with the strain, which had dragged out for more than a week. Many of them were quietly weeping. . . . There was no sign of revolt: these people were broken. Their faces showed only hopeless despair and a passive acceptance of their fate."

Later, when Jews not already in concentration camps were being rounded up, he wrote: "A large number of these desperate people, in just about all sections, tried to end their lives. In Marseilles, in the Cours Belsunce [the heart of the city], a refugee couple jumped out of the window at the very moment the police arrived to arrest them. . . . Many, realizing the danger they were in . . . disappeared from their homes and hid."

These are all letters I myself have received from persons I know, or know to be reliable. They concern only France. But the evidence for the other countries is of a similar, direct sort. There are, for instance, the two pathetic letters from Warsaw. I have seen photostats of them, and of the envelopes in which they were mailed, in the office of the American Jewish Congress. Written in German, they passed the German censor only because he did not understand the few Hebrew words in them, taking them, as he was intended to, for proper names. "I spoke to Mr. Jaeger," one of them goes. ["Mr. Jaeger" means the Germans.] "He told me that he will invite all relatives of the family Achenu [Hebrew for "our brethren," *i. e.*, the Jews], with the exception of Miss Eisenzweig [probably means those working in the iron mines], from Warsaw to his mansion 'Kewer' [Hebrew for "tomb"]. Uncle Gerusch [Hebrew for "deportation"] also works in Warsaw; he is a very capable worker. My friend Miso [Hebrew for "death"] now works with him. I am alone here; I feel very lonely. . . . Please pray for me."

The New York office of the General Jewish Workers' Union of Poland has received from a Polish Socialist underground worker known to it an account of gas executions the details of which are as revolting as they are convincing.

In the office of the World Jewish Congress in Geneva there is an affidavit, attested copies of which have been received here, recounting the extraordinary odyssey of a Polish Jew who was living in Brussels. On August 12 he was arrested and deported to Rumania. There were seventy men in his cattle car, packed in like crowds in the subway during rush hour. After two and a half days, their train stopped in Upper Silesia, and they were allowed to get out of the car, have a short rest, and eat a little soup. Those too exhausted to continue the journey were carried away, as were all boys between fourteen and twenty (to work, it was said, in the coal mines and the iron mills). The others were then loaded back into the cars and shipped on to the Ukraine. There they were asked whether they felt able to work or not. About half said that they were not able to work. These were led away. The others were given the uniforms of the Todt Organization and set to work building fortifications. From where they were working they could hear the rumble of big guns to the east, and once they saw a sign reading "Stalingrad—50 km."

The Jew from Brussels made friends with a young Bavarian officer, not a Nazi, and learned from him that the men who had not been able to work had all been immediately shot. Anyone who was sick for more than two days was shot also, the officer said. In the end the officer helped the Jew to hide himself in a train which was returning to the West. After many days the Jew found himself on a siding at the Gare de l'Est in Paris. From there he made his way to Switzerland, where he told his story.

This is the nature of the evidence. Letters, reports, cables all fit together. They add up to the most appalling picture of mass murder in all human history. Nor is it only the Jews who are threatened. Polish authorities assert that many hundreds of thousands of non-Jewish Poles have been slain with equal callousness, and soberly warn that the entire Polish people may be wiped out before this war is over. The decimation of the Greek people is a matter of record. The Nazis are evidently quite indifferent to it, if they do not actually welcome it. Thousands of French will die of hunger and cold this winter, and thousands more will never be born, either because the fathers who might have begotten them are being held in Nazi prison camps, or because the mothers are too undernourished to carry them. The same thing is true of many other countries of Europe. And by their executions of "hostages" the Nazis are systematically destroying the potential leaders of democratic movements in all the countries they have overrun.

We must face the terrible truth. Even though Hitler loses this war, he may win it anyway, at least as far as Europe is concerned. There are reports, apparently trustworthy, that the Nazis and the German army are prepared for eventual retreat, and that their plans call for the extermination of every living thing and the destruction of all physical property in the areas they may be forced to evacuate. When we remember that, even after the war of 1914-18 was hopelessly lost and the German army was retreating in confusion on the Western Front, it still found time, and the will, wantonly to destroy the factories and flood the mines in its path, we may well believe that this time it will be even more thorough, go even more berserk.

If this happens, we shall be confronted with the most frightful dilemma imaginable. Every man, woman and child in Europe will become a hostage, a means of blackmail. If we continue the war, they will die. Yet if we do not continue the war, the Nazis will have won all they can then hope to win—time. Time to regroup their forces, divide ours and strike again.

Our only course then will be to overwhelm them so rapidly that they will not be able to carry out their threats. For that we shall need all the strength we can possibly muster, and all the courage. The Nazis will certainly hope to cut off our allies one by one by threatening the total annihilation of their peoples if they continue to oppose them. We and our allies must be prepared to face the challenge unflinchingly.

Meanwhile, there are some things which can be done now, slight as the chances are that they will have much effect in deterring Hitler and his followers from their homicidal mania. President Roosevelt could and should speak out again against these monstrous events. A stern warning from him will have no effect on Hitler, but it may impress some Germans like the officer who helped the Jew from Brussels to escape. A similar warning from Churchill might help, too. A joint declaration, couched in the most solemn terms, by the Allied governments, of the retribution to come might be of some avail. Tribunals should be set up now to begin to amass the facts. Diplomatic warnings, conveyed through neutral channels, to the governments of Hungary, Bulgaria and Rumania might save at least some of the 700,000 to 900,000 Jews still within their borders. The Christian churches might also help, at least in countries like France, Holland, Belgium, Norway, the Pope by threatening with excommunication all Catholics who in any way participate in these frightful crimes, the Protestant leaders by exhorting their fellow communicants to resist to the utmost the Nazis' fiendish designs. We and our allies should perhaps reconsider our policy of total blockade of the European continent and examine the possibilities of extending the feeding of Greece to other occupied countries, under neutral supervision. Since one of the excuses the Nazis now offer for destroying the Jews and

Poles is that there is not enough food to go around, we might at least remove the grounds for the excuse by offering to feed the populations of the occupied countries, given proper guarantees that the food will not fall into the hands of the enemy.

If we do any or all of these things, we should broadcast the news of them day and night to every country of Europe, in every European language. There is a report, which I have not been able to verify, that the OWI has banned mention of the massacres in its short-wave broadcasts. If this is true, it is a sadly mistaken policy. We have nothing to gain by "appeasing" the anti-Semites and the murderers. We have much to gain by using the facts to create resistance and eventually rebellion. The fact that the Nazis do not commit their massacres in western Europe, but transport their victims to the East before destroying them, is certain proof that they fear the effect on the local populations of the news of their crimes.

Finally, and it is a little thing, but at the same time a big thing, we can offer asylum now, without delay or red tape, to those few fortunate enough to escape from the Aryan paradise. We can do this without any risk to ourselves, because we can intern the refugees on arrival, and examine them at leisure before releasing

them. If there is the slightest doubt about any of them, we can keep them interned for the duration of the war. Despite the fact that the urgency of the situation has never been greater, immigration into the United States in the year 1942 will have been less than ten percent of what it has been in "normal" years before Hitler, when some of the largest quotas were not filled. There have been bureaucratic delays in visa procedure which have literally condemned to death many stalwart democrats. These delays have caused an understandable bitterness among Jews and non-Jews in Europe, who have looked to us for help which did not come.

My Marseilles correspondent, who is neither a Jew nor a candidate for a visa, writes that, "in spite of the Nazi pressure, which she feels more than any other neutral, and in spite too of the reactionary tendencies of her middle class, the little country of Switzerland will [by accepting 9,000 refugees from Nazi terror since July] have contributed more to the cause of humanity than the great and wealthy United States, its loud declamations about the rights of the people and the defense of liberty notwithstanding."

This is a challenge which we cannot, must not, ignore.

VARIAN FRY

## The GOP Prepares for the Kill

I don't take it as a personal tribute to me. I know you have done it to help this country defeat the New Deal. I started out after that animal in 1932 and I hope, in 1944, that I can be in there at the kill.

**H**E WAS THE SHORTEST MAN ON the platform. Gray and in his middle sixties, he had a face that was ruddy and weathered like a farmer's. But his carefully fitted double-breasted suit somehow seemed to suggest the successful small-city Middle Western lawyer that he was. He smiled only slightly at the rousing applause which greeted his words. The new chairman of the Republican National Committee—Harrison E. Spangler of Cedar Rapids, Iowa—meant what he said. He spoke grimly of the long hunt and the hoped-for slaughter because they told just how he felt about the goings-on in Washington these past ten years.

A moment later the beaming senior Senator from Ohio, Robert A. Taft, rose on the floor. A meeting of the National Committee was not a Republican policy-making occasion, he said, and yet the motion he had to present on behalf of himself, Clarence Budington Kelland of Arizona ("Scattergood Baines") and H. Alexander Smith of New Jersey would be appropriate enough. The Senator read:

"Whereas today . . . the anniversary of the dastardly

attack by Japan . . . be it resolved . . . Republican National Committee solemnly pledges . . . they shall not have died in vain. . . . We assert the dignity of the American people. . . . We pledge . . . our sons, our hearts, our bodies, our possessions. . . . We reaffirm the resolution passed, April 20 . . . and concur in the declaration issued by Republican members of Congress. . . . This committee dedicates itself to victory . . . to a just peace . . . to the preservation of the Republic under our Constitution. God bless America!"

Retiring Chairman Joe Martin of Massachusetts, eagerly finishing out his last minutes in office, was quick to find a second among the cheers. Applause turned into a chorus of "Ayes!" And the Republican Party organization, which busies itself with such practical things as campaign funds, precinct workers and getting out the vote, was off with its interim leader on the trail of "that animal" and sniffing the cold Mississippi Valley air for advance smells of "the kill."

But any snowbound committee member whose arrival had been delayed until this last stage in the proceedings would not have had the faintest idea, from these appearances of harmony, what the business of selecting the new chairman was actually like. For it was a knock-down fight which stopped just short of being a drag-out as well. Representative Martin, who resigned to devote himself to riding herd on the

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